



# In a position to tell

Evaluation of Sørfond - the Norwegian South Film Fund

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**Abstract:**

Sørfond - the Norwegian South Film Fund - is a film fund whose goal is to strengthen film production in developing countries. This evaluation report shows that although Sørfond is still a young fund that so far has supported a small number of film productions, it has already contributed to elevating several filmmakers from developing countries and strengthening the filmmaking communities surrounding them. The evaluation also shows that Sørfond facilitates increased cooperation between filmmaking communities in developing countries and in Norway. In the ever more globalised film industry, Sørfond represents a small, but efficient stimulant for elevating filmmakers from developing countries onto the international film scene.



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# Preface

In the autumn of 2014, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs wanted an evaluation of Sjørfond to be performed. Telemark Research Institute prepared an offer and was awarded the assignment. The current report summarises the results of the evaluation.

The evaluation was headed and performed by Åsne Dahl Haugsevje, with scientific inputs also from Ole Marius Hylland and Ola K. Berge, all of whom are researchers at the Telemark Research Institute.

The assignment was performed in the period September-December 2014.

Interviews were an important source of information for the purpose of this work. We would like to thank all those who made themselves available as informants. We would also like to thank the staff at the Norwegian Film Institute and the Films from the South Foundation, who helped us obtain the necessary documentation, acted as facilitators during the empirical stage and answered questions arising in the course of the work. Without these contributions it would have been difficult to carry out the assignment.

Bø, 5 December 2014

Åsne Dahl Haugsevje

Project Manager

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# Executive summary

Sørfond is a film support scheme managed by the Norwegian Film Institute, on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The film fund, which was established in 2011, has the goal of strengthening the possibilities of producing film in developing countries, where filmmaking has turned out to be difficult to realise for financial or political reasons. The fund is aimed at filmmakers in countries on the OECD's DAC list. It is a requirement that an agreement must be signed with a Norwegian co-producer, but the funds shall mainly be used in the lead producer's country.

The evaluation of Sørfond was performed in the autumn of 2014 and is mainly based on qualitative interviews and document analysis. The assignment has consisted in evaluating whether Sørfond reaches its goals. An overarching goal of the assignment has been to elucidate to what extent and in which ways funds from Sørfond contribute to strengthening film as a cultural expression, furthering diversity, strengthening freedom of expression and artistic integrity in film from developing countries on the international film scene.

The evaluation shows that although Sørfond still is a young fund that so far has supported a small number of film productions, it has already contributed to lifting several filmmakers from developing countries and strengthening the filmmaking communities surrounding them. In its three rounds of grants, the fund has displayed broad coverage in terms of geography and genres. Several of the films have been made by women filmmakers. Moreover, Sørfond has contributed to the realisation of film projects that thematically challenge social and cultural values, taboos and controversial issues. Considering its short period of operation and rather modest funds available for awards, Sørfond has, in our opinion, obtained a lot.

The evaluation also shows that Sørfond facilitates increased cooperation between filmmaking communities in developing countries and Norway. In the ever more globalised film industry, Sørfond represents a small, but efficient stimulant for lifting filmmakers from developing countries onto the international film scene.

# 1. Introduction

Film is one of the most prominent cultural expressions of our times. Film is both an art, entertainment, a commercial industry and a medium for freedom of expression. The conditions for film production are not the same in all parts of the world. It has turned out to be difficult to realise locally based film production in developing countries. Sjørfond was established in 2011 in order to enhance film production by filmmakers in developing countries where such production is limited by economic or political constraints.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has wanted an evaluation of whether Sjørfond reaches its goals. The current report summarises the results of the evaluation.

## 1.1 About Sjørfond

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The Norwegian Film Institute (NFI) manages Sjørfond on behalf of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pursuant to a letter of agreement and guidelines issued by the Ministry. Sjørfond's secretariat and administration are funded by the Ministry of Culture.

The fund's guidelines note that filmmakers from developing countries need both capital and an international professional network. The overarching goal of grants from the fund is to

contribute to strengthening film as a cultural expression, to promote diversity and artistic integrity on the international film scene, and to strengthen freedom of expression. The grant shall also contribute to an increased cooperation between Norwegian and international film industry<sup>1</sup>.

Grants are to result in finished films produced in developing countries. The assessment and prioritisation of applications is to be based on an overall assessment of artistic, production-related, economic and technical aspects. The assessment of applications shall also take into consideration the fund's purpose and the projects' distinct cultural identity, including the use of local languages and shooting locations. Finally, the guidelines specify that emphasis is to be placed on the director's and the producer's experience, and whether women are represented in key positions of the projects.

Under the Sjørfond guidelines, it is a condition that the film's producer and director must be established in a country on the current OECD list of countries and territories that are eligible to receive official development assistance, the so-called DAC list<sup>2</sup>.

Grants are awarded for top-up financing of local and/or regional production of documentary and feature films with a lead producer from a country on the DAC list and a co-producer established in Norway.

The processing and recommendation of applications is done by a panel consisting of three to five members appointed by the NFI. The NFI reaches its decisions on the basis of the panel's nominations. The total allocation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs amounts to NOK 10 million, distributed over a five-year period. Grants from Sjørfond to individual projects shall not exceed NOK 1 million. There is a single yearly closing date for applications, and Sjørfond is current processing the last round of grants of the five-year period. So far, 18 film productions have received support.

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<sup>1</sup> Guidelines for support to film productions from Sjørfond. Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 January 2012.

<sup>2</sup> DAC is an abbreviation of Development Assistance Committee.

The support amounts granted range from NOK 121,000.- to 850,000.-. In Norway, twelve different filmmaking communities have been involved as co-producers.

## 1.2 Purpose of the assignment

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The assignment's goal is to evaluate whether Sørfond has succeeded in reaching its defined goals. An overarching goal of the assignment has been to elucidate

**to what extent and in which ways funds from Sørfond contribute to strengthening film as a cultural expression, furthering diversity, strengthening freedom of expression and artistic integrity in film from developing countries on the international film scene.**

Additionally, the following sub-questions have guided the work:

1. To what extent and in which ways does the scheme contribute to increased professionalisation of and transfer of competence to filmmaking communities in developing countries that have received support?
2. To what extent does the scheme trigger support from other financing sources, and what is the significance of the scheme for other financial and industry aspects of the film projects concerned?
3. How does the scheme contribute to increased mobility of artists in the film projects concerned?
4. To what extent does the initiative contribute to institution building or cultural infrastructure around the filmmaking communities in developing countries that have received support?
5. What is the non-financial value for receivers of this support in developing countries that grants are linked to cooperation with Norwegian filmmaking communities?
6. Do grants from Sørfond lead to increased cooperation between Norwegian and international film industry?

## 1.3 Report structure

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In this report, we first present the methods used and how we have proceeded with the evaluation work, see chapter 2. Chapter 3 provides an overview of applicants and grants, as well as the road to filing an application with Sørfond. Chapter 4 describes the panel's criteria and the fund's potential profile, and how these elements relate to quality, diversity in film, and need for assistance. In chapter 5 we look at the ripple effects of Sørfond on filmmakers and the film industry in developing countries. Chapter 6 describes Sørfond from the perspective of Norwegian film producers. Chapter 7 provides a summary of the main points of the report, as well as conclusions on the questions that the evaluation seeks to answer.



## 2. Method and execution

Measuring and documenting effects of an initiative is - generally speaking - an exacting exercise. It may be difficult to distinguish the direct effects of the initiative from the effects of altogether different circumstances. This is also true as regards the question of what the effects of Sjørfond are. Measuring, understood as counting "before and after", has only to a slight degree been an appropriate method in the current evaluation assignment. Some statistics exist in the field of film in general, but much of it is of limited relevance. Moreover, the questions at hand have required a qualitative approach aimed at uncovering the significance of Sjørfond for the individual film projects and the communities they originate from.

Consequently, different methods have been used for the purpose of the current evaluation: 1) document analysis, 2) qualitative interviews, 3) observation and 4) media search. In addition, some film statistics have been used. Among the different sources, the greatest emphasis has been placed on the first two - document analysis and interviews.

### 2.1 Document analysis

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A number of documents have been examined in the course of the assignment period. The documents as a whole have provided ample information about Sjørfond as an initiative and its orientation. The documents have also been important sources of information about the projects that have filed applications, those that have received grants and the panel's perspectives. Last but not least, the documents have provided an important knowledge base for the planning of the qualitative interviews.

Grants from Sjørfond are made on the basis of applications prepared by the lead producer from a DAC country and a co-producer from Norway. Those who receive support must subsequently report on how the funds were used. Both applications and reports of supported projects form part of the material that was analysed. Additionally, several documents are included where either the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Norwegian film Institute or Sjørfond is the sender. The most central documents that were reviewed during the evaluation are listed in the table below.

Table 1: Overview of the most central documents forming part of the basis of the evaluation.

Document
Letter of allocation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Norwegian Film Institute, dated 08.11.2011
Guidelines for support to film productions from Sjørfond
List of applicants, 2012-2014
Applications from producers who later received support, 2012-2014
Overviews of applications, projects that have received support, 2012-2014
Nominations and decisions, 2012-2014
List of grants awarded, 2012-2014
Reports from producers who have received support, upon project completion, 2012-2014
Reports on Sjørfond by the Norwegian Film Institute to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012 and 2013
Project Presentations Sjørfond Forum programme, 15th of October 2014

## 2.2 Qualitative interviews

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Qualitative interviews are an excellent approach if you want to obtain nuanced descriptions of concrete experiences (Kvale 2001). For this assignment, interviews have been a very important source of empirical information. At the same time, carrying out and analysing interviews is resource demanding. Taking into consideration the scope of the assignment, it has been decisive to solve the interview tasks in an efficient way. Consequently, only a limited number of ordinary face-to-face individual interviews have been carried out. They have been complemented by group interviews; in addition, several interviews have been done by email or telephone.

Seven persons were interviewed in a group interview. The interview gathered persons from Sjørfond, Films from the South and the Norwegian Film Institute, as well as two selected Norwegian co-producing film companies that had been involved in projects supported by Sjørfond.

Four persons were interviewed face-to-face in connection with the Sjørfond Pitching Forum organised at the House of Film in Oslo on 15 October 2014.

