

With Grace (2024)



Directors: Dina Mwende & Julia Dahr

Protagonist: Grace

Producers: Natalya Sarch, Arne Dahr, Johanne Kristensen Sandvik & Julia Dahr

Co-Producer: Dina Mwende (Dhamira Films)

Director of Photography: Julie Lunde Lillesæter

Editors: Adam Thomas, Mathias Askeland, Linn Heidi Slåttøy

Executive Producer: Julie Lunde Lillesæter

Composer: Kåre Chr. Vestrheim

Sound Designer: Liana Degtiar

Colorist: Tom Chr. Lilletvedt

Production Company: Differ Media

Length: 29 mins

Production Support provided by : Norwegian Film Institute, The Fritt Ord Foundation, Viken Film Center, Bergesen Foundation, Arts and Culture Norway - the Audio and Visual Fund, BBC

Genre: Documentary

Logline: Grace dreams big, but will she and her family weather the storm?

Official website: <https://www.withgracefilm.com>

Official Trailer: <https://vimeo.com/differmedia/withgracethefilm>

Social Media: [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [LinkedIn](#)

Festivals:

- IDFA, November 2024, World Premiere, Official Selection - Documentary Youth Competition
- FlickerFest 2025, Australian Premiere, Official Selection - Best Documentary Short
- One World Festival, Czech Premiere, Winner - Children's Jury Award
- Thessaloniki Film Festival, Educational Programme
- Human International Film Festival, Norwegian Premiere, Children's Programme

Poster artwork:  With Grace film poster_web_HQ.jpg

Short synopsis

Grace, a witty 13-year-old girl, with big dreams and the rare gift of making everyone around her laugh, takes us back to her early childhood years with her close-knit, loving farmer family in Kenya: a time with lots of fun, but also a time when disaster almost split her family apart.

Long synopsis

Grace, a witty 13-year-old girl with big dreams and the rare gift of making everyone around her laugh, takes us back to her early childhood years with her loving farmer family in Kenya. Growing up in a vibrant family with eight siblings, her world is full of playfulness, and she dreams of becoming a comedian—and perhaps a farmer like her hardworking parents. Rain is everything to Grace and her family. She used to trust that the rain would come and make their crops grow into delicious maize and sweet pumpkins. But that has all changed.

Grace shows us a time when disaster struck. Year after year, droughts put her family farm at risk, and her biggest fear becomes that her dad will have to leave them to find work in the city. When a storm destroys their home, Grace is sure that her family will be split apart. The rain that used to make her happy had suddenly become dangerous.

But even in the midst of crisis, there is laughter and hope, and her close-knit family ultimately recovers. At the heart of this story is Grace, whose humor and infectious

optimism holds them together through tough times. We follow her journey, witnessing the power of resilience, humor, and the unshakeable belief that a better tomorrow is possible—even in the face of climate change.

Director's statement

Dina Mwende, Director (Kenya)

Growing up, I danced in the rains during the rainy seasons and played with the sands when it was super dry. Just like Grace, I grew up on a small rural farm in the Eastern part of Kenya which is predominantly a semi-arid/arid area, hence vulnerable to the impacts of droughts and other extreme weather patterns, and so there is always shortage of resources. My family are still farmers and my mum especially is constantly worried about the return of the rains and if it will bring forth enough harvest for her family and the cattle. We need this story - as well as its impact campaign!

Grace and I share many of the same childhood experiences, worries as children of farmers, love for rain and nature - and we speak the same language. We have worked with a deep and long process where trust building, good and open conversations, listening, testing and facilitating good spaces for feedback is key. This has created a special connection between us and enabled open, in depth conversations about Grace's life, feelings, identity and playful and dreamy universe - and what she wants with the film and its impact campaign.

Julia Dahr, Director (Norway)

I've known Grace and her family since 2011, when I began filming my first feature documentary *Thank You For The Rain* (2017), which follows Grace's father, Kisilu (who also became a co-creator of the film and a life-long friend). While filming with Kisilu, Grace had a tendency to appear in our frame whenever we were filming. She was clearly fascinated by the camera and curious to get to know us, and I was very excited to get to know her too, smile together with her as she made her funny movements and jokes, and see how she made the whole family laugh. We ended up becoming close during the period I filmed with her dad from when Grace was 3 to 8 years old.

When people saw the finished film about Grace's dad, many came up to me and asked if I could also make a film for kids about rural life in Kenya. It got me thinking about all the amazing footage we had of Grace. And I asked Grace if she was up for sharing her story with the world, and she said yes!

I decided to make *With Grace* because I felt there was a gap - we lack films that can be conversation starters across generations on important topics that matter to us all; connection with nature, family bonds, stereotypes and climate justice. This is the kind of film I wish I could have seen when I was a kid and talked to my parents about. And now that the film is done, I love the conversations I've had with my kids after they've met Grace and learned her story in this film.

Bios

Dina Mwende (short bio)

Dina is an experienced film producer and director based in Nairobi, Kenya, who over the last 15 years has had the chance to create, design, produce and manage various developmental edutainment and entertainment projects in East Africa - among them The Know Zone Children's TV series Kenya/Rwanda and NAFSI the feature film on Netflix.

Dina Mwende (long bio)

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Julia Dahr (short bio)

Julia is a critically acclaimed director and producer who makes character-driven films for an international audience about current social issues. She is the director of the feature documentary Thank You For The Rain (2017), which was sold to broadcasters in more than 60 countries and won 17 international awards.

Julia Dahr (long bio)

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About Differ Media - Production Company

Differ Media is an independent film production company based in Oslo, Norway. We're passionate about storytelling that can spark public debate, challenge stereotypes and offer a new take on current issues, making award-winning documentaries for international audiences, telling personal and powerful stories about the most important issues of our time.

Productions:

AN ARMY OF WOMEN (2024)

WITH GRACE (2024)

THE RESILIENT (2019)

WHEN PRIDE CAME TO TOWN (2018)

THE DRY VALLEY (2018)

THANK YOU FOR THE RAIN (2017)

In production:

STAYERS

IN FLUX

NO BLACK SWAN