

Culture in Development:

From one Commonwealth People's Forum to the next... and beyond



A briefing paper for the 2009 Commonwealth People's Forum



The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda
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Foreword

It is with particular pleasure that the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda issues this briefing paper with the support of the Commonwealth Foundation.

It is indeed the collaboration between our two organisations that made possible a first ever workshop on culture and its integral role in development, as part of the Commonwealth People's Forum held in Kampala in November 2007.

The perception of culture as an essential dimension of the development process, and not just as a tool to help achieve development results, is one that is relatively new, but which is finding increasing support worldwide.

This shift partly reflects a reaction to global thought that has allowed economists to shape outlooks, emphasising the dominance of western ideologies and interests, out of which the notion of a 'Third World' was born. With 'modernisation' seen in terms of a rather simplistic transfer of western ideas and technologies, development initiatives have too rarely been derived from and owned by the global South, while traditional norms and principles that can inform sustainable solutions to development challenges have too often been disregarded as irrelevant, even 'backward'.

An emerging, more positive understanding of culture in development has been accompanied by a growing recognition

that culture is a vital dimension of effective and equitable change. 'Development' has come to be seen not only in terms of material well-being, but also in terms of human capacity and potential. Culture then becomes an end in itself - offering something to express, inspire and symbolise collective memory and identity. Such an understanding places culture in a constructive light, as essential for genuine social and economic transformation. There remain, of course, negative, retrogressive aspects encapsulated within cultures. These should not be disregarded, but need to be understood and adapted to achieve positive change.

The workshop at the 2007 Commonwealth People's Forum, with the theme "*Culture: a must for equitable and sustainable transformation*", attracted participants from a broad range of Commonwealth countries. It was a first and necessary beginning. As the next CPF in Trinidad and Tobago approaches, we need to take stock, reflect on what we have achieved since, and think about the next steps, both here in Uganda, and throughout the Commonwealth.

Hence this briefing paper and the suggestions that accompany it: we hope that you find them stimulating.

Emily Drani
Director, Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda

One of the greatest strengths of the Commonwealth is the diversity of its cultures. Across its different regions, from the smaller islands of the Pacific to the estimated 1.1 billion inhabitants of India, our citizens greatly value their cultures, traditions, beliefs and heritage.

However, despite the strength and vitality of creativity and cultural expression in many countries of the Commonwealth, the role of culture in offering resources for development has tended to be treated as somewhat peripheral. It was therefore a milestone for the Commonwealth when in 2007, for the first time, a dedicated workshop on culture and development took place at the Commonwealth People's Forum in Kampala, in partnership with the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, on the theme of '*Culture: a must for equitable and sustainable transformation*'. The deliberations were wide-ranging, from discussions that examined culture's role in providing instruments to advance development - an approach that is still perhaps the most attractive to many development audiences - to how culture can be seen as more intrinsic within development, exploring what resources our cultures might offer us to encourage creativity, individual growth and the building of social capital and social cohesion.

The workshop led to rapid follow-up at the Commonwealth level, particularly the 2008 Commonwealth Foundation report, *Putting Culture First*, which set out a series of ways in which

culture and development can be seen to connect, and calls for greater high-level recognition of these connections. Following the report's recommendations, the Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development was convened the following year. This Group of experts and practitioners is tasked with issuing a declaration to Commonwealth Heads of Government at their meeting in Trinidad and Tobago, November 2009, which will ask governments to consider, and act on, the significant potential that culture has to contribute to sustainable human development.

It is important, when the Commonwealth Summit convenes every two years, that we do not reinvent the wheel, but rather, that we reflect on the conclusions arrived at two years before and consider the progress that has been made since, before we go on to consider the next steps we should take. We therefore welcome this briefing paper, produced by the Cross-Cultural foundation of Uganda, which is intended to connect the 2007 and 2009 Commonwealth People's Forums, illustrate some of the progress made to date and help suggest a way forward for further engagement. We look forward to continuing the work in Trinidad and Tobago and beyond, in order to encourage policy-makers to make culture a priority in all future development strategies.