One informant was interviewed over the telephone and the sixteen other informants were interviewed by email or telephone. The email interviews were phrased as open-ended questions, where the informants expressed their answers in free form. The informants have also added additional comments on their own initiative. The email interviews have a form that lies between that of an ordinary interview and that of a questionnaire.

A total of 28 persons have been interviewed. Additionally, the evaluator has been in regular contact with several persons at the Norwegian Film Institute and Sjørfond, who have been helpful in answering questions. This is also an important source of empirical information, even though it was not provided through formal interviews.

The terms of reference of the assignment are to focus on the opportunities and effects that Sjørfond and the funds granted are capable of producing; for the Norwegian filmmaking community, but in particular for filmmaking communities in developing countries. In line with these terms of reference, priority has been given to providing space for informants that experience these opportunities or know these effects. Organisational questions internally within Sjørfond, or communication and dialogue between parties that manage and are involved in Sjørfond, are examples of aspects that have not formed part of the terms of reference of the assignment. This is reflected in the choice of informants; as a consequence, the number of informants representing the fund and involved parties has been kept low.

The lead producer from a DAC country and co-producers from Norway represent a large group of informants. They have been considered important, because they have first-hand knowledge of how the funds from Sjørfond have been used, how productions have developed and which effects they have had. Of the eighteen productions that have received support, there is only one where we have failed to obtain contact with the persons involved. As regards the other seventeen productions, we have informants from the lead producer's country (three productions), from Norway (eight productions) or from both countries (six productions).

The informants have different positions and links to Sjørfond, distributed as follows:

Table 2: Overview of informants.

<b>Informant/institution/role</b>	<b>Number</b>
Representative of the Films from the South Foundation/Sørfond Pitching Forum	2
Representative of the Sørfond grants panel	1
Representative of the Norwegian Film Institute	1
Producers/directors from DAC countries that have received support	9
Norwegian co-producers	10
Representative of a film institution in a DAC country	1
Co-producer from another Western country	1
Representatives of European film financing players	2
Film critic	1

The news of the establishment of Sørfond has reached the international film industry, but as a young film fund it is still best known in certain circles. It has been a challenge for this assignment to seek out a balanced selection of informants that provides space for the independent voices; those players who themselves do not have vested interests in Sørfond, but nonetheless have knowledge and perspectives that are relevant. To find these, several of our informants have been recruited through what we might call the snowball method; that is, they have been recruited upon input from other informants. This applies in particular to informants from different parts of the international film industry. We have been partly successful at this, but we would have liked to be able to include even more of these voices in our material. Thus, there will always be a risk that some perspectives have been left out, but all in all we consider the material gathered as broad and sufficient to answer the questions of the assignment.

## **2.2.1 Anonymisation and use of the interview materials**

In this report, we have chosen to anonymise the informants to the extent it has been possible and appropriate. In most places where direct quotes from oral interviews and emails have been used, it is of lesser importance to know who the source is. The informant's position in relation to Sørfond may however be relevant; for instance, it will be relevant to know that the informant represents the fund, is a member of the fund's grant panel, or has received support from the fund. In those cases, we have included the information we believe should be presented, but we have not stated their names. It is quite probable that some of those who know the filmmaking community will be able to identify some of the informants.

Although we have tried to anonymise our informants in the text, we have allowed them to verify quotes. All informants that have been quoted directly have received the quotes and the context in which they are used. They have been allowed to amend or rephrase the quotes, or withdraw them. In this way we hope nobody will perceive that what they have communicated to us in interviews has been misunderstood, misinterpreted or misrepresented in any way.

We have implemented a quotation practice according to which we have taken the liberty of slightly cleaning up language and sentences. The clean-up has been done to make quotes as legible as possible and to render them a bit less oral, in order to make them work as written text. Quotes from email interviews have also been cleaned up slightly. In order to preserve anonymity, dialectal words have also been removed to the extent possible. Twelve of the interviews were done in English, but the quotes from those interviews have been translated into Norwegian in the report.

## 2.3 Observation at the Sjørfond Pitching Forum

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The evaluator was present at the annual Sjørfond Pitching Forum on 15 October 2014. The events provides producers from DAC countries with the opportunity to present their projects to Norwegian producers and potentially sign agreements on production cooperation prior to applying to Sjørfond for production support. As an observer at the Forum, the evaluator gained an insight into several aspects of the pitching and the conditions and points of departure that apply to the lead producer from a DAC country and to co-producers from Norway, respectively.

## 2.4 Media search

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To obtain an overview of the media coverage of Sjørfond in Norwegian media, a search was done in the media database Retriever. The search produced about 50 articles from different Norwegian newspapers and Internet media and probably provides a good insight into the public debate on Sjørfond in Norway. In addition, some individual searches in international Internet media have been performed to include international commentators.

## 2.5 Film statistics

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Some statistics exist in the field of film, but much of it is of limited relevance to the assignment at hand. UNESCO's film database<sup>3</sup> includes figures on the film industry in some of the developing countries represented on the list of Sjørfond's grants, but unfortunately not all. In addition there are lots of EU statistics; however, their focus is mainly on European countries and they are thus less relevant in this context. As a result, the statistics included in this report are primarily used to illustrate the lacking knowledge base for film production in developing countries.

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<sup>3</sup> UNESCO Institute for Statistics, Cinema Statistics, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/culture/Pages/movie-statistics.aspx> (visited 17.11.2014).

# 3. Application and award

Three application rounds have been carried out after Sørfond was established and currently a fourth round is ongoing. In this chapter, we shall present what characterises the Sørfond applicants and the projects that have been granted support. To form an impression of what Sørfond is and its significance, in this chapter we will also describe how filmmakers from the Global South find their Norwegian co-producers; a cooperation they must establish before filing an application. In connection therewith there is also mention of the Sørfond Pitching Forum, which plays a central role in the application process for some applications.

## 3.1 Applicants

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The lists of applicants to Sørfond show that in the three grant rounds carried out to date, a total of 171 applications have been received; 38 in 2012, 70 in 2013 and 63 in 2014.

Among the 171 applications, some DAC countries are more frequently represented than others. These are Argentina (29 applications), Lebanon (12) and Mexico (10).

In total, more than 50 countries are represented among the applicants<sup>4</sup>. The number of applications from Argentina may be linked to the fact that it is among the countries with a well-developed film industry compared to many of the other applicant countries, but where film financing is difficult to obtain.

Approximately 70 Norwegian film companies are represented as co-producers on the lists of applicants. Some appear repeatedly; a few of them are represented with up to 10 to 12 different projects in the course of these three application rounds. Our impression is that some production companies have included Sørfond in their business strategy, while others have opted away from Sørfond because for different reasons it does not fit their business plans. Among the players that apply to Sørfond, there are for instance producers who in their plans include the filing of an application every year.

The great majority of applications received by Sørfond concern support for feature films. Only 30 out of 171 applications in the three rounds concern documentary projects.

## 3.2 Awards

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After three rounds of applications, eighteen film projects have been awarded funds from Sørfond. This means that one in ten applicants has been successful. The projects chosen represent eighteen unique production communities in a total of fifteen different DAC countries. A complete overview of awards are found in the table below.

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<sup>4</sup> Based on the lead producer's country. In some cases, the director is not from the same country as the producer.  
Evaluation of Sørfond

Table 3: Overview of grants awarded by Sørfond in the period 2011-2014. Source: Sørfond.

Title	Country	Lead producer	Norwegian co-producer	Amount
<b>Grant year 2012</b>				
<i>Char – The Island Within</i>	India	Son et lumiere	Cinema Oslo AS	200 000
<i>Deshora</i>	Argentina	Pucare Cine	Faction Film AS	679 000
<i>Yvi Maraey (Kandire)</i>	Bolivia	Cinematada	PJB Picture Comp. AS	750 000
<i>Dukhtar</i>	Pakistan	Zambee Films	Indie Film AS	750 000
<i>Palestine Stereo</i>	Palestine	Cinema Prod. Center	Ape & Bjørn AS	750 000
<i>Wakolda</i>	Argentina	Historias Cinematograficas	Hummelfilm AS	750 000
<i>When Hari Got Married</i>	India	Karmic Films	Cinema Oslo AS	121 000
<b>Grant year 2013</b>				
<i>Los Herederos</i>	Mexico	Lucia Films	Tordenfilm AS	850 000
<i>Flapping in the Middle of Nowhere</i>	Vietnam	Vblock Media	Film Farms AS	850 000
<i>Algiers by Night</i>	Algeria	Un Chambre á soi	Pomor Film AS	450 000
<i>A Maid for Each</i>	Lebanon	Orjouane Productions	Medieoperatørene AS	450 000
<i>The Past Will Return</i>	Egypt	Misr Int. films	Medieoperatørene AS	250 000
<i>The Chosen Ones</i>	Armenia	Bars Media	Tenk.tv as	150 000
<b>Grant year 2014</b>				
<i>Black Sunshine</i>	Ghana /Mexico	Piano Producciones C.	Barentsfilm AS	425 000
<i>Cemetery of Kings</i>	Thailand	Kick the Machine	Tordenfilm AS	400 000
<i>Giti – Paradise in Hell</i>	Rwanda	Almond Tree Films	Barentsfilm AS	300 000
<i>Lamb</i>	Ethiopia	Slum Kid films	Film Farms AS	450 000
<i>Murder in Pacot</i>	Haiti / France	Velvet Film	Ape & Bjørn AS	425 000

On the Norwegian side, twelve different co-producers have been involved. Several of the films have co-producers from other countries in addition.

The film projects that have been awarded grants vary in terms of genres and amounts granted. Of the eighteen films, six are documentaries and twelve are feature films. The percentage granted is thus higher for the documentaries than for the features; 20 % of documentaries have been granted support, while only 9 % of feature films have received support. It is unknown whether this is because the documentary projects on average were of a higher quality than the feature film projects, or whether there has been an intended preference for documentaries on the part of the grants panel.

Grant amounts have varied from NOK 121,000.- for one of the documentaries to NOK 850,000.- for two of the feature films.

The first round of grants was dominated by film projects from Asia and Latin America. In the two last rounds, projects from Africa and the Middle East have also been included, as shown in the table below.

Table 4: Overview of grants by geographical area.

