



2025

**SAUTI ZA BUSARA**

Festival Report



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## 1. STATEMENT

On behalf of the Sauti za Busara team, we're proud to celebrate the success of this year's festival. More than a music event, it's a vibrant platform for showcasing Africa's rich cultural heritage and diversity. Artists from across the continent and beyond come together to share their voices, illustrating music's unique ability to unite people from different backgrounds in a powerful celebration of Zanzibar's cultural identity and a broader sense of global artistic unity.

This year's lineup was a vibrant blend of musical styles, from traditional African rhythms to modern innovations. By embracing a wide range of genres and influences, Sauti za Busara not only entertains audiences but also highlights the continent's ongoing artistic evolution and through this diverse musical journey, it continues to inspire pride, learning, and a deeper understanding of Africa's lasting cultural imprint on the world stage.

Beyond its cultural impact, the festival is vital to Zanzibar's economy and sustainable tourism. Each year, Sauti za Busara draws thousands of visitors, boosting local businesses, creating jobs, and helping preserve the island's heritage and natural beauty. Looking ahead, we remain committed to uplifting African artists and fostering cultural exchange. Thank you for your continued support, looking forward to welcoming you again in celebration of the spirit, diversity, and creativity that make our shared humanity so powerful.

**Simai Mohammed Said, Chairman of the Board, April 2025**

A handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Simai Mohammed Said.



**"Having covered four editions of the superb Sauti za Busara annual music festival in Zanzibar for our nationally distributed radio series Afropop Worldwide, I can say that they offer one of the best festival experiences in the world."**

Sean Barlow – Founder & Executive Producer for Afropop Worldwide



Sauti za Busara is organised by Busara Promotions, a non-governmental, non-profit organisation as registered in Zanzibar in 2003.

### OUR VISION

Increased social cohesion and economic growth in Zanzibar, as fuelled by a wider appreciation of local, regional and international music uniquely connected to Africa.

### OUR MISSION

- To provide professional opportunities in the East African music industry that is connected and in exchange with other regions.
- To provide platforms for expression and celebration of cultural pluralism.
- To organise a globally acclaimed African music festival annually, that is inclusive to local and international audiences.

### THE BOARD

Simai Mohammed Said  
 Julia Bishop  
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## 2. WELCOME NOTE FROM THE FESTIVAL DIRECTOR

Music has the incredible ability to bring people together, bridging generations, cultures, and nations to foster peace, harmony, and mutual understanding. Sauti za Busara, organized by Busara Promotions, a dedicated non-profit NGO based in Zanzibar, is a beautiful celebration of this power. Every year, Stone Town transforms into a vibrant hub of African music, where people from all walks of life unite in joyful celebration. The festival not only showcases the rich diversity of music from across the Continent but also promotes respect for cultural traditions, encourages peaceful coexistence, and uplifts local communities, creating an unforgettable experience of unity and shared understanding.

For 22 years, as organizers, we have been deeply committed to ensuring that the festival continues to deliver meaningful benefits to society. Our primary goal has always been to foster celebration and unity while preserving our cultural heritage. Through the festival, we focus on activities that enrich knowledge, build skills, and create income-generating opportunities for local communities, with a special emphasis on empowering women, youth, and marginalized groups. Music unites us all, transcending borders and bringing harmony to the world." The 22nd edition of Sauti za Busara, held from February 14th to 16th, 2025, was a powerful way of giving life to this saying. The celebration of African music and bringing together artists from across the continent to showcase its incredible diversity, was beyond magic.

For three unforgettable days, audiences from around the world enjoyed 30 live performances, with 21 at the iconic Old Fort in Stone Town, six at Forodhani Gardens, and three more at the Busara Plus Event in Fumba Town, an exciting addition to the festival. This year's theme, 'Voices for Peace,' resonated deeply with both artists and audiences, amplifying the power of music to inspire unity, peace, and understanding. Since its inception, Sauti za Busara has become a global gathering where musicians and visitors from diverse backgrounds meet, exchange ideas, and create lasting cultural moments of connection and celebration.

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the success of this event, whether through support as partners and sponsors, the dedication of the festival crew, the enthusiasm of

our audiences, the amazing craft from the musicians, or the hard work of our staff.

As one festival draws to a close, the groundwork for the next begins, and we are already diligently preparing for the 23rd edition, set for February 5th to 8th, 2026. With full confidence and anticipation, we look forward to delivering yet another extraordinary and unforgettable Sauti za Busara experience.

**Journey Ramadhan, Festival Director**  
 Zanzibar, April 2025



### 3. NOTE FROM THE MANAGING DIRECTOR



Having now been part of the Sauti za Busara team for two full editions, I am truly humbled by the progress we've made together in continuing this incredible legacy. Since joining in 2023, it's been a rewarding experience to see how the festival has continued to evolve, creating a lasting cultural impact while maintaining its core mission of celebrating African music. Reflecting on these two years, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the festival's journey and to ensure that it thrives for many more decades to come.

While we've seen significant growth in both attendance and international recognition, we've also faced the challenges that come with scaling such a dynamic event. The pressure on our venue, for instance, has highlighted the need for ongoing improvements to meet the needs of both the expanding audience and the artists. These challenges, though, are part of the natural growth process, and we are committed to making the necessary changes to maintain a top-tier experience for all.

