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Behind the Scenes (BtS) Project Newsletter

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Vol.1 Issue 1

Welcome to the first issue of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW) Africa, ***Behind the Scenes*** Project quarterly newsletter! We are excited to share with you updates and news from our multi-country project.

ICRW
INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON WOMEN

mastercard foundation

BEHIND THE SCENES PROJECT
Young Women and Gender-Based Inequities in Africa's Creative Sector

Project Goal: Generate and disseminate evidence on the multiple and intersecting issues impacting young women creatives' access to dignified and fulfilling work in African countries.

Project Collaborators & Countries

Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda

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Responding to growing calls for deeper insights and rigorous evidence to support effective strategies that address gendered disparities in Africa's creative sector.

Africa's Creative Sector: Behind the Scenes

Africa's creative industry is a 'gold mine' and the region's most dynamic growth sector. By 2040, the sector will generate an additional \$20 billion in annual revenue and create over 20 million new jobs ([UNCTAD, 2022](#); [United Nations, 2019](#)). But what has the sector's growth and potential meant for young female creatives? To what extent are they benefiting from the boom in the sector? Are the region's young women creatives participating in the sector on their terms? What gendered inequities are mediating young women creatives' entry, participation, dignity, retention, and ability to benefit fully from the potential of the sectors?

[ICRW Africa](#), in partnership with the [Mastercard Foundation](#), has launched a groundbreaking three-year, seven-country research, capacity strengthening, and policy engagement project on Africa's creative sector, named: **[Behind the Scenes: Young Women and Gender-Based Inequities in Africa's Creative Sector](#)**, in response to the growing calls for **deeper insights** and **rigorous evidence to support effective strategies that address gendered disparities**

in Africa's creative sector. The project is implemented in active collaboration with Ethiopia's [Organisation for Social Science and Southern Africa \(OSSREA\)](#), the [University of Cape Coast](#), Ghana, the [University of Lagos](#), Nigeria, the [University of Rwanda](#), Rwanda, and [LAREM: Laborative de Recherches Economiques et Monetaires](#), Senegal from 2023-2026.

Project Updates



BtS Project Launched in Seven African Countries

BtS Project Launched in Seven African Countries

Between January and April 2024, the *Behind the Scenes* project was formally launched in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda. Key stakeholders in government, creative industries (artists and policy actors), non-governmental organizations, and research institutions participated in the

launch. The project launched across the seven countries elicited enthusiasm and provided opportunities to share the project roadmap and co-create the research agenda. Performances by artists in some countries showcased the industry's valuable and rich talent and raised anticipation for the project research outcomes. During the launches, the project's National Country Advisory Groups, a body of creative sector stakeholders, to provide advisory services were inaugurated.



Nairobi all project partners' meeting: Center- Sponty (Creative), Augustine Mwavuo (Youth Researcher (YR),Kenya), Natukunda Denise (YR,Uganda), Prof Georgina Yaa Oduro (Project Lead (PL), Ghana), Dr. Ousmane Faye (PL Senegal), Left - Garede Yilma (Ethiopia), Right - Dr. Michael Kunnuji (PL Nigeria) and project team

BtS All Partners' Meeting

BtS [project partners](#) met in Nairobi, Kenya from August 17th – 21st, 2024.

Participants included country project leads, youth researchers, creatives, policy

stakeholders, and the Mastercard Foundation team. During the meeting, the project roadmap, study tools, and policy engagement plans were deliberated.