Year	Applicants	Awards	Awards by geographical area <sup>5</sup>				
			Asia	Middle East	Africa	Latin America	Europe
2012	38	7	3	1	0	3	0
2013	70	6	1	2	1	1	1
2014	63	5	1	0	3	1	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>171</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>

Initially, the intention was to grant NOK 2 million every year for five years. In 2011, intended to be the first year, the preparation of the guidelines had not been completed; thus, the first application round was postponed one year. Consequently, a total of NOK 4 million was awarded the following year in order to get up to date with the five year plan. In 2013, with a view to not reducing the grant amount too much, a total of NOK 3 million was awarded. There was, according to our informants, also a hope that the Ministry would make additional allocations to the fund in the process, but that did not happen. In 2014, the choice was made to award grants according to the original plan; that is NOK 2 million, which means that there is only 1 million left to be granted in 2015, the last year of the five year period.

Among our informants, many have expressed concern for the fund's reputation and attractiveness because the amount has been reduced every year and now is perceived to very small, and that the chances of receiving support now are small. We have also received signals that Norwegian production companies consider refraining from filing applications this year because of this; however, we do not know how many companies this applies to.

### 3.3 The road to co-production and application to Sørfond

Increasingly, film production is considered a driver within the creative economy, and public authorities in many countries have come to understand the film industry's significance for employment, exports and tourism, to mention some elements (cf. Olsberg SPI 2012). Despite this, it is very hard to obtain financing for films, and our informants experience that following the financial crisis the competition for film funds has become even tougher.

There are a number of public funds globally that finance film projects. The funds vary in their orientation. They differ from each other in, for instance, the phases of a film project they finance. Some funds focus in particular on the development phase or they offer support during the distribution phase. Sørfond does not grant support for the development phase, but enters at a later stage of the process, providing support for the production phase. Nor does it grant support for distribution. The support from Sørfond is furthermore intended as top-up financing, and presupposes that at least 50 % of the financing has already been confirmed.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Here, the Middle East has been set as a separate category, and it includes Palestine, Lebanon and Egypt.

<sup>6</sup> Guidelines for support to film productions from Sørfond. Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 January 2012.

Thus, what the filmmakers that receive support from Sørfond have in common is that at the time of filing their application they have already been dealing with other financing sources. At the time of filing applications, some of the productions have started shooting, others have yet to reach the shooting phase.

The filmmakers from developing countries have come into contact with their Norwegian co-producers in different ways. Film festivals all over the world seem to be very central meeting places. Several of the production cooperation projects have originated as a consequence of the filmmakers having met each other at the film festivals in for instance Berlin, Cannes, Dubai or Durban. An example is the cooperation on the film *Black Sunshine* from Ghana/Mexico that received support in the third round of grants. A representative of the lead producer told that they met the Norwegian producer at the Durban FilmMart where they had presented their film project:

She introduced us to Sørfond and convinced us of the many advantages of the programme compared to other European financing options.

Thus, in this case the Norwegian producer acted as an "ambassador" of the fund.

Several of the informants, both lead producers and Norwegian co-producers, point out that their cooperation had arisen as a consequence of them having met and found out that their professional profiles matched well, that the co-producer became enthused about the project and that they in general experienced good chemistry.

The Films from the South Foundation works actively towards international film communities to promote Sørfond. The festivals in Berlin and Cannes are very important arenas that gather not only the Western film industry but also industry professionals from DAC countries. In addition to Germany and France, the foundation has since the fund's inception been present at film festivals in a number of countries to promote the fund: Mexico, Cuba, Argentina, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates (Dubai and Abu Dhabi), Qatar and the Netherlands. The people behind the Algerian film *Algiers by Night*, which received funding from Sørfond, are among those who met the Films from the South Foundation at an international film festival; in this case, the festival in Doha, Qatar.

Several of our informants confirm that Sørfond has been noted internationally. One informant representing another European financing institution states:

I was at a pitching forum in Berlin, at the co-production market there, and there I saw that [...] there were very many who were interested in Sørfond. There is a great need for this money, because it is incredibly difficult to find money for films. It seems it has become known within the industry.

One informant representing the Norwegian Film Institute has a similar impression:

My impression is that Films from the South has done a good job of promoting Sørfond internationally. [...] my impression is that the knowledge of Sørfond is quite good. And that there is a wide scope of projects from very many countries and areas.

In their search for a Norwegian co-producer, many producers from DAC countries now contact Sørfond. As a result, Sørfond has prepared a list of Norwegian producers that have shown an interest in Sørfond, so that filmmakers from DAC countries can contact them directly without Sørfond recommending some of them rather than others. For this reason, Norwegian producers also receive an increasing number of inquiries from producers that have been in contact with the foundation.



Even though Sørfond is a recently established fund, the news of its existence has spread rapidly in international film circles. Norwegian production companies we have been in contact with have experienced a substantial increase in the number of cooperation requests from filmmakers in DAC countries after Sørfond was established. A Norwegian co-producer expresses this as follows:

Sørfond is a topic of conversation in Cannes and other places. [...] Now the word has spread globally, so now we receive project [inquiries] from circles that we otherwise would never have got in contact with. It is a good mix of environments; some unestablished, some established, some from countries with a weak economy and a weak film industry. However, generally speaking, there are many that come to us now. And we spend a lot of time reviewing projects.

Another Norwegian co-producer, who receives an estimated 200 inquiries of this kind yearly, has experienced it may be time-saving to participate at different co-production forums at festivals around the world where the projects participating already have gone through a selection process with regard to quality, amongst other things. The Norwegian festival Films from the South, which takes place in Oslo every autumn, also acts as such a meeting place between Norwegian and international film industry. The Sørfond Pitching Forum, which is organised during the festival, turns out to be an important contact point.

### 3.3.1 The Sørfond Pitching Forum

The Films from the South Foundation organises the Sørfond Pitching Forum at the House of Film in Oslo every autumn during the festival Films from the South. The forum has taken its name from the concept *pitch*, which is a verbal and/or visual presentation of a new project that you try to make producers interested in<sup>7</sup>. The purpose of the forum is precisely that potential lead producers should have the opportunity to present their projects to Norwegian film producers with a view to signing co-production agreements. The Films from the South Foundation receives more than a hundred applications each year from filmmakers who want to pitch their project. A selection panel appointed by the Films from the South Foundation nominate participants and the final selection is done by the Films from the South Foundation in cooperation with the NFI.<sup>8</sup>

Selection is based on an assessment of project quality. The first year, 12-13 projects were selected; in 2014, only six projects. The limitation in 2014 was done because of the limited funds available for grants in 2015.

The Pitching Forum is organised as a meeting where Norwegian producers are presented with all the projects that have been selected for the Forum. Each lead producer is allotted a time slot of some minutes to present his or her project to a panel of Norwegian producers. Projects are presented orally, often accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation and sometimes with a teaser. The meeting is chaired by a moderator who is responsible for asking questions of clarification concerning the presentations and who chairs a round of questions and answers and a dialogue between the lead producer and the Norwegian forum participants after each presentation. After all lead producers have been allowed to introduce themselves and present their projects, a round of speed-dating is organised with the purpose of allowing participants additional talk one-on-one. The forum closes with social mingling.

Of the eighteen projects that have received support from Sørfond, five found their Norwegian co-producer through the Sørfond Pitching Forum.<sup>9</sup> It is mainly the unestablished filmmakers who have a need to come and pitch their projects. Filmmakers who have already made several films and who

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<sup>7</sup> Wikipedia, [http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitch\\_%28film\\_og\\_TV%29](http://no.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pitch_%28film_og_TV%29), (visited 26.11.14).

<sup>8</sup> Guidelines for support to film productions from Sørfond. Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 January 2012.

<sup>9</sup> The films concerned are *Deshora*, *Wakolda*, *Lamb*, *Black Sunshine*, and *A Maid for Each*.

maybe even have won international awards for their films, will find co-operation partners through their existing networks. The pitchers often have very limited financial resources, so they receive support from the Films from the South Foundation to cover travel expenses.

One of the projects that have participated at the Pitching Forum is the Argentine film *Deshora* which received support in the first round of grants. In the course of the development phase the project won a competition in 2010 under the auspices of Argentina's National Institute of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts. Later they got a co-producer from Colombia who obtained production support from a national fund in Colombia, but there was still a need for additional financing. A representative of the lead producer says:

Still there was a part of our financing that was incomplete and the plan was to apply to different funds in Europe. We applied to the Pitching Forum in 2011 and our project was selected. I travelled to Norway to participate and that is where I obtained the first contact with our Norwegian co-producer. It was very important to get the opportunity to present the project to producers with different profiles. The Pitching Forum was very well organised. A few months later [we applied to Sjørfond] and received funds that gave us the opportunity to complete the financing and make the film.

It is our impression that the Pitching Forum has established itself as an important contact point for filmmakers from developing countries that do not already have a network they can use in their efforts to find the right co-producer, or who do not have sufficient own financial resources to participate in international forums. However, competition for participation is tough and only a select few are granted the privilege.

While the Films from the South Foundation experiences a massive interest from filmmakers from developing countries who wish to attend the Pitching Forum, interest from the Norwegian film industry has not been equally great. We shall revert to this in chapter 6.2.

## 3.4 Summary

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Sjørfond is in the process of becoming well known in international film circles. After three application rounds, it turns out that both applications and grants are geographically well-distributed. Both feature films and documentaries have received support; a higher percentage of documentaries have received support than of feature films. Several of the films have been made by women filmmakers, who otherwise are underrepresented in the film industry. In terms of geographical spread, genres and filmmaker gender distribution, there is reason to believe that Sjørfond has contributed to increased diversity in film.

It is our impression that filmmakers from developing countries have acquired good knowledge of the opportunities provided by Sjørfond. The Films from the South Foundation has promoted the fund at many international venues and Norwegian producers also act as "ambassadors" of the fund. Norwegian production companies are receiving an increasing number of inquiries from filmmakers in developing countries looking for co-production agreements. The Sjørfond Pitching Forum seems to be a central arena for establishing networks and cooperation for the few players that are selected for the privilege of coming to Oslo to pitch their project.

# 4. Quality, diversity and need for assistance

Sørfond is supposed to both strengthen film as an artistic expression and further diversity and freedom of expression. These are broad and abstract goals that the panel must take into consideration when making its assessments. What kind of film projects have been chosen so far? After three rounds of grants, is it possible to perceive an incipient profile of this fund? How does the selection compare with the fund's goals? These are questions we explore in the present chapter. However, first we shall present how Sørfond and its panel relate to the possible dilemma of artistic quality versus need for assistance.

