

DIVERSITY IN THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

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From Research to Action: using international cooperation to drive gender equality.

Report from the online panel discussion held on 24 October 2024

*The event was part of the **Creative Economy Alliance** and was hosted by the global project Cultural and Creative Industries (implemented by GIZ and the Goethe-Institut on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development) and World Bank's Solutions for Youth Employment Project. You can access the recording [here](#).*

Introductions from **Namita Datta**, Program Manager Solutions for Youth Employment (**S4YE**) at World Bank and **Friederike Kärcher**, head of the Division: Policy issues of cooperation with Africa in the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (**BMZ**), set the scene, before a keynote address from **Caroline Munier**, **UNESCO** Programme Specialist, Entity of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

These notes are extracted from a hard-hitting, honest conversation between five changemakers: a practitioner, **Wanuri Kahiu**, a filmmaker and storyteller; an intermediary, **Magdalene Reddy**, director of the Durban FilmMart Institute; an academic, **Maria Belén Igarzabal**, director of the Communication and Culture Area at FLACSO - Argentina Headquarters and a policy maker, **Mahmoud Haidar**, Lecturer and Advisory Board Member.

These changemakers agreed that everyone has a part to play to create gender equality in the creative and cultural industries. It is not up to policy makers, politicians, practitioners or the public alone – each group has different levers to pull – and all are needed.

These themes emerged:

The power of policy: policy makers have a responsibility to understand the issues that are surfaced through artists, activities and researchers – and translate these into clear policies. Then monitor the way these policies are interpreted and put into practice. So many countries have signed the UNESCO S 2005 Convention of Protection and Promotion of Diversity to ensure that there will be this protection within their country. Are we holding our governments accountable to that?

“Policy policymakers need to understand what's happening on the ground – and civil society needs to hold government accountable for the policy they create.”

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The power of persuasion: activist artists speak the uncomfortable truths change society. Without them, gender stereotypes will not change. But this comes at a cost, and artists can burn out, feel alienated and exhausted. Who will create the safe spaces where healing can happen?

“We need to be able to create artists that continue to be resilient, that are able to speak out and are able to move forward despite what the world throws at them”.

A culture of care: Intermediaries and civil society can provide legal, psychosocial and advocacy services to build artists who are resilient and not afraid to speak up. Intermediaries need to protect and empower artists, so that when their rights are infringed, they know how to respond. Peacekeepers have healing retreats, shouldn't artists? Unless emerging gender activists see that there are support systems in place to protect those that have spoken out, their voices may never be raised.

“We need to empower people to ensure that they can create work that will be heard and will be seen.”

Change starts from within: Change needs to be both transversal and horizontal. It starts within organisations making sure that project teams include women, and those women's voices are heard. It is not enough to have a gender diversity department working in isolation – it needs to be embedded through everything we do.

“We all have to work inside our organizations to promote gender equality.”

Sharing local experiences to create global change: to create global change, we need to start with local realities, and local contexts. Are the needs of a woman performing artist in Africa and an Argentinian artist the same? A 70-year-old and a 25-year-old? Are the spaces they walk through the same? How do we balance local and global needs to create a unified push for gender equality? One thing is clear, we need to learn from the innovation stories of others – which is why shared case studies and reports are so valuable.

“We really need to work together to promote joint projects, scholarships, financing, networking with other organizations with the state, with the government, with the civil society, with the university.”

“I'd like to see more bold thinking, how we can get into the political arena and be in leadership roles and change matters.”

Every part of the network has a vital part to play, without each part, change will not happen. Artist activists need to know safe spaces exist to have the courage to hold difficult conversations. Citizens need to hold governments accountable to make sure polities are enacted, and policy makers need to be responsible to the citizens they serve.