

p u t t i n g
sierra Leone
in the picture

a white paper on
indigenous film sector development

Ian Noah

published by
The Sierra Leone National Film Workshop



...putting sierra Leone in the picture...

PUTTING SIERRA LEONE IN THE PICTURE

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Indigenous Film Sector Development

Written by

Ian Noah

Published by

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The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author and may not necessarily represent the official views or policy of the Sierra Leone National Film Workshop (SLNFW). The Film Workshop nevertheless acknowledges the importance of this publication in the exploration and analysis of key issues relevant to film-making in Sierra Leone. It is therefore pleased to make this work available to a wider audience in the interests of encouraging broader debate and involvement, nationally and internationally, by all interested individuals, as well as corporate, institutional and governmental bodies for the benefit of Sierra Leone and its film-makers.

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PREFACE

The Author

Ian Noah, the son of Sierra Leoneans, was born and educated in England. His interest in design and, later, photography and film, led him the study of two professional disciplines:- Architectural & Interior Design, followed by Film (16mm) & Television (Video) production. Over the last twenty-five years, he has acquired considerable experience working as a designer, producer and media consultant across the fields of art, design, film and television. He has worked with non-profit community projects as well as leading UK and international corporate clients and institutions.

In 2005, the author took a career break to pursue various personal and family projects, including research, writing and travel in Africa. Given the newly peaceful post-war climate of Sierra Leone, he chose to exchange a life in the UK for the experience of living in Sierra Leone and contributing to the rebuilding process of his country. He was invited to assist in the production of a local film, which led to further invitations and involvement in other subsequent productions. Following this first-hand introduction to the local struggles of film-makers, he decided to use his professional experiences and industry contacts to help establish a National Film Workshop (a non-profit organisation) to support and develop resources and strategies to benefit the entire film community in Sierra Leone.

The Publisher

The Sierra Leone National Film Workshop (SLNFW) has taken a leading role in facing the challenge to facilitate the development of indigenous film making in Sierra Leone. It is the first and only local, dedicated, non-profit making organisation working with local film-makers as well as other national and international organisations to encourage and support the development of film-making in Sierra Leone.

Aims

Recognising the potential of film and television industries around the world to provide employment and generate social, economic and cultural benefits for their countries, *Putting Sierra Leone in the Picture: A White Paper On Indigenous Film Sector Development*, is a public discussion paper that attempts, for the first time, to present an independent, contemporary overview of film-making practice in Sierra Leone, and argues for its acknowledgement and encouragement as an important part of Sierra Leone's economic, social, as well as cultural, development.

Audience

This paper is aimed at professionals, students or other individuals with an interest in Sierra Leone or its film-making activities. This includes film-makers in Sierra Leone as well their counterparts abroad; the Government of Sierra Leone (especially the Ministries of Information and Broadcasting; Labour and Industrial Relations; Youth, Gender and Welfare; Education; Tourism; Trade and

Economic Development) and their agencies; DFID and all other developmental organisations and institutions with an interest in supporting cultural development in general, and film-making in particular, by virtue of their role in providing advice, training, funding, equipment, distribution, screening or other support to the process of film and video production.

Executive Summary

Putting Sierra Leone In The Picture, is a white paper that proposes the formal acknowledgement and development of Sierra Leone's film sector. This paper is also designed to function as a strategy, planning and implementation discussion paper. As the first Sierra Leone film sectoral study and investigative review to be undertaken, its primary purpose is to explore the current existence and extent of systemic elements of indigenous film production activity. Having assessed this nascent activity and its potential for development as a new local industry; it seeks to assess the challenges facing contemporary local film-making, presenting ways to address them by systematising an approach based on the analogy of a sleeping giant, whose limbs are separate but inter-related parts of one body. Finally, the paper offers solutions to facilitate the global acknowledgement and formal establishment of an indigenous film-making industry through a suggested series of viable and immediate solutions to build capacity and ensure its sustainable growth and development for the cultural and economic benefit of the nation.