## 4.1 The work of the panel

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Funds from Sørfond are considered development assistance funds and culture funds. In this respect, the scheme differs from NFI's support scheme Co-production with Other Countries<sup>10</sup>, which lacks the development assistance element.

Sørfond's panel is faced with a challenging task when - with rather limited means available - it is to contribute to this dual goal; on the one hand strengthening film as a cultural expression, and on the other hand furthering diversity, strengthening freedom of expression and artistic integrity in developing countries. It is not a given that within a single grant it will be possible to cater to both aspects of the fund's goal. One of our informants who has been involved as a Norwegian co-producer believes Sørfond manages to do both, but also describes the dilemma:

As a producer with a background in development assistance work, I experience a dilemma. Which films is Sørfond to support? Shall it support the strongest voices from the South? Those that come to Berlin and Cannes? Those that also help the Norwegian co-producer to get important contacts in the global film industry? Or should Sørfond support the weak? Those who cannot realise films without the help of Sørfond? It is my experience that when I apply for projects that in my view are highly important in a development assistance perspective, they fail to prevail in the competition with projects presented by strong, well-established filmmakers in the South. If you look at the projects that have received support, it is probably the case that both the strongest and some weaker ones have received support, but to me as a Norwegian producer it is perceived to be "safer" to bet on cinematically strong projects rather than those I assess as representing important development assistance. This is a dilemma. What is the actual identity? Applying is like participating in a lottery, because you don't know how they prioritise. In principle, this does not differ substantially from how such films are assessed by a number of funds in many parts of the world. However, if your work contains a perspective of development assistance, it gives rise to thoughts about what is more sensible and what is less so. There is an inherent ambiguity that is probably difficult to do away with, but I find it important to point out that this is the situation.

Here, the informant points to a potentially problematic side of supporting on the one hand projects of high artistic quality and on the other hand providing assistance to filmmakers from developing countries that need a financial boost to have their film industries prosper. How does Sørfond's panel relate to this potential dilemma? Let us have a look at how the panel proceeds.

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<sup>10</sup> Co-production with Other Countries, <http://www.nfi.no/bransje/vare-tilskuddsordninger/kinofilm/samproduksjon> (visited 07.11.2014).

According to the fund's guidelines, the panel shall consist of three to five members appointed by the NFI; thus far, a three-member panel has been the practice. At least one member shall be from a DAC-listed country, and a new panel is appointed annually. The processing of applications and nomination of grant candidates is done by the panel, and the NFI makes the final decisions based on the panel's nominations.

Before the panel receives the applications for processing, the NFI and the Films from the South Foundation perform a pre-selection of applications. The pre-selection serves the purpose of weeding out applications that are not qualified for support because they are incomplete or because of other formalities, for instance that the lead producer lacks attachment to a country on the DAC list or the application lacks documentation that at least 50 % of the funding has been confirmed, see section 5 of the guidelines. An informant from the NFI points out how this pre-selection ensures a good process:

The projects that reach the panel are all projects that qualify for support and have needs in line with the fund's purpose [...]. No matter which project the panel chooses, they will fall within the purpose of the support scheme.

When the panel is to process applications, they thus consider just project descriptions and manuscripts. The Sørfond guidelines specify which assessments and considerations are to be used when prioritising applications and awarding grants:

The assessment of and prioritisation among applications shall be based on an overall assessment of artistic, production-related, economic and technical elements. Particular emphasis is to be placed on Sørfond's purpose, the project's distinct cultural identity, including the use of local languages and local shooting locations. Emphasis may also be placed on the director's and the producer's experience, as well as the representation of women in key positions.<sup>11</sup>

In other words, the panel must consider many elements, but the first and the most important criterion for granting funds is that the project must be of high quality. A member of the panel describes the selection process as follows:

Applications may look very different. Some include a full manuscript, some just a synopsis, some have a pilot enclosed. But what we decided to do, or what our guidelines state, is that we should just consider the project; whether it is original, a good project that can turn into a good film. However, almost all applications have the potential to become good films. So it is difficult to select the best ones. And if there is little money, it also makes it difficult to decide how much they are to receive.

*Is this in any way guided by needs? Do you take into consideration who have the strongest need for the money in order to realise their project?*

No, we think that will come in the third or fourth round, actually. First we select the projects we think are the best ones. [...] And we must limit them. And then other concerns are also brought into the picture. Which countries do we think are in need of this? Which countries have a film industry that needs to be strengthened? And then there are lots of resourceful directors. People that come from a developing country but who have travelled to the USA or Europe to study film and work here, and then return to their home country to make films [from there]. And then one may think that those kinds of films will be able to obtain funding in any case. [...] And then perhaps we give priority to projects that have a greater need, films that would not obtain funding so easily without us. Having said that, though, it is project quality that governs everything all the time.

*[...] Is it a dilemma, the fact that these are development assistance funds, but that the assessment is to be based on artistic quality?*

We did not relate to this as development assistance funds. But as production funds for artistic projects. We could not have done it differently, because then we would have needed other qualifications to

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<sup>11</sup> Section 6 of the Guidelines for support to film productions from Sørfond. Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 January 2012.

be on that panel. But then many factors enter into play, for instance gender. One would like to diversify a bit.

So the first selection criterion, after the pre-selection based on qualification and formalities, is quality. Next, it is the financial limits of the fund that decide the prioritisation among the project that are considered good enough. Thus, if the limits had been wider, more projects would have been granted support. The panel does not apply a quota system for projects at the expense of the quality criteria.

This way of doing it receives strong support from several of our informants. It is pointed out as important for the fund's reputation that the fund enters into projects of good quality, and the fact that quality is a fundamental criterion is unlikely to prevent the money from being applied where it is needed. A Norwegian co-producer expresses this as follows:

After all, these are film funds. Then it is natural to start with the filmic aspects. It must start with quality assessments.

One informant from the Films from the South Foundation specifies that this dilemma has not turned out to be a major problem, since among the applications there is a surplus of high-quality projects which simultaneously represent filmmakers that in terms of needs undoubtedly belong to the fund's target group. Applying a quota system has, according to the informant, not turned out to be necessary:

At the first round of grants we were a bit eager to see which countries would wind up receiving support, and when no African projects were among them I remember we got a bit disappointed. We would very much have liked to have them included, but there was no wish to include them through a quota system. The best projects were supposed to be the ones to receive support. But if we now consider the eighteen projects that have received support, with time the distribution has become quite even. With seven projects from Asia, five from Africa, five from Latin America and one from Europe. Over time, things even out. Nor have we had to apply quotas to include women directors.

Another informant, who is a film critic, points out that making Sjørfond's development assistance aspect a main criterion for selection would be problematic:

If Sjørfond is to contribute [exclusively] to helping filmmakers that would not be able to realise their film projects in any other way, or who must be from a country that has no film traditions and that in terms of infrastructure is at a primitive level, then of course there will be much fewer festival participations as well, because then [...] one might easily wind up supporting projects that don't quite have sufficiently high quality. If you feel it is important to support the first film from Rwanda that is made by a woman lesbian filmmaker or ... well, you see what I mean, if you are going to take it to the extreme in that direction, I think it might easily compromise quality. At least in my experience, projects from Argentina, Mexico and some Asian countries are often of a higher quality than projects from for instance some African countries that are almost at year zero in terms of infrastructure and film traditions, if I were to exaggerate a little. [...] I think that if one were to prioritise those who barely manage to stay alive, then you wouldn't get that many festival participations and then you cannot flaunt that many awards. And then it becomes more like mere emergency aid, to put it that way. But that is a choice you make. In any case, I think it would easily become boring if one were to reduce it to a question of emergency aid.

In line with this reasoning, it is important for Sjørfond's visibility and legitimacy in the international film industry that support should be granted not only to unestablished filmmakers, but that the list of grant receivers should also include filmmakers who have already proven they can make films that are successful in cinemas and festivals. Putting some of the Sjørfond funds into projects with well-known directors that probably are "safe bets" has, according to many, been wise, because the fund is in an early phase and needs to establish itself as a fund that supports good projects.

Although from a development assistance point of view it would be most rational to exclude those filmmakers who probably will be able to finance their film in other ways, Sørfond has a need to be perceived as a player that emphasises quality, thereby creating legitimacy (see DiMaggio and Powell 1991). The need to include some "safe bets" in their efforts is strengthened because the annual grant limits have been rather restricted. Had there been space for supporting a higher number of projects, the fund could have afforded to make more risky bets.

Striking the right balance between betting on the unestablished filmmakers and betting on the more experienced ones is important also to other film funds. A suitable dynamic arises between the fund and the different film projects; in some cases, film projects depend completely on the funds from Sørfond, in other cases it is more true that Sørfond "needs" the film project. An example of Sørfond having a greater need for the film than vice-versa is the film *Cemetery of Kings* directed by the renowned Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul, a former Palme d'Or winner in Cannes. At the same time, this represents and oversimplification, because even renowned film directors can experience difficulties in obtaining sufficient financing for their film projects.

## 4.2 Has Sørfond created a distinct profile?

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Because of this fluctuation between the established and the unestablished, and because Sørfond has been operating for a rather short time period, it is not simple to determine Sørfond's filmatic profile or what is a typical Sørfond film.

Some of our informants have nonetheless tried to describe some common features of the films that Sørfond has supported. Here are a couple of descriptions from a film critic and a European film finance institution, respectively:

You could say there are very few commercial genre films. Most of the films fall within the category called art house films. Which is actually a very large group of films, but these are films that are made more for artistic reasons than purely commercial ones. So, there are no Captain Sabertooth films in any of this. That's what strikes me, in any case. That very many of the applicants make films within that segment, which is called art house film, and which are more artistically motivated. [...] And these are films that quite often do rather well at film festivals.

It is difficult to generalise, because it's a bit "apples and pears". And it is difficult to tell since only a few films have been completed. Much variation. [...] But there are personal stories, author-driven, rooted films, local, but with an international appeal. That's perhaps a way to describe the profile.

A glance at the list of films that have received funds supports the impression of variation. There is a wide span from the Argentine psychological thriller *Wakolda*, dealing with the Nazi doctor Mengele's stay in Argentina following World War II, and the Ethiopian drama *Lamb* that addresses, amongst other things, climate change and famine, and which retraces the story of a nine-year-old boy who is sent away from his family and who does everything in his power to save a sheep, his only friend.

