

## Sanaa Blast Festival as Youth's Space for Creating Futures: Voices from the University of Dar es Salaam Graduates in Tanzania<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

This article examines the impact of the Sanaa Blast Festival in creating youth futures. *Sanaa* is a Kiswahili term that means art. The annual Sanaa Blast Festival that the Department of Creative Arts of the University of Dar es Salaam organises is a prime event targeting the optimisation of the tapping of university students' talents. The chief organisers of the festival are students themselves under the consultation of their instructors. Since its inception, the festival has helped transform the lives of youth graduates in diverse ways. However, these impacts often go unnoticed as no study has focused on this event. Against this backdrop, this study was conducted and used both secondary and primary data. Primary data were gathered through interview methods, mainly in-depth key informants and focus groups. Secondary data was utilised to locate theories, identify gaps, and back up findings gathered for this study. Using the tenet of the third space, this article argues that the Sanaa Blast Festival connects youth to the creative industry and gives them access to creative firms and people who later connect them to diverse opportunities, mostly jobs, internships, and networks. Becoming famous is a benefit that the Sanaa Blast Festival engenders to the graduates. Although the Sanaa Blast impacts the lives of youth optimistically, its survival remains doubtful because of the interplay of factors, such as insufficient recognition of the festival coupled with a limited budget, which presents persistent hurdles jeopardising the sustainability of the festival. Thus, the government, private companies, art stakeholders, and alumni must support the festival since it exposes youth to connections with companies and influential people in the creative industry.

### Keywords:

Sanaa Blast Festival, cultural festival, youth employment, Creative Arts, UDSM  
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<sup>1</sup> Future in this context refers to the youth's post-graduation life, particularly what kind of life they would live after graduation based on their investment in education and networking with people in the art industry.



## **Introduction**

Tanzanian youth comprise 60 percent of the entire population of the country (Population Census 2022). It is estimated that 9.4 percent of the youth do not have jobs in Tanzania because the formal sector does not create many new job opportunities for the youth (International Labour Organisation [ILO] 2018). The situation is even more alarming for university graduates, as about 900,000 youths graduate each year from various universities in Tanzania. Of these 900,000 graduates, only 50,000 to 60,000 get salaried jobs annually (*The Citizens* 2021). Limited access to job opportunities has prompted some of the youth to engage in pursuits that put them at risk of mental, physical, and psychological abuse (WYR 2007). Some graduates qualify for employment in various institutions. Conversely, many of them hardly penetrate the market due to a lack of connections and/or professional networks (Sanga 2022). Against this backdrop, the Creative Arts Department of the University of Dar es Salaam introduced the Sanaa<sup>2</sup> Blast Festival (SBF) has turned out to be a blessing for many youths studying diverse arts. The SBF has gifted the youths their own space for creating strong networks that, subsequently, give them access to jobs and internships that they could otherwise lack. The article looks at how the SBF creates jobs for the youths seeking to find direction in life.

Etymologically, SBF began in the Department of Creative Arts, the then Department of Fine and Performing Arts (FPA). It began as a tiny event designed for students from the Department of Creative Arts to showcase their creative endeavours and talents. During the event, the students used to showcase their creative ventures within the department. Whereas theatre and music students used a small stage within the department, art and

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<sup>2</sup> *Sanaa* is a Kiswahili term which means art. In the context of this study, the term *Sanaa* in Kiswahili stands for two categories of arts: the arts of making and the arts of doing. Whereas arts of making include painting, fashion, drawing, jewellery design, and sculpture, among others, the arts of doing include dance and/or *ngoma* performance, dance drama, stage plays/drama, storytelling, poetry, standup comedy, and music performance. In the context of this article, the term *Sanaa* refers to all these arts. the majority of which are usually performed during the festival.

design students used the open area in the creative arts building to exhibit their artworks. The creative works that they showcased were those that the students produced as part of their university practical examinations.

