

CREACT4MED Mapping: Best Practices

Application Number: BP_113

1. Basic info*	
Email Address	alia@shashat.org
Title of the Best Practice	Growing audience for film through supporting local film productions by young women
Name of the Applicant	Shashat Woman Cinema
Is the BP a registered legal entity?	Yes
Website	www.shashat.org
Country	Palestine
Subsector	a) Arts and culture (cultural heritage, gastronomy, visual arts, performing arts, leisure and recreation, crafts)
Category	a) Cultural and creative entrepreneurship
Year of establishment and duration	2005
Target group of the BP	Culturally marginal communities
1. Best Practice Characteristics	
Problem Statement	Cultural events and production opportunities are usually accessed by urban audiences and culturally sophisticated persons. This, however, leaves the majority of people outside of the experience of culture and the opportunity to express themselves creatively producing cultural works.
Mission Statement & Value proposition	The Palestinian geo-political context has generated a stereotypical representation of Palestine as a one-dimensional location of suffering, conflict, and war, diverting attention from the diversity and richness of its cultural and knowledge production. Shashat builds the capacity of young women filmmakers from diverse social and economic backgrounds to tell the Palestinian story as lived by them, presenting multi-dimensional and personal perspectives on Palestinian lives, especially that of women. Shashat's training, mentoring, production support, exhibition, screening discussions, and dissemination fosters and promotes a gendered modern and creative Palestinian culture. Shashat five programs of film training, production, screenings and discussions aimed at adolescents, youth and women, spring from its commitment to the human right of all to participate in cultural activities. Its activities target especially women and adolescent girls in the belief that culture is a vector of social change of awareness, empowerment and affirmation of identity. Shashat believes that cultural products must be relevant to people's experiences for them to become credible actors in the change of deeply entrenched values and emotional fabric of society.
Results and growth	Shashat has reached nearly every community in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem area with film screenings and discussions focusing on women's cinema and the social and cultural implications of women's representations. By providing sustainability and continuity to these objectives in all its programs it has enhanced women's access to self-expression, creativity and decision-making in the cultural field, acknowledged and essential components of democratic development promoting equity, growth and dignity for all citizens, men and women alike. The mandate of Shashat's women film festival is to screen films made by women filmmakers who express a gender or social sensitivity: it is not a festival 'about' women but 'by' women. It is heavily attended by men from all ages and social backgrounds.

	<p>Shashat’s activities are centered around five program areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Gender Equality in the Creative Industries” program which provides professional training and production opportunities for young women predominantly from deprived and peripheral communities, enhancing their employment opportunities in the audio-visual sector in leading roles as producers, launched in 2007. 2. “The Adolescent & Youth Media Interventions (What’s Tomorrow)” program provides the impetus and opening a space for adolescents to reflect and imagine horizons of different values and relationships through the use of media, launched in 2016 3. “The Big Sister” program focuses on shared capacity and financial sub-granting to community-based organizations empowering and amplifying community participation in cultural activities. 4. The “Yalla nshouf film!” (“Come Let’s See a Movie”) cultural social program includes both “Films for All” and “Shashat Woman Film Festival in Palestine”. The program is premised on articles 27 and 19 of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights - Right of cultural and art participation and Freedom of opinion and expression. The festival is the longest running film festival in Palestine, and one of the longest running women’s film festivals in the Arab world. 5. The “Cinema Cultural Program”, which includes a specialized film library with films and DVDs on Arab and international classics in three different sites in the West Bank; cine-club screenings and conversations; networking and research and publications, and rental of subsidized equipment to the filmmaking sector. <p>Shashat received the Palestinian Ministry of Culture “Award for Excellence in Cinema” (2010), the only time this award was given. It was awarded in 2013 the Palestinian Ministry of Culture “Palestinian Cinema Pioneers Award.” In 2017 its director was awarded jointly by the Palestinian Ministry of Women Affairs and the Ministry of Culture “Award for a woman who made a Change.” Shashat was selected by the Euromed Women’s Foundation in 2012 for its “successful practice...which has a strong added value and could inspire other initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean region,” honored by Sale International Women Film Festival in Morocco in 2008 for making women’s cinema accepted on the grassroots level. It won the 2015 Oxfam\CAWTAR regional cinema competition for films on gender-based violence. It was twice honored by the Algerian Ministry of Culture—in the “Committed Film Festival” in 2012 for the impact of its films on communities outside the center, and in 2022, at the closing ceremony of 11th Algerian International Cinema Festival as an outstanding “Cinema Organization” for its social impact, with an homage to its director.</p> <p>Shashat’s 38-month “Yalla nshouf film!” grant in the amount of 1,139,869 EURO from the European Union from 2017-2022, resulted in the production of ten films, ten TV programs broadcast on a Palestinian satellite channel, 1,333 screenings and discussions, directly reached 38,853 participants, 26,386 of whom are women (67.91%), in collaboration with 442 organizations in 265 localities in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip.</p>
<p>Strategy to be financially sustainable</p>	<p>We have been successful in generating income from the film rentals of our 120 film archive, as well as the subsidized rentals of our production and</p>

	post production equipment when it is not being used for our own productions. We also solicit funding through grants.
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2. Impact (please complete at least 3 of the 6 sub-sections)