Several of the films on the list deal with issues that are taboo and controversial, for instance the Vietnamese feature film *Flapping in the middle of nowhere*, which probes the issue of abortion. The Indian documentary *When Hari got married* explores arranged marriages, freedom and openness, and was described as follows by the Norwegian weekly *Dag og Tid*:

*When Hari Got Married* is about love and arranged marriage in the time of mobile phones in a documentary that is both funny and provocative, from Dharamsala in India, where Tibet's spiritual leader Dalai Lama lives. A tourist city where Hari is a talkative taxi driver ready for marriage who unabashedly tells the camera how he has talked to his wife-to-be, the twenty-two year old Suman, by mobile phone. In

this way they circumvent the ban on meeting before marriage and they get to know each other better.<sup>12</sup>

The list also contains other films which take real situations of war or catastrophe as a point of departure for telling universal stories in a local setting, for instance the Rwandan documentary on the village of Giti, whose inhabitants against all odds united and stood up to the 1994 genocides, managing to create a safe zone in the midst of the atrocities; and the feature film *Murder in Pacot* about a marred couple trying to tackle the consequences of the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

## 4.3 Summary

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Sørfond has been in operation for such a short time that it is still difficult to describe any clear profile. There is great variation, but many of the films still have something in common; they are more artistically than commercially motivated, and many of them are told from a local vantage point. Overall, there is reason to conclude that the productions supported by Sørfond have become, or are becoming, films that with their local voices and many different topics are important contributions to an increased diversity in terms of expression and contents. Furthermore, a large part of the supported films raise issues that are politically and/or culturally controversial or subject to taboos, and as such they are important contributions towards strengthening freedom of expression and making way for other filmmakers with strong stories that the world needs to hear.

The panel primarily considers project quality in its assessment of applications. The degree of need for development assistance may come into play as an element when establishing priorities among applications that are sufficiently good, but such need is never used as an argument for a quota system. The potential dilemma of the requirements of artistic quality versus need for development assistance seems to have been balanced in a good way by the panel. It may nonetheless seem like this dual focus in combination with limited availability of funds may create some uncertainty from the applicants' point of view as to what the fund will prioritise.

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<sup>12</sup> Mobile Marriage in Himalaya, Dag og Tid, 12.10.2012.  
Evaluation of Sørfond





# 5. Sørfond for filmmakers in developing countries

Through Sørfond, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs intends to stimulate filmmakers and film communities in developing countries. In the present chapter, Sørfond is seen from the perspective of the developing countries. What is the significance of Sørfond for filmmakers and their professional and industrial development, for the film communities that surround them, the film infrastructure in different countries and cooperation with the international film industry?

## 5.1 The film industry in developing countries

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It is difficult to give a general description of the scope and level of development of film production in developing countries, since they vary greatly. The countries on OECD's DAC list are countries defined as eligible to receive development assistance. The list includes countries with extensive commercial film production, the best example being India, and countries with very little film production, like for instance Algeria. We also find countries on the DAC list that have long-standing film traditions, but where funding currently is very difficult to obtain, like for instance Argentina and Pakistan, and countries where the political situation renders film production difficult, for instance Egypt.

UNESCO has gathered and made available statistical data in the field of film for a number of countries worldwide. Unfortunately, for many of the countries represented on Sørfond's list of grants, data are lacking or incomplete. UNESCO itself points out that it is very difficult to document film production in developing countries (UNESCO 2009). The figure below shows the distribution of feature film production among different countries in the world, and we see that the African continent stands out as very weakly documented.

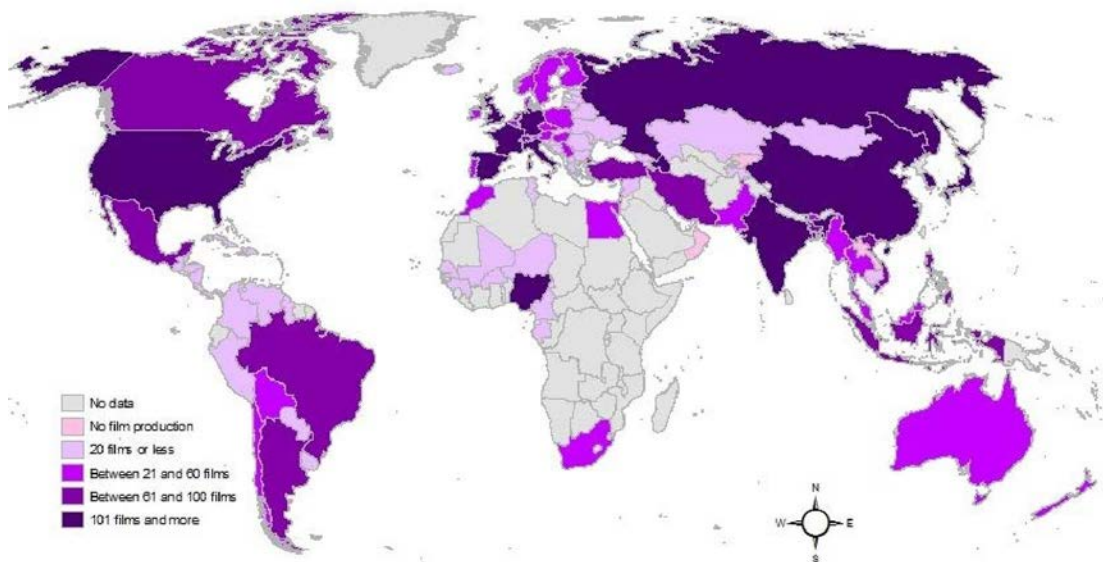


Figure 1: Number of feature films produced worldwide in 2011. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Some data are found on Argentina, Armenia, Egypt, India, Lebanon, Mexico and Vietnam, including an overview of the number of feature films produced, the percentage of these films that were 100% nationally produced and the percentage of internationally co-produced films, see the table below. We see from the table that India is in a unique position in terms of the number of films. For the remaining countries there is a lack of data in UNESCO's table.

Table 5: Volume of film production in selected countries in 2011. A hyphen indicates that data are lacking. Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics.

Country	Number of feature films produced	% of feature films 100 % nationally produced	% of feature films that were international co-productions
Argentina	100	-	-
Armenia	5	80	20
Egypt	28	100	-
India	1255	-	-
Lebanon	14	50	50
Mexico	73	81	19
Vietnam	75	56	-

The database also contains figures showing the extent of infrastructure, for instance the number of distribution companies and the number of screens. Unfortunately, the figures regarding the countries that are relevant in our context are so incomplete that they provide little or no information.

Despite meagre statistical documentation, we know that the films that have received support from Sørfond represent countries with great differences in film traditions and film infrastructure, but also in terms of funding strength and cultural policy conditions. Consequently, the role of Sørfond's contribution will vary in relation to each production and each country's film community.

## 5.2 No-spending and ripple effects on local film industries

Sørfond is a fund that so far has supported a few films from a few countries. Generally speaking, it will be difficult to measure what ripple effects a young Norwegian film fund has on the film industry in developing countries. It is however possible to say something about whether Sørfond seems to be oriented in a way that may strengthen the film industry in developing countries and how persons with knowledge of the field assess this.

As previously mentioned, funds from Sørfond are granted as top-up production financing, with up to NOK 1 mill. per project. So far, no project has received the maximum amount and grants have varied from NOK 121,000.- to 850,000.-. Film production is costly and by Western - not least Norwegian - standards, a grant from Sørfond in the amount of a few hundred thousand NOK would be mostly symbolic. The situation is however different for the film projects that have received support from Sørfond. As far as they are concerned, the funds from Sørfond have in general had a real economic significance. There are three reasons for this; firstly, because price levels in the production countries concerned are much lower than in Norway, so even limited funds go a long way; secondly, because the funds from

Sørfond are mainly to be spent in the lead producer's country; and third, because Sørfond does not demand repayment of its grants.

An informant representing Sørfund informs that the condition that funds preferably are to be spent in the developing country makes the fund highly attractive:

This is very clear feedback we have received from almost all filmmakers we meet at film festivals. We have travelled around to thirteen different countries and almost all report back to us that this fund takes filmmakers seriously, because they are allowed to make their film in their country with their people. I think Sørfond should be proud of that.

Several of the films that have received support from Sørfond are produced by filmmakers who lack the possibility of obtaining financing within their own countries. These filmmakers are constantly looking for possibilities of financing abroad. One example is Pakistan, where there is no government film financing. Co-production with foreign players is the only possibility for realising film projects. The filmmaker behind the Pakistani film *Dukhtar* worked for almost ten years to realise the project. The lack of government support schemes and the fact that it is not a Bollywood film, but a film about serious social topics, and with two women in the leading roles, made it impossible to find anyone in Pakistan willing to assume the risk of financing the project. When the film was granted NOK 750.000.- by Sørfond, it finally became possible to start production work. The filmmaker tells:

It didn't make up a large part of our budget, but still it was important because it could be used in Pakistan. I received money from a couple of other funds as well, but it could not be spent in Pakistan. [...] So even though it was a small part, it was just what we needed to find the other pieces of the financing puzzle so we could start shooting. When you have limited means you are forced to think creatively.

The Palestinian project *Palestine Stereo* is another example of a film where funds from Sørfond were important. The Palestinian film industry is little developed and badly organised and financing is difficult to obtain. A representative of the Norwegian co-production company points out that this kind of project which is produced in a country with no internal market, is completely dependent on this kind of support for its realisation. Even though the funds from Sørfond (NOK 750,000.-) only amounted to 10 % of the total budget of the film, the funds were important for ensuring the project's liquidity, and they covered most of the shooting that took place in the refugee camps of Ramallah and Jalazon.

Even films from countries with a well-developed film industry have drawn substantial benefit from Sørfond grants. A concrete example is the Mexican film project *Los Herederos*, where the funds from Sørfond played a decisive role in the final stages of the budget work, a fact that is confirmed by both Mexican and Norwegian sources.

