

Industry Information Section

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1. Introduction:

Welcome to the NFVCB Industry Information section. This section is designed specifically for NFVCB customers, and here you will find all the information relating to our censorship and classification, licensing of exhibitors and exhibition premises, and other services. Customers can also get download forms needed to submit a film, video, DVD or video game etc to the NFVCB for classification. We also plan to launch a business online application that will make online transactions easier for our customers.

2. Submitting Films for Censorship

All films videos or video games, and downloadable filmed content whether local or imported Most films, whether local or imported have to be classified before they can be publicly exhibited, sold or hired. There are however some exceptions, and a list of exemptions can be found in **Exemption List**.

Identical versions of a previously classified film do not require classification. You may exhibit an identical version of a previously classified film using its prior classification and consumer advice. To determine if a version of a film has a previous classification, please check the NFVCB **classification database**. This database displays the production details (title, producer, director and production company), duration, classification and consumer advice of a film that have been previously classified. Please contact us if you have any problems using the database.

If the details of a previously classified film vary from the version you want to exhibit, you must submit the film for classification. A variation may include either the addition or deletion of any content.

Exemption List: Certain films may be exempt from classification if their content can be accommodated under specific descriptions in the NFVCB Act. The conditions for exempt films are relatively specific and relate to both subject matter and classifiable elements within the film.

3. Our process:

Our workflow process is has been reviewed in line with new censorship and classification guidelines which have just been

published. The information contained in this section describes the process to be adopted by our Censorship committees in reaching a decision on a film as well as what a customer has to do in submitting a film to the Board.

4. Censorship & Classification Guidelines

As we move closer towards classification, industry players must perform an equally crucial role as the government by adopting an elevated sense of social responsibility and professionalism. A responsible and civic-minded industry makes a meaningful partnership with the regulators. Industry players can help nurture a more enlightened and efficient censorship environment through consumer advice and co-regulation, including responsibility for film classification.

The role of a censorship/classification officer is to determine the likely impact of a movie on the audience, bearing in mind the age, social and religious sensitivities, as well as the overall social benefit of the material in question. The following guidelines aim to be as objective as possible, while retaining the flexibility needed to accommodate notions of artistic freedom, merit and community standards. In considering each element, the Censorship Committee's classification decision is based on the impact of individual elements and their cumulative effect. The content and treatment of elements contribute to the impact. The Committee also takes into account factors such as tone, duration, frequency and the amount of visual or verbal detail. The relationship of classifiable elements to the narrative also contributes to the impact of a film, and therefore its classification.

Even though, the majority of movies produced in Nigeria are largely distributed directly through video to consumers, with very little going to the exhibition window; the Board should still take into consideration two formats for classification: public exhibition format, intended for screening in cinemas and theatres and home entertainment format, which includes videos, DVDs and other titles on discs. A classification of a title in one format will not apply to the same title in another, different format. A classification decision also takes into account the difference in the effect or impact of classifiable elements between watching a film in the cinema and the same film in the privacy of one's home. The interactive nature of a video or DVD, allowing one to play particular scenes over and over again, is also a factor that, while not determinative, may influence a classification decision. This would be the case particularly where scenes of instructive details in criminal techniques are included in the film.

5. Our Policy

The Board's broad philosophy is to apply censorship criteria before classification. It therefore follows that the Board's main censorship considerations are based on Section 37 of the NFVCB Decree No. 85 of 1993 which states "*the Censors and Classification Committee in reaching a decision on a film or video work shall ensure that:*

- *such a film or video work has educational or entertainment value apart from promoting the Nigerian culture, unity and interest; and*
- *that such film or video work is not likely:*
- *to undermine national security; or*
- *to induce or reinforce the corruption of private or public morality; or*
- *to encourage or glorify the use of violence; or*
- *to expose the people of African heritage to ridicule or contempt; or*
- *to encourage illegal or criminal acts; or*
- *to encourage racial, religions or ethnic discrimination or conflict; or*
- *by its contents to be blasphemous or obscene; or*
- *to denigrate the dignity of womanhood"*

6. Main Issues in Classification

The following sets out the general concerns which apply to a greater or lesser degree in the decision to classify or censor film and video works. Each film must be examined and classified on its own merits.

a. Theme & Context

The acceptability of a theme depends significantly on its treatment, i.e. the context and sensitivity of its presentation. However, the most problematic themes (for example cultural and traditional religious practices, drug abuse, sex, and violence, ethnic or racial hatred or violence) are unlikely to be appropriate at the most junior levels of classification, and may even be refused classification altogether.

b. Language

The Zonal Censorship Committee should have regard, in the accurate depiction of real-life actions and emotions, for script-writers to include "coarse" language. Many people are offended, some very deeply by the use of strong

language. Care must be taken to avoid its use in such a way as to invite imitation by children. Expressions or expletives with sexual connotations, or expressions normally specifically used in the context of certain groups in Nigeria, should not be permitted in G, PG, 12. For other classification categories mild expletives with sexual connotations or coarse language may be used but only infrequently and must be justified in context. The depth of concern about any particular word or expression will also depend upon the context within which it is used. For these reasons, it is impossible to set out comprehensive lists of acceptable words or expressions which will satisfy all sections of the public.

