STORY DEVELOPMENT

Finding Mac's story

I went to the Central African Republic to find stories for Water for Good. I had an assignment, but the people I met would determine what I filmed. One of them was Macaire Lambate, known as Mac, who traveled between communities keeping their water wells working.

Water for Good had given Mac the training and opportunity to learn a trade, then helped him build a business of his own. He could make a living, create opportunities for others, and keep clean water flowing for his neighbors. That was the story I wanted to tell: how an opportunity had changed one man's life, and how he was using it to help the people around him. I proposed a character film, and Mac and the organization welcomed it.

What I learned about Mac’s livelihood and his ties to other communities made me want to follow his story over time. Our pre-interviews shaped a two-part film around his maintenance journey: introduce Mac and his work before he left, then return to hear what the journey had been like. I filmed the first portrait with that return visit in mind. I wanted viewers to know who was setting out and care about what happened to him along the way.

Mac had become a friend. While traveling to maintain wells, he became ill from contaminated water and, too far from a hospital to get help in time, passed away before we could reunite. Losing someone who worked to bring others clean water in that way was heartbreaking.

Looking back, I would spend more of that first visit getting to know his family and community. I would ask about the people closest to him and spend time with them, then give those relationships a place in the film. I knew Mac through his work. I wish I had captured more of the life around it, so viewers could know more of the person I had met.

If time and budget allowed, I would also go with Mac on the maintenance journey. I would want to be there with the camera as he worked, solved problems, and met the people relying on him. Instead of building the journey from interviews before and afterward, we could watch it unfold with him. That is where I would want to put more of our filming time. His relationships and his work would tell the story together.

Watch Macaire Lambate – Water for Good