



CULTURE MOVES AFRICA

Case study: **MOROCCO**



DECONFINING
Arts, Culture & Policies
in Europe & Africa



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Préface

One of the most frequently cited characteristics of intra-African artistic mobility is the virtual absence of structured and stable support from the local private sector. This observation, widely shared by cultural actors across the continent, reveals a paradoxical reality: in a context where public funding remains insufficient and international donors have their own priorities, the African private sector—despite experiencing significant growth in many countries—remains largely absent from the dynamics of supporting artistic creation and circulation.

This absence can be explained in part by the very nature of philanthropic and corporate sponsorship in Africa, which is still too often perceived as one-off and ostentatious, rather than as a long-term investment strategy in the cultural and artistic capital of a society. The local private sector is frequently characterized as politicized and opportunistic. Its contributions are typically made on an ad hoc basis, in response to individual requests, or exploited during election campaigns, without being integrated into a coherent vision or a framework for structural transformation. This stance deprives the cultural sector of a reliable and predictable partner capable of supporting projects over the long term.

However, the potential for structured private engagement is real. When organized, well-conceived, and rooted in a long-term vision, it can contribute not only to the financing of cultural projects but also to the consolidation of artistic ecosystems, the strengthening of mobility networks, and the legitimization of culture as a viable investment sector in its own right.

The case of Morocco, as documented in this study, offers a compelling example that illustrates the path toward such a contribution. What distinguishes the Moroccan model is, above all, a break from the logic of disorganized, one-off donations. Patrons have chosen to move away from responding to individual requests from artists on a case-by-case basis; instead, they channel their support into a dedicated fund equipped with the skills, tools, and legitimacy necessary to act effectively and generate meaningful impact.

This evolution reflects a growing maturity in the approach to cultural sponsorship. Rather than dispersing limited resources in response to ad hoc requests, private funders are choosing to partner with specialized organizations capable of defining strategic priorities, assessing the sector's needs, and implementing appropriate support mechanisms. In doing so, they do not abandon their role as funders, but rather exercise it more intelligently—delegating operational management to experts while retaining influence over broader policy.

The restructuring highlighted in this study is not limited to the issue of funding alone. When funding is regular and predictable, it enables the deployment of sustainable strategies that are anchored in the long term and capable of producing a tangible impact. Beyond the financial dimension, however, it is the very nature of the relationship between the private sector and the cultural sector that is transforming: from a dynamic of dependence and uncertainty, the paradigm is shifting toward a partnership based on trust, reciprocity, and a shared vision of cultural development.

Ouafa Belgacem
CEO Culture Funding Watch

Culture Funding Watch (CFW) is a sustainable resource mobilization platform dedicated to creators from the Global South. Its mission is to support art and culture practitioners and professionals in accessing resources, while working for sustainable, transparent, and intelligent financing of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs).

CFW strengthens the capacities of CCIs through three pillars: access, knowledge, and community. By facilitating access to information, data, and resources, strengthening skills, and conducting research and advocacy activities on culture financing, CFW plays a strategic mediating role. The organization thus ensures the promotion of the sector and connects artists, policymakers, as well as cultural managers and entrepreneurs to the resources necessary to increase their impact and ensure their growth.

<https://culturefundingwatch.com>

DECONFINING is a four-year EU-funded project, bringing together cultural practitioners, artists, policymakers, and audiences from two continents – Europe and Africa. Dedicated to contributing to a better understanding of modes of confinement (social, political, and economic) from different points of view, the project aims to explore and develop new forms of intercontinental artistic and cultural cooperation (and in terms of cultural policies), as well as to offer better access and information for intercontinental mobility and co-creation.<http://deconfining.eu>

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1. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

A strategic issue for the cultural development of the continent

The mobility of artists plays a strategic role in the structuring and development of African cultural ecosystems. As emphasized in the African Cultural Renaissance Charter, adopted by the African Union in 2006, mobility is the foundation of continental integration:

“Cultural cooperation among Member States shall be based on the free movement of cultural actors and the exchange of cultural goods and services, in order to strengthen mutual understanding, fraternity, and continental integration.” (Article 27 of the preamble)

Beyond the simple physical movement from one point to another, mobility represents a structuring process that encompasses artistic exchanges, participation in cultural events, professional training, networking, international visibility, and openness to new markets.

The landscape of funding for artistic mobility in Africa

Funding for artistic mobility in Africa is currently fragmented, dominated by international donors, and characterized by a near absence of structured local mechanisms. The primary funding actors are foreign cultural institutions (such as the Institut Français, Goethe-Institut, British Council, and Pro Helvetia), international foundations, and multilateral cooperation agencies. Although these entities provide significant support to many African countries, they operate according to their own priorities and agendas, which do not always align with the genuine needs of African cultural ecosystems.

