IMARA ROUND TABLE 2

THEME: OPPORTUNITIES OF COOPERATION IN FILM, TV AND DIGITAL MEDIA.

WEDNESDAY 29th May 2019.

Background

The second IMARA Round Table was convened to discuss *Cooperation in Film, TV and Digital Media*. The forum drew participation of stakeholders from the film industry including film directors, festival curators and representatives from film associations among others; government including representatives from Kenya Film Commission, Department of Film Services and Office of the Deputy President, and academia..

Experience Sharing: Status of the Industry

After the introductory remarks, participants shared their experiences in the film, TV and digital media sector . The key points captured were that the following:-

- The local audio visual industry has high expectations of the Government, and many times expect solutions to be provided by government. While government should create a positive environment for industry growth, local content producers need to look for partnerships for funding. For example Nigeria producers have identified fundraising strategies that work well within their context. Relying on non-existent rebates is not profitable. Another strategy would be to ensure that there is a rollout plan for local productions;
- The local industry can learn from both the Nigerian and Ethiopian film industries that are making revenue in their own cinemas, consuming local content by telling compelling stories and building audiences;
- Local Industry needs to focus on collaboration rather than competition. There is synergy that will come from working together. From the perspective of training, some institutions have tried to partner with practitioners so that students get more comprehensive training.
  There is need to invest in job creation for the sector. The National Industrial Training Levy which employers pay could be used to cater for internship placements of students. This can help with creating jobs, supporting upcoming film makers and providing opportunities to get hands on learning while on high quality production placements.
  There is visibility of local content in media houses. However, local broadcasters need to outsource local content from independent producers in order to help growth in the industry.
  Media houses are producing local content for which they are not charged filming and classification fees.

There are challenges with the implementation of the 60% local content on broadcast channels. - One of the reasons for the non-adherence is that there is insufficient local content available. Members agreed there was need to get feedback on this and how this is being enforced from the ICT Ministry and the Communications Authority of Kenya. It would also be important to know which Media Houses are actually achieving or maintaining the local content requirement. In the music industry data has reflected that some artists make a lot of money as they have high airplay across the country.

- To promote local content it was proposed that Government establish/set aside a Sports channel, a culture channel and a channel for local producers.

- With digital expansion, the sector needs to take into consideration that film is soon going to be 100% ICT driven and there are numerous benefits to this especially because of funding.
- Development and promotion of the local industry should be prioritized. Members recognized the need to work with others so that the complex problem(s) in the sector are resolved.
  There is need to consider substantial financial solutions to the industry. One option is annual big budget film by Government.

There are some industries that have been successful in Kenya despite upheavals in their respective sectors. For example Coca Cola, EABL, Safaricom, and Equity Bank have managed to carve out a niche for themselves. They battle for the hearts, souls and minds of the target market. The creative sector needs to also do that. The film industry in Nigeria and South Africa is unfazed by foreign block busters/content.

Key questions discussed included:

- Mindsets: How do you build a consciousness in a country/citizenry so that people celebrate the positive content that is generated locally?
- Audiences: How do we cultivate loyal and big audiences?
- Sector Data:-What data is needed and where is it?
- Data analytics: How should the data be analyzed? Who develops the criteria for analysis? How do we use what is available?
- Data utility: What is the data for? Who is collecting it and for what?
- Success: What does a successful film industry look like?

Views by Participants

The role of government: Participants agreed that government has a key role in ensuring that the film industry grows and thrives . Government can provide a facilitative environment through policy formulation, legislation, regulation, financing, foreign relations, Intellectual Property protection and nurturing culture and heritage.

Audience development and distribution: The challenges within the local audio visual industry are in audience development and distribution of film. Kenyans do not have the culture of watching films in cinema halls. There are an estimated 80, 000 plus video kiosks in Kenya, who show local film and make money on this. There is potential in the sector. Emerging markets such as Kenya need to find their market base. The audience have a lot options on where they get content, Kenya's producers need to know their end game is when they create content. The market has changed and become more fragmented, and producers need to identify what draws the subscribers. We can learn from our neighbours. For example, the Ethiopian Film Festival took the films to the place where people are. Our cultural context has an influence on how people consume content.

