

Ivory Coast - SICA 2025: Abidjan Aims to Become Africa's Audiovisual Capital

By M'ma CAMARA

Abidjan, July 2, 2025 – Three intense days for a clear message: Ivorian audiovisual production is shifting into high gear. From June 26 to 28, the Sofitel Hôtel Ivoire hosted the 3rd edition of the Abidjan International Audiovisual Content Fair (SICA). Image professionals, policymakers, producers, and young creators all came together with a common goal: to build a powerful local industry ready to conquer international markets.

Produce, Shine, Establish

The tone was set right from the opening of the fair by the Minister of Communication, who initiated the event: Ivory Coast wants to become THE essential platform for audiovisual and cinematic production in Africa.

To that end, Amadou Coulibaly announced a co-production agreement with Japan, to be signed in August with JETRO. The objective: training and knowledge sharing. Additionally, momentum is already underway with French-speaking Belgium, which finalized a similar agreement on the sidelines of the fair. A concrete result? Co-productions will automatically receive national film status in both partner countries.

Africa Takes Back Control of Its Narratives

Throughout the three-day fair, one phrase echoed as a mantra: “Africa has its own stories to tell, and it wants to take back control.”

A compelling example is the ORUN Studios project by Habyba Thiero: an Afro-futuristic animation studio revolutionizing African storytelling. Her immersive installation—a six-meter geodesic dome combining video mapping, spatialized sound, and dance—literally captivated the audience. “I was blown away. In just seconds, you discover Africa and its history. It's fascinating,” said Sylla Fodé, 12, a 7th-grade student, perfectly representing a generation growing up with these new visual codes.

Financing: Thinking Outside the Box

How can this enthusiasm be transformed into a sustainable business model? The RTI media group sparked the debate during a working breakfast. Gilles Marchand, a philanthropy expert from the University of Geneva, offered practical suggestions: draw inspiration from European and North American models by setting measurable goals and signing strict governance contracts.

Jean Martial Adou, RTI's CEO, drove the point home: “We must move away from egocracy. The sector needs to reinvent itself.”

When Hollywood Meets Abidjan

Another highlight of the fair was a masterclass led by Larry Kasanoff, producer of the cult film *Mortal Kombat*. Speaking to an audience of young Ivorian filmmakers, he emphasized discipline, rigor, and vision: how to pitch a project well, structure a script, and build a team. A

valuable dialogue between local realities and international standards. “You have powerful stories. Work on them with passion and method,” he advised.

The Winning Strategy: Playing as a Team

These international agreements didn’t happen by chance. They are part of a methodical approach to balanced South-North cooperation. “These are concrete advancements for professionals,” emphasized Amadou Coulibaly, aware that creative isolation leads nowhere. Meanwhile, a tripartite decree between the Ministries of Communication, Tourism, and Culture will help structure the hosting of film shoots in Ivory Coast. A technical committee will support this attractiveness strategy, transforming the country into a top destination for international productions.

New Talents Take Center Stage

The SICA 2025 Pitch Contest revealed a bubbling creativity. Franck Vlehi won the professional film/series category with *Manley* (25 million CFA francs). Paule Andréa triumphed in the amateur category with *Paire de trois* (5 million CFA francs). *Tout en Direct*, a documentary by Djeneba Ouattara, received 10 million CFA francs, as did *Aucun Repos* by Yatto Junior, praised for its activist message.

See You in 2026

Mission accomplished for this 3rd edition: SICA fully played its role as a catalyst. Panels, B2B meetings, training sessions, screenings—every link in the chain was present. The next edition, scheduled for November 25 to 27, 2026, promises to be even more ambitious.

The African Narrative is Being Written in Large Format

This 2025 edition will be remembered as the one of consolidation. Training, financing, cooperation, creativity—the pillars are in place. The talents are here. So are the partners. The African narrative is now being written in large format on the shores of the Ébrié Lagoon.