

**MID-TERM EVALUATION OF THE MULTIANNUAL PROGRAMME (MAP) 2017-
2021 OF ZIMBABWE**

FINAL REPORT ON THE EVALUATION

Written by Ms. Nicolette Du Plessis



1. Executive Summary

The Multi-Annual Programme (MAP) between Africalia and the four Zimbabwean partners, Afriker Arts Trust, Music Crossroads Academy, Nhimbe Trust, and Zimbabwe Theatre Academy, has been well-conceived and elegantly structured. Africalia's experience over many years in the country and sound knowledge of the Zimbabwean cultural sector and the major players has resulted in the creation of a portfolio well aligned to the key principles and focus areas of the Belgian Development Corporation, with a selection of diverse and complementary partners. The departure point of two aspects of culture within development practices and as a methodology for human development – social and economic – is well-reasoned and described.

The Theory of Change for the programme provides a strong foundation from which activities have been designed by each partner for their own area of speciality. The four result areas are clear and the intended accumulation of outputs to achieve the outcomes is realistic and practical. Sufficiently SMART indicators have been identified and opportunities provided for each partner to interrogate and incorporate the ToC as a tool into their annual planning and organizational development. Particular attention has been paid to Result 1 with the allocation of the majority of the budget in this area. This is in order to enhance the technical and institutional capacities of the partners to retain and attract high quality human resources at the executive level, which also stimulates improved governance. Stabilizing (and in some cases, growing) the leadership of the partners and the formal tools, by which they can demonstrate this stabilization, is an important pivot point of the programme.

The integration of the ToC into the partners' general institutional processes has varied and could be improved in order to contribute more strongly to the reporting required by Africalia. To enable this, more training of how to better use the tool is required at management level and more information and exposure of this method at board level is recommended. Most of the boards are still in a process of consolidation themselves and, while their members are without doubt highly qualified people with appropriate and valuable experience, they also need to understand these contemporary management tools that are being required of their executive staff. This, in turn, will strengthen chances to secure other funding partners.

The implementation of the programme by the partners up to the end of 2019 is effective and there is evidence of a range of successful activities and results in line with the result areas. In particular, there are examples of good collaborations between practitioners and other institutions for the positive stimulation of the sector. These include improved knowledge and information about contemporary issues facing the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCI) from Nhimbe ; sound advocacy and lobbying to constructively influence regulatory authorities ; the establishment of working relationships with local government ; the introduction of additional diploma years of music education within MCA ; the adoption of 60% of the MCA curriculum into the general school system ; guest teachers and artists working through ZiTA and AAT and extending the experiences of local students ; the establishment of new festivals (Mitambo International Theatre Festival and Bulawayo Arts Festival) and the Arts Gathering as opportunities for performance and collaboration, as well as building new audiences through hybrid models of arts genres ; the establishment of a new cultural venue in each of the major cities – the Bluez Café in Bulawayo and the AAT Arts Hub in Harare ; and numerous examples of successful graduates/alumni receiving awards and additional work within the sector.

Of concern has been the inability to secure local accreditation for the various education qualifications being offered by AAT, MCA and ZiTA, despite persistent efforts to do so. This seems to be due to the slow workings of the various institutions approached and is an ongoing struggle in general. Nevertheless, there are extremely affirming responses from target beneficiaries participating in all the

training programmes and affirmation that the education products being offered are attractive and appropriate.

In general, the process management of the programme by Africalia has been steadily managed by a knowledgeable and trusted Programme Manager. However, there has been an unfortunate hiatus in this since February 2020, which also coincided with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown of countries at different rates and times. The breakdown in communication between Africalia management and the partners has cast some doubt on the reporting requirements currently requested which seem to be at odds with what was previously accepted¹. Most importantly, however, there has been no engagement concerning how the remainder of the programme should be implemented against the backdrop of the extraordinary Covid-19 environment. This mid-term evaluation was delayed from 2019 and again in 2020 and now comes at a time when there is less than 18 months left to fulfil the original obligations of the partner agreements. Partners are concerned and guidance is required from Africalia.

Of course, there are no concrete answers to many of the questions posed by Covid-19 pandemic, but the education and performance activities of the partners are unable to be carried out as planned. Venues must be closed and these opportunities for marketing and promoting culture, in the way originally defined by the programme, are no longer possible. All partners have demonstrated remarkable resilience in terms of adapting their work to digital platforms and media as much as possible, but they are additionally hampered by the increasingly disastrous socio-economic contexts of political and financial instability. There are various barriers to full entry into a digitalized world of virtual performance and communication anyway, without these being exacerbated by a potential humanitarian/health crisis, increasing poverty and political repression.

Against this difficult background and coupled with the many and various triumphs to date (Covid-19 notwithstanding), the programme represents a huge and valuable investment in human development. All partners were on track to achieving most, if not all, of their targets and are agile and determined. AAT and ZiTA are relatively young as organizations but have strong leadership and foundations. MCA is poised to make a difference in the region with respect to the music education if digital access can be created and Nhimbe Trust is at the forefront of developing ideas and paradigms around cultural digital resilience for this new era.

It would be seriously compromising to all players if the support from Africalia was withdrawn at the end of 2021. It would also be a lost opportunity, given the forward thinking and proactive approaches taken thus far. There is a likelihood that another programme (2022-2026) could capitalize well on these experiences and provide examples and best practice for other projects and programmes in the region. This is the recommended scenario. It would need to be well-prepared however, starting with the end in mind. This would best prepare partners for a clear exit point and allow for various interventions aimed to restore optimal working relationships and to augment the work that has been done.

The fact that Zimbabwe is not a priority country for Belgium and also that development interventions are, by their nature, not designed to remain forever is well understood. An exit is always to be expected and planned for. If that is what is decided for the end of 2021, then there is still an urgent need for engagement between the partners and Africalia to collaboratively decide what is possible to

¹ This refers specifically to the fact that the reports submitted in January 2020 were accepted by the Project Manager and the partners believed all was approved. However, after he went on leave and the Africalia office took up communication with partners in April, it emerged that the reports submitted were not in line with what Africalia required. The partners had to re-do reports in formats that they had not done before and this raised the issue.

bring this programme to a respectful close. Adjustments in targets will have to be made and agreements reached on how best to use the resources still available. There is not much time left and it advised that this is best done as soon as possible.