Notes

- (i). *Definitions*: Though industry professionals in other countries might correctly define Sierra Leone's non-celluloid, video-based productions as *video films* (or even just 'videos'), the term 'film' has been adopted in Sierra Leone (and therefore by this paper) to include any video production of fact or fiction, which can be screened in a local cinema.(video hall) using a video player/projection system or shown on a TV.
- (ii). *Source*: This white paper is based on a selection of some of the original excerpts, findings and summaries from the book entitled *Searching For Sollywood*, by the same author. The book outlines the author's observations of local film-making, the challenges to the creation of an industry, and possible directions to ensure the creation of a sustainable local film economy. (*Publication due 1st quarter, 2007.*)

1.0. INTRODUCTION

1.1. History

Sierra Leone's place in world history could well be seen by many as being a singular location made famous for its links with the historical exploitation of local inhabitants. From the time the Portuguese discovered it and re-named it; its significant role during the history of the Atlantic Slave Trade in the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries, as a country for the sourcing of slaves, and later as a country for the relocation of freed slaves; the 19th and early 20th century era of British colonisation; and most recently, through, a brutal ten year civil war, the peoples of Sierra Leone have arguably faced a constant struggle to enjoy sufficient peace and freedom to properly develop their country and themselves. Today, with the support of the international community, and hundreds of millions of dollars in post-conflict development aid and finance, the country has its best chance yet of fulfilling its Independence dream to develop into one of the most attractive, peaceful and economically self-sustainable countries in West Africa.

1.2. Language and Linguistic Legacies

Due to its colonial history and legacy of having been under British rule, the official language of Sierra Leone is English. However, although all official, commercial and legal business is conducted in English, it is worth noting that there are over fourteen indigenous ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, and many of these ethnic groups have more than just one distinctive language or dialect of their own. As a result, Krio, an adapted dialect based on English and local languages, has been adopted as a lingua franca.

1.3. Society and Culture

It has been widely acknowledged that in order to progress from the traumatising social experiences of a war, there is a need for those who have suffered together, to fully acknowledge, appreciate, learn from and build upon their shared experiences. This is particularly true in Sierra Leone, for not only is this necessary in order to help empower her citizens to challenge and reshape their old mindsets, but also in order to help in the reshaping of other people's perceptions of Sierra Leone. In addition this will enable them to regain ownership of the process of the writing and documentation of the country's history; the celebration of its culture; and the lives of its people.

This small nation has a historical and cultural depth and breadth that, given our small population, few

similar-sized African countries could match. From Krio to Koranko, Limba to Loko, it is a culture full of richness and diversity, reflecting, as it does, the co-existence of its many ethnic groups with their distinct languages and perspective; their varieties of spiritual beliefs, lifestyles, customs and practices.

Yet, unfortunately, despite our cultural wealth, there are, however, few opportunities to develop it properly and sustainably. With almost every key aspect of Sierra Leone life being crippled by the cancer of corruption, or immobilised by indolence, ignorance or indifference, it is not surprising that the nation's development is akin to a painfully slow dance of 'one step forward, two steps back'. Needless to say, within such a process that reflects the priorities of politics rather than the priorities of the people, the arts and cultural aspects of society have also been largely ignored or have fallen prey to patent philistinism such that the role of much of the arts has been severely misunderstood and critically diminished to the level of the most superficial demands of tourist entertainment.

Consequently, almost fifty years after independence, the country still has no substantive art or cultural collections, no national gallery, and no developed arts or cultural investment support. Tragically, there are fewer resources and opportunities to document our society and culture for the purposes of either education or entertainment. Music is one area in which a contemporaneous account of the shifting styles, politics, issues, and dreams of the nation is being reflected. Dramatists have succeeded in putting some of these issues on stage or on radio, but theirs is an ever-decreasing audience, and they struggle to reach more than a minority of the population. Novelists and poets also try but their even more rarefied efforts are undermined by a general lack of interest in literature amongst the population, due, in part at least, to the extremely high levels of illiteracy, and the extremely high cost of local book production.

Nevertheless, despite this unpromising background, there are many new voices re-engaging with the battle for art and culture. Artists, writers, musicians and other creative workers are striving to seek an audience; trying to formulate new approaches, new values, new visions of hope and inspiration to foster positive social, cultural and economic change. Amongst these cultural outpourings, brave attempts are now being made by film-makers to critique and communicate their own unique experiences of the world around them; to share their culture, their country; their world. These activities form an important contribution to the continual peace building process of society, helping people regain an all but abandoned sense of pride and nationhood; a contribution which the country ignores at its peril.

