



Sibikwa
arts centre

PERFORM WITH PURPOSE

Sibikwa Arts Centre
Annual General Report
2024

A Year of Creativity, Community, and Change

Organisational Profile

Sibikwa Community Project (T/A Sibikwa Arts Centre) is a nationally recognised award-winning community arts organisation and cultural hub based in Benoni, Ekurhuleni. Since our founding in 1988, Sibikwa has been dedicated to using the arts as a tool for empowerment, education, inclusion, and transformation. The Centre’s multidisciplinary approach integrates community-based programming with education and training, policy engagement, and performance.

Sibikwa is a registered Non-Profit Company (NPC), Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), and Non-Profit Organisation (NPO) accredited by the Culture, Arts, Tourism, Hospitality and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority (CATHSSETA) and the South African Council of Educators (SACE). Our programming is informed by values of creativity, integrity, inclusivity, lifelong learning, and community service. Our strategic pillars - Society and Community, Arts Education, Professional Training, Arts Industry Development, and Cultural Policy - drive our work locally and globally.

In 2024, Sibikwa operated across multiple sites and platforms, maintaining a physical base in Benoni while extending our reach through touring productions, digital initiatives, school-based programmes, and global cultural diplomacy efforts.

Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	3
<i>Introduction</i>	4
<i>Chairperson’s Message</i>	5
<i>The 2024 Arts and Society Landscape</i>	6
<i>Sibikwa’s 2024 Financial & Governance Landscape</i>	7
<i>Strategic Project Highlights & Achievements</i>	8
<i>Community Engagement</i>	8
<i>Education</i>	9
<i>Training</i>	10
<i>Arts Industry Development</i>	11
<i>Cultural Policy, Governance & Diplomacy</i>	12
<i>Marketing and Visibility</i>	12
<i>Moving Forward</i>	13
<i>Conclusion</i>	14

Executive Summary

In a year marked by change and challenge across the cultural landscape, Sibikwa emerged as a steadfast force for inclusion, creativity, and community. Anchored in a 36-year legacy of excellence and activism, over the 2024 year, Sibikwa sustained our core programmes and expanded our reach - bridging art and advocacy, education and enterprise, tradition and innovation. From classrooms to national festivals, policy platforms to global collaborations, Sibikwa reached thousands of people across South Africa and beyond.

In 2024, more than 2,600 participants attended events hosted at the Centre and other venues nationally, while arts education initiatives across Gauteng reached over 8,200 learners - with an increase in young people with disabilities - and over 520 individuals received accredited training supporting creative careers. Sibikwa created over 195 jobs, worked in 6 provinces, partnered across 4 countries, and contributed to more than 14 national and international industry events. The organisation engaged over 70 community members, 26 government officials, and 980 high school learners in governance and democracy-related programming, and digital platforms showed a 57% increase in engagement from the previous year.

Alongside flagship arts education and training programmes - the *Sibikwa Arts Academy*, *Artists in Schools* and *Inclusive Creative Arts Programmes* and the *Uvuko Creative Arts Entrepreneurship Incubator* - aimed at strengthening cultural and creative engagement, competencies and industries; key projects - such as the production *1789*, the *Body Moves Inclusive Dance Festival*, the *You, Me & Democracy* initiative, and the launch of *Strategies for Survival at Sibikwa 1988 - 2021* reflect the organisation's commitment to accessibility, excellence, and civic engagement.

As we celebrate Sibikwa's 2024 milestones, it is important to recognise that the year was challenged by financial instability, staff transitions, and factors impacting audience development - such as reduced disposable income of community stakeholders, and local public transport access and safety. This challenging context underscores the importance of strategic investment, innovation, and adaptive leadership to strengthen financial models, build human capital, and refine programmatic approaches to sustain and expand Sibikwa's social and creative mission.

In a rapidly changing world, the arts remain a critical force for healing, imagining new futures, and empowering communities - and Sibikwa remains firmly at the heart of that mission.



Introduction

"In Africa, art is not just an object but a way of life, a way of seeing and understanding the world."

~ Wole Soyinka

Sibikwa Arts Centre's programmes and initiatives are not simply about artistic expression; they are deeply embedded in community life, serving as tools for education, empowerment, and social change. Since our establishment in 1988, Sibikwa has actioned this philosophy, continuing a legacy of artistic excellence, cultural advocacy, and community empowerment; shaping a more inclusive and dynamic South African society.

