Creating awareness and understanding of the consequences of mono-linguistic education and building communities of change through enabling African indigenous language subtitling.
Colours of the Alphabet is an inspiring and bittersweet documentary exploring language and childhood. Following three children and their families over their first year of school in rural Zambia, we ask, does the future have to be in English?

Steward, Elizabeth and M’barak are three first time school pupils struggling to make sense of an educational system where the language they speak at home is different from the language used in the classroom. Slowly they discover that their tongue is no longer their own.

When nearly 40% of the world’s population lack access to education in their own language, the film offers an intimate, moving and often humorous insight into a global phenomenon from the unique perspective of three innocent children.

‘Poignant, touching and very amusing’
Across The Arts ★★★★

“One of the most beautiful documentary films I’ve ever seen” Liz Lochhead (Former National Poet of Scotland) -

“Lyrical, beautifully filmed...an inspiring, bittersweet documentary about language, communication and national identity” Glasgow Film Festival
Colours of the Alphabet forms the heart of an innovative practice-based research project developed and produced over five years by two filmmaker-academics based at the University of the West of Scotland and Newcastle University. Early stage research and development support was also provided by the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier University.

The research project aimed to capture and reveal the complexities of our multilingual world, specifically focusing on ethnographic and linguistic anthropological perspectives of minority languages and education.

The project’s wider research aims were threefold:

1. to highlight the importance of mother-tongue education globally
2. to explore the capacity of creative documentary filmmaking as a research methodology uniquely equipped to reveal the often unspoken relationship between language use and societal norms
3. to investigate mutually beneficial structures to enable academic-film industry collaboration within feature documentary development, production, distribution and impact campaigning.

Alongside the film, the filmmakers have published various articles related to the project. A list of which can be found on the film’s website https://coloursofthealphabet.com/research-project/
A key part of our creative method has also been the project’s unique focus on subtitling and indigenous language film translation. Aiming to explore the capacity of creative approaches to subtitling, including their impact on audiences’ understanding of multilingual contexts on screen, the film employs a multi-coloured approach to on screen text that conveys the different languages being spoken within the community and classroom. This visual innovation allows the audience to acknowledge the often overlooked and yet extraordinary multilingualism that is evident across nearly all of Sub-Saharan Africa.

This research theme was further developed and expanded through the African stages of our impact campaign. Specifically, we sought to explore how subtitling the film into 30 African languages could help in fostering new indigenous audiences and engagement with the issues at the heart of the documentary. Equally, we were concerned with how our impact campaign might support the training and development of a new community of African language translators who in turn might form the basis for a sustainable network for future African language subtitle releases.
WHO SAW IT

56 FILM FESTIVAL SCREENINGS

TRANSLATED INTO

40 LANGUAGES, INCLUDING 28 INDIGENOUS AFRICAN LANGUAGES

20,000 FILM VIEWS IN AFRICA LANGUAGES

- UK Cinema Tour
- Zambian cinema release.
- Digital, VOD, DVD and BluRay Release Internationally

DIGITAL RELEASE IN

50 COUNTRIES

200,000 VIEWS OF FILM'S ONLINE CONTENT IN AFRICA

- 15,000 film page likes,
- 1.7 million users reached,
- 120,000 link engagements.

AWARDS:

**Winner:** Best Feature Film - International Children's Rights Film Festival, 2018.

**Winner:** Best Documentary Shungu Namutitima International Film Festival of Zambia 2018.

**Special Mention:** Premio Unica, Babel Film Festival, Italy 2017.

**Shortlisted:** Grierson Awards 2016 - Best Newcomer

AUDIENCE FEEDBACK

- ‘loved it’
- ‘heartwarming’
- ‘thought provoking’
- ‘beautifully filmed’
- ‘authentically captures the atmosphere of an African classroom’
- ‘incredibly intimate portrait on a global issue’
- ‘a wonderful portrait of childhood’
- ‘funny and poignant’
- ‘Beautiful and interesting, resonates with so many global and local issues’
- ‘Beautiful, moving and poignant film on such a fundamental and vital issue’
- ‘A real eye opening insight into Zambian education and the importance of language’
- ‘Etre et Avoir en Afrique!’
- ‘Educative, interesting and a must watch!’
- ‘Colourful, comical and utterly captivating’
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Alastair Cole is an award winning UK based, New Zealand born documentary filmmaker. He is the director of Colours of the Alphabet, a film that continues his filmmaking and research focus on the often subtle, intimate and increasingly political dynamics of language, that he has previously explored in 3 award-winning short documentaries. His previous films have been broadcast in 27 countries and screened at 40+ festivals around the world, including at both the 2011 and 2012 Cannes Critics Week film festivals.