2.0. PRODUCTION OVERVIEW

2.1. Historical Development

Film-making was originally introduced during the era of British colonial rule, in the form of the Colonial Film Unit. Its key function was to produce films (8mm and 16mm celluloid) that documented aspects of life in Sierra Leone. (For example, local customs; agricultural practices; local industries; medical and health issues.)

After independence, the practice of government documentary film production was largely abandoned due to the costs of celluloid film production and processing. In the seventies and eighties, videotape offered a cheaper alternative and through the Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service (SLBS), the Ministry of Information ensured that news footage of the lives of Sierra Leoneans was available for broadcast to the nation. Unfortunately, due to the ever-present concerns for cost, the original videotapes used for the programme recordings were erased for re-use, losing valuable historical social footage. Salt was further added to this wound when some of the remaining footage that had escaped erasure or disintegration through time, and had been stored at SLBS, was burnt during the recent war.

Ironically, it could be argued that the current new wave of film-making is a direct consequence of the war. Few people were able to travel and film the brutality of the war whilst it was being fought 'up country' in the regions. However, when it finally reached the capital of Freetown, footage shot on the streets was sufficiently shocking to alert the whole world to the level of brutal violence and rampant destruction being meted out upon the country's civilian population. The pictures gave visual reinforcement to requests for an increase in international help, and before long, hundreds of NGOs and international organisations had duly focused their attention and resources on Sierra Leone. Some of these organisations helped fuel interest in film-making by soliciting and funding productions that were needed for documentation or sensitisation purposes. Following the end of the war, came the process of peace-building and reconciliation. The arrival of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the Special Court called for the filming of victim and witness testimonies and thus offered further opportunities for gaining practical training and employment.

However, in addition to these forms of videography and documentary, a new generation of independent film-makers had grown up during the war years, who were also interested in creating their own feature films. Like African audiences in general, they had watched Nigerian films grow, in just ten or so years, from virtually nothing to the massive international phenomenon of 'Nollywood' that it has become today. These Nigerian films, shown on Sierra Leone television as well as in local

cinemas, addressed an untapped market amongst African audiences who had a desire to see reflections of their African culture on screen.

It is to this new breed of young film-makers that the country now looks, as they face the challenges inherent in attempting to document and dramatise our lives and experiences through the creation of our own indigenous film industry.

2.2. Recent Developments

The range of films being made in Sierra Leone is still expanding. The few films that make it to commercial release can be grouped under broad categories of social realism, modernity, romance, post-colonial constructs, traditional culture, history, witchcraft and magic. Little has been done yet challenge stereotypes of Sierra Leone/African culture; to redress images of victimisation; poverty and suffering; to challenge the politics of poverty; the tensions of 'trade versus aid'; the politics of democracy in a largely illiterate (politically and otherwise) population; or the changing roles of women in society. (The male-dominated, traditionally orientated, Moslem-based social culture has conspired to limit the scope of women's involvement in many activities in Sierra Leone. This would seem to have extended itself even into film-making, where women are seen 'in front of the camera' as actresses, but very rarely 'behind the camera' as producers, directors or camera operators.)

Formats such as documentary are few and far between, owing to a lack of (so far) commercial and audience interest or support. Music videos (clips) are immensely popular, but not yet fully appreciated as the short films that they obviously are. Animation, art films or video works (as works of art by artists), or other forms of film craft such as children's films or abstract experimentation simply do not appear to exist. Of course, at such an early stage in the development of film practice in the country, it is perhaps too early to expect film-makers to have grappled with all the creative options and genres, and it would therefore be much, much too early to judge such omissions with criticism.

The fact is that feature-length dramas are the real focus of local film activity. It is where the real dynamism and change is taking place. However whilst this particular strand of commercial and cultural film-making dominates, this paper is concerned with the whole sector of filmmaking activity, and it is therefore the challenges facing all film activity that we shall now examine.

3.0. CHALLENGES

3.1. The Sorriest Part

'The Sorriest Part' is a phrase, recently made mainstream by its adoption in a popular local song. It perfectly describes the barrage of hurdles faced by Sierra Leone's film-makers once they start out on the lonely and rocky road of trying to make a local film. They are continually hindered, hampered and hamstrung by an array of problems and obstacles that assault the film-maker at every conceivable turn, to trip up, spoil, distract, delay, prevent and otherwise undermine most brave attempts to complete a film.

