



Behind the Scenes

stories of
women
in Africa's
**Creative
Industry**



Ethiopian youth researcher Mekonnen Meaza Ambachew in conversation with a local potter during a field data collection exercise in Leku Town near to Awassa City

We are back with another edition of the Behind the Scenes (BtS) newsletter! In this edition, we are turning the spotlight on the bold, brilliant, and unstoppable young female creatives shaping Africa's creative industry. From smashing gender barriers to rewriting the rules, these game changers are proving that talent knows no gender, and we are here to celebrate them!

For too long, the women in Africa's creative industry have been overlooked, underpaid, and underestimated; however, that's changing, and BtS is leading the change. Our research across seven countries (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Ghana) is highlighting the struggles that young female creatives face from gender bias to funding. The industry is tough, but these women are tougher. Through our interactions with young female creatives, we've brought to light what many know but few openly discuss: gender bias, funding disparities, lack of mentorship, and deeply rooted societal barriers. In response, these women aren't waiting for change, they're creating it. They're building studios, mentoring the next generation, owning their narratives, and redefining the creative landscape on their terms.

At BtS, we're not just documenting challenges, we're part of the movement for change. We're triggering discussion, advocating for better policies, equitable funding, and safer, more inclusive work environments. Because when women in the creative industry rise, the entire industry is transformed. For too long, the stories of young female creatives have gone unheard. We're here to tell them and amplify them.

Music is My First Love!

By Nyasanje (Kenya), Singer & Songwriter

I don't know if there's a passion greater than music in my life. The first time I wrote a song, I must have been 11. It happened almost by accident, but I've been in love ever since! My music is rooted in storytelling, sometimes imagined, sometimes drawn from real experiences, even my own. I appreciate that as a creator, my art has the power to pull people in, but the attention that comes with it? That's something I'm still learning to navigate. Should I even try to overlook it? Every field comes with challenges, and being a musical creative is no exception. Finances? Easily the biggest one for me. While there's money to be made in the arts and the world is embracing creativity more, the initial investments to get to a point of recognition and real earning power are no joke. Then there's gender bias in the entertainment scene. From concerts to airplay, the numbers favor men. While I haven't personally faced sexual exploitation in my pursuit of music, I know of female creatives who have been put in compromising situations just to receive "favors" from industry gatekeepers. Challenges are inevitable, but the creative journey would be so much smoother if equal opportunities were truly available. Still, we push through, we create, and we thrive because music is life, and I love to live wholesomely!

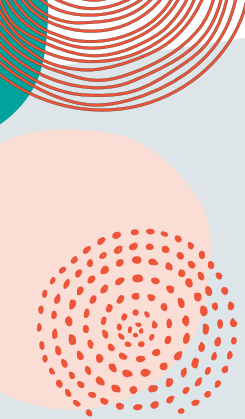


"By Force" to Full Force

By Angel Kabera

The first time I ever attended a poetry event, it wasn't out of choice but from the subtle persuasion of a teacher who saw something in me. One of my Literature in English teachers, Mr. Gilbert, handpicked three of his "best" students and asked us to prepare a spoken word piece for an event. No warning. Just pure literary ambush. Those students? My two best friends and I, Rhona Nantege, who's now a visual artist exploring watercolor, and Ashley Birungi, a scientist exploring the depths of epidemiology. Life has taken us on such different paths, but that shared stage was the beginning of everything for me. That first performance cracked something open. I didn't know it then, but poetry would become more than a passion or subject in school. It became a lifeline. A language. A form of protest and prayer. It spoke for me — and eventually, it started speaking for others. But the road? It's been anything but smooth. I've performed in bars where my fee was chips and soda, braided hair in hostel rooms to survive





university, and freelanced until my fingers cramped; all while chasing a dream in an industry that applauded performance but didn't pay for it, celebrated talent but didn't train it, and romanticized the "starving artist" while gatekeeping opportunity.

What I saw wasn't a lack of talent — Uganda is bursting with it. What I saw was a gap in knowledge, access, and tools that could turn passion into purpose and creativity into careers. That's why I created Soetry: to reimagine what it means to be a poet in Uganda. And through the various collaborations with the Word Weavers Academy, I've taken that vision further: teaching young creatives how to write, perform, protect, brand, and build from their craft. From school clubs to professional courses, I'm building a chain of poets who are not just powerful but prepared. Not just heard but earning and honored.

For me, it's not just about the money. It's about access to dignified, fulfilling work. Work that doesn't just feed you, but fuels you. Work that recognizes the power of creativity, not as a luxury, but as a livelihood.

