



#DOCSAFE

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

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Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction: DFM Safer Spaces.....	3
2.	Introduction to Roundtables and Themes.....	4
2.1.	Cultural Safety.....	5
2.2.	Political Safety.....	6
2.3.	Accountability and Restorative Justice.....	6
2.4.	Sexual Harassment.....	7
2.5.	Abuse of Power and Power Dynamics.....	7
3.	Individual Table Results.....	8
3.1.	Cultural Safety.....	8
3.1.1.	Addressed Issues.....	8
3.1.2.	Proposed Solutions.....	8
3.2.	Political Safety.....	9
3.3.	Accountability and Restorative Justice.....	11
3.3.1.	Key points raised.....	11
3.4.	Sexual Harassment.....	12
3.4.1.	Issues Addressed.....	12
3.4.2.	Proposed Solutions.....	13
3.5.	Power Dynamics.....	13
3.5.1.	Abuse on Set.....	14
3.5.2.	Abuse of Funding.....	14
3.5.3.	Contracts and Oversight.....	14
3.5.4.	Additional Proposed Solutions:.....	15
4.	Executive Summary.....	16
4.1.	Lack of Formalised Structures and Protocols.....	16
4.2.	Vulnerability of filmmakers and film workers.....	16
4.3.	The Role of Funders and Institutions.....	16
4.4.	Solidarity, Collective Action and Empowerment.....	16
4.5.	Accountability and Restorative Justice.....	17
4.6.	Systemic Change Through Policy, Training and Education.....	17
4.7.	Capitalist and Post-Colonial Pressures.....	17
4.8.	Lack of Support and Resources.....	17
5.	Appendix - Community Agreement - DFM Safer Spaces.....	18

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

1. Introduction: DFM Safer Spaces

The global screen industries have made significant strides towards inclusivity and accessibility in recent years. However, we at the Durban FilmMart Institute (DFMI) recognise that there is still much work to be done to create truly safe and equitable spaces for all film professionals, particularly those from equity and sovereignty-seeking communities and those from the Global South, particularly when they are faced with specific governmental, political and ideological circumstances and conflicts which either affect them directly and/or elicit responses of solidarity from them.

Inspired by initiatives like #DocSafe and driven by our commitment to fostering a more equitable environment for African screen professionals, we convened the DFM Safer Spaces Roundtable event at the 2024 edition of Durban FilmMart. This think-tank session brought together diverse voices from across the continent and beyond to address critical issues that continue to affect our industry.

We chose to focus on five key areas: cultural safety, political safety, sexual harassment, power dynamics & abuses of power, and accountability & restorative Justice. As it is transversal to many of these topic areas, curatorial justice also underpinned many of these conversations. These topics are not just abstract concepts but real-world challenges that impact the daily lives and careers of countless individuals in our field.

Cultural safety is crucial in an industry that thrives on diverse storytelling. We must ensure that our spaces are free from racial oppression, and harm and respectful of all cultural backgrounds. Political safety has become increasingly important as filmmakers navigate complex global issues and stand in solidarity with marginalised communities. We need to protect those who use their art to advocate for change.

The prevalence of sexual harassment in our industry demands our continued attention and action. Despite increased awareness, it remains a pervasive issue that requires ongoing vigilance and structural changes. Similarly, abuses of power and problem-prone power dynamics, whether on set, in funding relationships, or through unfair contracts, undermines the creative potential and well-being of our community. The notion that images can be harmful and the awareness that the conditions in which films are made raise ethical concerns which underpin the concept of curatorial justice that aims at reducing harm behind the camera and during screenings. It connects with the idea of a certain responsibility on the part of programming teams for the images which they endorse through their selections.

Lastly, we recognize the critical need for accountability and restorative justice. As an industry, we must not only acknowledge past harms but actively work to repair them and prevent future occurrences.

By hosting this roundtable, DFMI aimed to create a space for open dialogue, sharing of experiences, and collaborative problem-solving. We believe that by bringing these issues to the forefront and actively seeking solutions, we can contribute to the creation of a more just, equitable, and safe film industry.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

The insights and recommendations from this session are not meant to be final answers, but rather a continuation of an ongoing conversation. We hope that by sharing these outcomes, we can inspire further action and change across the global screen industries.

As Africa's largest film market, we at DFMI feel a responsibility to lead by example. We are committed to implementing the lessons learned from this roundtable and to continuing these crucial conversations. Together, we can build a film industry that not only tells diverse stories but also provides safe and nurturing spaces for all who contribute to bringing those stories to life.