Our film-makers first have to contend with – and overcome – the national problems, constraints and challenges that affect most Sierra Leoneans (e.g. lack of reliable power and communications). Then, if they are able to deal with all of these, they next face a whole raft of additional difficulties that further conspire to quash their dreams before they have barely begun.

The two following lists (see sections 3.2. and 3.3.) highlight some of the key problems that are inimical to local indigenous film-making and make sober reading for others in some developing countries who also like to regard themselves as 'struggling film-makers'.

To say that it is remarkable that anyone faced with such a barrage of challenges could even begin to think of making a film, let alone actually attempt to do so, and then succeed, would be a major understatement, and perhaps one not readily appreciated by those used to the comparative luxuries of the social and professional conditions available to most filmmakers in developed countries. Fortunately – and this should not be underestimated – film-makers here no longer have to deal with overt political repression. Freedom of speech (if handled with sensitivity and always within the limits of the law) is normally tolerated. (Though there have been exceptions to this as many journalists will attest.) Nevertheless, we should all be grateful for small mercies. Living in Sierra Leone whilst by no means wholly anti-film-making, still has a long way to go to be regarded as supportive, let alone conducive.

Consequently, I would be a strong advocate of the opinion that current independent film-making in Sierra Leone - whether viewed as good, bad or indifferent - must be seen in its current social, economic and political context. This means that Sierra Leone films are a proud testament to the energy, dynamism and spirit of a local film-makers, rather than a reflection - as yet - of any substantive interest or orchestrated support offered either from within or from outside the country.

3.2. Socio-economic

This list includes general social challenges affecting every walk of life in Sierra Leone, and are related to poverty, corruption, and deficiencies in education, business practices, infrastructural utilities and enforcement of the rule of law.

1. Sierra Leone is one of the poorest and least developed countries on earth, as listed in the UN Human Development Index.
2. The country has one of the highest levels of illiteracy. This means that the most effective forms of public communication are audio (radio) or visual (film and television).
3. Severe socio-economic iniquities and pervasive corruption in the distribution of the country's wealth, harnessing of opportunities and systems of social justice all inhibit expected levels of development.
4. Donor-dependent mentality inhibits saps local initiative and inhibits independent private and public local investment.
5. Massive unemployment. During the recent ten year war there was little or no regular schooling for most children and their education was severely interrupted; not least by the fact that many were forced to fight as child soldiers. Current population demographics reveal that the population now has a disproportionately large number of people below the age of 35 (youth). The majority of these are either unemployed or at best under-employed having only the most basic levels of numeracy and wholly inadequate literacy skills to truly maximise their potential contribution as members of society.
6. National economic disadvantages, including poor foreign exchange rates, poor utilisation of capital, aid, natural and human resources; poor integration and co-ordination of Government, NGO and private sector projects.
7. No financial support systems – Banks do not offer the financial products available elsewhere in the world. They don't offer credit cards; most individuals don't have their own bank account; loans are not widely available.

- 8 Arts and culture have a low priority, and consequently there has been little or no material support for the arts. Perhaps, it stems from the (flawed) political argument that to adopt the same approach to the role of arts and culture - and other sectors - as seriously as they are taken in the West is merely to reflect the values of the country's past colonial masters?
9. No reliable judicial support mechanism. No reliable or developed justice sector to enforce law and order, so film-makers abandon trust in their ability to enforce contracts, rights, and other agreements. For example I know of no single lawyer that would be classed as specialising in entertainment law – despite the proliferation of musicians, record labels, studios, film-makers, actors, production companies, and videos in the marketplace.
10. No utilities or infrastructure. The lack of reliable electricity power forces people to study, write and work without light. This puts enormous strain on film-makers using equipment from cameras to lights to computer editing that depend on electricity. Water is slightly better, though many homes do not have their own water connections so people have to find public standpipes that work. Telecommunications is also a big challenge as landlines cannot be relied upon for communication, and the alternative mobile phone, whilst being far better at reliability is substantially more expensive.
11. The role of women and allied issues of gender equality within ethnic, custom-based and religious practices undermine the ability of the female portion of the population to gain access to, and participate fully and equally in, all aspects of society, including educational and employment opportunities.
12. Geographic difficulties limit many residing in rural areas from accessing many of the resources (social, educational, employment, etc.) available in and around the larger urban centres.

