

## ***Girl Rising* depicts the value of educating girls**

SAN FRANCISCO, USA: Technology start-up Gathr is putting the power of the crowd behind *Girl Rising*, a film that poignantly backs the fact that educating girls makes the world a better place.

One of nine stories woven together by director Richard E. Robbins in the work was shown at the Sundance Film Festival on Monday (21 January).

Along with traditional premieres in New York City, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC, in March, *Girl Rising* hopes to debut in theatres throughout the United States thanks to Gathr.

"Through Gathr, anyone who has access to the Internet can request a showing of the film in their own community," said Shelly Esque, corporate affairs group global director at chip making titan Intel, which is backing *Girl Rising*.

"Once they reach a certain threshold of people who will show up, the theatre is able to host the film," Esque said.

She told of a friend who already had 50 aspiring viewers signed up at a Facebook page for an opening-night showing of the film in Phoenix, Arizona.

"Intel has always been on the precipice of what is new and disruptive," said Gathr chief executive and founder Scott Glosserman.

"For them to take a keen interest in the new and radical way *Girl Rising* is attempting distribution is really encouraging; Intel has given the movie and Gathr its stamp of approval," he added.

Glosserman was making a documentary about collectively-created online knowledge compendium *Wikipedia* when it struck him that the power of the crowd could remedy "archaic inefficiencies" of traditional film distribution.

He came up with a way to use the Internet to "crowd-source" theatre audiences by letting people in any US community use credit cards to reserve tickets then deliver films to local theatres once sales cover the costs involved.

"We let the people create the demand for us," Glosserman said. "Now, we are having screenings in far-flung parts of the country where a film wouldn't have had a hope of showing."

He noted that industry statistics show 98% of US theatre seats are empty between Monday and Thursday in any given week, meaning cinemas have ample space and motive to embrace what he called "theatre-on-demand."

If a screening doesn't "tip" the balance with enough ticket sales no one is charged.

"It may take a week to get to the film threshold but when it hits critical mass and the theatre puts it on a marquee, on a Facebook page or in a newsletter it goes from tipping to selling out very quickly," Glosserman said.

Gathr has benefited from the rise of online social networks and crowd-sourcing along with being able to deliver films inexpensively to theatres on encrypted hard drives or even high-quality disks.

Since Los Angeles-based Gathr went live nearly two years ago, it has seen success with films including Grammy-nominated *Big Easy Express* and Oscar-nominated *How to Survive a Plague*.

With *Girl Rising*, Gathr will be part of a celebrity-backed movement to get cultures around the world to embrace the idea that educating girls can translate into better lives and economies.

"These films give visual corroboration to knowledge we already have: Educating women and girls has the most optimistic, positive effects on families, communities, and economies worldwide," said actress Meryl Streep.

"If to see it is to know it, this film delivers hope; reasonable, measurable, tangible hope that the world can be healed and helped to a better future," Streep added

The list of stars narrating the film includes Streep, Freida Pinto, Selena Gomez, Liam Neeson, Alicia Keys, Salma Hayek, Anne Hathaway, and Cate Blanchette.

The film spotlights nine "unforgettable girls born into unforgiving circumstances" and serves as centre-piece of a campaign for education equality.

"*Girl Rising* is about the world-changing power of educating girls," said Robbins. "I wanted to give a voice to girls who are fighting for a better future in spite of very difficult circumstances."

Source: *AFP* via I-Net Bridge

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