CfCA Study on Trends in Public Investment in Zambia's Culture Sector: A 2025 Follow-up to the 2024 Baseline Assessment

CONNECT FOR CULTURE AFRICA

SELAM

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Final Report

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ABREVIATIONS

AU	African Union
CAGs	Cluster Advisory Groups
CCIs	Cultural and creative industries
CCS	Cultural and creative sector
CfCA	Connect for Culture Africa
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EU	European Union
EU MS	European Union Member States
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MGE	Mzansi Golden Economy
MoYSA	Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts
MTEF	Medium-Term Expenditure Framework
NAC	The National Arts Council
NFVF	National Film and Video Foundation
PAAGZ	People's Action for Accountability and Good Governance in Zambia
PPPs	Public-private partnerships
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
ZAMCOM	Zambia Institute of Mass Communication
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2025 Baseline Update on Public Funding to Zambia's Culture and Creative Industries (CCIs) highlights a sector of growing importance but continued marginalisation in the national fiscal framework. While government allocations increased from **K102.1 million in 2024 to K121.4 million in 2025**, representing a 1**8 percent rise**, this equates to just **0.09 percent of the national budget.** This remains far below the **African Union's benchmark of 1 percent,** underscoring the persistent underfunding of a sector that has potential to contribute significantly to economic diversification, youth employment, and cultural diplomacy.

This update, conducted by PAAGZ in partnership with Selam under the Connect for Culture Africa (CfCA) initiative, offers a comparative analysis of public investment trends between 2024 and 2025. ***It reveals modest progress—such as a 237% nominal increase in budget allocation to the Ministry of Youth, Sport, and Arts and the operationalisation of the 2023 National Arts and Film Policies—but these gains are undermined by contradictory developments. A 50% cut in capital investment, a 55% reduction in culture grants to local authorities, and the continued absence of a central innovation fund signal a lack of strategic commitment and coordination.***

The findings reveal several critical dynamics. The increase in allocations has been largely concentrated within the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, with only marginal growth in the Ministry of Tourism's Creative Industry line and the provincial Arts and Culture sub-programmes. This fragmentation illustrates the absence of a coherent national financing framework. Moreover, while recurrent expenditure for events and fairs has expanded, there has been a steep decline in capital investment for creative infrastructure, falling by almost half. This threatens long-term development by constraining the growth of theatres, cultural centres, and creative hubs. In addition, local authority cultural grants have been reduced by more than 50 percent, weakening decentralisation and reducing the ability of communities to sustain cultural programmes.

Policy implementation has also struggled to keep pace with ambition. Although the 2023 National Arts and Film Policies have been activated, funding has been skewed toward short-term operational activities rather than long-term institutional strengthening. The appointment of Provincial Arts Development Officers represents progress, but their effectiveness is constrained by limited fiscal transfers. Zambia has also not successfully positioned CCIs within broader development financing frameworks, missing opportunities to leverage concessional loans and donor support that have benefited other sectors such as agriculture and tourism.

The implications are clear: ***without deliberate, scaled up, and sustained public investment, Zambia will squander one of its most dynamic development assets.*** The arts are not just expressions of culture; they are industries, livelihoods, export commodities, and tools for diplomacy and social cohesion. Countries across Africa are awakening to this reality—integrating CCIs into their national growth strategies, investing in creative infrastructure, and attracting donor and private-sector co-financing. Zambia risks being left behind.

To address these challenges, the report calls for a decisive shift in both financing and governance. While detailed strategies are presented in the full document, several recommendations are of immediate priority:

- **Establish a Culture and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CCI-IF):** A dedicated financing mechanism to support enterprise incubation, digital content, and creative infrastructure, while leveraging private-sector and donor contributions.

- **Advocacy must be intensified to establish a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries,** which would serve as a focal point for legislative scrutiny, public hearings, and constituency-based oversight of cultural investment
- ***Institutional coordination must also be improved.*** The current fragmentation—with CCIs split across the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, the Ministry of Tourism, and provincial administrations—has created inefficiencies and weakened strategic coherence
- **Establishing a national "Art and Culture Budget Forum"** which can serve as a coordination platform to unify the sector's voice, set advocacy targets, and track progress
- The media has a vital role to play in shifting public and political perceptions of CCIs. Yet, media engagement has often been event-driven or limited to coverage of cultural festivals.
- **Restore and ring-fence local authority cultural grants:** Safeguard resources for traditional ceremonies, community arts, and provincial festivals as part of decentralisation.
- **Scale up capital investment in infrastructure:** Reverse recent cuts and prioritise cultural centres, performance spaces, and creative hubs necessary for sectoral growth.
- **Strengthen institutional coordination:** Develop a unified national financing and governance strategy, aligning CCI spending across ministries and provinces with the 8th National Development Plan.
- **Enhance oversight and accountability:** Establish a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on CCIs to ensure sustained scrutiny, visibility, and transparency of sectoral funding.
- **Introduce incentives for private-sector engagement:** Offer tax incentives, CSR recognition, and structured PPP platforms to stimulate greater private investment in CCIs.

Finally, the sector must reposition itself as an engine of growth, employment, and innovation rather than as a peripheral cultural activity. Evidence-based advocacy will be critical in shifting narratives, highlighting the CCIs as a multiplier for industrial diversification, cultural diplomacy, and inclusive national development.

In conclusion, the 2025 budget reflects modest progress, but without structural reforms in financing, governance, and infrastructure, the sector risks continued underperformance. The next budget cycle must move beyond symbolic increases to deliver strategic, transformative investments that place CCIs at the heart of Zambia's development agenda.

1. INTRODUCTION

The creative and cultural industries (CCIs) in Zambia have increasingly gained recognition as vital sectors for economic diversification, social transformation, and national identity preservation. As enshrined in the African Union's Agenda 2063 and Zambia's Vision 2030, culture is no longer seen merely as a social good but as a strategic development resource. Against this backdrop, public investment in the arts, culture, and heritage is emerging as a critical indicator of political commitment to inclusive, sustainable development.

The initial baseline study conducted in 2024 sought to provide an empirical foundation for understanding the level, structure, and effectiveness of public funding to Zambia's CCIs. It offered the first comprehensive mapping of government budget allocations, institutional roles, and stakeholder participation in the sector. The study highlighted gaps in financing, coordination, and policy coherence, while also identifying opportunities for reform and expansion.

The 2025 update builds on this foundation. It not only tracks year-on-year changes in budget allocations and policy implementation but also responds to recent developments, including the operationalisation of the National Arts Policy (2023), the introduction of local authority culture grants, and increasing stakeholder engagement in public finance processes. By adopting a comparative and participatory methodology, the update provides a current, evidence-based assessment of how public support for CCIs in Zambia is evolving.

The need and urgency for increased public investment in the sector cannot be overstated. Zambia's creative industries remain vastly underfunded despite their potential to contribute significantly to youth employment, rural development, tourism, innovation, and national cohesion. While the 2025 budget marked a welcome increase in allocation, the sector still receives less than 0.1% of the national budget—far below the African Union's 1% benchmark. Without deliberate and scaled-up investment, the sector risks stagnation, underutilisation of talent, and missed opportunities to harness culture for economic transformation.

Furthermore, as Zambia grapples with high youth unemployment and the search for alternative growth pathways beyond extractives and agriculture, investing in CCIs presents a timely and viable solution. The creative economy offers low-barrier entry points for young people, women, and informal actors, while also promoting innovation, inclusion, and digital transformation.

This updated report is structured to inform a wide range of actors—including policymakers, civil society organisations, artists, development partners, and the private sector. It aims to strengthen advocacy for increased and equitable public funding to the sector, monitor progress on policy commitments, and guide future strategic investments. In doing so, the report contributes to building a cultural ecosystem that is not only artistically vibrant but also economically viable and socially inclusive.

The 2025 baseline update comes at a crucial juncture. With the creative economy gaining momentum globally, Zambia has a unique opportunity to position its cultural assets as engines for development. Realising this potential requires not just policy ambition but also sustained, transparent, and equitable public investment. This report is both a mirror and a map: reflecting the current state of support for culture in Zambia and charting possible paths forward

2. BACKGROUND

The People's Action for Accountability and Good Governance in Zambia (PAAGZ) is an independent, non-profit organization established to strengthen public sector transparency, accountability, and citizen participation. Rooted in the belief that responsive governance is essential for social justice and inclusive development, PAAGZ works to improve public service delivery and institutional performance, particularly for marginalized groups such as women, youth, and rural communities. Through its innovative programming and policy engagement work, PAAGZ leverages data, civic education, and the arts to foster participatory governance and amplify underrepresented voices.

In pursuit of these goals, PAAGZ is implementing the Connect for Culture Africa (CfCA) initiative in Zambia, in partnership with Selam, a Pan-African cultural organization headquartered in Sweden. The CfCA initiative, implemented by Selam in partnership with the African Union (AU), aims to promote and develop the culture and creative industry sector within the AU member states. One key objective of the initiative is to lobby for increased public funding in the culture sector from government sources.

