

MDG-F contribution to the
Report of the Secretary General for the 2013 Annual Ministerial Review of the UN ECOSOC
Chapter IV

Even though cultural aspects are not explicitly referred to within the MDGs, the last decade has witnessed an increasing recognition of the links between cultural aspects and human development. The connection between culture and development was made explicit in the Outcome Document of the MDG Review Summit held at the UN General Assembly in September 2010, as well as 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 the 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 Joint Programmes funded under the MDG-F's Thematic Window on Culture and Development with a resource envelope of approximately US\$ 95 million 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 the place of culture 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.

On the basis of the evidence collected, six thematic areas of impact are identified, some of which can directly be related 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 simultaneously be related 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 include supporting productive capacity in the cultural industries and related sectors and fostering 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. Evidence has also been



found of the increase in income and employment generated by these interventions in several countries, particularly among 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

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 contents aimed at making education more attractive for disadvantaged groups are 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). Several studies have also been conducted in the context of the Thematic Window, most of them aimed at analysing cultural contents in existing educational programmes and seeking how 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 and 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 the preservation of environmental sustainability. Evidence of contributions to the achievement of MDG 7 (Ensure Environmental Sustainability) has been found in a few cases (Egypt, Senegal, Mozambique). It is worth noting that progress in this field may be particularly slow.

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 aim to address some of the hindrances that have traditionally prevented stronger links between the culture and development agendas and 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 and Herzegovina), the preservation of cultural identity (Occupied Palestinian Territories) and 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.

