



An in-depth look at a selection
of financial opportunities from

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FUNDS IN PANDEMIC TIMES:

ON WEATHERING THE STORM

Shootings were postponed, festivals, suspended, and movie theatres, closed. Just as in the rest of the activities, the consequences of the pandemic in the film industry were frighteningly immediate. As uncertainty crept in, the creative community avidly sought for signs to face a crisis that was already affecting everyone: both major film studios and independent producers, big theatrical exhibitions and art-house cinemas, class A festivals and community events. International funds were no exception, and their reactions to the crisis provided a glimpse of the new scenario that was being forged in the first months of the pandemic. By Gerardo Michelin.

A month after the WHO declared the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Sundance Institute** announced its **Covid-19 Respond and Reimagine Plan**, providing a glimpse of the scale and complexity of the challenges ahead.

“Three things are clear: First, it is essential that significant resources go directly to artists who are struggling financially, in order to support their basic needs and their work. Second, the need right now is greater than any one artist or group and disproportionately affects artists from historically underrepresented communities. Third, it’s clear that collaboration and collective impact will be needed to address the extent of the challenge.”

Sundance’s quick reaction was key to beginning to understand the new scenario that was unfolding, and a no-nonsense reality check for a film industry that was beginning to shake off its confusion in the face of an unprecedented global situation. A widely renowned organisation in the region, Sundance stepped in to help filmmakers, focusing on a hundred of them who were selected to participate in its spring and summer (boreal) labs.

Sundance also placed financial support for organisations from some 20 countries among its top priorities, including Mexico’s **Ambulante, Nicho 54**, which promotes the career development of Afro-Brazilian filmmakers, the **Asociación de Documentalistas de Puerto Rico** (AdocPR), the **Corporación Chilena del Documental CCDoc**, Ecuador’s **Corporación Cinememoria/EDOC**, and the Colombian production company **Anakaa Films**, which supports film production by indigenous peoples.

“As so many people the world over are reimagining what it means to be connected to one another, this is an important moment to send a message to independent artists: You are not alone. You are part of a resilient community -- a community that will continue to be a much-needed source of refuge, empathy, inspiration, and collective power in the days and weeks to come,” exhorted Sundance from its website.

Sundance Co//ab, a digital platform launched in late 2019 and dedicated to training and debating, also played a key role in the institute’s contin-

“We are already seeing festivals economically affected by the pandemic, both in their programming and in their industry activities.”

Luana Melgaço, Anavilhana



agency plan, not only because its webinars, Q&As, and masterclasses were opened to everyone free of charge, but also because it made it possible for people all over the world to stay tuned and in touch. In its first year, the platform received more than one million unique visitors from some 220 countries.

With the worst of the pandemic now seemingly behind us, many of the 58 programmes organised by Sundance have resumed their selection processes and activities, although in many cases migrating to digital format.

Another benchmark organisation that launched an emergency fund to support artists was the **Tribeca Film Institute** (TFI), although in this case it focused only on its independent alumni who have lost their jobs. After launching this lifeline, the New York-based organisation announced the interruption of all its programmes and operations as of September 2020, but not without pointing out that the interruption was only temporary.

“By no means is this the end of TFI. We are more committed than ever to supporting storytellers and our community as we try to recover from the devastating humanitarian and economic crisis left in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. This impasse in our activities will enable us to better position our focus and resources to support the greatest needs and where we can have the greatest impact, just like we did after 9/11,” they explained. A domino effect followed. After the announce-

ments by these two benchmark organisations, others such as **Filmmakers Without Borders** or the **National Geographic** support programme announced the suspension, closure or restructuring of their programmes and activities, while filming was postponed, cinemas were closed and festivals went online. As uncertainty crept in, different actors in the sector presented their strategies with a sole objective: to weather the storm.

FUNDS COME TO THE RESCUE

Measures to curb the impact of the pandemic were also adopted in Latin America, where most countries decided to maintain the existing funding programmes, while others made extra funds available to mitigate the impact on the industry, both through special funds and tax reliefs. Some countries chose to soften projects’ contractual obligations with public organisations, and to adapt or reformulate the calls for entries for support funds. In almost every territory, specific protocols were developed for filming and exhibition, and support was given to festivals and releases of domestic films, both on public and private digital platforms.

At a pan-regional level, the **Ibermedia Programme** loosened up some of its calls for entries requirements, especially those involving face-to-face formalities.

Private companies were also sending out signals through various initiatives aimed at protecting both their productions and the industry. **Netflix**

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was one of the first global players to announce the creation of a fund “aimed at supporting the most affected Netflix production workers around the world, as well as third parties and non-profit organisations providing emergency assistance to the creative community at large”. With a global endowment of \$150 million, Netflix’s initiative also reached out to its main production centres in the region: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia and Mexico. The INCAA in Argentina, the **Instituto de Conteúdos Audiovisuais Brasileiros** - ICAB in Brazil, the **Academia de Artes y Ciencias Cinematográficas** in Colombia, and **Ambulante** in Mexico were in charge of managing the funds, which amounted to almost three million dollars and benefited more than 7500 workers, according to data provided by the streaming platform on its website.

