

14.07.16: “I didn’t set out to make this film. I was sitting in a bar on the outskirts of Nairobi and saw the #HeForShe campaign on a television screen, it was an inspiration,” explained Barney Douglas, director of *Warriors* last night at Cinema Galleries.



Promotional poster for the film. Photo: Twitter.

Warriors tells the inspiring story of the Maasai Warriors Cricket team, their journey to Lord’s cricket ground and their struggle against female genital mutilation (FGM), contrary to the traditions of their own people. The film documents, and weaves into one, the disparate narratives of the team’s battle to compete in the Last Man Stands cricket tournament, their conflict with tribal elders over FGM and balancing the overall development of their community with maintaining their distinct identity.

Ciné-ONU was proud to partner with the Brussels teams of [UN Women](#) and the [United Nations Population Fund](#)

to bring this fantastic film to Ciné-ONU fans in Brussels. The event also highlighted the importance of the

[#HeForShe](#)

campaign – to engage men and boys as agents for change in the fight for gender equality. Often, especially in traditional male dominated societies, it is men who can effect change the most and make a real difference in conditions for women.



Photo: UNRIC.

The screening of the film was followed by a discussion with Barney Douglas (director of *Warrior*), Dagmar Schumacher (director of UN Women in Brussels), Imali Ngusale (Kenyan youth activist working with DSW), Sietske Steneker (director of United Nations Population Fund in Brussels) and was chaired by Caroline Petit (Deputy-Director of UN Regional Information Centre in Brussels).

Sietske Steneker proclaimed: “*We can change and end female genital mutilation within a*

generation with the right drive. FGM is a universal problem that usually goes hand-in-hand with other issues such as marrying off at an early age which typically means these girls are robbed of an education and fulfilling life as well”

A public health survey in 2009 found that 27% of Kenyan women had been ‘subjected to the cut’, however that number rose far higher in certain ethnic groups: Somalians had a rate of 98% and the Maasai had a rate of 73%. In these cases the ritualization of FGM is highly interwoven with tradition and notions of maturity. This is openly displayed in the film, with tribal elders stating that without FGM there would be no distinction between ‘girls’ and ‘women’. Barney commented on this theme saying: *“this film is not about making people reject traditions, but adapting to new realities”*



Director, Barney Douglas discussing FGM. Photo: UNRIC.

Dagmar Schumacher echoed the themes of the [#HeForShe](#) campaign saying the film was a ‘great showcase of the power of men fighting for gender equality’

and stated her optimism for the future: “

Gender equality is like a marathon, hopefully we are near the finish line”

Imali, commenting on her experiences working in the field on this very issue, explained how she became involved: “*What was the one thing I could do to change the world? I spoke out about this problem. I could have easily been born into a different environment, we never choose where we are born into. So I decided to take a stand. Women never get what they deserve, only what they fight for.*”

Closing up the debate, Caroline Petit emphasized the relevance of the [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

to

many of the issues raised in the film – especially SDG 5 for gender equality.