



Addis Ababa  
University



International Emerging  
Talent Film Festival  
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# The Future of Ethiopian Film

**The First Ethiopian Film Initiative Meeting**  
held at the UNECA on June 23rd & 24th 2008

Under the patronage of  
**The Minister of Culture and Tourism of the FDRE**  
H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Dirir Gheddi



THE NEW SPIRIT OF AFRICA



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# PROGRAMME

## UNECA Addis Ababa

Monday June 23rd, 2008

### **MONDAY AM OPENING PLENARY SESSIONS** - Main Conference Room 5

Master of Ceremony Maji-da Abdi

09:10 Welcome by Dr. Abiy Tasse, Vice President for International Relations,  
Addis Ababa University

09:20 H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Dirir Gheddi,  
Ministry of Culture and Tourism: 'A Vision for the Future'

09:40 Representative Mr. Nureldin Satti, UNESCO: 'Ethiopia's Nascent Film  
Industry and the Quest for Self-fulfillment'

10:00 H.E. Mr. Gurjit Singh, Ambassador of India to Ethiopia: 'Developing a  
Cinema in Ethiopia'

10:15 Ms Ragnhild Ek, IETFF/EFI: 'Towards an Ethiopian Film Initiative'

10:30 - 11:00 TEA & COFFEE BREAK

11:00 Professor Mbye Cham: 'The African Experience'

11:15 Mr. Gaston Kabore: 'Cinema and Society'

11:30 Yetnayet Bahru Gessesse: 'A Young Filmmaker's Personal Experience'

11:45 Highlights from Ethiopian Film: On trailers now, in cinema or coming soon

12:00 Professor Abiyi Ford, Addis Ababa University: 'Tools for a Film Industry'

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH

### **MONDAY PM WORKSHOPS** - Caucus Rooms 7, 8 and 9

14:00 - 16:30 (1) Film studies and training

(2) Understanding the structures of a film industry

(3) Establishing a 'film body': commission, board, institute or foundation

16:30 - 17:00 TEA & COFFEE BREAK

### **17:00 - 18:00 SPECIAL PRESS SESSION** - Main Conference Room 5

Presentation of A24 - a new pan-African news channel by Mr. Salim Amin

Q&A on A24 and the Ethiopian Film Initiative

Tuesday June 24th, 2008

### **TUESDAY AM WORKSHOPS** - Caucus Rooms 7, 8 and 9

09:00 - 12:30 Continuation of WORKSHOPS

12:30 - 14:00 LUNCH

### **TUESDAY PM CLOSING PLENARY SESSION** - Main Conference Room 5

14:00 - 16:30 Presentation of conclusions from workshops

16:30 - 17:00 TEA & COFFEE BREAK

17:00 - 18:00 **ENDING SESSION**

# PRESS RELEASE



## Vision Agreed for the Future of the Ethiopian Film Industry

International and local filmmakers have agreed on an ambitious three-point plan to strengthen the film industry in Ethiopia.

The three-point plan was agreed after a two-day workshop called the Ethiopian Film Initiative held at the UNECA in Addis Ababa on 23 - 24 June. The Initiative involved the Ethiopian Culture and Tourism Ministry, Addis Ababa University, local filmmakers and the International Emerging Talent Film Festival (IETFF) based in Monaco.

The Culture and Tourism Minister, H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Dirir Gheddi, who welcomed the Initiative, opened the Conference. Other key speakers included the Representative of UNESCO based in Addis Ababa, Mr. Nureldin Satti, and the Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, H.E. Mr. Gurjit Singh.

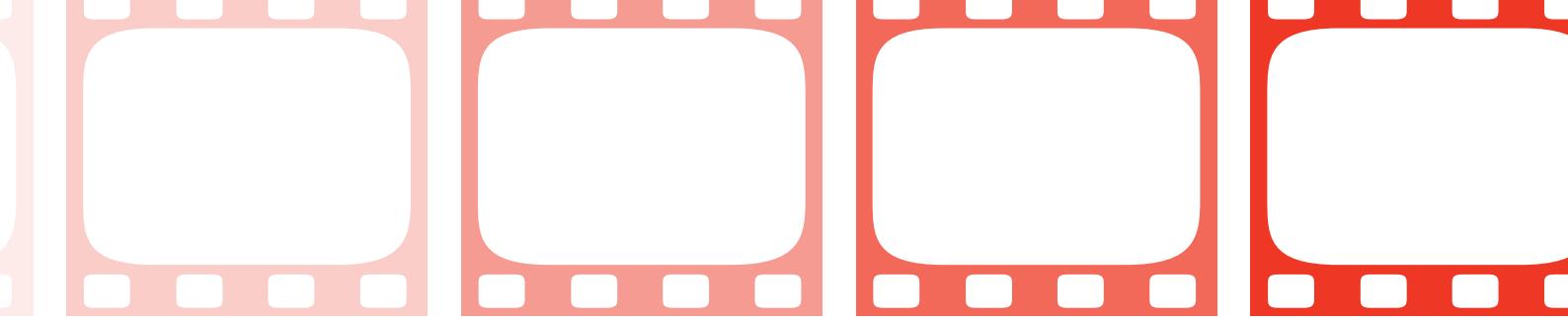
The three-point plan includes liaising with the government to establish a film policy and to discuss the setting up of a government agency to oversee the development of the local film industry. The second point emerging from the conference was a decision to set up an umbrella film organisation to represent all individual filmmakers and related associations in Ethiopia. This new organisation will seek to provide mutual support for all practitioners in the film industry, and act as a unified lobbying group on the film industry matters. An ad hoc group of local filmmakers was formed to plan how such an umbrella group would operate. The third point of the plan was to improve the professional standards of the Ethiopian film industry by encouraging short-term training to raise craft skills, production management, marketing and distribution. In the longer term the Ethiopian Film Initiative is supporting the development of permanent film centers in the country, including establishing a film department at Addis Ababa University.

The two-day workshop was attended by up to a hundred filmmakers and media professionals from Ethiopia and at least fifteen countries, including seven from the African continent.

H.E. Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael, who attended the workshop, said: "The time is now. If we don't use this opportunity no one anywhere is waiting for us. We have to be part of the global situation that is moving so fast. We have to realise that the film industry can bring a lot of money and can help promote the positive image of our country and increase the number of tourist."

The conference was sponsored by Ethiopian Airlines, the ECA, UNESCO, the Indian Embassy, and the US Embassy in Addis Ababa as well as Serenade Restaurant and Kuriftu Guest House in Addis Ababa.





# CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

## **The meeting made a number of recommendations, which included:**

- To encourage the Government to create a conducive environment through policy, legislation, and institutional mechanism, as well as recognising the importance of the film industry as a development instrument in promoting the country;
- To establish an umbrella organisation for individual filmmakers and existing film associations.

The new organisation will provide mutual support, centralised information and resources, and act as a unified lobbying group on film industry matters.

A steering group – the Ad Hoc Committee - has been set up by the Ethiopian Film Initiative to work out how such an umbrella group will operate.

- To promote the idea of establishing a government agency to develop the film industry in Ethiopia.

Supporters of the Ethiopian film initiative will seek to hold talks with key members of the Ethiopian government to explore how such a government film body might work.

- To improve the professional standards of the Ethiopian film Industry by working to raise craft skills, production management, marketing and distribution.

In the short term a number of small-scale training initiatives will be encouraged.

In the long-term the Initiative will support the establishment of film training centres including a Film School at Addis Ababa University.

The EFI agreed to work towards establishing a presence in Addis Ababa with a coordination and fundraising role.

It will liaise between the EFI members and its advisors and the counterparts in Ethiopia, as well as advice the EFI ad hoc committee. The EFI appointed Ragnhild Ek to on its behalf work out the detailed modus operandi, and she will be working with national partners in a capacity-building manner.

It was finally agreed by the EFI to ask the Ministry of Culture to appoint a liaison person inside the ministry who will follow up with the EFI.

# WELCOMING REMARKS

## MONDAY JUNE 23 9:30-12:30am

### **Dr. Abiy Tasse**

Vice President for International Relations, AAU

Dr. Abiy Tasse expressed his pleasure in being able to formally open the first Ethiopian Film Initiative meeting and expressed the regrets of Professor Andreas Eshete, President of AAU, who was unable to attend the workshop due to medical reasons, but sent his support.

He welcomed the involvement of the International Emerging Talent Festival and the launch of the IETFFs Global Film Expression pilot for Ethiopia, recalling that he first learnt about it from H.E. Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael, after its introduction at the festival in Monaco in May 2007.

Dr. Abiy also stated how after reading the fact-finding mission report in support of the Ethiopian film talent and industry by Ms. Ragnhild Ek, Professor Esthete underlines the need to establish a film studies program at AAU.

Finally, Dr. Tasse concluded by expressing his sincere hope that this workshop would produce the necessary deliberations leading to the strengthening of Ethiopia's growing film industry.

### **H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Dirir Gheddi**

Minister of Culture and Tourism

The ambassador, after expressing gratitude to the various stakeholders who contributed to the realization of this workshop, reminded participants of Ethiopians' longstanding familiarity with American and Indian films.

The ambassador, who described cinematography as among the most widely felt influential means of human creativity, recalled how, as a young filmgoer, how thrilling an experience it was to see African actors

such as the Egyptian Omar Sharif and later Ethiopian actors such as Debebe Eshetu, Zenebech Tadesse (most widely known as Chira Qeresh) and Wogayehu Negatu who acted in Shaft.