The inaugural festival, which began in 2017, was known as the “Talent Fever,” hence likening talent to a fever. Whereas a fever needs medicine to cure it, a talent needs showcasing to bring relief to the talented and expose their gifts. In 2018, the festival became TIKISA, an abbreviation of the Kiswahili phrase *Timiza Kipaji na Sanaa*, which encouraged the Department of Creative Arts students, as upcoming artists, to make sure they utilised the event as a platform for keeping the people within Tanzania and across the world informed about their talent(s). Simply put, the event facilitated the showcasing of the students’ numerous talents in the arts. It is seamless for students’ talents to be known worldwide as the department invites a significant number of media representatives whose content is broadcast globally. However, the name TIKISA did not last long. Complaints abounded that another artistic group in Tanzania used the name TIKISA. As such, continued use of the name made the department liable to be sued. Subsequently, the department decided to change the name to keep the event afloat and its mission in safe hands.

The then-head of the Department of Creative Arts, Dr. Kedmon Mapana, assigned students to undertake the task of finding a suitable name for the erstwhile festival. Subsequently, in 2019, the name Sanaa Blast Festival was born. The name refers to an artistic venture that requires performers, during the performance, to detonate and shake the area like a bomb due to their illustrious performance. However, the mission of this artistic event extends beyond the performance, especially when students and audiences use it as a platform for fostering cultural exchange, community engagement and celebration of diversity. Facts indicate that some students, staff, and art stakeholders use it as a platform for promoting dialogue, collaboration, and sharing experiences that foster unity and connection among the performers and the audience (Rutagand 2024).

The humble beginnings of the Sanaa Blast Festival occurred initially in the Department of Creative Arts stage, formally named the Old Estate. Later, the festival shifted from the Creative Arts stage to the BICO Garage, currently known as Sanaa Studio. BICO is an acronym for the Bureau for Industrial Cooperation (BICO), which is a unit of the University of Dar es Salaam’s College of Engineering and Technology (CoET). Since re-

designating its use, the place became home to the Sanaa Studio. However, because of the confined space, Sanaa Blast Festival performances shifted to the Hill Park carpark, which is more spacious and airy. The reason for the repeated relocation of the event stemmed from the rapid increase in the audience as the event increasingly became a household name.

Since the festival began, the audience appeared to have increased by thousands. The festival began with five hundred people who were essentially students and Creative Arts members of staff. Over the years, the number of attendees partaking in the festival doubled. For example, three thousand people participated in the festival in 2022. In 2023, the number soared to six thousand, twice as the previous year. Such a trend makes it possible to predict the number of audiences to be expected at the 2025 festival. The reason for the raised number of audience has a connection with the creative nature of the festival. The ground rule of the festival is that whatever is brought to the festival for performance and/or exhibition has to be executed creatively, be it a fashion show, dance, music performance, drama, or painting. Tanzanian celebrities, invited to perform side by side with students, gain the live coverage of the Tanzania Broadcasting Company (TBC 2) that it offers to the university. Such generosity affords the festival unlimited mileage.

Subsequently, a combination of these factors has transformed the festival from a local engagement to an international one. The festival has gone international because of the number of people who call, email, and send WhatsApp messages as the date for the Sanaa Blast Festival approaches. Artists from across Tanzania, Africa, and the global north, mainly Canada, Germany, and the United States, tend to ask about the festival and how best they could partake in the festival. For example, the 2003 festival had participants from Canada, whereas the 2024 event drew audiences from the UK and Kenya. The more the festival becomes international, the more advantageous it becomes to the performers, most of whom are UDSM students. This article, thus, explores how the SBF facilitates the youth's harnessing of connections in the creative industry and influential people and how these resultant connections support their access to professional networks, internships, and/or jobs. On the other hand, the article explores the dynamics threatening the sustainability and continuity of the SBF.

When conducting this study, the researcher was aware of festivals of this nature taking place elsewhere. In the UK, the University of Winchester

organises the Play and Creativity festival each year, whose intent is to make staff and students celebrate, explore and enjoy the numerous ways that play and creativity can saturate university life. Unlike SBF, where students play a role as the champions of the festival, in the Play and Creativity Festival of Winchester University, students and teachers work in partnership to facilitate the festival activities. In Tanzania, where this current study was carried out, besides the SBF, the Bagamoyo Festival is another vibrant cultural event that allows college students to play the role of performers, supporting coordinators, and logistics managers. They engage in a variety of artistic expressions, from traditional dances art exhibitions, and music performances. By so doing, they preserve their culture, history, and identity, which in turn foster in them a sense of pride and contribution to their culture. Broadly speaking, staff and students of Bagamoyo College of Arts organize the Bagamoyo International Festival (Interview 2024). The focus of this article, however, is solely on the Sanaa Blast Festival in a bid to explore how the festival helps university graduates acquire jobs, internships, and/or networks in the creative industry and beyond, as well as other otherwise elusive opportunities in the creative arts through self-employment.

