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## Overview of the SDC's support to artistic and cultural expression in the South and the East in 2022



The Dancing/Talking Table project, North Macedonia, Photo credit: Dragan Perkovski, Interart Culture Center 2022/2023

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## 1. Introduction

This report details the SDC's support for artistic and cultural expression in the South and the East in 2022. It is based on the results of a survey gathering 2022 data that was carried out by the SDC's Peace, Governance and Equality Section / Culture and Development in spring 2023. Support for arts and culture in SDC partner countries is managed by SDC country representations in a decentralised way and there is no exhaustive overview of SDC-supported cultural activities worldwide. An initial survey was carried out in 2009, followed by further surveys in 2013 and 2018 that also addressed qualitative concerns.

The goals of these survey are to regularly paint a picture of the SDC's cultural engagement in partner countries and to track trends. Gaining an overview of how many and what kinds of cultural activities are implemented in partner countries allows us to coordinate the work in a more suitable and adapted way. In addition to quantitative data, the 2022 survey focused on the added value of the SDC's engagement in culture for SDC's work and on the interlinkages between culture and the other themes of the Peace, Governance and Equality Section.

## 2. Methodology

The survey is based on a questionnaire that collects both quantitative and qualitative information for each type of project (see box 2) on financial volume, types of activities, themes, artistic disciplines, fields of activities, value of cultural projects and perception of the SDC's work in the country or region, as well as interlinkages between culture and other themes of the Peace, Governance and Equality Section. The questionnaire was sent to all country representations (cooperation offices); a total of **34 country representations participated** and submitted 43 completed questionnaires:<sup>1</sup> **6 regional programmes, 10 country programmes** (long-term intervention, carried out in several multi-year phases), **21 representations provided information on 83 small-scale actions**,<sup>2</sup> **3 representations reported on projects** which are not targeted at culture, but in which **minor cultural activities are integrated**.<sup>3</sup> In addition, for the representations that did not participate in the survey, the information was provided via email or from the statistics tool Qlik Sense.

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<sup>1</sup> Individual forms were used for each of the above project types, and some of the representations submitted more than one form for different project types- In addition, 2 representations each reported twice for the same regional programme, 1 representation filled out two questionnaires for small actions, and 1 representation documented 2 country programmes in two questionnaires, because of a new initiative launched 2022.

<sup>2</sup> If several small actions were supported by a representation in 2022, they each summarised all the information in a questionnaire without going into detail.

<sup>3</sup> Of this project type, only the qualitative responses are included in this survey, partly because no information could be provided on the share of culture expenditure.

### Box 1: Principles of the SDC's cultural policy

The SDC is convinced that culture is a fundamental driver of sustainable development. The SDC's Cultural Policy of 2016 highlights the importance of supporting arts and culture in international cooperation. On the one hand, cultural rights are **human rights**. [Article 27 of the UDHR](#) states: "Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits." On the other hand, a vibrant and independent cultural sector is a **motor for social change**, promotes **freedom of expression and democratic participation**, and is the basis for a strong civil society. Artists expose abuses and stimulate debate and exchanges. Through various platforms for dialogue, artists help break down silos and foster **social cohesion**. Arts and culture, like a free press, must therefore be seen as **important components of a democratic society**. Furthermore, intercultural exchange and dialogue can form **the basis for peaceful coexistence by building trust between communities and promoting tolerance and solidarity**. Finally, arts and culture are an important **economic factor**; the creative industry is one of the most dynamic sectors worldwide.

The SDC supports local arts and culture sectors in partner countries through specific projects and programmes and earmarked funding. All forms of cultural expression are eligible. Funds are primarily used to build up knowledge, institutions and networks (as opposed to infrastructure).

According to the SDC's guiding principles, the geographic and thematic divisions are obliged to **allocate at least 1% of its total budget to the promotion of arts and culture**. Contributions are mainly managed locally, primarily by SDC offices in order to best adapt to local needs and realities. The SDC **prefers to support multi-year programmes rather than sporadic short-term projects**, as long-term projects are able to achieve more sustainable results. Whenever possible, SDC engagement at micro level (support for cultural projects) is combined with measures at macro level (improvement of the framework conditions for cultural expression, i.e. freedom of speech, access to culture and information, and funding).

