



Commonwealth
Foundation

Culture and Development

Practical illustrations
from the Commonwealth



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The examples set out in this paper highlight some of the practical ways in which culture and development are being linked in practice. They have been drawn from submissions made by civil society organisations to the Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development¹ and offer practical examples to support the Group's Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development. They aim to shed light on the Group's recommendations and show potential ways in which they can be taken forward in practice. The four examples illustrate how culture-based methods and resources can support social transformation, realise economic benefits and foster community cohesion.

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Why culture and development?

Employment and income generation are key concerns for many, particularly in response to the current economic downturn. Correspondingly, creative industries are in many countries now being recognised as having an increasingly important economic role to play. In one of our examples, the Festival of Pacific Arts can be seen to be helping the region's small island states find new markets for cultural goods, products and services, and promoting investment in infrastructure, while encouraging the dynamic transmission of culture and creativity.

Youth unemployment and associated civic unrest are major challenges facing many Commonwealth countries. There is a need to help young people develop skills, including employable skills, but also personal and social skills. In our example from Trinidad and Tobago, programmes teaching music are engaging with young people and encouraging their positive development. It shows us that cultural expressions can help define an individual's and a community's sense of self-worth.

Cultural spaces – such as art galleries, performance venues and museums – often hold specialist knowledge of cultural contexts and can offer effective places

to disseminate important development information and encourage debate. In our example from Malawi, museum outreach and exhibitions are being used to connect with, and create awareness about, malaria and malaria prevention measures.

In some cases, aspects of culture may be seen as a challenge, but acknowledging and working with cultural norms and traditional practices in community development can help achieve progress in successful development. Our example from Nigeria shows how, by understanding and supporting women's traditional roles and putting women at the heart of its activities, an economic production project is supporting income generation.

It is our hope that lessons from each of these examples can be drawn upon and applied for potential replication in other contexts.

These four examples are intended as the first of a regular series. The Commonwealth Foundation wants to do more to promote such examples for mutual learning amongst its member countries to contribute to the growing discourse on integrating culture with development. The Foundation would therefore welcome receiving further examples which it can share.

¹ The Group, consisting of experts from civil society and government in both culture and development, was convened by the Commonwealth Foundation in 2009 to prepare a Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development for consideration at the 2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting.

‘...festivals generate cultural value for local people who can enjoy their country’s traditional costumes, music, dance and rituals in an engaging communal context, and they project the cultural identities of the countries onto the international stage.’²

Pacific Islands

Festivals as catalysts

There are many ways in which cultural festivals can support development. They can help affirm and strengthen people’s identities and build community confidence, which in turn can contribute to social cohesion and development. They can help preserve aspects of heritage and tradition, and transmit them to new generations. They can promote culture-based tourism and showcase cultural goods, products and services to new markets. Festivals also provide forums where cultural practitioners can exchange and develop strategies on issues such as traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights.

A key regional festival, the Festival of Pacific Arts, creates opportunities for exchanges between Pacific peoples, and can claim to have played a key role in a Pacific cultural renaissance.



A troupe from the Pacific performs at the 2005 Commonwealth People’s Forum in Malta.



Filmmaking in the Pacific.

Background

The cultural topography of the Pacific Islands, a dispersed network of thousands of mostly small islands, is wide ranging. A key regional festival, the Festival of Pacific Arts, creates opportunities for exchanges between Pacific peoples, and can claim to have played a key role in a Pacific cultural renaissance. It provides a focal point for a diverse range of both tangible and intangible cultural expressions, including song, dance, craftwork, jewellery and cuisine, among others.

This example sets out some of the ways in which this festival, and festivals in general, have contributed to development.

Issues identified

Culture continues to occupy a central place in many of the Pacific Islands. But while in some islands traditional values, beliefs, knowledge, heritage and other aspects of culture remain highly prominent and indeed central, in others they have been considerably weakened. This has been the result of the ongoing effects of colonisation, migration to larger countries and contemporary challenges to traditional family structures, and the corresponding loss of forms of inter-generational transmission of cultures.

