Why we invest in audio-visual production

In Rwanda the audio-visual sector is still at a nascent state with very little locally produced content airing online, in cinemas or in television stations. However, the industry has a lot of economic potential not only for the sector but beyond. Film-induced tourism is one of the cross-sectoral effects that is becoming increasingly important for Rwanda. Since audio-visual productions have the ability to transport cultural values and traditions outside the country, films are used to attract tourists. In addition, audio-visual productions can have a significant non-monetary value. When used to sharpen and reflect on a country’s own cultural identity, films can be instrumental for creating awareness, a sense of ownership, freedom of speech and democracy. Values that stimulate innovation and creativity, the drivers of inclusive and sustainable growth.

For Rwanda to develop a strong audio-visual sector, it is necessary to promote up- and downstream production infrastructure as well as skills training. Furthermore, to become a strong revenue generating economic sector, intellectual property rights need to be established and enforced.

Our strategy and partners

The Promotion of Economy and Employment Programme (Eco-Emploi) supports the audio-visual sector by promoting a business friendly environment. Good growth conditions include a clearly defined legal position and a reliable production infrastructure. Therefore, partners from public and private sector, amongst others, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MINICOM), the Rwanda Development Board (RDB), Rwandan Art Council (RAC) and the private sector have set up a core group to coordinate and advise on the interventions regarding these objectives. Meanwhile, Eco-Emploi acts as a facilitator between the various actors from government to private sector.

A few of our intervention

With regards to the protection of creative work an unambiguous legal position is necessary for the growth of the sector. Therefore, MINICOM launched a taskforce in 2017 to review and align the National Intellectual Property Strategy with international best practices. The implementation and enforcement of intellectual property rights will lead to an elimination of pirate copies and consequently to more stability and financial security for artists and producers. Hence, the sector becomes more profitable and more attractive for jobseekers and investors alike.

As an umbrella organisation for all relevant business membership organisations in the film industry, RAC is instrumental for the development of a strong Rwandan audio-visual sector. In order to be well prepared for this task, RAC undertook efforts to strengthen its organisational structure and to improve its membership management and services.

The establishment of the Rwanda Film Office (RFO) by RDB has been a major step towards creating a film-friendly environment and infrastructure for audio-visual productions. It serves as point of contact for the global and the domestic film industry, promoting productions in the country. The office provides information on film locations, pools local experts and connects them with international clients as well as investors. In addition to its service function, RFO also trains students as location scouts. To increase visibility and international
exchange, the RFO is in the process of establishing an international annual audio-visual conference in partnership with the Cologne Film Festival. The conference will function as a networking platform, where challenges of the industry can be addressed, projects presented and business ideas exchanged.

To enhance the infrastructure of the sector, Mopas Rwanda Ltd., the leading film equipment rental house in Rwanda, established a partnership with internationally operating ARRI Group. This Munich based company is one of the largest manufacturers and distributors of motion picture cameras, digital intermediate and lighting equipment in the world. With its support, Mopas will receive an international certification for handling film equipment, enabling the company to work with international productions at a larger scale.

Already in 2012, Deutsche Welle Academy, Babelsberg European Film Centre and Kwetu Film Institute joined hands to start the Rwanda Media Project (RMP) with the objective to support skills development in the audio-visual sector. Originally offering a two-year long digital media designer programme and four-week long film masterclasses, the RMP today is offering trainings of trainers for digital media design in addition to the masterclasses. The collaboration has been producing successful graduates, as for example since 2016, graduates of the digital media designer programme are successfully running the Gorilla Media Cooperative (GOMECO). Today, GOMECO is producing career guidance videos for RDB that support young people to make informed decision on their future work life.

What we expect

Introduction and enforcement of intellectual property rights will increase local and international audio-visual production in Rwanda and in consequence secure as well as create jobs in the sector. The establishment of the RFO is an important step for the country to become a renowned host for international productions. In 2016 only five of the 55 countries in Africa had film offices, hence it is expected that Rwanda will enforce a strong position among its African competitors as well as create fruitful collaborations amongst them. The primary impacts of film projects in the country will lead to the creation of various new jobs in the different stages of film productions from development over pre-production to editing. Strong and sustainable partnerships with international film festivals and production companies, help to increase the awareness level of Rwanda as an audio-visual production site and further support the growth of the sector.

The secondary impacts of international productions in Rwanda are spill-over effects on the economy e.g. increased revenues in tourism services, accommodation, transportation, catering and construction to name a few. Further collaborations between different sectors, such as ICT and tourism will give room for new business ideas and technical innovations. It is expected that cross-sectoral effects will lead to more tourist visits and higher appreciation of products made in Rwanda. Hence a strong audio-visual sector will contribute to overall economic growth in the country.