

MEDIA IMPACT FUNDERS

2017 Media Impact Festival Case Study: *A Suitable Girl* asuitablegirldoc.com

Film synopsis:

A Suitable Girl follows three young women in India struggling to maintain their identities and follow their dreams amid intense pressure to get married. Ritu, Dipti and Amrita represent the new India. Educated, financially stable and raised with a mix of traditional and contemporary values in the urban cities of Mumbai and New Delhi, they have access to the world in ways their mothers did not. Yet their lives take a dramatic turn when the pressure to settle down and get married hits. Documenting the arranged marriage and matchmaking process in vérité over four years, the film examines the women's complex relationships with the institution of marriage and the many nuanced ways society molds them into traditional roles.

Production team:

- Smriti Mundhra and Sarita Khurana, Directors
- Jennifer Tiexiera, Producer

Funders:

Women in Film, Netflix, Film Independent, private equity investors, individual donations through Indiegogo

Issues addressed in film:

A Suitable Girl is a close examination of sexism and patriarchy in Indian society, through the lens of arranged marriage. The film looks specifically at women from the middle- and upper-middle class in India, a segment of society seeing rapid change with regard to gender roles and women's roles in particular. The film deals with a dynamic that women face around the world, regardless of background: negotiating how to find a place in society while forging one's own identity and retaining agency.

Target audience:

The primary audience is Indian women, both within India and in the diaspora. The larger audience is women more broadly.

Impact goals:

- Redefine what it means to be "a suitable girl" in Indian society, and give young women the means, courage and support to fulfill their individual potential outside of marriage.
- Move the film from an interesting conversation piece to an engine for social, cultural and psychological change by chipping away at institutionalized sexism a little at a time.
- Raise awareness as the first step to liberation for women to recognize the injustices that society forces upon them in myriad ways in order to help them to start dismantling those systems and institutions (or, at least, make them work in their own favor).

Impact strategy:

The impact campaign involves screening *A Suitable Girl* for college-age women across 10 cities in India in order to give these young women tools to unpack their feelings about marriage, expectations for their futures, and how to discuss these issues with their families. The campaign aims to start a dialogue with these young women, in hopes that they feel more empowered to assert themselves to their families. Young women who attend screenings share their experiences via a dedicated Facebook group. A select group of young Indian women from the larger group of attendees will become “ambassadors” and continue speaking at colleges, schools and beyond about what it means to be a young woman in India today as well as serve as mentors for other young Indian women.

The film team will partner with Indian activists and NGOs to create discussion points and actionable steps, and hone messaging in advance of the tour. In addition to creating a discussion guide and launching the tour, the campaign involves creating a five-minute video highlighting women who broke the mold of “a suitable girl.” The campaign will be rolled out in partnership with organizations such as Sakhi, Asha for Women, Southall Black Sisters, and more.

Impact so far:

The film is currently in the midst of festival distribution after premiering at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival, where it won the Albert Maysles Best New Documentary Director award. *A Suitable Girl* has traveled to AFI DOCS, Sheffield Doc/Fest, Heartland Film Festival, ArcLight Doc Series, Chicago South Asian Film Festival and many more festivals. The film will be available for transactional video-on-demand services (iTunes, Google Play) in January 2018, and then on Amazon in March 2018.