



KENYA FILM CLASSIFICATION BOARD

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PRESS STATEMENT BY THE KENYA FILM CLASSIFICATION BOARD ON 'SQUID GAME' TV SERIES AIRED ON NETFLIX PLATFORM ISSUED ON MONDAY 1ST NOVEMBER 2021 AT 10:00 AM.

*Members of the 4th Estate
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen
Good morning:*

The Kenya Film Classification Board's (**Board**) attention has been drawn to a TV series titled '**Squid Game**', which is exhibiting on the **Netflix** subscription platform. The series, which has since been released to the Kenyan market, is available in original Korean and English dub languages. **Netflix** has rated the series as **18** on account of the graphic and violent nature of the content. It is important to note at this juncture that the rating of **18** is typically assigned to programming that is meant for adults only.

Released in **September 2021**, the series has gained popularity with more than **100** million views across the globe. The release of the '**Squid Game**' to the Kenyan market has, however, also elicited concern from parents and caregivers over children emulating some of the scenes in real life settings, either at home or in school.

As the statutory agency mandated by statute to regulate film and broadcast content with a view to protecting children from exposure to inappropriate content, the KFCB has resolved to issue an advisory to parents, guardians and care-givers on the Squid Game as follows:

1. Squid Game is rated 18 and is intended for mature audiences. Despite the childhood game references in the series, it's not meant for viewing by children.



General
Exhibition



Parental
Guidance
Recommended

Protecting Children from Exposure to Harmful Content



Not suitable for
persons under
16 years



Restricted to
Adult Only

Netflix has self-rated Squid Game 18+ with notes for suicide, violence and sex to advise viewers that are 18 and above that the content could be disturbing.

2. The Board has noted with concern that some of the gory scenes of the series have been copied and pasted onto other online streaming platforms, including YouTube, Instagram and TikTok. This development has seen content that is protected on the Netflix platform on account of its unsuitability to children and other vulnerable groups now become readily available online without any of the parental control safeguards that have been applied to the content on the Netflix's platform. This is regrettable as it is also a contravention of the intellectual property rights of the owners of the content.
3. As a result, the risk of children now imitating or re-enacting scenes in the game from the series has become real. While seemingly innocent, this may lead to escalation of violence and other vices as depicted in the series, causing grave harm to the children, including death. As you may be aware, research has shown that film and media content influence behaviour and the thinking of consumers, especially children, who are most impressionable.

It will be recalled that in 2021, a Kenyan youth is reported to have confessed as having murdered his parents and siblings on account of the influence of a film titled *Killing Eve*. Further, in 2017, another popular challenge game dubbed *Blue Whale*, allegedly led to suicide among teenagers in various parts of the world including Kenya.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. On the basis of the afore-cited cases, the Board is extremely concerned that scenes from the '***Squid Game***' series, that have been copied and subsequently posted on social media platforms like ***YouTube, TikTok & Instagram*** could easily be accessed by children and other vulnerable groups. In addition, recreations of depicted scenes as well as illustrations on how to play the game and succeed remains worrying. Going by the ease of accessibility and popularity of the game as depicted in the series, the Board would like to

categorically state that both Netflix and KFCB are of the view that this series is restricted to viewing by adults or viewers of 18 years and above only.

The Board takes this opportunity to advise parents, caregivers and guardians to be more vigilant and monitor the content their children are consuming on media platforms and guide them appropriately. This is particularly important, as we approach the December holidays, when children are likely to have unlimited access to media channels. Indeed, protecting children against exposure to inappropriate film and broadcast content is a collective responsibility. Unlike the free to air television channels, this series is exhibited on a pay to view platform and can readily be accessed through smartphone and other handheld devices. It is, therefore, the responsibility of parents, guardians and caregivers to ensure that children under their care are not exposed to age inappropriate content. If parents give their children access to smartphones and online streaming platforms such as Netflix, they must take deliberate steps to monitor what their young ones, especially minors, are consuming in order to guide them accordingly and make use of the wide parental controls offered on the service.

For those who have followed the Squid Game series, they will agree that the series depicts a scenario of quick fixes through unorthodox methods to getting rich. Children and vulnerable groups could easily be influenced into illegal activities. Therefore, parents must educate their children that there are no shortcuts in life and that hard work pays.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In light of foregoing concerns, the Board has engaged *Netflix*, and agreed on the following:

1. That '*Squid Game*' is appropriately rated as adult content. Since adults can choose what to watch, KFCB and Netflix will roll out a joint sensitisation programme to educate parents, guardians, teachers and care-givers on the available safeguards on the Netflix platform. The sensitisation is meant to empower parents, teachers, guardians and care-givers with information on the

available parental control tools on Netflix to safeguard children from accessing age-inappropriate content online, including the game in question. As a first point of reference, Netflix has developed educational materials that will guide members of the public on how to use parental controls on the service. KFCB will share these materials on our communications channels where the public can access them.

2. Netflix will work with the Board to ensure that all of its content available in Kenya will be in conformity with KFCB's classification for age suitability and other provisions of the law.
3. The Board and Netflix will constitute a joint team to deliberate on the mechanisms of fast-tracking the platform's application of the local classification system on Netflix's programming that is accessible within the Kenyan territory.
4. The Board has written to **Google** requesting them to ensure that sections and scenes of the '*Squid Game*' that have been recreated, distributed and exhibited on *YouTube* are pulled down or made inaccessible to help in ensuring that the content is restricted to adults.

It is important to note that in collaboration with other public and private sector agencies, the Board will continue empowering parents and caregivers with the requisite skills and knowledge to monitor content children are consuming online through the *Digital Parenting* and *Child Online Protection* programme. In this regard, the Board will work closely with Netflix and other platforms to support parents in safeguarding the interests of children and minors online.

We also wish to call on teachers and the religious community in the country to join hands with KFCB in sensitising children, parents and caregivers on the importance of ensuring that children consume clean and appropriate content. This is important in safeguarding children from harm.

Lastly the Board is open to collaborations with content exhibitors to ensure that content exhibited on their platforms is examined and classified before exhibition to the public. The essence of content examination and classification is to ensure that programming conforms to our culture, moral values and national aspirations as well as protecting children from exposure to harmful/adult content.

I thank you for your attention.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'C' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Christopher Wambua
Ag. CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER