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BEN
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MICHELLE
CHEBET TIREN

NUNGO
MARRIANNE AKINYI

NAWI

FILMCREW PRESENTS
TOGETHER WITH LEARNING LIONS AND BAOBAB PICTURES

MICHELLE LEMUYA IKENY „NAWI“ JOEL LIWAN OCHUNGO BENSON BENTEKEE MICHELLE CHEBET TIREN NUNGO MARRIANNE AKINYI
PATRICK OKETCH NYOKABI MACHARIA DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY KLAUS KNEIST ART DIRECTOR ERIXON KANGETHE MAKE UP DESIGN MERCY NG'ENDO
COSTUME DESIGN VIVA NJERI KIMOTHO EXECUTIVE PRODUCER LUDWIG BAYERN STEVEN HAFT KATJA EICHINGER MATTHIAS ROSENBERGER
PRODUCED BY LYDIA WRENSCH CAROLINE MUHL BRIZAN WERE STORY BY MILCAH CHEROTICH
DIRECTED BY TOBY SCHMUTZLER KEVIN SCHMUTZLER VALLENTINE CHELLUGET APUU MOURINE



NAWI

PRESS BOOKLET

a production by

FilmCrew Media GmbH,
Startup Lions Assets Kenya Ltd. & Baobab Pictures GmbH

story by

Milcah Cherotich

starring

Michelle Lemuya Ikeny, Joel Liwan, Ochungo Benson,
Ben Tekee, Michelle Chebet Tiren, Patrick Oketch
with Nungo Marriane Akinyi
and Nyokabi Macharia

producers

Lydia Wensch, Caroline Heim, Brizan Were

executive producers

Ludwig Bayern, Steven Haft, Katja Eichinger, Matthias Rosenberger

directed by

Toby Schmutzler, Kevin Schmutzler, Apuu Mourine, Valentine Chelluget

NAWI

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NAWI

PREFACE

Based on a story by a Kenyan YouTuber Milcah Cherotich, we are excited to share our feature NAWI.

The narrative unfolds in the cinematically rarely explored region of Turkana, Northern Kenya. NAWI explores the complex issue of child marriage in rural Africa and follows a girl as she resists age-old social traditions. With our movie about hope, sacrifice, and dreams we hope to spark essential conversations on education and gender equality.

In close collaboration with Turkana based NGO "Learning Lions", we believe NAWI will create a lasting impact as it's ancillary fund is dedicated to support girls in the region who are at risk of child marriage.







NAWI

LOGLINE

Sold for livestock by her own father, a young girl escapes her impending marriage and embarks on a journey to reclaim her dream of joining high school.

SYNOPSIS

Based on the winning story of a nationwide writing contest, NAWI portrays the life of a determined girl growing up in rural Kenya.

Nawi's (Michelle Lemuya Ikeny) aspirations of attending high school are shattered when she learns that her father Eree (Ochungo Benson) plans to marry her off to a stranger, Shadrack (Ben Tekee). Despite her family's necessity for the bride wealth – symbolized by a substantial amount of livestock – Nawi refuses to succumb to this arranged child marriage. Her steadfast ally in this struggle is her brother and closest friend, Joel (Joel Liwan).

However, Nawi's father remains entrenched in tribal traditions, swayed by the counsel of uncles, stepbrothers, and the elders of the clan. Even her three mothers (a.o. Michelle Chebet Tiren, Nungo Marrienne Akinyi), constrained by their roles as women, believe that being a wife is Nawi's destined path.

In a bold move, Nawi flees on her wedding night. Pursued by her own family, she embarks on a journey towards Nairobi, clinging to her dream of a promising future. But her sense of responsibility tugs her back when news arrives that her newly-born sister will have to take Nawi's place in the impending marriage. Nawi returns home to confront her family and husband, an idea in mind to rewrite the fate of countless child brides.

