

**ARTS ADVOCACY, METHODS MEANS AND MEASURES:
CREATING A MODEL OF ADVOCACY, LOBBYING AND ENGAGEMENT.
4TH WORLD SUMMIT ON ARTS AND CULTURE, 24TH SEPTEMBER 2009**

Depending on the context under which it is used, advocacy means many things to different people, and especially many organisations. In terms of definition, advocacy is the pursuit of influencing outcomes -- including public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social spheres. Lobbying is the practice of influencing decisions made by government (in groups or individually). It includes all attempts to influence legislators and officials, whether by other legislators, constituents, or organized groups.

I will certainly not bore you with definitions, but I must offer you one more, about cultural or arts networks. This is because my presentation on advocacy will contextualise the concept within the experience of a network, namely the Arterial network. Arts and Cultural networks can involve a group of individuals, people, associations or groups within the sector who for one reason or the other see the need to come together to further a common goal or outcome.

As we have been asked to share, good practice models, I will present very briefly the history of the Arterial network and the advocacy strategy that we are developing. Let me also hasten to add, that I am not presenting the Arterial as a good practice model, because the Arterial is a relatively new 'network', and evaluation of our work has not been done. So, I will share some development in the 'build your own advocacy model' experience taking place in Africa.

Background

The Arterial network came about as a result of a meeting in Goree in 2006. This meeting brought together artists from 14 countries to identify and discuss issues affecting artists on the African continent. The ultimate outcome of this meeting was the formation of a network that would seek to empower civil society in the arts and cultural sector on the African continent to take responsibility for their lives and livelihoods and to act towards this end, in their collective interests nationally, regionally and internationally.

At the 2006 meeting a number of issues were identified as follows:

- Absence of policy supportive legislation
- Poor lobbying and organising capacity
- Lack of reliable statistical information on the economic contribution of the arts in Africa
- Limited disposable income among audiences
- Lack of locally owned distribution channels, limited resources to market artistic products
- Low value of local culture
- Funding environment is not supportive

- Poor education and training
- Absence of art education
- Poor marketing and business skills
- Logistical and infrastructural challenges
- Limited critical discourse on the arts

All of these issues were common across the artists and countries. At that first conference, a team was elected to devise and drive a programme of action to address these primary needs. With the support of a number of funding partners, various activities have been implemented over the last two years.

10 primary areas were addressed:

- Capacity building in management, leadership
- Research economic impact studies, data collection, mapping
- Support to cultural entrepreneurship
- Distribution channels such as festivals, tours, access to markets
- Distribution of information through media arts journalists, websites
- Cultural exchange regional, continental, international
- Marketing and the development of audiences and markets
- Seminars, conferences, publications or critical discourse and debate
- Support for creative production and development of artists
- Lobbying and advocacy for enabling legislation, policy and funding environments

The Arterial advocacy campaign

Advocacy Strategy development:

In recent years it has become increasingly evident that those who wish to advance the cause of the arts, culture and creativity as a recognized element of social policy and as a significant contributor to the new imagination economy have to find new advocacy strategies and new ways to present them.

The importance of advocacy that targets awareness of issues or consciousness-raising, was emphasized in the Road Map that emerged from the UNESCO World Conference on Arts and Learning in Lisbon in 2005, and has been adopted as one of the three principal areas of interest and action by the World Alliance for Arts and Education at the World Creativity Summits of 2007 and 2008. Advocacy that targets awareness around issues echoes the Arterial advocacy campaign which will seek to elevate public and political awareness and discourse between government, local and international agencies and the arts communities around Africa.

After Goree, it was clear that if we were to achieve our mission, which is, to empower civil society in the arts and cultural sector on the African continent to act in their collective interest, we had to develop an advocacy strategy comprising two things: a broad based approach that would straddle the entire continent and second, an approach that would enable Arterial to address

the diverse issues raised in Goree. It was also obvious that this advocacy strategy would have to be based on a solid framework espoused by African governments, and the global community.

Examination of The Nairobi plan of Action adopted by the AU Ministers of Culture in Algiers in October 2008 and UNESCO's Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist adopted in Belgrade in 1988 and enhanced in Paris in 1998, revealed that these two instruments were more than adequate to lay the basis for a framework of advocacy for the Arterial Network as they addressed nearly all the concerns raised in Goree. The Arterial saw the existence of conventions, treaties, at AU and UN and regional levels addressing the 'Goree issues' as an opportunity for advocacy and for later lobbying governments to commit to terms of these agreements.

As pointed out, most conventions adopted by African governments resonate with the interests of artists as expressed at the meeting in Goree, Senegal and in the African creative sector in general. But experience shows that these recommendations, treaties and conventions will be implemented only when civil society in general and the artists specifically, become aware of these documents and act to ensure their implementation.

The central theme of the Arterial advocacy strategy therefore will be to raise awareness and action to influence social and political systems for the benefit of the creative sector in Africa.

Do we need a new approach?

