

QUEER ARTIST FUND IMPACT REPORT:

STRENGTHENING CREATIVE ADVOCACY AND VISIBILITY



**November
2024**

Organization Name

**Obodo Centre
for Advocacy
and Equal
Rights**

Introduction



Executive Summary

The Queer Artist Fund (QAF) Impact Report encapsulates the significant progress made during the reporting period in fostering artistic growth, representation, and capacity building within Nigeria's art and culture sector. This report provides an in-depth analysis of QAF's achievements, its impact on both individual artists and the broader community, and the invaluable support mechanisms it continues to build for sustained growth and advocacy.

Purpose of the Report

This report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of QAF's objectives, key activities, and measurable outcomes during the reporting period. It serves as a reflection on the fund's role in supporting marginalised communities while spotlighting the challenges and opportunities that define their experiences. The report also outlines the future trajectory of QAF in addressing the evolving needs of women and queer artists.

85%

over 85% of participants reporting improved confidence in their practice



700

exhibitions and multiple activations, attracting a combined audience of over 700 individuals



Key Achievements



Grants Awarded

A total of seven grants were awarded, supporting diverse projects spanning visual and performance arts, pottery and embroidery, filmmaking and digital media, fashion design, and Adire art. These projects not only highlighted queer narratives but also challenged societal stereotypes and opened pathways for discourse.

Mentorship Program

Successfully paired emerging artists with seasoned mentors in their fields, facilitating skill enhancement, project refinement, and stronger professional networks.

Skill-Building Workshops

Conducted specialized workshops on Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights, Labour Laws, Freedom of Expression and Association, with over 85% of participants reporting improved confidence in their practice. Further capacity-building workshops on Grant Writing and Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices sought to ensure the sustainability of the cohorts' careers moving forward.

Public Showcases and Events

Organized two major exhibitions and multiple activations, attracting a combined audience of over 700 individuals and sparking discourse around gendered restrictions and misrepresentation of marginalized groups, creating a safe space for unlearning and relearning.

Research and Advocacy

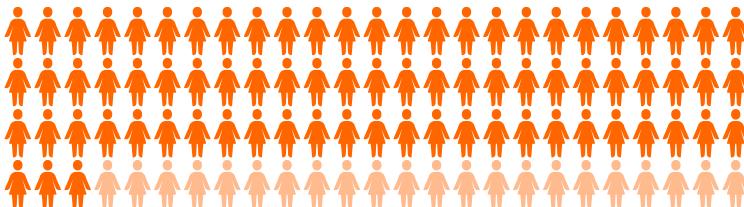
Research and advocacy are core pillars of the Queer Artist Fund (QAF), aimed at reshaping narratives surrounding LGBTQ+ representation and gender identity in Nigeria. A crucial tactic, given the constant erasure of Queer African Narratives within the continent. Each cohort member incorporated research, critical thinking, and documentation mechanisms throughout their projects, employing these tools to explore complex identities, challenge societal norms, and contribute to a nuanced understanding of marginalized narratives within Nigeria's cultural landscape.



Situated within queer, feminist, and postcolonial paradigms, an element of QAF is the publication of the anthology titled, ***The Shit and the Sunrise***, a print and digital collection of essays, artwork, interviews, and reflections documenting the journey of the cohort and the broader impact of the QAF initiative in catalyzing social change. This publication, drawing inspiration from the work of Nigerian artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji who has graciously written the forward for the book, explores how each artist navigates the hope and despair of existing as a queer individual in Nigeria. This ongoing archival project reinforces the significance of queer narratives and advocates for a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges faced by queer Nigerians. The anthology serves as both an archive and a learning resource, capturing the diverse ways queerness has been expressed and providing a literary space for the exploration of queer and feminist, identities, histories, and futures as interpreted by the cohort.

Impact Highlights

Community Engagement



Over 120 artists and community members participated in QAF activities, with 65% identifying as women, ensuring diverse representation across all programs.

Visibility and Representation

Projects funded under QAF have been featured in two national exhibitions and an international exhibition, submitted to one international film festival, significantly amplifying the visibility of queer and feminist narratives.

Transformative Stories

- ◆ **Girl-Boy** being submitted to film festivals.
- ◆ **Jeffery Okosisi's** exploration and implementation of critical thinking in his overall practice, stemming from **Tracian Meikle's** mentorship.
- ◆ **Bola Yahaya's** showcase at the Ford Foundation offices with the President of the foundation and Youth Minister in attendance.
- ◆ **Rachel Seidu** also showcased their work at the above event.
- ◆ **Jeffery, Sigil and Rachel's** month-long exhibition in Boston.

Testimonial Snippets

The cultural exchange within the group has enriched my artistic practice and deepened my appreciation for different forms of expression.