NAWI

CAST (selection)



Nawi
Michelle Lemuya Ikeny



Joel
Joel Liwan



Eree
Ochungo Benson



Shadrack
Ben Tekee



Rosemary
Michelle Chebet Tiren



Emanikor
Patrick Oketch



Mama Ekai
Nungo Marrienne Akinyi



Madam Christine
Nyokabi Macharia

NAWI

CREW (selection)

directed by

Toby Schmutzler
Kevin Schmutzler
Apuu Mourine
Vallentine Chelluget

story by

Milcah Cherotich

produced by

Lydia Wrensch
Caroline Heim
Brizan Were

executive producers

Ludwig Bayern
Steven Haft
Katja Eichinger
Matthias Rosenberger

service producers

Kamau Wandung'u (Nairobi)
Steven Kizee (Loropio)

music by

Amadeus Indetzki
Apuu Mourine

cinematography by

Klaus Kneist
Renata Mwende

art design by

Erixon Kangethe
Korodi Esinyen

make-up design by

Mercy Ng'endo

costume design by

Viva Njeri Kimotho

sound by

Roman Pogozelski

edited by

Toby Schmutzler



NAWI

FACTS

Shooting Location	Turkana (Kenya)
Language	Swahili & English
Production Countries	Kenya, Germany
Running time	99min
Genre	Drama
Screening format	DCP, .mov, .mp4
Resolution	4K & 2K
Aspect ratio	2:1
Frame Rate	25fps
Shooting format	8K RED, 2:1
Sound	5.1 surround & stereo
Subtitles	English



NAWI

DIRECTORS' STATEMENTS

According to UNICEF Kenya is home to over four million child brides today.

From the moment I read Milcah's short story I realized that NAWI is more than a beautiful and tragic story that is necessary to tell. It is a narrative that transcends borders and cultures to explore universal themes of hope, sacrifice, and the pursuit of dreams.

Seven years ago, Toby and I were approached by an educational non-profit, the "Learning Lions", to direct a movie in Turkana. Since then we became familiar with the culture while looking for the most compelling stories from the region .

Last year, we launched a writing competition together with the Learning Lions. The winning story by the first-time writer Milcah Cherotich became the foundation of NAWI. Her story portrays a girl facing forced marriage.

From a Western perspective, child marriage exists and is problematic. And that's as far as most peoples' understanding goes. To get our story beyond that limited point of view, we always knew that we would need local expertise in the directing team – which is how we got to meet Apuu and Vallentine a year before the shoot. I don't know if a multi-director constellation like this had been done before, but for NAWI our four-headed hydra model opened endless doors of creativity and cultural explorations.

Their insights allowed NAWI to delve beyond a superficial understanding and explore the reasons behind old norms while it immerses our audience in the rich culture of the proud Turkana tribe.

As four directors who bring different backgrounds and perspectives to the story, we hope to have translated it into a movie that will resonate with audiences globally. We aim to create a cinematic experience that challenges preconceptions, fosters empathy, and – most importantly – inspires action.

We believe that by telling Milcah's story, we can contribute to the global dialogue on child marriage, the importance of education, and gender equality, no matter where and what you are born.

Kevin Schmutzler

NAWI

DIRECTORS' STATEMENTS

Creating NAWI was a deeply personal journey for me. As a native of Turkana, a woman and a mother I grew up with the struggles, particularly regarding early child marriage and education for young girls and women. To me, Nawi's journey is a vessel for the untold stories of my people, carrying the responsibility to inspire positive change and eliminate harmful practices.

Working with a seasoned and professional team who understood the significance of this story for Turkana and beyond was both humbling and empowering. I gained so much knowledge and skills in cinema, and at the same time, it was able to share so much of our culture and traditions.

I have been making music since I was a child and working together in our directing team and with the whole crew reminded me a bit of playing in a band. Different instruments, different players and in the end, everything comes together in that one emotional piece of art. This complexity of producing and directing a film in the real world is still amazing to me.

Being the first woman director in my community to complete a full-length film is monumental. Words cannot capture the honor and hope I feel. This achievement is a testament to the power of dreams, intentionality, passion, and discipline, supported by an incredible team. Our collective determination to use our knowledge and experience to tell African stories and create opportunities for others is stronger than ever.