In 2024, as part of its implementation of CfCA, PAAGZ conducted a comprehensive Baseline Study and Actor Mapping covering public funding to CCIs in Zambia from 2019 to 2024. This baseline provided a foundational reference for identifying trends in budgetary allocations, institutional engagement, and governance mechanisms related to the cultural sector. It also highlighted systemic gaps in resourcing, coordination, and political will, offering a roadmap for advocacy and stakeholder mobilization.

The 2025 update of the baseline is driven by the need to remain responsive to emerging fiscal developments, particularly in light of Zambia's newly announced 2025 national budget. This update allows for a comparative analysis of budgetary shifts, stagnations, or improvements in the treatment of CCIs within national planning and financing frameworks. It also aims to identify new opportunities for policy influence, bolster the evidence base for multi-stakeholder advocacy, and inform broader discourse on the role of the arts in national development. Ultimately, the update is both a monitoring tool and a strategic instrument to promote transparent, inclusive, and sustained public investment in Zambia's cultural future.

2.1. Scope and Objectives of the 2025 Update

The 2025 Update of the Baseline Study on Public Funding to the Culture and Creative Industries (CCIs) in Zambia serves as a targeted follow-up to the foundational study conducted by PAAGZ and Selam in 2024. This update focuses specifically on Zambia's 2025 national budget, offering a timely assessment of whether recent policy pronouncements and advocacy efforts have translated into measurable improvements in public investment for the cultural sector.

This exercise is not merely a technical update but a strategic continuation of the broader Connect for Culture Africa (CfCA) advocacy agenda, aimed at influencing fiscal decision-making and promoting a sustainable, inclusive ecosystem for Zambia's CCIs. The 2025 update reflects the dynamic nature of budgetary processes and seeks to ensure that policy advocacy is anchored in current, accurate, and relevant data.

2.1.1. Scope of the Update

The scope of the update includes:

- Reviewing the 2025 national budget with particular attention to ministries, departments, and agencies (MDAs) that have direct or indirect mandates related to the cultural and creative industries.

- Tracking allocations, disbursements, and line items that demonstrate either a continuation, expansion, or reduction of support to the CCIs relative to the 2019–2024 period Baseline Report.
- Engaging relevant institutions, including the Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, National Arts Council (NAC), and other public bodies, to verify and interpret fiscal data.
- Capturing institutional developments, such as policy shifts, structural changes, or new programs that impact the cultural sector's funding environment.
- Maintaining consistency with the original methodology used in the 2024 baseline study to enable accurate year-on-year comparison.

2.1.2. Objectives of the Update

The key objectives of the 2025 update are to:

1. Provide an evidence-based analysis of public funding to Zambia's CCIs as reflected in the approved 2025 national budget.
2. Compare changes in public investment between the 2024 and 2025 fiscal years, identifying growth areas, regressions, or stagnations in state support for the sector.
3. Assess the responsiveness of government institutions to previous advocacy, including institutional reforms, policy statements, or re-prioritization of the cultural sector.
4. Highlight emerging challenges and opportunities for targeted stakeholder engagement and advocacy at both the national and subnational levels.
5. Offer actionable recommendations to strengthen civil society advocacy, parliamentary engagement, and media outreach to improve future investment in the cultural sector.

The idea of focusing on current data and institutional behaviour in the 2025 update is to empower stakeholders, particularly internal players in government, civil society, artists, policy advocates, and development partners, with the information needed to sustain further momentum toward advocating for a better publicly well-funded, vibrant cultural ecosystem in Zambia.

2.2. Link to the 2024 Baseline Study and Continuity

The 2025 update builds directly on the foundational work undertaken through the 2024 Baseline Study on Public Funding for the Culture and Arts Sector in Zambia. The baseline study served as a critical entry point for understanding the state of government investment in the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), the institutional landscape, legislative environment, and performance of the sector in economic terms—particularly employment and GDP contribution.

2.2.1. Building on the 2024 Baseline Scope and Context

The baseline covered the five-year period from 2019 to 2024, which was particularly significant given the political transition in 2021 and the subsequent shift in policy orientation under a new government administration. From 2022 onwards, the new government presided over the national budget and initiated policy reforms, including the development of the National Arts Policy (2023) and the Revised National Film Policy (2023), both of which signal stronger intent towards institutional support for the sector.

The baseline's focus on budgetary analysis provided a clear picture of the resource allocation patterns from both the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Arts and provincial administrative budgets, revealing that allocations to the arts and culture sector remained below 1% of the national budget. Despite some increases in nominal terms—particularly a 237% increase from K5.4 million to K18.3 million in 2024—the sector's share of the total national budget and domestic revenues remained negligible, averaging below 0.1% throughout the review period.

3. METHODOLOGY FOR THE 2025 BASELINE UPDATE PERSPECTIVES

This 2025 update to the baseline study on Public Funding to Culture and Creative Industries (CCIs) in Zambia adopted a comparative, participatory, and evidence-based approach to reflect fiscal, institutional, and policy changes since the initial 2024 baseline. The methodology retained core elements from the previous study to ensure consistency, while also integrating new tools and data sources for deeper analysis.

3.1 Comparative Framework

The update was guided by a longitudinal comparative framework. This enabled year-on-year analysis of budget allocations, institutional behaviour, and sector performance from 2019 to 2025, with a specific focus on shifts occurring between 2024 and 2025.

3.2 Data Collection

Data for the update was collected from multiple sources:

- National Budget Documents (Yellow Books 2024 and 2025)
- Ministerial Budget Briefs from the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP) and the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts (MoYSA)
- Expenditure Reports and Disbursement Records for 2023–2024
- Strategic and Policy Documents including the 8th National Development Plan, National Arts Policy (2023), and the Revised National Film Policy (2023)
- Parliamentary Budget Submissions and proceedings
- Consultations with key informants in government institutions, arts councils, CSOs, and cultural organisations

3.3 Stakeholder Consultations

Targeted consultations were conducted with key stakeholders to verify quantitative data and gather qualitative insights. These included:

- Structured interviews with officials from MoYSA, NAC, MoFNP, and selected provincial administrations.
- Focus group discussions with creative sector representatives and CSOs (e.g., PAAGZ)

3.4 Analytical Tools

Several analytical techniques and tools were applied:

- Budget Trend Analysis: Tracking nominal and percentage changes in allocations to CCIs
- Policy Implementation Mapping: Assessing the operationalisation of key policies adopted since 2023
- Geographic Equity Review: Exploring the emergence of subnational investment through local authorities
- Actor Matrix: Evaluating institutional roles and the dynamics of coordination

3.5 Validation and Triangulation

To ensure reliability and accuracy, data and findings were cross validated using:

- Official budgetary records and expenditure statements
- Stakeholder interviews and expert opinion
- Third-party research and media reviews
- Comparative assessment with 2024 baseline findings

3.6 Limitations

While every effort was made to maintain methodological rigor, certain limitations were encountered:

- Delayed or unavailable data from local authorities on newly introduced culture grants
- Limited access to disaggregated expenditure data for some Ministries, Provinces and Other Spending Agencies (MDAs)
- Inconsistencies in policy implementation timelines across provinces

Despite these constraints, the 2025 update presents a robust, timely, and representative overview of the current state of public investment in Zambia's culture and creative industries.

4. PROGRESS AND NEW DEVELOPMENTS AND POLICY/GOVERNMENT COMMITMENTS (2025)

4.1 Increased Nominal Budget Allocation

Since the publication of the 2024 baseline, there have been modest yet significant developments in Zambia's approach to supporting the culture and creative industries (CCIs). The 2025 National Budget reflected a notable increase in funding for the sector, rising from K5.4 million in 2023 to K18.3 million in 2024, a 237% increase. While this marks a positive shift in allocation, the sector's share of the total national budget remains below 0.1%, indicating that arts and culture still lack the recognition accorded to priority sectors.

In terms of policy, the National Arts Policy (2023) and the Revised National Film Policy (2023) are beginning to transition from framework documents into actionable strategies. Pilot programs, particularly those tied to artist welfare and creative enterprise development, have emerged under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts (MYSA), signalling early steps toward implementation.

Furthermore, advocacy efforts driven by co-created initiatives and agreements, including PAAGZ in collaboration with the Department of Arts and National Arts Council (NAC), the Technical Working Group on Arts under the Connect for Culture Project, have resulted in greater visibility of the arts within specific platforms such as Parliamentary Committee hearings and budget consultation forums. These developments mark an encouraging, albeit still nascent, trend towards improved state responsiveness and stakeholder engagement.

The 2025 budget presentation saw a substantial nominal increase in allocations to the arts—237% from K5.4 million in 2023/2024 to K18.3 million in 2024/2025. While this appears slightly promising, the sector's share of the national budget remains less than 0.1%, far below the African Union's benchmark of 1% by 2030.

Why this matters: It reflects growing awareness or political will to support the sector. However, real prioritisation remains weak, as this allocation still ranks among the lowest for any public sector function. It also shows that budget increases alone are not sufficient unless backed by strategic planning and institutional support.