One aspect of Sørfond that sets it apart from some other funds, for instance the French fund Fonds Sud Cinéma, is the requirement that at least 70 % of the amount granted must be used in the developing country. This is known as the principle of no-spending; that is, the funds are not conditional upon the use of Norwegian film workers. Almost all of our informants emphasised this as a unique and particularly essential aspect of Sørfond. An informant representing a Western production company that has been involved in several co-productions with filmmakers in developing countries claims that Sørfond is one of the most important international funds because there is no requirement that the funds should be spent in Norway and because no repayment is required. If you for instance have to hire a film photographer or soundman from Europe, it will consume a disproportionately large share of the budget. It may also create substantial tension within the team, since European crew members are much better paid than the locals. Sørfond's orientation enables developing countries to stretch the support funds much further:

I do understand why some funds often stipulate requirements of spending in the country where the fund is located; after all, many of these funds consist of public money. So - superficially - it makes sense to see the money coming back to its source country. However, it depends on how you measure returns, and how you view development support. If you consider the return on the investment as the opening of opportunities for creative exchange and cultural understanding, and support to culture as a road towards a more active citizenship, and an improvement of the financial sector by strengthening the capacities and possibilities of filmmakers and producers in the recipient country, then to me that seems a much better return on investment than spending a little bit more in France or Germany or wherever the funds originate from.

Several informants emphasise that no-spending and no requirement of repayment of grants make Sørfond a good development assistance initiative. A representative of a lead producer and a Norwegian co-producer, respectively, express this as follows:

What is the most difficult about Haiti - and other places in the Global South - is the total lack of national institutions, assistance for and financing of films. This means that either you cannot make films locally, at least not in a professional manner, or you have to get all your financing from Western countries, with all of its inherent restrictions: a requirement that parts of the money must be spent in the Western country concerned, ownership rights that no longer lie with the party in the Global South, but with the partner in the Western country, etc. The circumstance that Sørfond requires the funds to be spent in the production country in the Global South is of great help for building a local film industry and offering production support.

This is a kind of money that is extremely rare in the world; namely, with no strict condition of repayment, it does not come in the shape of really expensive loans, it is development assistance, right. It eases the pressure. It is a kind of funds that affords the filmmaker freedom to make his film. More risk-based financing sources impose more restrictions on what can be done.

In this way, Sørfond can contribute both to the development of local film industries and to the opening of opportunities for increased freedom of expression by creating spaces for the realisation of films with contents that otherwise would not have obtained financing.

It is difficult to point out examples of film productions supported by Sørfond having led to positive changes in the production country's film infrastructure in a concrete way. Several informants report great effects, although it is difficult to give a concrete description of them. Still, it turns out that in countries with no existing infrastructure whatsoever, even a single small film production may lead to improvements. One example is the production of the film *Giti* in Rwanda. Because a sound studio is needed for the post-production, efforts are being made to build a sound studio in Kigali in Rwanda. If successful, it will be a small, but important step in the right direction, something that in turn will make things far easier for other filmmakers in Rwanda.

Pakistan and the film *Dukhtar* is another example. The Pakistani film industry experienced a golden age in the 1960s and '70s, before starting its decline in the 1980s. Now there is virtually no commercial film industry left, and the situation is very different from that of its neighbouring country India. There are no government institutions responsible for the field of film and filmmakers must go abroad, for instance to India, Singapore, Hong Kong, the USA or the Middle East for post-production. The filmmaker behind *Dukhtar* is one of several filmmakers of Pakistani origin that have studied abroad before returning to Pakistan to make films. Now she has initiated a dialogue with Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Culture with a view to establishing a national film finance body. If they succeed, it will be an important contribution to the efforts to build an infrastructure. By supporting films from countries with these kinds of challenges, Sørfond contributes to the strengthening of filmmakers who subsequently may be important players in the creation of a local film industry.

The filmmaker behind *Murder in Pacot* is an example of a one displaying a high level of awareness as to how his use of local labour can stimulate the Haitian film industry, which currently is underdeveloped:

My production company, based in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, initiated the production of *Murder in Pacot*. I started by hiring the well-known Haitian author Lyonel Trouillot to develop the manuscript for me. The central idea was to create a Haiti-based project and to use local production capacity and staff. Thanks to my production experience from Haiti through two decades, I knew I could rely on local film technicians, actors and service providers, and even some local funding. To supplement the staff, and also to get access to professional film recording equipment that is not available in Haiti, I established a co-production agreement with France and the Dominican Republic. This also had the advantage that professional French film technicians could train local staff through the pre-production and shooting phase in Port-au-Prince.

The filmmaker further points out that the principle of no-spending in Norway is decisive for being able to work locally in this way. Also the filmmaker behind *Dukhtar* confirms that the shooting of the film meant a lot to the local actors and the film workers making up the staff. The professional training they got in the course of the production has led to several of them now receiving requests from Bollywood to come to India to make films. Hence, those who participated in the production experience that the quality of their work is being appreciated by the surrounding world.

If films from countries with an underdeveloped film industry experience international success, the film and the filmmaker may become visible to the granting authorities of the country concerned, which in turn - according to our informants - may trigger funding later. There is an exception in the case of oppressive regimes and films that criticise them; in such cases, the visibility will not produce such an effect.

The international success of films from countries with an underdeveloped film industry may also have a more general ripple effect by inspiring other filmmakers in the country concerned, as pointed out by an informant representing the Films from the South Foundation:

Let us take Vietnam as an example. If we support a quality production from Vietnam that gets international attention, it gives something in return. It is just like in sports; if you have someone who performs well internationally, you get to hear about it. So, it gives something in return to the industry that you are a part of. That you have distinguished yourself, you make it, you are perceived to deliver quality film, you are accepted at prestigious festivals, you win awards. Of course this gives something in return. It's like that for any Norwegian director too.

The informant uses Vietnam as an example because the Vietnamese film *Flapping in the Middle of Nowhere* has received a lot of international attention and won the award for the best film at the Venice International Film Critics' Week in 2014.<sup>13</sup> A representative of the Norwegian co-producer believes that although the film examines a controversial topic (abortion), the Sørfond financing and international recognition has led to the film being distributed in Vietnam and that the film will inspire debate and encourage other Vietnamese filmmakers to address difficult topics.

In this context, the events following the launch of the Pakistani film *Dukhtar* are interesting. A representative of the lead producer tells that the realisation of *Dukhtar* has led to other filmmakers now wanting to realise ideas for films they hitherto did not believe were possible

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<sup>13</sup> SØRFOND film with success in Venice, <http://rushprint.no/rushes/sorfond-film-med-suksess-i-venezia/>, Rushprint. Published on the Internet 09.09.2014.

to make in Pakistan because they are about social issues like honour killing. After *Dukhtar* they have, according to our informant, gained confidence that an audience exists that wants to see something else than Bollywood film.

### 5.3 Credibility

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Our impression, based on the statements of our informants, is that having been selected by Sørfond confers a certain prestige and credibility. There are several reasons for that. One important reason is, as already mentioned, that there are few sources of film financing and that the struggle for the few funds available is tough, and that only the very best receive such funds. Another reason is that Sørfond, according to our informants, has gained a good reputation in terms of the panel's selection, here described by one Norwegian co-producer, one Western co-producer and two lead producers, respectively:

Sørfond gives credibility. [...] It provides filmmakers with a position and gets them noticed. The Sørfond stamp has become prestigious. [...] Because projects are well selected, because high artistic quality is emphasised.

Even though Sørfond has not existed all that long, the selection has been quite good, so it is evident that the adviser on this are skilled people. There is a balance between debut filmmakers and more experienced ones, and also documentaries; all of these are important to support for many different reasons. I don't know how the panel works, but they have made very good choices.

Despite its short existence, the fund is perceived as prestigious and selective. It is widely known that it is difficult to obtain support from it. So if you do get it, it entails prestige and means that you have a strong, solid project.

The selection of the projects that have received support is done so thoroughly that in a way, Sørfond is also a quality stamp.

This credibility may also be linked to the fact that Sørfond is known as a "clean" fund, in contrast to how some other funds are perceived to base their awards on ulterior factors. A Norwegian co-producer expresses this as follows:

There are many funds in the world where connections play a part. There is probably quite a bit of dealing done in different places. But for instance Sørfond, Hubert Bals Fond and German World Cinema Fund are known to be clean. If you receive money from these funds, it is because your project is good. It is not because some producer is your buddy or...

Sørfond's reputation as a serious, solid, safe, honest and professional fund is confirmed by those of our informants who represent other European film finance institutions. At the same time, there are informants who point out that the fund's limited size and period of existence mean that the fund cannot yet boast having become the same quality stamp as for instance the Hubert Bals Fund after its 25 years in operation.

### 5.4 International cooperation and exchange of knowledge

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Sørfond stipulates a requirement that co-operation must have been established between the lead producer in a DAC country and a Norwegian co-producer. The Norwegian co-producer is the primary contact point between Sørfond and the lead producer. Beyond that, the role of the Norwegian co-producer varies a lot among the various film productions. On the one extreme, the Norwegian co-producer may have a

purely administrative responsibility for applying and reporting, with any additional contact with the lead producer being very limited. On the other extreme, the Norwegian co-producer may actively take part in also the creative work, he may provide assistance during the process whenever needed, he provides input to the co-production and assumes responsibility for the Scandinavian launch. How active a role the Norwegian co-producer assumes may depend on at what project stage the co-producer becomes involved, and whether he or she can contribute competence that is not already found in the production circles or with any additional co-producers. As in all other co-operation settings there may also be a question of personal chemistry. In some cases a friendship develops, along with wishes or concrete plans for further co-operation. Here are some descriptions of co-operation by five of the most satisfied informants on the lead producer side:

The Norwegian co-producer has been an incredibly valuable partner. She has been an actively involved team member who has provided feedback on the creative development of the film, and who has also given us advice regarding the more practical aspects of the production. She has helped mediate between different opinions within the team and she has come up with reconciliatory and insightful solutions. She is an experienced filmmaker and her broad experience has been a great contribution to the production.

Working with him has been a great contribution already from the start-up phase and subsequently through the production and post-production. He has been very thoughtful and receptive, even though Sørfond's guidelines do not require any specific action or responsibility on the part of the Norwegian co-producer beyond being a contact point for the Norwegian Film Institute.

The co-operation with the Norwegian co-producer has been a very active one, not only concerning economic aspects but also creative ones. Our co-producer followed the entire filmmaking process, from pre-production to shooting and post-production, and he had opinions on the different cuts, which was decisive for arriving at the final cut, and which made it a very interesting process. His perspective helped us find a universal language without causing the film to lose its identity, just the way we wanted.

