Cultural Statistics in Africa: The Missing Link

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I.   Introduction

> "True, there have been drastic global changes with regard to culture; demand for cultural products has increased significantly, market power has grown and become increasingly concentrated in a small number of multinational conglomerates, the legal and political institutions that are in charge of cultural regulation and promotion wield greater influence, and there is now a complicated mechanism of interdependence between the public and the private sphere. In light of this, it is all the more necessary to have access to reliable data that can be compared across borders in order to determine the status of the cultural sector, its weaknesses and its strengths."

> Belén Usero & Jesús Angel del Brío (2011 pp. 197)

As noted by Usero and del Brio (2001), the need for reliable cultural data, both for national and international purposes, is ever increasing in importance and is critical today for understanding both the economic and social dimensions of culture and for understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the sector. This is evident when one examines the multiple roles that cultural statistics can play. Data, statistics and indicators are needed if one wants to develop and implement evidence-based cultural policies as well as monitor and evaluate their effectiveness over time.

Of emerging importance globally is the interest of assessing the contribution of culture to development. Increasingly, policymakers and economists are interested in measuring the contribution of culture to the local and national economy. Continuing on the theme of the cultural economy, data and statistics are needed to plan, manage and measure the economic contribution of specific cultural sectors/domains such as Festivals, Crafts, Books, Music, etc…Understanding the role of public investment in the culture sector is also of interest and importance to governments and policymakers. Finally, understanding societal trends in cultural consumption, especially the impact that new modes of streaming are having on consumption, is also of interest and importance to both the public and private sectors.

It goes without saying that data and statistics are essential for the effective planning and management of the cultural sector at all levels of scale ranging from specific cultural sites to local communities, regions and overall nationally. The daily management and planning for cultural infrastructure such as museums, cultural heritage, natural sites and cultural centres for example require data. These entities are typically financed publically therefore data are also needed to assess the impact that the public financing of cultural services has had.

Data are not only required to understand the economic aspects of culture but also the social aspects. It is important for governments and societies to understand the social contribution of culture. How does culture support sustainable development? Lead to social cohesion? Improve wellbeing and happiness? Measuring trends in cultural participation is critical for both public and private sectors. Finally, data are needed in order to conduct social and economic cultural research that is undertaken by governments, academia and industry. Of particular importance is the need for statistics and indicators to support the different policy initiatives in Africa that may require data such as the Nairobi Plan of Action on Cultural Industries in Africa in 2005 and the African Declaration. Finally, most African Union member states have adopted one or more of the UNESCO Culture Conventions. Countries require data and statistics in order to monitor their progress in implementing and achieving the desired goals of these conventions.

This paper consists of 4 sections in addition to the introduction. Starting with Section II, the paper begins by examining the status of Cultural Statistics in Africa today. Although not an exhaustive analysis of the situation, through the analysis of the results of 2 recent UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) Africa regional training workshops pre-workshop questionnaires, and from the discussions that occurred at these workshops, the section highlights some of the key issues regarding the availability and use of cultural statistics in Africa.

Section III briefly discusses cultural indicators in a general manner, focussing on their role and utility in helping to understand the culture sector. Section IV then examines the question of national capacity building in cultural statistics which is critical if improvements to data collection, data quality and availability are to be realised in the countries in Africa. The paper concludes with Section V that makes some suggestions for a way forward for improving national cultural statistics.

II.   What cultural statistics exist in African Union (AU) member states?

The types of cultural statistics that can be produced are as large and diverse as is the scope of the culture sector itself. Cultural statistics can be obtained from non-cultural sources such as census and sample surveys and from administrative data sources. Cultural statistics can also be obtained from cultural specific surveys such a cultural participation surveys. One of the challenges of cultural statistics is to identify and extract the data that are available. As was noted in a recent European report on cultural statistics "*Cultural statisticians have to deal with the problem of scattered data that are produced by others according to their own definitions, methods, and periodicities*" (Project ESSnet Culture, Intermediary Report: October 2010 pp. 11). This fact of the field of cultural statistics also introduces other issues such as the use of classifications that are not discussed in this paper.

In an effort to understand the availability of cultural statistics in Africa, in July 2012, the author undertook a quick review of websites hosted by African National Statistical Offices (NSO) and Ministries of Culture (MLCT). The review is intended for illustrative purpose only and it reflects only data that were available free for public use and on English language and French language webpages. There may be other data available by special request that are neither factored nor available on the website.