2024 marked another year of growth, strategic expansion, and resilient progress in our mission to foster inclusivity and transformation through the arts. Demonstrating adaptability and a strong community focus, Sibikwa not only navigated challenges but also expanded our impact across key areas of community engagement, arts education, and industry advocacy. Through strategic initiatives, across fields of literature and publication, participatory performance and cultural exchange, innovation and co-creation, Sibikwa continues to be a dynamic force in South Africa's creative landscape.

The year 2024 also saw significant shifts in the global and national arts and culture sectors. Internationally, the creative industries have played a crucial role in economic recovery post-pandemic, with increasing emphasis on cultural diplomacy, digital innovation, and social cohesion. UNESCO's continued advocacy for culture as a global public good has reinforced the necessity of sustainable investment in the arts. Meanwhile, in South Africa, the arts sector remains a key driver of social transformation, despite persistent systemic challenges. National policy discussions around cultural governance, creative industry sustainability, and community-based arts education have underscored the importance of institutions like Sibikwa in shaping cultural policy and practice.

This 2024 Annual General Report details our key activities, achievements, and challenges, highlighting our continued commitment to fostering inclusivity, innovation, and cultural development through the arts. It also outlines our strategic priorities for 2025, including enhancing financial sustainability, expanding training and education programmes, strengthening policy advocacy, and developing marketing and audience engagement approaches.

I extend heartfelt gratitude to our dedicated Board, staff, partners, funders, and community for their invaluable support, collaboration unwavering support and commitment to our mission. Together, we are creating a vibrant and transformative future through the arts.

Sincerely,



Caryn Green

CEO

Chairperson's Message

Reflecting on 2024, we acknowledge that we are operating in a time of disruption and change. Economic pressures and global instability have created challenges, particularly in securing funding. However, despite these difficulties, Sibikwa has remained a beacon of resilience, creativity and continues to make a difference in our community.

Our arts education programmes have reached over 8,200 learners, our professional training has supported over 520 individuals, and our events have engaged more than 2,600 participants. We have also expanded our job creation initiatives, contributing to industry growth across South Africa and beyond. This progress would not be possible without the dedication of our team, the generosity of our donors, and the invaluable guidance of my board colleagues.

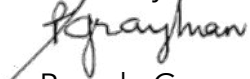
Looking ahead, we are committed to strengthening our impact by focusing on three key areas: early childhood development, environmental sustainability and climate action, and the integration of digitization and artificial intelligence. These priorities will be embedded in everything we do, ensuring that Sibikwa continues to evolve and remain a leader in arts education and advocacy.

We extend our deepest gratitude to our funders, whose support has sustained our programmes and expanded our reach. Continued funding is critical to maintaining our impact and we invite new and existing partners to help secure Sibikwa's future.

I would like to extend sincere thanks to our CEO, Caryn Green, for her strong leadership and to our Board of Directors for their unwavering support. I am pleased to welcome two new board members, Mr Xolisa Dhlamini and Ms Lebogang Koloane, whose expertise will help shape our future.

While challenges remain, we move forward with optimism, innovation, and a steadfast belief in the transformative power of the arts. We look forward to continuing this journey together.

Sincerely,



Pamela Grayman

Board Chair



The 2024 Arts and Society Landscape

Amid rapid digitalisation, economic uncertainties, and shifting socio-political dynamics across the world, creative industries are increasingly recognised as vital for social cohesion, cultural diplomacy, and economic recovery, yet they face persistent challenges. Funding constraints remain a core issue, as traditional support structures are re-evaluated and many institutions are forced to diversify income streams or downscale programming. Digital transformation, while opening new opportunities, has also heightened concerns around access, intellectual property rights, and the sustainability of live arts practice.

South Africa's cultural sector reflects these global tensions while also grappling with our unique set of systemic challenges. The broader socio-economic context in South Africa illuminates Sibikwa's challenges. According to recent Deloitte economic outlook reports, the country's economy experienced modest growth in early 2024, as declining inflation and the easing of loadshedding suggested some recovery. However, industry continues to struggle, and government budgets remain constrained. In such an environment, arts organisations often face reduced funding - as national and provincial budgets tighten and priorities shift toward more immediate socio-economic challenges. Similar trends were noted by the South African Cultural Observatory, which highlighted that even as the creative industries show signs of a global surge, public support remains patchy and many grassroots organisations continue to operate informally, with estimates suggesting that 60% of South Africa's artistic community lacks regular funding.