The results of this first roundtable at DFM are an invitation to other film industry platforms to organise similar meetings and to use this document to critique, develop and add new perspectives to the discussion. Ultimately, to foster the development of a community of shared practices and objectives from different perspectives and geographies.

2. Introduction to Roundtables and Themes

Making the spaces of our industry “safer” is only possible through a common effort and shared values. It requires the development and implementation of a set of practices and an ongoing awareness of the systems of oppression at play and the patterns of behaviour they produce that create conditions in which the safety of certain members of the global film community is compromised and in which harm, injustice, abuse of power and extraction are allowed to operate.

To this end, Jane Mote launched #DocSafe in November 2023 to address abuse in the documentary industry and highlight the lack of safety and accountability. The initiative, which the DFMI joined from its first meeting, aims to raise critical questions, explore solutions, raise awareness, advocate for change and establish best practices to create safer spaces in the industry.

The organisation of the DFM session and its themes were inspired by the issues raised by #DocSafe and other similar initiatives, as well as the experience of the two curators, Themba Bhebhe and Marion Schmidt. In the form of a roundtable think-tank session, the collaborative event unpacked, brainstormed and shared experiences around the following five aspects of safety in the global screen industries:

- cultural safety;
- political safety;
- accountability and restorative justice;
- sexual harassment;
- abuse of power and power dynamics.

The approach was to build upon the significant work that has already been done in these areas, rather than to reinvent the wheel. They drew on the existing body of knowledge to inform their discussions and reflections in curating the themes of the tables and its participants.

The takeaways and solutions developed during the session were not intended to be final. Rather, they represent a continuation of ongoing conversations. Building on the work done

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

around the #DocSafe initiative, for example, our dialogue was designed to build on previous discussions and move these issues forward.

The roundtable session was an opportunity to move the conversation forward and elevate the actions we discussed to the next level. One of the key outcomes was to identify next steps for the issues at hand, ensuring that our efforts contribute meaningfully to the broader discourse.

Finally, the 2.5-hour session began with a brief introduction by the main facilitators of the session, Themba Bhebhe and Marion Schmidt. Followed by the introduction and a joint reading of the Community Agreement (see Appendix), participants broke into pre-set groups, each with a dedicated facilitator, to discuss one of the five themes above, leading to the formulation of takeaways and recommendations that we will share in this report.

Each of the tables was provided with an initial definition of their topic to provoke, guide and inspire the ensuing conversation, and to give an initial direction to the discussions that followed.

2.1. Cultural Safety

It is clear that the screen industries as a whole are not spaces where cultural safety is practised and where emphasis and effort is put into making spaces culturally safe. Coined by Māori midwives in the 1990s, the concept of cultural safety originally referred to the safety of Indigenous patients within a settler colonial context where they could be harmed by racist attitudes and actions. It was a concept that enabled us to think through “how the spaces that we hold and that we create and that we’re responsible for can be safe for First Nations people.” The term has been extended to other historically marginalised groups and now broadly speaking refers to creating and holding spaces where such groups are kept safe by not exposing them to racial oppression in any form. “For someone to feel culturally unsafe means that they’ve likely experienced a space which is underpinned by racism. So, in the absence of cultural safety, there is a presence of racism. And that’s a really important point.” (*Cultural Safety – An Indigenous methodology*: Lilly Brown)

How then can we bring the principles of cultural safety to the screen industries? How can we ensure that participants in the industry at all levels feel culturally safe, and how can we hold institutions and those in power accountable for implementing and practising cultural safety beyond cultural sensitivity, and do we need to develop our own definition based on the original concept coined by Māori midwives in the 1990s?

How does cultural safety play into curatorial choices?

“And the curation of these manifestations of culture, across all media, has a deep impact on communities, and carries with it immense responsibility.”

(Extract from *Restoring the Future* report on curatorial justice)

One aspect of cultural safety when mediated through curatorial choices is the concept of curatorial justice. What role can curatorial justice play in the reduction and/or elimination of harm by removing or reducing harmful cultural, racial and ethnic stereotypes, tropes and

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

narratives? How can frameworks for curatorial justice be implemented at film festivals and other organisations which curate audiovisual works? And lastly, how can we move from quick fixes to defining frameworks, policies and practices, and what are positive examples from inside or outside our industries?

