South Africa – contextual human rights issues

The purpose of this summary is to provide a high-level overview of documented human rights issues in a particular country and how they could intersect with TV production. It aims to prompt further consideration and planning by production teams where appropriate. Not all issues will be relevant for all TV productions and, conversely, there may be aspects not yet covered that are relevant.

Human rights issue	Description of context	How this could intersect with TV production	Suggested mitigations	Resources
Discrimination – disability and LGBTQI+	LGBTQI+ people face abuses, including murder, assault, harassment and discrimination.	• Crew and talent may experience or witness homophobia or abuse • Local LGBTQI+ crew may be hiding their identities or living in fear • Local crew may exhibit homophobia	• Inclusive security practices • Establish culture where everyone can raise concerns • Wellbeing and support resources	[Aide Memoire for Inclusive Personal Safety on Location](#) [Inclusive security risk management](#) [Toolkit: Getting the culture right](#) [FATV Charity: The Whole Picture Toolkit](#)
Xenophobic violence	Anti-foreigner vigilante groups target foreigners, blaming them for unemployment and crimes.	• Crew and talent may experience or witness xenophobic violence		
Gender based violence (GBV)	Disturbingly high rates of gender-based violence cases, including murder and sexual assault	• Female crew may be at risk of violence or sexual harassment • Local female crew may have experienced or be experiencing GBV outside the production		
Behaviour of public security	Police have reportedly used excessive force to quell protests and have violated rights and caused deaths with little accountability (HRW)	• Public security is sometimes relied on for a production (e.g. a sporting event) • Crew or cast may be caught up in a protest or police activity	• Include public security in risk assessments where relevant, e.g. sport • Inclusive security practices	[FCDO travel advice: Safety and security](#) [Security and human rights knowledge hub and toolkit](#) [UN Code of Conduct for Law Enforcement Officials](#)
High rates of violent crime	High rates of murder, hijacking, robbery and rape	• Safety of crew members – crew may experience or witness violent crime	• Clear policy on use of armed security • Briefings for crew to allay fears but ensure sensible behaviour • Strong local partner to help navigate the context	

Vulnerability of workers to exploitation	Traffickers force both adults and children, particularly those from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities and rural areas as well as migrants, into labour in domestic service, mining, food services, construction, criminal activities, agriculture, and the fishing sector. Traffickers may exploit South Africans in forced labour on vineyards, fruit and vegetable farms. (US TiP)	• Providers of ancillary services (e.g. hospitality, cleaning, security, set construction) could be employing trafficked workers • Productions may also encounter such workers in hotels and venues	• Due diligence on suppliers of ancillary services • Direct engagement with and checks on ancillary workers during production	Production pack: protecting the most vulnerable workers Toolkit: Vetting suppliers appropriately Toolkit: Supporting ancillary workers directly Toolkit: Category Management Due Diligence
Land rights	Land access was historically denied to the majority of South Africans and the issue is highly politically charged, often coming to the fore near to elections.	• Productions may use politically sensitive land • Production use may displace (physically or economically) local communities	• Due diligence on the land being used • Review of the election cycle and checks on any history of land-related unrest in the area	Location due diligence (tool in development) Approach to meaningful stakeholder engagement
Access to water and sanitation	South Africa is a water-scarce country. Poor infrastructure has also exacerbated extreme weather events leading to widespread disruptions to water supplies and sanitation crises.	• Lack of sufficient access to water for cast and crew • Production's use of water may prevent local communities from accessing what they need	• Strong plan for water management (minimise, recycle and re-use where possible) • Ensure water use does not deprive local communities	WRI: Aqueduct tools – water risk atlas
Environmental risks	Country is among the top 20 emitters of greenhouse gases (GHGs) - extreme weather events have become more intense. Particular risks of toxic waste near abandoned mines and dams, including pollution of water sources. Unsafe levels of air pollution in Mpumalanga province.	• Risks to life and health of crew from environmental issues or natural disasters	• Factor in environmental risks and conduct checks on surrounding area for abandoned mines • Set high environmental standards on shoots and seek to minimise GHG emissions	albert production toolkit BFI: Screen new deal route map to sustainable film production
Government corruption	Transparency International reports that South Africa is in a state of kleptocracy where corruption part of the fabric of public governance from state-owned enterprises to most municipalities in the country.	• Productions may have to navigate poor public services (e.g. frequent electricity blackouts) • Productions may face requests for bribes or public officials abusing authority, e.g. in relation to filming permits	• Strong local partner to help navigate the context • Clear policy on bribery, risk assessment and response plan	Transparency International anti-bribery resources

Have further insights? Please share suggested issues, intersections with TV, mitigations and resources with amelia.knott@tvhumanrights.org