

# **Making films at ILRI**

## **Introduction**

Film making is complicated and people who want to commission a film often have a whole range of questions about how the process will work.

This article aims to answer the most important of the FAQs – please let us know if we have missed any and we will add those too.

ILRI has been making a range of different kinds of films for very different objectives. For example, it has produced science stories offering new options to problems; human stories that portray the context of the problems that ILRI science is addressing; profiles of scientists; short advocacy pieces to promote ideas or view points; educational films that inform groups about new interventions; films that allow local communities to talk to each other; films to recruit new staff by giving a sense of the institute and its people.

Urgent for ILRI now is a film about why livestock matter so funding is made easier; a film that will help our staff in HR recruit new people, and a film that showcases the high quality partnerships that ILRI has been involved in for possible adoption for the new CGIAR.

This article is written mostly for those interested in highly produced films for wide impacts. There are many other articles on the web that will help you think through making more 'quick and dirty' films using flip cameras and other such instruments.

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## **1 What can film do for me and my project?**

Some of the format options that have already proved themselves useful at ILRI and other CGIAR centres are:

**1 - a 2-minute summary of key statements** made as a documentary for release to international media ahead of a big event like a conference or a project launch event. This would need to be made before the launch date, so that it can be used by whoever is handling your PR. It would reinforce the significance of the event before it happens. 2-minute summary films get picked up by broadcasters' web sites (we have supplied to sites such as BBC and Scientific American). They also generate interest within the media which often ends in greater news coverage on the day by both print and broadcast houses.

Here is an example, made for the IBLI launch:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/3105262/>

**2 - a 5-minute event-opening documentary** that summarizes the problems and why action is necessary - made as a documentary ahead of the event. This is a very powerful and quick way to ensure that proceedings start with all participants on the same page.

Here is an example, made for the ILRI – AGRA Markets Conference:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/1990303/>

**3 - film is taken of important moments in a conference or event**, including interviews with key people attending. With editing, this footage can then be used to summarize the achievements made during the event. It can be shared with those who could not attend but want to participate. It will form a record of how the process grew.

Here is an example, made for the ILRI GIS Conference:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/1974896/>

**4 - a 10-20-minute documentary** is made of your project for educational and / or public information purposes. This can have many uses. It can provide donor feedback. It can spread understanding of new topics or concepts through broadcasts using national tv channels, or by use during community meetings. It can be a reward or incentive for partners. If aimed at local stakeholders, and produced in a range of languages, it can be a useful training tool where extension workers cannot

cover large enough areas.

Here is an example, made for CIP:

<http://www.ilrifilmworld.blip.tv/>

**5 - a 2-3 minute interview summarizing key messages for large events.** This form of media release can combine a talk-to-camera interview with footage from the regions. An example was the Carlos Seré interview done for COP 15, which allowed him to deliver his ideas widely without traveling so much.

Here is an example, made for COPENHAGEN 15:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/2985530/>

**6 - a 15-18-minute 'Ted Talk' interview.** Here, a scientist talks about his / her area of expertise, simply, without cutting to other images except audience shots. This is a powerful way to share ideas and passion. Good examples get wide viewing on YOU TUBE and other web channels, though the talks often needs a bit of practice on the part of the speaker. (Go to [tedtalk.com](http://tedtalk.com) to find many great examples.)

Here is an example for International Women's Day 2010:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/3418393/>

**7 - a 5-7-minute documentary summarizing a problem and solutions.** This format is designed to explain the need for continued or increased finance, to donors or the general public. It summarizes the problem and the forms that solutions might take.

Here is an example, made for the visit of World Bank-financed parliamentarians:

<http://www.ilrifilmworld.blip.tv/>

**8 - a 7-10-minute 'day in the life' documentary.** Films like this are extremely powerful emotionally, and allow science to engage the public or the media. The importance of agricultural and scientific research can be shown by example. Such communication tools have been successful in explaining the need for continued investment in agriculture for European populations that have no personal experience of African realities.

