

## Mapping of "People's museums"

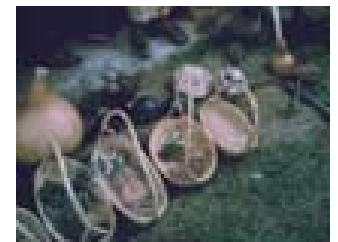


Cross-Cultural  
Foundation of Uganda.



## Summary Report

Kampala, February 2009.



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### **Acknowledgements**

The Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda wishes to express its thanks to all those who made this mapping study possible: the initiators of many exciting community initiatives to preserve local culture; the community development officers and other guides who helped us through our travels across the breadth and length of Uganda, as well as other informants and advisors. We also express our gratitude to the Uganda National Commission for UNESCO and UNESCO Nairobi office for supporting this exercise financially, morally and with much useful advice.

## 1. Background to the project

The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) is a registered, not-for-profit NGO, governed by a locally appointed Board of Trustees. The Foundation is dedicated to promoting culture as essential for equitable and sustainable development in Uganda.

Internally, culture is too often dismissed in Uganda as *dance and drama*, or as backward and irrelevant to contemporary development challenges. The forces of globalisation also often threaten Uganda's culture: its social fabric and values seem to be evolving in ways which many do not approve of. In spite of these influences, certain forms of Uganda's culture are very resilient but rarely exploited for development. Generally, development prescriptions neglect the country's cultural dimensions and rich diversity.

The Foundation therefore launched a "Cultural Heritage Programme" in 2007, with two main initiatives. One of these is entitled "Linking past and future: People's museums and cultural resource centres in Uganda."

Rather than focusing on Government museums (that are often divorced from ordinary people), this programme concerns people's museums or cultural resource centres - whose existence is less well known, but where an attempt has been made by small local organisations or individuals to make a connection with the past and to make them locally accessible. In the course of the last couple of years, it had come to CCFU's knowledge that in some parts of the country a few individuals and communities had taken initial steps in protecting and reviving their culture through such means.

CCFU is keen to support these efforts, as a means to harness cultural specificity and diversity for development and to strengthen Uganda's national cultural consciousness. The project therefore, as a first phase of implementation, aimed at *identifying and documenting local initiatives to establish and maintain museums/cultural resources centres*.

The project was supported by UNESCO, in conjunction with an initiative by the Department of Antiquities and Museums to map Uganda's intangible and tangible cultural and natural heritage.

## 2. The project implementation process

The project was implemented over a period of 7 months, from May to December 2008, with the following main steps:

**a. Preparation.** As soon as UNESCO's support for this initiative was ascertained, the CCFU team set to design an implementation plan and to prepare its field instrument. These were communicated to the UNESCO regional office in Nairobi and to the

Uganda National Commission for UNESCO offices in Kampala. Useful feedback was received.

**b. Developing selection criteria.** Developing selection criteria was an iterative process. Ultimately, the initiatives that were inventoried had to exhibit the following criteria:

- Being a private initiative (by a group, individual, enterprise, NGO, etc.) Public museums were therefore not inventoried.
- Having been established for the primary purpose of exhibiting cultural or historical resources, and with a connection with development concerns/issues or aspirations. (This excluded craft shops, spirit mediums, and the like)
- Having made at least a first step in constituting a collection (artefacts, documents, etc.). Proposed initiatives were therefore excluded.
- A willingness to share the collection with the public (a collection with only private access was therefore not considered)

**c. Publicising the initiative.** CCFU publicised the mapping initiative through various means that included:

- A press announcement (also publicising the initiative of the Department of Museums, published in the main national daily newspaper, the *New Vision*)
- Radio announcements, using a local FM station
- Letters to all community development officers in the country
- Letters and telephone calls to other potentially interested individuals
- Developing and distributing a leaflet on the programme (see Annex).
- One to one discussions with selected initiators / resource persons

**d. Developing an interview guide and piloting.** CCFU developed an interview guide, used for all site visits. This included sections on:

- Basic information (location, name, contact person)
- The history of the initiative and its objectives
- The collection; items on display, in store
- Management and ownership
- Successes recorded, as well as major constraints
- Sustainability, visitors, income and expenditure.

The CCFU team conducted some preliminary site visits to two accessible sites to test the instrument and adjusted it accordingly.

**e. Fieldwork preparation.** All field visits were prepared through telephone interviews with local contact persons to establish the relevance of each initiative and to map out an itinerary. Districts where a possible initiative was located were highlighted for a visit, community development officers and other resource persons who expressed an interest and volunteered relevant experience were also mapped. Districts from where no useful information was forthcoming were excluded.

**f. Fieldwork.** The mapping exercise was conducted in the period September to December 2008. Field work consisted of three one-week visits (for the Western,

Northern and Eastern regions), while initiatives in the central region were visited through a series of day trips. In all cases, meetings were held with Community Development officials or other resource persons, with the initiators of the community 'museums' and a photographic record taken.

- The Western Uganda trip covered the districts of Masaka, Mbarara, Kabale, Kabarole, Isingiro, Kasese and Kibaale. Altogether 22 initiatives and/or contacts were visited in these districts.
- The Northern Uganda trip covered the districts of Nebbi, Arua, Gulu, Lira, Masindi, and Hoima. Sixteen initiatives/contacts were visited in this region.
- The Eastern Uganda trip covered the districts of Moroto, Mbale, Namutumba, Jinja and Mukono. Nine initiatives/contacts were visited in these districts
- The mapping exercise in the central region (Kampala and environs) enabled the team to visit 7 initiatives and contacts.

Not all initiatives visited met the criteria set (see Section 5 below).

**g. Review meetings.** Three preparatory and review meetings were held between the Uganda Commission for UNESCO, the Department of Museums and CCFU, to plan the process, and review emerging results.

### **3. Some observations on the process**

- The team was challenged by the concept of "people's museums". Many local contact persons referred us to initiatives that did not fall into the remit of the exercise (e.g. traditional healers' shrines).
- The CDOs, thought at first to represent a key resource to orient the team in the field, did not everywhere live up to expectations. The 'culture' dimension of their work is not often prominent (compared to, say, adult education or HIV-related issues).
- Time and money proved to be a critical constraint, in relation to the magnitude of the exercise. Differences in timing also did not allow for joint field work to take place with the National Museum team.
- Nevertheless a good number of initiatives have been visited, much of the country has been "covered" and the interviews proved in many cases to be both relevant and interesting.

### **4. Main conclusions arising from the mapping exercise**

**a. Initiatives are in existence** The field work yielded considerable information as to the existence of initiatives that met the criteria set. The team was able to establish two categories of people's museums:

- Thirteen initiatives that could be described as established

- Ten initiatives that were either dormant or with potential for future development.
- Other initiatives of a more personal nature

The first two categories are enumerated in the Table below:

<b>A. Established initiatives</b>		<b>Location (district)</b>
1	African Research & Documentation Centre, Nkozi University: African artefacts, collection of documents – Africana.	Masaka/Nkozi
2	African Village Museum: personal collection of traditional and historical items (Africa).	Hoima
3	Bukonzo Cultural Association: collection of Kikonzo artefacts	Kasese
4	Kikonzo Language and Culture: collection of literature in Lukonzo	Kasese
5	Bunyoro Kingdom Museum: regalia of Bunyoro Kingdom	Hoima
6	Cultural Assets Centre (Uganda Rural Development Training): Bunyoro collection of artefacts, audio, folklore	Kagadi
7	Cultural Research Centre (Jinja Diocese Development Organisation): literature and artefacts of Busoga culture	Jinja
8	Edirisa: sample Kikiga traditional hut and shrine, fully furnished	Kabale
9	Human Rights Focus - Peace Museum: traditional artefacts, some related to conflict and peace (Acholi).	Gulu
10	Isingiro Women's group: itinerant group; traditional Ankole artefacts	Isingiro
11	Karamoja Women's Cultural Group: Karamoja artefacts	Moroto
12	Kawere African Museum: artefacts on Uganda history, Kingdoms, plus others.	Kampala
13	Koogere Community Museum Programme, Engabu za Tooro: Tooro artefacts	Fort Portal
<b>B. Potential initiatives</b>		
14	Acholi Cultural Foundation	Gulu
15	Busoga Kingdom	Jinja
16	Butambala Heritage Centre of Civilisation Ssana Walukagga Ltd	Mpigi
17	Frances Akello / Emorimor Institution	Soroti
18	International Institute of Alternative and Complementary Medicine	Kampala
20	Lango Cultural Foundation Cultural Centre	Lira
21	Mawokota Heritage Centre of Civilisation (PROMETRA)	Mpigi
22	Nkore Cultural Heritage Village Project	Mbarara
23	United Socio-Economic and Cultural Organisation	Pallisa
24	War child Holland	Gulu

