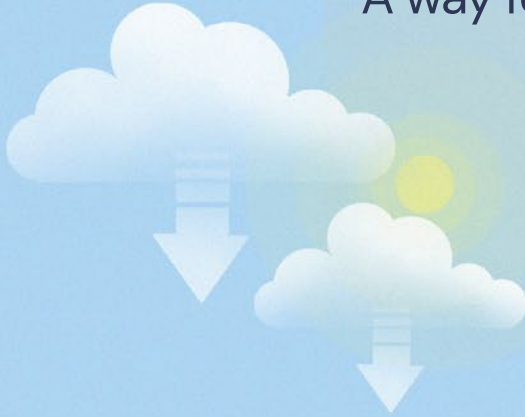


# Skilling Uganda's young creatives for a digital age

A way forward



## Acknowledgements

This research would not have been possible without the generosity of the 37 young creatives and the 20 expert interviewees from Uganda's culture and creative industries who took time to speak to our research teams about their work and experiences in the sector. Thank you.

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## Description

This report summaries and synthesizes research from the following reports analyzing the impact of digitalization on the culture and creative industries (CCI) in Uganda for young creatives.

1. *Uganda's culture and creative industries in a digital age: A landscape review* provides an overview of relevant literature and identifies research questions.
  2. *Skills for a digital age for Uganda's young creatives* shares findings from primary research with young creatives and other actors in the sector.
  3. *Skilling Uganda's young creatives in a digital age: Recommendations from creatives and actors in the sector* shares recommendations for skilling of Uganda's young creatives.
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# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Summary of research findings</b>	<b>9</b>
Young creatives have embraced digital technologies.	9
Young creatives are gaining some skills for a digital age, but gaps remain.	10
Skilling challenges are compounded by longstanding issues.	11
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>12</b>
The skilling young creatives want	12
Recommendations from industry actors	16
Authors' recommendations to support Uganda's CCIs	18
<b>References</b>	<b>21</b>

# Introduction

Kisakye, 30, is a budding singer in Kampala, where she has a nine-to-five job in an office and performs at restaurants and bars on the weekends and weekday evenings. Kisakye is also building an audience online through social media platforms by posting videos of her singing on Instagram and YouTube. She plans to eventually leave her office job and become a full-time musician. She says social media platforms will be a critical part of her career as an upcoming musician.

Kisakye is one of the young Ugandan creatives Caribou Digital spoke to explore how young people in the culture and creative industries (CCIs) are navigating and adapting to digitalization-driven changes, particularly regarding the skills they need. Kisakye's perceptions of one of the benefits of social media towards earning an income are echoed by many youths worldwide today. Digitalization has transformed CCIs, giving artists like Kisakye new avenues for producing and distributing creative goods and services while reaching a wider range of consumers globally through digital platforms<sup>1</sup> such as social media and e-commerce platforms. As markets shift online, creatives are afforded greater independence from traditional intermediaries and middlemen (such as publishers or galleries).<sup>2</sup> This shift has increasingly transformed CCIs into a viable income source for youth, allowing them to monetize their passions along the entire value chain, from production to consumption, thereby creating additional work prospects.<sup>3</sup>

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1 UNCTAD, *Creative Economy Outlook 2022*.

2 UNESCO, *Cities, Culture, Creativity: Leveraging Culture and Creativity for Sustainable Urban Development and Inclusive Growth*.

3 UNESCO, *Cities, Culture, Creativity*.

However, this digital transition makes skilling complex for young creatives. Formal education doesn't necessarily teach the skills needed to harness these technologies, and the creative sector evolves rapidly. In a world where digitalization—and the skills associated with digitalization—are becoming increasingly important in the structural transformation of economies, there is limited research to understand the nature and extent of digitalization and digital skills gaps in Africa.<sup>4</sup>

In an attempt to fill this knowledge gap, Caribou Digital interviewed 79 people in CCIs. They included poets, illustrators, actors, writers, podcasters, visual artists, and gamers, all between 18 and 35 years, based in Kampala. Interviews focused on these research questions:



What are the benefits and challenges of digitalization that young creatives see?



What skills do youth use and need as creatives in today's digitalized age?



Do available skilling opportunities address the needs of creatives in a digital age?

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4 Borhat et al., "Digitalization and Digital Skills Gaps in Africa: An Empirical Profile."

