



critical people
critical places
critical issues

freeDIMENSIONAL

Hosting activists in art spaces and using cultural resources to strengthen their work.

freeDimensional (fD) is an international network that supports art spaces hosting activism and strengthening community engagement. fD is made up of art spaces in over 60 countries with regional hubs in São Paulo, Cairo, New York City, Berlin, and co-hosted at two locations in India (Pune/Pondicherry). fD members provide safe haven for oppressed activists in their residency apartments; offer meeting rooms to community organizers who bring important local issues to light; and introduce new ideas to the public through bold exhibitions and inclusive educational programs.

What we do - Programs & Services

Each year, hundreds of activists and culture workers are violently assaulted for pursuing their ideas of social change: as community leaders they lose their jobs; face arbitrary imprisonment; and may ultimately die for speaking truth to power. Sometimes these individuals need to physically move away from their communities in order to escape danger. Therefore, fD developed a system to partner artist residencies with human rights organizations in order to facilitate rapid response safe haven and related services. fD's concept is rooted in the idea that community art spaces are local civil society spaces and therefore effective access points for social action and change. These

art spaces can perform urgent interventions such as hosting an individual in distress, but also by working in a networked fashion, they assume a unique level of influence in civil society from which decision-makers and the general public seek advice and input on pressing issues.

fD provides resources and safe haven for oppressed activists and culture workers

DISTRESS SERVICES (CREATIVE SAFE HAVEN + ACTIVIST INFORMATION & REFERRAL SERVICE)

Membership in the fD network requires that partner centers are willing to be called upon for up to three months of accommodation and related hosting services annually for activists and culture workers in need of assistance. freeDimensional receives placement referrals from human rights organizations to fill short-term living and working spaces that become available throughout the fD network of art spaces.



Issa Nyaphaga, Artist-in-Community (Cameroon)

Distress Services in Action:

After a Gambian journalist was charged in connection with a contested newspaper story pertaining to the purported coup attempt, fD was able to place him in an artist residency in Senegal. The journalist was able to use this creative safe haven to put his affairs in order before traveling onward.

fD responded to a visual artist from Israel whose work addressing the plight of women in the Druze community resulted in a violent attack, which led to his economic marginalization and depression. He was offered an artist residency in Bilbao, Spain in partnership with fD and the Festival Against Censorship.

When a poet from the Republic of Georgia received attacks, harassment and a prison sentence after his peaceful protests against human rights abuses, fD was able to find an artist residency for him in Estonia.

fD's distress services are intended for activists and culture workers in situations of distress as a result of their professional work. Distress situations may include verbal threats, imprisonment or legal persecution, violent attack, professional or social exclusion, or general harassment.

Since launching the Distress Service program in 2005, fD has come to the aid of nearly 50 activists and culture workers in distress. These individuals were activist artists, journalists, musicians, writers, and community organizers and came from more than 15 countries.

Art Spaces Hosting Activism: A timeline

- Artist-in-Community
 - △ Distress Services
 - Hub Event
- Rapid Response (Creative Safe Haven)

Shakeb Isaar AFGHANISTAN music presenter - 3 months at NKD, (Norway)

2006

Joelle Khoury LEBANON
composer - 2 months at Milkwood
International Art Center (Czech Republic)

△ Abdel M. MOROCCO actor who was stabbed in hate crime (Poland)
- fD partner in Czech Republic organized regional media campaign

○ Jamshid Matin AFGHANISTAN music presenter - week at Flux Factory (NYC)

2007

○ Bara Diokhane SENEGAL
lawyer & visual artist - month at
Empty Vessel Project (NYC)

Issa Nyaphaga CAMEROON
cartoon journalist - resident at Carlton Arms Hotel (NYC)

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

As the fD network evolves, member centers have begun to share models for working with vulnerable groups in their communities. fD supports these local initiatives by linking them to other members facing similar issues. A network-wide campaign, such as the Action Lab on Economic Migration, may be the result.

Youth Involvement in New York City

Each year, the Artist-in-Community initiative invites a socially-engaged artist to experience the diverse offerings of NYC through a multi-borough process of youth engagement, community organizing and innovative exhibition. The Artist-in-Community residency is offered in partnership with Flux Factory, an artist-run residency program and non-profit arts center in Queens and Eyebeam, an art and technology center focused on digital research and experimentation in Manhattan. Additionally, residents spend a portion of their time as teaching artist in a Brooklyn school.