Ambassador Mohammed Dirir also underlined the necessity of establishment of an Ethiopian film school at Addis Ababa University.

Finally he concluded by wishing a speedy recovery to Professor Andreas Eshete.

### **Mr. Nuredin Satti**

UNESCO Representative

Calling cinema 'One of the most exciting phenomena of our times', Mr. Satti focused on how cinema was perceived, appreciated or combated in his home country of Sudan.

Mr. Satti recalled how the Imam of his hometown defined cinema with Su' Nama, which means 'growing evil'. He also spoke of experiences in which the Imam led an angry demonstration against the inauguration of a cinema and how those ideologies contributed to the notion that cinema is an instrument of cultural invasion and assimilation.

Mr. Satti underlined the role of film in this era of globalization as an instrument in the hands of Ethiopian artists and intellectuals to portray the predicament of their countrymen and women and the hopes and aspiration of their nation.

He also suggested that Ethiopian cinema should follow along the path opened by the pioneers of African cinema, such as the Senegalese filmmaker and writer Sembene Ousmane.

## **H.E. Mr. Gurgit Singh**

Ambassador of India to Ethiopia

Ambassador Gurgit Singh reminded the participants of the symposium Cinema Now: Here and There held in November 2006, which was aimed at stimulating discussion and to provide a forum whereby the Indian experience could support the film industry in Ethiopia.

He expressed his belief that cinema, as an art form, provides the government of Ethiopia with another tool for public diplomacy, as well as contributing to the freedom of expression through the nurturing of democratic values.

Ambassador Gurgit Singh also expressed his hopes that cinema would add another avenue for private sector engagement and that if support becomes available to domestic cinema it may attract Indian filmmakers to Ethiopia. He underlined the need for public-private partnership in today's globalized world as well as the role of the government in areas such as capacity building.

Finally the Ambassador expressed his belief that the workshop would be an important occasion to provide direction whereby the economic growth that is sought in Ethiopia could be harnessed to create another avenue for cultural expression and to strengthen a positive image of Ethiopia.

## **Ms. Ragnhild Ek**

'Towards an Ethiopian Film Initiative'

Ms. Ek expressed gratitude to the guests who traveled all the way from South Africa, Rwanda, Burkina Faso, Ireland, France, the US and England to share their experiences with the Ethiopian filmmakers.

She also expressed her gratitude to the Ethiopian Airlines, UNESCO, UNECA, and the US and Indian Embassies for their kind contributions to the meeting.

She spoke about the many efforts that have been taken to strengthen the film industry, starting with the pioneer of Ethiopian cinema, Michel Papatakis who tried to push Ethiopia cinema to international levels, and the successes achieved by Haile Gerima and other famous filmmakers.

Ms. Ek also reminded participants of the fact that the IETFF is 'a very young film festival' that wants to help emerging film talent by promoting dialogue among filmmakers to promote cultural diversity and international understanding. During the first IETFF film festival that was held in Monaco in May 2007, Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael and herself discussed with the IETFF how to launch the Global Film Expression (GFE) program in Ethiopia, which was subsequently chosen as a pilot country.





## **Professor Mbaye Cham**

'The African Experience'

Professor Mbaye led the participants in a minute of silence for Ousmane Sembene, one of the pioneers of African Cinema. He recalled the contribution of Ousmane Sembene in Africa and the Centenary of Cinema, edited by the FEPACI, which summed up the fortunes of African Cinema as 'A little but still a lot.'

Professor Mbaye spoke about the new generation of filmmakers and The True African Cinema, which brings cinema in line with the reality and aspirations, hopes and dreams and problems of the continent. He also raised the central role that cinema played in the liberation process of many African countries.

## **Mr. Gaston Kabore**

'Cinema and Society'

Associating the motivation of filmmaking with the strong need of telling our stories, Mr. Gaston Kabore said that Africans have to organize themselves to produce their own films with their own values to balance those coming from abroad, which are not always real life stories.

Mr. Kabore agreed with the Indian ambassador that investing in filmmaking might seem as luxury, as many African countries struggle with important priorities such as health and education, yet it is necessary for Africans to confront their own images and identify their problems.

## **Ms. Yetnayet Bahru**

'A Young Film Maker's Personal Experience'

A first-time filmmaker, she spoke of her personal experience and how her family came to rescue for her first production. After graduating from AAU in 2007 Yetnayet Bahru wrote a script and contacted many potential sponsors. "Most sponsors," she said, "had either already sponsored another movie and did not have any money left or only wanted to sponsor renowned producers and directors."

She also highlighted was the lack of schools for aspiring filmmaker to gain knowledge and practical skills in filmmaking.

## **Professor Abiyi Ford**

'Tools for a Film Industry'

Professor Abiyi Ford stressed the need to establish a formal film studies program at Addis Ababa University and make 'a critical mass of Ethiopian filmmakers and scholars capable of producing critical literature in this area.'

The school of Journalism and Communications is best positioned to host a new program in film studies and he indicated that the program would be charged with designing a joint doctoral program with Yared School of Music and the School of Fine Arts.

Professor Ford concluded by stating that 'this EFI is quite propitious and timely, as it coincides with the felt, as well as the demonstrated, need for proper introduction of formal film studies at AAU.'

# GROUP DISCUSSIONS

## Working Group One

Facilitator Mr. Keith Bowers

**The group discussed three different areas:**

- 1- The establishment of an umbrella filmmakers association,
- 2- The need for a government agency/body to promote the film industry, and
- 3- Education & Training.

**A number of needs were identified by the Ethiopian filmmakers in group one, including:**

- Training, a film school and funding
- Infrastructure and film theatres
- The implementation of a copyright policy
- A film policy and professional maturity
- Recognition and cooperation with the government
- Established and trained film actors
- Networking and communication between filmmakers

They also identified the problem of plagiarism and the need for filmmakers to have to do everything on a production, from producing to acting.

### Setting up an umbrella film-makers association

In the past, there has been no continuity because of distrust and fear of unity among filmmakers in Ethiopia. It was agreed in the working group that the aim and agenda of an umbrella film association should be to:

- Unite different filmmaking groups together (young and more established filmmakers); liaise with government and ETV;
- Provide mutual support and sharing of knowledge
- Seeking investment in the film industry
- Seeking a clear and favorable government policy on the film industry: tax issues, copyright, film distribution, attracting international filmmakers, etc.
- Strengthening exposure to local and international film festivals
- Develop well-rounded film criticism

An umbrella filmmakers association would need a permanent staff and office, a loose federal structure and regional dimension united around specific initiatives and objectives.

### A government agency/body to promote the film industry

The working group suggested that the film body should be:

- Semi-autonomous, semi-governmental
- Restricted to simply overseeing the film industry
- A bureau/foundation within the Ministry of Culture, possibly part of a wider body to promote arts and culture
- Ideally headed by someone with creative knowledge of the film industry
- A focal point for the Ethiopian Film Industry



### The government filmbody should

- Protect and re-establish the historical and contemporary film archive
- Encourage the development of training initiatives
- Invest in the local film industry

### Education & Training

The working group agreed that it is vital to take urgent actions for the Ethiopian film industry and filmmakers to reach international standards.

All technical areas were considered to be in urgent need of improvements included sound and lighting, screenwriting, camera skills, directing, make-up and post production skills with training in modern digital editing, dubbing and color correcting.

Improving production planning was raised as another area in need of capacity-building, stretching from learning better marketing techniques, fundraising and financial management, to how to organize film schedules.

The importance of exposure to different film genres and traditions and training film critics was also raised.

### Short-term training possibilities were identified, including:

- Master classes by international and Ethiopian Diaspora filmmakers;
- Approaching donors in Addis (e.g. NGOs and bilateral donors) for support.

### The working group agreed on the following long-term needs:

- The establishment of a permanent training centre/film school

- The establishment a film department/film school at AAU was welcomed by some while others worried it might be too bureaucratic and theoretical.
- Train the trainers.

### Working Group Two Facilitator Ms. Moira Griffin

#### The group discussed several issues, including:

The need for education, potential structures of the Ethiopian film industry, problems of copyright and piracy, capacity-building, improved professionalism and understanding of the commercial reality underpinning the industry.

Professor Abiyi Ford emphasized the need for education on 'the craft and grammar of cinema', and the need for a better understanding of the various models of criticism in the industry. He stressed the direct relationship between knowing the craft and the quality of production produced. He also emphasized the fact that film education is not only for beginners but those already engaged in filmmaking could go to either short term trainings or regular college education to improve their skills and understanding of filmmaking.

### Need for film school and other training

Professor Ford also underlined the need for filmmakers to identify their needs, which stretched from script writing, directing, lighting, camera work, sound and editing. The importance of different formats were brought up, from a University-based film school with regular courses, to other short-term programs with considerable degrees of practical trainings, and exchange programs



between the various filmmaking institutions both internationally and locally.

The need of tracing resources was an important issue, including the need for knowledge databases to support the filmmakers and film students on ‘what is going on around the film industry’, including film funds, film festivals, artists colonies, available scholarships, and international and national short-term training opportunities.

### **Potential Structures of the Ethiopian Film Industry**

The members of the working group discussed the existing structures, agreeing that the various filmmaker associations are fragmented and there is a need to come together under an umbrella organization, which the government should help to found, but not to run.

