

To: Chief, BMS, UNESCO
From: Alexander Shaw, Audio Visual Aids, Uganda
Subject: The Uganda Film Unit. Final report on the Project-period
September 1961 to December 1964
Date: 22nd. February 1965
Note: My mission in Uganda finished in July 1964. The project continued until December of that year. This is a condensed version of my final report and that of J-C. Bois the other UNESCO expert, who worked on the project until December 1964

INTRODUCTION: During 1960 UNESCO sent me on a programming tour in the Eastern half of Africa. While I was in Uganda the head of the, then, Department of Information stated that the country badly needed a film unit mainly for mass education purposes but also to carry out public information work. Until about 1958 they had a small unit but the expatriate left and his Ugandan counterpart was killed in a car accident. Thus the unit came to an end and they had no means of restarting it. The project of reconstituting the Uganda Film Unit was eventually inscribed in the 1961/62 EPTA programme

HISTORY OF PROJECT

1961 The project started in September with an office in the Censor Board's viewing theatre, a desk, a filing cabinet, twenty four chairs, some equipment and myself. The Director of the Department was very anxious to make a success of it but there was a very small budget which could only be used for specific purposes and there was no provision for any trainees or staff. Neither was it a very good time to start a long term project as Independence was in the air and everyone was preparing for the change over and had not much time to look further ahead. I went on a very useful tour of the country which gave me an idea of distribution problems and I talked to all kinds of people about all kinds of matters. When I got back I started preparing plans and estimates which were discussed and revised and discussed again.

There were two people outside the Department who had been trained abroad in film making but there was no money to take them on so we could not start work. However, with two young men from the Information staff, who I was able to borrow, we carried out test shows all over the country in places where people were accustomed to gather. (There are no villages in Uganda.) We found out many things that were to be extremely useful to us later on - the two young men eventually joined the Unit - and we learned a lot about what length films should be, whether colour was a necessity or not and what sort of music to use. We also learned about the problems of generators, maintenance and over-enthusiastic audiences. For all these shows we had excellent co-operation from the field workers of the Ministry of Community Development

1962 . By now we had an adequate budget, new offices in another building, the \$14,000 worth of equipment provided by UNESCO was arriving and we had money to convert an old Government building into workshops for editing, projection and small studio work. We also had provision for salaries for trainees - I had asked for twelve to allow for wastage but this was reduced to four and then, later, raised to six.

In March the invaluable J-C. Bois (UNESCO expert) arrived. He was originally to have come for six months to concentrate on technical training,

especially in the camera field but (a) the project was already six months behind and (b) it was clear that the administrative side of setting up the Unit was going to be nearly a whole time job. It was impossible to find me a counterpart at that time. Happily, UNESCO was able to extend the stay of Bois, and this turned out to have been an essential factor in the project's eventual success.

Also in March we finally got a Land Rover for the use of the Unit. We had the people, the money and the facilities and were ready to start.

The first two films we were asked to do were urgent ones but not particularly suitable for our training purposes. It did not seem to be sensible to resist the idea when we had spent such a long time asking for things ourselves. So we covered the General Election of 1961 on a countrywide scale and then tackled the film of the Independence Celebrations. This was the official film and it presented all the problems of a full scale production and certainly gave the trainees an over-all view of film making techniques. The Unit gained in the end for the film was a great success, arrived back in Uganda at a very useful moment and the Government began to realise that the Uganda Film Unit could be a useful part of their Information set-up.

The Department had become a Ministry and the new Minister was full of enthusiasm for all the Mass Communication techniques. It was he who inaugurated television in Uganda.

1963 The full training programme started in February. Time was short so Bois and I had to use shock tactics. I started them on script writing with strong emphasis on content and approach, Bois gave them basic training in camera work and sound recording and direction. And they were then sent out to make films working in teams of two. Of course Bois visited them while they were on location and we were always on call to help them out. Such a system is hard on trainees but our team responded nobly.

We had a consolidated list of eighty four films requested by all the Ministries and we reduced this to forty five. They were all Mass Education films and from the list we chose those subjects we thought the simplest.

The whole year was spent in training and during this period the trainees shot fourteen films averaging about twenty five minutes each. They were in black and white and colour, rather rough, but very useful. (See Annexe I)

During this period, also, the trainees shot material for the new TV service, worked with foreign units visiting Uganda, attended drama classes and seminars and were sent, at Government's expense, to see any commercial films that Bois and I thought might be useful to them. They had no leave and a hard life but there was no time for the classic five-year training approach.

