

THE WHY

IMPACT AND ACTIVITY REPORT 2020

Screening at NCT, Pedda Kammaluru, India

Thanks to the hard work and generosity of our **partners, donors and supporters** we continue distributing **reliable information to everyone everywhere.** **2020** was despite the global circumstances an **impactful year.**

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Words from the CEO,

Let me first of all thank our partners, funders, schoolteachers, NGO's, Institutions, TV stations and not least our wonderful dedicated staff at the WHY, who in spite of Corona restrictions around the world have done the utmost to give people access to watch and discuss films that inspire, empower and inform. THE WHY Foundation wants to ensure that all people have free access to fact-based, independent media. We do this by producing and distributing human rights-centred documentary films globally, with a focus of targeting the almost 800 million people who remain illiterate, and the 3.1 billion people who still have no access to a reliable internet. Last year was a challenging year for everyone. However, despite the difficulties that the pandemic brought, THE WHY worked tirelessly to bring reliable information around the world - We take responsibility for the media we share. In many ways, The Why's change model is corona-proofed. As we all turned inwards, Broadcasters continued to air our series

and our YouTube Channel, which already had over 100,000 subscribers, thrived. We swapped live events to online and hosted the Quarantine Film Club and the Why Slavery? Online Premiere and organised offline events when the conditions allowed it. Even in the face of challenges, we continued to grow our distribution channels and increase our reach. In 2020, we acquired 14 new films, worked with 100+ broadcast partners and 41 educational and outreach partners in 21 languages. We estimate that each of our films reached this year an average of 100 million viewers through our broadcasters. Our films continue to make a difference wherever they are shown. The films have been used as part of efforts to reach those vulnerable to human rights violations, including India, South Korea, Ukraine and Russia. Our partner in Tanzania Vilages Health Support Organisation reported that WHY STORIES caused an important shift in the community perspective of female genital mutilation (FGM) following the screening of *In The Name*

of Your Daughter, a film about the harmful effects of FGM. Additionally, the ASK WHY? Docs reached new cities across Denmark. This project invites students to the cinema to watch films, followed by a discussion. Our reach has doubled since last year. Finally, our YouTube channel provided an alternative to audiences in countries with tough TV censorship and to places where the pandemic made organisation impossible. THE WHY has just reached more than 14 million views on YouTube, and THE WHY's films were watched 2.4 million times in 2020. They notably reached communities that are often portrayed in our films and who otherwise

might not have had access to human rights content. An example is Education, Education, a documentary that exposes the inequality of the Chinese education system. Last year a substantial amount of views were geolocated in China, even though YouTube is blocked by the Chinese government.

We are proud of our achievements and our continuous work to support free, fair and fact-based media for all. And to stimulate humanity awareness across the borders of religion, tradition and culture. We continue to fight to expand this freedom in support of sustainable development.



Mette Hoffmann Meyer, CEO



Who We Are

THE WHY Foundation is a non-profit organisation based in Denmark that supports sustainable development by securing free access to reliable information for as many people as possible.

THE WHY was founded in 2004 under the name "STEPS" by documentary visionaries Mette Hoffmann Meyer (former head of documentaries at DR) and Nick Fraser (founder of BBC's documentary strand Storyville).

The organisation changed its name to "THE WHY" in 2014.

THE WHY's production work rests on 2 pillars:

1. Thematic series commissioned by THE WHY:

WHY DEMOCRACY? (2007)
WHY POVERTY? (2012)
WHY WOMEN? (2016)
WHY SLAVERY? (2018)
WHY PLASTIC?
(in development, 2021)

2. WHY STORIES:

Annual curated series of 20 existing films. 2020 marked its 5th season.

The films are distributed globally in 5 ways:

1. Local television broadcasters.
2. International satellite television (BBC World News).
3. Outreach activities in educational, cultural and political contexts.
4. ASK WHY? Film Club showing films to school students.
5. Online, through THE WHY's YouTube channel.

Through these programs, we reach millions of people at all levels of society, engaging them in dialogues about human rights and democratic values.

"The ability of a free and independent press to hold political leaders accountable is what makes open government possible — it is the heartbeat of democracy."

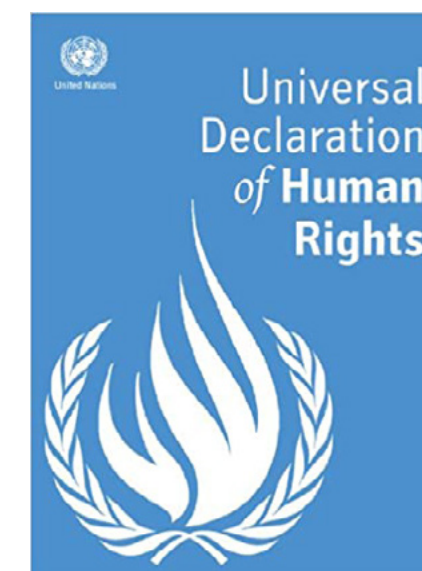
Madeleine Albright, *Fascism: A Warning* (2019)

Our Mission

THE WHY's mission is to help create an informed citizenry and to enable people to make choices that support a sustainable future. Using thought-provoking documentary films, we aim to advocate for human rights, democracy, justice and equality. Our focus is both on the local and global level, from schools to political systems.

The Foundation was created with a vision of making documentary films available to everyone, everywhere. To achieve that, THE WHY initiates, produces and

distributes films to local and global audiences through television broadcast, outreach activities and online media platforms - thereby ensuring that everyone has access to free, independent and reliable information. THE WHY supports the Sustainable Development Goals and specifically works to solve its key target, 16.10: "To ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements".



ARTICLE 19.

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Unequal access to information

40% of people speak only one language. ¹

4.1 billion people have no internet access. ²

89% of online content is only available in the 10 most spoken languages. ²

800 million adults cannot read and write. ⁴

These barriers to information can hinder development, free choices and government accountability, aggravating poverty and corrupt political systems.