The local private sector, despite its rapid growth, remains largely absent from this landscape. When it does engage, its involvement is typically sporadic and disorganized, lacking a strategic vision or long-term commitment. This situation creates a structural dependence on external funding, which undermines the sustainability of cultural initiatives and limits their capacity to contribute to long-term transformational processes.

Morocco’s Strategic Positioning

Within this context, Morocco has carved out a unique position for itself. Blessed with cultural richness and diversity in an environment characterized by the coexistence of local, regional, and continental dynamics, the country aspires to serve as a strategic hub and a model of dynamism for artistic mobility in Africa.

This positioning is distinguished particularly by the active mobilization of public, independent, and private actors. It is precisely the action of these private actors in favor of intra-African artistic mobility that has been identified as a model for the rest of the continent.

Recognizing that mobility support mechanisms play a structural role—both in facilitating access to the resources necessary for travel and in supporting artistic and cultural projects throughout their various phases—the Africa Art Lines fund was established. Supported by the Moroccan association Afrikayna, this fund is born in 2016.

This publication aims to go beyond merely recounting a successful experience; it seeks to serve as a powerful advocacy tool. By documenting the Africa Art Lines model, it provides cultural actors, public decision-makers, and private funders across the continent with concrete arguments and operational frameworks for rethinking how artistic mobility is supported.

2. AFRICA ART LINES: MOBILITY, CULTURE, AND CO-DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Why an artistic mobility fund?

The fund was created based on three fundamental observations:

Firstly, despite the fact that the importance and impact of artistic mobility for the cultural, social, and economic development of a country or region are well established, the structuring of strategic models to promote it and the actual implementation of various mobility support programs remain very limited in Morocco and across the continent.

Secondly, African artists still face major obstacles to mobility, including the high cost of airfare and limited connectivity between sub-regions, lack of resources, and visa issues.

Furthermore, many important cultural events in Africa depend on artists' ability to finance their own mobility, thus limiting their opportunities to actively participate in the African cultural scene.

Thirdly, the scarcity of funding specifically dedicated to intra-African mobility and the lack of local and continental models to support this mobility constitute additional barriers. Africa Art Lines is a direct response to these observations. In order to design the pillars and modalities of the fund, Afrikayna reached out to local and regional artists and cultural operators to draw on their diverse experiences and explore the priority levers to be activated for the promotion of continental artistic interactions.

The fund is now recognized as a benchmark for best practices on a continental scale for two main reasons. On the one hand, its funding model is based exclusively on local Moroccan patronage—a configuration that is still rare in Africa, where support mechanisms for cultural and creative industries remain largely dependent on international funding.

Second, the fund is the operational translation of a strategic desire to correct a structural imbalance in artistic mobility flows by actively promoting intra-African mobility. The results obtained demonstrate that a targeted, coherent mechanism with clear governance can help to rebalance cultural exchanges at the regional level.

«Africa Art Lines was made possible thanks to project partners who share the same vision, recognizing that arts and culture are a key driver of human, social, and economic development in Morocco and elsewhere in Africa, and who are working collectively for a united and intercultural Africa »

2.2 Fund objectives

The Africa Art Lines fund has several complementary strategic objectives:

- Identify and support artists and leaders of intra-African artistic and cultural projects.
- Ensure a greater presence of Moroccan artists on the continent and welcome African artists and projects to Morocco.
- Encourage joint creative projects between Morocco and other countries on the continent.
- Broaden audiences and participate in the development of art markets in Africa.
- Convey, through the arts, the values of diversity and intercultural dialogue.

2.3 Implementation mechanisms

Beyond the financial stability it provides, the fund innovates by combining complementary mechanisms that operate simultaneously on two distinct but interdependent axes.

The **first** axis is that of immediate and individualized support. Through grants awarded through an open call for applications, the fund responds to the concrete and urgent needs of artists: financing a residency, covering travel expenses, supporting participation in a festival or biennial. This open and accessible mechanism makes it possible to reach a wide range of artists and disciplines, while ensuring selection based on artistic and professional criteria.

The **second** focus is on the long-term structuring of mobility networks. Through strategic partnerships with festivals, professional networks, and cultural institutions across the continent, the fund helps to forge and consolidate the links that are lacking in intra-African artistic circulation. These partnerships are not limited to co-financing agreements: they enable the creation of lasting bridges between national artistic ecosystems, promote mutual recognition of artists and works, and gradually build a mobility infrastructure that goes beyond project-based approaches.

It is precisely this dual articulation—between individual support and collective structuring, between the short term and the long term—that makes Africa Art Lines a particularly inspiring model.

The program operates in two ways:

- **Calls for projects** open to all project leaders, following the guidelines set out in each call.
- **Direct partnerships** with Moroccan and continental structures (specific festivals or networks).

