



Dear Advisory Board Members:

As the International Emerging Film Talent Association (IEFTA) begins a new year, we wanted to tell you of achievements in 2009 and plans for 2010.

As you know, we have not held a festival since the 2007 launch. We determined that the economic downturn argued against a 2009 event. However, because our mission has always been to promote emerging filmmakers in developing countries, we transferred our energies to the less glamorous but probably more significant Global Film Expression (GFE) initiative. I am proud to tell you of our accomplishments to date.

In 2008, the IEFTA launched the GFE initiative in the Federal Republic of Ethiopia. After selecting Ethiopia at the 2007 Festival, the IEFTA hosted an international conference in Addis Ababa in June of 2008. Our project partners included the University of Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian Culture and Tourism Ministry, UNESCO and the Embassies of the United States of America and India.

Thanks in part to the hard work and financial support of GFE advisory board members, delegates from a dozen countries and universities in Europe, North America and Africa assembled to draft a detailed, practical plan to conduct film education in Ethiopia and build a national film industry.

After a two-day workshop at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) offices in Addis Ababa, a three-point program for the Ethiopian Film Initiative (EFI) was proposed and ratified.

Incredibly, the conference secured a commitment by the government to author a national film policy and to create a federal agency to oversee the development of the indigenous film industry.

Conference delegates next agreed to the establishment of an umbrella organization to represent the views of individual filmmakers and other industry stakeholders in policy debates over film-related issues. A group of local filmmakers convened to draft a charter for the group.



Thirdly, a plan was agreed to develop professional standards for the Ethiopian film industry. A three-tiered approach was adopted, including short-term training in various film making crafts; semester-length courses in production management, marketing and distribution; and, for the long term, the establishment of permanent institutions in the country: a film department at Addis Ababa University and an archive of Ethiopian Film.

One year later, the EFI is up and running, administered chiefly by Ethiopians. Ethiopian students have already participated in three separate training workshops: one in Burkina Faso and two in Addis Ababa. The government's commitment remains strong.

We are humbled by the sweat equity investment of our Ethiopian partners and friends. At the same time, we are cognizant of ongoing needs. An initiative of this scale, in this country, requires continuing support and involvement. We are reaching out to film institutions, equipment houses and small private donors to underwrite this endeavor. We are actively seeking the donation of used cameras and mini-DV decks. We are asking our fellow festivals to showcase the films that result from the Initiative.

To date, the response has been more than encouraging!

I look forward to further conversations with each of you concerning our plans, priorities and achievements. As our advisory board members, you are who we look to for encouragement, support, involvement, guidance and promotion of our objectives and our successes.

Sincerely,

The Founding Board Members of the International Emerging Talent Film Festival.

Angela, Marco, Noriko, Carol, Max, Biljana