Sources:

1. [Ansaldi, A., Marcotte, K., Scherer, L., & Raboyeau, G. \(2008\). Language therapy and bilingual aphasia: Clinical implications of psycholinguistic and neuroimaging research. Journal Of Neurolinguistics, 21\(6\), 539-557. doi: 10.1016/j.jneuroling.2008.02.001](#)
2. [4 reasons 4 billion people are still offline. World Economic Forum. \(2021\).](#)
3. [Literacy | UNESCO UIS. Uis.unesco.org. \(2021\).](#)

What We Do

We produce, curate and translate fact-based, human rights-centred documentaries that inspire our audiences to ask "why?"

Sharing stories about human rights is one of the first steps to raising awareness about injustices, and encouraging social and political actions.

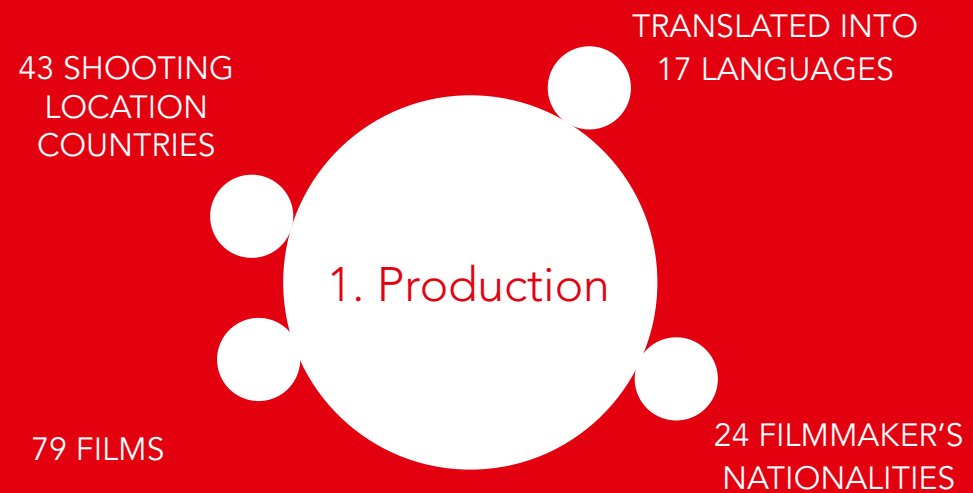
THE WHY's documentaries serve as educational tools, and they spark debate, dialogue and democratic understanding.

Research suggests documentary films have the power to deeply involve their viewers in emotional and cognitive ways - seeding empathy and comprehension. And, by way of emotional engagement, documentaries reinforce behaviour change.

Theory of Change



2020 Summary



"The films inspired our team which then resulted in social changes linked to fundamental human rights and to the mobilisation of public opinion to defend them."

Monia Wakana, screening facilitator from Centre For Development and Enterprises Great Lakes, Burundi

3. Engagement and Influence

DISCUSSIONS AND DEBATES INSPIRED BY THE FILMS EXPLORING ALL SDGs



"Empowerment can only be facilitated, never granted, for it is inherent in the nature of fundamental human rights."

Zainab Najeeb , invited speaker at screening from Women on Wheels , Pakistan

4. Action and Change

SOCIO-POLITICAL CHANGE

- Argentina: The article written by a spectator had a great impact in the political discussion about the working conditions of domestic workers.
- Tanzania: Most influential adults in the community change their opinion about Female Genital Mutilation practices.

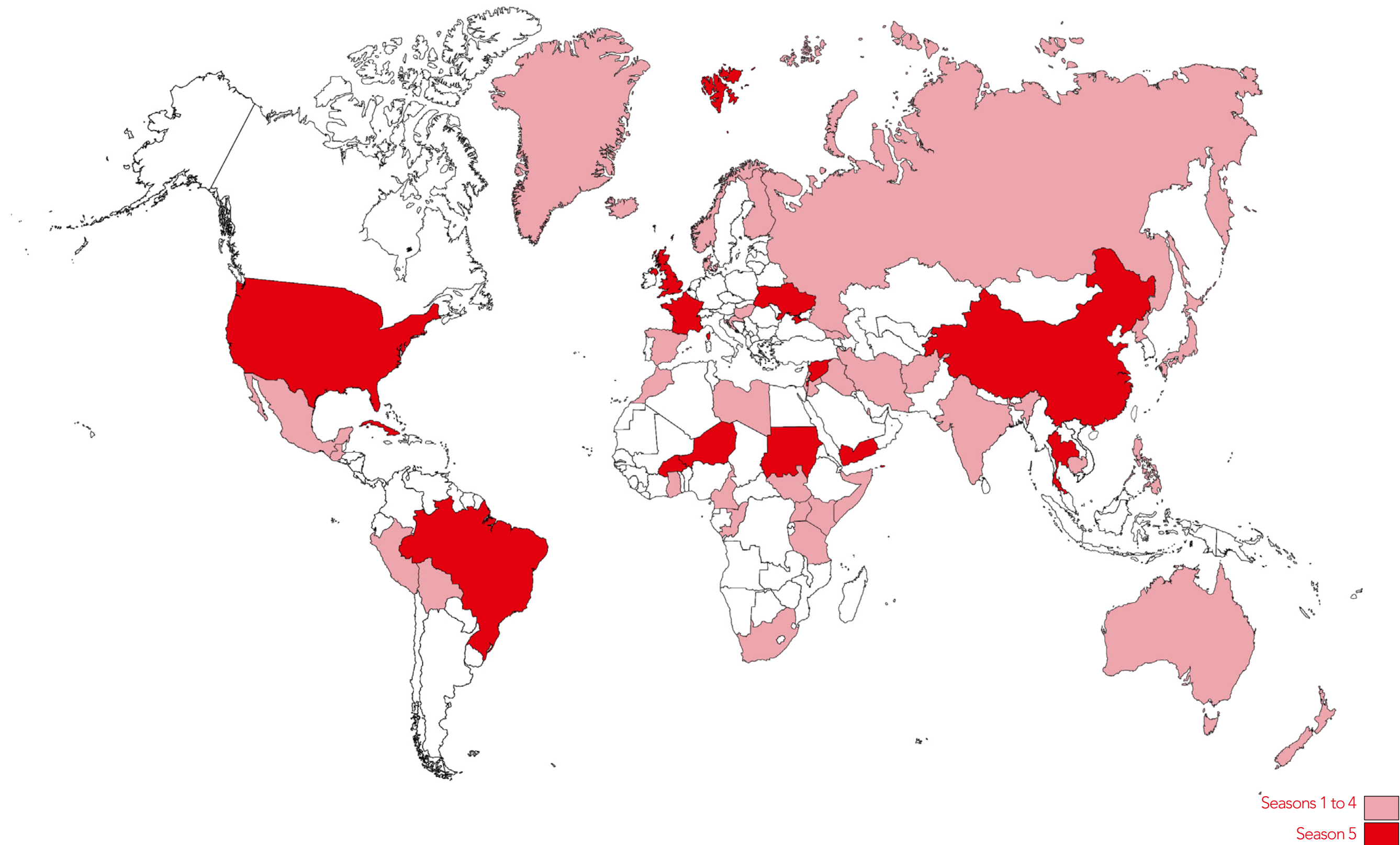
INDIVIDUAL AND GROUP ACTIONS

- Pakistan: A working group was set within the lawyer group Women in Law to address gender equality.
- Argentina: Participants decided to write about the situation of domestic workers during the COVID-19 crisis.
- Burundi: After film based awareness campaign, community takes action by creating online groups to help arresting human traffickers.

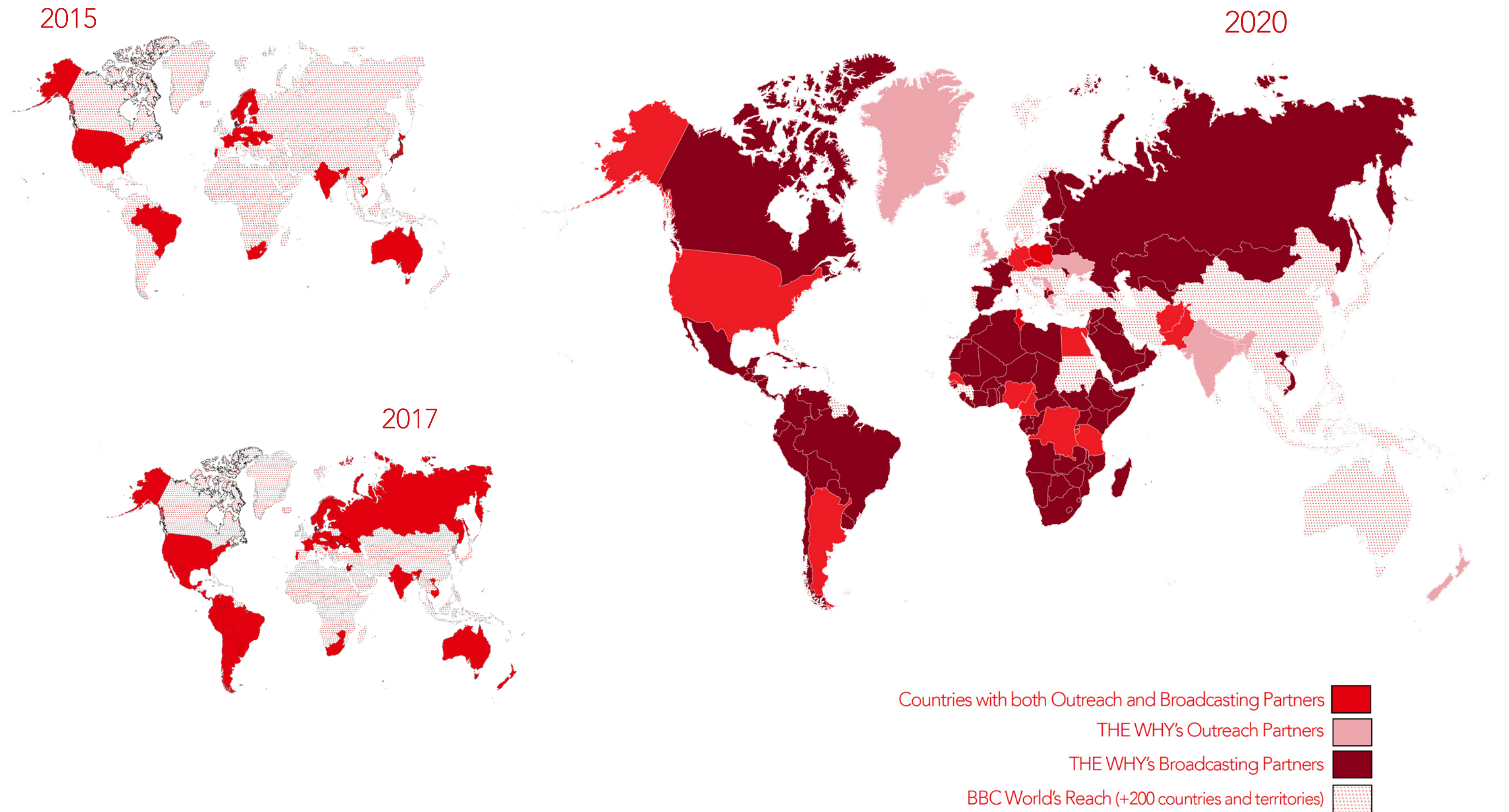


WHY STORIES

Where Do Our Stories Come from?



Where We Work



How We Cover the Global Goals

WHY STORIES Season 1 to 5

WHY STORIES films are selected through a rigorous process. We choose films based on their ability to convey strong, fact-based, human-centred stories. Another selection criteria is the ability of the narrative to connect people with key human rights issues, as identified by the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. The films in Season 5 touch on most of the issues covered by the SDGs with a focus on SDG 10 and SDG 16. [Click here to discover our catalogue.](#)

