UNESCO Country Strategy
for the Islamic Republic of Iran
2017 – 2021

UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office 2017
The designation employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area, or of its authorities or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Published by:
UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office for Afghanistan, I.R.Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan
Sa’adabad Historical and Cultural Complex
Zafaranieh, Tehran, 19894 I.R. of Iran
Telephone: +98-21-2275-135-7
Facsimile: +98-21-2275-1318
Website: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/tehran
FOREWORD

Ms. Esther Kuisch Laroche

UNESCO Representative to the Islamic Republic of Iran

Director of the UNESCO Cluster Office in Tehran covering Afghanistan, I.R. Iran, Pakistan and Turkmenistan

It is my pleasure to present the UNESCO Country Strategy (UCS for the Islamic Republic of Iran, covering the period 2017-2021. The UCS aims to situate UNESCO’s work in each Member State within the country’s development context. This document is grounded within the programmatic goals and planned outcomes of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for Iran (2017-2021), which coordinates and guides the activities of all the UN agencies in Iran.

The UCS for Iran, as is the UNDAF itself, is closely aligned with the 6th National Development Plan of Iran.

As a specialized agency within the UN system, UNESCO’s mission is to support the efforts of Member States in adhering to international standards and norms adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference, and fostering international co-operation between Member States, scientific bodies and civil society organizations involved in UNESCO’s fields of competence.

Building peace in the hearts and minds of people remains the primary mission of UNESCO. In collaboration with our partners in the Islamic Republic of Iran and worldwide, we hope to provide platforms for dialogue and cooperation that will enable the benefits of development to reach all, especially the most disadvantaged, women, youth and children, to shape a sustainable future for the world – a world of unity in diversity.

Esther Kuisch Laroche
Director and Representative
UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office
PART I: STRATEGIC VISION

As the key development strategy and planning instrument of the government, the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan 2016-2021 of the Islamic Republic of Iran is underpinned by three core pillars: **Developing a Resistance Economy; Progress in Science and Technology, and; Promoting Cultural Excellence.** The Plan aligns with the 20-year Vision 2025 document adopted in 2005, which offers a recipe for turning Iran into the number one economy in the region and one of the top 12 economies in the world by 2025. This vision document likewise foresees an investment of US$ 3.7 trillion by 2025 and presents various important goals in areas such as culture, politics, economy, defense, education and environment. The general policies of the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan include 80 clauses on the following key topics: Economy, Information and Communication Technology, Social Affairs, Defense and Security, Foreign Policy, Law and Justice, Culture and Science, Technology and Innovation.

The Plan predicts an annual economic growth rate of 8 percent. As outlined in the strategic document, the central focus of the government’s economic agenda for the next five years include reforming state-owned enterprises, strengthening the financial and banking sectors and improving the allocation and management of oil revenues.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2017-2021 provides a strategic framework for cooperation and a broad guide to facilitate coordinated planning and implementation of specific UN agency work programmes in partnership with the Government of Iran. Four main priority areas were identified in the UNDAF: Environment; Health; Resilient Economy, and; Drug Control.

UNESCO’s commitment is to support the Government of Iran in achieving its national priorities through its mandate in Education, Sciences, Culture and Communication and Information.

**Major Successes and Lessons Learnt**

Since the establishment of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office in 2003, the Office has introduced and expanded its programmes for the Education, Natural Sciences, Culture, and Communication and Information sectors. Key focus areas and partnerships have been created around strengthening the education sector, management of water resources, environmental sustainability, disaster preparedness and mitigation, preservation of cultural heritage and institutional capacity building of the media.

**Education**

Currently, UNESCO supports the Islamic Republic of Iran in its efforts to achieve inclusive and quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, in the areas of quality education statistics, analysis and reporting; literacy and lifelong learning; technical and vocational education and training, education for sustainable development; and ICT in education. One key aspect of UNESCO’s work is to disseminate internationally tested best practices and innovative ideas on education among policy makers and practitioners.

