#DontGoViral: Fighting the Infodemic through Culture

25 May 2020: Africa Day
Debate: 3.00 - 3.45 (Paris Time, UTC+2)
Concert: 3.45 - 4.30 (Paris Time, UTC +2)
What is ResiliArt?

COVID-19 has hit the cultural and creative industries hard. Behind each cancelled concert, postponed festival, delayed album launch and closed bookstore are countless artists and cultural professionals who lost their income. The pandemic revealed and magnified the creative industries’ pre-existing volatility and considerably weakened the professional, social and economic status of artists. Lockdown measures around the world had a direct impact on the sector’s capacity to create and distribute new artistic expressions outside of the digital spectrum, reducing the diversity of cultural expressions worldwide.

Still, art is resilient. Many artists and cultural professionals have imagined innovative and creative solutions, often by using digital tools to continue their activity and to connect with the public. Initiatives allowing artists and cultural institutions to connect with their audiences in new ways are emerging every day.

In times of crisis, we need art more than ever. People in self-isolation singing together from balconies showed us that culture and creativity give us the power to stand united. Art allows people to express themselves and maintain social ties amidst travel restrictions and lockdown measures. Art makes us resilient.

This is why UNESCO calls on all artists and cultural professionals to join the ResiliArt movement.

ResiliArt is an online debate series with key industry professionals and artists—both established and emerging—that raises awareness of the far-reaching impact of current lockdown measures as well as of the importance of cultural and creative industries for economic development and social cohesion. It aims to trigger efforts to increase the creative sector’s resilience and sustainability, as well as harness the universality and power of creativity.

Since the launch of the movement on 15 April 2020, over 24 countries including the Gambia, Nigeria, Uganda and Zimbabwe have organized ResiliArt debates with the participation of artists and cultural professionals. “Talent is not the problem. It is concrete support systems and respect for the arts that we need,” said one panelist in Uganda. Over 15 countries across Africa are now preparing their own ResiliArt debates to capture the creativity and resilience of Africa.

In the face of COVID-19, many campaigns have been launched in Africa, from awareness-raising songs to graffiti that urge the people to protect themselves. Solidarity, embodied by the spirit of Ubuntu, is a core value of African society. As the continent faces uncertainties, the pandemic has also revealed the inequality that derives from poor internet access. As physical distancing measures push cultural content to digital platforms, one question remains: how can we ensure a fair, economically viable and sustainable environment for artists in Africa in 2020 and beyond?

Culture sector and COVID-19 in numbers:

- According to CISAC, the current global shutdown of live and public performance across all repertoires alone affects around 30% of royalties collected for authors worldwide.

- The global film industry has recorded a revenue loss of US $7 billion.

- In Senegal, the Association des Métiers de la Musique estimated the loss in the music industry around 6 milliard CFA (around 10 million USD). Over 50% of participants to the survey confirmed a financial loss up to 1 million CFA (1,500 USD) due to COVID-19.

- In Kenya, according to a survey conducted by HEVA, 34% of the creative sector reported experiencing cancellations of events and orders and 76% registered instances of financial loss.
What is #DontGoViral?

#DontGoViral is an online campaign launched by UNESCO and the Innovation for Policy Foundation (i4Policy) on 1 April 2020. The campaign crowdsources creative content and addresses the urgent need for culturally relevant openly licensed information in African languages to inform communities, in their own languages, about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and combat the “infodemic” spreading disinformation and misinformation about the virus.

Since its launch, the #DontGoViral Campaign has received more than 500 submissions from more than 40 countries in Africa. The campaign’s social media posts on Facebook and Twitter alone have reached more than 128 million people so far, and the videos have been watched by countless more on Youtube and messaging platforms, as well as heard on local radio stations across the world. Top tier artists from across Africa and the African Diaspora have joined the campaign, including Fally Ipupa, Timi Dakolo, Wale Turner, Stonebwoy, Reekado Banks, Les Freres Smith and Seun Kuti, Didier Awadi, and Youssou N'Dour, to name but a few.

UNESCO’s content-rich and diverse #DontGoViral playlist is updated regularly with new contributions in both English and French. Several videos are also available in Arabic. The playlist includes Bobi Wine and Nubian Li, a remix of Wine’s “Corona Virus Alert” by youth, Didier Awadi, Youssou Ndour, and the Daan Corona Collective, Les Freres Smith and Seun Kuti, Seroney, Siti Amina, Big Seush and AST, the Mukuru Youth Initiative, Goumour Ezza, Collectif 229, Msafiri Zawoze, Saintrick Mayitoukou, Pam Luster, and Mujtaba Alsedding.
ResiliArt: #DontGoViral debate and concert in confinement

UNESCO and i4Policy are partnering with the Worldwide Afro Network (WAN) to organize a ResiliArt: DontGoViral debate and concert in confinement. WAN is a creative platform that celebrates the convergence of music, leadership, and innovation in Africa. On May 25, 2020, WAN will host a global virtual event featuring music performances, insights of African thought leaders, and an inclusive pan-African discussion on social media. At the heart of WAN is the belief that “most unexpected successes happen when diverse topics and people come together.”