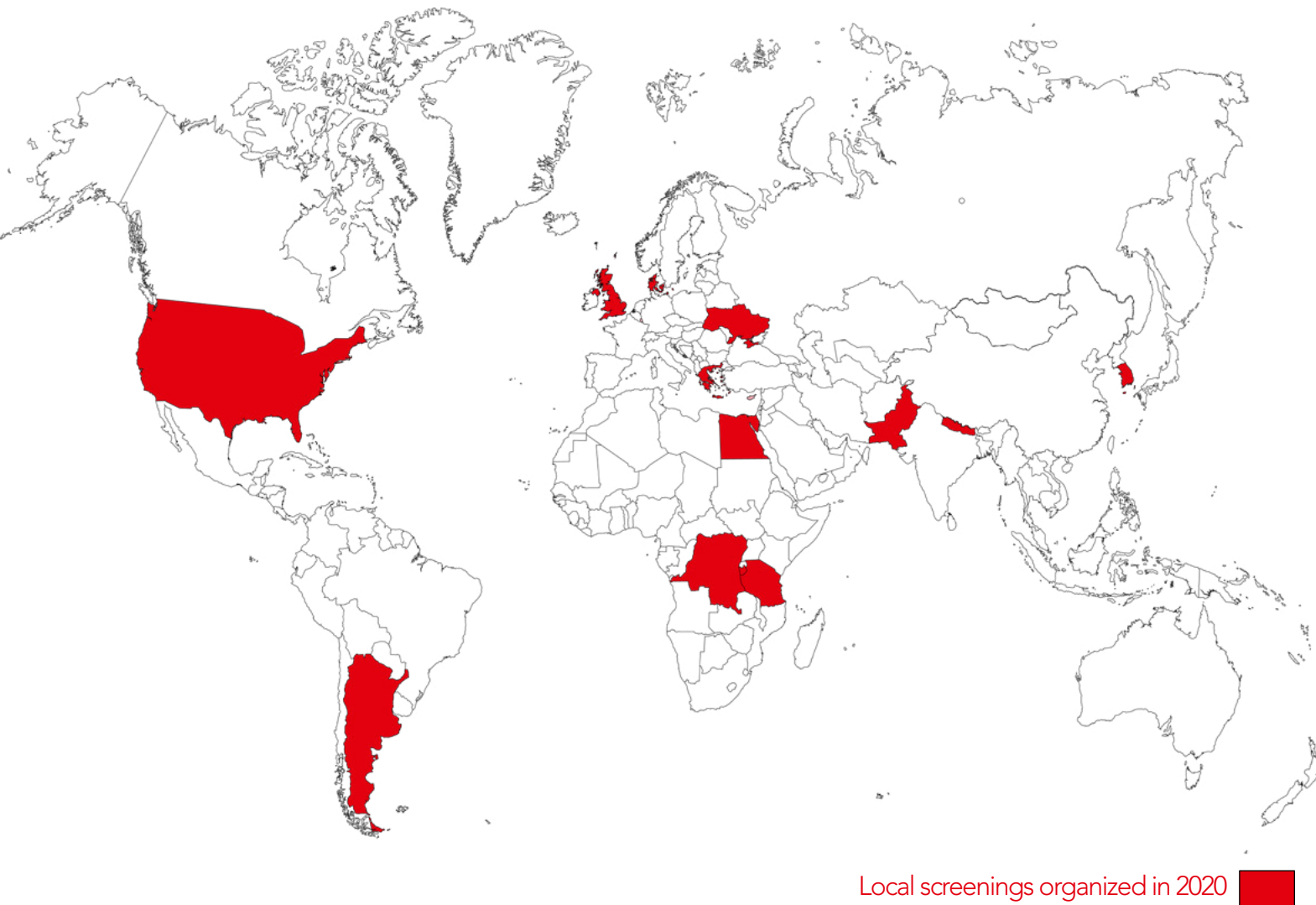


- | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|--|
| 1: No Poverty | 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth | 13: Climate Action |
| 2: Zero Hunger | 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure | 14: Life Below Water |
| 3: Good Health and Well-being | 10: Reduced Inequality | 15: Life on Land |
| 4: Quality Education | 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities | 16: Peace and Justice in Institutions |
| 5: Gender Equality | 12: Responsible Consumption and Production | 17: Partnerships to achieve the Goal |
| 6: Clean Water and Sanitation | | |
| 7: Affordable and Clean Energy | | |



From our film *The Chinese Mayor*

Local Screenings, Case Studies



ARGENTINA

BURUNDI

CONGO

CYPRUS

DENMARK

EGYPT

GREECE

LUXEMBOURG

NEPAL

PAKISTAN

SOUTH KOREA

TANZANIA

UNITED KINGDOM

UKRAINE

UNITED STATES

Case Study: Documentaries help shifting beliefs in Tanzania

The Villages Health Support Organisation (VHSO), one of THE WHY's partners, is fighting against female genital mutilation in Tanzania. This organisation used the film *In the Name of Your Daughter*, part of the WHY STORIES series, to help inform the community about the dangers of the procedure, which is considered a violation of human rights.

In Tanzania, FGM is still largely practiced, even though it has been illegal in the country since 1998. In the district of the capital city Arusha, it is estimated by the UNFPA that 41% of girls undergo the procedure.

Last September, our partners were able to gather 900 school children, village leaders and even two midwives, who practice FGM in the village. The results were remarkable. After the film screening, students said they now know they can report anyone forcing them to get cut. The children also understood the health dangers of FGM. An important shift in perspective also occurred among the most influential adults in the community, one of the midwives said that she believed FGM was performed to prevent urinary tract infection (UTI). Now that she understands the risks of FGM, she stated that she will refrain from the practice.

"Everyone who watched the film now feels responsible to be part of the solution for ending female genital mutilation in our society"

Jacob Amon , screening facilitator from Village Health Support Organisation, Olchorovos, Tanzania



Screening at VHSO, Olchorovos, Tanzania

Case Study: Empowering North Koreans

North Koreans are experiencing a cruel reality. The North Korean authorities are violating human rights, exploiting children and adults for their labour.

NAUH (Now Action & Unity for Human rights), our South Korean partner, work with informing North Koreans of their basic rights as human beings.

In addition, they report on the North Korean humanitarian crisis, and call on the citizens of the world to help improve the human rights situation.

Together, in 2020, we organised the screening of our film *North Korean Secret Slaves: Dollar Heroes*. This film uncovers how the North Korean regime is running one of the world's largest slaving

operations - exploiting the profits to fulfill their own political agenda. *Dollar Heroes* reveals the scale and brutality of this modern slavery operation.

This screening aimed to educate South and North Korean university students about the alarming situation. In the audience, stories were shared between people that escaped the North Korean's regime brutality.