Politically, the environment remains fluid. Recent policy adjustments, exemplified by fluctuations in arts funding priorities and the broader national emphasis on nation building through culture and heritage, create both opportunities and uncertainties. Although initiatives like the recent reprioritisation of funding by National Treasury indicate a governmental recognition of the arts' role in social cohesion and economic development, organisations often struggle to navigate these bureaucratic channels, a predicament compounded by the historical underinvestment in the arts relative to other sectors.

The appointment of Minister Gayton McKenzie as the head of the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture brought a renewed energy and vocal commitment to transformation, youth engagement, and heritage celebration. However, the long-standing structural issues - such as unreliable funding pipelines, underdeveloped infrastructure, the marginalisation of community arts, and an apparent shift in funding priorities away from urban and legacy arts organisations - continue to limit sustainability for many organisations who remain dependent on project-based grants with little core operational support, and constrained income generating opportunities with ticket sales and event attendance falling below expectations, impacted not only by delayed fund confirmations, limited marketing capacity, and sectoral competition, but also by broader socio-economic realities, shifting audience interests, evolving family structures, financial constraints, and other accessibility challenges and safety concerns. These factors underscore the need for innovative strategies to make the arts more accessible and relevant to our communities.

Sibikwa's 2024 Financial & Governance Landscape

Against the above contextual backdrop, Sibikwa demonstrated both resilience and adaptability, throughout 2024, in advancing our vision of cultural empowerment through inclusive education, performance, training, and policy engagement. Yet, Sibikwa has not been immune to the sector's challenges, continuing to work to strengthen our income-generating strategies to mitigate the uncertainties of grant funding and build reserves for sustainability far into the future.

Sibikwa's 2024 financial statements reveal an organisation striving to fulfil a vital social mission amid a challenging economic environment and broader landscape, where funding volatility and operational constraints are common. Financially, Sibikwa operates with minimal surplus and significant cash flow instability, late funder disbursements, and constraints on overhead recovery, which have required careful budgeting, difficult decisions, and austerity. The financial discipline reflected in Sibikwa's improved operating deficit may represent commendable cost containment efforts, but the overall decline in liquidity and equity hints at deeper challenges.

The financial journey of Sibikwa in 2024 is a microcosm of the challenges facing many South African arts organisations. Amid limited funding, economic headwinds, and shifting political priorities, community-based projects struggle to maintain liquidity and build reserves. Yet, these organisations play an essential role in fostering local talent, preserving cultural heritage, and contributing to social development.

Sibikwa's financial management strategy is both transparent and forward-looking, designed to support our mission within our values of excellence, creativity, integrity, lifelong learning and community. While our operations are predominantly project-based, we are actively working to diversify our funding sources to build a more resilient financial foundation. This approach includes expanding our network of collaborators, increasing the number and scope of applications, engaging new partners, and seeking unrestricted investment to meet our operational needs. Efforts in 2024 to secure long-term financial health to support our impactful initiatives - underscored by the necessity of adopting innovative funding and revenue generation models to counteract systemic challenges - were supported by the optimizing of our systems and processes to ensure that programme delivery remained both efficient and effective.

Sibikwa remains steadfast in our commitment to robust governance and operational excellence - principles that are deeply embedded in our strategic vision. This year, we welcomed Mr. Xolisa Dhlamini and Ms. Lebogang Koloane to our Board, enhancing our strategic leadership with their expertise in finance and legal affairs. Their appointments, which will be officially registered as non-executive directors in 2025, reflect our proactive approach to strengthening our organisational framework. This move aligns with our broader strategic priorities, where sound governance and effective leadership are recognized as foundational pillars for ensuring the continued growth, impact and sustainability of our organisation and programmes.



Strategic Project Highlights & Achievements

Sibikwa's achievements in 2024 reflect a dynamic and impactful year marked by innovation, growth, and resilience; recording impressive outcomes across our programme pillars. Among standout achievements was the continued delivery of inclusive and accessible arts education, the staging of high-quality artistic productions, and the strengthening of Sibikwa's position in cultural policy spaces.

