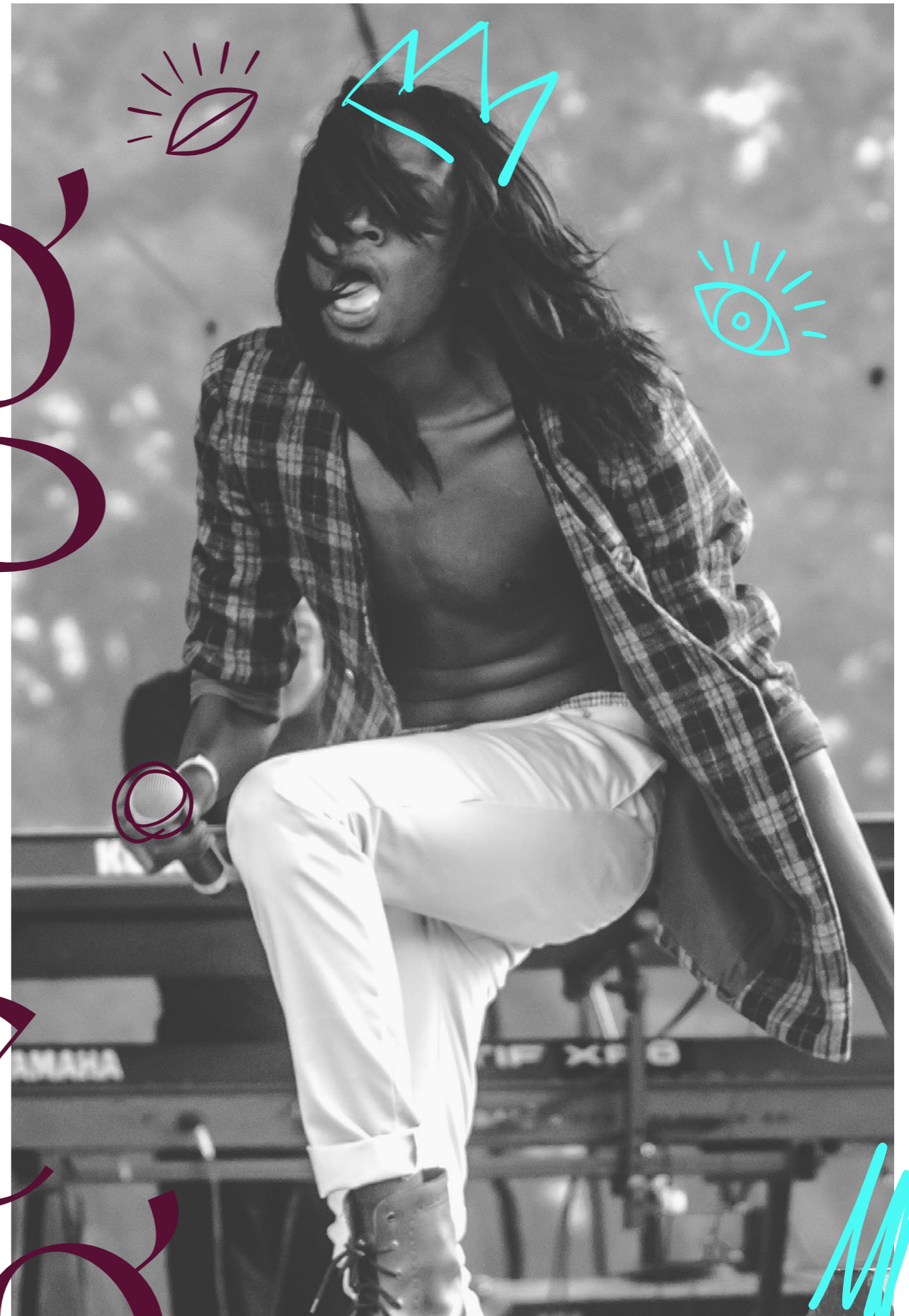


Skill Sharing

is

What does it mean to be a creative entrepreneur and how can you establish yourself in the market as a creator? The **perFORM Music Incubator** is a music business and artist development project in Kenya initiated as part of the project **Cultural and Creative Industries** to support music creators in building sustainable careers.

creative careers



Muthoni

drummer queen

Muthoni, why did you launch the perFORM Music Incubator?