Africa Art Lines has thus supported selected projects in partnership with leading African platforms, including:

Table 1 : Africa Art Lines program partners

Partner	Country / Region
Sauti Sa Buzara	Zanzibar (Tanzanie)
Music In Africa	Afrique du Sud
Visa For Music	Maroc
Fondation du Festival sur le Niger	Mali
Maison des Cultures Urbaines	Sénégal
Festival L’Boulevard	Maroc

2.4 Selection criteria

Applications are reviewed by a jury of African professionals who are partners of Africa Art Lines, based on a list of criteria including:

- A complete description of the project, partners, and artists involved.
- The artistic quality of the project submitted.
- The clarity of the objectives and actions of the operators and/or structures.
- The consistency of the schedule and implementation dates.
- The relevance and measurability of the expected results and impacts.

3. AFRICA ART LINES IN FIGURES (2016–2020)

3.1 Key program indicators

Since its creation in 2016, Africa Art Lines has gradually established itself as a structuring mechanism for supporting intra-African artistic mobility. Over the period 2016–2020 (ante COVID), the fund has financed:

Graphic No. 1: Key indicators of the Africa Art Lines program



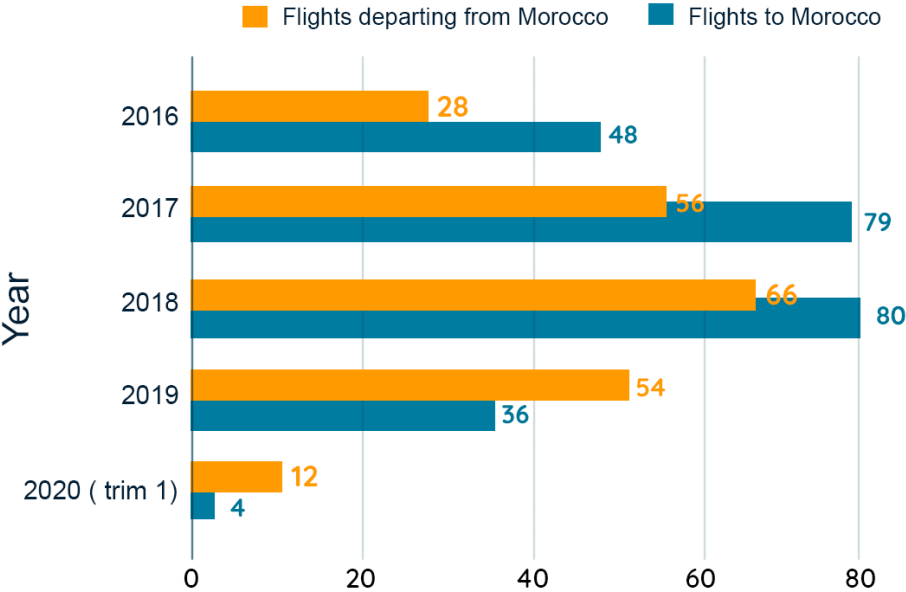
These indicators demonstrate both the program’s growth and its gradual establishment across the continent. They reflect the fund’s ability to respond to growing demand for mobility while continually expanding its geographical scope.

In its early days, the program focused on reducing the imbalance in movement between the continent and Morocco. The Moroccan art scene lacked visibility among platforms, operators, and festivals in Africa, which resulted in an imbalance between the projects hosted in Morocco—which were far greater in number—and Moroccan initiatives on the continent.

In order to restore this balance, a considerable effort was made in the early years to create links, encourage exchanges, and promote the richness of the Moroccan art scene.

This balance was achieved in 2019, after four years of operation. After 2016, the annual budget was doubled to cover 2017, 2018, and 2019, reflecting the growing confidence of the patron in the model.