Being a beneficiary of the Queer Artist Fund (QAF) has provided essential financial support and validation, allowing me to explore and experiment with my art freely. This support has also increased the visibility of my work, helping me reach broader audiences and create new opportunities for growth. QAF has fostered a strong sense of community by connecting me with other queer artists and allies, leading to valuable collaborations. It has emphasized the importance of queer representation, reinforcing my commitment to advocating for diversity and inclusion in the arts.

In a situation of real threat to life and sustenance as a queer body. In this country QAF Initiates a significant opportunity for expression through the creative process. With our project Poetics of Adire we employ literary and visual art as tools of artistic expression and a medium to continue the conversation of resistance within a community of individuals with diverse and at the same time shared narratives.

On a personal level, the QAF has helped me grow as an artist and an advocate. It has given me the confidence to push boundaries and tackle challenging themes in my work.

My mentor has been a source of encouragement, helping to build my confidence and resilience as an artist.

- **Professional Guidance:** Advice on navigating the art industry, from marketing to networking, has been invaluable for my professional growth.
- 3. **Personal and Emotional Support:**
 - **Encouragement:** My mentor has been a source of encouragement, helping to build my confidence and resilience as an artist.
 - **Understanding Challenges:** They have shown empathy and understanding towards the unique challenges faced by queer artists, offering tailored support.

Acknowledgements

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our cohort of exceptional artists, whose resilience and artistry inspire us to continue this work. To our mentors, who generously shared their expertise and guided emerging talents, your impact is immeasurable. We deeply appreciate our partners, funders, and allies who believe in the transformative power of art and advocacy. Your unwavering support enables the Queer Artist Fund to thrive and grow. As we look ahead, QAF remains committed to amplifying underrepresented voices and fostering a more inclusive art community.

It's been amazing so far. The Obodo team is easy to work with and made everything go smoothly.

Together, we are not just changing narratives; we are creating a future where every story can be told!

Table of Contents

→ 01	Introduction
→ 02	Program Overview
→ 03	Methodology
→ 04	Key Achievements and Outcomes
→ 05	Learning and Adapting
→ 06	The Road Ahead
→ 07	Acknowledgements
→ 08	Contact Us

1. Introduction

Context and Rationale Behind QAF

The Queer Artist Fund (QAF) was born out of a recognition that creativity is not just a form of self-expression but a powerful tool for advocacy, storytelling, and community building. For Nigeria's LGBTQ+ community, navigating societal barriers while seeking opportunities to create, share, and thrive remains a formidable challenge. At its heart, QAF exists to break these barriers—fostering an ecosystem where queer narratives are celebrated, voices are amplified, and artists are strengthened to pursue their craft unapologetically.

This impact report is a reflection of that mission. It documents the strides made by QAF during the reporting period and evaluates how these efforts have contributed to the growth and visibility of women and queer artists in Nigeria. We hope it serves not only as a record of our accomplishments but as an invitation for continued collaboration, support, and shared hope for a more inclusive cultural landscape.



1.1 Purpose of the Impact Report

This report seeks to illuminate the transformative work of the Queer Artist Fund, highlighting the tangible and intangible outcomes of our initiatives. Through data, testimonials, and critical reflection, the report outlines how QAF has supported individual artists, influenced community dialogue, and contributed to broader societal change.

By sharing these insights, we aim to:

- ◆ Celebrate the achievements of our cohort, mentors, and partners.
- ◆ Evaluate the effectiveness of our programs to refine future efforts.
- ◆ Inspire continued support and advocacy for the LGBTQ+ community through art and culture.

Above all, this report underscores the importance of centring feminist and queer narratives in Nigeria's cultural landscape while showcasing the profound impact of intentional support systems to catalyse change.

1.2 Background of the Queer Artist Fund

Founding Principles and Goals

The Queer Artist Fund was established with a simple but profound vision: **to create a sustainable support system for women and LGBTQ+ artists in Nigeria**. Rooted in the belief that art has the power to challenge stereotypes, spark discourse, and inspire change, QAF strives to:

- Strengthen artists by providing resources, mentorship, and platforms to showcase their work.
- Foster a sense of community among queer creatives, encouraging collaboration and mutual growth.
- Elevate the visibility of feminist and queer narratives in the arts, countering erasure and promoting representation.
- Advocate for broader social change through storytelling, expression, and creativity.

Since its inception, QAF has prioritized inclusivity, ensuring that women, nonbinary individuals, and other underrepresented groups within the LGBTQ+ community are at the centre of its programs.



Connection to Obodo's Mission and Pillars

The Queer Artist Fund operates as a flagship initiative under Obodo's larger mission to dismantle entrenched cultural narratives that undermine fairness, tolerance, and inclusion. Guided by the pillars of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, Obodo amplifies underrepresented voices and interrogates systems that perpetuate inequality.