I'm especially proud of the new partnerships we've forged, particularly with UN Women and the Inspire to Lead Campaign. These collaborations are more than just partnerships, they are essential in blending cultural entertainment with social change. The festival is

increasingly recognized for its role in promoting gender equality, women's empowerment, and leadership, which is an exciting evolution of our original mission. We are reaching new audiences and creating targeted outreach programs that have real, lasting impact, thanks to the involvement of big NGOs and international institutions.

As we look ahead, I'm thrilled to build on these relationships, with more exciting partnerships in the pipeline, such as our upcoming collaboration with UNESCO and WOMEX for the 2025–2027 period. These partnerships will only further enhance Sauti za Busara's global reach, allowing us to elevate African talent on the world stage and foster deeper cultural exchanges.

With 22 successful editions under our belt, I'm more confident than ever that Sauti za Busara will continue to evolve, driving cultural awareness and positive social change for another 20 years and beyond. Our team's commitment to this vision is unwavering, and I'm eager to see the festival continue to inspire and connect communities, both locally and internationally.

**Lorenz Herrmann, Managing Director  
Zanzibar, April 2025**

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'L. Herrmann'.



**"Sauti za Busara 2025 was an amazing experience. The diverse musical styles—from traditional island tunes to contemporary sounds—create a captivating mix and bring together guests from near and far. The iconic festival venue, the Old Fort, with its rich heritage, provides the perfect backdrop, blending the island's past with its vibrant present."**

Christine Grau – Ambassador of the European Union to Tanzania and EAC

# 4. THE IMPACT OF SAUTI ZA BUSARA

The impact of Sauti za Busara reaches far beyond the vibrant annual celebrations, leaving a deep and lasting influence on the local community and the global music industry.

Sauti za Busara creates a platform where local talent is celebrated, offering musicians and artists from Zanzibar and Africa the opportunity to showcase their unique cultural heritage to an international audience. It fosters pride in local traditions, strengthens community bonds, and gives both emerging and established artists the exposure they need to take their craft to new heights.

On a broader scale, Sauti za Busara's influence extends to the global music scene, bringing together diverse sounds, styles, and voices from all over the world. This cross-cultural exchange not only enriches the festival itself but also contributes to the global appreciation of African music and culture. The festival plays a vital role in shaping the future of music, providing opportunities for collaboration, education, and inspiration.

Sauti za Busara has become an essential driver of tourism in Zanzibar, significantly boosting the local economy while fostering understanding and cultural exchange between locals and visitors. The festival, which draws a growing number of attendees from around the world, serves as a catalyst for local businesses. The influx of visitors supports restaurants, hotels, and other service providers, creating a thriving atmosphere in the region. Ultimately, Sauti za Busara is more than just a music festival; it is a celebration of community, heritage, and the transformative power of music, leaving a lasting impact on individuals and the world at large.

Over the past five years, Zanzibar has experienced a noticeable increase in tourism, particularly in February, when the annual Sauti za Busara Festival takes place. In February 2025, the island welcomed 82,750 tourists, an increase of 16.4% compared with 71,095 visitors in February 2024. This surge can largely be attributed to cultural events like the Sauti za Busara Festival, which attracts both regional and

international visitors. The festival's growing prominence is evident, having featured over 460 bands from more than 60 countries since its inception, spanning genres from Traditional Taarab to Afrobeats.

This influx of tourists has provided a substantial boost to Zanzibar's economy, with the tourism sector's contribution to the GDP reaching 29.5% in 2024, reflecting a 13.2% increase from previous years. Additionally, the number of hotel rooms in Zanzibar grew from 10,961 in 2020 to 13,215 in 2023, marking a 20.58% increase, driven by the rising demand for accommodations during peak tourist seasons. These statistics underscore the vital role of cultural festivals like Sauti za Busara in enhancing Zanzibar's appeal as a top tourist destination and driving its economic growth.

Sauti za Busara's profound impact highlights its role as a key force for economic growth, cultural enrichment, and social unity, both within the region and across the globe.

**"Sauti za Busara has given us a stage where we get to meet a worldwide audience—all these people coming to Zanzibar get to see our products. We feel that it's a little bit of comfort smelling like coconut and lime while you're at the festival."**

**Ayesha Afzal - Sales & Marketing Manager, Inaya Zanzibar**



9 female performers/  
groups led by women



23,500  
Attendees



51%

Tanzanians



26%

EAC



7%

Rest of Africa



17%

Internationals



**1,710,268 views**  
**769,625 reach**  
among Instagram users



**417,363 views**  
**11,198 interaction**  
among Facebook users



**28,406 unique visits**  
**859,998 total visits**  
**12,749,119 total hits**

Website Interaction

# 5. INSPIRE TO LEAD



**In a remarkable collaboration between the European Union (EU), UN Women, the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, and Busara Promotions, the Inspire to Lead campaign brought together diverse communities and organizations to champion the critical cause of ending Gender-Based Violence (GBV).**

The campaign utilized a unique screening format, engaging over 3,000 individuals across three vibrant locations: Kisonge, Kiembe Samaki, and Forodhani Gardens. These screenings not only attracted significant audiences but also sparked meaningful conversations and proactive discussions. The feedback from both the audience and media outlets was overwhelmingly positive, underscoring the profound impact of this movement.

