

Kilio evaluation

After the termination of the Kilio cha haki album/project an questionnaire was spread among the majority of the 38 Nairobi mc's. In addition a lengthy evaluative discussion/conversation was held with the main stakeholders of the project. The findings and outcome of both evaluations are summarized below.

A.

1. Recording CD

Overall the atmosphere surrounding the recording of the album was considered as creative, open and stimulating. It was further believed that the positive vibe contributed immensely to the quality of the album. Most artists, and producers equally, had no expectations prior to the recordings, as it was everyone's first time to do an album. There was therefore little pressure and lots of energy and hope. As an album of with so many underground artists had never been done before in Kenya, most artists were excited and willing to go the extra mile to make it work. The resources were few but the creativity was immense.

The production team was dedicated and talented. Kennedy Muriuki, one of the co-producers, only joined after two weeks but especially on the engineering and production side he contributed a lot. Stije en Daan were very different from the others. Daan's presence as a very technical and serious force in the group was incredibly important. When Rha Goddess came the last week we were able to impress her with almost a full album. She added her input and came up, together with Roba and Kah, with the hitsingle "All over the world" of the album. Her experience and professionalism injected even more morale and energy into the project.

Carrying beats and music from a host of Dutch producers worked well. It worked in terms of selling the album abroad (the fact that it was a collabo between international artists). Creatively and time-wise it also helped a lot. The time frame of one month was OK, sufficient time to be creative and productive and not to lose the concentration focused on the album only in that one-month period.

Although Roba (co-producer and initiator of the project) felt we should have had more time. Most agreed that with the amount of mc's increasing every day it was better to go on for a month only. In addition, during the last days we received several threats that our equipment would be stolen, too many people found out about our activities.

Issues

According to the majority there were not many negatives issues. But the way Stije, Daan and Nynke worked was different from what Roba and his friends were used to. Nynke felt there were some issues though. She got too stressed at times: mainly through miscommunication. As she was doing the production on her own she relied too much on artists to be on the production rather than the creative side.

Overall opinion

The result was a great album and that was all that counted at that time.

2. NL Launch

The three artists who came to Amsterdam (Roba, Kah and Muri) felt it was good that the project was brought to Europe; the promotion of the album and meeting all the people was a plus. The in- stores in record shops were also good.

However the program was crazy busy and interview after interview was held. It was new for Nynke and the 3 mc's. It involved a lot of organization and was too much work on Nynke's shoulders alone. Nynke got little support from UpToYouToo. The issue was mainly money, since there was such a small budget for the whole project. Also the fact that UpToYouToo only had volunteers who had not signed any contract meant that there was little constant commitment from them.

UpToYouToo received a few 100 Euros from AFK and used 5000 of its own budget. Money that was meant for YIKE and had to be repayed through shows and the launch of the album before paying any returns to the 38 mc's. Although this was the agreement, Kah was not happy about that. He wanted to be paid. He did not seem to understand that he had come to the Netherlands to represent 38 others and not just himself. The mistake here was that it should have been clear from the start and UpToYouToo should have put down its rules surrounding the project on paper for all the mc's to read. The result was confusion, especially when it became clear that some money was coming in, Kah and his brother became very suspicious.

Roba however expressed that he was happy in the Netherlands. He felt Nynke worked very hard to accommodate them and that although he did not come back with a lot of money he was ok about it as it had never been his expectation in the first place. Muriuki also did not have any difficulties with the way things worked in the Netherlands and was happy to have been part of the "delegation". Both Roba, Nynke and Muriuki were mainly concentrating on the shows and on the plan for building a permanent studio.

Roba: I Had the same vibe as Nynke and Muri we wanted to get the studio plan down.

Nyn: the whole thing started between Roba and I and Chima, Johnny & Abu. Nairobi Yetu was formed. I didn't know Roba was part of Ukooflani from Dandora. Only later in the project is when the guys from Dandora became part of it.

Roba: I wanted them to be part of it as we had already done much together before. This is what they believe in so I felt they needed to be there.

Nyn: We wanted to have them in it. For me it still wasn't very clear who they were though, and how influential and even manipulative some of them would turn out to be.

Roba: For me it wasn't easy to make the choice for who to send to Holland. I was a bit in between Ukoo and the others. Nynke asked me about 3 people and people that will come back and wouldn't try to stay in Holland after the show. People I could work with. Nynke made those decisions.

Nyn: It was obvious in respect to Kilio who had to go, Muri was clear because of his important production and artist role. Kah seemed a good choice because he was on the single of the album and because we could then secure ukooflani to feel "involved". I never thought they would hijack the project. At the time we were in Holland for Launch others started with Kenya launch.

Roba: From that moment on, we left people here in Nairobi with money to organize for the Kenya press launch. From this time things went out of control.