Between 2013 and 2020, I was making music with two Swiss beat makers. I got a lot of exposure to the Swiss and European music system as we did quite a lot of touring. Being exposed to that market made me see the gaps in our own system at home. I realised that gaps in Kenya really sat with the artistic skill set and the business skill set. I longed for creating an environment in Kenya where we can upskill people who have already been working in the industry. A lot of us in the music industry in Kenya are do-it-yourself artists and entrepreneurs. We are underfunded and have very limited access to skills development opportunities or networks.

With the **perFORM Music Incubator** I wanted to create a learning environment for music professionals like artists, managers, publicists, music and event producers, sound and light engineers. Right from the beginning there was a very strong focus on developing stage-ready artists with a ready team behind the scenes, a machinery of managers, publicists and everybody who has an impact on the performance on stage.

Who is the main target group of the perFORM Music Incubator and what makes the Incubator so special?

If you want to develop the music industry further, it's not enough to develop artists only. You also need a whole lot of professionals that support the artist in creating music and performances. You need music producers to fine-tune the songs. You need managers to get the artist booked. You need the event managers to organise festivals and concerts. You need PR specialists to spread the word. And finally, you need the light and sound engineers to ensure a high quality of live performances.

The **perFORM Incubator** brings all those professionals together, it gets them working and thinking in teams. Together they develop a live show which they perform at the end of the programme. This multi-disciplinary approach is what makes perFORM special. It creates a community of practice, a whole independent ecosystem that works together.

Can the participants also benefit from your experience? How important is it to you to share your skills with the young creatives?

Yeah, it has been important to me to pour myself into it and to really share my own experiences. A lot of good that has come into my life has come through friends and people who believed in me and took a chance on me. I feel like I am in a privileged position because of my experience of creating music at a very high level in Europe. A lot of my peers haven't had these experiences because of limited access and limited options in Kenya. It made me almost desperate to bring my learnings back home. Because we are so good. There are so many Kenyan artists who are so good. A career in music does not have to mean to struggle to make ends meet. It can be so much more. The only things that are missing to move things to a next level are skills development and funding opportunities.

Do you also benefit creatively from the participants?

Yes, to 100%. I think one of the best people to learn from is people who are, let's say, at the beginning of their career journey. There is still a lot of innovation and fearlessness at that level. The way they solve problems, the way they rally the community – yes, I learned a lot. When you are further along in your career, there is always a danger of becoming more set in your ways, becoming less risk-friendly and I think that is a route to die as an artist.

How important is it to you that many women apply?

Women have been left out in so many industries – also the music industry. And I believe that we must create more opportunities to open the doors for women to thrive. After the first group of participants completed the perFORM incubator, we made the decision that the performing artists who joined the second and third group should all be women. Performing artists represent the music industry, so we found women's participation in those fields especially important to create positive role models.

Back in 2019, when we first started the incubator programme, we were not surprised that few women applied for the professions that require technical skills, like sound and light engineering and music production. Now, two years later, a sound engineering training for women in Kenya received more than 150 applications. It appears that also in these fields positive female role models who raise awareness for the profession are very important.

The innovative and multi-disciplinary incubator was piloted by Muthoni Music Entertainment and the Goethe-Institut in 2019 / 2020 and combines theory and practice. In this interview we talked to the initiator and owner of the project Muthoni Drummer Queen about teamwork, skill sharing, and community.

muthoni

Now, we are investigating how to create further business models for women such as the rental of technical equipment for music live performances.

What were the hurdles in the last years and how did you respond to them?