Artist-in-Community (AiC) is a pilot project of the fD network by which nominations for the visiting artist or community organizer are solicited from throughout the network. This allows the network partners to participate in residency placements outside of their local area while providing the NYC program with trusted referrals.

The first fD network-in-residence office was at the Pratt Center for Community Development in 2005-06 as a part of the neighborhood planning process for Bedford-Stuyvesant in Central Brooklyn. fD was hosted at Pratt because our programs responded to specific youth interests that arose through the community-driven planning process, including the development and support of after-school programs. During this period,



the Artist-in-Community (AiC) concept was born. Since then we have implemented the model at partner centers in Brazil, Mexico and The Netherlands in addition to our New York City program.

Economic Migration in Dakar

Each year, approximately 20,000 people drown while attempting long-distance sea voyages from West Africa to the Canary Islands, Europe, the Caribbean and increasingly farther destinations. In partnership with Atelier Moustapha Dime in Dakar, fD launched the Action Lab on Economic Migration with The Gorée Gazette, a research and publication process that took place between the 2006 and 2008 Dakar Biennials and encouraged

the media to address cumulative issues related to economic migration, such as youth opportunity, unemployment, and the worldwide trend of 'warehousing' people detained while attempting migration. Presently, fD is using lessons learned from The Gorée Gazette to connect with other projects on economic migration from around the world, including support for Cura Bodrum to host a migration and tourism research residency in Bodrum on the south coast of Turkey and Arkhana in Alexandria to produce a short animation film on economic migration emanating from Egypt's north coast. Whereas the residency in Turkey will produce policy recommendations, the film will be used as a public service announcement in Egypt and internationally.



Front page of The Gorée Gazette, 2008

Pierre Mumbere Mujomba CONGO-KINSHASA playwright - two months at Ledig House @ Art Omi (US) Emma Beltran MEXICO poet & activist - first week on Wasan Island (Canada)

Luz Araújo ANGOLA civil society leader - one month at Rogue Waves (Portugal)

Mouniro Ravenipour IRAN environmental defender & Goldman Prize winner - three years at Las Vegas City of Asylum (US) Rodolfo Montiel Flores MEXICO - one month at Montalvo Arts Center (US)

Franc Purg & Sara Heitlinger SLOVENIA / AUSTRALIA visual artists- three months at Santa Fe Art Institute (US)

Laura Silva MEXICO performance artist- two weeks at Guapamacátaro - Interdisciplinary Residency in Art and Ecology (Mexico)

Forced Migration in Cairo

Cairo is a city with close to one million forced migrants from Sudan, Iraq, Palestine, Somalia, Ethiopia and other countries, many of whom languish without basic necessities as they await refugee status or return home to war torn countries. Since 2005, a group of concerned organizations have worked to build an Egyptian-Refugee Multicultural Council known as Tadamon, which has evolved into a network of over 35 community-based organizations working to realize the welfare and mutual understanding of refugees, asylum seekers and marginalized Egyptians through cooperative projects, solidarity-building and advocacy. fD's Middle East hub partner, The Townhouse Gallery incubated the Tadamon Council and invited fD to create the 'Living Together Cairo' campaign with the purpose of addressing social tensions that arise among refugees and their Egyptian neighbors living together in Cairo. The council and related campaign are models that can be used in other cities experiencing large influxes of new refugees and asylum-seekers and for which there are art spaces interested to take action.

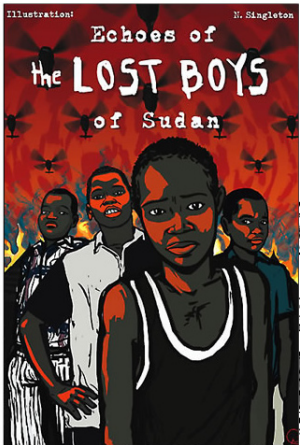


Strategies Against Violence in São Paulo

There are tens of thousands of violent deaths in Brazil each year. fD used the occasion of the 2009 World Social Forum in Bélem to build a coalition amongst organizations focused on combatting youth violence. fD hosted a meeting point within the Forum for participating organizations and convened a workshop entitled 'Creative Resistances' to showcase practical tools for mobilizing



communities against youth violence. Based on our experience at the World Social Forum and lessons learned implementing the Artist-in-Community concept in New York City, we helped to develop a community journalism training module for youth leaders from São Paulo that is housed at our South American hub center, Casa das Caldeiras.