The Inspire to Lead campaign has set a powerful precedent for future collaborative efforts, igniting a wave of awareness, empowerment, and commitment to ending GBV in Zanzibar and beyond. This success is a testament to the strength of partnerships and the collective will to create lasting change. We are excited about the continued momentum and look forward to seeing the positive ripple effects from this incredible initiative.

As Sauti za Busara continues to grow in both stature and influence. One of its most enduring legacies is its commitment to empowering individuals, especially

women, on stage and behind the scenes. The festival has become not just a celebration of music but a powerful platform for skills development, professional growth, and the cultivation of future leaders in the arts and event management industries.

Over the years, Sauti za Busara has trained and mentored a diverse team of staff, many of whom have grown to take on key roles within the festival. This long-standing investment in human capital has not only improved the quality of the festival's operations but has also created a ripple effect in the wider community, providing local talent with the tools and confidence to succeed in the competitive world of music and event production.

Among the most compelling success stories are the journeys of Clara Primsigh and Mariam Namuyode, two women whose careers were transformed through their involvement with Sauti za Busara.

**"I had the absolute pleasure of working closely with Busara Promotions to conceptualise and carry out three community outreach events in the lead up and on the last day of the Sauti za Busara festival 2025. Against the stunning backdrop of the festival, we reached over 3000 people with our Inspire To Lead! Campaign in collaboration with the Government of Zanzibar, the European Union and UN Women – sharing anti-gender-based violence messages and informing the public of gender services available in Zanzibar to safely report violence. "**

**Joanna Martin – Media and Communications Consultant,  
Government of Tanzania & European Union**



**Clara Primsigh, Amphitheatre Stage Manager  
Zanzibar, February 2025**

Clara's journey began as a volunteer during Sauti za Busara. Initially tasked with logistical duties, helping with setting up stages, Clara's work ethic and dedication quickly garnered the attention of the festival's leadership. What began as a small role evolved into an invaluable position as Clara's skills in Stage Management flourished.

With the mentorship and hands-on training provided by Sauti za Busara, Clara developed the leadership qualities and technical expertise needed to thrive in the fast-paced world of event management. Over the years, Clara advanced to become one of the festival's key Assistant Stage Managers. Her ability to oversee complex logistical tasks, such as coordinating performance schedules and managing technical teams, became crucial in ensuring that the festival ran smoothly. Clara's ascent is a testament to the power of providing local women with the training and opportunities to lead and create a lasting impact. Today, Clara is a beacon of success, and her story serves as an inspiration to other women in the region who may not have previously considered careers in Stage Management. Her experience highlights the tangible benefits of mentorship and hands-on learning, as well as the festival's role in helping individuals gain confidence and expertise that extend far beyond the event itself.



**Mariam Namuyode, Main Stage Sound Engineer  
Zanzibar, February 2025**

Mariam's story is equally inspiring, as it showcases the impact of Sauti za Busara's commitment to providing women with access to technical education in a male-dominated field. When Mariam first joined the festival, she had a passion for sound engineering but little practical experience. Through the festival's training programs, Mariam was introduced to the technical side of event production, learning from seasoned professionals who shared their knowledge of sound design, stage management, and equipment handling.

As she spent more time working with the technical team during the festival, Mariam quickly gained confidence in her abilities. Her natural aptitude for sound engineering became evident, and she began to take on greater responsibilities, eventually becoming one of the lead sound engineers at Sauti za Busara. Her role now involves overseeing all technical aspects of the festival's performances, ensuring that each artist's sound is delivered with clarity and precision. Mariam's rise in the world of sound engineering reflects the growing visibility and influence of women in technical roles. Her success story is a powerful example of how targeted training and mentorship can break down gender barriers and create more opportunities for women in industries where they have historically been underrepresented. Today, Mariam is not only an expert in her field but also a role model for young women aspiring to break into the technical side of music and event production.

# 6. THE MUSICAL MAGIC

Sauti za Busara stands as one of the premier festivals on the African continent, a prestigious platform that both celebrates and propels the careers of emerging and established African talent. With over two decades of excellence, it continues to be a key milestone for music enthusiasts and industry professionals alike, offering unparalleled opportunities to discover new sounds and promising artists. The festival serves as a powerful springboard, helping local talent gain exposure and launch their careers onto the international stage. With over 500 musicians competing for a chance to perform each year, Sauti za Busara has firmly established itself as a coveted and transformative event, shaping the future of African music and amplifying its stars on the global scene.

The 2025 line up featured Thandiswa (South Africa), Blinky Bill (Kenya), Christian Bella & Malaika Band (DRC & Tanzania), Bokani Dyer (South Africa), Frida Amani (Tanzania), The Zawose Queens (TZ/UK), Kasiwa Mutua (Kenya), Zanzibar Taarab Heritage Ensemble (Zanzibar), Leo Mkanyia & The Swahili Blues (Tanzania), Boukouru (Rwanda), Tryphon Evarist (Zanzibar), Charles Obina (Uganda), Baba Kash & The Band (Tanzania), Assa Matusse (Mozambique), Mumba Yachi (DRC & Zambia), Nidhal Yahyaoui (Tunisia), Étinsel Maloya (Réunion), WD Abo (Sudan), uKhoiKhoi (South Africa), Joyce Babatunde (Cameroon), Zenji Boy na Wenzake (Zanzibar), and more.

The programming of Sauti za Busara is a true testament of musical diversity, blending different African music genres seamlessly on one stage, creating an exhilarating crescendo that is programmed to reach its peak with the final act of each day. The festival features four stages, each carrying a unique and distinct musical experience, ensuring a diverse and dynamic experience for all. The vibrant daytime performances at the Forodhani Gardens are set in front of the backdrop of the Indian Ocean, free and open to the public, with an atmosphere where youths and citizens from Zanzibar mix with sunbathers from the promenade to admire unique performances. In the lush green gardens of Fumba Town, the Busara Plus stage coupled with the bustling Kwetu Kwenu Community Market, offers a beautiful family-friendly daytime experience. At night, the Old Fort comes alive with music and colorful lights, while the intimate

Amphitheatre stage allows for a closer connection to the artists. The main stage, with its impressive sound, lighting, and backdrop of the UNESCO world heritage site, complements the overall experience, providing an awe-inspiring setting to experience the diversity of African music and culture.

Sauti za Busara's global impact was recently highlighted when the festival was honored with the prestigious NXT Honors Award. This recognition speaks volumes about the festival's outstanding contribution to Africa's cultural landscape and its pivotal role in positioning Zanzibar as a prime destination for major international events. The NXT Honors Award celebrates excellence in sectors such as music, film, and social change, further solidifying Sauti za Busara as a key player in shaping Africa's cultural identity.

Zanzibar's growing reputation as a premier destination for events can, in many ways, be attributed to the success and prominence of Sauti za Busara. The festival has helped elevate Zanzibar as a cultural hub, attracting both international attention and a steady stream of visitors. With each passing year, the festival draws more artists and tourists eager to experience Zanzibar's rich history and vibrant culture, contributing significantly to the island's tourism industry. The combination of Zanzibar's recognition as a top event destination and the NXT Honors Award for Sauti za Busara highlights the broader impact of the festival. It not only celebrates African music and culture but also drives substantial economic and social growth in the region. As Sauti za Busara continues to thrive, its influence will undoubtedly create more and more opportunities for Zanzibar, ensuring its place as a premium location for world-class events for years to come.



# 7. THE ARTISTS



ASSA MATUSSE  
(Mozambique)



BABA KASH &  
THE BAND  
(Tanzania)



BLINKY BILL  
(Kenya)



BOKANI DYER  
(South Africa)



SWAHILI  
ENCOUNTERS  
(Various)



THANDISWA  
MAZWAI  
(South Africa)



TRYPHON  
EVARIST  
(Zanzibar)



UKHOIKHOI  
(South Africa)



BOUKURU  
(Rwanda)



CHARLES OBINA  
(Uganda)



CHRISTIAN BELLA  
& MALAIKA BAND  
(DRC & Tanzania)



FRIDA AMANI  
(Tanzania)



ZENJI BOY NA WENZAKE  
(Zanzibar)



ZANZIBAR  
TAARAB  
HERITAGE  
ENSEMBLE  
(Zanzibar)



WD ABO  
(Sudan)



ÉTINSEL MALOYA  
(Réunion)



KASIVA MUTUA  
(Kenya)



LEO MKANYIA & THE  
SWAHILI BLUES  
(Tanzania)



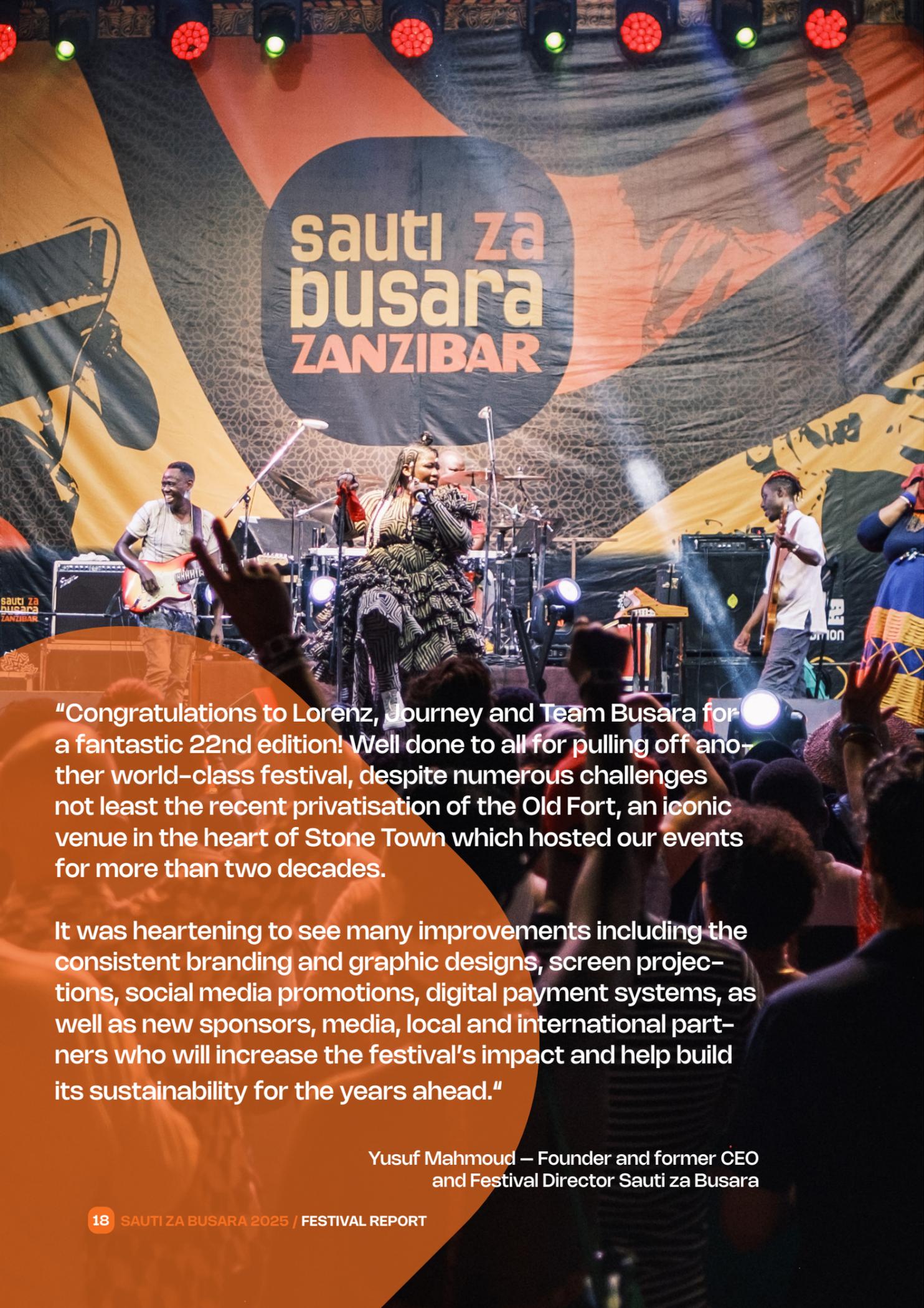
MUMBA YACHI  
(DRC & ZAMBIA)



NIDHAL  
YAHYAOU  
(Tunisia)

"The diverse lineup of artists, the electrifying performances, and the incredible crowd made it an unforgettable experience."

Halda Alkanaa – Managing Director, Dhow Countries Music Academy



## 8. THE ENHANCED BUSARA EXPERIENCE

At this year's Sauti za Busara, several exciting enhancements were introduced to elevate the festival experience and further solidify its position as a leading cultural event. The introduction of a Digital Ticketing System and Access Control by Payvent and Tukiio made the entry process smoother, more efficient, and secure, allowing festival goers to enjoy their experience without the hassle of long lines. Additionally, the second year of Cashless Payments ensured quick and seamless transactions, offering convenience to attendees while promoting a safe, modern approach to event spending.

A key highlight for this year, was the formation of new and long-term partnerships and collaborations. The three-year partnership between Sauti za Busara and Clouds Media is crucial to the festival's growth and further impact in the local market. As Tanzania's most influential media house, Clouds Media has significantly boosted the festival's visibility across radio, TV, and digital platforms in the first year of the partnership already. Their extensive media coverage, from promotional campaigns to live event broadcasts, has played a vital role in building excitement around the festival and showcasing local talent. Moreover, Clouds Media has helped foster greater community engagement by sharing stories from the festival, highlighting the cultural significance of the event, and providing a platform for emerging artists to gain exposure. Looking ahead, the partnership between Sauti za Busara and Clouds Media will continue to evolve, strengthening the festival's position as a key cultural and economic driver in East Africa.

On a further note, Airtel Money, played a key role in enhancing the digital experience for festivalgoers. By supporting mobile money transactions and strengthening on-site connectivity, they enabled faster, more secure payments and easier access to digital services. Their partnership reflects a shared vision of using technology to empower communities and create seamless, inclusive experiences for all.

Our Airline partner Kenya Airways was on board for the second consecutive year with a 20% discount for all visitors of the Festival during February. With their continued support, facilitating the travel of artists and guests across the continent and positioning Zanzibar as a key cultural destination in Africa, they con-

tributed greatly towards the large economic impact by bringing numerous visitors to the island.

One of the most notable developments this year was the extended bar area designed by Volks House, which created more space for attendees to relax and socialize, enhancing the overall festival atmosphere and ensuring that visitors could enjoy themselves comfortably during the performances.

Additional support came from partners such as, Zanzibar Insurance Company (ZIC), Infinity Developers, Fortitude Total Security, and Cape Town Fish Market, bringing value in areas from event security to dining and guest services. Longstanding collaborators like the Embassy of France, Zanlink, and Volks House continued to enhance the festival's cultural and digital infrastructure, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for all.

The impact of these partnerships goes far beyond financial or logistical support. They reflect a shared commitment to nurturing local culture, driving innovation, and engaging communities. By aligning with companies and institutions that believe in the power of the creative economy, Sauti za Busara strengthens its role as a catalyst for cultural and economic progress in Zanzibar and the region.

