



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Diversity of
Cultural Expressions

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Diversité
des expressions
culturelles

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Diversidad
de las expresiones
culturales

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

Разнообразие форм
культурного
самовыражения

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

تنوع أشكال التعبير
الثقافي

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

文化表现形式
多样性

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INFORMATION DOCUMENT

This document presents information on the UNESCO|Sabrina Ho initiative “You Are Next: empowering creative women”

1. Despite the growing importance of creativity in the digital era, inequalities between women and men as creators and producers of cultural expressions persist in all sectors of the digital creative industries. The UNESCO 2018 [Global Report](#) “Re|Shaping Cultural Policies” concluded that women are not only less connected, but have lower digital literacy skills and little access to training programmes. Women are less likely to be hired by tech companies and are underrepresented in tech conferences or creative industry marketplaces. Women entrepreneurs remain invisible in the digital creative industries even though they represent half of those employed in these sectors worldwide. Women are also largely missing in senior management and leadership positions. Women in the digital creative industries from the Global South, face additional challenges due to the overall lack of infrastructure, funding, training and regulatory frameworks.
 2. To meet these challenges, UNESCO developed a new initiative, “You Are Next: empowering creative women” with the support of Sabrina Ho¹, through a contribution of \$ 1.5 million. “You Are Next” is an innovative programme and the first UNESCO initiative to support young women working in the digital creative industries.
 3. This programme supports the creativity of young women for positive social, economic and environmental outcomes. It underscores the crucial link between culture, creativity, and equality to achieve the UN’s 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular SDG 5 to promote gender equality.
 4. This document presents the main activities of the UNESCO|Sabrina Ho “You Are Next: empowering creative women” initiative.
- I. UNESCO|Sabrina Ho “You Are Next: empowering creative women” calls for funding proposals**

First call for funding proposals - 2018

5. In February 2018, UNESCO launched the first “You Are Next: empowering creative women” call for funding proposals. The call closed on 20 April 2018. Successful projects were announced on the 2005 Convention’s website (<https://en.unesco.org/creativity/news/unesco-sabrina-ho-initiative-women-digital-creative>)
6. In order to ensure a fully transparent project selection process, all submitted projects followed 3 steps of evaluation:
 - Technical assessment by the 2005 Convention’s Secretariat;
 - Expert evaluation and final recommendations;

¹Following her studies in arts at the University of Hong Kong and the completion of her MBA in Switzerland, Sabrina Ho founded Chiu Yeng Culture Limited in 2015, a company dedicated to promoting young artists in Macao. She has been actively involved at the community level to support the emergence of the region’s cultural scene. She is a member of the Youth Committee of the Macao (China) Chamber of Commerce and is the Committee Chairman of the non-profit organisation, Boao Youth Forum for Asia.

- Approval of recommended projects by Sabrina Ho.
7. The Secretariat received 101 projects from 46 countries. The majority of the projects received focused on capacity development: 35% of projects were designed to provide mentoring and/or training; 22% aimed to build new and/or stronger networks of cooperation; 8% of the projects included governance and public policy in their objectives and activities.
 8. As a result of the technical assessment, 34 projects were deemed eligible for funding: 12 projects from Africa, 8 projects from Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 projects from Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, 3 projects from Arab states and 3 projects from Asia and the Pacific.
 9. On August 31, UNESCO announced the four winning projects for a total amount of 385,520 USD. Below are summaries of the selected projects.

#BeYourVoice (Mexico)

#BeYourVoice is a project developed by the performing arts company “Teatro de Aire” at the interface of education and culture. It is designed to empower 100 young women, giving them the artistic, digital and entrepreneurship skills they need to succeed. #BeYourVoice will operate within a unique platform, using Virtual Reality technologies. Its experimental dimension can lead to new educational models, both in form and content that could be replicable in other sectors or countries. Through this new VR e-learning tool, #BeYourVoice aims to increase women’s confidence, their employment opportunities and create a network of future decision-makers in the digital creative industries.

Women Audio Visual Education - WAVE (Palestine)

“Theatre Day Productions” in Gaza has developed a new project bringing together digital animation, drama, storytelling and vocational training to build entrepreneurial, creative and technical skills among young women. They will learn to create short videos with their smartphones and work with communities. Character analysis and development will foster new digital creative expressions from Palestine that can be distributed through international festivals and regional markets. National and international trainers, using the latest digital technologies and software, will mentor these young women. In parallel, “Theatre Day Productions” will launch an advocacy campaign on culture, freedom of expression and women’s rights. It will use the results of the project to formulate a five year strategic plan towards the introduction of curriculum on digital audiovisual production at a Palestinian university or public institution.