The future is bright, and our lives have been profoundly impacted through the NAWI film. Here's to more purposeful work and to making a difference, one story at a time.

Apuu Mourine



LUDWIG PRINCE OF BAVARIA & BRIZAN WERE founders of the NGO Learning Lions and producers on NAWI

What was the initial thought behind the project?

Brizan: We want to introduce Turkana to the world. Our program has been active in this region for almost ten years and we know about the challenges but also about the opportunities.

Ludwig: Since I first came to Turkana 15 years ago, I have dreamt of shooting a cinema movie here. I was so fascinated by the region and the culture, I wanted to share that with a Western audience. But it took over a decade for that dream to become a reality.

What were the biggest challenges?

L: Turkana is very remote, the government in Nairobi is so far away and vice versa. There is no established infrastructure to shoot with a big crew and heavy equipment. Plus we always wanted to integrate the making of the movie in our Learning Lions education program. So we needed to find heads of department who would not only shoot in an untapped territory but who would on top be willing to train and educate on the fly.

B: When we then witnessed the team not only work together but also grow together and learn from another, it validated our core beliefs at Learning Lions.

From crew to cast...

B: It was always clear that we wanted to be as authentic as a movie can be. I grew up in one of the villages we have been shooting. I insisted

we need to find someone from Turkana, who is familiar with the traditions for the lead role. A year before the shoot, the script was still in the making, we started looking for our 'Nawi'. The directors visited nearly every school in the region. In the end we had a few hundred girls auditioning for the role and with Michelle we found a girl who was born to play this part.

In the movie, she is playing a girl that could have been her. How much is fiction?

L: In the past few years, since Learning Lions has been active in Turkana, we've come across dozens of cases of early marriage. As an NGO, what do you do in that situation? There is no fiction here; that is the sad reality.

B: It takes time and patience to adapt traditions and systems that are so deeply rooted in the communities. Milcah has managed to portray in the script how much families struggle and depend on dowries. Breaking that cycle is what we are trying to achieve step by step.

L: We have already opened the first boarding schools for girls. We believe education is the key to change, so we have created several levers to educate young girls but also their families. We developed a concept that will provide access to education for girls and hopefully prevent many cases, some in advance and some when it counts.

B: We really believe our movie can open eyes, with the NAWI fund serving as a real-life instrument to create change.

NAWI

BIOGRAPHIES DIRECTORS

Toby & Kevin Schmutzler



Toby & Kevin co-direct films since childhood. All Generation Y, the brothers believe in the transformative power of movies to foster social change. Sparked by a student film on India's water crisis, the Munich- and Cape Town-based directors founded FilmCrew, an indie production house with a heart for sustainable filmmaking.

After a documentary on street children in DR Congo titled "Where the Street Ends", Toby and Kevin released their multi-award-winning feature film debut "Robin – Watch for Wishes" which was soon picked up by Electric Entertainment. "Robin", a bucket-list-movie about an ill child exploring South Africa, wasn't just a movie – it was a movement as the social campaign Watch for Wishes raised donations for kids in need.

After a historical short film venture "About German Women", and their stage direction debut with "Hunger and Greed" on crimes of the garbage industry the brothers co-created the Netflix documentary "Biking Borders", that has financed the construction of seven schools in remote regions in Africa and South America.

Toby and Kevin got to visit Turkana for the first time in 2017 and have since then travelled back and forth as they had been working on NAWI as their second feature.

NAWI

BIOGRAPHIES DIRECTORS

Apuu Mourine Munyes



Apuu is a musician, designer, and first-time filmmaker born and raised in Turkana, Kenya. In 2016 she graduated from the Learning Lions program and has since then used her passion and talent for creative arts to teach the following eleven generations of young Kenyans going through the program.

Despite facing opposition and cultural taboos, Apuu began her music career at a young age. With her music, she continuously wants to drive the transformation of her tribe, the Turkana, as a storyteller and educator.