Issues

Before going to Amsterdam most artists still didn't expect much. They just hoped for a studio eventually. Most seemed fine with the three who went to represent them in Amsterdam. However issues to do with money came up in two ways. With Kah complaining he was not getting enough in Amsterdam and his brother and several other receiving money to organize the press launch in Kenya. Especially Ukooflani became suspicious and started spreading stories compromising the integrity of the whole project.

Overall opinion

Overall the opinion of the artists about the launch in the Netherlands was good. The problems however came from a few individuals. This seemed to be because of unexpected success of the project and no clear direction from the beginning.

3. KE Launch

Press launch

When the three mc's were in Amsterdam Kamau, Mwas and Githingi were responsible and given money to organize for the press launch in July 2004. Out of respect and the need to stimulate their responsibility they were given the freedom to organize it in their own way. Although the launch went well other things such as local distribution of the album were not organized for. The show went well but there were tensions among the organizers and Nynke.

Nyn: I later realized that Mwas organized the launch almost on his own. He was a hard worker but would usually not get the credit for it. Also the invitation did not mention Nairobi Yetu but made it seem as though the album was done by Ukooflani. This ignored approx. 20 mc's who were not part of ukooflani. For me the trouble started here. It became quite political, "a power struggle".

Roba: At this point I felt stuck in the middle. Carnivore was free. Kwani was already in. Some things were already done. I didn't want to jump in so had to respect that. I started to feel there were issues with money. People all the time started asking for money. The original aim of making music started to drift away.

General launch

Cooperation became increasingly difficult towards the launch. Little trust and dedication marked the main launch and the period before it. Only two people made a real effort to organize things well and they were Muriuki and Mwas. Especially Kamau seemed to purposely frustrate preparations. When rehearsal would start at 9am he would delay artists and arrive at 2pm. Most ukooflani artists would follow his example. The relationship between Roba and Nynke worsened and characterized by constant break up, make up and long talks. Things were not working and became a big mess. Roba was stuck between his loyalty to the project and his loyalty to his group; ukooflani.

Kamau obviously felt threatened by Nynke's presence and wanted to show her "who he was". He continuously tried to tell her this and even went as far as threatening her several times. Others had warned Nynke beforehand but she thought they would manage and that it was worth it. In the end it wasn't.

Roba: Things got ugly during the launch. Nyn felt like it wasn't moving right. There was almost a fight at Carnivore. After that everything went totally out of hand. That was the end of the whole thing.

Nyn: we actually had a meeting for the studio to continue with all organizers. The only people who were there were Roba and Muri. Everyone felt it was their studio but didn't come to the meetings and didn't make any effort.

Issues

The issues were numerous, most to do with suspicion, power-struggle, pride and money. This period marked the beginning of the end of the project. Although the project ended several months later it was already clear that it was not working between the majority of the artists in the group.

Overall opinion

Most artists felt there was something wrong. Although it was a conflict that took place at organizational level mainly; the other artists were suffering too. Especially the dedicated ones who would find nobody present at rehearsals and who saw some of the others drunk and intoxicated on stage at the night of the main launch were disappointed. The overall opinion and atmosphere was bad during this period.

4. Music Video recording

Roba: at this point I wasn't really into the project that much. Already Muri and Mwas were responsible. I felt bad about that. I thought video was good to pull everyone together. Partially I felt I was to blame for some things like not taking charge.

Nyn: video was crazy I was a zombie. If it wasn't for Muri and Mwas it would have stopped. I felt we needed the video but was very tired. Had a meeting with Kamau and he told me terrible things.

Problems according to Nynke:

- Rumours spread that the video was expensive this brought trouble among thugs in the ghetto areas.
- A big foreign team, unsafe people were robbed.
- Couldn't deprive the team from their dinner: couldn't afford dinner for all though. Double standards. The team ate well and the artists (as they were sometimes 20!) not. Almost looked like a black and white thing.
- Discrepancy between money we were working with and the aim of the whole project (i.e. supporting the talented ghetto youth artists).
- For production it was hell. Responsibilities were too high. A lot of stress.
- As nothing was solved the misunderstandings became bigger. Expectations rose.
- Overall too much money spent on trivial things. Too many people from the Netherlands. Equipment too fancy could have been done with less.

Issues

Too much money spent, double standards used for the Dutch and Kenyan producers and the artists. A lot of stress and insecurity.

Overall opinion

Although there were numerous problems the video came out very well and served its promotional purpose. Lessons were learnt for the next time. A lot of sponsorship was gotten which pressed some of the costs. Still many things could have been organized differently for things to work more organized between everyone and to keep certain costs down.

5. UK Launch

Artists did not get their visas and could not travel to the UK. The launch therefore became more of a courtesy trip to thank the promoters in the UK. Although there was attention of the media.

Nyn: UK launch didn't make a lot of sense. It even cost me a lot of my personal finances.

PJ: it was good because of MTV Africa Base. Met a lot of people that worked for us.

Atmosphere pathetic though.

