



Festivals of cultural diversity (Nouakchott), gospel music (Atar) and traditional music (Kiffa)



A dance during the traditional music festival at Kiffa © UNESCO/Baouba Ould Mohamed-Naffe

BACKGROUND

The JP identified the need to create a dynamic cultural event that would promote the safeguarding of intangible heritage and boost the cultural industry. Such a festival could improve living conditions for the practitioners of traditional and/or endangered artisan knowledge. Mauritania has never had an annual event like this, apart from the Nomadic Music Festival which was organized in cooperation with the French government, but has not taken place for many years. The envisaged festivals aimed to reintroduce endangered art forms into national culture, each form representing a specific segment of society: Haratin art (former slaves), art of the griots, and arts of different ethnic communities in Mauritania.

The JP sought to fight poverty by targeting women, youth, and people from the poorest segments of society as its primary beneficiaries. These groups were taken into account in the conception and design phases of the project as well as during its implementation.

PROCESS

The Ministries of Culture and Tourism were involved in organizing all these events, along with cultural associations, groups of artisans, cooperatives, women's and youth associations, and UN agencies.

Meetings were held with the beneficiaries of the programme to explain the objectives and methodology for carrying out activities.

Communication campaigns preceded and accompanied each of the festivals, and their results are still being broadcasted on television. To organize each Festival, in-depth discussions were held with their direct beneficiaries in order to procure their technical advice and determine their role in their implementation.

These festivals have attracted large audiences, merchants and service providers, thus promoting domestic tourism.

There are now a dozen regional and national festivals held each year in Mauritania.

These festivals have attracted large audiences, merchants and service providers, thus promoting domestic tourism. Festival organizers are also turning professional and starting to hire staff and make money from their efforts. Furthermore, most of the JP's direct and indirect beneficiaries are women.

The project enjoyed wide visibility. At least two of the festivals were the subject of televised reality show competitions, which were a great success, helping to raise awareness about the festivals and attracting young talents to participate. Through television, radio and newspapers, the MDG-F is clearly identified as a promoter of culture in the country. These festivals have greatly improved the image of the UN agencies associated with cultural development activities in Mauritania.

However, the most important change to date has been the government authorities' raised awareness about the potential and importance of these events. The government now acknowledges that these festivals contribute to national cohesion and to a better coexistence between communities.

Outcomes