Graph No. 2: Flights to and from Morocco between 2016 and 2019



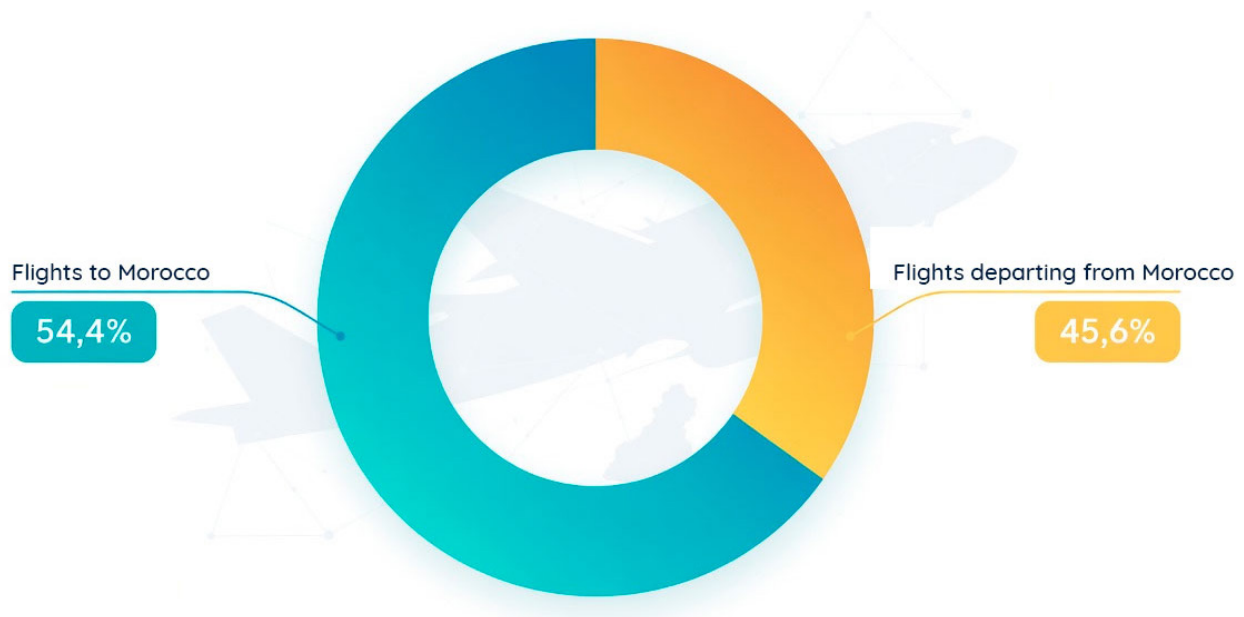
Methodological note : The number of airline tickets issued is not directly correlated with the allocated budget. Indeed, the cost of flights to/from East or Southern Africa can be two to four times higher than those to destinations in North or West Africa. This reality partly explains the concentration of exchanges with some sub-regions.

3.2 Inbound and outbound mobility

Analysis of mobility flows between Morocco and the rest of the African continent over the period 2016–2020 reveals a significant and deliberate shift.

During the first two years, inbound flights to Morocco outnumbered outbound flights, with an average of 69 inbound flights compared to 50 outbound flights. This configuration reflected the fund’s initial positioning, which aimed to make Morocco a privileged destination for African artists and artistic projects.

Graph No. 3: Percentage of flights to and from Morocco between 2016 and 2019



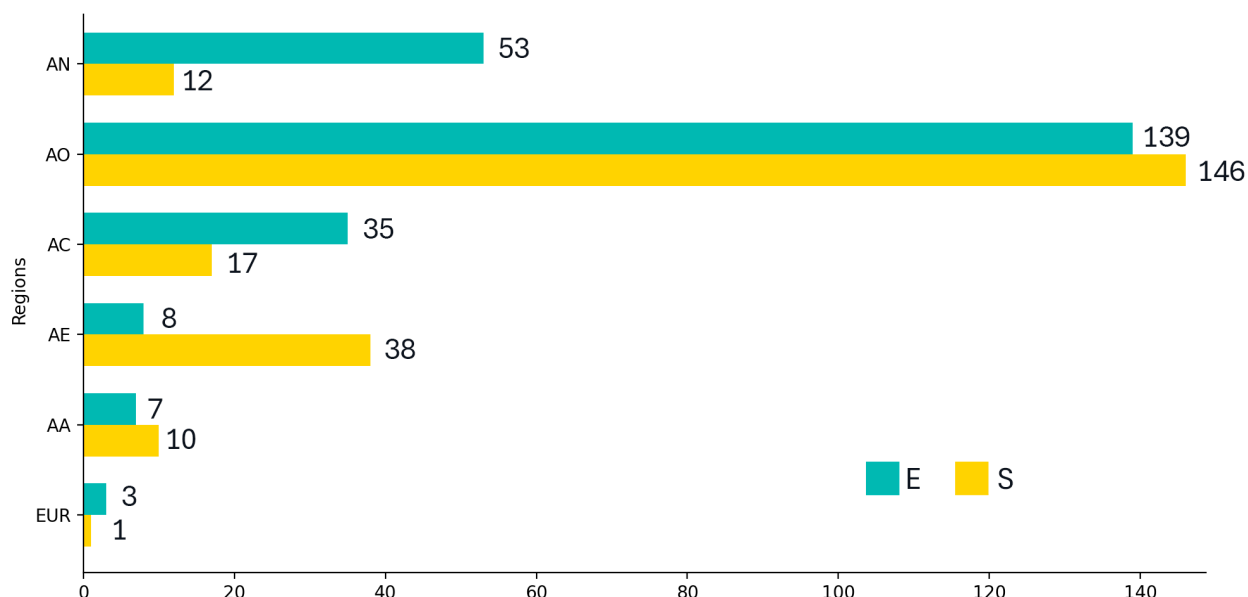
Starting in 2019, this trend reversed significantly: flights departing from Morocco increased significantly, highlighting the greater representation of artists and operators based in Morocco in other African countries.