It is thanks to events like this, that our films reach people directly affected by the human rights issues presented in the films. These events provide a safe space for victims of human rights abuses, to share their experiences and empower them to inspire others to fight for their rights.



From our film *Please Vote For Me*

Case Study: Bringing knowledge to the Ukrainian youth

Seven years into the Maidan protest, the Russian occupation of Crimea, and the outbreak war, Ukraine's crisis is deepening. Thousands of civilians have died, and Russian troops at the borders have established a sense of fear and unsafety for years. Ukraine's democracy, human rights, and fundamental freedoms are seriously challenged.

In 2020, we renewed our partnership with Docudays for another five years. Docudays is a network which unites 288 organisations, who use documentaries to

promote human rights in Ukraine. Among others, the film *Please Vote for Me*, a film about the intricacies of democracy, has been shown 120 times.

Moreover, we are working with CISC International Schools, three schools in Kyiv and Lviv, where six of our documentaries and five short films are integrated in the schools' program, to ensure that each student has enough knowledge, experience, and confidence to make their own choices and create their future.



Screening at NAUH, Seoul, South Korea

Reaching Millions Through Broadcast



THE WHY's Broadcasting Partners 
BBC World's Reach (+200 countries and territories) 

Case Study: 3.3 million views in Russia

The WHY STORIES films have reached more than 3.3 million views online in Russia. The number comes from BBC News Russian's YouTube - the TV channel is our partner in the country, and has uploaded 27 of our documentaries on their online channel. Despite the films being from different countries and continents, the most watched WHY STORIES in Russia is a local story. With 1.5 million views alone, the awarded documentary *Putin's Forgotten Children* captures the brutal reality of life for those who inhabit Svalka - Europe's largest rubbish dump on the outskirts of Moscow. Having these films available and well-received in Russia is a step that helps accomplish THE WHY's mission of informing the world with reliable information. Especially considering the country's background of campaigning against NGOs, as Human Rights



From our film *Putin's Forgotten Children*

A group of young people, mostly teenagers, are seated in a theater with red seats. They are all looking towards the left side of the frame, presumably towards a movie screen. The lighting is dim, typical of a theater. The text 'ASK WHY? DOCS' is overlaid in a large, white, bold font on a red rectangular background that spans across the middle of the image.

ASK WHY? *DOCS*

ASK WHY? Docs, Esbjerg

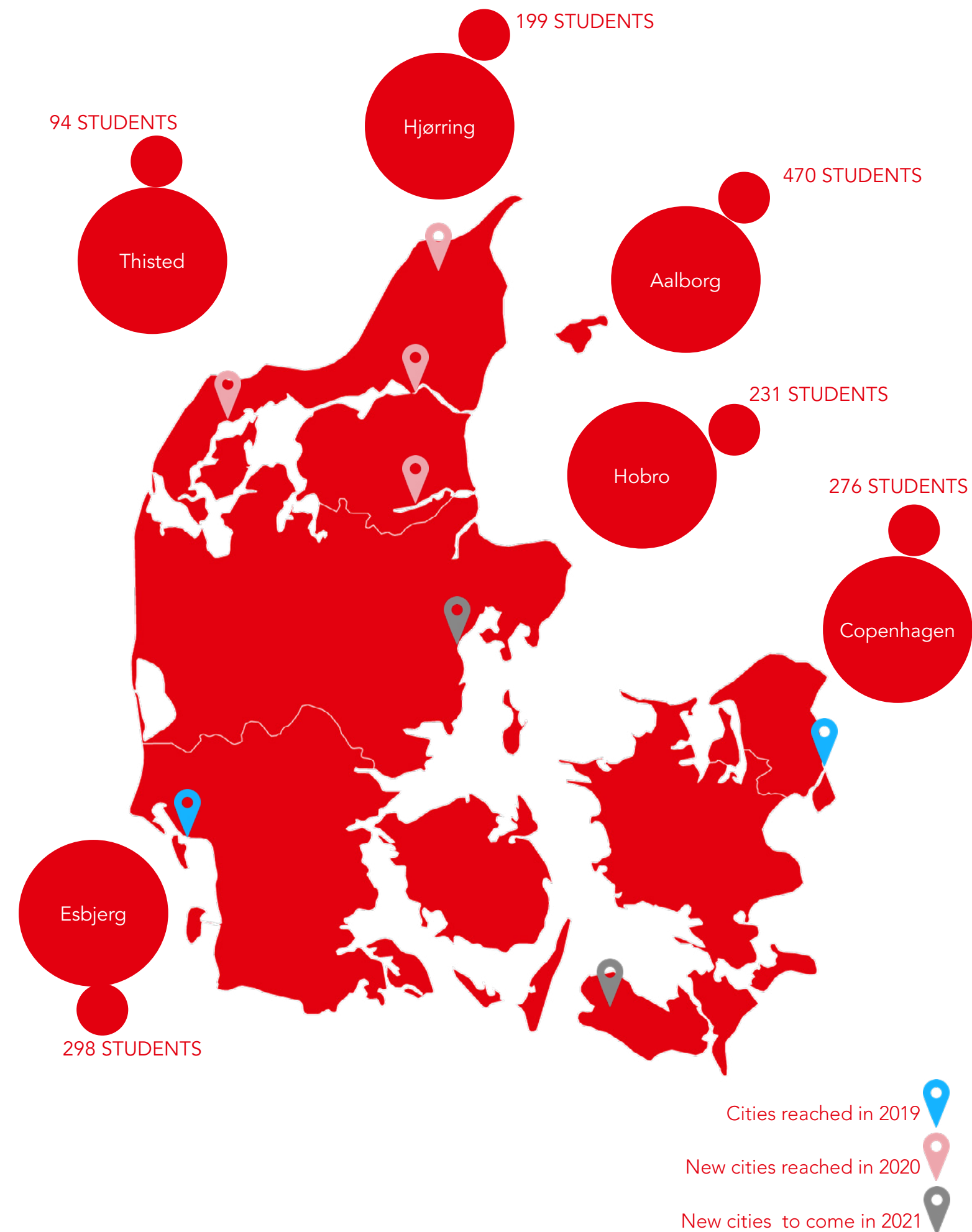
ASK WHY? Docs brings human rights films to Danish school students. This initiative has proven to be effective in raising awareness and compassion, illustrated by teachers as being an “empathy-booster”. Using the cinema as a classroom, this project aims to increase students’ awareness of basic human rights, as well as giving them insight into an everyday life that is far from their own.