With cultural expressions and cultural goods, products and services, a challenge in the Pacific has been the identification and development of income generating markets. Most Pacific Islands are geographically isolated; hence, there is often a need to rely on local markets which can only yield limited income. Further, the production of cultural goods and products is time and labour intensive and, as a result, they may be under-supported. Yet cultural goods, products and services from Pacific Islands, rooted in unique cultures and traditions, hold potential to capture fresh imaginations, enhance perceptions and understanding of Pacific Islands and reach new markets within and beyond the region.

It is therefore necessary to support ways of promoting cultural goods, products and services from Pacific Islands.

Action taken

Established in 1972 and held every four years, the Festival of Pacific Arts has grown as a market for cultural and creative industries in the region and is now a significant international cultural event and major tourist attraction. It brings together more than 2,000 people from 27 island countries.

It is the biggest gathering of Pacific peoples, where delegations of dancers, musicians, filmmakers, performing artists, craftspeople, painters and writers debate, demonstrate, exhibit and sell their products for twelve days to attendees of the festival.

The host country of the Ninth Festival of Pacific Arts, Palau, saw both economic and infrastructural gains, including sales from storyboards (traditional woodcarvings of Palau) carved by prison inmates, which brought in over US\$11,800. Following the festival, sales of the official festival film *Oltobed A Malt* generated more than US\$30,000 for the new Belau National Museum; sales of *Short Stories from Small Islands* generated revenues for artists and authors who took part in a creative writing workshop during the Festival. Each of the 16 states of Palau earned an average of US\$20,000 in sales of food and craft, while sales of philately earned over US\$1,800.

The Festival also helped to improve host country facilities, and benefits were felt for small businesses as a result of tenders for supplies, renovations and construction. In Palau, prior to the Festival, a new Belau National Museum (US\$2.2m), the Ngarachamayong Cultural Centre (US\$2.45m) and a 3,000 seat grandstand at the Palau Community College sports track (US\$363,000) were opened.

The Festival, since its inception, has established itself as a key event in the region and is an important instrument in the preservation and revitalisation of expertise underlying many cultural expressions. Knowledge and skills have been rediscovered, revitalised and in some cases, updated. For example, during the First Festival of Pacific Arts in Fiji Islands, 1972, French Polynesia was inspired to

revive the disappearing art of tattooing³, which is today a well recognised form of French Polynesian cultural expression. In 2004, 17 woodcarvers were chosen to undertake further studies in Hawaii under master woodcarvers.

The Festival also offers a perfect platform for development organisations and countries to undertake other important initiatives. In 2000 and 2004, HIV and AIDS awareness-raising materials were packaged and distributed to performers and spectators. In 2004, a capacity-building media project also trained more than 20 journalists from six countries and resulted in the official Festival DVD. A book of short stories was published from the creative writing workshop. Funds raised from both projects were channelled back into regional cultural development projects.

Key points

Festivals offer ways to showcase cultures from a region and can lay foundations for growing cultural markets. As well as economic gains, the growth of creative markets can help to tackle issues of isolation and marginalisation.

Beyond economic benefits, festivals can foster unity through exchange and sharing. They can act as platforms for debate on locally relevant development topics, such as economic and health issues. Finally, as inclusive gatherings, festivals offer significant opportunities to engage with young people and promote the inter-generational transmission of traditional knowledge and values.

There is a need to build on the regional and international platforms festivals offer to extend festival brands and packages. In order to further develop cultural trade links, practitioners should also be supported to travel to other festivals internationally. These represent opportunities to promote cultures abroad and create markets for cultural goods, products and services.

Potentially transferable learning

- **Support festivals in order to celebrate and share tangible and intangible cultural heritage.**
- **Use festivals and other forms of cultural gatherings to promote cultural goods, products and services to new markets.**
- **Link festivals to other culture-based tourism initiatives.**
- **Use festivals to drive the development of cultural infrastructure and facilities that will continue to benefit communities and local business.**
- **Ensure space is opened up in festivals for participation by young people.**
- **Embed opportunities for debate on relevant development issues, such as traditional knowledge and trade in culture, in festivals.**
- **Support and make available research on the financial and social contributions of festivals.**



Traditional performance face paint and head dress.