2.2. Political Safety

Political safety refers to how organisations can create safety for individuals and communities who express a certain political view and/or stand in solidarity with oppressed, marginalised and stigmatised communities and/or who support certain political movements. It goes without saying that much of this conversation will be focused on the light which has been shed on this subject in the wake of the irrefutable ongoing and televised genocide in Palestine and particularly in Gaza. How can the safety of those affected be insured? What can be done to ensure the safety of those who advocate on behalf of (humanitarian) political causes? How can film organisations embrace values which mean that they don't ostracise those who stand in solidarity with oppressed peoples through political actions, petitions, open letters, etc.? What measures can film festivals do to not cause harm back home to both the oppressed and their allies who speak out? How can film organisations not place individuals who are vulnerable in their home countries in dangerous or precarious situations? How can film organisations take a strong political stance whilst avoiding harm to those affected? What can we make of the double standard observed between the handling of Russia's war and full-scale invasion of Ukraine and the war in Palestine? How can film organisations and leaders attempt to carve out or demand political safety for themselves in hostile political environments? What happens to protect film creatives who withdraw their films from festivals for political reasons? What happens to the works which are withdrawn? How can the voices of these filmmakers who withdraw for political reasons be amplified and not silenced? How can these filmmakers be protected from ostracisation on the festival circuit? These are the types of questions that this conversation will broach with a view to prototyping solutions to avoiding the gross dysfunctionalities and flouting of human dignity that we have witnessed in the past 12 months.

2.3. Accountability and Restorative Justice

This conversation will explore how organisations, institutions and collectives can cultivate a culture of accountability. Errors will invariably happen and sometimes these errors cause harm or have other negative effects or consequences for staff, audiences, specific communities and other people who come into contact with an organisation, a film, the actions of a person or else who are affected by decisions made by any of the latter.

How can organisations not only acknowledge the effects of their actions and decisions but also take on board their effects? How can organisations make amends? How can individuals, organisations and others create frameworks for restorative justice which seek to repair the harm caused?

Initiatives such as the **Documentary Accountability Working Group** or **Karim Ahmad's *Restoring the Future*** initiative on curatorial justice already exist to interrogate the real-world effects of film production and curatorial decisions on those directly involved and/or regarding

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

historical marginalised groups whose continue to be affected by objectifying, negative and stigmatising images.

Is it possible or helpful to work towards global standards or templates for accountability in the film industry? Can we draw lessons from other industries or grassroots movements on implementing restorative practices to address conflict, such as mediation and dialogue circles? How can we tackle institutions that remain unable or unwilling to acknowledge, learn, change, and become more aware and accountable? What accountability can be enforced when images normalise problematic situations or continue to reinforce negative tropes and stereotypes? This conversation will unpack all of these aspects of this topic. The driving idea is to ideate pragmatic take-aways and solutions for the industry through the collective and collaborative brainstorming during this session.

2.4. Sexual Harassment

SWIFT (Sisters Working in Film & Television) has done pioneering work on the issue and this conversation will dive into all aspects of the widespread harmful phenomenon of sexual harassment with a view to ideating effective take-aways and solutions on how to continue to combat and eliminate gender-based violence and sexual harassment in the film industry.

Given the visibility of movements like #metoo, #balancetonporc as well as organisations like the Time's Up, WIFT and a series of high-profile cases of sexual harassers and their numerous victims, the industry's awareness of the issues has grown manifold, yet it still remains endemic.

This conversation will, as such, reflect on how prevalent sexual harassment actually is in the global screen industries, how data is being gathered? It will also pose questions as to which organisations exist and what their actions are, and which measures can be taken at all levels of the film industry, starting, of course, with film sets. Significantly, this roundtable conversation will explore which initiatives exist for victims to report cases of harassment and seek justice? What frameworks exist for the complaints to be heard, taken seriously and handled with due care and diligence? The conversation will also enquire about the legal frameworks in place? It will enquire as to how organisations can show accountability and impose consequences for offenders? It will beg the question of which forms of restorative justice exist for the victims of sexual harassment?

2.5. Abuse of Power and Power Dynamics

In November 2023, Jane Mote, tutor, mentor and editorial consultant for the Whickers Award spoke up in an article about abuse in the documentary field based on harrowing stories of filmmakers abused, harassed, and taken advantage of by the very people supposed to be supporting them in mentoring, training and supporting roles.

