

Cinema and filmmaking in Africa

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Algiers, July 1 (RHC)-- Right now, there are many African film festivals, including among the most important ones the Cairo International Film Festival (Egypt), Marrakesh International Film Festival (Morocco).

Africa has all the human, economic resources, and all the energies and talent to shape its own destiny. It may take time, but it does not matter—the movement has begun and a thousand creative fires are already smouldering. A torrent of images, narratives and stories that nothing can suppress is about to flow. Africa will inevitably soon get into its stride and pick up steam. Gaston Kaboré Filmmaker (Burkina Faso).

The screening of the Sudanese film “Good Bye Julia” -- that represents a lot to all Sudanese people for being the first one to be presented in Cannes, came few days after the beginning of the war in the country. The film itself had many symbols, as it tells the story of two women who represent the complicated relationship and differences between northern and southern Sudanese communities. It takes

place in Khartoum during the last years of Sudan as a united country, shortly before the 2011 separation of South Sudan. It is a film about racism, discrimination of women and poor people.

As the director of the film, Mohammed Kordofani, described his film "The racism that was practiced for many decades from most Northern Arabs, government and people, was a major reason for the southerners choosing to secede. Consider Goodbye Julia a call for reconciliation and a spotlight on the social dynamics that led to the separation of the South."

Eiman Youssef, the main role actress said, "the war did not give us the chance to celebrate our success". With a lot of sadness, she explained "I had to travel as a refugee just before the presentation of the film, exactly as the people of the South did many years ago."

Overall, the film and audiovisual sector in Africa remains historically and structurally underfunded, underdeveloped and undervalued, generating only US\$5 billion in annual revenue out of a potential US\$20 billion, according to the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI).

Many aspects of the industry are still informal. Some reports indicates that only 44% of countries having an established film commission and 55% of countries having a film policy. Regulations, when they do exist, are sometimes seen as obstacles rather than enablers. Piracy remains rampant and two-thirds of countries estimate that at least 50% of the potential revenue of the sector is lost to the illegal exploitation of creative audiovisual content, which in many cases, deters structured investment. The education gap is wide: degree programs are too few and far between and largely inadequate compared to local needs, with curricula that still remain more theoretical than practical and do not keep up with the pace of technological advancement in more developed markets.

Challenges also persist in sensitive areas such as gender equality, particularly in the Central African region where almost all respondents estimate the share of women in films to be less than 10%. In the Central and West Africa regions. However, several Arabic-speaking and English-speaking countries, including Tunisia, Morocco, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, Rwanda and Zimbabwe, showed encouraging dynamics, with 30% or more of women in front of and behind the camera. Regarding freedom of expression, little progress has been observed in recent years.

Both historically and culturally, there are major regional differences between North African and Sub-Saharan cinemas, and between the cinemas of different countries.

The Nigerian film industry is the largest in Africa in terms of volume, number of annual films, revenue and popularity. Almost all African countries suffer a lack of freedom of speech, that undermine the film industry and there are explicit or self-imposed limitations to what can be shown or addressed on screen. This was obvious for example in Equatorial Guinea in the feature film "The Writer From a Country Without Bookstores": it was the first to be shot in the country and critic with Teodoro Obiang Nguema's dictatorship, one of the longest lasting in the world.

African cinema, like cinema in other world regions, covers a wide variety of topics. In Algiers in 1975, the Pan African Federation of Filmmakers (FEPACI) adopted the Charte du cineaste africain (Charter of the African cinéaste), which recognized the importance of postcolonial and neocolonial realities in African cinema. The filmmakers start by recalling the neocolonial condition of African societies.

Some African filmmakers, for example Ousmane Sembene, try to give African history back to African people by remembering the resistance to European and Islamic domination.

Right now there are many African film festival, among the most important ones are: Cairo International Film Festival (Egypt), Marrakesh International Film Festival (Morocco), and in Sub-Saharan Africa the most important and large African film festival is Ouagadougou International Film Festival (Burkina Fasso) known as FESPACO. There are less known but not less important: the Sahara Film Festival (known as FiSahara), and Tarifa African Film Festival in South Spain.



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