It was stressed that if the filmmaker association is united it can become strong and heard. It should serve as a service organization to the industry and lobbying body, which sensitizes government to enforce the various legal frame works that are already in place.

It was further suggested that the executives of an association should meet as frequently as possible, and that it could sustain its running cost through membership. It was also stressed that it should not be Addis-centric but encompass the whole country.

### **Problems of Copyright Infringements and Piracy**

The need for a body regulating the film industry was also raised, and this should be film and television body reflecting the many crossovers.

The problems of copyright control and piracy were also highlighted by Mr. Arjit Dutta, who drawing from his experience in India stated that in order to fight the problem

in Ethiopia, all film-makers have to come together as well as the distributors. Publishers who print the stickers for the original CDs duplicate additional stickers and sell to the pirates, making them appear as original’ copies. Mr. Dutta stressed that legislation is not enough - sensitization of the society is crucial to make the legislation work - creating a sense of ownership and responsibility among the people.

He proposed that the industry should create stars who speak to the public, bringing their celebrity status to bear on the public, who would listen and respond better than if the police raid all the shop owners and imprison street underage street vendors.

The Ethiopian musicians’ example of trying to stop the piracy including reducing the price from 13 birr to 9 was mentioned as an example of what has been tried in Ethiopia.

### **The issues brought by the Ethiopian filmmakers in group two, included**

- The lack of funding; the suggestion that the government should levy taxes on imported films so as to encourage local cinema, as imported films are cheaper to view;
- The need for scholarships for filmmakers and related professionals;
- A liaison between government and filmmakers to facilitate with filming permits; the need for a commercial base for the film industry to survive (including in-film advertisement or product placement).
- The lack of a distinct dividing line of professional roles between actors, producers and distributors.

Mr. Arjit Dutta reminded the group that if a film is given to a distributor who is professional in promoting pictures and popularizes a movie, then the current and the future movie with a director’s name and star attached to it can sell well.

## **Working Group Three**

**Facilitator Mr. Don Palmer**



### **Working group three discussed the role of film schools, business practices and organizational structures in creating a successful film industry.**

Mr. Arjit Dutta underlined that ‘culture needs a sound commercial practice in order to exist’. In his home region in India they had started to upgrade theatres in order to make the film industry grow. The improved theatres have subsequently helped them get money to produce films.

Mr. Eddy Mbalo, CEO of South Africa’s National Association for Video and Film – NAVF, described his organization’s structure and their activities, aiming to create an enabling environment for filmmaking NAVF works primarily in policy development, advising the government on the viability of the national film school and provides funding and training on producing, script development and marketing. Mr. Eddy Mbalo underlined the need for Ethiopian filmmakers to understand what affects the cinema industry in Ethiopia, and ‘the importance for the cinema industry to be able to speak with one voice’.

Ms. Maji-Da Abdi, representative of Pan-African Federation of Film-makers (FEPACI) pointed out that while important changes have taken place in the last 10 years, many problems persist including lack of cooperation among film-makers and their associations, lack of education, exhibition centers and the high cost of facilities. She raised an issue, which recurred throughout the meeting, namely the need for an umbrella body/association that could represent ALL filmmakers in Ethiopia.

Ms Parine Jaddo, an Iraqi filmmaker, and writer, stressed that independent filmmak-

ers should make films because they have a story to tell. Films should be made out of passion for the profession - if money making is the sole driving force the films suffer.

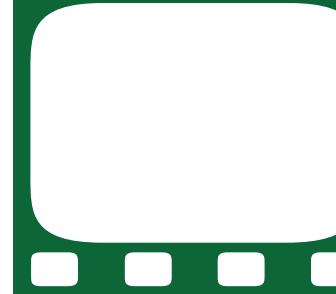
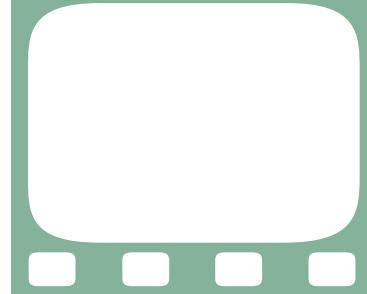
Mr. Gaston Kabore, Head of Imagine Film School, Burkina Faso, shared his experience of setting up a film school and pointed out the contribution film festivals can have in the process of institutionalizing filmmaking and bringing the government onboard. The first film school was set up in 1976, training over 200 filmmakers. A new school was set up in 2003.

Mr. Eddie Mbalo shared that the NFVA is a product of consultations. South Africa’s culture action group has played a key role in its formation, helped by South Africa’s strong constitution, and cooperation between government institutions. He underlined the need to have a strong representative association of filmmakers in Ethiopia.

### **Among the issues and needs brought by the Ethiopian filmmakers in group three, were**

- The need to collaborate and have a strong commitment among film makers (Selome Gerima, Negodguad Film)
- The need of equipment, training, funding and to overcome differences in cultural standards of what good movie is like (Aida Ashenafi)
- The problems of high costs for film gear and cinema equipment as well as lack of training (Getachew Mekonnen)
- The importance of legitimacy and the need for a code of conduct and a law regulating the industry (Garbes Coragian, a specialist on ethical and legal matters)
- The lack of political commitment hindering the development of Ethiopian Cinema and the need for the government to sup





port the Film Association as an instrument contributing to a strong industry. (Ato Mohammed, former president of the Ethiopian Film Association)

- Making the filmmakers aware of the potential benefits of a strong film association. (Aboneh Ashagre, a lecturer of theatre arts at AAU)
- The need to have dialogue to reconcile the differences between the young and the old filmmakers in the country. (Daniel, a young aspiring filmmaker)
- The participants also reiterated the need for government support, help with capacity building, enforcing copyright laws, introducing different incentives for filmmaking, undertaking tax reforms and lessening the red tape.
- Creating a smooth work environment, present a united front and have a clear strategic plan was also underscored.

**The working group formulated a series of objectives that the Ethiopian Film Association should pursue, including:**

- Lobby the government for legitimacy and cooperation

- Hold talks on unifying the various stakeholders
- Begin to identify sources of funding
- Start to lobby local funding from broadcasters
- Seek partnerships with local broadcasters
- Lobby for tax breaks, rebates and incentives
- Invite experienced people and create partnerships with associations of other countries to accomplish its objectives

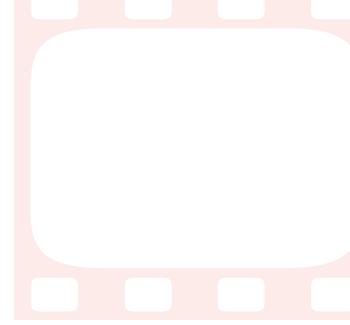
It was suggested that the Film Association should be self-financing through membership & joining fees.

Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael stressed that the Film Association will help both government and the private sector, as “film makers should come together and appoint representatives to talk to the Ministry of Culture. It may also work with other ministries involved like the Ministries of Information, Finance, Tourism, Trade and Industry and Capacity Building.”



# ENDING REMARKS

TUESDAY JUNE 24 2:00-5:00pm



## H.E. Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael

The Ambassador thanked the IETFF and its executive director Marco Orsini for the selection of Ethiopia as a pilot country for the Global Film Expression and his portrayal of Ethiopia during the Monaco festival. Ambassador Tadelech also thanked Ms Ragnhild Ek, Moira Griffin, and Prof Abiyi Ford who organized the first Ethiopian Film Initiative meeting.

She acknowledged the government, the private institutions and individuals for their involvement at different level to make this gathering a success. She also thanked the sponsors, particularly Ethiopian Airlines, for their unreserved support in enabling the international experts to attend this meeting.

She rued Ethiopians' trend of missing opportunities and pleaded the filmmakers not to miss the opportunity this time.

Finally, she paid tribute to the professionals who gathered from around the world with real commitment to help Ethiopian cinema grow.

## Professor Abiyi R. Ford

On behalf of Professor Andreas Esthete, President of Addis Ababa University, who unfortunately could not be with us on this occasion, and as one of the coordinators of this event, I wish to express our sincere thanks to all who took part in this ground breaking exercise aimed at re-enforcing the nascent Ethiopian film industry. I would like to especially thank H.E. Ambassador Mohammed Dirir for being the Patron of Ethiopian Cinema, H.E. Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael for championing the cause here and abroad, Mr. Marco Orsini for his

vision and confidence, and Ms. Ragnhild Ek for her remarkable industriousness in organizing this international event.

This Ethiopian Film Initiative is quite propitious and timely, as it coincides with the demonstrated need for the proper introduction of formal film studies at Addis Ababa University. We are well aware of the pivotal role film can play in the diffusion of culture, expansion of education, and efficacious promotion of the country to the international community. As I indicated in my opening remarks, others will undoubtedly engage in this endeavor and contribute to the developing body of literature on Ethiopian Cinema; however, it is the Ethiopian film-makers and scholars that ought to take on this task in earnest. To do so, however, will require the creation of a critical mass of Ethiopian film-makers and scholars capable of producing critical literature in this area, and who, in doing so, strengthen and stimulate the growth of a viable Ethiopian Film Industry that speaks to the world about Ethiopia with an Ethiopian voice.