In addition, the SDC runs a cultural programme in Switzerland with the aim of **facilitating access to audiences, cultural markets, capacity building, and professional networks** for artists from the South and East. This intervention is realised in cooperation with cultural partners in Switzerland and **strives to strengthen the cultural sector in the respective countries**.

The SDC's commitment to culture is **an important Swiss contribution to the implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions**.

### Box 2: Forms of the SDC's work in arts and culture (types of projects)

**Arts and culture programmes:** the term 'programme' refers to a long-term intervention, carried out in several multi-year phases. Programmes are based on a thorough strategic reflection (entry proposal and credit proposal). While programmes usually have a limited number of selected partners, they may retain a 'small action fund' component. They can be carried out at the level of one country (country programmes) or several countries (regional programmes).

**One-off activities (small actions):** the terms 'micro/small action' refers to one-off activities of limited duration. Small actions are managed by country representations using their global credit. The timeframe is limited to 18 months, not renewable. The upper financial limit is CHF 200,000 per country; most small actions in the field of arts and culture amount to between CHF 1,000 and 100,000. Small actions typically support artistic production and dissemination (a play, music or film festival, etc.).

**Projects spread out over several years that do not target culture, but do contain minor cultural activities.** Governance/Media projects are an example of this.

### 3. Results in figures

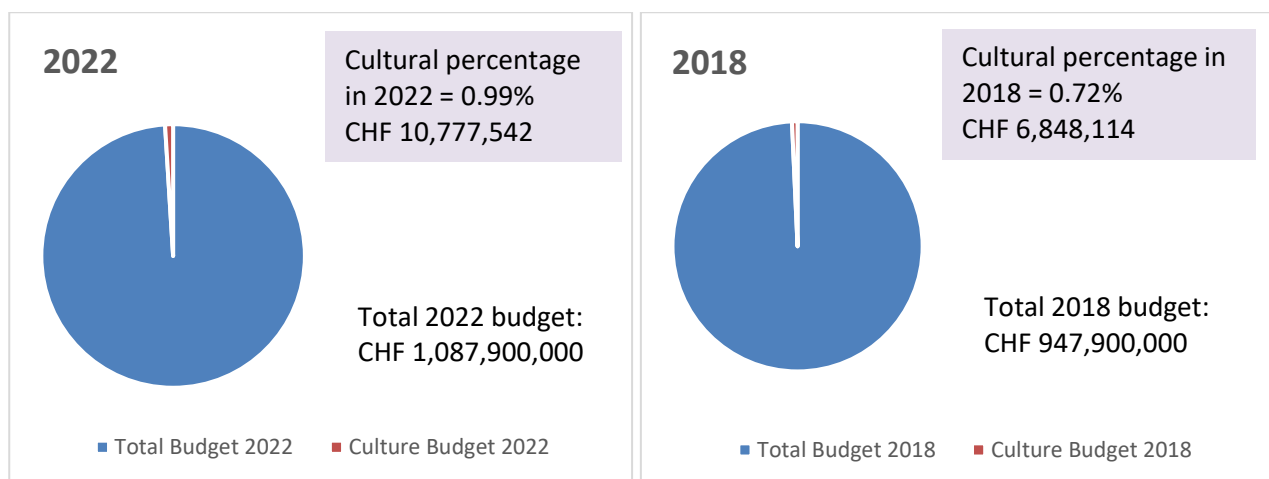
#### 3.1. Percentage of SDC budget allocated to arts and culture

In 2022, the SDC allocated a **total budget of CHF 10,777,542** for cultural activities in its partner countries and regions. This represents **0.99%** of the total operational budget (including regional budgets) of the SDC in 2022, i.e. **CHF 1,087,900,000**.<sup>4</sup> Accordingly, the SDC has nearly reached the benchmark of 1%.

