

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT

Voleine Amilcar, ITVS	415-356-8383 x 244	voleine_amilcar@itvs.org
Mary Lugo	770-623-8190	lugo@negia.net
Cara White	843-881-1480	cara.white@mac.com

For downloadable images, visit pressroom.pbs.org/programs/independent_lens/milking_the_rhino
For the program companion website, visit pbs.org/independentlens/milkingtherhino

DAVID E. SIMPSON'S "MILKING THE RHINO" EXPLORES THE INNOVATIVE IDEA OF COMMUNITY-BASED CONSERVATION, WHICH BALANCES THE NEEDS OF ENDANGERED ANIMALS WITH THE NEEDS OF THE AFRICANS WHO LIVE WITH THEM

Film Airs Nationally on *Independent Lens* on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, at 10 PM

(San Francisco, CA)—A bloody kill on the sun-drenched Serengeti. Dramatically intoned warnings about endangered species. These clichés of nature documentaries ignore a key feature of the landscape: the villagers who live just off-camera, navigating the dangers and costs of living with wildlife on a daily basis. And when seen at all, rural Africans are often depicted as the problem—mercenary poachers who encroach on habitat and spoil our myth of wild Africa. They are at the center of a deepening conflict between humans and animals in an ever-shrinking world.

MILKING THE RHINO goes beyond myths and clichés to examine the complicated search for a more sustainable form of human-wildlife coexistence in modern Africa. The Maasai tribe of Kenya and Namibia's Himba—two of Earth's oldest cultures, both of which depend on cattle for survival—are in the midst of upheaval. Emerging from a century of "white man conservation," which turned their lands into game reserves and fueled their resentment toward wildlife, Himba and Maasai communities are now vying for a piece of the wildlife-tourism pie. A Kartemquin production of a film by David E. Simpson, **MILKING THE RHINO** will air nationally on the Emmy® Award-winning PBS series *Independent Lens*, hosted by Terrence Howard, on Tuesday, April 7, 2009, at 10 PM (check local listings).



Scenes from MILKING THE RHINO, coming to Independent Lens April 2009.

-More-



In communities across Africa, a new conservation concept known as “community-based conservation” (CBC) is taking root. This is a radical rethinking of conservation that integrates animal welfare goals, rural development and poverty reduction, trying to find an equitable balance between the needs of wildlife and the needs of people. Although heralded by environmentalists as a win-win solution, the reality is more complex.

MILKING THE RHINO visits two African communities at the forefront of the community-based conservation movement, in Kenya and Namibia. Like most of Africa, the old conservation methods here involved the forced displacement of indigenous people and a “fences and fines” model of wildlife management. Colonial governments banned subsistence hunting, but did little to protect crops and lives from marauding animals. Rural Africans, who for millennia had lived harmoniously with animals, came to resent wildlife as “the white man’s property.”

This troubled history plummeted to its nadir in the 1980s with a “shoot to kill” approach to dealing with poachers in Kenya. Out of this crisis, bold new ideas emerged. **MILKING THE RHINO** explores the challenges and successes of CBC, focusing on the gauntlet of obstacles it faces today.

The Maasai of Kenya are an ancient cattle culture that mastered the art of coexistence through centuries of living alongside the richest wildlife herds on Earth. But in the 1970s, the Kenyan government banned all hunting of wildlife and turned large portions of Maasai grazing land into game reserves for tourists. This separation of the Maasai from their land and livelihood furthered the region’s decline. But over the past decade, the Maasai at Il Ngwesi have turned things around, becoming a model of CBC with their construction of a tourist lodge owned and run by the community. Carefully managed grazing has restored habitat and wildlife. The people here are beginning to see that conservation can be a powerful economic engine. “We never used to benefit from these animals,” explains James Ole Kinyaga, manager of the community lodge and self-taught social entrepreneur. “Now we milk them like cattle. We are able to profit from our lodge, pay salaries, buy more land for the community.”