Mark Collins
Director
Commonwealth Foundation

1. Learning from the State of Culture and Development in Uganda

For the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, enthusiasm for co-organising the first ever Commonwealth People's Forum (CPF) workshop on Culture *in* Development stemmed from an analysis of the perception of culture in Uganda, which is likely to echo in other Commonwealth countries. Can Uganda's experience therefore provide us with an illustration of what exists and what we could collectively aspire to in other parts of the Commonwealth as well?

First, what did we find?

A skewed perception of culture

Culture is often dismissed as *dance and drama* and development prescriptions generally neglect our country's rich and diverse cultural resources.

This can be traced to the colonial period, when culture was branded as 'backward'. Since independence, however, development has too often

continued to be measured with Western lenses. The natural processes of cultural development have been disrupted by norms of 'modernisation', which seldom take into account indigenous worldviews, and culture is often perceived as an obstacle to progress, or at best as an irrelevance. 'Culture' also tends to be narrowly defined in terms of traditional rituals and practices, especially those that are oppressive, with an insufficient focus on the dynamism of culture and the creativity it embodies.

The positive aspects of Ugandan culture, such as the spirit of communal responsibility and accountability, conflict resolution, informal moral education and inculcating the values of honesty, industriousness, virginity and abstinence, are therefore rarely utilised by development actors and strengthening culture as part of human potential is generally given low priority.

This problem is compounded when 'development' is equated with economic progress: for many

Ugandans, culture can only redeem itself if it can help to make money. This view often leads to an urban and tourism-oriented view of culture as business, with an emphasis on the production of crafts for visitors, concerts in high-end theatres and fancy cuisine in expensive restaurants. Further, when culture does not appear to translate into direct material benefit, preference is given to Western prescriptions that seem to provide ready answers to present-day challenges. In a poor country like Uganda, what matters is security, health and food on the table; it is not always obvious to people what culture might offer to meet these immediate needs. The case for cultural resources needs to be better made.

We should remember too that, as a colonial creation, Uganda's boundaries cut across ethnic identities. Our Constitution recognises the existence of 65 ethnic groups. These have their distinct culture, and

often their own language. And we need to examine the role played by post-colonial attempts to build nationhood. With independence, achieving oneness became an important issue: soon, our Constitution stressed the country's unitary character and our traditional kingdoms were outlawed. Cultural diversity therefore took a back seat, and today it can prove difficult to bring together Ugandans of different backgrounds, class and religions.

Without a common language, national identity, or unified cultural thinking, dealing with culture becomes a sensitive issue. An ever-growing number of ministers, members of parliament and districts also contributes to an inward-looking perception of development that stresses self-representation rather than national representation, fostering development that is fragmented along ethnic lines.

Finally, in the modern world, Uganda's cultural identities are threatened by the forces of globalisation,

especially when social fabric and values seem to be evolving in ways which people find difficult to endorse. There is then a double loss: useful aspects of modernity may not be internalised, while valuable traditional norms that could provide a basis for development solutions are disregarded as negative.

The struggle has thus continued between rejecting what we have come to regard as backward, and embracing this same culture that shapes our identity as a people of value. For without a distinct cultural identity, we can easily be subsumed by more dominant forces and lose an opportunity to demand that our unique culture takes the place it deserves, nationally and in the global village.

In summary, although Uganda's 1995 Constitution enshrines a **right to culture**, the opportunities offered by cultural development have been missed, and the current policy environment, with a few exceptions, largely ignores the value that culture can offer in fighting poverty and strengthening our human potential.

Rising to the challenge

Nevertheless, some progress should also be recognised in Uganda. While in itself insufficient, the 'use' of culture to promote developmental messages has grown, as when dance and drama convey information related to the HIV/AIDS crisis, or when ancient role models are drawn upon to enhance gender equality.

The restoration of cultural institutions in 1995, allowing kingdoms and chiefdoms to regain a measure of authority should also be noted. Cultural leaders can influence community responses to change and there has been a growing trend by development agencies to involve them as arbitrators in conflict and civil strife, and in protecting the rights of the vulnerable.

There has also been a growing recognition that language helps us to transmit and develop cultures. The debate is one that elicits strong emotions, because Uganda lacks a local national language and some languages dominate others. Nevertheless,

Government recently introduced a policy to make local languages the medium of instruction in primary schools, replacing English.

