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**Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation SDC**



*“Le Réviseur” is a play addressing corruption created in Burkina Faso with SDC support. It toured in remote areas in several countries of Western Africa, triggering laughter and raising awareness. In Burkina Faso, the SDC cultural project also considers culture as a source of employment and income, and strengthens capacities for cultural management and policy dialogue among professionals in the theatre sector.*

# Cultural Engagement in the South and the East

## Overview 2009

This overview presents the cultural engagement of SDC in the South and the East in 2009. It synthesizes the results of a study carried out by the Team Culture and Development of the Division Knowledge and Learning Processes (K&LP) in response to a mandate of the SDC Board of Directors.

# 1. Methodology

The study was conducted with the corporate domains Regional Cooperation; Cooperation with the East; and Humanitarian Aid. Information was collected on financial volume, types of activities and good practice in a questionnaire e-mailed to 50 SDC field offices (cooperation and program offices); 48 participated in the study.

To complete the picture, the study was also conducted with the Swiss embassies working in transition and developing countries. In 2009, 9 out of 42

embassies supported local initiatives in the cultural sector through “small actions” for a total of CHF 111,060. Since these funds do not come from the budget of SDC corporate domains, these contributions are not integrated in this overview.

In terms of human resources, the study represented 20% of a position over 6 months at SDC Headquarters, plus the time needed to fill the questionnaire by the field offices.

## Principles of SDC cultural policy

Recognizing that culture is at the heart of development, SDC promotes cultural understanding and cultural diversity with the aim of consolidating the processes of development and transition in the countries in which it is active.

According to the guiding principles SDC established in 2002 and confirmed in 2009, at least **one percent** of the total budget in its partner countries is allocated to the promotion of local culture.

To the extent possible, these contributions are managed locally and primarily by SDC **field offices** in order to best adapt the support to local needs and realities.

All types of cultural expressions are eligible. Funds are primarily utilized to build up knowledge, institutions and networks (as opposed to infrastructure).

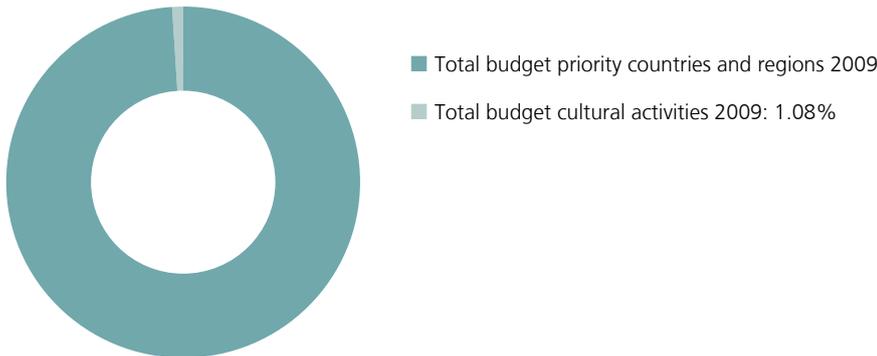
Wherever possible, engagement at micro level (support to cultural projects) is combined with measures at macro level (enhancement of framework conditions for cultural expression, namely freedom of speech, access to culture and information).

*Full version of these principles on [SDC website](#), SDC Culture Strategy 2010-2015, “Axis B” (p.6 and Appendix 5).*

# 2. Results

## 2.1 Percentage of SDC budget allocated to culture

In 2009, SDC allocated a total budget of CHF 6,078,108 for cultural activities in its partner countries and regions. This represents 1.08% of a total budget of CHF 562,600,000<sup>1</sup>.



## 2.2 Distribution by type of project



The distribution by types of projects shows that more than half of SDC cultural engagement was channeled through its three **regional cultural programs** (Western Balkans, Central Asia and Southern Africa). The Swiss Cultural Program for Western Balkans alone accounted for 0.46% of SDC cultural engagement abroad in 2009.

These programs were set up to accompany processes of democratization, conflict resolution and intercultural dialogue. In addition to supporting local artistic production as well as capacity and institutional development at the national level, these programs put a strong emphasis on **regional dialogue and collaboration**.