Not all SDC partner countries implemented cultural projects in 2022 (see table 1).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the cultural budget did steadily increase over the years 2013–22, in line with increased support through strategic longer-term cultural programmes as opposed to small-scale actions.

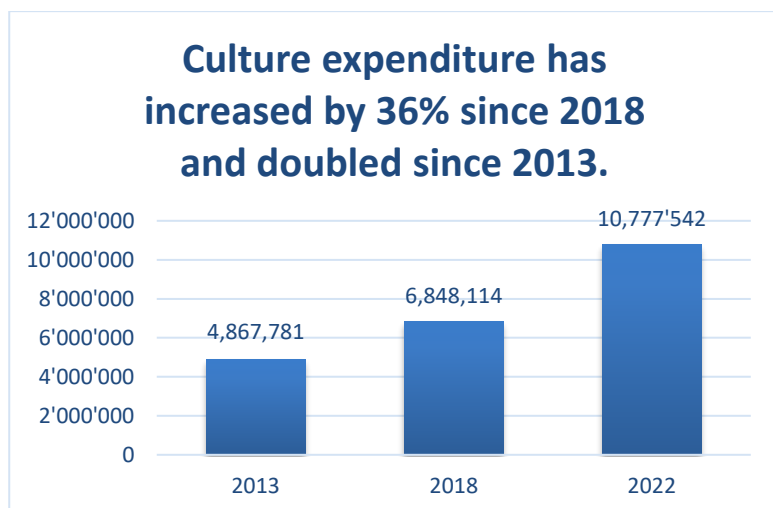
#### Figures 1 and 2:

The SDC nearly reached the benchmark of 1% in 2022. Comparing 2022 to 2018, the operational budget increased slightly, while the budget for arts and culture increased by 36%.



#### Figure 3:

Spending on cultural projects in the partner countries evolved as follows from 2013 to 2022:



<sup>4</sup> SDC expenditures, data as at 5.5.2023, Development Finance Statistics, SDC, 2022 SDC bilateral expenditures by country and field of activity: <https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/sdc/portrait/figures-statistics/sdc-expenditures-2009-2013.html>. The survey was limited to SDC partner countries (according to the list on the [SDC website](#)) and their respective budgets (including regional budgets).

<sup>5</sup> It must be taken into account that the 2022 budget was slightly higher due to COVID-19 budget shifts, as some of the project activities could not be implemented in 2020/2021 due to pandemic constraints and were postponed to 2022 (Regional programme North Africa).

### 3.2. Distribution by priority countries/regions

The following table presents the amounts of the budget spent on arts and culture in 2022:<sup>6</sup>

**Table 1:**

Continent	Country	Budget 2022	
Africa	Benin	85,909	
	Burkina Faso	610,000	
	Central African Republic <sup>*7</sup>	26,400	
	Chad	35,000	
	Great Lakes (regional): Rwanda, Burundi, DRC	1,376,918	
	Mali	239,333	
	Mozambique	347,923	
	Niger <sup>* **</sup>	130,895	
	North Africa (regional): Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya	1,500,000	
	Southern Africa (regional): Zimbabwe, Zambia	250,000	
	Tanzania	159,200	
	Latin America/Caribbean	Bolivia	184,644
		Haiti	500,000
Honduras		54,291	
Colombia		59,139	
Nicaragua		869,443	
Peru <sup>***8</sup>		62,000	
Central Asia		Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan (regional)	625,000
Asia	Bangladesh	200,000	
	Cambodia	41,850	
	Laos	96,187	
	Mongolia <sup>* **</sup>	336,538	
	Myanmar	409,473	
	Nepal	11,000	
	Middle East	Jordan	33,432
Lebanon		400,000	
occupied Palestinian territory		627,142	
Eastern Europe	Albania	90,000	
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	43,848	
	South Caucasus: Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia	274,000	
	Kosovo	286,600	
	North Macedonia	95,152	
	Moldova	125,800	
	Serbia	300,000	
	Ukraine	290,425	
<b>Total</b>		<b>10,777,542</b>	