**b. Objective, thematic focus and collections** Where the initiators set out specifically to promote their culture, the cases are strong and well demonstrated. In practically all initiatives visited<sup>1</sup>, the focus is on ethnic culture and on the preservation of culture for culture's sake rather than, say, for tourism. In some cases, the impact of the war on the communities' interest in culture is reflected: there is a desire to capture what has been lost as a result of war, especially for the generations whose experience has been mainly in internally displaced camps.

<sup>1</sup> With the exception of the "War Child Holland" initiative, although this might not be sustained beyond the programme horizon of this international NGO in Gulu district.

In spite of this, many of the collections are of items without a strong thematic focus (e.g. utensils, clothing, tools, etc.); there is often “breadth”, rather than “depth” in the collections. This raises a question as to how broad should the theme(s) of the museum be and how this affects relevance, especially to local communities, if the theme is very general.

The size of the collections varies: some of the collections are very diverse and contain hundreds of items of varying interest, age and rarity. Other collections consist of a handful of items only. Most of the initiators adhere to a traditional concept of museum – with the ‘living’ aspect absent; they also often have a vision connected to the immediate environment and relevance to it. There may be need to encourage some initiators who have potential but restricted vision and conceptualisation to develop clear concepts for their museums.

**b. Geographical distribution** Genuine attempts to preserve culture by individuals and organisations in the form of collections were found in all parts of Uganda. Altogether 20-odd such initiatives met the minimum criteria set by the CCFU team. These initiatives are better established, however, in Western and Central Uganda than elsewhere in the country, possibly for two major reasons:

- In Northern and Eastern Uganda, vast areas have been affected by war and displacement. This has not only put immediate survival needs at the forefront, it has also led to a breakdown of cultural norms and values, especially among the younger generation. A large section of population have spent most of their lives in camps, know less than before about traditional practices and values, and have grown accustomed to a ‘new’, monetised culture. The relevance of museums in such areas links to the themes related to life before or during the war.
- In the central and Western regions, several initiatives benefit from the growing tourism trade, from relatively developed infrastructure and from the proximity of expanding urban centres.

**c. Initiators and ownership** A range of “owners” were found: from the traditional NGO (whose “museum activity” is usually a part of their overall programme work), to individuals, community groups and companies. In almost all instances, the founder of the collection was still the person-in-charge. Most (but not all) initiatives are male dominated.

**d. Marketing and public access** In all cases, collections are said to be open to the public. Exhibitions (including participation in events organised by third parties) are resorted to in several cases, as these tend to attract a wider audience than static collections.

The degree of openness to the public differs. Thus, collections held by traditional institutions are viewed on request, managed by an official from the kingdom and therefore not opened for public viewing on a daily basis, except during special ceremonial days (e.g. the Moon celebration in Bunyoro or on official visits to the king in Alur).

With the exception of one initiative in Kabale (Edirisa), these initiatives are hardly known beyond their immediate locality

**e. Sustainability, income and expenditure** Though attempts are made to generate income (such as through participation in exhibitions and charging an entrance fee), the museums visited gather little income and often rely on the initiators' voluntary contributions. Where the initiators are awaiting external support, these have rarely been successful.

Limited income results in poorly kept premises and collections. Often, members of the neighbouring community have preserved items but are not willing to donate items insisting on payment, making the acquisition of items challenging in most cases.

A community connection is an important aspect of the museums; enhancing involvement, commitment and ownership of the initiatives (e.g. donations to the collection) has been successfully harnessed in some cases.

