

Selam launches new initiative to promote artistic freedom in Africa

Selam is launching the Pan-African Network for Artistic Freedom (Panaf), a new network building initiative funded by the Swedish Arts Council. The initiative will be developed in collaboration with partners in Nigeria, Gambia, Mozambique, Zambia, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda and Ethiopia, with plans to involve several other countries in the future.



Selam founder and CEO Teshome Wondimu (left) and Swedish Arts Council director-general Kajsa Ravin (right). | Source: Supplied.

Panaf will primarily focus on the music and film sector with the intent to gradually involve artists, performers, journalists, writers, cultural workers and activists, as well as officials. It aims to establish a Pan-African network of creatives to strengthen collaborations at national, regional and continental levels, as well as to develop a digital platform for knowledge exchange and new initiatives.

Selam's founder and CEO Teshome Wondimu shares Panaf's vision: "In most African countries, there is a great need to strengthen cultural actors and reinforcing artistic freedom is an integral part of that. We want to show solidarity with individual actors and break the isolation that many experience.

"Through the networks that will be created, cultural actors will get to support each other on issues such as legal support, opinion formation on specific issues and around processes related to dialogues with decision-makers."



Selam has worked for over 20 years in cultural development and development aid and has offices in Stockholm (Sweden), Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Kampala (Uganda) and an Africa regional office in Nairobi (Kenya). In addition to its work on the African continent, Selam has utilised its vast experience and global network to develop and execute several cultural projects in Latin America and Asia.

Wondimu concluded: “We want to create tools and better conditions for the creatives as well as to form hubs of support and alliances, and strengthen the sector in general. Selam and our partners are thrilled and grateful for the good dialogue, trust and support we continue to receive from the Swedish Arts Council. Through this new project, we take another step forward, building on an already established successful working relationship with our partners.”

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