Article: *We Must Address Abuse in the Documentary Industry*

<https://documentary.org/online-feature/we-must-address-abuse-documentary-industry>

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

Addressing the issue of abuse of power is crucial in organisational, initiative or community settings, and in mentor/mentee/consultant relationships, particularly in an industry where 'success' and 'access' are often based on personal connections and granted by gatekeepers. Abuse of power can take many forms, from subtle coercion and blurred lines between personal and professional dealings to outright manipulation and exploitation. It thrives in environments where there is a lack of accountability, where hierarchies are enforced, whether rigidly or by design, where there is a lack of training and awareness, and where cultural norms prioritise authority and the status quo over ethical behaviour, protective behaviour that intends to actively and intentionally create safety.

What are the mechanisms that encourage abuse of power and what are the dynamics that facilitate that abuse? How can we move towards a culture and framework that prevents or minimises the possibility of that person abusing their power, and how can we, for example, design anywhere professionals come together in a way that reduces the possibility of an abusive dynamic? How do we deal with abusers and how can they be held accountable and prevented from continuing their abusive behaviour as funders, mentors, trainers or in whatever role of real or perceived hierarchy?

3. Individual Table Results

3.1. Cultural Safety

The participants in this group discussed cultural safety as having an allowance for cultural specificity. The discussion touched on the sensitivity of cultural safety in the industry and how it affects the working conditions for filmmakers.

3.1.1. Addressed Issues

The participants pointed out that the cultural issue in the film industry is bottom-up. Participants noted that the film industry is not well structured. There is no protocol for participants in the industry to follow when it comes to cultural safety, let alone a definition.

Therefore, institutions should adopt internal codes of ethics that reflect their values, and these codes should guide their relationships with partners and stakeholders. Another point raised was the capitalist and post-colonial pressures that fuel a constant drive for growth, often to the detriment of the wellbeing of workers and communities. Sometimes institutional refusal - the decision to slow or stop certain types of growth - is necessary to prioritise the health and sustainability of the whole community.

Additionally, cultural safety norms are not prioritised in the industry and are often neglected.

3.1.2. Proposed Solutions

Participants discussed several solutions to address tackle cultural safety in the film industry:

- **Consultations** – the participants call for institutions to conduct consultations with filmmakers, employees and other stakeholder workers to implement and enforce appropriate practices.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

- **A pan-African grass roots** institution to develop a protocol which consists of a culturally sensitive curriculum of theory and practice.
- **Money drives power.** Participants call on donors to protect filmmakers who are not protected by their organisations or who are freelancers, on issues such as racism and cultural safety, within their working environment.
- **Anonymous whistleblowing** within the industry should be encouraged, and channels for such should be opened and should be encouraged within the industry.
- **Institutional training** should be provided. This could be through the establishment of cultural offices that train filmmakers and institutions internationally on acceptable protocols to follow when dealing with cultural safety in the industry.
- There needs to be a **policy and implementation** on cultural safety and this needs to be an evolving document. It should prioritise community consultation, ongoing engagement with the community throughout the value chain, and create protocols for members of Indigenous nations.

3.2. Political Safety

Participants discussed the political safety perspective and divided it into two main categories, namely institutions and individuals.

From an individual perspective, participants focussed on the themes of refusal and insistence. Specifically, they focused on the conflict that arises when individual values clash with institutional norms. This created a rich platform for sharing personal experiences, particularly with regards to navigating different roles within the industry.

One central question that emerged was: **how should we approach public statements of refusal? Should we make and document these statements, and should they be publicised?**

This aspect of the conversation opened up a broader discussion about the difficulties inherent in these choices, as we operate both as individuals and within institutions.

A key challenge that was explored was the precarity of the work as filmmakers and art workers, particularly in terms of employment and funding. This vulnerability plays a significant role in shaping our responses to solidarity strategies, including refusal and insistence. The participants shared various anecdotes from the past ten months (the time of the event was July 2024), as well as from their broader careers, and agreed that there isn't a singular answer—both refusal and insistence have their place, depending on the context.

The conversation also highlighted the importance of **compassion** and **solidarity**. There is a constant tension between individual workers and institutional structures, and it is crucial to approach our colleagues' actions with **understanding** and **empathy**.

For instance, withdrawal — whether from jury participation or from showcasing work on platforms that are misaligned to our values — often leads to the silencing of voices. The participants explored ways in which the community could come together to document and

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

highlight these acts of withdrawal, ensuring that the reasons behind these choices are not lost in the process.

Parallel programming was one potential solution that was discussed, where alternative programming occurs alongside mainstream festivals that filmmakers have chosen to boycott. This could be driven by a community working together to maintain visibility and solidarity in such cases.

The participants discussed individual experiences and reflections on the themes of refusal and insistence. Specifically, they focused on the conflict that arises when individual values clash with institutional norms.