Another major player, **Sony Pictures Entertainment** also launched an aid fund in the region. In partnership with the platform **Show Me the Fund**, an initiative promoted by **Brazilian Content**, **Cinema do Brasil** and **Projeto Paradiso**, the Japanese multinational launched **De Volta aos Sets** (Back to the Sets, in English), a fund aimed at supporting the resumption of filming in Brazil. This programme was developed within the framework of the **Sony Global Relief Fund**, a \$100 million global fund set up by the company to support people affected by the pandemic.

Managed by the ICAB, the Sony Global Relief Fund distributed nearly \$400,000 among some

100 production companies from 15 Brazilian States. Earmarked for health protocols, the money was intended to improve the safety of people working in series and feature films shot after March 2021. International co-productions were given priority in the selection process, while 60% of the supported projects had a budget of less than R\$1 million (about \$192,000).

“The grants were given not only to low-budget films, but also to larger productions in need of support to ensure the safety of their working environments,” the **Brasil Audiovisual Independente (BRAVI)** association --in charge of the Brazilian Content programme-- told LatAm cinema.

The ICAB was also in charge of managing two other industry aid funds sponsored by major studios: the **Amazon Studios and Prime Video**

Fund, which allocated R\$5.3 million (approximately \$1 million) to help independent Brazilian audiovisual production workers whose income have been compromised by the pandemic, and the **Fundo Outubro Rosa**, launched jointly with **ViacomCBS** and aimed at providing financial support to women in the film industry. Through these two funds, some 5,200 workers have received a grant amounting to one minimum wage in Brazil (about \$ 200).

Filmmakers, actors and producers also showed their solidarity in the face of the crisis. That was the case of **Sifonóforo**, an emergency fund created by some of the most renowned Mexican personalities in the



“In Brazil, independent productions remain at a standstill, more due to a lack of resources, than to the consequences of the pandemic.”

**Leonardo Mecchi,
Enquadramento Produções**



“I think we will be producing less, and hence we will have to focus on doing it better.”

Fernanda del Nido,
Setembro Cine

industry, such as Alejandro González Iñárritu, Guillermo del Toro or Salma Hayek, among others, together with some 50 Mexican and international production companies.

“Our goal is to support the people who, with their daily effort and dedication, help us to transform ideas into images. Without them, we wouldn’t be able to practice our storytelling craft,” explained the sponsors of this fund managed by the **Mexican Academy of Cinematographic Arts and Sciences** and aimed at supporting technical and manual workers in the Mexican industry who were economically affected by the pandemic. The fund provided a one-off financial support of 20,000 Mexican pesos (about \$1000).

ON PRODUCING IN PANDEMICS

Luana Melgaço of **Anavilhana**, a Belo Horizonte-based production company, was planning Julia De Simone’s “Campo Santo” pre-production when the pandemic broke out. The film’s director was due to travel to Lisbon to hold the acting auditions when they realised that, in addition to

cancelling the trip, they were going to have to postpone shooting.

“Throughout the pandemic, we managed to restart some projects and initiate others, especially those that could be worked on remotely. Some are still on hold, as they are larger projects with more complex shooting conditions involving both greater financial effort and health risk,” she explains, adding that the lack of dialogue and support measures from the Brazilian Film Agency ANCINE are seriously jeopardising other Anavilhana’s projects.

“All of this leaves the sector in an unstable, difficult situation, and international funds might also be facing the consequences. In fact, we are already seeing festivals economically affected by the pandemic, both in their programming and in their industry activities,” says Melgaço, adding that her production company had to put its feature film “Canção ao longe” by Minas Gerais director Clarissa Campolina on hold.

Leonardo Mecchi, another Brazilian independent producer whose company **Enquadramento Produções** used to engage in international co-productions, argues that the pandemic also came at a critical moment for Brazilian cinema: “Our country was already shaken by the dismantling of public incentive policies carried out by the Bolsonaro government, and that created the ‘perfect storm’ for a serious crisis in the sector”.

The producer of films such as Beatriz Seigner’s “Los silencios” and Maya Da-Rin’s “A febre” also has a somewhat critical view of the post-pandemic scenario that is now emerging. “What we have seen so far is the resumption of projects linked to streaming platforms, whether feature films or series, while independent productions remain at a standstill, more due to a lack of resources, than to the consequences of the pandemic,” he warns, anticipating that international funds will tend to focus on those countries whose industries have suffered the most and that have less local funding.

According to Mecchi, the closure of movie theatres was one of the factors that had the stron-

gest impact on the film industry. Late last year, the production company had to release “A febre” in a hybrid format that combined a few cinemas and streaming platforms. “It is very sad that a project we have been working on for years cannot be properly launched and get the attention and visibility it deserves. A harvest of more than a year’s worth of films became virtually invisible because they were only available online,” he reflected.