Figure 1 below shows that there are very few cultural data and statistics made available electronically via the internet. A total of 6% of the Ministry of Culture websites and 23% of the National Statistical Office websites posted any type of cultural statistics.

In its efforts to better understand the situation concerning cultural statistics globally, the UIS carries out a pre-workshop survey of the status of national cultural statistics and cultural policy from countries participating at any UIS regional culture statistics training workshop. Below are some results from the pre-workshop questionnaires that were sent to countries that participated in two recent African workshops that were undertaken in 2010 and in 2011. The results represent responses received from 32 sub-Saharan African countries.

Figure 2 show that 75% of the countries had at least one institution that was responsible for collecting cultural statistics. The type, quality and quantity of the statistics found were not examined as part of this quick survey.

Figure 1: Very few Ministry of Culture (MCLT) or National Statistical Offices (NSO) in Africa disseminate any type of Cultural Statistics in 2012
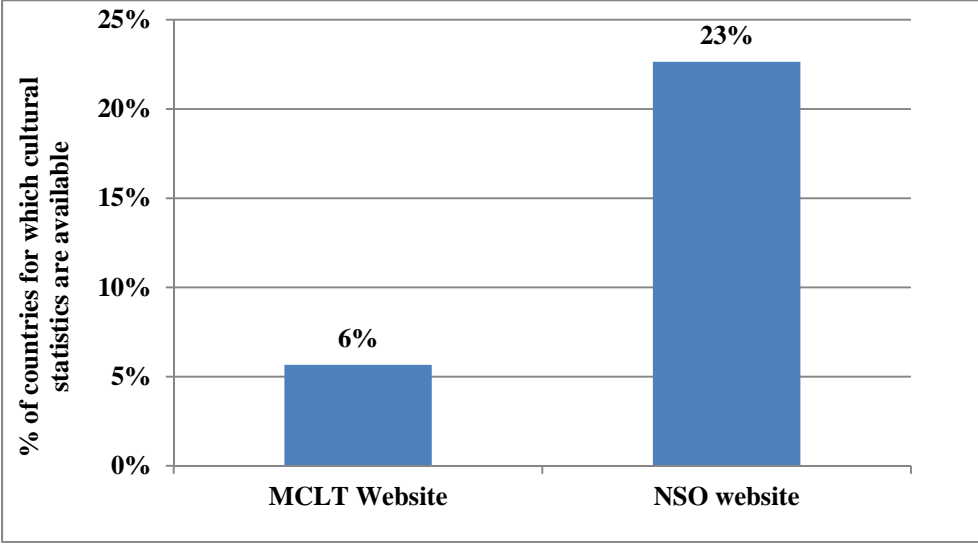
Figure 2: However, 24 of 32 countries surveyed in Sub-Saharan Africa have an institution that is collecting selected cultural statistics.
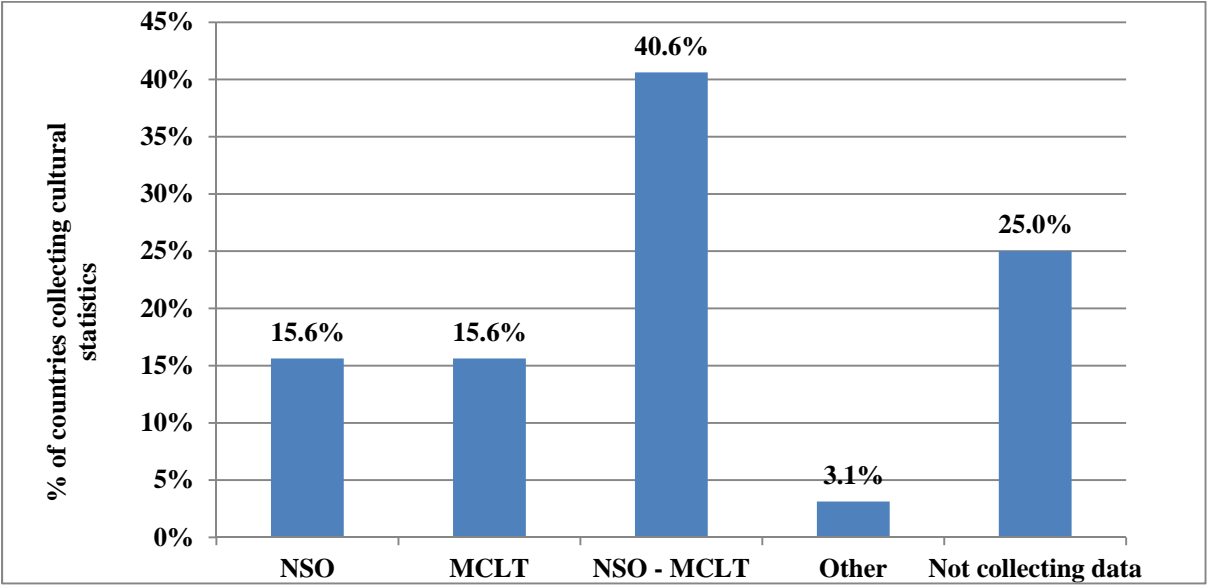