A Commonwealth perspective on culture and development

The *Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development* states that an investment in the cultural sector, including support for practitioners and cultural institutions – which would include cultural festivals – is required so that culture can contribute to development, including economic development through the growth of the creative industries. (See paragraph 9 of the Statement.)

People have a right showcase their culture and to be exposed to other cultures. This is central to developing an understanding of the world and fostering local pride and confidence. (See paragraph 10 of the Statement.)

Cultural diversity is one of the Commonwealth's greatest strengths. In a globalising world cultural diversity needs to be actively promoted. Festivals offer a good way of promoting diversity. (See paragraph 11 of the Statement.)

Creative industries can not only provide income for artists, but the community as a whole, including through tourism promotion, and for small businesses which provide a range of associated services. Small island states can benefit particularly from creative industry development as they often have unique cultural forms that can be drawn from. (See paragraph 17 of the Statement.)

As well as driving tourism and knowledge transfer, festivals can also improve how a community that hosts a festival values itself and sees itself in relation to the world. (See paragraph 18 of the Statement.)

To underpin this, investment in the creative industries and policy to support this should be further promoted. (See paragraph 23c of the Statement.)

³ Dr Nico Vink, Study on the Cultural Co-operation between the European Commission and the Pacific region (The Netherlands, 2000).

‘Created in the 1930s, the steelpan owes its genesis to the carnival festivals of that era. It emerged as the product of the energy of the people directed towards cultural self-expression. The steelpan therefore became a cultural vehicle forged from the historical and social conditions prevailing at that time. Its development was moulded by the ethnic influences of the heritage of Trinidad and Tobago.’⁴

Trinidad and Tobago

Steelpan for youth empowerment

Cultural expression is an important part of how people retain and sustain their identities, and can also contribute to revenue generation through culture-based tourism and cultural industries. Beyond this, cultural expression can also offer young people a source of education and personal development. The following is an example of how intangible cultural expressions can play a significant role in the positive development of young people. It explores the role of music, specifically the steelbands of Trinidad and Tobago, in offering young people a vehicle for self-expression, achievement and fulfilment.



Small ensemble at the Birdsong Academy.



Transferable skills acquisition through music theory classes.

Background

The archipelagic twin island state of Trinidad and Tobago is home to a long and varied ethnic and cultural history. Primarily an industrial economy with a focus on petrochemicals, Trinidad and Tobago is also known internationally for its vibrant culture, epitomised in its carnivals and its recognition as the birthplace of the steelpan⁵ instrument and calypso⁶ music.

Trinidad and Tobago is home to many different steelpan orchestras and groups, and the majority of steelband players in the country are between the ages of 15 and 25. The Birdsong Academy, one such steelpan group, focuses on youth development and education through music and culture. Its mission is to create a productive environment for young people to express themselves using the steelpan.

Approximately half of the Commonwealth’s near two billion people are under 25 years of age.

Issues identified

Approximately half of the Commonwealth’s near two billion people are under 25 years of age. Young people are correspondingly recognised as an important group in the Commonwealth that demand a special focus in promoting their empowerment, participation and growth. In Trinidad and Tobago, as in many small island states, current social problems include crime, unemployment, poverty and family breakdowns. Young people experience these problems disproportionately, and are often vulnerable to feelings of alienation and helplessness, and correspondingly may be caught up in anti-social or criminal behaviour.

Promoting the active participation of young people in community life, and their self-empowerment, through accessible means, is one way to address this.



Young people, by learning steelband, can gain in self-confidence.

4 Historical Development of the Steelband – Trinidad and Tobago. See <http://library2.nalis.gov.tt/Default.aspx?tabid=165>

5 Steelpan: a bowl-shaped percussion instrument made from a steel barrel divided into sections producing different notes when struck.

6 Calypso: a type of music that originated in the Caribbean, notably in Trinidad and Tobago, characterised by improvised lyrics on topical or broadly humorous subjects.