Echoes of the Lost Boys of Sudan is a graphic novel on Sudanese youth living in the US, illustrated by Niki Singleton. As a fD Artist-in-Community, Niki was awarded a dual residency from Hotel Maria Kapel and Kunstfort Vijfhuizen in the Netherlands to complete her project.

Learn more about fD's advocacy & public awareness campaigns on the next page →

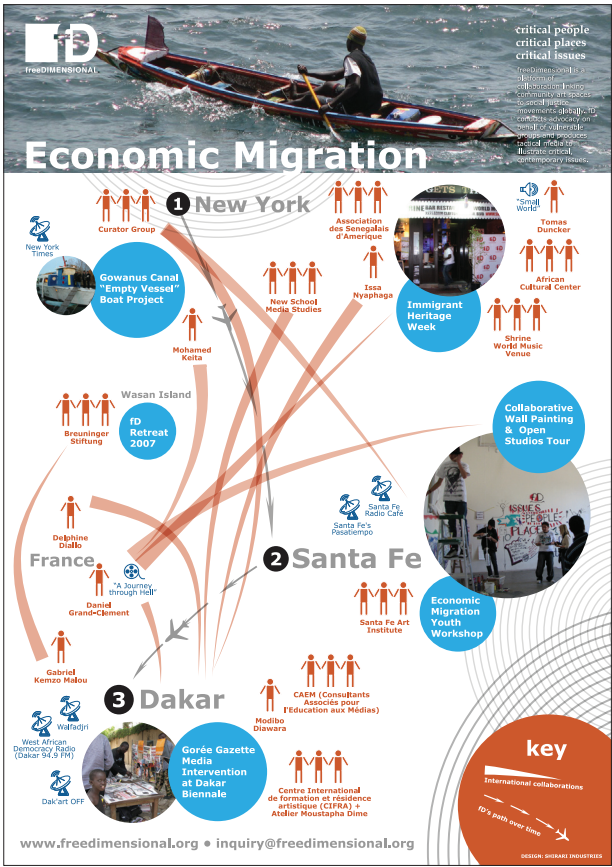
ADVOCACY & PUBLIC AWARENESS

Art and creativity are often commodified without acknowledgment of the social issues they represent, thus the relation between culture and society erodes. freeDimensional seeks to strengthen this relationship by taking practical steps to ensure individual safety, raise awareness and instigate change. fD's approach acknowledges that censorship and suppression of ideas do not exist in a vacuum but occur in relation to constantly evolving critical issues in communities, countries, and regions where the network has member centers.

The goal of fD Advocacy & Public Awareness is to connect local audiences to the activities of the network and to promote activism on social issues through the arts. fD works strategically with a range of media partners and maintains visibility at international art and human rights events, and supports selected Artists-in-Community worldwide.

fD receives a growing number of requests for support to socially-engaged art projects from independent artists and programmers. The volume of requests encouraged us to expand our Artist-in-Community initiative in order to provide support to artists engaging in activism in locations outside the reach of our New York City program. We are doing this because we realize that galleries will not always support social issue art projects and thus independent artists may need practical support such as graphic design assistance, web space, media strategy and fundraising support in order to realize these projects. Additionally, fD can engage artists and collectives on thematic campaigns that resonate throughout its programs, such as the Action Lab on Economic Migration.*

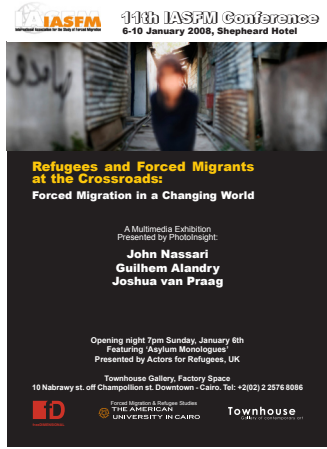
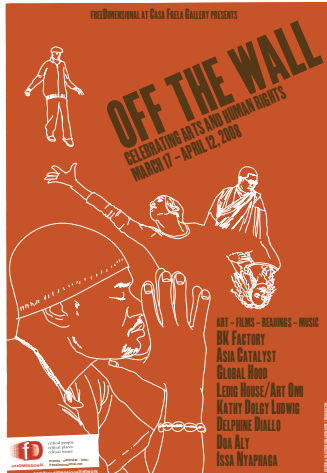
* The Action Lab on Economic Migration is multi-media, multi-region approach to raising awareness and reducing injustices experienced by economic migrants.



Design featured in the 2008 FIAC Catalog

"I'm not a sociologist ... I say what I find ... but sometimes that analysis can get in the way. People question if that is the role of the artist. Should I have to have a pseudonym in order to share these observations. When you're involved openly in social projects, your reputation in the art world goes down."

Ottjoerg A.C., Artist-in-Community in New York City, 2009



Additionally fD convenes its own events, such as the 2007 Censorship Show and 2008 'Off the Wall' Festival of Art and Human Rights, and supports our partner-led events, such as the Chinese LGBT Film Festival (NYC) with Asia Catalyst and the EXILE exhibit at Townhouse Gallery during the 'Forced Migration in a Changing World' conference (Cairo).

- △ Emma Beltran MEXICO poet & activist - second week on Wasan Island (Canada)
- △ Abazar Hamid SUDAN peace singer - received grant for work permit while in exile (Egypt)
- △ Journalist ETHIOPIA received psycho-social support while living in exile (Sudan)
- △ Doa Aly EGYPT resident at Carlton Arms Hotel (NYC)
- △ Omar Afifi Soliman EGYPT writer & lawyer - nominated for distress fund (US)
- Conectas VIII International Human Rights Colloquium BRAZIL 60 global activists hosted by Casa da Caldeiras for workshop

Why we do it – Advancing Social Justice

fD is a network of art spaces organized around the belief that creative expression can fuel social justice movements. fD works with the global arts community to identify and redistribute resources, and support meaningful relationships between art spaces and activists. Throughout its work, fD aims to engage with and foster solidarity among marginalized groups, including LGBT communities, people experiencing economic oppression, people with disabilities, migrants, and young people. fD is also committed to promoting long-term economic and environmental sustainability within its network of art centers and human rights organizations.

In the beginning, we created a system by which human rights and free expression organizations could nominate activists and culture workers-in-distress for safe haven, information resources and moral support. In the second phase, art spaces in the network share pressing issues that affect their local communities in order to problem-solve, exchange resources and build strategies across the network.

How we do it – Systemic Change Working Across Sectors

fD is a decentralized organization that recognizes the power of strategic partnerships throughout its work. Rather than a top-down imposition of values and programs, fD works with local civil society groups, social movements, arts organizations, schools and independent media outlets to build meaningful grassroots programs. By working closely with its members and regional hub centers, fD stays informed on a range of pressing social justice issues. Simultaneously, the nature of the fD network is one of flexibility and sharing ideas, resources and space for direct action. fD seeks to fill gaps that are left by other human rights and free

expression organizations in relation to activists and culture workers-in-distress. On several occasions fD has received a placement nomination from a human rights organization which has dispensed a distress fund to the same individual. With its process of identifying and sharing resources, fD is setting an example for the bundling of funds and services in the human rights sector. Additionally, freeDimensional works closely with long-term accommodation networks such as the International Cities of Refuge Network and Scholars at Risk in order to provide transit placements between the country of departure and a final destination. In keeping with this idea of *intersecting networks*, fD maintains relations with other networks such as Res Artis, Trans Europe Halles, Art Factories, Shapeshifters, The Upgrade, and the International Journalists in Exile Network, as well as having common members with Arts Collaboratory, Triangle Arts Trust and the European Network of Cultural Centres & Historic Monuments.

EMERGING ART SPACE SUPPORT INITIATIVE

fD is working with new art spaces around the world through its Emerging Art Space Support Initiative (EASSI), which seeks to increase the number of self-sustaining art spaces that can provide resources and residencies to vulnerable activists and culture workers.