3.3. Professional/Technical Challenges

This list includes those challenges particularly affecting film-makers, including lack of finance, organisational structures, professional training, equipment, and distribution channels.

1. No national appreciation of economic value of film-making. An intrinsic failure to recognise film's potential importance as part of the country's culture and economy, as well as an important aspect of societal development; in social education, cultural development, tourism promotion, economic exports and as foreign exchange earner.
2. Lack of choice in production resources resulting in a near monopolisation of, and the limiting of affordable access to, professional equipment. Unfortunately there is little in the way of co-operation, let alone trust, between film-makers; instead there are constant stories of being undermined or exploited by others. As a result, secrecy, jealousy, and negative rivalry has grown where mutual co-operation and friendly competition should be.
3. Lack of choice/monopolisation of funding, due to there being no formal financial support system, no specialised bonds, equities or other financial programs that could be used to facilitate production or distribution, and barely more than a handful of regular corporate or private donors. Amongst the considerable range of potential funding projects presented to philanthropists and would be-donors, (e.g. newspaper publishing, clinics, music albums, concerts, etc) film has yet to make any critical impact.
4. Lack of training in key areas (e.g. writing, producing, directing, camera, etc), or in the support areas (e.g. Make-up, costume, etc) of acting or film production. Lack of production opportunities mean that few people have the chance to see or participate in a real shoot.
5. Lack of suitable screening opportunities at cinema venues or on local television stations.
6. No local role models for actors or film makers, except those offered by Nollywood/Bollywood/Hollywood models, (which are not necessarily always the most appropriate when looking to the development of our own distinct national identity).
7. No intra-communication amongst SL film-makers. No inter-communication or links to other film-makers visiting the country or working on Sierra Leone subject matter. Almost every week, there are foreign film-makers coming into Sierra Leone to research or shoot their own

films – (dramas as well as documentaries). The opportunity to assist them, learn from them, work with them and benefit from them is being entirely lost to local film-makers in particular and the country in general.

8. No local understanding or conception of how film-making works as a process or industry.
9. No market research; no national surveys conducted amongst public or industry.
10. No local markets developed and no national distribution channels (although tentative, emerging initiatives such as the Video Seller's Association are to be applauded.)
11. No respect for actors or film-makers. They hold a poor reputation in the eyes of the public. Whilst the stars of Nigeria are fêted and lauded, our own local talent is ignored and criticised as 'loafers', due mainly to the lack of visible earning opportunities for these professionals.
12. No reliable copyright protection for film-makers (or other artists).
13. No sharing of resources. If film-makers pooled their resources, the monies currently paid to hire equipment would actually allow the outright purchase of camera and editing equipment.
14. No appreciation of importance of the role of a complementary education. Many film professionals have separate, independent professional qualifications in the fields of education, health, business and law, as well as a knowledge of subjects such as Cultural studies, Literature, foreign Languages, Psychology, Philosophy or Social Studies.
15. No revenue management mechanisms. Mainly due to the lack of enforceability and lack of accountability there are no systems in place to ensure that revenue income is efficiently tracked, collected and channelled to the rightful owners.

4.0. SOLUTIONS

4.1. Approaches

Film-makers cannot be expected to resolve the problems of the country with any simple remedies, but they can – and must – take the lead in creating a methodology and framework with which to develop an indigenous praxis of film making in the context of contemporary post-war Sierra Leone. So far, film-makers have not yet been able to create a coherent and cohesive community that can come together to formulate strategies and thus progress towards the establishment and acknowledgement of their film activities (and hopefully) their industry.

The creation of a Sierra Leone Hollywood, perhaps to be known as a 'Sollywood', 'Leonewood' or 'Sallywood' (Salone Hollywood) could be a real and long term consequence of implementing a few selected key strategies today. However, if we are to create an industry there must be certain elements in place, otherwise, like an electrical circuit, if one element is missing, the current cannot complete the circuit, cannot flow, and the machine one is hoping to power, will remain dormant.

Like any business, a film industry needs to include the following:-

- i) investment
- ii) research and development
- iii) provide product or service
- iv) receive revenue
- v) repay investors
- vi) make a profit for further re-investment.