Colours of the Alphabet is his debut feature length documentary. Alastair is also a Lecturer in Film Practice at Newcastle University.

Nick Higgins is an award-winning documentary producer and director. Colours of the Alphabet is the fourth feature documentary that Nick has produced through Lansdowne Productions.

Previous productions include the BAFTA Scotland nominated, We Are Northern Lights (GFF 2013), that went on to become the first ever Scottish documentary to be released nationally by the multiplex cinema chain, Cineworld. Nick also originated, co-directed and co-produced The New Ten Commandments (EIFF & Sheffield 2008, BBC) and also produced and directed, A Massacre Foretold (EIFF 2007 & Winner of the WACC/SIGNIS Best Human Rights Documentary Film Award 2007).

His films have been broadcast on the BBC, STV, Al Jazeera, SVT (Sweden), YLE (Finland), ZDF (Germany, Austria, Switzerland), VPRO (the Netherlands) and continue to be distributed by Icarus Films (North America) & Deckert Distribution (Europe) and screened at film festivals internationally. Nick is also a Professor of Media Practice at the University of the West of Scotland and director of the UWS Creative Media Academy.

THE TEAM

EDITORS
Colin Monie, Nick Gibbon

MUSIC
Victoria Wijeratne

UK PRODUCER OF MARKETING AND DISTRIBUTION
Ged Fitzsimmons

AFRICAN IMPACT PROJECT PRODUCERS
Alastair Cole and Nick Higgins.

AFRICAN IMPACT PROJECT COORDINATOR
Gertrude Katongo

AFRICAN SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN
Charli Van Rensburg

SUBTITLING WORKSHOP LEADER
Dr Lee Williamson
THE PARTNERS
To achieve the ambitious goals of the project, we created key partnerships with a number of organisations who shared the project’s goals.

DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION:
The film was produced by Lansdowne Productions and Tongue Tied Films, and its production benefited from the financial support of Creative Scotland. The film and wider research project was advanced through a partnership between Newcastle University and the University of the West of Scotland, early research development was also supported by the University of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier University.

The key creative team also benefited from several feature film development programmes including: Scottish Documentary Institute’s Interdoc, European Documentary Networks’ Twelve for the Future, and Berlinale Talents.

UK AND FESTIVAL RELEASE:
The film’s UK distribution was undertaken in partnership with Cosmic Cat Distribution, and was developed through the Make Your Market Lab, with We Are Tonic and the Scottish Documentary Institute. The multi-lingual versioning of the film for its theatrical release was developed with Screen Language, and the film is distributed internationally by Documentary Educational Resources (DER).

INTERNATIONAL IMPACT CAMPAIGN:
The film’s international impact campaign has benefited from key partnerships including with AfriDocs, the distribution and streaming network that screens African and international documentaries across Africa. AfriDocs is an initiative of the multi-award winning South African documentary production and distribution company, Steps, in partnership with the Bertha Foundation. The AfriDocs broadcast stream is seen in 49 countries by satellite TV, and terrestrially to an additional 100 cities in 8 countries, as well as online across Africa.

As well as working with academic institutions including Newcastle University and the University of the West of Scotland, the impact campaign partnered with subtitling and translation organisations including Amara, the current major online subtitling platform, and the Institute of Translation and Interpreting UK, a network with over 3000 interpreter and translator members who specialise in more than 100 languages and dialects from around the world. Additionally, we worked with SubTrain and Screen Language, who specialise in subtitle translation training and subtitle implementation respectively.

