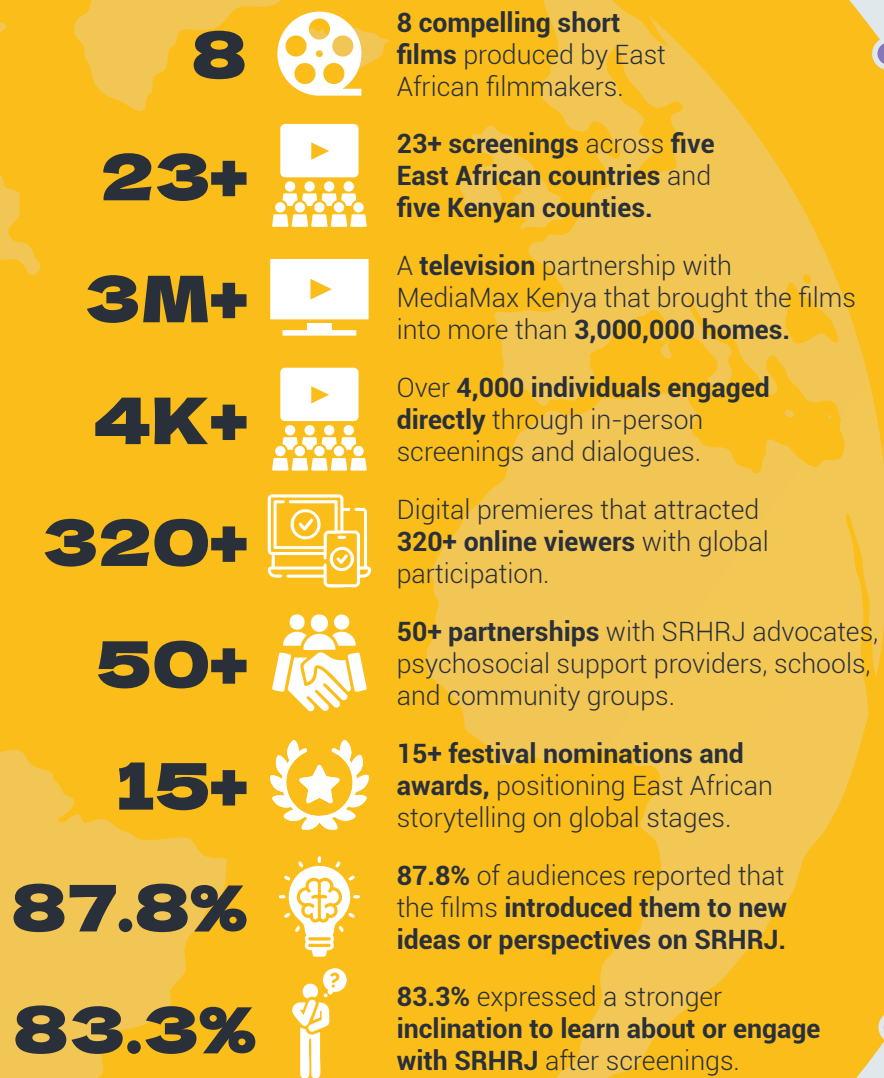


Get Reel

**A Cinematic Approach to
Shifting SRHRJ Narratives**





Markers of Progress

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Get Reel Project, led by Docubox with support from the Hewlett Foundation and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund, set out to use film as a catalyst for shifting narratives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice (SRHRJ) in East Africa. By training and supporting eight filmmaking teams, the project produced a powerful slate of short films that unpacked sensitive but urgent issues such as gender-based violence, sexual pleasure, unintended pregnancy, abortion, HIV stigma, and sex education.

These films became the centerpiece of the Let's Get Real Impact Campaign, which unfolded across the region through premieres, national broadcasts, community screenings, digital engagements, and festival circuits. The campaign demonstrated how storytelling can open silences, humanize statistics, and inspire action by creating spaces for honest, stigma-free conversations.

The reach and results are evident in the markers of progress achieved, [see page 2](#).

This report traces the journey of Get Reel through two interlinked phases. It begins with the creative process, where filmmakers were mentored and supported to craft authentic, powerful stories rooted in lived realities. This laid the foundation for the second phase, the impact campaign, which brought the films into communities through premieres, television broadcasts, and grassroots screenings, igniting conversations that had long been held back by cultural and religious taboos. The report then takes us through audience and partner feedback, showing how these screenings sparked both emotional and intellectual shifts, where audiences described feeling moved, hopeful, and informed, while partners spoke of political affirmation, healing, and empowerment.

Together, these phases demonstrate the transformative potential of storytelling in SRHRJ advocacy. By investing in authentic films and ensuring they reached diverse audiences, the project disrupted silence around taboo topics, gave survivors and young people safe spaces to speak, and built new cultural reference points that communities can return to in ongoing dialogue. These conversations have already begun to influence how advocates design their campaigns, how service providers engage with young people, and how policymakers are confronted with lived realities rather than abstract data.

In this report, we see how Get Reel has shifted SRHRJ from the margins into everyday conversations across homes, schools, churches, and policy forums, with the films laying the groundwork for future collaborations where art, advocacy, and policy intersect. The hope is that through the phases of this project, practitioners can draw out key takeaways and practical lessons that can guide future interventions of using film for SRHRJ narrative change, across East Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The Get Reel Project is a transformative initiative by Docubox, supported by the Hewlett Foundation and the Wellspring Philanthropic Fund. It was conceived with the conviction that storytelling, and particularly film, can shift social narratives, spark dialogue, and influence both social norms and policy on Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice (SRHRJ).

Docubox, the East African Documentary Film Fund, has built its identity on what it calls a “triple A” approach — aggregating, assessing, and allocating opportunities for filmmakers in the region. Over the past decade, Docubox has invested in nurturing East African storytellers by providing grants, mentorship, labs, and platforms for distribution. This ecosystem has demonstrated that films can provoke conversation, humanize statistics, and inspire communities to act.

The Hewlett Foundation and Wellspring Philanthropic Fund brought to the project their deep commitment to advancing SRHRJ across Africa. The Hewlett Foundation, for instance, has emphasized that compelling narratives are foundational to a strong SRHR ecosystem, asserting that stories are necessary to advance and sustain progress in the field¹. Wellspring has similarly supported initiatives that center lived realities and shift power to communities, recognizing that change in policy and practice is often preceded by a change in story.

The need for such an intervention in East Africa was evident. Scholars have shown that storytelling can

serve as both a research tool and an intervention, shaping public health knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors, including those related to sexual health². Yet across the region, SRHRJ conversations remain siloed, largely confined to advocacy circles, and often blocked by entrenched cultural, political, and religious taboos. These barriers weaken the ecosystem needed to advance SRHRJ, as stigma and silence make it difficult to create narratives that communities feel safe to engage with³.[^]

The baseline survey conducted by Docubox confirmed these obstacles. Respondents described their working environments, saying:

“Our biggest challenge is packaging the message in a way that does not feel threatening. Communities shut down when you begin with technical language.”

“There is a fatigue with conventional methods. People need to see themselves in the stories, otherwise they will not listen.”

¹ Hewlett Foundation (2023). Advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights Through Narrative Change.

² McCall, L. et al. (2019). Storytelling as Intervention: Using Narrative to Influence Public Health Knowledge and Behaviours. Journal of Public Health Research.

³ Tohit, N. & Haque, M. (2020). Cultural Taboos and the Accessibility of Sexual and Reproductive Health Information in Africa. Global Health Perspectives.



“Young people are relying on the internet for information, but what they find is often inaccurate or harmful. We need creative ways of countering this.”

“There is no shared vocabulary for some of these issues. People know the problems, but they don't always have the words to discuss them openly.”

“Film can go where advocacy brochures cannot. People will sit, watch, and talk afterwards – that's where change begins.”

These findings shaped the objectives of Get Reel. The project set out to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of East African filmmakers to craft authentic, emotionally resonant films on SRHRJ.
2. Use these films as tools to package and disseminate new narratives that could trigger dialogue, reduce stigma, and ultimately influence public support for reproductive health policies and programs.

A strategy was then designed with this ambition in mind.

1. Filmmakers would be supported through a collaborative process that paired them with SRHRJ experts, ensuring that their films were grounded in lived experience while remaining accessible to broad audiences.
2. The films would move into an impact campaign that blended simultaneous regional premieres, national television broadcasts, community screenings, digital dialogues, and festival runs.

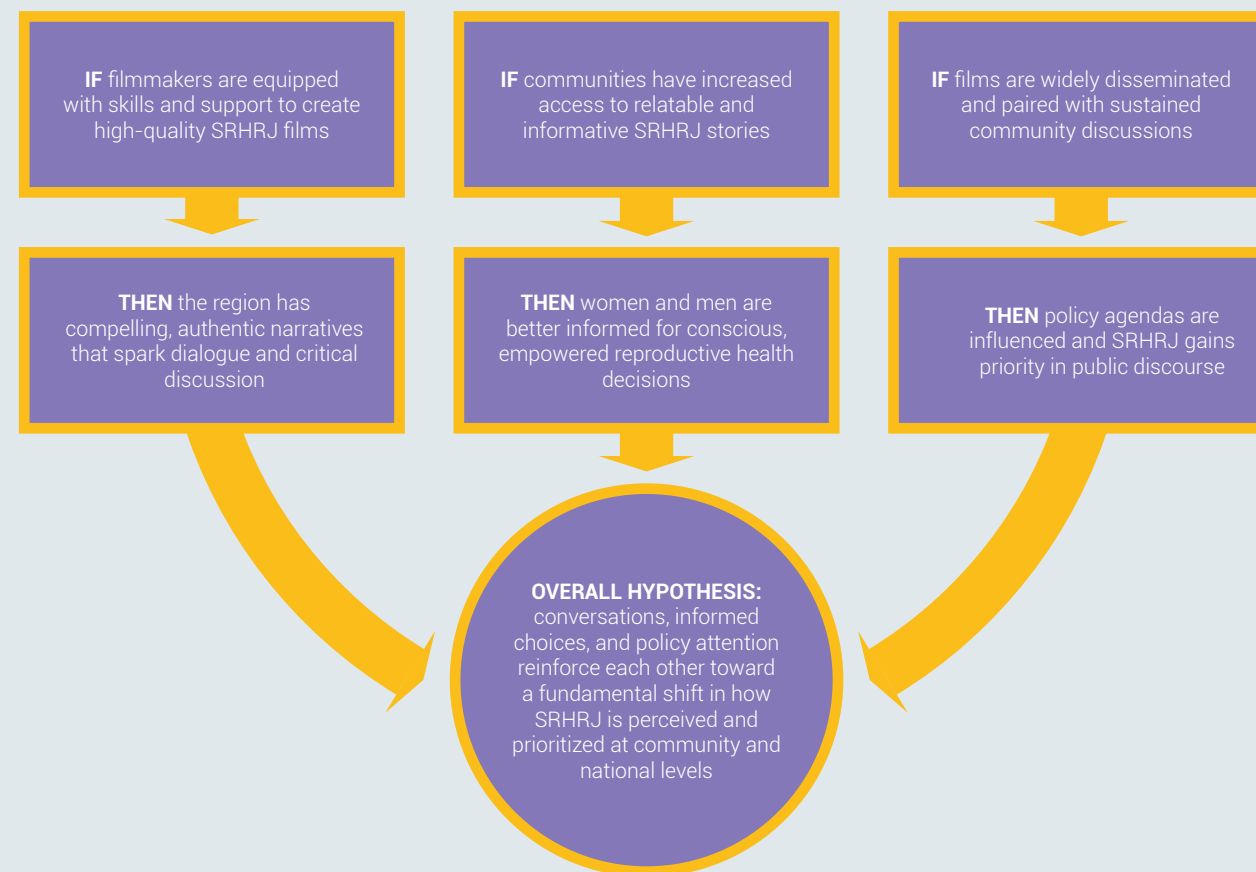
By linking the reach of media platforms with the intimacy of grassroots discussions, **the project sought to disrupt silence, create stigma-free spaces, and build momentum for both social and policy change.**

Over the past decade, Docubox has invested in nurturing East African storytellers by providing grants, mentorship, labs, and platforms for distribution.

