



Contact:

Cathy Fisher, cfisher@pov.org, 212-989-7425; Cynthia Lopez, clopez@pov.org, 212-989-7425

POV online pressroom: www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom

Are International Aid Programs in Africa Undermining the Very Communities They Aim to Help? POV's "Good Fortune" Goes to Kenya to Find Out, Tuesday, July 13, 2010, on PBS

"As this fascinating and infuriating film illustrates . . . the road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions." – *In These Times*

MEDIA ALERT – FACT SHEET

National Air Date:

Good Fortune has its national broadcast premiere on **Tuesday, July 13, 2010**, at 10 p.m. on PBS. (Check local listings.) The film airs during the regular season of the [POV \(Point of View\)](#) documentary series. **Good Fortune** will also stream in its entirety from **July 14 – Oct. 12, 2010**, on www.pbs.org/pov/goodfortune. Now in its 23rd year, POV is American television's longest-running independent documentary series and is the winner of a Special Emmy for Excellence in Television Documentary Filmmaking and the International Documentary Association's IDA Award for Best Continuing Series

The Film:

Over the past 50 years, the West has sent some \$2.3 trillion in aid to Africa, the poorest of the world's continents. **Good Fortune** is a provocative exploration of how massive international efforts to alleviate poverty in Africa may be undermining the very communities they aim to benefit. In Kenya's rural countryside, Jackson's farm is being flooded by an American investor who hopes to alleviate poverty by creating a multimillion-dollar rice farm. Across the country in Nairobi, Silva's home and business in Africa's largest shantytown, Kibera, are being demolished as part of a U.N. slum-upgrading project.

These gripping stories of two Kenyans battling to save their homes from large-scale development present a unique opportunity see foreign aid through eyes of the people it is intended to help. Director Landon Van Soest spent over a year and a half in Kenya to capture these vantage points.

Watch the trailer and learn more at www.pbs.org/pov/goodfortune.

In the News:

Voice of America: "U.S. Vice President Urges Kenyans to Transform Their Country," by Peter Clotey, June 9, 2010. "Kenyans are expected to vote in a referendum scheduled August 4 to determine whether to accept, or reject, a proposed constitution that will also pave the way for the next general election. . . . U.S. vice president [Joe Biden] said, 'a new constitution will accelerate reforms. . . . reforms will bring more foreign investments into the country. The power to bring about change in Kenya rests with its people.'" Complete story: www1.voanews.com/english/news/africa/US-Vice-President-Urges-Kenyans-to-Transform-Their-Country--96009544.html

The Standard, Nairobi: "When the Promised land isn't all promising," by Silvano Ateka, May 30, 2010. "It was a journey reminiscent of the Israelites leaving Egypt. . . . On that dusty September afternoon, last year, residents like Ruth Njeri left their mud hovels in the sprawling Kibera slum, and took a 20-minute ride to their "paradise," where more than 300 little palaces awaited them. The relocation was the first in the slum, and part of a series of slum upgrading projects in the country that are hoped to phase out informal

settlements. Complete story:

www.standardmedia.co.ke/InsidePage.php?id=2000010476&cid=4

Filmmakers'
Statements:

“**Good Fortune** is about reconciling fantasy with reality,” says director/producer Landon Van Soest. “The film explores how the lofty ideals of Western humanitarians intent on solving world poverty play out on the ground in the developing world. Though the film profiles two Kenyans on the receiving end of foreign aid, it is really meant to be a reflection on us as Western citizens and the sense of paternalism we project on the developing world, even when we have the best intentions.”

Producer Jeremy Levine adds, “We really wanted to bring Jackson and Silva’s voices into the debate on international development. It’s our hope that the film can help advocate for more community leadership in development and local, grassroots solutions for Africa.”

Bios:

Landon Van Soest (Director/Producer)

Landon Van Soest is the director/producer of the award-winning “Walking the Line,” a feature documentary about “vigilantes” along the U.S.-Mexico border. The film has screened at film festivals around the world and been broadcast in six countries. Van Soest began his career in New York with Big Mouth Productions during production of the breakout NBC documentary “Deadline” and the documentaries **Arctic Son** (POV 2007) and **Election Day** (POV 2008). He subsequently worked for PBS, National Geographic and The Learning Channel at Engle Brothers Media. Van Soest founded Transient Pictures with Jeremy Levine in 2005 and has produced original content for such clients as the Sundance Channel, Working Films, United States Artists and the Dramatists Guild. He is also co-founder, with Levine, of the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective, a nonprofit organization dedicated to fostering a vibrant filmmaking community in Brooklyn, N.Y., where he lives.

Van Soest is currently producing “The Legacy Project,” a 10-part video series profiling theater legends including Edward Albee, Arthur Laurents and Stephen Sondheim, for the Dramatists Guild, and “House of Rath,” a documentary about an eccentric home designer in the midst of New York City’s mortgage crisis, for Cactus Three. He holds a bachelor’s degree in nonfiction film production from Ithaca College and has completed extensive research on economic development in East Africa with the School for International Training. He was awarded a Fulbright Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts to begin production of **Good Fortune**.