At the end of the year we put the Unit to the test. We were to make the film of the Prime Minister's Wedding in colour and I decided that it should be done entirely by the trainees. They would stand in front of three thousand people in the Cathedral and fifteen thousand at the reception so that everyone could see them doing the work themselves. The film was first class, everyone was delighted and the trainees showed the film to the Prime Minister at a large party. I think that, from that day, the Uganda Film Unit

was established.

The administrative side was making progress although changes of staff within the Ministry meant that we often had to start all over again. Fortunately I was directly responsible to the Permanent Secretary. This was essential as most matters were policy ones and we could go directly to the Minister. The project owes a lot of its success to the continued support of the Unit by the P.S. and the understanding attitude of the two Ministers.

1964 During the first part of the year the trainees started writing commentaries, recording them and editing them for the films that they had made. They also learned about music tracks.

As part of our condensed training scheme we relied very much on fellowships. We had four from UNESCC. The most experienced trainee went to the National Film Board of Canada for polishing. Another went to study Government Film making methods in India, (most useful), Malaysia, Pakistan and the Sudan.

Maintenance being one of our major problems, we were fortunate enough to obtain a fellowship from D.T.C. and a Ugandan is now completing a course in London. To complete the fellowship part of this report we obtained two more fellowships from D.T.C. and the production manager went to London and so did a fifth trainee. We felt that by spreading the fellowships across the world we were giving the whole Unit an international background and we are indebted to the work that ~~UNESCC~~, UNESCC, and the D.T.C. put into organising these studies.

The completed films were now coming in and being shown to the Ministries concerned. We had deliberately left certain mistakes in the films so that the trainees would learn the hard way, for now they knew enough to see where they had gone wrong - a lesson that no amount of telling could teach.

There were more official films to be made - the visits of the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago and of the Emperor of Ethiopia - and these were now automatically done by the trainees. They had to learn how to do official filming diplomatically and get the shots without unduly disturbing important people.

The Minister had decided that the Unit must take on a new sort of film making - the projection of Uganda abroad - and his decision was confirmed by the new Minister who took over. There was also talk of a newsreel and an expansion of the distribution service. Now that the country was running so well there was more time to think of the future. The Film Unit needed a general overhaul. It had become, in a very short time, an integral part of the Government's services. But its whole set-up needed rethinking in view of new demands.

DESCRIPTION OF THE UGANDA FILM UNIT

a. Place in the Government. The Uganda Film Unit forms a section of the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism, P.O. Box 142, Kampala, Uganda. The Producer is responsible to the Permanent Secretary for policy and programme and to the Under-Secretary for administration. It has an acting Executive Assistant/Films Officer but at the moment no Producer.

b. Premises. Three offices in the Ministry. Four cutting rooms, one sound cutting room, a projection theatre, store rooms, garage etc. about five min. a distance from the Ministry.

c. Staff An acting Executive Assistant/Films Officer. One secretary shared with other sections.

Five film technicians.

Two technical assistants - one for maintenance

A Film Assistant/Librarian plus an assistant,

One mobile cinema projectionist

One driver plus the usual messenger staff

d. Equipment The unit is well equipped to carry out the work required up to a certain stage (see under Production c.) The Government already had some basic equipment and UNESCC added to this. There are now two 16 mm. Arriflex, four Faillard Bolex, an Lomicola editing machine, Colortran lights, a Kudelski Nagra tape recorder, a magnetic film recorder synchronised with the Arriflex plus the usual editing equipment. To implement the decision to make films for abroad and a new reel, the Government have bought a 35 mm. camera and a new Nagra III synchronised with it, a 35 mm. editing table with three heads and portable battery-run lighting equipment. It is planned to buy dubbing equipment.

e. Production. The Unit can produce sound or silent films in black and white or colour. The technicians can carry out investigations, write treatments and scripts, direct, photograph and edit. They can write commentaries and record them and edit sound to picture. ~~They can write commentaries and record them and edit sound to picture.~~ They can also shoot synchronised sound. They are not all equally good at all the jobs; each has his own special aptitudes but they know all the techniques.

All processing work has to be done in the U.K. and so does the dubbing. This is a great weakness. A laboratory and a dubbing studio should be as much to hand as an editing table or a camera. The Overseas Film and Television Centre are the London agents of the Government of Uganda and they have been most helpful all the way through but even they cannot prevent the endless delays caused by sending film back and forth, even though it ~~goes~~ by air.

f. Film Library. Information took this over some years ago from Community Development. At one time it distributed films from many sources. But, with the coming of Independence, I suggested that it should confine itself to films about Uganda, adding films about East Africa or any other worthwhile films that had no distribution point in Uganda. There are many 16 mm. projectors all over the country and an increasing number of countries and organisations have their own libraries. The official library is much used although, until the new productions of the Uganda Film Unit, its films were rather dated.

g. Distribution. Up-to-date there is only one mobile cinema, given by U.S.A.I.D., and this has been in continuous use since it was received and with enormous success. The audience figures are staggering and the demands incessant. These shows do two important jobs. One, they show nationally important films and thus make the country people feel that they are part of one country and they also take the capital to the country. Two, they gather very large audiences from their scattered homes and thus give an opportunity for mass education films to be shown and for the extension

workers of all the Ministries to ~~make use of this opportunity~~. These audiences present one problem. They have often come a long way and are not going to be fobbed off with the ideal programme of one film. This suggests that programmes will have to be carefully balanced and the key film well presented.

