



Gjirokastra Artisan Incubation Centre



Artisan incubator © UNDP Albania

Over 250 artisans have benefited from the centre in and around Gjirokastra, including areas near Tepelene, Permet and Delvine. In all, over 500 micro- and small entrepreneurs benefited from participation and/or attendance at the annual artisan fair organised

BACKGROUND

The Historic Centre of Gjirokastra is inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List, jointly with the Historic Centre of Berat. Gjirokastra, is home to 35,000 people. The population lives in either the historic upper town, which is hundreds of years old, or the modern lower town, dating from the 1970s. Gjirokastra has suffered from a lack of investment, but efforts are under way to revitalize the historic town and restore its buildings.

Gjirokastra is also home to approximately 200 artisans specializing in local handicrafts and is consequently one of the major artisan centres of Albania. The artisans enjoy a mutual sense of familiarity and cooperation with one another, but they suffer from a lack of organized sales channels.

PROCESS

To address the issue of having a sales point and a production centre that would also permit the transmission of skills from one generation to the next, it was proposed that an incubation centre be set up by the Joint Programme (JP).

The JP team identified a previously inhabitable building, and developed designs for renovations works which were conducted by UNESCO and UNDP. With funds-in-trust from the Albanian Government given for the restoration of the historic center of the town, UNESCO worked on the exterior of the building, while UNDP contributed with MDG-F JP funds to rehabilitate the interior.

Outcomes

Since the building's inauguration, it has acted as a hub for local artists and artisans that have also benefitted by various training on product development. The centre is being operated by a local NGO, the Gjirokastra Conservation and Development Organization (GCDO) and has subsequently attracted the attention of other supporters of cultural heritage activities. Now the building houses a number of 'add-on' projects, which would be unable to operate without the common space allocation. Some examples include an iso-polyphny intangible heritage project, financed by a Telecom company, and inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List for Intangible Cultural Heritage, and an annual artisan fair, run with support from the British Council.

In all, over 250 artisans have benefited from the centre in and around Gjirokastra, including artisans from areas near Tepelene, Permet and Delvine. A total of over 500 small entrepreneurs benefited from participation in the annual artisan fair, which is growing ever-larger as the town further develops its arts and crafts in realization of its cultural tourism potential.

The artisan centre in Gjirokastra also sparked off other donor-financed projects aimed at renewed support for the artisan community in southern Albania.





Cultural marketing strategy

11 Nëntor 2010
Tirana International Hotel

- Five new tools for cultural marketing produced
- Visit Albania Year 2012, celebrating the centenary of the country's independence developed

BACKGROUND

In the past, Albania's rich and diverse cultural heritage has often been undervalued, at times even suppressed and neglected, particularly during the country's long years of isolation. Today, two UNESCO World Heritage Properties and one element inscribed on the Intangible Cultural Heritage Representative List testify to Albania's role as a place where different peoples and civilizations have harmoniously coexisted over nearly three millennia.

Albania is well situated to harness culture as an instrument in shaping a new national identity, particularly as its government, economy and people move towards greater participation in international fora. Albania's diverse heritage should be promoted for social, economic and human development, however, fundamental changes are still needed at all levels of government and society to make this idea resonate. Most importantly, there is a need for an increased national awareness of how culture can be used as a tool for sustainable development and, conversely, how sustainable development can serve as a catalyst for culture.

PROCESS

The Culture Marketing Strategy, developed under the MDG-F Joint Programme (JP), is designed to tackle these problems. The Strategy provides technical assistance and support to the Albanian National Tourism Agency to develop action plans on how to utilize Albania's cultural legacy to increase both tourism and international visibility. The JP has already instituted new marketing tools (products, activities and events) which have heightened the awareness of clients abroad about Albanian culture (such clients include Albanian embassies, foreign cultural institutions, NGOs, and businesses).



Cultural Marketing © UNDP Albania

Five of these tools have been selected and produced on the basis of their effectiveness under the culture marketing strategy and action plan to promote Albania as a society of cultural understanding and religious tolerance. A donor mapping plan in the area of cultural heritage has also been developed by the programme team and has served as a complementary guidance tool for future work.

These background studies, along with other main strategic documents of the Albanian Government, have been accompanied by frequent stakeholder meetings in Albania, as well as a market survey in Western countries that will help attract visitors to Albania.

Outcomes The Year One Action Plan (2011) will launch Albania's cultural heritage marketing in primary and secondary markets, as well as globally, through the promotion of 'Visit Albania Year 2012'. This year-long celebration coincides with the centenary of Albanian independence, which was achieved in 1912. It will galvanize the tourism industry behind the national centenary celebration, boost local pride in heritage, and ensure that a positive cultural image of Albania is projected internationally. The marketing tools produced have been made available to Albania's Ministry for Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, the National Agency for Tourism, and also the Ministry for Foreign Affairs which is currently in the process of developing its own cultural diplomacy strategy, largely as a result of this initiative.



First-ever MA programme in Cultural Resource Management in Tirana University

BACKGROUND

Despite Albania's skilled cultural heritage workforce, very few post-graduate training and educational opportunities exist for practitioners. As a result, Albania's national cultural heritage industry remains stagnant and shows little sign of alignment with international standards. Furthermore, the lack of domestic educational options means that those professionals who can afford it are forced to seek additional education abroad.

PROCESS

The need for the establishment of an MA Programme was identified at the inception phase of the MDG-F Joint Programme (JP). The architects of the future MA Programme anticipated obstacles with respect to accreditation of the programme, based on previous experience. Therefore, the JP team made sure to identify, from the outset, the main stakeholders involved in the management of cultural sites. These main stakeholders included, among others: the Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports; the Ministry of Education and Science; other universities public or private which had shown an interest; and other institutions.

A number of meetings were organized at the initial stages which helped the team identify the main issues, take stock of the needs of the cultural sector and the capacities of the educational sector to initiate and sustain this programme. In order to make sure the Joint Programme had 'all the facts' about the main dilemmas surrounding the creation of the MA programme, it was decided that a feasibility study should be conducted. On the basis of the recommendations of a local consultant hired through a competitive process, the JP partners decided to house the MA programme in the University of Tirana, Faculty of History and Philology.

The main issue raised was the lack of the local academic capacities to cover some of the courses in the curriculum. To respond to this need in the short term, visiting professors were invited to lecture.

CRM/MA-Program in Tirana University © UNDP-Albania



In the long term and with the view to keep the programme aligned with the current relevant discussions and developments, MA premises were provided with the technical equipment for distance learning and lecturing.

One issue raised was gender parity. The designers prioritized ensuring a balance between male and female students, in order to promote gender equality among graduates of the programme, who aim to be the next generation of managers in the Albanian cultural heritage industry.

Outcomes

On October 25, 2010, the Masters programme was launched in the Faculty of History and Philology at the University of Tirana, which possesses a long-standing reputation in the in-service training of cultural heritage specialists. Mainstreaming the programme in the regular State higher education system guaranteed its sustainability while making it accessible to a wider range of interested students and future managers.

The MA programme has managed to mobilize the quality professors from a number of related faculties, thereby reflecting the interdisciplinarity of the MA programme. It has also been able to provide scholarships to Albanian-speaking students from outside the country.

The first year of the first ever MA Programme on Culture Resource Management was concluded with a study tour Tirana – Athens, which enabled the students to experience first hand and discuss on the various aspects related to the cultural and historical sites and institutions visited. This was an enriching practice both for the MA students and the university.

With its formal launch on 25 October 2010, the MA Programme on Culture Resource Management was accredited and it could accommodate only 50% of the applications received during its first year of operation.