Now, I'm proud to be a voice in Uganda's creative and feminist spaces, performing at events like Women Deliver and the Uganda Film Festival, leading communications for youth-centered movements, and telling stories that ignite conversations on body autonomy, rights, and culture.

What keeps me going? The fire of my inner child. The belief that poetry isn't just art; it's industry. Its impact. Its identity. I'm not just building a brand, I'm building a blueprint. So that the next girl with a pen and a dream doesn't have to choose between passion and paycheck, or between art and dignity.



Poetry isn't
just art; it's
industry.
Its impact.
Its identity.
**I'm not just
building a
brand, I'm
building a
blueprint.**



In Kenya's buzzing creative economy, four trailblazing women are rewriting the narrative not with noise but with purpose. Led by Janet Machuka, the country's National Creative Ambassador, this powerhouse squad is not just breaking glass ceilings; they're redesigning the entire roof. Take Spontaneous the Poet, her first gig paid a mere 200 shillings back in 2013. Today, she runs a civic education platform that gives voice and vision to the unheard. Wendy Loyce is swapping handshakes and "coffee favors" for signed contracts and digital accountability, using tech to challenge the old boys' network. And Lucy Kinuthia? She's taking on the industry's chaos where rate cards shift like quicksand and demanding structure, fairness, and respect.



Redefining the Rules: How Four Kenyan Women Are Flipping the Script in the Creative Industry

by Janet Machuka

Their journeys echo with familiar struggles: sexual harassment, pay inequality, and even algorithmic bias that pushes women's work to the margins. But through Behind the Scenes (BTS), they've built something bigger than any one of them, a collective force that believes in collaboration over competition, action over talk.

Because this is more than just inspiration, it's instruction. These women are showing us what it looks like when creatives take back control of the narrative. They're crafting a blueprint for an industry where women aren't asked to play small, stay silent, or go solo. As Machuka puts it, "This isn't just conversation. It's action." This is what reclaiming power looks like behind the scenes, and beyond. Watch [here](#)

GETTING THE NUMBERS:

*Fieldwork in all
its glory!*

In February and March, we hosted Data Collection Training Workshops in all the seven project countries (Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, Senegal, Ghana, Rwanda and Ethiopia) to strengthen the capacity of the project's youth researchers. These sessions focused on ethical research, informed consent, and effective data gathering equipping them to lead fieldwork in their local communities.



I feel more
confident
stepping into
the field with
this training,”
—Youth Researcher,
Ethiopia

It's been an exciting couple of months, filled with energy, passion, and action! Our youth researchers have been on the ground, traveling from bustling cities to the most remote corners of their countries. Their mission? To connect with young female creatives, listen to their stories, understand their challenges, and discover the barriers they face. They've been hearing firsthand how these young women navigate their struggles and what can be done to create a better future.

From extreme heat to fair weather and rainy days, our team has been on the move, gathering invaluable data straight from the source. It's been a whirlwind, and we're thrilled to see the progress we're making in amplifying the voices of these incredible young women.



Youth researchers enjoying a light moment while engaging with a respondent's creative work during data collection.



MEET OUR NATIONAL CREATIVE AMBASSADORS

Drumrolls, please...

Ugandan youth researchers share a light moment following a data collection session in lake Bunyonyi, Rubanda district

Meet our National Creative Ambassadors, a group of talented young female creatives who will serve as the faces of the BtS project in their respective countries. These ambassadors will connect with fellow female creatives, host events, promote gender inclusion, and actively spread and strengthen the BtS message. They will also play a key role in shaping and guiding advocacy strategies within their national contexts for policy and programmatic change.

KENYA: Janet Machuka
(Social Media & Content Marketing Expert).

Janet Machuka is a digital marketing consultant, content creator, and founder of ATC Digital Academy, a venture that trains Africans in digital skills and marketing. She leads content strategy and campaign tracking, using her digital expertise to align project messaging with



UGANDA: Kabera Angel Amahoro
(Song-Poet & Digital Creator).

Kabera Angel Amahoro is a Ugandan spoken word poet and founder of Soetry Uganda. She plays a key role in brand collaboration, bringing her creative advocacy and storytelling to shape campaign messages that spotlight gender justice and community empowerment.



RWANDA: Delphine Ntagara
(Journalist & Poet).

Ntagara Delphine is a Rwandan journalist at Radio Salus. She is a poet and content creator. She uses her voice to advocate for gender equality and environmental care by hosting live social media sessions, holding interactive Q and A's and conversations that draw the audience and spark meaningful engagement into the heart of the project's mission.



GHANA: Anita Akua Akuffo
(Actress & broadcaster).

Anita Akua Akuffo is a vibrant Ghanaian television presenter, journalist, and model who is widely known for her energetic style and charisma. She specializes in social media engagement, sparking meaningful dialogue through comments, DMs, and live interactions that deepen audience connection to BTS values.