THEORY OF CHANGE

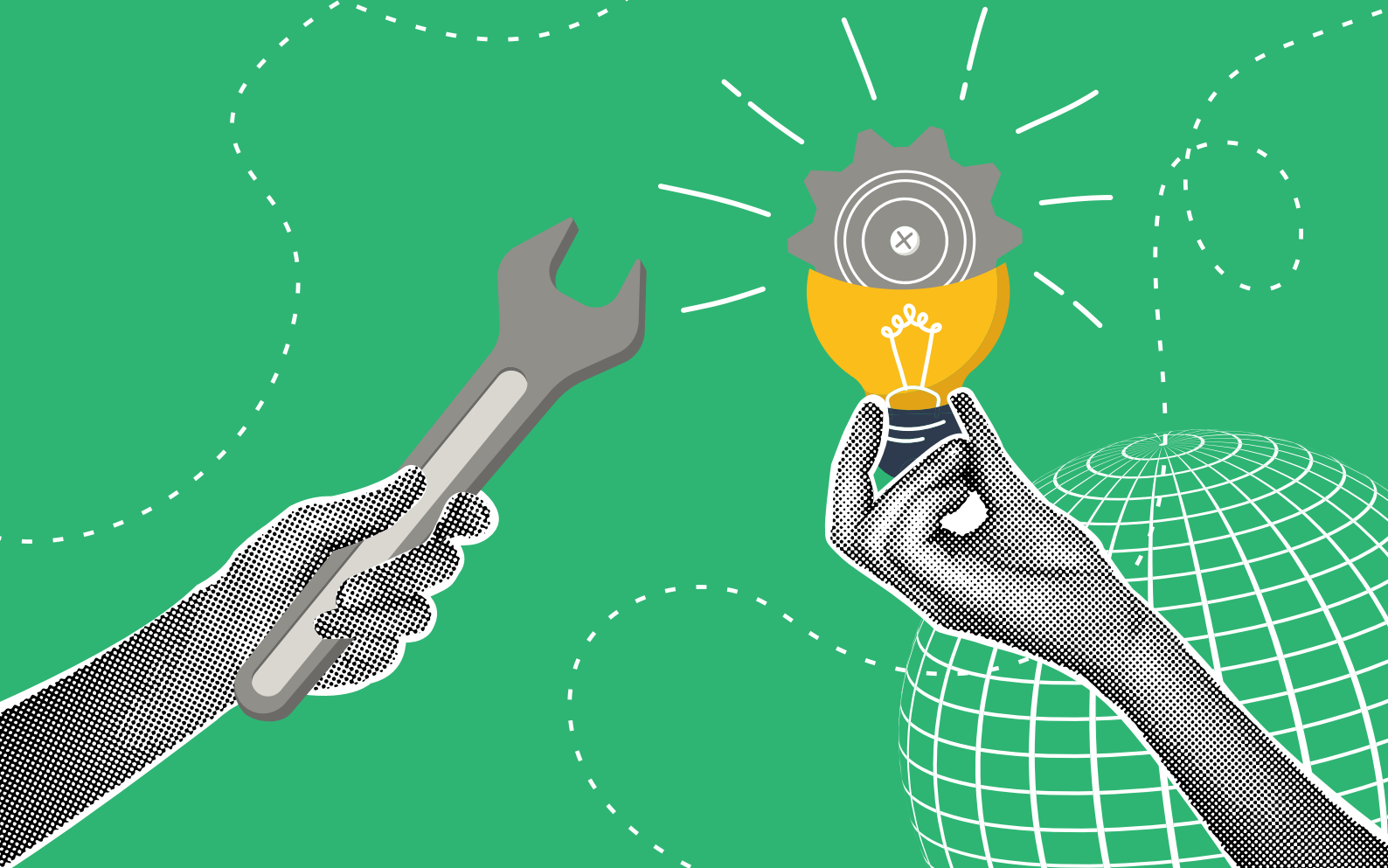
The project's Theory of Change proposes that by equipping filmmakers with the skills to create high-quality SRHRJ films, the region gains compelling narratives that spark dialogue within communities. When these narratives are made accessible and relatable, women and men are better informed and able to make conscious reproductive health decisions.

As the films are disseminated widely and linked to sustained community conversations, they begin to influence policy agendas and elevate SRHRJ within public discourse. **Together, these pathways suggest that authentic storytelling can bridge personal agency and collective advocacy, creating the cultural and political conditions for long-term change.**



PHASE ONE

THE CREATIVE KITCHEN



The Get Reel journey began with an open call for applications across East Africa. Independent filmmakers were invited to submit text and video concepts that could bring new perspectives to Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice (SRHRJ).

The response was overwhelming: 102 applications were received, reflecting the region's creative hunger to tell stories that address sensitive but urgent realities. Applicants expressed a strong desire to both hone their craft and tackle themes that are often silenced. As one Kenyan applicant noted, *"I aim to explore funny and relatable stories that will shed light on these complex realities."* A Tanzanian applicant emphasized the need to reclaim boundaries around SRHRJ: *"I plan to explore a story that reminds people in our African communities to understand their boundaries when it comes to the sexual and reproductive health and rights of their loved ones."*

The response was overwhelming: 102 applications were received, reflecting the region's creative hunger to tell stories that address sensitive but urgent realities.

From this pool, eight filmmaking teams were selected by Docubox and an independent panel of advisors. These included:

- Sarah Mallia & Timothy Mwaura (KE)
- Wanjiru Kairu & Gakuru Gachoki (KE)
- Shirleen Wangari & Gilbert Lukalia (KE)
- Ijvan Tusabe & Talemwa Pius (UG)
- Omar Hamza & June Wairegi (KE)
- Kelvin Kagambo & Willy Nyka (TZ)
- Saitabao Kiyare & Mumo Liku (KE)
- Loic Niyonkuru & Florian Kaneza (BUR & RWA)

FLAMMABLE



+ Sarah Mallia



+ Timothy Mwaura



+ Wanjiru Kairu



+ Gakuru Gachoki



+ Omar Hamza



+ June Wairegi



+ Kelvin Kagambo



+ Willy Nyka



+ Shirleen Wangari



+ Gilbert Lukalia



+ Ijvan Tusabe



+ Talemwa Pius



+ Saitabao Kiyare



+ Mumo Liku



+ Loic Niyonkuru



+ Florian Kaneza

CREATIVE AND MENTORSHIP LABS

To move from raw ideas to compelling films, Docubox convened a Film Development and Editorial Lab. Here, the **filmmakers were immersed in the lived realities of SRHRJ through engagement with survivors, practitioners, and advocates.** These sessions unpacked themes such as menstrual poverty, unsafe abortion, sexual abuse, and marital rape.

“...allowed me to develop that eye that sees the relevance of the topics I didn't care about before. I also developed empathy for the victims of SBGV, and I myself learned how to live with others, understand their differences, and understand their reactions.” — Filmmaker, Burundi.

Mentorship was provided by senior practitioners Ian Masters (UK), Francois Vester (South Africa), Khalid Shamiz (Libya/South Africa), and Angela Wamai (Kenya), who supported both story development and post-production. **Given the sensitive themes, the program embedded safeguarding, consent protocols, and psychosocial support throughout the process.** This ensured that both filmmakers and participants could work in a safe, respectful environment, while also modeling the ethical practices expected in SRHRJ storytelling.

Filmmakers testified to the importance of this lab saying:

“This training gave me the opportunity to meet the emotions of my future viewers, connect with them, explore them safely, and manage them. In a way, I felt that I'm contributing to my viewer's therapy.” — Filmmaker from Burundi.

“I liked the mentorship sessions and how the Get Reel program was structured. Every mentor/facilitator was very professional and made sure that we understood and got value to what they offered.” — Filmmaker from Uganda.



BEHIND THE



THE FILMS

The process culminated in eight short films, five fiction and three documentaries, that tackled themes of sexual health, sexual and gender-based violence, unintended pregnancy, abortion, STIs, and sex education.

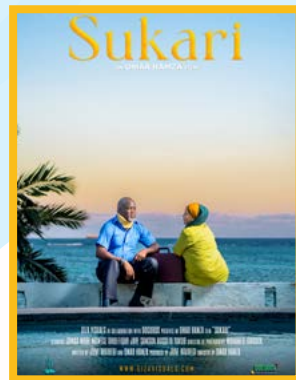
Together, they form the backbone of the Let's Get Real campaign.

FILMS →



Sukari

Dir. Omar Hamza,
Prod. June Wairegi



A conservative Muslim man's world unravels when his wife demands an orgasm, forcing him to confront pleasure, patriarchy, and denial.

Themes: Sexual health, sexual pleasure, marital relationships, bodily rights.



1992

Dir. Gilbert Lukalia,
Creative Prod. Shirleen Wangari



Set against the HIV/AIDS crisis in early 1990s Nairobi, a couple wrestles with secrets, stigma, and fear.

Themes: HIV/AIDS stigma, secrecy, public health silence.



Unasemaje?

Dir. Kelvin Kagambo



A bold portrayal of youth navigating bodily autonomy, sexuality, and the gaps in sex education.

Themes: Comprehensive sexuality education, youth agency, bodily autonomy.



The Red Line

Dir. Timothy Mwaura,
Prod. Sarah Mallia



Follows Jackie, a sexual assault survivor, as she leads a justice campaign while navigating trauma and resilience.

Themes: Sexual violence, survivor resilience, justice, activism.



Detour

Dir./Prod. Wanjiru Kairu,
Prod. Gakuru Gachoki



A young woman's unintended pregnancy following a tryst pushes her to make difficult decisions about abortion and autonomy.

Themes: Unintended pregnancy, abortion, stigma, women's choices.



Jimbi

Dir. Ivan Tusabwe,
Prod./Ed. Talemwa Pius



A timid man who witnesses a sexual assault develops a mysterious rash, wrestling with guilt and entrenched myths.

Themes: Sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), masculinity, complicity, myth.



Before 16

Dir. Loïc Niyonkuru,
Prod. Floriane Kaneza



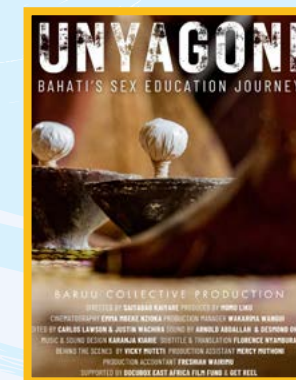
Elizabeth reflects on becoming a mother at 16 after rape, exposing the lifelong impact of early pregnancy.

Themes: Rape, child marriage, teenage pregnancy, girls' rights.



Unyagoni

Dir. Saitabao Kaiyare,
Prod. Mumo Liku



Explores Swahili cultural traditions of sexual education, examining their relevance and contradictions in modern society.

Themes: Cultural traditions, sex education, generational change.

PHASE TWO

THE IMPACT CAMPAIGN



With the completion of the eight films, the project advanced into its impact campaign. The impact campaign consisted of five interlinked strands, each chosen for a specific purpose and designed to reinforce the others.

Regional premieres across Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi created a shared launch moment that convened policymakers, media, and community leaders, therefore setting a national tone for dialogue. **A national television partnership brought the films into households**, because access at home increases family conversations and lowers participation barriers, therefore widening reach beyond event-based audiences. A dedicated digital distribution stream kept the stories in circulation between broadcasts and screenings, because younger and diasporic audiences gather online, therefore sustaining debate and countering misinformation through repeat exposure. **The Get Reel on the Road** community tour took screenings and facilitated discussions to counties and cross-border communities with limited media access, because proximity and safe spaces improve participation and disclosure, therefore deepening learning and referral uptake. **Festival circulation** placed the films in regional and international programmes, because critical visibility attracts partners and press, therefore opening advocacy doors and strengthening later community and broadcast engagements.