### **Motivation of the study**

Several reasons motivated the researcher to conduct this study. One of which is that since its inception in 2017, no study has been undertaken on the SBF, its significant contribution notwithstanding. As such, there was an overriding need to carry out this study to fill this research gap. Moreover, there was a connection between students' pursuing art-related programmes in the Department of Creative Arts and the value that they attached to the festival. Indeed, students treat the SBF as their own space for showcasing their talents to the stakeholders in the creative arts after undergoing training for some time at the University of Dar es Salaam. As one of the members of staff in the department, the researcher wished to investigate how progressive students and alumni utilise the SBF to gain footing in the creative industry and people. The researcher was also curious about exploring the connection between what students and alumni do in the industry at present and how the SBF has helped them and contributed to their current placements. Thus, the study listened to the voices of progressives and alumni.

## **Methodology**

This study was conducted in Dar es Salaam with students from the Department of Creative Arts. Dar es Salaam was chosen because it is where the University of Dar es Salaam is located in Tanzania. It is also a place where a good number of alumni reside after completing their studies. Dar es Salaam is also treasured, for it is thought of as a hub to connect Tanzania to the world (Ekström 2010, p. 124). It is where the international airport, roads, marine transport, and stable internet are available, which simplify communication within the country and beyond borders. Alumni were interviewed side-by-side with students who were still pursuing their bachelor's degrees in the department. In all, the study interviewed 46 students who had not yet finished their studies and 20 alumni. Also interviewed were students' festival founders to triangulate information the alumni provided. The study employed triangulation in examining the same issue from different angles (Laws et al. 2003). Furthermore, this qualitative study intended to gather data from respondents using qualitative methods ranging from life history, observation, and interview methods, mainly key informants, in-depth, and focus groups. Creswell (2009) contends that the qualitative method is effective when the researcher intends to gather data through document analysis, behavioural observation, and participant interviews, which this study deployed.

As for selected interview methods, in-depth interviews were held with students who, for the last three years, had played a role as chairs, deputy chairs, treasurers, and members of the technical, hospitality, communication, and media committees, among others. The method was useful to interview students because of the flexibility it offered to the researcher and the researcher in the course of the data collection process (Laws et al. 2003). Notwithstanding that students were busy with tests and examinations, the flexibility that the method offered made it possible for students to participate in the study. Focus group discussion further gathered data for this study to complement already stated methods. They allowed several people to converge in a group to discuss a certain issue (Dawson 2020). This method was applicable during preparations for the Sanaa Blast Festival of 2023 and 2024. A total of 4 FGDs were organized with students who played a role as members of the SBF steering committee. Forty-eight students participated in focused groups divided into two strata of 24 for each year under review. There were four groups of 12 discussants.

The method enabled the researcher to gather a large amount of data in a fairly short period (Dawson 2020).

On the other hand, the key informant interview was used to gather data with the founder of the Sanaa Blast Festival, Dr Kedmon Mapana, and students, mainly Mathew Valerian and Huruma Haule. Key informant interviews resemble everyday conversation that allows for a free flow of information and ideas between the interviewee and the researcher (Marshall 1996, p. 92). Last but not least, the method deployed to collect data for this study is the life history method. The life history method was chosen because it gives the researcher an entry point towards understanding the social and economic structures that shape individual life (Ojermark, 2007). The life history method was used to collect data from employed and self-employed alumni. It aimed to trace their background information and examine whether the SBF contributed to shaping them into who they have become. The selected methods were of use because they aided the researcher in gathering data that are analysed shortly in this study. However, before presenting the data, let the researcher present the theory that she used to put the data gathered in perspective.