By the time the pandemic broke out, Mexican producer Martha Orozco of **Martfilms** was a week away from starting the pre-production of Nicaraguan Laura Baumeister’s “La hija de todas las rabias”, and from signing a contract for a documentary series in six countries that was cancelled after the borders were closed. But despite the enormous uncertainty that reigned during the first months of the pandemic, Orozco highlights some interesting lessons. “The quarantine allowed us to rewrite projects and pull other smaller, more intimate films out of the drawer,” she explains, warning that the problem of distribution in Latin America will sadly continue to worsen, and that it won’t be easy to get people back to the theatres.

On the other hand, Orozco believes that the leap to virtual activities has expanded networking possibilities for producers looking for international partners. “Although there is nothing like human contact, online industry markets have certainly shortened distances. The opportunity to talk to potential new partners, fund curators, sales agents or buyers without incurring in travel expenses made it possible for many producers to attend such spaces for the very first time,” she says. According to the producer of films such as “Cuates de Australia” or “Allende, mi abuelo Allende”, this new way of working won’t be disappearing any time soon.

For producer Fernanda del Nido, lockdown and teleworking paved the way for a major decision: making the leap from Barcelona to her native Buenos Aires with her company **Setembro Cine**. The co-producer of films such as Pablo Larraín’s “Neruda” and Sebastián Lelio’s “A Fantastic



“The quarantine allowed us to rewrite projects and pull other smaller, more intimate films out of the drawer.”

Martha Orozco, Martfilms

Woman” believes that changes are accelerating, and that audience building is one of the main challenges for Latin American filmmaking industry, with an audience that tends to diversify and become increasingly selective.

“Now more than ever, we need to relearn and create new tools for communicating and reaching audiences. At a time when theatrically releasing films or distributing them on the theatrical circuit in other territories has turned to be a Herculean mission, we have to be crystal clear about which audiences we are targeting, and learn new ways to reach them”.

Regarding other changes that have arrived to stay, del Nido reckons that it will be increasingly difficult to finance medium-sized films, so they will need to focus on “smaller and bolder” productions, or on others with an assured slot in the market. “I will say something that is not easy to say out loud, but I think we will be producing less, and hence we will have to focus on doing it better,” envisages del Nido about the post-pandemic scenario in Latin American film industry.



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Show me the Fund is aimed at film industry professionals looking to connect with financing opportunities worldwide. The initiative was developed by **Brazilian Content**, **Cinema do Brasil** and **Projeto Paradiso**, three organisations working on the promotion of the Brazilian film industry. Carried out by **LatAm cinema**, the first stage of the project was an exhaustive research that selected and analysed 50 funding opportunities open to producers from Brazil and the rest of Latin America. In 2021, the project has grown into an information hub featuring an online platform committed to the democratisation of information and the development of the film industry in the region. In this first edition of **Focus on Funds**, LatAm cinema takes an in-depth look at five of the funds included in Show Me the Fund.

Interviews by Emilio Mayorga.

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“WCF aims to promote filmmaking in regions and countries where making films is uncertain, very complicated, or is under constant threat of economic or political crises”.

Q&A

Vincenzo Bugno

Head of the World Cinema Fund

Launched in 2004, the **World Cinema Fund** is a joint initiative led by the German Federal Cultural Foundation and the **Berlinale** - Berlin International Film Festival, in cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office. With the mission of supporting film production in territories without a strong and structured film industry, the WCF backs “films that could not be made without additional funding, films that stand out with an unconventional aesthetic approach, that tell powerful stories and convey an authentic image of their cultural roots,” as officially stated.

The WCF offers two annual calls for production grants –February and July–, and an additional distribution line for films with theatrical distribution in Germany. Funds are intended for projects with budgets ranging between 200,000 and 1.4 Million euros.

Claudia Llosa’s Golden Bear winner “The Milk of Sorrow” (Peru), Mariana Rondón’s “Bad Hair” (Venezuela), Nelson Carlos De Los Santos’ “Cocote” (Dominican Republic), Marcelo Martinessi’s “The Heiresses” (Paraguay) -Alfred Bauer Prize Silver Bear, Berlinale 2018-, Alejandro Landes’ “Monos” (Colombia), and Maya Da-Rin’s “The Fever”, Juliana Rojas’ “Cidade; Campo”, and Karim Aïnouz’s “Suely in the Sky” from Brazil are some of the productions from Latin America that have received support from WCF over the years.

LatAm cinema talked to the Head of the Berlinale’s WCF, Vincenzo Bugno, who is also a curator of the TFL-TorinoFilmLab.

How would you define the WCF compared with other international funds?

WCF aims to promote filmmaking in regions and countries where making films is uncertain, very complicated, or is under constant threat of economic or political crises. This was the original idea behind the WCF, as well as strengthening the cooperation between German and European producers and producers and directors in those territories.

