



These projects are turning up the volume on women's creative potential: *Holla Systems* and *Wana Wake* are giving women in Kenya the backing track they deserve. Through hands-on training and live gigs, they're changing the tempo of gender equality.



The Kenyan music industry lacks opportunities for women, particularly in technical roles such as sound engineering. To address this issue, the Goethe-Institut initiated the Holla Systems programme as part of the Cultural and Creative Industries project and invited the all-female SoundSystems Collective from Berlin to Kenya to deliver a 4-week training in sound engineering to 40 women.

The highly demanded training programme attracted more than 150 applicants, underscoring the eagerness and capabilities of women to follow artistic pursuits that have long been male-dominated. The programme focused on technical skills, such as equipment operation and sound mixing, and included practical experience in sound management at local music establishments. Trainees attained hands-on experience and facilitated the sound for live performances at an open air concert.

Women



Inspired by their tutors from the Berlin-based SoundSystems collective, the trainees formed their own collective: **SoundSystems Kenya**. They are now part of the SoundSystems movement and benefit from international networking opportunities.



**Hands-On:** At least 4 trainees now work full-time in sound technology roles, with one at a recording studio. Others continue freelancing.



**Did you know that ...** women make up only **2.6%** of music producers and represent less than a third of artists globally?

Source: USC Annenberg (2021), *Inclusion in the Recording Studio? Gender and Race/Ethnicity of Artists, Songwriters & Producers across 900 Popular Songs from 2012-2020*



Welcome to an interview with **Antto Logy**, one of the members of SoundSystems Berlin. Established in 2013, SoundSystems was initiated as a sound project to inspire, learn and empower FLINTA\* individuals (Female, Lesbian, Intersex, Non-binary, Trans and Agender).

Today, SoundSystems Berlin has a network of 15 proficient sound engineers. With over a decade of experience in music production and live sound, Antto Logy is an indispensable member of SoundSystems. Antto offers support and PA workshops to fellow members. In this interview, we explore Antto Logy's experiences, the SoundSystems activities in Kenya and their influence on the FLINTA\* sound engineering community.

### **What inspired you to form the SoundSystems Collective?**

We were inspired by the dream of seeing more FLINTA\* people in a field dominated by men. We wanted to give tools and knowledge to minorities, to women, to non-binary and to trans people, and show the world that we are capable to do all kind of jobs. We also wanted to raise awareness for equal payment in sound engineering.

### **Who forms part of the collective?**

FLINTA\* people interested in sound or working in the field as well as FLINTA\* people based in Berlin with the curiosity and power to move in favour of sound and feminism.

### **Why is it important to motivate FLINTA\* people to pursue a career in sound engineering?**

Because we can do it! Sexism and discrimination are barriers that FLINTA\* music producers and technicians frequently face in the music industry. It's imperative that we actively challenge gender stereotypes and biases and create role models that can inspire future generations. Having more FLINTA\* sound professionals will enrich the entire music scene. It is an important step towards equality and diversity. We need to create new and safe spaces that are inclusive and non-judgemental.

*It was beautiful to generate interest and to transfer the power of knowledge on technical issues – to make it clear that women can work in this field just as well.*

### **Which challenges do FLINTA\* people face in the industry?**

Many. From underrepresentation in music production to deeply rooted sexism and discrimination that continues to hinder their progress, hostile work environments, harassment, dismissive attitudes, condescension to disparities ... The list goes on.

### **You recently trained 40 women in Nairobi, Kenya, in sound engineering. Tell us about the 4-week training. What does a typical training day look like?**

We start with grounding work in order to let all problems out of the room and to connect with the inner self. This is followed by dynamic games for the participants to feel integrated and in relation with each other. Then, we dive directly into the content for a few hours, mostly theory and reviewing the topic of the past day. We plan time for questions. The second part of the day focusses on practical aspects and makes room for practicing: how to solder or connect a complete PA system, how to route signals, how to mick, mix, play instruments, make sound checks, practicing in general. We finish with a feedback round.

### **How did you experience the time in Nairobi?**


It was amazing to see the high interest in audio topics and the skills of our Kenyan sound engineers. At the same time, I was shocked by how patriarchal the environment is, to see how women in the industry are held back in their development, how society submits them to certain expectations, how little access to resources women have. It was also very sad to witness homosexual people having to hide all the time, having to simulate heteronormativity. Still, it has been a very encouraging experience! The people who attended

our workshop gained strength, hope, motivation and above all security in music production – an industry usually dominated by men. The ease with which they were able to play instruments, to understand rhythms and sing was impressive. Despite their challenges, the participants were extremely friendly, just extraordinary human beings with so much curiosity, generosity, and love to give. They are the best people I have met in my life.

### **After the training, the Kenyan participants founded their own collective: SoundSystems Kenya. How does the collaboration between SoundSystems Berlin and SoundSystems Kenya look like?**

SoundSystems Berlin will always remain in contact with our sisters in Kenya! We help each other, we talk, we invite them here, we advise them, we support them in all the processes. We know and acknowledge that it's tougher for them than for us and that they have to find their own way navigating the political context in their country, step by step. But we believe blindly in their skills and capacities!

