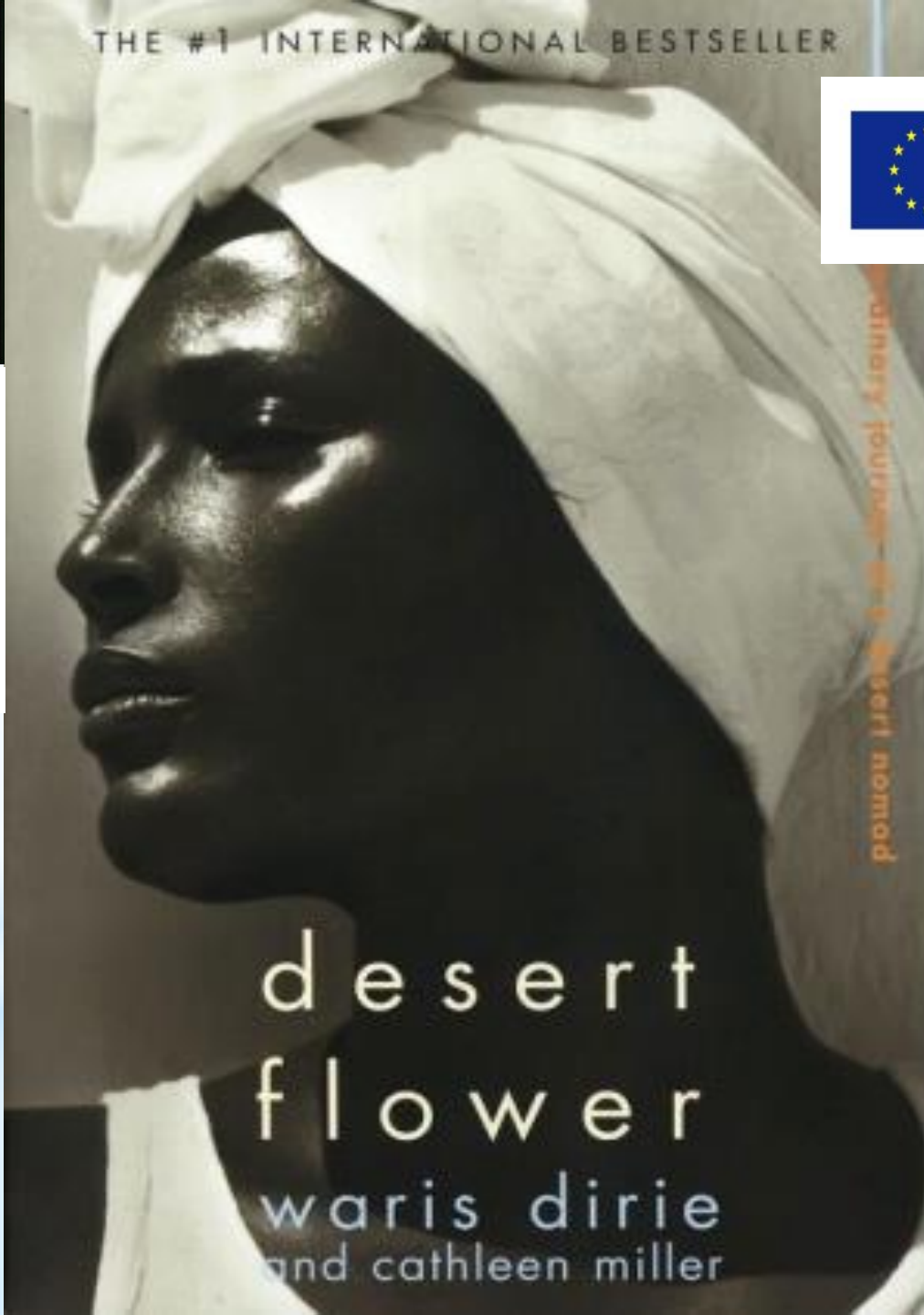




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# \* The story of WARIS DIRIE

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# \*The story of WARIS DIRIE

**Somali model, author, actress  
social activist and once  
UN Special  
Ambassador**



**Waris Dirie** was born in 1965, a nomadic family, in the region of Gallacchio, in the Somali desert, at the border with Ethiopia.

In 1997, Harper Collins published Waris Dirie's biography "**Desert Flower**" (in New York) and the book quickly became an international bestseller.

The book "**Desert Flower**" by Waris Dirie and Cathleen Miller is about her life. She was a hardworking girl, living in harmony with her family and nature until she was around five years old. Even if she went through difficult times, she says: *"I thank God every day that I'm from Africa"*.





At the age of twelve, her father arranged a marriage to a sixty-year-old boy. She didn't want to marry him but her father got 5 camels in exchange. She decided to run away, and so she had to cross the dessert to Mogadishu. She had no shoes, no food or drink, no money, illiterate, nothing but an overwhelming will to survive. With great courage and extraordinary intuition, something she has naturally developed in her nomadic life, she found her way to Mogadishu, and eventually to London, working as a servant in the Somali Embassy.





On her way she was nearly raped by a trucker. When she arrived in the city she lived in the house of her sister and helped her with her kids, later she lived with her aunt. After a few years she managed to work as house keeper in London. A stranger asked her, if he is allowed to take photos of her, but she was afraid of him because of her difficult past.

When her family returned to Somalia, Waris refused, hiding her passport and ID. To support herself she worked at McDonalds while living in a youth hostel with her new girl friend, who was also from Africa.

After some years she met again the stranger who wanted to take photos of her and he gave her a card with his phone number. She decided to call him. At this time started her model carrier. The problem was her visa. The only way to get a valid visa was to marry an English man. She did it and so she could stay in London and she was also allowed to travel around the world and so she become one of the most famous models in the world. She also speak up about female circumcision, a terrifying experience she went through in Africa.



