

The Situation of At-risk and Displaced
Artists and Culture Professionals

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Case Studies

CHAPTER 6

Case Study: Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund (The Netherlands)



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Case Study: Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund (The Netherlands)

by Rana Yazaji

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The [Prince Claus Fund](#) is an independent foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, dedicated to supporting artists in ‘regions where culture is under pressure’ (as stated in their mission). The newly established Urgency Fund aims to assist artists in 141 countries in the Global South, focusing specifically on those who have previously received Seed Awards or Fellows Awards from the foundation.

The pilot of the Urgency Fund will be officially launched in September 2025, backed by a 1.5 million EUR contribution from the National Postcode Lottery which will be distributed over three years. The Programme is designed as a safety net for Prince Claus Fund-awarded artists, ensuring they can trust that urgent support will be available to them when needed.

The primary objective of this programme is to ensure the professional continuity and growth of artists working under extremely challenging conditions, such as war, natural disasters, and oppression. As such, the concept of ‘urgency’ is central to the programme’s design. In this context, urgency refers both to time-sensitive situations requiring rapid intervention and to disruptions that threaten the ongoing practice of the artists.

Positioning the Prince Claus Fund: responding to urgency

While urgency programmes—and, more widely, emergency support—have not traditionally been a primary focus of the Prince Claus Fund, the creation of this programme responds to a growing need among the fund’s awardees. Many artists supported by the Fund face urgent challenges arising from diverse and shifting geopolitical contexts.

For the Prince Claus Fund, providing urgent support is a targeted effort to address the immediate needs of its awardees, complementing its broader mission to support culture under pressure. The Urgency Fund is designed to help

artists in the Global South maintain their presence and prominence in the art sector, ensuring they are not pushed out by crises and can continue to develop as artists and cultural workers in their fields.

The Urgency Fund prioritises immediate relief through rapid intervention, while also planning for additional support via recovery funding and, in highly exceptional situations, temporary relocation assistance. This approach ensures both immediate and sustained support for artists facing acute challenges.

Target groups and conditions

As highlighted above, the fund is available exclusively to Prince Claus Fund Awardees in the Global South who are experiencing immediate pressure and require specific support to sustain

their artistic practices. In this pilot phase, the focus will be on awardees from 2021 to the present, encompassing approximately 600 artists.

Nature of support

The support is structured into two main: Relief Fund and Recovery Fund (Fertile Ground).

Relief Fund

The Relief Fund tier provides immediate, small-scale funding of 500–2,500 EUR per applicant. Through this grant the artists are entitled to use the funds in the best way to deal with the urgent situation they face. This openness in utilising the fund is another approach to the much needed ‘tailored’ support in urgent situations, but here it is tailored by the artists individually rather than the foundation.

Recovery Fund

Through the Fertile Ground mechanism, the Recovery Fund offers a ‘recharge’ grant to recipients of the Relief Fund, enabling them to benefit from a temporary art residency.

Fertile Ground is an ongoing programme that supports Seed Awardees by fostering strong connections with organisations within their respective art ecosystems. Through this initiative, the Prince Claus Fund contributes to the sustainability of these organisations while empowering artists to participate in residencies, workshops, and other developmental activities. This established network of host organisations will be mobilised to provide recovery spaces for artists facing urgent challenges.

The Recovery Fund is also accessible to those who did not apply for the Relief Fund, though a prioritisation process is in place to ensure support is directed where it is most needed. Importantly, artists benefiting from the Recovery Fund are not expected to be immediately productive; these residencies are intended as spaces for rest, reflection, and regaining the capacity to continue their artistic practice.

The Fund is currently studying the potential to support the relocation of artists facing high-risk situations at a later stage of the pilot. In this development phase, and potentially in collaboration with specialised organisations, relocation is being considered only as a last-resort option, to be applied in exceptional and highly urgent cases.

As the foundation supports artists across the Global South—a term that encompasses highly diverse geopolitical and cultural contexts—the Urgency Fund requires Prince Claus to adopt prioritising positions on developments in specific regions. This pushes the foundation toward a more advocacy-oriented approach and necessitates prioritisation mechanisms. The programme will require focused strategies for certain regions based on their unique circumstances or political developments, for this, ongoing internal discussions will shape how these approaches evolve.