In 2020, the project gathered 1600 teenagers in watching and debating three documentaries. The films are followed by Q&As with experts, all happening in cinemas across the country. In 2020, we also

decided to update our teaching material in collaboration with the film director and primary school teacher, Kristoffer Kiørboe. The teaching material is designed to educate students on two subjects: documentary filmmaking and the issues treated in the films. Using this material ensures that the dialogue will continue in the classroom, thus making the screenings have a lasting effect on the students. After participating in this project, teachers report less bullying and teasing in everyday life. The films strengthen students’ tolerance by promoting empathy, learning, and understanding.

“In terms of understanding other cultures and people, the film has contributed to the students’ compassion and given them a more nuanced understanding. We’ve talked a lot about opportunities in life and privileges and how they are inherited.”

Susanne Kjerrumgaard, teacher at Hjerting School, Esbjerg





ASK WHY? Docs, Hjørring

"It's very relevant for teaching and for our work with the UN SDGs to have examples from the real world on subjects that can otherwise be hard to grasp in our part of the world"

Morten Poulsen, 9th grade, Copenhagen

"The 'ASK WHY?' concept is extremely good and versatile! And schoolchildren in Denmark really need to 'ask why' and gain insight into living conditions in other countries. It's healthy and develops them as human beings."

Susanne Kjerrumgaard, teacher at Hjerting School, Esbjerg

FILMS

In The Name Of Your Daughter

The story of courageous Tanzanian young girls running away from genital mutilation and child marriage.

SPEAKERS

Christina Søs Eng, Anthropologist.

Girl Model

The Japanese fashion industry brings young girls from Siberia to work as models. But instead find themselves both exploited and in debt.

Anna Lykke Oehlenschalæger, Model and Scout.

My Escape

The film follows two young Syrians fleeing Syria. The escape is seen from the boys' perspective and part of the film is video footage from the boys' own mobile phones.

Nagieb Khala, Author and War Correspondent.



ASK WHY? Docs, Hjørring

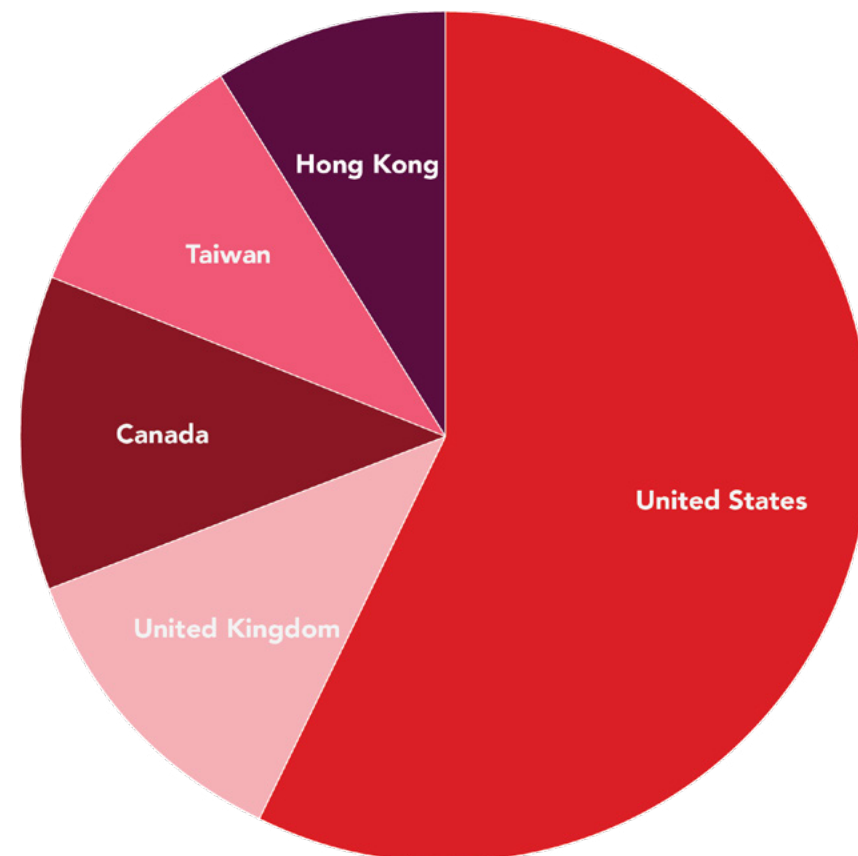
Our Online Community

In 2020, we reached 100.000 subscribers on our YouTube channel, and this number continues to grow rapidly. Our YouTube channel focuses on engaging audiences on human rights issues. In 2020 alone, THE WHY's films were watched 2.4 million times, amounting to more than 525,100 hours. Our viewers are evenly distributed across all age groups. Looking beyond the

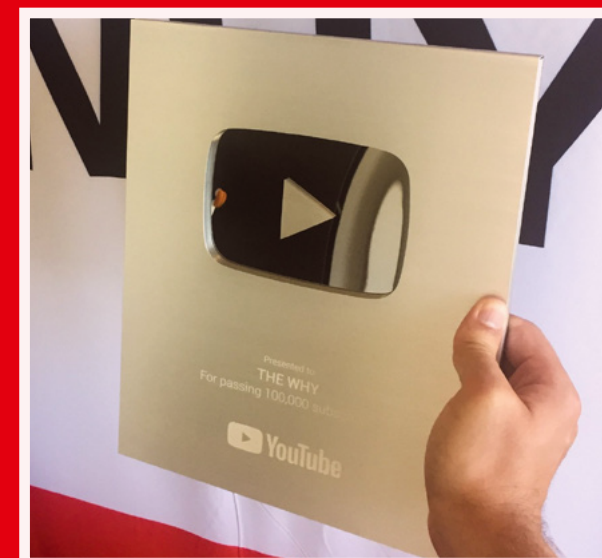
numbers, we are proud that our films capture audiences in the countries where they take place. YouTube allows THE WHY's films to be immediately available for millions of people, raising awareness about the SDGs and human rights violations.