c. Sex and Nudity

Whilst it's a often stated fact that the depiction of Natural nudity, providing there is no sexual context, is an established art form, however, Nigerians are particularly sensitive to public display of nudity and sex, however intended. Besides, the portrayal of human nakedness before children is unacceptable. Therefore such scenes must not be permitted in movies rated G and PG, and only to a very mild extend permissible in "12" movies. The portrayal of human sexual activity can range from kissing and references to 'making love' to simulated sex. This is reflected in the classification system, in which progressively stronger portrayal is allowed as the categories rise. However, the Board reserves the rights to requests cuts or edits and in some cases refuse classification for movies which have no artistic or entertainment value.

d. Violence

Whilst violence has always been a feature of entertainment for children and adults, the Board addresses the degree and nature of violence through our classification system and the need to protect children from imitable scenes. These facts of real life have made more difficult the problem of maintaining a balance in the showing of contrived violence in entertainment films. Violence has always been part of drama and even sports from time immemorial: what should concern the censorship officer is the degree to which it is depicted in a film, and also whether it is gratuitous or not. Therefore, in classifying movies censorship officers should be mindful that lower

classification categories do not contain scenes which have the following:

- portrayal of violence as a normal solution to problems,
- heroes who inflict pain and injury callousness towards victims,
- encouraging aggressive attitudes taking pleasure in pain or humiliation.

It is important to note however, that works which tend to glorify, glamorise or sexualise violence will receive a more restrictive classification and may even be cut or refused classification. No gratuitous violence will be allowed regardless of the category.

Children's materials (e.g. Westerns and Cartoons), it can be objectively argued, have traditionally depicted violence. Provided that such violence is far enough removed from reality that it does not frighten children or invite ready imitation, it can be tolerated. The general experience has been that children are more seriously disturbed by violence threatened or perpetrated against those (including animals) who are helpless or are clearly unable to escape.

e. Imitable techniques

Because of a natural tendency to copy adult behaviour without consideration of broader social implications, children are normally the people who are likely to be badly affected by violence in films. Such effects extend to teenagers but hopefully to a lesser extent. Therefore, the Board is concerned about detailed portrayal of criminal and violent techniques and the glamorization of easily accessible weapons. Action that may promote illegal or anti-social behaviour, and portrayals of potentially dangerous behaviour which young children are likely to copy, are of particular concern. Censorship officers must examine and classify a film having in mind the degree to which a young person can be exposed to depictions of violence without being tempted to emulate them.

f. Traditional Rituals & Customs

The NFVCB recognizes that there are certain customs and traditions, some of which may be animist in origins, which are practiced widely in Nigeria and some other African countries. These "rituals" are not necessarily seen in a

negative light, but its depiction or portrayal in some movies give the Board cause for concern. Whilst the Board recognizes the right for filmmakers to depict some of these rituals in movies it must be done in good taste, and reflect the context of the story, and not be gratuitous or glamorize such acts.

g. Drugs

No work taken as a whole may promote or encourage the use of illegal drugs, smoking, alcohol abuse or substance misuse particularly at the junior categories. Any detailed portrayal of drug use likely to promote or glamorise the activity may be cut or refused classification altogether.

h. Importance of context

The Censorship committee should always take into consideration in reaching decision on classification, the **Context** of the film or video works. This is crucial in determining whether a classifiable element is justified by the story-line or themes.

i. **The classifiable elements:** The six classifiable elements in a film or video works are:

- themes
- violence
- sex and nudity
- fetish voodoo
- language
- drug use
- nudity

The classification takes account of the context and impact of each of these elements, including their frequency and intensity, and their cumulative effect. It also takes account of the purpose and tone of a sequence, and how material is treated. Assessing the impact of material requires considering not only the treatment of individual classifiable elements but also their cumulative effect. It also requires considering the purpose and tone of a sequence.

j. Impact may be higher where a scene:

- contains greater detail, including the use of close-ups and slow motion
- uses accentuation techniques, such as lighting, perspective and resolution

- uses special effects, such as lighting and sound, resolution, colour, size of image, characterization and tone
- is prolonged
- is repeated frequently
- is realistic, rather than stylised
- encourages interactivity.

Interactivity includes the use of incentives and rewards, technical features and competitive intensity. As a general rule:

- material that contains drug use and sexual violence related to incentives or rewards would be Refused Classification.

Impact may be lessened where reference to a classifiable element is verbal rather than visual. For example, a verbal reference to sexual violence is generally of less impact than a visual depiction. Also, some visual impacts have less impact than others: for example, an incidental depiction may have less impact than a direct one.