Application and selection process

Eligible artists are those who previously received Prince Claus Fund's [SEED Award](#) or [FELLOWS Award](#). Artists should be from, living, and working in eligible countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

Core to the application and selection processes for the Urgency Fund is the concept of trust-based funding, which is a core principle followed by the Prince Claus Fund. Trust-based funding, as practiced by Prince Claus, is an approach that centers on the autonomy and expertise of artists and cultural practitioners. The Fund believes that those working in their own contexts best understand their needs and challenges. Therefore, all financial support is provided without restrictions or prescriptions on how it should be spent, and payments are made upfront rather than being dependent on reporting or budgets. Recipients are free to invest the funding in any way they believe will most effectively support their professional growth and impact, whether that's purchasing equipment, covering living expenses, or investing in new projects. This model gives artists space and freedom in their practices. Building on the same concept and expanding it, there is no extensive process of case verification, which illustrates that trust-based funding is not merely a concept related to budgets allocation, but rather it is a relationship built on trust between the donor institution and the artist.

Awardees will need to access a simple application form. The online form, which is only available in English, is exclusively accessible to previous awardees through their accounts. The aim is to respond positively to every eligible request. The call remains open throughout the year, with applications reviewed on a rolling basis every two weeks. Once the allocated budget for a given quarter is exhausted, the call will be temporarily closed until the start of the next quarter. While the fund strives to support all eligible applicants, prioritisation may shift according to the urgency

and severity of each case. For example, a request involving the loss or damage of a musical instrument may be deprioritised in favour of applicants facing more critical or high-risk circumstances.

A structured scoring system ensures fair prioritisation based on the following two main criteria:

1. Impact severity: using an impact severity scale from 1 to 5, this criterion evaluates the extent to which the reported situation affects the artist's capacity to sustain their artistic practice, based on the information submitted.

2. Urgency scale: using an urgency scale from 1 to 5, each application is assessed for time sensitivity and is placed on a scale indicating how urgently support is needed. Support may be granted immediately or, depending on the urgency relative to other cases, postponed for up to three months. Applications that are deferred three times will automatically become ineligible for further consideration and will be declined.

Each application is assessed by an independent international expert, who provides a graded evaluation along with qualitative feedback focusing on assessing the urgency of the situation and its impact on the continuity of art practices of the concerned artist. Based on the recommendations of the external experts, the Programmes Team Selection Committee makes the final prioritisation. Important to notice, that experts will be selected based on their expertise and knowledge in most of the concerned regions. Their contribution through assessment and recommendation will be compensated.

The application form asks applicants to identify if their situation is life threatening or high risk. If this is the case, artists can not apply for the relief fund, as more specialised organisations are more equipped and experienced for such situations.

Challenges and limitations

As in many other contexts, funding for arts and culture in the Netherlands has faced significant cuts. The Prince Claus Fund has been directly affected by these reductions, resulting in the loss of several staff members and a necessary reorganisation of work. Currently, just 12 people are responsible for managing all the activities of the foundation.

The foundation has a strong focus on supporting Seed Award artists, who often face the greatest challenges and are at higher risk of dropping out of the art sector.. However, this commitment brings its own set of challenges; the foundation must continuously adapt to categorise and respond effectively to the diverse and complex difficulties experienced by its artists, ensuring that support is both timely and relevant.

The fund does not claim that it has the capacity to solve the problems faced by artists, or to be their saviors raising unrealistic expectations, rather it seeks to assist them find the space to overcome their challenges.

Cooperation with specialised organisations is a priority of the Prince Claus Fund, enabling them to implement the second component (artist residencies programme) and in highly exceptional cases facilitate a temporary relocation. This imposes a challenge connected to employment regulations (such as having access to work permits) and funding restrictions that institutions worldwide are dealing with. Relocation of artists does not fall within the working remit of the Prince Claus Fund that is subsidised by the [Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) to fulfil its mission supporting artists in their home countries.