### **Theorising the ‘Third Space’**

Space is simply defined as a three-dimensional area allowing individuals to coexist and engage with one another (Lefebvre 1991). Homi Bhabha (1994) coined the concept of the “third space.” The third space refers to a platform that permits everything to come together. The third space is also called a fundamental mechanism for inclusivity. Lefebvre (1991), who is known as the father of space, contends that not only can a third space be physical but also psychological, mental, or metaphorical. Though the family and home environment constitute the first space and workplace and school as the second (Walsh 2015; Whitchurch 2008), WordPress (2013) contends that the third space can be anything or anywhere provided that it offers individuals the freedom to be themselves in distinct from home or class environment where communication may be stereotyped and superficial.

The third space is an alternative domain that allows people to meet and do things that matter to them. Egger (2013) calls it a space ‘in-between’ characterised by tremendous openness and space, which allows individuals to experiment with choices, consequences, and ways of being. Boyte (2004) treats the domain as a free space in which the powerless experience autonomy of self-organization and engagement with alternative ideas,

which subsequently empower them with the aptitudes to challenge the conventional beliefs about the world, culture, and politics (Braidotti 1994). Rutherford (1990) contends that the third space permits the powerless to become powerful. Overall, the current study employed the “third space” in its examination of how students from the Department of Creative Arts of the UDSM capitalise on the Sanaa Blast Festival as their third space to negotiate with the Tanzanian audience about who they are and what they can be if they are given a space to demonstrate their potential through the activities they showcase in front of the audience. As long as SBF is organised by the youth from planning to evaluation, the researcher used it to explore how UDSM students use it to learn about event organisation skills and how the skills aided them in entering the market.

### **Data presentation and analysis**

The study found that the Sanaa Blast Festival played and still plays a centripetal role in creating and fostering futures for youth, sharpening their talents at the University of Dar es Salaam through the Department of Creative Arts. Alumni confirmed that the festival afforded them skills to employ themselves as well as others as their firms blossomed. The festival also appeared to help UDSM graduates gain access to internships and jobs in both private and public companies. Also, the *Sanaa* Blast Festival connected the youth to the market and afforded them a network relevant to their career as upcoming musicians, dancers, designers, and filmmakers. Popularity is another reason why SBF is treasured by university students. Furthermore, the festival has proven to transform the lives of university youth from inconsequential to prominent individuals, as the Sanaa Blast Festival offered them a myriad of opportunities. In this study, the discussion focuses primarily on SBF and the role it plays in helping youth get internships, jobs, and networks in both private and public companies. Additionally, the article explores how the SBF fashion transformed the lives of youth from nonentities to prominent status and how it assisted them in employing themselves. The study outlines setbacks threatening the sustainability of SBF as part of its conclusion.

### **SBF and Graduates' Access to Internships**



An internship is a short-term work experience firms, or organisations offer to people to gain an entry-level experience in the industry or job of their interest (Budig & Hodges 2009). Internships may last for one month or a year. In Tanzania, because public jobs generated are scarce (*The Citizens* 2021), internships have become an alternative to the youth, even for measly payments. Worse still, getting an internship in a reputable organisation or company is not a straightforward endeavour, just like getting a job. Apart from what you know, who you know matters (Fisher 2018). Most of the graduates interviewed for this study testified to getting internships based on who they knew, and it was through the SBF that they got to know people who, in turn, assisted them in getting internships. These are some of their testimonies:

“The one who connected me to this internship saw me in SBF as I was dancing and appreciated my skills. She also appreciated my skill as the organiser of the festival as I was among the principal organisers of the festival” (Neema Athuman, Alumni BA Theatre Arts).

“I was seen by the director of the company when I was singing and dancing in the SBF” (Amini Selomba -BA Theatre Arts).

“He saw me during awards when I was given an award as the best trophy designer, which made me become the best designer of 2023 SBF. When I was called for an interview, I took my certificate, which I was awarded as the overall best designer. The certificate helped” (Daniel Msungu - BA Art and Design).