This development is the direct result of the deliberate rebalancing strategy implemented in the early years of the program and illustrates the fund's ability to adapt its priorities based on observed results.

3.3 Geographic distribution of mobility

An analysis of the geographical distribution of mobility supported by Africa Art Lines between 2016 and 2020 reveals a significant concentration in certain sub-regions, with disparities.

Graph No. 4: Inbound and outbound flights by region between 2016 and 2019



The predominance of West Africa can be explained by several converging factors: geographical and cultural proximity to Morocco, the density of artistic networks and festivals in this sub-region, the common language (French) facilitating exchanges, and the existence of solid partnerships with leading West African platforms.

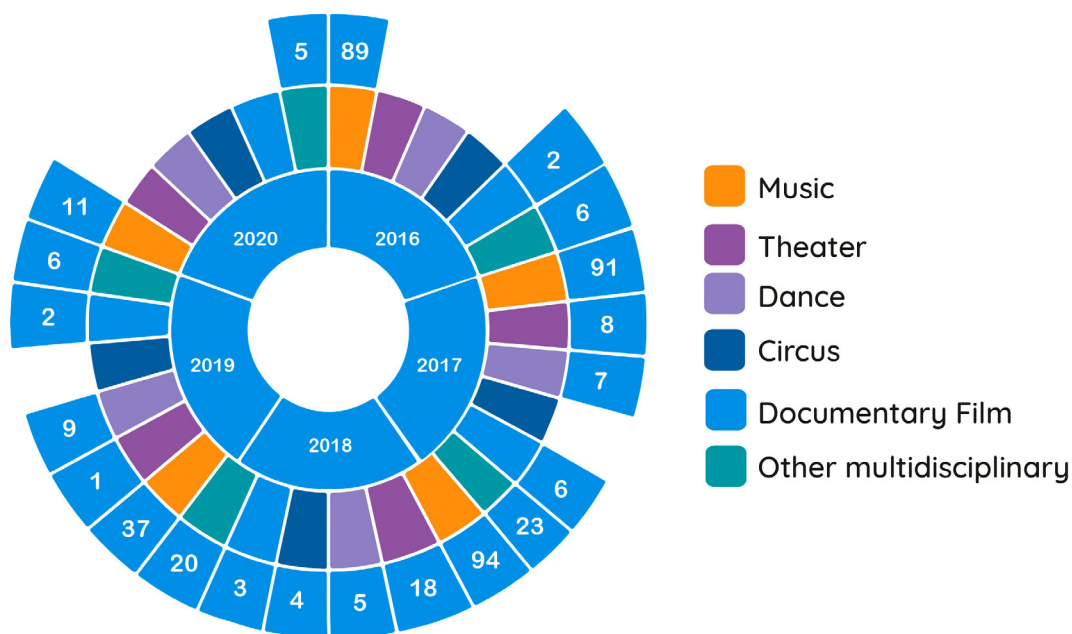
The under-representation of East and Southern Africa reflects the constraints associated with high flight costs and the lack of structured partnerships in these sub-regions—a limitation that the fund will need to address in its next phases of development.

3.4 Distribution of mobility by artistic discipline

Analysis of the distribution of mobility by artistic discipline highlights a gradual shift towards diversification in the forms of expression supported.

The program began in 2016 with an exclusive focus on the music sector, before gradually opening up to the performing arts (theater, dance), visual arts, and multidisciplinary disciplines. Despite this opening up, music remained at the top of the list of grant applications and partnerships throughout the period: 290 flights out of 450, or 64% of the total.

Graph No. 5: Distribution of mobility by artistic discipline



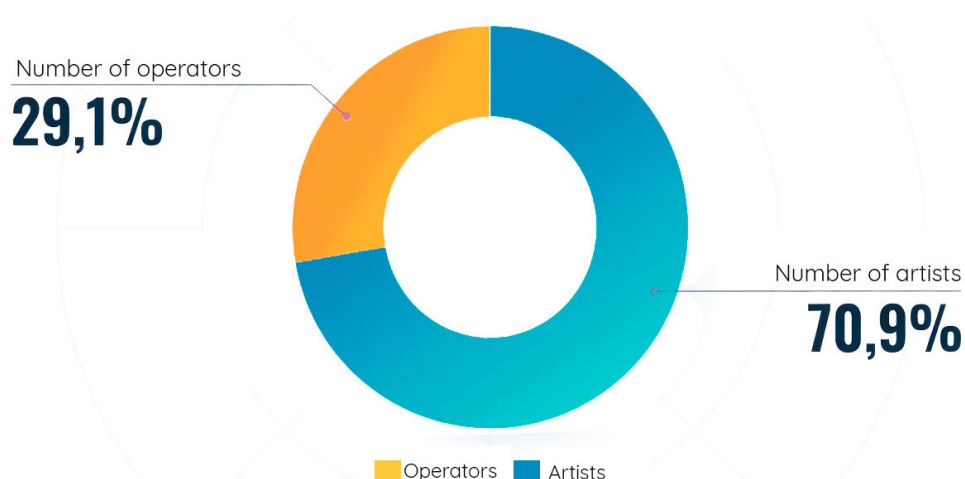
This predominance can be explained by the more advanced structure of African music networks, the density of music festivals on the continent, and the strong demand expressed by musicians when the fund was designed.