Monitoring and evaluation

While this case study was being written, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, metrics, and methods were still under development. One key indicator will be whether artists have been able to overcome the challenges that prompted their requests for support and continue their artistic practices. Residencies will also be evaluated to determine if they fulfill their purpose as recharging spaces for artists under pressure, including consideration of participants' mental well-being.

The current plan includes conducting interviews twice a year with a selected group of supported artists. Additionally, a smaller cohort will participate in a three-year assessment process, an approach already used in Fellowships to inform the impact report. Each year, reflection sessions are held with twelve artists, from which a subset is selected for ongoing accompaniment for up to three years.

Supporting artists in their regions

Prince Claus Fund's Urgency Fund is situated within an approach of supporting at-risk artists to stay in their countries or at least in the proximate region. There are other frameworks that fit into this category including the [Funding in the regions of origin provided by the Martin Roth-Initiative](#), which serves as a parallel system to their temporary relocation to Germany programme.

Martin Roth-Initiative supports artists to face the challenges in their context through different mechanisms, including funding a host organisation in one of the neighbouring countries to temporarily host at-risk artists, or providing direct financial support to artists to independently travel to a place they consider safer for a period up to three months without directly arranging a host organisation for them.

Other examples stem from the Global South taking a responsive, reactionary and temporary nature to natural disasters, wars and genocides. Following the devastating earthquakes in February 2023 in Northern Syria and Southern Turkey, [Action for Hope](#), in partnership with [Ettijahat - Independent Culture](#), initiated the [Ahliyah Initiative](#) to meet the urgent and long-term needs of the affected communities. Officially announced on 6 March 2023, the initiative was founded on strategic partnerships with grassroots and local civil society organisations, facilitating direct, community-led implementation of cultural and psychosocial support programmes on the ground.

By collaborating with groups such as [Douzan Art & Culture](#) in Gaziantep, the [Hurras Network](#) in Ma'arrat Misrin and Idlib, [Hooz Centre](#) in Azaz, Nabid for Relief in the Idlib countryside and Jindires, and [Ashna for Development](#) in

North and Northeast Syria, the initiative reached over 7,000 individuals between March and August 2023. Activities included psychosocial and cultural programming, as well as capacity-building workshops in Turkey and Lebanon, providing local practitioners with the tools to continue their work amidst ongoing crises. The Ahliyah Initiative serves as a compelling example of how culture and community engagement can promote resilience and healing in the aftermath of a disaster.

In 2024, Action for Hope and Ettijahat-Independent Culture partnered again with a network of organisations both within and outside Palestine to launch the [Gaza Emergency Response](#) to support artists and cultural institutions amidst the ongoing crisis. The initiative provided small grants averaging 1,000 EUR to 74 individual artists and 10,000 EUR each to eight cultural organisations, including [Mayasem for Culture and Arts](#), [Basma Society for Culture and Arts](#), and the [Future Association for Development and Environment](#). These funds supported a range of urgent activities, such as psychosocial support sessions for women and children, puppet theatre performances, the distribution of food parcels and hygiene kits, and therapeutic recreational programmes for individuals with disabilities¹.

In response to the October 2024 attacks on Lebanon that displaced over a million people, Action for Hope, in collaboration with Ettijahat - Independent Culture, launched the [Ahliyah Relief Initiative](#) to provide urgent cultural and humanitarian support to affected artists, families, and communities. The programme delivered small grants ranging from 800 EUR to 2,400 EUR to 132 former beneficiaries of Action for Hope and awarded 10,000 EUR each to three

¹ Action for Hope later provided an additional top-up grant of 6,800 EUR to each of the eight partner organisations. These included the Independent Living Association, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, Future Association for Development and Environment, Juzoor for Health and Social Development, Sharek Youth Forum, and Unlimited Friends Association for Social Development.

frontline organisations—[Ahla Fawda](#), [Women Now for Development](#), and [Endless Medical Advantage](#)—to provide immediate aid in the Bekaa and Beirut².

These initiatives illustrate the significant effect of targeted cultural and psychosocial support during times of crisis. Such examples highlight the importance of a collective commitment to maintaining artistic practices in the face of adversity. They also show the value of support schemes that aid artists in their home regions

through temporary relocation and direct financial assistance.