Promoting a ‘cultural approach’

Evidence increasingly tells Ugandans that, for development to be equitable and sustainable, culture must be harnessed as an essential driving force. At the same time, we must acknowledge that each culture is unique and valued by its people, and exploit the strength of cross-cultural interaction in our diversity. The challenge is then to find ways to capitalise on our diverse cultural wealth and to turn this into an opportunity, rather than the threat to harmony it is often perceived to be.

How do we do this? For a start, we need to seek more inspiration from our traditional value systems and incorporate them within contemporary policy frameworks. We therefore need a *culture in development perspective*, which begins by appreciating our cultures as a stepping stone to

understanding who we are, and what we can exploit in ourselves and our environment to tackle our development challenges, using values, systems and points of reference that we can readily understand. Once cultural resources are identified as useful in addressing present day challenges, they are easy to embrace because people already own the ideas that arise. Cultural resources not only provide tangible benefits, such as herbal medicine and nutritious traditional food, or good counsel drawing on traditional wisdom, but a sense of pride in the fact that what is locally defined, generated and owned is indeed useful and should continue to be used.

This was our starting point for the design of the 2007 Commonwealth People’s Forum workshop on Culture in Development. It informed the Cross-Cultural Foundation’s desire not only to play host to this important event, but also to share our experiences, challenges and aspirations with regard to a development agenda in Uganda that harnesses the power of culture.

2. The Culture *in* Development workshop at the 2007 CPF: highlights

In 2007, for the first time in the history of the Commonwealth Summit meetings, a two-day workshop was therefore held in Kampala on 'Culture in Development'. This attracted national and international participants and aimed at sharing practical experiences in the promotion of culture and indigenous knowledge,

as well as debating the ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Workshop Outcomes

The outcomes of the workshop included:

- A sharing of practical experiences illustrating the importance of culture and indigenous knowledge in development interventions, and in different national and cultural contexts across the Commonwealth.
- The development of six resolutions presented to Commonwealth Governments, underlining the importance of culture as central to the development process.
- A commitment to promote the ratification and implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in Commonwealth countries.

The debates

The workshop was enriched by presentations on the role of culture *in* development from several Commonwealth countries. Prof. Millar from Ghana for instance shared his experiences of a programme that promotes links between NGOs and universities so that African knowledge can be 'rehabilitated' as scientific in the eyes of academia. From Pakistan, Faiz Fayyaz Mohammad of the Community Motivation and Development Organisation, described the work of his NGO in the regions bordering Afghanistan that are affected by intense conflict, partly arising from the failure to utilise local conflict resolution resources. This highlighted the need for cultural understanding and

sensitivity to be incorporated in one's development practice. A Ugandan presentation illustrated how the positive aspects of culture could be harnessed for development, by focusing on how organisations are helping to address HIV/AIDS, for example by training herbalists and healers, or using clan leaders to help modify culturally-rooted practices that contribute to the spread of the epidemic.

Hazel Brown from the Network of NGOs for the Advancement of Women, Trinidad and Tobago, shared her perspective about culture being central to the well-being of the country, and highlighted the work of her organisation in drawing from tradition to help women acquire control over their finances through mutual self-help groups, rather than seeking the services of micro-finance and other banking institutions, where control eludes them. Nelcia Robinson, from St Vincent and the Grenadines, emphasised how, rather than blaming our culture for

our failures, we should realise that cultural resistance is *“what has kept us afloat”*.

From the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, based in Canada, Jim McKee outlined the main features of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and highlighted the need and opportunities for civil society to foster its ratification and implementation, in order to preserve and expand the policy space for culture.

Discussions focused on three areas:

The centrality of culture in the development process

Participants noted that culture pervades all aspects of human endeavour and is essential to define identity and ensure social survival. Culture also offers resources for people to realise their potential and feel valued. Participants therefore stressed that:

At times, the debates were heated...



- Methods rooted in culture provide an essential means of encouraging participation and involving people in development and democratic governance.
- African cultures are often perceived and presented in a negative light; yet local and indigenous knowledge has potential to be harnessed for development.
- All should take responsibility for identifying practical ways to integrate cultural approaches to development, and to document and disseminate cultural identities and values.
- There are opportunities to engage the private sector in leveraging resources to support culture.