Top 5 Viewership



We passed 100.000 subscribers on YouTube!





From our film *Egypt: We are Watching You*

Case Study: A documentary that defies the Chinese censorship

The Chinese language version of our film *Education, Education*, directed by the Chinese director Weijun Chen, was the second-most viewed film on our YouTube channel in 2020. With 507.6K views coming primarily from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Japan, and to a lesser extent China, where YouTube is blocked. This case study gives us a hint, that there is a thirst for uncensored and reliable information about human rights in China.

the Chinese government. This blockage forces the population to hide their IP-address in order to access the site, effectively hiding their true location. Knowing this, we assume that some of the views coming from other countries are in fact from China.

The fact that China is not the country with the highest number of views, even though the film's audio and subtitles are in Chinese, could be due to the YouTube-block imposed by

Adapting to the Pandemic

When some countries went into strict lockdowns due to Covid-19, large gatherings and events remained canceled or postponed for months. People around the world started spending more time at home and online.

THE WHY decided to act, and when physical screenings became impossible, we moved them online. We started by organising the [Quarantine Film Club](#) during the first lockdown, giving free access to 10 of our documentaries for a month.

In December, during the [WHY SLAVERY? Online Premiere](#) a total of 6 documentaries, and three live Q&As with the directors, were freely available in nine languages for almost a month.

Through the Quarantine Film Club and the WHY SLAVERY? Online Premiere, we honored our mission of providing free access to reliable information to everyone, especially in times of crisis.



From our film *Education, Education*

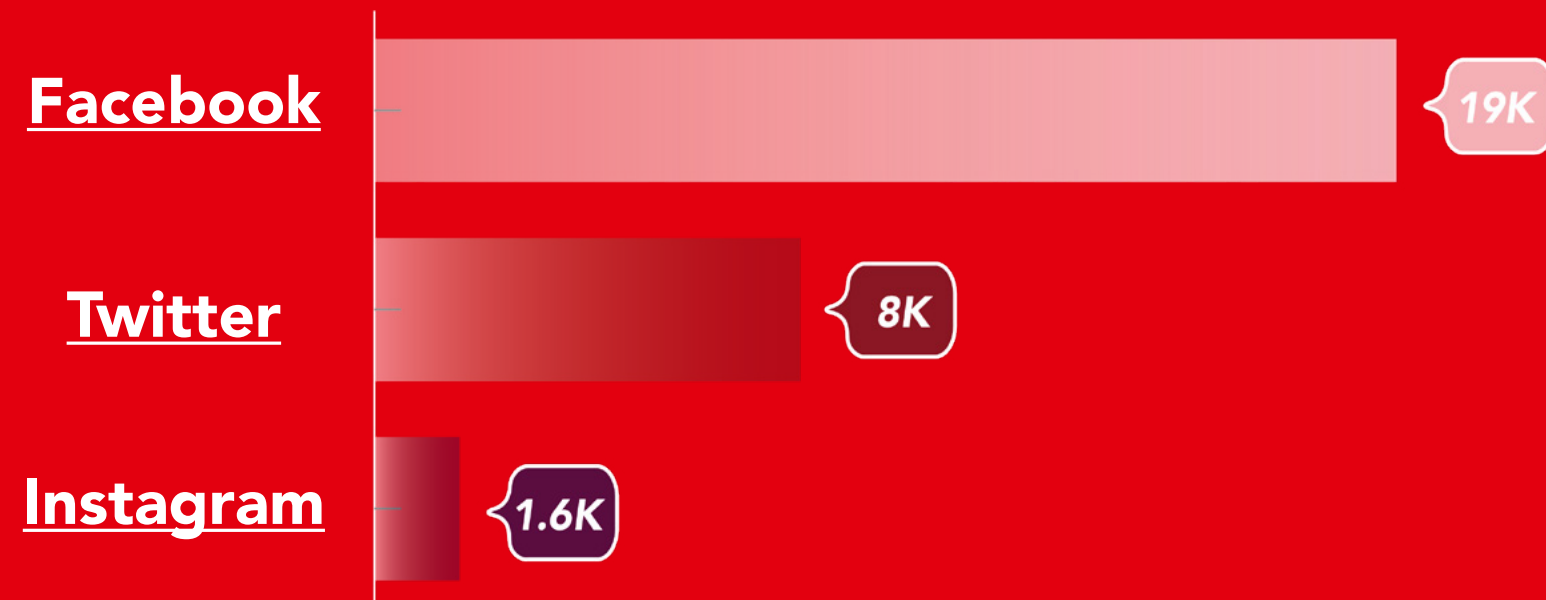
Communication

Engaging the **online community** is central to provide a **strong platform for debates and dialogues**.

By being present online we create **awareness**, stay in touch with our **audience and partners**, allowing us to work together towards **strengthening human rights**.

Another way in which we **engage our community** is by providing an in-depth look of our stories in the **news section of our website**.

Number of followers





WHY PLASTIC?

PRE-DEVELOPMENT

After a year of researching, we are almost ready to present a cutting-edge documentary series, unlike any plastic documentaries made before. Filmed across the globe, the series will bring hard facts to the table, confronting the audience with findings that may come as complete surprise. The series consists of three one-hour documentary films and ten short films that will be broadcast by our +100 broadcasting partners and distributed to NGOs, educational institutions, museums and community organi-

sations. This issue needs to be debated, discussed and acted upon by a global, well-informed audience. Addressing plastic seems more important now than ever. During the pandemic, the use of single-use plastic has skyrocketed. Reports from environmental advocates around the world are flowing in, showing how gloves and masks have become a common pollutant in waterways and in nature. Therefore, the virus has made the WHY PLASTIC? films even more timely.

We The Guinea Pigs*

Production: Plus Pictures
Denmark

Are we part of the greatest biological experiment of all time?

The Story of Recycling*

Production: a&o buero
Germany

What happens to our plastic trash?

The Plastic Industry*

Production: Renegade Pictures
United Kingdom

A look into plastic production.

