



Workshop participants



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Developing the Music Industry in Africa

A resource for economic growth, experts look at the Nashville model

June 23, 2000—Despite its reputation for vibrant music scene and talented musicians, Africa has so far been unable to capitalize domestically on these natural resources. In a one-day workshop jointly organized by the World Bank and the Policy Sciences Center, participants discussed the potential for economic growth in the African music industry and new methods to build on the industry's resources.

The workshop, said Kreszentia Duer, New Business Development Leader, Social Development Department, "was something that could lead to increased exposure for African music and culture. We hope to see a big-time transfer of knowledge, skills and technology, so that not just star performers, but the support industry such as sound technicians, back-up musicians can flourish on the continent."

Participants discussed new methods to build Africa's music industry. For example, state-of-the-art technology could enable African musicians to be compensated automatically and transparently for the use of their music on the Internet. New technology from IBM has the potential to prevent access without payment, and to deliver instant payments to musicians for the online sale and performance of their music.

Participants also explored several alternative legal approaches to developing an intellectual property rights system appropriate to African needs and resources. This also takes in the controversial issue of copyright in cyberspace. They also looked at the model of the Nashville experience, wherein a once dirt-poor Appalachian town became a music industry powerhouse and notable contributor to the regional economy.

Such approaches would not only help in job creation, but also strengthen the knowledge base of African countries to negotiate better terms of trade within the World Trade Organization (WTO).

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Several of the agreements that came out of the Uruguay Round are based on the experiences of the advanced countries and often have little meaning in poor economies. One example is the agreement on trade-related aspects of intellectual property – TRIPS. "In putting together an intellectual property system tailored to the needs of the industry in Africa, we can be build up a knowledge of experience from which developing countries can work at the WTO to make it a more effective promoter of their progress," said Finger.

In recent years the World Bank has been developing its cultural industries loan program, introduced since James D. Wolfensohn became its president. The Bank currently lends \$265 million to \$300 million for cultural activities, mainly comprised of loans to help develop culture-related tourism, such as ecological and craft initiatives, as well as more traditional tourist-related loans for the restoration of historic city centers, such as the Medina in Fez, Morocco.

It is hoped that the workshop's findings will inform Bank operational staff about the African music industry and ways to develop creative and effective projects to help build its capacity. The discussions will be incorporated into a wider paper by Nobel Prize Laureate Professor Amartya Sen and will soon be available on the Bank's websites.

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