

Press release

The Future of African Cinema Is Female: **AYWA**, a New Momentum for African Women Directors

The Tamayouz Cinema Foundation marks a new chapter with the launch of AYWA, a pioneering residency program for African women filmmakers. Building on the success of two previous editions of the Tamayouz Ateliers Pro (TAP), this initiative embraces a bold pan-African ambition, aiming to strengthen the presence of African women's voices on the global stage. Applications are now open until **July 31, 2025**, with the program set to begin on **September 14, 2025**, between Rabat and Marrakech.

AYWA: Singular Voices, a Collective Vision — a panafrican initiative led by UNESCO and Tamayouz Foundation

AYWA is conceived as an immersive creative experience spread across four sessions over six weeks. It brings together ten emerging women directors from the **five sub-regions of the African continent**. Each participant will develop, shoot, and post-produce a short film under professional conditions, ensuring a final result ready to enter the international circuit.

What makes AYWA unique is its dual purpose: enabling each director to craft a deeply personal work, while collectively building a pan-African anthology series. The collection, tied together by a narrative thread rooted in Morocco—host country and cultural crossroads of the continent—will serve as a **“proof of concept”** for future collaborative African audiovisual projects.

At the heart of this initiative are women and their voices. With diverse life paths and artistic visions, these directors bring contemporary African realities to the screen with boldness, depth, and sensitivity. While African cinema has historically been shaped by its founding fathers, **a new generation of women** is redefining its narratives and aesthetics—and claiming their rightful place in the global industry.

« AYWA was born out of the belief that our stories hold universal power—when told with honesty, freedom, and artistic rigor. By offering these women a demanding yet nurturing environment, we're giving them space to grow, to be heard, and to lead. It's also an act of faith in a future African cinema that is bold, plural, and unapologetically female. » - Lamia Chraïbi

Tailored Mentorship Led by Key Figures in African Cinema

Throughout the residency, the filmmakers will receive hands-on professional guidance under the direction of **Lamia Chraibi**, producer and driving force behind this ambitious program. She will be joined by two major voices in African cinema who will help shape this creative journey ; **Hicham Lasri**, creator of the anthology series and lead mentor, will support the participants in developing their artistic and narrative visions. While **Abderrahmane Sissako**, internationally acclaimed director, will open the residency by sharing his experience and offering insights to help the filmmakers shape their professional trajectories.

This framework will be further enriched by a network of international experts—producers, editors, distributors, artistic coaches—to provide a personalized, rigorous, and inspiring mentorship experience that matches the ambition of the AYWA program.

This landmark initiative is made possible thanks to the support of prestigious partners: **UNESCO**, **Mohamed VI Polytechnic University** (UM6P), and **La Prod**. It fully embodies the values of the Tamayouz Cinema Foundation, itself born of a powerful collective movement led by women in cinema. Responding to the call of Dounia Benjelloun-Mezian, Farida Benlyazid, Simone Bitton, Lamia Chraibi, and Narjiss Nejjar, these professionals took over the red carpet at the Marrakech International Film Festival to demand better representation for women in the film industry.

A Strategic and High-Impact Closing Event

On **October 27**, the residency will conclude with a press and industry event designed to bring together broadcasters, platforms, and potential partners, and to catalyze new pan-African projects. This event will feature the participating filmmakers, Tamayouz alumni, and key industry stakeholders. The goal: to spark concrete collaborations, showcase the talent nurtured through the program, and strengthen professional bridges between Africa and international markets.

Beyond the residency, a strategic distribution plan will be rolled out in partnership with cultural and institutional actors — including UNESCO, embassies, African and international festivals — to ensure lasting visibility for the films and their creators.