Economic significance	Shashat's 120 film archive of films made since 2007 has had longevity with its films still touring and generating income and visibility and status to its filmmakers which is translated into higher potential employment and attractiveness to funders.
Replicability and upscaling	<p>Our model is easily replicated and upscaled. It is multi-stage and multi-phase.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide Training programs, over several phases, for young women filmmakers from marginalized communities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip so as to enhance their professional skills and provide them with a portfolio which showcases their creativity and enables them to find professional employment. 2. Support professional quality productions by young women filmmakers of films which can compete in international film festivals. The support is either through funding of productions with mentoring or outright production grants. 3. Assist young women filmmakers in applying to film festivals and facilitate their travel. 4. Provide an institutional back-up support for young women filmmakers applying for jobs, grants or further studies. 5. Send their films to the media, film critics and researchers so as to promote articles on their works. 6. Conduct national touring programs of screenings and discussions of their films accompanied by a vigorous media visibility campaign enhancing the national profile of the young women filmmakers. 7. When possible produce TV programs on audience responses to the films to broadcast on Palestinian satellite channels to reach the general public. <p>This is affirmed as was mentioned earlier Shashat was selected by the Euromed Women's Foundation in 2012 for its "successful practice...which has a strong added value and could inspire other initiatives in the Euro-Mediterranean region."</p>
Employment generation	<p>Over 90% of our trainees have maintained and grown their involvement in the audio-visual sector in different capacities. The majority of the women filmmakers involved in the program succeeded in obtaining professional employment, advanced production grants, and study fellowships, launching a successful career for them. Their films competed in official competitions and shown in major short film festivals in Europe, Asia and the Arab world including the Cannes International Film Festival.</p> <p>Some of Shashat's filmmakers' film have received awards and their films selected to international film festivals, including Cannes International Film Festival, showing in competitions and panoramas. Other filmmakers pursued major and not so major regional and international production opportunities and production grants based on their portfolio and video show reel made possible by Shashat's training, production funding, subtitling and packaging of their films. While others have pursued an academic and theoretical tract of higher education through Masters or</p>

	<p>Ph.D. scholarships. Others work in the Palestine bureaus of international news agencies and satellites, while others work for local stations.</p>
<p>Inclusiveness</p>	<p>Shashat developed for nearly twenty-years of commitment and work a meaningful presence in marginalized areas with its films a centerpiece throughout villages, towns, cities, refugee camps, Bedouin communities and universities in the West Bank, Jerusalem area, and the Gaza Strip. Shashat generated acceptance and debates on gender equality and women and girls' human rights.</p> <p>Shashat is committed to a wide geographic scope of outreach with its activities reaching communities and sectors of communities outside the elite center, especially those who do not usually participate in activities, such as those in seam areas and refugee camps. Shashat's film screenings and discussions provide those absented from community dialogue, due to pre-conception of inability to understand the full scope of issues (women), or inexperience (youth), and the handicapped, with a communal public framework which empowers them to speak and encourages others, marginalized like them, to speak. These include male and female farmers and laborers, women in Old Cities, house-wives, people in old people's homes, orphans, the physically challenged, Bedouins, illiterate members of the community, as well as young men and women from traditional communities who normally do not interact.</p> <p>This re-situates these individuals and communities as aware, active and concerned members of the communities able to articulate their point of view and propose options and solutions to their conditions. It creates a sense of solidarity and community through shared concerns and active involvement in solving common problems.</p> <p>The screening discussion events function as 'town hall' meetings of participatory democracy and active citizenship from the ground up highlighting the role individuals and communities can play in fostering social cohesion, communal peace, and a culture of tolerance and human rights. Through the discussions of socially relevant films, audiences engage in democracy as a tangible daily lived practice affecting them, their families and their communities and not as an abstract concept.</p> <p>In peripheral and closed traditional communities, frameworks for open and free dialogue and voicing one's opinion do not exist. The film screenings and discussions provide such a forum in a culturally entertaining framework and interest was quite high, especially among youth who are attracted to the audio-visual component. This helps to engage youth in the social issues of their communities, and through films made by women contribute to breaking the widespread misogyny of women as incapable.</p>
<p>Social impact</p>	<p>Shashat aims at building the capacity of young women filmmakers from diverse social and economic backgrounds through training, mentoring, production support, exhibition and dissemination so that they are producers of a gendered modern and creative Palestinian culture with respect to women and girls' human rights.</p> <p>Shashat programs and activities of film training, production, screenings and discussions, spring from its commitment to advocate for women and adolescent girls' human rights and prevent gender based violence through protection of awareness and empowerment.</p> <p>Shashat believes that culture and media play a transforming role and serve as an interventionary agent in changing cultural perceptions and attitudes about women. Women's access to self-expression, creativity and decision-</p>