EASSI provides the tools and support for emerging art spaces to become regular fD partner centers with the capacity to either host an activist or culture worker-in-distress (for residencies) or participate in a advocacy and public awareness campaign through their public programs or, simply, by offering space for important community



Todd Lester, fD founder, was living in Khartoum in 2005 where he met a pioneer of Sudanese cinema, Gadalla Gubara. After working as an encryption specialist in the Sudanese military and developing a film department in the Sudanese Ministry of Information, Gadalla decided to launch Gad's Studio, the first independent film studio in Sudan. In 1998, the Sudanese government issued a decree of eminent domain in order to take the land that Gad's studio occupied and silence the critical voices in his films. According to Gadalla's daughter, Sara, this was the very day that he fell blind. A portion of the land, including the studio and its concession, was returned to the family in early 2005; however it was in total disarray. As its very first action, fD linked Gad's Studio with a theatre company in need of practice and performance space. A deal was made that the young actors would help clean up the studio in exchange for using it as a community theatre. During the course of the project (in Summer 2005) the Vice-President from South Sudan, John Garang, died in a helicopter crash. Khartoum erupted in violence that mirrored the 22 year north-south civil war. Even though many of the actors were from South Sudan (and the Gubaras from the North), Gad's Studio continued to be used for community theatre. Gadalla, a blind man in his 90s, danced with his daughter, Sara, at the second public performance only a couple months after the incident.



△ Taslima Nasrin & Ma Thida BANGLADESH / BURMA 2 writers - Critical Dialogue at Ledig @ Art Omi (US)

◇ 10 young community organizers BRAZIL hosted for 8 month video training fellowship at Casa das Caldeiras (São Paulo)

△ Ben Koissaba KENYA member of Maa Civil Society Group - introduced to human rights partners

◇ Niki Singleton CANADA graphic novelist - one month each at Hotel Maria Kapel & Kunstfort Vijfhuizen (The Netherlands)

Fahed Halabi ISRAEL druze visual artist - three months in Bilbao, Festival Against Censorship (Spain)

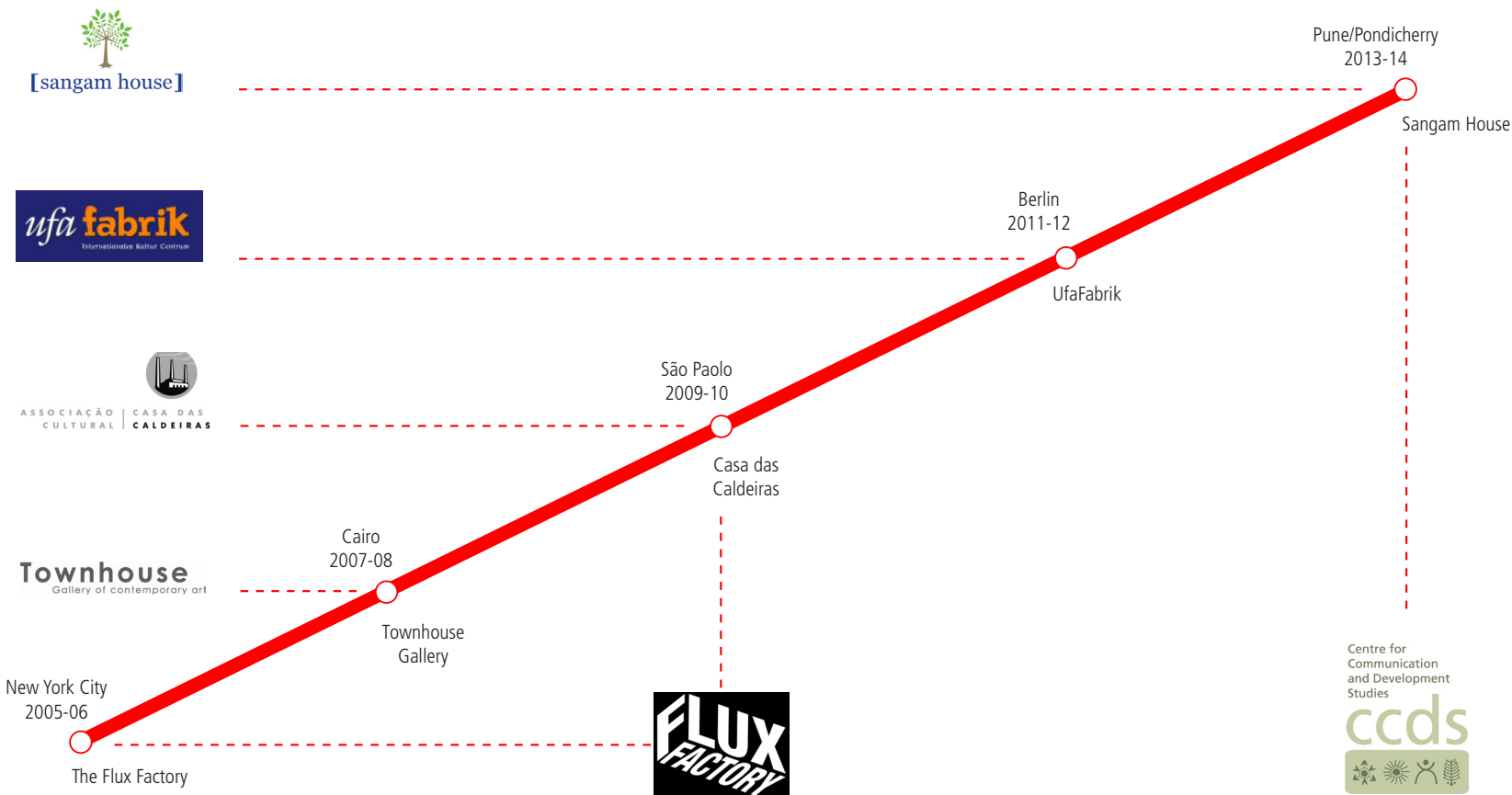
Zurab Rtvelashvili REPUBLIC OF GEORGIA poet, performance artist & activist - three months at Kultuuritehas Polymer (Estonia)

