Sawdust
Rebuilding an existence
A case story to increase vocational training investment at the Dzaleka refugee camp in Malawi.

For this film we have partnered with There is Hope, a local non-profit grassroots organization founded by former refugee Innocent Magambi. This NGO is transforming lives through education and vocational training provided to refugees and their host community.
Why it is important

We seldom hear anything about Malawi and very few people know of its existence. It is one of the poorest countries in the world. Still, because of its stability compared with other countries in Africa, it has become home to thousands of refugees. The Dzaleka refugee camp near the capital Lilongwe is overpopulated with more than 42,000 people living in extreme poverty conditions. It is of critical importance to tell Jacques’ story to create awareness and increase resources to the needed educational programs at the Dzaleka camp. Jacques’ story is a proof that education makes refugees’ permanence, who in average wait 17 years for resettlement, more bearable and increase their chances to become self-reliant within the camp. Having education will also prepare them to economically contribute to their host country when they resettle.
Life-threatening violence forced Jacques Kabongo and family to flee his accommodated situation in conflict-stricken DRC to a refugee camp challenging his determination to rebuild his existence.

Logline

Life-threatening violence forced Jacques Kabongo and family to flee his accommodated situation in conflict-stricken DRC to a refugee camp challenging his determination to rebuild his existence.
Jacques Kabongo had a good life. He was happily married with two children and a job in an NGO defending the Congolese democracy and human rights. But what type of life is one in which you do not know if you will wake up the next morning. After a traumatic and violent near-death experience in his home country, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Jacques saw no option but to take his family and flee for their safety.

In 2013, they arrived in Malawi’s Dzaleka Refugee Camp. Jacques had no means of earning money and to survive he began molding bricks to sell at the camp. They lived in a small, shabby, grass thatched home with no electricity. Sending their children to school was a major challenge and they depended on food rations supplied by UNHCR in order to survive. With no hope of ever becoming self-reliant, Jacques heard about vocational training programs and decided to apply. He got accepted into the carpentry training and successfully graduated from the course. While Jacques, his wife Esther, and their 6 children continue to patiently wait in the tough camp conditions for resettlement, their life changed dramatically. Jacques opened a carpentry shop and was able to send his children to school again. He has given his family a better life in a new home that he built with his own hands.
Sawdust is a short documentary film that confronts tragedy with hope. Its cinematic aesthetics and direction immerses you in a remote story that feels like a narrative film until you realize that it is a bold reality to millions. Jacques story proves that this reality can change for refugees through education.
We aim to create a cinematic style documentary narrated by a balanced combination of both our subject’s real life interactions and voice-over from their interview accompanied by b-roll visuals.

By telling the story through our subject’s conversations with people in their everyday and interview voice overs we will allow the audience to live and become part of the story rather than removing the subject from its natural environment and getting told the story. The audience will rarely visualize our subject in a conventional interview format, unless it is essential to the story.

We aim to produce a movie-like feel carefully finding the perfect intersection between documentary and narrative. Most of our film will be shot with hand-held camera except for establishing shots (stills or with drone) or when the story requires otherwise.

We will film in 24fps and when necessary we will switch to a higher frame rate to accentuate the emotional scenes of the story.

Our final piece will be filmed in 4k and will be visualized in a 21:9 aspect ratio. Natural sound will be protagonist and music will accentuate the emotionality throughout the narrative.

Jacques’ eldest son Israel has written a song which he sings accompanied by his brothers and sisters. With Israel’s permission, we will use this song in the film crediting Israel for his music.

Intimacy and closeness with the subject will be fundamental. Our goal is to create a bond between our subject and audience allowing the spectator to feel truly compelled to take action.

Artistic Approach
70.8 million people around the world forced to leave their home. 25.9 million are refugees and over half of them are under 18 years old. Millions of people are stateless which means they are denied a nationality and access to their human rights.

For some, this might be hard to understand. However, life has given us the opportunity to live outside our home country and witness the struggle of our family as economic migrants to the USA. We have become extremely sensitive to the needs of migrants in general and especially of refugees because of the injustice of not having a choice but to leave their homes. For most, it is a life or death type of decision. We have seen it with our own eyes talking with the people at the Dzaleka refugee camp. The global refugee crisis is one of the largest humanitarian crises of our time and something must be done. As filmmakers, we have a responsibility to bring attention to this critical matter and give voice to those who most need to be heard and we believe that we can contribute to building a better future for refugees one film at a time.

Malawi caught our attention as it is a country that is very challenging. Until now, refugees have been relying on NGOs to receive food and other basic needs. The government has recently adopted the United Nations Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework, which means in a few years refugees will be able to integrate into the National Systems and NGOs will gradually stop supplying basic needs. Now more than ever, it is essential that refugees and locals receive joint education so that they can prepare for the day when they live and work together.

This film is very important and timely because it will increase funding for There is Hope’s education programs so more refugees have the opportunity to join. Currently there is a bottleneck and There is Hope can only accept a fraction of the people applying to enter the education programs. We are in an excellent position to make this film because of the relationship that we have developed with Innocent Magambi and his team at There is Hope. We also specialize on the topic of refugees for all of our films. This film covers the challenges of living in a refugee camp, the restrictions for a life in the local economy, the importance of vocational training in the current environment, the lack of opportunities for education, and others.
Through a compelling story we will shine a spotlight on Malawi and the challenges in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. This film will illustrate how refugee education can support the transition to settlement and self-reliance engaging people and foundations to want to invest in There is Hope education programs.