4.2. Operationalization of National Arts and Film Policies (2023)

The 2023 policy reforms laid out frameworks for:

- Artist welfare (contracts, pensions, health cover)
- Skills development
- Intellectual property protection
- Culture as an economic sector, not just a social one

In 2025, initial steps have begun:

- MoYSA has started pilot grant programs for creative enterprises
- There is increased reference to the creative economy in economic empowerment schemes
- Capacity-building programs through the National Arts Council are gaining traction

Why this matters: Policy reforms are now slowly transitioning into programmatic interventions, meaning the advocacy is bearing fruit. However, this also requires the baseline to now monitor implementation gaps, not just policy presence.

4.3. Culture Grants to Local Authorities - Fiscal Innovations and Opportunities

A key fiscal innovation introduced in 2025 is the allocation of culture grants to local authorities. This move indicates an emerging decentralisation agenda where provincial and district-level administrations are being entrusted with culture-related programming. This model offers a valuable opportunity for community-based access to cultural resources and grassroots empowerment.

Additionally, there are increasing calls for the establishment of a National Culture and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CCI-IF), which would provide dedicated grants to innovative projects, especially for youth and digital content creators. This proposed fund, if operationalised, could serve as a catalyst for public-private partnerships, donor co-financing, and targeted support to underrepresented and grassroots segments of the creative ecosystem.

The Constituency Development Fund (CDF) is also being cited as a potential instrument for supporting community-based arts activities, under the economic empowerment and social inclusion windows. These fiscal innovations point to the growing potential for a multi-channel, locally anchored, and responsive funding landscape for CCIs.

Since the last baseline report, one of the most transformative changes in 2025 is the introduction of culture-specific budget lines at the local authority level (e.g., through the Constituency Development Fund and special provincial sub-programmes).

This reflects:

- A move towards decentralisation
- Recognition of culture as a development function, not just a national identity tool
- Opportunities to make funding more accessible to community-based creatives

Why this matters: This offers a new area to track equity, access, and local innovation. The baseline must now look beyond national figures to provincial and district-level allocations and assess whether this decentralisation improves outcomes or leads to further fragmentation.

4.4 Decentralisation and Subnational Investment Trends

The inclusion of arts and culture line items in subnational budgets is a relatively new development in Zambia's fiscal architecture. While previously culture was predominantly funded at the national and provincial levels, the 2025 budget indicates the beginning of structured decentralisation. It should also be acknowledged that the support, appointment and deployment of Provincial Arts Development Officers (PADOs) is a progressive form of decentralising arts development at provincial level. So far, 5 officers have been employed, oriented (including by PAAGZ), and deployed. This is a significant move towards mainstreaming and devolving the functions from the central level.

At the local level, Culture grants allocated to local authorities provide a framework for arts programming outside of Lusaka, allowing artists in provinces and districts to access public support. However, the baseline update reveals significant disparities in allocation levels and administrative readiness across provinces.

Some local councils have embraced cultural programming, integrating traditional ceremonies, youth arts training, and cultural exhibitions into their annual plans. Others lack the capacity or political will to prioritize the sector. This unevenness underscores the need for a decentralisation support mechanism, including capacity building, monitoring tools, and national-level guidance to ensure coherent and equitable investment in arts and culture across the country at local level.

The constitution of the republic of Zambia provides under Article 147 (2) provides an Annex which shows the functions of National, Provincial and Local levels of Government[1]. In this regard, the cultural matters function is provided for in the constitution as a mutually exclusive local authority function and concurrent national and provincial function.

1. Constitution of the Republic of Zambia (Amended 2016)

In 2023, the culture matters sub function was devolved through a Cabinet Circular No. 2 of 2023 and the resources for the function provided for through the 2024 national budget which provided a sector grant budget line under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture for funding the Local Authorities to perform the cultural matters devolved function.

Budgetary provision under the national budgets also remains at the provincial level as this function is a concurrent national and provincial function as well, hence the provincial budget allocations for cultural matters.

Arts and Creatives is not listed under the constitution as a devolving function to the Local Authorities. Instead, under the Arts and Creatives, a different form of administrative decentralisation is observed. Government uses the different form of administrative decentralisation and Delegation: Under Delegation, the central government assigns specific functions or tasks to semi-autonomous public authorities, corporations, or area-wide/ regional authorities. These entities operate independently but still remain accountable to the central government. In this regard, the National Arts Council is the delegated authority performing some specific roles as prescribed in its mandate by the National Arts Council Act.

Budget Execution is done within the Integrated Financial Management Information System (IFMIS). The Budget Office under the Ministry of Finance and National Planning provides ceilings in the system to the Heads of expenditure under the National Budget, of the limits to which they can spend for the quarter based on forecasted revenue collections. Ministries and Spending Agencies will allocate to the different budget lines up to the ceiling and the Budget Office will release these budgets monthly allowing funds flow from the main government account to the Treasury Single Account (TSA) which is a spending Account. Ministries can then process payments to different payees within the system and advise the Treasury through the system. The MOFNP, will then pay the different accounts based on the list submitted by the Ministries and Spending Agencies in the system.

4.5 Legislative and Institutional Reform Monitoring

The 2024 baseline identified a fragmented and outdated legal environment governing Zambia's CCIs. While progress has been made with the approval of the National Arts Policy and Revised Film Policy in 2023, several key institutional reforms remain pending.

In 2025, civil society actors and sector leaders have amplified calls for the reform of the National Arts Council Act (1994), which many consider misaligned with current sector dynamics. Additionally, there is growing momentum for the establishment of a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries, a proposal that has received informal endorsement but is yet to be formally tabled.

The baseline update finds that while the new policies have prompted increased dialogue, actual institutional transformation remains slow. The challenge lies not in policy formulation, but in operationalisation, monitoring, and accountability. Integrating budget tracking with policy implementation scorecards could help bridge this gap.

Advocacy groups, including PAAGZ, have proposed the creation of a Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries—separate from the current split committees (Tourism and Youth).

While still under discussion, this is a potential game-changer. It would:

- Enable focused legislative oversight on CCIs
- Give the sector stronger visibility in Parliament
- Give the sector recognition regards the sector's economic contribution to the nation's GDP.
- Enhance scrutiny of annual budget allocations and performance

Why this matters: If successful, this would institutionalize political accountability and create a legislative platform for artists and creatives to engage more effectively with public finance processes.

4.6 Private Sector and Donor Engagement

The baseline update finds a growing awareness among private sector actors of the economic potential of the creative industries. Companies involved in telecommunications, beverages, fashion, and media are increasingly aligning their brand strategies with creative sponsorships. However, these efforts remain largely ad hoc.

There is currently no national framework for public-private partnerships (PPPs) in the culture sector. The establishment of the proposed CCI Innovation Fund could formalise mechanisms for matching public funds with private and donor contributions. Additionally, embassies and international organisations have expressed interest in structured partnerships to support cross-cultural exchange, capacity building, and digital content creation.

A more deliberate national strategy on donor and private sector co-investment is needed. This would include incentive frameworks (e.g. tax breaks, CSR recognition), project pipelines, and co-funding schemes that align public development goals with private sector innovation.

4.7. Growth of Stakeholder Engagement in Budget Processes

Since 2024, there has been a noticeable increase in the participation of civil society organisations (CSOs), artists' unions, and creative associations in budget processes. Groups such as Caritas Zambia, PAAGZ, CTPD, Barefoot, JCTR, and ACA have championed budget advocacy, particularly through media campaigns, public submissions, and grassroots mobilisation.

However, capacity remains uneven. Many CSOs still lack the technical expertise to analyse budget documents or engage in sustained policy dialogue with the arts and creatives lens. Similarly, creatives often face barriers to formal participation in governance platforms due to limited organisation, lack of legal standing, or absence of representation.

The baseline recommends investment in capacity building for budget literacy, coalition building, and digital advocacy with specific contextual focus on the arts and creatives sector. Establishing a national "Art and Culture Budget Forum" could serve as a coordination platform to unify the sector's voice, set advocacy targets, and track progress. Civic engagement is crucial not only for transparency but for ensuring that public investment reflects the diversity, needs, and aspirations of Zambia's creative communities.

However, since 2024, it can be stated that there's been increased involvement by CSOs and creatives in:

- Cluster Advisory Groups (during budget consultations)
- Public submissions to the Ministry of Finance, e.g., this was done by PAAGZ, film expert Frank Sibuku and other CSOs in 2024 for the 2025 national budget.
- Pre- and post-budget civil society dialogues.

Why this matters: Participation is a key metric of governance health in the cultural sector. It signals progress from passive receipt of budgets to active demand-making by stakeholders. The baseline should now track this civic engagement as a driver of improved public investment.

5. STAKEHOLDER MAPPING AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE REVIEW

The 2024 baseline also conducted an extensive stakeholder mapping that identified the core state and non-state actors across government ministries, civil society, international partners, and academia. Key institutions such as the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Arts, the National Arts Council of Zambia (NAC), Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP), and the Ministry of Tourism were examined for their roles and influence in the sector. Civil society organizations like Caritas Zambia, PAAGZ, ACA, and JCTR were noted for their policy advocacy efforts, while others like Modzi Arts and Barefeet Theatre were recognized for their contribution to cultural expression and community engagement, albeit with limited involvement in budget advocacy.

