



Theme 1 Flagship Initiative:

“The Contribution of Arts, Culture and Heritage to Peace”

1. Supporting the Arts
2. Promoting Culture
3. Safeguarding Heritage for Sustainable Peace in Africa

<i>Title</i>	Supporting the Arts, Promoting Culture & Safeguarding Heritage for sustainable peace in Africa
<i>Thematic and best practices forum</i>	Theme 1: “The Contribution of Arts, Culture and Heritage to Peace”
<i>UNESCO Regional Office focal points</i>	Adele NIBONA (UNESCO Abuja) & Guiomar ALONSO (UNESCO Dakar)
<i>Geographical scope</i>	Africa
<i>Synopsis and objective</i>	<p>The theme ‘The Contribution of Arts, Culture and Heritage to Peace’ echoes, celebrates, and accompanies the African Union Year 2021: ‘Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want’. It resonates with Aspiration 5 of Agenda 2063 and with 2021 International Year of Creative Economy for Sustainable Development. It explores recent findings on how the arts, culture and heritage interplay with conflict, reconciliation, and efforts to build more peaceful societies in Africa. It also highlights ways in which artists, creative and heritage practitioners and local communities are contributing to prevent, mitigate and support the recovery from the effects of conflict, inequality and the COVID-19 pandemic and thus contributing to peace.</p> <p>Culture contributes to sustainable development, integration and peace in many ways: 1) through economic activities such as creative industries (CCIs), sustainable tourism, cultural heritage and more; 2) providing a set of values that shape actions and behaviors of individuals and communities at various jurisdictional levels, and 3) through the physical context and the history of the different forms of tangible and intangible heritage.</p> <p>This thematic area aims to explore and showcase the contribution of Culture through three sub-themes in line with the key areas highlighted by the AU Year.</p> <p>Through these three-fold subthemes, linked to the theme: “Supporting the Arts, Promoting Culture & Safeguarding Heritage to achieve sustainable peace”, existing and potential partners of UNESCO, the African Union and the Angolan Authorities have the opportunity to unite their forces to support African countries by: 1) responding to the challenges that the continent’s tangible and intangible heritage are facing; 2) fueling cultural and creative economies and its actors - especially women; and 3) promoting pan-Africanism through a positive new narrative for Africa.</p> <p>This flagship initiative - and the actions taken under it - responds to the concerns raised by the diverse actors and institutions that make up the African arts, culture and heritage sector, answering to their urgent plea to integrate Culture into COVID-19 relief and recovery plans. These initiatives will acknowledge and support the specific nature of cultural and artistic work and the value of cultural and natural heritage. Furthermore, they will encourage innovative practices and help to move towards shared policies that integrate culture into peace-building strategies and programmes.</p>

<p><i>Axes of intervention and theory of change</i></p>	<p>Axis 1: Supporting the Arts</p>
	<p>The support of African artists as well as cultural and creative industries for an inclusive and sustainable economic recovery</p>
	<p>The arts and culture sector and the creative industries in Africa are among those hit the hardest by the pandemic crisis, a crisis that is cutting off revenues of individuals, businesses, and organizations particularly in the live/performing arts, audio-visual, cinema and visual arts. Furthermore, the ‘forced’ digital transition is creating new challenges as artists find it harder and harder to earn revenue for their online performances and in particular, this is hindering women’s participation in cultural activities.</p> <p>The <i>AU Year 2021: ‘Arts, Culture and Heritage’ concept note</i> recognises the role of cultural and creative industries (CCIs) in the socio-economic development of the African continent, notably through job creation - especially for young people - and social inclusion, and highlights that the context shaped by the COVID-19 pandemic provides an opportunity to revise the continent’s priorities and contribute to building resilient and inclusive societies inspired by the Ubuntu Philosophy: ‘I am because you are; you are because I am’. The contribution of artists and creatives in curbing the pandemic has been acknowledged throughout Africa. At the same time, paradoxically, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the weakness and structural shortcomings of the culture and creative sectors and highlighted the precarious and vulnerable working conditions of artists and other culture actors. The culture sector should not be left out the recovery plans, as it is a full-fledged economic sector requiring attention, as well as a sector that contributes with meaning and purpose to face the crisis. For this reason, building on existing achievements or policy frameworks at the regional level to stimulate the cultural and creative economy will be key.</p>
	<p>Key outputs of axis 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Support artists, CCI practitioners and institutions in Africa, including investing in TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) 1.2 Promote gender equality and support women in the arts and culture sectors 1.3 Reinforce the professionalization and certification of educational programmes in culture and the arts, including Technical and Vocational Education and Training

Axis 2: Promoting Culture

Reengaging with history, arts and cultural values to promote a new narrative for Africa

The integration of African cultures and history in school curricula as well as museum education and outreach, serves to create a new narrative for Africa and to promote pan-Africanism, as shown by the UNESCO initiative on teaching the General History of Africa (GHA). To create this new narrative it is crucial to strengthen the link between culture and education, to build on the digitalization of cultural contents, to provide online access to culture and to promote linguistic diversity. This also calls for revisiting African history and changing the narrative when it comes to the role of women in the history of Africa or sharing new evidence on how African history was written and conceived in thousands of ancient manuscripts written in African languages.

The 2015 UNESCO Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections, their diversity and their role in society, emphasizes that museums are not only important for preservation, research, communication and education, but that they also contribute to social cohesion and are places for debate. In this sense, they are ideal places for reengaging with history, arts and cultural values to promote a new narrative for Africa, at a national, but also a regional and international level. Africa has an incredibly rich heritage and new museums have opened on the continent. However, many of them are still under equipped. If the number of museums worldwide is estimated at 104,000, according to UNESCO's report on the impact of COVID-19 on museums, less than 1% of them are located in Africa. Furthermore, only 5% of museums in Africa could provide online cultural content during the lockdown due to the digital gap.