Action taken

The Birdsong Academy uses steelbands as a vehicle to counteract many of the issues that young people in Trinidad and Tobago face.

The Academy provides training to students between the ages of 12 to 25 in skills that are intended to be transferable. These include music theory, ear training, sight reading, percussion, music appreciation, life in music, using technology, voice training, theatre arts and personal development. As well as skills development, the training aims to nurture interest in Trinidad and Tobago's cultural heritage. The training is free, and since 2004 when the Academy was founded, more than five hundred students, female and male, have benefited from its programmes.

Realising the importance and relevance of music education, Trinidad and Tobago's Ministry of Education has also created a music programme in both primary and secondary level education called 'pan in the classroom'. Over the first five years of its operation 250 primary and secondary schools have received instruments, and instructors have been assigned to each school. Resulting from the success of the programme, there is now a commitment from the Ministry of Education to have all schools involved in the programme in the next three years of its operation.

In the case of the Birdsong Academy, some of the students who have completed its programmes have gone on to enrol at universities such as the University of the West Indies, the University of Trinidad and Tobago and the Berkley School of Music, USA. Some graduates of the Academy have also found full time employment at the Office of the Prime Minister, as members of the Fire Services Orchestra, and as steelpan instructors at the Ministry of Education.

Key points

Music and entertainment have high appeal to young people and can therefore assist in encouraging their participation in community matters. They can, in particular, help vulnerable and under-privileged young people to discover positive forms of self-expression. Music projects can help instil a sense of discipline and collective working, bringing together young people from different communities. As well as social and technical skills, they can help build self-esteem and self-confidence.

Music and arts education offer vehicles for knowledge transfer and encouragement towards excellence in both education and future professional life.

By promoting empowerment and self-confidence, music and arts programmes give young people the opportunity to become owners of their development rather than its recipients. Culture-based training programmes such as these therefore have an intrinsic developmental edge.

While economic development and the development of the creative industries are important, an over-narrow focus on economic development can overlook some of the positive social impacts of an investment in culture. The fostering of wellbeing in disadvantaged young people can set them on the path to the establishment of better, more sustainable livelihoods, which can in turn promote long-term economic prosperity.



Percussion class at the Birdsong Academy.



Steelpan lessons at the Birdsong Academy.

Potentially transferable learning

- **Use culture-based methods to initiate communication with and encourage participation by young people, particularly disadvantaged and at risk young people.**
- **Support cultural practitioners and institutions to increase their access to parts of society which may be difficult to reach.**
- **Recognise that training initiatives to build skills and drive professional development can also have benefits for personal and community development, and use culture-based methods to promote this.**
- **Make connections between initiatives to drive the creative economy and broader initiatives to foster self-expression, self-confidence and community cohesion.**

A Commonwealth perspective on culture and development

The *Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development* calls for new approaches to development in the face of continuing challenges of poverty, inequality and mass unemployment, and to help better fulfil human aspirations. The use of cultural expressions such as music and other forms of art can be used to meet the needs and enhance the wellbeing of disadvantaged people, particularly in the face of current economic and environmental emergencies. (See paragraph 2 of the Statement.)

Music and arts programmes can contribute to an individual's sense of physical and mental wellbeing, which should be the end goal of development. (See paragraph 7 of the Statement.)

Successful initiatives to promote the growth of the creative economy need to be underpinned by investments in the cultural sector more broadly, including support for cultural practitioners and institutions. These are closely interlinked. (See paragraph 9 of the Statement.)

Cultural expressions can help define an individual's and a community's sense of self-worth. Investments in cultural spaces give opportunities for people to express themselves and articulate their needs and identify their solutions. (See paragraph 18 of the Statement.)

Culture-based initiatives enable people to participate in development processes more easily and develop self-confidence and life skills. (See paragraph 20 of the Statement.)

‘Museums have an important duty to develop their educational role and attract wider audiences from the community, locality, or group they serve. Interaction with the constituent community and promotion of their heritage is an integral part of the educational role of the museum.’⁷

Malawi

Museums save lives

Cultural spaces such as museums are equipped with specialist knowledge of culture and can offer effective places where people can be exposed to information addressing a wide range of development issues. The Malawi Museums Save Lives project illustrates how the multifaceted and dynamic nature of many museums can be utilised to transmit information in a community specific format and sustainable way. It demonstrates in particular how cultural spaces can act as an effective means of making available messages regarding key health issues, thus helping to make progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)⁸. This example looks at the challenge of malaria in Malawi and how museums address this issue.

⁷ International Council of Museums. See www.icom.museum/ethics.html#intro

⁸ Millennium Development Goals. See www.undp.org/mdg/goal6.shtml Target 6c: Halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Indicators: 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria, 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets, 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs.



School children draining stagnant water at Chimbende School in Mangochi district.

The museum’s education division’s work on activities aimed at achieving the MDGs include a focus on MDG target 6C, ‘to halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases’, through the lens of culture.

Background

Museums of Malawi (MoM) is a governmental department under the Malawian Ministry of Tourism, Wildlife and Culture, established in 1957. Its mandate is to disseminate information to the public regarding the cultural and natural heritage of Malawi. MoM regards 21st Century museums as being about people rather than objects, situating them as agents of change and vehicles for helping to deliver sustainable development programmes. MoM empowers its members to generate awareness on health issues currently affecting Malawi, including malaria and HIV and AIDS. The museum’s education divisions work on activities aimed at achieving the MDGs include a focus on MDG target 6C, ‘to halt and begin to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases’, through the lens of culture.

Issues identified

Poverty eradication is a primary aim of the Malawian government, yet poverty reduction and development is challenged by poor health of the citizens. It is on this premise that MoM began its malaria prevention outreach programme. Malaria is a serious health issue in Malawi, particularly affecting pregnant women and children. Few individuals, especially those at risk, are aware of adequate prevention methods, and they are therefore unable to detect or mount an early response to the disease. Inaccurate information surrounding hygiene and sanitation is a key part of this challenge. Lack of awareness can lead to the propagation of false beliefs, for example, that symptoms such as anaemia and convulsions are caused by ‘witchcraft’ rather than symptoms of malaria.

In such cases aspects of culture, such as superstition, can inhibit progress, but although culture may here be seen as a challenge, it also offers resources to derive solutions. Using cultural forces to overcome such misconceptions is a logical approach. Trusted cultural institutions, such as MoM, are in a valuable position to provide reliable and accurate information where it is needed most.



Malaria prevention message through drama at Kamwendo School in Mchinji district.

Action taken

MoM believes that the implementation of widespread information, education and communication (IEC) programmes are an effective means of disseminating life-saving information. The Museums Save Lives programme focuses on prevention measures through classroom activities. It employs a range of tools, including prevention methods demonstration, music and dance, drama, lectures by Ministry of Health and Population officials, community film screenings and the establishment of Anti-Malaria Community Clubs.

Developed by the education department of MoM, this latter programme chooses students in their final year of primary education in rural areas to lead anti-malaria clubs in schools. Students are placed in a strong position to use information and knowledge gained actively and to transfer knowledge via peer-to-peer learning. As well as working with students MoM also works with and seeks to involve the surrounding community.

This project was initially piloted in two areas and evaluated periodically by stakeholder meetings and teacher student surveys. Since then, MoM has been able to circulate information through 63 schools, distributing over 600 posters and pamphlets across seven districts, reaching approximately 53,000 people.

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Key points

As many Malawians do not receive adequate information about malaria, MoM works by disseminating understandable, accurate information while debunking myths and misconceptions. MoM uses existing institutions, such as schools, teachers, churches and community leaders to promote its programmes, creating early dialogue and discussion within schools and the wider community prior to the start of a programme.

In this particular context, many museums are able to provide information on mosquitoes and malaria through their entomology exhibitions. They are also well placed, on the basis of their cultural and anthropological research, to understand and work with the diverse cultural and educational backgrounds of target communities.

The museums' mandate to work with the cultures and people of Malawi provides the project with a trusted and established infrastructure on which to base its work. As a national institute the museum can continually monitor progress and implement follow-up programmes to build sustainability.

