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UN documentary forum shines a spotlight on global fight against hunger



WFP Goodwill Ambassador George McGovern

8 April 2011 – Filmmakers, activists, journalists, aid workers, policy-makers and United Nations staff are gathering in New York this weekend for a two-day documentary forum aimed at raising public awareness about the fight against hunger worldwide.

The third annual “Envision: Addressing Global Issues Through Documentaries” forum, which kicks off tonight, comprises film screenings and panel discussions centred on the themes of combating hunger and poverty, one of the eight Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) that world leaders have pledged to try to achieve by 2015.

Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, said the choice of poverty and hunger for this year’s event was particularly timely given the approaching target date for the MDGs.

“We must redouble our efforts to bring the crisis facing so much of the world’s population into the public eye,” Mr. Akasaka said. “Documentarians, who present complex issues to filmgoers in ways that engage the heart and mind alike, are crucial allies in that effort.”

The former United States senator and presidential candidate George McGovern, who has been a [Goodwill Ambassador](#) for the UN World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) since 2001, told the UN News Centre that there was “no excuse” for the estimated 1 billion people worldwide going hungry each day.

“We need to get our priorities straight. We know how to produce enough food, we know how to distribute enough food, and we know how to teach others how to produce enough food,” he said.

Mr. McGovern – who described hunger as the most urgent global problem today – said it was important to remember that defeating hunger was “not a dream. This is something we can do. It’s something that the people of this planet can do.”

He said filmmakers, television producers and other artists had an important role in bringing the issue of hunger, as well as other key global issues, to the public spotlight.

“A picture can sometimes speak louder than words... Television is such a powerful medium, and there are some very powerful documentaries out there.”

Co-organized by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Independent Filmmaker Project (IFP), the Envision forum will be screening three films with distinctive subjects.

In *The Sound of Mumbai: A Musical*, filmmaker Sarah McCarthy follows a group of children in an Indian slum who gain the opportunity to perform the movie classic *The Sound of Music* with the help of an orchestra.

Phil Grabsky’s film, *The Boy Mir: Ten Years in Afghanistan*, charts the journey of a charismatic boy from the age of eight to the cusp of adulthood at 18, while Lucy Walker’s *Waste Land* – which was nominated for an Oscar – follows the artist Vik Muniz to the world’s largest garbage dump in Brazil.

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