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***PUSHING THE ELEPHANT* ENGAGES INFLUENTIAL AUDIENCES WORLDWIDE**

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NEW YORK, NY (October 7, 2010) – In September 2010, *Pushing the Elephant*, Arts Engine’s newest Big Mouth documentary film, screened before the World Bank and was a key element during a congressional breakfast with ten organizations that are actively seeking to end violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and around the world with the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA). These two events, among others, prompted action by Senator Diane Feinstein to co-sign I-VAWA, which is set for a vote in a few weeks and would allocate more than \$1 billion in U.S. assistance over five years and make ending violence against women and girls a U.S. diplomatic priority.

“We were certainly hopeful that *Pushing the Elephant* would have a positive impact on policy towards women and towards the DRC,” said Beth Davenport, one of the film directors, “but we didn’t expect the reaction to be so quick and decisive.”

The film depicts the life and activism of Congolese refugee Rose Mapendo and her family. Rose’s impassioned plea for reconciliation has quickly become part of the international dialogue about the current and former conflicts in the DRC. Both a portrait of a powerful woman and an intimate portrayal of the refugee experience, *Pushing the Elephant* takes us on a journey from the cul-de-sacs of suburban Phoenix towards peace in the war-torn DRC. Today the Mapendo family is worlds away from the death camp in South Kivu where they found themselves more than a decade ago.

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Though the conflicts in the DRC have been some of the worst in recent memory and have drawn comparisons to WWII, there appears to be a growing international response in the face of recent allegations that the United Nations has failed the people of the DRC. On October 3, 2010, the *New York Times* published an article titled “Frenzy of Rape in Congo Reveals UN Weakness,” which cited official statements by the UN that sexual violence in the DRC is “the worst in the world.”

Regarding *Pushing the Elephant* screenings and discussions, the response has involved more than Senator Feinstein’s valuable contribution. Jewish Women International, UNIFEM, UNHCR, Mapendo International and Woman for Women International have joined hands to make a statement about bringing a peaceful change to the DRC. And the campaign has already created strong momentum with screenings and discussions in New York, Washington, Kinshasa and in Kenyan refugee camps.

On Monday, September 13, 2010, the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) screened *Pushing the Elephant* before an audience of policy makers, human rights advocates and other United Nations representatives, and discussed ways that Rose’s experience in the death camp might be used as a test case in international law.

On Wednesday, September 15, 2010, the World Bank screened *Pushing the Elephant* to over 40 internal staff and policy makers as part of a training on leadership in fragile states and the need for women’s political participation.

On Thursday, September 16, 2010, a congressional breakfast held by the I-VAWA Coalition in Washington DC screened portions of the film to over 160 people, including 50 staffers as part of an effort to raise awareness and support for the act. Paula Kerger, president and CEO of PBS, commented on the power of *Pushing the Elephant* in conveying the brutal realities faced by women around the world, and the importance of the film in giving a voice to those women. Rose was a featured panelist at the event,

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where she shared her personal stories of surviving gender-based violence and addressed the importance of creating local solutions to local problems, with women at the fore. Also featured on the panel were activists in the IVAWA movement and two of the Congresspeople co-sponsoring and heavily pushing the passage of the bill, Congressman Ted Poe (R-TX) and Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky (D-IL).

The film will continue to reach audiences worldwide. In advance of the U.S. national broadcast of *Pushing the Elephant* on Independent Lens (PBS) in March 2011, the prestigious International Documentary Film Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) will present the film within their Panorama section in November 2010.

About Arts Engine

Pushing the Elephant is Arts Engine's ninth Big Mouth film. Arts Engine is a trusted source of media that matters, driving change by connecting media, technology and community. In addition to Big Mouth Films, Arts Engine includes: Media That Matters, MediaRights.org and DocuClub. For more information, please go to: www.artsendine.net.

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