The cooperation with the Norwegian co-producer is going very well. It has been a very refreshing cooperation in dialogue and with feedback on the project. Several Skype meetings where the project has been discussed, the different axes, viewpoints and characters of the film. The co-operation has been at both a creative and a financial level. We have also discussed the different distribution strategies that are possible in Europe and in particular in the Scandinavian countries.

On my part it has been a great privilege to work with an experienced producer and one who has more experience with international financing. The co-producer has been very adept at putting the package together, having the capacity to pitch in a skilled way, and obtaining the funds. In this sense, it has been a highly advantageous relationship. We have several co-producers and all co-producers have their own responsibilities, and in our project the Norwegian co-producer was responsible for the Norwegian co-production part, so he has helped us a lot in managing and organising it. His role was most significant in relation to financing and the like, not so much the creative part, since he entered the process at a quite late stage. And in the festival phase he will help us to reach out to the Scandinavian world, help launching it and finding out which possibilities we have.

There are also lead producers in our material that report having had limited contact with their Norwegian co-producer and that the co-producer has played only a limited role. One of the Norwegian co-producers tells of a co-operation that was far from problem-free:

The cooperation between us was constructive and instructive during the application process, but has faded substantially during the production of the film, and in the process the lead producer has failed to comply with the information duty stipulated in the co-production agreement, even though I have given several reminders.

What I know is that the production is delayed due to problems in post-production, but the cause is less clear.

Geographical distance, language and communication problems, differences in business culture and other cultural differences may complicate the co-operation between lead producers and Norwegian co-producers.

Our main impression, based on the feedback we have received from one part or the other, or both, is that the co-operation is often very fruitful and provides benefits in several ways. By way of summary we may say that the Norwegian co-producer has often turned out to contribute filmic knowledge and experience to the production environment, and often also new and refreshing perspectives. They have also turned out to be capable of contributing to making the film more topical and appealing to an international audience, and contributing to the concrete efforts of launch and distribution. In this sense, our material confirms the findings of a study on what is required to build sustainable film enterprises; that precisely international connections and networks are a very important success factor (Olsberg SPI 2012).

## 5.5 Mobility, co-production and distribution

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As we have seen in chapter 5.2, the Sjørfond funds are preferably to be used in developing countries. In other words, there is no incentive in this scheme that obliges the filmmaker from the developing country to produce parts of the film in Norway, even though a Norwegian co-producer must be included in the team. In this respect, there is nothing in the production support as such that contributes to the filmmaker getting to travel out of his or her country in connection with the production. Nor does the fund grant distribution support. Still, several of the informants believe that Sjørfond contributes precisely to increasing the filmmaker's mobility. This view can to a certain degree be justified. Firstly, it depends on how co-production agreements come about; secondly, it is about distribution:

Worldwide, the film industry is currently struggling to establish sound income models (cf. Olsberg SPI 2012). The various film funds contribute to ameliorating the situation. The particularly difficult financing situation in the field of film forces filmmakers worldwide - in particular those who lack financing options in their home country - to actively hunt for co-production opportunities in other countries. Pitching arenas are organised many places, often in connection with festivals, and travel support enables filmmakers from developing countries to attend such events in person. Through the Sjørfond Pitching Forum, Sjørfond gives filmmakers from developing countries an opportunity to travel and meet the Norwegian film industry. In doing this, Sjørfond contributes to increasing the mobility of filmmakers already before filing any application with the fund, even though only a few participants are granted participation each year.

As already mentioned, Sjørfond does not grant support for distribution. Films that have received support from Sjørfond do however have their Scandinavian premiere at the Films from the South festival.<sup>14</sup> Several filmmakers that have received support have been guests at the festival, thus obtaining additional publicity for their film and an opportunity for further networking. Several of the films have received support also from other funds, and in total this financing brings increased visibility to the filmmakers.

Of the nine films that have completed their production and have been launched, several have received wide attention through screenings at various important festivals; an overview is provided in the table below. *Wakolda* has been shown

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<sup>14</sup> Guidelines for support to film productions from Sjørfond. Established by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 20 January 2012.



at nineteen film festivals, including Films from the South, and is so far the film with the most extensive festival distribution.

Table 6: Completed films: year of premiere and indication of whether the film was screened in the country of origin, at the festival Films from the South and at a selection of international film festivals. Source: NFI.

Title	Year of grant	Planned premiere	Cinema country of origin	Shown at Films from the South	Selection of international film festivals
<i>Char – The Island Within</i>	2012	2012			Busan, GZDOC, Dubai, Goa, Krakow, La Rochelle, Thessaloniki, Sydney, Tiburon, Moscow, Kathmandu etc.
<i>Deshora</i>	2012	2013	x	x	Berlin, Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador, Israel, Belize, Bergen, Belarus, Thessaloniki etc.
<i>Yvi Maraey (Kandire)</i>	2012	2013	x	x	Mar del Plata, Argentina, France, Canada, Havana etc.
<i>Dukhtar</i>	2012	2014	x	x	Toronto, Busan, London, San Francisco, Stockholm
<i>Palestine Stereo</i>	2012	2013	x	x	Toronto, Dubai, Hong Kong, Lyon, Seattle, Turkey, Taiwan, Egypt, Australia, USA, France
<i>Wakolda</i>	2012	2013	x	x	Cannes, Australia, Venezuela, Peru, Sarajevo, Montreal, Argentina, San Sebastian, UK, Chicago, Turkey, Brazil, Chile, Zagreb, Lithuania, Israel, Taiwan, USA
<i>When Hari Got Married</i>	2012	2012	x	x	New Taipei, USA
<i>Flapping in the Middle of Nowhere</i>	2013	2014	x	x	Venice, Toronto, Korea
<i>Murder in Pacot</i>	2014	2014	x		Toronto

A report on co-production in a European context documents that European co-productions on average are launched on more European markets and generate more admissions than films that have no foreign co-producers (Kanzler 2008). The report suggests potential explanations for this:

- Co-productions often have larger budgets as they can tap into a larger number of financing sources. There is often a connection between budget size, production value and commercial appeal on the one hand, and admissions on the other.
- Co-production improves access to international broadcasters and distributors because the network of each co-producer is exploited.
- Co-producers will influence the film's expression and contribute to furnishing it with an international appeal.
- Co-production often makes it possible to use other actors than those that would otherwise be available, for instance through a mix of international and more local stars, making the film more attractive to a wide audience in many countries.
- Co-productions are often shot in English language, which lowers the barrier for international distribution, especially in countries where subtitles are not often used, for instance in the UK.
- And last but not least, the fact that release in more markets result in higher admissions.

Even though the report examines European co-productions, there is reason to believe that many of its findings also will apply to other international co-productions. Sjørfond can already point to several films that have obtained good distribution, and based on our material there is reason to believe that the Norwegian co-production together with other international co-production is an important reason.

By way of summary we can say that the support from Sjørfond through the way it is oriented, does not directly contribute to increasing the mobility of filmmakers. If we however consider Sjørfond as a piece of a wider context where many festivals and funds act together in co-production and distribution, then Sjørfond, through its Pitching Forum and its relationship with the screening venue Films from the South, acts as one of many drivers of mobility for filmmakers from the whole world, developing countries included.

## 5.6 Summary

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The countries on the DAC list have very different conditions for film production and Sørfond's contribution in this respect will differ in scope and content, depending on the country and production concerned. It is not possible to determine the general effects of Sørfond at this early stage of its existence; it is however possible to point out some isolated results. There are several examples that funds from Sørfond have contributed to the realisation of projects, triggered additional support, increased knowledge development, cooperation, mobility, networking and visibility; in turn, this inspires others and will hopefully give rise to increased awareness and willingness on the part of local authorities. The results do not seem to be completely random; there seems to be a clear connection between these isolated results and the way in which Sørfond is oriented, with a requirement that most of the money must be used locally in the developing country concerned and with no requirement of repayment.

# 6. Sørfond for the Norwegian film industry

In this evaluation assignment, the main emphasis is on which ripple effects Sørfond creates for filmmaking communities in developing countries, with less focus on its significance for the Norwegian film industry. This is logical, considering that Sørfond is a development assistance initiative and not a cultural policy measure with a national target area. Still, one cannot avoid the fact that the initiative, since it involves Norwegian co-producers, also can produce results for Norwegian players. Moreover, within the international film industry there is a steady increase in global cooperation (Ryssevik et al 2014) and it cannot be taken for granted that the transfer of knowledge necessarily is unidirectional - from North to South - it may as well move in the opposite direction. In this chapter, we look at Sørfond from the perspective of the Norwegian film industry with a focus on the ripple effects the initiative has for Norwegian filmmakers.

## 6.1 Knowledge, networks and new opportunities

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Many of the Norwegian co-producers we have been in contact with, have benefitted strongly from their involvement in Sørfond projects. Several of them tell that through their cooperation they have gained new experiences that make them better equipped for working internationally, both in terms of film skills and in relation to international cooperation and intercultural communication:

It has been of great value to our company [...]. There has been a positive cultural exchange and exchange of cinematic knowledge among us. What the film means, how it communicates, how we understand and interpret different techniques that have been applied in the film has been very important to all parties. It will help me to increase the quality of the films I work on in Norway.

I have gained an insight into the Palestinian situation in general and Palestinian film production in particular, and this has contributed to an increased awareness of how geographically and politically conditioned the access to means for expressing oneself through art is. I have also experienced the importance of clarity, but also respect for cultural differences within international cooperation.

Communicating stories that entertain, inspire or challenge the audience is an important motivation for many filmmakers (Stavrum 2009). It is our impression that idealism and social engagement to a high degree characterise filmmakers that have involved themselves in productions supported by Sørfond. Several of the Norwegian co-producers have prior international experience and a burning commitment to help telling stories it is important for the world to hear. The cooperation also provides the Norwegian and as such rather privileged filmmakers with a balanced view of their own situation in contrast to the conditions under which their cooperation partners in developing countries work. One of the Norwegian co-producers provides the following description:

I have all the time been incredibly impressed by [them] as producers. They have worked with co-producers and financiers in many countries and they are very resourceful [...]. At the same time, they operate in a different reality. Their work schedules, and especially shooting dates, were delayed several times because of car bombs [...]. There are many reasons why my projects have been delayed, but working with them puts your own challenges as a producer into perspective. My impression is that [they] accomplish a lot under difficult conditions.