These evidential statements suggest that, besides their academic performance, the people who saw them perform during the SBF connected them to internship programmes. Even the certificates that are usually provided to outstanding students facilitate the application for internships besides participating in SBF. Some graduates confirmed to be doing their internships in government institutions, whereas some in reputable NGOs, which could otherwise not accept them without their participation in the SBF. Companies identified the students and their talents during the SBF, hence making it an important avenue for people who work in artistic and

non-artistic companies to watch for precious talent during the event. Apart from coming to watch creative performances and exhibitions, they come to identify potential interns for their companies. Indeed, many of the NGOs depend on donors for their survival. As a result, they are incapable of employing workers permanently. Instead, they employ just a few and bank on interns to undertake some of the activities under their supervision (Holyoak 2013; Shoenfelt & Kottke 2013).

Thus, the Sanaa Blast Festival is one of the platforms they use to get suitable interns to work with as cheap labour (Ismail 2018; Galloway *et al.* 2014). In this regard, a good number of graduates confirmed to have worked as interns in various companies because they participated in the SBF. These interns include Neema Omari, Naomi Nimrod, Daniel Bashiri, and others. Neema worked as a communication officer in one of the companies in town; Naomi and Daniel worked as designers in another big company in Dar es Salaam. These are just a few examples of the University of Dar es Salaam from the Creative Arts Department, who attest to the value of the Sanaa Blast Festival.

However, the benefits of internships are not one-sided. They are rather mutual. Interns and NGOs benefit from each other. Even though NGOs get labours at low costs, graduates get the opportunity to apply the knowledge they learned in the classroom by doing (Elarde & Chong 2012). By so doing, they develop soft and interpersonal skills such as professionalism, cultural sensitivity, time management, and integrity, which Holyoak (2013) argues cannot be obtained in class for they are not stipulated in the university curriculum. Although interns admitted the benefits of being interns in reputable companies like those they were in, some reported experiencing exclusion in the decision-making process, even in matters that affected their lives. Graduates who raised this issue requested their names not to be mentioned here. They argued that being excluded in matters affecting them causes them to develop a feeling of discomfort and alienation in the companies. Indeed, Holyoak (2013) argues that not all internship programmes are lucrative to interns. They become lucrative only if people at the centre are willing to help interns to get connected to the company and community.

### **SBF, a key to unlocking job opportunities**

In Tanzania, youth constitute 68 percent of the labour force (Kimaro 2021). Although they make up such a huge percentage of the labour force, the majority do not have jobs. As a result of this, youth unemployment is four times higher than that of adults (Van Gough 2016; ILO n.d). Van Gough further points out that in Africa, of which Tanzania is part, three out of five young people are unemployed. Structural and personal factors contribute to the unemployment state of young people. Though the failure of the government to generate employment for the youth remains a constant factor, the youth's lack of connections that would provide them with footholds in the world of work is a dilemma impeding their smooth transition from school to the world of work (Flanagan et al. 2021). Nonetheless, Sanaa Blast Festival has proven that youths utilise it as an avenue for getting connected to the world of work. Youth who were working in various government and private institutions linked their success to getting jobs in those companies with people they met during the Sanaa Blast Festival. They attested that the SBF connected them to people who later linked them to the reputable companies they were working in, and they believed they would not have been hired if not for connections they created during the SBF.

Abubakari Abdullah Azizi, nicknamed Aluwatan, for example, who worked as a spokesperson and presenter of Yanga Football Federation, confirmed that it was the Sanaa Blast Festival that facilitated him to acquire such a job. During interviews, he attributed his success to being employed by the Yanga Football Federation SBF and the role he played during SBF as a master of events, the job that the researcher, as a witness, saw him doing incredibly well. Radio and TV presenters saw him during SBF and commented on videos and photos he posted on Instagram related to the festival. Ramadhani Ngoda and Baraka Mpenja are among the Radio and TV presenters who commented on his post, and that gave him the courage to keep going. After completing his undergraduate studies, he was employed by Baraka Mpenja for his online TV because he was attracted by the video he posted and the skills as a master of events he demonstrated in the posted videos. Although Abubakari discovered his skills earlier, working as the master of events in SBF boosted his confidence and self-trust that his skill to face the public can make him a good presenter. When Yanga Football Federation announced the job, he used his posts and certificates he got during SBF to demonstrate that he was the right candidate for the post. He admitted that apart from getting his bread from his job, he enjoyed the job itself as he was doing the job of his dreams.