Soon Uganda will receive some mobile cinemas from Canadian Aid and the whole project of countrywide coverage will be under way. This has always been considered of great importance by both the Ministers. The rural people must not be left behind and they must also be persuaded to follow new policies for economic development.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

a. Production Units that have to meet changing demands must themselves change. The Uganda Film Unit is no exception. It is already changing to meet the challenge of having to make films for abroad. But it is still a comparatively young institution and probably not yet ready to meet all the stresses and strains that may beset it.

A. It is recommended that the officials responsible give the Unit as much sympathetic attention in the future as they have done in past

b. If the Unit had continued to confine itself to films of a mass education nature it could probably have stood on its own feet with a producer being found from amongst the existing personnel. But it has been agreed that an outside producer will have to be brought in to take the Unit a further step into the field of a more sophisticated type of film for overseas use

B. It is recommended that the Producer be found and put in charge as soon as possible. A long period without production leadership might prove disastrous

c. The distribution service will be enlarged when the vehicles from Canada arrive.

C. It is recommended that the Distribution service is looked upon as an integral part of the work of the Ministry, that the projectionists are carefully chosen and from salary point of view treated as key people since they represent the Ministry in the field. They should be well supported from the centre when on safari.

d. It seems that the Unit will have to be expanded if the Minister's new policy is to be carried out. At the moment it looks as though three extra people would be sufficient to meet the new demands and do away with the present situation where, if one person is ill or leaves, the Unit loses a third of its production potential

D. It is recommended that the expansion is carried out with due consideration of the economic possibilities. Too small a unit cannot do a proper job but too big a one can quickly become a first victim in time of economic recession. If three new people are taken on it would probably be as well to send them abroad for training right away so that they do not become juniors to those who have been abroad and stay in that position through lack of prestige.

e. There is a sum of money for buying dubbing equipment.

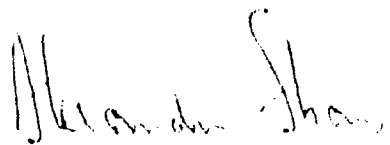
E. It is recommended that someone should be sent abroad right away for at least two years to study this complicated technical subject. He should be someone who has already had training in electronics.

f. This still leaves the laboratory problem. Since there are no processing facilities in East Africa all film production is subject to delays.

F. It is recommended that the idea of a joint East African laboratory be pursued. Already suggested by the first Minister of Information and with a great need for it in neighbouring Kenya (and presumably in Tanzania), it would seem that some sort of common service laboratory is a necessity. The possibilities of a private enterprise/Government/bilateral aid project might well be investigated.

SUMMARY: The Uganda Film Unit now exists and flourishes^s. There is no reason why it should not continue on its successful way and develop under a new Producer. The Government has, with its usual wisdom, avoided one of the pitfalls into which so many Government film projects have fallen. It has never, except on rare and reasonable occasions, used the Unit for purposes of political expediency.

I am sanguine about the future. My experience of Uganda and its people has convinced me that there is a basic solidarity and a hard core of good sense that will ensure it a prosperous future. Since we hope that the Uganda Film Unit is part of that future, we can, I think, afford to be optimistic.


Alexander Shaw UNESCO
Taipei, Taiwan

ANNEXE I

Uganda Film Unit

List of Productions made during Training Period

Ministry of Health

Good Health

1. Better Housing
2. Clean Water
3. Nutrition
4. Environmental Sanitation.

Ministry of Community Development

National Literacy
Campaign

1. The Two Friends
2. Cows or Goats?
3. Danger
4. The Burden of Disease.

**Ministry of Agriculture &
Co-operatives**

Cotton

Cultivation

1. Spacing and Spraying.
2. Farming with Oxen.

Fisheries Department

Increased Production

1. Better Boats

**Ministry of Information, Broadcasting
& Tourism**

National Events

1. General Elections 1962.
2. Uganda Attains Independence
3. The Anniversary of Independence
4. The Prime Minister's Wedding
5. The Visit of Sir Eric Williams
6. The Visit of the Emperor of Ethiopia.

also government news items for the U.S. Information Service, the British Information Service and Uganda Television.