7. Specific Censorship & Classification Guidelines

- Films shall be classified separately in the following formats :
 - 35 mm, video,
 - DVD,
 - VCD.
- A separate classification shall be applied for in each of the said formats and a classification in one format shall not apply to a different format.
- Every movie is seen as a whole, and not a part to another movie either as its sequel or prequel. The classification decision for a movie would be based completely on the individual impact and characteristics of each film or video.
- To qualify for a classification decision each movie submitted must contain the essential elements of cinematic content, that is, each story should contain – a beginning, conflict and the resolution or end. Not necessarily in that order. The Board will withhold classification for movies that abuse cinematic tradition.

- e. An applicant for classification of a film or video work whether foreign or local, in a particular format shall furnish, to the satisfaction of the Board, confirmation of her or his right to distribute and/or exhibit the film in that format in Nigeria. In the absence of satisfactory confirmation of such distribution and/or exhibition rights, the Board may refuse to classify the film in that particular format and may revoke any certificate of classification with may have been issued with respect to that film in that format.
- f. Furthermore, all presenters must show evidence of all music synchronization rights used in the movie.
- g. Besides the classification, the Board would also include consumer advisory information pieces, such as *Nudity, Fetish, Rituals, Coarse Language, or Brutal Violence*. These warnings, along with the classification, must appear on all advertising to help the viewer in making informed choices. For every work passed, the Board must provide information about the content of the movie, which indicates why it has been given a particular category and what it contains by way of language, nudity or sex, fetish practice, violence, bad language, etc. This Consumer Advice is an important aspect of the classification systems worldwide which enables them to make informed decisions about viewing.
- h. Occasionally, a work lies on the margin between two classification categories. In applying the criteria in these Guidelines in such a case, the Censorship committee should take into account the intentions of the film-maker, the expectations of the public in general and the work's audience in particular, and any special merits of the work.
- i. In line with international practice, and indeed to stem rising incidence of indecent movie trailers, the Board decisions would be more restrictive with regard to trailers and advertisements. This is because difficult content in such short works have a greater impact on an unprepared audience, and due to the increased possibility of under-age viewing.
- j. Classification decisions may be stricter on video, DVD and digital works than on 35mm films meant for

exhibition directly. This is because of the increased possibility of under-age viewing. Accordingly, a video work may occasionally receive a higher age classification than on film, or require new or different cuts.

8. Consumer Information Advisories

The Board shall provide reliable Consumer Advice on all the works it classifies, as the advisories alert consumers to the elements that have contributed to the classification. It helps people to make informed choices about the films and videos they choose for themselves or for their children.

Therefore, along with a classification, most films will be assigned an advisory: this is a short information piece that lists specific content factors in the film. It covers in particular violence, sex, nudity, rituals, language, drugs and any other matters likely to be of concern to the public. The information should appear on publicity for all films, including music videos, rated 'G' to '18', and on the packaging of all videos. Consumer advice is designed to provide information to consumers as to the theme and nature of the material they are about to buy or watch.

In determining the appropriate advisory, the primary consideration is the material in the film that played a determinative role in the film's classification; this will be listed first, followed by other content factors where relevant. A typical advisory will warn on such factors as "violence" or "sexually suggestive scenes." Parents should be aware that the advisory does not necessarily capture all material in the film.

Some examples of consumer advice are:

- Mild violence
- Moderate violence, including scenes depicting rituals, fetish sacrifices, etc.
- Frequent coarse or strong language
- Suggested or Strong drug use
- Medium Level Animated Violence
- Simulated sex scenes

9. Classification Criteria

Once a film or video work has passed the major censorship criteria, the next step is determining what age group the

material is suitable for. In classifying films, and video works, the NFVCB shall as much as possible give consideration to the following basic principles, also gives consideration to the following basic principles

- adults should as far as possible be free to choose what they see, providing that it remains within the law and is not potentially harmful to society
- works should be allowed to reach the widest audience that is appropriate for their theme and treatment
- the context in which something (eg sex or violence) is presented is central to the question of its acceptability
- the NFVCB's Guidelines will be reviewed periodically. The Guidelines, and the Board's practice in applying them, have particular regard to changes in public taste, attitudes and concerns; changes in the law; or new evidence from research or expert sources

10. Classification Symbols

ALL **films** that are supplied to the public must be labeled with the approved classification symbol as well as the short synopsis of the movie, as submitted to the Board. The Board logo must be on :

- on video cassettes
- on VCD and DVD cases, as well as the discs
- as part of film trailers and advertising material such as posters

Film labels are colour coded, much the same as traffic lights:

- **GREEN** means anyone can view a film
- **YELLOW** means that anyone can view the film, but the film may contain material, such as violence or sexual themes, which may offend or upset some people. Parental guidance is advised before children view the film.
- **RED** means that the film is legally restricted and can only be viewed by the audience specified.

All labels have a rating or classification symbol and usually a descriptive note briefly explaining the content of the film, for example whether the film contains violence or sex.

11. Fees & Charges

[Insert fees and charges or link to fees and charges](#)

12. Forms

[Insert link to downloadable forms](#)