DigitELLES (Senegal)

Gender equality, artistic creation and freedom of expression are priorities for “Africulturban” who works to support women and girls in Dakar to take ownership of their creative environments and develop their full potential. Through this project, “Africulturban” will provide a new digital training programme for young female artists working in the music industry to strengthen their technical and artistic skills. With the collaboration of “Positive Planet International”, they will provide opportunities for cultural management training and for the production of new cultural expressions using digital tools. Through this partnership, they will introduce collaborative co-

working spaces and the Human-Centred Design approach that will help these young women establish micro-enterprises and contribute towards achieving their financial independence. In parallel, “Africulturban” will launch an awareness raising campaign to combat stereotypes and empower women to fight against discrimination in this sector.

Digital Arts Academy (Tajikistan and Afghanistan)

Much of Tajikistan and Afghanistan’s cultural and educational infrastructure was destroyed by conflict and war, impeding their social and economic development. As they move towards rebuilding their countries, they face fundamental challenges, including the exclusion of women from economic and public spheres, including the tech world. “Bactria Cultural Centre” will establish a new Digital Arts Academy in Dushanbe for female cultural entrepreneurs under 40 years old from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The academy will offer courses on coding, digital creation and entrepreneurship training to help them become competitive on the digital job market. The female graduates will be involved in developing new curriculum, teaching and mentoring future academy graduates. This will help break down barriers women face to spheres of influence. The “Bactria Cultural Centre” will launch a creative digital campaign designed by the graduates themselves, to help raise awareness of the role and creative capacities of women. Their digital artistic productions will be promoted, giving recognition to the contribution of women to the digital arts scene of Central Asia for the first time.

10. Project implementation started in February 2019 for both projects Women Audio Visual Education (Palestine) and Digital Arts Academy (Tajikistan) and in March 2019 for DigitELLES (Senegal) and #BeYourVoice (Mexico).

Second call for funding proposals – 2019

11. The second call for proposals will be launched in 2019 and will be opened to civil society organisations.
12. This second call for funding will target innovative projects that aim to:
 - Create incubator spaces to strengthen the digital and entrepreneurial skills, capacities and knowledge of young women working in different sectors of the cultural and creative industries (CCIs);
 - Develop new vocational training for young women to acquire technical, digital as well as entrepreneurship skills;
 - Establish mentorship programmes and networking opportunities for young women to present their ideas, to exchange with established professionals and to explore new markets.
13. Results and lessons learned from innovative projects will inform future cultural policies and the Secretariat’s programme to promote gender equality in the digital creative industries.

II. Visibility

14. The project beneficiaries were invited to the “Create|2030 Talks” organized during the twelfth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, on the 11th December 2018. They underlined the importance of investing in gender equality in the digital creative industries and how investing in women would alter the current economic system. With the digital skills they will acquire during the project, women will be able to produce their own audiovisual content and distribute their works online. In Palestine, Women Audio Visual Education will give young women the opportunity to access audiences and markets through online platforms, even when they are not able to travel outside of their territory. The project beneficiaries in Mexico and Senegal emphasized the value of encouraging young women to produce their own narratives through auto-entrepreneurship in the digital creative industries in order to contribute to their financial independence.
15. A “You Are Next” reception was held in the evening of 11th December 2018, at UNESCO Headquarters, to recognize the four beneficiaries. UNESCO’s Assistant-Director-General for Culture, Mr. Ernesto Ottone, opened the reception and highlighted the value of the Sabrina Ho partnership: *““You Are Next” is the first initiative in the Culture sector to focus on gender equality and Sabrina Ho is the first private donor to support this important work.”* The event was a huge success and included three performances: a slam poet from Senegal, hip-hop dancers and DJ from France.
16. The first major “You Are Next” conference will be held in Macau, in December 2019. This conference will focus on gender equality and women’s empowerment in the digital creative industries. It will also be an opportunity for networking and sharing experiences with key women who are personalities in the digital creative industries from around the world that can become role models for the next generation of women.