5.1 Updated Actor Landscape

The 2025 update confirms that the institutional landscape mapped in the 2024 baseline remains active and relevant. Key public institutions and actors such as the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts (MoYSA), the Provincial Arts Development Officers (PADOs), the National Arts Council of Zambia (NAC), the Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP), and the Ministry of Tourism continue to play central roles in shaping the funding and policy direction of the CCIs.

On the civil society side, organisations including the People's Action for Accountability and Good Governance in Zambia (PAAGZ), Caritas Zambia, the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection (JCTR), the Alliance for Community Action (ACA), and creative groups such as Modzi Arts and Barefeet Theatre remain actively engaged in sectoral development. Their roles have expanded to include greater involvement in budget advocacy, public consultations, and legislative dialogue.

Coordination among these actors has marginally improved, particularly around the development and early implementation of the 2023 cultural policy frameworks. However, gaps persist in cross-sector collaboration, and there is continued need for stronger institutionalised platforms for dialogue, joint programming, and resource mobilisation.

6. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK REVIEW

The 2024 baseline highlighted the fragmented legal landscape governing the CCS, listing at least nine major legislative and policy instruments. It emphasized the need for harmonization and strategic alignment, especially in light of new policy developments such as the 2023 National Arts and Film Policies.

6.1 Update Legislative and Institutional Reform Monitoring

The 2024 baseline identified a fragmented and outdated legal environment governing Zambia's CCIs. While progress has been made with the approval of the National Arts Policy and Revised Film Policy in 2023, several key institutional reforms remain pending.

In 2025, civil society actors and sector leaders have amplified calls for the reform of the National Arts Council Act (1994), for which consultation has begun by NAC and MYSA through the UNESCO funded IFCD grant, an act which many consider misaligned with current sector dynamics. Additionally, there is growing momentum for the establishment of a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries, a proposal that has received internal informal support from stakeholders but is yet to be formally tabled or advocated.

Despite this, no new laws or legislative amendments have been introduced in 2025. The legal framework remains unchanged, and much of the policy progress has occurred at the implementation level rather than through new statutory instruments.

The baseline update finds that while the new policies have prompted increased dialogue, actual institutional transformation remains slow. The challenge lies not in policy formulation but in operationalisation, monitoring, and accountability. Integrating budget tracking with policy implementation scorecards could help bridge this gap.

7. FINANCING TO THE SECTOR – ART AND CREATIVES PROGRESS

7.1 Breakdown of the Key Budget Lines supporting CCI's

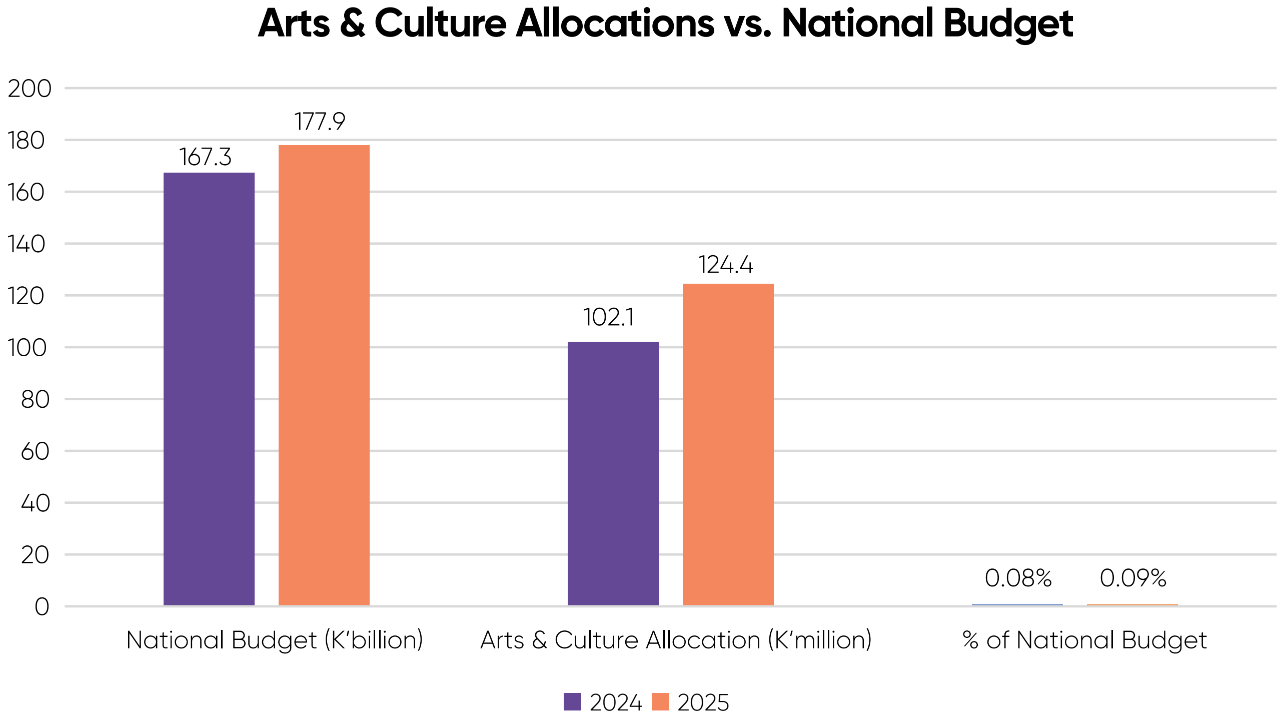


Figure 1. Arts and Culture Allocation Vs. National Budget

The development of the creative arts industry remains a key cornerstone of national development, especially with the notable uptake that the sector supports among the youths in terms of employment. Despite the country facing adverse economic challenges in 2024, emerging from the climate change and drought effects and leading to key sectors of agriculture and electricity generation recording negative growth, the sector accounted for a positive contribution to the 4 percent economic growth that the country attained in 2024. A 0.04 percent contribution was recorded in 2024 by the sector. As a share of the nominal GDP in 2024, the sector recorded 0.3 percent, the same as its 10-year historical average. Therefore, there is scope for better performance especially as the economy recovers from its challenging year of 2024. Government provisions to development of the sector are provided for through the allocations in the national budget and allocations in the local authority budgets for functions performed at the subnational level through the constitution appointed mandates.

Inadequate Capital Investment for Infrastructure - One of the most concerning developments is the **50% reduction in capital asset financing** under the Arts Development Programme—from K10 million in 2024 to K5 million in 2025—despite only 60% of the 2024 allocation having been released. This impairs the delivery of infrastructure such as art centres, creative hubs, and galleries, all of which are critical for professionalizing the sector and attracting private-sector or donor investments.

Table 1: Data sources for baseline

	2023 Real GDP K' billion	2024 Real GDP K' billion	2024 Nominal GDP K' billion	Share of 2024 Nominal GDP (%)	Contribution to 2024 Real GDP (%)
Arts, entertainment and recreation	383.2	442.3	1,763.8	0.3	0.04

A critical observation during the period under review is that while other sectors have considerable support that is captured in the budgets from the cooperating partners group, ***the resources appropriated in the national budgets for the creative arts industry indicate only government-supported programmes.*** There is therefore a need for further clarity on whether this is due to the lack of interest from cooperating partners or due to the failure to capture such resources from other partners, which would mean that there are more resources accounting for the results being achieved, a point for review of efficiency in utilisation of public funds, or if this is due to the non-availability of cooperating partners to support the sector, which calls for more interventions. Publicity and advocacy for the sector to be able to attract additional investments from cooperating partners is of significant importance at the moment.

It is imperative to recognize that public borrowing constitutes a significant financing mechanism for national development, enabling the government to implement key infrastructure projects in sectors such as transport, health, education, and security. Roads, hospitals, schools, and police housing have all benefited from concessional project loans—affirming that well-structured borrowing can contribute meaningfully to social and economic transformation.

However, despite the glaring infrastructure deficits within the Creative, Cultural, and Artistic sector, none of the loans in the current national debt portfolio have been allocated to address these gaps. This omission reflects a structural undervaluation of the sector's economic potential. The consequence is a chronic underinvestment in foundational infrastructure—such as creative hubs, performance venues, cultural centres, and logistics systems—that are critical for scaling up creative output and connecting it to national and global value chains. In the absence of such physical and logistical platforms, the sector remains fragmented, informal, and economically marginal.

There is Skewed Recurrent Expenditure Growth- While capital budgets declined, recurrent expenditure for goods and services increased by over 100%, mostly to support activities such as hosting art fairs. Though such events are critical for exposure and empowerment—as reflected by the overperformance in 2024 (37 fairs held vs. a 15-fair target)—the 2025 target of 25 fairs appears conservative, even with a higher budget.

The central challenge lies in how the CCI sector is currently "packaged." Without robust evidence of economic viability and structured investment cases, it remains sidelined in national financing strategies. ***To change this trajectory, stakeholders must collectively invest in research, economic modelling, and strategic advocacy that positions the sector not as a social luxury, but as an untapped economic growth engine.***

This transformation is not merely about accessing resources—it is about redefining the sector's role in Zambia's development narrative. If change does not occur, the sector risks being permanently excluded from national priority frameworks, with long-term consequences for innovation, identity, and inclusive economic development.