BUDGETS:
Production Budget Total: £150,000
Creative Scotland Film and TV Fund
University of West of Scotland
University of Edinburgh
Edinburgh Napier University
Lansdowne Productions
Tongue Tied Films

Impact Campaign: £75,000
Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)
Impact Grant.
Creative Scotland Distribution Fund
SDI/ We Are Tonic - Make Your Market
Newcastle University
University of the West of Scotland

COLOURS OF THE ALPHABET
IMPACT REPORT
11
12
The film’s impact campaign was split into two: firstly a UK focused cinema release and audience engagement project, followed by an Africa wide impact campaign, that focused on supporting indigenous African language subtitling, through training and capacity development, audience engagement, and the release of the film in 30 African languages.
Our aim was to foster UK audience awareness and engagement with the issues at the heart of the film, specifically framed around the global lack of mother tongue education in all countries. We therefore encouraged audiences to consider how these issues related to their local linguistic and cultural context. The national campaign was also conceived as a means to lay the groundwork for an African impact campaign.

For this first phase of the project the campaign was launched via a tour of theatrical and non-theatrical screenings and events across the UK, with a specific focus on Scotland.

**UK CINEMA & ENGAGEMENT TOUR**

**UK IMPACT AIMS:**
- Educate and inform people about the global challenge in mother-tongue language education.
- Support and facilitate local and national discussion relating to minority language experience in education.
- Promote the positive case for bilingual, multilingual and mother tongue education.
- Encourage the public to get involved in the film’s international impact campaign.

**ACTIVITY:**
- Film festival launch at the Glasgow Film Festival, followed by festival campaign.
- UK Theatrical Tour with each screening and event supported by Q and As with the filmmaker and local/national linguistic specialists including writers, poets, academics, and educators.
- Engagement with national and local press.
- Engagement with local schools and teachers.
AFRICAN IMPACT CAMPAIGN
A campaign to increase the awareness and societal value of indigenous African languages through a continent wide language subtitling and translation project - training a new generation of African language subtitlers, enabling the release of the film in 30 languages across the continent, supported by an audience awareness through a parallel social media campaign.

AFRICAN IMPACT AIMS
- Create awareness of the film and its launch on UNESCO’s International Mother Language Day (IMLD)
- Educate and inform an online African audience about the continent-wide challenge in mother-tongue language education.
- Support and facilitate online, national and regional discussions relating to minority language experience in education.
- Promote the positive case for bilingual, multilingual and mother tongue education.
- Encourage the public to engage with our social media and Afridocs platform
- Support indigenous language literacy campaigns

AFRICAN IMPACT ACTIVITY
- Release the film in 30 African languages across all 50 African countries.
- Train 54 new African language subtitlers and proof readers
- Create new open source subtitle training material for other indigenous language communities.
- Establish the first African Film Translation Network
- Online social media campaign

Building on the success of the first 12 months of the film festival and cinema release of the feature documentary Colours of the Alphabet, we embarked on an ambitious impact project focused on a 50 country pan-African release of the film in early 2018.

The opportunity of a pan African release with AfriDocs provided a valuable opportunity for the film to have an impact on the wider debate of the potential and importance of mother-tongue education and indigenous language media.

“If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.”
Nelson Mandela
OUTPUTS

We designed a unique translation, subtitling and training impact project, that resulted in:

The training of 27 local indigenous African language translators in professional translation and subtitling skills, as well as a further 27 proof readers.

The translation of the film into the 27 indigenous languages, spoken by over 400 million people across the 49 countries, through these newly trained film translators.

The production of an open source training material for translation and subtitling skills, including online lectures and workshop material, for the future training and development of indigenous language subtitlers.

The creation of the first, sustainable, indigenous-language film translator network for Africa, launched online for use by the wider film industry in February 2019 as part of the UNESCO year of Indigenous Languages.

The creation of an industry focused case study outlining the project, as well as highlighting the potential synergy and potential of academic – film industry impact campaign collaborations.