- **Protection and Political Safety for Film Workers:** Institutions have a duty to prioritise the political and personal safety of film workers, above the interests of their funders. This principle should be fundamental, ensuring that film workers can operate in environments that respect their rights and shield them from political harm. Safeguarding the values and wellbeing of these workers must come before financial considerations.
- **Negotiating with Funders:** When entering into institutional funding agreements, it is essential for institutions to approach funders with a clear separation between financial dependency and ethical or political commitments. Those representing institutions, particularly directors and leaders, should negotiate confidently to ensure institutional values are not compromised for funding. This requires transparency and assertiveness in maintaining independence throughout the decision-making process.
- **Employee Rights and Freedom of Expression:** Institutions have a responsibility to protect their employees, not only in a physical sense but also in terms of their right to express their views publicly and within the communities they serve. This extends to supporting employees in expressing personal or political beliefs without fear of repercussions. Institutions should create a safe environment for dialogue, ensuring that employees feel secure in their freedom of expression.
- **Code of Ethics:** Every institution should develop a robust code of ethics to guide its decisions and relationships. This code needs to reflect the values of the institution, the community it serves, and its employees. It should be a living document, shaped by the input of all stakeholders, and serve as a tool for navigating complex relationships, especially when engaging with funders or partners whose values may not fully align with those of the institution.
- **Refusal of Growth as an Institutional Strategy:** There is often pressure for institutions to continuously expand, driven by capitalist and postcolonial frameworks. However, there are times when institutional "de-growth" — deliberately slowing down or even refusing growth — is an act of care. This considered refusal can be a strategic stance against unsustainable expansion, which tends to prioritise profits over the wellbeing of employees, collaborators, and audiences. Taking care of the holistic wellness of everyone involved, including the communities the institution serves, should remain central to its mission.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

Finally, participants stressed the importance of solidarity in bringing about change within institutions. There are multiple approaches to solidarity and context that need to be used to bring about change. Solidarity and encouragement among colleagues and co-workers could provide much-needed reassurance to workers experiencing difficulties.

3.3. Accountability and Restorative Justice

Participants concluded that there is a need for organisations to hold themselves accountable, adopt restorative justice measures, and reprioritise resources. This includes publicly acknowledging any harm caused, sharing positive examples of restorative processes, and continually updating their mission and values.

Informal mechanisms for maintaining transparency between organisations are essential, and funders should demonstrate resilience when organisations undergo accountability processes.

3.3.1. Key points raised

The key points raised include:

- **Training and Skills Development:** Organisations must prioritise better training for staff, particularly in areas such as workplace mental health and legal issues within the film industry. This will empower workers and create safer, more informed environments.
- **Protection for Filmmakers:** The participants suggested the implementation of **unions** that can advocate for restorative justice on behalf of filmmakers who are victimised by organisations. They also called for an **independent grievance process**, free from the influence of the organisations involved, to ensure fairness.
- **Accountability for Grant Recipients:** Films that receive grants must be held accountable to the institutions providing those funds. Organisations should stop financing films that are in breach of their contractual obligations.
- **Clear Vision and Mission:** Organisations need to have a clear vision and mission that reflect their core values. They must be willing to take accountability and publicly acknowledge harm when it occurs. The focus should be on how organisations respond to mistakes, encouraging those that actively promote restorative justice rather than solely judging them for their errors.
- **Accountability Plans:** Organisations should develop accountability plans that include preventative measures to avoid harm and procedures for addressing harm when it occurs. Human resources departments must play a proactive role in creating and enforcing these plans.

Participants emphasised that boards of directors need to be more proactive, particularly in fundraising and in safeguarding the wellbeing of staff, prioritising employees over the brand itself.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

The conversation underscored that accountability and safety must not be reactive; rather, these principles should be built into the institutional framework. Human resources departments must be reformed to serve the needs of individuals, rather than simply protecting the institution's legal interests.

In conclusion, participants called for greater transparency, stronger legal protections, better mental health support, and the creation of **ethical charters** to sustain the wellbeing of filmmakers and staff. Additionally, **more resources** need to be allocated to support these measures, as they are currently either underfunded or not funded at all.

3.4. Sexual Harassment

Participants emphasised that sexual harassment in the film industry is a systemic issue that emanates from different points of power within the industry. They emphasised the need to address key areas, such as how perpetrators are dealt with, the lack of intimacy coordinators on set, and the vulnerability of freelancers seeking work. The common thread participants highlighted was the socio-economic imbalance present throughout the entire process, starting from film school and continuing through to film distribution. This imbalance becomes most apparent during financial transactions, whether it's funding for productions, payments to freelancers, or other exchanges.