The first group of participants had just completed the incubator in December 2019, and we were looking forward to reviewing the training and to continue with the second group. Then COVID-19 hit and obviously that was a big set-back for our programme and the industry at large. In late 2020 we started again with a mix of online and on-site classes. Instead of working on live performances, the teams worked on performances that were filmed and presented on YouTube. This had the positive effect that participants had a proof of their work to show to booking agents and other potential employers. I would call that a silver lining. COVID-19 also made us look deeper into the digital education of participants and integrate it to the programme.

How have the participants developed during their time within the perFORM Incubator? What progress have they made?

For me, it was very intense to witness a lot of AHA-moments of the participants. All of them had already worked in the industry but lacked knowledge to take them further in their careers. For example, one big AHA-moment for the performing artists was when they learned how to develop their personal brand. They never went to marketing or business school, so this was the first time they did a deep dive into this aspect of being an artist. To be a brand is as important as the creative output. Your brand, the fullness of your being, is what helps you to commercialise, to build partnerships. The participants did a lot of growing also in terms of thinking about how to build sustainable careers instead of just chasing a hit. The collaborative song writing sessions were also emotionally intense. For me and a lot of the participants it was the first time to really open up and to realise that you do not need to create just by yourself but that there is a lot of fluidity when writing collaboratively.

I received further funding to bring perFORM into a second phase. We are now a few months into it. From the 105 participants of phase one, we selected 16 outstanding artists, producers, managers, and they are now completing apprenticeships

under established industry professionals while getting financed to produce their own music, build their brand, and commercialise it. It's a holistic approach. Yeah, fast forward!

What effects do incubator projects like perFORM have on the Kenyan music scene?

One effect that we aimed at was to make the Kenyan music industry more visible. And we were quite surprised that we were able to achieve this in a short time frame. We noticed an increase in interest from professionals who are working in other industries. They are noticing that something is happening in the Kenyan music industry. They notice that we have great jobs to offer and that there is a lot of room for collaboration. We had a lot of interesting conversations with people approaching us, wanting to know how they can plug in. African music is on the rise and people want to participate.

Where do you see the project in the next years?

Right now, we are looking into various options on how to keep the perFORM Incubator going. First, we would like to extend the duration of the training programme because we realised that twelve weeks for the incubator phase are not enough time to prepare the participants. It would have to be twice as long. If you combine the incubator phase with the apprenticeship phase that follows, I see it as a holistic 18-month programme. An important next step is to get accreditation for the training. Certification is important in Kenya. Especially these new career options need to become recognised as real professions. Parents must get accustomed to the possibility that their child wants to become a light engineer. Accreditation would be a big win because it would allow us to charge for the education. It would make us less reliant on donors, and the training would be sustainably embedded in the Kenyan music system. That would be amazing.

Another aspect we are looking into is creating a permanent space for rehearsals. A space where artists can prepare for live performances and sound and light engineers can test their concepts. Making this available for music professionals is an important piece of the puzzle to upskill the Kenyan music industry. Live performances and gigs make up a big part of the music market in Kenya and a strong live show is critical for artists to get booked. So, we are now trying to figure out what it takes to make that happen.



drummer queen

"After the programme, we have seen participants get employed, starting jobs in event production companies, closing deals." **Muthoni Drummer Queen**

