



Culture and Development

MDG-F Thematic Study: Key Findings and Achievements.

Executive Summary

Background

This thematic study aims to capture the main achievements of the 18 Joint Programmes (JPs) ⁱ funded under the thematic window on Culture and Development of the MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F).

Even though cultural aspects are not explicitly referred to within the MDGs, the last decade has witnessed an increasing recognition of the links between culture and human development. This connection was made explicit in the Outcome Document of the MDG Review Summit held at the UN General Assembly in September 2010, as well as in two other recent resolutions. Other international milestones in recent years include a number of legal documents (including UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions) and major international reports (including the 2004 edition of UNDP's Human Development Report, entitled *Cultural Liberty in Today's Diverse World*, and the two UNCTAD / UNDP *Creative Economy Reports* published in 2008 and 2010), as well as policies, programmes and publications designed by several local, regional and national governments, development agencies, regional and international organizations and NGOs.

The 18 JPs funded under the MDG-F's thematic window on Culture and Development stand as a substantial contribution to this area, taking account of the financial resources provided and the innovative and diverse approaches implemented. The main arguments given for the affirmation of culture's place in human and sustainable development are twofold. On the one hand, culture is seen as a resource to achieve international development objectives in other fields of human activity, including the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion, the promotion of health and education and the preservation of the environment. On the other hand, culture is also affirmed as a substantial component of human and sustainable development, rather than merely existing as a tool for the achievement of results in other fields.ⁱⁱ Activities supported under the thematic window's 18 JPs, which are diverse in terms of the countries where they have been implemented, the topics addressed and the achievements sought, attest to both these perspectives.

Achievements and Key Results

On the basis of the evidence collected, the study identifies six thematic areas of impact, some of which can be related directly to MDGs (poverty reduction, education, health, environment) and others which can be seen as key factors in the achievement of the MDGs and which can be related simultaneously to several MDGs (development and strengthening of cultural capacity, and contribution to governance and policy-making). They are briefly summarized below:



Strategies aimed at poverty reduction

All JPs included activities aimed at enhancing economic capacities and broadening income opportunities in the cultural sector, often with a focus on disadvantaged communities. The main intervention areas included supporting productive capacity in the cultural industries and related sectors, and encouraging the economic potential of cultural heritage (notably tangible heritage). All JPs have provided small-scale producers with training and capacity-building opportunities and with adapted resources to foster production, distribution and/or consumption of their products. Evidence has also been found of the increase in income and employment generated by these interventions in several countries, particularly in disadvantaged communities. The training of women in the crafts sector has been seen to contribute not only to broadening their economic opportunities but also to enhancing women's role in the household and the community, leading to a reduction of gender-based violence and an increased ability to manage family budgets and discuss taboo subjects (Cambodia, Senegal). In the field of cultural heritage, JPs have contributed to the inclusion of two cultural sites in Senegal in the World Heritage List, as well as the design of management plans for the preservation of heritage sites and the attraction of cultural tourism (Egypt, Turkey, etc.).

Access to and improvement of education

Some of the methods used by JPs to contribute to the achievement of international objectives in the field of education, including MDG 2 (Achieve Universal Primary Education) are: the development and cultural adaptation of educational programmes, approaches and tools to tackle obstacles to education; the promotion of intercultural understanding in the educational context; and the design of educational strategies with cultural content aimed at making education more attractive for disadvantaged groups. Several studies have also been conducted in the context of the thematic window, most of them aimed at analysing cultural content in existing educational programmes and seeking ways to foster integration of disadvantaged and minority groups in the educational system. Relevant examples have been found in, among others, China, Costa Rica and Bosnia & Herzegovina.

Access to and improvement of health



The thematic window has provided the opportunity for the design and implementation of very innovative programmes in the field of health, including the cultural adaptation of health techniques, the promotion of dialogue between formal and traditional health practitioners and the design of new governance and policy frameworks in the field of health. Whereas only a limited number of JPs have addressed these issues (China, Ecuador, Mozambique, Namibia), models and achievements presented hereafter could inspire developments in other countries, insofar as the necessary adaptation measures are considered. Programmes have often simultaneously focused on issues addressed by MDGs 4 (Reduce Child Mortality) and 5 (Improve Maternal Health), whereas fewer initiatives have dealt with MDG 6 (Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases).

Contribution to environmental sustainability

Plans for the joint management of cultural and natural heritage sites -- the assets of which reinforce one another -- and the enhancement of traditional techniques for the preservation of natural resources are some of the areas in which cultural activities have contributed to environmental sustainability. Evidence of contributions to the achievement of MDG 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability) has been found in a few cases (Egypt, Senegal, Mozambique).

Development and strengthening of cultural capacity

Several activities supported under the thematic window have contributed to strengthening beneficiary countries' ability to develop cultural policies and programmes aligned with the achievement of development objectives. By reinforcing the knowledge base, raising awareness, fostering the adoption and implementation of new laws, policies and governance models, building individual and organizational capacities, and creating new cultural infrastructures, these initiatives address some of the hindrances that have traditionally prevented stronger links between the culture and development agendas; they also serve to recognize the substantial role played by cultural resources and capacities in the promotion of sustainable development. Specific examples include: the setting-up of new cultural information systems, particularly in Latin America, as well as specialized databases and baseline studies (Ethiopia, Mauritania, Cambodia, etc.); the promotion of participative mapping exercises fostering the inclusion of minority groups (Costa Rica, Nicaragua, China); the adaptation of national legislation to international standards; the improvement of governance structures and support policies; the design of new postgraduate courses (Albania, Honduras); and the improvement of local cultural infrastructure (Senegal, Ethiopia, Costa Rica, Uruguay, Honduras, Morocco, Cambodia, etc.).

Broader governance developments

The results of certain JPs can be linked to broader national political objectives, including the strengthening of constitutional values (Ecuador), regional integration (Bosnia & Herzegovina), the preservation of cultural identity (Occupied Palestinian Territories) and the promotion of decentralisation processes (Morocco, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Bosnia and Herzegovina). Programmes have also fostered the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the institutional and political context as well as the participation of women in public life (Morocco, Ecuador), and have contributed to the empowerment of women through the broadening of social, economic and civil opportunities.

Conclusions

Sustainability

Several JPs or individual interventions supported in the context of JPs have become sustainable after their initially-envisaged lifetime. This includes the design of new framework programmes which build on the legacy of the JPs (Ecuador, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Nicaragua, Egypt, etc.), the institutional integration of JPs' processes and products, improvements in the knowledge base, the branding and visibility of the programme's key aims and achievements, and the sustained results of training and capacity-building activities.

Replicability

Several activities funded in the context of the thematic window have become models for replication in other areas of the beneficiary country or in neighboring countries. Key aspects facilitating the replication of programmes include: the innovative and successful nature of some of the pilot projects implemented (e.g. support to the cultural and creative industries, promotion of intangible heritage, integration of an intercultural perspective in health and educational policies, development of cultural mapping exercises, etc.); the promotion of participatory models; and the trend towards decentralization, which allows the transfer of models among different local authorities within one country.

Lessons learned

On the basis of the evidence presented and the positive and negative experiences observed, some lessons which could inform future programme design can be identified and are briefly presented in the main study. They concern the design of programmes, the cultural dimension of development programmes, the links between poverty reduction and culture, the governance of programmes, awareness-raising, and monitoring and evaluation.



Recommendations

Enabling environment. The conditions conducive to a more dynamic cultural sector, which can enhance its contribution to the achievement of international development objectives, could be strengthened through a number of strategies. These include: better integrating cultural development support into broader economic strategies; diversifying funding sources; better analyzing the potential in national and international markets; and addressing inequalities through structural analysis, participation and specific opportunities.

Tackling cultural aspects. The specific cultural dimension of international development programmes and projects should be strengthened by reinforcing cultural policies, providing specialized training, improving the knowledge base, developing and implementing cultural impact assessment tools and fostering awareness-raising.

Knowledge sharing and advocacy in international forums. Finally, and in the context of preparations for the post-2015 agenda for international development, knowledge-sharing and awareness at international level should be fostered by increasing the visibility of JPs' outputs, encouraging cross-country learning and stressing the specific, distinctive elements of culture.

Access to full report: <http://on.mdgfund.org/Zy5uR4>

ⁱ In the UN context, a Joint Programme (JP) is a programme involving two or more agencies, resulting from a joint programming process. Within the context of approved agency country programmes and signed agreements, a JP is outlined in a single document, which describes the linkages between and responsibilities of all participating agencies. Different funding mechanisms can be adopted. The use of JPs has been fostered in recent years. For additional information, visit <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=237> [Last visit: 28/11/2012]

ⁱⁱ See Section II.2 for more detailed information about these arguments and additional references.