As the lead United Nations agency for education, UNESCO is strategically positioned to support the Government in the achievement of its educational goals. UNESCO has successfully built crucial partnerships with national stakeholders, in particular with the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and the Ministry of Education, as well as with development partners, civil society, the private sector and sister UN agencies, such as UNICEF.
The Office is provided technical backstopping by experts in the Regional Office in Bangkok and the Headquarters in Paris, as well as various Category 1 Institutes and Centres, thus bringing to bear the full range of UNESCO’s expertise in education. In this regard, the fruitful cooperation of the Tehran Office with UNESCO’s Regional Bureau for Education, UNESCO Category 1 and 2 Institutes and Centres, UNESCO Chairs for Education and educationalists should be maintained and further strengthened. More advocacy should be done highlight the critical importance of quality education for all, for the achievement of Iran’s development goals.

Natural Sciences
In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNESCO helps to strengthen national capacities in sciences and technology. UNESCO provides data, advice and technical assistance to support governments in formulating and implementing effective science and technology policies. Through its natural sciences programmes – especially related to water and biodiversity - UNESCO advocates for environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources. Partnering with Iranian authorities, UNESCO’s Natural Sciences programme promotes international scientific cooperation and links researchers with policy-makers and the private sector.

UNESCO creates links to information on the scientific causes and responses to natural phenomena leading to disasters. With partners such as the ISDR (UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction), UNDP and the International Institute on Earthquake Engineering and Seismology (IIEES), ongoing cooperation has been developed with Iranian institutions engaged in research, risk mitigation and risk preparedness, and disaster management.

In recent years, UNESCO led UN-wide efforts to build Iranian science and technology capacities for the benefit of social, economic and environmental development. Assessments of the status of Science and Technology within the Islamic Republic of Iran were undertaken with the Supreme Council on Cultural Revolution. Advocacy initiatives have broadened the knowledge base of policy-makers, researchers, curriculum developers, officers and private sector representatives on scientific and technological opportunities.

UNESCO provides support, advocacy and best practices for science parks. These parks are a high priority of the Iranian government and a successful initiative for the transfer of science and technology.

Regional and international cooperation in the field of natural sciences could be further promoted through regional/sub-regional programmes in thematic areas of interest and relevance to the Islamic Republic of Iran, such as transboundary waters, seismic risk analysis, science and technology education through UNESCO Chairs and Category 2 institutes. UNESCO could further leverage the expertise of its Regional Science Office in Jakarta, various intergovernmental programmes and UNESCO-affiliated institutes to further promote international cooperation, the sharing of best practices and capacity building in areas related to the environment and sustainable development.

Culture
UNESCO leads international efforts to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage. The organization focuses on promoting cultural diversity by safeguarding heritage in its various dimensions and enhancing cultural expressions; promoting social cohesion by fostering pluralism, intercultural dialogue, and a culture of peace, as well as securing the central role of culture in
sustainable development; and working to preserve humanity’s irreplaceable riches, its diversity and shared heritage. To preserve the significant cultural heritage of the Islamic Republic of Iran and to foster a cultural environment conducive to peace and development, UNESCO promotes the adoption and implementation of UNESCO conventions and recommendations for culture. This includes building knowledge, capacity and networks to safeguard both tangible and intangible heritage, as well as encouraging intercultural dialogue for peace.

In support of national efforts to improve Iran’s network of museums, UNESCO has trained museum managers on best practices for collection management, heritage conservation and promotion, as well as the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural property.

Iran currently has 22 UNESCO World Heritage Sites. The preservation of these properties is a long-term commitment that has benefited from a strong partnership between Iran and UNESCO. The management of the sites has been strengthened through training and capacity building of national experts, site managers, and policy makers. UNESCO is supporting the development of a national strategy for sustainable tourism in Iran and has provided training to World Heritage Sites managers on how to incorporate tourism into their management plans and effectively plan for tourism, while ensuring the conservation and protection of the sites.

In 2016, the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office also started to support the Iranian Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization in building national capacities for the protection of underwater cultural heritage. Iran ratified the 2001 Convention in 2009, but the country has not been able to implement the Convention due to a lack of awareness and capacity. In November 2016, the Office organized a three-day training workshop in Korg Port, on underwater archeology with a focus on the 2001 Convention. A follow-up practical training for marine archeologists is planned for early 2018.

In order to effectively assist the Islamic Republic of Iran in meeting its national goals and targets vis-à-vis tourism, UNESCO should concentrate its technical assistance on the development of sustainable tourism and the conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage. Community engagement is key in developing cultural tourism and protecting and safeguarding tangible and intangible heritage. Engaging local populations in tourism development can build stronger and more resilient communities, help communities preserve their culture and develop new skills, lift people from poverty, promote gender empowerment and youth participation and help protect the environment. In order to achieve this, proper planning is required as well as a management framework for ensuring and enabling sustainable development and community engagement.

**Communication and Information**

To build inclusive knowledge societies, UNESCO focuses on the human dimensions of the digital divide – cultural and linguistic diversity of contents, access and empowerment of civil society. UNESCO’s Communication and Information programme in the Islamic Republic of Iran promotes equitable access to information and knowledge, including for persons with disabilities, capacity building of media professionals with a focus on science journalism for sustainable development, and strengthening Media and Information Literacy competencies. Particular attention is given to cross-cutting issues and the role of media and ICT for education, science and culture. Through the Memory of the World Programme, UNESCO also supports the preservation of, and access to, documentary heritage in Iran.

In partnership with the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD), UNESCO builds institutional and technical capacities of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
Broadcasting (IRIB), including through training for journalism and reporting on key issues, such as water management, climate change, culture, and disaster risk reduction.

UNESCO works closely with the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO and the National Library and Archives to identify and preserve Iranian documentary heritage through the Memory of the World Programme. Nine documents have been added to UNESCO’s Memory of the World Register to date.

Partnering with the Education Sector, the CI programme develops innovative, cross-cutting approaches to advance media and information literacy in schools, through teacher training and media education.

Contributing to the UNDAF, UNESCO promotes policies for socio-economic equity in access to knowledge and information, and innovative use of ICT for development, with a focus on the role of ICTs in empowering people with disabilities.

As the only United Nations agency with a mandate in communication and information, UNESCO needs to focus its efforts in fostering information and communication capacities for universal access to knowledge. In this regard, capacity building interventions must target practicing journalists, students of journalism and national media institutions. Key areas requiring further capacity building support include quality reporting on sustainable development and environmental issues, accurate and non-discriminatory reporting, access to public information and preservation of media archives. UNESCO should widely disseminate and promote guidance materials developed by UNESCO such as the Model Policy for Inclusive ICTs in Education for Persons with Disabilities and Guidelines on the Inclusion of Learners with Disabilities in Open and Distance Learning as they can inform the development of national policies and action plans.
PART II: COOPERATION FRAMEWORK AND PARTNERSHIPS

UNESCO’s envisaged interventions are anchored on the core programming principles of the new UNDAF guidance and Iran’s 6th National Development Plan.

The broad goals and concrete objectives of the international community – as set out in the internationally agreed development goals, particularly the Sustainable Development Goals – underpin all UNESCO’s strategies and activities. UNESCO’s unique competencies in education, the sciences, culture, and communication and information contribute towards the realization of those goals.

UNESCO’s work in the Islamic Republic of Iran is guided by the Organization’s mission to “contribute to the building of peace, the eradication of poverty, sustainable development and intercultural dialogue through education, the sciences, culture, communication and information”.

Further, UNESCO’s cooperation and technical assistance framework promote inter-sectoral approaches in formulating responses to complex development issues through UNESCO’s five core functions: a laboratory of ideas, a standard setter, a clearinghouse, a capacity-builder for Member States and a catalyst for international cooperation.

In order to identify opportunities for joint programming and resource mobilization, UNESCO actively builds and sustains strategic partnerships with government counterparts, UN agencies, the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO, development partners, private sector, civil society organizations, UNESCO Headquarters, UNESCO Regional Bureaus, UNESCO Category 1 and 2 Institutes, UNESCO Institute for Statistics, and UNESCO Chairs.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, UNESCO provides technical guidance and operational assistance to government counterparts, UN system partners and the Iranian National Commission for UNESCO on the operationalization of its mandate and strategies to support the delivery of results.