## Methods and report outputs

The research team planned to produce three reports using the methods further below.

- 1 The first report **reviews the literature on Uganda’s CCI**s to understand how the sector responds to digitalization, what skilling initiatives exist to skill creatives for a digital age, and what sort of economic, social, and political environment creatives operate in.
- 2 The second report shares **primary research findings**.
- 3 The third and final report discusses **recommendations to the industry**.

This report serves as the **overall executive summary and synthesizes the above three reports**.

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### Methods

- A **comprehensive literature review** of available online literature on Uganda’s CCI
s.
- **Expert interviews with 16 key informants** who work in CCI
s, including policymakers, training providers, curators of arts spaces, development partners, and established creatives.
- **One-on-one in-depth interviews with 21 young creatives** representing various fields within CCI
s, including literary arts, visual arts, performing arts (such as literature to film, poetry, theatre), fashion, illustration, audio-visual, music, photography, content creation, and influencers.
- A **brainstorming session with 17 additional creatives** to share findings and invite a discussion on skills gaps and policies, held at the National Museum in Kampala. b(from 58 applications) to ensure a diverse range of creative disciplines, including visual arts, music, performing arts, design, and literature. A moderator guided the discussions using a predefined set of open-ended questions. The sessions were audio-recorded by a rapporteur.
- A **final research validation workshop with 25 representatives** from CCI
s including policymakers, the Ugandan National Culture and Creative Centre, training providers, established creatives, and academics.

Therefore, a total of 79 individuals participated.

All interviews were held via Zoom, Google Meet, WhatsApp, or in person.

Participants were selected through purposive sampling, a sampling technique where researchers select respondents who are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information.<sup>5</sup> Each interview lasted approximately 45 minutes and was audio-recorded with the participant’s consent.

All transcriptions were then coded and organized into themes and subthemes using Dovetail (an online qualitative data analysis platform). The emerging themes were reviewed, refined, and analyzed to identify patterns, commonalities, and variations in the participants’ responses.

The study does have limitations; qualitative research by its nature is not intended to be representative. This study concerns a relatively small number of creatives and is largely restricted to Kampala. No doubt in other geographical areas and depending on the creative’s skills, different issues may arise. However, as described in this report, there is little up-to-date literature on the context of CCIs in the digital age in Uganda and, moreover, the skills needed. Therefore, these findings are a critical contribution to the existing literature and provide valuable recommendations for numerous stakeholders to further support and empower young creatives in Uganda.

See Appendix A to D in the findings report for all guides and a list of interviewees with pseudonyms.

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<sup>5</sup> Campbell et al., “Purposive Sampling.”

The literature scan on Uganda's CCIs found a significant knowledge gap on opportunities and challenges for digital skilling in the sector in Uganda, as traditional models of skilling and practice persist. For example, Makerere University's Department of Performing Arts and Film, established in 1971, is the only one offering training in all fields of the performing arts. It offers certificates from diplomas to master's programs across 49 courses, including script writing, videography, and theatre, as well as production and drama course units in TV and radio.<sup>6</sup> It has trained many of the country's leading professionals in the sector but is struggling to keep up with digital arts technologies and "*the demands and ambitions of the growing cultural and creative industry.*"<sup>7</sup>

Research on the skills development and skills gap in Uganda's film and television sector found a lack of infrastructure at the few institutions providing the skills.<sup>8</sup> This, the researchers say, cannot cater to the growing number of young people who want to learn the skills to join the film industry. Other concerns around training include the inadequacy of qualified staff and limited educational support resources. Also, training and capacity-building programs around entrepreneurship, innovation, and cultural management need urgent improvement.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the literature review found that CCIs in Uganda continue to face challenges, including high rates of informality, skills and knowledge shortages among various actors, and an absence of infrastructure for capacity building.<sup>10</sup> Artists lack the business acumen, management skills, and legal knowledge to manage their careers in a sustainable way, while the lack of formal arts management education creates a vacuum for artists or artist managers who can skillfully manage careers of talented artists.<sup>11</sup> Knowledge and skills around intellectual property rights, including for digital creatives, are scattered.

Aside from skilling challenges, creatives navigate economic, social, and political tensions in the country. There are still laws and regulations that stifle creativity. Moreover, young creatives encounter conventional obstacles, including a lack of government support, restrictive laws and regulations, irregular or unpredictable income, and, for women, gender-based discrimination.