Here is an example, made for Irish Aid:

<http://ilri.blip.tv/file/2787368/>

**8 - a b-roll package to promote your project** through media outlets. This item is not an edited film, but is made up of carefully selected background footage of your story (usually 80 or so shots), produced in a format that the tv networks can use nationally and internationally. This kind of targeted communications tool makes a huge difference to whether a network will cover your story or not. Many do not have budgets for additional filming, but are eager for good quality footage that they can edit themselves. The b-roll package would be delivered with your text article summarizing key points (provided by your project), and an itemized list of what each shot is. In this way you retain some control of the way your story is told.

Packages like this have been made for many events including Copenhagen 15, the GALVmed launch of ILRI's live ECF vaccine and the IBLI launch.

## **2 How does the documentary making process work?**

Documentary making comes in 3 distinct phases.

**Pre-production:** The organization happens first. This is when we jointly decide on the best locations for filming your story.

I will talk to you about key issues, then write a list of shots that I want to take in order to tell your story. We need to know from you who on the ground can escort the film crew since we need to be taken round by someone that the local population knows, and who also knows the project, and can translate interviews for us. At this stage a consensus is needed on the ten most important points of the project, produced in bullet point form.

**Production:** Filming is next. Covering a science story will take a minimum of 3 days of filming for each country / location you want covered, not counting traveling time to get to the area. It is always better to add more days however if you can – this will give the crew time to catch activities that often do not happen in accessible locations or at useful times. When you are planning locations that you want the film crew to visit it is good to keep traveling to a minimum. The crew cannot film in a moving car, or after dark.

In addition to filming that specifically deals with the issues of your own project, all ILRIFILM clients are able to benefit from ILRI's large footage archives, which cover many parts of the livestock and more general agricultural conditions existing in some regions of the following:

Mali  
Malawi  
Mozambique  
North East India  
Ethiopia  
Kenya  
South Korea

However, since film is usually taken while we are following one or two specific stories, please understand we do not have footage of EVERYTHING. We have lots of footage in our film archive to offer now, but it is inevitable that you will want footage that we haven't yet got. That's because everybody's story is different.

Our archive also has another section – farmer interviews from all the above countries. If anyone is interested in reading the interview transcript archive, please let us know the country. All interviews relate to agriculture, most to livestock.

These are in constant use for all our films, but could also be useful on websites and also as a source of quotations for papers, etc.

**Post-production:** The next stage is the editing. The length of your film will be decided by what you want it to do for you, and who your audiences are. Post-production includes such things as the footage edit, narration recording, sub-titling, colour and sound correction, addition of names and credits.

### **3 How long do films take to make?**

For a 20-minute film, this whole process might take about 6 weeks. For a 2-minute film, it will probably take a week. Extra options (translations, animations etc) add to the time. After the film edit process is over, the DVD production begins. This takes between 5 and 10 days.

### **4 How much time will I have to give to make my film happen?**

Making films is a complex process and needs your thought and input. However, a well-made film can save you huge amounts of time in the future. For example, it can reduce staff travel, and time spent explaining issues to visitors by giving an alternative method of

delivering messages; it can help cut numbers of extension workers needed for information services; it can cross language barriers and reach the wider public.

## **5 How can I be sure my film is what I need?**

We need your help to make sure your film is crafted for your needs, and contains your messages.

