

On 9 October Ciné-ONU screened 'The Breadwinner' at Cinéma Galeries in Brussels, in partnership with the European Week of Action for Girls, Mission of Canada to the EU, and The Embassy of Ireland to mark the International Day of the Girl Child.



The Breadwinner tells the story of 11 year-old Parvana, who lives under Taliban rule in Afghanistan in 2001. After the wrongful arrest of her father, Parvana cuts off her hair and dresses like a boy to support her family. Working alongside a friend, she soon discovers a new world of freedom and danger. She draws strength from the fantastical stories she invents, and embarks on an epic quest to find her father and reunite her family.

After the screening, there was a panel discussion with Nora Twomey, Director of The Breadwinner; Áine Hearn, Director of the Conflict Resolution Unit at the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland; and Sietske Steneker, Director of the Brussels Office of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Carlos Jimenez, from the UN's Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) moderated.

Nora Twomey began by explaining the emotional connection she felt to the character Parvana and why that motivated her to create the animated film: "I felt a deep amount of empathy for Parvana but I had so much more to discover. I wanted to find out more about Afghanistan and the different stories that are there, and I think that you can do that with the different layers of the film. The journey is very slow for animation - it took almost 5 years to script the film - but it allows you more time to understand the stories."



“I found it a really moving film. It shows the reality that is going on in Afghanistan and the staggering gender inequality in the country,” said Sietske Steneker.

Áine Hearn added, “Inequality, in particular for women, is a huge matter globally. In fact, there are elections coming up in Afghanistan and only 26% of women are registered to vote. So, women won’t have a voice in the election. Parvana is able to read but is house bound until she is a boy. What would happen if all these girls were not held back but set free? Beyond just trying to survive. We have to empower young women. We need to beat the drum to ensure that women and children are heard.”

In response to questions from the audience about whether the issues highlighted in the film are still present in Afghanistan today, and what can be done to address them, Nora Twomey said: “I think we first have to acknowledge that there are still a lot of questions to be answered. We need to allow children to ask more questions. The author of the breadwinner wanted readers to ask questions and empathise with the characters in this situation. I would like to see more books and films like this. Rather than protecting our children, we should be opening them up to the issues they will see in this world.”



- To see pictures from the evening, [click here.](#)
- For more information about the film, [click here.](#)
- Follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#): @CineONU #CineONU