HOW IMPACT WAS TRACKED

REACH

- Cinema bookings
- Audience numbers
- Festival screenings
- Academic and conference screenings
- Streaming & online viewing numbers
- International distribution

ENGAGEMENT

- Screening feedback forms
- Social media posts
- Press coverage

INFLUENCE

- UNESCO
- National & international Research Community
- Press coverage TV, Radio, Print & Online
- Awards & Nominations
- Countries - screened
- Zambian schools debate

The creation of an industry focused case study outlining the project, as well as highlighting the potential synergy and potential of academic – film industry impact campaign collaborations.
MOTHER TONGUE EDUCATION AND LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

The film and impact project focus on the global issues surrounding mother-tongue education and linguistic diversity. UNESCO estimates that 40% of the world’s population, or 2.3 billion people, lack access to education in their own language. This situation is most acute in Africa where our outreach will take place.

Colours of the Alphabet explores the consequences of not educating children in their mother tongue. These consequences, ranging from lack of confidence to a failure to value indigenous cultures, have been recognised internationally by UNESCO.
Children who study in their mother tongue tend to be **better and faster at learning** than children studying in second languages.

Early learning in a home language leads to better **performance in tests in official language of instruction in later school years**.

Mother-tongue education has benefits beyond cognitive skills including **enhanced self esteem, self confidence and classroom participation**.

Lack of mother tongue education has a **significant negative impact on the social mobility of an individual**.

**Linguistic Environment**

Zambia’s linguistic context provides an example of the multilingualism that is seen across the continent. Whilst Zambia has 72 spoken languages and 7 national languages, it only has 1 official language; English - spoken at home by a mere 1.6% of the population. Despite this low use, the language of education in Zambia is largely English, including all exams, and all post grade four teaching is conducted through English.

Across the continent, millions of African students are unable to access education in their own language. It is estimated that there are over 2000 languages spoken across the continent, with indigenous language multilingualism a common feature of everyday life.
The UK release aimed to engage audiences with an interest in childhood, education and language. We found through our audience surveys that over 70% of our audiences were female, many of whom were engaged with education, as well as parents. Speakers of Scottish Gaelic, Doric, Scots, Glaswegian, Welsh, and speakers of regional dialects from across the UK were also key audiences.

Viewers were speakers of the indigenous languages listed above, who were based in 49 countries. Many viewers who engaged with the film’s social media campaign had direct experience of being taught in a language that was foreign to them, which formed the basis of the #MyTongueMyStory aspect of the social media campaign.
Impact Dynamics

Changing Minds
Improve the understanding of the consequences of state supported mono-linguistic education.

Target Audience
Most people, with specific attention to parents, teachers, educational professionals, and educational policy professionals.

Changing Minds
Improving audiences’ understanding of the capacity of indigenous African languages to be used in film subtitling.

Target Audience
Indigenous language speaking film viewers.

Building Communities
Create a network of newly trained subtitlers in 27 African indigenous languages.

Target Audiences
Indigenous African language linguists and translators,

Changing Structures
Elevating the presence and supply of African indigenous language subtitling in film distribution on the continent.

Target Audience
Filmmaking and distribution professionals working in Africa, translation professionals working into indigenous African languages.
WHAT HAPPENED
SUMMARY:
Glasgow Film Festival - 21st Feb 2016 - UNESCO International Mother Language Day - Sold Out
Scottish Cinema Preview Tour of 5 cities: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen & Inverness.
A mixture of community and independent cinema screenings in select bilingual communities including Glenelg, Portree, Oban, Stornoway, Lochmaddy, Aberystwyth, Tywyn.
Further UK screenings in London, Bristol, Newcastle, Manchester, Leeds, Cardiff.
All screenings accompanied by filmmaker & special guest Q&A.
The project used the Glasgow Film Festival as a launchpad for both the UK impact campaign and the film’s festival release. The Glasgow Film Festival not only allowed us to premiere on UNESCO International Mother Language Day, but thanks to the wide public appeal of the festival within the city of Glasgow, it gave us an opportunity to establish the nature of our UK audience.

Furthermore, in the months prior to the festival launch, the engagement campaign was developed through the Make Your Market audience development programme, which involved a six month collaboration with a Producer of Marketing and Development. This support allowed the team to develop the film's audience positioning for the launch at the Glasgow Film Festival, as well as begin to develop the UK wide release strategy.