Regional Premieres

The regional premieres marked the public unveiling of the Get Reel films and were a deliberate strategy to ignite conversation simultaneously across East Africa. By launching in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi on the same date, the project created a shared cultural moment that signaled SRHRJ as a regional concern rather than an isolated national issue. This simultaneity gave the premieres political weight, drew significant media attention, and offered each country's advocacy community a platform to situate the films within their own contexts.

In Kenya, The Nairobi premiere convened filmmakers, policymakers, and SRHRJ practitioners, creating a highly visible launch that connected cinema with national advocacy. Sukari quickly became a highlight for its playful take on sexual pleasure, showing that humour can ease audiences into subjects often clouded by stigma. **This encouraged advocates to consider film as a softer but effective entry point for public discussion.** Alongside laughter, other films sparked deeper conversations on justice and cultural practices, creating a balance of tones that reflected the complexities of SRHRJ.

“*Sukari had a beautiful storyline, combination of comedy, romance, etc., great camera work too.*”

“*They can be conversation starters for SRHRJ topics and help demystify what SRHRJ is all about.*”

“*The films showed that we can talk about sex without shame, and that was refreshing.*”

DRUM BEATS



In Dar es Salaam - Tanzania, the premiere was hosted through the Simulizi Festival in collaboration with Mema Africa. **Here, the films resonated because they depicted cultural traditions rarely represented on screen.** Unyagoni in particular provoked discussion about the evolution of rites of passage and their impact on bodily autonomy. **The screenings broadened the national conversation, moving it beyond contraception and menstruation to themes of dignity and choice.** Policymakers present affirmed the films' role in encouraging young people to engage critically with tradition.

“*Unyago reminded me of our cultural practices and their deeper meanings.*”

“*The films clarified that SRHR involves much more than sexual intercourse, tackling broader social norms and personal health issues.*”

“*Seeing our traditions represented on screen made me proud, but also made me question which ones we should carry forward.*”

In Bujumbura - Burundi, the premiere at the Institut Français du Burundi **created a rare safe space for discussing topics usually silenced in public.** Although language barriers challenged comprehension, the emotions and visuals of the films carried through powerfully. Attendees described the event as liberating, noting that cinema provided a non-threatening way to broach sensitive issues. The event marked an opening in a context where stigma and silence have historically curtailed public dialogue on SRHRJ.

“*We do not often express emotions in public, but these films touched us in unexpected ways.*”

“*These films can be valuable tools for advancing sexuality education and shaping future policy.*”

“*Even without understanding every word, I understood the pain and the hope in the stories.*”

In Kigali, Curious Afrika hosted the premiere with a diverse audience that included NGOs, health advocates, and government representatives. **The screenings broke social convention by triggering unusually open emotional responses, sparking dialogue about policy gaps in sexual education and healthcare.** For participants, the films did not just entertain but exposed systemic barriers, pushing the call for integrating such content into schools and advocacy platforms.

“*These films can be valuable tools for advancing sexuality education and shaping future policy.*”

“*In our culture, you don't speak about certain things. But that silence is why we suffer.*”

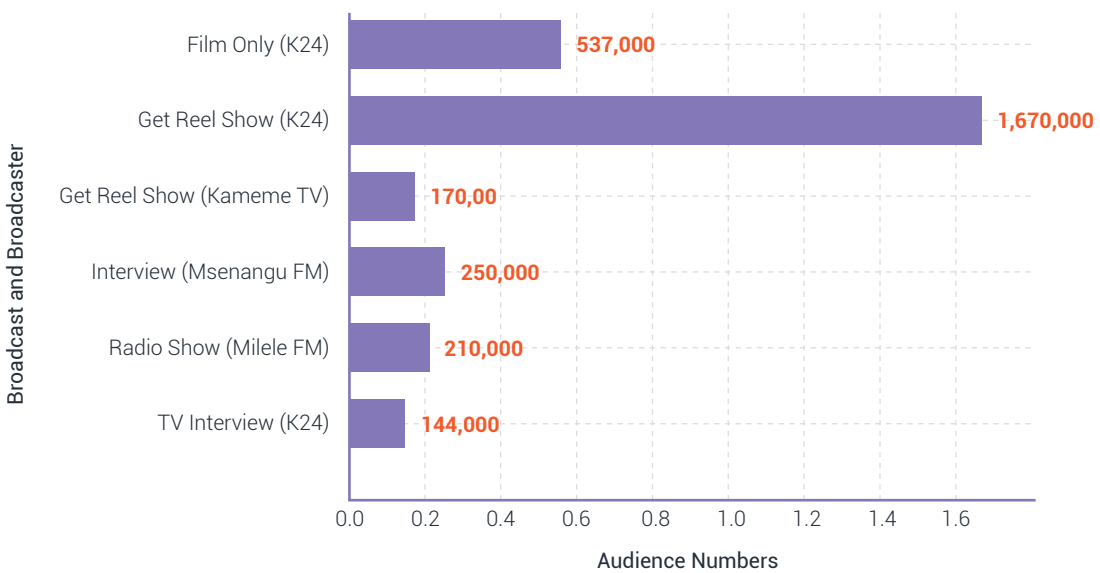
“*For real change, we must move from talking about pain to fixing systems that keep people in pain.*”

Broadcast

The broadcast partnership with MediaMax Kenya was a pivotal strand of the impact campaign, designed to extend the films' reach beyond formal venues and into the domestic spaces where social norms are most often reinforced. Over a four-week period, K24 aired the films as part of a prime-time series branded The Get Reel Show and reached **over 3,001,000 broadcast viewers nationwide.** Most broadcasts featured a screening followed by a live on-location panel discussion, with counsellors, police officers, survivors, teachers, and government officials unpacking the issues. This design meant that **the films became springboards for moderated conversations that made sensitive topics feel safer and more relatable.**

The broadcasts were staged in four key urban centres; Nairobi, Nyeri, Mombasa, and Kisumu, each chosen to capture a spectrum of Kenya's cultural, religious, and geographic diversity. Each location shaped the discussion differently. In Nairobi, conversations leaned toward systemic barriers and policy gaps, with panelists focusing on healthcare access and misinformation. In Nyeri, defilement and its consequences dominated the debate, with strong calls for improved survivor services. In Mombasa, religious and cultural influences shaped how audiences received the themes, with stigma and silence noted as enduring barriers. In Kisumu, dialogues were particularly emotional, with survivors openly disclosing experiences of abuse and neglect. **This variation underscored how SRHRJ issues are experienced unevenly across regions, but also revealed common threads: the role of culture, the need for parental guidance, and a demand for more accessible services.**

Audience Numbers by Broadcast Type and Broadcaster



BOARDCAST



“ We don’t have credible information on sexual reproductive health... Unfortunately, many people fall for this false information.”
— Audience member, Nairobi

“ Defilement brings poor academic performance, low self-esteem, depression, and poor social relationships. Normalizing discussions can mitigate these effects.”
— Ken, Nyeri

“ The fact that cultural norms and religious beliefs hamper open discussion and hinder access to SRH services is a major barrier.”
— Zainab, Mombasa

“ It’s great to see Kondele and Migosi police stations making strides, but we need consistent support across the country.”
— Patrick Ominde, Kisumu

A major win from the MediaMax partnership was its ability to shatter traditional film distribution barriers. The Get Reel films were not confined to select screening venues, they reached millions of homes, in their home countries. The success of this collaboration has sparked new possibilities. Recognizing the transformative power of film and dialogue, MediaMax has expressed a strong interest in future collaborations, a clear indication of the impact and public engagement generated.

“ Showcasing a film and fostering meaningful conversations around it proved to be incredibly effective. It extended our value as a platform, leaving us with the sense that we are truly empowering people while making a tangible impact as a business.”
— Joanna, MediaMax

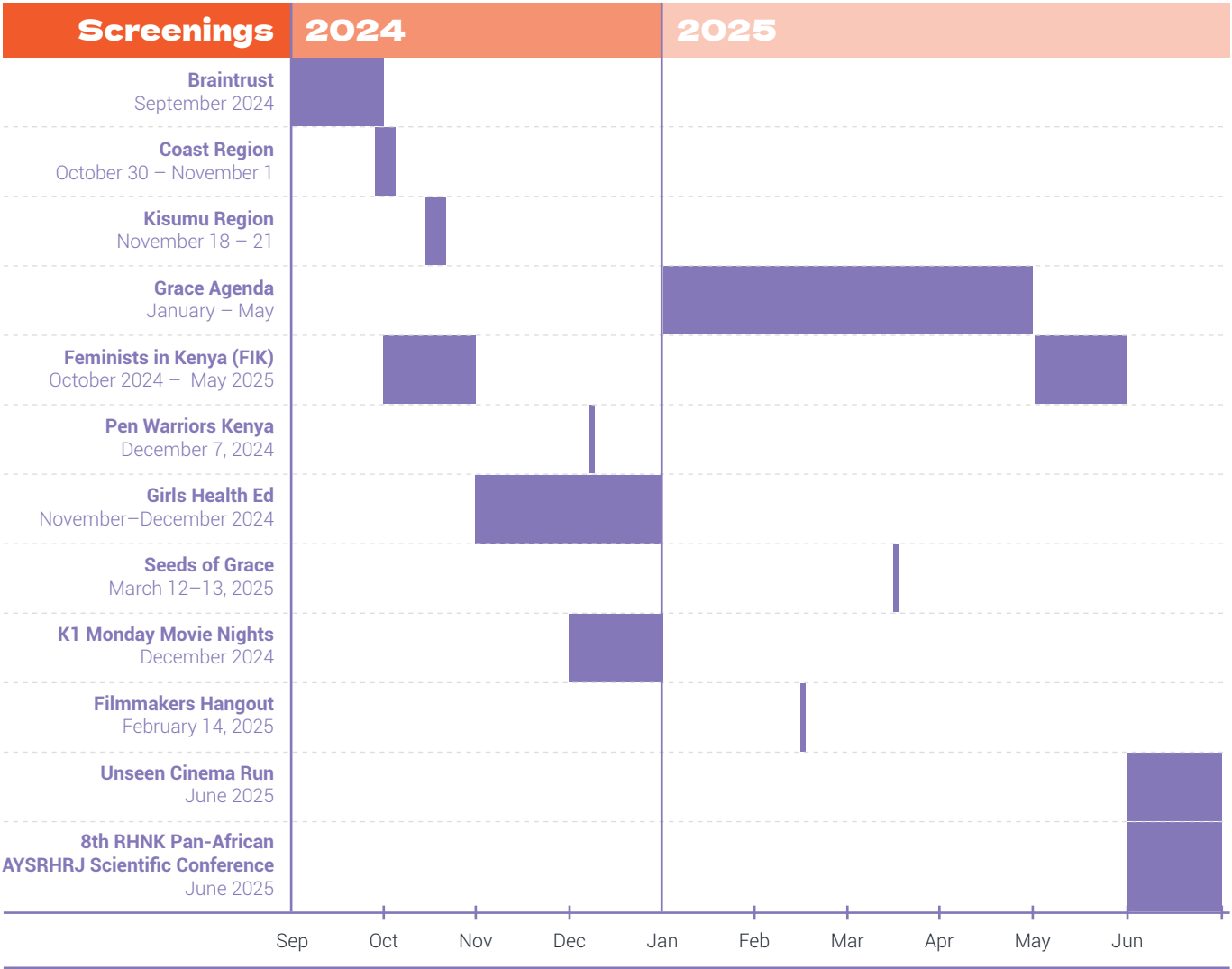
Get Reel on The Road:
Taking the Conversation to
Communities

To translate awareness into sustained dialogue and action, the campaign shifted from large-scale national events to targeted community screenings under Get Reel on the Road. **This approach recognised that many of the communities most affected by SRHRJ issues are often excluded from formal policy forums or urban-centric events and conversations.** By bringing the films directly into towns, schools, churches, and informal settlements, the project created spaces where silence could be broken close to home.