The new programme by the Prince Claus Fund represents a vital effort to assist artists confronting immediate and severe challenges. It guarantees that artists receive prompt help as well as opportunities for long-term recovery. Through trust-based funding and strategic partnerships, the Urgency Fund not only meets immediate needs but also promotes continuity within the global arts community.

To fully appreciate the breadth of the research on The Situation of At-Risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals, please do consider reading the [other chapters](#) gathered in this third report, as well as the first two reports available for download: [Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition - Volume 1 Scoping Review](#) and [Policy and Practice in the EU: Pathways, Impediments, and Patchwork Solutions - Volume 2 Cultural Policy Analysis](#).

2 By 2025, these efforts had expanded significantly: Ahla Fawda reached 1,950 families through its EcoHub, distributing over 48,000 meals and offering emergency shelter; Endless Medical Advantage provided 355 mattresses and blankets, psychosocial support to more than 1,487 individuals, and cardiology consultations to 100 displaced patients; and Women Now funded school tuition for 42 children, supported 33 displaced women and girls through psychosocial sessions, delivered baby formula and nappies to 60 families, and offered food assistance to 700 refugees.

About the Author

Rana Yazaji is a researcher, trainer, and cultural manager. She serves as the co-director of 'Arts and International Cooperation' at Zurich University of the Arts and is currently conducting artistic research on contemporary arts and popular culture during and post-war contexts. Her work combines research and cultural practices, focusing on three interconnected levels: creative initiatives, institutional building, and policy discussions.

In 2011, she co-founded Ettijahat – Independent Culture, a Syrian organisation formed to support independent arts and culture actors in implementing social and political transformation. In 2014, Yazaji became the Executive Director of Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy), a regional cultural organisation active in the Arab region.

Yazaji completed a BA in Theatre Studies from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts (Damascus, 2001), an MA in Design and Management of Cultural Projects from the New Sorbonne University (Paris, 2005), and an MA in Theatre Directing and Dramaturgy from the University of Paris X (Paris, 2006).

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Annex: Internal Assessment Form of the Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund

Each reviewer will assess the application using both the Impact Severity Scale and the Urgency Scale. Only applications with a combined score of 5 or higher will be considered for support. Within each selection round, applications with the highest scores will be prioritised for funding until the budget limit for that round is reached. The remaining positive applications will be deferred based on their urgency scale.

1. Impact Severity Scale (1–5)

Assesses the degree to which the applicant's artistic practice is being disrupted, while doing so, please consider the applicant's respective location and its actualities. Please score the impact of the situation the applicant is facing and provide your written assessment of it up to 300 words.

- 1: Minimal Impact: The situation has little to no effect on the artist's practice.
- 2: Mild Impact: Some disruptions are noted, but the artist can largely continue their work.
- 3: Moderate Impact: Clear disruptions are present; the artist's practice is partially impeded.
- 4: Significant Impact: The artist is unable to continue their practice without intervention.
- 5: Critical Impact: The situation has brought the artist's practice to a complete halt or caused severe professional or personal consequences. If the artist is directly at Risk please flag the application immediately.

Guiding Questions for Reviewers:

To what extent has the artist's ability to create, present, or sustain their work been affected? Are the impacts described structural, or circumstantial? Is the disruption ongoing or expected to worsen without support?

2. Urgency Scale (1–5)

Assesses how time-sensitive the situation is in relation to other cases.

- 1: Can be deferred (>2 months): No immediate action required; support can wait.
- 2: Low urgency (1–2 months): Some time sensitivity; no severe risk in short-term delay.
- 3: Moderate urgency (<1 month): Timely support is important to avoid worsening impact.
- 4: High urgency (within 2 weeks): Delay will significantly worsen the situation.
- 5: Immediate (crisis-level): Requires immediate intervention to prevent severe harm or irreversible damage to the practice. If that is the case please flag the application immediately.

Guiding Questions for Reviewers:

Will the absence of immediate support cause further deterioration? Can the challenge be reasonably wait or be mitigated without immediate assistance?

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