QAF embodies these principles by providing a safe, nurturing space for artists to challenge oppressive norms and reimagine possibilities. Through creativity and free expression, QAF serves as a beacon of resistance and hope, ensuring that the voices of women and LGBTQ+ artists are not just heard but celebrated.

This alignment with Obodo's values underscores the importance of QAF as both a cultural and advocacy-driven initiative. Together, we strive for a future where every artist, regardless of their medium and identity, has the tools and support to tell their story and thrive in their craft.

1.3 Scope of the Report

The Queer Artist Fund (QAF) Impact Report offers a comprehensive overview of the work accomplished during the designated reporting period of **January to December 2024**. This period reflects not only the strides we have made but also the moments of reflection, growth, and renewed purpose that have shaped our journey. Our intent is to provide a transparent and detailed account of QAF's activities, outcomes, and the transformative impact the fund has had on the artistic community in Nigeria.

Reporting Period Covered

This report spans an impactful year of programming, innovation, and collaboration. It encapsulates the birth and subsequent growth of QAF, following the journey of our cohort, mentors, and partners as they navigated challenges and celebrated achievements. From the first grants disbursed to the final showcases and evaluations, the reporting period captures every significant milestone that has brought us to where we stand today.

Overview of Activities Assessed

The report delves into various dimensions of the fund's activities, capturing both the qualitative and quantitative aspects of its impact. Key areas covered include:

1. Grant Disbursement:

- Number of grants awarded and their distribution across various disciplines.
- Developmental tracking of the fund's impact to the personal and professional journey of the cohort.

2. Mentorship Program:

- Pairing of seasoned field experts with emerging talents for guidance and skill development.
- Feedback from both mentors and mentees on the value of this initiative.

3. Skill-Building Workshops:

- Sessions focused on copyright knowledge, technical skills, creative exploration, and professional development.
- Participant feedback and observed outcomes from these workshops.

4. Artistic Showcases and Public Engagements:

- Exhibitions and events that highlighted grantees' work and created dialogue about queer representation in art.
- Audience reach and feedback, including testimonials from attendees.

5. Research and Documentation:

- QAF's mission to document, archive and amplify feminist and LGBTQ+ representation and narratives in Nigerian art and culture.

6. Advocacy and Awareness:

- Collaborative efforts with cultural institutions to champion gender and LGBTQ+ rights through art.
- How grantees have used their platforms to challenge stereotypes and inspire change.

7. Community Building:

- Networking events and initiatives that fostered connections among grantees, mentors, and the broader LGBTQ+ community.

2. Program Overview

The Queer Artist Fund is a reflection of Obodo's commitment to fostering cultural inclusion and advocating for systemic change through the arts. At its core, QAF seeks to create spaces where underrepresented voices, particularly those of women and LGBTQ+ artists, can flourish and thrive. This section outlines the goals, objectives, and key activities that have defined the program over the reporting period, showcasing our dedication to empowering marginalized artists and amplifying their stories.



2.1 Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives of QAF are rooted in the belief that art is a powerful tool for creating pathways of transformation. Our work is driven by the following aspirations:

- **Establishment of Sustainable Support Systems:** Recognizing the unique challenges faced by women and LGBTQ+ artists, QAF has prioritized building long-lasting support systems that provide stability and growth opportunities. This includes financial assistance, mentorship, and access to resources that address both immediate and long-term needs.
- **Promoting Visibility and Representation:** Visibility is a catalyst for change. Through QAF, we aim to challenge stereotypes, celebrate diverse identities, and normalize feminist and queer narratives within the Nigerian art and culture scene. By elevating the voices of marginalized artists, we foster a culture of inclusion and belonging.
- **Supporting Professional Development:** QAF is committed to nurturing the potential of every artist in our cohort. This is achieved through tailored mentorship, networking opportunities, and access to resources that allow artists to expand their skills and practice.
- **Encouraging Advocacy and Systemic Change Through Art:** Art has the power to disrupt, provoke, and inspire. Through QAF, we champion art as a medium for advocacy, leveraging creative works to spotlight issues of inequality and injustice while advocating for systemic change and human rights.

2.2 Key Activities

The program's success is built on a foundation of carefully curated activities designed to strengthen artists, foster collaboration, and amplify the impact of their work.

Grant Program

Seven artists were selected for the first QAF cohort, each receiving financial and technical support for their unique projects spanning diverse media:

- Sigil (Pottery and Embroidery) The Ivy Tree
- Jeffrey Okosisi (Acrylic painting) Through The Shadows
- Bola Yahaya(Fashion Design) Ajenda
- Rachel Seidu (Photography) Threads of Defiance: Celebrating Queer Resilience in Nigeria
- James Notin (Performance Art) Article 19
- Kehinde Awofeso (Adire and Poetry) Egungun
- Ajay Abalaka (Film) Girl-Boy

These artists represent a dynamic range of identities and expressions, using employing various mediums to amplify Queer Nigerian and African narratives. Through QAF's support, they not only developed their practices but also engaged in showcasing and presenting their works, effectively contributing to greater visibility and understanding of queer art and culture.