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6 UNESCO, *ReShaping Policies for Creativity: Addressing Culture as a Global Public Good*.

7 African Union, "Revised African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries."

8 Comunian and Kimera, "Uganda Film and Television: Creative Skills Development and Skills Gap for the Sector."

9 African Union, "Revised African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries."

10 Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, "Report on the Mapping of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda."

11 Hivos People Unlimited, *The Status of the Creative Economy in East Africa: Ubunifu East Africa Report*.

However, the literature review also found many concerted efforts by various stakeholders, including the government, nonprofits, civil society, private sector players, and several development partners, who are funding or implementing multiple initiatives to promote Uganda's CCIs. Some, but not all, have skilling initiatives that match the skills young creatives need for the digital age such as multimedia skills, digital marketing, copyright, and intellectual property rights (see full list in Appendix E of the [findings report](#)).



# Summary of research findings

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## Young creatives have embraced digital technologies.

Young creatives in Uganda are proactively maneuvering and adjusting to the digital revolution within CCIs. Specifically, they are adopting digital platforms and exploring emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality, and NFTs, while turning to online educational platforms to address their knowledge and skill deficiencies.

Young creatives recognize the value of incorporating technology into their work. They strategically leverage digital platforms to create visibility for their work, find customers online, or promote their talents through social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Here, digital platforms are defined as: a) marketplace platforms, including formal marketplaces connecting buyers and sellers of goods and services, and b) social media and messaging platforms that allow for informal exchanges and coordination of all manner of economic activity.

Young creatives shared how digital platforms are an avenue to paid work opportunities. Many mentioned how they have used digital platforms to generate income through selling crafts on social media, getting paid to create advertising content for clients, and professional gaming. For example, in a brainstorming session, a participant shared that he makes money as a professional gamer through brand partnerships and sponsored content from gaming companies.

Additionally, digital platforms have become the new portfolios for creatives' work. Musicians showcase talent on online streaming platforms like Spotify and YouTube. Illustrators and graphic designers use Behance, a platform where one can showcase their artwork and be discovered by potential clients. Actors and filmmakers use YouTube as a depository for their work, while content creators use the same platforms to show what they have done for other brands or share original content.

Young creatives also demonstrated awareness of emerging technologies such as AI. While attitudes toward AI were mixed, many recognized issues related to safeguarding their intellectual property and navigating the impact of emerging technologies like generative AI and NFTs. Many were unsure of the implications of these technologies for their work, with some worrying that they might be replaced by AI.

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## Young creatives are gaining some skills for a digital age, but gaps remain.

However, as these technologies become ubiquitous and open new possibilities, they provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment for young Ugandan creatives.<sup>12</sup> Many find themselves in need of more skills to navigate this new normal.

Young creatives indeed understand the value of digital skills and are re-skilling themselves to be competitive and innovative in the digital age. Some of these skills include, among others, digital marketing, graphic design, and how to use a range of digital platforms that serve various purposes. Almost all the young creatives interviewed had already taken the initiative to learn some of the skills they didn't have. The "University of YouTube," they said, was a crucial part of this.

Many took online courses, while others learned from peers online. Others spoke of participating in various training initiatives by development partners, arts foundations, and experienced creatives, but most have not met the skilling needs of a digital age. Particularly, critics point out that formal training institutions prioritize teaching theory over practical skills and have not kept up with the technological advancements in the industry.

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<sup>12</sup> Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, "Report on the Mapping of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda."

Creatives see value in continuous skilling and are looking to various actors in the sector to equip them with the skills and knowledge to better prosper in the digital era. Based on their recommendations below, a skills ecosystem would involve collaboration between various stakeholders, including **skills providers** offering digital, vocational, and transversal skills; **development partners** who can fund skilling initiatives; **government agencies** under which the sector falls; and **learning spaces** that facilitate both peer-to-peer learning and practical application of acquired skills. The ecosystem would also include **industry mentors** who can guide and support young creatives on their professional journeys.

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## Skilling challenges are compounded by longstanding issues.