7.2 Departmental allocations (Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, others)

In the 2025 budget, the allocations for creative arts industry programmes, were provided for under the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts (Arts Development programme), the Ministry of Tourism (Culture Preservation and Development) and through the Provincial Administration Budgets (Arts and Culture sub-programme).

The total allocations on these budget lines amounted to K124.4 million, an increase of 18 percent. As a percentage of the total budget this was 0.08 percent in 2024 and increased to + 0.09 percent in 2025.

There is Low Budget Prioritization Amid Sectoral Potential-Despite CCIs being recognized as key drivers of youth employment and innovation, the 2025 national budget allocation stands at K168.9 million, representing only **0.09% of the total national budget**—a slight increase from **0.08% in 2024.** This minuscule share is in stark contrast to the sector's demonstrated potential, particularly its resilience during the economic contraction of 2024, when it still managed to contribute **0.04% to real GDP and 0.3% to nominal GDP.**

Within the budget for the Ministry of Tourism, however, the budget line for ***the creative industry specifically saw its allocation increase from K5.02 million in 2024 to K5.3 million.*** It is this budget line that we will continue to monitor for the purpose of this study, going forward. This mismatch between potential and allocation reflects an underestimation of the sector's contribution to diversification and inclusive growth. Without substantial financial backing, the sector remains locked in a cycle of informality, underdevelopment, and limited impact.

One notable response by the Ministry to the concerns raised in the 2024 study was the decision to isolate the personal emoluments budget line under the Arts Development Programme. ***In the 2025 budget, a dedicated allocation of K2.7 million was provided specifically for this expenditure. This move reflects a positive step toward transparency and compliance with the principles*** of output-based budgeting (OBB), which requires that all costs associated with the delivery of a programme output—including personnel costs—be fully reflected within the relevant programme. Such a measure improves the integrity of budget classifications and supports more accurate performance assessments.

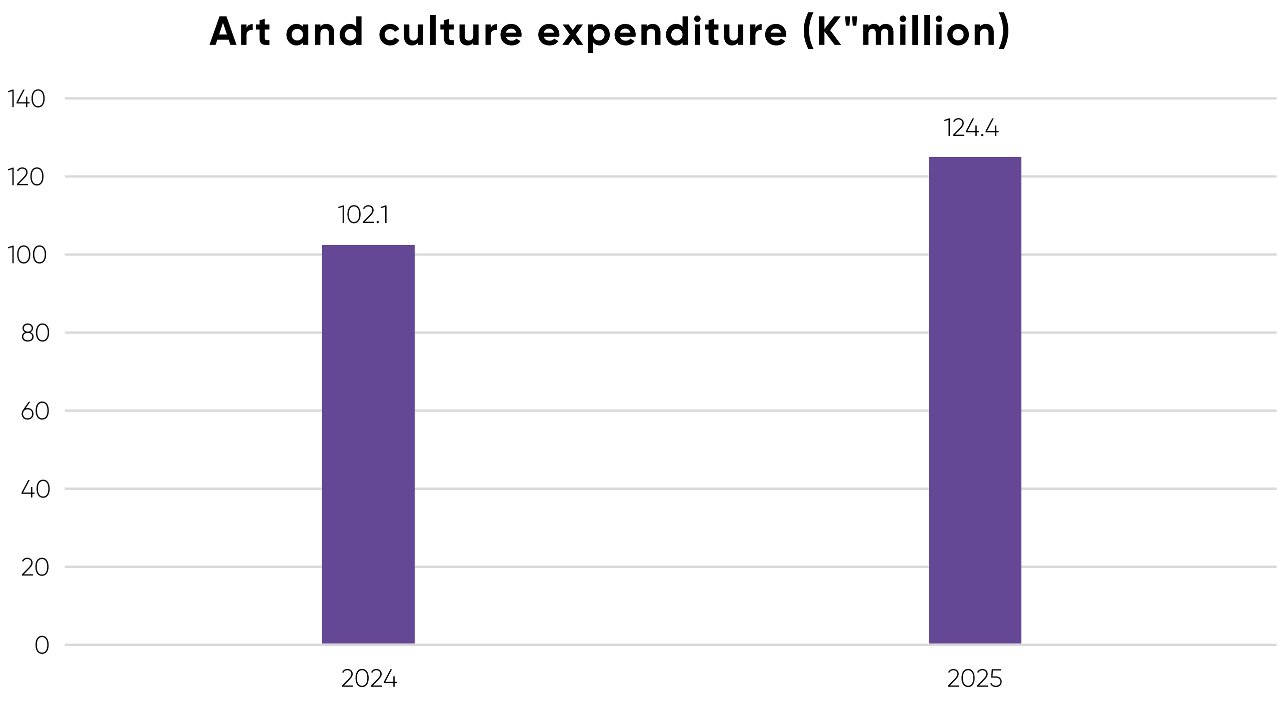


Figure 2. Art and Culture Expenditure in 2024 & 2025

However, a closer look at the economic classification within the Arts Development Programme reveals an emerging concern. ***In the 2025 budget, there is a 50 percent reduction in the allocation for capital assets, falling from K10 million in 2024 to K5 million, while the allocation for goods and services has more than doubled.*** This shift suggests a prioritisation of operational expenditures over long-term investment in critical infrastructure. While the Ministry's 2024 performance—in which it exceeded its target of 15 music and art fairs by hosting 37 by the third quarter—might explain the increased allocation for goods and services, it raises questions about the overall strategic direction. ***The 2025 target of 25 fairs appears*** underwhelming when weighed against past performance and expanded resources. Without more ambitious and transformative goals, the sector risks stagnating in repetitive short-term activities.

Furthermore, the reduction in the capital asset budget is particularly troubling in light of the fact that only 60 percent of the 2024 capital budget was released. ***Delays in fund disbursement, coupled with lower allocations, significantly hinder the timely completion of much-needed infrastructure.*** This poses a direct threat to the delivery of the Eighth National Development Plan (8NDP) priorities, particularly those centred on infrastructure development for CCIs. Infrastructure such as cultural centres, performance spaces, creative incubators, and storage facilities for heritage assets are indispensable to scaling the sector's economic impact.

While the Provincial Arts and Culture allocations saw a modest **13% increase, the devolved local authority grants were slashed by more than 55%—**from K1.26 million in 2024 to K558,888 in 2025. This undermines decentralisation objectives and the role of local councils in promoting grassroots creativity.

The situation under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture further illustrates the structural limitations in current public investment. Within the Culture Preservation and Development Programme, which houses culture promotion activities, the creative industry received a specific line-item allocation of K5,019,799 in 2024. While this amount was fully released—a commendable achievement—it only accounted for 6 percent of the total programme budget. ***This disproportionately low allocation suggests that the creative economy remains under-prioritised, despite government rhetoric on economic diversification.*** To unlock the sector's full potential as a driver of inclusive growth and employment, there is an urgent need to scale investment. ***The current budgetary envelope does not provide the fiscal space necessary for meaningful research, market development, public-private partnerships, and the acquisition of local artistic products by government institutions—measures that are essential for building a vibrant and commercially viable creative ecosystem.*** Without targeted and scaled investments, the sector will remain peripheral, unable to contribute meaningfully to GDP growth, job creation, or Zambia's cultural identity on global platforms.

Therefore, it is recommended that the budget allocation to the creative industry under the Culture Preservation and Development Programme be expanded at least threefold in the 2026 national budget. This increase should be accompanied by a clear strategic framework for infrastructure development, private sector engagement, and value chain strengthening. Only then can the CCIs be repositioned from marginal beneficiaries of public financing to central pillars of Zambia's development and diversification agenda.