This suggests the need for a comprehensive approach to tackling the issue, focusing on power dynamics and structural inequities within the industry.

3.4.1. Issues Addressed

There are many issues that make filmmakers and film workers vulnerable to sexual harassment in the film industry. One such issue is the lack of legislation and accountability structures in hiring processes. Even where HR departments do exist, they are often internal, meaning companies are effectively regulating themselves. This system needs expansion.

Due to the short-term nature of work in the industry, freelancers are not covered under the same internal umbrella as permanent employees. As HR is internal, there is no need to have policies in place for freelancers as they are on short-term contracts, leaving freelancers exposed to unfair conditions.

Moreover, filmmakers and other freelancers in the industry are constantly seeking their next job, which makes it difficult to secure long-term stability. The reliance on short-term contracts adds to the pressure, as freelancers need to continually renew their contracts or seek new opportunities.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

Participants pointed out that budget constraints in the film industry are a major contributing factor to the problem of sexual harassment. For example, due to limited funding, institutions often avoid removing perpetrators from projects, for fear of the financial consequences of such action. This reluctance to take immediate action against perpetrators is driven by the concern that removing key individuals during a project could result in significant financial losses. As a result, perpetrators are often retained until the end of the project, allowing the harmful behaviour to continue in the specific situation, and by extension, in the industry at large.

Additionally, participants noted that people are often unaware of where to seek help when problems arise. Additionally, information about problematic individuals is usually kept internal, and no clear grievance or justice processes for those who have experienced harassment are in place or are accessible.

The participants created the following categories of solutions:

3.4.2. Proposed Solutions

In terms of solutions, participants focused on resources, and on making “safety.” Their discussion centred heavily around production, but the ideas could be applied more broadly to the whole ecosystem.

- **Resource allocation for safety personnel on set:** The participants suggested assigning a dedicated contact person, like a safety officer, who is well-known to everyone on set. This person would handle issues as they arise, similar to an intimacy coordinator for intimate scenes.
- **Training and awareness are essential!**
It's essential that the safety contact person be properly trained and that crew members are aware of the procedures. Often, real change begins when there's a clear stance on acceptable behaviour. For example, if someone addresses inappropriate touching from the start, it sets a clear boundary for everyone. The goal is to shift the onus away from the person being harassed and onto the collective responsibility of the team.
- **Insurance coverage:** The participants also discussed the need for insurance coverage, especially in cases where reshoots are necessary due to harassment or other issues. Just as insurance covers illness or accidents, it should also cover these scenarios.
- **HR expansion:** There should be external oversight in HR to avoid internal conflicts of interest.
- **Information sharing:** Systems should be developed to share information about problematic individuals across productions, ensuring transparency.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

3.5. Power Dynamics

"People would rather work in an environment with joy than one with despair. If you're a misogynist, just go home—I'm not paying for that." (Quote from the participants of this conversation).

The participants discussed the fact that abuses of power in the film industry manifest in various ways, from exploitative behaviour on set to inequities in funding structures. They concluded that addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach that promotes fairness, accountability, and structural change.

The group devised the following solutions that focus on three key areas:

- conduct on set,
- funding mechanisms,
- and contractual dynamics.

By implementing these strategies, the hope is to create a safer, more equitable industry where filmmakers from the Global South are treated as true partners, and the power imbalances that often facilitate abuse are diminished.

3.5.1. Abuse on Set

- **Solution:** Introduce a **code of conduct** to set clear expectations for behaviour on set. All team members should understand these rules before committing to the project, ensuring that professional standards are upheld.
- **Horizontal hierarchies:** In regions where hierarchical structures, such as those found in family and social settings, reinforce power imbalances, promoting **horizontal hierarchies** within teams can mitigate the opportunity for abuse.

3.5.2. Abuse of Funding

- **Solution:** Global North funders often impose disproportionate ownership stakes on Global South producers, contributing only financially yet demanding creative control. This needs to shift toward using funding as a form of **reparations**. Film funds should adopt **ethical guidelines** that ensure fair and equitable partnerships.
- **Collectives:** Form **regional collectives** in the Arab, African, and Latin American regions (as well as the rest of the Global South). These collectives can pool resources and influence, advocating for safe and fair collaborations, where producers are treated as equal partners rather than tools for external profit.