Her deep convictions and philosophy of life are summed up at the end of the book when she says:

*“Many friends have expressed concern that a religious fanatic will try to kill me when I go to Africa. After all, I’ll be speaking out against a crime many fundamentalists consider a holy practice. I’m sure my work will be dangerous, and I admit to being scared.... But my faith tells me to be strong, that God led me down this path for a reason. He has work for me to do. This is my mission. And I believe that long before the day I was born, God chose the day I will die, so I can’t change that. In the meantime, I might as well take a chance, because that’s what I’ve done all my life.”*





She moved from London to New York and became one of the first African Supermodels receiving an exclusive agreement with the cosmetic group Revlon. She also graced the front pages of all the major magazines.

She appeared as a James Bond Girl, alongside Timothy Dalton in “The Living Daylights”.

The BBC commissioned the programme “A Nomad in New York”, based on Waris Dirie for their series “The day that changed my life”.

The US based famous journalist, Barbara Walters, interviewed her on behalf of NBC. Waris was also interviewed by Laura Ziv for the magazine Marie Claire, in which she decided to tell about the cruel ritual of female genital mutilation and also her own destiny.



She travels on behalf of the United Nations around the world, participates in conferences, meets presidents, Nobel Prize winners and movie stars and gives hundreds of interviews to draw attention to her mission.



# Desert Flower Foundation

In 2002 she founded her own foundation, called “**Waris Dirie Foundation**” to support her work as a campaigner against FGM.

In 2010, the Foundation was re-named “**Desert Flower Foundation**” to reflect the broader approach to addressing Female Genital Mutilation through economic projects in Africa.

The foundation’s team is made up of men and women committed to gender equality, human rights and all of them share Waris Dirie’s ideal: **Ending Female Genital Mutilation.**

The Desert Flower Foundation and all its campaigns, projects and activities are financed by private donations.

The key work aspects of the Desert Flower Foundation are:

## **Raise Awareness**

Through workshops, seminars, conferences, presentations, charity events, online campaigns etc.

## **Prevention work**

Through projects like “Save a little desert flower”, which seeks to protect little girls in Africa from FGM.

## **Damage Repair**

Through Desert Flower Centers they try to help and guide victims of FGM to regain, as much as possible, their life quality and confidence.





# Desert flower - the movie

LIYA  
KEBEDE

SALLY  
HAWKINS

The extraordinary true story of  
the woman who crossed a  
desert and changed the world.

Based on the  
bestselling novel by  
WARIS DIRIE  
and CATHLEEN MILLER

## Desert flower

A film by  
SHERRY HORMANN

MARKINSON SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY ANTHONY MACKIE WITH TIMOTHY SPALL AND JULIET STEVE

ENTERTAINMENT AND THE MATCH FACTORY PRESENT A PRODUCTION BY DESERT FLOWER FILM PRODUCTIONS IN COOPERATION WITH...  
SETO IN ASSOCIATION WITH BACKUP FILMS A PETER HERMANN PRODUCTION DESERT FLOWER LIYA KEBEDE SALLY HAWKINS CRAIG POKINSON MARGA STAL SOBANA OBAAR-SOGBO SPECIAL APPEARANCE BY ANTHONY MACKIE WITH TIMOTHY SPALL AND JULIET STEVE  
EDITED BY KEN PELSNER ASC PRODUCTION DESIGNER JAMIE LEONARD COSTUME DESIGNER CLARA FRARY COSTUME COLLECTOR GABRIELE WUNDER SPA STYLING SUPERVISOR STEPHAN STOLT MUSIC BY MARTIN TRUSCHAKOW COSTUME DESIGNER GENEVIEVE REISLER  
EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS BARBARA SEILLER JAMES WOLFGANG JORDAN ROBERT VON SPIETH BITTINA REISE WRITTEN BY THE AUTHORSHIP OF WARIS DIRIE AND CATHLEEN MILLER COMPOSER BENJAMIN HERMANN DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY DANNY WASSER PRODUCED BY PETER HERMANN WRITTEN AND

MAJESTIC CINECITY SBCS EPC ARRI/ARRIFLEX DOLBY DIGITAL RESTRICTED PARENTS STRONG LANGUAGE AND SOME DRUG USE www.desertflowermovie.com NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC ENTERTAINMENT

IN THEATERS MARCH 2011



In March 2008 producer and Oscar-winner Peter Hermann (“**Nowhere in Africa**”) commenced with the shooting of “**Desert Flower**” (the budget: USD 16 Mio). The initial filming took place in Djibouti with mostly amateur actors. Further locations included New York, Berlin and London. **Waris Dirie** served as associate producer for the film, which was directed by Sherry Hormann.



**Waris Dirie** is played by an Ethiopian supermodel and the image of Estee Lauder, Liya Kebede, who had already played roles in two big productions: “The Good Shepherd” directed by Robert De Niro and “Lord of War” by Nicolas Cage.

In the movie we also see other prominent actors, such as Sally Hawkins (“Happy Go Lucky”, “Cassandra's Dream”), Timothy Spall (“Harry Potter”, “Vanilla Sky”), Meera Syal (“Scoop”, “Anita and Me”), Juliette Stevenson (“Bend It Like Beckham”) and Craig Parkinson (“Control”).

My mother named me after a miracle of nature: Waris means desert flower. The desert flower blooms in a barren environment where few living things can survive.

*Waris Dirie*

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*"I can enjoy anywhere, and I can leave it  
Life is about moving on"*

*Waris Dirie*



I love life. I wish I could live another 500 years, truly. There is so much to do. I don't feel bitter or angry or disappointed. If anything, I am very grateful for where I come from. I have absolutely no regrets.

– *Waris Dirie*





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