

SIMA 2026 Shortlist Announced — Films From 43 Countries Advance as Finalists

Championing documentary storytelling at the intersection of creative excellence and social resonance.

LOS ANGELES, CA, UNITED STATES, January 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In 2025, the image lost its innocence. Manipulation, replication, noise. What we see no longer guarantees what is true. Truth has become both fragile and urgent. What endures are authentic narratives—stories rooted in lived experience, carried with integrity, and told with courage. [The films advancing as finalists in SIMA 2026](#)

honor cinema as a vessel for that truth—where art becomes witness, and storytelling a vital offering. Through intimate and unflinching portraits of humanity, these works confront injustice, uncertainty, and change, while still daring to imagine something better—affirming empathy, truth, and accountability as essential to our collective resilience.

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*Daniela Kon Lieberberg,
Founder & CEO of SIMA*

Spanning 43 countries, this year's finalists move across the full spectrum of our shared existence—love and war, memory and justice, land and belonging, grief and renewal. These films return us to presence and meaning: from love stories told through the embodied poetry of sign language (*A Quiet Love*) to a new generation of Afghan skiers building community on makeshift wooden skis (*Champions of the Golden Valley*). Together, they insist that resilience is not a slogan or an image—it is a daily, lived practice.

Across the slate, filmmakers confront the forces shaping our world with urgency and care, turning their lens toward both overt conflict and the quieter architectures of power. Through satire as truth-telling (*Coexistence, My Ass!*), women challenging patriarchal systems from within



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(Cutting Through Rocks), and reckonings with autonomy, land, incarceration, and historical erasure (Life After, Loot, Yurlu | Country, Seeds, The Quilters), these works reject simplification in favor of stories earned through trust and intimacy—reminding us that when cinema is grounded in ethical intention, images can still carry meaning, and even help restore it.

“The SIMA 2026 Finalists show us that impact isn’t about scale, it’s about the depth of storytelling,” says Daniela Kon Lieberberg, Founder & CEO of SIMA. “At a moment when images no longer guarantee truth, these films embrace complexity and nuance, reaffirming cinema’s power to witness the world with integrity and care. We’re deeply honored to support these storytellers and their courageous, vital work.”

Beyond the films themselves, SIMA 2026 honors a powerful cohort of Impact Campaign and Production Company Finalists—projects and partners that transform cinema into sustained action. Together, they demonstrate what becomes possible when ethical production, long-term strategy, and artistic rigor move in concert: advancing reparative justice and corporate accountability (Asog, Union); amplifying survivor-led movements and legal advocacy (Devi, To Kill a Tiger, Volverte a Ver / To see you again); confronting environmental and public health crises (Plastic People: The Hidden Crisis of Microplastics, Yintah); defending freedom of the press (State of Silence); and building new, trauma-informed models of healing (All That I Am, From Here). From investigative journalism to immersive nonfiction and community-rooted storytelling, these campaigns and organizations reflect SIMA’s belief that cinema’s responsibility does not end at the screen—it deepens through collaboration and sustained impact.

For over fourteen years, SIMA has championed storytelling at the intersection of creative excellence and social resonance. Since 2012, SIMA has served as a global platform for filmmakers pushing the boundaries of form and access while amplifying voices historically excluded from mainstream media. In a time when image is abundant and trust is fragile, SIMA films exemplify what it means to create with authenticity—grounding cinema in intention and care. The SIMA 2026 Finalists are now eligible for consideration in [Cinema Across Borders](#), SIMA’s traveling screening series reaching communities in 30+ countries, as well as [SIMA Academy](#), the organization’s award-winning education platform engaging 160,000+ students across 100+ countries. As the competition enters its final judging phase, finalists will compete for awards and cash prizes, with winners announced on February 4, 2026.

SIMA AWARDS SPONSORS

SIMA’s Sponsors are committed to the collaborative effort of honoring the most thought-provoking documentary films of our time. The 14th Annual SIMA Awards are powered by SIMA STUDIOS, The Foundation for Systemic Change, Media for Change, Ethologics, FIPADOC - International Documentary Festival, International Documentary Association (IDA), Firelight Media & Firelight Films, DC/DOX Festival, Double Exposure Film Festival, Documentary Organization of Canada (DOC), Documentary Australia, The Good Media Network, Women’s Voices Now, Doc Edge, and Docubox.

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