NIGERIA: Oluwatomi Akintibu
(Singer & Writer).

Oluwatomi is a dynamic Nigerian musician. She sings, writes songs, and hosts karaoke sessions, crafts original, high-impact digital pieces that spotlight key BTS themes, using her creative edge to drive awareness and spark dialogue across platforms like Instagram and TikTok.

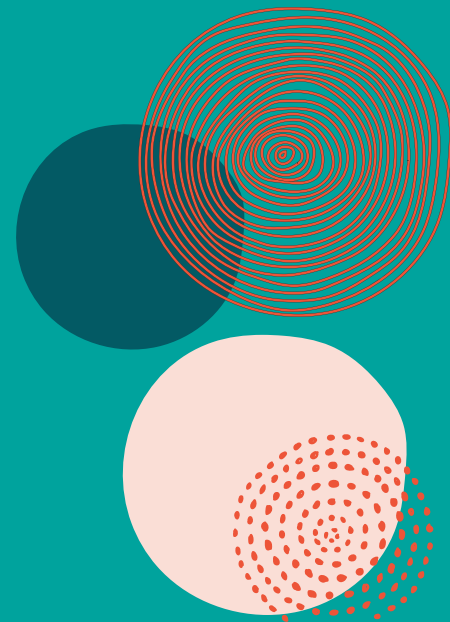


SENEGAL: Amira Abed
(Singer & Songwriter).

Amira Abed is a talented Senegalese vocalist and songwriter with an expressive voice and engaging performances. She leads audience engagement by translating BTS messages into visually striking, emotion-driven content that cuts across Francophone communities and digital platforms.



MEET THE FACES BEHIND THE SCENES



Every month, we highlight the amazing voices of our youth researchers as they share their experiences in the BtS project. They are learning and growing into the next generation of researchers who will use evidence to help build a creative industry in Africa that is fair and open to everyone, no matter their gender.



Kaloki (Youth Researcher, Kenya)

“During one of our data collection sessions, I met a powerhouse of a young female creative whose story truly moved me. Despite living with a disability, she’s navigating the creative world with a kind of resilience that demands attention. Her journey shed light on the unique challenges disabled creatives face and even more importantly, the incredible, untapped potential within this community. It was a powerful reminder of how gender and disability intersect in the creative sector, and why real inclusion means leaving no talent behind.”

Masaku Kaloki, Kenyan youth researcher, poses for a photo during a data collection session

Catherine Antwi Boasiako
(Communications lead, Ghana)

“Being part of BTS has made me more conscious of the issues and challenges that women, especially those in the creative sector across Africa, face. Talk of harassment, limited resources, gender pay gap, lack of recognition for their contributions, double standards, and gendered expectations. It is fascinating to learn that, despite these challenges, many of which are deeply tied to their gender, these women are not folding or backing out. As Duignan-Pearson (2019) observed, rather than passively resigning to their circumstances, they are actively finding ways to assert their agency, create and take up space. This project has opened my eyes to how much more there is to uncover, especially around the stories of young women in this space. Their strength, resilience, and creativity need to be shared and heard, and BTS provides the platform for that.”



Folajumi Sefiu (Youth Researcher, Nigeria)

“My time in the field with the BtS-Nigerian Team was eye-opening. I got to meet talented creatives from all walks of life – tech whizzes, filmmakers, and catering entrepreneurs. What amazed me was how open they were with me about their experiences. It says a lot about their strength and confidence. Sitting down with them, listening to their stories, and learning about their struggles and wins was humbling. I was struck by their passion and determination. Being part of this project showed me the importance of listening to diverse voices and perspectives. What I loved most was the trust they placed in us as researchers. It was a privilege to be part of their narrative and contribute to a project that aims to make a difference. This experience has stayed with me, and I’m excited to see the impact of our work.”



Folajumi and fellow youth researchers during a training exercise

Clementine Uwase (Youth Researcher, Rwanda)

“My name is Uwase Clementine, and I’m a youth researcher with the Behind the Scenes project. In the BtS project, I gained many skills that have been very helpful in my studies, especially as a student of Development Studies at the University of Rwanda. These skills have not only improved my academic work but also helped me grow personally.

Working on this project has given me access to Rwanda’s vibrant creative sectors, allowing me to meet inspiring fashion designers, photographers, and artists. As we visited different locations to collect data, I gained hands-on experience, connected with diverse communities, and confidently explained our work to sector leaders. I learned how to build trust with respondents and improved my communication, transcription, and survey skills. The power speaking and rapport-building training helped me to conduct interviews with confidence and ease.