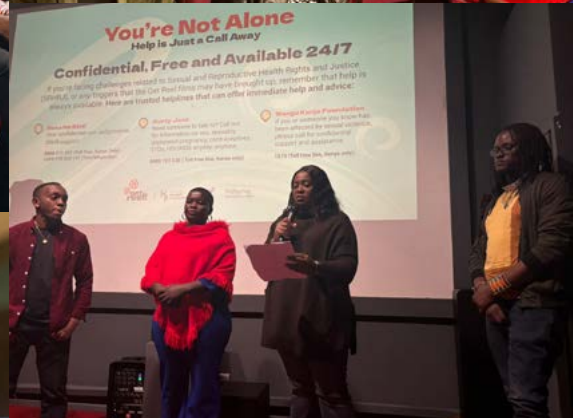
Each event was designed to be more intimate than the premieres, **with smaller audiences, facilitated panels, and SRHRJ practitioners, survivors, and youth leaders anchoring the conversations.** The goal was to ensure that the films were not consumed passively but became tools for collective reflection, safe disclosure, and access to information and services. As the screenings moved from region to region, they revealed the nuances of how SRHRJ is lived across Kenya: in some places, humour and relatability unlocked conversation; in others, silence around abortion or violence showed where stigma still held strong.

1 Braintrust Screening
September 2024

The Braintrust screening was convened at the very start of the campaign as **a way to ground the films in the lived and professional expertise of those working on SRHRJ and media.** By bringing together



SCREENING



KISUMU SCREENINGS

practitioners, advocates, service providers, and media partners, the session ensured that the films would be strategically useful. The purpose was to gather guidance on which communities most needed to be reached, how to frame sensitive topics, and which partnerships could give the campaign both credibility and traction.

The discussion revealed how essential context-setting would be for audiences who had little or no exposure to the concept of SRHRJ. Experts noted that while the films captured real challenges, unprepared audiences might disengage when confronted with difficult themes like abortion, rape, or survivor stigma. They also emphasized the importance of creating support structures alongside the screenings, warning that without referral systems, communities could feel exposed rather than empowered. Perhaps most importantly, **the Braintrust highlighted that the greatest impact would come from taking the films into communities where stigma was strongest and safe dialogue least available, because it is there that silence most urgently needs to be broken.**

“The films reflect realities we see every day in our work. They will be valuable tools if targeted well.”

“You need to prepare audiences for the heaviness of some themes, otherwise people will shut down.”

“These stories will resonate most in areas where stigma is strongest — that’s where you need to go.”

2 Coast Region Screenings

October 30 to November 1, 2024

The Coast Region screenings were scheduled immediately after the K24 broadcasts to sustain national momentum and root it in local community conversations. **By moving into Mombasa, Kilifi, and Malindi, the campaign reached areas where SRHRJ issues intersected strongly with cultural traditions, religious norms, and tourism-driven economies.** Unlike the television format which featured a single film per episode, the Coast events screened all eight films, giving audiences a fuller sense of the project’s breadth and allowing multiple entry points into discussion.

The screenings drew a cross-section of youth, survivors, service providers, and community leaders. Sukari and Jimbi elicited open laughter and empathy, sparking discussions on sexual pleasure, masculinity, and the hidden psychological effects of bystander trauma. These conversations demonstrated how humour and relatability can ease communities into otherwise difficult topics. In contrast, films addressing abortion and children born of rape provoked hesitation and silence, with some participants visibly withdrawing from dialogue. This contrast **underscored the need for careful facilitation and culturally sensitive framing, as well as the importance of linking sensitive films with psychosocial support.** The Coast screenings showed that while film can break silence, sustaining those conversations requires safe spaces, youth-led forums, and clear referral systems.

“Films like these should be discussed and analysed by the youth in a safe space like in a focus group.”

“We should feel free to talk our minds with our peers without feeling judged.”

“After watching, I feel people need to know where to get help fast when these things happen.”

3 Kisumu Region Screenings

November 18 to 21, 2024

The Kisumu screenings took place soon after the K24 broadcast and **were deliberately concentrated in informal settlements and peri-urban areas known as hotspots for sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).** Guided by local partners, the events created platforms where survivors, young people, and sex workers could speak openly about experiences often hidden by stigma and silence. The screenings were staged in Manyatta, Mama Grace Onyango Hall, Muhoroni, Obunga, and Seme, reaching more than 600 participants in total.

Unlike the national broadcast format that presented one film per week, the Kisumu sessions focused on a cluster of SGBV-related films, allowing audiences to connect their lived realities directly to the screen. Survivors of sexual violence spoke candidly about exploitation, unsafe abortions, and the lack of accessible healthcare. Young people highlighted peer pressure and misinformation as key drivers of unsafe practices, while local leaders connected these issues to broader challenges of poverty and inequality. For many, the films validated painful personal experiences and provided the courage to demand better systems, characterized by collective calls for education, services, and justice.

“Some men refuse to pay after services... it’s exploitation and it puts us at more risk.”

“Peer pressure is pushing our youth into unsafe practices because they don’t have proper sexual education.”

“Unsafe abortions are killing women here because they don’t know where to go for safe services.”

4 Screenings with Grace Agenda

January to May 2025

Grace Agenda, founded by Kenyan women’s rights advocate Jacqueline Mutere, partnered with Get Reel to **integrate the films into its survivor-centred advocacy and healing programmes. The screenings were deliberately survivor-focused, building on the fact that two of Grace Agenda’s members, Jacqueline (The Red Line) and Elizabeth (Before 16), are protagonists in the films.** This direct link between lived experience and storytelling gave the screenings unusual power because they welcomed audiences to engage with the very women whose lives shaped the stories reflected in the two films.

Three key screenings marked this partnership. At the Mashimoni PAG Church in Nairobi (31 January 2025), survivors from informal settlements gathered alongside youth and service providers. The films created space for participants to connect cinematic narratives with their own journeys, affirming that sharing testimony could be both liberating and politically significant. On 24 March 2025, the films were screened as part of the International Day for the Right to the Truth Concerning Gross Human Rights Violations, honouring survivors of the 2007–2008 post-election violence. Here, Before 16 and The

SCREENING



COAST SCREENINGS

Red Line underscored themes of justice, dignity, and memory, prompting reflections from activists and government representatives on the need to sustain support for survivors of conflict-related sexual violence. Finally, during the Clooney Foundation for Justice fellowship training in May 2025, The Red Line and Before 16 were used as case studies for early-career African women lawyers, sparking powerful debates about legal advocacy and the systemic barriers survivors face in accessing justice.

Across these events, the screenings reinforced the role of film as a societal mirror because they validated survivors' pain, encouraged reflection on progress made, and highlighted the long road still ahead in dismantling stigma, shifting cultural attitudes, and securing legal reform.

“*Seeing one of us narrating their survival journey shows us that we have a voice, and we should use it to spread awareness.*”

“*It was inspiring to hear women speak so openly about their pain and how they overcame it, it makes me believe I can also heal.*”

“*The films reminded me of the many layers survivors have to go through, from cultural stigma to policy barriers, before they can truly heal.*”

5 Screenings with Feminists in Kenya (FIK) October 2024 and May 2025

Feminists in Kenya (FIK), a vibrant African feminist movement, partnered with Get Reel to bring the

films into explicitly feminist spaces. The screenings were designed to create **affirming environments** for marginalised voices, including sex workers and young women, while also confronting how patriarchal norms shape everyday experiences of SRHRJ.

The first collaboration took place in Kilifi (11–12 October 2024) during a feminist workshop. Screenings of Sukari and Unasemaje set the stage for discussions on sexual pleasure, autonomy, and communication in intimate relationships. Participants highlighted how harmful cultural practices have contributed to rising HIV infections, early pregnancies, and GBV in the region. By framing the conversation around pleasure and agency rather than shame, the workshop helped participants reclaim language often denied to them in their own communities.

A second screening in Kibera, Nairobi (May 2025) reached around 40 participants, where the films became mirrors through which participants saw their realities reflected, while also sparking visions of alternative futures. Discussions centred on feminist well-being, collective resistance, and re-imagining a society where bodily autonomy is respected. While The Red Line was attempted, facilitators halted it after it triggered distress among survivors in the room, choosing instead to prioritise emotional safety and to reintroduce it in future convenings when conditions were more supportive.

Together, the FIK screenings showed how the **Get Reel films could serve as feminist tools for dialogue, spaces not only to critique systemic oppression but also to affirm joy, pleasure, and resilience as part of advocacy.**

“*Patriarchy can deny us sexual pleasure as women, and we have a right to communicate and air our struggles.*”

“*I have a right to sexual pleasure and to enjoy it responsibly.*”

“*It taught how harmful cultural practices are the main causes of increased HIV infections, early pregnancies, and GBV in Kilifi.*”

6 Screening with Pen Warriors Kenya December 7, 2024

As part of the global 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Pen Warriors Kenya, an organisation that fuses poetry and cinema, partnered with Get Reel to host a screening at Lolwe Books in Kisumu. The **goal was to use the films as a creative entry point into conversations on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), while also connecting grassroots voices to wider advocacy campaigns during this symbolic period.**

The screening brought together around 50 participants, including youth, women, grassroots organisers, and local leaders. By blending artistic expression with film, the event created an atmosphere where audiences could reflect openly on the prevalence of violence in their own communities. The discussions highlighted how GBV and IPV cut across age and class, and how survivors often lack accessible, trauma-informed support. Participants underscored the importance of collective action, safe spaces for survivors, and stronger collaboration among local advocacy groups. The inclusion of psychosocial counsellors on-site ensured that the emotional weight of the stories was matched with immediate support, a practice that reinforced trust

in the event and modelled how future community screenings could safeguard participants.

“*Film and poetry help us speak about things we cannot easily say in public, and that freedom is part of healing.*”

“*We need more safe spaces like this where survivors can talk without fear and know there is someone to help immediately.*”

“*Art must be part of our advocacy; it brings people together and makes them reflect in ways statistics never could.*”

7 Screening with Girls Health Ed November–December 2024

During the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence, Girls Health Ed (a U.S.–based nonprofit with a Kenyan programme focused on adolescent girls and young women) partnered with Get Reel to host a virtual webinar screening. The event, which brought together around 40 participants, **was designed to link film storytelling with education and advocacy for girls' rights. The choice to screen Before 16 was deliberate, as the film's narrative of a girl who becomes a mother after rape resonated deeply with the organisation's mission of promoting comprehensive health and sexuality education.**

The digital format allowed participants from different regions to come together and reflect on how abuse within families often goes unreported, and how girls lack both the vocabulary and safe environments to name their experiences. The screening encouraged participants to consider their own roles as mentors, advocates, and protectors in their communities.

SCREENING



Many noted that the film brought into focus the urgency of breaking silence within households, where abuse often begins, and called for ongoing integration of films into advocacy and education work.

“*The film reminded me how silence in families allows abuse to continue unchecked.*”

“*This story makes me want to mentor more girls so they can speak up and protect each other.*”

“*Films like this are powerful tools for raising awareness and should be integrated into education programmes.*”

8 Screenings with Seeds of Grace

March 12–13, 2025

In commemoration of **International Women's Day 2025**, Seeds of Grace, a grassroots organisation in rural Uasin Gishu County, partnered with Get Reel to host school-based screenings in ACK Kiambaa Secondary School (12 March) and Kaptum Secondary School (13 March). With an audience of more than 560 adolescent girls, **the screenings sought to address intimate partner violence, peer pressure, and healthy relationship dynamics through films that could spark age-appropriate reflection. The chosen films – Detour and Unasemaje – provided narratives that were relatable for teenage audiences, tackling themes of unintended pregnancy, choice, and communication.**

The sessions were carefully structured to include not only film screenings but also guided journaling activities that encouraged personal reflection in a

safe, private manner. Facilitators highlighted the importance of self-love, recognising unhealthy relationship patterns, and making informed decisions. **The discussions revealed how students often lack trusted channels to discuss sexuality and relationships.** While the films unlocked candid conversations, cultural sensitivities emerged: a kissing scene in Detour and an elopement storyline in Unasemaje provoked discomfort among school administrators, with two schools ultimately withdrawing from the programme entirely. **This response highlighted the tension between the urgency of adolescent SRHR education and the conservative norms that still govern many school environments.** Despite these challenges, the screenings demonstrated the potential of culturally sensitive, well-supported interventions to open dialogue among young people.