We need to aim for a situation in which all the elements of the cycle are in place – ideas, investors, technical resources, production, distribution, revenue collection, profit to share and re-invest. (At present the focus is on resources and production, but little has been done to address issues relating to the maximising of distribution or revenue management.) How are these elements reflected in the film industry? How does one envision an entire industry from scratch? What elements do we need? How will these interact and interface to create the interdependency of a self-sufficient, viable industry? In all film industries around the world, coverage of all these elements in the business cycle can be recognised within, typically, five activity groups, as outlined below.

4.2. The Sleeping Giant

To understand this, let us use the simple analogy of a body:-

- The *body* is the giant of Sierra Leone film-making that we want to stir and make come alive.
- The *heart* is the core of our nation; our cultural soul.
- The *head* is for thinking and planning.
- The *hands* are the two key resources; one for tools the other for skills to utilise the tools.
- The *feet* are the two supports; one represents money, the other represents the market.

We know the heart is beating; we are already aware of its 'beatings' from the culture around us, but it is powerless to do or make anything on its own, without the use of a body. The head can be stirred from its sleep, to think and plan, but can do nought without the use of its hands. The hands can be freed, to learn skills and use equipment to make films, but still this means nothing unless the giant is free to stand on his own two feet and walk about. Thus the feet - the pillars which hold up all industries, can gain access to money, and access to markets. With no audience interest (or an unreachable audience), there is no demand for films. Likewise, with no money for investment, for research, for production, for marketing and for returning to investors as profits or for re-investment, there is no industry. Money is the fuel for all commerce and industry, and film is no exception.

So, our analogy is complete; our giant – the 'body politic' of film, if you will - needs both feet to support him, he needs both hands to work with, and of course he is clueless without his head, and dead without a beating heart.

These five areas - cultural energy, policy, equipment, training, money and a market - form the focus of responsibilities for specific and appropriate activity groups or organisations. By analysing these responsibilities, specific organisational solutions can now be tailored to meet the specific social, cultural and economic requirements in Sierra Leone.

4.3. From concept to reality

The following series of tables map the process of moving from the conceptual analogous body parts to the industry reality of a corresponding set of film-related responsibilities. The left hand column identifies the *Analogy* (the example), its physical *Function*, its function in a *Film Context*, some associated *Responsibilities*, and finally, and some suggested *Example Organisations* to administer such activities:-

Tables of Industry Responsibilities and Corresponding Organisations

(a) Heart

<i>Analogy:</i>	Heart
<i>Function:</i>	Life
<i>Film Context:</i>	Cultural Energy
<i>Responsibilities:</i>	Community of independent artists and cultural workers, creating and communicating experiences of the country and its people.
<i>Example of Organisation:</i>	National Organisation of Sierra Leone Artists

(b) Head

<i>Analogy:</i>	Head
<i>Function:</i>	Thinking
<i>Film Context:</i>	Strategy Planning
<i>Responsibilities:</i>	Strategy, planning policy-making; representation of film sector to government, monitoring (e.g. Local and international groups wishing to such as licensing and supervision of productions, cinemas, supervision of sectoral activities. Consults and liaises with relevant government departments, NGOs and other civil society organisations to explore new ways to ensure the maximum contribution of film to the culture and benefit of the country.
<i>Example of Organisation:</i>	National Film Council (<i>working in parallel, or as a subset of, a National Arts Council</i>)

(c) Hands

<i>Analogy:</i>	Hands (Two)	
<i>Function:</i>	(Using tools and resources)	
<i>Film Context:</i>	Hard (Equipment) Resources	Soft (Human) Resources
<i>Responsibilities:</i>	Equipment to facilitate all phases of video production, post-production, distribution and screening, as well as equipment for other supporting and allied technical activities to ensure the accomplishment of films from script to screen within national boundaries.	(i) Personal and professional development in the form of skills training and development. (ii) Maintenance of professional standards, practice and payment guidelines, governance, representation, and networking.
<i>Example of Organisation:</i>	National Film Workshop	(i) National Film Workshop (<i>Skills</i>) (ii) National Film Guild (<i>Standards</i>)