Being part of this project is a great opportunity for me. I am learning and gaining new skills that I didn’t know before. I have grown both in my career and my personal life. I am very thankful for the opportunities this project has given me, especially helping me grow my professional network. It means a lot to be a member of the Behind the Scenes project.”



Working on this project has given me access to Rwanda’s vibrant creative sectors, allowing me to meet inspiring fashion designers, photographers, and artists.

Clementine Uwase and fellow youth researchers after data collection training



Georgina Akolpoka Atambila (Youth Researcher, Ghana)

Behind the Scenes (BtS) research project offered me invaluable training in literature review and data collection, covering data methodologies, data collection tools, and ethical considerations. The sessions were engaging, and the principal and co-investigators were knowledgeable and supportive. I learned the critical importance of data quality and validity through hands-on exercises and group discussions. As a youth researcher, I conducted surveys and moderated focus group discussions in two regions of Ghana, gaining practical experience with multimethod and multidisciplinary approaches photovoice, social listening, creative mapping, and creative representation that were new to me. This project also reinforced the value of teamwork, communication, and attention to detail, and helped me build meaningful relationships with fellow youth researchers and other stakeholders. Ghana's creative sector faces significant gender-related challenges, especially for young female creatives. Cultural and religious norms, lack of supportive networks, and power imbalances continue to create an environment where women struggle to thrive. Despite these barriers, many young women remain determined, driven by passion, ambition, and the desire to be seen and heard.

To create a more inclusive and equitable creative industry, there is a need for regular sensitization programs that promote awareness and accountability, as well as financial support systems that empower young women to pursue their careers with confidence and independence.



Ghanian youth researchers having a light moment during safeguarding and data collection training



Cultural and religious norms, lack of supportive networks, and power imbalances continue to create an environment where women struggle to thrive.



Chikodi Christabel Ezinwa (Youth Researcher, Nigeria)

Behind the Scenes: Young Women and Gender-Based Inequities in Africa's Creative Sector has been an eye-opening project that exposed me to aspects of Nigeria's creative industry. I hadn't previously considered, particularly the challenges and unequal conditions that many women face while seeking or working in creative roles. During the data collection training, I had the opportunity to acquire practical skills such as using the KoboToolbox data collection tool. I also discovered new facets of myself, including a creative side I hadn't fully explored, like my interest in singing. The group discussions were rich with insights, and the learning process was both engaging and enjoyable. That said, collecting data is no easy task; it involves interacting with people from diverse backgrounds, values, and schedules, which taught me patience, flexibility, and empathy.

Overall, this has been a meaningful and transformative experience. I have come to appreciate how far Nigeria's creative sector has come, especially seeing more women step into leadership roles and excel across various subsectors. Despite the persistent challenges, their progress is inspiring."



I had the opportunity to acquire practical skills such as using the KoboToolbox data collection tool. I also discovered new facets of myself, including a creative side I hadn't fully explored.

Niyigena Marcelina (Youth Researcher, Rwanda)

“My name is Niyigena Marcelina. I am a Development Studies student at the University of Rwanda and a Youth Researcher in the Behind the Scenes Project. My journey in the project has been a transformative experience, enhancing my public speaking skills and expanding my professional network. I gained valuable research experience, especially in examining gendered disparities and barriers in Rwanda’s creative sector and conducting surveys and communicating effectively with respondents. Mapping the creative sector introduced me to industries I had not considered, such as publishing and print media, and architecture. Managing my studies and work taught me time management and the importance of self-care. I acquired skills beyond the classroom, shaping my perspective on growth and collaboration. The lessons I am learning through this project have given me valuable knowledge and practical skill sets that will be useful in my future endeavors.”

Youth researchers from Rwanda taking a photo after BtS training.



Mekonnen Meaza Ambachew, Ethiopia (holding a sheet of paper) engaging with female creatives in Awassa City, Sidama Region during a field visit for data collection.



Mekonnen, Meaza Ambachew (Youth Researcher, Ethiopia)

“Behind the Scenes” project explores gender-based inequities in Africa’s creative sector through youth-led research. In Ethiopia, fieldwork in Addis Ababa, Awasa, and Leku Town revealed challenges such as limited understanding of the diverse creative sector (spanning fashion, digital media, and crafts) and narrow perceptions of harassment, often overlooking verbal or psychological abuse. Participants expressed skepticism about research impact, highlighting the need for actionable follow-up. Engaging with women artisans like a traditional potter in Leku Town



underscored resilience amid systemic barriers, including societal undervaluation of women’s contributions. The sector is rapidly evolving, with youth driving innovation in branding and digital content, yet gender disparities persist. Key insights call for broader awareness, advocacy, and support systems to empower women creatives. The project emphasizes translating research into policy and practice to address inequities, amplify marginalized voices, and foster sustainable change in Ethiopia’s creative economy.”