Addis Ababa University is now well positioned to take on the task in a timely manner through formal studies for the novice, and short-term training programs for the practicing professionals. As the recent recipient of the complete inventory of film production equipment from the former Ethiopian Film Corporation, the Faculty of Journalism and Communications is well suited for hosting a new program in film studies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and for conducting short-term training courses in film.

The university looks forward to working closely with the Ethiopian Film Initiative in bringing about the positive growth of a genuine and vibrant Ethiopian Cinema.



# THE EFI AD HOC COMMITTEE

Based on the recommendations gathered from the three working groups, the participants decided to use the opportunity to found an EFI Ad Hoc committee, tentatively for six month or until it can present its work at the next EFI meeting in 2009, when it will propose a new structure benefitting the Ethiopian film-makers and the film industry.

## **During this time it will:**

- Study the experiences of the already established associations
- Draft a mission statement and list of objectives for the association,
- Facilitate the setting up of the umbrella association.

The ad hoc committee, elected from the three discussion groups consists of Kibre Dawit, Yared Shumetie, Nebiyu Baye, Feleke Abebe, Aster Bedane, Yidnekachew Shumetie, Geta Mekonnen, Haimanot Alemu and Henok Ayele.

## SPECIAL PRESS SESSION

MONDAY JUNE 23 5:00-6:00pm

### **Presentation of A24 a new pan African news channel**

[www.a24media.com](http://www.a24media.com)



Mr. Salim Amin, CEO of Camerapix and chairman of A24 Media first reflected on his father's long history in Ethiopia and his own affection for the country. He introduced A24 Media as Africa's first online delivery site for material from African journalists. In his brief presentation the website, Mr. Amin explained how the continent will benefit from its real and positive representation in the media, remarking that 'Africa can only be covered by Africans'.

## **Ethiopian Films' Trailers**

Trailers of Ethiopian movies entitled 11th Hour, Girdosh, Aldewolem; 13 Months of Sunshine were presented at the workshop to show where the Ethiopian cinema is at the moment.



## COMMITMENTS BY EFI ADVISORS

### **Maji-da Abdi** (Chinguetty Films, Paris)

Assist the group of local filmmakers and serve as an advisor to the Ad Hoc committee.

### **Keith Bowers** (Broadcasting consultant)

Help to facilitate courses at the Addis Ababa University and provide support for filmmakers.

### **Mbye Cham** (Howard University)

Establish a Center for African Studies Department at AAU, which can be used as an additional resource for workshops.

### **Arijit Dutta** (Priya Entertainments, India)

Support the Ad Hoc group and help focus on business aspects of filmmaking including exhibition and distribution. Work at the ground level of the industry and help set up the infrastructure with external funding; upgrade technical know-how. Look into sources of funds for different programs and speak with film festivals in India about showcasing a package of Ethiopian films.

### **Trey Ellis** (Columbia University)

Work on getting a letter from Columbia University who can commit students and professor to short term training programs or work on exchanges with Addis Ababa University.

### **Abiyi Ford** (AA University)

Coordinate a center for training. A space is needed in terms of a benchmark facility such as the former Filmmakers building.

**Samson Giorgis** (Ethiopian filmmaker in Paris) Will report back to group about advances made with local filmmakers. Has already begun reaching out to local filmmakers and establishing relationships with members of the community.

### **Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael** (Ethiopian Embassy, Paris)

Bring Ethiopian films to UNESCO. Bring exposure and secure commitments from the government.



**Gaston Kabore** (IMAGINE, Burkina Faso) Welcome four Ethiopian students for workshop training at Imagine film school in Ouagadougou.

**Parine Jaddo** (Filmmaker and lecturer) Assist with workshop training and look into how to explore resources with NAFTI (Ghana). Connect with the future cine-club and help to build a film library.

**Nicole Kalisa** (Rwanda Cinema Center) Exchange programming information on how the RCC developed with the filmmakers in Addis. Possible showcase Ethiopian films during the Rwanda Film Festival.

**Eddie Mbalo** (The National Film and Video Foundation, South Africa) Share programs, curriculum framework. Script development program which will work with local filmmakers and bring them to South Africa for their workshop. Approach South African embassy to form a partnership based on the cultural agreement.

**Kaare Melhus** (Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, Norway) Aid with fundraising for film center with the University.

**Salem Mekuria** (Wellesley College, USA) Find ways of training teachers and help with screening group and workshops.

**Marco Orsini** (IETFF)

Look into corporate sponsorship for courses and mentorship programs.

**Don Palmer**

Send films for screenings by local filmmakers and sample contracts. Will look into funding sources for programs and filmmakers including the Ford Foundation.

**Keith Shiri** (Africa at the Pictures)

Provide festival information for database. Collaborate with the Addis Ababa Human Rights Festival in order to help establish a larger festival.

**Rod Stoneman** (Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media)

Enquire into a production scholarship for a three week program in Marrakesh and a three week program at Imagine for which the committee could look into finding money/scholarship information for local filmmakers.

**Metty Woldemariam** (Plymouth State)

Help raise funds for workshops. Teach selected workshops in Addis.



# ATTACHMENTS

## EFI International Advisors

### MAJI-DA ABDI

Owner of the Paris-based production company Chinguetty Films with her partner Abderrahmane Sissako, they have produced multiple award-winning films 'Bamako' and 'Waiting for Happiness' by A. Sissako, 'Abuna' and 'Daratt' by Haroun M. Salleh among others. After her studies at the University of Western Ontario she worked for a Japanese T.V station 24HTV then returned to Ethiopia to produce various documentaries for European television. She directed the documentary 'The River that divides'. Her first fiction production was the Ethiopian short film 'The Father' by Ermias Woldeamlak. She is also the east African regional representative for FEPACI (Federation of pan-African filmmakers).

### SALIM AMIN

Salim Amin is CEO of Camerapix, founder and Chairman of The Mohamed Amin Foundation and Chairman of A24 Media. As Executive Producer and Presenter, Salim finished a documentary chronicling his father's life in March 2006 entitled "MO & ME" which has to date won nine Awards including the Grand Jury Award at the New York International Film Festival. In December 2005, Salim Amin began work on the launch of the first 24-hour pan-African News and Current Affairs Channel. A24 Media, a precursor to the Channel and Africa's first online Agency for video and stills content, is set to launch in July 2008. In January 2007 the World Economic Forum in Davis named Salim Amin a Young Global Leader.

### MICHAEL AURET

Originally a lawyer, specializing in Entertainment and Media consulting, Michael Auret is a serial entrepreneur having started and built an advertising agency, TV production company and radio station in his native Zimbabwe. He was from 2001 until 2007,

the Festival Director of the Cape Town World Cinema Festival as well as CEO of the Sithengi Film and TV Market which were the biggest Film and TV events in Africa. He is now the Joint Managing Director of Spier Films which is a boutique sales, distribution and production company based in London and Cape Town.

### KEITH BOWERS

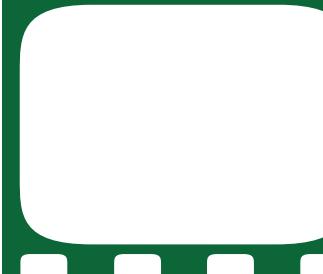
Keith Bowers works as a broadcasting consultant and teacher/trainer in a number of countries including the UK, Ethiopia, Kosovo and Spain. He has been teaching television production on the Masters course in Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University since the program began. Before his freelance career Keith Bowers worked as a journalist, including a 20-year stint at the BBC where he was the executive producer of two acclaimed international television documentary series, Assignment and Correspondent.

### MBYE CHAM

Chairman and Professor of Literature and Film in the Department of African Studies at Howard University, Washington D.C. In addition to numerous essays and chapters in books on African and Caribbean literature and film, he is the editor of EX-ILES: Essays on Caribbean Cinema (1992), and co-editor of Black frames: Critical Perspectives on Black Independent Cinema (1988) and African Experiences of Cinema (1996). Dr. Cham's research and writing focus on oral traditions, film, literature and society in Africa and the Caribbean. He was a lead scholar for the first African Film Summit held in Tshwane (Pretoria), South Africa in April 2006.

### ARIJIT DUTTA

Arijit Dutta is the head of Priya Entertainments Pvt. Ltd. (P.E.P.L, an Entertainment



Company, which has been successfully operating, managing and programming various cultural centers, theatres and cinemas in Kolkata and districts of West Bengal. Joint Venture Partner for Eastern India since 1994 with Columbia Tri-Star Films, Walt Disney, Buena Vista, Sony Pictures. In the production sector, his Group Companies have produced quality films in the past like "Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne", "Aranyer Dinratri", "Pratidwandi" directed by Satyajit Ray, "Chuti"-the first movie directed by Arundhati Devi and "Hatey Bajare" directed by Tapan Sinha.

### **RAGNHILD EK**

Ragnhild Ek is an award-winning filmmaker and journalist, who has filmed extensively in the Horn of Africa. Her work includes documentary productions such as 'Terror on Trial' for the BBC and Indies news features for Channel Four and other TV stations. She served with the UN Refugee Agency on numerous assignments, including producing the organization's 50th Anniversary events, as UNHCR roving senior spokesperson in Afghanistan and Pakistan, heading UNHCR's Video Unit, and producing the 'Voices for Darfur' gala event at the Royal Albert Hall in London. Ragnhild Ek is currently running an independent production company and developing an African dedicated search portal 'Essentialafrica.com' as well as serving as a consultant to the UNHCR on the Horn of Africa.

