



OVERVIEW OF THE SDC'S SUPPORT FOR ARTISTIC AND CULTURAL EXPRESSION IN THE SOUTH AND THE EAST IN 2022

1. INTRODUCTION

This report outlines 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 data on 2022 that was carried out by the SDC's Peace, Governance and Equality Section/Culture and Development in spring 2023. Those results are compared to earlier surveys. 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. The goals of the survey are to 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 for more suitable and adapted coordination. In addition to quantitative data, the 2022 survey focused on the added value of the SDC's engagement in culture and on the interlinkages between culture and the other themes of the Peace, Governance and Equality Section (PGE).

2. METHODOLOGY

The survey is based on a questionnaire collecting 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 PGE Section. 34 out of over 40 country representations completed the questionnaire.

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**. 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. 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 they 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 opportunities).

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

Arts and culture programmes: the term 'programme' refers to a long-term intervention carried out in several multi-year phases. They are based on a strategic reflection and can be carried out at country or regional level.

One-off activities (small actions): the term 'micro/small action' refers to one-off activities of limited duration.

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

3. THE SDC'S CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT IN PARTNER COUNTRIES IN 2022:

In relation to the total operational budget of all SDC partner countries, the **cultural percentage corresponds to 0.99%, which is an increase of 0.27% since 2018**. Arts and culture expenditure has increased by 36% since 2018 and doubled since 2013 (see figures 1 and 2).

Figure 1

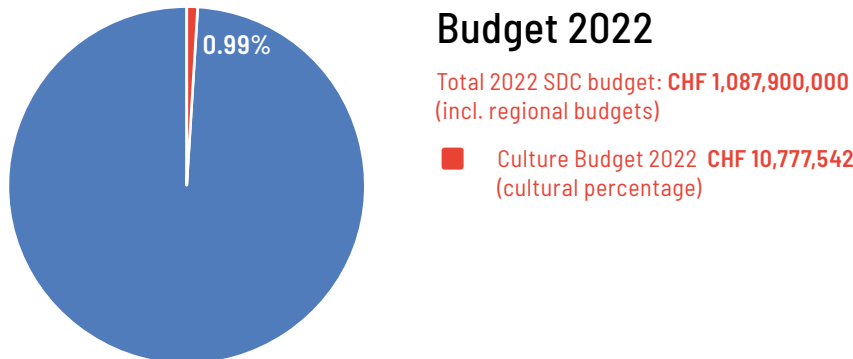


Figure 2

Culture expenditure has increased by 36% since 2018 and doubled since 2013.

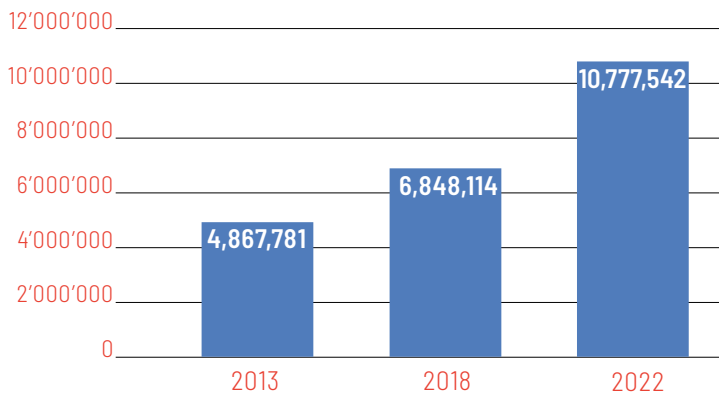
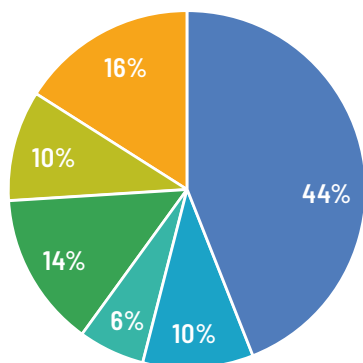


Figure 3

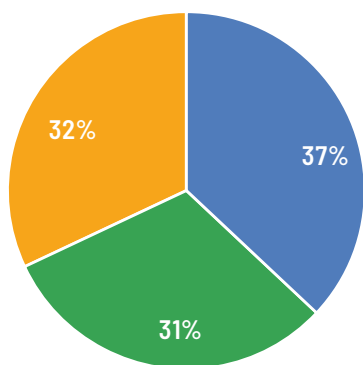


Budget 2022 by region

Africa	CHF 4,761,578
Asia	CHF 1,095,048
Central Asia	CHF 625,000
Eastern Europe	CHF 1,505,825
Middle East	CHF 1,060,574
Latin America/Caribbean	CHF 1,729,517

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 (see figure 4 below). This figure was only around 53% in 2018. Moreover, one regional and three country programmes have been confirmed to date this year.