PI Perspective: Nigeria's Music Industry Is on Fire and the World Is Dancing to Its Rhythm.

INSIDE Principal Investigator *Nigeria's music industry is on fire, and the world is dancing to its rhythm.* By **Florence Ewomazino Nweke (Ph.D.)** Department of Creative Arts, University of Lagos, Nigeria

From sold-out shows across continents to Grammy wins and chart-topping hits, Nigerian artists are not just making music; they're shaping global culture. With a projected revenue of \$14.82 billion by 2025, this industry is more than entertainment. It's a major economic driver and a source of national pride. But beneath all the glamour and streaming numbers lies a persistent question we don't ask enough: where are the women? Despite the undeniable talent and contributions of female creatives, the Nigerian music scene remains largely male-dominated. This isn't due to a lack of skill or ambition, but rather a system that continues to sideline women at every turn.

Cultural norms, deeply ingrained gender roles, and industry bias have created barriers that make it harder for women to access funding, gain recognition, or rise into leadership and production roles. Genres like Afrobeat and hip-hop often reinforce these limitations, with male voices and faces taking center stage while women fight for space behind the scenes and sometimes, even in front of the mic. Beyond visibility, women in music often navigate a minefield of harassment, limited resources, and structural inequality. The work environment is not always welcoming, and the media's portrayal of women frequently reinforces objectification rather than artistry. It's exhausting, and yet, in true Nigerian spirit, women continue to push through. Artists like Tiwa Savage, Yemi Alade, Ayra Starr, and Tems are

living proof that women are not only present but essential to the industry's success. They're making waves globally, challenging norms, and redefining what it means to be a Nigerian musician. But let's not stop at the stars. Women are also behind the scenes writing, producing, managing, educating, and innovating. Their contributions are powerful but still under-acknowledged. The truth is that their presence is an underutilized asset in an industry hungry for fresh voices and new direction.

What the industry needs now is structural change. We need to move beyond celebrating female artists as exceptions and start creating systems that support equity across the board. That means safer workspaces, mentorship programs, equal access to funding, intentional media representation, and firm policies against discrimination and harassment. It's not just a moral issue, it's a smart investment. When women are empowered to lead, create, and thrive, the entire industry benefits. And this conversation isn't just about Nigeria. The dynamics at play here echo across Africa's creative industries. The fight for equity in the music sector mirrors struggles in film, fashion, art, and beyond. By addressing these challenges and building more inclusive frameworks, we can unlock immense untapped potential across the continent. As more women break barriers, take up space, and tell their stories, the creative economy becomes not only more diverse but also more dynamic and sustainable. So yes, Nigerian music is loud, proud, and global. But for it to truly reach its full power, it must also be inclusive. It's time to hand more women the mic, not just on stage, but in boardrooms, studios, and everywhere decisions are made. Because when she speaks, she doesn't just echo, she changes the game."



COUNTRY CREATIVE SPOTLIGHT!



KENYA

1

A KENYAN VOICE, A GLOBAL STAGE

From Nairobi to Forbes, Spontaneous, the poet speaks! When Rachel Stephanie Akinyi, commonly known as Spontaneous the Poet, steps on stage, something changes; her voice isn't just heard, it's felt. This March, Spontaneous did something remarkable. She took the stage live at the Forbes Women Africa 2025 Summit. Yes. Forbes. A world stage brimming with trailblazers, visionaries, and powerhouse women from all over the continent, and there she was, our very own, standing tall and unapologetic, with poetry in her veins. Her performance touched on themes of womanhood, legacy, silence, and strength. She spoke of the women who came before us, those who walked through fire quietly, and of the courage it takes to use your voice when the world expects you to stay small. Every word she spoke carried weight. The rhythm of her delivery, the



Spontaneous the Poet, a member of the Community Advisory Group (CAG), Kenya

emotion in her voice, held the room in stillness. And yet, what made it even more special was how grounded she remained. Her message wasn't just for the cameras or the claps. It was for the girls back home. The young poets. The women who haven't yet found the words. This moment was even more significant because Spontaneous is a BtS icon. As part of BtS, she's been an advocate for empowering women in the creative space, helping them rise and be seen. Her performance at Forbes Woman Africa was a perfect reflection of this mission, using her platform to highlight the power of women's voices in art, poetry, and storytelling. It wasn't just about being in the spotlight; it was about shining that light on other women, encouraging them to step into their creative power. This was a proud moment not just for Spontaneous, but for all of us. For Kenyan artistry. For African storytelling. For every woman who has ever felt unseen. To watch her take her place on a global stage and speak from the heart with faith, fire, and full presence was a reminder: our voices belong everywhere! Spontaneous didn't just perform. She stood tall for all of us. And we're celebrating her every step of the way.