As can be seen in this cooperation framework, UNESCO’s programmatic interventions are fully aligned with the goals and targets of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2017-2021, Iran’s 20-year Vision 2025 document, the Sixth Five-Year Development Plan 2016-2021 and the overall framework of the Sustainable Development Goals 2015-2030 as well as the UNESCO Global Medium-Term Strategy 2014-2021 and Regional Support Strategies for its various sectors.

UNESCO’s programming for 2017-2021 in the Islamic Republic of Iran will specifically contribute to three main UNDAF focus areas:

- **Environment**
  - Integrated natural resource management, and;
  - Low carbon economy and climate change

- **Health**
  - Prevention and control of HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases, and;
  - Promoting health throughout the course of life

- **Resilient Economy**
  - Inclusive growth, poverty eradication and social welfare;
  - Food security, sustainable agriculture and improved nutrition;
  - Natural disaster management;
  - Sustainable employment, and;
  - Sustainable tourism and cultural heritage
**Major Programme I: Education.**

Under the **Health** pillar, UNESCO will focus its interventions on the following key areas:

- HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care;
- Institutionalization of health promotion and development;
- Maternal and neonatal health;
- Child and adolescent health, and nutrition;
- Meeting the health needs of vulnerable groups such as the elderly and the disabled, and;
- Food safety.

To achieve the health outcomes articulated in this pillar, UNESCO’s Education sector will:

- Support awareness raising and development of health curricula for MoE targeting adolescents and youth;
- Provide technical support to necessary assessments/data collections in schools and communities to ensure evidence-based interventions targeting adolescents in schools, literacy classes and vocational training centers;
- Promote development of training materials for specific groups of literacy learners, vocational training students and other low-literate population groups, and;
- Support the formal education bodies to develop life skills training materials which cover healthy life style and nutrition.

Under the **Resilient Economy** pillar, UNESCO’s interventions will concentrate on the following:

- Promoting inclusive growth;
- Addressing poverty eradication;
- Supporting social welfare, including on quality education, child poverty, child welfare, and lifelong learning;
- Food security;
- Sustainable agriculture;
- Rural livelihoods;

In concrete terms, UNESCO’s Education sector will:

- Support South-South and regional cooperation on promoting quality education for all;
- Support the Government in the development of policies and strategies to provide quality education for all;
- Support capacity development for data collection and analysis, curriculum development and organize fora for best practices and knowledge sharing;
- Provide irrigation literacy for farmers and inhabitants of rural areas through the use of open source mobile learning opportunities;
- Develop and promote educational mobile apps for children and young adolescents on disaster preparedness with a focus on earthquakes;
- Promote a knowledge-based society through enhancing the culture of entrepreneurship, improved understanding of labour market needs and provision of market driven quality vocational skills training;
- Advocate for a focus on women and youth in the promotion of home-based businesses, handicraft production, etc;
UNESCO’s work under the Health and Resilient Economy pillars will support the Government of Iran in meeting various Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

**Major Programme II: Natural Sciences**

Under the Environment pillar, UNESCO will focus and target its support to the following priority areas:
- Sustainable water resources management;
- Biodiversity conservation;
- Sustainable management of the marine and coastal environment;
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Addressing air pollution, and;
- Promoting renewable energy.

Concretely, UNESCO will leverage the strengths of its Natural Science programme in order to:
- Promote the generation and sharing of knowledge in relation to integrated natural resource management;
- Support capacity-building through international scientific collaboration for the protection and sustainable management of the water bodies, their coasts and their ecologically related lands, terrestrial ecosystems, biodiversity and freshwater security;
- Coordinate and catalyze international collaborative projects on integrated natural resource management;
- Identify and support the designation of UNESCO biosphere reserves as site-specific examples of sustainable development;
- Promote the use of biosphere reserves as learning places for sustainable development and for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and;
- Assist the government of Iran in fostering wide application of renewable energies, especially by means of establishing science park(s) on renewable energies.

