

Cultivating Safe Spaces and Creative Capacities for Women's Entrepreneurship



„Culture builds bridges between groups and peoples, it creates peace, and it is a significant economic player. [...] In short, culture is what people create. It is the matrix of people and of humanity, and globally the most powerful engine of change and integration.“¹

Whether music from Senegal, South African animated films or design from Jordan – the work and products of creatives are economic factors, **drivers of innovation** and **a voice for important social issues such as women's rights**, social injustice, discrimination and climate change. Social change and innovation are unthinkable without creativity. This is precisely why promoting the cultural and creative industries (CCIs) represents a good practice in the implementation of a feminist development policy – we will show you how it is done in the Global Project Cultural and Creative Industries.

Let's dive in!

Our approach to promote gender equality centres around **the creation of safe spaces** and targeted **capacity development initiatives** tailored specifically for women creatives. We recognise the critical need for environments that foster inclusivity, empowerment, and skill enhancement within often male-dominated sectors. Through our 3-step approach, we aim to establish safe spaces that provide an environment for women to explore their creative potential, cultivate leadership skills and receive tailored training in cultural and creative entrepreneurship. These safe spaces are designed not only to facilitate economic empowerment but also to serve as hubs for fostering network building, knowledge-sharing, and advocacy for gender equality.

- **Step 1** involves building capacities within our team, prioritising the cultivation of a feminist reflex.
- **Step 2** entails conducting gender analyses and formulating activities based on identified needs.
- **Step 3** signifies the pivotal stage of implementing gender-responsive measures, which are underpinned by our thorough internal groundwork.

Throughout this submission, we will delve into tangible examples, such as the establishment of Senegal's first women-only music academy or the FemLab, a safe space for women and LGBTQI+ creatives.

The aim of BMZ's feminist development policy is to eliminate the structural and systemic causes of inequality. To achieve this, it is necessary to deconstruct power structures and dismantle gender roles. "Feminist development policy promotes an environment in which women and marginalised persons advocate for the transformation of society as Agents of Change."² All right! To find agents of change it is worth taking a look at the **Cultural and Creative Industries**.

1. **Women Creatives are Global Role Models and Agents of Change!** Creatives often address the need for social change in their art. They raise awareness for inequalities, the rights of women and members of the LGBTQI+ community, democratic values, the overcoming of colonial continuities, or the fight against climate change. They demand and initiate social change (#metoo) and promote inter-cultural dialogue. Individuals in the CCIs can achieve great visibility and reach. Women or people from marginalised groups who are in the public eye thanks to their art offer tangible role models and can motivate others to become activists for change as well.
2. **Almost half of employees in the CCIs are women.** In terms of the percentage of women employed, the sector globally ranks fourth.³ In contrast to other sectors with a high share of women employment (health, social work and education), CCIs have a high start-up dynamic – ideal for women's entrepreneurship.

¹ EU-LAC Foundation, Grätz, R: [Culture as an Instrument of Social Transformation](#)

² BMZ Feminist Development Policy

³ UNESCO (2022): Reshaping policies for Creativity, S. 256

Although an unusually high number of women are employed in the CCIs, they suffer from poor working conditions (low wages, no social security, restricted access to financing, weak compliance with intellectual property rights, low representation in leadership positions).



This is where the **Global Project Cultural and Creative Industries** comes in. The **GGI** project aims at improving the income and employment prospects of creative professionals, especially women in five countries: Kenya, Senegal, South Africa, Jordan, Lebanon and Iraq. The GIZ and the Goethe-Institut are jointly implementing this project on behalf of the BMZ with the expertise of local partner organisations in the fields of design, music, fashion, and animation/gaming. So how are we promoting gender equality?

Step 1: Building Capacities in the Project Team

As stated in the BMZ feminist development policy, internal work needs to be done.⁴ To this end, our aim was the cultivation of a feminist reflex.

Build Capacities and Ownership

- In an internal workshop, we discussed the BMZ and GIZ gender strategies and their implications for the project. As a result, gender equality became a stronger focus.
- We provided a platform for exchange, feedback and questions in a designated gender teams channel. Furthermore, we scheduled exchanges with the team on a regular basis.
- We conducted an internal survey to identify needs in the team. We identified a need for guidance on how to mainstream gender in the project and consult with partner organisations.

Mainstream Gender

- We developed procurement guidelines to ensure gender equality in the procurement process.
- Furthermore, we developed a guide for the assessment of gender responsive and transformative approaches in organisations in the CCI. It serves as an aid to explore potential areas of capacity building activities regarding the promotion of gender equality at an institutional level.

Learnings

- ✓ Consider a tandem/working group instead of one gender focal point. Connect with gender focal points in partner countries.
- ✓ The AIZ course on gender for gender focal points is very helpful.
- ✓ The quality of the guidelines was positively influenced by an initial exchange between GIZ and partner organisations to create a common understanding.

Step 2: Identifying Industry Needs

Conduct a Gender Analysis

- The project conducted two studies on gender. The first took place in the pilot phase back in 2017, while the second was conducted in 2022. The analysis had a strong focus on music, fashion, animation and design, which are the project's main areas of work. The study was carried out jointly by an international consultant and three experts from the region.

⁴"A feminist development policy is only credible and workable if it is accompanied by a continuous learning, growth and adjustment process in relation to internal structures, processes and working methods."

Create an Action Plan

- Based on the gender study findings, we defined steps to address the most pressing issues, namely: (1) Social expectations prevent women from accessing public spaces; women and men often work in “gender-typical” professions and are discouraged by their social environment; (2) discriminatory recruitment practices and gender pay gap; (3) a prevailing culture of homophily/boys’ club.
- We discussed the action steps with the project team and with partner organisations.

Verify Findings and Implement Action Plan

- To verify the gender study findings, we organised two regional workshops with partner organisations. It helped to generate a common understanding of promoting gender equality. In those workshops partners had the chance to provide feedback on the study findings and communicate their needs.
- The country teams started the implementation together with partner organisations.

Learnings

- ✓ The partner organisations were devoted to advancing women's economic empowerment. It is vital to collaborate with partner organisations who can take ownership and track changes in the future.
- ✓ Regional exchange between industry organisations was helpful and inspiring.
- ✓ Creating safe spaces was identified as a first step moving forward.

Step 3: Implementing Gender Responsive Project Activities

In the following, we would like to share good practices of our gender responsive project activities.

FemLab - Fueling Inclusivity in Nairobi's Creative Scene

In Kenya, women as well as the LGBTQI+ community face ongoing difficulties in locating easily accessible venues in which they can unleash their creativity, refine their skills, and convey their ideas. The scarcity of prospects impedes not only the development of artistic talent but also the dissemination of knowledge and inspiration. FemLab is tackling this problem head on by offering creatives a place to realise their artistic endeavours. Initiated and managed by the project partner Goethe-Institut, the FemLab creates a safe space for female and LGBTQI+ creatives to learn, grow, work, collaborate, exhibit and connect. Although the FemLab only provides basic infrastructure, from tables and chairs to water, projectors and speakers, it is a versatile space that can be seamlessly transformed to host trainings, workshops, co-working projects, art exhibitions and events. Hiring venues for events and exhibitions often takes up a significant portion of creatives’ budgets, making it difficult if not impossible to realise these. Yet, public exposure is crucial for creatives to promote their work to audiences and clients and thus making money. Limited access to affordable spaces is a struggle that also results in diverse voices not being heard and art not being seen. For this reason, the FemLab invites creative professionals to host events that align with its transformative vision. Artists who are planning film screenings, exhibitions, small concerts or other events are all eligible to use the underground stage, free of charge, thus enhancing the creative output of Nairobi’s artistic community.



Supporting the Establishment of Senegal's first Women-only Music Academy



Despite women’s historical influence in Senegal’s socio-economic and cultural development, they remain underrepresented in the country’s cultural sector, particularly in music. Limited access to education, training, and economic resources are among the factors that have hindered women’s involvement. However, the Jigeen Ni Academie Musique (JAM) is a project dedicated to the professional development of women. Along with practical music skills, JAM provides training in leadership and cultural entrepreneurship to enhance income and employment opportunities for women in the music industry. The all-female academy was set up in collaboration

with the National School of Arts, the first state-recognised public art school in Senegal. In 2022, a group of 15 female musicians were trained to become trainers. Involving the famous all-female Jigeen Ni Music Orchestra as teachers boosted morale and gave students role models to look up to. Today, the academy offers training in music practice, leadership and cultural entrepreneurship to 25 female students each year.

Hosting Legal Consultations for Female Creatives in Kenya



In Kenya's thriving creative industries, securing rights and incomes rely upon a robust understanding of intellectual property (IP) and copyright laws. However, for many artists and creatives, navigating IP protections has been a challenge. Without access to legal information tailored for their needs, many have faced barriers to fully benefiting from their work. Women face additional barriers in the CCIs, such as gender biases, the lack of female mentors and role models, limited networking opportunities for women and the challenges of balancing career and family life. With this in mind, the Kenya Copyright Board (KECOBO) and the project initiated an activity to improve the understanding of intellectual property and copyright among women creatives. Representatives from KECOBO and entertainment lawyers teamed up with Nairobi's FemLab to provide tailored support for women in the creative sector.

Open dialogue sessions covered topics ranging from benefits of copyright registration to collective management of copyright. To ensure that creatives take immediate action to secure their rights, KECOBO supported them with free on-the-spot copyright registration and re-registration services. The entertainment lawyers, in turn, offered one-on-one consultations to discuss workable solutions for creatives' individual legal issues. The aim was to sensitise creatives on how to use the National Rights Registry to register their copyright and provide women creatives and marginalised groups with an open and safe space to learn and ask as questions. During the course of the outreach, a total of 1,263 copyright registrations were reported by KECOBO.

Championing Entrepreneurial Women in the Textile Industry

Though women make up the backbone of fashion industry, their representation in leadership roles is low. Those who succeeded in founding their own fashion business face presently volatile markets, caused by ongoing political crises. Rising inflation, disrupted supply chains, and reduced purchasing power create an overall challenging business environment for the women entrepreneurs. The digital gender gap creates further disadvantages as access to digital knowledge and tools is scarce. The International Trade Centre (ITC) and the project teamed up to create a more supportive ecosystem for women entrepreneurs in fashion. As part of the Cultural and Creative Industries project, they designed the ITC SheTrades Accelerator programme following a holistic, two-pronged approach. The programme increases the competitiveness of women-led businesses (WLBs) in the textile industry and trains local business support organisations (BSOs) to establish a lasting support structure for entrepreneurial women. The impact of the SheTrades Accelerator programme spans across six countries with almost 500 women-led businesses trained and over 300 new jobs created, mostly for women.



Upcoming Activity: Safe Space Conversation Circles

Sometimes it can be very hard for partner organisations to change their internal structures towards supporting gender equality. The project therefore will assist five partner organisations to host Safe Space Conversation Circles. The aim of the Safe Space Conversation Circles is to create liberating spaces for individuals to nurture their growing sense of gender responsiveness in community with others. The activity focusses on creating gender awareness as it relates to individual 'lived' experiences by the participants, in this case, the organisation's staff. Creating a co-creative space, which brings meaningful attention to gender empowerment, prepares the staff to think about gender empowerment within the organisation and/or externally.