

Giving a voice to two billion people to save their habitat

Issued by [M&C Saatchi Abel](#)

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The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), in collaboration with South African advertising agency M&C Saatchi Abel, has launched an emotive video shot in the heart of Africa to draw attention to the plight of the world's disappearing dryland forests and the two billion people who depend on them.

"Generally speaking, people don't know what dryland forests are," says Robert Grace, founding partner and head of strategy at M&C Saatchi Abel. "They can look like deserts and often aren't typically 'beautiful'. Unlike rainforests, dryland forests don't get the attention they deserve and yet they provide two billion people with food, a home and a livelihood. Drylands cover 41% of the earth's land surface, but at the current rate of desertification, 23 hectares of drylands are disappearing every minute. We needed to make the public understand that the drylands are not wastelands. They are full of life and hope for the two billion people who depend on them."

FAO is calling on governments and financial partners to invest in restoring dryland forests and managing them sustainably for future generations, also as a means of building resilience to climate change.

Grace was approached by FAO to assist on a pro bono basis with drawing attention to this issue following a presentation he gave at the World Forestry Congress in Durban, South Africa, in September 2015 on communication and cause-related marketing.

"Communication is a very powerful thing," adds Kayli Vee Levitan, Creative Group Head, M&C Saatchi Abel. "So, as a communications agency, we believe that it's our duty to use our skills and resources to make a positive impact on the world around us and give a voice to those who need it most."

The video was shot in Limpopo, South Africa, and directed by Miles Goodall of Velocity Afrika. At present, the video is being shared on social media networks and in the short time that it has been live, it has been viewed more than 33,000 times and shared more than 300 times. The agency hopes that it will also be aired on television news channels.

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