3.5.3. Contracts and Oversight

- **Solution:** Global South producers must recognize their value and demand fairer terms. Creating a **resource hub** with access to contract templates and legal guidance can help them make informed decisions.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

- **Term Limits & Oversight Committees:** Establish **term limits** for decision-makers in funding organisations to ensure fresh perspectives. Additionally, **oversight committees** should be tasked with continuously updating policies to reflect social progress and current industry needs.

3.5.4. Additional Proposed Solutions:

- **Reporting mechanisms:** Implement anonymous platforms for reporting abuse, ensuring transparency and accountability for all stakeholders.
- **Redemption pathways:** Focus on rehabilitation alongside accountability, creating **redemption pathways** for individuals willing to rectify their behaviours, instead of simply blacklisting them.
- **Universal policies:** Promote globally accepted standards for ethical behaviour, ensuring fairness and fostering communication between funders and filmmakers, especially in vulnerable regions.

By addressing these issues through collaborative, systemic changes, we can foster an industry where power dynamics no longer perpetuate abuse and exploitation, and where joy, respect, and fairness become the foundation of every production.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

4. Executive Summary

The outcomes from the five roundtables reveal several key commonalities and conclusions. Here's a synthesis of these overarching themes:

4.1. Lack of Formalised Structures and Protocols

A significant commonality across all areas is the absence of formalised, universally accepted structures and protocols. Whether it's the absence of cultural safety norms, unclear codes of ethics, or non-existent protections for freelance workers, the film industry as viewed by the participants of these roundtables, operates in a fragmented manner. Participants consistently called for the creation of internal codes of ethics, community agreements, clear accountability mechanisms, and formalised systems to ensure transparency and equity.

4.2. Vulnerability of filmmakers and film workers

Across the board, filmmakers and workers, particularly freelancers and those from marginalised backgrounds, are consistently left vulnerable to exploitation, harassment, and unsafe working conditions. The dependence on short-term contracts, the lack of protective structures for freelancers, and budget constraints exacerbate these vulnerabilities, leaving many without the protection offered by traditional HR or legal frameworks. This is a systemic lack of safety that tends to prevent those who experience "unsafety" to speak up out of fear from losing their work and/or reputation.

4.3. The Role of Funders and Institutions

Participants repeatedly pointed out the disproportionate influence that funders and institutions wield, often at the expense of filmmakers' rights and creative freedom. The dependence on funding often forces filmmakers, especially those from the Global South, to surrender control over their projects. There's a growing recognition that ethical funding models must be established, separating financial dependency from political and ethical obligations. This includes ensuring that funders and other film institutions and platforms respect the political safety, values, and autonomy of filmmakers and film workers.

4.4. Solidarity, Collective Action and Empowerment

Another recurring theme is the power of solidarity and collective action as a means to challenge the structural inequities in the film industry. Whether it is forming collectives to resist the exploitation of Global South filmmakers or encouraging parallel programming as a form of refusal and protest, participants emphasised the need for communal support. Solidarity was also seen as essential in advocating for safer, more equitable working conditions, supporting whistleblowers, and ensuring that those who refuse to work with unethical institutions are not silenced.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

4.5. Accountability and Restorative Justice

Across all discussions, the demand for accountability was clear. Participants argued that institutions must not only hold themselves accountable when harm is caused but also engage in restorative justice processes that prioritise healing and reform. Whether addressing the consequences of sexual harassment, abuses of power, or cultural harm, there is a need for institutions to transparently acknowledge mistakes, take corrective action, and continually update their practices in collaboration with the communities they serve. Restorative justice, rather than punitive approaches, was seen as a more holistic and constructive solution.

4.6. Systemic Change Through Policy, Training and Education

Policy change, training and education were mentioned by all groups as essential tools to create a safer and more equitable film industry and to achieve systemic change. This includes the implementation of universal policies on cultural and political safety, ongoing training programs to build awareness and skills around cultural sensitivity, sexual harassment prevention, and power dynamics, as well as the development of collective bargaining structures (e.g., unions) for marginalized workers. Institutions need to commit to continuous engagement with these evolving issues, ensuring their policies are living documents shaped by community consultation.

4.7. Capitalist and Post-Colonial Pressures

Participants repeatedly concluded that many of the challenges, including abuses of power, lack of cultural safety and unsafe working conditions, are linked to broader capitalist and post-colonial pressures that prioritise profit and growth over individual and community well-being. Participants argued that the drive for continuous expansion often undermines the holistic wellness of workers and filmmakers. There is a call for institutions to practise "refusal of growth" as a strategy of care, prioritising the well-being of staff, filmmakers, and the communities they serve.