Provincial Administration provides policy guidance, monitors and sets protocols promoting culture and art development within their districts in their provinces. ***It is therefore gratifying to notice that the allocations in 2025 for the art and culture programme budget at the provinces increased by 13 percent.***

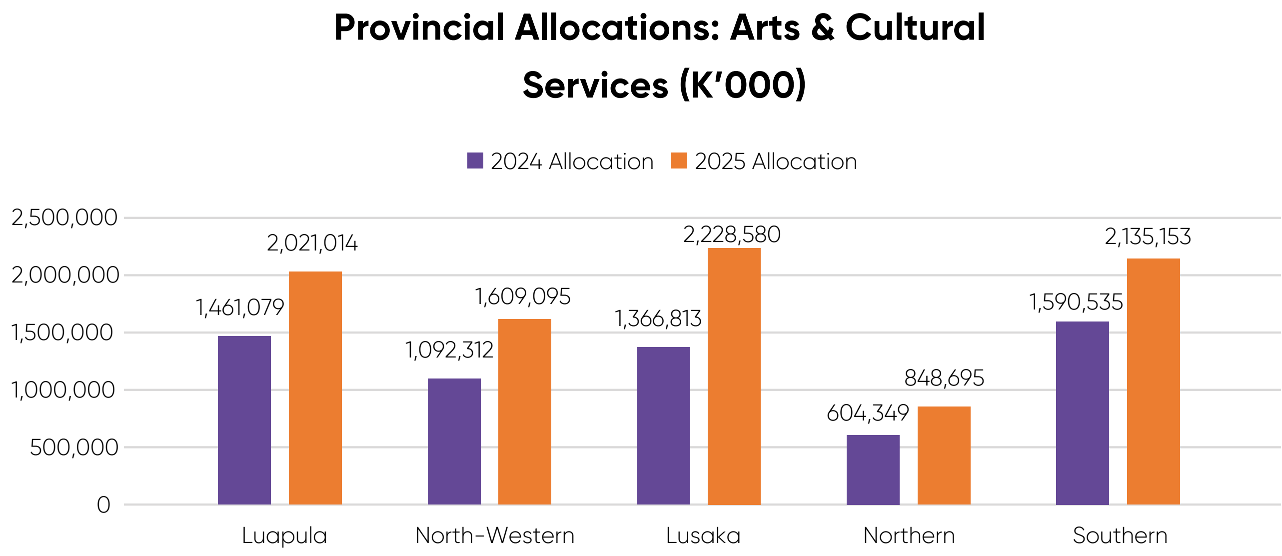


Figure 3. Provincial Allocations: Arts and Cultural Services

It is also good to see the effort of the government by the creation of Provincial Arts Development Officers in at least five provinces, which will coordinate these activities at the district level. The local authorities culture services grant is released as a devolved sector grant under the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Preservation, and Development programme, to support implementation of culture activities at the district level by the local authorities. ***However, reducing the allocation in the 2025 budget from K1,258,888 in 2024 to K558,888 may delay the attainment of desired results, and there is need to revise the provision upwards to enable realistic attainment of planned results of the 8NDP and indeed decentralisation.***

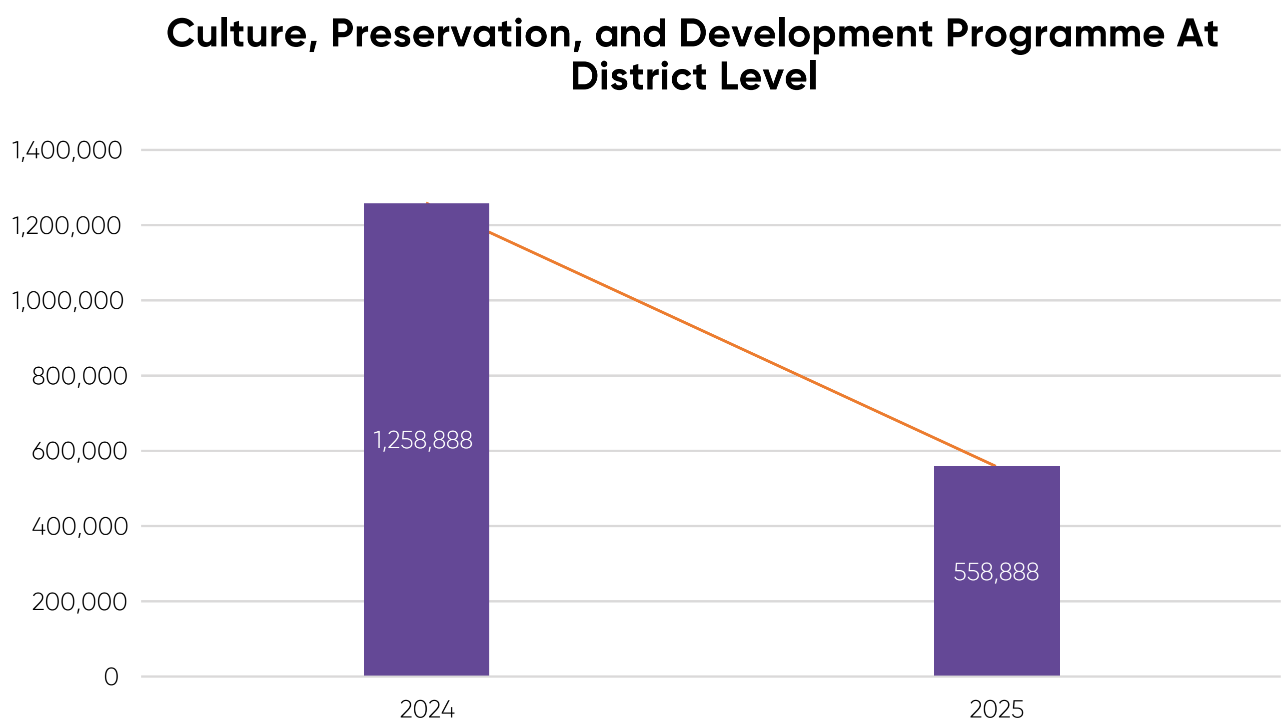
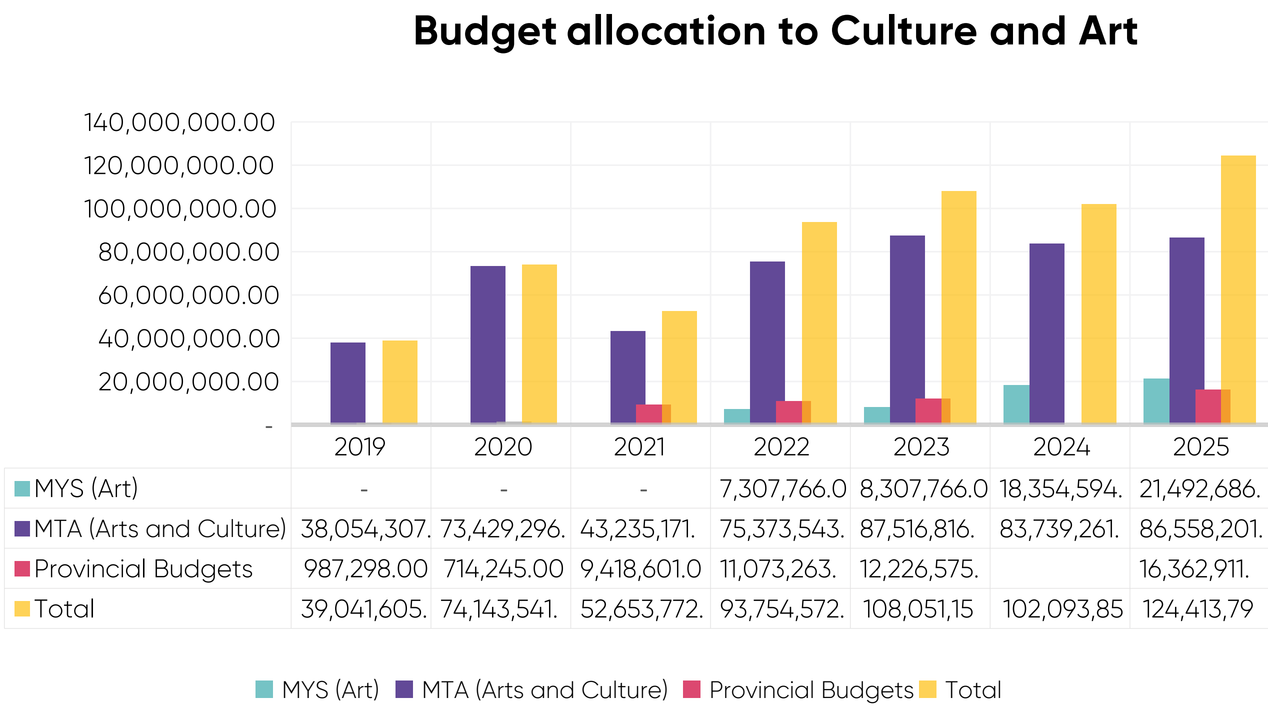


Figure 4. Budget allocation to Culture, Preservation, and Development Programmes at district level

The implication of this is that fiscal devolution is being undermined in practice. Without adequate financing at district levels, the vibrancy of community-level cultural expression and identity formation is stifled, weakening bottom-up national development efforts. Below find Figure 5 and 6.

Figure 5 is a depiction of the Budget Allocation to Creative and Art Sector from 2019 to 2025 the National Budget. Figure 6, is the depiction of the Budget against the Budget releases for the same period of 2019 to 2024.