Community Engagement

In 2024, Sibikwa's commitment to fostering community connectedness and inclusive cultural participation deepened through a dynamic calendar of events - rooted in community and reaching far beyond. These initiatives provided platforms for creative expression, cultural exchange, and social reflection.

A key highlight of the year was the ***Body Moves International Inclusive Dance Festival***. Held in Gauteng and the Western Cape in November, the festival brought together dancers with and without disabilities from South Africa and England. It featured performances, workshops, and dialogues on themes of human rights and environmental justice, delivered in partnership with the Market Theatre, Afrika Tikkun and Unmute Dance Company. Supported by Arts Council England, the National Arts Council's Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme, and the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture via the Federation of Gauteng Community Arts Centres, the festival reaffirmed Sibikwa's leadership in inclusive, accessible arts practice.

Over the year, Sibikwa also presented:

The Africa Month ***Marimba Jam***, bringing together school marimba bands from across Gauteng in a joyful celebration of youth, creativity and indigenous instruments;

The Women's Month ***Seriti sa Basadi Festival*** programme of workshops and performances by female and queer artists - in partnership with Lucky Dance Theatre and the GDI Hub's UK Aid-funded AT2030 Programme;

The Heritage Month ***Impande Zobuntu Festival*** including intergenerational workshops, indigenous games, fashion showcases, dynamic dance performances, and pop-up stalls offering Afrocentric food and crafts, supported by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture through the Federation of Gauteng Community Arts; and

On 10 December, the ***Mantsoe Amacha Acts of Freedom Youth Theatre Festival*** platform for young theatre makers to showcase work, supported by the National Arts Council's Presidential Employment Stimulus Programme.

Education

In 2024, Sibikwa reaffirmed our commitment to accessible, quality arts education for learners across Gauteng. The Centre's programming focused on nurturing artistic skills, building life competencies, and creating awareness of creative career pathways. With support from public and private partners, over 8,200 learners participated in Sibikwa's arts education offerings.

The **Sibikwa Arts Academy** remained the flagship youth development programme, providing weekend classes in music, drama, dance, and visual arts to young people from historically marginalised communities. With support from TotalEnergies and the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, this programme fosters the development of creative talents, social-emotional skills and leadership capacity. The **Artists in Schools programme**, funded by the Department of Sport, Arts and Culture, provided 38 trained artist-facilitators residencies in public schools to assist with the delivery of the Creative Arts curriculum. Complementing this was the **Inclusive Creative Arts Programme**, offering weekly classes for learners with disabilities at special needs schools in Ekurhuleni. In addition, **Arts Education Initiatives** reached Early Childhood Development (ECD) and foundation phase learners and educators through participatory performance-based learning. Sibikwa also hosted the **Creative Industries Career Exhibition**, bringing together Grade 12 learners and recent school-leavers to explore diverse opportunities in the cultural and creative economy. These initiatives expanded access to quality education, with a particular emphasis on learners with limited prior exposure to the arts.

Sibikwa's education programmes respond to curriculum needs and also contribute to learners' personal growth, community pride, and cultural literacy, affirming the transformative potential of arts in education.



Training

Sibikwa's accredited training programmes continue to strengthen the professional capabilities of creatives and educators through a range of incubation, internship, and capacity-building initiatives, designed to enable sustainable employment and entrepreneurship within the arts and related industries. In the 2024 year, over 520 individuals participated in accredited and workplace-based training at Sibikwa.

These included **CATHSSETA-accredited Facilitation Training**, aimed at developing competent arts facilitators, many of whom went on to support the Artists in Schools programme. In parallel, the **SACE-accredited Teacher Training** initiative enhanced the capacity of classroom educators to deliver Creative Arts with confidence, creativity, and pedagogical rigour.

A major milestone was the implementation of the 3rd **Uvuko Creative Arts Entrepreneurship Incubator**, funded for a 2nd year by the Entrepreneurship Development Trust. This programme offers young aspiring entrepreneurs access to **CATHSSETA-accredited Arts Administration Training**, mentorship, and seed capital to develop, launch and scale their creative enterprises.