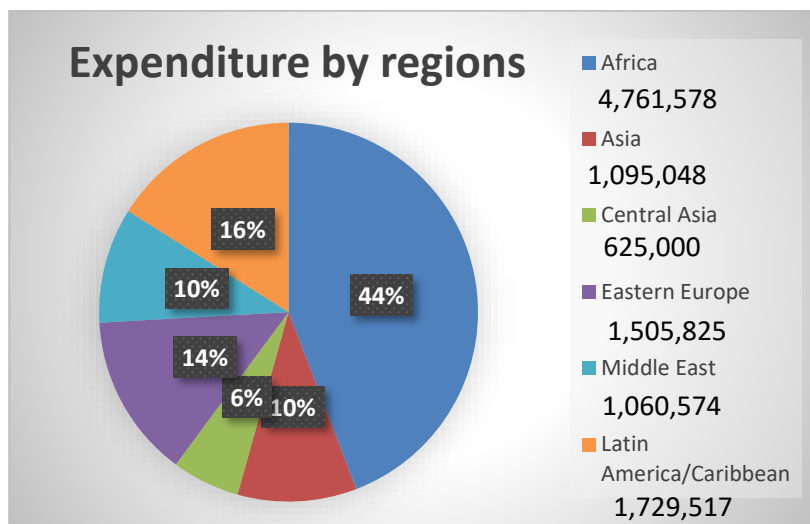
<sup>6</sup> None of the budget was spent in culture in 2022 in Eritrea, Iraq, Yemen, North Korea, Syria, Sudan, South Sudan or Afghanistan (according to the Qlik Sense statistics tool), nor in the Horn of Africa or Cuba – two locations where, however, a new project in the field of culture was confirmed in 2022.

<sup>7</sup> \*Qlik Sense, \*\*via e-mail.

<sup>8</sup> \*\*\*Peru: in the framework of the SDC's Global Programme.

**Figure 4:**

The following figure shows 2022 spending on culture by region (in CHF):



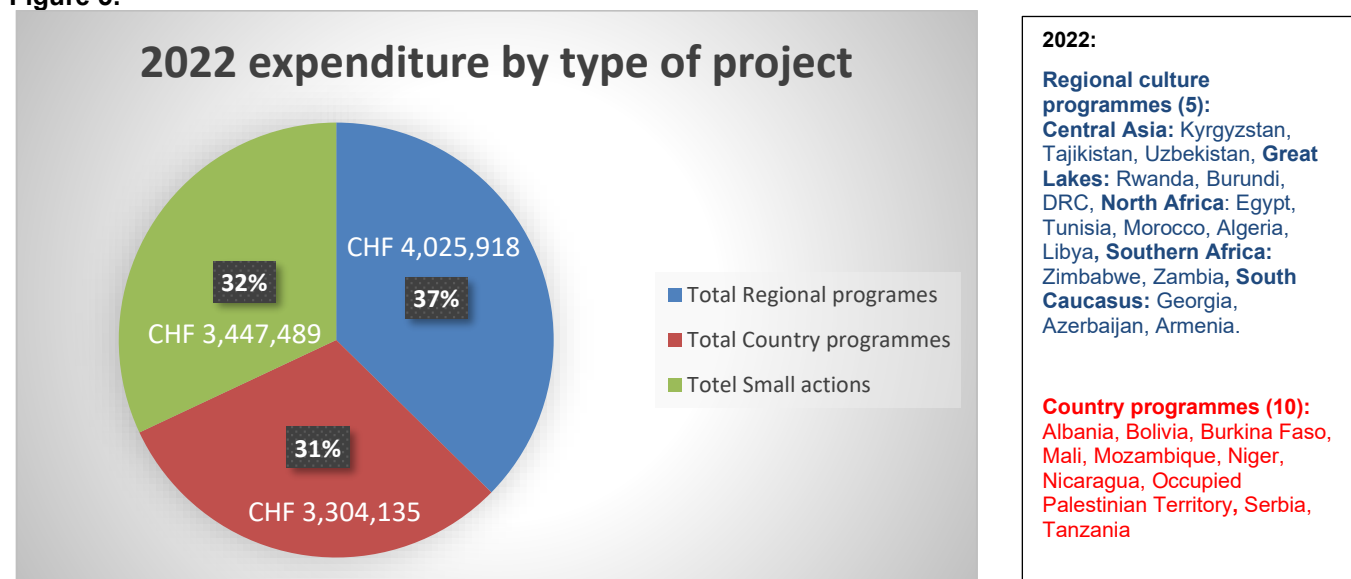
### 3.3. Distribution by type of project

In total, **5 regional cultural programmes, 10 country programmes and 102 small-scale actions were implemented in SDC partner countries in 2022** as opposed to 4 regional programmes and 7 country programmes in 2018.

In 2022, around **70% of the total budget was allocated to long-standing, strategic cultural programmes** as opposed to small-scale cultural actions (see figure 5), compared to only around half of the budget (53%) in 2018.

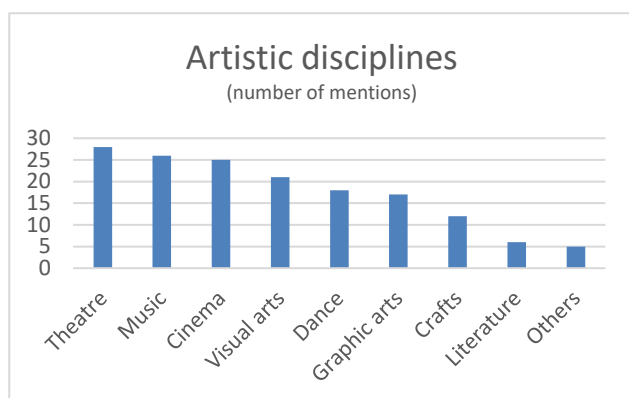
**The trend of supporting more strategic cultural programmes in partner countries continues in 2023;** the programmes already confirmed and currently in the early stages of implementation/development include one regional programme in the Horn of Africa<sup>9</sup> and three country programmes covering Cuba, North Macedonia and Bangladesh. In addition, Niger, Central Asia and Mozambique have developed new initiatives that will replace the previous programmes. The strategic cultural programmes (targeted at culture) are mostly allocated in or strongly linked with the priority areas of governance or human rights, depending on the priorities of the respective countries and cooperation strategies.

**Figure 5:**



<sup>9</sup> Regarding the regional programme in the Horn of Africa, offices in Kenya and Ethiopia participated in the 2022 survey, providing qualitative input and the entry proposal was approved in 2022. The programme is in its early stages; none of its budget was spent in 2022.

### 3.4. Distribution by artistic discipline (based on project-specific information)



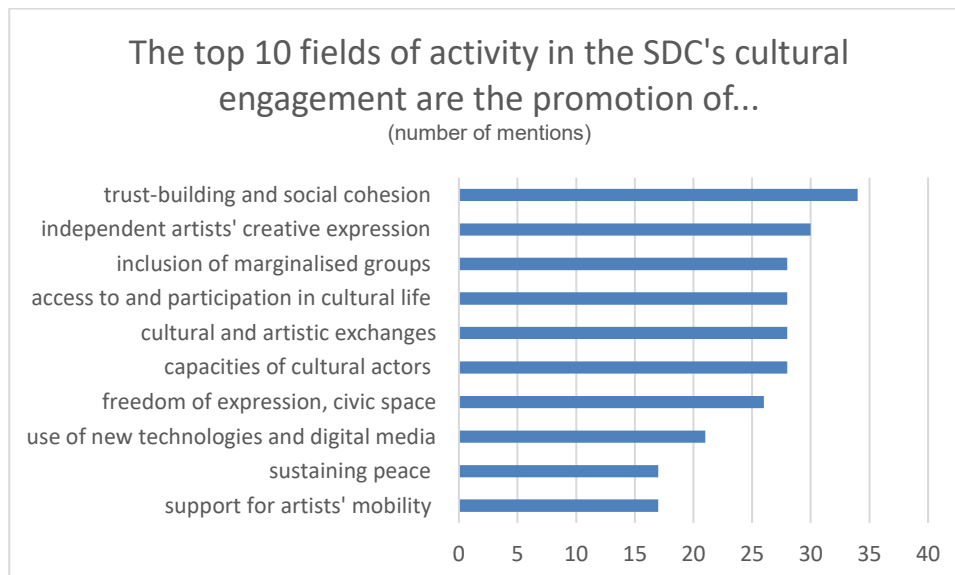
In regard to distribution based on project-specific information, theatre is at the top (28), followed by music (26), cinema (25), visual arts (21), dance (18), graphic arts (17), crafts (12) and literature (6). In addition, comedy (2), video gaming, circus, architecture and design were listed as other artistic disciplines. Multiple answers were possible.