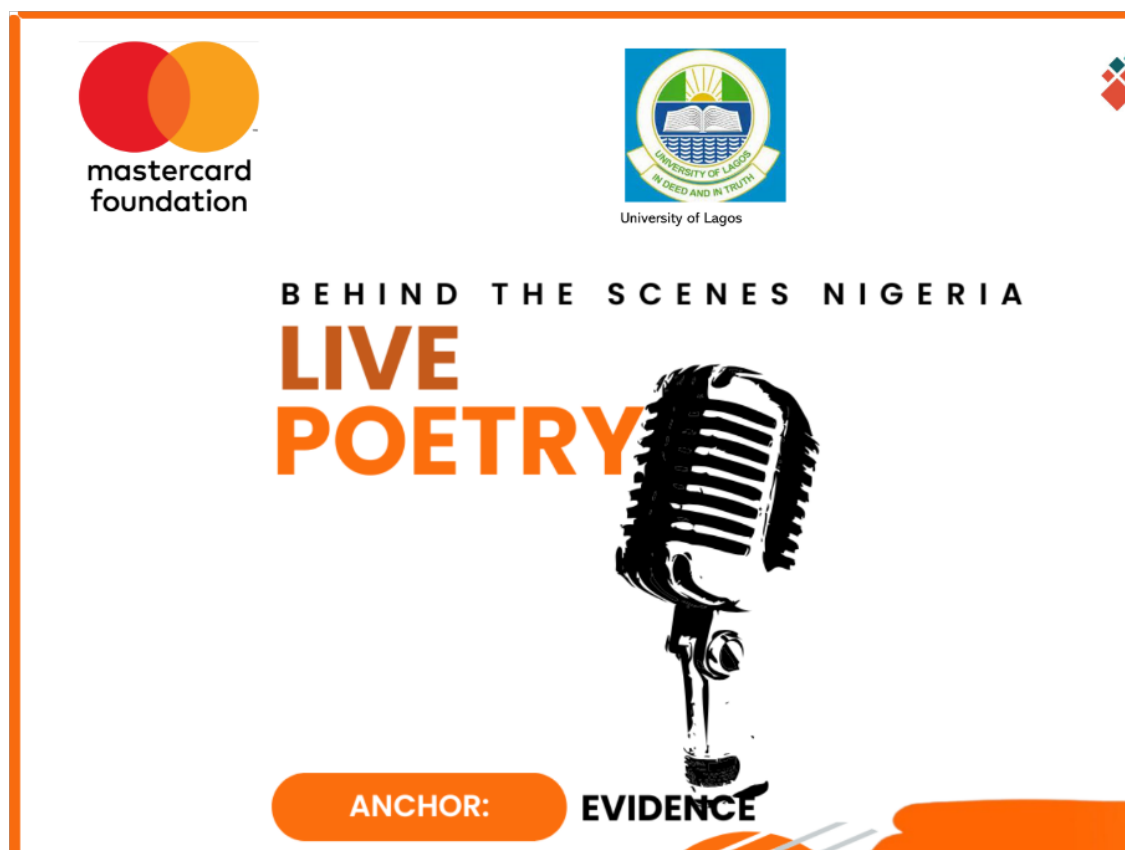
BtS Youth Researchers Benefit from Multiple Trainings

One hundred youth researchers (79 female and 21 male) from seven African countries are engaged in the [***Behind the Scenes***](#) project. These youth researchers are supporting the project while also benefiting from multiple activities to strengthen their skills and competencies. They have participated in training sessions on research ethics, systematic reviews, reference management, research tool development, data collection, and safeguarding. Future training sessions on public presentation, Gender 101, manuscript development, and policy engagement are planned. As efforts to research, understand, and confront uneven gender norms in Africa expand, and the opportunities and prospects for programming, advocacy, and change grow, these skills and competencies will be beneficial to the BtS youth researchers.

Evidence Roundtable

The *Behind the Scenes* project is currently conducting a scoping review to understand the state of research and evidence on women creatives in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). The review covers three major questions: 1) In which creative industry sub-sectors and roles do women in SSA participate? 2) What challenges do they face? And 3), how do they negotiate or cope with these challenges? Answers to these questions have the potential to inform new research questions and furnish evidence for the formulation and

implementation of effective policy and programmatic action. Findings from the review will be shared in a future issue of the *BtS project Newsletter*.



Nigeria BtS Partner's 16 Days of Activism Campaign

BtS Nigeria partner, the University of Lagos' country project leads and youth researchers organized a campaign and joined the [Global 16 Days of Activism Campaign](#) dedicated to ending gender-based violence from November 25th, International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, to December 10th, Human Rights Day.

The campaign raised awareness on gender-based violence and cyberbullying, and generated discussions on what this means in and for the creative sector. Campaign engagements were [online](#) and in-person. Activities included live conversations on [Instagram](#) with creative celebrity Chef Amaka and other

guests, a publicity walk, an art exhibition, and celebrations of female creative changemakers. The online conversations engaged audiences on various topics in the creative sector including workplace harassment and gender discrimination, nurturing and showcasing creative talent through topics like “It’s cool to be you – embracing your unique style and identity”, live poetry, and art therapy.



Presentation at the Uganda Musicians' Associations' Meeting

Strategic Partnerships for Research Uptake: Meeting the Uganda Musicians' Association

ICRW Uganda *BtS* project team met women artists from the Uganda Musicians' Association on October 16th, 2024. The meeting enhanced awareness of the project evidence generation objectives, and strengthened partnerships with the creatives to leverage their expertise for the research. The early engagement with the artists served to prepare the association for the gender lens sector mapping and data collection while offering an opportunity for the team and the

artists to jointly deliberate on the selection process for a creative ambassador for the project.

During the meeting, the Centenary Bank of Uganda trained the artists on financial management as a key factor in their economic empowerment.