	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
MYS (Art)	-	-	-	7,307,766.0	8,307,766.0	18,354,594.	21,492,686.
MTA (Arts and Culture)	38,054,307.	73,429,296.	43,235,171.	75,373,543.	87,516,816.	83,739,261.	86,558,201.
Provincial Budgets	987,298.00	714,245.00	9,418,601.0	11,073,263.	12,226,575.		16,362,911.
Total	39,041,605.	74,143,541.	52,653,772.	93,754,572.	108,051,15	102,093,85	124,413,79

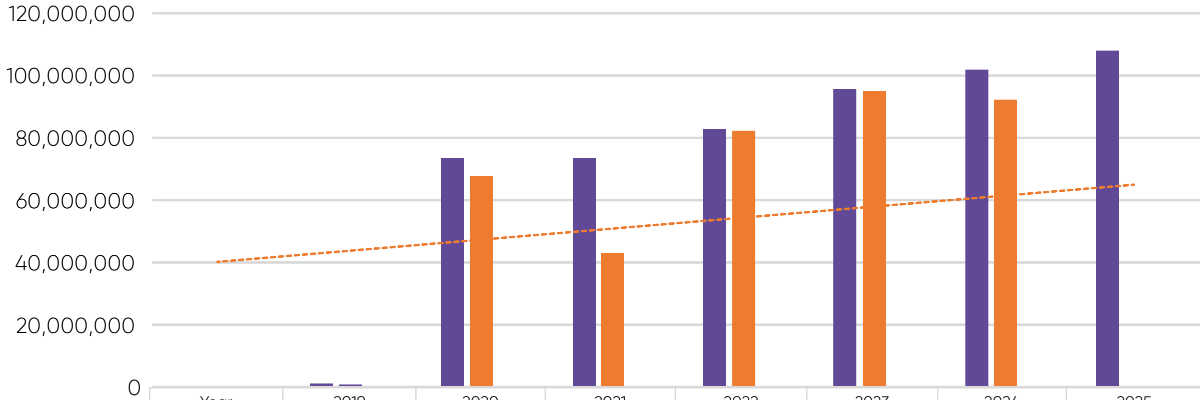
Figure 5. Budget allocation to Culture and Art (2019-2025)

The 2025 found that there is still fragmented Institutional Support and Weak Central Coordination. The funding is spread across multiple institutions:

- Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts (Arts Development Programme),
- Ministry of Tourism (Culture Preservation and Development), and
- Provincial Administrations.

Yet, there is no central CCI fund or clearly integrated financing framework that unites national, provincial, and district-level support, nor one that explicitly links CCI development to other strategic national goals like tourism, education, or youth empowerment. The implication of this is that the fragmentation undermines scale and efficiency. Coordinated investment is essential to unlock synergies between departments and establish value chains across creative sub-sectors.

Budget Allocation and Release to Culture and Art



Year	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Budgetary Provision (K)	925,009	73,429,296	73,429,296	82,681,309	95,824,582	102,093,855	108,048,862
Budgetary Releases (K)	533,323	67,997,383	43,235,169	82,681,149	95,089,842	92,353,238	0
Percentage Release	58	93	100	100	99	90	-

Budgetary Provision (K) Budgetary Releases (K) Percentage Release Percentage Release

During the period under review, it was found that there is still the absence of a Dedicated Innovation or Public Investment Fund. Despite calls in the 2024 study and beyond, the 2025 budget does not provide for a dedicated Culture and Creative Industry Innovation Fund or a Public Investment Facility tailored to incubate emerging creative entrepreneurs, support intellectual property development, or subsidize exports of cultural goods. The sector remains disconnected from Zambia's broader economic diversification and industrial policy frameworks. This isolates it from trade facilitation, export growth, and technology innovation support structures.

8. Key Developments and Emerging Opportunities

8.1 Evidence of Emerging Political and Institutional Will

Despite the continued underfunding, there are unmistakable signs of institutional awakening. ***The increase in nominal budget allocation, even if modest, represents a shift in public sector responsiveness. The operationalisation of the 2023 National Arts and Film Policies is further evidence that policy is moving beyond paper promises. Additionally, the introduction of culture grants to local authorities, while undermined by subsequent budget cuts, marks a bold step toward decentralised cultural governance.***

There is also a political movement in Parliament, ***with informal endorsements for a dedicated cultural committee and increased references to creative economy in public policy forums.*** These signals, though nascent, suggest that the ground is fertile for bolder reform. Advocacy must now push beyond visibility to consolidation—demanding systems, structures, and sustained financing mechanisms that give life to policy intentions.

8.2 National or Subnational Shifts in Support: Emerging Trends in Cultural Financing

The 2025 update reveals both promising and contradictory shifts in the architecture of support to Zambia's culture and creative industries at national and subnational levels. At the national level, the most notable development is the 237% increase in the nominal allocation to the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, rising from K5.4 million in 2023 to K18.3 million in 2024. This increase, while still insufficient relative to the sector's needs, indicates a recognition—however modest—of the strategic value of CCIs in national development. In parallel, the segregation of personal emoluments within the Arts Development Programme budget reflects improved budgeting practices aligned with output-based budgeting principles, suggesting gradual maturation in fiscal discipline and programme targeting.

8.3 Operationalisation of the National Arts and Film Policies (2023)

Another critical national-level development is the operationalisation of the National Arts and Film Policies (2023). ***These frameworks, previously dormant, are now being translated into tangible programmes such as creative enterprise grants and capacity-building activities by the National Arts Council.*** However, implementation remains inconsistent, underfunded, and overly reliant on recurrent expenditures, particularly for events and fairs, at the expense of long-term infrastructure development.

8.4 Culture grants to local authorities

Sub nationally, the 2025 budget marked a transformative, though uneven, shift through the introduction of culture grants to local authorities, reflecting a policy move towards fiscal decentralisation in the arts sector. ***For the first time, district councils are recognised as actors in cultural development, empowered to plan and fund local artistic activities through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and devolved sector grants.*** However, this progressive step was quickly undermined by a 55% cut in the local authority culture services grant, from K1.26 million in 2024 to just K558,888 in 2025. This regression threatens to neutralise the momentum gained in grassroots cultural engagement and illustrates a troubling disconnect between decentralisation policy and fiscal practice.

There is also uneven provincial implementation. While the government has equipped 5 provinces with appointed Provincial Arts Development Officers

(PADOs) and included culture in their development planning, other provincial administrations lack the political will or administrative capacity to follow suit. These disparities underscore the need for a decentralisation support mechanism, including technical assistance, budget guidelines, and monitoring frameworks to ensure that subnational investment in CCIs is not only symbolic but functional and impactful.

9. Entry Points for Engagement with Non-Cultural Sector Actors: Unlocking Cross-Sectoral Influence

1. ***The strategic positioning of CCIs within Zambia's governance and budgeting ecosystem requires deliberate engagement beyond the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts.*** The Ministry of Finance and National Planning (MoFNP) is central to this effort, as it sets the budget ceilings and policy direction for all sectors through instruments such as the Budget Policy Concept Note, the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF), and the Annual Borrowing Plan. ***The Arts and Culture sector's limited participation in these processes, particularly during policy hearings and budget framework development stages, remains a missed opportunity for resource mobilisation and influence.***

2. To this end, ***cultural advocates must strengthen their participation in existing but underutilised policy spaces.*** Cluster Advisory Groups (CAGs) offer a legally mandated avenue for stakeholder input during budget planning, yet many artists and CSOs remain unaware of or disengaged from this process. ***PAAGZ and partners should coordinate to ensure that cultural actors are formally represented in CAGs, and that submissions to the national budget—currently often sidelined—are strategically framed, data-driven, and politically salient.***

3. Parliament represents another critical entry point. ***Currently, cultural issues are fragmented between the Committee on Youth, Sport and Child Matters and the Committee on Tourism, Energy and Environment, which dilutes sectoral visibility.*** Advocacy must be intensified to establish a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries, which would serve as a focal point for legislative scrutiny, public hearings, and constituency-based oversight of cultural investment. ***Civil society can also use the Green Paper consultation period and pre-budget parliamentary submissions to table recommendations and build political consensus across parties.***

4. Beyond Parliament and Finance, engagement should extend to sectors such as education, local government, tourism, and trade, all of which intersect with CCIs through curricula design, cultural tourism, local economic development, and creative exports. Cross-sectoral strategies—such as linking CCIs to youth skills training under the Ministry of Education or to SME development under the Ministry of Commerce—can help unlock new funding streams and mainstream culture within Zambia's development agenda.

5. ***Finally, the donor community and international development agencies represent untapped partners.*** Unlike sectors such as agriculture and health, the CCI sector has no concessional or multilateral loan financing recorded. Proposals for World Bank or AfDB co-financing of cultural infrastructure or creative enterprise development should be developed and pitched, especially where the sector's contribution to youth employment and GDP can be empirically demonstrated.

10. Recommendations for Advocacy and Engagement

10.1 Strategic Pathways for Increasing Public Funding to CCIs in Zambia

1. The 2025 Baseline Update reflects a mixed picture of progress and persistent constraints in Zambia's public investment in Culture and Creative Industries (CCIs). While a nominal increase in budget allocations—from K5.4 million in 2023 to K18.3 million in 2024—signals an emerging recognition of the sector's potential, the allocation remains significantly below the African Union's benchmark of 1%. ***This marginal commitment, at less than 0.1% of the national budget, suggests that Zambia's cultural economy is still treated as a peripheral development concern rather than a strategic investment in youth employment, innovation, and economic diversification***

2. ***Advocacy must be intensified to establish a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries,*** which would serve as a focal point for legislative scrutiny, public hearings, and constituency-based oversight of cultural investment. ***Civil society should also use the Green Paper consultation period and pre-budget parliamentary submissions to table recommendations and build political consensus across parties.***

3. To reverse this underinvestment, several strategic steps are necessary. ***First, the establishment of a dedicated Culture and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CCI-IF) must be prioritized.*** This fund would serve as an anchor for both public and private investment in the sector and could be used to support high-impact initiatives such as digital content creation, creative enterprise incubation, and export promotion of cultural goods. ***Secondly, mainstreaming CCIs into national economic frameworks—such as the 8th National Development Plan, industrial strategies, and digital economy policies—is essential.*** Doing so will enable CCIs to compete for cross-sectoral funding and facilitate more integrated programme planning.