Jeremy Levine (Producer/Editor)

Jeremy Levine’s work has been screened in dozens of film festivals around the world, broadcast nationally in six countries and recognized with several awards for production and human rights. He partnered with Van Soest as director/producer of “Walking the Line” and worked as an editor on “Everything’s Cool,” a feature-length documentary that premiered at the 2007 Sundance Film Festival. Levine is also directing and producing the independent television documentary “House of Rath” and “The Legacy Project” for the Dramatists Guild. In 2006, He volunteered at the Educational Media Agency in Addis Ababa, where he produced educational videos for Ethiopian schools.

Levine also works closely with Working Films, a nonprofit outreach group that links cutting-edge documentary films with activist organizations. He received a bachelor’s degree in documentary production from Ithaca College, where his work was nominated for a Student Academy Award. Levine co-founded Transient Pictures and the Brooklyn Filmmakers Collective, a nonprofit organization that supports independent filmmakers in Brooklyn, N.Y., with Van Soest.

Featured in

Good Fortune: Kibera:

- **Silva Adhiambo** – A traditional midwife in Nairobi’s Kibera slum. She migrated to Kibera over 15 years ago from a rural area of Western Kenya to seek employment in Nairobi and a good education for her two young daughters. Since moving to Kibera

she reports greatly increasing her income, and fears the upgrading project will threaten her business.

- **Fred Odhiambo** – Silva's husband works as a security guard in one of Nairobi's wealthy neighborhoods.
- **Sara Candiracci** – An associate human settlements officer for U.N. Habitat's Water, Sanitation and Infrastructure branch. She was the U.N.'s representative for many activities of the Kenya Slum Upgrading Project.

Yala Swamp:

- **Jackson Omondi** – A second-generation farmer and schoolteacher in Yimbo Village on the southern edge of the Yala Swamp. His family home is threatened by a 1,100-acre reservoir being constructed by Dominion Farms Ltd. to irrigate a major commercial rice farm.
- **Margaret Adhiambo** – Jackson's wife and mother of two.
- **Mary Aware** – Jackson's mother settled the family farm nearly 50 years ago, and has been farming ever since. She is a widow who looks after several young orphans.
- **Calvin Burgess** – Founder and CEO of Dominion Farms, and American agricultural business based in Oklahoma. Dominion has a 25-year lease on 17,000 acres in Western Kenya to produce rice for the local market.

Credits: Director/Producer: Landon Van Soest
Producer/Editor: Jeremy Levine
Executive Producers: Katy Chevigny, Judith Helfand, Diana Barrett, Andrew Herwitz
Cinematographers: Landon Van Soest, Alexander Stikich
Original Music: T. Griffin

POV Series Credits:

Executive Producer: Simon Kilmurry
Executive Vice President: Cynthia López

Good Fortune is a production of Transient Pictures.

Running Time: 86:46

Awards and

Festivals: UK Premiere, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, London, 2010
Witness Award, Silverdocs AFI/Discovery Channel Documentary Film Festival, 2009
Centerpiece Presentation, Human Rights Watch Film Festival, New York, 2009
Official Selection, International Documentary Film Festival, Amsterdam, 2009
Fledgling Fund Award for Socially Conscious Documentaries, IFP Market, 2007
Fulbright Fellowship in the Creative and Performing Arts, 2006

POV Website: The [Good Fortune companion website](#) offers a streaming video trailer of the film, an interview with the filmmakers, a list of related websites, organizations and books, a lesson plan, a discussion guide and this special feature:

- Watching **Good Fortune**: Experts react to the film and discuss international development. Greg Adams of Oxfam America; Rasna Warah, a Kenyan journalist and former editor of *UN-HABITAT* magazine; and representatives of the Map Kibera Project and the Center for Global Development participate.

Outreach: POV works with public television stations and national and community-based groups across the country to foster community dialogue around the issues presented in the film. For a list of upcoming screenings for **Good Fortune** or if you are interested in organizing a screening event, go to: www.pbs.org/pov/outreach or email: events@pov.org.

POV also works with nationally recognized media educator Dr. Faith Rogow to develop a discussion guide with background information to help event organizers carry out discussions around the film's content. Cari Ladd has created the lesson plan. Gina Blume of the Monroe Township Public Library has created a multimedia resource list of related

books and videos that further explore the issues. The materials are available free of charge at www.pbs.org/pov/goodfortune.

DVD: Go to www.pbs.org/pov/goodfortune to purchase the DVD.

Pressroom: Visit POV's pressroom, www.pbs.org/pov/pressroom, for press releases, downloadable art, filmmaker biographies, transcripts and special features.

POV: Produced by American Documentary, Inc. and now in its 23rd season on PBS, the award-winning **POV** series is the longest-running showcase on American television to feature the work of today's best independent documentary filmmakers. Airing June through September, with primetime specials during the year, **POV** has brought more than 300 acclaimed documentaries to millions nationwide and has a Webby Award-winning online series, *POV's Borders*. Since 1988, POV has pioneered the art of presentation and outreach using independent nonfiction media to build new communities in conversation about today's most pressing social issues. More information is available at www.pbs.org/pov.

Major funding for POV is provided by PBS, The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, The Educational Foundation of America, New York State Council on the Arts, New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, The Fledgling Fund, FACT and public television viewers. Funding for POV's *Diverse Voices Project* is provided by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts and the Rockefeller Brothers Fund. Special support provided by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. POV is presented by a consortium of public television stations, including KCET Los Angeles, WGBH Boston and THIRTEEN in association with WNET.ORG.



Media Sponsor:

