



آفاق AFAC

Learning from the Past
Imagining the Future

10 YEARS OF REFLECTION





In May 2016, The Arab Fund for Arts and Culture commissioned Moukhtar Kocache to undertake an evaluation of the organization's ten year history. This report, **Learning from the Past, Imagining the Future** represents the culmination of this process.

Cover Photo: HAMJU by Echos Elektrik
Above: "Mariam On Bike" by Imane Al Dabbagh
from her documentary photography project Shame (less)



آفاق AFAC

The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture
الصندوق العربي للثقافة والفنون – آفاق

Table of Contents

Message from the Chairman & Director	5
Preface and Methodology	6
Summary Report	9
Introduction	12
AFAC in Brief	15
Identity and Mission	24
Identity	25
Regional Mission	25
Mandate	26
Impact on and Perception of Cultural Production	27
Communication	28
Grants Management and Organisational Development	30
Introduction	31
Grantmaking Process	31
Jury	31
Grant Amounts and Reports	32
Transparency and Accountability	33
Funding Sources	33
Staffing and Governance	35
Programmatic Focus	36
Program Areas	37
Program Categories	37
Special Programs	42

New Grant Ideas	43
Capacity Development	44
Networking	44
Dissemination and Audience Engagement	45
Knowledge Production	45
Philanthropy	46
Advocacy	47
Conclusion	48
Author's Bio	50
Annexes	51
Annex A: Interviewees' Questions and Bios	52
Annex B: AFAC Survey, 2016	55
Annex C: Working Group	63



Message from the Chairman and Director

In 2016, AFAC set out on a mission to revisit, review and reflect on its ten years of operations. The purpose of this exercise is to measure the institution's work, outcomes and impact in relation to its mission and objectives and to provide indicators to what has worked well and what still needs to be improved and/or adapted. More importantly, this study will lay the ground for a strategy for the coming five years.

In a region where the term 'accountability' is barely circulated and practiced, institutions like AFAC are required to utilize their very own strict codes of operations as well as standards of quality. Building on the past ten years is at once an organic and a challenging task. We are at a self-imposed juncture to challenge ourselves and never rest on our laurels. AFAC has laid the foundation for arts and culture institutions in the region and should continue to play this exemplary and referential role. Beyond this, we continuously ask ourselves what more we can be and do vis-à-vis our mission, mandate, stakeholders and changing realities, and how we can serve public interest with the best intentions and quality while maintaining a critical eye on the value, impact and standing of cultural projects.

Our internal structure allows for these in-house discussions to flourish and be shaped into actions, taking a distance from what we have done so far, assessing, questioning and also re-imagining. For this ten-year evaluation, we were keen on engaging with a wider circle of AFAC stakeholders. Previous and current grantees, jurors, donors, board members, partners and cultural practitioners were solicited to give feedback on the different areas of grant-making, programs, internal administrative processes, governance, and communication, as well as provide recommendations for future programs. The feedback was overwhelmingly heartwarming and affirmative of AFAC's status as a main supporter of arts and culture in the region. The detailed comments and recommendations were exemplary of a unique level of engagement that all stakeholders have towards AFAC. Moreover, the participants in the evaluation touched upon issues and questions that we ourselves constantly raise, thus demonstrating ownership and deep knowledge of the organization.

Some of the feedback and ideas were eye-opening. Others confirmed our pre-existing knowledge of what needs to be supported and expanded. Yet some other comments indicated a shallow knowledge of the organization and its programs. Though such comments are in most cases addressed on our website, we still feel the responsibility to listen carefully and act proactively towards maintaining our transparency and communication to live up to the expectations of our stakeholders and community at large.

Based on the results of the study and its findings which will be discussed further with specialized focus groups, a five-year strategy will be developed for AFAC programs and areas of support. The strategy will retain AFAC's main grant-making activities while revising the underlying details of how and what to support under the main existing grants. The strategy will also endorse the sector's and artists' needs for cultivating and supporting under-developed areas of artistic and cultural practices through defining a number of new special programs to be implemented based on priority and availability of funds.

Over the past decade, AFAC had provided the space or rather the laboratory for artists to grow, explore, experiment and also fail. While we are keen on continuing with this path, we are also aware about our standing and conscious about our responsibilities. Here exactly lies the challenge: mirroring the realities of our region without allowing ourselves as an institution to be a mere reflection of its image. Being progressive and ahead of our societies is a must because what AFAC stands for today is the hope for a better future for our region. Taking on this bigger role is a natural outcome of the ten years of hard work on all levels. It is by no means a role that strives for authority but rather one that contemplates the positioning of AFAC in the wider context.

We are grateful for the generous contributions of the survey respondents and interviewees. Their insights, engagement and reflections are yet another proof as to why arts and culture matter so much, providing the space for dialogue, discussions, and criticism to flourish.

We are very proud to share this study with the wider community of artists, supporters, and audiences as we believe that the only way for us to progress is to stay relevant to the priorities of the arts and culture sector.

Ghassan Salamé
Chairman

Rima Mismar
Executive Director

Preface and Methodology



Still from "Headbang Lullaby" by Hicham Lasri



Still from “You Come from Far Away” by Amal Ramsis

To mark its 10th year anniversary and ensure its second decade with a sustained significant imprint on artistic and cultural production and on the advancement of Arab philanthropy for arts and culture, AFAC has initiated an evaluation process to assess its programs, mode of operation and impact.

The Objectives

1. To assess AFAC’s 10-year history of sustaining and impacting artistic and cultural production in the region.
2. To learn from and engage with AFAC’s stakeholders of grantees, partners and funders about their perception, understanding and analysis of the organizations past as well as suggestions for the future.
3. To highlight and present AFAC’s strengths and weaknesses as well propose future steps and initiatives that will ensure the sustainability, growth, and impact of the organization for the coming years.

The Study

The research for this study was gathered in the following manner:

1. INTERVIEWS

Seventeen interviews (out of twenty-five invited) were conducted with a diverse group of individuals ranging from artists and grantees to board members, individual donors, institutional funders, jurors, and cultural managers who were asked a series of questions relating to their professional involvement with AFAC. (See Annex A for interviewees’ questions and bios.)

2. SURVEY

A survey comprised of fifty-six questions was sent out to over three hundred individuals identified from AFAC’s database (grant recipients and applicants) and list of funders, partners, jurors, and board members. Over one third of those invited to partake in the survey responded. It is important to note that the survey parameters were not meant to provide scientifically accurate data and statistics, but rather were envisioned as a simple way to glean a sense of personal perspectives and input, as well as recognize broad patterns of significant correlations.

The survey was divided into questions pertaining to the following categories:

- A. Mission and Identity
- B. Organizational Operations
- C. Programs

They were asked to scale their responses from 1 to 5 accordingly:

1. Poor
2. Fair but Needs Improvement
3. Good
4. Very Good
5. Excellent

Respondents were also given the option to select Not Applicable, which could reflect instances when they do not have enough information to answer the question.

Additionally, several questions invited respondents to contribute personal statements to allow a more detailed understanding of their assessments and recommendations.

The demographics of the survey included:

Individual Grantee: 46

Institutional Grantee: 21

Cultural Professional: 24

Institutional Partner: 5

Donor: 14

Other (Funders, University Professors, Individual Philanthropists, Artists, AFAC Board Members, Art Collectors, Jurors): 14

The respondents, were from the following countries (in descending order / highest to lowest):

Lebanon, Egypt, Palestine, Morocco, USA, Jordan, France, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Kingdom, Somalia, Germany, Switzerland, Algeria, Sudan, Yemen, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain. (See Annex B for survey.)

3. WORKING GROUP

On August 22-23, 2016, a two-day meeting was held at AFAC's offices in Beirut, in which AFAC's staff along with four invited cultural practitioners from the Arab region reviewed the initial findings from the survey and interviews. This meeting focused on a process of reflection, brainstorming, and analysis of AFAC's grants management systems, internal administrative processes, governance, communication methodologies, and program areas.

The guests were Tarek Abou El Fetouh, Khyam Allami, Orwa Nyrabia and Rasha Salti. (See Annex C for bios.)



Summary Report: Learning from the Past Imagining the Future

Objectives

To mark its 10th year anniversary and ensure a second decade of sustained impact on artistic and cultural production and the advancement of Arab philanthropy for arts and culture, in spring 2016 AFAC's leadership initiated an evaluation process of its programs and operation, as well as recommendations from the field to help guide its future programs and activities. Independent advisor Moukhtar Kocache was retained in May to conduct the research and contribute synthesized priorities that AFAC can explore moving forward. This summary report encapsulates key findings and recommendations from the main report.

Methodology

Research methods included:

- A. Review and analysis of AFAC's grants management systems, internal administrative processes, governance and annual reports.
- B. A detailed anonymous survey of 56 questions sent to over 300 individuals, consisting of grantees, applicants, donors, partners, board members, and culture professionals, with a response rate that exceeded one third.
- C. Seventeen interviews (out of twenty-five invited) with a diverse group of individuals, including artists and grantees, board members, individual donors, institutional funders, jurors, and cultural managers.
- D. Two days of convening and brainstorming to review initial findings and generate reflection and new ideas with regional cultural practitioners including Tarek Abou El Fetouh, Khyam Allami, Orwa Nayrabia, Rasha Salti, and AFAC staff.

Objectives

As it celebrates ten years of service to the arts and culture field in the Arab region, AFAC is experiencing a transformative moment in its history. The organization has undergone a leadership change, with a new executive director, and will be challenged in the coming years to significantly expand its resources and diversify its income streams. In the Arab region, socio-political, humanitarian, displacement, and freedom of expression challenges abound, impacting vast segments of AFAC's constituencies and partners as well as the landscape and context of contemporary cultural production. Growing tides of conservatism, minimal public support, and limited corporate and private philanthropy for arts and culture coupled with the growing needs and expectations of a dynamic youthful population, place nearly insurmountable pressure on AFAC. These forces demand that AFAC expand its grantmaking, widen its geographic reach, diversify the cultural genres it supports, provide more professional training, and diversify its regional audiences.

Clearly, accomplishing all of this is an impossible task for a single institution. Yet, AFAC stands as a beacon of light, creativity, and promise. Since making its first grant in 2007, AFAC has raised over \$23 million, made over 980 grants with a total of more than \$15 million, spent almost \$3 million on professional training and workshops, reached millions of audiences, processed over 9,000 applications, and worked with over 200 jurors. In terms of demographics, 50% of individual grantees are between 25 and 35 of age and 30% are between 35 and 45. The community of grantees identifies receiving support from AFAC as critical to its freedom of expression, ability to tackle sensitive issues and independence. It is also seen as the most important stamp of approval and legitimacy.

Reevaluating AFAC's activities, contributions, and capacities as it plans for the future is essential, given the regional dynamics, development of the arts and culture ecology in the Arab region and increasing expectations for it to lead locally and internationally.

Learning from the Past

1. IDENTITY AND MISSION

A. AFAC enjoys exceedingly high levels of admiration, recognition, and praise from both the Arab region's arts and culture community and international cultural institutions. Between 70% to 85% of survey respondents believe that AFAC is the most, or among the five most important organizations in the sector, including in terms of its levels of transparent and fair decision making, value and relevance, positive impact on the quality and visibility of cultural production, and overall professionalization. An astounding 85% to 95% of respondents strongly agree that AFAC is relevant and valuable to the region, which shows near-total approval of how the organization is accomplishing its mission and responding to a vital need.

B. AFAC is admired for having a strong visual and communications identity; yet, it is known to lack presence on social media channels and traditional media networks. Despite being impressed by AFAC's communications, the community at large would like to see more media coverage and presentation of its funded projects. Those who view them are impressed by AFAC's annual reports, but desire a simpler format for the information.

C. In terms of its identity, two particular issues are worth noting. The first is a question about whether AFAC is "an Arab fund," or "a fund for the Arab region." Although most members of the community understand that AFAC is inclusive of artists and institutions that come from diverse ethno-religious communities and which represent the mosaic of the Arab region, this needs to be better articulated in its public profile. Perceptions regarding prominence or hegemony of "Arab" identity and culture, particularly among other identities, ethnicities and minorities in the region begs reflection. Second, despite wide excitement about and appreciation for the excellence, quality, and type of artistic and cultural production AFAC supports, in addition to its regional reputation as a trendsetter, some are concerned that it tends to prioritize contemporary aesthetics perceived as being rooted in

Western avant-garde language and form (implications of privilege) at the cost of more accessible, community-based, and popular (not populist) emergent forms of expression.

2. GRANTS MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. AFAC's staff and team garner overwhelming praise and esteem from grantees, partners, and funders for their professionalism, and for how much the organization accomplishes given its small team. However, the community wishes to know more about and to engage with the organization's staff, but even more so its governing board.

B. AFAC's grant management system and process vastly meets expectations, and the simplicity, flexibility, and thoroughness of its grants administration (agreements, payments, reports) are much appreciated.

C. The community would like AFAC to render more public and visible its policies and procedures on conflict of interest for board, staff, partners, jurors, and grantees.

D. Although AFAC makes laudatory efforts to share its financial information with the public, there is a desire to learn more (and in a simplified manner) about its annual budget allocations, administrative expenditure, funding and amounts/percentages of sources of income.

E. There is a noted desire for AFAC to improve the geographic and national diversity of its staff and board and for it to maintain awareness of its increasing, while understandable, Lebanese character, due to cumbersome labor laws.

F. AFAC is the regional leader in fundraising capacity and diversity of resources, and has become the role model for local and regional independent organizations, in culture or otherwise, by matching its ability to convince diverse institutional stakeholders with engaging a growing number of local individual philanthropists. This capacity continues to develop and expand in spite of the challenging philanthropic and political context. Today, AFAC raises over \$3 million yearly and is set to embark on an expanded campaign to raise \$20 million by 2020. In 2011, Arab funding sources constituted about 10%, in 2015 and 2016 this number surpassed 35%. This is no small feat, given the regional context, but it still falls short of the organization's existential goal to generate the majority of its resources from local donors; a goal that will continue to guide AFAC's mission.

3. PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS

A. AFAC's grant categories are very highly appreciated by artists and cultural organizations in the region, and seem to positively respond to their needs in terms of genres, styles, and media. Film has received the largest number of grants, followed by research/training/regional events, visual arts, music, performing arts, and literature.

B. The geographic diversity of both individual and institutional grantees has steadily expanded. AFAC

grantees are relatively young with 50% between the ages of 25 to 35, and 30% between 35 to 45.

C. The community identifies the support from AFAC as critical to freedom of expression, ability to tackle sensitive issues, and independence. It is also seen as the most important stamp of approval and legitimacy.

D. There is overwhelming conviction and desire (survey responses between 60% to 80%) that AFAC should continue to focus on production grants and the occasional special program grants, despite the sector's clear dire needs for more training, education, capacity development, policy, research, and advocacy (though many support the idea that AFAC could enable and possibly fund others in the sector to conduct such activities).

E. Areas that repeatedly emerged as issues that AFAC might address in the near future were:

1. the urgent need to improve circulation, distribution, activation, and audience/public engagement in the region given the financial, cultural, and social repercussions and impacts;
2. the desire for grantees and others to be brought together into a community to network, exchange, see each other's work, and learn from one another; and
3. for AFAC, given its unique position, to be more intellectually aware and engaged in terms of data mining and initiating reflections on content, thematic and aesthetic patterns, and ideas emerging from its community of applicants and grantees.

F. There is a growing desire by grantees and applicants to receive more feedback on their applications and the jury's deliberations. Grantees would like more tailored reporting guidelines for each grant category.

G. Grantees struggle to finalize activities and projects without the 25% of grant amount that AFAC disburses once projects are completed.

Imagining the Future

1. IDENTITY AND MISSION

A. AFAC should consider expanding investment in communication and marketing (including adding staff) to create layered content that shares grantee stories and production with the community and the wider Arab public. This should include exploring the creation of a social media platform and a meeting place for grantees and partners on the website.

B. To help activate media exposure as well as regional circulation of work, AFAC can consider hiring a publicist and establishing audio-visual and print media partnerships to help disseminate information about new work, grantees, its activities, and issues emerging from its work of pertinence to the wider community.

C. Ten years on, it might be opportune to revisit the organization's mission, values, and objectives.

D. AFAC can develop special modules and outreach programs to emerging philanthropists in the Arab region and consider creating an award for philanthropists of arts and culture to create a buzz and more widely anchor the organization in the Arab public sphere.

E. As a learning and self-regulating process, AFAC could greatly benefit from the creation of an ongoing formal participatory process of review, feedback, and analysis with grantees and the constituency at large.

2. GRANTS MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A. AFAC should explore ways to render more transparent its jurying and selection process and establish clearer conflict of interest policies; such a move could influence standard practices in the region.

B. AFAC needs to consider developing a board diversification strategy and criteria, according to the organization's needs and fundraising goals. Diversity and national representation of staff should also be explored even though there are administrative challenges related to labor laws for non-Lebanese nationals.

C. The coming years will demand rigor, planning, and dedication in terms of resource mobilization, institutional donor fundraising campaigns, individual philanthropists, and corporate support. A detailed resource mobilization strategy would be helpful to develop at this particular juncture to stabilize the organization's finances for the coming decade. It is a strategic time to begin the process of creating an endowment.

D. Explore hiring staff dedicated to development and fundraising for both institutional and individual donors.

3. PROGRAMMATIC FOCUS

A. Consider running two grantmaking cycles a year to help meet surplus demand and allow more opportunities and flexibility for applicants. Reduce final payment amounts of grants to ease the production burden on grantees.

B. Explore separating research and training from regional events grants to ensure cohesion and focus.

C. AFAC should initiate a new grantmaking program to support distribution, circulation, and audience engagement, which will moreover help create and meet a growing demand for cultural consumption, develop and reach new audiences, create markets, establish links between independent artists and organizations with creative industries, and expand exposure to artists and cultural products.

D. AFAC should explore creating an annual forum that brings selected grantees together for exchange and networking, explores thematic issues pertinent to the sector, and that provides a platform to present commissioned or edited intellectual reflection by writers, scholars, and cultural producers inspired from the data and knowledge the organization and its applicants generate each year.

Visibility events can be added to such a convening for philanthropists and the media to expand opportunities and visibility for all stakeholders.

Conclusion

AFAC is a miraculous success story and a source of inspiration in a region undergoing tumultuous change and the erosion of human and civil rights. Arts and culture not only help make sense of the world and our understanding of it, but also offer a mirror to society, capture the pulse of history, and initiate dialogue and emotional catharsis to help communities, nations, and individuals ground themselves in our shared humanity. The role that AFAC plays within this context is therefore foundational and urgent; as such, it requires awareness, sensibility, vision, and responsibility from its staff, leadership, board, and partners. The coming decade for AFAC also promises to be a period of growth, expansion, and deepening, which it is challenged to do without usurping resources and centralizing power, and without competing with existing and more fragile cultural infrastructure and organizations in the region. It must possess the wisdom and artfulness to share power and resources and to grow in tandem with the rest of the regional cultural ecology.



Still from "Photocopy" by Tamer Ashry

Introduction



“AFAC demonstrates the model of independence, transparency, fairness and artistic standards in the region.”

This is a significant moment for AFAC as it celebrates ten years of existence and service to the arts and culture field in the Arab region. The organization has recently undergone a leadership change at the level of its executive director and will be challenged in the coming years to significantly expand its resources and diversify its income streams as well as to deepen the impact and structure of its programs.

Socio-political, humanitarian, displacement, freedom of expression challenges abounds regionally, impacting vast segments of AFAC’s constituencies and partners as well as the landscape and context of contemporary cultural production in the Arab region. In addition, growing tides of conservatism, minimal public support, limited corporate and private philanthropy for arts and culture coupled with growing needs and expectations by a dynamic youthful population, have increased pressure and demands on AFAC to expand its grantmaking, widen its geographic reach, diversify the cultural genres it supports, provide more professional training, diversify regional audiences and act more as a knowledge-making hub — clearly a lot to undertake by a single institution operating in such a context.

“In an environment of growing conservative discourse, the freedom of expression that AFAC provides helps us to push back and unsettle those forces.”

Re-evaluating AFAC’s activities, contributions and capacities and planning for the future is both delicate and critical given the regional dynamics, development of the arts and culture ecology in the Arab region and increasing expectations for it to be a leading local and international organization.

AFAC stands as a beacon of light, creativity and promise having raised over \$23 million, made over 980 grants totaling approximately \$13 million, spent almost \$3 million on professional training and workshops, reached millions of audiences, processed over 9000 applications and worked with around 200 jurors since making its first grant in 2007. In terms of demographics, 50% of individual grantees are between 25 and 35 of age and 30% are between 35 and 45. The community of grantees identifies receiving support from AFAC as critical to its freedom of expression, ability to tackle sensitive issues and independence. It is also seen as the most important stamp of approval and legitimacy.

“AFAC’s performance is consistently developing and is robust. It is very impartial and engaged with a clear set of values. It has succeeded in remaining a



Still from “The Last of Us” by Alaeddine Slim

consistent fund which continues to grow and have impact. AFAC is aware of the needs on the grounds and respects the independence and freedom of our work”

Given the organization’s tremendous contribution, it is no surprise that this study has uncovered a lot of praise and appreciation for AFAC as an organization and the contributions it has had on the arts and culture field in the region and its constituency of grantees and partners. AFAC is viewed to be a highly reputable organization; over 95% of the respondents qualify AFAC to have a very strong reputation. AFAC enjoys exceedingly high levels of admiration, recognition and praise from the Arab region’s arts and culture community as well as from international cultural institutions.

“It raises the visibility of different art forms and practices taking place in the Arab speaking countries, raises awareness locally and internationally on the arts of the Arab speaking countries and has been open and on ground active and involved in the process of cultural development with peers, artists and start-up institutions.”

Between 70% to 85% of survey respondents believe that AFAC is the most or one of the five most important organizations in the sector. The same range is true when it comes to perceptions of AFAC’s levels of transparent and fair decision-making, its value and relevance, its positive impact on the quality and visibility of cultural production and the overall professionalization of the sector in the region.

An astounding 85% to 95% of respondents strongly agree that AFAC is relevant and valuable to the region, which shows quasi total approval in the way the organization is accomplishing its mission and responding to a vital need. Over 90% of the respondents feel that AFAC is greatly



Still from "Street of Death" by Karam Ghossein

contributing to the improvement of the sector as a whole.

"AFAC has stimulated an unparalleled momentum for the cultural production process in the region through its continuous and consistent funding which has contributed to sustainable overall growth"

The organization's impact on the lives of artists was strongly underscored throughout the course of this research.

AFAC allowed artists to feel valued and supported and has enabled them to expand their horizons and the boundaries of their work. More so, **"AFAC has been crucial in helping them break boundaries and barriers" and "It offered gifted regional artists the chance to reveal their skills and to compete on the international scene."**

"AFAC has given positive and encouraging opportunities to artists from the region. It pushes them to create and experiment in a fluid and free manner without any strong restrictions or set rules... Due to this, it helps the art sector grow with talent and diverse styles that come their way. AFAC is a humble and supporting institution for artists and creative makers."

Additionally, AFAC has had an integral impact on artists' overall ability to raise funds for their productions and expand their pool of support. **"AFAC is not only an address that gives hope to creative cultural producers,**

receiving AFAC funding gives us credibility." As was repeated many times by artists for this research, **"AFAC has become a vital source of support in the last few years for individual and institutional projects."** This has proven especially true for those in countries with limited or non-existent resources and for marginalized minority artists.

"By providing financial support in a transparent and professional manner, AFAC enables Arab artists to have leverage while negotiating additional funding. It made it easier for Arab artists to find money to produce new works."

This report sheds light not only on the organization's significant and positive contribution over the last decade, but also analyzes and highlights future possibilities for the growth of AFAC and the development of cultural and artistic production in the region. Despite raving reviews by contributors to this study, significant challenges were raised relating to AFAC's relative limited impact at a broader more mainstream societal level, its shortcomings in terms of communication and marketing, the need to expand its mandate, weaknesses with its outreach and questions around its identity, purpose and mission. As reflected in the following sections in this study, the invaluable insight from its constituencies and partners lays out a rich set of assessments and recommendations related to the organization's identity, purpose, management and programs, as well as expanding AFAC's wider impact through improved dissemination and activation of funded projects.

AFAC in Brief



AFAC's Mission and Objectives

AFAC envisions a thriving Arab art and cultural scene, one that is confident in its expression, open to dialogue, accessible to all and sustained by local patrons.

TWO FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES GUIDE AFAC'S WAY OF WORKING:

1. Transparency in the grant giving process; and
2. Independence from influence due to a diversity of funding sources.

AFAC'S OBJECTIVES TOWARDS THE REGIONS' ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITIES:

1. To increase and enhance contemporary art and cultural production and research;
2. To support capacity-building and training in the cultural sector;
3. To perpetuate cultural exchange and collaboration across the region and globally;
4. To deliver a sustainable source of funding for outstanding and meaningful cultural work;
5. To identify and develop distribution channels for Arab cultural production in the region and beyond.

AFAC'S OBJECTIVES TOWARDS AUDIENCES:

1. To cultivate appreciation and engagement with contemporary art and culture among the wider Arab publics;
2. To encourage patronage and philanthropy towards arts and culture activities from individuals, corporations and foundations

AFAC'S OBJECTIVES TOWARDS THE PUBLIC SECTOR:

1. To advocate for fair, transparent and accountable access to resources to artistic communities;
2. To reduce barriers to public participation in arts and culture;
3. To encourage investments in the arts through tax revenues, public and private investment, and entrepreneurial business practices.

AFAC Programs

AFAC currently provides grants in nine categories divided between the General Grants Program and Special Programs.

THE GENERAL GRANTS PROGRAM INCLUDES:

1. The **Visual Arts** grant program supports painting, sculpture, photography, installation, audio-visual arts and multi-media works of a contemporary and innovative nature. Grants also support exhibitions, visual arts book publications as well as art production.
2. The **Performing Arts** grant program supports classical, folk, experimental and contemporary theatre and dance, as well as performance art, street arts and festivals. Grants also support playwriting, drama, directing, dance and choreography workshops.

3. The **Cinema** grant program supports all kinds of film projects – shorts, feature-length fiction and documentaries, animation and experimental. AFAC offers funding for development, production and post-production.

4. The **Music** grant program supports all kinds of music composition and production including classical, tarab, folk music, hip hop, reggae, jazz, fusion, electronic and alternative. Grants also support conservatories, recordings, archives, research, workshops and performances at local, regional and international festivals.

5. The **Research/Training/Regional Events (RTR)** grant program supports projects in all fields of cultural production for capacity building, workshops, residencies



Still from "Ibrahim" by Lina Alabed

THE SPECIAL GRANTS PROGRAM INCLUDES:

6. The **AFAC Novel Writing Program (ANWP)** supports emerging fiction writers through an intensive year-long professional training and production program.

7. The **AFAC Documentary Program (ADP)** supports creative feature, medium and short documentary projects that address social realities in the Arab world that are in production and post-production.

8. The **Arab Documentary Photography Program (ADPP)** –supports compelling non-stereotypical and unconventional visual documentation of important social issues and narratives relevant to the Arab region, in recognition of the image's power to document, educate and advocate.

9. The **Arab-European Creative Platform – (AECF)** is a new special program that mobilises intellectuals and artists in the Arab region and Europe, to reflect critically on intolerance and hostility resulting from forced migration and propose innovative actions to affirm the potential of tolerance and integration.

PREVIOUS SPECIAL PROGRAMS

The Arab Documentary Film Program, (ADFP) launched in partnership with the Sundance Documentary Institute in 2009, provided support to creative documentary filmmakers from the Arab region. The program supported 44 films over three cycles and was succeeded with AFAC's Documentary Program (ADP) in 2013 which is still running.

AFAC Express provided support to artists and small institutions that were actively engaged within their artistic communities and aspired to expand their activities in response to new realities across the region with financial support for projects and operational expenses. It was founded in 2012 on a quick-response process using a rolling deadline to funnel emergency financial aid to artists-in-need and institutions and organizations whose resources were being stretched due to the dramatic events that took place in the Arab region starting 2010.

Crossroads was launched in 2012 and targeted independent Arab filmmakers exploring the frontiers of new possibilities offered by the social and political turmoil in the region by offering both financial and professional support for film projects in development phases directed by emerging filmmakers who are discovering fertile grounds for innovation, creativity and experimentation amidst the upheaval engulfing the region. The program supported 12 films.

Why Culture? Is a campaign that AFAC launched in 2013 as part of its ongoing efforts to raise awareness on the importance of cultural philanthropy in the Arab region and to involve a wider range of people in reflecting on arts and culture. The campaign included three competitions, with the aim of producing posters, comics and short videos that responded to the question: Why is culture important? Two winners were announced under each category.



Still from "I Crossed the Hallway" by Rabih El-Amine

Grant Application Process

All applications are received on-line in a user-friendly format available in Arabic and in English on the AFAC website. Applications for the **General Grant** programs are submitted three times a year in accordance with the grant category: February through April: Visual Arts and Performing Arts; May through July: Cinema; and June through August: Music and RTR.

Applications for the **Special Grant** programs are submitted accordingly: Mid-January through mid-March: AFAC Novel Writing; February through March: Arab Documentary Photography; February through April: Documentary Film.

Once grant applications are submitted to AFAC, they are reviewed by the staff to insure that they conform with administrative guidelines and program categories, and that applications are complete and include all supporting documents. In 2016, AFAC introduced a process to handle an annual increase in the total number of applications. A readers' committee of four members per category pre-selects applications based on quality, innovation, relevance and budget (the same criteria that are used later on by the jury). The aim of this process is to pre-select a maximum of 90 applications in total per category. The recommendations of the readers' committee is then sent to three anonymous jurors.

Grant Jury System

The pre-selected applications are then distributed to three mutually anonymous jurors who submit their assessments following a designated criteria of quality, innovation, relevance and budget, in addition to comprehensive comments on each and every project.

The jurors change every year, allowing for greater flexibility and diversity of points of view and fairness in the selection process. Jury committees are given four to six weeks to assess the applications after which AFAC collects and cross-checks their evaluations. Then the evaluations are discussed together with all three jurors during a face-to-face meeting in AFAC's Beirut office for a definitive selection and recommendation to the board. The Board of Trustees approves the grants suggested by the jurors.

Grant Announcement

Approved grants are announced on the AFAC website and also distributed by press release to Arab media outlets and relevant cultural institutions in the region and internationally. Press releases include the descriptions of the awarded projects, nationalities represented and a general statement from the jury committee.

Grant Distribution

The AFAC grants manager negotiates a contract with each individual grantee, specifying reporting requirements and timelines of disbursement. Funds for each project are disbursed either in two or three payments depending on the total amount of the grant. Maximum grant amount is \$50,000, the average grant amount is \$25,000. The status of each project is updated by the grants manager and verified by the financial officer, then audited externally at the end of each year. Except for film projects, the processing of the grants hinges on raising 70% of the remaining project budget.



"Darna" by Zineb Benjelloun



2007-2016

AFAC Statistics

APPLICANTS: Total

9,068

INDIVIDUAL APPLICANTS: By Gender

2,680 / female / 36%
4,673 / male / 64%

APPLICANTS: By Type

7,353 / individuals / 81%
1,715 / institutions / 19%

APPLICANTS: By Arab Nationality

Algeria	238	Libya	53	Somalia	8
Bahrain	25	Mauritania	21	Sudan	160
Egypt	2297	Morocco	637	Syria	701
Iraq	305	Oman	11	Tunisia	439
Jordan	554	Palestine	1127	UAE	38
Kuwait	32	Qatar	11	Yemen	178
Lebanon	1390	Saudi Arabia	58		

APPLICANTS: By Category

Cinema	1883	RTR	1188	ADP	279
Literature	797	ADFP	360	ANWP	668
Music	708	AFAC Express	168	ADPP	292
Performing Arts	1103	Crossroads	142	GCC Training	5
Visual Arts	1345	Why Culture	130		

GRANTEES: Total

981

INDIVIDUAL GRANTEES: By Gender

283 / female / 39%
448 / male / 61%

GRANTEES: By Type

731 / individuals / 75%
250 / institutions / 25%

GRANTEES: By Nationality

Algeria	31	Oman	0	Ireland	2
Bahrain	2	Palestine	146	Italy	1
Egypt	175	Qatar	0	Switzerland	1
Iraq	30	Saudi Arabia	8	UK	9
Jordan	53	Somalia	1	USA	6
Kuwait	5	Sudan	21	Germany	5
Lebanon	220	Syria	94	India	1
Libya	8	Tunisia	49	Turkey	1
Mauritania	3	UAE	4	Spain	1
Morocco	81	Yemen	15		
		France	8		

GRANTEES: By Location

local / 792
diaspora / 189

GRANTEES: By Impact

local / 453
regional / 316
international / 201
cancelled / 11

GRANTEES: Number of Grants Received

first grant / 825

second grant / 138

third grant / 13

more than 3 grants / 5

GRANTEES: By Experience

emerging / 498

established/ 483

GRANTEES: Total Per Category

Cinema	148	RTR	135	ADP	48
Literature	95	ADFP	44	ANWP	28
Music	129	AFAC Express	35	ADPP	31
Performing Arts	122	Crossroads	19	GCC Training	5
Visual Arts	133	Why Culture	7	AACP	2



Book-signing ceremony celebrating the launch of seven new novels produced within the framework of the AFAC Novel Writing Program at Beirut International Book Fair 2016

GRANTS: Total

\$15,129,552

GRANT AMOUNT: Total Per Category

Cinema \$3,013,101	RTR \$2,258,250	Crossroads \$515,000
Literature \$739,700	Documentary Film \$1,957,060	Why Culture \$31,000
Music \$1,594,344	ANWP \$455,158	GCC Training \$100,000
Performing Arts \$1,573,330	ADPP \$626,650	AACP \$146,000
Visual Arts \$1,743,300	AFAC Express \$376,659	

CINEMA: Per Year

Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	5 / \$130,000
2008	13 / \$284,500
2009	15 / \$252,000
2010	8 / \$204,000
2011	13 / \$243,000
2012	12 / \$295,000
2013	16 / \$313,531
2014	20 / \$384,930
2015	24 / \$431,140
2016	22 / \$475,000

LITERATURE: Per Year

Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	4 / \$47,000
2008	7 / \$78,500
2009	16 / \$148,500
2010	16 / \$128,700
2011	15 / \$90,000
2012	21 / \$127,000
2013	16 / \$120,000

MUSIC: Per Year

Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	3 / \$55,000
2008	5 / \$34,000
2009	8 / \$85,000
2010	7 / \$111,000
2011	12 / \$124,000
2012	9 / \$132,126
2013	17 / \$200,000
2014	20 / \$298,818
2015	21 / \$254,400
2016	27 / \$300,000

PERFORMING ARTS: Per Year

Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	6 / \$61,500
2008	8 / \$158,400
2009	12 / \$130,700
2010	7 / \$104,500
2011	10 / \$109,400
2012	12 / \$163,000
2013	15 / \$182,000
2014	16 / \$186,000
2015	17 / \$228,280
2016	19 / \$249,550

VISUAL ARTS: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	5 / \$90,000
2008	9 / \$120,100
2009	10 / \$137,000
2010	6 / \$171,500
2011	10 / \$150,000
2012	16 / \$185,800
2013	18 / \$193,500
2014	17 / \$218,000
2015	21 / \$205,400
2016	21 / \$272,000

**DOCUMENTARY
(ADFP + ADP) Per Year**
Number of Grantees / Amount

2009	15 / \$325,060
2010	0 / \$0
2011	16 / \$350,000
2012	13 / \$260,000
2013	12 / \$315,000
2014	10 / \$200,000
2015	15 / \$250,000
2016	11 / \$257,000

CROSSROADS: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2012	12 / \$400,000
2013	1 / \$10,000
2014	5 / \$90,000
2015	1 / \$15,000

WHY CULTURE: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2013	5 / \$29,000
2014	2 / \$2,000

RTR: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2007	6 / \$90,000
2008	11 / \$117,000
2009	9 / \$128,000
2010	10 / \$126,700
2011	12 / \$157,000
2012	10 / \$198,000
2013	14 / \$300,000
2014	18 / \$354,500
2015	23 / \$384,050
2016	22 / \$403,000

ANWP: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2014	10 / \$136,108
2015	10 / \$134,419
2016	8 / \$184,631

ADPP: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2014	10 / \$190,222
2015	11 / \$213,678
2016	10 / \$222,750

AFAC EXPRESS: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2011	9 / \$111,659
2012	26 / \$265,000

GCC TRAINING: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2014	5 / \$100,000
------	---------------

AACP: Per Year
Number of Grantees / Amount

2016	2 / \$146,000
------	---------------

Identity and Mission



AFAC Music Grantee Emel Mathlouthi

Identity

AFAC is locally and internationally known as an arts and culture fund for the Arab region and generally perceived as supporting diversity and multi-cultural expression from the Arab world. The acronym AFAC in English refers to the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture, highlighting its Arab identity. In Arabic, AFAC translates to “horizon,” referencing the organization’s mission to expand the boundaries and quality of arts and culture in the Arab region.

In addition, AFAC supports Arab artists living outside of the region and non-Arab institutions working on projects related to the Arab region and its culture.

“AFAC makes resources and opportunities equitable and available to all Arab nationalities.”

In recent years, regional identity, ethnicity, and minority politics have challenged hegemonic notions of Arab identity and culture. Although the concept of an Arab Fund is highly valued and deemed an extremely powerful and important framing, the issue of the funds’ Arab identity lends itself to further exploration, reflection, and clarification. Has AFAC outgrown its name? Is AFAC a fund for Arab artists, or a fund for artists in the Arab region? Does AFAC support Arab arts, or does it support the arts produced in the Arab world? What is AFAC’s identity: is it pan-Arab, regional, or Lebanese with a regional focus?

“AFAC, by focusing on Arab artists, allows us to present our own stories and issues that are relevant and important to us.”

AFAC is inclusive of artists and institutions that come from diverse ethno-religious communities and which represent the mosaic of the Arab region. It is clear that AFAC’s mission fills a huge void by addressing the specificities and needs of the Arab region on a wider level.

Regional Mission

“In my society, the only option of support comes from the Ministry and a handful of government funded organizations. All of them are corrupt and do not make decisions according to quality and standards of excellence. As such, having AFAC as a funding source is essential and its regional scope is of huge importance.”

AFAC’s regional mission is a significant asset for artists and cultural producers who are geographically isolated, and/or struggle to find community and an opportunity to exchange ideas. Greatly perceived as providing support without conditions, and without political or ideological



Panel, Visual Storytelling and Social Change, Beirut, August 2016

corruption, ***“AFAC’s contribution to the field is its ability to reach all artists wherever they may geographically be, irrespective of their identity and affiliation.”***

AFAC is recognized for its unique capacity for regional outreach, which advances a culture of inclusion while fulfilling applicants’ and grantees’ urgent desire for community and sense of belonging.

“As a Palestinian from ’48 lands, AFAC is one of the only sources for funding that is unconditional, it allows us freedom for true creation. This has enabled me and my peers to create more subversive art. Irrespective of whether our proposals are funded, having this option is liberating.”

For artists facing increasingly tightened state control in environments suspicious of foreign funding, AFAC support is critical, since, although it incorporates both foreign

international funding sources and contributions from the Arab region, AFAC is simply perceived as an “Arab fund.”

As an independent and effective organization with a truly regional scope and outreach, AFAC also initiates and serves as an important regional partner for many international organizations with Middle East and North Africa funding strategies. AFAC has earned its title as **“the best partner in the region,”** functioning as a mediator between the independent cultural sector and international organizations. Although this is widely understood as a positive leading role, some express concern that AFAC is increasingly centralizing the limited available international funds to the region.

There is an overwhelming recognition of the Funds’ relevance in the region. When asked “How relevant is AFAC to the regional context?”, the vast majority of respondents attributed the highest score possible. Respondents also unanimously reported that **“AFAC has rendered arts and culture from the Arab region more visible.”** There is a great appreciation for the quality of the projects supported; however, some respondents felt that the number of funded projects is not large enough. In addition, respondents reflected that the impact of the projects only reached small circles and local communities, but has not yet palpably impacted broader Arab society.

When asked to evaluate AFAC’s outreach, nearly 70% of respondents strongly admired that AFAC reaches out to new voices and geographies. Over the years, AFAC has consistently managed to expand its geographic regional reach; however, some suggest the organization should find innovative ways to expand its outreach and presence in diverse cities. As well, it was noted that AFAC could increase its visibility and outreach specifically in Africa and the Gulf. One strategy for increasing a regional presence could be for AFAC to explore opening satellite offices in other Arab countries, or place full-time representatives around the region.

AFAC could also increase its regional impact by increasing and maintaining on-going field country visits, with more

face-to-face informational presentations in different cities and countries.

“I hope that AFAC will do more to expand its knowledge about different contexts and communities and not settle with receiving information from the “usual” sources and circles. The importance of discovering new circles, including reaching artists that are at the fringe, will be important for the future and sustainability of AFAC.”

Mandate

“AFAC is an understanding organization and needs to continue to be in terms of ideas, contexts and circumstances, while challenging censorship and tackling sensitive issues.”

Due to the immense level of need in the region, combined with AFAC’s success as a reputable and effective organization, people and institutions increasingly expect it to take on greater responsibilities and address a wider range of issues that far exceed its core activity as an arts and culture grantmaker.

Many questions and debates continue to arise regarding whether AFAC’s mandate should expand beyond funding. **“What does AFAC want to be?”** Should AFAC initiate and implement its own projects? Expand its training and capacity building for artists, cultural managers, and institutions? Conduct more advocacy on cultural policies and legal frameworks in the region that impact the creative sector? Moreover, is it an activist organization, or one that funds institutions supporting artists at the grassroots level? Who is AFAC’s main target: artists, programmers, audiences, or philanthropists?



“ORB” by Darine Hotait

Some people would like to see AFAC serve as a platform for critical thinking and intellectual reflection, becoming a leader in terms of knowledge production. Others hope that it will invest more resources and effort to expand audiences and their engagement by improving the circulation and dissemination of contemporary cultural production.

“AFAC is an instructive, impressive and visionary organization.”

AFAC is greatly valued for its independence and **“outward looking”** nature. AFAC’s track record has garnered the organization wide recognition in the sector for providing forms of support that radically differ from the few available government and market sources, which has helped expand appreciation for its nonprofit, independent status.

“Non-governmental funding is essential for an independent creative industry and AFAC’s independence is vital.”

Ten years on, it might be opportune to revisit AFAC’s mission, values, and objectives in order to better reflect the organization’s growth, changes in the local ecology, and the evolving needs of its arts and culture constituencies.

The present investigation has revealed that AFAC should avoid a programmatic or curatorial agenda, and avoid implementing its own cultural projects. Both the organization’s leadership and its stakeholders strongly believe that it should instead continue to support organizations, cultural producers, and artists in realizing their visions.

Although the process of building community is highly complex and can take on multiple meanings, most respondents felt a sense of recognition and belonging after receiving AFAC funding.

This association with AFAC provides a sense of participation in broad civic initiatives, which is otherwise mostly unavailable to citizens in the region. How can AFAC leverage this sense of community, expanding and activating it for the benefit of both the organization and its constituency?

“While AFAC is valuable in the fields it is focused on, the state of matters in the region call for a certain level of overlap with other areas: arts and culture with economy, arts and culture with social justice, etc.” AFAC’s presence at various regional and international civil society fora, whether economic, human rights, education or development based, may allow it a seat at important conversations with regional impact on Arab society. As this could provide additional leverage to bring about more sustained and deeper fundamental change in the Arab region, can AFAC and its leadership more concretely and systematically explore such opportunities?

While the above ideas suggest possible opportunities for new mandates and an expanded regional role, respondents overwhelmingly agree that AFAC should above all continue to **“focus on grant-making for sure.”**



Still from “Atlal” by Djemal Kerkar

Impact on and Perception of Cultural Production

“AFAC has created a true alternative in the Arab region by supporting serious creative projects that fall outside of the commercial market realm and the constraints of government policies.”

Supporters and grantees alike consistently reference AFAC’s impact on cultural production and aesthetics in the region. AFAC’s responsiveness to the field is recognized and appreciated as an important reason for its success and proven ability to attract creative ideas.

AFAC is furthermore perceived as supporting many younger artists, helping anchor its identity as an organization that cultivates the creative visions of the upcoming Arab generation. **“AFAC has managed to reach emerging artists from every part of the Arab world and has often supported their first significant artistic production.”**

It is a given that contemporary cultural production from the region explores and contends with difficult and challenging themes and issues that reflect tumultuous conditions. For most, this chiefly explains AFAC’s current significance, since it makes possible diverse documentation of the region’s reality and initiates critical thinking about existing and emergent issues. However, some interpret this as an intentional, preferred focus that somewhat narrowly prioritizes social and political aesthetic forms.

“AFAC has supported projects of excellence that are able to compete internationally. Often these works represent young artists and new contemporary art currents. As such, AFAC has managed to restructure the form of regional cultural production and has challenged the hegemonic conservative and regressive culture and artistic thought in the Middle East.”



Still from “Boy From War” by Usama Alshaibi

While many enthusiastically appreciate the quality and types of artistic and cultural production AFAC supports, and recognize its regional reputation as *“the trend setter,”* some are concerned that it tends to prioritize contemporary aesthetics rooted in Western avant-garde language and form (implications of privilege) at the cost of more accessible, community-based, popular (not populist) emergent forms of expression.

“AFAC is helping revolutionize support for non-traditional work in the Arab world, especially for edgy productions in dance.”