The inputs we need from you include:

### ***Before filming***

- We need you to write the 10 key points to appear in your film – as bullet points.
- We need to make use of your contacts in the field to locate a translator who understands your project, and also farmers that demonstrate your story.
- Your key deadlines for the film production.
- A list of your target audiences

### ***Before editing***

- We need you to take part in the scripting process. With your 10 bullet points we will write a draft script. This we will send to you, so you can share it with your key decision makers on the film production. A team of 3 would be ideal here. Your team might include a key partner, research colleague, or theme leader for example. Please remember however, that if you make your team too large the film will suffer. You cannot make a good film by committee.
- With your comments, and the comments of your team, we will hold a meeting with ILRI Directors and other key communicators. The idea here will be to check the messaging from ILRI's standpoint.
- After the meeting the script will be updated by the film crew, then circulated to your team for final sign-off so that the film editing can begin
- We also need logos for the DVD box cover
- Credits for the end of the film
- A list of what you want your film for, and how it will be played (the hardware) in each venue

### ***2/3 of the way through the editing process***

- When the film edit is about 2/3 of the way through, we will ask you to a viewing of your rough film. At this stage you can make changes if necessary to the words or images that do not tell your story.
- For longer films (over 5 minutes) we will if you like, make the changes then invite you back to view them before we proceed to the next stage in the edit. After the second

viewing we will ask you to sign a form to say you will not make more changes. If you cannot view your film in person, we will put it on to our roughcuts website and send you the URL.

## **6 What format will my film be in and how will it be delivered?**

There are hundreds of film formats for you to choose from, each one doing a different job. When we make a film we make a high-resolution 'raw copy' that needs to be converted for your specific use.

When you tell us what you want your film for – a conference or your website or to project through a computer or a DVD player with a projector, television, etc – we then have to convert it. Each conversion takes a long time, so you must tell us at the beginning of the project what you plan to do with the film. (We don't do extra conversions unless asked to do so at the beginning of the film project.)

For example, the films on BLIP are highly compressed – low quality – so that they run on the web. They look good on BLIP but look bad when they are enlarged and projected onto a wall or screen.

If you decide after your project is over that you want your film in another format (for another purpose) we will therefore have to charge extra.

After the film edit process is over, we can then begin to produce bulk copies of it on DVDs if you want that.

## **7 What does film making cost?**

This is a very common and vital question with an annoyingly complex answer, because every film project is different. Not only is there a range of film formats each taking a different length of time to make, but there is a range of other services that can be added on.

### **Rough guide to filming and editing costs:**

- 1 Film costs are separate from editing costs. As a rough guide film crew and equipment hire is about \$1200 a day – film license, food, accommodation, interview transcription transport and translator costs have to be added to that.
- 2 Filming costs can be reduced if projects get together to organize the filming. For example, all transport, food, accommodation, and film license costs can be shared.

3 Editing costs depend on the kind of film you want. Films using footage from the field that are from 2 to 10 minutes long cost approximately \$1500 a minute of final film product. For films over 11 minutes this goes down to about \$1100 per minute of completed film.

4 An interview – with the interviewee visible on screen for most of the time – takes less time to edit so is cheaper. 15 minutes of finished film cost approximately \$2500

**Rough guide to additional options:**

1 If you want original music to be composed for your film it will cost about \$800 a minute of final film product (using original music avoids copyright problems if the film is to be widely distributed)

2 Sub-titles to another language costs about \$1000 for 10 minutes, if you can provide us with someone to translate the text.

3 Boxed copies of your films on DVD to hand out at conferences or to send to partners currently cost:

Number	\$ unit cost
100	7.25
200	5.375
300	4.75
400	4.6875
500	4.45
1000	3.975

This includes DVD purchase, burning and printing, box and DVD design and all the cutting and packaging.

4 If you want to add animations to your film to use for a cross-age group teaching tool, or to cover topics that you cannot currently show, the additional cost is approximately \$800 a minute.

**8 Comments from ILRI projects that have already used film**

Over the 3 days of the ILRI APM 2010, there was lots of feedback from project leaders who have already used film.

Below is a selection of comments covering a range of topics

Steve Staal

**The goods:** Quality film is a powerful communications tool for a science project. It gives you access to the world media. We made 2 films about northeast India pig and dairy marketing.

Films are also a means of bringing the voice of the poor into a conference where they would otherwise be intimidated and silenced by important delegates. Participants in meetings in fancy venues are then reminded of the pro-poor agenda.