Figure 3 shows that the most common survey used in Africa is the Census of Population and Households however less than 50% of them contained any culture related questions. It should be noted that despite the fact that the surveys listed were not designed specifically for producing cultural statistics, many do produce or there is potential to produce cultural statistics from them.

Figure 3: Sub-Saharan African countries carry out several types of sample surveys but few collect some form of cultural data.

Type of Surveys	% of countries having surveys	% including cultural topics	Topics related with culture
System of National Accounts	59.4%	31.6%	Share of Recreation and culture in GDP, Production and Consumption of cultural goods
Business survey	46.9%	53.3%	Cinema, Mapping of cultural industries
Census	81.3%	46.2%	Language, Religion, Ethnic group
Labour Force survey	50.0%	43.8%	Cultural employment, Unemployment in Cultural sector
Household Expenditure survey	68.8%	50.0%	Expenditure on cultural items: Audiovisual, Books, Films, Theatres

Often what is simply lacking is the awareness of these potential sources of cultural statistics. Once the awareness is present then efforts to improve the quality of the cultural statistics from these sources can be undertaken.

When we examine the availability of culture specific surveys, Figure 4 below shows that, less than 20% of countries undertake dedicated cultural data collection, with only 16% of countries having undertaken a time use survey.

Figure 4: Sub-Saharan African countries carry out several types of culture specific sample surveys

Type of Surveys	% of countries having Cultural survey	Topics
Time-Use survey	16.1%	Personal and community services, Celebration, Attend cinema/shows, Food preparation for ceremony, Dance
Cultural participation survey	12.9%	Attendance of cultural events (Theatre, Museums, Cultural Association), Traditional Know-How
Visitor survey	12.9%	Sites and Monuments visited, Inbound tourists (origin, reasons for travelling), Visitors in museums (National, Foreign, Students)
Administrative data	32.3%	Hotel rooms, Intangible Cultural Heritage
Other	22.6%	Languages mapping, Tourist expenditure patterns and perception, Customs and traditions that influence the HIV/AIDS prevalence, Traditions, Collection objects, Cultural center

Another example that can be used to illustrate the availability of cultural statistics in Africa is available from the UIS Feature Film Statistics Survey that is undertaken on a biennial basis

globally. The purpose of the survey is to collect data on the film sector and to disseminate internationally comparable data and indicators to inform on trends for this cultural sector.