Meanwhile, under the Resilient Economy pillar, UNESCO will prioritize the below areas:
- Investing in disaster risk reduction taking into account the Sendai Framework;
- Understanding disaster risk;
- Effective disaster and emergency preparedness and response;
- Entrepreneurship and business/social enterprise development, and;
- Science and technology transfer;

UNESCO’s Natural Science sector shall:
- Help build capacities and foster partnerships so that science and technology can serve to mitigate the effects of natural disasters and reduce vulnerability;
- Promote disaster risk reduction and preparedness related to natural hazards;
- Raise awareness among the population on disaster preparedness;
- Build the capacity to effectively report on Disaster Risk Reduction issues;
- Promote stronger cooperation and partnerships between the media and key stakeholder groups in disaster preparedness and DRR efforts;
UNESCO’s Communication and Information programme will specifically support the Major Programme V: Communication and Information (Partnerships for the Goals).

UNESCO’s planned initiatives under the Resilient Economy pillar will help the Government of Iran in realizing nearly every Sustainable Development Goal, particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

**Major Programme IV: Culture**

Under the Resilient Economy pillar, UNESCO’s support to the Government of Iran will direct its efforts on the following priority concerns:

- Development of sustainable tourism,
- Preservation and promotion of cultural heritage, and;
- Combating the illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

Through its Culture programme, UNESCO will undertake the following actions:

- Support the government in achieving its goal of increased tourism by developing and promoting sustainable cultural tourism;
- Support the protection of national and UNESCO World Heritage Sites;
- Support the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage;
- Promote creative industries, in particular handicrafts;
- Promote the involvement of the private sector in the restoration of historical buildings and sites, and;
- Conduct capacity building activities in collaboration with UNODC on combatting the illicit trafficking of cultural property.

UNESCO’s planned initiatives under the Resilient Economy pillar will help the Government of Iran achieve SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

**Major Programme V: Communication and Information**

UNESCO’s Communication and Information programme will specifically support the Environment and Resilient Economy pillars by:

- Supporting raising public awareness for behavior change on water consumption, through capacity building for media, communication professionals and supporting curricula development for educators on sustainable natural resource management, and;
- Supporting the Government in empowering persons with disabilities and enhancing their social and economic integration.

UNESCO’s work under the Environment and Resilient Economy pillars will assist the Government of Iran in realizing nearly every Sustainable Development Goal, particularly SDGs 1 (No Poverty), 2 (Zero Hunger), 3 (Good Health and Well-Being), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities), 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), 15 (Life on Land), 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

PART III: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This section outlines the approach to monitoring and evaluation of programme implementation, with a strong focus on monitoring, data collection, analysis and reporting as the 2030 Agenda has strongly increased data demands. Monitoring and evaluation is critical to assess progress towards achievement of the outcomes underlying UNESCO support, but also for accountability.

For the UNDAF 2017-2021 cycle, a Results Matrix was developed which includes indicators of achievement. In addition, the Statistical Centre of Iran was commissioned by the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation Group to undertake a baseline study and compile baseline data for the current UNDAF cycle.

Results-Based Management and Results-Based Budgeting principles are being applied to all activities of the UNESCO Tehran Cluster Office, whether funded by regular programme budget or from extra budgetary resources by UNESCO’s organizational units at the various stages of the programme cycle, from programming throughout implementation and monitoring to evaluation and reporting. This is enabling a process through which results are formulated, programme achievements are monitored, decision-making is better informed, reporting is facilitated and transparency and accountability are ensured.

Results-Based Monitoring is relevant both at the activity level, project level and at higher levels. In addition to the above, the responsible officer for a UNESCO Programme and Budget Document (C/5) expected result needs to routinely review if the results achieved at the activity and project levels contribute in effect to the achievement of the C/5 expected result. Thereafter the responsible officer of a Major Programme needs to routinely review if the results achieved at the C/5 level contribute in effect to the achievement of strategic objective(s) thus ensuring the coherence of the results chain.

UNESCO will measure progress against available UNDAF indicators and report achievements to the UNDAF Monitoring and Evaluation Team and the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office, as required. UNESCO will also prepare periodic results-focused monitoring reports for Member States, donors and partners, as required, and publish bi-annual activity reports.