Besides, we do have a dogma that is crucial for us: the money given by the WCF must be spent outside Europe. Spending 50,000 euros in France is not the same as spending them in Bolivia or Peru. Over there it is a much more culturally and financially relevant contribution.

What can you tell us about your editorial philosophy?

If we are talking in terms of content or cultural policy, our aim is to understand the complexity of the world, but also to be curators and funders of films that do not yet exist, which is not an easy task. But if we are talking about editorial philosophy, then our task is not merely to read scripts or analyse budgets, but to rethink and discuss cinema. On the other hand, we analyse projects that come from regions in the world with a nasty history of colonisation, such as Latin America, hence the importance for us to try to culturally contextualise the problems of post-colonial identity.

Today, everybody talks about “diversity, inclusion, gender politics, politically correct...,” which are undoubtedly important and necessary concepts, but for us, what I mentioned before is in our DNA.

What kind of projects fit best with this editorial line?

We seek to sponsor films with a powerful identity and a strong artistic will. Genre films with a contemporary cinematic discourse, which try to understand what new possibilities might be open to this form of art, are also a good fit for our programme.

Is Covid having an impact on the submissions and on the type of cinematographies WCF is addressed to?

If the films are not shot, WCF runs into some administrative problems, so the current situation calls for a more flexible approach, sensitive to the Covid environment.

The average quality of the submitted projects is high, as it has always been. But I would say that the average quality of these last two years is even higher than before. We are currently working on the projects that were submitted at the beginning of the year, and I can tell you that their aesthetic level and sense of identity are really high. I wonder if there is a relationship between this and the pandemic; if, given the circumstances, the authors have had the opportunity for more reflection and development.

What's the WCF's relationship with Latin America?

At the beginning, the percentage of projects coming from Latin America was incredibly high, around 80%. I remember that in the first call we received 35 projects from Argentina alone. Throughout all these years, we could say that Latin America has been the first territory of WCF; in fact, it has never been below 50% of all the projects. Nevertheless, while at the beginning the projects were mainly from countries with a strong and traditionally recognised film industry (Mexico, Brazil, Argentina), during the last few years we have witnessed an increased diversity. This is, of course, part of the WCF's identity: to try and support projects from countries with a marginal relevance. We have already sponsored four projects from Paraguay, and also others from Peru and the Dominican Republic; all very valuable films and projects.

Talking of Latin America is always tricky: in such a widely diverse territory, no generalization can ever be made. But we do see that there is a generation of young filmmakers with a very significant idea of cinema. When it comes to Latin America, it has to be noted how quickly the situation can change. For example, about 10 years ago, we

were receiving projects from Brazil with a very clear financial structure, projects in which WCF's support was hardly essential - having our support was almost a matter of prestige. However, during the last two or three years the situation has changed dramatically because of the political situation in the country. Currently, Brazil is almost the country with the most applications, and we can see that they really need our funds.

Even though Latin America is undoubtedly resistant to sweeping generalizations, does the WCF detect any prevailing trends in the region?

There are many young Latin American directors focusing on building a solid contemporary film

discourse. In some countries more, in others less, but it is unmistakable. And there is a strong interest in the idea of film discourse.

We are clearly going through a very difficult, sad period. Notwithstanding, in terms of artistic identity, the large number of documentary projects with solid and original formal approaches is truly remarkable. This has not always been the case in the past.

"We support fiction, documentary and everything in-between" is another important mantra of ours. The *in-between* defines our commitment to search in itself, and to all possible future developments.



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"We know that more women and gender nonconforming filmmakers are developing, completing, and being recognized for their films, as they should have and will continue to do with full power"

Q&A

Sabine Fayoux Cantillo

Program Manager at Chicken & Egg Pictures

Chicken & Egg Pictures was founded in 2005 by Julie Parker Benello, Wendy Ettinger, and Judith Helfand with headquarters in New York City and San Francisco. The label was set up as a fiscally sponsored project of the Tides Center, an incubator platform for small progressive organizations within the San Francisco's Tides Foundation and it was exclusively backed by funds raised from individuals, donor advised funds, and family foundations.

The Chicken & Egg Pictures' mission is clear –"to support female non-fiction filmmakers making content that pushes social change."

The company also offers a program for first or second-time filmmakers called the **(Egg)celerator Lab**, granting 35,000 dollars towards production on their documentary project. In addition to the grant funding for the production of non fiction feature-length film, the program offers mentorships, creative retreats, and networking opportunities.

Sabine Fayoux Cantillo manages the (Egg)celerator Lab, the **Chicken & Egg Award** for advanced-career filmmakers, and the **Project: Hatched** program, launched in 2020 and aiming to support directors with completion funds and mentorship as they prepare their documentary's world premiere.

French-Colombian Fayoux holds a BA in Sociology from the Université Paris-Diderot, as well as a MA in Visual Anthropology from the University of Barcelona.

What is the editorial philosophy of the (Egg)celerator Lab program fund?