	<p>making in the cultural field, especially the audio-visual one, are acknowledged essential components of democratic development promoting equity, growth and dignity for all citizens, men and women alike. Organizations and individuals affirm that using film is an effective, creative and innovative way to address social issues and promote civic engagement and social change. The films express the issues in a simple, direct and easily understandable manner which makes their issues accessible to audiences from different educational, social and cultural backgrounds and ages.</p> <p>They are an immediate and short-hand way to bring up provocative and sensitive social issues because they were presented through the stories of real people, which leads to audience identification with the characters and their problems. The interactive nature of the film screenings and discussions breaks the routine of didactic workshops which rely on lecturing and 'teaching' which are premised on the assumption that audiences are ignorant and need to be educated, whereby the audience is passive and not involved emotionally or reflectively.</p> <p>Culture is a deep impact agent for social change promoting the human rights of women and girls and contributing to their inclusion and civic participation in their communities. It is effective in reaching out to different social categories across geographic, political, religious and economic barriers because it touches on human sensibility and emotions bringing about a change in values and behavior.</p> <p>Gender inequity in Palestine is grounded in popular cultural perceptions of women held by the public, policy-makers, and most of the institutions whose decisions have a profound impact on Palestinian women and girls' lives. These cultural perceptions and stereotypes normalize control of women and girls leaving them with limited resources to control their lives or develop their capabilities.</p> <p>They leave women and girls with a poverty of access to knowledge and options for how to change their lives or empower them to do so. They normalize gender in-equity and legitimize women and girls' marginalization and disenfranchisement leading to multi-level violations of their human rights.</p> <p>Cinema can play a central role in creating awareness and challenging stereotypes, putting upfront violence against women and girls, women rights, and gender equality at all levels of society.</p>
<p>Innovation</p>	<p>The major source of Shashat's innovation is actually its outreach to communities which have not been reached before with opportunities for the telling and screening of their lives and their stories. This invigoration of the Palestinian film sector with new young female talent from refugee camps and rural areas has contributed much needed innovation to a Palestinian film sector composed for the most part of middle-class educated professionals. The impact of the stories told by young women from these communities is demonstrated in the vibrant and heated discussions filmed for Shashat's TV programs in which older women, village leaders, young men and women tell of their lives and women's lives in their communities, of the issues affecting their daughters, sisters and wives. Talking of their own lives brings the messages of the films into daily experience, rather than as NGO slogans or position papers, and the sense of familiarity collapses any distance that viewers may feel from the messages of these films. It is clear that films evoke widespread response precisely because communities and the women are touched and recognise themselves in these films. This methodology has allowed Shashat to forge collaborations with nearly five hundred community organisations, municipalities, governorates and village</p>

	<p>councils from Jenin refugee camp in the north of Palestine to Rafah refugee camp in the south of Palestine. It is significant that Shashat receives requests for their films, many produced over a decade ago and still in demand, on a daily basis from communities in towns, villages and refugee camps and from small - scale organisations (previously unknown to Shashat) who are working locally in their communities.</p>
Environmental sustainability	<p>Shashat's films advocate for environmental protection among youth and adolescents as well as communities. Its films address the pollution of the Gaza sea and the mountains of Hebron.</p> <p>"It looks pretty but..." shows vividly the impact of dumping untreated sewage into the Gaza sea and the resultant impact on marine life and people, although the Gaza sea is the only recreation outlet for Gazans. In the idyllic and grand Hebron mountains the burning of cables and other household items to extract metal from them turn the sky black and causes cancer to those in the vicinity including the youth employed for this dangerous work. In the film, "Countryside in Black" the youth tell of the need to support their families even at the cost of their own health. These two films toured extensively for several years nationally followed by discussion on the importance of environmental protection for the sustainability of communities and livelihood. Other films address the value of the environment and the pleasures of clean air and water, as well as their destruction and depletion such as "Madleen, the first fishergirl" in Gaza and "The Shepherdess."</p>
3. Challenges and lessons learned	
Challenges	<p>With the security and humanitarian crisis in Palestine escalating as years go on, Shashat aims to continue to enable young Palestinian women filmmakers to tell their own stories.</p> <p>Shashat has over fifteen-years experience in overseeing film production in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza Strip addressing the challenges of the Israeli Occupation and settlers. Shashat maps safe travel routes, while scheduling and rescheduling is its modus operandi. Shashat's no-harm policy encompassing staff and crews necessitates continuous and agile adjustment of time frames and action plans to respond to emerging conditions on the ground. We accommodated in the budget an additional '5th' day for shooting in the event of delays or cancellations due to flying or closed checkpoints, military incursions, and army requests to vacate a location suddenly declared 'military'.</p>
Lessons learned	
4. Demographic Information	
Is the organization led by a woman?	Yes.
What age is the lead of the organization?	Our Board members who lead the organization range in age from 22 years old to 75 years old, with three in their twenties.