It also highlights the considerable development potential that exists for other disciplines, particularly the visual arts and cinema, which are still underrepresented in the program.

3.5 Types of beneficiaries

The direct beneficiaries of Africa Art Lines are artists and cultural operators (programmers, producers, project leaders). Over the entire 2016–2020 period, the breakdown between these two categories is as follows:

Graph No. 6: Breakdown of beneficiaries

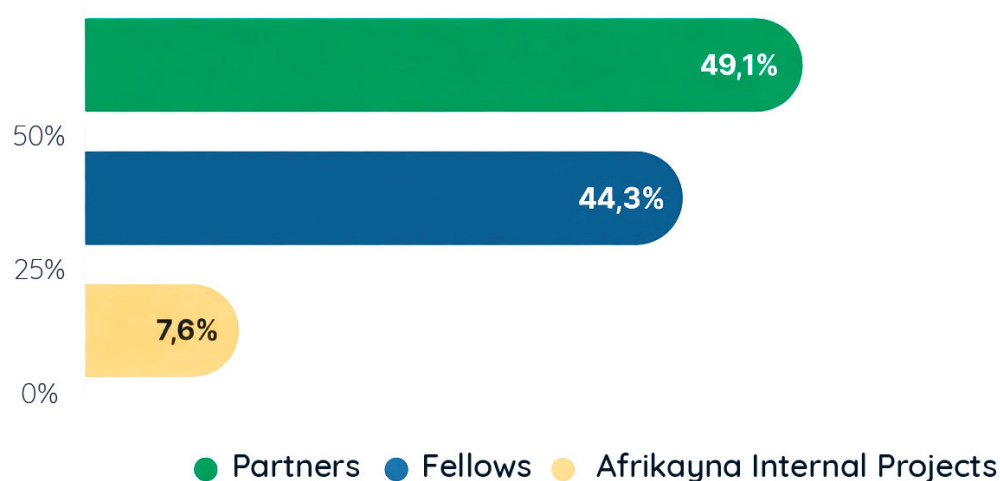


This breakdown reflects the fund’s primary purpose, which is to directly support artists in their mobility. However, the significant share allocated to cultural operators (30%) demonstrates the fund’s recognition of the importance of cultural professionals—programmers, producers, managers—in structuring artistic ecosystems and creating conditions conducive to artist mobility.

3.6 Indicators by type of program

The agreements established between beneficiaries and Afrikayna fall into three main categories, in addition to the organization’s internal projects.

Graph No. 7: Breakdown of flights by beneficiary category



The slight predominance of direct partnerships (215 flights) over individual grants (198 flights) reflects the importance the fund attaches to network building, beyond individual support for artists.

It also illustrates the evolution of the program: while the first two years were marked by intensive communication to increase the number of applications for project calls, the trend gradually rebalanced from 2018 onwards, with an increase in calls for applications.

4. TESTIMONIALS

“I recently returned from Burkina Faso, a country I first visited in 2018 thanks to the Afrikayna mobility fund. We brought together cultural actors and festival organizers to explore ways to revitalize funding in Africa and address other mobility-related

challenges across the continent. We are truly counting on the revival of the Africa Art Lines fund! It would come at exactly the right time—artists need it!”

Ahlam Morsli,

Col’Jam Association — Dance; Co-founder of the Rencontres Chorégraphiques de Casablanca Festival

“I received the AAL grant for a theater tour in Senegal, organized in collaboration with the Kadu Yarakh association. This incredible experience allowed me to better understand Senegal’s social realities and discover new approaches to touring. Our journey took us from Dakar to Casamance, providing us with the opportunity to lead numerous forum theater workshops.”

Hosni Mokhlis,

Actor and Co-founder of the GORARA Théâtre Social association

“Thanks to AAL, we were able to host Azza Ezza, a renowned Egyptian artist, alongside Ahmad Borham, an architect and urban planning researcher. Together, they are the driving forces behind the innovative ‘Memories of the Cities’ project. The goal was to forge connections among artists from Cairo, Casablanca, and other major cities in the region, focusing on the theme of urban gentrification. This ambitious project could never have come to fruition without the support of the AAL Mobility Fund.”