As the festival continues to grow and adapt, it stands as a dynamic platform for artistic expression, inclusive leadership, and unity, its influence echoing far beyond the shores of Zanzibar.



"Congratulations to Lorenz, Journey and Team Busara for a fantastic 22nd edition! Well done to all for pulling off another world-class festival, despite numerous challenges not least the recent privatisation of the Old Fort, an iconic venue in the heart of Stone Town which hosted our events for more than two decades.

It was heartening to see many improvements including the consistent branding and graphic designs, screen projections, social media promotions, digital payment systems, as well as new sponsors, media, local and international partners who will increase the festival's impact and help build its sustainability for the years ahead."

Yusuf Mahmoud – Founder and former CEO and Festival Director Sauti za Busara

# 9. FUMBA TOWN & BUSARA PLUS

The Busara Plus Stage has now entered its third edition at Fumba Town, and with each passing year, it flourishes in both popularity and inclusivity. What started as a small event has now become a major daytime highlight of the Festival, with a profound impact on the community. Fumba Town is rapidly transforming into a dynamic and thriving eco-city, just 20 minutes from Stone Town, and the festival plays a key role in showcasing this exciting evolution.

As Fumba Town grows, Busara remains at the forefront, offering a vibrant platform for incredible performances and giving visitors and locals a chance to witness the town's transformation firsthand. Monthly live music showcases at the Kwetu Kwenu Community Market highlight this progress, and during the festival weekend, the special Busara Plus edition elevates the experience further, expanding the festival from three to four stages.

This year, Busara Plus continued to showcase the innovative side of the festival, with three top-tier acts that blend traditional music with forward thinking contemporary influences, reflecting the spirit of Fumba through their music.

**"As we continue to shape Fumba Town into a vibrant community, arts and culture remain central to our vision. We're committed to fostering creativity and empowering the local community, enriching the lives of residents and visitors alike. By supporting initiatives like Sauti za Busara, we amplify our efforts to celebrate Zanzibar's rich cultural heritage. Through innovative programs, we're excited to see Fumba Town grow as a hub for cultural development and a testament to the power of the arts in community building."**

**Tobias Dietzold – Chief Operations Officer of CPS and Fumba Town**

Artists like Ukhoikhoi (South Africa), Blinky Bill (Kenya), and The Zawose Queens (Tanzania) captivated nearly 1500 Visitors, adding to the growing energy of Fumba Town. Alongside the music, more than 93 vibrant vendors filled the space with an impressive array of locally crafted goods from fashion and houseware to organic groceries and mouth-watering delicacies. Busara Plus not only enhances the festival but underscores Fumba Town's rising cultural significance.

The ongoing success of Busara Plus has enriched the festival experience, making Fumba Town an even more exciting destination for locals and visitors alike. Its sea-side charm, paired with a strong sense of community, offers guests an unforgettable atmosphere to enjoy world-class performances while contributing to the development of this remarkable area.

Busara's partnership with Fumba Town continues to grow, fueling both cultural and community development across Zanzibar, while providing a vital stage for the arts to thrive.





# 10. CARNIVAL PARADE

The 2025 Sauti za Busara festival kicked off with an electrifying carnival parade, marking the start of the three-day cultural celebration in Zanzibar. This iconic event, the largest annual street celebration on the island, was filled with excitement and pride, offering exposure to a diverse array of local cultural, artistic, and community groups. This year's parade was an extraordinary display, featuring over 170 artists and performers, including children's groups, beni brass bands, zumari players, ngoma drummers and dancers, acrobats, stilt-walkers, comedians, and disabled associations.

The route, from Kisonge Square to Darajani, the old Slave Market, and through to the famous Forodhani Gardens outside the Old Fort, attracted a vibrant crowd of approximately 3,000 spectators, both local and international. The parade's dynamic mix of performances showcased Zanzibar's rich cultural tapestry, leaving the crowd buzzing with energy. At the free Forodhani Stage in Forodhani Gardens, attendees were treated to performances by slam-poet Joyce Babatunde from Cameroon and upcoming Singeli artist Baba Kash from Tanzania.

This year's theme, "Voices for Peace," resonated powerfully throughout the festival, with the Carnival Parade serving as a perfect reflection of unity, cultural pride, and community spirit. The event not only celebrated Zanzibar's cultural diversity but also reinforced the importance of sharing and preserving heritage. It created an unforgettable experience for both the participants and spectators, while fostering a deep sense of pride and connection to the island's traditions.



# 11. SWAHILI ENCOUNTERS

One of the standout features of Sauti za Busara for both musicians and audiences is the annual Swahili Encounters programme. This unique collaborative project brings together musicians from the featured bands and local talent for a week-long creative session that celebrates the power of African music and brings the event's theme to life.

In partnership with Little Gig, we created an incredible opportunity for local and international artists to unite, craft unique sounds, and rehearse together before performing as a cohesive band under the guidance of Msaki, renowned artist from South Africa and director of the arts collective ATLBLK.

Aligned with the theme "Voices for Peace," Swahili Encounters 2025 brought together artists from Zanzibar, Tanzania, South Africa, Sudan, and Uganda. Under the mentorship of South Africa's music superstar Msaki, the group embarked on the challenge

of creating a one-hour showcase in just one week. Through their collective creativity and musical magic, they infused the theme with a deeper meaning, weaving together diverse musical influences and stories that resonated with unity, harmony, and the transformative power of music in fostering peace. Their unique sound not only brought the theme to life but also amplified its message, creating a truly unforgettable experience.

Building on this collaboration, the artists have transformed Swahili Encounters into a vibrant, ongoing network. By promoting each other's work and creating shared opportunities, they continue to amplify their talents and enrich Africa's music scene demonstrating the lasting impact of Sauti za Busara in fostering unity, cultural exchange, and mutual growth.



**"My experience as the Artistic Director for Swahili Encounters 2025 has been life-changing. I was expecting magic, but I didn't think we would be moving set together. I am in awe of all the artists—their diversity, and the way people learned each other's songs, rhythms, and stories. I think I speak for everyone when I say it was a memorable and enriching time. We were intrigued by each other's differences and surprised by our similarities—in perspective and in purpose—as cultural workers and preservers of language and ancient songs."**

Msaki – Musician and Activist, South Africa





## 12. AMPLIFYING WOMEN'S VOICES

One of the major challenges faced by festival organizers is achieving gender balance in programming and production, as well as within the technical crew. Sauti za Busara has long prioritized the inclusion of female performers, but it is also crucial that these artists meet other key criteria, such as offering unique music, performing live, and delivering messages that positively impact society. Women in East Africa and elsewhere face additional barriers in both local and global music industries, which often restrict their career progression, leading to a significant underrepresentation of female artists.

The "Amplifying Women's Voices" project is dedicated to supporting women artists and creative professionals through comprehensive training programs. These programs are designed to enhance their skills, help refine their craft, and provide valuable insights into the music industry. Additionally, the project creates opportunities for women to perform, showcase their talents, and network with peers, mentors, and industry leaders. By fostering an environment that champions participation, this initiative aims to elevate women's voices, raise awareness about the challenges they face in the music industry, and drive positive change. Its overarching goal is to foster collaboration and advocate for gender equality and empowerment, helping to create more inclusive and equitable opportunities for women in the sector.

At Sauti za Busara 2025, we are proud to showcase our commitment to gender inclusivity and empowerment. On Friday, 100% of the performances at the Amphitheatre stage were dedicated to women, and 67% of the performances at the Busara Plus Stage featured female artists. Additionally, one entire session at Movers & Shakers was led by women, from the topic to the panellists.

We also made significant strides in training and capacity building for female stagehands and technical staff, facilitated by an all-female professional team. As a result, the proportion of women in the crew increased by 7%, rising from 31% to 38%. Furthermore, the MCs across the festival's stages were 100% female, and Swahili Encounters saw 61% female participation, giving the event a distinctly female focus.

Beyond the numbers, the women involved in the festival's production serve as powerful role models for the young female audience, many of whom are inspired by the visibility of women in leadership roles on and off the stage.

While addressing gender inequality remains an ongoing challenge, we are firm in our commitment to continue the slow but steady process of training, capacity building, and exposure. Through these efforts, we believe we can make meaningful progress in narrowing the gender gap in the music industry, creating long-term and lasting change.



**"I'm truly grateful for the opportunity to perform at Sauti za Busara 2025. The hospitality was exceptional, and the entire experience was unforgettable. I got to connect with amazing people from different backgrounds, immerse myself in new cultures, and witness how other artists bring their energy to the stage. It was inspiring to see the diversity in music and performance styles, and I've learned so much from this experience. Thank you to everyone who made this possible."**

**Frida Amani – Musician, Tanzania**

# 13. MOVERS & SHAKERS

Movers & Shakers is a dynamic platform at Sauti za Busara that connects the African music industry with the global music scene. Attracting thousands of visitors to Zanzibar, the Festival also draws experienced professionals, as well as emerging artists, managers, and entrepreneurs. Designed to promote collaboration, exchange, and business opportunities for up-and-coming artists, the Movers & Shakers platform plays a pivotal role in supporting talent and innovation.

Through engaging panel discussions on timely industry topics, personal introductions, and informal networking sessions, the platform fosters an environment rich in dialogue, connection, and idea-sharing throughout the festival.

This year, over 120 industry professionals attended, representing major cultural institutions, prominent African and European music festivals, arts foundations, and international organizations. The platform creates a space for a diverse mix of industry players, enabling meaningful exchange and growth.

Key discussions such as "Breaking Barriers: The Resilience and Empowerment of Women in the Music Industry" with Assa Matusse (Artist, Mozambique), Frida Amani (Artist, Tanzania), Joyce Babatunde (Artist, Cameroon), Melissa Perales (Festival Curator Durchlüften Festival, Berlin), moderated by Phiwo Dhlamini (Comms Manager MTN Bushfire Festival, Eswatini) showed the

individual but also shared challenges of women in the music industry and created a space for open exchange and discussion.