Mentorship

QAF's mentorship program was bolstered by prominent figures with extensive backgrounds in sociology, fine arts, curatorial practice, and strategic consultancy:

- Adebayo Quadry-Adekanbi - Bola Yahaya.
- Adejoke Aderonke Tugbiyele - James Notin.
- Chrystel Oloukoi - Ajay Abalaka.
- Tony Agbapuonwu - Kehinde Awofeso
- Tracian Meikle - Sigil/Jeffery Okosisi
- Wolfgang Tillmans - Rachel Seidu.

During the four month-long incubation, these mentors provided personalised and critical insights into the socio-political, cultural, and academic dimensions of the cohort's work, guiding them in exploring and refining their practices while addressing complex themes like Yoruba queer aesthetics, Black Queer feminist theory, pre-colonial African history, and post-colonial resistance.

Capacity Building

Capacity-building workshops over the course of Artistic Development and Incubation covered essential skills, including a 2-day Copyright and Intellectual Property Rights, Labour Laws, Freedom of Expression and Association workshop, a 4-day dedicated Artist Connect that covered critical areas of capacity building through workshops on Grant Writing and Reporting, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) practices, and a week-long Mental Health Management group and personal sessions. These activations aimed to enhance the cohort's professional development and establish a sustainable practice framework. The mental health sessions titled The Cost of Creating as a Queer Artist, held in collaboration with UsTherapy were particularly impactful, providing the cohort with coping strategies to manage the psychological challenges often associated with art creation in a criminalized context, creative expression or artistic practice that stems from lived experiences that may be riddled with trauma and feelings of isolation. Group and individual counseling sessions were also made available to the cohort who readily engaged with the exercises and healing practices.

Artistic Showcases and Exhibitions

Each artist hosted Open Studio sessions to share their practice and process with the public, fostering visibility and community. Dependent on the themes explored in the individual projects, cohort members created avenues for convening members of the general public. A case study is the Healing Circle which Bola Yahaya incorporated into their Open Studio. The Healing Circle session culminated in a tie and dye exercise where participants were invited to utilize art as a form of therapy. Engagement like this reflects the pinnacle of Obodo's work. These midpoint events also facilitated valuable feedback and allowed the artists to test their concepts in real-time, leading to critical refinements in their projects.

Obodo X ProvinceTown Business Guild

In June, Obodo partnered with the Provincetown Business Guild (PBG) to present a month-long exhibition that highlighted the work of QAF cohort members alongside other African queer artists. This unique collaboration celebrated queer Nigerian realities and artistry on an international stage, with a curation that thoughtfully explored identity, history, resilience, and cultural pride. The exhibition attracted over 200 attendees, fostering a vibrant space for critical thinking and exploration, unlearning and relearning, dialogue and community building. The artworks displayed diverse expressions of queerness, challenging stereotypes and affirming queer and feminist narratives from Nigeria within a global and diasporic context. This exhibition not only elevated the voices of marginalized artists, but also underscored the importance of cross-cultural discourse and visibility for Queer African narratives.

The Politics of Queerness

The month-long culminating exhibition, The Politics of Queerness showcased the cohort's works and invited dialogue on Nigerian Queer history, identities and narratives. This showcase achieved significant public engagement, and is intrinsic to our long-term mission of sustainability and establishing platforms and spaces for dialogue on LGBTQ+ representation in Nigerian art and culture. For the closing week of the exhibition, we curated an event in collaboration with CHEVS titled In Queer Feminist Joy and Resistance. The event explored means for Queer and Feminist collaborations, intersectionality and movement building. A final screening of Girl-Boy, the film project by Ajay Abalaka which navigates the complexities of gender identity, fluidity and expression was also well received.

To celebrate the creativity and resilience of our artists, QAF hosted exhibitions and showcases that brought their work to the public eye. These events not only provided artists with visibility but also created opportunities for dialogue and connection with diverse audiences.

Public Engagement and Dialogue

The Open Studio sessions further deepened the impact of our work by creating avenues for the public to interact with the cohort and better understand the individual mediums utilized in their amplifying of queer and feminist narratives and expressions. Feedback from the sessions was instrumental in fostering public discourse, encouraging conversations around identity, and interrogating stereotypes through artistic interpretation. These networking activations proved essential to exposing the cohort to potential career-defining connections, collaborations, and future opportunities.

The capstone Politics of Queerness exhibition, further provided a platform for the cohort to convene the public and the fully realized outcomes of their incubation and development period. Each work was a poignant exploration of queerness ranging from deeply personal narratives to broader sociopolitical critiques. The exhibition served as a fireplace, attracting a diverse audience of explorers, including members of the community, art critics, collectors, curators, and actors of change. The broad engagement reflected the power of queer art to resonate across different social strata. Media coverage in collaboration with The Coloured Space, helped amplify the voices of the cohort and furthered the conversation about the importance of queer representation in the arts and cultural sector.