Sabrina Kamili,

Cultural Activist; former Development Officer at the Atelier de l’Observatoire Visual Arts

5. LESSONS LEARNED

The experience of Africa Art Lines over the period 2016–2020 provides a valuable learning laboratory for all actors involved in supporting intra-African artistic mobility. The lessons learned are not limited to the management of a mobility fund: they more broadly question the structural, institutional, and relational conditions that enable such a mechanism to have a lasting impact.

Structured local patronage is possible—and effective

The first and undoubtedly most significant lesson is that local private funding can be a solid and sustainable pillar for artistic mobility, provided it is organized around a clear strategic vision. The Africa Art Lines model demonstrates that it is possible to mobilize Moroccan patrons around a dedicated fund, managed by a professional structure with the necessary expertise. This configuration breaks with the logic of one-off donations and creates the conditions for a sustainable, predictable, and impactful commitment. It offers a credible alternative to dependence on international funding, which often remains subject to external agendas.

The combination of mechanisms multiplies the impact

Africa Art Lines has demonstrated the value of a hybrid approach, combining two complementary approaches: direct support for artists through open calls for applications, and the structuring of networks through partnerships with festivals and continental platforms. This dual approach makes it possible to respond simultaneously to the immediate needs of artists and the long-term challenges of the ecosystem. It avoids the pitfall of purely transactional support, which does not contribute to the construction of a sustainable mobility infrastructure.

Continental partnerships are essential levers of legitimacy and reach

Collaborations with leading African platforms have played a decisive role in anchoring the fund on the continent. These partnerships have not only broadened the program's geographical reach, but also strengthened its legitimacy among cultural actors on the continent. They illustrate that artistic mobility can only be effectively supported through reciprocity and co-construction with local ecosystems.

6. CHALLENGES

The geographical concentration of exchanges and prohibitive mobility costs

The geographical concentration of exchanges in West and North Africa, to the detriment of East, Central, and Southern Africa, constitutes a major structural limitation. This imbalance reflects both the lack of established exchange channels with these sub-regions and the economic constraints inherent to travel on the continent. Indeed, the cost of intra-African

mobility remains particularly high, notably due to the scarcity of direct flight routes, substantial airport taxes, and monopolies on certain connections.

Expanding the fund's continental coverage will require specific investments in developing partnerships with stakeholders in these geographic areas, but above all, the capacity to absorb these disproportionate transport costs.

The Need for Ongoing Investment in the Face of Fixed Costs

These high mobility costs necessitate a reevaluation of the very nature of funding. Unlike other cultural projects that may eventually generate their own revenue or reach financial break-even, artistic mobility remains, by its very nature, structurally deficit-prone. It therefore requires ongoing and continuous investment from patrons and funders.

Without this constant financial support, mobility flows come to an immediate halt. Convincing private partners to commit to long-term support — beyond mere publicity stunts or one-off event funding — thus represents a major challenge for the model's sustainability.

The Inadequacy of Tools for Measuring Return on Investment (ROI)

This difficulty in securing sustainable funding is exacerbated by the inadequacy of current monitoring and evaluation tools. Patrons and corporate partners, accustomed to traditional investment logic, often demand quantitative and short-term ROI indicators (number of tickets sold, immediate media coverage, brand visibility).

However, the impact of artistic mobility unfolds over the long term and yields primarily qualitative benefits: capacity building, the structuring of professional networks, the creation of collaborative works, intercultural dialogue, and symbolic capital. The lack of standardized tools capable of translating these intangible benefits into metrics that the private sector can value complicates the dialogue between cultural actors and funders.

The challenge, therefore, is to develop new evaluation frameworks that enable the real and profound impact of **mobility** to be measured and communicated effectively, thereby justifying the need for structural and ongoing financial support.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the lessons learned and an analysis of the Africa Art Lines model, several recommendations can be made to the various stakeholders involved in supporting intra-African artistic mobility.

For Private Sector Actors and Patrons

Move from one-off donations to structured commitments. Companies and philanthropists who wish to contribute to the cultural development of their country and the continent would benefit from entering into long-term partnerships with specialized organizations, rather than responding to individual requests on a case-by-case basis. This approach allows them to optimize the impact of their contributions, benefit from professional expertise in fund management, and align their efforts with a coherent strategic vision.

Invest in dedicated funds with clear governance. The Africa Art Lines model demonstrates that a fund managed by a competent organization with transparent governance and sector expertise is significantly more effective than a multitude of scattered donations. Patrons are encouraged to support—or contribute to the creation of—such funds in their respective countries, ensuring that these entities possess the human and institutional resources necessary for their proper functioning.

View cultural patronage as a strategic investment. Culture is not merely an expense: it is an investment in the influence of artists, the vitality of cultural and creative industries, and the construction of a strong, sovereign African cultural identity. Patrons are encouraged to adopt this perspective and to measure the impact of their contributions not only in financial terms but also in terms of symbolic capital, reputation, and influence.