“*Peer pressure is real in our schools, and films like these show us what it can lead to if we are not careful.*”

“*I realised I need to love myself first before I can make choices about relationships.*”

“*These films helped me understand that not all traditions are good for us, and we must question them.*”

9 Screening with K1 Monday Movie Nights

December 2024

As part of its weekly Monday Movie Night series, the popular Nairobi entertainment venue K1 Klub House partnered with Get Reel to showcase the films to an urban, culturally diverse audience. Known for its lively mix of music, art, and conversation, **K1 provided a**

platform to reach audiences that may not ordinarily attend advocacy screenings, bridging the gap between entertainment spaces and social justice dialogue. The screening was intentionally intimate, with around 20 film enthusiasts in attendance.

The event featured a Q&A session that gave audiences a behind-the-scenes look at how the films were conceived and crafted, while also grounding the stories in the real-life SRHRJ issues they represented. **Conversations centred on the importance of creative courage in tackling taboo subjects, the balance between artistic vision and advocacy responsibility, and how storytelling can disrupt silence in everyday spaces.** Though small in scale, the K1 screening demonstrated how even lifestyle and leisure venues can be harnessed to host meaningful conversations, creating ripples of dialogue across digital and social platforms.

“*I came for a film night, but I left thinking differently about how we use stories to change our society.*”

“*The filmmakers were so honest about the challenges of telling these stories, it made me appreciate the films even more.*”

“*This shows you can have a fun night out and still leave with something important to think about.*”

10 Screening with Filmmakers Hangout

February 14, 2025

On Valentine's Day 2025, Filmmakers Hangout Kenya partnered with Get Reel to host a special edition of its monthly gathering, merging film, music, and conversation into one event at the heart of Nairobi's

central business district. The screening drew nearly 600 participants, mostly young people working or studying in the creative industry. The decision to align with Valentine's Day was an invitation to participants to reimagine love, intimacy, and consent in a space that typically celebrates romance, while using the films to question harmful societal narratives about relationships.

Discussions that followed unpacked themes of bodily autonomy, sexual rights, and consent, with SRHRJ experts on hand to provide practical insights and answer questions. Many participants remarked on the power of seeing taboo issues explored in creative ways, highlighting how the fusion of film and music created a safe yet vibrant environment for both emotional connection and critical debate. **The event confirmed that creative spaces, when paired with advocacy, can inspire not only personal reflection but also collective shifts in attitudes toward SRHRJ.**

“*The films made me rethink how consent is talked about in our society – it should not be negotiable.*”

“*Mixing music and film made the conversation feel natural; it wasn't heavy but still very real.*”

“*As creatives, we have a responsibility to use our art to challenge harmful norms, and tonight showed us how.*”

11 Unseen Cinema Run

June 2025

The Unseen Cinema Run was a deliberate effort to position the Get Reel films within mainstream

STORYTELLING



cultural spaces. Held at Unseen Cinema in Nairobi throughout June 2025, the run scheduled weekly evening screenings that presented all eight films as a curated programme. The format was paired with Q&A sessions featuring filmmakers and SRHRJ advocates, which turned the screenings into spaces for reflection and dialogue.

While ticket sales were modest, audience engagement was strikingly deep. The screenings demonstrated that cinema can be more than entertainment when stories reflect realities that are often silenced. Laughter around films such as Sukari created openings for candid conversations on sexual pleasure, while the heavier tones of The Red Line and Before 16 prompted sombre reflection on gender-based violence and the long-term impacts of sexual trauma. **Viewers connected the films to their own lives, asking questions about justice, stigma, and cultural silence. The cinema run proved that commercial cinema venues can be repurposed as safe spaces for dialogue, healing, and awareness, and that framing the films as art elevated both the profile of the filmmakers and the credibility of the issues raised.**

12 Screening at the 8th RHNK Pan-African AYSRHRJ Scientific Conference June 2025

In June 2025, Get Reel partnered with the Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK) to host a side event during the 8th Pan-African Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (AYSRHRJ) Scientific Conference in Mombasa. The conference brought together researchers,

policymakers, practitioners, and youth advocates from across Africa under the theme “Adolescent and Youth Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in a World of Emerging Threats and Opportunities.” **Against this backdrop, the Get Reel showcase was designed to demonstrate how storytelling and film can complement evidence-based advocacy by humanising complex SRHRJ issues and amplifying the voices of those most affected.**

The event screened Bella is Dying, Maybe Next Week alongside selected Get Reel shorts, sparking discussions on the power of narrative to make policy debates more relatable. Participants reflected on the role of film in shifting harmful norms, bridging generational gaps in communication, and mobilising empathy across cultures. Conversations also drew attention to structural challenges facing SRHRJ storytellers, such as the difficulty of securing sustainable funding and the limited platforms available to showcase socially engaged films. By positioning storytelling within a scientific conference, the side event showed that advocacy is strengthened when data and narrative work hand in hand.

“Film humanises what statistics cannot. You don’t forget a story once you’ve seen it.”

“Funding is always a bottleneck, but seeing these films makes me believe we must prioritise it.”

“Storytelling should sit alongside research in shaping policy because it brings urgency and humanity to the numbers.”



Digital Distribution

The digital distribution strand ensured that the Get Reel films circulated beyond physical venues and television, reaching younger and more tech-savvy audiences across East Africa and in the diaspora. Over the campaign period, **the films attracted 320 online viewers** through organized digital premieres, with extended reach via social media conversations, reposts, and clips that travelled beyond the official channels. The digital strategy was critical because it created access for audiences who could not attend screenings or tune into broadcasts, while also generating a living archive of conversations that could be revisited and amplified.

The design of the digital roll-out recognized that online spaces are both sources of misinformation and arenas of vibrant youth dialogue. By embedding the films in these spaces, the project countered myths and replaced fragmented narratives with relatable stories. Posts featuring short clips from the films sparked threads on sexual pleasure, consent, and stigma, while X (formerly Twitter) Spaces linked the films to global observances such as International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV. This linkage between content and advocacy moments ensured that the films remained relevant to ongoing struggles, rather than standing alone as isolated cultural artefacts.

Patterns in engagement showed that while urban audiences were most active in viewing, the diaspora community amplified visibility by sharing and commenting on the films on social media. Youth in particular gravitated toward humour-infused clips like those from Sukari, while survivors and advocates resonated more with Red Line and Before 16, using them as entry points for testimony and solidarity.

“The Get Reel films featured online are not just stories; they are a form of activism. Through each narrative, a conversation about sexual health, rights, and justice is initiated.” – @Prince_Victor

“The films highlight personal stories of struggle and resilience in SRHRJ, encouraging empathy and awareness.” – @ItsNjorogeK

“Through storytelling, Get Reel makes SRHRJ relatable, helping to build a world where respect and communication are at the core of every relationship.” – @KenyaN3ws

Over the campaign period, the films attracted 320 online viewers through organized digital premieres, with extended reach via social media conversations...

Film Festivals

As part of the impact campaign, the Get Reel films were deliberately circulated through regional and international film festivals. This strategy **extended their reach beyond advocacy spaces, placing them within cultural and artistic platforms where cinema is celebrated for both craft and meaning. Screening in festivals gave the films artistic legitimacy, proved that SRHRJ narratives can stand alongside other works of world cinema, and elevated the filmmakers' profiles on professional stages.** Over the course of the campaign, the anthology travelled to more than 25 festivals in 12 countries, with selections at prestigious events.

Festival Circuit Highlights

- 1 Carthage Film Festival (Tunisia) – *Unyagoni* won the Bronze Tanit Award, one of Africa's most prestigious recognitions.
- 2 Kitale Film Festival (Kenya) – *Unyagoni* won Best Short Film.
- 3 Mombasa Film Festival (Kenya) – *Unyagoni* won Best Documentary and Best Film with Coastal Theme.
- 4 FESPACO (Burkina Faso) – *Before 16* officially selected.
- 5 Sony Future Filmmakers Award (USA) – *Before 16* selected.
- 6 Encounters Documentary Festival (South Africa) – *Before 16* and *The Red Line* screened.
- 7 Lausanne African Cinema Festival (Switzerland) – *Before 16* screened.
- 8 Saint Louis Docs (Senegal) – *Before 16* screened.
- 9 Zanzibar International Film Festival (ZIFF, Tanzania) – *Unasemaje?* nominated for Best Short Film.

- 10 Sauti Zetu Film Festival (Tanzania) – *Unasemaje?* won an award.
- 11 Uganda Film Festival (Uganda) – *Jimbi* won Best Regional Film and the iKON Award for Gender & Social Justice.
- 12 Durban International Film Festival (South Africa) – *Sukari* official selection.
- 13 Pan-African Film Festival (PAFF, USA) – *Sukari* official selection.
- 14 Africa Magic Viewers' Choice Awards (AMVCA) – *Sukari* nominated.
- 15 International Human Rights Film Festival (The Hague, Netherlands) – The *Red Line* and *Before 16* screened.
- 16 Kenya International Film Festival (Kenya) – *1992* and *Unyagoni* screened, with *1992* taking home Best Short Film (Kenya)
- 17 Nairobi Film Festival (Kenya) – Featured *Sukari* and *Detour*
- 18 Africa USA Film Festival (USA) – *Before 16* was included
- 19 Lagos Fringe (Nigeria) – *1992* was programmed here and received an Honourable Mention for its expressive storytelling
- 20 Mini Movie Marathon (Zimbabwe) – *1992* was screened as part of a special programme on socially conscious shorts

These appearances created opportunities for dialogue with international audiences who recognised the universal relevance of themes such as stigma, bodily autonomy, sexual pleasure, and survivor resilience. For filmmakers, the festival run provided exposure to industry panels, networking events, and potential collaborators. For the campaign, it demonstrated that advocacy stories can thrive as cinema, secure global recognition, and travel across continents while still serving as powerful tools for social justice.

FESTIVAL



Audience and Partner Feedback



Audience and Partner Feedback

To measure what the films meant to the audiences and partners they were introduced to, we gathered structured feedback. The process was designed to capture both the immediate emotional responses of viewers and the practical reflections of organizations working in the SRHRJ space. By listening carefully to these perspectives, the project created a record of how the films were received and how they might continue to be used beyond the campaign itself. What follows is a synthesis of that feedback.

Audience Insights

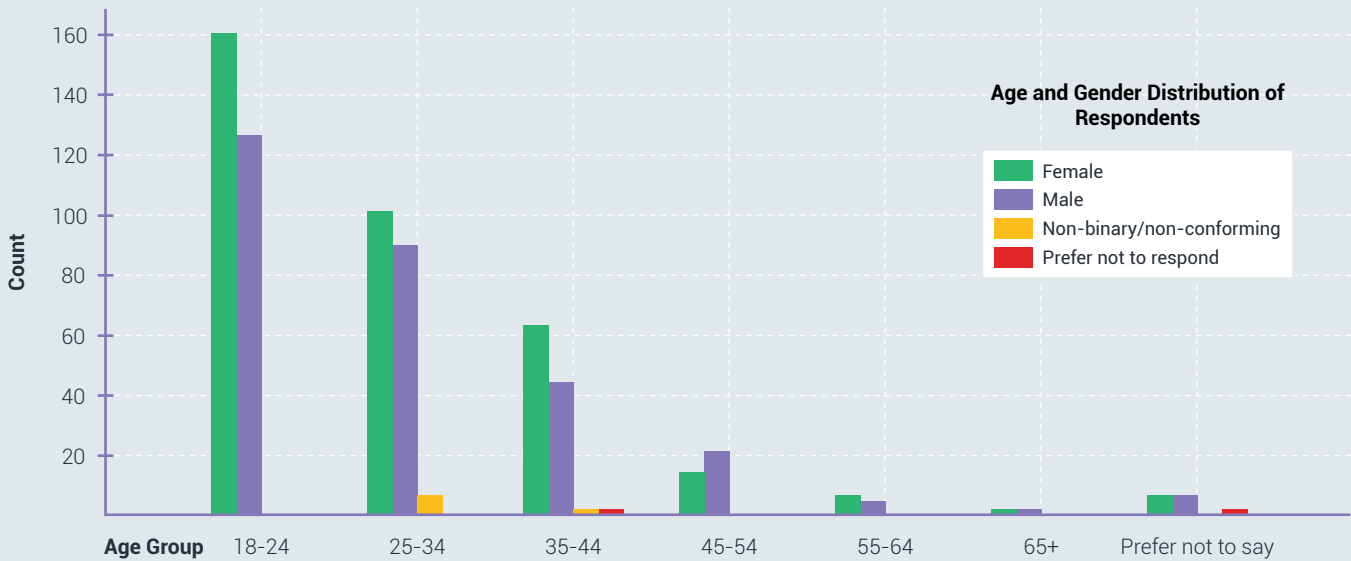
As a learning measure of what the films introduced to the audiences, we distributed a survey form. **657 of our audience members were graceful enough to offer feedback.**

a) Age and Gender Distribution

A majority of the respondents were aged between **18–24**, followed by 25–34, with smaller numbers in the older brackets and a handful who preferred not to disclose their age. **Gender distribution was fairly balanced**, though with a slight female majority, alongside a small but notable non-binary presence.

b) How did the film make you feel? Why?