Much remains to do, including fostering a wider engagement of the development community towards the cultural sector. The new narrative must also support a stronger voice of Africa within the global policy dialogue, including at the UN level, notably in preparation of the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies (Mondiacult) in September 2022. It is also crucial to foster the ratification and implementation of the Charter for African Renaissance, to stimulate the development and adaptation of cultural policies at different jurisdictional levels.

Key outputs of axis 2:

- 2.1. Contribute to the integration of the GHA into education
- 2.2. Deliver projects and support creators and thinkers who provide a fresh look on the history of the continent
- 2.3. Safeguard and valorize ancient manuscripts
- 2.4. Support the new generation of museums in Africa

Axis 3: Safeguarding Heritage

Protecting and promoting African cultural and natural heritage

African heritage, in its diverse forms, is playing an important role in fostering resilience as it constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities disrupted by socio-economic and environmental changes. Shared heritage is also proving an essential tool for peacebuilding during armed conflict and peace-making processes at the heart of some of the contemporary conflicts in the continent.

Nevertheless, a pressing challenge today is the steady flow of African heritage objects that are illicitly leaving the African continent, and the return of objects long lost. The turmoil caused by ongoing conflicts and the COVID-19 shutdown is making illicit trafficking of archaeological and ethnographic objects from the Sahel, Central Africa and many other parts of the continent thrive. UNESCO has put in place various instruments to fight more effectively against illegal traffic and to facilitate the return and restitution of cultural property to its country of origin. UNESCO will continue to support the efforts of African countries to better train national professionals and to legislate the prevention of the illicit trafficking of cultural property. A top-level commitment to stop the loss of African heritage is urgent along with the evolving discussions and development on the return and restitution of cultural property in line with Agenda 2063 Aspiration 5 and Agenda 2030 objective and target 16.4. The achievement of these agenda and commitments constitutes a significant contribution to a culture of peace.

Natural heritage conservation is a critical contributor to peace. African natural heritage includes some of the most iconic wildlife habitats and landscapes on the planet. Yet, due to the pandemic many of these parks, biosphere reserves and World Heritage sites are closed, income for park management is reduced, local communities and businesses are negatively affected. Reduced funding, restrictions on the operations of conservation agencies, and elevated human threats to nature are new challenges for Africa's conservation efforts. The protection of natural heritage is key for peacekeeping, as it is intertwined with traditional management systems, traditional knowledge systems, ways of life and cultural identities that are threatened when resources become scarce and thus create political tensions, causing not only environmental issues but also impacting demographic imbalances, forcing migration and displacement and affecting cultural identities. Moreover, in order to reduce the risk of future pandemics it is urgent to give a new thrust in the regulation of unsafe wildlife trade practices, the development of more resilient conservation models and wide-spread approaches that balance the needs of human and natural habitats.

Preventing conflict, reducing risks and building peace through the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Africa

Intangible cultural heritage, encompassing rituals, practices, oral traditions and traditional knowledge, is fundamental to cultural identity and fostering peaceful, just and inclusive societies based on the respect for human rights – notably as part of the reform of the UN peacebuilding architecture. Through its safeguarding in Africa, intangible cultural heritage can allow communities, states and development actors to pursue culturally relevant pathways towards inclusive participation, peaceful cohabitation, dispute prevention or resolution, and sustainable security and peacebuilding.

Many practices and expressions of intangible cultural heritage in Africa have peacebuilding at their core and can serve to bring communities together around shared cultural values. Intangible heritage conservation enables a sense of common identity and mutual understanding, and it protects cultural rights. Intangible heritage conservation and promotion can also help communities transcend and address differences based on gender, colour, ethnicity, origin or class, including among displaced and marginalized communities.

Safeguarding activities in post-conflict situations can also bring together different parties around a project of reconstruction, promoting reconciliation between and within communities. In addition, sustaining youth employment and employability is key for the prevention of violent extremism.

Moreover, by strengthening social cohesion, intangible cultural heritage can contribute to community-based resilience to natural disasters and climate change, supporting communities in their capacity to reduce risk, respond to and recover from various types of emergencies faced by the continent.

Key outputs of axis 3:

- 3.1. Protect and promote World heritage in Africa, including the development of nomination files, the removal of sites from the WH in Danger list and capacity building
- 3.2. Rethink the role of heritage in the process of strengthening peace and security, using cultural heritage as one of the main mediation tools in conflict prevention and resolution¹ as well as in the post-conflict recovery, and promote the ratification of the 1954 UNESCO Convention ² and its two Protocols
- 3.3. Fight illicit trafficking through 1) capacity building; 2) providing support for return and restitution of cultural objects; and 3) promoting the the ratification of the 1970 UNESCO Convention³
- 3.4. Valorize, safeguard and integrate the contribution of traditional knowledge systems and practices to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, reduction of disaster risk and mitigation of climate change impacts and integrate it into policies and processes as well as education programmes
- 3.5. Raise awareness and promote the role of traditional authorities, governance systems and inter-ethnic alliances in conflict prevention and resolution
- 3.6. Promote the role of women against violent extremism and as preventive diplomacy
- 3.7. Promote the integration of intangible cultural heritage into public programmes and policies in Africa aimed at the restoration of peace, reconciliation between parties and recovery of communities

¹This could be done in the framework of the new Thematic Programme “Heritage for Peace” launched by the Committee for the Protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict in December 2020 (Decision 15 COM 6 § 5). Priority will be given to South-South cooperation in the African region within the framework of this cross-cutting and multidisciplinary programme, which aims to strengthen the protection of cultural property in both emergency and peacetime situations.

² [The 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two \(1954 and 1999\) Protocols](#)

³ [The 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property](#)