— Jacques

Through There is Hope I am who I am today. I know that there are a lot of people who are suffering out there in the camp, who have nothing to do. I want you to know that what There is Hope is doing is very important and they should have the chance to do it. My story will encourage people who have lost their hope due to the different situations they have passed through in life.
Impact Vision

Through a compelling story we will shine a spotlight on Malawi and the challenges in the Dzaleka Refugee Camp. This film will illustrate how refugee education can support the transition to settlement and self-reliance, engaging people and foundations to want to invest in There is Hope’s education programs.
Impact Goal

An impact campaign targeting $300,000 increase in funding to our grassroots partner There is Hope’s vocational training programs at the Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.
There is Hope’s Vocational Training
Audience

• Current Foundations supporting There is Hope
• Current There is Hope Donors
• Existing There is Hope followers
• Resettled refugees
• Congolese diaspora
• Humanitarians and philanthropists
• Foundations targeting Africa development, education and human rights

• Foundations targeting sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis
• Corporate Sponsors with interest in education in developing countries and/or refugees
• Refugee rights influencers and bloggers
• Human Rights journalists
Bare in mind that we have already started conversation with Motion Picture as a potential partner for the film's impact campaign.

- Film Festivals (50 film festivals - $1,500)
- Community Screenings (international and local)
- Film Website (Build $2000 + $35 month maintenance)
- Online Trailer
- Partner's Social Network Sites

- Social Change Online Media (e.g. Indieflix, BraveMaker, Media4Change, OpDocs, RYOT, ITVS, PBS etc.)
- Email list
- Refugee and Human Rights Conferences
- Celebrity Advocates

**Distribution & Targets**
1. Scale There is Hope’s Vocational Training Programs

Indicators:
• An increase in education application acceptance by There is Hope
• An increase in There is Hope’s school infrastructure
• An increase in There is Hope’s school staff.

2. Raise Public Awareness

Indicators:
• Number of International Screenings
• Number of Local Community Screenings
• Number of Film Festival Selections
• Number of Online Film Visibility
• Clicks on Film Website
• Number of conferences the film is screened at
• Press Articles
Founder of Home Storytellers, a fiscally sponsored organization of California based Empowerment Works, Inc. We create documentary films and impact campaigns to drive change and build a better future for refugees. I was Executive Producer of “Hot Dogs on a Tricycle”, a short film we released in May, 2019 in partnership with the nonprofit Asylum Access. This film is already a selection for the Berlin Short Film Festival, Respect Human Right Film Festival and won Impact Docs Award of Excellence.

After completing an MFA with the Academy of Art University in 2017 and I attended the MediaStorm methodology master class in December 2017. I draw from 30 years of successful international corporate business experience to run complex projects and tight budgets. I retired from the Kellogg Co at the end of 2013 to work on the intersection of art and social change. My last position in Kellogg was Vice-President Latin America Supply Chain. I had 8 plants and about 2300 employees in my charge.
Based in Barcelona for the past 8 years, her passion for visual communication has led her to experiment with different disciplines mainly focusing on post-production, storytelling and design.

A little over a year, she and her father Co-Founded HOME Storytellers, a non profit that uses the power of film to shed light on sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis through character-driven short documentary films. In May 2019, HOME Storytellers’ finished their first production Hot Dogs on a Tricycle, in which Alejandra took a part of the film as Creative Director and Editor. She is currently working as director, producer and editor on the HOME Storytellers’ upcoming impact film, Jacques Kabongo. This documentary aims to raise awareness and increase There is Hope’s vocational and education programs funding at Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Malawi.

Alejandra Alcala F.

Director, Producer, & Editor
Isaac Msiska

Isaac is There is Hope’s Communications Coordinator. He is from Malawi and began getting involved with refugees because he is passionate about transforming peoples’ lives. He loves being a part of something big, and he believes There is Hope is something big. He started working with There is Hope in February 2017 and manages TIH’s media profile, writes stories about what is happening at TIH and creates communications tools (brochures, newsletters, annual reports, etc.). He also coordinate with reporters who are covering TIH’s functions.

Isaac is HOME Storytellers’ upcoming film’s fixer, which means he helped us select the story, provides logistical support, facilitates permit, custom, location, talent, crews, equipment, accommodation and transportation for HOME Storytellers. His expertise, wonderful personality and motivation has helped HOME Storytellers’ advance smoothly with their upcoming film.
Carlos C. Rivero

Carlos is a lifeteller based in Barcelona, Spain who shares sensorial experiences through emocional visual journeys. He catches an intimate side of the story with a creative vision and likes to create a heartfelt connection between his projects and himself.

Carlos has been involved in several projects with brands like Volcom, PUIG, Puma, Arnette, VICE and many agencies such as Virtue, MOI, Havas, Herraiz & Soto.

A few months ago, Carlos embarked on a journey to Cox Bazar, one the largest refugee settlements in the world. His interest in the Rohingya people and their current state drove him to investigate further on their identity. He is currently working on this personal project as well as keeping up with his branded content.

Click here to view website

Carlos C. Rivero
Director of Photography & Cinematographer
Bernardo Castro is a composer for visual media based in Barcelona. He has a Master's Degree in Film Scoring from the Berklee College of Music. Some of the clients he has worked for include Audi, Seat, Danone and Volkswagen. He was also the music editor of the Goya award winning film “El Ciudadano Ilustre” and composed the score for the feature film “Las 7 Muertes”, recorded by the Budapest Art Orchestra.

He was recently nominated for Best Score at the Seattle International Fashion Film Festival for his work on the film D.O. by Stella Coll, directed by Javier Cano Larumbe.

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Contact
Francisco Alcala Torreslanda
francisco.alcala@homestorytellers.org
+52 1 442 230 1659
Alejandra Alcala F.
alejandra@homestorytellers.org
+34 683250055
www.homestorytellers.org