The 2005 UNESCO Convention and other policy issues

The assembly discussed the need for a speedy ratification by Commonwealth countries and for

the allocation of sufficient resources to implement relevant cultural policies. They also stressed the need to 'mainstream' our cultural identity into national development agenda.

Cultural industries

Participants noted that cultural industries have transformative potential. Each country has unique cultural resources that can be drawn on, and that can offer culturally different products to meet niche markets. There are also many social spin-offs from livelihoods which are innately creative.

Cultural and creative industries therefore have a key role to play in economic, social and human development, but there is a danger of solely defining them in terms of economic benefit, thus overlooking their inherent social and creative function.

After an intensive day and a half of plenary discussions, presentations and group work, the

centrality of culture in the Commonwealth was underlined. Culture, as one participant said, is *“where the vehicle of development hits the road, the wheels and rubber tyres without which we cannot move”*.

Workshop resolutions

Participants developed six resolutions to be presented to Commonwealth Governments (see box), which included urging them to ratify the 2005 UNESCO Convention and to meaningfully involve and support civil society in its implementation at all levels. Participants recommended that Commonwealth bodies support civil society to follow up, move forward and identify practical ways to make this ratification a reality and to ensure progress in its implementation before the next CPF in 2009.

Noting that culture is a driving force for people-centred development, participants also affirmed that culture and cultural diversity should become

one of the fundamental pillars of Commonwealth programmes and projects, alongside those relating to development and democracy.

Reflections

In retrospect, much about the workshop worked well. Participants had the opportunity to share experiences and perceptions of the role of culture in development across nationalities and contexts. They shared their aspirations to raise the profile of culture on international and national agendas, and collectively affirmed the need to work towards the ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention. The statement on culture produced during the workshop was included in the CPF Statement, for the first time.

But there were frustrations too. Culture remained a long way down the order of priorities, still struggling to catch the attention when competing with other pressing issues of the day. For example, culture was one of the issues that was squeezed out of the

civil society dialogue with Commonwealth Foreign Ministers at the conclusion of the CPF.

Culture could not be said to have been mainstreamed, being barely discussed in other CPF workshops. The Culture in Development workshop participants were mainly those already persuaded of the benefits of culture, mostly with a strong cultural background, with limited participation by individuals

from outside the culture sector. Culture needed to be both vertical – to have its own presence – and horizontal – to be embedded in workshops discussing issues such as the environment, gender and HIV and AIDS. Culture also needed to get its message across better. The use of the media was limited and not very effective.

These are all lessons for 2009 and beyond.



The following became part of the Kampala Statement presented to Commonwealth Heads of Governments:

Noting that culture in the CW is a driving force for people-centred development,

We call on Commonwealth Member States and CHOGM 2007 to:

1. *Recognise and promote awareness* that cultural diversity within and between member states is a fundamental pillar of the Commonwealth, alongside development and democracy;
2. *Create an enabling environment* to foster unity in diversity; ensure respectful dialogue between people with different identities and values within communities, regions, nation states and the Commonwealth; and *address* issues of conflict, social exclusion and marginalisation;
3. *Recognise and support the increasing role of* the creative industries, cultural heritage, and other forms of cultural creativity in contributing to economic development, while protecting creators' rights of ownership to enable local communities to realise their potential;
4. *Raise* the status and budgets of member government Ministries and Commonwealth bodies with a brief for gender, youth, culture and diversity, while ensuring that their programmes and actions are integrated into the work of all other departments.
5. *Support* greater Commonwealth level networking between culture ministers and senior officials, including civil society and the private sector; and
6. *Ratify* the UNESCO convention and meaningfully involve and support Civil Society in its implementation at national, regional and international levels, notably in the development and application of cultural policies and strategies.

3. How did we take the agenda forward in Uganda?

The experience of the CPF workshop in Kampala prompted civil society to take action on several fronts:

Advocacy on culture and development policy

The workshop helped participants realise, first of all, that those development initiatives that have taken the positive aspects of culture into account are often isolated and make limited reference to broader enabling policies. There is for instance only a limited overlap between traditional cultural institutions and key development actors, such as NGOs and local governments. A weak integration of traditional knowledge in development concepts, and vice-versa, for example in agriculture, environment protection, gender, conflict resolution, has often resulted in well intentioned but short-lived development initiatives.