Figure 5 below shows the response rates by region while Figure 6 shows the African countries that responded to the UIS survey. In 2010, only 12 of 53 countries in Africa responded to the survey while UIS was able to obtain supplementary data from a further 2 countries. Africa is also the only region where the number of data available declined between 2007 and 2010. It should be noted however that cinema data may be available for some of the countries that did not respond to the UIS questionnaire but this cannot be determined.
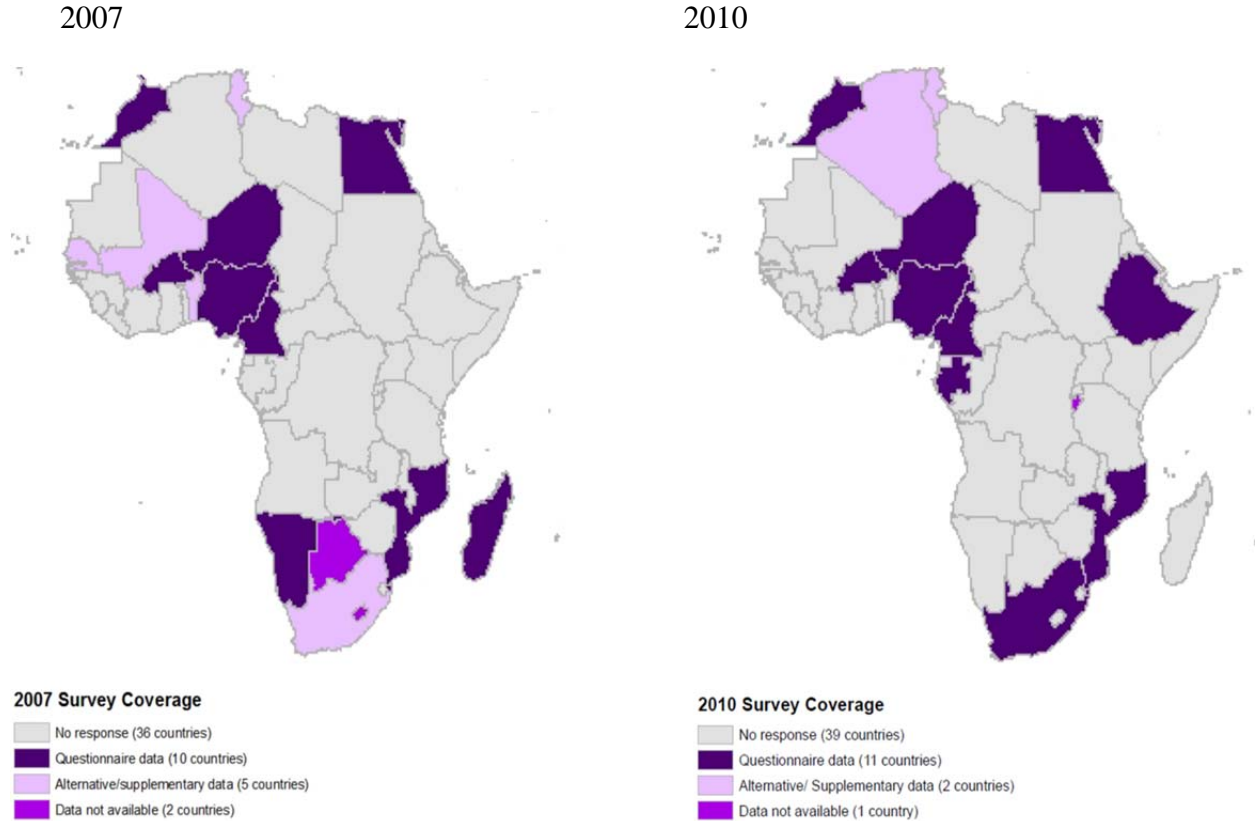
Figure 5: Coverage rate of the UIS Feature film surveys: 2007-2010
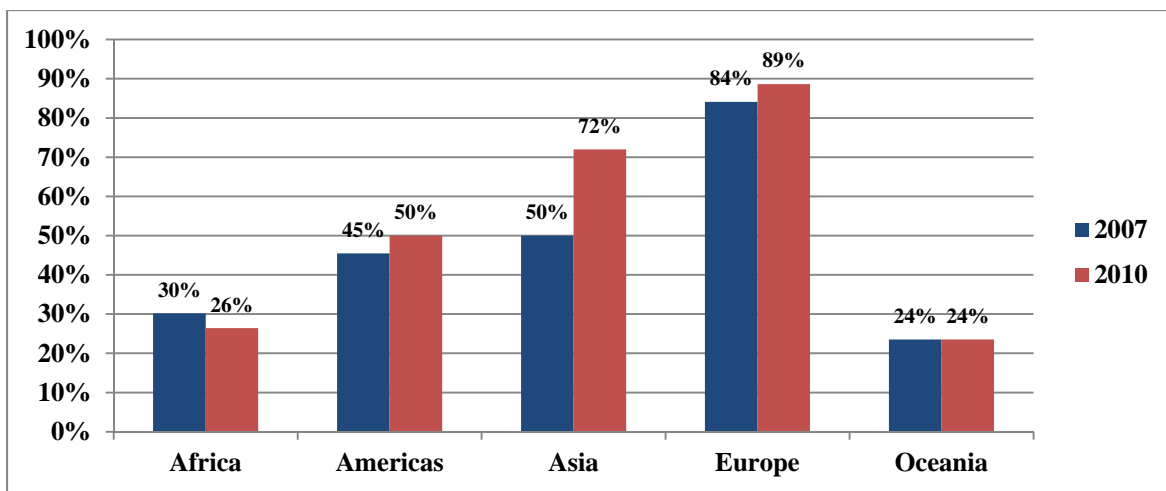
Finally, it is important to note that there are several excellent initiatives underway in Africa that highlight attempts to develop cultural statistics or studies to measure the economic contribution of culture. For example, the UIS is aware of the annual publication of cultural statistics specific reports from the Ministries of Culture of the Republic of Mali, Republic of Gabon and Burkina Faso.

Of note are several studies that UIS is aware of that looked at the economic contribution of culture that have recently been undertaken. Mali, in 2008, undertook a study that looked at the economic impact of the cultural sector with an interesting attempt to measure the informal economy. Similarly, there is the Gauteng Creative Mapping Project (British Council, 2008) of South Africa that was also undertaken. UEMOA also commissioned in 2011 a study to develop guidelines for a methodology to measure the economic and social impact of culture.

Figure 6: UIS Feature film statistics responses for Africa

2007

2010

2007 Survey Coverage
- No response (36 countries)
- Questionnaire data (10 countries)
- Alternative/supplementary data (5 countries)
- Data not available (2 countries)

2010 Survey Coverage
- No response (39 countries)
- Questionnaire data (11 countries)
- Alternative/ Supplementary data (2 countries)
- Data not available (1 country)

Finally, UEMOA has established a 5 year plan to develop cultural statistics for which UIS is a partner. Senegal and South Africa are interested in developing their national statistical framework while a cultural mapping study is currently underway in Kenya.

The different initiatives noted above clearly demonstrate the variety of activities in cultural statistics that are occurring in Africa but also show the will to improve cultural statistics on the region.

III. What cultural indicators need to be developed?

The answer to this question is not an easy one and it will depend on both the phenomenon to be measured and the purpose or use of the proposed indicators. Due to the enormity of the Culture Sector, the identification of a core set of indicators is quite difficult and possibly impossible to do satisfactorily. In addition, what would be the utility of such a list? Instead, when one is thinking about indicators, it is important to consider developing indicator sets for specific

cultural phenomenon of interest (or in other words create several indicator sets) each having their specific objectives. Always ask the question *which indictors and for what purposes*?

A clear understanding of the utility of indicators will help with the identification of appropriate indicators. For example, indicators are a tool for policy analysis. Indicators therefore can be used to measure and evaluate the effectiveness or impact of policy. As was noted earlier, there exist many national and regional cultural policies in Africa but relatively few if any plans for developing the necessary statistics and indicators to analyse their impact. Indicators are also used for planning, monitoring and evaluation purposes. They are also useful for identifying trends and drawing attention to particular issues such as the economic contribution of cultural industries.

Related to their role for drawing attention to particular issues, indicators are an important tool for public communication especially since they are usually easy to understand. This means that they are also a means of initiating discussion and debate amongst stakeholders and stimulating public debate.

The selection of indicators will depend on each countries context and priorities in culture, their appropriateness for accurately informing on the phenomenon being measured and the availability of data (existing and to be developed). Regardless of the indicators chosen, it is important to keep in mind that not all data and statistics are indicators.

In general, indicators have some specific characteristics and attributes. Indicators are a statistic whose purpose is to measure a change in a specific phenomenon. The attributes of a good indicator are shown below in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Attributes of a Good Indicator

• Grounded in Theory	• Consistent with purpose
• Relevant	• Timely
• Linked to policy practice	• Measurable over time
• Comparable across regions	• Valid
• Comparable across time periods	• Reliable
• Measurable	• Realistic
• Easily Understood	• Trusted

(IFACCA, 2005, p. 10)

If the African Union has identified a common set of cultural policy objectives, it may wish to consider identifying a common set of cultural indictors to help inform and monitor such objectives. In this case, there is a case for the establishment of a comparable set of indicators

with a clear purpose. It will be important however to develop any such indicators in the context of an appropriate cultural indicators framework that reflects the policy objectives. In addition, the data would need to be produced and available on a comparative manner.