The interviews unearthed several challenges in the sector beyond skills and digitalization. Young creatives, experts, and stakeholders spoke of several frustrations that hold back the industry from fully realizing its potential. The sector is an underfunded priority, musician-turned-member of parliament Rachel Magoola said at the stakeholder meeting. Many others echoed her, saying that the government needed to invest more in the sector as it could provide more young people with employment opportunities. Young creatives also shared their frustrations with social attitudes toward creative work, especially a lack of support from family members—particularly parents—particular, who want them to drop their passions and pursue “proper jobs.” Representatives of organizations running programs for creatives spoke of “rigid funding” made available under several initiatives by development partners. Both creatives and experts said that most funders focus on specific agendas, leaving creatives and actors in the industry little room for creativity.

# Recommendations

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## The skilling young creatives want

### 1 Creatives want more skills for a digital age.

Skills for a digital age go beyond digital skills and include a diverse range from purely technical to entrepreneurial skills, such as leadership, business management, project management, communication skills and networking, financial management, sales and marketing of products and services, and those relating to the protection of intellectual property rights. Young creatives listed a wide range of such skills as shown in Table 1. (A more detailed description of each skill set can be found in [the main report](#).)

Table 1▼

The specific skills and knowledge young creatives want

Skill set	Examples
Technical/vocational skills	Playing various musical instruments Fashion design.
Understanding platform functionality better	How social media algorithms work Navigating creator tools on social media How online streaming platforms work
Basic, intermediate, and advanced digital skills	Producing good video content Digital marketing Digital storytelling Cyber security Coding Programming
Emerging technologies and CCI	Artificial intelligence NFTs 3D printing
Business and management skills	Running and managing a business as a creative Negotiating contracts Monetizing talent online and offline Paying taxes Registering a business Building a team Writing grant proposals Pitching work to clients.
Transversal skills <sup>13</sup>	Critical and innovative thinking Interpersonal skills (e.g., presentation and communication skills, organizational skills, teamwork, etc.) Intra-personal skills (e.g., self-discipline, enthusiasm, perseverance, self-motivation, etc.) Media and information literacy
Policy knowledge on CCI	CCI regulation Freedom of expression Copyright laws and restrictions Exporting goods Policies governing business registration for creatives, royalties, and taxation

<sup>13</sup> According to UNESCO, transversal skills are typically considered as not specifically related to a particular job, task, academic discipline or area of knowledge but as skills that can be used in a wide variety of situations and work settings. UNESCO-UNEVOC, "Transversal Skills."

## 2 Creative want spaces where they can sharpen skills and collaborate.

Creatives want spaces where they can sharpen skills and collaborate, such as arts centers, galleries, and theatres. As per the findings, creatives with access to such spaces describe how critical they are to hone one's skills and giving one the time to "*just be creative.*" For example, visual artists who have had a chance to be in spaces such as 32° East speak highly of the experience of immersing oneself in a project for an extended time during which they can experiment. In these spaces, creatives engage with peers and learn from each other. Young creatives say there should be more public art centers, galleries, studios, theatres, cinemas, etc. While creatives have access to digital platforms where they showcase their work, having one's work exhibited in a public or private space is equally important.

## 3 Creatives want more peer-to-peer learning, mentoring, and localized content.

Interviewees frequently mentioned the importance of learning from peers: Ugandan creatives who have "made it" or are succeeding in what they are doing. Creatives trust that their peers would be more relevant given that the content they find online is not always suited to the Ugandan context. Creatives suggest that these interactions can be in the form of online and offline masterclasses, regular peer-to-peer meetings, or workshops. Some are willing to pay, but many prefer that the government or development partners fund these opportunities.

While many creatives are learning online and appreciate the value of the flexibility it provides, they also want in-person training so they can interact and network with their instructors and peers in a physical space.

## 4 Creatives say competitions could help encourage skills improvement.

According to young creatives, regular participation in competitions could significantly enhance their skills as they compete and learn from each other. UNESCO acknowledges that skills competitions offer individuals or teams the chance to showcase their talent in a specific vocational skill, contributing to personal growth and development.<sup>14</sup> To support this, creatives recommend that governments and development partners establish such competitions.

A noteworthy example is the Uganda Press Photo Awards (UPPA), an annual competition for photographers that has been running for 11 years and has expanded to include the rest of East Africa. UPPA has created a thriving community of photographers who learn from each other through the competition, frequent training opportunities, digital skills for new and upcoming photographers, and networking opportunities.