Abubakari Azizi is not the only one who got employment through the Sanaa Blast Festival as the master of events. Neema Massawe, nicknamed Neneeh, is another example of graduates who got hired as a result of the SBF. She was among the organisers of the SBF. Her main role in the event was the mistress of the event. After completing her studies in 2022, she was employed by Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation, abbreviated as TBC 2, as a TV presenter. This is a government-based Media Company. Neema Massawe was employed by TBC 2, for they saw her in sports as she was doing her task as mistress of event. The TBC 2 was attracted by her extraordinary talent as a mistress of the event. Similar to companies that came to the festival to look for interns, companies intending to recruit new employees appear to use the SBF as a platform to earmark potential employees, particularly in employment related to arts and culture. Available data indicates that several graduates from the Department of Creative Arts have been employed in various artistic and non-artistic companies across Tanzania. For example, many have been employed in Television stations in different capacities as presenters, editors, producers, marketing officers, cameramen or women, designers, to mention but a few. Companies prefer the SBF to find appropriate candidates because, in the festival, students demonstrate what they can do in contrast to the interview setting, where they demonstrate what they say they can do. Hind and Moss (2011) call such a demo as employability. Employability is much more than employment. It is an act of showcasing necessary tools needed by employers that incorporate knowledge, skills, and abilities (Hind & Moss, 2011). These are important assets that a job seeker has to demonstrate possessing in the labour market environment.

### **Sanaa Blast and Youth Empowerment in Self-Employment**

Self-employment is a state of working for oneself rather than working for an employer. Dawson et al.'s (2009) study in the UK illustrated why individuals employ themselves. The reasons were numerous, which included getting a chance to use skills and/or talents in a business environment, do what they like most, a means for self-expression, gain a higher level of independence, to compensate for the low income from their waged labour. Others worked as self-employed because there were no other viable options available. Findings gathered in the UK study, in some ways, resemble this study. Most of the graduates interviewed for this study began to work as self-employed after realising that there were no government jobs for them. As such, they decided to open their small companies as they were

waiting for government jobs to materialise. Companies opened by graduates include Film companies, Design, Recording studios, theatre groups, stand-up comedy groups, and others. Although their idea to open companies began as a way to buy time while waiting for government jobs, with time, the idea the government employed gradually disappeared. Reasons provided by those self-employed graduates who were no longer interested in government jobs include the following:

“I like that freedom.”

I am accountable to nobody.”

“I am making more money than the government employees do.”

“I can’t wait for monthly salary.”

“I do what I dreamed.”

“I apply knowledge and talent I got practically.”

“I am my boss”

Whereas a good number of graduates did not want to be employed by the government for the reasons already mentioned above, some wanted to be employed by the government for a stable income as it was said, “no matter how little the money is, you get it every month.” Graduates who wanted to be employed by the government, however, were not primed to live the entrepreneurial jobs they had established. They had a sensation of maintaining both and had no plan to leave their entrepreneurial jobs any time in the future. Studies have made it apparent that people want government jobs because of workers’ benefits attached to working in the government. These include health insurance, stable income, and being paid while on leave or sick (Department for Business Innovation and Skills n.d.).

Analysing the gender dimension of self-employment, the majority of female graduates were not self-employed except for a few. The majority were employed in companies to which they could not apply the knowledge they gained at the university (See also ILO 2021). Many were working in shops as shop sellers and in restaurants as cashiers or waiters temporarily as they were waiting to be employed by the government. Budig and Hodges (2009) argue that women do not have the spirit to employ themselves as men commonly do. Those who did employ themselves not because they wanted financial gains but rather time that the self-employment offered to the female entrepreneurs, which helped them balance between jobs and

childcare. The implication here is that female graduates need to be empowered with capital and entrepreneurial skills.