Sibikwa also participated in the **FirstRand FirstJob** and the **Assitej SA managed IDC SEF** programmes, hosting young graduates in internship roles across administration, marketing, technical support, education assistance and event support. These placements provided hands-on experience and professional exposure to the inner workings of the creative sector. By bridging skills gaps and creating pathways to employment, Sibikwa's professional training efforts contributed to both individual growth and sectoral development.



Arts Industry Development

Sibikwa remained a vital contributor to the South African arts industry in 2024, advancing performance innovation, touring productions, and sectoral exchange. The Centre created over 195 jobs for performers, administrators, facilitators, and technical staff across our many projects and events.

A major highlight was the theatre production *1789* which continued our successful national run, attracting critical acclaim and audience engagement. Presented in partnership with the French Institute of South Africa (IFAS), the National Arts Festival, and Joburg Theatre, the production earned multiple Naledi Award nominations and the CEO's Award for Innovation in Theatre.

The *Khula Youth Theatre Company* served as a dynamic platform for young artists to create and present socially resonant theatre for young audiences at Sibikwa, the Soweto Theatre, My Body My Space Public Arts Festival in Mpumalanga, and various community venues. These performances reached diverse ECD and foundation phase audiences and sparked important conversations about identity, community, and resilience.





Cultural Policy, Governance & Diplomacy

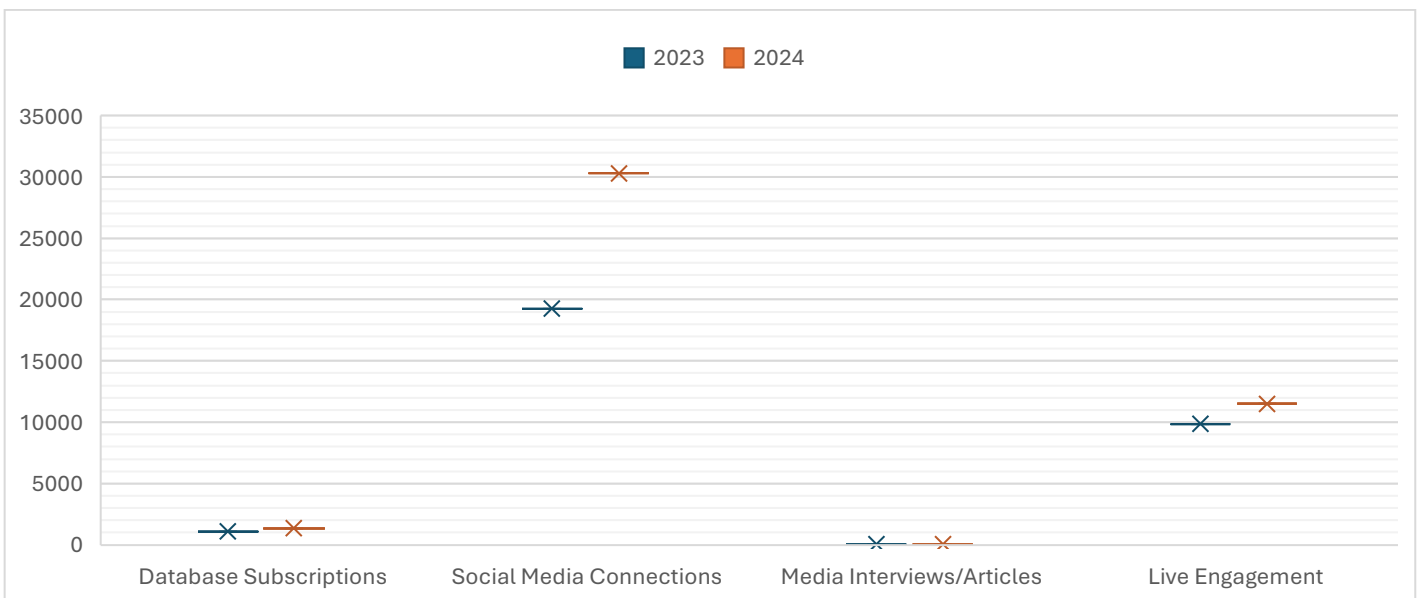
Sibikwa launched our first book published by Routledge, *Strategies for Survival at Sibikwa 1988 – 2021: Landmarks of South African Theatre History*, marking a historic milestone in documenting community theatre and cultural resilience. This publication, supported by Business and Arts South Africa and the Arts and Culture Trust, was celebrated with events at Sibikwa and Wits University.