(d) Feet

<i>Analogy:</i>	Feet (Two)	
<i>Function:</i>	Support of the body	
<i>Film Equivalent:</i>	Finance	Market
<i>Responsibilities:</i>	Financial tools and systems (loans, sponsorships, bonds and investments, insurances, completion guarantees), bursaries, fellowships, awards and grants, co-production finance and other financial resources to facilitate the funding of all aspects of film production and distribution. Development and management of national and international revenue channels including Cinema, TV, Satellite, Internet, Video DVD and other forms of licensing, hire or sales.	Identification of national and international markets such as Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone Diaspora, Anglophone (incl. UK and USA), ECOWAS countries, Rest of Africa, Rest of the World). Development and management of appropriate audience markets through market research, promotions, sales, screenings. Development and management of national and international distribution channels including Cinema, TV, Satellite, Internet, Video, DVD. and other forms.
<i>Example of Organisation:</i>	• National Film Fund	National Film Agency

Based on the above solutions Sierra Leone film-makers can begin the process of addressing their challenges and starting to improve the conditions which will hopefully be more conducive to the development of our embryonic film production activities into a mature local industry. It needs a co-ordinated, coherent, cohesive approach to ensure that our film-making 'giant' can think and plan clearly, using head and hands effectively, as well as standing on solid feet - without falling over!

If, based on the willingness of the Sierra Leone film community to come together and work positively towards a common goal, and if the above proposed solutions can be further supported and developed, then at least the basis for a solid framework would have been created within which all aspects of the nascent film industry could be accommodated.

5.0. RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Key Issues

To help reach the solutions advocated earlier, a strategy needs to be developed. The following are strategic recommendations, highlighting key issues, which could form the basis of any implementation strategy for the current development of a national film industry.

(a) More Research

This is just a discussion paper, presenting a set of problems and proposing solutions. It was written based on feedback and discussions with local productions based in and around the capital Freetown, and the Western area. This is the area with the largest population concentration and note was taken of the national and regional experiences of the many film-makers with whom the author came into contact, sufficient to lead to the observations, conclusions and subsequent recommendations outlined herein. However, it is highly recommended that more structured field work, research and analysis - especially in other regional conurbations and rural areas – be conducted. This would provide an even more comprehensive picture and set of data with which to help develop a national film development strategy.

(b). Consultations and Inclusivity

Appropriate organisational solutions for the development of an industry need to be properly applied with the level of commitment required to sustain sustainability. As such, it is vital that further formal consultations (for example, in the form of a forum), are held, in order to elicit opinions and suggestions from film-making professionals and other stake holders in the development of Sierra Leone film. With this process, contributions to, and ownership of, the process of shaping and developing a local industry can necessarily include as many film-makers and stakeholders as possible.

(c). Information

In order to communicate the concerns, issues and developments of the nascent film-making industry, publication of appropriate articles, discussion papers would be extremely beneficial for film-makers, policy makers and international readers. This should also include publication of legal templates for production agreements and contracts.

(d). National Private Sector Development Programme

Based on the evidence of current and potential film production activity, it is clear that the film sector should be recognised as being complimentary to the key aims and objectives of Private Sector

Development (PSD) as outlined in the recent report *Private Sector Development* by the FSIA-DFID. The report stated that the fundamental goal of PSD in Sierra Leone '*...is to alleviate poverty. The rationales for FIAS-DFID intervention are to increase both the domestic and foreign investment, stimulate the growth of business, particularly through SME development whilst reducing informality. Increased investment and capital business growth in turn will create more jobs and increase exports, therefore reducing poverty....*'

In the light of these goals, the independent film sector, as an industry, would necessarily be a component part of the private sector, contributing to the stated goals of PSD and especially contributing to the PSD impacts '*in terms of higher investment (both domestic and foreign) an expanded manufacturing (e.g. film production) sector, increased and diversified exports, increased business registration, a greater number of SME's, reduced informality, increased employment in the non-agricultural sector, reduced poverty, improved human development and gender empowerment.*'

(e). Funding and investments

A finance investment programme should be developed to solicit and manage film fund investments from locals; Sierra Leoneans abroad; other individual, corporate, and institutional funding. This should include building relationships with international organisations such as in the UK (BBC, Channel Four Television), USA (PBS, Cable Stations and appropriate Hollywood-connected agencies).

(f). Professional centre

The creation of a professional 'nexus' for film-makers, acting as a national hub and rallying point for film-makers, for meeting, networking and sharing experiences, accessing professional equipment and resources. The acquisition of a central building with contemporary production, post-production equipment and allied resources, with the aim of making these fully accessible and affordable to Sierra Leone film-makers. Provisioning of skills training and professional development, and the creation of employment opportunities.

