



## Press Release

# Think digital to engage with youth, say film experts at Doha Giffoni Youth Media Summit

*Digital media creates the platform to connect but challenge is to understand what the youth really needs*

**Doha, Qatar; December 2, 2014:** The first Doha Giffoni Youth Media Summit is taking place during the Ajyal Youth Film Festival this week through a collaboration between the Doha Film Institute and the Giffoni Experience. The Summit aims to draft an action plan over the course of the next six months to manage cultural events and initiatives for children and youth..

An integral part of the second Ajyal Youth Film Festival, the Summit is attended by over 36 film industry professionals around the world, who exchange views on the state of cinema for youth with a focus on how new media and social networks are affecting it.

At the opening session of the Summit, the participants highlighted the need for 'thinking digitally' to engage with the youth more effectively, underlining that the fundamental challenge is to understand what young people really need.

Inaugurating the session, Fatma Al Remaihi, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute and Director of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, said: "The aim of the Doha Giffoni Youth Media Summit is to bring together local, regional and international experts working on cultural events for young people around the world.

"Ajyal means 'generations' in Arabic and in many ways we are using this forum to bring generations together under the umbrella of media and young people. Through the Summit, we want to listen and learn, share and discover and together propose solutions and partnerships for the future."

Claudio Gubitosi, Director and Founder of Giffoni Experience (Italy), said the Summit is being held in "the right place at the right time for the right people." He said the discussions will enable the film industry to lend hope to the youth by delivering great art to them in a way they have never experienced before.



“Digital media is changing the rules of the game and how we interact with the youth. By sharing ideas and experiences here in Doha, questioning and critiquing ourselves, we stand to gain a better understanding of what the youth really wants. Our quest must be to go beyond the platforms that new technologies have created and think digitally to better engage with the youth,” he added.

Wassime Achkar, Online Business and Services Senior Specialist at Al Jazeera Media Network, highlighted the value that the Summit brings in engaging effectively with the youth. He said that the Ajyal Youth Film Festival has indeed brought together generations through the medium of films.

A number of industry initiatives that are aligned with connecting with the youth through digital media were highlighted at the Summit. Rasha Awada, Head of Marketing at the Doha Film Institute, detailed the successful digital media strategy of the Ajyal Youth Film Festival. “We continuously ask questions to understand our audience and thus shift their discussions on social media towards cinema and art,” she observed.

Habes Mohammed Howail, Qatari Youth Ambassador at the Arab Thought Foundation, highlighted that today’s youth are global citizens, and moving forward, it is important to create content in different formats that appeal to all segments anywhere in the world. He said it is important to create a sustainable, constantly evolving platform for effective engagement with youth through film.

Iris Verhoven, Director of European Youth Film Festival of Flanders, described her ‘Film Fun in Bed’ initiative that takes the action and fun of film festivals to hospital beds for children who are unable to attend the festivals. Choo Jung-hoo, Festival Planning Manager at Seoul Youth Film Festival, explained the ‘SUB-way’ approach to engage youth led by the Speed, Utilisation and Broadening the reach of social media.

Sulafa Hijazi, Founder Director of blue.dar Digital Art Production House in Syria, described how animation is used through social media platforms to connect with today’s children, while Nana Janelidze, Director of Georgian National Film Centre, explained how the Giffoni experience has transformed film awareness among children in the country who had practically no exposure to world cinema. Firdoze Bulbulia, Chairperson of Children and Broadcasting Foundation for Africa, reminded the participants on how it is equally important to engage with youth who are not necessarily technologically connected or socially networked.

The working sessions of the two-day event will create a draft resolution that will be further discussed in the coming months for further elaboration at Giffoni in July 2015.



The second annual Ajyal Youth Film Festival is taking place until December 6 at Katara Cultural Village. The programme consists of daily public screenings of local and international films; family days; special events and exhibitions; the Sandbox interactive digital playground; school screenings; and the Doha Film Experience.

For more details on the Ajyal Youth Film Festival, please visit [www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival](http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/filmfestival)

**-ENDS-**

**About Doha Film Institute:**

Doha Film Institute is an independent, not-for-profit cultural organisation. It supports the growth of the local film community through cultivating film appreciation, enhancing industry knowledge and contributing to the development of sustainable creative industries in Qatar. The Institute's platforms include funding and production of local, regional and international films; skills-sharing and mentorship programmes; film screenings; the Ajyal Youth Film Festival; and the Qumra Doha Film Festival. With culture, community, learning and entertainment at its foundation, the Institute is committed to supporting Qatar's 2030 vision for the development of a knowledge-based economy.

Doha Film Institute

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