Research and Advocacy

Research and advocacy are core pillars of the Queer Artist Fund (QAF), aimed at reshaping narratives surrounding LGBTQ+ representation and gender identity in Nigeria. A crucial tactic, given the constant erasure of Queer African Narratives within the continent. Each cohort member incorporated research, critical thinking, and documentation mechanisms throughout their projects, employing these tools to explore complex identities, challenge societal norms, and contribute to a nuanced understanding of marginalized narratives within Nigeria's cultural landscape.

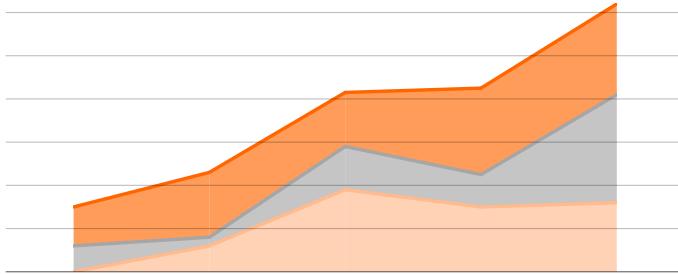
Situated within queer, feminist, and postcolonial paradigms, an element of QAF is the publication of the anthology titled, *The Shit and the Sunrise*, a print and digital collection of essays, artwork, interviews, and reflections documenting the journey of the cohort and the broader impact of the QAF initiative in catalyzing social change. This publication, drawing inspiration from the work of Nigerian artist Wura-Natasha Ogunji who has graciously written the forward for the book, explores how each artist navigates the hope and despair of existing as a queer individual in Nigeria. This ongoing archival project reinforces the significance of queer narratives and advocates for a nuanced understanding of the unique challenges faced by queer Nigerians. The anthology serves as both an archive and a learning resource, capturing the diverse ways queerness has been expressed and providing a literary space for the exploration of queer and feminist, identities, histories, and futures as interpreted by the cohort.

The writers undertook a deep exploration into the lives and personal journeys of each cohort member, weaving together a tapestry that captures both resilience and vision in the face of unique social and cultural challenges. Each writer paired with an artist, immersed themselves in the artist's practice, experiences, and modes of expression. This collaborative process involved dialogue and documentation, with the writers not only chronicling artistic techniques but also engaging in critical reflections on how their paired artist negotiates complex intersections of queerness, identity, and cultural heritage. By analyzing and archiving these stories, the anthology speaks to the dualities of despair and hope, survival and growth. Currently, in the publication phase with a March 2025 launch, this publication not only provides long-term visibility for the cohort and a legacy to the community but will also be used in subsequent educational programs to highlight the significance of queer and feminist artistic narratives in reshaping cultural discourses.

3. Methodology

In evaluating the impact of the Queer Artist Fund (QAF), we sought to ensure a comprehensive and transparent approach, emphasizing accuracy and meaningful insight. Our methodology captures the voices of those directly impacted by the program while aligning with the program's broader goals. This section outlines the data collection methods and evaluation framework used to assess QAF's activities during the reporting period.

3.1 Data Collection Methods



To understand and evaluate QAF's effectiveness, we employed a variety of data collection tools, ensuring that our assessment reflects both qualitative and quantitative insights:

Surveys and Feedback from Grant Recipients:

Each grant recipient was invited to share monthly detailed feedback on their experiences, from the application process to the implementation and incubation phase of their projects. These surveys offered valuable insights into what worked well and areas for improvement while capturing personal stories that highlight the transformative nature of the fund.

Attendance Records and Engagement Statistics:

We meticulously tracked participation in events such as workshops, mentorship sessions, and artistic showcases. Engagement statistics, including audience numbers and interactions during public events, provided a snapshot of the program's reach and influence.

Financial and Programmatic Data:

Detailed records of grant disbursements, workshop costs, and other program-related expenditures were analyzed to ensure transparency and effective resource allocation. This data helped measure the financial sustainability and operational efficiency of QAF.

Case Studies and Testimonials:

Personal stories and case studies from artists and mentors added depth to our analysis, illustrating the human impact of QAF. These narratives highlight how the fund has enabled personal growth, creative expression, and advocacy.

3.2 Evaluation Framework

Our evaluation framework is designed to measure success not only in numbers but also in alignment with QAF's core values and objectives.