The Lab supports non-fiction directors working on their first or second feature-length documentary. We welcome applications from women and gender nonconforming filmmakers from all over the world, and who bring their unique perspectives to the screen. We accept projects within a broad range of artistic approaches and themes, and our team gives great value to authorship and point of view. While some projects may have an important social issue at the forefront, others may offer more personal stories. Artistic approaches may range from the most investigative and journalistic ones, to those exploring essayistic and observational creative forms.

What are the most appropriate projects to apply?

We're passionate about films that address the most pressing global justice, human rights, and environmental issues of our time. While we prioritize films that focus on social issues, having a social issue in the film is not explicitly required. Personal and experimental non-fiction stories are eligible.

How do you expect the pandemic has affected applications this year?

The Covid-19 pandemic has deeply affected the non-fiction industry in many ways that will continue to reveal themselves in the future. Filmmakers had to endure threats to their health and their livelihoods as productions came to a complete halt. We expect the pandemic to have significantly slowed down the pace in which productions were moving –even if temporarily. We're expecting that a lot of filmmakers who are applying again for the (Egg)celerator Lab might have made little progress or have few updates to share. Perhaps for more personal stories, the pandemic might have given filmmakers a greater chance to advance their projects, with more time to write and think creatively. Regardless of how much progress applicants might have been able to make, what we see and have felt the most is perseverance—perseverance from filmmakers who, despite having gone through an unprecedented year, still find the strength to put their best foot forward and submit an application.

What is the fund's relationship with Latin America?

Being an international program, the (Egg)celerator Lab has supported stories told by filmmakers representing unique and complex identities within the very broad and diverse Latin American community and will keep doing so moving forward as we continue to expand our reach. Some of the films we've supported through the (Egg)celerator Lab about and/or by Latinx and Latin American filmmakers are Isabel Alcantara's "The Age of Water", Ali Codina's "Paper Children", Marcela Arteaga's "The Guardian of Memory", Loira Limbal's "Through the Night", Jasmin López' "Silent Beauty", Débora Souza Silva's "Black Mothers", Betzabé García's "#MICKEY" and our latest Robie Flores' "The In Between" and Isabel Castro's "Mija".

How do you envisage the future of the filmmakers you're supporting and that of the (Egg)celerator Lab program itself?

Our hope for the (Egg)celerator Lab is for the program to continue growing and expanding its reach. Through the (Egg)celerator Lab alone, we've supported over 60 women and gender nonconforming directors. These are 60 filmmakers navigating the industry with more resources, unique artistic visions, connections, camaraderie, and confidence than before. Our hope is for the program to have a ripple effect on the independent documentary film industry, and to contribute to building a strong sense of community, pride, and confidence for the filmmakers we support. We know that more women and gender nonconforming filmmakers are developing, completing, and being recognized for their films, as they should have and will continue to do with full power.

Do you detect any trends in the submissions that (Egg)celerator Lab is receiving?

We've noticed that more filmmakers from different communities are coming out to tell their own stories. These vary from stories of injustices in their own countries to deeply personal stories that shed light on their culture and shared past, wherever they are. It has been humbling and beautiful to see more filmmakers claiming the space that is theirs and telling their stories with pride.



“Our focus is on supporting filmmakers in their storytelling journey, unlocking creativity, connecting regional and international talent and creating a sustainable film financing model from Qatar for the world”.

Q&A

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi

Chief Executive Officer of the Doha Film Institute

Fatma Hassan Alremaihi is the CEO of the **Doha Film Institute** (DFI), an independent and non-profit organization created in 2010 with the aim of “identifying new talent, seeking out new cinematic voices and discovering universally resonant stories.” As well as organising two major events a year -the **Qumra Screenings** and the **Ajyal Film Festival**-, the DFI has a funding programme for filmmakers from Qatar and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region, and a second post-production support program for first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world.

LatAm cinema talked to Hassan Alremaihi about the functioning and philosophy of the Qatar Institute, geographically far from Latin America but artistically close. And this is reflected in the Latin American features which have received a boost from the DFI over the years, such as Benjamin Naishtat’s “History of Fear” (Argentina), Flavia Castro’s “Unremember” (Brazil) Dominga Sotomayor’s “Too Late to Die Young” (Chile), Nelson De Los Santos Arias’ “Cocote” (Dominican Republic), Tatiana Huezo’s “Prayers for the Stolen” (Mexico), Simon Mesa Soto’s “Amparo” (Colombia) and Javier Alejandro Avila León’s “Zona Norte” (Mexico).

The DFI has a complex program, could you outline its key lines and editorial impulses?

Our funding initiatives are part of our strategic vision to build a vibrant ecosystem for filmmaking, and to promote new voices in cinema, not just from Qatar and the Arab region, but from across the world. To promote global cinema, we have two initiatives: The annual Grants provided in two cycles –fall and spring–, and our co-financing projects. Together, our focus is on supporting filmmakers in their storytelling journey, unlocking creativity, connecting regional and international talent and creating a sustainable film financing model from Qatar for the world. To date, we have supported over 650 films from more than 70 countries through our funding initiatives.

Who are the funds intended for?

The Doha Film Institute Grants Program provides development, production and post-production funding to filmmakers from Qatar, and first- and second-time filmmakers from around the world. The goal is to seek out original voices in cinema and develop a community of filmmakers as part of our alumni. Through our co-financing initiative, we invest in film production through strategic partnerships on film projects that are culturally relevant and commercially viable and promote co-production opportunities between international and Qatar-based filmmakers.

What kind of projects, formats and producers fit best with this approach?

The Grants Program provides creative and financial assistance for short and feature-length films by Arab and international first- and second-time directors from across the world. Regarding international projects, we are currently providing post-production funding for feature-length films by first- and second-time non-MENA directors. By extending our support to international projects through our grant programs, we are contributing to discovering the next generation of film talent around the world as well as nurturing global collaboration and exposure for filmmakers in Qatar. The list of countries that we support covers practically all Latin American nations.

Is the pandemic affecting the applications this year?

The pandemic has reiterated the need for closer collaboration within the film industry and stresses the importance of fostering a culture of partnerships so we can lend continuity to cinema making, especially independent voices. But the pandemic has also taught us that we can overcome barriers; we have adjusted to working remotely, and our promising filmmakers are exploring the potential of technology to make films even when they are not travelling or meeting with large teams. We believe it is our responsibility to support creative voices, more so, during these challenging times. In our newly announced 2021 Spring Grants, a total of 32 film projects by emerging and established filmmakers from the Arab region and globally have been selected. Four film projects in this cycle are from the non-MENA region representing France, India, and Mexico.

What is the DFI Grants Program relationship with Latin America?

We have a diverse line-up of film projects from Latin America that we have been supporting over the years. This is not surprising given the strong population of Arabs in several Latin American and South American nations. They are part of the extended Arab Diaspora and have strong connections with their roots, which inspire them to tell stories of universal resonance. However, I want to add that the Grants are not just for filmmakers of Arab origin – but for every emerging and first- and second-filmmaker from the Latin American nations. In fact, for our 2021 Spring Grants, we have chosen “Shame” (Mexico, Qatar) by Miguel Salgado, a feature narrative in post-production and the feature documentary in post-production “Zona Norte” (Mexico, Qatar) by Javier Ávila. In our Fall 2020 Grants, we had Kiro Russo’s “El Gran Movimiento” (Bolivia, France, Switzerland, Qatar) and our Spring Grants 2020 recipient Gessica Fabiola Geneus’ “Freda” (Haiti, France, Qatar), which has been selected for 2021 Cannes’ Un Certain Regard. To date, we have supported 26 films from the wider Latin American region, and we are excited to receive entries from talented filmmakers from this part of the world.

How do you envisage the future of the Program and that of the filmmakers you are supporting?

As I've already said, the Grants Program is a critical component in building a strong film ecosystem. In particular, I would like to emphasize that the Grants program plays a key role in empowering women filmmakers. In fact, since 2010, nearly 48% of the DFI Grants have been awarded to women. We grant films based on the quality of the submissions and the filmmakers tackle a range of subjects. Some of these are cutting edge as is often the case with young filmmakers or emerging talent. As an organization we believe that good stories need to be told, and some of these filmmakers come from regions and countries in a time of change, so their projects naturally reflect the challenges and realities of their people and societies. We don't dictate the stories they tell; our role is to support and facilitate their creative journey and if some of them reflect a harsh reality, that is a reflection of the current global geopolitical situation some of them are living in.

Are you noticing any consistent trends among the submissions?

What stands out is the astonishing level of creativity by young talent –and as mentioned before– an increase in the number of women filmmakers who are applying for the Grants, including from Latin America. Another interesting trend is the strong interest in web series and TV productions. We live in the digital era, where more people are consuming entertainment content online. We want to support emerging talent in promoting one of the most popular entertainment forms in the region and develop compelling content in the Arabic language in this medium. There is huge potential for development in this space and we believe more people will explore this format to tell their stories to the world. In terms of creative storytelling, the quality of the submissions is fascinating, as more young people explore new ways to tell their stories. It is an interesting time to be supporting independent voices in cinema and we are honoured to be playing a part in their creative journeys.



LatAm cinema is an trade news platform for the Latin American film industry. Our website, newsletters, e-magazines and social networks provide accurate, relevant and up-to-date information to professionals and the general public looking to pursue and find ways of financing new projects and businesses in the industry.

Created in 2007 and based in Montevideo, our team of collaborators is made up of seasoned industry journalists based in different countries of the region.

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“Sørfond’s overall objective is to strengthen film production in countries where film production is limited for political or economic reasons.”

Q&A

Per Eirik Gilsvik

Project Manager of Sørfond - Norwegian South Film Fund

Per Eirik Gilsvik is the project manager of **Sørfond**, a film production fund administered jointly by the **Films from the South Festival (Film fra Sør)** and the Norwegian Film Institute. Sørfond also counts with the support of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The fund was set up in 2011 focused on developing countries. Fiction and documentaries are eligible, at least 50% of the budget must be secured and the maximum support is set at 114,000 USD approximately.

Gilsvik has also served at Oslo's Film fra Sør since 2012 where he is a member of the festival's programming committee and Project Manager for **The Critical Room**, the Festival's forum for discussion.

In May, Sørfond announced the selected projects to get Norwegian grants. Latin American projects included Carlos Lechuga's "Vicenta B" (Cuba), Natalia Santa's "Malta" (Colombia), with around 51,000 and 63,000 USD respectively.

The fund has supported other films from the region over the years, including "Divine Love" by Gabriel Mascaro (Brazil), "Karnawal" by Juan Pablo Félix (Argentina), "Contacted" by Marité Ugás (Peru), "Retablo" by Alvaro Delgado Aparicio (Peru), "Our Time" by Carlos Reygadas (Mexico), "The Untamed" by Amat Escalante (Mexico), and "The Family" by Gustavo Rondón (Venezuela), among others.

Currently, producers can only submit projects with a Norwegian co-producer, but this could change soon, as the organization plans to relaunch **Sørfond+**, which will allow them to submit projects with a European co-producer.

Could you please briefly explain the editorial backbone of Sørfond?

It is difficult to sum up the 'editorial backbone' of the fund in a couple of sentences. Sørfond supports both fiction and documentaries, and projects from 85 different countries are eligible to apply, that means there is and will continue to be a wide variety of projects supported by us.

The best way to get an impression of our profile is to look at our list of supported projects. Furthermore, I suggest filmmakers who consider applying to make sure they also read our guidelines, with particular emphasis on the sections describing the fund's overall objective, which amongst other things states: "Sørfond's overall objective is to strengthen film production in countries where film production is limited for political or economic reasons."

And what would be the most suitable projects and producers to apply?

Projects that fit the scope of the scheme are encouraged to apply. Projects located in qualified countries, that also contribute to reinforce film as a cultural expression, promote diversity and artistic integrity, and strengthen freedom of speech, are in the scope of Sørfond.

Please note that in order to apply, the main producer and the Norwegian minority producer must have entered into a co-production agreement. A letter of intent will be accepted for the application.

Fiction film and documentary film are eligible formats for the fund.

What is the effect that the pandemic is having on this current year's applications?

Sørfond has not noticed any manifest decrease in applications after the pandemic. It seems that digital solutions help the producers find each other and go about to co-produce despite the pandemic. Still, we do notice that everything takes more time, and of course, precautions in the production and measures to prevent the spread of Covid-19 on the set contribute to things taking more time.

What are Sørfond's bonds with Latin America?

Sørfond is a proud supporter of many Latin American projects over the years. This year, Sørfond has supported Cuban "Vicenta B," by Carlos Lechuga and Colombian "Malta," by Natalia Santa. Among the previous projects, we can mention Paraguayan "The Heiresses," by Marcelo Martinessi, Peruvian "Retablo," by Alvaro Delgado Aparicio, Colombian "Candelaria," by Jhonny Hendrix, and Brazilian "Divine Love," by Gabriel Mascaro.

Since 2019, just Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru have been able to apply due to an 85-country list. Are there some expectations to open the eligibility for all LatAm territories in the next future?

Sørfond is funded by The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). The revision to the list of eligible countries that was implemented in 2019 was done due to instructions from the MFA. The list of qualified countries for Sørfond is identical to the list of countries that are eligible for developmental aid from the MFA. For now, there are no specific plans to expand the list of qualified countries, however this might change in the future.

What's the future of Sørfond? Do you envisage any new plans?

I cannot say too much about the future of Sørfond for now, as there are no concrete plans for significant changes in the near future. But we hope to be able to re-launch our side-scheme called Sørfond+, where eligible applicants can apply with any European co-producer, not only Norwegian co-producers. This would also allow us to increase the number of projects we support each year. However, the re-launch of Sørfond+ is dependent on us receiving funding from Creative Europe's MEDIA-programme, so this is far from confirmed.

“We’re noticing an increase in Latin-American films unearthing erased parts of history and challenging dominant cultural narratives”.

Q&A

Hajnal Molnar-Szakacs

Sundance Institute's Documentary Film Fund Director

Instituted in 2002 with founding support from Open Society Foundation the Sundance Documentary Film Program supports non-fiction filmmakers worldwide in the “production of cinematic documentaries on contemporary themes.”

Various Latin American projects have benefitted from the program, including Maite Alberdi's “The Mole Agent,” Petra Costa's “The Edge of Democracy,” Lucrecia Martel's “Chocobar,” and Clare Weiskopf and Nicolas Van Hemelryck's “Alis.”

Africa, China, India, Latin America, and the Middle East are prioritized territories outside the U.S. Indigenous artists from all over the world, and filmmakers from these regions who are living in the diaspora are also prioritized.