Through audience surveys at the sold out Glasgow Film Festival screenings, the initial data highlighted that over 70% of our audience were female, predominantly working professionals and over 75% of the overall audience was over 25. There was a clear link to an interest in the themes of education and language issues in the appeal of the film to audiences. Although this was a festival audience, our initial findings were replicated throughout the preview tour of the film to other cinemas in Scotland, as well as through social media analysis.

The Scottish cinema release and engagement campaign was developed in partnership with Ged Fitzsimmons and Cosmic Cat, and a tour of all the major cities in Scotland, as well as the communities of the Highland and Islands was supported by Creative Scotland’s Distribution and Exhibition Fund.

Importantly, each tour stop had local language experts joining for the post film Q&A with the filmmakers, giving opportunities to link the issues raised in the film with local contexts. These guests included former national poet and Makar Liz Lochead who opened the tour in Glasgow, as well as broadcasters, writers, academics, head teachers, and Gaelic and Doric language specialists joining for post film discussions. These ‘event’ screenings were linked with a national and local press and media campaign, specifically directing discussion around the issue of the lack of mother-tongue education both globally and at a local level.

“One of the most beautiful documentaries I’ve ever seen.” - Liz Lochhead, Former Scottish National Poet.

“"The dream that is shown in the film, is that nothing is impossible in terms of language.” - Norman Gillies OBE

“What came through quite clearly was the importance of languages being recognised officially, legally and the challenges presented when a language doesn’t have official status and when the established education system doesn’t provide resources. I think that came through quite clearly. And that’s what I saw as a parallel between what’s been happening in Scotland in terms of Gaelic and what we were seeing there (Zambia)” - Donald MacLeod, The Nicholson Institute.

Following the Scottish tour, further engagement screenings were organised around the UK, including in Cardiff, Bristol, Leeds, Manchester, Newcastle, and London, as well as community screenings in Welsh speaking cinemas in Wales. These were organised in collaboration with film festival partners, as well as academic and independent cinema partners. Following the model and lessons learnt from the Scottish release, screenings were accompanied with local language and cultural experts in discussion with the filmmaker, and focusing on the language and education aspects of the film.
Theatrical screenings with supporting discussion were critical to connecting with an audience for an issue-led campaign.

The challenge of attracting a UK audience to a film set in Africa required careful planning, and the foregrounding of the underlying themes of language and education in the film’s promotion, rather than its location were important.

Listening to our audience prior to the screening was the best way to learn when was the best time for them to see the film, rather than telling them when they must come. Many of our target audience were working mothers, who required more advance notice than other audience groups. In community locations, local cinemas were also vital to creating the optimum conditions for target audiences, which included programming screenings earlier than normal, to accommodate family and work commitments, and creating teacher and parent friendly events.

Understanding the limits of the team, as there is an endless list of things that can be done to engage people. Trying to do everything can dilute the team’s efforts. This is especially important for a small team, with filmmakers directly involved in the release.

Building in enough time for preparation. Several unofficial organisational ambassadors were crucial in getting our message to the right people but it takes time to identify them and make contact.

Audience surveys established that word of mouth was one of the critical ways audiences were discovering the film, thus working with local champions willing to promote the film locally prior to screenings was often more valuable than local radio, TV or press coverage.
The film’s African release provided a unique opportunity to engage with an audience for whom the issues at the heart of the film were perhaps the most relevant. With the opportunity for a pan-Africa release made possible through a partnership with Africa’s only continent wide documentary film platform, AfriDocs, the opportunity for a large scale continent wide digital release and accompanying impact campaign became possible.

The ambitious objectives for the campaign were:

• In partnership with AfriDocs, launch the film in 30 African languages, on UNESCO International Mother Language Day 2018.
• Create all 30 language versions, including 27 indiginous African language versions, with multicoloured creative subtitles, and make them available for free across Africa.
• Create a continent wide, multilingual social media campaign #MyTongueMyStory, encouraging viewers to share their experiences of language and education.
• Train a team of African indigenous language speakers in translation and subtitling skills, to undertake the paid work to translate the film into their language.
• Create a free and accredited online resource of training materials to support those wishing to learn translation and subtitling skills to work into their own language.
• Establish the first African Film Translation Network, using the newly trained subtitlers as the inaugural network members, and provide a mechanism for future film productions to be translated into indigenous African languages.

