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Development, culture and the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

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Article published in the 2nd report of Agenda 21 for culture:
Culture, local governments and Millennium Development Goals



Ajuntament de Barcelona
Barcelona Cultura



United Cities and Local Governments
Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis
Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos

Development, culture and the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

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Recognition of cultural diversity and enhancement of opportunities to broaden cultural liberties are a key part and essential goal of development policies. This was expressly recognised by the UNDP - United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report for 2004, when for the first time it included a discussion of the right to diversity and cultural identity as a human right.

Culture is on the development agenda. Cultural cooperation has a measurable impact in terms of improving people's quality of life. There is still some way to go in deepening and making use of all the potential in the relationship between culture and development. But there are no grounds for the old clichés about the intangibility of the benefits of this relation. In any comprehensive vision of the struggle against poverty, it would be wrong to ignore the direct link with exclusion on cultural grounds as one of its causes. It is in turn a mistake to underestimate or not use to the full the possibilities offered by cultural policies and the added value of cultural actions as a major contribution towards driving human development.

There is still some way to go in deepening and making use of all the potential in the relationship between culture and development.

Following in the footsteps of many other authors, I shall here try to go a little deeper into the strengthening of this relationship between development and culture by highlighting the not always express but nonetheless perceptible and valuable presence of culture in the Millennium Declaration. I shall also try to show that this relevance already has an important practical application in programme instruments that are directly linked to achieving its Goals and Targets. They include the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund Spain – United Nations, which contains a strong budget commitment to the utility and significance of cultural interventions for development, without fearing innovation and experience-based improvement.

A preliminary approach to these issues makes it necessary to ask what definition of poverty is to be used, and in which development model culture can play an essential role and cultural cooperation can fulfil its potential.

Poverty does not allow for a simple definition. It is clear that a person is poor when they do not achieve a certain level of income or do not have stable and sufficient access to the foodstuffs required for subsistence. Nonetheless, poverty also exists when gender, ethnicity or the absence of channels for participation in public spaces constitute factors for discrimination and economic and social exclusion as well as unequal treatment; or when geographical or language barriers impede access to basic services in water supply, sewerage, health and education. It would seem more accurate to say that a person is poor when they lack something essential for realising themselves as a human being and hence are in a situation of vulnerability; when they are subject to the absence or limitation of rights and opportunities either individually or collectively, in the present or with a deferred impact in the future.

In any comprehensive vision of the struggle against poverty, it would be wrong to ignore the direct link with exclusion on cultural grounds as one of its causes.

In consonance with these multiple faces of poverty, and in line with the argument of Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen, there is an individual and collective right to human development which is realised by increasing the political, economic, social and cultural opportunities and abilities of individuals and peoples to achieve and sustain a life with dignity. This multidimensional vision of development, and the solidarity required to attain it, need to have intergenerational reach through the conservation of the environment and be founded on inclusion and dialogue, striving to preserve global public goods such as peace, freedom, security and respect for cultural diversity.

Human beings play an active role in development and they exercise rights and have duties. Governments and social actors are correlatively obliged to guarantee, protect and foster these rights and respond by making an unqualified contribution to the globalisation of solidarity and tackling the causes of poverty. In contrast to the failure of economics-based policies which relied on general access to higher levels of development and the logic of growth in national and individual incomes to reduce inequality, it is clear that making headway with this other model of existence and coexistence entails maintaining complementary international, national and local public policies geared towards the various fields and goals of development over time. These will include governmental and non-governmental efforts to achieve hoped for results at each stage of medium- and long-term processes.

There is also a need to define that agenda of minimum expected results for each stage in order to guarantee a common denominator in the orientation of policies and resources, together with a joint review of general progress in development for people stemming from the impact of actions taken. Hence the fundamental reference value of the development agenda, which many of us conferred on the Millennium Declaration as it provided a clear framework of measurable goals.

Let us now turn back to culture. In a way similar to UNESCO's definition (1982), we might call it "the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group [and that] includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs". Respect for the right to preserve and manifest this identity is a necessary condition and forms part of this global vision of development.

Development does not call for homogenisation but rather the inclusion of respect for cultural diversity in public policy and its free expression and exercise balanced against the exercise of other personal rights, together with recognition of the existence of other cultures and of the value of dialogue and coexistence with them. In practical terms, any cooperation intervention for development which disregards the beneficiaries' commitment to ownership and dispenses with the methods and codes with which they identify would be neither feasible nor sustainable.

It is equally important to emphasize that fact that policies and actions geared towards fostering mutual knowledge and cultural exchanges are a determining factor in preventing social conflict and wars or in restoring coexistence after them, and hence they weave a peace culture that is essential for development.

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The institutional strengthening of cultural policy and cultural management are also vital. Stress can be placed on their orientation towards ensuring universal access to cultural goods and services, as it helps to create a critical spirit and opens up key participatory options to shape the responsible conscience of individuals and groups and further social cohesion.

