



**PRESS RELEASE: for publication 22 Aug 2015** (Swahili version available on request)

## **Zanzibar music festival is cancelled. No Sauti za Busara in 2016.**

Due to shortage of funding, Busara Promotions has reluctantly announced their decision to cancel the 2016 edition of *Sauti za Busara*. This will be the first time in thirteen years Zanzibar does not enjoy an international music festival in February.

Yusuf Mahmoud, CEO of Busara Promotions, said today “This decision was not taken lightly. Previously we had always announced festival dates a year in advance. But after closing the books on another highly successful festival in February 2015, once again we were back to square one, with no funds to start working on the next edition. We set ourselves the target to raise US\$200,000 before July, when we hoped to announce dates for Sauti za Busara 2016. After many meetings with stakeholders, we extended our fundraising deadline to midnight on Aug 19. The total amount of cash or ‘in-kind’ support we were able to raise presently stands at \$42,000, so there is still a long way to go. Usually at this time of year, we are already well advanced in agreeing contracts with venues, equipment suppliers, artists and managers, towards scheduling the timetable and confirming artists’ travel and accommodation arrangements as early as possible. The pressure was on further, as we have been receiving enquiries from all over the world by people needing to know the dates, to make arrangements for their own flights and hotel bookings. Selling tickets for Sauti za Busara was never a problem, but these only cover 30% of festival costs”.

Yusuf continued, “Festivals invigorate young people's interest in local culture, give opportunities for artists and music professionals to meet and learn from each other, keep traditions alive, create employment for local people and promote models for responsible tourism that honour and respect local culture. However, since 2004, we had zero financial support from the government in Zanzibar, the United Republic of Tanzania or the East African Community. Despite tireless efforts, support from donors, embassies and commercial sponsors has reached an all-time low. Busara Promotions is an NGO; the festival is non-profit. Some suggested we try crowd-funding. However, to truly be more sustainable, before the 2017 edition our priority will be to develop long-term partnerships with donors and sponsors who share our vision. If anyone reading this is interested to help keep Sauti za Busara alive, generating employment locally, whilst shining the spotlight on our rich musical traditions and promoting cultural tourism for Zanzibar and Tanzania, please contact me at Busara Promotions.”

For the past twelve years, Busara attracted thousands of visitors from all corners of the world to Zanzibar, at a time which used to be low season. Flights to Zanzibar around festival week were full, hotels and restaurants were full, the shops around Stone Town were all busy with customers. Even conservative estimates suggest since 2004 Sauti za Busara has generated USD 70 million in revenue for the island. Meanwhile, BBC World Service hailed Sauti za Busara as one of “Africa's best and most respected music events”. It is also included in CNN's “7 African music festivals you really have to see” and tops Afro-Tourism's list of “Best Music Festivals”. \*\*\*

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Yusuf Mahmoud said finally “Sometimes it’s necessary to take one step back, before continuing to move forwards. Busara Board and management shall be working hard over the coming months, to ensure the festival resumes stronger than ever from 2017. Possibly this will mean moving location, or making it a biennial event. Certainly our priorities will be to keep the event accessible for the local population, whilst seeking to build longer-term partnerships, with the public and private sectors”.

Whilst the festival takes a break, Busara Promotions will continue with their regular activities to promote African music, strengthen local know-how and build livelihood in the regional music sector. Throughout the year, Busara ensures East African artists are invited to other international events and facilitates skills-building for local artists and festival crews, through exchanges and training in arts management, marketing, media and technical skills. This work, as generously supported by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Dar es Salaam, is unaffected by the decision to cancel Sauti za Busara 2016.

More info: [www.busaramusic.org](http://www.busaramusic.org) | [www.facebook.com/sautizabusara](https://www.facebook.com/sautizabusara)

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Photos: [www.busaramusic.org/SzB2015pics/](http://www.busaramusic.org/SzB2015pics/)

Busara logos: [http://www.busaramusic.org/downloads/SzB2015\\_logos.zip](http://www.busaramusic.org/downloads/SzB2015_logos.zip)

\*\*\* *External references:*

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