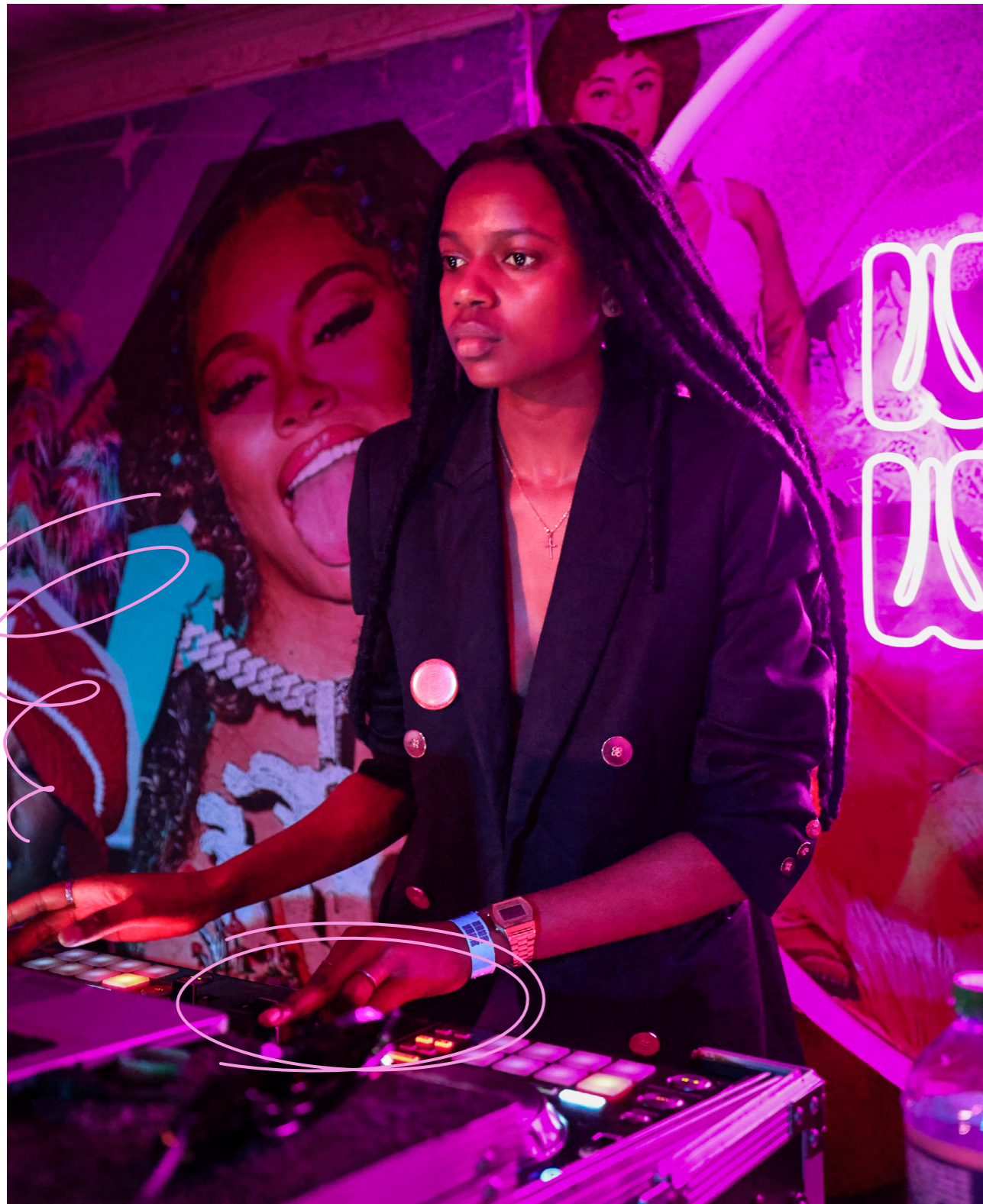
Interview

Sisters in Sound!  
Check out the SoundSystems on Instagram 



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**Valuable Industry Connections:** Understanding that technical knowledge alone does not guarantee access to market for the trained sound engineers, the Goethe-Institut designed a follow-up programme: Wana Wake. This all-female music performance series was hosted at various established venues in Kenya's buzzing capital of Nairobi.

The Wana Wake performance series allowed trainees to build a network of potential clients while demonstrating and practicing their acquired sound engineering skills. In September 2023, Wana Wake organised the Femcee Night at the club MIST, which featured rap and hip-hop artists. The all-female line up was backed by an all-female technical team of trained sound engineers. The event had an audience of 200 attendees, demonstrating positive audience endorsement.

Sound artist

# Learning

**Practice is Paramount:** Holla Systems recognised that hands-on experience is crucial for skills development in the field of sound engineering. By incorporating practical components, like live gigs, into the training and providing ongoing support through Wana Wake gigs, participants gained invaluable experience that strengthened newly learned techniques.

**Mentorship Maximizes Momentum:** To sustain training impact, Wana Wake engaged an experienced mentor to offer ongoing guidance and refresher courses. This helped to ensure that the women not only had skills but could thrive independently, reinforcing lessons learned. Continued mentorship has kept their momentum going.



# 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.



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