



# A Small Act

Autumn  
Season  
2011

**Release:** 2010

**Cert (UK):** 12A

**Runtime:** 88 minutes

**Director:** Jennifer Arnold

**Cast:** Hilde Back, Chris Mburu



Directed by Jennifer Arnold, the movie follows the causes and outcomes of 'a small act' performed by Hilde Back, a Swedish schoolteacher who made a donation to sponsor a child in Kenya through secondary school. Like many people who may or may not donate to charities, the film opens with Hilde's thoughts, "What you send in is just a drop in the ocean. I don't have much, and sometimes you wonder, does it help?"

Jennifer Arnold's latest documentary (a finalist for the Grand Jury Award at Sundance) is warm, triumphant, hopeful and inspiring without ever being the slightest bit mawkish or sappy. It's basic premise is that anyone can make the world a better place - if not

on a grand scale, at least by making a difference to individual people - one small act at a time.

'A Small Act' centres on the life story of Chris Mburu, who as a small boy living in a mud house in a Kenyan village, had his primary and secondary education paid for by a Swedish woman. This cost her \$15 a month. They had never met. He went on to the University of Nairobi, graduated from Harvard Law School, and is today a United Nations Human Rights Commissioner.

The film shows Mburu seeking the Swedish woman who "made my life possible." She is Hilde Back. Before even meeting her, in gratitude he started a foundation named the Hilde Back Foundation, to fund scholarships for poor village children. She is now 85 years old, a German Jew who was sent to Sweden as a child. Her family died in the Holocaust. She was a school-teacher, never married and has lived in the same apartment for 35 years. She is a tiny woman, but robust and filled with energy.