Spontaneous, a member of the BtS Country Advisory Group, serves as a role model for young female creatives, demonstrating the power of dignified and fulfilling work. Her involvement highlights the impact of representation and inspires and raises the esteem of emerging young female talent to pursue meaningful careers in the creative industry.

2

UGANDA

Collaboration with [The Njabala Foundation](#) at the [Obulo Bwaffe Festival](#)

As part of our efforts to create visibility for the BtS project, we are intentionally seeking opportunities to engage with creative spaces and collaborate with industry players. This approach allows us to ensure that creatives are not only informed about our work but also actively involved in the process, rather than being engaged solely at the dissemination and advocacy stages.

Our collaboration with the [Njabala Foundation](#) was a perfect alignment of missions. Njabala Foundation is dedicated to increasing the visibility of women artists by organizing campaigns that highlight their work. The foundation also actively campaigns against gender inequality in the art world, creating platforms that amplify the voices of women in the creative industry in Uganda.

As part of this partnership, our team participated in a panel discussion titled "[Cultivating Legacies](#)"—a key session within the festival, a week-long event held in Kampala, Uganda. This engagement provided a valuable opportunity to discuss our work, share insights, and connect with creatives who are directly impacted by our research.



The Government of Uganda, through Operation Creation of Wealth (OWC), injects 2.1 billion to support creatives in Northern Uganda

In early 2025, the Operation Wealth Creation (OWC) program, led by Gen. Salim Saleh, initiated efforts to support the creative sector in Northern Uganda. This included establishing the West Nile, Acholi, Lango, and Karamoja (WALK) Creative Arts Foundation, aiming to unify and empower creatives across these regions. The initiative plans to construct four major production studios in Gulu, Lira, Arua, and Kotido, and provide capacity-building programs for artists. Additionally, a proposal was submitted to the Ministry of Finance for funding to support these projects. However, some creatives have expressed concerns regarding transparency and inclusion within the WALK Foundation, leading to calls for direct engagement with Gen. Saleh to address these issues.

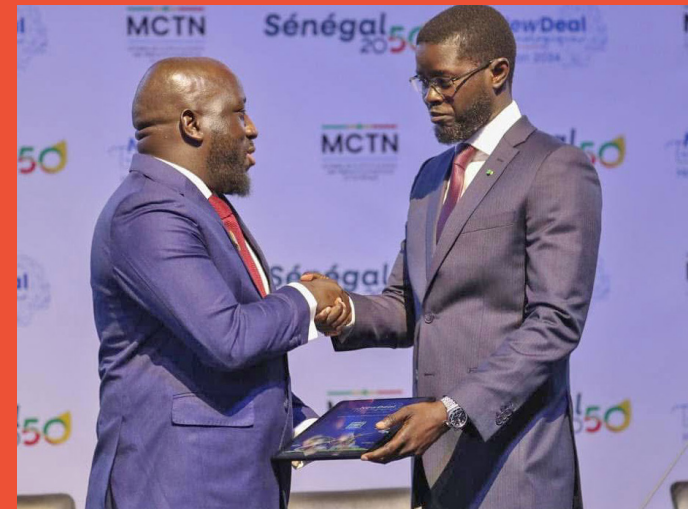
The BtS project will use its platforms to advocate for transparency and inclusion to promote gender equity, where there is equal access to funding and resources for both male and female creatives in Uganda.



SENEGAL

In 2025, digital innovation is revolutionizing Senegal's creative industry. From music and film to digital art and fashion, more creatives are harnessing technology to share their work, build careers, and reach global audiences. At the heart of this transformation is President Bassirou Diomaye Faye's **New Deal for Technology** a bold, forward-looking strategy that aims to position Senegal as a leading African hub for digital innovation by 2034. This initiative is set to democratize access to technology, open doors to international collaborations, and unlock significant revenue streams. The creative space in Senegal is no longer just a channel for artistic expression it's rapidly becoming a vital sector of the national economy and a powerful engine of opportunity.

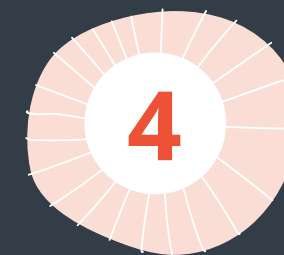
Against this backdrop, the **BtS (Behind the Scenes)** project gains powerful momentum. With a mission to uplift and empower young



Senegal President, H.E. Mr. Bassirou Diomaye Faye having a handshake during the Launch of the New Deal of Technology in Dakar.

female creatives, BtS is perfectly aligned with the vision of the New Deal. It envisions a future where barriers are broken down through digital connectivity, and where inclusive government-backed tech initiatives fuel growth and innovation. For young women in music, film, and digital art, BtS serves as both a guide and a launchpad. It offers tools and pathways to monetize their talent, network on a global scale, and drive meaningful economic impact.