The use of locally specific knowledge of cultures, traditions and languages place museums and similar institutions in a well equipped situation to manage and disseminate information and deliver it in an accessible manner for schools and communities.



Mosquito treated nets given to best learners at Kaputa School in Mzimba district.

Potentially transferable learning

- **Use existing national cultural infrastructure and spaces to help disseminate important information.**
- **Empower cultural research organisations to address communities in a culturally applicable and effective manner.**
- **Use community programmes and existing community strengths and resources to promote action and awareness in combating health issues through community-based programmes.**
- **Make use of existing assets, such as museum exhibitions, to connect to, and create awareness of key development messages.**
- **Work with school children in primary education to promote effective learning at an early point in their education. This will promote sustainable knowledge sharing and peer-to-peer exchange.**



Demonstration on use of a treated mosquito net at St Matthews School in Chikwawa district.

A Commonwealth perspective on culture and development

The *Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development* highlights that many development projects are implemented in different cultural contexts to those in which they were conceived. The Statement suggests that development projects should be conceived in a culturally sensitive manner in order to promote effective and sustainable development practice. Museums as guardians of culture are uniquely equipped to address community based development approaches. As cultural spaces museums can also act as forums for debate and discussion. (See paragraph 8 of the Statement.)

Museums reflect the cultural expressions of people – both past and present. Investment in cultural spaces provides the opportunity for people to express themselves and share vital knowledge and information between one another at both a local and national level. As familiar, trusted guardians of cultures, museums are ideally placed to promote community based development projects and offer people opportunities to articulate their needs regarding pressing issues. (See paragraph 18 of the Statement.)

Cultural practitioners bring approachability to development processes. Folk forms, heritage and local knowledge can be utilised to work with the grain of communities and advance change. Museums are well positioned, with knowledge of such forms, to bridge the gap between communities and development practitioners. (See paragraph 19 of the Statement.)

Sustainable development can be promoted in communities through the use of indigenous cultural resources and languages. (See paragraph 23b of the Statement.)

‘Nothing, arguably is as important today in the political economy of development as an adequate recognition of political, economic and social participation and leadership of women. This is indeed a crucial aspect of “development as freedom.”’⁹

Nigeria

Women – the salt of the nation

In designing and implementing development interventions, a sound understanding of cultural norms and values, stories, and folklores is required. Change that seeks to work with and enhance elements of culture is more likely to be successful and sustainable than interventions that do not take account of cultural forces. Interactions between culture and gender particularly need to be understood and integrated.



Man on a dugout canoe on a river in Nigeria. © Commonwealth Secretariat.

Salt manufacturing remains the major means of livelihood for women in the communities around the Uburu Salt Lake area, and the same salt production methods have been in use for approximately 400 years.

Background

According to folklore, long ago in what is now Ebonyi State, Nigeria, a group of hunters and their dogs stopped by a lake to drink from the water. On discovering that it was a salt lake, the hunters reported back to the community, and the elders decided to consult an Oracle. The Oracle declared that the salt water would be a source of wealth for the community. According to the story, the Oracle decreed that salt processing and salt trade would be an exclusive reserve of women. While men would clear the bush, dig and remove mud from the pond and fetch firewood, married women alone were allowed to extract the lakes and ponds.

Modern day Ebonyi State is primarily an agricultural centre, producing banana, cassava and maize, but it is also rich in minerals, particularly salt, to the extent that is known as ‘the salt of the nation’. Salt manufacturing remains the major means of livelihood for women in the communities around the Uburu Salt Lake area, and the same salt production methods have been in use for approximately 400 years.

In seeking to improve salt production methods, this example illustrates the benefit of cultural sensitivity and demonstrates how traditions and values need to be adequately understood to achieve successful development.



Women involved in food production, Nigeria.

Issues identified

The traditional method of salt production has been to boil salt water taken from the lake using firewood. The cost of this fuel constitutes as much as 85% of the production cost¹⁰. In addition to the environmental impact of burning wood, this fuel cost is a considerable constraint on the income that could be generated for communities from salt production in the region. Finally, traditional methods of extraction are time-consuming and tedious, and involve the use of rice. They therefore limit the amount of rice available for other uses and restrict the time women have for other activities. Increased income and increased time for other roles could help to raise the status and power of women in the community.