Younger audiences, especially those aged 18–24, mostly reported strong emotions such as sadness, anger, or being triggered, reflecting their proximity to the realities portrayed. Those in the 25–34 bracket leaned toward hope and inspiration, often linking the stories to agency and change. On the other hand, older groups expressed feelings of being educated, encouraged, or enlightened, showing a more reflective distance.

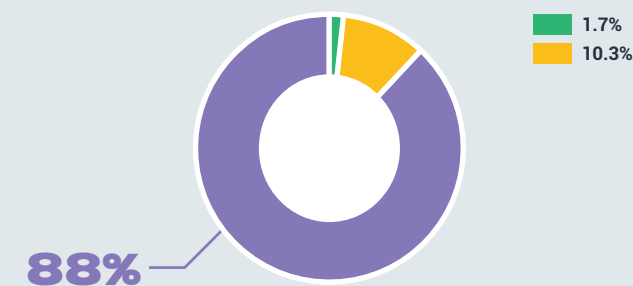




Gender deepened these contrasts: **women frequently described being inspired, hopeful, moved, or saddened, while men tended to emphasize learning and awareness**, using terms like educated, informed, or entertained.

c) Did you like the films? Why?

88% of the respondents said that they liked the films and only 10.3% said no. Those who said yes often pointed to **the educational value and the awareness the films created**.



- *it's educative"*
- *educational and informative"*
- *because it helps me understand what GBV is"*

The few who said no described the content as too heavy or emotionally difficult, with others citing religious reasons.

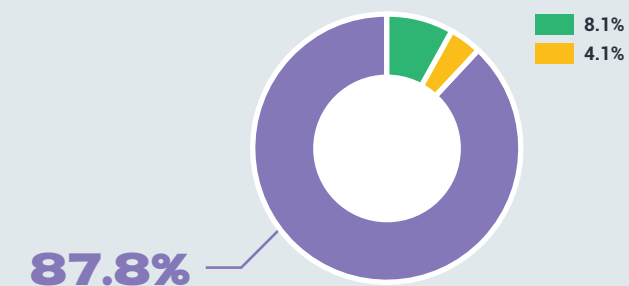


- *Bad things happening to innocent people"*
- *it's very emotional"*
- *born and raised again"*

c) Did the film introduce you to new ideas or perspectives?

87.8 percent of the respondents felt that the films introduced them to new ideas or perspectives on sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice while 4.1 percent said they didn't, and 8.1 percent gave no clear answer.

Those who said yes pointed to fresh insights on gender-based violence, justice, and relationships, while others spoke of personal lessons.



- *good communication between couples,"*
- *gender based violence,"*
- *the one about Justice, I saw a different angle on it."*
- *how to satisfy my girlfriend"*

In contrast, those who said no felt the films confirmed what they already knew.

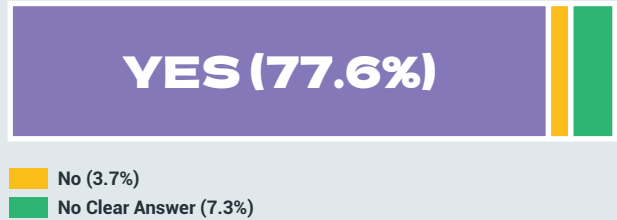


- *I've come across such on social media,"*
- *I have interacted with most of them,"*
- *I am satisfied with my sex life."*

e) Relevance to Respondents Lives and Communities

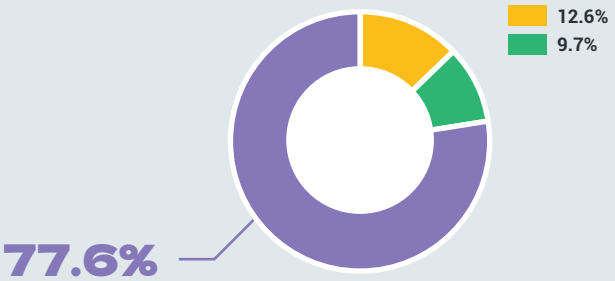
Respondents strongly connected the films to their lived realities. They pointed to issues such as “being denied sexual rights,” “sexual assault, survivors was unable to talk about it,” and “creating awareness.” Others **emphasized the need for education**, saying the films “promote and educate on the importance of being knowledgeable of perspectives of gender roles and expectations and how not to oversee one’s own as super elite than the others.” Some also highlighted cultural debates, with one noting, “the community should stop abortion.”

On the other hand, a smaller group felt the films were less relevant to their context. **They argued, “we have more pressing issues,” or framed their environment as different**, saying, “I come from a well organised society of learned members.” One respondent admitted, “Zero experiences.”



f) The films opening up new worlds to their audiences

77.6% said there were moments in the films that surprised them or made them think differently. **Many pointed to unfamiliar cultural practices or unexpected perspectives**, while others were struck by issues of gender roles and symbolism.



- *didn't know much about unyagoni*
- *where the mother is wondering how the children will survive*
- *the issue of a young girl with a tattoo looks ritualistic*

Those who said no, felt like the topics were familiar or expected.

- *I have seen or heard about this topic.*
- *was just normal.*

g) Influence by films to learn about or engage with SRHRJ issues

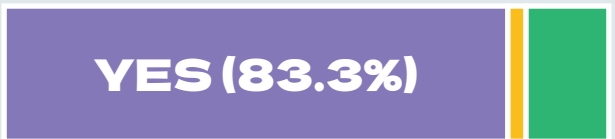
Most respondents (83.3%) said the films left them more inclined to learn and engage with sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice. For many, the stories revealed the urgency of action, they spoke of preventing abuse, protecting others, and breaking silences.

- *To impact the society in a positive way by preventing and avoiding abuse.*
- *I'd like to help people in such situations.*
- *to enable stop its spread.*
- *because one should report sexual harassment.*

A small group (3%) distanced themselves from further engagement, with their responses suggesting hesitation, shaped either by unfamiliarity or discomfort.

- *I don't like to see anyone suffer.*
- *because I have never engaged.*
- *it complicates everything.*

The remainder (13.7%) offered no clear answer, signaling perhaps uncertainty or ambivalence after watching.



h) Audiences mentioned as a MUST-watch for the films

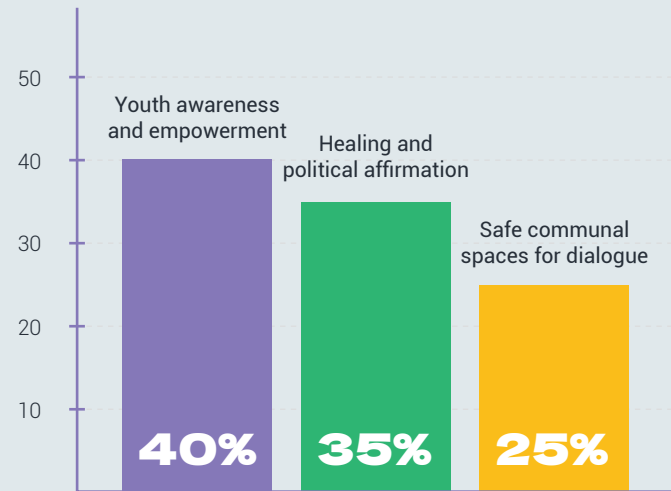
Most respondents emphasized that the films should be seen by everyone, but especially by youth, young adults, parents, and community members. The sense was that these groups are either shaping the future, guiding the next generation, or most directly affected by the issues raised.

- *High schools, from early teens to young adults, so as they grow up, they know they should love themselves as they are.*
- *Parents – to see what we are not doing and do better.*
- *Everyone. First of all because the films are our stories. They therefore provide a mirror to which as a society it's important for us to look at.*
- *All age groups.*

The emphasis on inclusivity, “everyone,” “all people,” “community” **shows a recognition that sexual and reproductive health rights touch every layer of society**, though young people were singled out most often as the ones who must carry the lessons forward.

Partner Insights

a) Importance of screening the films in their communities



Youth awareness and empowerment (40%)

Partners stressed that young people were the core audience for the screenings. Many youth in the communities lacked open conversations and accessible knowledge on sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice. **The films offered a starting point, helping them understand autonomy, justice, and bodily rights in relatable ways.** Because of this, screenings gave young audiences both the language and courage to discuss matters that are often silenced. When young people claim this knowledge, they carry it into their daily lives, which influences peers and reshapes community attitudes toward sexual health and gender justice.

“Our community, primarily made up of young youth, needed to know their rights and justice when it comes to sexual and reproductive health, so that they can learn to have autonomy over their own bodies.”

“The young people in our area rarely have safe platforms to talk about SRHR issues. This space allowed them to open up and learn.”

“By reaching youth, we start shaping future leaders who can challenge stigma and misinformation around sexual health.”

Healing and political affirmation (35%)

The screenings were described as a political and healing act. By using film as a mirror, **communities saw their lived experiences reflected and validated.** They **also opened pathways for imagining different futures.** This dual function was especially powerful in contexts where pain, joy, or resistance are difficult to name through language alone. **The effect was both personal healing and collective sense of solidarity.** In this way, screenings allowed communities to ground politics in lived realities, strengthening both resilience and advocacy.

“Screening these short films in our community was a political and healing act. Visual storytelling holds immense power to bring our truths closer to the surface.”

“The films provided a mirror and a map: a mirror to see our lived experiences reflected back to us, and a map to begin imagining new possibilities of being.”

“Seeing our realities on screen brought healing because people felt recognized, and that recognition sparked conversations that normally remain suppressed.”

Safe communal spaces for dialogue (25%)

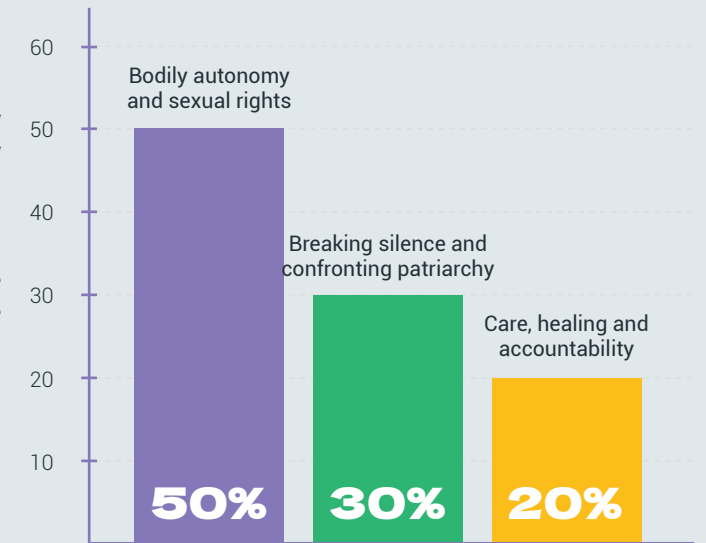
The screenings also created accessible, emotionally safe spaces for dialogue on difficult issues. By grounding the political in the personal, the films allowed communities to engage with themes such as gender-based violence, feminist wellness, and sexual autonomy without fear or stigma. Films like *Sukari* softened the entry into sensitive topics while still provoking reflection and action. The screenings’ effect was to open space for honest dialogue, build trust, and encourage collective transformation.