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<sup>14</sup> UNESCO-UNEVOC, "Skills Competition."

## 5 Creatives want more platform-led training.

Creatives also want the platforms they use to offer on-platform training to help them navigate the constant changes. They suggested that Google, for example, invest in training young creatives on algorithms, Google Ads, and search engine optimization. However, some young creatives seem unaware of the several free online training tools that platforms like Google, Facebook, and YouTube already provide. Skills providers or peers could help point them in the right direction during workshops or facilitate peer-to-peer interactions.

In 2020, Caribou Digital explored the concept of platform-led upskilling<sup>15</sup>—where digital platforms provide skills to users to enable them to become more adept digital producers. Jumia Uganda, for example, offers business training to vendors on the platform to help them sell more. This in turn benefits both the seller and platform. Additionally, these are transferable skills that users can use outside of the platform. This recommendation is further discussed below.

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<sup>15</sup> Caribou Digital, *Platform-Led Upskilling: How Marketplace Platforms Can Transform Emerging Markets by Investing in Skills Development*.

## Recommendations from industry actors

Representatives of various organizations focused on the sector recognize the importance of skilling the new generation of creatives, but they too need support. Several experts in the industry shared that many skilling initiatives operate in isolation and need more cohesion and collaboration. There is, therefore, a pressing need for a unified effort to skill youth in CCIs, equipping them with the necessary tools to build resilience and succeed in the digital age.

Additionally, professionals providing skilling within the sector expressed their desire to contribute more, but they require additional funding. Funding is particularly crucial since most young creatives cannot afford the costs of available training opportunities. More so, skills providers said they need support in understanding the digital transformation in the sector for them to be able to better support young creatives.

### 1 Training providers need external funding to do more.

Training providers want to do more to build young creatives' skills but need funding. Most say they often rely on external funding to run skilling workshops because many young creatives cannot afford to pay for them.

Skilling providers also say they need financial support to buy equipment to offer practical skills to creatives. Some skills providers run programs that require creatives to have access to audio and video equipment and computers, but many need more resources to buy the equipment. Most young creatives may not have their own equipment either. At the stakeholder workshop, renowned playwright Angela Emurwon suggested creating more funding for longer-term incubation programs through which creatives have access to resources that can help them improve their skills.

### 2 More collaborative skilling initiatives are needed.

Some experts identify a need for more collaboration among skills providers, government, and development partners, many of whom already support various initiatives. At the stakeholder workshop, Professor Mercy Mirembe Ntangaare, a performing arts lecturer, suggested a partnership model between private and public skills providers such as Makerere University. A Uganda Performing Rights Society representative asked skills providers to cooperate with the institution to empower young artists on their royalty rights.



### 3 Create more spaces and opportunities for creatives to practice and showcase their work.

Both experts and creatives agree that there is a need for more spaces through which creatives can practice and improve their craft. A parliamentary report urges the government to replicate the Motiv Uganda model that offers space and equipment to various categories of creatives. Such creative hubs can promote creativity, digitalization, and knowledge sharing, according to UNCTAD.<sup>16</sup>

### 4 Government should invest more in skills development.

Experts tasked the government with playing a more proactive role in training young creatives. The Uganda Communications Commission runs training workshops and competitions for filmmakers. However, some stakeholders wondered why the regulator was involved in providing training. Additionally, participants at the stakeholder workshop called on the government to allocate more funding to the sector. The chairperson of the Uganda Parliamentary Forum for Creative Industries, Hon. Rachel Magoola, advocated for CCIs to have its own ministry. Currently, it is nestled under the Ministry for Gender and Social Development.<sup>17</sup>

### 5 Donors should make funding requirements less rigid.

A key issue that came up in various conversations with young creatives and experts was the “rigid funding” available under several initiatives by development partners. Both creatives and experts said that most funders focus on specific agendas, leaving creatives and actors in the industry little room for creativity.

### 6 Collect and update data on CCIs.

As mentioned in the [landscaping study](#) and [findings report](#), the most recent comprehensive country-wide data on CCIs is from 2014 mapping study done by UNESCO in conjunction with the Uganda government.<sup>18</sup> More recent data is needed, in addition to more statistics on various aspects of the industry that can inform policy on CCIs such as: how CCIs contribute to the economy; how creatives are earning through digital means; how many have knowledge of digital tools and how they use them; and who is providing relevant training to creatives and what are the associated costs. Beyond these suggestions, stakeholders can discuss what other data can be relevant to those who support the industry, including government, development partners, learning institutions, art foundations, and others.