Her cultural work with community-based organizations like "Value Villages", "Turkfugee" or "Kakuma Sound" provides her with the possibility to use her talents in various arts as a tool for empowerment, awareness, and development.

Nawi, as Apuu's first feature film, was a perfect project for her creative skillset and a dream come true to prove her abilities as a director and musician. Plus: as a woman, a Turkana, and a mother, Apuu has been dealing with the issue of child marriage since she is born. Her greatest lesson from the project: "Teamwork makes the dream work!"

NAWI

BIOGRAPHIES DIRECTORS

Vallentine Chelluget



Vallentine is a self-made filmmaker residing in Kisumu, Kenya. Val got her expertise through workshops, YouTube, and – despite her age of just 23 – years of field work. As a director, scriptwriter, and producer, Val has created various short films that got her jobs in the directing department of several award-winning Kenyan productions like “Deranged” or “Okethoree”, and the Kenyan Film Prize nominated “Wife for Hire”.

Val also works as a trainer in the charity organization “Naweza Films” in Kisumu, which empowers youths through training in filmmaking and storytelling.

Growing up in the slums, she has always had a passion for telling the untold stories. To let audiences know and understand the challenges people face, as they inherit their cultures, traditions, and passions. And while her good communication skills have helped her to connect with people from diverse cultures and beliefs to find those stories, her talents in art and film have enabled her to be heard and listened to.

NAWI is Valentine’s first feature-length project as a director, a role in which she could put all her experience in Kenyan movie-making in.

NAWI

BIOGRAPHY WRITER

Milcah Cherotich



Milcah is living at Lake Nakuru where she is working as a national park tour guide and YouTuber. Milcah has very personal touchpoints with the issue of child marriage within her close family and thus, when she came across a writing competition hosted by the NGO Learning Lions she seized the opportunity to lend her voice to the cause.

Milcah submitted a moving first-person narrative exploring the emotional journey of a young girl forced into marriage – and won the competition. As the spearhead of a writers' room, she then brought her first cinematic script to life: NAWI

"Child marriage is a topic that doesn't receive the attention it deserves. In fact, many people aren't even aware that it still exists. But we must fight against these practices now. We must stand up for girls' rights and their right to an education. With this spirit, I've just submitted my story."

NAWI

PROJECT BACKGROUND

NAWI is the first feature film that shot and set in the arid landscapes of Turkana, a semi-desert in Northern Kenya. Milcah Cherotich's winning entry in a national writing competition is inspired by true and deeply personal events. It takes us into the heart of a land where the Kenyan government's efforts to bring change collide with the enduring tradition of child marriages in the rural communities of Turkana.

The movie is the result of a unique collaboration between the Kenyan NGO program Learning Lions and the German production companies FilmCrew and Baobab Pictures. Their shared mission: to bring an authentic, untold Turkana story to life, shot on real locations and starring local talent in key roles.

NAWI extends beyond the screen to create awareness about the pressing issue of child marriage. The producers have launched an ancillary fund, dedicated to building girl schools in remote regions of Africa. To help protect girls from forced marriage and empower them to shape their own futures – the NAWI Fund.



NAWI

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Child marriage

More than 640 million girls or women alive today were married as children. That equals 12% of the world's population. Each year, approximately 12 million girls are married before they turn 18. While the global prevalence of child marriage has decreased from 21% to 19% over the last decade, progress is not fast enough to meet the Sustainable Development Goal of eliminating child marriage by 2030. To achieve this goal, the rate of reduction would need to increase twentyfold.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the second-highest rate of child marriage worldwide, with about 20% of girls married before age 18. At the current pace, it would take over 200 years to eliminate child marriage in this region.

According to latest Unicef numbers, every fourth girl in Turkana is married underage.

In regions like Turkana which face extreme poverty, families marry off their daughters at a young age in exchange for livestock. This trade is seen as an economic necessity, offering immediate financial relief to the other members of the struggling families. Although countries like Kenya forbid child marriage by law (Marriage Act of 2014), the practice persists, particularly in remote communities where enforcement is challenging.