Metrics for Success:

- **Number of Artists Supported:** We evaluated how many artists received grants, mentorship, or training, ensuring representation across different disciplines and identities.
- **Audience Reach:** Metrics such as event attendance and digital engagement (e.g., social media interactions) helped gauge the visibility of our artists and their work.
- **Partnerships Formed:** A notable partnership is the cocktail reception themed Queer Feminist Joy & Resistance held during [ArtXLagos](#) in collaboration with [The Center for Health Education and Vulnerable Support](#). The event explored intersections of art, joy, and resistance, emphasizing how queer feminist perspectives challenge societal and gendered oppression. Through further partnerships with institutions like Iwalewa Publishers, [16/16](#), [Goethe Institut](#), and the [Provincetown Business Guild](#), QAF facilitated cross-cultural showcases and discourse, extending the cohort's reach beyond Nigerian borders. These collaborations further validate the significance of queer African art in global conversations. These collaborations were tracked as indicators of strengthened networks and expanded opportunities for women and queer artists.

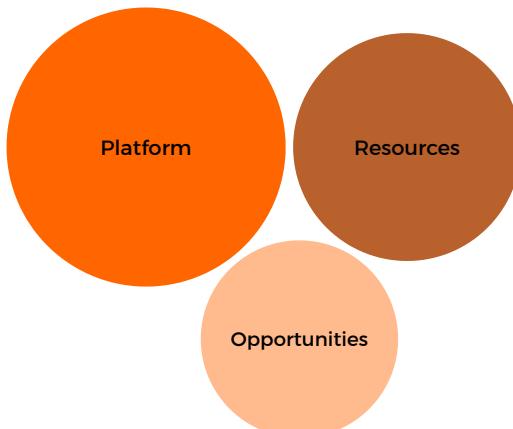
Alignment with Initial Project Outcomes:

The program was assessed against its initial goals: fostering sustainable support systems, promoting visibility, and using art as a tool for advocacy. We examined how QAF activities contributed to these outcomes, ensuring that our work remains purpose-driven and impactful. Our evaluation process is not merely about numbers; it is about understanding the nuances of impact—how QAF has touched lives, shifted perspectives, and inspired change. As we share these insights, we invite you to celebrate the collective achievements that make QAF a beacon of possibility and progress.

4. Key Achievements and Outcomes

The Queer Artist Fund has made remarkable strides in strengthening women and LGBTQ+ artists, advancing representation, and driving advocacy within Nigeria's art landscape. This section highlights the program's achievements during the reporting period, weaving data-driven insights with personal stories to celebrate the transformative impact of the project.

4.1 Empowerment of Women and LGBTQ+ Artists



A central mission of QAF is to strengthen the practice of women and LGBTQ+ artists by providing them with resources, opportunities, and a platform to thrive.

Grants Awarded and Projects Supported:

During this reporting period, QAF awarded grants to a cohort of seven artists spanning various disciplines, including visual arts, fashion design, filmmaking, and performance. Each recipient utilized their grant to develop compelling projects that reflected their unique perspectives while addressing themes of identity, resistance, and community.

Stories of Impact:

One grantee, a trans photographer, described how the fund enabled them to launch a photo series documenting gender euphoria, which has since been exhibited internationally. Another artist, a queer filmmaker, shared that QAF funding allowed them to complete a short film that garnered recognition at a regional festival, sparking important conversations about queer love in conservative spaces.

4.2 Advancing Representation and Visibility

QAF prioritises the elevation of queer narratives, ensuring that underrepresented voices are heard and celebrated.

Artistic Works Challenging Stereotypes:

Grantees have produced in-depth works that challenge societal stereotypes and amplify the richness of feminist and LGBTQ+ experiences. Case in point, Ajay Abalaka's *Girl-Boy* is a poignant exploration into the intersection of queerness and gender identity, breaking cultural taboos and fostering discourse on society's perception of womanhood.

Exhibitions, Showcases, and Media Coverage:

Artistic showcases, including *Re-imagining Queer Africa* and *Politics of Queerness*, provided platforms for queer creators to share their work with diverse audiences. Media coverage of these events, including features in prominent art journals and blogs like the Provincetown Business Guild Journal, significantly increased the visibility of queer narratives, fostering inclusivity in the Nigerian art scene.

4.3 Capacity Building and Professional Development

Supporting artists extends beyond financial aid to include mentorship and skill development, equipping participants for sustained success.

Mentorship and Workshops Conducted:

QAF facilitated personalized mentorship programs, pairing emerging artists with experienced professionals for guidance and growth. Workshops on navigating the legal and sustainability aspects of their practices, equipped participants with practical tools for their artistic careers.

Skills Acquired and Applied:

Artists reported significant improvements in technical proficiency, networking abilities, and advocacy through art. A mentee noted,

4.4 Public Engagement and Advocacy

Through public events and dialogues, QAF fostered a sense of community and amplified advocacy efforts.

Panel Discussions and Dialogues:

Activations such as the Artist Connect and Grief and Somatic Healing Circle provided spaces for open conversations about representation, healing and resilience. These events attracted a diverse pool of participants and stimulated meaningful discussions on the challenges and triumphs of being queer not just in creative spaces, but in a deeply homophobic society such as Nigeria.

