

When politicians go to the movies

By LEAH COWAN

As part of the Global Health Summer School, which we co-organised in Berlin this September, HAI arranged a preview screening of the documentary, *Fire in the Blood*. The film has been causing a stir across the world since its first appearance. It tells the story of “medicine, monopoly and malice”, focusing on those who struggled against Western pharmaceutical companies and governments in order to improve access to treatments for HIV/AIDS, when the epidemic was its worst.

Last week, we received great news from the documentary’s director, Dylan Mohan Gray. *Fire in the Blood* is about to reach the audiences who need to see it most—policy makers—when it is screened in the European Parliament on 4 December. In Washington, D.C., congressional representatives and senators are scheduled to watch the documentary in January of 2014, and a screening in the UK Parliament is expected to follow. Gray has also revealed that he is pushing to arrange screenings for parliamentarians in India and South Africa. Furthermore, the World Health Organization has requested a special showing, and the film will be shown at the United Nations headquarters in New York on 9 December, hosted by UNAIDS.

HAI Europe focuses on informing policy change through evidenced-based advocacy, largely through publication and letter writing, by meeting with MEPs, hosting conferences and events, coordinating advocacy work with our partner organisations, and so on. However, it’s great to see HAI’s priority issues reaching MEPs and policy makers through other media. *Fire in the Blood* manages to capture the complexities and challenges that contribute to lack of access to medicines, yet brings them to life in an accessible way; a crucial objective, Gray says, to the making of the film. With original footage, scientific evidence, and interviews and testimonials from key informants, the film has a genuine and pressing feel to it. Moreover, it makes clear that the campaign against unethical drug patent laws and large profit-driven monopolies is by no means a won battle. It leaves a powerful and lasting impression on the viewer.

We hope the film will provoke a sense of moral injustice and need for action in EU-level audiences, as it did with us in Berlin, and complement HAI’s work by further highlighting the important role access to medicines plays in achieving universal health coverage.

Did you miss your chance to see *Fire in the Blood*? In India, the film will be freely available on YouTube by early 2014, and worldwide by the end of next year. In the coming weeks, it will also be broadcast on television in several countries, including Switzerland, Poland, Norway, Finland and Israel. Upcoming film screenings include Athens, Barcelona, Mumbai, Brussels, Cape Town, Geneva, London, New York, Toronto, Vienna and Zurich.