## 4. Interlinkages of culture with peace, governance and equality

### 4.1. Distribution by field of activity

The fields of activity in which cultural projects take place provide insight into where arts and culture can be used most effectively. These fields have been formulated based on the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of 2005, with some additions to reflect the topics of our Peace, Governance and Equality Section. All of the 43 surveys completed contained one or more answers to this question (multiple answers were possible).

The interlinkages with the themes of governance, peace and leave-no-one-behind are obvious. As in the last survey of 2018, **the promotion of culture as an element of social cohesion is the number one field of activity in the SDC's cultural engagement** (34). The other nine top fields of activity show further interlinkages between the SDC's cultural engagement and the themes of peace, governance and gender equality: inclusion of marginalised groups (28), access to and participation in cultural life (28), promotion of freedom of expression, civic space (26) and promotion of sustaining peace (17).



### Overview of all results:

	Field of activity	Number of mentions
1	Promoting culture as <b>an element of trust-building and social cohesion</b>	34
2	Promoting <b>independent artists' creative expression</b>	30
3	<b>Strengthening the capacities</b> and human resources of artists and cultural institutions	28
4	<b>Cultural and artistic exchanges, promoting co-productions</b>	28
5	<b>Facilitating access</b> to and participation in cultural life	28
6	<b>Inclusion</b> of marginalised groups	28
7	<b>Strengthening freedom of expression, assembly and association</b> , and fundamental freedoms in general, as well as civic space and social accountability	26



8	Use of <b>new technologies</b> and digital media	21
9	Support for <b>artists' mobility</b>	17
10	Culture as a means for <b>sustaining peace</b> (conflict prevention, -transformation, peacebuilding or recovery)	17
11	Culture and the arts as a means to promote <b>the protection of the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples</b>	16
12	Support for the <b>creative industries</b> (employment and income, social protection for artists)	15
13	Advocacy for <b>better framework conditions</b> for the cultural sector and its actors	12
14	Creating <b>sustainable financial systems</b> that foster culture and development	12
15	<b>Cultural heritage</b>	12
16	Support for the <b>government's cultural policy</b>	9
17	Carrying out various <b>studies and surveys in the field of culture together with the government</b>	5
18	Strengthening <b>infrastructure</b>	5
19	Cultural <b>tourism</b>	5
20	Special <b>protection of culture and cultural property</b> in crisis situations	4
21	<b>Research</b> on culture and development	2

## 4.2. Gender equality

31 out of the 43 surveys completed indicated that their projects have a specific focus on gender. The focus on gender was specified by selecting one or more of the following potential answers:

Number of mentions	
<b>18</b>	Culture as a means of <b>breaking down harmful gender stereotypes, gender roles and behaviours and related social/cultural norms</b> , aiming at transformative change for greater gender equality
<b>17</b>	<b>Special focus on women/artists in cultural promotion</b> (capacity building, productions, works, infrastructure, access to finance, access to and use of digital tools, etc.)
<b>17</b>	<b>Awareness-raising concerning specific topics in the area of gender</b> (women's rights, gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health and rights, LGBTIQ+ ...)
<b>5</b>	<b>Others:</b> gender quota in projects, research publication on gender and culture, participation of female audiences