You can view the multilingual release page at https://afridocs.net/watch-now/colours-of-the-alphabet/.

• The film and accompanying material has been viewed over 220,000 times to date (2019).
• The release has generated significant press, comment, and engagement across traditional, and social media platforms.
MULTILINGUAL RELEASE

The release of the film was conducted through AfriDocs, a new screening platform exclusively for Africa, bringing the best African and international documentaries to audiences anywhere in Africa. AfriDocs is an initiative of the multi-awarded South African documentary production and distribution company, Steps International, in partnership with the Bertha Foundation.

In preparation for the release, the film was edited down to a 60min version that was then prepared for translation and subtitling into the 30 target languages with newly trained subtitlers. You can read more about that process on the following pages. The film was prepared to support the use of the unique multicolour subtitles that the theatrical film employed, requiring individual versions of the film for each language (please see ‘languages of translation’ section of the document for more information on the languages the film was released in).

The release was scheduled for February 21st 2018, again tying the film’s to UNESCO’s International Mother Language Day, who supported the launch. This digital release was combined with a physical launch of the African Impact Project with a special screening of the film with the director and producer at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London. Following the launch day, the film and its release received extensive online and traditional press coverage across Africa.
The unique nature of the campaign and the partners involved made it possible to train a cohort of first-time subtitlers and provide them the skills to work on this project as well as future film releases.

The project trained 27 indigenous language speaking participants, (one for each indigenous target language) based across Africa in professional translation and subtitling skills to make the multilingual release possible.

This was done through the creation of an online workshop in collaboration with Newcastle University and the University of the West of Scotland. The successful completion of the training workshop resulted in the participants being offered paid work to subtitle the film.

The workshop content has been converted to an open source online workshop to be made available for training future translators and subtitlers.

In addition to the 27 subtitlers, a further 27 indigenous language speakers were trained, and given paid work, as proofreaders, whilst also being provided free access to the workshops to train as subtitlers.
The project team developed a new online training workshop that provided participants with core skills in translation and subtitling, including technical skills to work with the Amara subtitling software. The project worked in partnership with the team at Amara, to make the best use of the platform for the unique nature of the project. The workshops were developed and led by audio visual translation education specialists, and benefited from the knowledge that the academic partner institutions brought with them. The workshops were developed to be applicable to different target languages, however, due to the nature of the languages involved in the film, the workshops were delivered in English with French language support.

A call for participants was made across networks in Africa to applicants with a mother-tongue in one of the 30 target languages. We received over 500 applications in the first week, and from these the top applicants for each language were selected to move forward with the project.

Over the course of two months the participants were asked to complete the online training, which included video lessons, as well as interactive exercises and feedback sessions with the workshop leader. Participants who successfully completed the workshop were offered the paid work to subtitle the 60 minute version of the film.
The film’s African release was supported by a major social media awareness campaign encouraging viewers to engage with their own experiences of mother-tongue education entitled #MyTongueMyStory.

The social media campaign was coordinated between the UK and Africa, and focused on Facebook, the most active social media platform on the continent at the time. The campaign worked with the film’s translation team to engage with the language communities of the 30 languages of the film’s release.

The personal testimonies posted in response to the #MyTongueMyStory call, included both English posts and posts written in mother-tongue languages. These posts provided an immediate and often very touching window into the experiences of the audience in Africa and the relevance of the issues explored in the film.

Facebook engagement: 15,000 film page likes, over 1.7million users reached, 120,000 link engagements.

African Film Translation Network (AFTN) www.subtitlingafrica.org

The final stage of the African impact campaign was to launch the first online network of African language subtitlers that would provide future film productions with the opportunity to find trained subtitlers working in indigenous languages. The key aspects of this stage of the project were:

The project’s 27 workshop participants, as well as a number of the 27 proof readers, formed the first ever African Film Translation Network, launched in February 2019.

