

# ***CULTURE AND OUR NATIONAL PROSPERITY***

*Civil Society's contribution to Uganda's  
National Development Plan*

**Kampala, 2010**



## 1. What is this booklet about?

The Uganda Government is launching a Five-Year National Development Plan (NDP), for the period 2010/11- 2014/15 to succeed the Poverty Eradication Action Plan. The NDP proposes an overall theme, *“Growth, Employment and Prosperity for Socio-economic Transformation”*.

When the Government launched a consultative process to help develop the NDP, a series of civil society meetings were conducted, including a main event in Kampala attended by 56 participants from, among others, traditional cultural institutions, religious institutions / faith-based organisations, the visual and performing arts, academia and NGOs.

Participants analysed the role of culture for national prosperity and issued a set of proposals to government, which this booklet describes.

## 2. Culture and national prosperity: where do we stand now?

Civil society welcomes Government’s recognition that culture has an important role to play in our nation’s development. It welcomes its achievements, such as the launch of Uganda’s national policy on culture, the policy on the use of local languages as medium of instruction in primary schools and the development of a draft policy on traditional and complementary medicine.

It also welcomes the restoration of “institutions of traditional and cultural leaders”, the constitutional requirement placed upon Parliament to gazette national cultural heritage sites and to provide for their ownership and management. The creation of an environment that has allowed the growth of private sector involvement in culture, especially private theatres and recreational facilities, is also important.

Nevertheless, civil society deplores the limited emphasis placed by government on culture and cultural affairs in the social and economic development of the country:

- **Marginalisation** Culture and cultural affairs are too often marginalised, instead of being considered central to our nation's development. Thus, cultural affairs only command a low priority in spending, with only 0.03% of the national budget<sup>1</sup>. There is no approved plan to implement the National Culture Policy and resources are grossly inadequate. This results in a negative attitude towards the arts and other cultural aspects, with an influx of foreign materials (such as in the media). Mechanisms to promote positive cultural values are not in place. Marginalisation also results in limited or decaying infrastructure, almost absent outside Kampala.
- **Legal framework** Prevailing laws are obsolete and inadequate; relevant international conventions are not ratified and/or applied (e.g. UNESCO Conventions on cultural diversity of cultural expressions).
- **Cultural institutions** The policy framework currently recognises the cultural leaders but not cultural institutions in their entirety. Thus, only individual cultural leaders receive protection and financial facilitation, in this way “personalising” entire institutions. Enabling laws to operationalise the 1993 Act are also inadequate, as the partial return of the property of cultural institutions illustrates, and smaller ethnic groups tend to be totally left out.
- **Tangible cultural heritage**<sup>2</sup> Our cultural heritage is fast vanishing, partly as a result of outdated laws which do not protect them in the face of “modern” development projects. Thus, Lugard's Fort in Old Kampala was demolished and cultural/ historical objects are easily exported. Gazetted sites are not optimally utilised and therefore cannot generate significant economic benefit. Some ethnic groups are at the risk of totally losing their cultural heritage as their lands are alienated, with little or no compensation.

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<sup>1</sup>This is calculated on the basis of recurrent and development expenditure for the culture sub-department in the Ministry of Gender and the Museums and Monuments sub-department in the Ministry of Trade and Tourism.

<sup>2</sup>Tangible heritage includes structures, monuments, museums, art galleries, flora, fauna of significant cultural or historical value.

- **Intangible cultural heritage**<sup>3</sup> Inadequate research and documentation on our intangible heritage, limited funding and inadequate policy frameworks for its conservation lead us to fear that traditional knowledge and practices will also vanish. This is aggravated by an information gap between innovators and users. Dispossession of various ethnic groups from their lands undermines indigenous knowledge and cultural rights.
- **Implementation agencies** Government does not fully appreciate the potential economic value and development function of culture. Having culture as a sub-department in the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development, not clearly linked to sister departments (such as the department of Museums and Monuments), has led to the further marginalisation of culture. In addition, decentralising the culture function (under Community Development) without adequate resources has compromised a vital aspect of our society and its development.

### 3. Can culture contribute to our national development objectives?

Civil society recognises that culture informs all aspects of national development. Culture influences different aspects of people's perception and aspirations of life. Prosperity for all can therefore not be achieved without a focus on cultural development and cannot be solely defined by its economic dimension. Prosperity must be understood as a multi-faceted achievement whose cultural dimension is cross-cutting.

In addition, culture can - and must - make a significant contribution to all the proposed national development objectives, as follows:

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<sup>3</sup>Intangible Heritage includes indigenous knowledge and skills (of medicines, flora and fauna, food preparations, traditional agriculture and health practices, natural resource management and utilisation), spirits, language, behaviour and education.

- a. **Uplift household standards of living:** Optimal use of traditional knowledge and skills (traditional medicine and other practices, performing and visual arts) offers means of earning a living, reducing health-related and other expenditure, and promoting local culture at household level. Traditional leaders are influential and are in a position to discourage negative cultural practices and to promote positive values to enhance community participation, harmony and prosperity. Enhanced knowledge about a people's origin and way of life, will inculcate a sense of pride and motivation to preserve positive aspects of one's culture and in turn trigger a desire to improve living standards and to contribute to development initiatives.
- b. **Enhance the quality and availability of gainful employment:** The development of our tangible and intangible heritage offers employment opportunities for both skilled and less skilled members of a community. Employment can include reconstruction, maintenance and management of cultural sites; development of cultural arts, crafts, the entertainment industry near heritage sites and National Parks (especially for ethnic minorities), other tourism-related opportunities, and local markets for farmers' and other produce. With support, those employed in the culture industry can produce and market quality cultural products nationally and internationally.
- c. **Improve social, economic and trade infrastructure nationwide:** Uganda is an attractive tourist destination. It has a rich cultural menu to offer: this will not only translate into revenue for local and central government, but result in increased development and marketing of a variety of quality Ugandan arts and crafts and enhance Uganda's image. The development of our tangible heritage can attract private sector investment and help develop amenities around heritage sites, which will in turn enhance the establishment of infrastructure and facilities nationwide. Products of research and documentation on cultural (performing and visual) arts offer items for trade, literacy empowerment and posterity.

- d. **Develop efficient, innovative and internationally competitive industries:** Developing and promoting cultural products will enable Uganda to participate in international cultural exhibitions, establish linkages with other cultural industries and add value to existing cultural artefacts and practices.
- e. **Develop and exploit the national resource base and ensure environmental and economic sustainability:** Through optimal use of traditional / indigenous knowledge, rural communities will be given an opportunity to harness their potential to contribute to national development. Environmental / natural tangible heritage is currently the main tourist attraction in Uganda. However sites of cultural and historical value need to be listed, preserved, developed and marketed through public-private partnerships to enable optimal exploitation and sustainability. Traditional cultural institutions can participate in community mobilisation and implementation of government programmes incorporating traditional knowledge, skills and practices that can be well understood and sustainably used. Policy harmonisation and the utilisation of cultural resources will save government revenue, increase our tax base through increased employment and contribute to sustainable environment use and consciousness.
- f. **Strengthen good governance and improve human security:** Effective communication and people's understanding of governance enables them to appreciate and contribute to issues related to human rights, patents, policies and programmes. The use of local languages helps people internalise knowledge and information on these issues. Strengthening cultural courts, clan governance, and respect of cultural values enhances harmony and togetherness in relation to authority. At the national level, increased awareness of the value of different ethnic groups' culture will enhance inter-ethnic relationships which will augur well for national identity and unity. The development of memorial sites can raise people's consciousness about their right to good governance and human security.

## 4. What does Civil Society propose?

Civil society proposes that 5 priority areas (see back page) be reflected in the NDP, for Government, the private sector and civil society to act upon:

1. **“Mainstreaming” and resourcing culture in all development initiatives**
  - a. Use an integrated approach to culture in development by, amongst others, subjecting sectoral plans and development goals to a cultural audit and elaborating a cultural definition of development needs.
  - b. Earmark at least 1% of the national budget to cultural development and programmes.
  - c. Capacity-building in elaborating the role of culture in development.
  - d. Use the arts to create a positive attitude, develop, promote and popularise culture.
  
2. **Reclaiming what we have lost: Cultural heritage education and languages**
  - a. Carry out heritage education in schools, universities, tertiary / vocational institutions.
  - b. Build the capacity and raise the awareness for relevant government agencies (immigration, police), community development officers, community members, politicians and other stakeholders through outreach programmes.
  - c. Establish training centres for language translation (translation of policies, books and other documents), knowledge and skills development at district levels and liaise with training and cultural institutions, including minority languages.
  - d. Conduct exposure visits to promote indigenous knowledge (agriculture and medicine; conflict resolution, medicinal gardens, land management...).
  - e. Religious education to heighten the relevance of religion and culture.



### 3. Knowledge generation and management

- a. Document and preserve each ethnic group's heritage (through videos, museums) to define a national culture, values and agenda.
- b. Research, document, protect and promote our tangible and intangible heritage, including the completion of the database on monuments and sites, including those of ethnic minorities.
- c. Promote cultural research and training in tertiary education institutions; create an institution for cultural studies.
- d. Use the arts as a means of research and documentation and to contribute to a global culture.