Alongside these "capital gains" of peace and social cohesion, and as has been pointed out by Professor Alfons Martinell (*Quorum*, Spring 2007), it is worthwhile highlighting, without any pretension to being exhaustive, other points of added value brought by culture which aid in achieving goals in other development sector policies and attaining the Millennium Goals and Targets. I shall thus mention at least four areas in which culture makes a direct contribution to development:

1. The added value culture brings to economics through generating income from creativity with a direct impact on raising income levels and the generation of decent jobs for young people and women (MDG 1, 3 and 8).
2. The added value culture brings to social cohesion through enhanced access and sustainable use of public spaces and cultural and natural heritage that results from urban regeneration schemes led by public institutions.

The effect on urban and country planning can be demonstrated as culture drives the adoption of measures which cut down on environmental impact or foster the development of basic services and projects for decent housing (MDG 7). The gender impact of these actions is obvious as they expand inclusive public spaces for women and help to reduce violence.

Also far from negligible are the rise in economic activity and the consequent increase in income that is brought about by such regeneration schemes (MDG 1 and 8).

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3. The indirect impact on the increase in cultural tourism (as long as it is environmentally sustainable), which entails the generation of income and jobs and greater opportunities for young people and women (MDG 1, 3 and 8).
 4. The added value culture brings to building a participatory community that can exercise rights and benefit from basic social services through informal education and through access to new technology via cultural centres or alternative media outlets such as local radio and television stations (MDG 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8).

Development needs culture. As I pointed out at the start, this field needs specific budgets and programmes. International development cooperation policy needs to give rise to specific instruments such as the one described below.

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund

The Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (the MDGF) was set up under the terms of an agreement signed in December 2006 by the Spanish government and the United Nations, represented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which acts as its administrator. The Fund seeks to help achieve the Millennium Goals by reinforcing local development leadership and ensuring quality in its cooperation interventions and the involvement of public and private actors in accordance with the principles of the Millennium and Paris Declarations and the Accra Agenda.

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The Fund operates at the country level and its actions come under National Development Plans. The process begins with a public call for Joint Programmes backed by the United Nations System Resident Coordinator and the advocacy of the national government. There are 59 eligible countries and eight thematic windows:

- Gender equality and women's empowerment
- Environment and climate change
- Culture and development
- Economic governance
- Youth, employment and migration
- Conflict prevention and peacebuilding
- Childhood, food security and nutrition
- Development and the private sector

Terms of reference are drawn up for each window to guide the bids, which are assessed on technical grounds by a committee of twelve experts made up of six independent professionals and six UN staff members. The committee is coordinated by a Director from one of the agencies most closely linked to the window concerned. So far \$700 million has been awarded to 129 Joint Programmes in 49 countries.

Both the terms of reference and the assessment criteria stress:

- A focus on results with evaluable impacts on enhancing the living conditions of meta groups.
- Strengthening public policy and civil society networks to foster social cohesion and growth to benefit the poor (the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's "growth pro poor" doctrine).
- Respect for cultural diversity and gender equality.
- Innovation.

Also required is coordination with the United Nations system that is consistent with the features of its reform as passed by the General Assembly. This means that the agencies which take part in a programme must give evidence of the added value of their contribution to the solution for the identified problem and work together.

The Fund committed to the vision of culture as an extremely effective practical instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The Fund committed to the vision of culture as an extremely effective practical instrument for achieving the Millennium Development Goals and opened up a specific Culture and Development window with \$95 million headed by UNESCO. This provided a wide range of work options in the field of the "capital gains" of culture referred to above and received 50 bids. 18 Joint Programmes were approved with a per programme allocation of between \$3 million and \$9 million over three years. These programmes were started up in 2007 and 2008 and will have annual monitoring whose results will condition the financial flow for the following year. It should be noted that work is being done in Africa, Latin America, Asia, Eastern Europe and Arab countries, and this will afford exchanges of experiences and knowledge management opportunities which will be extremely useful when it comes to building a best practice database.