4. ***Equally important is the need to strengthen decentralised cultural financing.*** The 2025 budget disappointingly slashed grants to local authorities from K1.26 million to just over K550,000—a 55% cut that undermines decentralisation goals and hampers grassroots cultural development. Reinstituting and increasing these grants, coupled with capacity-building for district-level implementation, would not only enhance access for rural and community-based creatives but also promote cultural equity. ***This needs to be supported by the development of provincial guidelines to help budget officers integrate CCIs into subnational planning and funding frameworks.***

5. ***Institutional coordination must also be improved.*** The current fragmentation—with CCIs split across the Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts, the Ministry of Tourism, and provincial administrations—has created inefficiencies and weakened strategic coherence. A unified financing framework or national strategy for CCIs is urgently needed to align public spending with sectoral goals. ***Additionally, the development of bankable project proposals that demonstrate CCIs' economic returns would help attract concessional loans and inclusion in the Annual Borrowing Plan, where the sector is currently absent.***

10.2 Refining Advocacy Targets and Strategic Messaging

1. ***Effective advocacy hinges on targeting institutions with direct influence over fiscal decisions and policy oversight.*** The Ministry of Finance and National Planning remains the central authority in shaping budget ceilings and determining fiscal priorities.

Therefore, sustained engagement with MoFNP, particularly during the Budget Policy Concept Note and Medium-Term Budget Plan phases, is essential. The Ministry of Youth, Sport and Arts also plays a critical role in shaping internal sector demands and should be supported to enhance its visibility and influence in budget hearings.

2. ***Establishing a national "Art and Culture Budget Forum"*** which can serve as a coordination platform to unify the sector's voice, set advocacy targets, and track progress. Civic engagement is crucial not only for transparency but for ensuring that public investment reflects the diversity, needs, and aspirations of Zambia's creative communities.

3. Parliamentary committees present another important advocacy front. However, current arrangements—where cultural issues are split between committees on Tourism and on Youth—dilute focus and weaken accountability. ***Lobbying for a dedicated Parliamentary Committee on Culture and Creative Industries, as proposed by advocacy actors, could institutionalise sectoral visibility within the legislature and provide a consistent oversight platform for budget and policy matters.***

4. ***The messaging to accompany these advocacy efforts must be evidence-based and compelling. Framing culture as a resilient and strategic economic sector is key.*** Data from the 2025 update—such as the 0.3% contribution of CCIs to nominal GDP during a year of economic contraction—should be amplified to argue for increased investment. Narratives should stress that culture is not a cost centre, but a vector for innovation, youth employment, national identity, and inclusive growth. Emphasising the disconnect between sectoral potential and current allocation (0.06% of the national budget) can help build a stronger case for reform. For instance, key messaging can take the following form to the Ministry of Finance and Parliament.

    a. ***"Culture is a catalyst for jobs, youth empowerment, and inclusive growth."***– Zambia's CCIs employ thousands of young people across music, film, fashion, and digital content creation—often with minimal public investment. At a time when youth unemployment remains high and the formal job market is shrinking, CCIs offer accessible and innovative pathways for income generation and social mobility. Public funding to the sector is not just about supporting the arts—it's a targeted investment in livelihoods, talent development, and economic justice.

    b. ***"Investing in CCIs is smart economics: the sector is growing even where others are shrinking."*** In 2024, during a period of economic downturn caused by drought and energy shortages, Zambia's creative economy still contributed 0.04% to real GDP and maintained a 0.3% share of nominal GDP. This demonstrates the sector's resilience and growth potential. Yet, public funding remains below 0.1% of the national budget. With better investment, the creative sector could double its contribution to the economy and accelerate Zambia's diversification agenda.

    c. ***"Local creatives can drive national development—if we decentralise and fund them."*** The introduction of culture grants to local authorities and the appointment of Provincial Arts Development Officers signal growing recognition of CCIs at the subnational level. However, these gains are at risk due to a 55% cut to local grants in 2025. Reversing these cuts and supporting district-level cultural programming would empower communities, preserve cultural heritage, and promote inclusive development outside Lusaka.

    d. ***"Without capital investment, Zambia's creative potential will remain trapped in informality."*** Despite an increase in operational funding, capital spending on creative infrastructure was cut by 50% in 2025. Without investment in studios, performance spaces, training centres, and digital hubs, Zambia's creatives remain disconnected from both domestic and international markets. The government must prioritise capital development alongside events and fairs to unlock long-term sectoral growth and competitiveness.

10.3 Engaging CSOs, Media, and the Private Sector: Building a Coalition for Cultural Finance

1. ***Civil society organisations have become more visible in budget processes, but their impact is still constrained by technical limitations and fragmented coordination.*** To address this, a national Art and Culture Budget Forum should be established as a platform for joint advocacy, budget tracking, and engagement with government. This would bring together actors such as PAAGZ, Caritas Zambia, JCTR, ACA, and artist unions under a shared advocacy framework. Building technical capacity in budget analysis, public finance law, and strategic communication is equally critical if CSOs are to influence policy meaningfully.

2. The media has a vital role to play in shifting public and political perceptions of CCIs. Yet, media engagement has often been event-driven or limited to coverage of cultural festivals. ***A more structured approach would involve commissioning investigative journalism pieces on budget implementation, highlighting success stories of artists benefitting from public investment, and placing op-eds around key moments such as budget day.*** This would serve to humanise advocacy messages and create public demand for sectoral accountability.

3. On the private sector front, there is increasing interest from industries such as telecommunications, beverages, and fashion in aligning with creative content. However, their contributions remain ad hoc due to the absence of a formal framework. ***Introducing incentives such as tax credits for CCI investment or recognising cultural spending as CSR could stimulate more structured engagement. Additionally, public-private dialogue platforms should be revived or introduced to align private sector innovation with public sector goals for the creative economy.***

10.4 Next Steps for PAAGZ, Selam, and Strategic Partners

- In light of these challenges and opportunities, ***PAAGZ and Selam should lead efforts to convene a national post-budget dialogue involving artists, CSOs, budget officers, and legislators. This forum should analyse the implications of the 2025 and past allocations, identify missed opportunities, and co-develop an advocacy roadmap for the 2026 budget cycle.*** Concurrently, partners should invest in packaging the proposed Culture and Creative Industries Innovation Fund into a compelling, costed proposal with co-financing potential from donors and the private sector.

- Selam, as a continental cultural actor, should also explore regional benchmarking opportunities through the African Union and peer learning platforms, leveraging its links with the CfCA initiative. ***Support for pilot projects in selected provinces—especially in areas with active provincial arts officers—could serve as proof-of-concept interventions to demonstrate the efficacy of decentralised cultural financing.***

- ***Donor engagement must be renewed with a clear ask:*** to support infrastructure, policy implementation, and sectoral research. Currently, donor and concessional financing is virtually absent in the sector. Without this support, Zambia's CCIs risk remaining isolated from broader economic development frameworks.

11. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this 2025 Baseline Update leaves no doubt: Zambia's culture and creative industries (CCIs) stand at a critical juncture. While there have been welcome signs of policy activation, nominal budget increases, and modest decentralisation efforts, the sector remains dramatically underfunded, fragmented, and under-leveraged. This is a missed opportunity of national consequence.

At a time when Zambia is grappling with economic recovery, high youth unemployment, and the urgent need for economic diversification beyond mining and agriculture, the CCIs offer a vibrant, youth-driven, innovation-rich sector that is already contributing to GDP growth—even amid national downturns. The sector's resilience in 2024, its cultural depth, and its inclusive reach—especially among women and young people—make it one of the most strategic yet untapped avenues for inclusive development.

However, the current public financing architecture fails to reflect this potential. With allocations stagnating below 0.1% of the national budget, and with critical gaps in infrastructure, institutional coordination, and capital investment, Zambia risks stifling a sector that could power job creation, national identity, digital transformation, and cultural diplomacy. Recurrent expenditures focused on short-term events, while important, cannot substitute for sustained investment in long-term creative capacity, cultural infrastructure, and innovation systems.

The government must now make a decisive shift—from symbolic gestures to structural commitments. This includes establishing a dedicated Culture and Creative Industries Innovation Fund, reversing cuts to local authority grants, integrating CCIs into national development and borrowing strategies, and coordinating across ministries to ensure efficiency and scale. Crucially, it must also recognize that public investment is not charity—it is a catalyst for unleashing the full economic and social returns of Zambia's creative talent.

Zambia cannot afford to treat its culture and creative industries as peripheral. They are central to the nation's future. The next budget cycle must reflect that urgency. Anything less would be a betrayal of potential, policy, and the people whose voices, stories, and livelihoods depend on a thriving creative economy.

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