1. Debate

This Special Edition ResiliArt: #DontGoViral highlights the crucial role music plays during lockdowns as well as during the recovery phase. Artists who have participated in the #DontGoViral campaign will shed light on the social and economic challenges they face and discuss how music can be a tool to fight disinformation. They will also highlight resilient cultural initiatives that have emerged across the continent.

The main objectives of the debate are to:

1) Highlight the role of artists in combating the infodemic around COVID-19 in Africa and the diaspora,
2) Discuss how cultural actors can co-create response and recovery initiatives to COVID-19,
3) Raise awareness about the role of culture, music and artists in promoting resilience in crisis situations.

Participants

Moderator: Valeriane Gauthier (Journalist, France 24)

Panelists:

- **Siti Amina** is a singer and musician that uses Traditional Taarab Music to voice female centered change for the upcoming generations. As lead vocalist and Oud player of Siti & The Band, Siti Amina has expressed her story of domestic violence and patriarchy using her strongest tool; her voice. Freeing herself with her music, she now stands out in her society as strong leader and role model for the upcoming generation and is part of UNESCO’s #DontGoViral Campaign.
- **Kareytse Fotso** is a singer whose repertoire includes mangambeu, Afro pop, world music, soul music and Ethnic blues. In 2009, she won the Silver Medal at the Jeux de la Francophonie and participated at the first commemoration of the end of slavery. She has been an Ambassadrice de la Francophonie since 2017.
- **Danny Lee** is a rapper and founder of the “Raised Fists” Collective in Niger, which mobilized to raise awareness against the spread of COVID 19 in the country through music, with a particular focus on marginalized groups. The song of the collective “Protect your Life” is the winner of the best video category in the first phase of the #DontGoViral Campaign.
- **Zolani Mahola** is South African singer, actress and inspiration speaker. Since 2002, she has led the internationally acclaimed South African group Freshlyground. The group is best known for their collaboration with the Colombian singer Shakira on the 2010 FIFA World Cup anthem “Waka waka (This time for Africa)”.  
- **Youssou N’Dour** is a singer, songwriter, composer, businessman, and politician. In 2004, Rolling Stone magazine described him as “perhaps the most famous singer alive” in Senegal and much of Africa. He served as Senegal’s Minister of Tourism from April 2012 to September 2013.
- **Neila Tazi** is Vice-Chairperson of the Moroccan Senate, as well as vice chairperson of the Moroccan association of the private sector. In 1998, she founded the emblematic festival Gnaoua of Essouaira, which became a global reference in world music festivals.

And surprise special guests!
Questions and themes

The ResiliArt: #DontGoViral debate will focus on fighting the infodemic through culture. It will also contribute to the understanding of the current state of cultural emergency.

Some questions include:

- What is the role of culture and cultural professionals in promoting resilience in the face of COVID-19?
- What positive impacts have you witnessed from the fight against misinformation through music, including the #DontGoViral movement?
- What is the role of artists from Africa and the diaspora in combating disinformation around COVID-19?
- How has COVID-19 affected the livelihoods of artists in your country?

Format

This debate is part of the Africa Day Celebrations organized by UNESCO and will be held from 3:00-3:45pm (Paris time) on Monday, 25 May 2020.

The debate will be streamed on UNESCO networks. Viewers will be able to ask questions to the panelists using a chat function. Interpretation will be provided in French and English.

How to join the debate

You can join the debate at this address: bit.ly/ResiliArt. The link will go live on 25 May 2020.

For any question or inquiries, please contact UNESCO: resiliart@unesco.org
2. Concert

Programme

More than twenty renowned artists from across Africa and the African diaspora will take part in this global digital concert hosted by Valeriane Gauthier (France 24).

Throughout the concert, artists will highlight the importance of music to fight the infodemic as well as the messages of the ResiliArt movement.

Format

The concert will take place from 3:45-4:30pm (Paris time) on 25 May 2020.

The concert will be streamed via France 24 and UNESCO channels, as well as on the WAN platform.

How to join the concert

You can join the concert from 3:45 pm (Paris time) at bit.ly/ResiliArt. The link will go live on 25 May 2020.

For any question or inquiries, please contact UNESCO: s.rubel@unesco.org