Secondly, with more than a third of Uganda's population officially defined as surviving below the

'poverty line', creative energies are geared towards meeting immediate, basic survival needs. The workshop helped participants realise that developing our human potential through experimentation with innovative thinking, local science and technology is thus seldom given high priority in the public policy framework, and this has implications on sustained support for culture-related programmes.

Following the workshop, in the light of the thinking this had assisted, an opportunity arose for concerned civil society organisations to meet and lobby for changes in national policy when the Government launched a consultative process on Uganda's Five-Year Development Plan a few months after the CPF.

Civil society activists, representatives from traditional kingdoms and participants from faith-based organisations met and, while they recognised that Government had developed a national policy

Civil society's five priority proposals for Uganda's 2009-2013 National Development Plan, in relation to Culture and Development

1. "Mainstreaming" and resourcing culture in all development initiatives, including earmarking at least 1% of the national budget to developing the cultural sector (up from less than 0.1% currently).
2. Cultural heritage education and languages: training in local languages, cultural values, heritage education and awareness creation.
3. Knowledge generation and management: defining a national culture and agenda; documenting and publicising tangible and intangible heritage.
4. Cultural infrastructure and financing: promoting the necessary infrastructure – human, physical and financial - to revive and showcase heritage.
5. Legal and policy framework: updating, ratifying, and enforcing national and international policy and legal instruments for the promotion and conservation of tangible and intangible heritage.

on culture and made other efforts, these, in their view, remained too often piecemeal, expedient or low priority initiatives. Cultural infrastructure was, they concluded, decaying; laws obsolete; relevant international conventions not ratified. Tangible cultural

heritage is disappearing and there were fears that traditional knowledge and practices would be lost.

Participants therefore issued a set of proposals to government in relation to Culture and Development (*box*).

Use of culture and evidence-based examples to inform policy

In relation to the CPF recommendation to identify practical ways to integrate a cultural approach in development, a need to continue searching for, documenting and disseminating experiences that illustrate the significance of culture in practical development work was acknowledged. Research work on best practices and dissemination through the media and other fora within and across Uganda has proved useful to highlight how culture can constitute a pillar for development.

For example, a quarter of all Ugandans live in extreme poverty, a situation that has prompted Government to examine ways to introduce 'social protection' measures

for the poorest. These might, however, borrow much from elsewhere, without building on local traditions, which help explain why a fifth of Ugandan households currently look after an orphan, without any recourse to public funds. Research was therefore conducted on the interface between culture and 'traditional' social protection mechanisms (such as clans and community welfare groups). The study shows that social protection initiatives could usefully build on (rather than substitute for) these traditional solidarity values and mechanisms. Some mechanisms have indeed shown resilience, adaptability and a degree of inclusiveness that can provide opportunities for future growth.

The UNESCO Culture Convention

More recently civil society representatives met to review progress on Uganda's pledge to have the 2005 UNESCO Convention ratified.

The Convention, while so far not meeting objections as it winds its way through the approval process, is yet to be ratified by Government. There remain hopes that it will have done so by the time of the

next CPF. The meeting unanimously stated that *Uganda should ratify this Convention in order to safeguard her diverse cultural heritage. Ratification will not only come with financial benefits, but also create an opportunity for mainstreaming culture in sustainable economic development.* A press release was issued to this effect.

There remains much to be done.

More long term suggestions were made by civil society, including:

- Intensifying engagement with government and key stakeholders, using existing knowledge on 'culture in development', including 'domesticating' the Kampala Statement recommendations as advocacy tools. Influencing the Ministry of Finance was identified as particularly important in this respect. This would entail packaging messages in a way that can be appreciated by economists and ensuring that values and figures are understood concurrently.

The 2005 UNESCO Convention

- Reaffirms the importance of the link between culture and development, and supports action nationally and internationally to recognise the true value of this link.
- Protects and promotes the diversity of cultural expressions (including cultural activities, goods and services), so that they flourish and freely interact in a mutually beneficial manner.
- Encourages dialogue: between countries to ensure wider and balanced cultural exchanges; within countries for intercultural respect and a culture of peace.
- Strengthens international cooperation and partnerships to protect and promote the diversity of cultural expressions.
- Calls upon each state that ratifies to create an environment which encourages people to create, produce, distribute and have access to their cultural expressions; to pay attention to the special circumstances and needs of women and minority groups in accessing their diverse cultural expressions; to create public awareness on the importance of cultural diversity; and to incorporate culture into sustainable development
- Establishes a central role for civil society in the implementation of the Convention.
- Sets a new norm for preferential treatment to be given to cultural goods, services and practitioners from developing countries.

