



**SIMON CUMBERS  
MEDIA CHALLENGE FUND**

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**TV Seed Grant Report**

**Please answer all relevant questions**

**Name of Organisation:** Midas Productions

**Reference number:** Contract Number 15

**Title of Project:** Walking in the Devil's Footsteps

**TV Seed Project Start Date/Completion Date:**

Start Date: 21 May 2007

End Date: 4 October 2007 (end of proposal phase)

**1 Project**

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**1.1. Please provide the following information:**

**1.2. Prospective Name of Programme**

Walking in the Devil's Footsteps (working title)

**1.3. Themes/Issues Covered in the Programme/s**

The proposed documentary 'Walking in the Devil's Footsteps' will aim to examine the complex issue of landmines and mine clearance.

The themes and issues of the programme are:

The reality of living with the daily threat of injury or death from unexploded landmines.

The painstaking and dangerous work of de-mining.

Approaches to tackling the landmine issue.

This programme will raise issues of war and conflict and the basic human right of people to live in security in their own countries. It will raise awareness among the Irish viewing public of the scale and complexity of the landmine issue, give an insight into the human side of those living with the danger, and celebrate the achievements of those who are tackling the problem. It will provide an opportunity for Irish people to reflect on Ireland's role and responsibilities with regard to issues of equality and

justice in human development, and encourage people to take action for change by making them aware of the work of organisations that they may decide to give their support to.

In the course of research, the proposal has evolved, with resulting changes in the line-up of contributors and locations (as outlined below), but the overall themes and issues of the programme remain unchanged.

#### **1.4. Key Messages Conveyed in the Programme/s**

The proposed programme will include interviews with local people in countries affected by landmines, show the reality of living with the daily threat of injury or death from unexploded landmines, show how individuals and communities are affected physically, psychologically, socially, economically.

The programme will show the painstaking and dangerous work of de-mining. We will meet individuals involved in this type of work and learn what drives them. A key contributor is an Irishwoman who works for MAG (Mines Advisory Group) in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo (a neighbouring, but separate, country). We see how she works with local communities, raising awareness of the dangers and imparting the skills necessary for local people to deal with the threat themselves rather than rely on outside agencies. Above all, we witness the transformation brought about in the lives of people by this type of work.

Specialists discuss various approaches to tackling the landmine issue and assess the success/limitations of the Ottawa Treaty (which was to ban the use and production of landmines worldwide) ten years on. We hear the differing views of practitioners on the best approach to solving the landmine issue. Organisations which have confirmed their willingness to provide a spokesperson include HALO Trust, MAG, and the Irish Defence Forces. Other contributors include an Irish-based member of Pax Christi who was involved in the International Campaign to Ban Landmines from the earliest days, and a lecturer at the University of Derby who has written extensively on the landmine issue.

The lasting impression on the viewer will be that landmines pose an immense problem, but it is not insurmountable, that lives are being transformed by the work of mine clearance and education, that we in Ireland, as individuals, as a nation, and as members of the EU, can and do make a valuable contribution to this work. But the programme does not shy away either from pointing out the shortcomings of the Mine Ban Treaty and asking what can be done better.

#### **1.5. How Was a Local/Global Link Established**

A local/global link is established by featuring Irish people working in the field and other Irish contributors. We hear how funding from Irish Aid to organisations such as the Halo Trust and MAG has been used to fund mine education and clearance programmes in many countries, making viewers aware that they are directly contributing to this life-saving work. We also hear how we are contributing indirectly through EU funding of landmine clearance work.

#### **1.6. Target Group**

This programme is aimed at a general adult audience. It will be of interest to people who wish to know more about the complex issue of mine clearance in post-conflict situations, who are drawn to stories of human endurance and human achievement, and who wish to reflect on Ireland's role and responsibilities in the developing world.

### **1.7. Intended Content/Structure of Programme/s**

This is a location-based documentary which uses some archive footage to show the conflicts which led to the current landmine problem. Rather than use a presenter, contributors to the programme tell their own stories and narration is used only where necessary to link sections of the programme.

In the course of research, the proposal has evolved and the list of proposed contributors has changed. (For example, a potential contributor who had been working in El Salvador is now involved in a project in Sri Lanka. We have been advised that due to the security situation it would not be advisable to attempt to film his work in Sri Lanka at this time.)

Filming will be done on location in Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo, the Republic of the Congo, the UK and Ireland. The main contributors are listed above. (1.4) Our contacts in the de-mining organisations and their local NGO and community organisations will assist us in identifying local individuals and families affected by landmines to participate in the programme so that they can tell their own stories.

### **1.8. List of Personnel and their Qualifications**

**PRODUCER:** Mike Keane (Managing Director of Midas Productions Ltd).

In the course of many years of work in television Mike has built up an impressive list of dozens of credits. Of particular relevance are the True Lives (RTE ONE) documentary 'From Croke Park to Cuba' which narrates the story of Dr. David Hickey - Ireland's leading pancreas transplant surgeon – and his work in assisting medical professionals in Cuba in overcoming the impact of the American Blockade on the quality of services they can offer to their patients, and the Cogar (TG4) 'Mile Cnoc, Mile Fadhbh' documentary following the final weeks of Concern's tracing team in Rwanda, as they try to trace the homes and families of children separated from their parents during the genocide six years previously, in 1994.

**DIRECTOR:** Claire Cunningham (Director of Rockfinch Ltd)

Claire is an independent director and educational consultant who worked as Director/Producer on the adult literacy television series 'The Really Useful Guide to Words and Numbers'. Her role there involved directing numerous shoots filming literacy learners in their daily lives and interviewing specialists. She has previously directed videos for AV Edge (an independent production company), Cornelsen Verlag (a German company) and has produced videos for the Department of Education and Science.

If successful in being commissioned, the production will engage the services of an experienced cameraman with a track record of working internationally.

### **1.9. Describe the approach taken during the project**

Following the successful application to the Simon Cumbers TV Seed Fund, the Producer and Director/Researcher met to discuss the best use of the funding received (Euro 10K of the Euro 30K requested) and plan the work to be undertaken. As with all TV projects, the original proposal evolved in the course of research, where additional or alternative contributors were identified, or where the thinking on locations changed.

The original application had envisaged the preparation of a written proposal for submission to broadcasters, plus the filming of an accompanying pilot on location. Given the fact that the budget was now a lower sum, it was decided to focus on researching a strong written proposal to be submitted, in the first instance, to Irish national broadcasters. This necessitated devoting time to researching Irish angles to the landmine issue.

It was recognised that the travel involved in the proposed programme makes it an expensive project, and that any additional funding which could be sourced would make the programme a more attractive prospect for broadcasters. It was decided, therefore, to adapt the proposal in order to make an application to the European Commission's call for proposals for Audiovisual Projects for Television which are geared towards 'Awareness Raising in the field of Development'. (We were informed of this call by Connect World.) This has implications for the choice of locations for filming and entails widening the themes to also include information on EU funding dedicated to mine awareness and clearance activities.

### **1.10. Please indicate the stages involved in the project.**

PLANNING of the best use of funding received, ie Euro 10,000 Simon Cumbers TV Seed Grant. (meetings between Producer and Researcher)

RESEARCH:

- the history/use/effects of landmines, the Mine Ban Treaty, modern approaches to mine clearance (reading Monin and Gallimore's 'A History of Landmines', consulting web pages and Landmine Monitor Annual Report of ICBL, web pages and publications of international and national de-mining organisations, organisations like landminesurvivors.org and No More Landmines Trust; reading up and conducting interviews on the history of the Mine Ban Treaty, including Ireland's involvement)
- contact with national and international mine clearance organisations (email contact with HALO Trust, MAG, Handicap International, DanChurchAid, Norwegian People's Trust, Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, Swedish EOD and Mine Action Centre, Danish Demining Group)
- identification of Irish and international contributors, both those involved in mine clearance/education and those knowledgeable about the field (enquiries were made to organisations mentioned above, plus additional enquiries were made to GOAL, MSF, Irish Red Cross, Trocaire, Concern, Oxfam Ireland, SPIRASI, Pax

Christi, Irish Defence Forces, Comhlámh, Development Studies Centre (Kimmage), etc – any leads arising from these enquiries were followed up - meetings and/or phone conversations held with representatives of MAG, Irish Defence Forces (Ireland and Bosnia), MSF, Goal, cameraman who worked in Angola, academic with expertise on landmines

- investigation of potential locations for filming (research into possibility of filming in Sri Lanka, Bosnia, Cambodia, Mozambique, El Salvador, Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, Republic of the Congo – decision made to focus on last three)
- focus on the identification of contributors and/or aspects to the topic which would make the programme more relevant to an Irish audience (research of Irish Aid funding given in particular for mine clearance or education projects)
- focus on the identification of contributors and/or aspects to the topic which would make the proposal suitable for submission to the European Commission call for TV proposals on awareness raising in the field of development (research of Europe Aid funding given in particular for mine clearance or education projects)

#### PROPOSALS:

- preparing written proposal for submission to Irish broadcasters
- preparing submission to European Commission call for TV proposals on awareness raising in the field of development (dependent on receiving support from a broadcaster in the form of a letter of commitment to broadcast and financial support)

#### PRODUCTION

- if successful in being granted funding from the European Commission, it is envisaged that the programme will go into production in 2008

#### **1.11. Please set down the next steps for the project and the outcome of any negotiations.**

The support of Irish broadcasters is being requested for a submission to the European Commission call for TV proposals on awareness raising in the field of development.

If this is received, the next step is to make a submission to the European Commission.

If successful in being granted funding from the European Commission, it is envisaged that the programme will go into production in 2008.

#### **2 Please provide a copy of all material produced.**

This project is at the research/proposal stage, so no TV programme is yet available.

#### **3. Your Evaluation of the Project**

### **3.1 What difficulties, if any, did you encounter in the process?**

There is a wealth of information available on landmines and mine clearance. The international mine clearance agencies are very open to proposals to film and helpful in identifying possible contributors and locations, subject, of course, to the restrictions caused by local security situations. However, due to the relatively small number of Irish people involved in working in mine clearance, it took quite a bit of research to identify potential Irish contributors.

### **3.2 What have you learned from the experience of programme making/researching and writing about the subject matter of your project?**

The subject of landmines takes in a vast number of issues, organisations, people and locations. There is a danger in trying to make a programme on the issue to get lost in generalities and fail to focus on individual stories which an audience would find it easier to engage with. Having said that, there are many stories of exciting work being done which deserve to be heard.

One issue that constantly came up is that there is an even bigger potential crisis in the wings which may put landmines in the shade: cluster bombs.

### **3.3 Has this project changed your media outlet's attitude or approach to development issues? Will there be more reporting of development issues?**

Midas Productions will continue to have an interest in developing programme proposals on development issues and will look for opportunities to do so.

### **3.4 Have you any general comments on this project? What advice would you give another group if they were doing a similar project? What advice would you give the organisers of the Simon Cumbers Media Challenge Fund about how to structure this grant programme?**

It is an expensive business to make television programmes on development issues and broadcasters may look more favourably on a project if it is brought to them with a substantial amount of funding already in place. It may be a more productive use of the Simon Cumbers TV Seed funding to make larger grants to a smaller number of projects, giving each project supported a greater chance of success.

This Seed Report form is extremely detailed and seems to include unnecessary repetition (eg the same information is requested in sections 1.11 and 4). Also, some of the questions seem more relevant to projects which have been completed. It would be useful if a simpler form could be provided for interim reporting, with more detailed reporting provided at the end of the project.

## **4 Planned Follow-up**

**Please provide details of the next stage for this project. Please provide Connect World with details and a copy of any final programme made.**

The support of Irish broadcasters is being requested for a submission to the European Commission call for TV proposals on awareness raising in the field of development.

If this is received, the next step is to make a submission to the European Commission. (Deadline 4 October 2007)

If successful in being granted funding from the European Commission, it is envisaged that the programme will go into production in 2008.

## **5 Budget**

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See separate document [MidasInterimBudget.doc](#)