Understanding the supply chain: The manufacturing industry has understood the supply chain and this is working to their advantage. In the past many audio visual producers made their money through television. The funding available has changed. Kenya Audience Research Foundation was established to provide data and quarterly reports on media (both TV and Radio). The data collected on film and the wider creative sector needs to be aggregated.

Telling local stories/Case Studies: The Nigerian film industry started as sale of electronics. The producers supported one another and customers got content they wanted albeit at low quality. The sales were decentralized and as the film makers began to make more money the quality improved. In India , it is nationalism which influenced film content and there was high appreciation of local content which told the

Indian story. In Kenya, the National Script Competition has revealed that most do not write Kenyan stories, but rehash stories from films they have watched. There is need to change this and find a way to build and support developing the Kenyan story. Creative inspiration is important so that our story is rooted in the right place.

Learning about business: Teaching entrepreneurship in addition to film making and creative skills will have a great impact on the local production industry.

Monetization: One major challenge experienced in the industry is how to design projects that will appeal to their audience and make money. One needs to make one good project rather than 5 cheap productions. Productions make money through resell, syndication and so on. Producers need to understand how to monetize their content. For example, *Supa Modo* has penetrated the European markets. How can we create the enablers that help local films to get there?

Funding: On funding, producers need to think of multiple revenue streams for their productions. For example Doha Film Institute usually funds post-production and they also support commissioning. Information on funding and other opportunities need to be shared among the industry practitioners. Content marketing is important as well as understand how licensing operates.

Animation: The challenges experienced in the sector is lack of capacity in producing quality content, high cost of production, marketing , and distribution channels.

UNESCO Protocols: There are some that Kenya has not ratified which makes it impossible for Kenya to sign Co-production agreements with other countries. There are opportunities that can come with co-production that can support monetization of content if the necessary legal agreements are made.

Limits of the law: With regard to audience development the law might not always solve everything. Producers need to target the soul of the Kenyan. E.g. In the transport industry *Nganya* (public service vehicles modified with comfortable seats and quality entertainment systems) make more money than ordinary matatu because of the appeal to the customer. However, an example of a producer who has been successful is *Fatboy Animations* who continue to use simple stories that the audience can identify with. There is need to identify and find the audience for our stories, and evolve innovative models of distribution and marketing our films.

Regarding the policy and legislative framework, there is need for a policy that protects artistic expression and minimizes censorship. KFCB has taken the role of licensing based on no Executive Orders and is now showing interest in supervising production. The finalization of the film policy needs to be prioritized.

It was clarified that the Film Commission is under the Ministry of ICT and funding for industry is also under ICT. The Sports & Heritage Fund however is under Ministry of Sports & Heritage, and the industry can still access the fund though the parent ministry.

Way Forward/Action Points

1. *Advocacy:* There is need for advocacy and to lobby the government with a fresh approach and with solutions. Internal ambassadors need to be identified and quick wins targeted and communicated in clear visuals for the industry to win stakeholders support.

2. *Industry Action Plan:* Provide a well thought out Film Industry Action plan. Industry can also establish a Film Policy and Implementation Committee mandated to monitor industry growth.

3. *Ratification of UNESCO Protocols***:-** There is need to identify protocols that need ratification in order to grow the creative sector. The Kenya Film Commission will to look at the protocols and prepare list of countries that Kenya can sign with, identify point people within The Presidency and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and what sector can do to support.

4. *Industry Data:* It is important to define what success looks like and what data is needed for the sector to achieve the success. Reaching out to KIPPRA and KNBS would be useful.

5. *Remittances to Creatives from Broadcasters*. There is need to engage Communications Authority local content remittances and how much is being remitted.

6. Skills and Training: Strengthen sector skills development. This might involve curricula review and running Master Classes, working with Technical and Vocational Training Institution and organizing structured internships. .