(g). Exhibition and Promotions

The development of a Screening, Promotions and Distribution programme for local films; a managed national film distribution network; securing appropriate film launch venues; and developing a strong brand to help the promotion of Sierra Leone film in local and foreign markets.

(h). Official Dialogue

The development of dialogue and discourse with Government agencies and departments, relevant

stakeholders and other potential industry partners. This should include the British Government through the British Council, (to identify the possible provision of support to the development of the culture of this Anglophone, ex-British colony.). In addition, foreign embassies should also have a role to play in communicating our burgeoning industry to their domestic film industries and assisting in helping to build bridges with Sierra Leone's film-makers.

5.2. Action not words

The author hopes that it is now obvious that Sierra Leone's film-makers are worthy of immediate, dedicated, practical support and assistance. Yet no such need for support has ever been previously recognised, let alone forthcoming. The discussion of problems is a useful step to providing solutions, and this paper is an attempt at stimulating such discussion. However, merely discussing problems, does not, in itself, solve anything. Consequently, in order to help address film-maker's needs and 'get the ball rolling', the Sierra Leone National Film Workshop, non-profit organisation, was established in Freetown.

The remit of the SLNFW is to encourage production and develop new talent by assisting film-makers to develop new projects. It is the only resource in the country dedicated exclusively to developing Sierra Leone film-making as a viable and self-supporting industry. However, despite almost no resources and without any external funding, it is already taking an early initiative to try to shine a light to illuminate the road of progress for film-makers.

Without making a fuss, the SLNFW has quietly begun helping film-makers by preparing foundations and putting initial modalities in place with an integrated and interconnected strategy for developing an industry, based on implementing many of the above solutions and recommendations. Specifically, it is already assisting in the following areas:-

- *Information:* Identification and research on key issues impacting on indigenous film practice. This is being developed with materials and input from international film and television organisations.
- *Productions:* Three independent film productions (two features and one short) have benefited from the facilitating of production and the provision of financial resources.
- *Finance:* The development and management of a finance investment programme 'Screen Partners' to attract investors and fund local productions.
- *Distribution:* Assisting in the development of an organised and vetted network for screening Sierra Leone films
- *Exhibition:* Securing a regular centre in Freetown for launching independent screenings. Enabling the public screening of any film (features or documentaries for entertainment or

education), in communities in remoter parts of the country by developing a national mobile cinema project. Co-developing an annual *Freetown Film Festival* (being developed with input from local and foreign organisations). Co-developing an annual *National Film Awards* ceremony to promote and acknowledge Sierra Leone film production and acting talent.

- *Promotion:* Developing '*Film Sierra Leone!*' As a national and international brand and promotion programme for Sierra Leone's film related activities.

These initiatives do not remove the necessity for further and additional work to be done - with the input of all film-makers and stakeholders. Indeed, the very scale and range of these initiatives that have already been started by the SLNFW, also serve to demonstrate the scale and range of work that still needs to be done if Sierra Leone film-makers are to achieve their goal of being recognised as professional members of a valued industry.

6.0. CONCLUSIONS

This white paper is an unequivocal argument for a national film industry. That there is indeed an embryonic, nascent film *movement*, is now beyond question. However, to call it an *industry* at this early stage of its development would be premature, given the lack of necessary industry elements (as outlined heretofore) in place.

To make 'Sollywood' a reality, (for it can be so, if sufficient desire and determination exists), our film-makers need encouragement and support to develop film as an important national asset for the country's culture and economy. A film *industry* can indeed be kick started by the actions of just a few people providing strategic support in a dedicated way; motivated not by greed or opportunism, but rather a genuine desire to support and develop indigenous film-making for the benefit of the nation (and the rest of the world).

It is therefore incumbent upon not just Sierra Leone film-makers, but all Sierra Leoneans, at home or in the diaspora, to consider the roles they can play. Whether as film-makers, investors, distributors or an audience they are all critical to the process of industry development, and thus everyone – including non-Sierra Leoneans can assist in the creation of this new industry.

The solutions presented here could - and should - enable Sierra Leone to establish its own place in the world of film-making and provide a much needed fillip not only to various aspects of our economy - from education to tourism. Yet perhaps there is an even more pressing reason; it could also be a great boon to lift the hopes and dreams; morale and prestige; pride and spirit of Sierra Leoneans around the world, as we finally succeed in '*Putting Sierra Leone in the Picture*'.