Youth Researcher Perspective

At the heart of the project is 'meaningful youth engagement' in research. We asked *BtS* youth researchers what meaningful youth engagement in research projects means to them and their aspirations. We also heard from one of the project's Country Advisory Group members about her engagement as a creative. Here is what we learned:



Being involved in the BtS research project has been an invaluable experience. It has allowed me to learn more and think of ways to contribute in addressing the gender-based inequities in Africa's creative sector, where women often face barriers. Through this project, I have learned a lot from expert researchers, understanding how research can drive meaningful change. This experience has given me the confidence to push for increased gender equality and more possibilities for young people in the creative industry, especially in Rwanda. With this experience, I will be able to write my final research project based on this topic.



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Engaging in the BtS project has become a journey of self-growth for me. Beyond building my academic skills, it has made me more gender-conscious than ever before. Since I started this research, I find myself constantly contemplating how gender is intertwined with power dynamics, societal norms, and cultural narratives. Now, I understand that the way all these themes manifest in the creative sector is very complex, and I look forward to uncover how they all come together within this field.

Edongest Mequanint, Youth Researcher



**A Creative's Perspective.
BtS Project Country Advisory Group Member**

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Being part of the BtS project has been a transformative experience that has given me a deeper sense of purpose in my life. It has been an incredible opportunity to fill a gap to advocate for female creatives, whilst exploring and seeking to address the inequalities we face. I have the chance to contribute to tangible solutions that can change lives and shift perspectives. The project offers a chance to serve, inspire and create a stronger, more equitable creative sector.



Look Out!

Gender-lensed Mapping of Africa’s Creative Sector for Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, and Uganda by the [BtS project](#) is underway. This activity will uncover the situation and gender gaps in the respective countries’ creative sectors.



Doreck Ankunda receives best actress award at the Bayelsa Film Festival

Celebrating Wins in Africa’s Creative Industry

- Doreck Ankunda, disability inclusion facilitator, advocate, actress, and Uganda BtS project Country Advisory Group member won the [‘Best Actress’ award at the 2024 Bayelsa International Film Festival in Nigeria](#) for her role in the film ‘When You Become Me’
- Lesogo Chombo, 26, Botswana attorney and Miss World Africa 2024 winner, was [appointed Minister of Youth and Gender Equality](#)

BtS Project in the News

- [Women creatives from Africa fight to end gender inequalities in the sector](#)
- Ghana - [Women empowerment: Research initiative launched to enhance capacity of women in creative arts sector](#)
- Uganda - [Researchers set out to discover challenges for female creatives; Esther Nakaziba makes film sets look more believable and glamorous](#)
- Senegal - [Égalité des Sexes dans le Secteur Créatif Africain : Le LAREM lance son projet "Behind the Scenes" ; Egalité des sexes dans le secteur créatif africain : Le projet «Behind the Scenes» pour rectifier le tir](#)

Resources



Resources - Watch, Attend, Read

Watch

- [Senegal **BtS** project launch in Dakar](#)
- [Africa's women creatives are ready to take on the world](#) (Listen)

Attend

- [Global Women's Empowerment & Leadership Summit](#). Theme: "Break Barriers, Build Futures" - October 27-29, 2025, Bali, Indonesia
- [Global Conference on Women's Studies](#) - July 25-27, 2025, Copenhagen, Denmark. Submit abstracts
- [Innovation Africa Summit](#) - May 1, 2025, Nairobi, Kenya

Read

- [Africa's Creative Renaissance](#) - Creative industries a potential source of job creation on the continent
- Contribution of [Nigeria's](#) creative and communication industry to the country's GDP in 2023
- Film industry in English-speaking [West Africa - Statistics and facts](#)
- UNDP's [Women Creative Labs](#): Empowering women through creative spaces

Publications

- [The Creative Economy in Africa: The Focus and Scope of the African Journal of Creative Economy](#)
- [The Future of Africa's Creative Industries](#)

- [Creative Economy Outlook 2024](#)



- Call for applications for research on African artistic practices - [Cadbury Fellowship Programme in Honour of Karin Barbe](#). Early-career African scholars should apply
- The Mastercard Foundation EdTech Fellowship - An entrepreneurship acceleration program designed to support promising, African EdTech ventures - [Apply](#)
- [Cisco Youth Leadership Award](#) - A young person who has demonstrated impact in achieving the United Nations' Global Goals, should apply for this Global Citizen's award for the most inspiring youth leaders
- Join a community of creatives - Africa Creatives Alliance (ACA), a new initiative dedicated to transforming Africa's cultural and creative industries - [Apply](#)
- [Africa Research Scholarship Programme](#) - Masters Degree at Wageningen University and Research
- [Mentorship for Artists in Africa](#), 2025 - Building Beyond Mentorship
- [Fellowship for African researchers](#) - CEGA Fellowship Program

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