“It was also important to create an accessible and emotionally safe space where feminists could witness, feel, and discuss issues like gender-based violence, sexual autonomy, and feminist wellness.”

“Films like *Sukari* help us soften the conversation around difficult topics while still holding power to provoke.”

“The gathering itself was healing. People shared openly about violence, about culture, and about survival, because the films made them feel safe to do so.”

b) Conversations the films ignited in the communities



Bodily autonomy and sexual rights (50%)

The most consistent theme was around autonomy and rights. Screenings were seen as catalysts for conversations about control over one’s body, the right to pleasure, and reproductive decision-making. These discussions matter because they disrupt silence and empower individuals, especially youth and women, to claim their rights. By opening these conversations, communities begin to normalize dialogue on sexual health, which is a critical step toward breaking stigma and building accountability.

“Autonomy over our own bodies, sexual rights, and reproductive health.”

“The right to pleasure, rest and bodily autonomy, particularly for feminists who are first responders to GBV cases.”

“ Young people will start speaking about consent and control over their choices without fear.”

Breaking silence and confronting patriarchy (30%)
Another strong theme was the challenge to internalized silence and patriarchal conditioning. **Partners observed that the films created room to name shame, control, and power dynamics that often remain hidden.** By sparking dialogue, films push communities to confront silence and question the systems that enforce it. Such conversations extend beyond the screening rooms into homes, schools, and community gatherings, slowly reshaping attitudes toward gender and equality.

“ Internalized silence and shame, and how patriarchal conditioning often makes it hard to speak up or take up space.”

“ The films helped us see how power is negotiated, withheld, or weaponized.”

“ People started reflecting on why our culture silences women when it comes to sexuality and decision-making.”

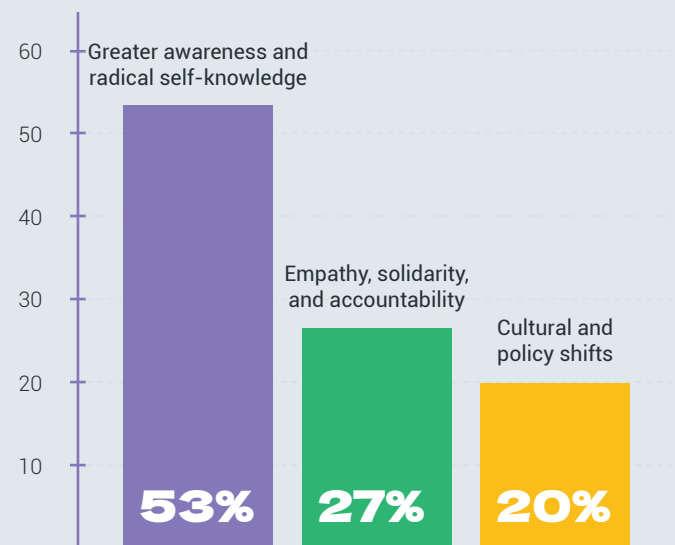
Care, healing, and accountability (20%)
The screenings also encouraged dialogue around feminist care, collective healing, and accountability in relationships. **Partners highlighted how communities began imagining alternative systems of support rooted in love and responsibility. This mattered because it moved conversations from individual struggles to collective responses, reinforcing solidarity and resilience.** They argued that communities that talk openly about care and accountability are better equipped to resist harm and sustain movements for justice.

“ Feminist care and community healing, especially in how we respond to harm, hold each other in love, and build alternative systems of support.”

“ Accountability in relationships, both personal and institutional, became part of the dialogue.”

“ These conversations, when held in community, help us deepen our understanding of what resistance can look like – not just in the streets, but also in our homes, relationships, and inner lives.”

c) Changes the films could catalyze in their communities



Greater awareness and radical self-knowledge (53%)

The most dominant change identified was heightened awareness of sexual and reproductive health, rights, and justice. Screenings gave youth and feminists the language to name autonomy, boundaries, and desires. This mattered because naming produced self-confidence, which rippled out into families and peer networks. In effect, the films seeded a culture of informed decision-making.

“ Awareness of our sexual and reproductive health and rights.”

“ Radical self-awareness, especially among young feminists, about their rights, boundaries, and emotional needs.”
The films gave youth language to articulate things they had only felt privately, making self-knowledge a form of power.”

Empathy, solidarity, and accountability (27%)

Another anticipated change was in cultural attitudes, where empathy and solidarity would replace judgment and silence. Screenings opened space for men to reflect on allyship, for women to share without fear, and for communities to hold each other accountable. This would in turn trust, and trust enables collective resistance to harm.

“ Greater empathy and allyship, where community members begin to understand feminist struggles not as isolated issues, but as deeply interconnected realities.”

“ The films created conversations where men began to reflect on their roles as allies rather than gatekeepers.”

“ When empathy grows, accountability follows, because people no longer dismiss struggles as someone else’s problem.”

Cultural and policy shifts (20%)

Partners anticipated shifts at structural and cultural levels: policy conversations in schools and communities, cultural changes around consent, and embedding art into everyday activism. This mattered because it showed how storytelling can leap beyond dialogue and influence leaders, institutions, and cultural norms. The effect was to position film as both a mirror and a catalyst for long-term reform.

“ Policy-influencing conversations, where such storytelling pushes us to rethink how we engage local leaders, schools, parents, and service providers.”

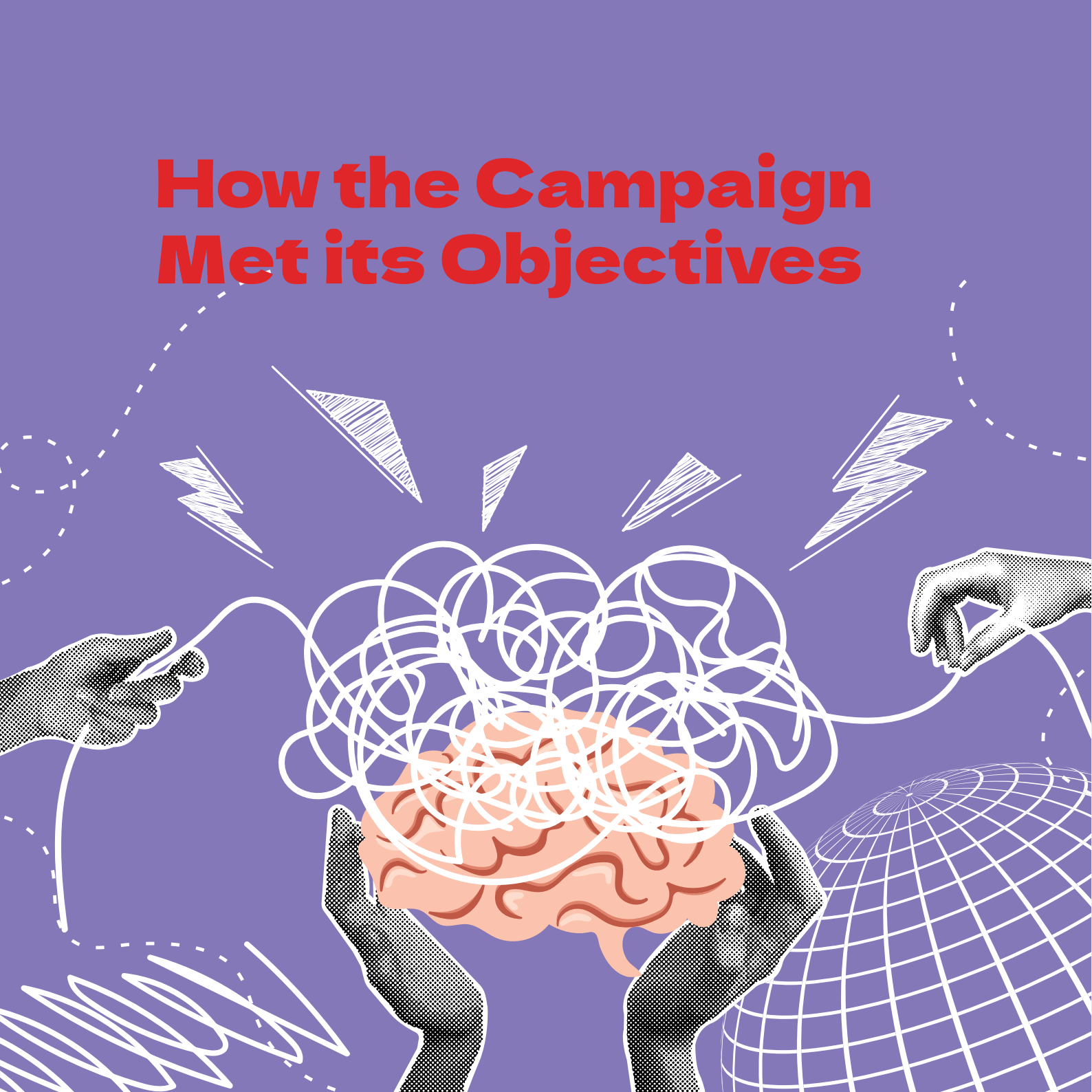
“ A culture of consent, care and joy, where speaking up is not punished but encouraged.”

“ Art becomes a regular part of how we resist and heal.”

PARTNERS

- Alliance Française Mombasa
- Aunty Jane
- CBT Kenya
- Center for Rights Education and Awareness (CREAW)
- Centre for the Study of Adolescence
- Centre Seruka Burundi
- Clooney Foundation for Justice (Fellowship training)
- Curious Afrika, Rwanda
- CTRZL
- Development Dynamics
- Feminists in Kenya (FIK)
- Filmmakers Hangout
- Girls Health ED
- Grace Agenda
- International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF)
- K1 Movie Night
- Kenya Medical Practitioners and Dentists Council (KMPDC)
- Kisumu County Director Culture and Gender
- Kisumu Feminist Society
- Kisumu Law Courts
- Kisumu Medical and Education Trust (KMET)
- Little Theatre Club
- Maisha Girls
- Maono Space
- Malkia Initiative
- Marie Stopes
- Maternal Aid For Mothers in Africa (MAMA) CBO
- MediaMax Network & K24 TV
- Men Against Femicide
- Mema Tanzania
- Mikadie Production, Burundi
- Ministry of Health
- National Gender and Equality Commission
- Neema Rescue House Nyeri
- Nena Na Binti
- Nyeri County Health Department Disease Surveillance and GBV Coordinator
- Nyanza Reproductive Health Society (NRHS)
- Pen Warriors Kenya
- Physicians for Human Rights (PHR)
- Reach A Hand, Uganda
- Red Planet PR
- Reproductive Health Network Kenya (RHNK)
- SAFE Kenya
- Sauti Plus Media Hub
- Seeds of Grace
- Simulizi Festival and Mema Afrika, Tanzania
- SIRC
- Sitarusha Mawe Tena Peace Campaign
- Slum TV Africa (Mashimoni screening)
- Survivors of Women Empowerment Network (SWEN)
- The Coalition of Grassroots Human Rights Defenders (CGHRD)
- The International Resource for Impact and Storytelling (IRIS)
- The Mentoring and Empowerment Programme for Young Women (MEMPROW)
- The Terrace, Kilifi
- Thriving Teens Foundation
- Tunga Media Afrika
- Unseen Cinema
- Usawa Reproductive Health Services
- Wangu Kanja Foundation
- Young Women's Association (YWCA)

How the Campaign Met its Objectives



1 Encourage Open SRHRJ Discussion and Challenge Negative Narratives

From the very first screenings, **the campaign carved out spaces where stigma could be challenged and silence replaced with dialogue.** Regional premieres, community screenings, and broadcasts each created opportunities for audiences to talk about sexual and reproductive health in ways rarely possible in public. In Mombasa and Malindi, laughter during Sukari and Jimbi became a gateway into honest conversations about masculinity, intimacy, and bystander trauma. In Kisumu, survivors went further, disclosing painful experiences of exploitation and unsafe abortion, proving that film could unlock testimony even in communities long marked by silence. **By the end of the campaign, nearly nine in ten respondents said the films introduced them to new ideas or perspectives, and more than 83% felt inspired to learn more or take action on SRHRJ.**

