

AFTER MY GARDEN GROWS

DIRECTOR OF OSCAR® WINNER *SMILE PINKI*

PREMIERES NEW DOCUMENTARY FRESH FROM SUNDANCE FILM FESTIVAL

March 6, 2014 – Fresh from this year's Sundance Film Festival, Megan Mylan, the Academy Award® winning director of the documentaries *Smile Pinki* and *Lost Boys of Sudan*, releases a new film shot in India. The short documentary, *After My Garden Grows*, tells the story of a teenage girl from Cooch Behar, West Bengal, growing food to feed her family and the seeds of her own independence in a tiny rooftop garden.

The film's release coincides with International Women's Day on March 8, 2014. *After My Garden Grows* is being launched through a series of film premier events and grassroots digital distribution in collaboration with a consortium of human rights NGOs focused on girls' empowerment and ending poverty and hunger. *After My Garden Grows* is a Principe Productions film supported by Sundance Institute in partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. Additional support from Kendeda Fund.

The film's central character, Monika Barman, is one of 40,000 girls participating in a program to empower adolescent girls launched in 2011 by the government of West Bengal and the nonprofit Landesa. The pilot program teaches girls about their rights and how to utilize small plots of land to improve their family's nutrition, help them stay in school and reduce their vulnerability to child marriage. The strategy is part of the federal SABLA (The Rajiv Gandhi Scheme for Empowerment of Adolescent Girls.)

"At a time when we see daily reports of women's rights in India under attack, it is a privilege to be able to share this positive story about how a seemingly tiny plot of land and simple gardening skills can empower young women to feed their families, stay in school and delay marriage," said filmmaker Megan Mylan.

Globally, nearly a billion people have no land of their own and each year 14 million girls are married as children. According to UNICEF, while the legal age of marriage in India is 18, the median age of marriage for rural girls is 16. Girls who marry early are more likely to drop out of school, to suffer health problems, to live in poverty, and to experience gender-based violence. These same girls are more likely to either die in childbirth or lose their newborn infants.

"*Smile Pinki* was so warmly embraced especially in India and we were able to translate the Oscar excitement into real impact for children with clefts. My hope is that audiences connect with *After My Garden Grows* just as strongly and come to understand the devastating impact of landlessness and child marriage, but also that change is possible. Seemingly simple strategies can dramatically change lives. It's already happening," said filmmaker Megan Mylan.

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ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Megan Mylan is a New York-based documentary filmmaker whose work has been recognized with an Academy Award®, Emmy-nominations, Independent Spirit Award and a Guggenheim Fellowship. Through extensive social action campaigns, Megan's films have raised millions of dollars for charitable causes, motivated thousands of volunteers and informed public policy. She recently completed, *Raça*, a documentary on Brazil's unfolding struggle for racial equality. The film is currently in national theatrical release in Brazil. Megan directed and produced the Oscar®-winning film *Smile Pinki* broadcast on HBO and the Sundance Channel in the U.S. and internationally. Her film, *Lost Boys of Sudan*, had a 70-city theatrical release and international broadcast in 30 countries. Megan also directed *Batidania* on Brazilian resistance music and worked on a variety of films including the Oscar®-nominated, *Long Night's Journey Into Day* and the Sundance Award winning film *Sing Faster*. Before beginning in documentary, Megan worked with Ashoka, an international development non-profit, in the U.S. and Brazil. She has a Bachelor's from Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service and Masters' degrees in Journalism and Latin American Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. She recently served as guest director of the Documentary program at Berkeley's Graduate School of Journalism.

FILM CREDITS

featuring MONIKA BARMAN
director/producer MEGAN MYLAN

editor PURCELL CARSON
camera MARIO FURLONI
sound SONIA NARANG
field producers TESS JOSEPH and ROOP SEN
assistant editor NINA SEN
color grader GARY COATES
audio post JIM LEBRECHT
music PRASANNA

special thanks
THE COMMUNITY OF BHUTKURA, COOCH BEHAR, WEST BENGAL
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