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KENYA REELS IN SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FILM INDUSTRY

By Wilhelmina Maboja
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Kenya's film industry is expected to gain significant momentum in the next few years following growing support from government.



Man filming with a video camera.
PHOTO: Getty Images

“We’re happy that we can now put film firmly where it should be, on the economic agenda here in Kenya. One of the things which a lot of people many not know [is that] over the last five years or so, film in Kenya has actually grown in terms of establishments by about 85 per cent,” Michael Onyango, a board member of the Kenya Film Commission, told CNBC Africa.

“When you talk about the number of people who’ve actually gotten into film, we’ve also grown by about 45.8 per cent. When you’re talking about the number of new establishments over the last five to seven years, we have about 85 establishments.”

The success of Oscar-winning Lupita Nyong’o, a Mexican-Kenyan actress, has further bolstered Kenya’s film industry, and prompted government to ensure the thriving of creative arts in the country.

“The current government actually came on the platform of supporting the creative industries, and there’s actually a ministry – the ministry of sports, culture and arts – that is specifically geared towards supporting the creative industry, of which film is a part of,” Onyango explained.

“Over the next four years or so, the government has also committed to 10 per cent of our GDP coming from the creative industries. From the film sector, we probably want to see a growth of about four per cent over the next five years with respect to contribution to our overall GDP.”

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The Kenya Film Commission has since been mandated with the task of establishing a film school as a means of sustaining the country’s creative arts industry.

The commission is also currently engaging with Kenya’s 47 counties to ensure that film becomes a mainstay within the economic agenda.

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Nigeria's film industry, also known as Nollywood, has had decades' success as one of the world's highest-grossing film industries. While Kenya is still far from Nollywood's stature, it is nonetheless expected to form a key part of the country's future growth agenda.

"78 per cent of our population is actually under the age of 35, and naturally a lot of young people are more attracted in and geared towards the creative industries. That is one area that the government is very committed towards, and they have put money behind their word with respect to what it is that we're doing within the film industry."



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