4.8. Lack of Support and Resources

A consistent theme was the lack of adequate support and the need for a (re)distribution of funding, human capacity, time, and long-term institutional commitment. Without the necessary funding, staffing, and dedicated time, the changes required will not become sustainable or systemic. Instead, they risk remaining reactive and, at times, ineffective because those responsible for implementing them are not sufficiently equipped or trained to maintain them in a professional and consistent manner.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

5. Appendix - Community Agreement - DFM Safer Spaces

SAFER SPACES ROUNDTABLE AT DFM 2024 COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS

The following **Community Agreement** is a set of agreements between all participants of the **Safer Spaces Roundtable at DFM 2024** that we ask all participants to respect and follow.

Our **common goal** is to create and facilitate an open, inclusive and brave space so that everyone has the opportunity to **learn, contribute, connect and collaborate**.

As members of the global film and TV community working towards a more inclusive and just world, we pledge that, within the space we create around this initiative and those that we invite into this space, we do not and will not condone any forms of discrimination, by themselves or perpetrated by others, on the basis of ethnicity, religion, geographical origin, skin colour, religious beliefs, caste, sexuality, gender identity, socio-economic class, disability or age.

We and those we bring into this space declare that we will not tolerate sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, Islamophobia, antisemitism, colorism, ableism, fascism and other -isms. We are committed to the absolute necessity of safer spaces and of culturally safe environments more generally.

We recognise that **creating a safer environment** is an ongoing and **collective commitment**. As such, we commit to acting **responsibly and respectfully** when communicating with others and expect all participants to do the same. We focus on impact not intention, moving from safe space to a space with acceptable risk.

In order to fully grasp the complexities of the challenges that our film industry peers from marginalised groups face, we commit to an **intersectional framework** in all facets of life and work. We also acknowledge that structural racism exists and that institutionalised racism and forms of discrimination and exclusion are part of the screen industries in all its facets.

We aim to create a space in which everyone feels the safety to exist, express and flourish, feeling seen, heard and understood.

We therefore agree to share space on the basis of the following principles:

We will not harass, bully or exclude anyone.

We will be kind to everyone. Every person deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

We will not discriminate according to sex, gender expression or sexual orientation, nor race, ethnicity, religion, age or nationality.

We will treat everyone **equitably**, understanding that treating everyone equally doesn't necessarily mean treating everyone fairly.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

Everyone is important as **an individual**.

We will honour diversity but **don't flatten differences**. We recognise the different and unequal ways in which people have been harmed or held back because of their racial and ethnic identities, gender or sexuality, disability, age, citizenship, economic and other backgrounds and experiences.

We will be aware of our **own power, position and experiences** and how these shape our own approach and how this might impact on others.

We will be open to the diverse values, experiences and lifestyles that come with a vibrant screen industry community.

We will be **respectful** and recognise that the personal boundaries of others may not be the same as our own.

We want to call out prejudice or bias when we see it. If someone draws a boundary and calls you out on something, we want to **respond with 'thank you' rather than defensiveness**.

We will be mindful of the **appropriateness of language** that some may find offensive. We will also recognise that some terminology may be more present in some spaces than in others, and try to avoid rushing to judge this.

We will not be afraid to ask questions or be critical, but we will be aware of our own privileges when talking about issues we don't have lived experience of. For those of us who carry privilege, we are committed to checking our privilege.

We will **assume positive intention and speak from a loving space**, while also acknowledging negative impact.

We value and are mindful of the physical, emotional, psychological, cultural and political safety and integrity of all those who are sharing this space with us.

We believe that following the above guidelines will ensure a better experience for everyone

We also want to inform that participating in any kind of verbal, physical or sexual abuse will have consequences. These may include, but are not limited to, being asked to leave the event and/or be excluded from future events.

If you experience abuse or discrimination during the day, please talk to the host directly to report it. We will treat any reports made with sensitivity. We promise to take complaints seriously, and be supportive and non-judgmental. We will handle your concerns with tact and discretion.

We value your attendance and your safety, we hope you find the meeting engaging and insightful.

Report: Safer Spaces Roundtable Event - Durban FilmMart 2024

This Community Agreement is inspired by:

- community Agreement for the EQUITY & INCLUSION PATHWAYS SEMINAR, conducted at Berlinale EFM 2023/ 2024
- Community agreement for a training by Sondos Shabayek, for #DocSafe, 2024
- Value statement for the EFM Toolbox Programmes



#DOCSAFE