Advocacy Milestones Achieved:

QAF's efforts have contributed to increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ art in mainstream society. Artists and their works are now part of larger cultural dialogues, paving the way for societal shifts in perceptions and attitudes.

4.5 Research and Documentation

Research and documentation are vital components of QAF's work both reflected in the cohort's projects and Obodo's mission, ensuring that queer histories and experiences are preserved and amplified.

The Shit and The Sunrise:

This groundbreaking anthology documents queer lives through essays, poetry, and visual art, providing a platform for introspection and collective healing. The anthology is poised to become a resource for academic and cultural discourse, cementing its legacy as a tool for education and historical context for future reference.

4.6 Institutional Collaborations and Networking

QAF's success is deeply rooted in the partnerships and networks it has cultivated.

Partnerships Formed:

Collaborations with cultural institutions, such as art galleries and community centres, enhanced the reach and credibility of QAF initiatives. Partner organizations provided venues, technical support, and media outreach, amplifying the impact of grantee projects.

Long-Term Relationships:

The enduring relationships established with creative and cultural organizations such as 16/16, Goethe Institut and the Coloured Space, ensure ongoing opportunities for the community we serve. These partnerships have also laid the groundwork for sustained advocacy, mentorship, and community support.

The achievements outlined here underscore the transformative power of collective action. By centring queer and feminist voices, fostering professional growth, and advocating for visibility, QAF has become a cornerstone of support for LGBTQ+ artists in Nigeria. This journey would not have been possible without the cohort's resilience, the mentors' guidance, and the community's trust. Together, we continue to build a future where art transcends boundaries and fosters understanding, equity, and inclusion.

5. Learning and Adapting

Collaboration and Sustainability

A key aspect of fostering change is establishing strong partnerships that amplify our impact. One of the most significant collaborations was with the Provincetown Business Guild (PBG). Through this partnership, members of our cohort had their work exhibited for a month in Provincetown, Massachusetts, a vibrant hub for LGBTQ+ art and culture. This opportunity not only provided the artists with a platform to showcase their talents but also connected them with wider audiences and potential clients/benefactors. The exhibition served as a springboard for these artists, reinforcing the idea that sustainability in their practice is achievable through visibility and exposure.



Additionally, the cohort's work was featured in Provincetown Magazine, offering further recognition and validation of their creative endeavours. Such exposure is vital for the ongoing professional development of these artists, as it provides them with credibility and opens doors for future opportunities. We learned that strategic collaborations can significantly enhance the sustainability of artistic practices, allowing artists to thrive in their careers.

Change Happens Slowly but Builds Momentum

One of the most important lessons we've learned is that systemic and social change, especially for marginalized communities like queer artists, happens slowly. Societal perceptions and institutional frameworks that marginalize LGBTQ+ individuals are deeply entrenched, and challenging them requires sustained long-term effort. However, even incremental progress can build momentum over time.

This understanding has reinforced the importance of patience and persistence. While immediate results are sometimes elusive, the small victories—such as the increased visibility of queer artists through exhibitions or the growing interest in queer narratives within the Nigerian art scene—are crucial steps forward. Over time, these wins coalesce into broader cultural shifts. We've seen this in the growing number of artists willing to share their experiences publicly and the gradual emergence of more safe spaces for queer expression.

As a result, the QAF has shifted its focus from solely seeking rapid outcomes to nurturing a long-term vision. We've increased our efforts to document our progress so that even the smallest advances in queer representation and artist empowerment can be built upon in the future. Additionally, we've learned that by investing in the professional development of artists and equipping them with tools to advocate for themselves, we can accelerate the pace of change over time.

The Role of Mental Health and Well-being in Sustainable Change

A critical learning from our work is that sustainable change cannot happen without addressing the mental and emotional well-being of our community. The trauma and marginalization experienced by many in the community create barriers that go beyond creative output. Through the Artist Connect initiative, which included mental health counselling and group sessions, we learned that providing support for mental health is just as important as supporting artistic growth.

Many of the artists were grappling with the intersection of personal identity, societal expectations, and the emotional labour of creating art in a hostile environment. This deepened our understanding of how mental well-being is foundational to sustainable change. It has prompted us to include mental health support as a permanent feature of our programming moving forward.

The Power of Community-Building

One of the most profound lessons we've learned is the power of community. Artists who were part of our programs not only benefited from individual development but also formed strong, supportive networks with each other. The Artist Connect sessions, the workshops, and the collaborative projects created a sense of solidarity among participants, many of whom had previously felt isolated in their creative practice.

This sense of belonging has strengthened our resolve to focus more on community-driven initiatives. We've seen that collective efforts, rather than isolated individual achievements, are where true change begins. By fostering collaboration, mentorship, and mutual support, we are contributing to the long-term resilience of the queer artistic community.