TABLE 1. TITLES OF THE 18 JOINT PROGRAMMES IN THE “CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT” WINDOW
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	Title of the Joint Programme	Budget	Situation
Albania	Albania’s Cultural Transformation: From Isolation to Participation	3,260,000	Signed
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Improving Cultural Understanding in Bosnia and Herzegovina	8,000,000	Signed
Cambodia	Creative Industries Support Programme	3,300,000	Signed
China	The China Culture and Development Partnership Framework	6,000,000	Signed
Costa Rica	Intercultural Policies for social inclusion and generation of opportunities	4,800,000	Signed
Ecuador	Development and Cultural Diversity to reduce Poverty and promote Social Inclusion	5,500,000	Signed
Egypt	The Dahshur World Heritage Site Mobilization for Cultural Heritage for Community Development	3,095,000	Signed
Ethiopia	Harnessing Diversity for Sustainable Development and Social Change	5,000,000	Draft
Honduras	Creativity and cultural identity for local development	8,000,000	Signed
Mauritania	Heritage, tradition and creativity for sustainable development in Mauritania	7,500,000	Signed
Morocco	Cultural Heritage and the Creative Industries as a Vehicle for Development in Morocco	5,000,000	Signed
Mozambique	Strengthening cultural and creative industries and inclusive policies in Mozambique	5,000,000	Signed
Namibia	Sustainable Cultural Tourism in Namibia	6,000,000	Signed part 1 / part 2
Nicaragua	Cultural Recovery and Creative Productive Development on the Caribbean Coast of Nicaragua	8,486,000	Signed
Palestine Territory	Culture and Development in the occupied Palestinian Territory	3,000,000	Signed
Senegal	Promoting Initiatives and Cultural Industries in Senegal	6,500,000	Signed
Turkey	Alliances for Culture Tourism (ACT) in Eastern Anatolia	3,800,000	Signed
Uruguay	Strengthening Cultural Industries and improving access to the cultural goods and services of Uruguay	3,370,000	Signed
TOTAL – all the Joint Programmes		95,611,000	

Source: Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund, http://www.undp.org/mdgf/culture_jp.shtml

But even more important is the fact that culture is in all of the Fund's windows. They do not merely see cultural diversity as a reference point but rather include products, activities and budgets in programme formulation which are cultural cooperation for development. For instance, numerous programmes in the "Gender", "Youth, employment and migration" and "Private sector and development" windows involve actions designed to drive cultural and creative industries.

In addition windows such as "Economic governance" and "Environment and climate change" feature use of traditional mechanisms and techniques for participatory governance or for handling territory and natural resources. And of course in the "Conflict prevention and peacebuilding" window, peace culture and intercultural dialogue account for a large part of each Programme's components.

Culture is in all of the Fund's windows.

An exhaustive tour of the various lines of intervention which are provided for in the Joint Programmes is beyond the scope of this article, but I shall nevertheless set out below the most commonly used and significant ones:

- Orientation towards ethnic minorities and social groups in marginalised urban areas.
- Actions geared towards consolidating respect for diversity and cultural freedom by giving it legislative backing and including it in all governmental sector policies, combined with recognition for the role of culture in National Development Plans.
- Strengthening the State's cultural institutionalality compatible with decentralisation and social participation in management: systematisation of the information and statistics required for decision making, cultural management training for human capital and the inclusion of culture in local and community development plans are strategies used in many programmes.
- Fostering creativity and driving cultural and creative industries by enhancing product quality and ease of access to markets, with special attention paid to the participation of women and young people and geared towards "growth pro poor" and fair trade; that is to say with a redistributive vision of wealth.
- Recovery for social use of public space and tangible and intangible cultural and natural heritage linked in many cases to the development of environmentally sustainable cultural tourism.
- Setting up cultural facilities which foster social cohesion by enabling free cultural expression and access to knowledge; these facilities may be physical or virtual such as community radio stations or new communication technologies.

I would not wish to close without commenting on the measurement of progress in processes and results geared towards improving people's quality of life, in other words about the assessment mechanism which the Fund sees not as a final act but rather as part of the programme formulation and management cycle. That way building in lessons learnt and the configuration of the knowledge management system based on evidence supplied by the programmes and coordination processes for the actors who take part in them is continuous.

I will do that by quoting a paragraph from an assessment report on one of the bids submitted for the Culture and Development window: "It would seem possible to improve the detailed explanation of the link between the bid and the Millennium Goals and Targets. Likewise the analysis which justifies the intervention takes an excessively general approach, often with a focus separate from Culture and Development, when what is required is the provision of objective data and indicators that demonstrate the problem of weakness in terms of the institutionalisation of culture and the measurable benefit, in terms of development, of adopting a strategy designed to strengthen this institutionalisation. Or when it is a question of identifying the situation of people and groups for whom cultural exclusion is a cause of poverty and the enhancement of culture assets may generate substantial improvements in their lives.

"A more focussed analysis is called for that specifies potential beneficiaries, geographical action areas and the core lines which make it possible to describe the initial position and compare it with the expected outcomes of the Joint Programme by drawing up indicators that are not only quantitative for actions put in place but also qualitative and focussing on impact."

The renewal of a public square does not in itself impact on development. What matters to us, for instance, is to know whether this new space articulates marginalised areas and enables more children and women to have safer access to public spaces, or whether a craft market opportunity has been generated which enhances access for producers or traders. Running cultural management training workshops is not an end in itself; what is more significant is the impact of this training on preserving such-and-such heritage or its effect on the lives of users of a cultural centre.

It will be necessary to move forward in building specific indicators for measuring culture's impact on development, and in all probability the demands of the reality of the Fund will contribute to this. The accurate process of drawing up the programmes in a way similar to that set out above, together with the introduction of indicators we might term classic, provide a more reasonable starting point for assessing the efficacy of a culture and development intervention.

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- ISBN of the full report: 978-84-692-5704-3

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