Sibikwa’s influence extended through presentations at 5 major conferences and contributions to 2 cross-sectoral engagements. These included dialogues on local cultural governance, creative economy development, and community engagement strategies, demonstrating leadership in policy development, research, and national sectoral planning.

Altogether, these initiatives exemplified Sibikwa’s mission to serve as a thought and practice leader for professional growth, cultural excellence, and sectoral impact.

Marketing and Visibility

Sibikwa’s work in 2024 maintained an active presence on national platforms and engaged in policy processes aimed at strengthening community arts infrastructure, governance, and public engagement.



Over the year, we saw growth in our social media presence and engagement, and stable publicity with 49 interviews/articles, reflecting our ongoing efforts to boost visibility across diverse communities. While marketing and publicity consultants are relatively expensive, by strengthening our communication approach and database management, we are building lasting networks to engage more meaningfully with our audience. Our focus on innovative and community-centered marketing strategies not only enhances our brand presence but also serves as a catalyst for increased participation in our programmes and events. This strategic emphasis on marketing helps to amplify our role as a dynamic force in South Africa's creative landscape.

Moving Forward

As Sibikwa looks toward 2025, the organisation's strategic direction is firmly aligned with our mission to champion inclusive development, foster artistic excellence, and contribute to a resilient and vibrant arts sector. Key priorities include enhancing financial sustainability, expanding accredited training, deepening policy advocacy, and strengthening marketing and audience engagement.

Financial sustainability remains a critical focus, and the Centre is actively pursuing diversified funding strategies. This includes expanding the donor base, building reserves, increasing partnerships with the private sector, and seeking multiyear and unrestricted support to enable long-term planning. There is also renewed emphasis on developing internal revenue-generation mechanisms, including rental income, merchandise, and fee-based training programmes.

Education and training will be further enhanced by finalising Sibikwa's transition from CATHSSETA to QCTO accreditation, a shift that will broaden programme reach and recognition. Efforts to integrate Early Childhood Development more formally into Sibikwa's offerings will strengthen foundational learning and offer greater development opportunities to younger beneficiaries and educators.

In the realm of advocacy, Sibikwa aims to expand our role in shaping cultural policy and promoting democratic values through digital and environmentally conscious initiatives. This includes scaling up existing platforms such as the Democracy in Motion project, integrating eco-conscious practices and content into our organisation and programmes, and exploring new partnerships for live art in public spaces, digital civic storytelling, and community dialogues.

To ensure greater visibility and impact, Sibikwa seeks support and investment for innovative marketing strategies, including improved storytelling, data-driven audience segmentation, enhanced visual branding, and the use of multimedia formats for outreach. These efforts will support the organisation's broader aim of deepening community engagement and amplifying our relevance in an increasingly digital world.

These strategic directions reflect Sibikwa's continued evolution as a creative and community-rooted institution - one that is committed to cultural transformation and excellence.

Conclusion

Reflecting on 2024, it is clear that Sibikwa has navigated a demanding environment with resilience, vision, and purpose. Amid economic constraints, policy uncertainty, and sectoral shifts, the organisation not only sustained our programming but expanded our reach, created new opportunities, and amplified our voice as a cultural leader.

The successes achieved this year - in education, professional training, advocacy, and industry participation - are the result of strategic collaboration, passionate leadership, and deep-rooted community connections. Whether through the vibrant rhythms of marimba jams, the introspective power of theatre, or the inclusive energy of international arts exchanges, Sibikwa has consistently demonstrated that the arts are essential tools for transformation.

As the organisation moves into 2025, we remain committed to refining our model for sustainability, impact, and inclusion. Through financial resilience, programmatic innovation, and active advocacy, Sibikwa will continue to serve as a beacon for community empowerment and cultural vitality in South Africa and beyond.

Together with our board, staff, partners, funders, and the communities we serve, we look forward to building on our successes and shaping a future where the arts remain central to social change, learning, and human connection.

*Together, we imagine, create, and transform –
one performance, one learner, one community at a time.*