For Cultural Organizations and Operators

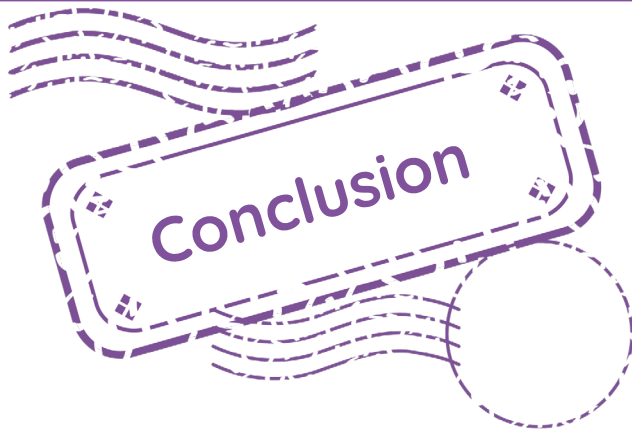
Développer une culture de la documentation et de l'évaluation. Develop a culture of documentation and evaluation. One of the primary strengths of the Africa Art Lines model lies in its ability to produce quantitative data regarding its activities, enabling a rigorous analysis of mobility flows and program impact. Cultural organizations are encouraged to invest in monitoring and evaluation systems, not only to report their activities to funders but also to fuel advocacy for increased support for artistic mobility.

Build continental partnerships based on reciprocity. Organizations wishing to support intra-African mobility must engage in genuine partnerships with counterpart structures across the continent, grounded in a logic of co-construction rather than simple service provision. These partnerships must be designed for the long term, featuring shared objectives and mutual accountability mechanisms.

For Public Decision-Makers

Create an attractive legal and fiscal framework for cultural patronage. One of the main obstacles to the development of private patronage in Africa is the absence, in many countries, of tax measures that allow companies to deduct their cultural contributions from their taxable income. Governments are encouraged to implement such measures to stimulate private sector engagement in culture.

Support the replication and adaptation of the Africa Art Lines model. The model developed by Afrikayna in Morocco deserves to be recognized, studied, and adapted in other national and regional contexts. Regional institutions—such as the African Union, regional economic communities, and cultural cooperation agencies—are encouraged to support initiatives aimed at documenting, disseminating, and adapting this model to other realities on the continent.



Africa Art Lines serves as a concrete, quantifiable demonstration of what structured private engagement—anchored in a clear strategic vision and supported by an organization with the requisite expertise—can achieve.

In just four years, the fund has financed more than 450 round trips, supported over 130 projects across 32 African countries, and contributed to gradually rebalancing the flow of artistic mobility between Morocco and the rest of the continent. These results illustrate the power of a model that combines strategic vision with a firm grounding in local realities.

Beyond the figures, however, it is perhaps the qualitative transformation of relationships among African cultural actors that constitutes the most valuable legacy of this experience. Testimonials gathered from beneficiaries reveal enriched professional trajectories, unprecedented collaborations, and innovative projects born out of encounters made possible by the fund. They serve as a powerful reminder that artistic mobility is not an end in itself, but rather a vehicle for creation, exchange, and the building of a vibrant, united African cultural community.

The Africa Art Lines model carries a message of hope and high standards for the entire continent. It demonstrates that the resources needed to support artistic mobility exist within Africa, that the skills required to

manage them effectively are available, and that artists and cultural operators are ready to engage in ambitious continental cooperation initiatives. What is still lacking in many contexts is the political and entrepreneurial will to structure these resources and place them at the service of a shared vision.

By rigorously documenting the Africa Art Lines experience, this publication aims to provide decision-makers, patrons, and cultural actors on the continent with a solid advocacy tool and concrete operational frameworks for replicating, adapting, and amplifying this model. The challenge is not to reproduce the

Moroccan experience identically, but to extract its founding principles—structured private engagement, transparent governance, a dual articulation between individual support and collective structuring, and continental partnerships based on reciprocity—and transpose them into different contexts, with the necessary adaptations.

Intra-African artistic mobility is a right, a necessity, and an opportunity. It is a right because African artists deserve to move freely across their own continent and contribute to the construction of a strong, sovereign continental cultural identity.

It is a necessity because, without the circulation of works and creators, cultural ecosystems become impoverished and opportunities for cooperation are lost. Finally, it is an opportunity because Africa possesses extraordinary cultural and creative wealth, the mobilization of which could contribute significantly to the continent's economic, social, and human development.

Africa Art Lines has shown the way. It is now up to everyone—patrons, governments, cultural organizations, and artists—to take up the challenge and contribute, at their own level and with their own means, to making intra-African artistic mobility a reality accessible to all.



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