Building Ecosystems (Sustainability Through Capacity)

QAF has also emphasized the need for sustainability within artistic practices. To achieve this, we focused on building the capacity of our cohort members, equipping them with the tools necessary to thrive in their careers. Our programming included workshops on intellectual property rights, labour laws, and financial management, ensuring that artists not only create but also understand the business side of their practice.

This capacity-building approach has strengthened artists to navigate the complexities of the art world more effectively. They are now better equipped to apply for grants, engage with potential collaborators, and articulate the value of their work in a professional context. This shift is essential for long-term sustainability, as it fosters a sense of agency among artists and encourages them to take ownership of their careers.

Moving Forward: Adapting Based on Learnings

- Mental health and well-being: We will prioritize mental health support as a core element of all our future programming.
- Flexibility in funding: We have learned the importance of agile financial support and will continue to tailor funding to meet the specific needs of artists, especially in times of crisis.
- Building networks of support: We are doubling down on community-building, ensuring that artists not only gain individual growth but also foster a sense of collective empowerment.



6. The Road Ahead

As the Queer Artist Fund (QAF) continues to evolve, we are inspired by the progress achieved and the promise of what lies ahead. Our commitment to empowering LGBTQ+ artists remains steadfast, and we look to the future with purpose and optimism.

6.1 Strengthening Partnerships and Advocacy Initiatives

Collaboration will continue to play a pivotal role in QAF's trajectory. We aim to deepen existing relationships with cultural institutions, advocacy groups, and creative networks while forging new alliances. These partnerships will enable us to create more impactful public engagements, strengthen advocacy for LGBTQ+ rights through art, and collectively push the boundaries of representation.

These efforts will be complemented by regular public engagements to maintain a dialogue with stakeholders and ensure our initiatives remain responsive to the community's evolving needs.

6.2 Long-Term Vision

The long-term vision for QAF is rooted in sustainability, resilience, and integration with broader feminist and LGBTQ+ movements:

Sustainability Strategies: Ensuring the longevity of QAF requires a focus on financial resilience and institutional capacity-building. We are exploring innovative funding models, including long-term partnerships with philanthropic organizations, individual donors, and corporate sponsors. Capacity-building initiatives will continue, equipping artists with the tools they need to thrive independently while fostering a community that encourages mutual growth and resource-sharing.

Supporting Queer Art and Artists Beyond QAF: Beyond direct support, we have utilised QAF as a catalyst for a larger ecosystem that nurtures queer creativity. This includes advocating for more inclusive cultural policies, creating platforms for international collaborations, and fostering peer-to-peer support networks among artists.

Integration with Broader Feminist and LGBTQ+ Movements: Art has always been a powerful tool for social change. QAF's work will continue to align with the larger feminist and LGBTQ+ movement, using art to interrogate societal prejudices, celebrate queer identities, and advocate for equity. By integrating artistic expression with activism, we hope to contribute to a future where diversity is celebrated, and all individuals can thrive.

Closing Remarks



**As we look ahead,
we remain inspired by the courage, talent, and
resilience of the artists we have supported. QAF's
path forward is not just about sustaining its work
but about dreaming bigger and doing more.
Together, with our community, partners, artists, and
allies, we will continue to push boundaries, break
barriers, and create a world where queer creativity
flourishes unabashedly.**

7. Acknowledgements

The journey would not have been possible without the collective effort, dedication, and belief of a remarkable community of individuals and collectives. This report, and indeed the milestones achieved during this reporting period, is a testament to the power of collaboration, resilience, and shared purpose.

First and foremost, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to the incredible cohort who brought their talent, courage, and authenticity to the program. Your stories, creations, and boldness in expressing your truths have illuminated the path for others and reaffirmed the importance of the work we do.

We also deeply appreciate our mentors, whose guidance, encouragement, and expertise have provided invaluable support to the cohort. Your dedication to nurturing emerging talent and fostering an environment of growth has been instrumental in shaping the program's success.

To our partners, allies, and sponsors, your unwavering belief in the vision of QAF has been a cornerstone of this initiative. Your financial support, advocacy, and willingness to stand alongside us have amplified our reach and made our impact all the more significant.

A special thank you goes to the Obodo team, whose passion and tireless efforts have been the driving force behind every milestone celebrated. From organizing workshops and exhibitions to providing one-on-one support for artists, your commitment to excellence and community building has been exemplary.

Finally, we acknowledge our most treasured community; the reason we do this work, who continue to push boundaries and fight for visibility, representation, and justice in their little pockets of the world. Your courage and resilience inspire us daily and drive our commitment to building sustainable and impactful programs.

As we look to the future, we remain deeply grateful for the collective effort that has brought us this far. Together, we have set a powerful precedent for what is possible when we invest in creativity, advocacy, and equity.

Thank you for being a part of this journey.

Contact Us



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