Swiss Cultural Program Western Balkans  
1990 – 2013 (14 phases)  
2009: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia

Swiss Cultural Program Southern Africa  
1999 – 2013 (6 phases)  
2009: Mozambique, South Africa, Zimbabwe

Regional Art and Culture Program Central Asia  
2007 – 2011 (1 phase)  
2009: Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

<sup>1</sup> Total budget 2009 of SDC development cooperation and cooperation with Eastern Europe and the CIS in priority countries and regions (incl. special programs), and SDC humanitarian aid. Source: Statistics booklet of the Annual Report for Swiss International Cooperation 2009, tables 6, 8 and 10.

Most field offices supported culture through contributions to **short cultural projects (78)**. Such projects involve contributions between CHF 1,000 and 50,000, and last from 1 to 12 months.

These projects typically supported artistic **production** (e.g. CD, films, plays, books) and **diffusion** (e.g. events, festivals, tours, workshops, distribution network). Most of them had an **educational dimension** (promoting knowledge sharing and discussion or fostering capacity development) and were **networking platforms for professionals**. Only one project included financing of infrastructure.

**Type of cultural expressions in one-off and short cultural projects (several options possible)**

Theatre and dance	27
Music	25
Film	21
Painting, photography, installation	15
Literature	10
Other (e.g. conference cycle)	2

Short cultural projects generally aimed at strengthening democracy or contributing to conflict prevention/transformation. However, specific themes were also addressed (climate change, water, human rights, health, migration).

Some field offices (Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Cuba, Gaza & Westbank and Nicaragua) have designed **cultural project lasting for several years** (CHF 30,000 to 250,000 per year). Beyond support to artistic production and diffusion, these projects also have objectives in terms of **capacity development** for cultural management or **institutional strengthening** with selected national partners, and thus strive for sustainable results for the local cultural sector.

Most projects combined tradition and modernity. However, 13 explicitly mention a contribution to protection and promotion of **cultural heritage and traditional cultural identity**.

**Protection and promotion of cultural heritage and traditional cultural identity**

Georgia	Udi ethnic group
Tanzania	Matwara region
Bolivia	Coroma Ayllu and other indigenous people
Nicaragua	folkloric ballet and indigenous culture
Mali	traditional "snake ceremony" and arts from the desert area
Benin	national languages
Nepal	Sherpas' traditions
Afghanistan	cultural heritage
Bangladesh	Santals and Adivasis indigenous culture and tradition
Gaza & Westbank	Dabka and other folkloric art

Out of 78 projects, 15 projects were primarily targeted at **youth**. Beyond gender mainstreaming, 5 projects addressed specific **gender** issues (interfamilial violence, role of women in society, women's rights) or female audiences (skills development).

Several projects underlined **employment and income** as a dimension of the intervention.

Finally, 10 activities were reported as being **integrated into another project on an SDC priority theme**. The cultural component represents 2 to 80% of the total project and between CHF 10,000 and 150,000. Activities reported here are very heterogeneous. Most of them (Nicaragua, Benin, Mongolia, Vietnam, Azerbaijan, Gaza&Westbank) are similar to "one-off cultural activities", but used with a specific sensitization objective about the theme of the project (**democracy, human rights, gender, health, education, water, climate change**). In Pakistan, they had longer-term objectives, e.g. developing arts and crafts as a source of **income and employment** and **rural development**. In Sudan and Gaza & Westbank, support to culture was designed as a long-lasting contribution to **conflict transformation, democracy, good governance** (e.g. support to independent media / fund for cultural community-based organizations).

## 2.3 Distribution by priority country/region

**Field offices from all three SDC corporate domains** (regional cooperation, cooperation with the East and humanitarian aid) **engaged in promoting local culture.**

In total, 17 field offices did not conduct any cultural activities in 2009. Most are humanitarian aid offices (Angola, Colombia, Haiti, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Liberia, Morocco, Russia, Syria, Thailand, and Zimbabwe), but there were also cooperation offices in priority countries/regions (Azerbaijan, DPR Korea, India, Burundi, and Laos).