### **TREY ELLIS**

Trey Ellis is a novelist, screenwriter, essayist and professor. His work for the screen includes the Emmy nominated Tuskegee Airmen, and Good Fences starring Danny Glover and Whoopi Goldberg, which was shortlisted for the PEN award for Best Teleplay of the year. His first play, Fly, was produced and performed at the Lincoln

Center Institute. He is a regular blogger on the HuffingtonPost.com and Babble.com and lives in Manhattan with his two children where he is an Assistant Professor of Film at Columbia University.

### **ABIYI R. FORD**

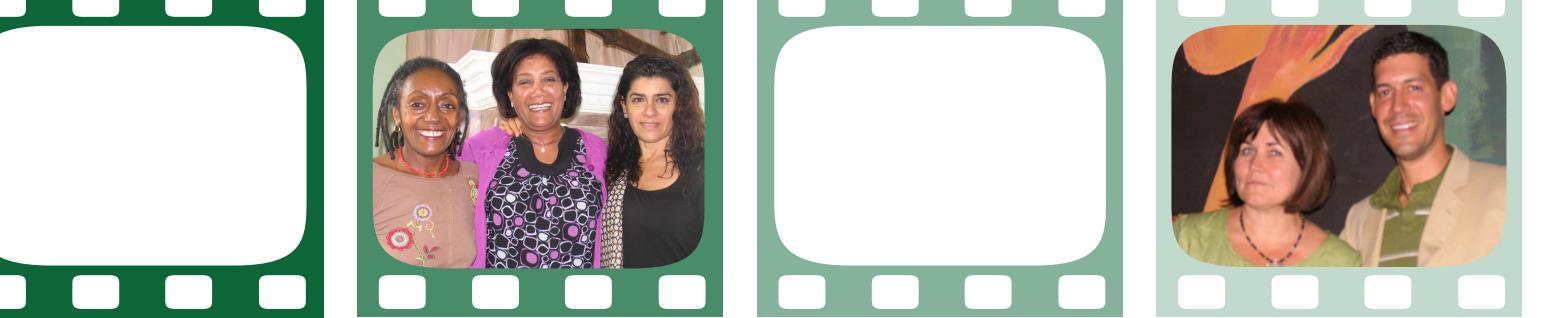
Abiyi R. Ford is a senior consultant to the office of the President of Addis Ababa University. He is a former Dean of the faculty of Journalism and Communication at Addis Ababa University and as well a former Coordinator of the Graduate Film Studies program at the John H. Johnson School of communications at Howard University. An independent filmmaker and a founding chairman of the department of Radio, T.V. and film at Howard University, he studied film at Columbia University.

### **SAMSON GIORGIS**

Filmmaker Samson Giorgis is an Ethiopian filmmaker living in Paris. His films include "The Return of the Obelisk", "Rethinking Justice, imprisonment in Africa", "The Djibouti-Ethiopian train, stories of a return", among others. He has a MA in cinematography from the Sorbonne and has worked as the Coordinator of Cultural co-operations projects between Ethiopia and France. In addition he was the founder of the cultural center "La Bizz'Art" in Drome.

### **MOIRA GRIFFIN**

Vice President of Pipedream Productions overseeing development. Moira Griffin has produced short films including the award winning "Night Magic" by Bernardo Ruiz and has worked in production management for a variety of companies including NBC, VH1 and Mega Entertainment. She is the co-founder/ curator of Rooftop Films a non-profit film festival and production collective. Moira Griffin created "Universal Soul", which focused on bringing new music and art that



crosses genres exposing new artists to a wider audience. She is currently producing "Apache", and filming "The Love Project" a documentary about black women, spirituality, and HIV in the USA.

### **PARINE JADDO**

Iraqi-born filmmaker Parine Jaddo studied film at Howard University. She has worked in film and television in the capacity of writer, producer and director. Her latest film "Rasta's Paradise", a 50-minute documentary, was shot in Ethiopia and is presently in distribution. Parine Jaddo worked as writer for 100 episodes on women for Arab Satellite MBC during 2006. She also taught film production courses at Howard University in Washington DC and The Lebanese American University in Lebanon. She presently resides in Accra Ghana where she is writing and teaching film.

### **GASTON KABORE**

Gaston Kabore received his degree in Film Production in 1976. He returned to his native country to be director of the Centre National du Cinéma. His film Wend Kuuni was only the second feature film produced in Burkina Faso. His work for the screen, focusing on his country's rural heritage, has received numerous international awards, including a French César award. In 1997 he won the first prize at the 15th Pan African Film and Television Festival of Ouagadougou (FESPACO) with the film Buud Yam. From 1985 to 1997 he was Secretary-General of Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers. In 2005 he created the program Imagine, in Ouagadougou, which trains professionals for the television and cinema industries.

### **KHALIPHA 'EDDIE' MBALO**

Eddie Mbalo is the CEO of The National Film and Video Foundation, whose mission

is to create an environment that develops and promotes the South African film and video industry domestically and internationally. He is a qualified television engineer, but his widest experience is in television production, having established the first black production company in 1984. He has freelanced for the world's leading television news agencies and produced many documentaries, and other television programs. He launched E.tv's first current affairs show, E.files and lectured part time at the National Electronic Media Institute of South Africa (NEMISA).

### **SALEM MEKURIA**

Salem Mekuria is Associate Professor of Art at Wellesley College in Massachusetts, and an independent film producer, writer, director, originally from Ethiopia. For a number of years, she worked with NOVA, Public Television's premier science documentary series, a production of WGBH-TV, and with numerous international film productions focusing on issues of African women and development. Salem Mekuria is the recipient of numerous awards, production grants and fellowships. Her films have been broadcast internationally and have screened at venues all over the world.

### **KAARE MELHUS**

Kaare Melhus, whose background includes broadcast reporting with the Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation, is currently an Assistant Professor at the Gimlekollen School of Journalism and Communication, Kristiansand, Norway. He led the Extension and Consultancy department, which cooperated with the University of Addis Ababa in the establishment of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication. He was also instrumental in starting the Kosovo Institute of Journalism and Communication in Pristin.



## **MARCO ORSINI**

Marco Orsini is the Executive Director of the International Emerging Talent Film Festival (IETFF) and resides in Monaco. He has close to 100 hours of Prime time television programming as a Producer and Director in both English and Spanish language networks. As an award winning filmmaker, Marco's work has premiered at the Sundance Film Festival, his script writing was accepted into the Tribeca Film Festival inaugural "All Access" program and he was acknowledged by NALIP as an up and comer Latino Director in the States. His latest project, "The Reluctant Traveler", shot in Ethiopia, will be released in January of 2009.

## **DON PALMER**

Don Palmer has worked at the New York State Council on the Arts since 1986 where he is currently Director of the Individual Artists Program, supporting media artists' productions and theatre and composer commissions. He also worked as a Program Associate in the Presenting and the Museum programs. He has written extensively on music, including blues, jazz, African and Caribbean, for national publications.

## **KEITH SHIRI**

Keith Shiri is a film curator and founder/director of Africa at the Pictures a festival of African cinema based in London. He is a programming advisor to the London Film Festival and has been a trainer for ESOD-OC European Social Documentary a EU's Media Plus training initiative that encourages documentary filmmakers to work in the areas of human rights, social justice and environmental protection. From 2004 – 2007 Keith Shiri was a member of the Berlinale World Cinema Fund which was set up to provide production and distribution support to projects from Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, South Asia and the Caucasus.

He is also on the advisory board of Focus Features Africa First Short Film Program, which provides production support for young African filmmakers.

## **ROD STONEMAN**

Rod Stoneman is the Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media at the National University of Ireland, Galway. He was Chief Executive of Bord Scannán na hÉireann / the Irish Film Board until September 2003 and previously a Deputy Commissioning Editor in the Independent Film and Video Department at Channel 4 Television. He has made a number of documentaries for television and written on film in various magazines including: Screen, Sight and Sound, Kineme and Film Ireland.

## **METASEBIA WOLDEMARIAM**

Metasebia Woldemariam, PhD, is an Associate Professor of Communication and Media Studies at Plymouth State University in Plymouth, New Hampshire. She is a Member of the Board of ORBICOM, the Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communication. Her publications and research interests are related to media representations of Africa as well as on gender issues related to media, Africa and the African Diaspora.

## **NICOLE U KALISA**

Nicole U. KALISA is the Executive Assistant of Rwanda Film Festival, Initiative of Rwanda Cinema Centre, and the first Cinema Organization in Rwanda. She is a member of the Film Festival Programmers & Film Selection Committee, as well as the Coordination of the Women Panorama, an Actress and the first woman filmmaker trained in Rwanda. She initiated a Rwanda Women in Film Network working under the umbrella of Rwanda Cinema Centre.

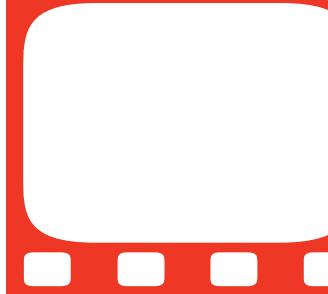
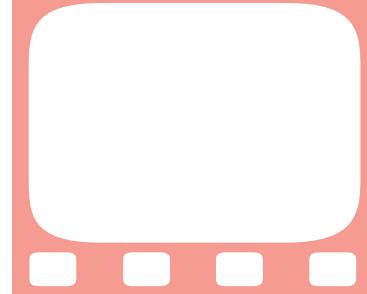
# PARTICIPANTS

## IN THE WORKSHOPS



Betelehem	Abate	Gemini Trust, Addis Ababa
Maj-da	Abdi	Chinguetty Films, Paris
Feleke	Abebe	Keen Arts Linkage, Addis Ababa
Belayneh	Abune	Addis Ababa University
Habtamu	Addis	Gem TV, Addis Ababa
Adanech	Admassu	Gem TV, Addis Ababa
Haimanot	Alemu	Haimanot Advertising Agency, Addis Ababa
Heruy	Arefe-Aine	CAFAA, Addis Ababa
Aboneh	Ashagrie	
Emrakeb	Assefa	Addis Ababa University
Michel	Auret	Spier Films, London & Cape Town
Henok	Ayele	Alatinos Productions, Addis Ababa
Yetnayet	Bahru Gessesse	Yetnayet Film Production, Addis Ababa
Nebiyou	Baye	Addis Ababa University
Aster	Bedane	Fontenina film production, Addis Ababa
Keith	Bowers	Broadcasting consultant, England
Samson	Chall	Samrach film production, Addis Ababa
Mbye	Cham	Howard University, USA
Kibre	Dawit	Kisama Africa University College
Daniel	Debebe	Sudden Flowers Production, Addis Ababa
Arijit	Dutta	Priya Entertainements, India
Trey	Ellis	Columbia University, USA
Shane	Etzenhouser	Whiz Kids Workshop, Addis Ababa
Abiyi	Ford	Addis Ababa University
Yared	Gebresilassie	Yeshimub Film and Communications
Selome	Gerima	Negodgwad Film Production
Deborah	Ghirmai	Initiative Africa (Film Fest)
Samson	Giorgis	Independent filmmaker, Paris
Eric	Gottesman	Sudden Flowers Production
Ambassador Tadelech	Haile-Michael	Embassy of Ethiopia, Paris
Desaalegne	Hailu	Forum Cinema, Addis Ababa
Mohammed	Hassen	Addis Ababa University
Mohammed	Idris	Mesaid Films, Addis Ababa
Parine	Jaddo	Independent filmmaker, Accra, Ghana
Gaston	Kabore	IMAGINE, Burkina Faso
Nicole U	Kalisa	Rwanda Cinema Center
Mesfin	Kebede	Masters Film School
Habtu	Kebede	Alchemy World Project
Samson	Ketema	ETV, Addis Ababa
Tsion	Kiros	Cassiopiea film production, Addis Ababa
Garbos	Korajiw	AA University
Ephrem	Lemma	Masters Film School, Addis Ababa
Anna	Little	Freelance journalist, Addis Ababa
Mikias	Makonnen	GTZ, Addis Ababa
Tesfaye	Mamo	Filmmakers Association, Ethiopia





Eddie	Mbalo	CEO of the National Film and Video Foundation, South Africa
Geta	Mekonnen	ASTAR/Tewanney Studio, Addis Ababa
Salem	Mekuria	Wellesley College, USA
Kaare	Melhus	Gimlekollen School of Journalism & Communication, Norway
Thomus	Mhommed	Admass Advertising, Addis Ababa
Michael	Million	Alatinos Film Productions, Addis Ababa
Aida	Muluneh	
Marco	Orsini	IETFF, Monaco
Don	Palmer	The New York State Council on the Arts, USA
Michel	Papatakis	Veteran independent filmmaker, Addis Ababa
Paulos	Regassa	Resonance production
Selamawit	Sertsu	
Behailu	Shiferaw	Addis Ababa University
Dawit	Shimeles	
Keith	Shiri	Africa at the Pictures, London, UK
Yared	Shumete	Alatinos Film Productions, Addis Ababa
Yidnekachew	Shumete	Tom Film Production /School, Addis Ababa
Clio	Sozzani	
Rod	Stoneman	Director of the Huston School of Film & Digital Media, Galway, Ireland
Yeneakal	Tamrat	Omo Studio / Addis Ababa University
Addisalem	Tebikew	Addis Ababa University
Kibre	Tesfaye	Alatinos Film Productions, Addis Ababa
Metty	Woldemariam	Plymouth State University, USA
Zelalem	Woldemariam	Zeelman Productions, Addis Ababa
Nebeyou	Worku	Gem TV (Ethiopian Gemini Trust), Addis Ababa
Tafari	Wossen	Waag Communication, Addis Ababa
Daria	Zebrowska	Polish Embassy Addis Ababa
Tadesse	Zenaye	Addis Ababa University
Brook	Zerai	Independent filmmaker, Addis Ababa
Tadesse	Zinaye	Addis Ababa University



# CINEMA AS ART AND INDUSTRY



## Statement at the Ethiopian Film Initiative Workshop

by H.E. Mr. Gurjit Singh, Ambassador of India to Ethiopia

I congratulate the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture, Addis Ababa University and the International Emerging Talent Film Festival in Monaco for organizing this Workshop and I am honoured to participate in this. I fondly recall our initiative in holding the one-day symposium Cinema Now: Here and There in November 2006 which was an amazing success.

The idea behind that Symposium was to stimulate a discussion and provide a forum where the Indian experience and possible support to the film industry in Ethiopia, as a creative medium and as an industry, could be discussed. I must confess that the enthusiasm which we saw at the Symposium was amazing and the participation of H.E. Ms. Tadelech Dalecha, State Minister of Culture & Tourism and H.E. Mr. Ahmed Tusa, State Minister of Trade & Industry was certainly well noted. We also had the good fortune of the participation of Mr. Mesganu Arga, Head of Information and Culture Bureau, Addis Ababa City Administration and the Director of Marketing of Ethiopian Airlines besides a host of filmmakers, publicists, advertising people and film buffs.

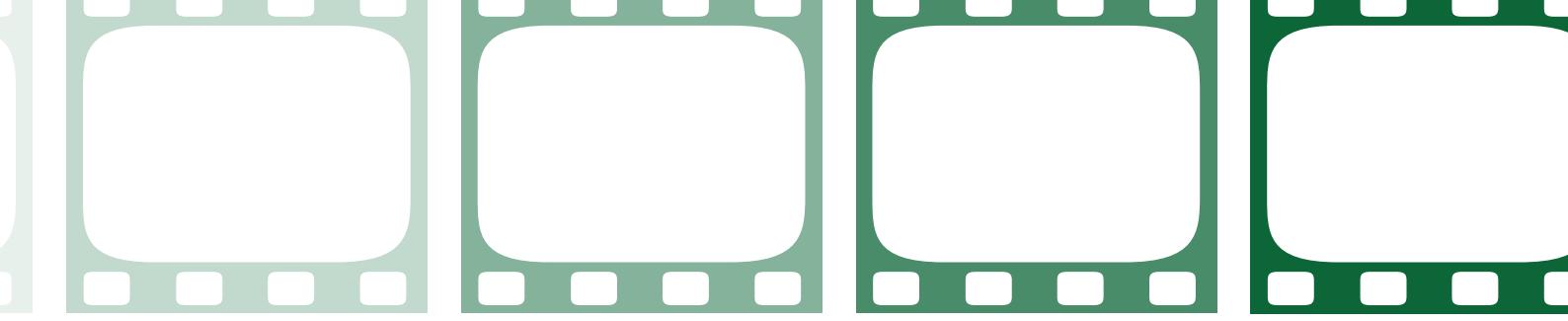
The Symposium was divided into two parts, the first dealing with thematic issues entitled "Cinema & Society – what we see and what we don't" and was chaired by me. The second session was focusing more on industry and was entitled "Films & Industry – agony and ecstasy" and was chaired by Mr. Mesganu Arga.

My own view is that promoting cinema as an art form provides the Government of Ethiopia with another tool for public diplomacy and I had elaborated this in my remarks at the Symposium. I also believe that supporting cinema contributes to freedom of expression and nurtures democratic values. At the same time promoting cinema as an industry could perhaps create another avenue for private sector engagement and if such support is available to domestic cinema it may attract Indian cinema makers to Ethiopia. Either way I believe that this could be a major support to tourism into Ethiopia much as other tourism boards have done to attract Indian filmmakers.

### **Some of the ideas which emerged at the Symposium were the following:**

- The perception that there is a lack of ownership over Ethiopian culture and it is necessary to develop a good cinema to foster it.
- All stakeholders in the cinema industry need to be brought together. This should include Government, City, banks, private sector and filmmakers. To this end there appear to be several bodies like the Film Makers' Association, the Private Producers' Association and the Young Film Makers' Association which perhaps need to be better coordinated.
- In India film making is essentially in the private sector with the Government providing some support mainly in terms of policy like declaring it as an industry, providing financial support to fledgling filmmakers and some institutions in various places. In Ethiopia where the Government is the biggest economic player it was suggested whether Government could play a role to promote cinema as an industry as well.





### **My own concluding remarks included the following ideas:**

If a round table or forum for cinema was created as a result of this Symposium with the help of the Government of Ethiopia and its ministries, my Embassy would certainly support such a forum. Today we are happy to do so.

I believe that projection of Ethiopian films in India and other places could contribute to a new image for Ethiopia. We were willing to facilitate this but there was no common list of Ethiopian films available which could be presented as a package.

The Film and Television Institute of India in Pune offers various diploma courses including a three-year diploma course for which a scholarship through the Indian Council for Cultural Relations is available. This is awaiting utilization. There would be a need to hold an Ethiopian Film festival on a regular basis to provide a forum for films and have a common awards ceremony. Coordination among various filmmakers' associations with some funding could be considered. Capacity building for film making is also something that could be looked at.

I must confess that in my view cinema to succeed as an art form needs appropriate marketing and expression of a commercial interest. Unless the systems for film exhibition are institutionalized and commercially viable, keeping in view local conditions, they cannot become a part of cinematic expression. Without the domestic development of such facilities the artistic expression of Ethiopian filmmakers would largely be confined to overseas exhibition which restricts them to a linkage with their diaspora and to be accepted on the festival circuit and will not allow them to reach the hearts and minds of the people whose culture they really manifest. Further, an appropriately implemented scheme of exhibition with commercial spin offs will actually become a contributing factor to the development of cinema as industry. Thus any effort to enhance the development of Ethiopian cinema must go firmly hand-in-hand with the integration of exhibition facilities into the emerging ethos of modern Ethiopia.

Further, the development of cinema as industry would also need to include the creation of production facilities both physical and technical so that cinema makers find it convenient to produce and complete films within Ethiopia itself. This would considerably lower the cost of production after the initial investment. At the same time the enlargement of film making facilities including outdoor equipment will facilitate the utilization of the lovely locales of Ethiopia by international film makers. The economic impact of developing such film production facilities particularly for outdoor shooting would be an impetus for the development of cinema, both as art and industry in Ethiopia.

To develop cinema as an art we also need to focus on the socio-political direction that the country is taking and use the medium of cinema to emphasise the values that are sought to be projected. The greater openness that is visible in Ethiopia in the last few years would

benefit from the development of cinema. There is no doubt that domestic capacities for film making and all its attendant technical facilities would need to be built up. Ethiopia has a strong tendency towards building human resource capacities and there is no going away from the fact that this could be replicated in the field of cinema. The idea of creating a film institute is a good one but it must go hand-in-hand with the development of cinema as industry because we do not want the supply of filmmakers and technicians to outstrip the demand which would otherwise render a film institute infructuous.

In many good things in a globalised world a public-private partnership is extremely important. In most countries a commercial and artistic cinema is normally a private sector initiative. The Government is expected to provide industrial support through the creation of production facilities, providing exhibition avenues and in some cases supporting capacity building. These are perhaps lessons that Ethiopia could learn. I must confess, however, that in Ethiopia, cinema in particular and culture in general, is not considered a socio-economic priority and the allocation of funds or seeking international assistance through government channels succumbs to the more diversified and urgent needs of a developing society. This is not unique to Ethiopia and, therefore, understandable. However, given the rich culture and diversity of Ethiopia and the love that its people have for international cinema, particularly Indian cinema, means that there is an opportunity waiting to be tapped and greater private sector initiatives to support the growth of cinema as art and industry are, therefore, more likely to yield positive results in the short term. Private sector entrepreneurs can be drawn into creating and improving exhibition facilities, upgrading older facilities and tap the growing urban population in Ethiopia. These could also have replication in simpler ways in the smaller towns of Ethiopia. Similarly, a public-private combine to create production facilities and an effective film corporation could give a positive signal to private sector entrepreneurs who may want to invest in exhibition facilities and in film making. This is one of those areas where an overseas market will not generate foreign investment in Ethiopia because the market has to be domestically created and catered to.

I believe that this is an important occasion to take important decisions and provide a direction so that the variety of growth that we seek in Ethiopia can be harnessed to create another avenue for cultural expression, strengthen a positive image of Ethiopia and yet assimilate domestic and foreign entrepreneurship and investment.



# A FACT-FINDING MISSION TO ETHIOPIA

## in Support of the Emerging Film Talent and Film Industry

Report by Ragnhild Ek

### INTRODUCTION

The Global Film Expression (GFE), an initiative by the International Emerging Talent Film Festival (IETFF) in Monaco, aims to provide opportunities and education to those who lack the resources for cinematic expression. Ethiopia, ravaged by war, famine, drought and AIDS, but thirsty for education, skills and tools to use film as a means for change, was chosen as the pilot country during the festival in May 2007.

In order to expedite the launch of the GFE in Ethiopia, a fact-finding mission was undertaken to Addis Ababa (13–16 June 2007), collecting information on the status of Ethiopian filmmaking and the needs of the filmmakers. This mission was facilitated and attended by Ambassador Tadelech Haile-Michael. However, I'm solely responsible for the contents of this report.

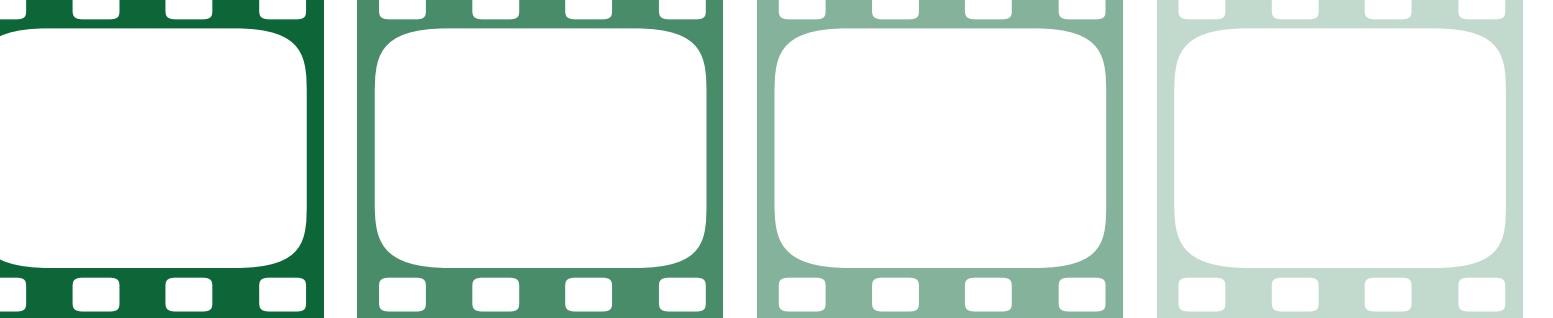
Discussions were held with Ethiopian authorities and representatives of the Ethiopian broadcasting as well as the private sector, including veteran as well as emerging filmmakers, the previous and current head of the Ethiopian Film Association, and business people.

There is a widespread awareness of the critical role Ethiopian film could play in changing the image of the country, as well as depicting its country's ancient heritage of culture, religion and art, the beauty of its varied landscape, multitude of ethnic groups, its checkered history and dramas of daily life.

The discussions centered on the resources needed as well as problems encountered by the emerging talent. Our interlocutors repeatedly called for ways and means of supporting and training Ethiopian filmmakers in their own country. With Ethiopian cinema in its infancy, the immediate aim is to build a quality film infrastructure with professional crews, equipment, knowledge and experience. However, the ultimate long-term aspiration is to make the country an important potential location not only for national but also for international film productions, both within the documentary as well as feature film fields. This, however, will require substantial planning, advice and investment in capacity-building.

Until some ten years ago the number of films shot in Ethiopia were limited and largely produced by established Ethiopian filmmakers trained and mostly residing abroad. And while problems of red tape and bureaucracy may be a problem of the past, the filmmakers still face an uphill battle against budgetary constraints, lack of domestic training and screening opportunities, as well as understanding of film production, limiting the number of films produced in the country. But, while the new generation clearly sees the potential of the industry, not least through looking towards West Africa (Nigeria & Ghana) and more recently neighboring Kenya, lessons need to be drawn on how to successfully marry quantity with quality and learn from developments in similar markets.

Watching movies is undoubtedly popular in Ethiopia, with American, as well as European, Indian and Arabic films showing at the cinemas or rented through numerous DVD/video



distributors in the main cities. Increasingly, Ethiopian-made films are appearing on the screens, and some cinemas have started concentrating on domestic productions. Until recently there were only a limited number of government-owned cinemas (theaters), but increasingly private cinema houses are opening. However, with most of Ethiopia's 75 million people struggling below the poverty line, many can ill afford to go and see a movie, and thus providing access to film to a broader part of the community is another challenge to be addressed in due course.

## KEY MEETINGS

**Addis Ababa University** is exploring the establishment of a film school and the president of the University, Prof. Andreas Eshete and Prof Abiy Tasse underlined the need for support and advice to make this endeavor possible, as they aim to make it a reality in the coming year.

The process of developing a draft syllabus for filmmaking has already been initiated, and a workshop to discuss this draft syllabus is being planned - tentatively for the end of July or early August 2007. The participants would include:

- Government representatives, i.e. decision-makers from the ministries of Capacity Building, Tourism and Culture, etc;
- Educational institutions;
- Ethiopian filmmakers;
- Selected African and Western filmmakers with relevant experience; and
- The private sector.

Ideally the courses would include the art of cinematography / cinema and media studies, directing, editing, producing, production design, screenwriting, sound design, etc including comprehensive training with hands-on experience in filmmaking. The structure would make it possible to provide shorter courses covering creative and practical fields in both film and television for people looking to improve their skills, but also allow students to build a selection of courses towards full-length university degrees.

The lack of in-country educators is a big concern. But a pool of existing filmmakers and film educators, particularly Ethiopians in the Diaspora with relevant skills and familiarity with the culture and language, has been identified to kick-start the training. To encourage visiting educators, support will be needed to cover travel, subsistence costs, stipends and/or salaries.

## Ministry of Capacity-Building

The minister of Capacity-Building Ato Tefera Waluwa underlined the commitment of the government in supporting the development of Ethiopian filmmaking. He would very much welcome international assistance and underlined his Ministry's readiness to provide the



necessary political and administrative support needed for the development of the film industry. A focal person was assigned to follow up on his behalf.

### **The Ethiopian Film Association and Ethiopian filmmakers**

Discussions regarding the Ethiopian film industry in general and highlighting the problems faced by the emerging talent in particular, were also held with:

- **Ethiopia's Film Association** – both the former head Tafari Wossen, and the current head Tesfaye Mamo, as well as current members;
- **Pioneer filmmakers** – all trained abroad - including Michel Papatakis, and
- **Emerging talent** - representing the most successful Ethiopian young producers/directors producing among the best productions and whose feature films are currently showing at Addis Ababa cinemas. They had no formal film training though except 'on-line courses', in one case a couple of short courses in the US, and 'trial-and-error' during production.

These discussions covered both the past history and the current problems. The transition 'from celluloid to video' is hampered by the lack of trained players, scarce resources and experience. However, the potential in the domestic market and among the large Ethiopian expatriate community, coupled with the ease of accessing digital technology regardless of professional background and know-how, is fueling a rapid surge of often rudimentary productions.

### **FROM CELLULOID TO VIDEO**

Ethiopian films and the status of its industry reflect the opportunities, or lack of such, during the different stages of Ethiopia's modern history: the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930-1974); the Derg/Mengistu regime (1974-1991) and the current EPRDF government.

### **The Ethiopian Film Corporation**

A first step towards building an Ethiopian film industry was taken over thirty years ago, when the country provided the set for the filming of *Shaft in Africa* (MGM -1973) and the local production *Gouma* (1975) by Michel Papatakis. This triggered the launch of the Ethiopian Film Corporation as a center for an Ethiopian film industry and co-productions, equipped with substantial film and editing gear, incl 35 mm Arriflex with accessories and Nagra soundrecorders, and funded by the income from the government-owned cinemas. It was eventually divided into two sections, one for news and propaganda; and the other for art productions, which only produced one feature film, *Aster*, directed by Solomon Bekele.

Following the change of government in 1991, the Film Corporation lost its role. However, among its legacy is a spacious compound, well-located and beautifully set in Addis Ababa, which remains intact with its diverse equipment. It emerged from the discussions that it is a perfect location - hard to otherwise find in the overcrowded capital - for a national film body/centre, training, screenings, small festivals, and even location filming. Many feared that the compound might be at an impending risk of being sold off and stressed the importance of retaining the camera gear and rescuing the compound to the benefit of Ethiopian film industry.

Another legacy from the Mengistu era is a considerable amount of raw footage either

spread between different basements in government buildings, or withering away ‘in limbo’, as most ministries were provided with 16 mm cameras, having realized the power of film for propaganda purposes. The footage needs to be preserved, and restored as part of Ethiopian national film and audiovisual archives.

Some of the members of the Film Corporation subsequently formed the Ethiopian Film Association. One of the important issues they are facing is how to bridge the gap between the cineasts trained in traditional film production coming from ‘the old school’ and the new talent embracing digital video as a means of storytelling. It is a challenge to successfully bring together the old filmmakers with the new emerging talent in a ‘revamped’ industry where all skills are desperately needed.

### **The Emerging Talent**

In the past couple of years there has been a real surge in domestic productions ‘made in Ethiopia’. As digital filmmaking has made cinema approachable to the emerging talent, numerous domestic video production companies are increasingly aiming for the big screen and to break into a nascent Ethiopian film market (a sort of Ethiowood). However, while these budding Ethiopian filmmakers are rapidly moving forward with enthusiasm and passion, they lack both training and financial resources, making ‘no-budget’ films primarily shot on video, with postproduction done on Avid Xpress and Final Cut Pro.

It should be noted that British DFID has financed short hands-on courses for youth from underprivileged backgrounds. There are also a couple of private initiatives for film training run by business people rather than professionals from the film industry.

In 2006 a workshop on film was held at the Hilton Hotel, convened by the Indian Ambassador to Ethiopia, discussing the status of Ethiopian film industry and ‘what to do next’, and some Ethiopian filmmakers will now receive training in India.

### **THE NEEDS IDENTIFIED DURING THE MEETINGS**

The areas considered to be in need of intervention covered all aspects of filmmaking – which reflects the fact that Ethiopia is a country with a nascent industry in need of support:

- In-country training opportunities (directing, cinematography, production design, sound design, editing, screenwriting);
- Understanding the legal, financial, business and logistics of production, including
  - How make a budget and how to the film pay off – improving access to cinemas and distribution, as they currently get negligible return from the screenings
  - Marketing, exhibition arrangements, international exposure / festival exposure.
- Funding as grants and/or loans for script development, gear/equipment; productions, distribution, marketing;
- Develop co-production deals with international companies;
- Securing tax breaks and the understanding that film is primarily art, not lucrative business;
- The establishment of a body which provides information and expert knowledge on the industry as well as monitoring and regulatory body;
- Securing the compound owned by the Film Corporation to benefit the Film Industry;
- Preserve materials of interest to cinematic history, which is currently being destroyed through neglect.



## **HOW TO MEET THE OBJECTIVES OUTLINED IN THE IETFF GLOBAL FILM EXPRESSION PROGRAMME**

### **1- Develop educators that can teach cinema and filmmaking to the nation's young people**

The establishment and staffing of a Department of Cinematography or Film school at Addis Ababa University will require international partnerships and could be one of the key Ethiopian counterparts for the Global Film Expression.

The plans for the Film school will be developed at a workshop in late summer 2007, which would provide an excellent opportunity for the GFE to start its program in Ethiopia. The GFE could co-sponsor the workshop, making the outcome part of a formal base for its future work in the country.

### **2- Educate young people about the craft of filmmaking, with an emphasis on the practical, expressive capabilities of moving pictures and about the employment opportunities available for those with these skills**

The planned Film School will include practical short technical courses, which will require camera and sound gear; editing hardware; editing and graphics software; tapes; training books etc; scholarships for students; as well as support for student productions.

The GFE could provide some of that needed equipment in kind and/or dedicated scholarships. In addition, GFE could send educators for dedicated courses and workshops.

### **3- Assist interested persons and groups in producing their own films**

The emerging filmmakers need a central production and distribution support scheme with cash and kind – the mechanism of which will have to be worked out – to which GFE could be among the donors, and possibly even assume the role of being the initiator. This could also be the base from which a participant is chosen to produce a film, which with the assistance of GFE participates in the International Emerging Talent Film Festival 2008.

The scheme would cover all relevant areas, from providing development support for film ideas and script writing; production financing; legal training; financing and technical support of translation; opportunities for co-productions; as well as support for distribution and participation in international festivals.

### **4- Screen films for communities that have only limited access, if any, to cinema**

This objective was seen as very important, not the least given Ethiopia's multitude of ethnic groups and languages. There are already video houses at community level around the country, for which the screening of films on DVD and VHS should be regulated before further screening schemes are pursued. However, the support of language versioning/dubbing/sub-titling is already an urgent requirement.

## **CONCLUSION**

The potential and status of the emerging talent, coupled with the interest shown by the relevant authorities in Ethiopia, underlined that Ethiopia is an important choice by the Emerging Talent Film Festival as a pilot country for its Global Film Expression. The immediate key challenge is how to turn the initiative into a constructive and fundable plan of action – which could make a difference and bring sustainable results.

An important next step for IETFF in pursuing this project would be to participate in the workshop, which Addis Ababa University is preparing. This would make it a player in the discussions on how to provide film education as a means of expression in Ethiopia and serve as a base for the planning and implementation of the GFE initiative.

In this context it should also be mentioned that it is imperative that the existing “film compound”, previously used by the Film Corporation, is secured as a national center for film work. This would facilitate GFE’s involvement but above all support national filmmaking.

Not only is the timing conducive; it has to be stressed that ‘time is now’ for any organization interested in assisting aspiring Ethiopian filmmakers and/or participating in the development and capacity-building of the national film industry. It also has to be stressed that there is a vibrant community, both among aspiring students, emerging talent and the established filmmakers, to support and work with, as well as accessible government authorities.

The country could also, with the right support, become an attractive and suitable location for international film production and eventually qualify for IETFF’s Global Film Forum. The potential is clearly there ready to be developed, and the overriding challenge will be how to best achieve this goal. There are disperse initiatives in the making and bringing them onto common ground in a focused cohesive plan of support, nurturing and promoting the



## ACRONYMS

- AACA** Addis Ababa City Administration  
**AAU GSJC** Addis Ababa University, Graduate School of Journalism and Communications  
**EFI** Ethiopian Film Initiative  
**FDRE** Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
**FEPACI** Pan-African Federation of Filmmakers  
**GFE** Global Film Expression (Monaco)  
**IETFF** International Emerging Talent Film Festival (Monaco)  
**NAVF** National Association for Video and Film (South Africa)  
**UNECA** United Nations Economic Commission for Africa  
**UNESCO** United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



## THE ETHIOPIAN FILM INITIATIVE

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