2 Enhance Audience Access to Psychosocial Support

Because the films dealt with trauma and resilience, screenings were designed to ensure audiences were not left exposed. **Safeguarding was embedded across the campaign, with psychosocial organisations and counsellors present at multiple events.** This approach turned screenings into safe spaces rather than risky ones. At the Pen Warriors screening in Kisumu, counsellors provided immediate support for participants triggered by stories of GBV, while Grace Agenda screenings gave survivors the extraordinary experience of watching their own narratives represented on screen. Seeing protagonists Jacqueline (The Red Line) and Elizabeth (Before 16) recount survival and resistance

made many feel affirmed in their own healing journeys. **Survivors described the events as both validating and liberating, showing how access to care transformed the screenings into places of solidarity.**

3 Provide Accurate SRHRJ Information

Every strand of the campaign paired storytelling with credible expertise, ensuring that emotional impact was backed by accurate knowledge. The broadcast series on K24 was designed to reach millions and at the same time place counsellors, teachers, police officers, and survivors in live panel discussions immediately after screenings. **This made sensitive themes feel both safer and more practical to engage with.** In Nairobi, experts tackled healthcare misinformation head-on; in Kisumu, police outlined services available to survivors; and online, digital premieres and X Spaces countered myths by linking stories to real-time observances such as International Women's Day. Audiences themselves acknowledged this role: 88% said they liked the films, most often citing their educational value. Responses such as "because it helps me understand what GBV is" underline how the campaign filled knowledge gaps with clarity and credibility.

4 Humanize SRHRJ Issues

The strength of the anthology lay in its ability to humanise issues often discussed only as statistics or policy. By weaving humour into Sukari, allegory into Jimbi, and direct survivor testimony into Before 16 and The Red Line, the campaign ensured that SRHRJ felt personal and relatable. In



Burundi, audiences described being deeply moved despite language barriers, noting that “even without understanding every word, I understood the pain and the hope in the stories.” **For many, the films acted as both a mirror and a map: they reflected lived realities while offering pathways to imagine alternatives.** Audience surveys confirmed this shift, with **77.6% saying the films surprised them or made them think differently.** Partners also highlighted how screenings sparked empathy and solidarity, qualities that are essential for transforming attitudes and encouraging collective responsibility.

5 Build a Movement for Change

The campaign’s design deliberately connected individuals, communities, and institutions, ensuring that impact rippled outward. From simultaneous premieres across five East African countries, to county screenings, to diaspora amplification online, the films created a shared cultural moment that treated SRHRJ as a regional issue rather than a localised concern. Partnerships with feminist movements, grassroots organisations, broadcasters, and even scientific conferences meant that screenings moved fluidly between healing circles, youth forums, and policy dialogues. Communities called the events both political and healing acts, describing them as spaces where personal pain and collective advocacy could co-exist. MediaMax, after airing the films to more than 3 million viewers, expressed interest in continued collaborations, a sign that institutions as well as individuals recognised the films’ transformative value. **By the end of the campaign, Get Reel had begun knitting together a movement that linked survivors, youth, advocates, and policymakers in a shared conversation about dignity, rights, and justice.**

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

Get Reel set out to create stigma-free spaces where people could engage with Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHRJ) through film. In doing so, it encountered resistance, discomfort, and logistical hurdles, but each challenge provided invaluable insights:

1 Cultural and Religious Taboos

In many communities, entrenched cultural and religious beliefs made open dialogue on SRHRJ extremely difficult. Some viewers labeled the films “pornographic” when confronted with topics like sexual pleasure, while others dismissed SRHRJ entirely as a Western agenda. In coastal Kenya, abortion narratives in *Detour* and *Before 16* triggered visible withdrawal from dialogue, showing how stigma can silence even when stories are relatable. Yet where local leaders and faith figures were engaged beforehand, as seen in Malindi and Kilifi, communities participated more openly. The experience showed that cultural gatekeepers must be brought in early to build trust, otherwise the silence remains unbroken.

2 Emotional Triggers and Unaddressed Trauma

The films’ strength lay in their emotional honesty, but that also meant some audiences were re-exposed to trauma. At Kisumu screenings, survivors of sexual violence broke down mid-session, while in Nairobi, *The Red Line* left several participants visibly shaken. Although counsellors were available at some events, limited funding meant they could not always be present, leaving audiences vulnerable. Where support was available — such as at *Pen Warriors* screenings with two counsellors on-site — participants said the

space felt safe and healing. The uneven provision highlighted how essential psychosocial support is; without it, powerful stories risk re-traumatizing rather than healing.

3 Limited Access to Services

A recurring pattern was that films motivated viewers to seek SRHR services, but services themselves were often lacking. In rural Uasin Gishu, adolescent girls inspired by *Detour* and *Unasemaje?* discovered that clinics were either under-resourced or hostile, particularly for those seeking contraception or HIV services. The screenings revealed a gap between inspiration and action: communities were ready to engage, but the systems meant to serve them were not. The partnership with organisations like KMET in Kisumu helped bridge this, but it also underscored that film campaigns must be paired with stronger service linkages to meet demand.

4 Language Barriers

Language emerged as an unexpected barrier to connection. Most films were in English or Kiswahili, with subtitles provided, yet audiences in rural Kenya and Francophone Burundi found it difficult to fully connect. During the Bujumbura premiere, emotions carried through, but participants admitted they missed key details of dialogue. The lesson here was that translation and adaptation matter just as much as content. Without linguistic accessibility, the power

of story risks being blunted, even when its emotional force remains intact.

5 Skepticism from Key Stakeholders

In some settings, religious and community leaders were reluctant to endorse screenings, fearing backlash from conservative constituencies. This was especially evident in rural Nyeri, where officials declined to appear on panels despite strong community turnout. In contrast, where leaders were included in framing, such as in Mombasa where imams engaged with Unyagoni, their presence signaled to the community that dialogue was permissible. Winning over skeptics required careful framing and patient trust-building, reminding the campaign that change begins not only with audiences but also with the figures they look to for permission.

6 Logistical and Coordination Complexities

Running a campaign across five countries and multiple Kenyan counties tested both capacity and finances. Some planned screenings were cancelled when funds ran out, while others were delayed because of strained coordination between partners. Despite this, layered outreach, through K24 broadcasts, community screenings, festivals, and digital roll-outs, meant the campaign still reached over three million people. The strain of logistics highlighted the limits of resources, but also proved that strategic partnerships and mixed distribution models can achieve reach that individual screenings alone could not.

7 Safeguarding Dialogue Spaces

Another recurring difficulty was that audiences sometimes shut down when confronted with heavy themes. In Kilifi, screenings of *Before 16* left long silences that facilitators struggled to fill, while in Kibera, *The Red Line* was stopped mid-way when survivors in the room found it too overwhelming. These moments showed how easily conversations can collapse without careful facilitation. Yet they also revealed that humour and metaphor work as soft entry points — *Sukari*, with its playful take on marital intimacy, consistently opened audiences up. Balancing heavy themes with accessible storytelling created space for disclosure rather than withdrawal.



Key Takeaways and Recommendations

Get Reel showed that film can open conversations that were long considered untouchable, while also exposing the gaps and tensions that shape how those conversations unfold. The lessons drawn from these varied experiences point to both the strengths of storytelling as a tool for change and the adjustments needed to deepen its impact. What follows are five intertwined takeaways and recommendations that chart a path for sustaining and amplifying this work.

1 Preparing Screenings with Safeguards and Support

Screenings opened doors when audiences felt emotionally safe and well guided. Grace Agenda gatherings worked because survivor-centered facilitation, familiar faces, and clear referral options set the tone. Pen Warriors brought counsellors on site, which steadied the room when stories of GBV surfaced. In Kibera, facilitators paused *The Red Line* to safeguard survivors, then re-routed the conversation. Seeds of Grace paired *Detour* and *Unasemaje* with guided journaling so adolescents could process feelings privately.

Going forward, every event should carry a standard safeguarding kit: a pre-brief that sets expectations, trained facilitators and counsellors, discreet referral cards, and decompression spaces. Budgeting for psychosocial care and signing MOUs with local providers turns this from goodwill into infrastructure.

2 Linking Film Dialogues to Real SRHRJ Services

Films consistently nudged audiences toward action, yet access varied by place. In Kisumu, police

participation clarified where survivors could seek help, and KMET's presence linked dialogue to health services. In rural Uasin Gishu, enthusiasm from school screenings met thin or unfriendly services, especially around contraception and HIV care.

The next phase should **stitch a visible "care pathway" into every screening**: hyperlocal service mapping on invitations, two-minute slots for providers to outline services, QR codes to hotlines, and follow-up reminders. Community tours can double as mobile outreach when paired with county health teams.

3 Winning Over Community and Faith Leaders Early

Resistance was strongest in places where religious or cultural leaders were excluded, while buy-in was visible when they were engaged. On the Coast, conversations around Unyagoni drew strength from leaders who could speak to rites of passage with nuance. In Malindi, humour in *Sukari* eased audiences into pleasure conversations that leaders contextualized for their communities.

A standing "leader track" can help: private previews, facilitator notes aligning SRHRJ language with locally held values, and rotating co-moderation slots



for respected figures. When community custodians carry the message, audiences treat the conversation as their own rather than an outside intervention.

4 Making Films Accessible Across Languages and Contexts

Emotion travelled across borders, yet comprehension dipped when language and context shifted. At the Bujumbura premiere, audiences described deep feeling yet missed key dialogue. In schools, scenes triggered cultural sensitivities that teachers had to navigate in real time. Solutions lie in translation and adaptation: subtitle packs in Kirundi, Kinyarwanda, and local Kenyan languages; dubbed versions for community halls with low literacy; and age-appropriate edit reels for schools.

Screening companions with glossaries, discussion prompts, and locally trained moderators can further ensure that content resonates across diverse contexts.

5 Using Layered Distribution While Tracking Change

The layered approach worked: regional premieres created a shared moment; K24 broadcasts reached 3,001,000 viewers; the community tour deepened disclosure; festivals conferred legitimacy; and digital platforms sustained debate among youth and the diaspora.

Conclusion

The next step is wiring learning into each layer. Standardized audience questions, coded panel themes, and quarterly partner reflections can turn raw reach into measurable evidence of change. This way, layered distribution remains the backbone of impact, but is strengthened with continuous feedback and adaptation.

The Get Reel project positioned African storytelling as a meaningful approach to advancing Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights and Justice (SRHRJ) in East Africa. Through narratives rooted in local language, culture, and lived experience, **the project created opportunities for audiences to reflect, connect, and participate in public conversations that had long been avoided or constrained.**

These films served as entry points for dialogue around issues such as sexual pleasure, gender-based violence, reproductive choice, and community accountability. **Audience engagement extended beyond emotional response into active participation,** with viewers asking questions, sharing personal stories, and seeking ways to support others. This kind of interaction signals a shift in how SRHRJ is being discussed and understood in both public and private spaces.

The project highlighted key conditions that support narrative engagement. These include culturally grounded storytelling, emotionally safe environments, partnerships with trusted community actors, and opportunities for continued dialogue after screenings. Where these elements came together, audiences responded with openness and clarity, and in some cases, with action.

The experiences documented across screenings, digital broadcasts, and community partnerships demonstrate the value of integrating storytelling into broader SRHRJ strategies. **The films supported learning, connection, and social recognition of complex realities. They offered communities a space to speak and listen, to make sense of shared challenges, and to begin imagining new possibilities.**

Get Reel has shown that African filmmakers, working alongside SRHRJ advocates, can shape narratives that resonate widely and contribute to cultural and systemic change. **The work of narrative engagement continues to matter; for those seeking justice, for those navigating silence, and for the communities striving to hold space for truth.**

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