### 4. Cultural infrastructure and financing

- a. Revive and present our cultural assets to showcase our tangible and intangible heritage, including highlighting an annual "Monument of the Year".
- b. Develop infrastructure and implement a human resource strategy to cater for artists and other cultural stakeholders.
- c. Make budgetary provisions to facilitate district commercial offices to create a market for intangible and tangible heritage at the district and national levels.
- d. Increase resource allocation for tangible and intangible heritage development, marketing and promotion.
- e. Strengthen and finance partnerships with traditional cultural institutions to mobilise local populations on development activities.
- f. Create an endowment Fund for the Arts.
- g. Create incentives for the conservation of our tangible and intangible heritage, e.g. provide tax relief for cultural innovators.

## 5. Legal and policy framework

- a. Review and enforcement of laws.
  - Formulate national and district by-laws to protect and conserve the intangible heritage, including patent laws to protect innovations.
  - Update and enforce legislation on listing and protection of national cultural monuments.
  - Recognise and facilitate cultural institutions in their entirety, including the return of their assets.
  - Promote the development of a code of conduct for religious institutions.
  - Determine minimum quota of Ugandan artistic contents for the media.
  - Ratify and implement UNESCO conventions on tangible heritage and cultural diversity – UNESCO, Convention on the illicit trafficking of cultural property.
  - Disseminate and sensitise populations about laws and by-laws in local languages
  
- b. Policy development:
  - Disseminate and operationalise the national culture policy: establish a specific structure at central government level for its management and overseeing, to ensure cultural aspects are considered in planning, budgeting and implementation of the National Plan.
  - Develop a policy framework and management plan for the conservation of tangible and intangible heritage knowledge, skills, practices. Develop a benefit sharing scheme where such knowledge yields benefits to the authors/owners.
  - Incorporate cross-cutting issues (HIV/AIDS, human rights, gender, and environment) in policy and programme implementation with regard to our tangible and intangible heritage.
  - Create an enabling environment that supports the development of institutional arrangements for local, national and international networks.

- c. Enhance the effectiveness of government and other organs in relation to cultural development:
  - Re-study the composition and constitution of ministries to prioritise culture, harmonise functions and increase communication flows.
  - Form a Cultural Heritage Authority to act as a regulatory body to preserve and promote our cultural heritage.
  - Centrally harmonise policy initiatives and establish a policy monitoring and evaluation body to ensure “cultural compliance”.
  - Establish a decentralised management plan and management committees (with representatives from central and local governments, CSOs, private sector, traditional leaders and local communities).

## 5. The Coalition for Heritage Conservation and Development

Recognising some of the challenges above, a Coalition for Heritage Conservation and Development was founded in 2009, when a small group of people from diverse backgrounds met to share their mutual interests and concerns about Uganda’s endangered heritage. In particular, the Coalition noted the need to review the policy framework for heritage conservation and to advocate for new laws and the implementation of existing ones.

The Coalition was therefore formed to engage policy makers, politicians and the general public about the plight of Uganda’s heritage and propose changes in the policies that would preserve important oral traditions, language and skills, old buildings of outstanding architectural, historic and cultural merit, as well as natural biodiversity of Uganda.

The Coalition is a free-membership forum; members include private practitioners and representatives from for-profit organisations, government agencies, cultural institutions and NGOs. One of the strengths of this coalition is an all-round character drawn from a broad

range of professional specialties - including Museum management, History, Archaeology, Heritage conservation, Architecture, Economics, Environment, Education, Culture and the Arts.

Currently, the coalition has included on its agenda:

- A campaign to lobby the Government for the ratification of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.
- A collective effort to ensure that Parliament reviews and updates the 1967 Historical Monuments Act, which is currently the national legal instrument directly related to the conservation, protection and promotion of Uganda's cultural and natural heritage.



## **Civil society's five priority proposals for Uganda's National Development Plan, in relation to Culture and Development**

1. **Mainstreaming and resourcing culture in all development initiatives**, including earmarking at least 1% of the national budget to developing the cultural sector (up from less than 0.1% currently).
2. **Cultural heritage education and languages**: training in local languages, cultural values, heritage education and awareness creation.
3. **Knowledge generation and management**: defining a national culture and agenda; documenting and publicising tangible and intangible heritage.
4. **Cultural infrastructure and financing**: promoting the necessary infrastructure – human, physical and financial - to revive and showcase heritage.
5. **Legal and policy framework**: updating, ratifying, and enforcing national and international policy and legal instruments for the promotion and conservation of tangible and intangible heritage.

*For the full text of this submission or for information on the Coalition for Heritage Conservation and Development, please view [www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug](http://www.crossculturalfoundation.or.ug) or contact the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda at Kibuga Block 9, Plot 283, off Makerere Hill Road, Kampala, Tel: 0312-294675*



The Cross-Cultural  
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