### **Sanaa Blast as footpath to celebrity status**

Celebrity status is the secondary benefit that youth acquire as a result of their participation in the SBF. Celebrity is a state of being known to a large number of people (Nayar 2009). Historically, celebrity status was not a state that could be achieved easily. It was associated with extraordinary actions performed by individuals in their respective fields. It is within this backdrop that Alexander the Great, Confucius, Vasco Da Gama, Aeschylus, Archimedes, Plato, and Aristotle are celebrities of ancient times (Shayo 2019). Studies have proven that the revolution of media has transformed the status of people from unknown to prominent so swiftly (Duffy 2017; Shayo 2019). Supported by media technology, this study revealed that the Sanaa Blast Festival has turned out to be a platform for youth to become celebrities within a short period. The nature of the activities the students performed, from planning to the evaluation of the festival, contributes to shaping those who desire to achieve celebrity status to become one. Evidence indicates obviously that since its inception, the festival has exposed students to activities, people, and companies capable of paving their way to becoming celebrities. Media, as one of the companies capable of changing the status of people, are usually invited to the festival. The media houses that are always invited to the festival include ITV, Clouds TV, TBC, Azam TV, and quite a good number of online TVs. These media usually get invitations to take part in the festival as members of the audience and stakeholders. They earmark the best students to work with after completion of their studies. Indeed, there are a good number of students who work as comedians and TV presenters and are gradually becoming known for their talents. Online TVs in which Creative Arts graduates were employed include *Cheka 2* and *Watu Baki*. These are comic-based YouTube channels that specialized in stand-up comedy. Graduates who work on these online TVs acknowledged that it is through these media that they have become famous.

The upcoming celebrities whose success is associated with the SBF stage include Gilbert Mshana, aka Munga, Julius Joseph, aka *Ududu Mwingi*, Abubakari Abdullah Aziz, aka Aluwatan; Beatrice Akyoo; and many others. They all acknowledge that it is through Sanaa Blast that they have transformed their status from unknown individuals to notable figures.

Beatrice Akyoo, for example, became a celebrity based on activities she was involved in during the *Sanaa Blast Festival*. She was a designer and a model in the SBF fashion show. She narrated that as she was joining UDSM, the Department of Creative Arts, she did not know who she would be after graduation. What she liked most was fashion and design. She pursued her Bachelor's Degree in Art and Design. After participating in a fashion design course and later in the SBF as a designer and model, she made up her mind to compete for Miss Dar es Salaam as she was pursuing her BA programme. She used the same spirit to compete for Miss Tanzania and achieved number 4 from the top. Interviewing her, she appreciated the *Sanaa Blast Festival* and the role it played as she was finding herself who she was and what she could do. Because of the achievements she got through *Sanaa Blast*, she has become an ambassador of *Sanaa Blast* and encouraged her fellow students to take *Sanaa Blast* seriously as a platform that can help them define who they are.

#### **Funders of the Sanaa Blast Festival**

The University of Dar es Salaam is the main source of finance for the *Sanaa Blast Festival*, contributing a sizeable portion of the overall sum. Hugo Domingo, the Film Board, Tanzania House of Talent, Tanzania Broadcasting Company (TBC 2), BASATA (Baraza la Sanaa la Taifa), also known as the Tanzania Arts Council in English, and others, constitute significant sponsors. Their contributions, which range from cash to in-kind support, are essential to the festival's long-term viability. The festival continues to have a significant influence on Tanzania's and other countries' artistic communities because of their combined efforts.

#### **Conclusion**

The article intended to underscore the contributions of the *Sanaa Blast Festival* in creating futures for young graduates from the Department of Creative Arts. It found that the SBF helps students showcase their talents to people and companies who also use the SBF as a platform to choose graduates to work with after completing their studies. Although students use the SBF as their own space to get connected to the creative industry and people, the festival is facing a sustainability conundrum as an upshot of limited funding. The Department of Creative Arts appreciates the budget that is set by the University for the Festival, which is the main funder of the festival. However, its budget is very limited to run a huge festival like this,

whose audience is approximately six thousand. Although the number of audiences has increased, the budget has remained constant. This study suggests the university to increase the budget as it was promised by the DVC Administration in 2021 Sanaa Blast Festival. Exclusive of the University of Dar es Salaam, the paper calls forth stakeholders, UDSM staff, private companies, embassies, and the government of Tanzania to support SBF because graduate youth use it as a key to opening doors of opportunities that could not be opened otherwise seeing that the majority of graduates are coming from ordinary families and they are the first educated generation in their families. Thus, they have none to connect them to the world of work. As time elapses, apart from what you know, who you know matters. Supporting the SBF implies helping young graduates who could hardly put their feet in the market because they lack connection.

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