



SDC Culture and
Development Policy

An overview

Why culture is a key issue for SDG

Intercultural dialogue and exchange lays the foundation for peaceful relations between people, communities and states. Exchanging ideas and openly debating differences is essential to mutual understanding and tolerance. The non-recognition of a minority, a language or religious traditions can stir up tensions, or even unleash conflict.

Cultural rights, such as accessing and participating in a cultural life of one's own choosing, are a part of human rights and are indispensable to human dignity and individual fulfilment. Support for cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue is important for peacebuilding and for sustainable development in general.

Art holds a special position within a culture. While it is integral to a culture, art can also place itself outside of a particular cultural context to question cultural norms. Artistic expression by individuals and communities has always encouraged changes in perception with the capacity to set them in motion. This creates an environment favourable to reflection, self-criticism and discussion, which promotes diversity of opinion and social transformation.

*People are celebrating the Holi festival.
Narayangonj, Bangladesh, 2016*



Culture is essential to sustainable development

The cultural sector makes a unique and significant contribution to the various goals of sustainable development, democratic transition and peacebuilding, particularly in developing countries and fragile contexts. Specifically, an independent, diverse and participatory cultural sector can:

- strengthen civil society, its participation in cultural life and social and political processes
- protect freedom of expression and create a favourable environment for developing democratic discourse
- contribute to the development of pluralistic societies
- support integration and social inclusion, cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, as well as respect for diversity and minorities
- bolster efforts to prevent violence and conflict, to deal with the past and to achieve individual and social stability
- encourage the development and access to new ideas
- strengthen self-confidence, creativity and innovative skills
- impart hope and build confidence in the future

Residents from the neighbourhood enjoy a performance of "Diakoya Dogotoro Le Médecin malgré lui (Molière)" by the theater group Assitan Tangara in Niarela. Their projects have been supported by SDC. Bamako, Mali, 2016



Activities in partner countries

An adequately funded cultural policy that promotes diversity is lacking in many developing and emerging countries. Also lacking are developed markets with an effective legal framework for protecting intellectual property rights. Artists find it difficult to finance their professional development and to raise the funds necessary to realise and promote their creative endeavours.

In its partner countries, and independent of other development goals, SDC works to:

- provide artists with opportunities to undertake further training, to develop their activities, organisations and networks, and to gain respect for their rights, recognition of their work and improvement in their general conditions.
- support artistic expression, creative activities and the dissemination of work; and encourage space for reflection, dialogue and discussion. Emphasis is often placed on production that addresses problems related to social and development issues, with due regard given to the artistic freedom and programming decisions of its partners.
- promote community access to and participation in cultural and artistic life in its partner countries, particularly in rural, remote or disadvantaged areas.

Theater performers in a drama at the Shilpokola Academy. Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2016



Edel Dolo, who is in his 50's used to sell tickets for the movies before it closed down. He now lives and takes care of the abandoned "cinéma Le Vox", which has been part of his life for decades. Bamako, Mali, 2016

Activities in Switzerland

Faced with many technical and financial obstacles, artists in countries of the South and East have limited access to international markets and networks. This access can provide opportunities, experiences, recognition, financial support and professional contacts that are not merely useful but indispensable to their creative work.

For these reasons, SDC seeks to facilitate artists' access to the public, markets and professional networks in Switzerland and abroad. This support is given in collaboration with specialized partner institutions from the culture sector in Switzerland.

A man in the audience watches Oumar Konaté from Gao perform in Songhoi blues bar in Baco Djicoroni Golf. Bamako, Mali, 2016



Actors performing the drama "Karbala" at the Shilpokola Academy. Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2016



The cultural dimension within SDC operations

In international cooperation, the SDC acts consciously of the values that underpin its strategy. It ensures that its employees are able to understand the particular cultural characteristics of the communities where they work. As an organisation, it takes account of these differences in its analysis and interventions.

SDC engages with its partners in a dialogue between equals that respects cultural differences.

SDC is committed to the respect of cultural rights. Where cultural or religious practices restrict or violate other human rights, the SDC not only condemns, but also seeks dialogue and strives to formulate a joint solution.

This approach is implemented through the following measures:

Diversity of teams and partner networks: within its representations in partner countries, the SDC is attentive to diversity in its teams. Further, it ensures a broad network of partners and that the partners are aware of the cultural diversity of the communities where they work.

Intercultural competency: this is an essential requirement in recruiting and training employees. It includes not only the principle of intercultural communication, but also involves reflection on individual identity and the ability to observe and analyse issues of interculturality.

A dancer jumps up a wall during a contemporary dance routine in Kettly Noel's dance studio called Donko Seko in Bamako in Mali.


Bamako, Mali, 2016



Placing people at the centre of development cooperation: SDC's operational processes should be designed to place people at the centre, be implemented in a participatory manner, to consider local cultural specificities, and to allow flexibility. These features are essential for the communities concerned to be able to assume responsibility for their own lives. SDC's in-

struments allow for the consideration of cultural aspects in planning, monitoring and evaluating strategies and projects.





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