"Corporate Partnership and Festival Sustainability in Africa: Balancing Growth and Brand Integrity" with Andrew Rugamba (Director Airtel Money, Tanzania), Bongani Dhlamini (Sales & Marketing Manager MTN Bushfire Festival, Eswatini), Liginiku Millinga (Founder Fern Marketing, Tanzania), moderated by Lorenz Herrmann (Managing Director Busara Promotions, Zanzibar), was a fruitful discussion on how to enhance festival sustainability via corporate partnerships while still keeping the festival brand integrity alive. The high-level panel contributed valuable insights into the ins and outs of how to secure a corporate partner, what to be careful with, and how to make sure to implement the partnership in a way where both sides get maximum benefit, which would naturally lead to a prolonged partnership.

Movers & Shakers is a cornerstone event that nurtures community within the music industry, offering professionals a space to connect, collaborate, and thrive. By fostering knowledge sharing, building supportive relationships, and encouraging innovation, it strengthens the bonds between industry members and contributes to the continuous evolution of the music ecosystem. The platform ensures that professionals have the resources and opportunities needed to succeed and grow.

**"I also had the opportunity to participate in the Movers and Shakers conference, where I made meaningful connections with artists and industry professionals. The discussion on empowering women in music was especially inspiring, as I had the privilege of meeting many powerful African women artists from the lineup."**

Melissa Perales – Festival Curator Durchlüften Festival, Berlin



# 14. FORODHANI STAGE

This year's edition of Sauti za Busara celebrated the continued success of the Forodhani Stage, which has now firmly returned as a key part of the festival. Located in the heart of Stone Town at Forodhani Gardens, this free stage continues to provide incredible value to both local and visiting audiences.

Free for all and fully sponsored by the festival organizers, the Forodhani Stage showcased six musical groups from diverse backgrounds. With a focus on exceptional local talent, the stage also featured renowned international artists, offering a vibrant mix of performances that highlighted both local creativity and global musical influences such as Joyce Babatunde (Cameroon), Baba Kash & The Band (Tanzania), Charles Obina (Uganda),

Étinsel Maloya (Réunion), Nidhal Yahyaoui (Tunisia) and Zenji Boy na Wenzake (Zanzibar). This combination created an exciting atmosphere, filling the audience with pride as they witnessed the diverse and powerful exchange of cultures, enriching the festival experience for all. Attracting thousands of visitors who enjoyed exceptional performances set against the breathtaking backdrop of the Indian Ocean, the Sultans Palace, and the House of Wonders, the Forodhani Stage remains an essential part of the festival. It ensures strong community involvement and furthers our mission to provide platforms for artistic expression and celebrate cultural pluralism.



**"Thank you for the opportunity to allow us to experience a small part of the festival for free! We are festival organizers in Germany and really loved it here!"**

Lilli and Jo – Festival Organisers, Germany

# 15. MEDIA COVERAGE

**Sauti za Busara 2025, held in Zanzibar from February 14 to 16, was live-streamed by Clouds TV and Clouds FM, two of Tanzania's top entertainment and news stations.**

The festival generated significant media coverage before, during, and after the event, attracting attention from both local and regional outlets. Daily News was one of the most prominent sources, publishing over 12 articles that explored various aspects of the festival, including artist interviews, performance reviews, and its broader cultural impact. Habari Leo contributed six articles, focusing on the economic benefits the festival brought to Zanzibar and its role in fostering regional collaboration through music. The Citizen followed with five articles, emphasizing the festival's theme of peace, profiling key performers, and showcasing its contribution to promoting East African talent.

Additionally, The Guardian published two articles discussing the festival's role in advancing African music on a global scale. Alongside these outlets, other key local media platforms helped to broaden the festival's reach. TBC 1 and TBC 2, Tanzania's prominent state-run television channels, provided comprehensive online coverage, streaming performances, and sharing live updates. Radio stations like Malkia Choice FM and Jembe FM also played an important role, offering live broadcasts, artist interviews, and behind-the-scenes content. MwanaSpoti, a leading sports and entertainment newspaper, highlighted the festival's impact on both the music and tourism industries, while Coconut FM, a well-known Zanzibar radio station, delivered local coverage that

underscored the event's cultural significance and the tourism boost it brought to the island.

Internationally, The East African published two reports examining how the festival promoted cultural integration across East Africa. Music In Africa featured four articles focusing on the official lineup, performances, and artist showcases, while noting the festival's growing global influence. Additionally, BBC Swahili, RFI Kiswahili, CNBC, The New York Times, and the Danish Cultural Organisation all provided coverage, offering interviews with artists and sharing insights into the festival's impact on the regional music scene. This widespread media attention not only highlighted the energy and vibrancy of Sauti za Busara but also solid-



# 16. PARTNERS & SPONSORS

Each year in February, the world comes together to celebrate African music, diversity, and unity. This annual celebration of cultures, people, and both emerging and legendary musicians wouldn't be possible without the support of countless contributors. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who joins forces with the festival organizers year after year, making this extraordinary event a reality.

## MAIN PARTNER

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## FRIENDS OF BUSARA:

Archipelago Waterfront, Azam Marine, Café Foro, Colors of Zanzibar, Dhow Countries Music Academy, Forodhani Park Hotel, Hodi Hodi, Inaya Zanzibar, Januz Safaris, Livingstone Italian Restaurants, Mercury's Restaurant, Ms. Makeda Adventure in Tanzania, Stone Town Café, The Box by Ashley Maybe, United Petroleum, Yeoyum, Zuri Rituals

# Festival Report

## 2025



### **Busara Promotions**

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