The AFTN aims to encourage film distributors and producers to recognise the opportunities that indigenous African language releases bring, and break down the barriers to the production of subtitles in African languages.

The AFTN Network aims to continue to provide paid work as professional subtitlers for the participants, and future members.

The network was designed and developed in collaboration with the Institute for Interpreting and Translation (ITI), the only UK-based independent professional membership association for practising translators, interpreters and language service providers. This included developing network working guidelines, best practice advice and sample documentation for use by network members. New members have a profile online with contact details, that also allows prospective film producers and distributors to search the member database by language.

The network was launched on International Mother Language Day 2019, alongside a screening and discussion of the theatrical version of the film at the Smithsonian Museum, in Washington DC, USA.
CHALLENGES & LESSONS LEARNT - AFRICAN CAMPAIGN

Working with specialist partners such as AfriDocs and Amara was vital to the success of the campaign. The importance of breaking ground with the overall goals of the project, but not trying to reinvent the wheel in the processes we used to get there was essential.

The synergy and shared goals of impact projects for academia and the documentary film industry were a very positive lesson from the project. The unique skills that academic partners brought, such as experience in workshop creation, network development, and impact evaluation, as well as the opportunities for funding from both sectors was the reason we were able to complete the project.

Whilst the vast reach of online and digital technologies made a project such as this possible, the remote nature of the project team, based largely between the UK, South Africa and Angola, created a unique technical challenge, especially in preparing and delivering 30 individual versions of the film between the UK and South Africa.

The goals of the project created an inherently multilingual environment that we needed to work within. Whilst this was manageable during the training and production of the subtitles, the social media launch of the film created a far greater challenge for engagement with the wide variety of language communities who were responding and discussing the project online.

These limits of personnel, finance, and logistics are not dissimilar to those that co-production structures in film production have sought to overcome. As such, the project does highlight the potential for similar co-production structures to be embraced within impact projects.

The project was designed to conclude after setting up the AFTN. However, this overlooked the ongoing HR requirements of the network and its need for continual promotion that was beyond the scope of the funded project. While long term self-sufficiency has been built into the design of the network, there remains the challenge of being able to fully embrace the potential of ongoing engagement within a set time frame for an impact campaign such as this.

The challenge of positioning the project and release within a wider literacy and educational context in Africa was notable. Whilst we were able to engage with many organisations in the promotion of the film's release, understanding how subtitling in indigenous languages can be best positioned within the existing large scale literacy campaigns, as well as in relation to existing indigenous language viewing habits such as dubbing, was important.

The challenge of positioning the project and release within a wider literacy and educational context in Africa was notable. Whilst we were able to engage with many organisations in the promotion of the film’s release, understanding how subtitling in indigenous languages can be best positioned within the existing large scale literacy campaigns, as well as in relation to existing indigenous language viewing habits such as dubbing, was important.

The project was valuable as a tool and model for many of the organisations that we partnered with, and we identified partnerships to ensure that they were able to best capitalize on this. Communicating the potential, for example; of the AFTN to be a tool for a platform such as AfriDocs, or the online workshop as support for Amara, and the film for International Mother Language Day and related projects in the future, was important to build into early planning.

The limitations on filmmakers to undertake the lead roles on an international impact project of this nature created a further challenge. Especially with the knowledge and capacity building required to get the project underway. The project team were able to focus the project work within a specific region, which allowed for more concentration and the development of a strategic team, however, this was still outside of the team leaders known market, and created limitations for the scope of the project.

While working with smaller partner organisations who shared our goals such as those mentioned above was vital for the project happening, the inability of the project to fully connect with larger international organisations with shared values, such as UNESCO, was a challenge for the global visibility and reach of the project. While contact and conversations were able to be had, and UNESCO did support the African release, the time needed to negotiate the multiple levels of such a large organisation was underestimated and resulted in the project not being able to fully embrace the potential synergy that was possible.
Colours of the Alphabet shortlisted for a Grierson award for Best Newcomer.

African Impact Project launched, and project team established between Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Scotland.

Audience analysis undertaken highlighting the make up of the film’s audience, as well as the initial impact of the film on cinema goers.

UK impact project presented at the Edinburgh International Film Festival.