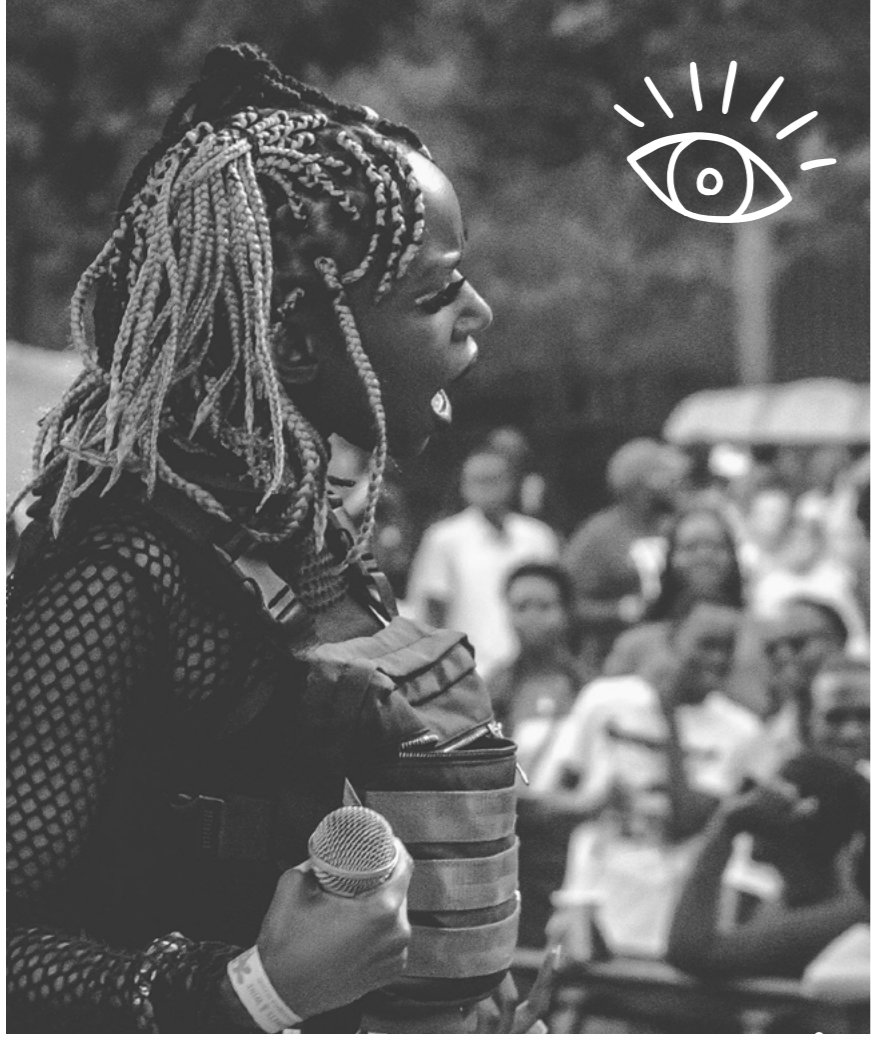
Muthoni Drummer Queen is a Kenyan rapper, singer, producer, entrepreneur, and founder of two festivals. Her mission is to create a creative ecosystem that gives young creators the opportunity to grow and break through obstacles and barriers by sharing experiences.

Thank you for the interview.

Leadmakers the dreamwork

Participants of the perFORM Music Incubator





Participants of the perFORM Music Incubator

The perFORM Music Incubator is the place to be for: musicians, artist managers, music publicists, music producers, event producers, sound & light engineers

Mayonde performing her single **Isikuti Love** during perFORM Music Incubator's showcase. Find all performances on [YouTube!](#)



level up



for music

Many of the participants of the **perFORM Music Incubator** embody the improvement of their level of knowledge and professionalism. The musicians are getting more and more opportunities to perform and get booked within the Kenyan music scene. **79%** of the incubator participants stated that they were able to find new employment.

about the project

The project Cultural and Creative Industries is jointly implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH and the Goethe-Institut on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

It improves employment and income opportunities for creative professionals in six partner countries; Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Kenya, Senegal, and South Africa and operates mainly in the music, fashion, design and animation sectors. In addition to promoting the development of entrepreneurial, digital, creative and technical skills through training programmes, the project aims to strengthen the framework conditions and the ecosystem of the cultural and creative industries.



Published by: Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Registered offices: Bonn and Eschborn, Germany, Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 32+36,
53113 Bonn, Germany, +49 61 96 79-0, kultur-und-kreativwirtschaft@giz.de
www.giz.de

Project: Cultural and Creative Industries implemented by GIZ and Goethe-Institut
Responsible: Angelika Frei-Oldenburg
Design and Layout: TINKERBELLE GmbH, Berlin
Photo credits: Goethe-Institut / perFORM Music Incubator
Bonn, 2023

Implemented by

