

# Cultural Indicators: Views from Africa

## Foreword

Defining the strategic priorities for viable research into cultural indicators of development with universal applicability has been on the agenda of a number of organisations for quite some time. Adapting those indicators to Africa's present need for poverty alleviation, sustainable development and cultural liberty has been felt as a worthwhile effort by institutions like OCPA, the Interarts Foundation, the Forum 2004, UNESCO, and African Futures Institute, which have sponsored several events to that end during the last two years.

At the outset of the process, those organisations had understood and accepted that it would be a daunting challenge, because of the multiplicity of social, economic and political factors and actors, which shape and determine culture on the African continent. It was also understood that key to the success of such an undertaking would be the capacity to mobilise an African expertise in that area. The sponsors did therefore their best to gather academics, policy makers and practitioners. Such an interdisciplinary and complementary team proved to be fruitful as demonstrated by the quality of analysis carried out during two seminars held in Maputo in March and August 2004. The present document, which is an output of these meetings, is something I believe will be useful for the purposes of development planning, research and advocacy.

UNESCO is proud to have been associated with the work of this task force, which has been a challenging one, and I trust that the outcome will be useful and will contribute positively to ongoing initiatives in discourses of cultural rights and human development being undertaken at the moment by a variety of institutions around the world. UNESCO for its part will seek to ensure that the work is disseminated widely in the interest of international cooperation and development.

I would like to use this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment of the members of the Task Force, and commend them for their significant contribution.

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## **Introduction:**

This document has been prepared by a Task Force of African experts on culture and development, which was set up after an international seminar held in Maputo (Mozambique) in March 2004 with a view to provide a specifically African perspective on cultural indicators for human development. Drafted for presentation at the Congress of Cultural Rights and Human Development under the auspices of the Forum Barcelona 2004, the present document recognises the critical importance of identifying priority areas and a set of cultural indicators for human development.

A starting point is to recognise the historical context of the current discourses of culture and development on the African continent, key amongst which have been the nature and the processes of formation of states and market forces. Equally, we acknowledge the need to make a new vision of citizenship central to a global discourse of human rights and cultural rights in development.

We recognise that the state has developed in diverse ways across the continent, and that there are particular circumstances, which do not lend themselves to a transnational analysis. Similarly, we have seen a significant variability in economic developments and outlooks on the continent; these have also been shaped by particular and often non-transferable circumstances. Therefore, as much as we try to provide a holistic approach that could be applicable to the whole continent, we take into cognisance the particular circumstances that have shaped its different parts and aim to give but an overview over the key issues at stake for the continent at large.

Over the last two decades, we have seen the state being challenged particularly for its failure to deliver on the mandate of its citizenry, and witnessed amongst others the emergence and resurgence of other identities, which put the credibility of the nation state to the test. In this respect, the modern state's evident discomfort with the expression amongst its citizenry of multiple cultural identities loses perspective of the fact that the citizens will continue to demand a right to live these their identities and accordingly a freedom of cultural expression; failing to address this issue will thus ultimately result in conflict. Thus, we recognise that there needs to be a continental commitment to the management of cultural diversity, and to creating and enhancing a culture of respect for both human and cultural rights.

These are developments which have not emerged exclusively in Africa; even in other continents, where states did deliver on their mandate, civil societies have increasingly invoked their rights and demanded recognition by states of their multiple identities, both in their indigenous and their diasporic dimensions.

An important development for the African continent has undoubtedly been the birth of the African Union (AU) and the increasing call for African solutions to African problems. Without discarding global perspectives and opportunities, as exemplified by the development of NEPAD which indeed stresses regional integration and partnerships, these developments demonstrate the need to locate a potential for confronting the continent's challenges within its very own resources, its human capital and economic potential, as well as its cultural heritage.

Clearly, a key challenge for the continent is the direction towards which discourses of development and democracy will steer over the next few years. However, the commitment of leadership to democratic governance has already been demonstrated, and international frameworks and instruments – such as the UN Millennium Declaration and related Development Goals, as well as the UNESCO Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity and the UNESCO Draft Convention of Cultural Diversity – clearly state that the citizenry should and will continue to engage in the delivery of commitments on the subject of cultural rights and human development.