IV.   What capacity building is required in cultural statistics?

It is agreed that most countries globally require capacity building in cultural statistics. For the purposes of this paper, the discussion on capacity building focusses on the need to develop national capacity for the production, dissemination and use of cultural statistics. This is no easy task and requires both resources and time. As Lievesley (2000) indicates:

"…it is also vital that there is recognition of the ongoing resources and expertise needed to collect timely and policy-relevant data. The importance of integrating data collection and statistical capacity building cannot be overemphasised; however, this is neither a cheap option nor a fast solution."
(pp. 78-79)

Using the results of the pre-workshop questionnaires discussed earlier in this paper as well as the results of the discussions that took place during these workshops, participants identified the following issues pertaining to capacity building and the challenges facing the improvement of cultural statistics in their countries:

- The need for awareness on the need of cultural statistics
- An absence of financial resources and lack of IT equipment for culture data collection
- The need to develop expertise in cultural statistics
- The need to improve methodology to collect cultural statistics
- A lack of coordination and synergy between different cultural stakeholders
- The need to reinforce institutional capacity of the culture sector
- Insufficient technical, financial and human resources for cultural statistics
- The need for cultural officers and statistician to be trained in cultural statistics
- The need to identify and develop indicators to measure the economic and social impacts of culture
- The need to harmonise and centralise the production and dissemination of cultural statistics.

It is clear the challenges are numerous and that time and resources will be required in order to improve the situation regarding statistics in general and cultural statistics specifically.

V.   Improving national cultural statistics: suggestions for the future

In order to improve cultural statistics, there first needs to be agreement about the definition of culture. It is only then that one can begin to delineate the boundaries and identify the components of culture that will allow for the identification and production of relevant cultural data and indicators. Given the complex scope of the culture sector, priorities will need to be established as it is impossible to measure all aspects of the culture sector. On the other hand, it is neither necessary nor desirable to measure everything.

UNESCO has developed a tool that can help countries to improve their understanding and production of cultural statistics: The 2009 UNESCO Framework of Cultural Statistics (2009).

The purpose of the 2009 UNESCO Framework for Cultural Statistics (FCS) is to provide countries with concepts and definitions to guide the production of comparable statistics, as well as to support the development of indicators and analytical research in the culture sector. More specifically, the FCS does the following:

- Defines the Cultural Sector by establishing boundaries to support policy formulation
- Sets out definitions for the harmonization of cultural variables across data collection instruments
- Guidelines for the extraction of cultural data from existing data sources
- Improves the quality and accuracy of cultural statistics improving the measurement of cultural phenomenon
- Provides a guide for the production of cultural statistics for all national stakeholders
- Technical roadmap for the production of culture statistics
- Facilitates the systematic monitoring of national policies
- Advocacy for the development of cultural statistics

A review by Usero and del Brio (2011) examined how the 2009 UNESCO FCS contributes to the existing literature. They identified 3 key contributions that the FCS has made:

> "The first significant contribution is to answer what we shall call the "which" question; that is, to delimit cultural activities by defining what is and what is not included within a cultural domain. The second contribution is to answer what we shall refer to as the "how" question. The Framework specifies how to carry out the previously mentioned activities, i.e., the chain of value from inception of the cultural activity through to its final provision. Lastly, the third contribution defines the "how much" question. Here, current international classification systems are used to describe precisely which activities are included in the cultural domains in order to measure their economic and social impact."

> "We believe that, by publishing this report, UNESCO has made a significant effort to provide a definition that allows cultural activities to be clearly delimited."

<div align="right">Belén Usero & Jesús Angel del Brío (2011 pp. 194)</div>

The countries that UIS is aware of that have implemented national frameworks for cultural statistics or similar statistical/policy document include: Australia (2000/01), Canada (2011), China (2005), Colombia (2004), Finland (1999), Hong Kong, China (2003), New Zealand (1995), Singapore (2002), United Kingdom (2004) and Germany (2009). Examples of international frameworks include UNESCO (2009) and the European Union (2011). It is no coincidence that the countries that have adopted cultural statistical frameworks or similar document are the same countries that have the strongest capacity for producing and using cultural statistics.

Cultural statistics is a vast and complex sector. In order to begin to move forward, it will be necessary for countries to first examine the current status of cultural statistics and identify where they want to be in the medium to long term. Based on national priorities for statistical measurement in culture, then an appropriate plan of action could be established.

It is clear from this brief paper that there are cultural statistics already in most if not all countries in Africa but these are insufficient to meet the current and emerging needs of governments, policy makers and other stakeholders to understand the Culture Sector. The current data available in most cases represents that of traditional infrastructure focussed data and statistics and thus, in order to effectively understand todays Culture Sector, countries will need to move beyond these traditional data.

There is a clear need for capacity building in cultural statistics if the availability and quality of these data is to improve. This will require the mobilisation of resources, both human and financial. Finally, given the scope and complexity of the Culture Sector, cooperation and collaboration will be needed amongst the various stakeholders in many aspects of data collection, dissemination and analysis and to help foster a clear understanding of the extent of the culture sector to be measured.

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