Although in many cases there is little financial benefit to be derived for the Norwegian co-producers, depending on the degree of involvement there will almost always be some benefit to be had professionally

or in terms of networks. As mentioned, many of the productions also have other co-producers from other Western countries who may also become important future cooperation partners. As a result, interaction and exchange is often not only two-way but three-way, or in some cases involving even greater networks of interaction.

The films that obtain broad distribution and a positive commercial reception will however also be capable of producing increased income even for the Norwegian co-producers, as pointed out by one of them:

We can also negotiate [Norwegian distribution] rights. Which means that we potentially can reap greater financial benefits if the film is successful [...]. So as a general rule it is a loss-making project moneywise. [...] But we always gain access to competence, network expansion and reputation building, for when we are going to go out in the world with our projects.

Those of the Norwegian co-producer who have been involved in films with internationally renowned producers or directors will be able to profit greatly from the cooperation.

To me it means incredibly much to be able to cooperate with a director of such international reputation. Internationally, your track record is of great significance, and the fact that I now have co-produced a film by a director who regularly has films at the most important festivals and who has been on the juries of both Cannes and the Berlinale will probably open some doors for me too. When in the future it will become increasingly important also to gather international financing for Norwegian films, this may also make the difference in the process of finding relations and being heard.

To exaggerate a little, it seems Norwegian co-producers have two different approaches to Sjørfond. Some of them are involved primarily as a result of strong idealism and they want to help promote young and unestablished film talents from developing countries who have strong stories to tell. To others, Sjørfond is also a stepping stone for their own international film career, by mainly involving themselves in projects with renowned filmmakers who already have demonstrated their ability to make hit films. In practice, it is probable that most of them have both idealistic and commercial reasons for their engagement. After all, filmmakers are among the art producers that to the highest extent and without integrity problems combine art and commerce, if we were to compare them to for instance pictorial artists or stage actors (cf. Mangset 1997, Stavrum 2009). Still, it is important to point out that the Norwegian co-producer's financial benefit will vary a lot depending on the project concerned.

To the Norwegian film industry in general, Sjørfond is a gateway to the international film industry. The fact that the Sjørfond funds are not solely an aid for needy filmmakers in the Global South but also a great opportunity for Norwegian filmmakers, is also pointed out by our informant who is among those renowned international star filmmakers:

With a minimal investment, because measured against Norway's economic strength the fund's total size is not large, Norway is at the same level as for instance France (which traditionally makes greater investments), in its international representation in the film industry.

In this perspective, Sjørfond emerges as a scheme that is quite lucrative for Norwegian filmmakers. Still, it would be an exaggeration to state that the Norwegian film industry gathers around Sjørfond.

## 6.2 Norwegian support

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Far from all Norwegian filmmakers consider co-production through Sjørfond to be an option and so choose to disregard it. Some of our informants point out that Sjørfond does not fit with the profile and business model of all Norwegian production companies. The organisers of the Sjørfond Pitching Forum also struggle to have Norwegian filmmakers support the event.

Several of our informants, both from the Films from the South Foundation, from the NFI and from different parts of the Norwegian film industry, believe the reason is that Norwegian filmmakers perceive the arrangement as not very financially beneficial to them and that they fail to see what they actually can obtain by getting involved. A film critic expresses this as follows:

Norwegian producers are actually quite lucky in the sense that they have access to quite much financing at home. They don't have that great a need to go abroad to get money. So this means that they do this kind of projects because they are adventurous, perhaps. Not for the money. [...] I would perhaps have thought that more people would be a bit hungry to participate in something like this. Not that producers are lacking, but the really major producers in terms of volume, they are conspicuous by their absence. The great feature film producers in Norway, they don't participate. And the reason may be that they have enough to do and that they don't give priority to it because they don't see that they can make any money on it. However, this thinking is very short-term, because you can actually get an international network by participating in more such productions.

The informant believes that this will change with time, and this view is supported by another informant who refers that the Dutch Hubert Bals Fund was in a similar situation at its inception. Dutch filmmakers were not all that interested and they were not used to co-productions with countries outside of Europe. So the scheme needed some time to establish itself, but when the films started winning awards and receiving attention they started to show interest. They understood they would not make fast money on it, but that they would expand their networks and receive international attention. It took nine years to establish the fund among Dutch co-producers. The informant believes it is probable that Sørfond also will receive increased interest among Norwegian co-producers if given time.

Some of the Norwegian informants believe that something must be done about the economic incentives for the Norwegian co-producers. Some point out that if Norwegian co-producers cannot draw more financial benefits from such cooperation than at present, there is a risk they will not want to get involved. On its part, the NFI admits that the Norwegian co-producers are doing a good job for the fund for little money, in the application process, but also as a source of information and contact point for the NFI during production and until the release. On the other hand, as we have described earlier, many of the Norwegian producers who have been involved emphasise that they have benefitted strongly from the job they have done as co-producers, and that indirectly it represents a great value to them and their production companies. The fact that Sørfond is perceived to be a stable fund with sufficient financial means for grants every year may seem to be more important for the fund's appeal to Norwegian producers than how large a share of the funds granted winds up in their hands.

## 6.3 Summary

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In an increasingly global film industry, Sørfond represents a gateway for Norwegian film players to international circles. There is little money to be had for Norwegian co-producers, unless the film is a commercial success, but the cooperation can be valuable in other ways. In some projects, the filmmaker from the developing country has competence and networks that the Norwegian co-producer may benefit from. In other projects, the exchange of competence and network building will primarily take place through other Western co-producers participating. Participation in an international co-production affords the Norwegian co-producers with both cinematic competence, international experience and visibility, which in turn makes them better equipped for new international productions. So far, Norwegian filmmakers have shown somewhat limited interest in involving themselves in applications to Sørfond; the reason may be that the fund is perceived to be financially rather unattractive to Norwegian co-producers or that the fund has been in operation for too short a period for Norwegian filmmakers to have experienced sufficiently the advantages participation may confer.

# 7. Summary and conclusion

In an increasingly global film industry where industry players search worldwide for financing, the newcomer Sjørfond has been received with open arms as a welcome and refreshing addition to existing co-production funds.

Nonetheless, a support scheme of this kind will always be at risk of propping up Eurocentric attitudes and notions, for instance regarding what is an "authentic" film from a developing country. Shortly after Sjørfond was established, the then Minister of International Development, Heikki Holmås, stated that:

Film is a fantastic way of telling stories. Through Sjørfond we contribute to giving strong voices from the Global South the possibility of *exhibiting their own culture* [emphasis added]. This also helps us to better understand the world that surrounds us.<sup>15</sup>

Most of us would agree with the minister, but filmmaking concerns much more than exhibiting one's own culture. It is important to be aware that filmmakers in developing countries do not necessarily have a greater need to and interest in basing their film projects on local or national cultural content than Western filmmakers. Filmmakers from developing countries should have the opportunity to be just as international, universal and for that matter commercial in their film projects as filmmakers from Western countries. The risk of creating Eurocentric side effects is however not limited to Sjørfond; in principle, it concerns all cultural support with a development assistance perspective.

After three rounds of grants where a total of eighteen films from fifteen developing countries have received support, Sjørfond shows a good geographical spread and great variation in genres. Several of the filmmakers that have received support are women, and several of the films challenge cultural values, taboos and controversial questions through their choice of themes. By supporting these filmmakers and their film projects, Sjørfond contributes to creating greater diversity in film, providing a space for freedom of expression and giving filmmakers the chance to inspire and make way for other filmmakers as well.

To individual filmmakers in developing countries, the support from Sjørfond has been of great importance. In some cases, the support has been the last piece of a larger financing puzzle and has been decisive for the realisation of the film. The fund is known as "clean", serious and with a sound selection process based on project quality, and with a credibility that rubs off on grant receivers, which provides them with visibility at home and towards the national film industry. The fund's condition that most of the amount granted must be used in the developing country concerned, leads to the use of local film professionals in productions, which is necessary for local competence building and professionalisation.

International co-productions often lead to good cross-border distribution of films. This applies to Sjørfond films as well. Of the films that have been completed, several have enjoyed excellent distribution in many countries, not least at the festivals linked to the various co-production funds, where Films from the South is the Norwegian screening venue. The festival screenings that follow in the wake the financing from different funds are important networking arenas for filmmakers. Through its emphasis on co-production, where the Sjørfond Pitching Forum is a central arena, and through its relation with the screening venue Films from the South, Sjørfond indirectly contributes to filmmakers increasing their mobility; they get out into the world, establish cooperation with others and travel around with their film.

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<sup>15</sup> Quote cited by the NFI, New Norwegian fund gives film grants to countries in the South, <http://www.nfi.no/bransje/Old/tildelinger/nytt-norskfond-gir-filmtilskudd-til-land-i-s%C3%B8r>, published 25.04.2012.

It takes a bit to create development at a more general level in terms of improvement in the infrastructure for film in different countries. Although our material contains certain isolated and anecdotal examples that even a single film production can lead to infrastructure improvements, additional productions are probably required to really see an effect. It is however our impression that Sjørfond applies conditions that with time may have positive effects on the film industry and infrastructure in developing countries.

Co-operation with the Norwegian co-producers has, to our understanding, been of great value to many of the filmmakers. The co-producers have turned out to contribute cinematic competence and experience and new and refreshing perspectives to the production communities. They have also contributed to strengthening the international appeal of films. In addition, they have taken care of concrete tasks linked to financing and Scandinavian launch and distribution. In several cases, the cooperation relationship has been so fruitful that the parties want and/or have concrete plans for further cooperation and new projects, with or without support from Sjørfond. This is cooperation that probably would not materialise without Sjørfond's contribution the first time round. In this respect, our material supports the findings of other research that states that international connections and networks are an important success factor for building sustainable film businesses.

In an increasingly global film industry, Sjørfond represents a gateway for Norwegian film players to the international film industry. Generally, there is little money to be had for Norwegian co-producers, unless the film is a commercial success. The cooperation has however turned out to provide other benefits in the shape of cinematic competence and cultural understanding, international networks, visibility and international track record.

**After three rounds of grants, eighteen grants and seven completed films, Sjørfond contributes, in our assessment, to strengthening film production in developing countries where such production is difficult for financial or political reasons. The conditions for support are designed in such a way that these are funds that put the filmmaker in a position to make his or her film.**

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