## 4.3. Leave no one behind

Of the 43 surveys completed, 28 indicated that their programme/small actions have a specific focus on inclusion of vulnerable and marginalised groups (leave no one behind). Cultural projects contribute to:

Number of mentions	
<b>24</b>	<b>Inclusion in artistic expression/performances/training</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>Inclusive access</b> to cultural events
<b>3</b>	<b>Others:</b> support for artistic groups with disabilities, music as a tool to contributing to reducing discrimination of minorities and increasing intercultural learning, raising the wider society's awareness of the needs of these groups

## 4.4. Governance

The survey shows that in contexts with political polarisation and where democratisation is under pressure, the SDC's cultural commitment provides opportunities in a number of ways:

- Providing space for freedom of expression and free assembly, that are in some contexts less controlled by the government compared to the traditional ones (e.g. media)
- Promoting space for critical thinking and diversity of opinion through an independent cultural sector and through diverse and plural voices
- Fostering dialogue, expressing community concerns, exchanges, discussions and debates on various topics such as democratic values, gender equality and human rights
- Creativity and innovation: Creating opportunities to find out new and innovative ways to address the SDC's topics.

## 4.5. Peace

The survey shows that the SDC's cultural commitment contributes to peaceful coexistence and social cohesion at different levels:

- Building bridges between people and communities, fostering social cohesion, tolerance, reconciliation and breaking down stereotypes
- Facilitating dialogue and exchanges on diverse – and sometimes difficult – topics
- Strengthening healing processes and resilience, and overcoming traumas
- Involving young people as agents of change and builders of a peaceful future through their creativity
- Promoting positive narratives and destroying historical clichés that fuel conflicts
- Giving people a sense of belonging

## 4.6. Success stories

In Burkina Faso, the programme has contributed to improving creative and dissemination capacities, decentralising cultural support, and taking gender and youth into account. It has helped to resolve the issues faced by cultural actors, such as access to funding, structuring and organising, training and professionalising actors, creating and disseminating quality cultural and artistic works, and educating citizens about good governance and the fight against impunity. The study (2009–22) counted 304 theatrical and cinematographic works created; 836 training courses organised for 7,582 actors, including 2,055 women; 570 young people trained; and 13,088,996 people attended performances/broadcasts of cultural productions, including 2,578,333 women.

Central Asia: A cultural centre based in Bishkek initiated a project on Art Leadership education. The project conducted a ToT for local cultural practitioners to prepare national trainers, who are now conducting several modules of Cultural Leadership training for participants from various regions of the country. A strong and lively network of eight trainers and around 100 beneficiaries, which continues to function after the project, is one of the successful results of the project. They exchange ideas, news and experiences, organise events together, and promote each other's events/activities, significantly increasing their outreach.

In North Macedonia, the Dancing/Talking Table project transforms the stage after the performance into a platform for discussion of gender-based and domestic violence. Moderators invite the audience to join the discussion and share thoughts, experiences or questions on these topics. The first performance ended with the audience engaged actively in a high-level discussion of gender-based and domestic violence.

In Colombia, a rural community, including demobilised people, reflected – through four community-produced "We are stories" documentaries – about the meaning of peacebuilding and the effects of war and violence. It was used as a collective reparation measure.

In Bangladesh, Switzerland has supported Nodi Rocks, a youth-oriented initiative whose aim is to use music to raise awareness of the impact of environmental and climate change on Bangladesh's rivers – and to inspire action in this area. The main target audience of this small action were youth and civil society. After producing seven river anthems, a mega concert was arranged with specific messages on river protection. 4,000 people, mainly university students, attended it. Following the concert, many youth groups took initiatives through schools and universities to raise awareness of the adverse effects of climate change on Bangladesh's rivers.

In Jordan, the Haya Cultural Centre will produce a video animation to be called Together We Can in order to raise awareness amongst the general public regarding the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities, with a focus on children.