Despite insisting therefore on locating solutions to Africa's challenges within Africa itself, including the empowerment of Africa's civil society to partake in political and economic affairs, we advocate that it is also incumbent upon global players to deliver on their democratic mandate. While corporate social investment and good governance must indeed become a global concern; it is up to cultural practitioners to be on the forefront of civil society in terms of advocacy.

Affirming the real wealth of Africa's cultural diversity, and the centrality of cultural rights and human rights in development, we thus believe that delivery on these three aspects should inform African as well as global development strategies. This is where we see the role of partnerships at local, national and international levels, which will enhance social movements and civil society across nation states as the only way forward. We can envision an Africa which benefits from its human capital, and secures economic returns for its cultural heritage and creativity through its cultural practitioners and industries, specifically the enforcement of intellectual property regimes that protect the art of the creator. The sustainability of the above should involve a collective commitment from both civil society and the state parties. Sustainable development may only be fully realised if resting on an enabling environment, which is premised on a balanced relationship between states and non-state actors.

## Priority issues and indicators:

### 1. Governance – legal and political pluralism

Governance is critical for the enjoyment of human, social and cultural rights. Citizen participation in governance should be at the core of a rights-based approach to development. At the very least it covers the following elements:

- Managing relations between different levels of authorities; federal or central government to provincial and local authority, interaction between the various levels  
*Indicators:*
  - Legal frameworks and domestication of international frameworks at national and local level
  - Capacity to ensure participatory governance on the basis of a shared vision.
  - Relationship between state and citizen, between market and citizen, between market and state.
- Managing cultural diversity, including ethnicity, in the devolution process  
*Indicator:*
  - Policy synergies, integration of cultural policies in development
- Managing multiple legal systems, for example the coexistence of traditional and modern legal systems in a given state, in a manner that protects human and cultural rights and ensures accountability and predictability.  
*Indicator:*
  - Development and management of partnerships (private-public partnerships, different level of authorities, etc.)

### 2. Equity

Poverty is a major development challenges; it breeds social exclusion, powerlessness and disenfranchisement. It is often correlated to unequal access to and distribution of:

- Productive resources, such as forestry, agriculture, fisheries, finance, etc. should be harnessed with a view to correcting imbalances and creating opportunities for jobs, meaningful self-employment and entrepreneurship.  
*Indicators:*
  - Reform of land tenure systems
  - Transparency of budgetary allocations and revenue collection
  - Public investment programmes
  - Credit provision
  - Job creation
- Social services: education, health and information  
*Indicators:*
  - Decentralisation of infrastructure
  - Existence of community based heritage resources
  - Enrolment and literacy

- Sexual and reproductive health services
- Health services
- Housing services
- Assuring access for people with disabilities to full enjoyment of cultural rights
- Valuing and protecting Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Valuing, protecting and using Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS)
- Institutions which are accountable to the citizenry.

*Indicators:*

- Existence of an enabling environment and legal framework for NGOs and community based organisations
- Policy frameworks, which are conducive to their interaction with the government level
- Economic institutions for cultural producers and practitioners
- Professional organisations

### 3. Cultural liberties

Cultural liberties are essential to create and sustain an environment which fosters tolerance and respect for cultural diversity and ensures the development of different cultural forms of expressions. Main areas, which require attention of policy-makers and practitioners would include:

- Linguistic pluralism

*Indicators:*

- Documentation of minority and endangered languages
- Development of community media in local languages
- Officialisation of indigenous national languages

- Mother tongue education

*Indicators:*

- Production of educational and leisure material
- Policies related to the provision of language tuition and use in schools

- Curricular reviews to enhance cultural diversity

*Indicators:*

- Updated curricula at all levels, inclusive of cultural education

- Religious freedoms, cultural rights

*Indicators:*

- Fair treatment and recognition of public holidays
- Protection of religious institutions and places of worship
- Inclusion of religious diversity in schools

- Multiple identities

*Indicators:*

- Support for indigenous minorities
- Protection of cultural expressions, for example ritual practices
- Banning of all forms of discrimination
- Fostering tolerance through the production of educational material

#### **4. Creativity and cultural entrepreneurship**

Enhancing innovation and creativity through the provision of a diverse range of resources and institutions, of an enabling environment for the development of cultural enterprise.