This convergence of innovation and inclusion reflects the core of BtS's message: when digital access meets creative ambition, vibrant careers are born. And for all Senegalese creatives, this moment is a powerful affirmation that passion when empowered by technology can truly lead to prosperity.



GHANA

The creative sector in Ghana has seen both highs and lows. For example, after President John Mahama was sworn in, he unveiled an ambitious plan to transform Ghana into a premier cultural destination, featuring year-round film, music, culinary celebrations, and fashion.

However, the 2025 budget has proved to be a major challenge to the creative sector, as it has omitted funding for the tourism and creative art sector, marking a departure from previous allocations of GH¢115,694,000 in 2023 and GH¢260,948,961 in 2024 ([DailyGuide Network](#)). This omission contradicts President Mahama's ambitious plans and raises concerns about future support, which could mostly affect women in the industry.

The creative sector also saw rising stars making significant impacts with hit songs from Arathejay and Black Sheriff. The theatre scene equally experienced a resurgence in 2024, a reflection of a vibrant performing arts sector.

Using evidence, the BtS project aims to support and enhance existing efforts to ensure both female and male emerging talents benefit equally from the creative industry, promoting fair opportunities, personal fulfillment, and dignity in their careers.

5

RWANDA

Rwanda's creative sector is poised for an exciting leap forward in 2025. On 13 February, the [Students' Creative Society](#) made its debut at an event graced by representatives from the Museum Ingabo, the Rwanda National Commission for UNESCO, the University's Department of Career and Student Employability, alumni leaders, and other key stakeholders. Backed by UNESCO, this initiative is designed to spark vibrant communities of artistic expression and cultural engagement. By offering skill-building workshops, industry mentorship, and opportunities for student-driven projects in music, film, fashion, dance, and technology, the Society not only nurtures emerging talent but also positions Rwanda's creatives on the global stage. Its online platform bridges resource gaps, ensuring that every visionary student, wherever they are, can access the tools they need to innovate and collaborate.



Student and creative representatives pose for a group photo during the launch of the students' creative society at the University of Rwanda.

More than just a launchpad for ideas, the Students' Creative Society is a powerful testament to BtS's mission of empower youth creatives, particularly young women. By validating their talent and cultivating networks of peer and professional support, the Society dismantles the barriers that often hold female artists back. At the same time, it creates a competitive yet nurturing environment that invites all students to dream bigger and aim higher. For Rwanda's broader creative community, this initiative signals a new era of inclusion, innovation, and sustainable growth, an open invitation to engage, contribute, and shape the country's cultural economy for years to come.



For Rwanda's broader creative community, this initiative signals a new era of inclusion, innovation, and sustainable growth

6

NIGERIA

The 2025 Grammy Awards, held on February 2 in Los Angeles, became a historic celebration of African musical brilliance as Nigerian stars dominated the newly introduced Best African Music Performance category. Global icons like Burna Boy, Davido, Asake, Yemi Alade, and Wizkid lit up the nominations list, but all eyes were on reigning champion Tyla, the 22-year-old South African sensation who had claimed the award the previous year. In a thrilling upset, Nigeria's Tems triumphed with

Nigerian singer Tems receives the Best African Music Performance award for Love Me Jeje at the Grammy Awards.



her soulful anthem "Love Me Jeje," edging out fierce competition to secure the Grammy, a victory that resonated far beyond the glittering ceremony.

Now in its second year, the category has become a watershed moment for African artists, amplifying their influence on the global stage. Tems' win, however, transcended mere recognition. At 29, she

shattered lingering gender barriers in a male-dominated industry, proving that young women could not only compete but dominate. Her journey from Lagos studios to Grammy glory embodies the core mission of the BtS Project, an initiative dedicated to empowering underrepresented female artists through mentorship, resources, and global platforms. Tems' success is a rallying cry for Nigeria's next generation of creatives, particularly women: it screams that authenticity and vision can redefine outdated norms. Her Grammy is more than a Trophy; it's tangible proof that equitable opportunities and unwavering support can turn raw talent into world-shaping artistry. For BtS, this victory is both validation and fuel. It underscores the power of investing in women who dare to dream beyond borders, reinforcing the belief that when given the tools to thrive, they don't just break ceilings, they build new stages for the world to witness.

In a continent bursting with untapped potential, [Tems' story](#) is a beacon. It's not just about

music: it's about rewriting the narrative, one fearless artist at a time.



ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, a significant development in the creative sector was the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on March 17, 2025, between the Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Sport (MOCS), the Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority (EIPA), and MultiChoice Africa Holdings B.V. (MAH). This agreement, detailed in Capital Ethiopia: [Combating Piracy and Supporting Ethiopian Creative Sector](#), aims to combat piracy and enhance intellectual property rights protection. The MoU builds on previous collaborations under MAH's Partners Against Piracy (PAP) program, addressing the escalating threat of piracy that impacts creators, the economy, and cultural heritage. EIPA, established in 2003, administers intellectual property policies, while MAH, a leading entertainment provider for nearly three decades, contributes to the local media landscape. This MoU is a powerful step toward protecting creatives—especially young women—whose



work is often undervalued or exploited. For the Behind the Scenes (BtS) project, this signals institutional recognition of the need to safeguard intellectual property, ensuring fair compensation and dignity for creative labor. It reinforces the BtS goal of empowering young female creatives by fostering a safer, more supportive environment where their contributions are respected. This development tells all Ethiopian creatives that their voices matter, their work has value, and systemic change is possible when stakeholders collaborate to combat piracy and uplift the industry.

Ethiopian Ministry of Culture and Sport (MOCS), Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority (EIPA), and MultiChoice Africa sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to Combat Piracy and Support Ethiopian Cr

THE NUMBERS ARE IN AND **SO IS THE TRUTH**

LEADERSHIP IN AFRICA'S CREATIVE INDUSTRY



1 WOMAN: 5 MEN

We're deep into data crunching for the Behind the Scenes (BtS) Project, and some trends are impossible to ignore:

Only 17%

of leadership roles in the creative industry are held by women.

<https://www.kerningthegap.com/>

5 million

The creative sector employs 5 million people (US\$5 billion GDP/year); live music earned US\$200 million in 2022 (projected to double by 2030)

<https://artafricamagazine.org/africas-creative-goldmine-unlocking-growth-amid-gendered-challenges/>

10%

Africa is projected to supply 10% of global creative exports (US\$200 billion, 4% of regional GDP).

<https://mastercardfdn.org/en/articles/africas-creative-goldmine-unlocking-growth-amid-gendered-challenges/>

4%

The creative sector contributes 4% of sub-Saharan Africa's GDP (US\$58 billion annually) and 8.2% of regional jobs, surpassing global averages.

<https://artafricamagazine.org/africas-creative-goldmine-unlocking-growth-amid-gendered-challenges/>

Watch the scoping review videos that spotlight the challenges faced by female creative in Africa:

- [Here](#) for the French version
- [Here](#) for the English version

But here's the spark of hope. Young women creatives aren't just sitting back, they're breaking barriers, redefining success, and reshaping the industry on their terms. From bold artistic expressions to launching their ventures, they're pushing back hard and making waves.

This is more than data. It's a call to action. Let's support, invest in, and amplify women in the creative space. The future is hers, and it's already unfolding. But here's the good news: Young women creatives are pushing back,

CREATIVE FEATURE!

Was I that easy to forget?

00:39

"I'm having Starbucks, it's 3 pm here"

00:40

So eager to embrace it.
So fast to accept it-
It;
the change

00:41 "My professor says he's been to
Kampala."

00:50

My dear Muyindi lover,
Did the mention of home in a land so
far away hurt?
How does it feel
to be taunted with memories of a
place so familiar
And yet so remote?

My dear Muyindi lover,
does anything there remind you of me?
Do you search the grocery stores for matooke
and ghee
, or do you now prefer Starbucks and KFC?

My dear Muyindi lover,
I'm happy for you and
grateful for the opportunities overseas-
but
I can feel you feel us drowning
In the oceans between
and do nothing.

00:52

"What do you keep deleting?"

00:53

"Typing errors... effects of texting while half-
awake... hahaha"

**Muyindi: Luganda term to describe a person of Indian descent in Uganda.*



Rwandese youth researchers at Inshuti Gallery Art in Musanze District during data collection

**Kenya Office: Vienna Court, Fourth Floor, State House Crescent,
Nairobi, Kenya. P.O. Box 44168 – 00100
Nairobi, Kenya. Phone numbers: (+254) 769 060 463 / 785 048 377)
Email: info.kenya@icrw.org**

**Uganda Office: 1st Floor, S&L Chambers, Plot 14
Mackinnon Road, Nakasero – Kampala, Uganda.
P.O. Box 131136, Kampala. Phone Number:
(+256) 393 206 506) Email: info.uganda@icrw.org**

In partnership with