Initial analysis of African audiences response to the film undertaken and the proposal for international impact campaign developed for documentary industry and academic consideration.

National press, radio (BBC) and TV (STV) coverage of the film and the issues at its centre.

Colours of the Alphabet takes part in the SDI / We Are Tonic Make Your Market Lab and begins work with a Producer of Marketing and Development.

Colours of the Alphabet takes part in EDN’s 12 for the Future Feature Film Development programme.

Colours of the Alphabet Premiere’s at Glasgow Film Festival on UNESCO International Mother Language Day.

Colours of the Alphabet screens in all major Scottish centres.

Colours of the Alphabet's African premiere at the Lusaka International Film Festival, selling out all screenings.

Colours of the Alphabet screens in rural and island Scottish Communities.

Scottish screenings supported by Q and A’s with filmmaker and locally engaged figures, including poets, writers, academics, and education professionals.

The UK impact project receives Creative Scotland Distribution Funding for UK release.

The Film

2015

2016

Impact & Campaign

Colours of the Alphabet screens at cinemas across England, supported by Q and A’s with the filmmaker and invited guests.

Colours of the Alphabet receives Creative Scotland Film and TV Fund support.

Colours of the Alphabet takes part in SDI’s Interdoc feature documentary film development programme.

Colours of the AlphabetPremiere's at Glasgow Film Festival on UNESCO International Mother Language Day.

Colours of the Alphabet Premiere's at Glasgow Film Festival on UNESCO International Mother Language Day.
Colours of the Alphabet continues to screen at festivals internationally throughout 2017, including across Europe, Africa, and North and South America, and is translated into 10 languages.

Colours of the Alphabet screens in London with producer and filmmakers present to mark the launch of the Africa Wide Release.

Colours of the Alphabet continues to screen at film festivals internationally, including across Europe, Africa, and North and South America, and is translated into 10 languages.

2017

2018

All 30 versions (27 Indigenous language versions as well as English, Portuguese and French) of the Colours of the Alphabet are multicoloured subtitle versions created in partnership with Screen Language.

Participants who successfully completed the workshop are given the paid job of translating the 59min version of Colours of the Alphabet.

Participants undertake one month online translation and subtitle training workshop

Indigenous African language subtitling training participant applications welcomed, with 600 applicants in the first week. Participants chosen to cover all 27 African indigenous languages of the project

Participants who successfully completed the workshop are given the paid job of translating the 59min version of Colours of the Alphabet.

Colours of the Alphabet receives the Premio Unico menzione speciale at the Babel Film Festival, Sardinia

Participants undertake one month online translation and subtitle training workshop

Indigenous African language subtitling training participant applications welcomed, with 600 applicants in the first week. Participants chosen to cover all 27 African indigenous languages of the project

Colours of the Alphabet is released in 30 languages across Africa via AfriDocs, on International Mother Language Day.

Traditional media launch across Africa, with extensive online and print media coverage across multiple countries.

Social Media Campaign #MyTongueMyStory launched in parallel, generating personal stories of language and education from viewers of the film across the continent.

African Impact project receives Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESRC) Impact Accelerator Award

AfriDocs and Amara established as project partners.

African Impact Project launched, and project team established between Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Scotland.

2017

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Colours of the Alphabet receives the ICRFF award for the Best Film on Children’s Rights

Colours of the Alphabet wins the Best Documentary Award at the Shungu Namutitima International Film Festival of Zambia

Colours of the Alphabet screens at the Smithsonian Museum, Washington D.C.

Ongoing online engagement and impact activity supporting the African multilingual release of the film.

ESRC awards the project further follow-on impact funding for the creation of the African Film Translation Network (AFTN).

Development of the web based film translation network begins, partnerships established with Interpreting and Translation Institute and Screen Language.

Launch of the AFTN on International Mother Language Day, in parallel to the screening of the film at the Smithsonian Museum.

Original Participants of the translation training project, as well as the trained proofreaders invited to become inaugural members of the AFTN.

2018

2019
For more information about the film and to arrange screenings:

**UK, EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL**

www.colourofthealphabet.com

**NORTH AMERICAN**

www.der.org

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