<b>Continent</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Total (CHF) cultural engagement</b>
<b>Africa</b>	Burkina Faso	250'000
	Benin	103'250
	Chad	26'655
	Mali	62'800
	Madagascar	49'524
	Mozambique	10'000
	Niger	22'939
	Rwanda	10'800
	Southern Africa	320'000
	Sudan	30'000
	Tanzania	70'655
<b>Central/South America</b>	Bolivia	295'170
	Central America/Nicaragua	115'425
	Cuba	321'980
	Peru	17'870
<b>Asia</b>	Afghanistan	20'318
	Bangladesh	13'467
	Central Asia	477'700
	Mongolia	45'054
	Nepal	63'800
	Pakistan	191'000
	Sri Lanka	21'186
	South Caucasus	69'901
	Vietnam/Mekong	86'024
<b>Europe/the Mediterranean</b>	Gaza and West bank	707'680
	Moldova	14'000
	Ukraine	10'000
	Western Balkans	2'650'910
<b>Total</b>		<b>6'078'108</b>

## 2.4 Good Practice

Eight field offices have characterized their project(s) as being “good practice”. Among these are short cultural projects, multi-year cultural projects and cultural component integrated into projects. Two regional programs were also highlighted as good practice. Selected quotes:

“The program is extremely cost-effective and creates a high profile for Swiss intervention. This improves the attitude in the countries and entire region towards other SDC programs. Culture also creates networks overcoming barriers that cannot be overcome in other ways”

**Regional cultural program Central Asia**

“Locally implemented, (the program) empowered the local cultural actors, public authorities and media. It combined democratization, conflict prevention and economic development through the promotion of cross-border regional projects in various fields of innovative arts and culture.”

**Regional cultural program Western Balkans**

“The festival offered an exchange and learning field for the organizers and the artists, and provided the audience with a rich program of performance art rarely seen otherwise in the country”

**COOF Dar Es Salaam, short cultural project  
“Visa 2 Dance contemporary dance festival”**

“(The project) contributes to structuring the cultural sector and having it taken into account in development policies. By developing critical thinking on (societal) issues, cultural organizations contribute to form public opinion that reacts to national development challenges ”

**COOF Ouagadougou, multi-year cultural project  
“Support to cultural sector in Burkina Faso”**

“(…) In a society like the Bolivian that has not yet solved the challenges of cultural diversity due to exclusion and inequality, culture can play an important role to stimulate transformation and social cohesion”

**COOF La Paz, multi-year cultural project  
“Culture and governance”**

“An alternative to raise awareness, a strong tool to appeal people to change their set attitudes towards a better environment, stimulating people’s sense and intellect (…)”

**COOF Ulaanbaatar,  
Musical drama integrated in the  
“Coping with desertification” project**

“Woodcraft trade has become a source of income and employment for the local population and stopped the carpentry population migration to bigger cities”

**COOF Islamabad, cultural component integrated in the  
“Baltistan enterprise Development and Arts revival” project**

### 3. Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)'s conclusions

Based on the international commitment taken by Switzerland in 2008 with the ratification of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, SDC reaffirms its commitment for the principle of the "cultural percent". **This principle will be further anchored in SDC strategy.**

**In 2009, SDC cultural engagement reached its benchmark of "one per cent"**. It is not excluded that more activities related to culture in its broad dimension were integrated in thematic projects. All types of cultural projects are generally in-line with SDC 2002 principles for cultural policy and several offices describe their cultural projects as "good practice".

In 2009, more than half of SDC cultural engagement is channeled through three regional cultural programs; out of these, two will end their last phase by 2013. The study however reveals a potential for increased cultural engagement in several priority countries and regions. In this context, **SDC is taking the necessary measures to achieve its benchmark** in the coming years. Particular emphasis will be put on internally promoting the principle of "cultural per cent" and sharing good practice based on SDC past and current experience, e.g. for the management of the cultural engagement and its integration in SDC overall strategy.

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