The Convention establishes an *International Fund for Cultural Diversity* open to public institutions, business enterprises, civil society organisations and individuals. This could be used to strengthen cultural industries; build capacity; support infrastructure and policy development; and conduct education and public awareness campaigns.

- The creation of a critical mass of actors within civil society who champion the promotion of culture in development, thereby creating space and occupying it rather than waiting for government to create opportunities or respond to civil society pressure
- These concerns also pointed to the need to carry out training in 'culture in development'

and developing the use of 'cultural audits' to engage and lobby politicians to take culture into account.

- The group also discussed the idea of centrally coordinated efforts to address some of these challenges, in the form of a National Trust, as well as advocating for mainstreaming culture in the school curriculum.

4. The aftermath of the CPF workshop in the Commonwealth

At the Commonwealth level, the outcomes of Kampala were taken seriously by the Commonwealth Foundation, in its capacity as the association's lead agency in culture. They can be seen to have informed the development and operation of the Foundation's Culture Programme. Civil society has, for example, been supported to encourage ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Culture Convention in the Caribbean and in the Asia-Pacific Rim. Since the 2007 CPF, five Commonwealth countries have ratified, and many report that they are close to doing so. Most notably, to follow up on the promptings of the 2007 CPF, the Foundation launched an extensive research and consultation project, with the aim of analysing and promoting some of the key connections between culture and development in a Commonwealth context.

This research, set out in the Commonwealth Foundation's 2008 report, *Putting Culture First*, notes that: "*The integration of culture into development*

approaches can reap rewards for the people of the Commonwealth... Development therefore cannot avoid exploring and addressing key questions about one of the very things that makes us human and which humans make: our cultures."

This observation is based on the recognition that "*Development approaches in their current form are increasingly being recognised as limited – and even flawed... As 2015, the target year for achieving the Millennium Development Goals approaches, there is little to suggest that the concerted efforts of the Commonwealth's global citizenry and governments are going to be enough... Through our failure to use creativity and cultural expression as a force for social justice, transformation and the articulation of human need, governments and development organisations may find that they are unwittingly letting down the very people in whose name they work."*

The Foundation's report, the first such at a Commonwealth level, takes as its starting point the proposition that culture is a fundamental component of sustainable development, and seeks to understand how civil society and government across the Commonwealth currently understand culture and development, and how better connections can be supported between the two (see box). The report acknowledges that culture has been widely used as a tool for promoting development and governance, and indeed the Commonwealth Foundation's earlier [Commonwealth Culture Toolkit](#) provides a number of examples of this. The report also recognises that the role of the creative industries in promoting economic development is increasingly being recognised. Yet it poses the fundamental question: 'How does 'culture' become **intrinsic** to development, rather than simply instrumental?'

"Putting Culture First" observes, "Rather than considering culture a luxury to be pursued only after other basic human needs have been met, there is an emerging sense in the Commonwealth that culture and cultural expression provide a foundation for the good society that development is supposed to strive towards". The report thus recognises that: "There have been an increasing number of calls from Commonwealth citizens, beginning at the Commonwealth People's Forum 2007 and amplified through the consultative process for "Putting Culture First", for the Commonwealth as a whole to make culture a bigger part of its development work. The Commonwealth simply cannot turn back".

The report's key conclusion centres on a deficit in political will and understanding that is preventing culture from becoming a more central part of development. To help address this, in 2009

the Commonwealth Foundation convened the Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development. The Group, headed by Baroness Young of Hornsey, an independent UK Peer with a lifelong background in culture, comprises 13 expert voices from all around the Commonwealth. During 2009 they have aimed to produce the first and definitive Commonwealth statement on the connection between culture and development, to be presented to Commonwealth governments and civil society at the Commonwealth Summit in Trinidad and Tobago. Over 40 external submissions from a wide range of stakeholders, both governmental and

non-governmental, were received by the Group, indicating that there is widespread and growing interest in the debate in Commonwealth countries. The statement is intended to offer a platform for advocacy, policy dialogue and change, and the basis for the Commonwealth Foundation's future work, as well as the development of new collaborative projects to take forward its recommendations. The statement will be supported by a number of case studies which shed light on some of the ways in which the connections between culture and development are being supported in practice in different Commonwealth contexts.