The sustainability of several of the initiatives visited is open to question, given the limited opportunities for raising incomes directly through the museum. Other income sources often need to be developed to finance the management of the museum, as voluntary contribution may not be sustainable in the long run. Such alternatives may include a crafts shop, literature, music, dance and drama etc). A business plan would be useful to make several of these initiatives viable.

**f. Challenges** In addition to the challenges mentioned above, the following have emerged

- Limited marketing, publicity and income generation skills. The “reach” of many of the initiatives visited needs to be broadened.
- Management of the collection, including focus, presentation, storage, labelling and the challenge of physically preserving artefacts (rodents, insects, mould, as well as theft). There is limited recording, with reliance on the fragmentary memories of elderly people
- Legal protection – land titles, licences, registration etc
- Infrastructure – space for display
- Isolation (no networking at present between these different initiatives, and with external sources of information and support; risk of duplication in some areas)
- Coordination – learn about each other in the same region (risk of duplication)

**g. Possible future forms of support** The mapping exercise has highlighted forms of support that could usefully be availed to the initiators of people's museums<sup>2</sup>. These can be clustered in the following three main areas:

- Museum management and governance: capacity building/training in helping initiators to develop their museum's focus; income generating skills and business plan development; research and documentation skills; financial

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<sup>2</sup> CCFU is currently mobilising resources for a two-year support programme for selected people's museums in Uganda.

management; public relations and marketing; curating skills (including storage and presentation).

Other forms of support might include help to establish an advisory or governance structure (if a museum is not already part of an institution) and community involvement.

- Documentation, publicity and marketing: catalogues and leaflets for individual museums; trail of community museums and booklet on community museums, website and link on website of Ministry of Tourism.
- Linking and networking: constitution of a peer learning group; establish a secretariat function providing services – information and communication services for people’s museums in Uganda; linkage with the International National Trusts’ Organisation, link with CCFU support group.

CCFU may need to develop an approach to encourage people who are not part of the existing museums, or are trying to establish fledgling initiatives to become involved, through outreach activities.

## 5. Appendix: Programme leaflet



### Cultural Heritage Programme

Culture is ever changing and provides essential reference points for ourselves and to inform how we relate with others. Our culture heritage is however quickly being eroded by internal and external factors. We for instance can everywhere notice the destruction of monuments, and the rapid loss of knowledge held by older people because these are not recognized as valuable resources. CCFU therefore seeks to:

*Link past and future through people's museums and cultural resource centres.*

It has come to our knowledge that in some parts of the country individuals and communities have taken initial steps in protecting and reviving their culture. CCFU is keen to support these efforts and has started to identify emerging "people's museums" and other initiatives to preserve culture, especially in cases where a connection has been made between past and present challenges.

Currently, CCFU, with financial support from UNESCO, and in collaboration with the Government's Department of Museums and Antiquities, is mapping local peoples' and communities initiatives to preserve and develop their culture throughout the country.

These are initiatives by an individual, family or community to elements of the local culture such as a collection of artefacts, collection of stories, proverbs, collection of documents, elements of the natural environment, oral history, inventory of skills, other forms of indigenous knowledge. Such a museum therefore need not be an elaborate structure. It may be a small collection kept privately

The aim of this mapping exercise is in part to identify the most appropriate strategies for future support.



### What is the Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda?

We are a registered, not-for-profit non-governmental organisation, governed by a locally appointed Board of Trustees.

Our Foundation is dedicated to promoting culture as essential for equitable and sustainable development in our country.

We define culture as a constantly changing set of values, identities, traditions and aspirations that govern the way we relate as individuals, communities and nations.

Culture 'goes deep': it goes to the heart of any society. It is central to our well-being and to defining the ideal society we seek. We believe that the positive aspects of culture can be harnessed to bring about social and economic transformation, and help us express our collective heritage and identity.

The Foundation acts as a catalyst to promote an understanding of development, as seen through 'cultural lenses', through three main interventions:

- "Culture in Development" programme
- Cultural Heritage programme
- Cross-cultural training and brokerage



### How to contact us

We can be contacted on e-mail: [ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug](mailto:ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug) or by phone on 0312 294675. Our offices are in Kampala, National Theatre building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Or visit our website: [www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug](http://www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug)