

EVALUATION REPORT 2023

# Executive summary

## Film Industries

Making an impact with film:  
Strengthening local film industries

## Background

In many countries of the Global South, the film sector often faces challenges in realizing its full economic potential and meaningful impact on shaping public opinion. Access to adequate financing for film projects and a shortage of well-trained professionals for production, distribution and management are key hindrances. Consequently, there is a limited number of commercially successful films and series that address socially relevant topics in these countries. Film's potential as a powerful medium for promoting democracy and freedom of expression remains underutilized.

The DW Akademie's BMZ-financed film industries program covered 13 different projects implemented from January 2021 to April 2023, across ten countries. The anticipated outcome of the film industry program was formulated as follows: "The film sector in selected countries in the Global South is structurally strengthened and contributes to opinion formation through socially relevant productions".

This outcome is expected to contribute to the following overall objective: Productions are being completed with socially relevant topics for local, regional and in-

ternational markets, making an impact on national and international debates.

To achieve the above, the following three project lines (on the output level) were pursued:

1. producing internationally competitive films
2. the film industry is strengthened structurally and sustainably
3. access to qualifications and networking for filmmakers

The program has a strong regional focus in Africa, with implementing partners in South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania, Uganda and Nigeria. Other countries targeted include Uzbekistan, Lebanon and Colombia with a regional focus on Latin America. Supported projects include Generation Africa (GA), Film Development Fund, Country Queen, Digital Film School, Ladima Film Academy, DOCCO Labs, Durban Film Mart Institute (DFMI), Coping with Trauma through Film, Lebanon Series Lab, Addis Abeba Animated - Animation Training Ethiopia, South-South Exchange (S2S), Creative Central, and the Uzbekistan country study.

This evaluation took place between November 2022 and April 2023 to provide actionable information on the performance, impact and lessons learned of the film industry program and to serve as a needs assessment for subsequent proposals for the program. The methodology followed the principles of the OECD/DAC criteria, which includes assessing relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability. The evaluation was conducted through desk research, online interviews with representatives of all 13 sub-projects and an in-person field visit with key informant interviews to South Africa.

## Project evaluation results

**Relevance:** Overall, the program fills a clear need in terms of financial support and capacity building for film industry professionals, since there are few funding and educational opportunities in the film industry, especially on the African continent. The program contributed to increased visibility internationally for the supported film projects, garnering considerable attention for African stories by African filmmakers in particular. In addition, in the areas of impact production, edutainment and specific training offerings, DW Akademie entered a niche in terms of development needs. Gender equality, as well as the inclusion of minority communities, is emphasized and accommodated across the different projects in the film industry program.

In terms of existing organization-wide interventions, the film industry program is a new endeavor for DW Akademie and therefore demands a different approach to funding and implementation, which has been an ongoing learning process. In conclusion, the program's relevance was summarized as "comprehensively fulfilled."

**Coherence:** This was a pilot project for DW Akademie, with the goal of working across different continents and with a focus on internal coherence within the program—rather than external coherence among related stakeholder fields in the respective countries. There was coherence between project activities within the program, although it was not always fully utilized. The implementing partners collaborated broadly with other organi-

zations, and for many of the projects, a collective of groups was involved. Project activities were in line with the implementing partners' existing activities. For partners inexperienced in conducting digital training, additional capacity building in this field was very beneficial. Coherence could be increased through better facilitation of synergies between projects and improved communication between teams in areas that can be developed at a broader scale. Examples include edutainment strategies, script writing and production processes, as well as impact screenings. Coherence across the film industry program was therefore assessed as "overall fulfilled."

**Effectivity:** In general, from a quantifiable perspective on the assessment of the program, the intervention was very successful. In particular, the capacity building of filmmakers and producers was very successful, as was supporting production efforts. To assess the results of the project's higher-level impact, more qualitative assessments would need to be added to the indicator table, including more specific indicators related to the increased capacity of trainees and audience reports from screening events in terms of reach and awareness. Taking the expected outputs into consideration, the effectiveness was rated as "comprehensively fulfilled."

**Efficiency:** The film industry program scores very well in terms of where it has put its funding and the impact it achieved. Although there is room for improvement, the longer-term and larger-budget projects overall performed very well. Some smaller projects should not be overlooked however, since they have a multiplier effect (such as the South-South exchange) or because they fill a particular niche (such as the animation training in Ethiopia or script writing and pitch training in Lebanon). An area in which DW Akademie can significantly increase its efficiency lies in the funding structure in relation to its implementing partners and how this structure affects project implementation. Overall, the short-term grants were followed by insecurity on the part of the implementing partners, not knowing whether the project would be continued and thus when they could continue with follow-up activities. The efficiency of the film industry program as a whole was therefore assessed as "partially fulfilled."

**Impact:** Apart from a couple of critical aspects pointed out in the evaluation, the program made a significant contribution in terms of reaching the program's objective of strengthening film industries in the Global South, raising local voices and increasing visibility. In most of the interventions, the outputs and successes would not have been possible without the support of DW Akademie. In terms of opinion forming through socially relevant productions and contributing to national and international debates, the anecdotal evidence is there, but not across the board for the full film industry program. For this level of impact to take place, more time and targeted efforts are necessary. This could be accomplished by investing in full project cycle support and in impact-focused projects for instance, including supporting impact campaigns similar to STEPS's community screenings and facilitation guides. The impact of the program was rated as "overall fulfilled."

**Sustainability:** In general, the products and capacity development measures supported will remain relevant and applicable after the grant ends. Even in cases where the project ended, the curriculum that was developed is still in use. The Digital Film School has continued with a test training among students after the end of the project end, and Ladima has continued working on the curriculum. Making content available under creative commons and creating open-source tools accessible and adaptable for others as well as self-study could be considered where applicable. Several of the implementing partners have expressed a desire to strategize their own business plans and in-

come streams alternative to donor funding, such as STEPS and DFMI, to increase their organizational sustainability. Business model development is something DW Akademie could thus invest in more as part of future programming with its implementing partners.

To enhance the sustainability of the products developed and of future outputs, more synergies between projects and activities could be created and facilitated by DW Akademie. An existing example of this type of synergy is in the South-South exchange, where films produced as part of Generation Africa are presented at community screenings in Colombia, guided by impact facilitation. This way a very small activity (S2S) contributes to a multiplier effect, supporting other projects (GA and DOCCO). In summary, the sustainability was rated as "overall fulfilled."

## Selected recommendations

- **Good monitoring & evaluation practices:** Steps toward improving M&E practice should be taken by: one, structuring and training the DW Akademie team in archiving, monitoring and evaluating their projects according to a single system; two, training partner organizations in reporting on their activities as part of a set timeline following a reporting timeline and within a standardized M&E template; three, working from one clear program-wide theory of change or logical framework, reflected in each project's M&E framework.
- **Standardize selection processes and onboarding of implementing partners:** For both new and existing partnerships, conduct an organizational check to determine their all-round capacity in project implementation and grants management.
- **Administrative relief for implementing partners:** Standardize a required budget line for sufficient admin personnel with the partner organization if this is not already in place. Alternatively, and better yet, would be to relieve the administrative burden of detailed financial reporting for smaller expenses and to slow the frequency of reporting and project proposals.

- Supporting entire project life cycle and allowing for long term planning & contracting: As part of the program planning process, consider the entire project cycle life. In terms of sustainability, it might make more sense to focus on a smaller number of projects, with higher or longer-term investments. With established partners and projects, moving to a 3-year implementation plan and budget cycle is recommended.
- Consider supporting impact production and impact campaigns: Impact production is not the same as film production. Having an impact producer on board from the very beginning of a film project means having an extra set of eyes focused on the result and creating audience-centered strategies for impact throughout the different stages

of the film project. While impact training is happening, awareness is increasing, as are the development of impact campaigns. What is lacking is the financial means to implement those campaigns. This could be a niche DW Akademie can enter through its already established partners.

## DW Akademie

is Deutsche Welle's center for international media development, journalism training and knowledge transfer. Our projects strengthen the human right to freedom of expression and unhindered access to information. DW Akademie empowers people worldwide to make independent decisions based on reliable facts and constructive dialogue.

DW Akademie is a strategic partner of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development. We also receive funding from the Federal Foreign Office and the European Union and are active in more than 70 developing countries and emerging economies.

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*The objective of the external evaluation is to provide a constructive assessment of the project results. It does not necessarily align with the perspective and planning of DW Akademie. Nevertheless, all findings were discussed in order to allow lessons learned to be incorporated into the development of future strategies.*