The fund grants 50,000 USD to each project from a production/post-production line and 25,000 USD for those from a development line. Submissions can be made twice per year (July and January), and they are also considered for the **Gucci**, **Kendeda** and **Sandbox** funds. Between 30-40 projects receive grants per year.

Educated in Italy in Public Management and in Ottawa's Carleton University, Hajnal Molnar-Szakacs is the Sundance Documentary Film Fund Director. Additionally, she is an industry consultant for international film festivals and pitching events, and has served as volunteer for several volunteer foundations.

Tell us about the philosophy or general principles of the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund.

First and foremost, we seek to support the work of nonfiction filmmakers from around the globe. Our aim is to find projects that express the world in creative, complex, beautiful, and provocative ways. We are interested in supporting filmmakers with a distinct voice and vision, and a meaningful connection to the work they create. We are especially keen to raise the voices of underrepresented communities from around the world, in the service of building a more fair, free and open society.

Are there any projects more appropriate than others?

Through our funding we seek to elevate stories that cross genres, themes and approaches. Our funding seeks to showcase the beautiful tapestry of work that is being created around the world from diverse artists. We are strongly committed to supporting voices and perspectives that have been historically neglected and traditionally marginalized.

What are the main requirements?

We provide grants to projects with a director attached. Confirmed access to locations, character profiles, a structure and a defined subject are also required. The project's budget must be below 1 million USD. So those projects in late development or early production are at an ideal stage to apply.

What is the fund's relationship with Latin America?

We have been working to cultivate artists and partnerships in Latin America by attending numerous festivals, forums and markets in the region, including events in Mexico, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile, Brazil and Uruguay. Our team also has deep connections to Latin America— including staff members with roots in El Salvador, Cuba and Peru, and former members from Mexico and Colombia. We have partnerships with a number of organizations in Latin America to work together to support artists through workshops and master classes. One of our partners is Chiledoc and we will also be hosting a session in partner-

ship with DocMontevideo on Sundance Co//ab, our digital platform, later this summer. We are deeply committed to supporting artists from Latin America, which is definitely one of our global priority regions.

Do you have any available stats about the Latin American submissions or grants?

Yes, 13.5% of our current Special Opportunity Funds grantee feature projects are from filmmakers based in Latin America. On average, around 10% of Documentary Fund selected projects are from applicants who identify as Latin American—we anticipate this will increase in tandem with our cultivation efforts in the region.

How do you envisage the future of the filmmakers you're supporting and that of the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund itself?

The Fund is committed to continuing to support work from across Latin America. We hope to discover new talent, support local non-fiction film production and empower communities to tell their own stories. We are also looking forward to deepening our partnerships with organizations working on the ground in Latin America, from attending Festivals and Forums to co-hosting panels and artist development conversations.

Do you detect any trends in the applicants/national LatAm cinemas that the Sundance Institute Documentary Fund is addressed to?

We're seeing films that explore conflicts and violence in the region, especially in Mexico and Colombia. Many personal films look into the effects of war and violence and its aftermath on people's lives. We have also noticed personal films dealing with trauma and complex family histories that are entangled with the history of a nation. We are also seeing more indigenous voices and stories, border stories—specifically about crossing over, rather than on undocumented life in the US; films addressing issues of impunity and government accountability; films giving voice to people from communities that have traditionally been marginalized and historically neglected, shedding light on stories of civic empowerment and movement building. In short, films unearthing erased parts of history and challenging dominant cultural narratives.



Brazilian Content is a project that fosters the export and promotion of audiovisual content made by Brazilian companies. The project is focused on the improvement and growth of Brazilian companies, it expedites the access to content markets and festivals, offers exclusive training programs and consultancy, and access to business intelligence reports. Brazilian Content represents 178 companies from all over Brazil and was created in 2004, in a partnership between Brasil Audiovisual Independente, the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (Apex-Brasil), and the Audiovisual Secretariat of the Ministry of Culture.



Cinema do Brasil aims to reinforce and expand the participation of Brazilian audiovisual productions in the international market, to encourage the development of co-productions and the distribution of Brazilian films abroad. It is an export program implemented in 2006 by the São Paulo's Audiovisual Industry Guild - SIAESP.



Projeto Paradiso is an initiative of the Olga Rabinovich Institute that provides high-value support mechanisms for Brazilian talents in the audiovisual sector, with a focus on fiction films and series that connect with their audiences. We invest in professional training and capacity building through fellowships, mentoring programs, workshops, seminars and studies, nurturing a network of professionals in Brazil. Focused on internationalization, we work through partnerships with well-known institutions, thereby connecting national talent with training and business opportunities around the world.



LatAm cinema is the leading trade media platform covering the Latin American film industry. Aimed at professionals and the general public, our website, newsletters, e-magazines, and social networks provide relevant timely information to discover, promote and finance new projects and businesses. Created in 2007 and based in Montevideo, our team of contributors is made up of industry insiders based in different countries in the region.



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