Child marriage has severe consequences for young girls. It not only deprives them of their education and childhood but also exposes them to an increased risk of domestic violence, and higher rates of maternal and infant mortality due to early pregnancies.

Efforts to combat child marriage include improving access to education, strengthening legal frameworks, and addressing cultural norms that perpetuate the practice. Initiatives to establish boarding schools for girls are seen as one of the most practical solutions to provide safe environments where they can learn and develop away from the pressures of early marriage.

NAWI

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Turkana

Turkana is a county in northwestern Kenya. The remote region is known for its challenging living conditions, its rich cultural heritage and its significant development needs. It is one of the poorest and least developed areas in Kenya, with limited infrastructure and resources.

The county's semi-arid climate makes sustainable agriculture very difficult, so that many food supplies have to be transported from regions several hours away. One of the county's most prominent features is Lake Turkana, which stretches approximately 300 kilometers from north to south and serves as a critical resource for local communities. Despite its mildly saline water, the lake supports fishing activities and provides a stark contrast to the surrounding desert landscape.

Most of Turkana's population still follow traditional living habits in relatively poor conditions. Pastoralism is the primary economic activity. Raising livestock such as cattle, goats, and camels plays a central role in providing food, income, and social status.

Other local businesses in Turkana include basket weaving, mechanical repairs and small kiosks, however none of these scale to provide widespread employment opportunities or meaningful wages. The youth are the most directly affected, having little opportunity to find a job and move beyond subsistence livelihoods in their home region.

The semi-arid climate makes the region vulnerable to droughts and water scarcity. Environmental threats also include the impact of upstream hydroelectric projects and climate change on Lake Turkana's water levels. Socioeconomic challenges include poverty, limited access to education and healthcare, and inadequate infrastructure.

Despite these obstacles, efforts are ongoing to address these issues and improve living conditions for the residents. With around one million inhabitants Turkana holds an untapped potential of human talent with the great opportunity of internet access even in some of the most remote areas.

NAWI

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Learning Lions Kenya

Learning Lions Campus, 2023



Learning Lions is a non-profit transforming lives in rural Kenya. It offers a digital empowerment program, providing opportunities for young adults in Turkana to learn, earn and innovate. Founded in 2015 by Ludwig, Prince of Bavaria, Brizan Were, and others Learning Lions is fighting poverty with digital opportunity. They connect talents from one of the remotest regions in Africa to global digital markets, making use of internet and solar power access.

The program offers training in software development, graphic design, and media & film production, enabling young adults to generate income online and build sustainable careers without leaving their communities. A special focus of the program includes female empowerment and girls education.

The Learning Lions ICT Campus is designed by Francis Kéré and ensures that students can focus entirely on their education. The initiative aims to bridge the gap between education and employment, fostering local talent and reducing urban migration.

NAWI is the first feature film project realized by Learning Lions, exemplifying their innovative approach of teaming up young local talent with Western professionals. This collaboration has created a fruitful work and learning environment, unleashing immense creative potential.

NAWI

SOCIAL IMPACT

The NAWI fund

Wakanda Girls Senior High School



The NAWI fund has been created to support girls at an immediate risk of being married or need to be rescued from of an existing marriage. It aims to achieve this through several approaches:

- **Building schools:** Finance and construct schools, in particular boarding schools for girls to provide access to education and shelter from violence.
- **Providing stipends:** Offer scholarships to girls who are at risk of being married or have been rescued from marriage
- **Establishing Rescue Teams:** Create, train, and equip rescue teams who are capable of intervening in immediate danger situations
- **Supporting Families:** Incentivize and support families to send their daughters back to school after long holidays, when most cases of child marriage occur.

The first girls' highschool, "Wakanda Girls Senior High", has already been completed during the production of the movie. Located at the shore of Lake Turkana next to the Learning Lions NGO campus the school enrolled over 300 girls in its first year.

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