

AFRICAN STATISTICS DAY

NOVEMBER 18, 2021

“MODERNIZING NATIONAL STATISTICAL SYSTEMS TO SUPPORT SOCIOCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN AFRICA”

African Statistics Day is an annual event celebrated on 18 November to raise public awareness on the importance of statistics in all aspects of social and economic life. The theme for this year is “**Modernizing National Statistical Systems to support sociocultural development in Africa**”. It is in tandem with the African Union theme of the year 2021 “**Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want**” and calls for strengthening the production of Arts, Culture and Heritage Statistics for Sustainable Development and Building the Africa we Want.

The theme for African Statistics Day in 2021 was chosen to raise awareness among decision-makers, technical and financial partners, data producers and users, researchers, and the general public about the importance of data and statistics on cultural and creative economy in the process of building back better and more inclusively, post COVID-19 pandemic.

Global and continental frameworks acknowledge cultural and socioeconomic value of the creative economy

The importance of Arts, Culture and Heritage and their socioeconomic benefits are reinforced in many National Development Plans as well as in continental and global development frameworks. Along with various instruments on culture adopted on the continent, including the African Union Plan of Action on Cultural and Creative Industries (2005), the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006), and the African Union Model Law on the Protection of Cultural Property and Heritage (2018), Aspiration 5 of the Agenda 2063 – the Africa we Want - focuses on African

cultural renaissance and calls for an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics.

Promotion of local culture, natural heritage and patrimony, and their linkages with sustainable tourism occupies an important place in the Sustainable Development Goals. Four of the Agenda 2030's targets¹ referred to culture and tourism, and called to protect, safeguard world's cultural and natural heritage, and ensure its sustainable management for socioeconomic and cultural benefits.

In 2019, the United Nations has adopted a resolution declaring the year 2021 the “International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development” recognizing the potential that creative economy has to support developing countries in diversifying production and exports and to deliver sustainable development in an inclusive and equitable manner (UNCTAD 2021).

Globally, the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) play a key role in national economies through their contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In addition to the cultural and economic benefits, CCIs show more resilience to external shocks than other industries as evidenced by its steady growth over the past twenty years. Cultural and Creative Industries can also foster inclusive recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Available data has showed that African countries' total export of Creative Industries has more than doubled between 2004 and 2013, however, Africa's share of the global creative economy remain very low (less than 1%). Today, the cultural and creative industries generate annual revenues of US\$2,250 billion and exports of over US\$250

¹ SDG 8.9, 11.4, 14.7, and 12.b

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billion globally. These sectors provide nearly thirty million jobs worldwide and employ more young people (aged 15–29) than any other sector, representing up to 10% of GDP in some countries (UN, 2021).

Modernizing National Statistical Systems (NSS) is needed to support sociocultural development in Africa

A recent study by the ECA showed there was poor data availability on the SDG indicators² related to culture and tourism in African countries. Understanding the challenges and opportunities requires quality data and statistical analysis. In August 2021, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) launched the survey of expenditure on cultural and natural heritage (SDG 11.4.1) to collect data for the global monitoring of this indicator. Collecting and analysing CCI data is vital for decision making and policy formulation and should be considered among priorities.

In recognition of the importance of CCIs, amidst economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, National Statistical Systems (NSS) on the continent must transform and modernize to be better equipped to provide data and statistics, supporting socio-economic and cultural development in Africa. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic on NSS in Africa has been big and related to financial, operational, and methodological issues among others. The

pandemic has accelerated the quest for transformation and modernization of the NSS. With assistance and support from partners, NSS have developed and used alternative methods for data collection such as telephonic surveys, online, web scrapping and usage of administrative data. However, it is recognized that the process of modernisation needs to continue and be sustained.

The African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics is created

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted the African community to accelerate and materialize the establishment of the African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics. The statistical community has globally recognized that producers of official statistics need to transform and modernize to adequately respond to all data demands arising from 2030 Agenda, Agenda 2063, Subregional and National Development Plans as well as other agendas and frameworks. This transformation and modernization cover all areas of official statistics, including the institutional statistical environment, production processes, coordination, and collaboration. The African group on transformation and modernization of official statistics was created by the Statistical Commission for Africa in 2020 to strategically guide and coordinate the work on transformation and modernization of National Statistical Systems in Africa.

²SDG 8.9.1, 11.4.1, and 12.b.1