ARCHIVES IN MOTION: AN ARTISTIC AND DIGITAL ODYSSEY 2025-2026

The archives of the *Festival mondial des arts nègres* (FESMAN), held in Dakar in 1966, represent a landmark of African cultural heritage. Preserving and making its collections accessible offers new opportunities for education, research and diaspora connections. Through Archives in motion: A digital and artistic odyssey, Belgian diaspora organisation **Mandji** partnered with the Institut Fondamental d'Afrique Noire (IFAN) Cheikh Anta Diop to digitise historical archives while equipping young people and heritage professionals with practical digital preservation skills. The project also helped lay the foundations for a contemporary reinterpretation of the 1966 FESMAN archives, on the occasion of its 60th anniversary, by transforming them into sources of creativity and cultural transmission. This initiative took the form of an exhibition and a musical and audiovisual performance, in which artists incorporated and reinterpreted elements from the festival's archives within their own creations.

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Results snapshot

25
students and IFAN staff trained on digitising archives

120
historical archives digitised to preserve the legacy of FESMAN

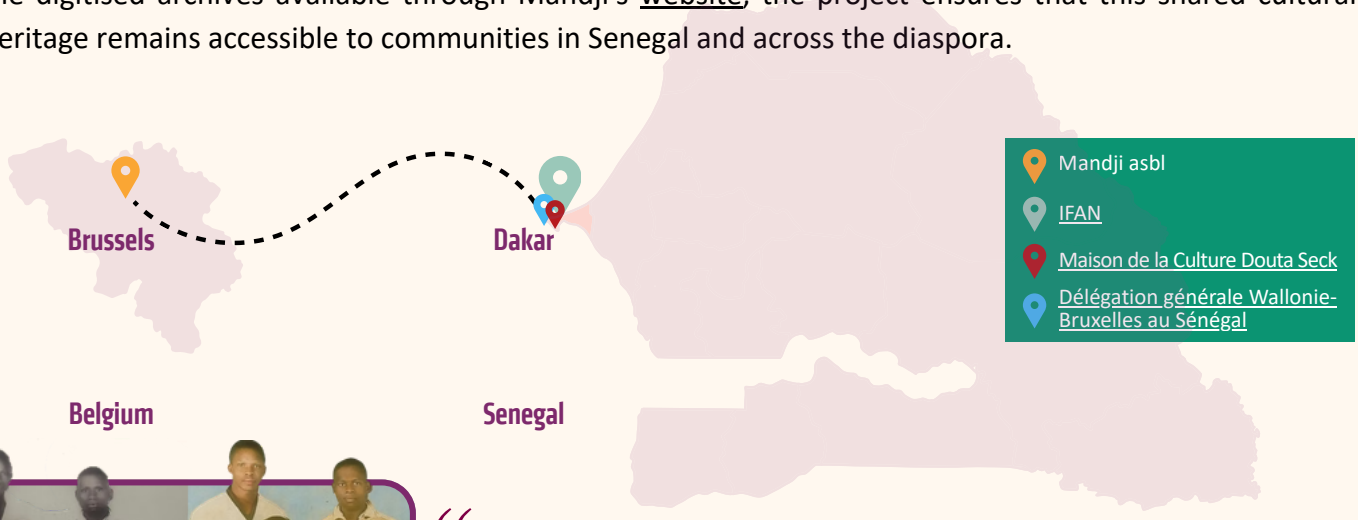
37
artworks created with the diaspora for FESMAN's 60th

1000+
engaged with FESMAN through the festival and the digital platform

Diaspora contribution

Keeping younger diaspora generations connected to their African heritage was at the heart of the project. Mandji's diaspora identity shaped the project from conception to implementation, reflecting its mission to build bridges between Africa and Europe through culture, education and heritage.

The diaspora contributed at every stage of the project. Members of Mandji supported the selection and preparation of the FESMAN archives, coordinated activities with local partners and transferred archive digitisation skills alongside diaspora professionals. They also contributed to the artistic programme marking FESMAN's 60th anniversary, with four diaspora artists collaborating with four Senegalese artists to create contemporary works. The artist residencies, creation process and exhibition were hosted by the Délégation générale Wallonie-Bruxelles au Sénégal and the Maison de la Culture Douta Seck. By making the digitised archives available through Mandji's website, the project ensures that this shared cultural heritage remains accessible to communities in Senegal and across the diaspora.



> *As the young people who completed the digital training discovered the documents, they were surprised – they were not aware that in the history of Senegal there had been such an event [attended by] Halie Selassie, Duke Ellington, and delegations from every country. […] We can bring all this sleeping heritage back to life in contemporary works. Let the youth take ownership of these tools and all this dormant material.*

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The D4D Grants of the EU Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF) aim to promote sustainable development by supporting diaspora-led initiatives in the country of origin in the areas of climate, economy, education and health. It provides financial and capacity development support for diaspora organisations to undertake small-scale projects that generate tangible improvements in the well-being of a target community.

Implemented by: MANDJI
In collaboration with: I.F.A.N. Ch. A. DIOP
Co-funded by
Under contract with: ICMPD International Centre for Migration Policy Development