## 5. Added value of cultural engagement for the SDC's work

The cultural sector and its actors make an important contribution to sustainable development, to peaceful coexistence, to social cohesion and to a strong civil society. In many contexts, Swiss engagement in culture is perceived in a very positive light. The responses to the survey demonstrate that there are multiple added values that the SDC's cultural engagement generates in the following areas:

- Contributing to social cohesion, bridge-building, solidarity and peace
- Addressing sensitive issues through art and providing spaces for interaction, dialogue and exchange
- Promoting freedom of expression
- Giving spaces and voices to vulnerable and marginalised groups
- Promoting hope and positive narratives

## 6. Challenges of cultural engagement for the SDC's work

Culture plays a central role in the success of sustainable development. However, working in the area of culture involves certain challenges, which the cooperation offices identified in the survey:

- Significant needs to strengthen the capacities of cultural actors, framework conditions, needs for funding
- State censorship of cultural actors and lack of freedom of expression of artists, persecution of cultural actors
- Need for security of spaces to enable an independent cultural sector
- Difficult access to culture for all (e.g. rural communities)
- Potential exacerbation of polarisation through culture (= cultural sensitivity) – assessing and applying the 'do no harm' principle in order to avoid deepening the social divide or exacerbating polarisation.

## 7. Conclusions

### The SDC's cultural engagement in partner countries in 2022:

- In 2022 the **cultural percentage made up 0.99% of the total operational budget of all SDC partner countries – an increase of 0.27% compared to 2018**. The expenses for arts and culture have increased by 36% since 2018 and doubled since 2013.
- There is a trend towards implementing more long-term, strategic and systemic cultural programmes. In 2022, around **70% of the total budget was allocated to long-term, strategic cultural programmes** (as opposed to small-scale cultural actions), compared to only around half of the budget (53%) in 2018. Moreover, one new regional and three new country programmes have been confirmed in 2023 so far.
- The strategic cultural programmes, i.e. the programmes that specifically target culture, are mostly allocated in or strongly linked with the priority areas of governance or human rights, depending on the priorities of the respective countries and cooperation programme.

### Interlinkages between culture and the topics peace, governance and equality:

- As the results of section four show, culture is strongly linked to the issues of peace, governance, gender equality and “leave-no-one-behind”.
- Especially now, with the global rise of authoritarianism and the consequent shrinking of civic space for the freedoms to assemble and to freely express opinions, the strengthening of cultural actors as civil society agents is particularly important. Cultural actors provide an inclusive space for dialogue as well as critical thinking and the promotion of democratic participation. Art tends to have some leeway, as artists address these critical issues not obviously, but with a certain ambiguity through metaphors, symbolism and imagery.
- Cultural engagement also makes an important contribution to peaceful coexistence; in particular, it can build bridges between people and communities, foster social cohesion, tolerance, reconciliation and break down stereotypes.
- Cultural projects can specifically promote women in their artistic activities as well as their access to cultural events and raise awareness of gender issues.
- It has to be taken into account that while arts and culture can make a crucial contribution to various development objectives, assessing and applying the 'do no harm' principle and conflict-sensitive project management approach (CSPM) is key, in order to avoid deepening the social divide and exacerbating polarisation.
- In addition, in politically polarised contexts where democratisation is under pressure and the freedom of expression is restricted, government control and restrictions can increase. Oppressive bureaucratic procedures can make it difficult for cultural organisations to maintain operations, and may even lead to their closure. In addition, there is the risk of cultural actors being persecuted.
- In particular, given the general lack of funding, there are significant needs to strengthen the capacities and framework conditions of cultural actors.

### The added value of the SDC's cultural engagement and how this work is perceived:

As underlined above, an independent cultural sector makes an important contribution to sustainable development, to peaceful coexistence, to social cohesion and to a strong civil society. Moreover, it can promote hope and positive narratives. Switzerland's long-term engagement in supporting local cultural sectors seems to be unique and appreciated in many contexts in the civic and non-governmental sector and with authorities. The SDC is perceived as a trustworthy and reliable donor. Various survey participants mentioned that this cultural engagement enables Switzerland to continue playing a solid role in policy dialogue in support of the sector and that Switzerland has a positive image and visibility thanks to its cultural support.