AFAC must increasingly reflect on its powerful role in setting standards of quality, form, and aesthetics for regional cultural production. This role has been rightly welcomed as a marker of inclusion in the international contemporary art world, but can also signal increasing dominance of globalization’s exclusive language and form.

“It feels as though AFAC supports a certain style of work. I think that it can actually support more diversity in styles and tackle more daring projects and ideas.”

Although AFAC systematically reflects on the artistic and social impact of its supported projects while identifying the interconnections, many people would like AFAC to provide more support for and to help foreground socially engaged and participatory forms of art. AFAC acknowledges its need to do more outreach to encourage community-based artistic initiatives to apply for funding.

“AFAC can better manage tensions between art for art’s sake and socially engaged work – our context demands it.”

AFAC is perceived as supporting highly polished and sophisticated artistic work produced by mid-career and established artists, even though the statistics show that just as many emerging artists receive support for their first major work. This perception might point to the need for AFAC to expand the types and forms of cultural production it supports, in part by diversifying its jurors to ensure program support for multiple forms and artistic languages.

Communication

AFAC’s communication infrastructure currently integrates various modes of branding and promotion that range from reports, its website, publicity, social media, special publications, books and infographics.

Its most common communication tools however are the following:

1. Reports
2. Website
3. Publicity, Advertising, and Social Media

1. REPORTS

AFAC’s annual reports over the last ten years integrate beautiful graphics, images, and excerpts and information about their projects; they are described as incorporating *“very good visuals that are not too institutional, not too arty – creative and straight to the point.”* Interestingly, 56% of the respondents were familiar with the annual reports, whereas 35% were not, highlighting the question: *“Is there a way to synthesize information from annual reports and share it in a more streamlined and attractive way?”*

One idea was that perhaps the concept and approach for an annual report can shift from a print, text-based summary to something more innovative, dynamic, and accessible to the general public, such as short film reports that can be streamed through social media as it is easier to facilitate widespread dissemination of reports through visuals and films rather than through the more traditional form.

2. WEBSITE

The website is the main source of information and communication about the grantees, programs, and application processes, functioning as the centerpiece for AFAC's identity and branding. The majority of respondents indicated ***"that the website is clear, friendly and informative,"*** while only 15% stated that the ***"website is not very functional."***

AFAC can hire communications staff or an external expertise to create multi-layered and innovative content for AFAC's website (i.e., to share grantee stories, production stills, short films), which would assist in and interface with publicity, advertising, and social media as well.

3. PUBLICITY, ADVERTISING, AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The majority of responses to AFAC's publicity and promotion mechanism ranged between poor to fair, indicating that they are only slightly aware of the organization's social media imprint and signaling that there is room to improve.

An important concern is how AFAC can balance expanding the organization's work and accomplishments, while also increasing visibility of its grantees' work to a wider public. ***"I would like AFAC to publicize more about its programs and the grantees' work through partnerships with different media outlets. It should not just depend on its website for disseminating information."*** Although 60% of the respondents judged dissemination of information about grantees as good, 20% said it was fair, and 15% reported it as poor. Generally, people would like to see more information about the grantees. ***"AFAC needs to have a broader communication strategy to reach a wider Arab public."***

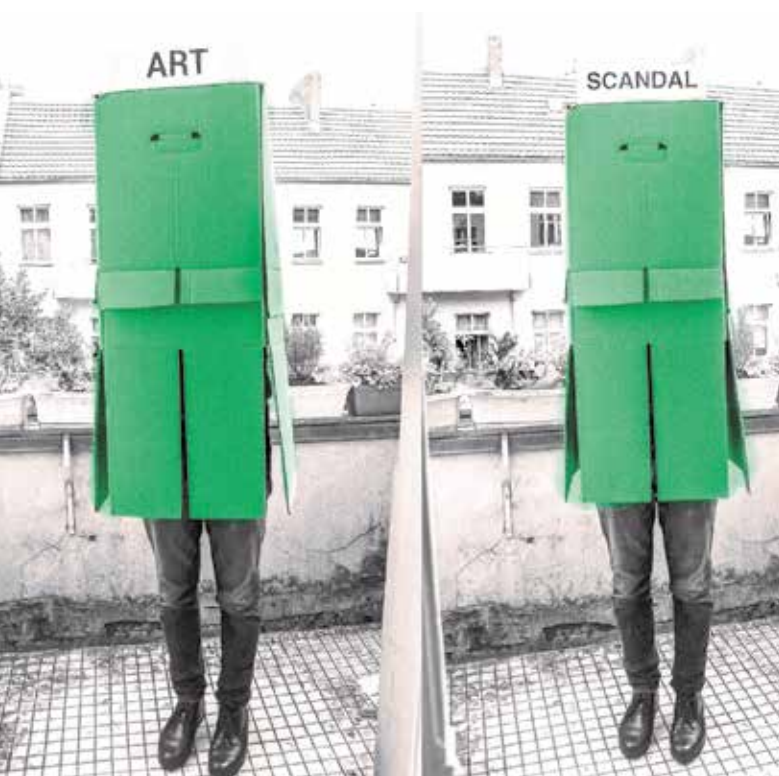
A main recommendation highlights that AFAC should invest more in communication and marketing, as its impressive accomplishments warrant being more widely publicized. ***"AFAC should advertise, publicize its grants and the projects it supports. There are still many people who are not familiar with AFAC, especially those outside the arts and culture circle."*** Besides exploring the

development of regular soundbites, tweets, or highlights for its website, the organization might also benefit from enhancing its existing social media footprint. For instance, it might develop social media campaigns to more greatly impact and reach out to the Arab public and international art communities.

AFAC could thus benefit from hiring a publicist who would activate a dynamic system for disseminating information about new work produced by grantees. Through innovative audio-visual and print media partnerships, the publicist could secure greater media exposure and thus increase circulation of the grantees' work both regionally and internationally. ***"We would like to see more presence of AFAC on TV channels, especially in the form of interviews with grantees presenting highlights of their work."*** There was also an interest in ***"more media presence at the grassroots level"*** in terms of local media and not just rely on regional media outlets.

There is a need for communication to become more dynamic, not only generated by AFAC's team, but also by its grantees and community members. ***"I think social media can be improved and personalized. Having the artists participate by uploading more info about the work will also help spread AFAC's mission and help create a network."***

Grantees also expressed an interest in increased interaction and exchange with AFAC, hoping to ***"stay in touch with past jurors to help build the community"*** noting that ***"not everyone checks the website regularly so perhaps there can be periodic updates on past grant recipients."*** Indeed, one of the main challenges for grantees is the issue of visibility in relation to the distribution and facilitation of partnerships. ***"AFAC could possibly highlight its grantees separately throughout the newsletters. This would give more visibility and facilitate the creation of more partnerships and synergies."*** These results suggest that AFAC is already recognized and appreciated as a platform for networking, connection, and community-building, and people want more opportunities to engage, interact, and collaborate.



Above, CULTURUNNERS tour in the United States
Left, Flyer of the performance "The Architects" by Youness Atbane

Grants Management and Organizational Development



Still from "Off Khartoum Sides" by Marwa Zein Al-Abdin Fadl

Introduction

“AFAC has succeeded in presenting itself as an accountable and transparent organization that engages with a diverse range of cultural activists.”

AFAC is known throughout the region as an organization that **“has raised the bar in terms of quality of work and organizational development, setting a standard which other art related institutions in the Arab world aspire for.”** Grantees praise its grantmaking management system (including the streamlined two-stage selection process and grants administration procedures of agreements, payments and reports) as **“flexible, streamlined and thorough — there is an unrivaled simplicity in AFAC’s application process.”**

A vast majority (90%) positively responded when asked whether AFAC has succeeded in transparently and fairly disseminating resources to artists and the cultural community. Over 75% rated AFAC’s administrative management process as fair to excellent. AFAC’s grantmaking model has been described as “transparent, credible, easy to navigate and straightforward.” **Moreover, its reputation as a grantmaking institution is excellent, with “good administrative systems in place.”**

Suggestions and recommendations for the grants management program can be identified in the following categories:

1. Grantmaking Process
2. Jury
3. Grant Amounts and Reporting
4. Transparency and Accountability
5. Funding Sources
6. Staffing and Governance

Grantmaking Process



Still from “Chopped” by Karam Ali

Currently, AFAC accepts proposals once a year for each category of support. Although there is satisfaction with the frequency of deadlines, many would like AFAC to consider offering two application deadlines a year per category, even if this means dividing allocated budgets in half per cycle. This added grant cycle would help meet exceeding demand and allow more opportunity and flexibility for grant-seekers. This would also ensure that grant-seekers would not have to wait an entire year to submit or resubmit their proposals if they were to miss the deadline or were not selected for support during a grant making cycle.

Another suggestion is to divide grants into small and large grant amounts, where small grants would be available as rolling grants, or twice a year. All of these suggestions need to be analyzed in relation to the impact on AFAC’s budget, time and administrative capacities.

AFAC accepts applications in both Arabic and English; however, some request that applications also be submitted in French. Interestingly, survey results reveal a clear majority of respondents preferred to communicate in English (47.2%), followed by Arabic (42.5%), and then French (10%), which raises the question: why do less than half of the respondents prefer to communicate in the Arabic language? As most artists and organizations prepare applications to submit to a number of funders, usually Western foundations, preparing one version in English is usually more efficient for applicants. In addition, most of the artistic and formal language used in these applications may not exist in Arabic, therefore applicants might prefer to express themselves in English or French.

Jury

“I never had a funding organization analyze my project better than me and recommended more funding than I requested”

The grantee selection process entails three stages: Pre-Selection, Jury Selection, and Grant Awards. Some respondents felt that applications should not be filtered through a pre-selection process, and that all complete grant proposals should proceed directly to the jury phase. Others mentioned that jurors should receive a complete list of all eligible applications to have a complete sense of the applicant pool and to understand the context and reasons for exclusion during pre-selection.

Respondents shared many suggestions and requests for direct assistance from the AFAC grant readers and/or jurors on how to improve their application. It was stated that it would be beneficial for all people submitting an application to receive a unified acknowledgement letter from AFAC that the application has been received.

“Some feedback would help us learn how to better fundraise for our projects.”



Still from "Street of Death" by Karam Ghossein

As well, it was suggested that grantees be immediately notified if they are filtered out during the pre-selection round, so they can pursue other sources of funding. They also stated that it would be helpful for "rejection letters" to include comments and feedback from the reader that would suggest whether they should apply again, or to a different category, or at a different stage in the project. ***"Perhaps AFAC can consider workshops or forums for applicants whose projects and applications were not selected to help them improve their proposal writing skills."*** Another suggestion was that AFAC include a list of other funding opportunities with the rejection letters.

It was noted that the guidelines for the pre-selection readers and the jury need clarification, highlighting the importance of an agreed-upon set of criteria for the decision-making process. ***"We have encountered in the past a negative experience with the selection process of AFAC: Last year, we were encouraged to apply for a grant for one of our programs. After submitting our application, we learned that it was filtered out during a pre-selection made by AFAC's team. This exclusion was not based on any administrative criteria, such as incomplete application or applying under a wrong category. Our application never reached the Jury and was denied a fair chance of being selected for funding. As mutual respect and trust are the foundations of any healthy community, it has become difficult to view how the institutional policies and practices of AFAC are in compliance with its proclaimed values and mission statement."***

When respondents were asked to evaluate AFAC's grant making decisions and selection process, 80% ranked the selection process between good and excellent, and that they highly regarded and appreciated AFAC's peer-to-peer jury system. ***"People trust the process of selection even if they weren't lucky."***

Although most respondents felt that ***"AFAC is doing a great job with jurors and a selection process that is forward looking and contemporary,"*** some expressed a greater need for transparency in how juries are formed, and about the pre-selection process by AFAC staff and readers' committees. Others questioned whether the entire jury process needed to be reassessed and redesigned to ensure fairness, efficiency, and transparency.

Additionally, despite the fact that all juries are comprised of 3 members, with attention given to geographic, age and gender diversity, people expressed a desire for- ***"a more diversified jury, and sometimes a younger one."*** Might this diversity be achieved by having five jurors instead of three? Another suggestion is that ***"past jurors can be enlisted as potential mentors and can encourage applications from certain unreached countries and communities."***

Grant Amounts and Reporting

When asked if AFAC's grants amount is reasonable and satisfactory, 70% of the respondents feel that the grant amounts are fair to excellent. ***"There are no production grants that cover significant amounts of project budgets in the region; AFAC does."***

However, there is also a perception and reality that the grants are not high enough especially because there are few sources of funding in the region and there are no legitimate substitutes to raise the difference. ***"Sometimes grant awards are much lower than the total cost of a project, which makes it difficult to complete the production with the intended quality."***

Another suggestion is that AFAC should increase the amounts per grant and support a larger percentage of the projects cost. ***"AFAC is doing a great job. But it should have more means to support projects with higher budgets. It is better to give bigger grants, even if is to fewer grantees."***

The grant amount is a source of ongoing discussion between AFAC's staff, board and jurors. What is clear is the great need and demand for funding within the context of limited resources. This is reflected by AFAC's ability to only grant support to 10 to 15 percent of submitted applications.

AFAC perhaps could also encourage or insist that grant applications include an artist fee, depending on project type and activity, as many artists forego covering their living and administrative costs by allocating the total grant amount towards production. This in turn has had a negative impact on the completion of the work, its quality and sustainability of the artists' career.

After a grant is awarded, the following procedures are applied:

1. Any grant of 10K and less: 60% upon contract signature; 40% after completion of work and submitting reports
2. Grants more than 10K (all categories except film): 50% upon contract signature; 25% after spending 80% of first installment and submitting interim reports; 25% after completion of work and submitting final reports
3. For film:
 - a. Production grant (always greater than 10K): 25% upon contract signature; 50% upon expenditure of 80% of first installment AND beginning of actual production; 25% upon film completion
 - b. Post-production: 50% upon contract signature; 50% upon picture lock

Grantees have reported that they struggle to finalize activities and projects without the final 25% of their grant. This disbursement breakdown should be analyzed to determine whether it offers the most effective incentive for people to finish their work.

Respondents also described the many issues they face when producing their final report. For some grantees, financial reporting can be challenging, especially for smaller projects in countries where receipts and paperwork can be difficult to obtain.

Perhaps AFAC can create specific guidelines for these reports, tailored to each grant category, in order to facilitate the process of acquiring more concrete and usable data. Perhaps streamlining the structure and format of the reports can contribute to attaining important quantitative and qualitative information about the grantees, such as how much support is allocated to emerging, mid-career, or established artists.



“Nehna wel Amar wel Jiran Festival” by Collectif Kahraaba

Transparency and Accountability

“It seems that AFAC is constantly improving its transparency with regards to its selection process. Can it also try and be more forthcoming about its internal policies and how it manages conflict of interests?”

There is a desire from the community for AFAC to render more public and visible its policies and procedures of conflict of interest for board, staff, partners, jurors, and grantees, and many believe these policies could influence standard practices in the region. It would be helpful to understand in a transparent and accountable way how AFAC manages conflicts of interest internally, as well as with its community of grantees, jurors, and partners. Moreover, the creation of an ongoing formal participatory process of review, feedback, and analysis with grantees and the constituency at large would be extremely important for AFAC as a learning and self-regulating process.

Although AFAC makes laudatory efforts to share its financial information with the public, there is a call to learn

more, and in a simplified manner, about its annual budget allocations, administrative expenditure, and funding sources. While 40% of respondents are aware of AFAC’s funding sources, another 40% indicated that they know little to nothing about them. This information serves as a benchmark of the respondents’ perceptions and familiarity with the Fund. Although 70% of respondents highly praise the level of transparency of AFAC, many still request more accessible information about the organizations’ funding sources. Despite the presence of funding sources and financials in the Donors and Resources section on AFAC’s website and in annual reports, it would be helpful if there was more detailed information about the amounts and allocation of funding on a yearly basis using simple graphics.

Another frequently noted request is for AFAC to improve geographic and national diversity amongst its staff and board, and that it maintain awareness of its increasing (though understandable) Lebanese character.

Funding Sources

AFAC is the leading regional independent cultural organization, with a strong and expanding fundraising capacity comprised of diverse stakeholders, individual philanthropists, and other international and local resources. No other fund in the region has managed to create such a diversified funding source. Today, AFAC raises a little over \$3 million a year, and is about to embark on an expanded campaign to raise \$20 million by 2020. In 2011, Arab sources of funding constituted about 10%, while in 2015 and 2016 this number has surpassed 35%, a highly encouraging trend. It is important to note that the increase in Arab sources of funding over the last two years is the result of AFAC’s Arab Creativity and Entrepreneurship Fund (ACEF), a new fundraising initiative which has invited individuals to buy ‘one thousand shares’ for a thousand dollars each, with the goal of securing a million dollars each year from individual donors.

This fundraising achievement is no small feat, given the regional philanthropic and political context, but it still falls short of the organization’s existential goal of generating the majority of its resources from local donors. It is important to emphasize that AFAC engages in a highly conscious and ethical process of acquiring funds, only soliciting funding and partnerships with individuals and institutions that support the same kind of values that are fundamental to the organization’s mission and have insured its continuous neutrality and independence.

Although AFAC’s financial credibility and growth has been praised, there have also been some concerns about its influence in the region. **“AFAC has pooled a large number of resources and pre-existent institutional grants, some of which have become exclusive to it. This has led to few opportunities for grants outside AFAC.”** Despite the fact that AFAC is constantly cultivating new donors in the region and internationally, with the intention of increasing the overall amount for the entire sector, there is a concern by artists and cultural organizations that AFAC in its fundraising process might be competing and centralizing direct resources that could be made available directly to

the field. *“AFAC should be very careful to not syphon from the limited resources for arts and culture in the region. It should search for new sources that are inaccessible to artists from the region and not compete for funding from the existing funding institutions that are already supporting the sector. Our sector should strive to multiply our sources of funding instead of centralizing resources into one institution as this would have a negative impact on the development of existing and new institutions in the region.”*

It is important to note that AFAC is very aware of its fundraising strength and power, and avoids implementing its own projects and programs at the expense of others. In fact AFAC sees itself as a buffer between the potential demands and influence that donors might have on artists and cultural production, and accepts funding that is aligned with the sector's priorities and values.

When respondents were asked about their comfort level with AFAC's funding sources, 65% noted that they are very comfortable. It is important to note, however, that 15% did not respond to this question (NA), which perhaps reflects a lack of information about AFAC's funding. AFAC has largely filled an important gap in the arts and culture sector by providing direct support and funding for Arab artists and institutions that were previously dependent on Western or foreign donors. That said, AFAC cannot be the sole grant giver in the region, and many more complimentary initiatives can be created inspired by its success.

Respondents express concern about AFAC's sustainability and how successful AFAC has been in creating ongoing local Arab funding sources. Some concerns and questions about funding include: Are the strategies for increasing local funding innovative, creative, and consistently pursued? What are the expectations from the region's new Arab funding sources? How is AFAC influencing and informing donors' perceptions of arts and culture in the region? Can AFAC remain independent? Is AFAC developing original fundraising plans in the region that include individual donors? Is there a methodology to integrate AFAC's visibility in the region with the fundraising strategies? Is there a way to decrease the cost of the fundraisers so that more funding goes directly to the artists? It is worthwhile to mention here that until 2016 no more than 5% of AFAC's annual budget was allocated to fundraising and communications expenses, while 85% has gone to grants. AFAC is exploring sponsorship opportunities to cover costs associated with large fundraising events in a desire to allocate more funds for grants.

Clearly, the coming years will demand rigor, planning, and dedication in terms of resource mobilization and fundraising campaigns targeting institutional donors, individual philanthropists, and corporate support. A detailed resource mobilization strategy would be helpful to develop at this particular juncture to help stabilize the organization's finances for the coming decade.

“AFAC needs to diversify its funding sources in order to remain sustainable and not be dependent on a few donor organizations. I think this has already started in the last few years and I hope it continues to develop.”

It is crucial that AFAC begin the process of creating an endowment that will sustain future generations of artists in the region, and expand its fundraising from Arab individuals and institutional donors to include reaching middle income donors.



Still from “Benzine” by Sarah Abidi

“I hope that AFAC will lead the way in reaching the goal of attaining a large ratio of funding from regional supporters. There is plenty of money in the region and raising awareness that this wealth can be channeled into arts and culture would be the greatest achievement that AFAC could fulfill.”

It is recommended that in-depth creative strategies be developed on possible alternative funding sources over the next few years. Can fundraising be expanded by including corporate sponsors, creative industries, and new geographical areas like Asia? Can AFAC explore income-generating projects and initiatives that maintain the integrity of the organization while advancing aspects of its social and cultural mission? Can AFAC explore addressing some of its constituencies' needs for greater dissemination, circulation, and market opportunities for cultural products, while ensuring alternative and consistent source of funding for the organization and the artists?

Since grantees seem to already desire more interaction and connection, perhaps AFAC can also imagine ways for grantees to at some point give something back to

the organization (in the form of, for instance, financial donations, artworks, mentorship, etc.) to help expand resources and enhance AFAC's collaborative spirit.

Staffing and Governance

AFAC's staff and team receive overwhelming praise and admiration for their professionalism from grantees, partners, and funders. There is wide appreciation for how much the organization manages to accomplish with a small team. The results from the survey convey that 53% of respondents rate AFAC's staff as excellent, and another 40% say they are very good. ***"The leadership is very professional, skilled and resourceful, the team is solid and manages to deal with complicated logistics."***

The professionalism, transparency, and productivity of AFAC staff set high standards, however respondents noted that ***"the staff seems overloaded and very busy and that sometimes communication between grantees and AFAC staff can be very slow."***

From the survey, 70% of respondents felt they had a significant amount of knowledge about AFAC's staff, remarking that the ***"staff are full of integrity and their relationships with the community is special."*** Yet, a notable almost 30% of respondents conveyed a low or nonexistent familiarity. Perhaps AFAC can analyze grantees' needs in relation to their capacity to find realistic ways to communicate with a broader constituency.

It is clear from the assessment that hiring a communication staff member or team dedicated to areas of development and fundraising (both institutional and individual donors) is urgent to address growing and diverse communication needs. AFAC's Beirut headquarters has meant that its staff are all Lebanese; while acknowledging the practical reasons for this, the community feels that a truly Arab regional fund should strive to have a staff from different Arab countries. Although the current Lebanese employment restricts the hiring of non-residents and citizens, AFAC can explore ways to rely on diverse representatives cadre of volunteers, jurors, spokespeople and board members.

The community has expressed their desire to know and engage more with the organization's governing board. It is relevant for AFAC to consider developing a strategy to expand and diversify the board in accordance with the organization's strategic needs and fundraising goals. Suggestions include that the board expand its diversity in terms of expertise and sector representation and age group, in addition to including ***"dynamic super wealthy individuals,"*** as is customary with other international cultural organizations.



Programmatic Focus



Still from "Off Khartoum Sides" by Marwa Zein Al-Abdin Fadl

Program Areas

With a wide array of grant areas and categories, and as one of the largest sources of money dedicated to cultural production development in the region, AFAC has provided opportunities to a vast number of artists and cultural projects, resulting in a continuous output of exceptional production. This is AFAC's area of expertise and ***"most cultural production of value today is supported and sustained because of AFAC."***

Program Categories

AFAC's grant categories are highly appreciated by artists and cultural organizations in the region, and seem to adequately reflect their needs in terms of genres, styles, and media. Cinema has received the largest number of grants, followed by Research, Training, and Regional Events (RTR), Visual Arts, Music, Performing Arts, and Literature. Valued as transparent and one of the fairest allocations of resources to the sector, the grant award program offers an independent source of funding for artists and cultural practitioners.

"They seem to consistently fund projects that push boundaries and are perceived as risky by other funders. They judge on artistic merit not commercial viability and they don't censor or interfere in content. They have made so many artists happy."

When asked "how would you evaluate AFAC's grant making program?" an overwhelming 80% of respondents strongly agreed that it was excellent. Moreover, 96% indicated they were highly satisfied with AFAC's six main grant making categories named above. The program categories seem adequate and broad enough to accommodate various needs and forms of production. Additionally, there is a strong alignment between the needs of the region and AFAC's current forms of support, with over 70% strongly confirming that its grants programs are the most knowledgeable, suitable, and effective.

There is considerable amount of gratitude for the Regional Events, Training, and Research (RTR) category, as it allows for a breadth of cultural and artistic development to occur without the pressure to produce new work. This is especially needed in the region, which lacks so many elements of a healthy cultural ecology. ***"I especially appreciate the research grants because they are the only source of support in the region to help us explore and ask questions. Can these be expanded?"*** Some have suggested that research and training should be separated from regional events to ensure better cohesion and focus, as well as to respond to the vast needs in the region for expanded and improved knowledge production and professional development.

"We would like to see AFAC support organizations' administrative expenses and operation costs, because nobody else is willing to cover these in the region."

While most of AFAC's grants are allocated towards the production of new work, organizations are eligible for funding to receive project-based support in visual arts, performing arts and music.

Grants to organizations typically cover costs for training programs, festivals, exhibitions, presentations, touring, and so on. There is a major desire to see AFAC move beyond short-term and activity-based funding towards support for arts organizations' operational costs. It is believed that this will help improve sustainability and stability in the field, and would allow organizations to improve their capacities and infrastructure. Could this be explored under a separate grant scheme or an expanded component of RTR? Could such support be structured as 2- to 3-year grant periods? It could be strategic to roll out this grant category with priority for organizations that have previously received AFAC project support.

Despite widespread satisfaction with the grant program areas and categories, for some the grants framework seemed outdated, a bit too conventional, and traditional. For instance, they may not present a clear fit for experimental films that exceed the cinema category, interdisciplinary and technological forms of production, or performance art. One respondent suggested, ***"I think these categories could be reformulated or revisited to better reflect new contemporary modes of production."*** Others thought that the grant categories and special programs were complicated and confusing, and suggested that AFAC consider simplifying and streamlining them.

Although AFAC supports interdisciplinary projects within existing categories, a strong recommendation is that it creates a new interdisciplinary grant category to reflect how contemporary artists are increasingly working today.



Still from "A Gaza Weekend" by Basil Khalil

TIDE

"Tide" by Hussien Ibrahim

CINEMA

"There is no substitute for AFAC in the region with regards to support for emerging filmmakers, not just in terms of production but also in terms of distribution and presentation."

The film scene in the Arab region is booming, although still in its early stages and vastly underdeveloped. However, with AFAC's support, there is a clear sense of a growing movement and a dynamism that many attribute to its presence. **"AFAC has given filmmakers a new sense of freedom and independence that wasn't around prior to its existence."** AFAC is valued by the film community for providing crucial production support, but also for organizing screening programs and creating opportunities for filmmakers and producers to meet each other and present Arab cinema both regionally and internationally.

Funding for film production from the Gulf countries has dwindled over the last few years which has put increased pressure on AFAC to support more films from the region. This has meant giving more grants with smaller amounts, which some view to be counterproductive making it harder for film projects to find additional funding to help materialize the projects. Some have suggested that AFAC should make less grants, but for larger amounts to ensure success and quality of films.

Some would like to see this program category renamed "Film" instead of "Cinema" to include and reflect the breadth of genres and styles explored by filmmakers in the region. Additional suggestions were also received for AFAC to support thematic and special focus areas in its Cinema program. **"Can AFAC for instance, have a special focus on human rights films?"**

Because AFAC is one of the few and most significant film funders in the region, there is increased competition amongst filmmakers. **"This has placed established filmmakers in competition with emerging ones who might be working on their first film. Could AFAC create a separate film production category, that specifically focuses on emerging filmmakers to help alleviate this tension?"** Still, **"AFAC provided grants to films that would otherwise be very difficult, if not impossible to fund. Having AFAC on board with a decent percentage of the budget always encourages other Arab and non-Arab funders to support these projects."** Indeed, there are suggestions that AFAC can help develop partnerships with European and international agencies to expand relationships between Arab filmmakers and international markets, as well as to support both pre- and post- film development. While the program currently supports projects in pre-production development phase, production or post-production phases, there is great desire for AFAC to expand its pre-production support even though they currently support it through the development or production phase. Some would also like to see a clearer articulation as to why some projects receive support for production, but not post-production. **"Can feedback be conveyed to applicants following the jury process and decisions?"**

For many producers in the region, the fact that AFAC has only one application deadline per year is frustrating – **"Could AFAC open more calls for proposals each year?"**—while others have proposed that AFAC also provide support for producers not only when they are representing a specific film, but also to help them advance their capacities and their planning for future development of projects. **"In Film, especially independent film, it's wise to gear dedicated support to producers of independent film as there is a lack of infrastructure, proper education and distribution channels; and they have to operate within a competitive international scene that is much more equipped and facilitated around the world."**

Regarding application materials, several respondents asked that the Fund request applicants submit photos, synopses, and a more complete set of materials. Some see it as a problem that supporting materials for shortlisted film proposals are requested in English, seeing this as elitist and detached from the regional cultural context.

Since people in the sector are overwhelmed with the problems and complexities of film distribution both regionally and internationally, AFAC may have an opportunity to lead the sector toward increased reflection and to spark innovation. ***“Can AFAC lead a regional study and analysis around this problem and propose a strategy and advocate for options and possible solutions for distribution?”***

LITERATURE

“AFAC has contributed to the development of the literature scene in the Arab region by supporting daring and alternative writers that would never receive support from government-based publishing houses nor be eligible for support from traditional conservative publishers like the ones in the Gulf.”

Many in the sector speak of a complex crisis in terms of Arab literature and contemporary Arab writing. Although there is a consistent increase of published novels each year (in the hundreds) and awards granted to these writers, the situation seems dire for other forms of literature and writing, including poetry, novellas, children’s book, youth literature and literary criticism. In these genres the number of emerging authors is low, the amount of published new works is almost non-existent. Outreach to new readers for all forms of literature is very limited.

The Literature program initially supported publications in poetry and prose, fiction and nonfiction, online and in-print, publishing houses, libraries, literary magazines, as well as individual authors, poets, critics, book illustrators, and translation projects.

“AFAC has enabled unknown writers to come to the foreground.”

Dissatisfied with the quality and the breadth of the proposals in this category, AFAC decided to initiate an emerging fiction writer program. In 2014, AFAC suspended its broader literature grants program, which had been part of its annual open call since 2007, and launched “The AFAC Novel Writing Program” a focused intensive training and production initiative.

Yet many in the field perceive this shift as unfortunately limiting. Some recommendations include that this program revert back to a full-fledged and more open grant category. ***“I think AFAC should do more to support literature, through publishing, residencies, production of audio books, and creating a literature award.”*** They also believe the category should be called ‘Writing’ and not ‘Literature,’ as it is more inclusive of the diversity of genres. ***“It would be worthwhile if AFAC would consider translating the works that it helps produce, so that they are made available to wider international audiences.”*** It is clear that this grant category requires a great deal of analysis and reflection in order to help it develop into the robust program that many would like to see.



MUSIC

The contemporary music scene in the region is blossoming. Young people are innovating with genres and styles of exceptional quality and creating new audiences and followers (primarily through social media), despite the dominance of Arab pop music in the market and on commercial broadcasting platforms.

However, the sector still needs a wide range of support. The main impediment to its development is the poor level of distribution and commercial viability that would help sustain musicians and the infrastructure of their sector. As such there is a growing desire for AFAC to go beyond providing production support for albums by seeking out broader solutions to this distribution and marketing predicament.

Furthermore, respondents desire a greater diversity in supported musical genres and forms. ***“I wish that AFAC would consider having different categories for different music genres, such as classical, world, pop, traditional etc. instead of having just one general music section.”*** Others wish to see AFAC increase the support for composers and producers in addition to musicians.

While artists deeply appreciate support to produce new work, they want to see AFAC be more proactive in developing solutions that address the broader issues of sustainability. Can AFAC partner with the sector at all stages? Can it have a more entrepreneurial approach by innovating new platforms and strategies that would help address these issues, while generating income for the artist and for AFAC?



top right, Photo by Khyam Allami
above, “Symphonies of the Self” by Hasan Hujairi

VISUAL ARTS

The visual arts are by far the most prominent, internationally recognized, and financially supported art form in the region. This is greatly due to the growing ecology over the last twenty years of collectors, biennials, dealers, art fairs, curators, and increasing overall international interest in art work from the region. AFAC complements this growing ecology by providing critically needed support for emerging artists who are not yet part of the art world as well as to established artists whose work would not be produced by other market-based sources.

Given the regional vibrancy, it is not surprising that the visual arts category receives one of the highest numbers of proposals for funding. One suggestion is for AFAC to expand support to more emerging and experimental forms of visual art, as well as to conceptual research based-work.

“As individual artists, one of the challenges we face is that we produce high quality work, but we don’t have the equipment and high quality production materials in the region. We are constantly struggling with printing, photography, finding projectors for our video works.” How can AFAC reflect on the challenges facing contemporary visual artists in the region, which include limited materials, production facilities, and properly-equipped exhibition venues?



Above, Poster of the performance “Karasi” by Assirk Assaghir
Right, Still from “Daoud’s winter” by Koutaiba Al Janabi

PERFORMING ARTS

AFAC’s performing arts grants are open to classical and experimental theatre and dance, and entail support for productions and performances. Ten years ago, contemporary dance form was virtually non-existent in the region, except for a small number of western-trained choreographers and dancers. Today, the picture is radically different: there is a surge of contemporary dance companies, training programs, dancers, and choreographers. Although regionally it is probably still the most nascent art form, there is a growing community of practice and engaged audiences, especially among young people. The dance scene is growing, fervent, and is an emblem of resistance and cathartic liberation in light of highly regimented social norms and oppressive societies.

“Especially in a field like dance, that is usually less funded, AFAC has facilitated the gradual emergence of a dance community in the Arab region, that is still growing, and still needs a lot more to become prominent like other fields.” AFAC is engaged with and supportive of the growing contemporary dance in the region; however, many would like to see more expanded support for dancers, choreographers, dance companies, training, and production.

Significant challenges, however, still infringe on the performing arts’ ability to attract new audiences and generate income, as is the case in more developed social contexts. The limited availability of professionals, such as dramaturges, lighting artists, stage managers, stage designers etc., negatively impacts the quality of performing arts productions throughout the region. Another impediment is the relatively high cost of productions, as they are collective and participatory in nature and involve large production teams. The scale of productions also limits their ability for touring, as it is very costly and there are many regional and international restrictions on mobility. ***“I think AFAC should support initiatives for distribution of the performing arts. It produced a lot of productions which circulate much less than other fields because the performing arts needs a special market development and without it Arab artists will always stay dependent.”***





Cinemarif in Tangier, Morocco

Special Programs

AFAC continues to develop special grant programs that reflect unique and current needs of the region, such as: The AFAC Documentary Program, The AFAC Novel Writing Program, The Arab Documentary Photography Program, and most recently The Arab European Creative Platform.

A significant majority of respondents feel that Special Programs based on specific themes and needs are a highly successful way to create targeted impact and help move the needle for an issue, or to form and address an issue in a tangible way. When asked whether AFAC should initiate more thematic programs, 57% said yes.

It is important to note, however, that 10% indicated that the question did not apply to them, and many decided to skip it altogether, which might indicate a lack of familiarity with these programs. Perhaps their structure as short-term, specifically focused in an art form or practice, and often with a pedagogical goal means that the thematic programs lack the same visibility and differentiation from the general grants and therefore draw less interest from practitioners in the field.

There was much appreciation and excitement by people who had either participated in or been associated with these special programs. ***“Special programs are great, especially because they favor educational and training opportunities that help advance artists’ craft and careers and help promote a focus on certain types of work.”***

Once again, when probed about whether AFAC should increase special program areas and reduce funding through its core grants program, a significant majority of respondents hoped that AFAC would continue to prioritize open grants instead. ***“AFAC should continue to favor open grant making as opposed to gear more of its funds to special thematic programs.”***

New Grant Ideas

DISTRIBUTION GRANTS

“AFAC’s impact is limited because grantees don’t receive a lot of visibility and opportunities for distribution and circulation.”

There is a clear and urgent need for support in the region for expanding modes of distribution and circulation, which directly and enormously impact the sustainability of artists’ careers, the generation of income, and development of audiences. It has been recommended that AFAC create a special grant program to support distribution and help productions reach the widest possible audience.

While some grantees feel that an entirely new and separate grant program is needed to address this issue, others have suggested that AFAC should consider providing additional earmarked distribution resources to production grants. Others would additionally like AFAC staff to provide guidance and mentorship on distribution methodologies and strategies. “Grant recipients need an engaged follow up from AFAC in order to insure proper distribution and publicity of the work. It shouldn’t just end at being selected and granted a fund but have more guiding processes and support throughout.”

SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY-BASED ART

“I wish that AFAC would support art and activism and community cultural projects at the grassroots level and not just ignore them.” Given the dire state of affairs, including poverty, inequity, violence, displacement of people, and absence of social safety nets, much of the regions hope for development and change needs to be driven by marginalized local and grassroots communities. A growing movement of practice that engages these communities in creative and artistic production must be supported.

Suggestions include that AFAC expand its grant making to include more community-based art projects and programs that will support and encourage the production of culture and art in civil society. AFAC could explore supporting community-based works that are more participatory and pedagogical, and exist outside of the centers of the art world. Often these self-sustained and poorly supported initiatives help build social cohesion and pedagogical skills that bring hope, inspiration, and economic vitality. Community-based arts tend to take the form of public and street art, as well as arts education and cultural programs for children and youth. Moreover, they often address social concerns and help advance civic engagement and participation.

Many would like to see AFAC offer dedicated support to community-based residencies, workshops, projects, and forms of social practice that enable the development and self-determination of marginalized and under-represented communities.

STIMULUS FUNDS

Several grantees and professionals in the field expressed the desire to see already-funded projects eligible for additional, if smaller and more focused support. This would take place through a streamlined and simplified application process, given that these projects have already been screened and approved by a jury, and are already in AFAC’s network of grantees. Some referred to this as a second round of support.

In many instances, once production is at a well-advanced stage or completed, unforeseen costs and dimensions that are important for their success emerge. Sometimes, additional production money is needed, while other times there are costs related to marketing, touring, distribution, etc. Access to this fund would help grantees deepen the impact and reach of their creative interventions and artistic productions.

MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

“I see great value in AFAC assigning artistic mentors to work with young emerging artists. A person whose function is to support, help with ideas, networking, or even training on certain levels. This can be done via Skype, through weekly or bi-weekly sessions, it does not have to be a person living in the same country as the recipient. If needed the mentor can also travel for a few days to spend more intensive time with the recipient.”

Considering the limited infrastructure of support for emerging and young artists in the region, especially those residing outside of capital cities, new models need to be imagined that help address the isolation and accompanying lack of knowledge and exposure in the absence of educational frameworks, training programs, and a vibrant



Photo by Nadia Bseiso from her documentary photography project “Infertile Crescent”

artistic community. Addressing this issue in a traditional manner by building the needed infrastructure is clearly impossible. However, AFAC is in a unique position to leverage its relationships with mid-career and established artists and cultural professionals to help mentor and accompany those who require such guidance.

Mentorship could help reach a new generation of artists and create personal and professional linkages and relationships. This form of artistic accompanying could represent a very important stage in the development of a young artist's career. Perhaps AFAC can help pilot such a program, which would provide production support to mentored artists and income stream for the mentors. One interviewee recommended that ***“peer to peer mentorship can be a good model to explore regionally, across ages and experiences, to share information, support, exchange and transfer knowledge. This helps to produce change-makers.”***

Capacity Development

There is an overwhelming conviction and desire that AFAC should continue to focus on production grants and the occasional special program grants, despite the sector's clear need for more training and capacity development. When asked if AFAC should offer workshops on capacity building, 60% of responders say it would be a great idea and 20% disagree. Many support the idea and see the importance of capacity development for the field, but think that AFAC should outsource this work ***“and create long-term partnerships with organizations that can provide capacity development and building.”*** Or, they think AFAC should possibly expand ways the Fund currently supports training, education, and capacity development through its RTR

grant category. ***“AFAC is uniquely positioned to help bridge training and production through its programs.”***

The vast majority of respondents think AFAC should continue to prioritize grant making (63%), so perhaps AFAC can support capacity development through a mentorship program (similar to the proposed idea to mentor artists) tailored for projects and institutions.

AFAC can also explore developing long-term strategic partnerships with cultural and academic institutions that train cultural managers and are involved in alternative education and professional development skills for artists. Some equally would like to see AFAC provide grant support in the form of scholarships for specialized diplomas and degrees in various areas of art and culture. ***“As art education is problematic in the region and inadequate, can AFAC consider a new category for scholarships for study abroad? Or a category of support for local educational/pedagogical workshops/training?”***

Networking

“It would be great if AFAC would organize regional networking events. The region suffers from a lack of freedom and many political restrictions on artists and cultural innovators. We are in desperate need for engagement and dialogue.”

An area that emerged of utmost importance for AFAC's future goals is to build and sustain a community-like network amongst grantees and others that can facilitate cultural exchange and enable grantees to see each other's work. ***“What so far has been missing, is the possibility for artists to connect and exchange via an AFAC platform. For example, the Anna Lindh Foundation brings its grantees face-to-face together once a year, and has its members online in a database. This enables new partnerships and networking to emerge.”*** Perhaps AFAC can initiate an annual meeting of grantees and partners to facilitate networking and information exchange. These meetings can bring together the entire grantee community, or can be organized at regional levels, city-wide, or by discipline.

Aside from resolving the issues of isolation that some grantees experience, this can create opportunities for long-term partnership and exchange at the regional level. By expanding attendance by potential philanthropists and AFAC's institutional partners, these gatherings could also be opportunities for pitching and kick-starting new projects.

Perhaps in lieu of or in addition to a physical gathering, AFAC can develop a participatory digital platform that is largely self-managed by its grantees. Such an online forum for exchange and networking would achieve greater visibility for AFAC, as well as for individual artists and the creative community.



Still from “Amal” by Mohamed Siam

“What I would like is the possibility to meet and interact with the interdisciplinary fellow grantees. Even if only by exchanging, experiencing and seeing other works in order to get a better idea of what is being produced in the region and an opportunity to reach out and interact with my peers.”

Dissemination and Audience Engagement

“Although AFAC enables artists to produce their work, the opportunity to reach broader audiences and develop diverse networks of dissemination is very frustrating. We are stuck in terms of distribution and access to audiences, and this in turn limits our cultural and social impact.”

The great need, expectation, and urgency for AFAC to prioritize the issue of dissemination in a strategic manner repeatedly emerged in this study. The community struggles with circulation, distribution, and audience/public engagement in all sectors and fields.

“We are asking AFAC to really challenge itself, to address the problem of dissemination by any means it finds suitable.”

Given the current regional financial, cultural and social challenges, AFAC’s impact on society remains rather limited, precisely because there is such poor dissemination and limited public discourse around new cultural production. Although **“culture is the only space where discussion is still open and possible”**, this potential is currently a missed opportunity, because the works are not disseminated. The possibility for this engagement with innovative and pertinent work is not happening at an impactful level.

One grantee stated that AFAC **“lacks an initiative for distribution, not much is done afterwards in helping the artist reach a larger and wider audience.”** It is recommended that AFAC initiate a new grant category for distribution: circulation of work that promotes outreach to diverse audiences.

There are several suggestions for how this issue can be addressed. AFAC can provide additional support and technical information to all funded projects through its existing grant program to improve dissemination, circulation, and activation. Another suggestion is to create a separate grant category that specifically focuses on this issue, creating a pilot program with a selected limited number of projects each year to receive financial support and professional mentorship to develop and implement strategies of dissemination and public engagement.



Mai Masri at the AFAC Film Week in Tunisia - 2016

These strategies would include marketing plans, media campaigns, pedagogical tools for education programs, public engagement, and income-generating methodologies.

Another possibility is for AFAC to annually showcase more new production and the work of grantees by establishing long-term partnerships with festivals, biennials, art fairs, cultural centers, educational institutions, and so on.

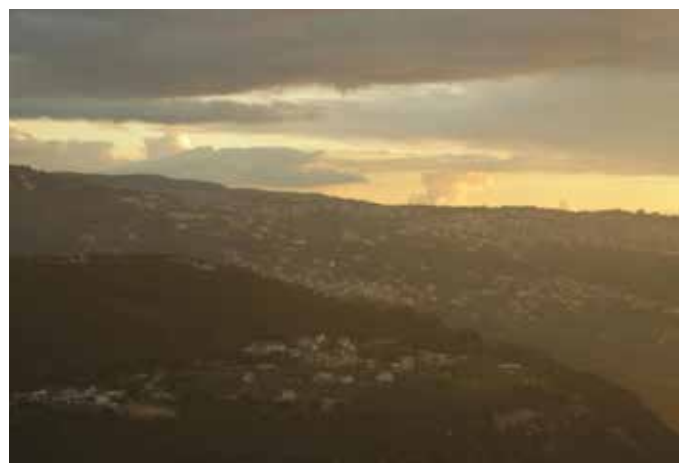
Acknowledging that a significant obstacle is the market viability and limited commercial platforms that can help distribute current cultural products in the region, a recommendation is to firstly study and analyze those dynamics. Solutions could be to either partner with emerging creative industries and e-commerce platforms, or to establish a new structure that could take on this task.

Knowledge Production

“AFAC should be funding more art and culture research and intellectual production, not just artistic production.”

AFAC’s unique position in the Arab region demands an extensive awareness of the intellectual and cultural themes, patterns, and ideas emerging from its vast community of applicants and grantees. A significant concern of some respondents is that **“AFAC is operationally efficient but not very intellectually aware.”** The day-to-day grant-making process is so extensive and pervasive that there is very little time and space in the organizational process for reflection, dissemination, and communication of the knowledge base they have on the current political and social issues affecting arts and culture in the region.

When asked how well AFAC produces communication and knowledge about the regional creative sector, respondents feel that overall AFAC delivers good information about the creative sector in the Arab world. However, 30% of the responders rated the communication between poor to fair, which indicates room for improvement. **“AFAC has room for growth as a thought leader regionally and internationally.”** Aside from the important and essential work of grantmaking, fundraising, and program reporting,



it is important and essential for AFAC to explore more in-depth research endeavors that will provide the public with richer information and deeper analysis. ***“They could be even more substantive and deal with important issues and go beyond advertising, fundraising and newsy updates.”***

One interviewee stated that AFAC ***“has the potential to become an intellectual leader in the region and internationally.”*** Through an intellectually engaged approach, AFAC can initiate a “think tank” process that develops a critical analysis of knowledge and production in the region. ***“AFAC could invest more in their own thought leadership role, as the donor role is a limited one. They could be and ought to be convening, stimulating more discussions and commission research. An example of this are the travel reports.”*** It is recommended that AFAC begins to produce materials that are analytical and that advance knowledge, not only descriptive and technical reports. The organization should examine how its programs and grantees are creating opportunities for dialogue, engagement and social change.

AFAC can also commission writers and thinkers to produce critical writings and publications that reflect on the content and impact of the grantees’ work in the region. As an organization, AFAC already houses an incredible database of the history of art in the region over the last 10 years, comprised of work it has supported, as well as applications that never received funding. From this database, critical in-depth analysis and discussion of themes, trends, and movements can be mined, creating a more intellectually-oriented platform to reflect on the region’s arts and culture. These critical writings, along with stories collected from the grantees, contribute to an extensive and invaluable archive of ***“the collective memory of our contemporary art movement.”*** Furthermore, this database system is an opportunity for a more proactive and interactive

platform and interface for exchange between the grantees, researchers, and future applicants. Lastly, perhaps AFAC can also periodically initiate a market research study that maps interdisciplinary themes of art and culture in the region.

Many respondents felt that there is indeed an openness and willingness for people to meet and brainstorm with AFAC staff and board about the intellectual and critical areas for research. ***“If AFAC is supporting research it should do so more rigorously and explore the possibilities of symposium, panels as well as involvement of graduate students in producing new knowledge.”***

Philanthropy

Over the last ten years the region has witnessed a significant development in philanthropy for arts and culture and AFAC is a major contributing factor for this phenomenon. AFAC is widely recognized to be the leader in the cultivation of individual donors, creating a philanthropic network that has great future potential.

“I would like to see AFAC succeed in mobilizing more regional wealth towards regional cultural artistic production.” An important mandate for AFAC is to expand its funding from within the region, and to develop partnerships that would widen its philanthropic network. In order to have a better understanding of existing donor networks and their potential for the future, ***“AFAC could lead a study on the changing philanthropic landscape in the region for arts and culture.”***

A potential idea is for AFAC is to develop special modules and outreach programs to cultivate and educate emerging philanthropists in the region. A ‘Philanthropy Working Group’ can be established for Arab donors that includes trainings, discussions, and analysis about regional needs and different models of support.

AFAC can also initiate an annual award to honor arts and culture philanthropists that show commitment and appreciation for the organization and creative expression in the region. Such an award can help bring publicity to AFAC and set standards of excellence for the region.

Lastly, AFAC could facilitate opportunities and platforms for philanthropists and artists to meet, exchange, and share

intimate knowledge about cultural production and artistic process and the needs of the region.

Given AFAC's unique and explicitly stated objective to help develop philanthropy for arts and culture in the region, AFAC should strive in the coming years to experiment, innovate with mechanisms and initiatives to help garner broader participation and investment from individual philanthropists as it has managed so successfully to do through the Arab Creativity and Entrepreneurship Fund.

AFAC's staff and board are currently developing plans for an expanded strategy to nurture local philanthropy by linking this into their future communication plan and campaigns.

Advocacy

"AFAC is in a position today to influence international grant makers in the region and to advocate for more funding directed towards cultural production in a more equitable and meaningful way. They have the possibility to help transform the funding landscape thus creating a more open and prolific cultural milieu."

AFAC is unrivalled in its reach and capacity to convey a comprehensive analysis and understanding of arts and culture from the region; therefore, it is well-positioned to advocate for the needs and priorities of artists and cultural producers in the Arab world. Whether this happens through

local and regional decision-makers, or international agencies and governments, AFAC is increasingly perceived and expected to lead on issues of policy and advocacy.

When asked whether AFAC should explore relationships with state cultural policies, or interface with the public sector, many held the opinion that ***"there are no real opportunities for cultural policies in the Arab region, and therefore AFAC should not make this a priority."***

Others acknowledged that other organizations in the region work on cultural policy issues, and that AFAC should prioritize grant making, production, and services to artists and the cultural sector. However, given its leadership role and its success, AFAC can continue to influence international donor strategies, and inform funding streams on the region's priorities and realities.

It is important to note that AFAC has clearly outlined in their objectives a commitment to:

1. Advocate for fair, transparent, and accountable access to resources to the artistic community;
2. Reduce barriers to public participation in arts and culture; and,
3. Encourage investments in the arts through tax revenues, public and private investment, and entrepreneurial business practices.

It is important that AFAC in the coming ten years help advance and crystallize these advocacy objectives; the organization can take advantage of the opportunity to mobilize artists, grantees, and jurors to act as ambassadors and spokespeople, together advocating for a better environment for arts and culture in the region.



Photo by Muhammad Salah from his documentary photography project "I Want to be Visible"

Conclusion

La Semaine AFAC du Cinéma Arabe Indépendant

Du 25 mai au 1^{er} juin

أسبوع
آفاق
السينمائي
2016
25 ماي - 1 جوان

CinéMadart Carthage / Le Rio Tunis سينمادار قرطاج / الريبو تونس

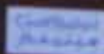
Des séances gratuites et gratuites des œuvres

محرمات مجانية ومجانية للآثار



afac.tn

الأسبوع السينمائي الأفريقي
أسبوع أفق الأفلام



afac 2016

“I can’t imagine what would happen to the sector if AFAC was to disappear”

In a region experiencing tumultuous change and dire conditions for human and civil rights, AFAC has successfully and firmly stood as a beacon of inspiration, a magnet for creativity, and an influential leader in the arts and cultural sector in the Arab region. It enjoys exceedingly high levels of admiration, recognition, and praise from both the Arab region’s arts and culture community and international cultural institutions. As a key arts and culture funder in the region, its potential to help individuals, communities, and nations realize a shared humanity through both critical and cathartic new works underscores the urgency of sustaining and renewing its mandate and expanding its reach.

Based on recommendations and reflections from survey respondents and working group participants, as well as analysis of AFAC’s history and the regional and international sector context, areas of needed improvement, opportunity, and risk were identified. As the coming decade promises to be a necessary period of growth, expansion, and deepening of AFAC’s work, staff, leadership, board, and partners must be aware, visionary, and responsible. AFAC’s new leadership must aim to deepen the organisation’s vision and footprint, while continuing to prioritize transparency and inclusion, ensuring that stakeholders are aware of how it identifies regional needs and makes strategic decisions to meet them. The management and the board have committed to a process of continuous reflection and evaluation in 2017 and beyond. AFAC is putting together focus groups for each program category to dig deeper into the needs and grantmaking processes of each area of support. This is in line with the organization’s desire and awareness for the need for deeper and more participatory forms of engagement and reflection with its constituency.

Crucially, in its grant making and other efforts, AFAC must avoid becoming a gate-keeper and thereby centralizing power, limited resources, and cultural capital. Can it avoid both elitism and populism? To do so, it must possess the wisdom and artfulness to share power and resources: to grow in tandem with the rest of the regional cultural ecology through increased efforts to delegate, partner, enable, and outsource when the infrastructure exists elsewhere. AFAC is already very aware of these dynamics and steers away from initiating and implementing programs, capacity building and training except in two specialized time-bound programs, writing and photography. However, fine tuning and rendering public its strategic plan and goals for the coming years will help clarify and mitigate its power dynamics with the sector.

Such efforts dovetail with stakeholder- especially grantee- desires for AFAC to expend more effort and resources serving as a platform for networking, fostering community, and exchange. Mobilizing AFAC’s database of supported and unsupported works, developing interactive and social platforms for the website, and providing mentorship support and dedicated distribution funds are some

recommendations for how to meet the need and desire for community, cohesion, and shared power. Are there other ways to create an on-going, inclusive process to identify new needs/priorities with the community?

To increase awareness and critical reflection of its vision, while building desired community, AFAC can consider creating an annual forum for selected grantees to come together for exchange and networking, philanthropist working group meetings, and curated educational and research-oriented conferences that explore thematic issues pertinent to the sector. Such forums for exchange would aim to expand opportunities and visibility for all stakeholders, as well as to spark intellectually and politically relevant dialogue about arts and culture in the region. Further theme-based intellectual reflection and knowledge production can be commissioned from writers, scholars, and cultural producers, inspired from the data and knowledge the organization and its applicants generate each year. Such conferences and forums can also initiate relations with a new donor base interested in criticism and art in the Arab world, as well as provide meaningful media exposure.

An annual forum would also serve as a milestone for AFAC to deepen its impact by creating dialogue, in addition to initiating funding programs to address the ongoing problems of distribution, dissemination and critical research. It seems imperative for AFAC to lead innovative experiments and solutions in the coming years to improve the circulation of cultural production and expanding audience engagement in the region.

As it moves forward, AFAC should recognize that its collaborative spirit is one of its most important assets and resources, since increased interaction, exchange, participation, and connection repeatedly emerged as key themes in this analysis. AFAC should continue in its extraordinary capacity to lead and serve the arts and cultural sector in the Arab region, while remaining responsive to both the intended and unintended effects of its dominant role.

AFAC’s staff, grantees, partners and stakeholders are very passionate about the organization’s programs and whether it should expand, reduce or morph its current areas of focus. The diversity of options and opinions create a tension that is expected and will always exist given AFAC’s unique role in an environment with expansive needs – this diversity of opinions is a good sign and indicates a strong sense of ownership and stake by AFAC’s constituency in the organization’s development. The organisation will need to closely examine its constituency’s needs, developments in the regional cultural landscape and craft a strategic vision that will guide its growth and expansion in the coming years.

The future looks bright for AFAC and the cultural environment in the Arab region. AFAC’s unique experience over the last ten years and the emerging maturity of the sector’s artistic expression and its vitality promise a coming decade full of wonder, creativity and critical engagement in a region that desperately needs it.



Author's Bio

Moukhtar Kocache has over twenty years of expertise in philanthropy, non-profit management, curatorial practice and cultural and civil society development. Born in Beirut and raised in Paris, he spent fifteen years in Washington DC and New York, and eight years in Cairo. Since 2012, he divides his time between New York, Paris and Istanbul.

From 2004 to 2012, he was Program Officer at the Ford Foundation's regional office in Cairo. During his tenure, he worked on the development and sustainability of arts and culture spaces, networks and service infrastructure. He also programmed and managed a cluster of grants that support alternative and emerging media platforms and media reform agendas, as well as a cluster of grants that support the development of local philanthropy in the MENA region.

From 1998 to 2004 he was Director of Programs and Services at the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council in New York, a leading arts council in the US where he initiated and developed residency programs, art in the public realm initiatives, exhibitions, publications, conferences and seminars as well as workshops and resources for individual artists and small arts organizations. During his tenure at LMCC, he directly supervised and nurtured the creative processes of hundreds of artists and small organizations.

He studied international relations, art history and cultural/non-profit management. He completed his undergraduate studies at American University in Washington DC and graduate studies at Columbia University in New York.

His current interests include the sustainability of independent creative platforms, cultural and social justice philanthropy, the links between political philosophy and policy, alternative institutional and organizational structures, participatory and community philanthropy, innovative community development, civic engagement, gender equity and diversity, international collaboration, memory, film, photography, material culture and the activation of art and cultural production to advance civic, knowledge and social change.

Annexes



Photo by Sara Sallam from her documentary photography project
"The Fourth Pyramid Belongs to Her"

ANNEX A

Interviewees' Questions and Bios

GENERAL

1. How would you describe your experience with AFAC?
2. How did the AFAC grant support your project?
2. Are there recommendations you would give to improve the quality of the program?
3. Were your professional/programmatic expectations met?
4. What are your current thoughts about reaching and working with audiences, publics and communities? In your work and for AFAC to consider?
5. Do you think that AFAC should surpass its core activity as a grantmaker to play other roles? If yes, what would those be?
6. In your views what are the major needs for cultural production in the Arab region and does AFAC respond to these needs?
7. Did the workshop meet your expectations?

ARTISTS, CULTURAL PRODUCERS

1. What are the challenges you face as an artist/cultural producer/cultural leader?
2. With the boom of visual content in media and social media, how do you evaluate the audience's reception of professional work in your area?

AFAC GRANTEES

1. What are the challenges you face as an Arab documentary photographer?
2. In your views what are the major needs of photographers in the Arab region and does a program like ADPP respond to these needs?
3. What major needs do Arab writers have today? And how can AFAC respond to them? What are the main areas in this sector that need support?
4. What are the main challenges you face as an independent musician in the Arab world today?
5. How did the support of AFAC affect your music career?
6. Do you think the support of AFAC and other sources of funding affect the distribution and sales of music albums?
7. With the new media and the internet, how relevant do you think the production of CD albums is today?
8. Do you think the Fund should put more emphasis on a specific aspect (distribution, booking agency, concerts, etc.)?
6. What is the most efficient way in your view to support the music sector in the Arab region today?
9. How would you evaluate your experience with AFAC in terms of interface with the team, communication,....?

10. What are the areas in PA that need most attention and support?
11. What else can AFAC do to support PA?
12. Did AFAC assist your project in terms of visibility?
13. How do you describe the dance scene in the Arab region? What are the major needs?
14. In your views what is the relevance of dance to Arab societies?
15. How do you think the conditions for the dance community could be improved, in Palestine and the Arab World in general?
16. Do you think there is a way to sustain your work without contributions from cultural or other foundations?
17. How do you think audience's sensitivity and awareness about dance and its role could be raised?
18. Do you think AFAC as a fund can contribute to the improvement of sector as whole? If yes, how?
19. When did you first apply for a grant at AFAC? Did you have any other sources of funding before AFAC? What are your other funding sources?
20. How was AFAC's support valuable to you?
21. Do you think there are ways to make this support more efficient in regards to the work you do?
22. What are the major challenges you are facing on the ground while executing your projects?

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. Are you satisfied with AFAC's accomplishments during the last 10 years?
2. Did you have any expectations that you think weren't met?
3. What are the future aspirations in regards to the cultural sector in the Arab world?
4. Do you think special attention should be given to specific geographical areas? Or specific artistic and cultural practices?
5. How do you think AFAC's visibility can be enhanced?
6. What are your recommendations for AFAC?
7. Where do you see AFAC in 10 years from now?
8. What guarantees are you as a board working on to secure its sustainability?

EXTERNAL CULTURAL OPERATORS

1. How did you hear about AFAC?
2. Have you been involved with AFAC in any way in the past 10 years?
3. What were your first impressions about their work?

4. Do you think the existence of an Arab fund is significant? What makes it different from other sources of funding?
5. Did you get the chance to see works supported by AFAC? What do you think of the quality of work?
6. What artistic or cultural practice do you think needs attention the most?