However, not all community members embrace the changes. “A rhino means nothing to me! I can’t kill it for meat like a cow,” James’s neighbor exclaims. And when drought decimates the grass prized by both livestock and wildlife, the community’s commitment to conservation is sorely tested.

Two thousand miles southwest of Kenya, a rugged corner of Namibia is like the American Wild West. Distances are vast and population low. Poaching has decimated the once-abundant wildlife. Now the Himba residents have formed “conservancies”—organized groups with the right to utilize resources inside their borders. But efforts to revive the habitat are stunted by myriad problems, including an ecological crisis related to a new watering hole drilled with conservancy profits.

Shot in some of world’s most magnificent locales, **MILKING THE RHINO** subverts expectations of classic wildlife films by focusing on people. When drought hits hard in Kenya, we are with the Samburu herder boys as they carry dying calves on their backs to help them survive. In Namibia, we sight down the barrel of a rifle on a community meat hunt for antelope. Although these scenes have the power to shock, they also make clear the necessity for balance between animal preservation and the needs of the local people. Through dramatic stories and memorable characters, **MILKING THE RHINO** depicts the potent mix of factors that will determine the future of African wildlife. The film is also that rare event that places Africa at the center of a hopeful story on the world stage.

To learn more about the film and the issues, visit the companion website for **MILKING THE RHINO** at pbs.org/independentlens/milkingtherhino. Get detailed information on the film, watch preview clips, read an interview with the filmmaker, and explore the subject in depth with links and resources. The site also features a Talkback section for viewers to share their ideas and opinions.

-More-

Major On-Screen Participants

James Ole Kinyaga is senior host of Il Ngwesi Lodge, Kenya's first community-owned and -managed tourist eco-lodge. He helped build the lodge in 1995 and has traveled internationally to promote community-based conservation.

John Kasaona was born and raised in the Kunene region of Namibia. His father "poached" wildlife to put food on the table. John is now assistant director of the Integrated Rural Development and Nature Conservation, a nongovernmental organization that works to build the capacity of rural Namibians to sustainably manage and benefit from their natural resources.

Ian Craig converted his family's 40,000-acre Kenyan cattle ranch into a wildlife and nature conservancy after witnessing the sickening sight of an elephant massacre in 1988. Raised in Kenya, he realized wildlife had no future unless local communities participated in its protection. His Lewa Wildlife Conservancy, with a mandate to protect and conserve Kenyan wildlife, is now a worldwide organization.

Kinanjui Lesenteria is an Ndorobo Maasai elder at Il Ngwesi in Kenya who possesses an unparalleled knowledge of regional wildlife. Previously employed at the Lewa Wildlife Conservancy to protect and care for the rhino and other endangered species, he is now retired. He was instrumental in persuading the Il Ngwesi community to adopt neighbor Ian Craig's plan of building their own tourist lodge and conserving wildlife.

Helen Gichohi is president of the African Wildlife Foundation, an international conservation agency with a nearly 50-year history of protecting Africa's wildlife and wild lands. Gichohi oversees AWF operations in 11 countries. A leading figure in conservation in eastern Africa, she earned her doctorate in ecology at England's University of Leicester and was one of five panelists chosen to advise President Bill Clinton on African environmental issues in 1998.

Hector Magome was South Africa's first black ecologist when he began working in 1986 at Bophurthatswana Parks. After completing a master's degree at Witwatersand University and Colorado State University, he returned to Bophurthatswana and launched an award-winning community conservation program—the first of its kind in the country. His Ph.D. from the University of Kent, U.K., focused on community development and management of protected areas in post-apartheid South Africa. Today, he serves as the executive director of Conservation Services for South African National Parks (SanParks). He is also in charge of SanParks' transfrontier conservation initiatives.

Komungandjera Tjambiru is a Himba woman and community member in Namibia's Kunene region who is actively involved in the research, survey and conservation of native plants.