◇ Belarus Free Theatre BELARUS hosted for production cycle in cooperation with Trans Europe Halles (Sweden)

◇ Ottjoerg A.C. GERMANY resident at Carlton Arms Hotel (NYC)

△ Female Academic EGYPT writer - introduced to literary contacts

Female Journalist INDONESIA journalist - three months at Ledig House (US)



NETWORK IN RESIDENCE

freeDimensional was founded in New York City in 2005 with offices at the Pratt Center for Community Development and the Magnolia Tree Earth Center in 2007 and 2008 (and a residency program at the Carlton Arms Hotel from 2007-2009). After three years of informal collaboration, The Flux Factory in Queens has become the official NYC hub center and will host an fD office as well as the Artist-in-Community residency program starting in 2010. In order to stay abreast of global issues and the suppression of independent voices, freeDimensional established four more regional hubs in São Paulo, Cairo, Berlin, and co-hosted at two locations in India (Pune/Pondicherry). These offices provide on-the-ground support for local initiatives that link partner centers to activists and human rights organizations. The network-in-residence approach is an office rotation strategy to build ownership and horizontally

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distribute decision-making across the network. Office rotation is determined during the annual meeting when network members make plans for the following year, including activities of the regional hubs and hosting of freeDimensional's administrative functions.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS & SELECT MEDIA

fD has access to hundreds of months of surplus accommodation and meeting space throughout its network. By cataloging this resource, which can be valorized at a substantial amount, fD seeks funding from supportive foundations, businesses and individuals to professionally implement its Creative Safe Haven and related services. Based on this business model, freeDimensional was a semi-finalist in the 2006 Global Social Venture Competition, a finalist in the 2006 Yale 50K Competition and received first place in the 2007 'Working for Good' Business Plan Competition. fD was featured in a consultancy clinic at the 2008 Skoll World Forum on Social Entrepreneurship and was one of 12 networks selected to participate in 'Winter Camp' organized by the Institute of Network Cultures in March 2009.

fD has received significant press coverage since its beginning in 2005, including articles in the New York Times, Santa Fe New Mexican, and Walfadjri (Senegal) newspapers, as well as books such as the London School of Economics Global Civil Society Yearbook, the Commonwealth Foundation's 'Putting Culture First', brandeins' 'Where Does Responsibility Start?' and the forthcoming Sage publication, 'Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation'. fD has been featured in Bidoun, Contemporary Practices, and Elan magazines as well as the Voice of America (VOA), West African Democracy Radio, WBAI (New York), Santa Fe Radio Café and SUD Quotidian radio interviews.

The Breuninger Stiftung provides training support and technical assistance to fD each summer by hosting the network on its Wasan Island conference facility in Canada. Similarly, fD has received three years of capacity-building support from The Fledgling Fund. We thank all our supporters.

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