- cultural markets and protection of producers and resources

*Indicators:*

- Sponsorship of fairs and festivals for artists and cultural practitioners
- Multisectorial investment in the arts and heritage sectors
- Financial resources to support cultural entrepreneurship, such as credit facilities
- Creation of local and regional arts funding bodies
- Protection of Intellectual Property Rights and other patenting regimes
- Access to and distribution of resources from cultural tourism
- Contribution of cultural industries to Gross National Product

#### **5. Knowledge generation and management**

Key to the empowerment of civil society is the improvement of the generation and management of general and specialised knowledge, as well as the products derived from it.

- Research

*Indicators:*

- Inventories of cultural activities and policies
- Databases of cultural goods and practitioners
- Benchmarking of good practices
- Quality assurance

- Funding

*Indicators:*

- Funding for research activities, NGOs and civil society organisations
- Grants for institutions, Higher Education

- Development and conservation of knowledge resources, including heritage

*Indicators:*

- Support for museum and heritage resources
- Strengthening of archival and conservation institutions
- Support for community heritage centres and resource facilities
- Conservation of intangible heritage, for example oral traditions

- Methodologies and techniques

*Indicators:*

- Development of heritage impact assessment instruments
- Development of inventories
- Developing regulatory mechanisms for the arts

- Documentation, Publications, Dissemination

*Indicators:*

- Establishment and support for public libraries
- Promotion of a culture of reading
- Support for indigenous publishers enterprises or associations

- ICT and websites
- Active use of living heritage, e.g. elders, oral heritage keepers
- Sharing of knowledge resources, particularly best practices
- Enshrining of media freedoms
- Regulation of diversity in local media content

## **6. cross-cutting issues:**

Human development is about enhancing people's choice. Building capacity of individuals and communities can contribute to enhancing their capacities to meet their development goals. On the other hand, gender disparities and inequalities can be a major impediment to human development. In the same vein, HIV/AIDS constitute in Africa, and elsewhere for that matter, a major development challenge. It has therefore been felt that addressing these issues in a systematic manner is key to success in the priority areas and cultural indicators identified above.

- Capacity-building
  - Institutional resources and processes
  - Human Resource Development, e.g. of cultural practitioners, and management
  - Financial Resources
  - Infrastructure Exchanges and Networking at local, interregional, and intergovernmental levels
- Gender
  - Gender education
  - Formulation of gender policies and gender mainstreaming
  - Girl child education
  - Facilitating credit provision for women entrepreneurs and cultural practitioners
  - Monitoring gender development in the media
  - Number of women in leadership positions
  - Gender impact assessment
- HIV/AIDS
  - HIV/AIDS policies and workplace programmes at local and national level
  - Community participation in design of prevention, treatment and care programmes
  - Leadership commitments to comprehensive responses to HIV/AIDS
  - Monitoring the impact of HIV/AIDS in the cultural sector
  - Addressing issues of stigma and discrimination
  - Programmes addressing the gender dimensions of HIV/AIDS

## **Conclusion:**

Promoting Human development and respectful cultural diversity is a major challenge for Africa and indeed the world. In the current context, three elements are critical for achieving such a goal.

The first is a formulation of a common vision; Africa must define for herself a vision of the future she wants. Long-term perspective studies conducted at the national and regional level do suggest that such a vision will by necessity have multiple dimensions; economic, social, political, environmental, cultural and technological. In each domain, appropriate strategies have to be devised and be consistent with the long-term goals of the vision. In the area of culture, promotion of unity in diversity as advocated in the UNDP 2004 Human Development Report seems to be the preferred strategy. It implies not only tolerance among, but cooperation between, indigenous groups at national and regional level. It also implies tolerance and cooperation at international level, among nations.

The process of formulating such a vision should be seen as important as the product itself. The process should be as participatory and inclusive as possible, if the vision is to be a shared one and one which is owned by the majority of people and communities.

Secondly, action is a critical aspect in the form of a set of research activities, policy measures and operational activities. Research activities would pertain to cultural indicators of development, and indicators of cultural development. Policy measures would include development and implementation of frameworks that make mandatory cultural soundness assessment. Operational activities must be geared to mainstreaming cultural policies in local and national development strategies, policies and programmes.

The third is evaluation and monitoring. No matter how inspiring is the vision we formulate and consistent with it the actions implemented, development must be seen as a learning process and as such it is bound to progress by constant review, adjustment and revision. It is important that no community be excluded from this process of evaluation and monitoring, and that indeed all measures be taken so as to ensure full participation of all development stakeholders.

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