About the Filmmakers

David E. Simpson (Director/Producer/Writer/Editor)

David E. Simpson has crafted award-winning films for 25 years. As a producer, director and editor, he plies his trade in the belief that a well-told story can move viewers' hearts and minds regarding crucial human issues. David co-produced and directed *When Billy Broke His Head*, a documentary about disability culture that won the Sundance Film Festival's Freedom of Expression Award, among many others. He co-produced and edited *Forgiving Dr. Mengele*, about an Auschwitz survivor's controversial campaign of forgiveness; the film won the 2006 Slamdance Grand Jury Prize for documentaries. David directed *Refrigerator Mothers*, about a generation of mothers who raised autistic children under the shadow of professionally promoted mother-blame. The film won top honors at the Florida, Indiana and Sedona film festivals and aired on the PBS series *P.O.V.* And he produced and directed *Halsted Street, USA*, a snapshot of America through the prism of one multicultural street. His experimental narrative, *Dante's Dream*, a reworking of Dante's cosmology, earned five First Place festival awards.

-More-

When not producing/directing his own work, David edits long-form documentaries. His credits include Kartemquin Films' recent *Terra Incognita: Mapping Stem Cell Research*, which aired on PBS's *Independent Lens*; the PBS/Kartemquin series *The New Americans*; the Emmy®-nominated *Nova: Mysterious Crash of Flight 201*; *Frontline*/Marian Marzynski's *Shtetl* (Grand Prize, Cinema du Real); Kartemquin Films' *5 Girls* and *Vietnam Long Time Coming*; and an episode of *The People's Century* for BBC/PBS.

Jeannie R. Magill (Concept/Co-Producer)

Jeannie owned and operated Westwind Safaris and Tours, a company specializing in educational safaris to Kenya. She was a Visiting Scholar with the Program of African Studies, Northwestern University; and she served as a consultant to the renovation of the African wing of Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History. She has chaired panel discussions for the African Trade Association Congress, presented numerous educational talks, and published many articles for travel trade newspapers and magazines.

Gordon Quinn (Executive Producer)

Gordon Quinn is the president and a founding member of Kartemquin Films and has been making documentaries for 40 years. His producing credits include such highly acclaimed films as *Hoop Dreams* (1994), *Golub* (1990), *5 Girls* (2001), *Refrigerator Mothers* (2002) and *Stevie* (2002), for which he also won the Cinematography Award at the Sundance Film Festival. For *Vietnam Long Time Coming* (1999), Gordon won a National Emmy® and the Director's Guild of America's award for Best Documentary.

In 2004, Gordon executive produced *The New Americans* and directed the Palestinian segment of this intimate seven-hour PBS series that chronicles the journey taken by new immigrants to this country and the obstacles they face once they have arrived. The series received many awards, including the IDA Best Limited Series Award and the Council on Foundations Film Festival Award. He also produced *Golub: Late Works Are the Catastrophes*, an updated film about Leon Golub. He is currently directing *Prisoner of Her Past*, a film on delayed post-traumatic stress syndrome in a childhood Holocaust survivor, and recently executive produced two films that deal with the human consequences of stem cells and genetic medicine: *Terra Incognita: Mapping Stem Cell Research* and *In the Family*. He also recently executive produced the current IFC release *At the Death House Door*, a film on a wrongful execution in Texas.

Gordon has been a longtime supporter of public media and community-based independent media groups and has served on the boards of several organizations, including the National Coalition of Public Broadcast Producers, the Citizens Committee on the Media, the Chicago Public Access Corporation, the Illinois Humanities Council, the Public Square and the *Independent Lens* Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights.

About *Independent Lens*

Independent Lens is an Emmy® Award-winning weekly series airing on PBS. The acclaimed anthology series features documentaries and a limited number of fiction films united by the creative freedom, artistic achievement and unflinching visions of their independent producers. *Independent Lens* features unforgettable stories about unique individuals, communities and moments in history. Presented by ITVS, the series is supported by interactive companion websites and national publicity and community engagement campaigns. *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by ITVS and PBS and is funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, a private corporation funded by the American people, with additional funding provided by PBS and the National Endowment for the Arts. The series producer is Lois Vossen. Further information about the series is available at pbs.org/independentlens.

###