INDIVIDUAL DONORS INTERVIEW'S QUESTIONS

1. How did you get engaged with AFAC?
2. What kind of contribution are you making? One time? Or multi-year? (if one time, why?)
3. As a supporter of AFAC, have you been following their recent achievements?
4. If yes, what do you think of their recent projects and programs?
5. Do you think the quality of work you have seen respond to your standards?
6. With the overwhelming mainstream media, do you think artistic and cultural projects supported by AFAC reach enough audiences?
7. In your views, what is the direct or indirect impact of cultural productions supported by AFAC?
8. Which of the supported categories in your opinion are more relevant to the region's cultural needs?
9. Do you think artistic and cultural productions are capable of inducing social change? Would you be able to elaborate using specific examples?
10. Is there an additional cultural form that you think needs to be covered by AFAC?

11. Do you think AFAC should put more emphasis on certain types of productions and why?
12. What do you think of cultural policies in Arab world? Do you think they are necessary?
13. What do you think the cultural sector needs to be more financially sustainable?
14. Do you have any specific suggestions or ideas in this specific area?

INSTITUTIONAL DONORS

1. For how long have you been supporting AFAC?
2. What changes/progress in regards to their work have you noticed over this period of time?
3. What are AFAC's main assets in your opinion?
4. What do you think of their fundraising efforts?
5. What are other areas that you believe the Fund should cater to if any?



Still from "Benzine" by Sarra Abidi

Interviewee Bios (as of 2016)

Zineb Sedira is a French-born Algerian visual artist living in England whose photography and video installation work addresses and questions representations of memory, displacement and the transmission of history.

Roy Dib is an artist and an art critic who works and lives in Beirut. His work focuses on the subjective constructions of space.

Khaled Elayyan born in the town of El Bireh, Palestine is the choreographer and technical director of the Sareyyet Ramallah troupe for Music and Dance.

Abdullah Al Kafri is a playwright and cultural activist from Syria and the executive director of Ettijahat – Independent Culture, an organization that promotes the growth of independent culture in Syria, that is now operating from Beirut.

Nadia Arouri is a Palestinian dancer and choreographer and founder of the Palestinian community dance movement YANTHE – Youth, Art, and Levante. She studied Contemporary Dance Pedagogy, musicology, and cultural management. She works in both Palestine and Vienna.

Muhammad Ali Atassi, is a Syrian journalist, filmmaker and human rights activist currently living in Beirut.

Habib Attia is the director of Cinetlefilms, a Tunisian-based production company that has produced award-winning films for cinema and television.

Khaled Abdalla is a British Egyptian actor and activist. He was one of the founding members of the Mosireen collective in Cairo, and has starred in The Last Days of the City, United 93, The Kite Runner, Green Zone and the Square.

Anthony Richter is the regional director for the Middle East, North Africa, and Southwest Asia of the Open Society Foundation. He has established more than 20 of the Foundations' offices and developed programs such as Revenue Watch, the Central Eurasia Project, and Eurasianet, and has supported the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture.

Laila Hourani is a Palestinian novelist and cultural facilitator, currently working as the Program Officer for Arts, Culture & Media at the Ford Foundation in Egypt, overseeing the Middle East and North African regions.

Idriss Nor is a member of the management of the DOEN Foundation. He is part of the international culture and media program with focus on Africa and the Arab region. In addition, he is a member of DOEN's investment team with responsibility for the social enterprises and media. He studied educational sciences in Frankfurt and Amsterdam and followed the FMA/study business administration at Nyenrode Business University.

Nabil Qaddumi is the Vice Chairman of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC), the founder and Chairman of SPETCO International Petroleum Company, and the Chairman of United Materials Company (MAWAD). He was the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Welfare Association (TAAWON), and is the Director of the Hani Qaddumi Scholarship Foundation (HQSF).

Susan Meiselas is an American documentary photographer and member of Magnum Photos since 1976. She is the author of Carnival Strippers, Nicaragua, El Salvador: The Work of 30 Photographers, Chile from Within, Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History, Pandora's Box and Encounters with the Dani. She is the president of Magnum Foundation.

Jumana El Zein Khoury is the director of the Prince Claus Fund and a former Professor of Arts and Law at the University of Amsterdam.

Rana Yazigi is the Managing Director of Al Mawred Al Thaqafi / Cultural Resource. She is the former Executive Director of Ettijahat Independent Culture.

Khyam Allami is a British-based musician and musicologist of Iraqi descent. He lives between London and Beirut.

Maya El Khalil is the director of Athr, an international contemporary art space and gallery in Jeddah, since its foundation in 2009.

ANNEX B

AFAC Survey, 2016

Q1

Are you an Artist, AFAC Individual Recipient, AFAC Institutional Recipient, Culture Professional, AFAC Institutional Partner, Funder, Other? — select all that is appropriate

Artists	42.59%
AFAC Individual Recipient	38.89%
AFAC Institutional Recipient	19.44%
Culture Professional	22.22%
AFAC Institutional Partner	4.63%
Funder	12.96%
Other (please specify)	12.96%

Q2

State your country of residence

Algeria	1 / .93%	Somalia	2 / 1.85
Bahrain	1 / .93%	Sudan	1 / .93%
Egypt	12 / 11.11%	Switzerland	2 / 1.85%
France	6 / 5.6%	Syria	1 / .93%
Germany	2 / 1.85%	Tunisia	3 / 2.78
Jordan	7 / 6.48%	United Arab Emirates	4 / 3.70
Kuwait	1 / .93%	United Kingdom	3 / 2.78%
Lebanon	22 / 20.37%	United States	7 / 6.48%
Morocco	8 / 7.41%	Yemen	1 / .93%
Palestine	12 / 11.11%	Other: Austria (1), Belgium (2), Malaysia (1)	
Qatar	1 / .93%	Monaco (1), South Sudan (2)	
Saudia Arabia	4 / 3.70%		

Q3

State your preferred language

No. of Respondents	Arabic	English	French
108	2.59%	47.22%	10.19%

Q4

If an artist, please state your discipline

Theatre	9	Photography	7
Film	15	Literature	9
Performing Arts	2	Dance	2
Cultural Director	3	Music	4
Video Art	4	Architecture	1
Visual Arts	9		

Q5**How well do you think you know AFAC?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
3 2.8%	4 3.85%	29 27.88%	28 26.92%	39 37.50%	1 .96%	104	3.93

Q6**How well do you know its grant-making program?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
2 1.92%	5 4.81%	19 18.27%	36 34.62%	42 40.38%	0 0%0.25 in	104	4.07

Q7**How well do you know its “special” programs?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
11 10.58%	24 23.08%	24 23.08%	20 19.23%	25 24.04%	0 0%0.25 in	104	3.23

Q8**How well do you know its governance/board of directors?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
19 18.27%	29 27.88%	26 25.00%	14 13.46%	15 14.42%	1 .96%0.25 in	104	2.78

Q9**How well do you know its staff?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
4 3.85%	25 24.04%	23 22.12%	27 25.96%	25 24.04%	0 0%	104	3.42

Q10**How aware are you of its funding sources?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
16 15.38%	25 24.04%	20 19.23%	27 25.96%	16 15.38%	0 0%	104	3.02

Q11**What are the areas that seem to be obscure or you would like to know more about?**

RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q12**How would you evaluate AFAC’s overall impact & success?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0 0%	1 1.09%	10 10.87%	32 34.78%	48 52.17%	1 1.09%0.25 in	92	4.40

Q13							
Has AFAC succeeded in disseminating resources to artist and the cultural community in a transparent and fair manner?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	4	10	34	41	3	92	4..26
4.35%	10.87%	34.96%	44.57%	3.26%			
Q14							
How well has AFAC as a fund contributed to the improvement of the sector as a whole?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	2	8	31	43	3	92	4.29%
2.17%	14.13%	33.70%	46.74%	3.26%			
Q15							
How relevant is AFAC to the regional context?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	2	8	31	49	2	92	4.41
0%	2.17%	8.70%	33.70%	53.26%	2.17%		
Q16							
How valuable is AFAC?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	0	5	18	68	1	92	4.69
0%	0%	5.43%	19.57%	73.91%	1.09%		
Q17							
Has AFAC rendered arts and culture from the Arab region more visible?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	2	15	27	44	3	92	4..28
0%	2.17%	16.30%	29.35%	47.83%			
Q18							
How does AFAC fair in building community?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
2	10	24	26	22	8	92	3.67
2.17%	10.87%	26.09%	28.26%	23.91%			
Q19							
Has AFAC impacted regional cultural production?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	3	15	29	39	6	92	4.21
0%	3.26%	16.30%	31.52%	42.39%	6.52%		
Q20							
How satisfied are you with AFAC's outreach to new geographies and voices?							
1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	4	14	31	34	9	92	4.14
4.35%	15.22%	33.70%	36.96%	9.78%			

Q21**What additional thoughts or suggestions might you have about AFAC's impact and outcomes?**RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q22**How would you qualify AFAC's overall reputation?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	0	5	31	53	1	91	4.5
1.10%	0%	5.49%	34.07%	58.24%			

Q23**Is AFAC the most important/valuable institution for A&C from the Arab region?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
3	3	16	33	33	3	91	4.02
3.30%	3.30%	17.58%	36.26%	36.26%			

Q24**Is AFAC amongst the top five most valuable regional A&C institutions?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	5	4	16	62	3	91	4.51
1.10%	5.49%	4.40%	17.58%	68.13%			

Q25**How would you evaluate AFAC's peer to peer jury?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	6	14	24	37	9	91	4.1
1.10%	6.59%	15.38%	26.37%	40.66%			

Q26**How would you evaluate AFAC's transparency?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	3	14	25	39	9	91	4.2
1.10%	3.30%	15.38%	27.47%	42.86%			

Q27**How comfortable are you with AFAC's funding sources?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	3	13	23	38	13	91	4.21
1.10%	3.30%	14.29%	25.27%	41.76%			

Q28**How would you evaluate AFAC's overall visibility?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
5	7	20	28	25	6	91	3.72
5.49%	7.69%	21.98%	30.77%	27.47%			

Q29**What additional thoughts or suggestions might you have about AFAC's reputation and standing in the field?**RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q30**How well does AFAC produce communication and knowledge about the regional creative sector?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
2	6	23	34	18	5	88	3.72
2.27%	6.82%	26.14%	38.64%	20.45%			

Q31**Evaluate AFAC's dissemination of information about its grantees**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
5	8	18	30	23	4	88	3.69
5.68%	9.09%	20.45%	34.09%	26.14%			

Q32**How aware are you of AFAC's social media footprint?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
14	16	31	12	10	5	88	2.86
15.91%	18.18%	35.23%	13.64%	11.36%			

Q33**How informative, clear and userfriendly is its website?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
4	8	17	33	22	4	88	3.73
4.55%	9.09%	19.32%	37.50%	25.00%			

Q34**How familiar are you with AFAC's annual reports?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
11	21	27	13	11	5	88	2.90
12.50%	23.86%	30.68%	14.77%	12.50%			

Q35**How familiar are you with AFAC's annual reports?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
14	17	30	16	9	2	88	2.87
15.91%	19.32%	34.09%	18.18%	10.23%			

Q36**What additional thoughts or suggestions might you have about AFAC's communication?**RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q37**How would you evaluate AFAC's grantmaking program?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	0	14	34	33	3	85	4.20
1.18%	0%	16.47%	40.00%	38.82%			

Q38**How would you evaluate AFAC's special thematic programs?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	1	23	22	28	10	85	4.00
1.18%	1.8%	27.06%	25.88%	32.94%			

Q39**Should AFAC do more special thematic programs?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
6	7	14	17	32	9	85	3.82
7.06%	8.24%	16.47%	20.00%	37.65%			

Q40**Should AFAC do more special thematic programs and less open grant-making?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
22	19	14	13	10	7	85	2.62
25.88%	22.35%	16.47%	15.29%	11.76%			

Q41**Should AFAC offer workshops and capacity building programs?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
9	9	12	20	29	6	85	3.65
10.59%	10.59%	14.12%	23.53%	34.12%			

Q42**Should AFAC offer more workshops and capacity building programs and less open grant-making?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
37	17	12	8	6	5	85	2.11
43.53%	20.00%	14.12%	9.41%	7.06%			

Q43**Should AFAC be more involved in policy research and advocacy to the field?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
16	12	17	14	21	5	85	3.15
18.82%	14.12%	20.00%	16.47%	24.71%			

Q44**Should AFAC offer more policy research and advocacy to the field and less open grant-making?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
37	23	8	6	8	3	85	2.09
43.53%	27.06%	9.41%	7.06%	9.41%			

Q45**Does AFAC provide the right type of support for the Arab regional community?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	2	21	31	29	1	85	4.01
1.18%	2.35%	24.71%	36.47%	34.12%			

Q46**Are AFAC's grant amounts reasonable and satisfactory?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
2	8	21	31	20	3	85	3.72
2.35%	9.41%	24.71%	36.47%	23.53%			

Q47**How satisfied are you with AFAC's six grant-making categories in Cinema, Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Literature, Music, as well as Research, Training and Regional Events?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	1	12	35	35	2	85	4.25
0%	1.18%	14.12%	41.18%	41.18%			

Q48**How satisfied are you with AFAC's alternating calls for funding/frequency of open calls according to category/field??**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
0	7	26	28	17	7	85	3.71
0%	8.24%	30.59%	32.94%	20.00%			

Q49**If you are an artist or a cultural producer, please share your thoughts about where and what type of support AFAC should provide in the future for your respective field (music, cinema, performing arts, literature, regional events, training and research...). Please state your field of work and share your perspective in a few sentences.**

RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q50**What additional thoughts or suggestions might you have about AFAC's programs**

RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q51**How would you rate AFAC's responsiveness to the field?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
2	0	19	35	25	5	85	4.04
1.18%	0%	22.35%	41.18%	29.41%			

Q52**How would you rate AFAC's administrative procedures?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
3	5	12	25	33	7	85	4.03
3.53%	5.88%	14.12%	29.41%	38.82%			

Q53**How would you evaluate the effectiveness and professionalism of its staff?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	0	8	29	45	2	85	4.41
1.8%	0%	9.41%	34.12%	52.94%			

Q54**How would you evaluate AFAC's grantmaking decisions and selection process?**

1	2	3	4	5	NA	Total	WA
1	3	15	28	32	6	85	4.10
1.8%	3.53%	17.65%	32.94%	37.65%			

Q54**What additional thoughts or suggestions might you have about AFAC's effectiveness and main assets?**RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

Q56**Feel free to share any comment, impression, recommendation or anecdote**RESPONSES INCLUDED IN MAIN REPORT

ANNEX C

Working Group

Rasha Salti is a curator, writer, and researcher. Previously programmer for the Toronto Film Festival and currently is the programmer at Arte France.

Orwa Nyrabia is a producer, filmmaker, human rights defender and co-founder of DOX BOX International Documentary Film Festival in Syria.

Tarek Abou El Fetouh is an independent curator, architect and previous director of Young Arab Theatre Fund and Meeting Points.

Khyam Allami is a British-based musician and musicologist of Iraqi descent. He lives between London and Beirut.





Dance Performance "Ouled Jelaba ... On his footsteps, I Dance ..."
by Rochdi Belgasmi



آفاق AFAC

The Arab Fund For Arts and Culture
الصندوق العربي للثقافة والفنون – آفاق