Figure 4



Expenditure by type of project (2022)

Total Regional programmes	CHF 4,025,918
Total Country programmes	CHF 3,304,135
Total Small actions	CHF 3'447'489

Regional culture programmes (5):

Central Asia: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, **Great Lakes:** Rwanda, Burundi, DRC, **North Africa:** Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria, Libya, **Southern Africa:** Zimbabwe, Zambia, **South Caucasus:** Georgia, Azerbaijan, Armenia.

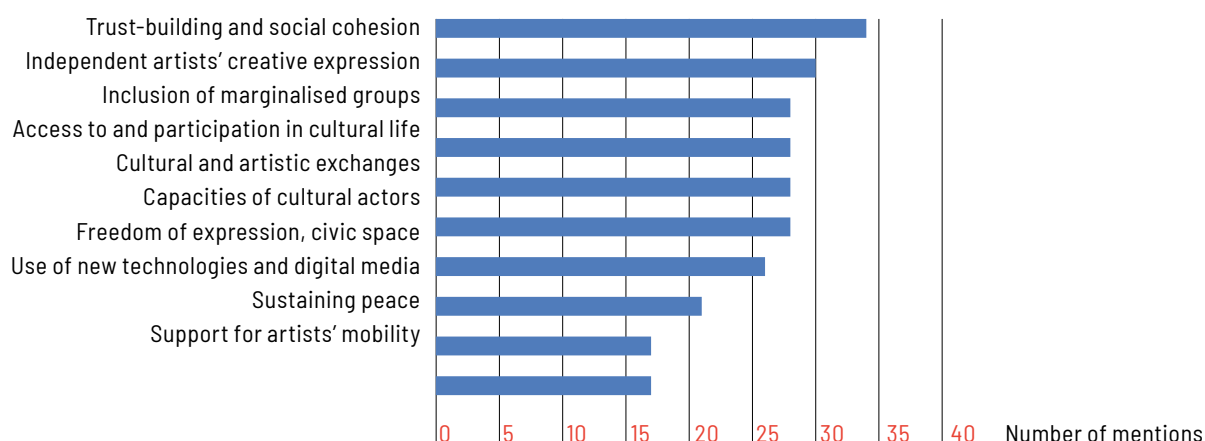
Country programmes (10):

Albania, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Nicaragua, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Serbia, Tanzania

4. INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN CULTURE AND THE TOPICS PEACE, GOVERNANCE AND EQUALITY:

- Especially in current times, with the global rise in authoritarianism and corresponding shrinking of civic space for the free expression of opinion and freedom of assembly, strengthening cultural actors as part of civil society is particularly relevant. Cultural actors provide an inclusive space for dialogue as well as critical thinking and the promotion of democratic participation. The art tend to have some leeway, as artists do not address critical issues in obvious ways, but rather with a certain ambiguity through metaphors, symbolism and imagery.
- The strategic cultural programmes are mostly allocated in or strongly linked with the priority areas of 'human rights' or 'governance' depending on the priorities of the respective countries and cooperation programme.
- Cultural engagement makes an important contribution to peaceful coexistence by building bridges between people and communities, fostering social cohesion, tolerance, reconciliation and breaking 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.
- Arts and culture can make a crucial contribution to development objectives. However, applying the 'do no harm' approach is crucial, in order to avoid deepening the social divide / exacerbating polarisation.
- In politically polarised contexts where democratisation is under pressure, government control and heavy bureaucratic procedures can lead to the closure of cultural organisations or persecution of cultural actors.
- In particular, given a general lack of political will and funding opportunities, there is a significant need to strengthen the capacities and framework conditions of cultural sectors.
- When looking at the fields of activity in which cultural projects take place, the interlinkages with the themes of governance, peace and leave-no-one-behind are obvious. **The promotion of culture as an element of social cohesion is the number one field of activity in the SDC's cultural engagement** (see figure 5 below).

Figure 5 **The top 10 fields of activity in the SDC's cultural engagement are the promotion of...**



5. ADDED VALUE AND PERCEPTION OF CULTURE ENGAGEMENT TO THE SDC'S WORK:

Switzerland's long-term engagement in supporting local cultural sectors seems to be unique and highly appreciated in many contexts in the civil society and non-governmental sector and among 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.

Box 3: Two success stories

In **Burkina Faso**, the SDC's programme has contributed to improving creative and dissemination capacities, decentralising cultural support, and taking gender and youth aspects into account. It has also helped to resolve issues that cultural players face, 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.

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