Issues

Costly trip (especially organizing for the location, soundsystem etc.) and not really worth it due to the absence of the artists. However meeting with the promoters and MTV Africa Base did mean a great deal for the further promotion of the album in the UK and Africa through MTV (even MTV Europe learnt about the project through these meetings). Therefore the visit was valuable but the launch not really.

Overall opinion

The artists including Roba and Muri had little to say about this activity. They were not there and could not evaluate it. They obviously did feel happy about the links with MTV Base and the immense airplay "All over the world" got (A-rotation!).

6. FR tour

As things were not clear to Roba, Muri and Kah and whether the project would go on the trip was a bit strange to them. Under pressure Ukooflani had managed to get the remaining equipment from Kilio and set up their studio, to the disapproval of the other artists who felt left out. They were not allowed to record at Ukooflani's studio either.

Roba: At that point, I was like what is the point of doing it. Joyce basically convinced me. Maybe I would get new connections. Then gave it a shot. At that moment I wasn't into it at all anymore.

Muri: It was good because of meeting new people. For me it reached a point where I didn't know where it was going but I was prepared to do anything. Tour was sort of nice for me I liked meeting BoulaOne.

Roba: Organisation was basically good. I had a nice time. The trust issue at the moment was hard.

Issues

There were no major issues during the France tour. The attention was there and the artists were taken good care of. It was especially strenuous for PJ who went with the artists. Muriuki was very serious and helpful. Roba and Kah especially were not very cooperative. PJ was insulted and felt they should have made more effort.

Overall opinion

The trip was not bad but most of the artists were not really together anymore at the time. Ukooflani had pressured for their studio and therefore they were separate from the rest. The other artists knew little of what was going on. The trip was good for the artists individually and not bad for the promotion of Kilio in France, however it should have been the beginning of promo in France and not the only trip. The effort was not put in by the artists the way they should have.

7. Live 8

PJ made an enormous effort to get the three artists representing the others to perform there. He managed and it was an almost impossible task. The response of Roba and Kah was not positive.

Roba: It reached a point I wanted to do my own things. At the end of the day I had to get organized and get stuff going. Nyn told me to get someone from outside. Then we tried to get a manager to organize our stuff. I tried to pull out of Ukooflani management so they could do their own thing. I remember Nynke calling me. There was a lot of confusion. I wasn't 100% sure of doing Live8 but then it needs to come from the heart. PJ: Did you feel cheated when it didn't work because of the cancellation of that particular concert in Edinburgh?

Roba: I was trying to get organized. I was trying to analyse and try to see how I can move on with or without ... I realized I was putting other people first while I should maybe be moving as an individual. The other issue was communication. Hadn't met Nynke for quite some time. The whole Kilio was more or less over. I felt why should I have been left outside and when something comes up I have to be involved. PJ wasn't involved in what I was doing and when it came up it was a tricky situation.

Issues

The issue here was that PJ still made an effort to have them booked for Live8 while the artists did not feel it anymore. In the end the concert got cancelled anyway. The trust was gone and the project was virtually over. Very unfortunate because the opportunities it had for the artists and the promotion in other countries was still large.

Overall opinion

The other artists of Kilio had little to do with the live8 event. The overall opinion was that there was little point in the continuation of the project if nobody was committed to it anymore.

9. Establishing Studio

Despite the problems the studio was established but under a different banner. Eventually UpToYouToo together with Muri and several other artists involved in Kilio realized that it was important to not give up on the establishment of a permanent

studio for talented ghetto artists. It has so far been successful to detach the studio from Kilio cha Haki and still have quite some of the Kilio artists benefit from it. Luckily also other ghetto artists are able to benefit. The studio is up and running and doing well. Most artists when asked to evaluate were happy the studio was finally set up even if it was not linked to the Kilio project anymore.

B.

Coherence Nairobi Yetu:
very low

Communication between UpToYouToo & NY:

minimal. Lack of avenues to communicate with the artists. Most have no mobile phones or email.

C.

Music Business & development aid good combi?

Roba: In my case I studied sociology and am musician and all things about dev. aid are linked to sociology. Through music you can reach many people and even have an opportunity to make some money.

Nyn: I also think it all contributes.

Muri agrees as well.

D.

Professional environment:

Depended on the activity. Some were carried out very professionally others less.

What are the greatest lessons to be learned?

- Structure and direction of a project before it starts.
- Less people involved is easier to handle
- Clear authority
- Good balance between realism and idealism
- Clear guidelines if volunteers involved. Contracts.
- Budget upfront
- Communication established

End comments

Overall the project was extremely successful. All artists later on in the questionnaires or privately to Nynke or Muriuki expressed that it helped them immensely. Artists were able to record for free at studio's because of their involvement with Kilio cha haki. The album set the standard in East Africa. Any artist linked to it automatically had a name and good reputation. It became a classic. Despite all the problems and troubles it helped most artists and UpToYouToo a lot to learn valuable lessons and further their goals.