Connecting culture and development: excerpts from Putting Culture First



- 1. The creative economy and sustainable livelihoods:** There is a growing body of work that demonstrates the benefits that national economies can achieve through support for their creative industries.
- 2. Cultural policy and the 2005 UNESCO Convention:** The formation of good cultural policy can reap real benefits for a country's cultural sector, and for maintaining a diversity of cultural expressions. The 2005 UNESCO Convention reinforces civil society's calls for meaningful involvement in the initiation, design and implementation of cultural policy.
- 3. Culture as a tool for development:** The use of street theatre, radio or popular music can help communicate key health or governance messages. The use of cultural forms can help break down taboos. Culture can be a resource, with traditional knowledge supplementing and complementing other development techniques. Development practitioners are also increasingly realising the necessity of working with the grain of culture and within a cultural context if they are to reach new audiences that might otherwise be inaccessible.
- 4. Culture as a process for development:** Taking a cultural perspective to development interventions might however mean something more fundamental than using culture as a tool, such as nurturing a genuine respect and understanding for other cultures and worldviews.
- 5. Cultural expression and negotiating identities:** Support for a creative environment, in which people can hear voices from their own cultures, can help to build cohesive societies at ease with themselves. This can have a subsequent impact in limiting unwanted emigration of skilled workers, in reversing social disintegration, and in helping people to choose the aspects of their identity which they wish to emphasise.
- 6. Culture, crisis and expression:** in an environment that supports and values creativity, cultural civil society and creators can also act as a positive force to help societies resolve crises and come to terms with historical experiences. In periods of repression, cultural practitioners and creators can be agents for social change and justice.
- 7. Rights and culture:** Despite historical difficulties in progressing a debate on 'cultural rights', an urgent need is emerging at a Commonwealth level to discuss the place of culture in human rights frameworks, including the right to live within one's own culture, the right to hear different cultural voices, and the right to an environment that supports creativity.

5. How can the agenda be taken forward to the next CPF and beyond?

The next CPF will be held in Trinidad and Tobago in November 2009, on the same theme as the CHOGM: “*Partnering for a more equitable and sustainable future*”. Emphasis is placed on the need to develop new partnerships, which may include partnerships between countries and regions, between rich and poor, between different sectors (government, civil society and the private sector), interests, social groups and generations and, it should be clear, between those working in culture and those working in development, linking culture with other issues of the day, such as governance, democracy, prosperity and the environment. New partnerships are seen as a way to arrive at a future which is more sustainable and more just than is currently the case.

From Uganda: recommendations for the 2009 CPF

The representatives of Ugandan civil society organisations who were present at the last CPF propose the following:

- The creation of an international Commonwealth coalition on Culture in Development.
- Continuing the culture in development theme at a workshop at the next CPF, but strategically mainstreaming culture in the other workshops and meetings.
- Tracking progress on how many Commonwealth countries have ratified the UNESCO Convention.
- Generating further evidence-based knowledge on the value of culture in development (for instance in relation to governance, climate change and financing development).
- Using the CPF to lobby for increased national budget allocations for culture, with the countries represented seeking Commonwealth support to monitor progress on this at regular intervals.

The group also made several suggestions for future research and advocacy:

Research

It was suggested that a range of studies be carried out to better illustrate the significance and contribution of culture to development. This would entail unpacking the very concept of “culture in development” to gain conceptual clarity for those operating outside the culture sector. Areas for possible research included:

- Examining the economic value added of the creative industries and cultural heritage (and, where this research has already been conducted, disseminate the findings more widely)
- Exploring and sharing experiences of how Uganda uses traditional values and systems in an attempt to resolve conflict and their limitations, including exploring the role of traditional leaders and governance

- Exploring the cost of *not* using culture as a resource and not being culturally sensitive in development - beyond figures
- Examining trends of de-culturalisation and its implications; and what needs to be done in the light of this to restore the value of culture in development
- Exploring negative aspects of culture; and how these can be worked with and modified

Advocacy

The civil society group highlighted a need for more intensive advocacy and lobbying, especially targeting the “unconverted”, which necessitates the linkages between people working in culture and other sectors (such as education, governance, climate change, environment, education, health and disability issues) and to find ways to present emerging issues in relevant fora.

Efforts, the group felt, should also be made to mobilise more participants to form a critical mass to promote 'Culture in Development' within the Commonwealth - including partners from academia and religious institutions - with the proposed Commonwealth coalition on Culture in Development as a possible vehicle.

The broader Commonwealth perspective

The Commonwealth Foundation report "*Putting Culture First*" recommends that "*All government, civil society and private organisations concerned with culture and development in the 53 countries of the Commonwealth should begin serious dialogue at the national level on how recognition of culture's role can be integrated into approaches to development (...) government, civil society and donors should incorporate a cultural perspective into their approaches to development, and this commitment should be backed up by resources*". Political will should be built at all levels for the case that cultural expression should be a central

pillar in approaches towards development.

In addition, *Putting Culture First* made a number of other recommendations for the Commonwealth which are forming the basis for follow-up (*box*).

The Commonwealth Foundation is again ensuring that culture has a significant presence at the 2009 CPF, not least through the presence of members of the Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development, alongside others with a strong background in culture, in the CPF Assembly on Creativity and Innovation. At the same time, Group members and other participants will be encouraged to involve themselves, and embed aspects of culture, in the seven other Assemblies on issues of development, embracing topics such as the environment, the financial crisis, health and peace-building.

The 2007 Kampala Statement played a significant role in shaping the direction and the work programme of the Foundation, and its interactions

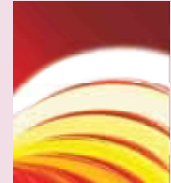
and joint working with key stakeholders. The 2009 Port of Spain Statement, with an anticipated heavier emphasis on the connections between culture and development, is expected to have a similar impact

In sum, *“much more needs to be done to pay proper tribute to the people and citizens of the*

Commonwealth who, day after day and often without acknowledgement, try to improve their societies through cultural expression, one step at a time. The time has now come for the Commonwealth to recognise and support the action its people are taking. By doing so, it can inspire many more to harness their creative efforts to make their world a better place”.

Key recommendations for the Commonwealth (edited excerpts from *Putting Culture First*)

1. The formation of a high-profile Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development to raise political awareness amongst decision-makers and to develop further practical guidance on how to make culture central to development.
2. Making culture and development a central and substantive focus for future Commonwealth People's Forums and the processes of civil society consultation and mobilisation that precede them.
3. Encourage, fund, carry out and widely disseminate further evidence-based research, indicating culture's effect on, for example, economic growth and poverty, but also on different academic disciplines, and indices of human development which appreciate the importance of cultural expression and practice. Also research on the impact of current practice on the free movement and exchange of cultural practitioners, and the barriers that inhibit this, and support advocacy for the development of common standards in this regard. This should inform the Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development, and have an advocacy edge and could take the form of a series of accessible policy briefs to key policymakers.
4. Applying the research and policy recommendations, provide evidence and information on culture's role in development to key decision-makers and development practitioners in the Commonwealth. Information could be transferred through training courses, and supplemented by toolkits and training modules on incorporating a cultural perspective.
5. Create opportunities to test and apply the practical recommendations to be issued by the proposed Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development, such as through regionally based projects with particular thematic areas of focus, supported by network-building and targeted grant-giving by the Foundation. Learning generated from the implementation of the Group's practical guidelines would help to shape future Commonwealth priorities.
6. Recognise and publicise the work of Commonwealth artists and cultural practitioners, and continue to offer direct support and bring Commonwealth cultural expression to a wider audience.
7. Make greater efforts to work with other partners across the globe to recognise and maximise culture's role in development, including intergovernmental organisations, and CSOs, to learn and avoid duplication.
8. Encourage those carrying out work on the different connections between culture and development to come together under a global umbrella movement or coalition, bridging gaps between developed and developing countries, between civil society and government, and between the cultural and development sectors.





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