The advocacy strategy will therefore comprise of advocacy activities directed at raising awareness around already existing agreements, plans or conventions among artists, technocrats in Government, international bodies and the private sector. Instead of engaging governments and policy makers with new arguments and perceptions, it was thought that perhaps we should engage government around issues they have already committed themselves to, and then advocate and lobby for action. Most advocacy campaigns and definition talk about 'changing the system' our strategy will be primarily concerned with influencing action within existing systems (legislation, conventions, policy and accountability mechanisms) in ways that will produce tangible action.

We know from experience that it is extremely difficult to get the attention of any one, let alone governments to see the importance or relevance of the arts in the context of social expression, national planning and development. The second advocacy strategy is to ensure, by raising awareness around these documents, that the African creative sector practitioners participate and engage proactively in local, regional, and international affairs that promote the arts. The rationale is that if awareness of the existence of these documents is raised, perhaps then policy makers and governments can be persuaded take notice and act in supporting and promoting arts and culture.

Way Forward

With the strategy broadly agreed, the second Arterial Network meeting was held just before the World Summit on the Arts and Culture from the 21st to the 22nd September . This meeting was about prioritising the actions and programmes that this continental civil society network should

pursue over the next 2 to five years. So how are we going to advance the Arterial in this new 'build your own advocacy model' and what methodologies will Arterial use to implement its advocacy strategy?

- 1. Arterial will need to develop an overall advocacy strategy that brings together the diversity of issues raised in Goree and which will give meaning and benefit to artists on the continent.**

One of the most important outcomes of the second meeting was the Agreement to adopt 10 points from the Nairobi Plan of Action and the Recommendations of the Status of the Artist as the basis of all Arterial advocacy action. In this way, Arterial has defined its advocacy position.

- 2. Arterial will need to increase the volume, quantity and scope of voices of to cover much more of the continent and to be considered a strong voice, and to be considered a critical mass that effectively lends itself towards activating collective action.**

At the first meeting we had 14 African countries in attendance. The second meeting was a strategy to increase the membership and scope of the Arterial network. At the second meeting we had 28 African countries represented. An important outcome of the second bi-annual meeting is that the Arterial now has representatives in 28 countries around the continent, and from all the regions, southern Africa, Central Africa, north Africa, west Africa and east Africa. In addition, Our website and newsletter now reaches around 3,500 artists and organizations around the continent who can be called 'to action'. The target for 2009, is to increase access to our website and news letter to around 6,000 and we believe we shall achieve that target.

- 3. Through our trainings and seminars we have learned that there is little knowledge in regard to political and non-political instruments treaties and conventions regarding the arts and culture in Africa among the artists. This information will have to be disseminated widely.**

As a first step after this realization, both the Nairobi Plan of Action and the Belgrade Recommendations on the status of the artist are accessible on the Arterial website.

- 1. Again through the interaction on our website data collection efforts, we have learned that there is little knowledge in regard to political and non-political systems and mechanisms of accountability, political and non-political arts and culture institutions, structures, departments, at local, national and international levels. This information will have to be disseminated widely.**

These are part of the information and data that will be researched and published on the Arterial site. The Arterial will endeavour to document on the website:

- Institutional structures framing the arts in African countries (Arts councils, ministry, departments, national endowment, heritage sites etc. NGO). This has in part already begun.

- Key decision makers and decision making flows (between ministers, bureaucrats, arts experts, arts administrators, artists, community representatives)
- Decision making processes (how are decision makers appointed, influenced, to whom are they accountable, and how do they make their decisions at local, national and international levels)

5. Who should be the target of such campaigns and what should they hope to achieve?

The Arterial Network recognises that Artists themselves and arts organisations must play a role, and this is a hugely important role, and the arterial campaign will attempt to focus more effectively in informing, educating and empowering artists and artists' organisations with information and advocacy tools.

In addition, the advocacy strategy will involve creating dialogue between government technocrats, policy makers, legislators, business sector, local, regional and international bodies and artists so that the different groups can learn from each other.

What are the challenges and the possibilities of implementing such a strategy across the continent and regionally and also getting artists to work together for their collective interests?

- Artists do not read, unless we invigorate the artists to become curios and enthusiastic about these documents, the strategy might fail. A blog on such issues is in process of being set up to stimulate discussion.
- The diversity of government styles and approachability is a serious consideration, as the strategy needs the cooperation of these structures and personalities therein.
- Dealing with other bodies and institutions can create conflict and misunderstanding, this is a challenge we can hopefully manage if it occurs.
- So many advocacy strategies have been tried with little success, this strategy has not been tried before, and we are going to have to create solutions and measures to ensure its success.

In closing, I can only say, that this model will primarily work by raising awareness among artists about the legislation and policies that are already there and by giving the artists the training to use advocacy tools in order to address the issues that were raised in Goree. It is an advocacy strategy that has grown out of continent wide dialogue and consultation and is an attempt at creating a coordinated Africa wide campaign to promote the value of the arts. It is perhaps not strictly speaking a best practice model, but what might become a new model for promoting the arts in the African environment.

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