Filming the voices of small scale dairy traders, and showing these interviews at a high profile dairy conference was a key turning point in our dairy project, where it helped change the legislation of the Kenyan Dairy Board.

**The bads:** However, films take a long time to plan and make. The dairy film was designed to help us generate additional funding but the funding came through before the film was ready.

Delia Grace

**The goods:** The dairy film was useful in ways we hadn't thought of when we commissioned it. We've taken it to a range of conferences worldwide since then.

**The bads:** It's really hard to work out the impact of showing our films in conferences etc. We get really good feedback – they are popular – but we can't say how much donor funds they've helped attract.

Boni Moyo

**The goods:** I had 2 films made about Mozambique just after I first got to the region. They really helped me because I was on my own. I used them to spread information among politicians and other interested investors about why livestock are important and how livestock research could help contribute to this sector..

For me the added bonus was that I did not have to explain the realities – the farmers said everything themselves, so the politicians had to listen.

I have had very good results, and we are now showing these films at the inception meetings of new projects to explain certain topics..

So these days I am using the films for different reasons – to help explain issues to our new partners for example. The films are about the importance of livestock, and of livestock markets in Mozambique. Both are complex ideas, but the films are able to sum up the issues quickly.

**The bads:** I want more films but I have to find the money for them.

Dirk Hoekstra

**The goods:** Film has a huge impact. We in IPMS are mainly using film to inform farmers, development staff about the various value chain interventions in livestock and crop commodities. It lets people explain their problems and tell their stories, and you don't need a highly produced product for that. We are also using cameras and small video recorders as extension tools to document field observations, which can be shown on audio visual equipment in knowledge centers at District and village level.

Noah (IPMS)

We at IPMS do educational documentaries. We have found that the story line is the most powerful element and has to be clear.

Andrew Mude

**The goods:** When we launched the Index Based Livestock Insurance product we wanted to make sure that the world media noticed. We were recommended by Burness - the PR group - to produce a media package including film b-roll of the story, and interviews of myself and local pastoralists. This generated a lot of interest and I've been asked to go back with a range of journalists and TV networks to do follow-up interviews.

**The bads:** Doing interviews for the camera is hard. The film producers make you repeat comments over and over until you say them the right way. And you have to wait for cars and planes to go by so they can record clear sound.

Jemimah Njuki

**The goods:** I have never liked watching myself on film but the film of my presentation on livestock and women I liked. The film has created awareness amongst staff, and even the board, of the gender issues in livestock and what ILRI is doing and can do about them.

**The bads:** However, doing the narration on the shorter film was hard. I had to say the words over and over - I had to put in passion, which I find difficult when I am reading.

Julius Nyangaga

**The bads:** You have to be careful that you get permission from the people you film. People, even rural folks, are increasingly getting interested to know what you intend to do with the pictures and video clips taken of them.

Steve Kemp

**The bads:** Film can be powerful when it is real. But over-produced films can be harmful if they put words into the mouths of people, such as farmers, that they wouldn't naturally say just to get across institutional messages.

Jean Hanson

**The goods:** We started by making two films about the ILRI gene bank. These have been used over and over again for public awareness about the importance of forage diversity. We also give them to donors. And they have saved us a huge amount of time because we can play them for visitors instead of having to explain the issues.

Now we are using film and multi-media in lots of other ways. We make training videos so people can learn lab techniques. And we make video clips and flip books from digital images that are cheap and easy to access on the web.

**The bads:** Films are expensive, and here in Addis we don't have the bandwidth to play the versions on the ILRIFILM (Blip.tv) website so we have to keep a DVD supply.

Additional comments

**The bads:** One important use of films is to reward partners – if you forget to mention them it can sometimes cause problems. If you have a lot of partners however, the names stop the flow of the story, so they can be acknowledged in the credits at the end.

In interviews, your voice and body language has to be passionate, yet you must also be natural.

**The goods:** Having to use simple language makes one think