Preparing the Premiere

Film Competitions and Festivals

During 2020, the WHY PLASTIC series was selected to pitch at the International Film Festival and Forum on Human Rights, in Geneva - FIFDH Genève.

One of the series' film, *The Recycling Scam*, has already won the 9th ARD documentary film competition.



Case Study: Collecting trash in Copenhagen to present WHY PLASTIC

Ren Havn (Danish for "clean harbor") was thought of as an opportunity to raise awareness about plastic pollution. 80 volunteers kayaked for two hours along the city's waterways, bays and canals, filling up baskets with waste until the total pile reached 120 kg. After presenting the campaign and the documentaries in progress, followed by a "WHY PLASTIC? Quiz" where the people were asked questions about plastic pollution. By questioning themselves, the participants were

able to discover that a lot of information about plastic in health, economical and environmental matters is covered up. The activity also highlighted how the topic is usually mystified and simplified, and helped adding context and complexity to one of the greatest environmental issues of our time. By sharing the knowledge with events like this, THE WHY intends to inspire people to acquire more information, share the knowledge they gain and continue to ask WHY PLASTIC?

THE WHY Plastic Nordic Youth Network

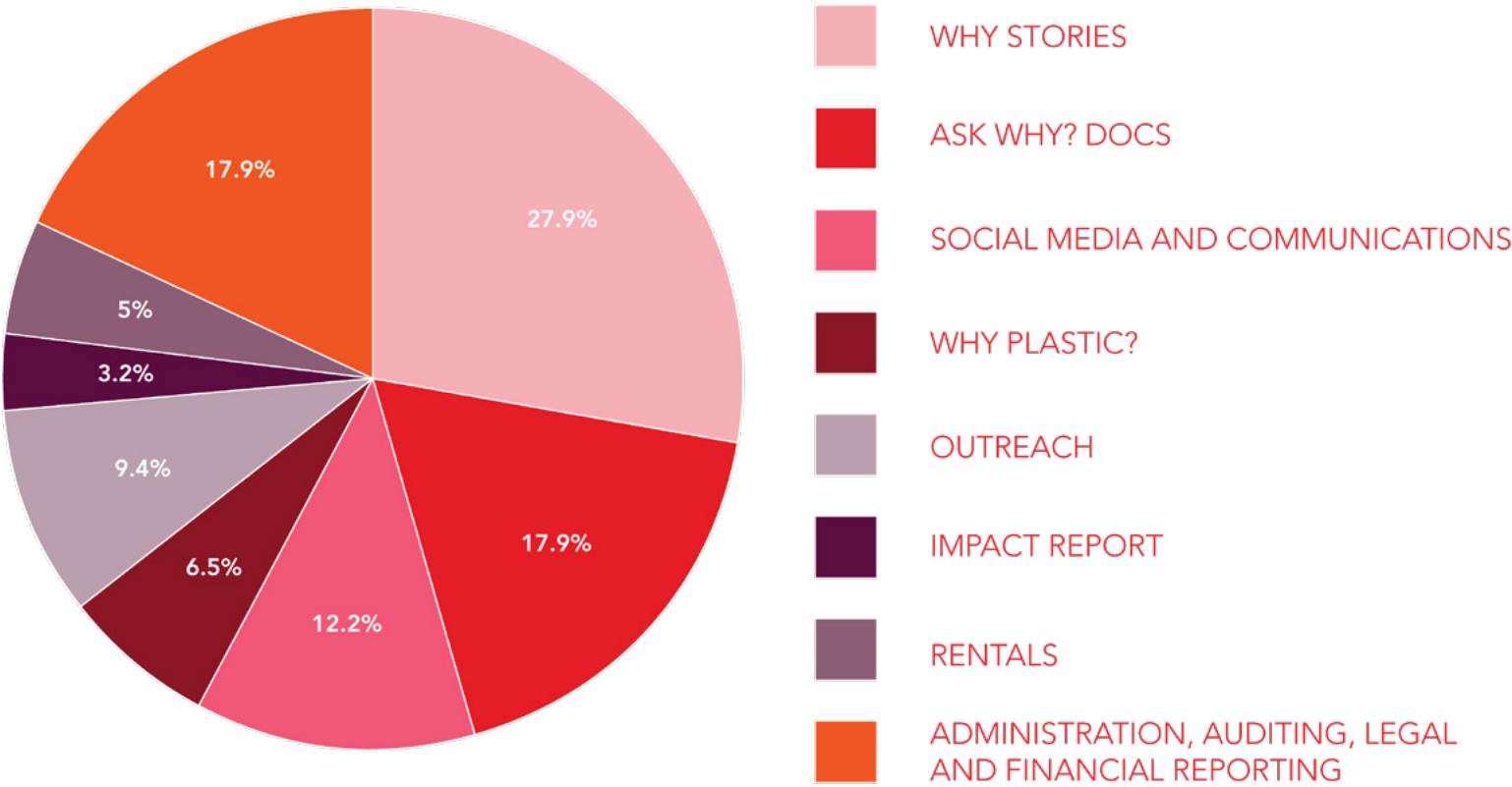
With the intention of increasing our campaign's impact, THE WHY initiated the Plastic Nordic Youth Network. The Network is a collaboration between youth-led environmental organisations across the Nordic countries that aims to empower young people and to draw upon their creativity, knowledge, and dreams, in order to engage wider audiences in the public debate for a more sustainable future. This project's goal is to inform about plastic pollution through film screenings, debates, workshops and creative events. The Network rests on three central ideas: 1 - Young people are powerful agents of change.

2 - Solutions to global problems require collaboration across borders. 3 - Culture has the power to shift our perspective. Through this project, Nordic youth will take the lead in the achievement of SDG Goal 12, specifically with regard to sustainable production, consumption, and disposal of plastic. Plastic is an excellent example of a material with unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. We are proposing knowledge-sharing activities to make young people aware of the unsustainable production and circulation of plastic.



Financial Sustainability

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION IN USD



TOTAL REVENUE IN THE PAST YEAR = 506.938 USD

With Support From



Thanks To

Co-producing Broadcasters



Broadcasting Partners



Outreach Partners





From our film *Daphne: A Pen Too Sharp*

THE WHY FOUNDATION

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Join us.

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As a broadcaster
As a supporter
As a filmmaker