A United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO) project therefore aimed to build the capacity of women salt producers in Uburu, Okposi and Idembia Ezza communities¹¹ by providing them with new equipment and methods.

Action taken

This project aimed to promote the use of solar stills and to reduce the use of firewood in order to increase environmental sustainability and reduce costs. UNIDO first recognised that it needed to work with the grain of tradition and culture. Due to the long historical role of women in salt production, illustrated by the story above, UNIDO resolved that women would be the lead stakeholders in its initiative. The women of Ebonyi formed into cooperatives to handle salt processing and iodisation. Participating women were initially provided with 15 to 17 solar stills for salt production.

Women have remained in charge of salt processing and UNIDO has introduced up-to-date equipment for better production. The men involved in the project have assisted the women by carrying out other tasks that do not cut across women's traditional roles in production.

According to UNIDO the project, "Is expected to eliminate 28,000 tons of firewood per year with current market price of 200 million Naira [US\$1.31m] generating an additional income of 167,000 Naira [US\$1,095] annually (against current annual income of 40,000 Naira [US\$262]) for each of the 1,200 women engaged in salt manufacturing."¹²

By recognising the important contribution women make to the industry and ensuring that their traditional roles were not threatened, but could instead be worked with to enhance their overall position in society, the implementation of the project met with little resistance and the new technology was integrated with ease.

The project has also engaged with traditional leaders as well as government officials in convincing the community of the income-generating value of the activity.

Key points

A culturally sensitive approach to even hard-edged and economically-driven industrial development projects can help ensure support from local communities and include community members in the shaping of projects. An approach that takes account of cultural norms, values and traditions heightens the chances of successful development.

In work that has a gender dimension the traditional roles of women and men must be understood, and change has more chance of success if it is based in the amplification of aspects of these rather than directly goes against these.

Traditional leaders can help foster engagement with communities and need to be understood and worked with.

Culture must not be viewed as a separate entity to the development process. Closer scrutiny of projects through a cultural lens can lead to innovative and progressive development projects. Cultural approaches to development should not be limited to cultural expressions but should also include trade, industrial and economic activities, which can also benefit greatly from a culturally sensitive approach.

Cultural approaches to development should not be limited cultural expressions but should also include trade, industrial and economic activities, which can also benefit greatly from a culturally sensitive approach.

Potentially transferable learning

- **Promote research, understanding of and engagement with the cultural heritage of communities, including appreciating the value of folklore, heritage and popular narratives.**
- **Understand, and build into ways of working, local interactions between cultural and gender norms and roles.**
- **Engage with traditional leaders to help mobilise communities.**
- **Explore the potential to blend contemporary, renewable and sustainable approaches with local, traditional ones.**



Demonstration of traditional cooking. © Commonwealth Secretariat.

A Commonwealth perspective on culture and development

The *Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development* states that because a consideration of cultural values, practices and resources has often been left out of development analyses, many development interventions have failed to achieve their objectives, and there therefore remains unrealised potential to help achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). (See paragraph 2 of the Statement.)

The enabling of physical and mental wellbeing and the fulfilment of people's potential should be the end goals of development. This includes providing people with a productive and culturally relevant work life. (See paragraph 7 of the Statement.)

Understanding worldviews, values, heritage and other aspects of culture should form the starting point for the initiation of development strategies. Development projects should first consider the cultural context of the community before there are attempts to intervene. (See paragraph 8 of the Statement.)

An understanding of cultural context helps us to appreciate, and work with, local nuances and differences, and better engage with, and win the support of, communities. (See paragraph 19 of the Statement.)

Local and indigenous cultural resources, languages and governance processes should be worked with to ensure more sustainable cultural, economic, environmental and social development. (See paragraph 23b of the Statement.)

¹² See www.unido.org/index.php?id=4835&ucg_no64=1/data/project/project.cfm&c=40658 Figures converted at market rates, November 2009.

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