<sup>16</sup> UNCTAD, *Creative Economy Outlook 2022*.

<sup>17</sup> Parliament of the Republic of Uganda, “Parliamentary Forum for Creative Industries.”

<sup>18</sup> Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, “Report on the Mapping of Culture and Creative Industries in Uganda.”

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## Authors' recommendations to support Uganda's CCIs

### Skilling opportunities across the value chain

As stakeholders and skills providers consider providing training opportunities, there is a need to map out where they have the most strength across the CCI value chain. The European Commission's report mapping the EU's creative value chain in the digital age provides an example.<sup>19</sup> The report uses the UNESCO culture cycle as an underlying framework. Education and training are seen as key supportive factors across all stages of the value chain (using the visual arts sector as an example).

Once the stages are mapped, matching skills can be suggested.

Table 2 ▼

Skills along the CCI value chain

Value chain for visual arts	Examples of suggested skills (not exhaustive)
Content creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Various vocational skills</li> <li>Business and management skills</li> <li>Using digital platforms to create</li> <li>Project management</li> <li>Business registration and taxation</li> <li>Pitching to clients</li> </ul>
Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intellectual property rights</li> <li>Business and management skills</li> <li>Negotiating contracts</li> <li>Financial management</li> <li>Podcasting</li> <li>Coding and programming</li> <li>Financial literacy</li> </ul>
Dissemination, exhibition, and sales (online and offline)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Digital marketing</li> <li>Social media marketing</li> <li>How to set up online exhibitions</li> <li>Storytelling</li> <li>Negotiation skills</li> <li>Communication skills</li> <li>Exporting goods and services</li> <li>Personal branding</li> <li>Networking skills</li> <li>Curating art shows</li> <li>Taxation</li> <li>Copyright online</li> <li>Selling online</li> </ul>

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<sup>19</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, *Mapping the Creative Value Chains: A Study on the Economy of Culture in the Digital Age*.

## Support research to explore CCI-specific issues.

There is very little research currently on the CCI in Uganda. We therefore suggest that industry players support research to explore various issues in the sector such as:

- Research on the implications of emerging technologies on the creative sector, in the Ugandan context.
- Research on the most potential earning per CCI along the digital value chain.
- Research on the sector—how it can create fulfilling and meaningful work and what more can be done to support it in a digital age.
- Research on how creatives with disabilities are navigating the digital age.

There is a need to convene and facilitate regular conversations or an annual conference that brings together various stakeholders and creatives to exchange ideas and chart the way forward for the sector. Such meetings will also allow various actors to network and create partnerships.

Young female creatives face several challenges on top of the many that plague the sector. There is a need to create or fund existing initiatives that support female creatives to create, produce, or disseminate their work.

## Foster government support for CCIs.

Create national campaigns that nudge the private sector and public to appreciate Uganda's CCIs and create a domestic market for them.

In its 2021 plan of action on CCIs, the African Union makes several recommendations for member states to adopt covering many categories:<sup>20</sup> Markets for Africa's Cultural and Creative Industries; Education, Capacity Building and Sustainability; Finance and Investment; Intellectual Property Rights; Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs); Cultural Infrastructure; Cultural and Creative Industry Statistics and Social Inclusion and Cohesion. The document is a good reminder of the commitments that member states, including Uganda, made to promote CCIs. The implementation framework in the document lays out clear roles for various stakeholders including government, CCI ministries, Civil Society Organisations, Pan African institutions, revenue authorities, creative hubs, incubators and accelerators, investors, and foundations, among several others. All stakeholders should consider the plan of action as they plan and implement programs to support the growth of the CCIs.

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<sup>20</sup> African Union, "Revised African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries."

Kisakye has watched countless YouTube videos to learn how to sing better, but she says she needs more skills to become a professional musician. She wants to learn how to market herself better online, how to play new instruments, how to produce music production, and how to copyright her work. Kisakye says,

*“I’m hoping, especially for Uganda, that we will uphold artistry because these are gifts from God. I hope there’s more support for artists in Uganda.”*

**Kisakye (30), musician**

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