

Workshop title: **Culture in Development: A must for Equitable and Sustainable Transformation**

Organising institutions: Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda; Commonwealth Foundation

Contacts at organising institutions: Name: Emily Drani (CCFU); Andrew Firmin (C.F)
E-mail: ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug. Andrew Firmin :
Tel : CCFU : +256/312 294675, +256/752622543

Rapporteur: David Millar (workshop facilitator), Emily Drani (CCFU)

1. Introduction

On 19th and 20th November, 2007, 65 participants most drawn from a broad spectrum of civil society met in the context of the CPF to address for the first time the issue of “Culture in Development: A must for equitable and sustainable transformation”.

The workshop had its origins in a suggestion made during the 2005 CPF by a number of Caribbean civil society representatives, and in subsequent discussions with Canadian and South African civil society partners, for culture to form part of the substance of the next Forum.

The workshop was facilitated by Prof. David Millar from the University of Development Studies in Ghana. It was co-organised by the Cross-cultural Foundation of Uganda, a local NGO, and the Commonwealth Foundation. Its objectives were:

- To share practical experiences that illustrate and promote the importance of culture and indigenous knowledge in all development interventions, and identify opportunities for joint action.
- To share experiences, and strategise on how to ‘localise’ and apply the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions to Commonwealth contexts.
- To examine and share learning from different approaches to supporting cultural industries in different Commonwealth countries, and to identify possibilities for replication.
- To urge Commonwealth Heads of Governments to make a statement about the importance of culture in the CHOGM Communiqué and Declaration for the first time.

After a day and a half of plenary discussions, presentations from practitioners from different Commonwealth countries, and group work, the workshop underlined the centrality of culture in the Commonwealth. Culture, as one participant said, is “where the vehicle of development hits the road, the wheels and rubber tyres without which we cannot move”.

The participants therefore urged that cultural diversity be recognised as one of the fundamental pillars of Commonwealth programmes and projects, alongside those relating to development and democracy.

In addition, participants developed 7 resolutions to be presented to CHOGM, including urging Commonwealth Governments to speedily ratify the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and meaningfully involve and support civil society in its implementation.

2. Summary of the Outcomes

The outcomes of the workshop include:

- A sharing of practical experiences illustrating the importance of culture and indigenous knowledge in all development interventions, and in different national and cultural contexts across the Commonwealth
- A commitment to promote the ratification of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in different Commonwealth contexts and fora.
- The development of 7 resolutions to be presented to the Commonwealth Heads of Governments, underlining the importance of culture as central to the development process.

3. Presentations

The workshop was enriched by 4 presentations on Culture *in* Development from 3 Commonwealth regions

- Prof David Millar – Ghana, centred his presentation on a case study, that of COMPAS (Comparing and Sustaining Endogenous Development), which promotes links between NGOs and universities so that African knowledge is “rehabilitated” in the eyes of academia as scientific and essential to inform tertiary education and reverse cultural alienation..
- Faiz Fayyaz Mohammad – Chief Executive of the Community Motivation and Development Organisation in Pakistan, described his organisation’s work in the regions bordering Afghanistan that are affected by intense

conflict, how these conflicts are deepening because of the failure to utilise local conflict resolution mechanisms and how this highlights the need for cultural sensitivity to be effective in one's development practice, as in their successful promotion of girls' education in a region where this was initially not acceptable.

- Emily Drani – from the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda, gave us an overview on the current perception of culture in Uganda (too often perceived as “backward” or restricted to music, dance and drama) and illustrated how the positive aspects of culture could be harnessed in development, by focusing on how Uganda organisations are dealing with HIV/AIDS, for example by training herbalists and healers, or using clan leaders to transmit safe sex messages.
- Hazel Brown from in Trinidad and Tobago shared her reflections about culture as having been central to the survival of the island, such as in the case of women retaining control over savings through traditional mutual help groups, rather than joining micro-finance and other banking institutions where control eludes them.

The respondent, Nelcia Robinson, also from Trinidad and Tobago, emphasised how, rather than blaming our culture for our failures, we should realise cultural resistance is “what has kept us afloat”.

Later in the day, Jim McKee from the International Federation of Coalitions for Cultural Diversity, Canada, outlined the main features of the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions and highlighted the need and opportunities for civil society to foster its implementation.

4. Summary of discussions

With regard to the centrality of culture in the development process, participants noted that

- culture pervades all aspects of human endeavour, is key to defining identity, and is essential for social survival.
- development undertakings should therefore be culturally based; culture needs to be included in, and inform, our respective national agenda.
- Culture is a key arena in which people may realise their potential and feel valued. Cultural methods are a key means of encouraging participation and involving people in development and democracy
- African culture is often perceived and presented in a negative light; yet local and indigenous knowledge has potential to be harnessed for development.

- it is our responsibility to identify practical ways to integrate a cultural approach to development, and to document and disseminate our cultural identity and values
- there are opportunities to engage the private sector in making resources available for cultural undertakings

With regard to the UNESCO Convention and other policy issues, participants discussed:

- the need for Commonwealth countries to speedily ratify the Convention and to allocate sufficient resources to implement the relevant cultural policies
- the need to “mainstream” our cultural identity in our national development agenda.

With regard to cultural industries, participants noted

- that, being transformative themselves, these have a key role to play in economic, social and human development.
- the danger of solely defining them in terms of economic benefit, thus negating their inherent social and creative function to give us a cultural identity.

5. Summary of the outputs

Noting that culture is a driving force for people-centred development, participants affirmed that culture should be one of the fundamental pillars of Commonwealth programmes and projects, alongside those relating to development and democracy;

At the conclusion of their deliberations the participants agreed that a main recommendation is that all Commonwealth Governments should ratify the UNESCO Convention and meaningfully involve and support Civil Society in its implementation at national, regional and international levels, notably in the development and application of cultural policies and strategies.

6. Recommendations for follow-up by civil society

The participants recommended that Commonwealth bodies support civil society to follow up, move forward and identify practical ways to make ratification of the UNESCO Convention and progress in its implementation happen before the next CPF in 2009 in Trinidad and Tobago.

7. Recommendations for follow-up action by the CHOGM

The participants called on Commonwealth Member States and CHOGM 2007 to:

1. *Recognise and promote awareness* that cultural diversity within and between member states is a fundamental pillar of the Commonwealth, alongside development and democracy;
2. *Create an enabling environment to foster unity in diversity; ensure* respectful dialogue between people with different identities and values within communities, regions, nation states and the Commonwealth; and *address* issues of conflict, social exclusion and marginalisation;
3. *Recognise and support the increasing role of* the creative industries, cultural heritage, and other forms of cultural creativity in contributing to economic development, while protecting creators' rights of ownership to enable local communities to realise their potential;
4. *Raise* the status and budgets of member Government Ministries and Commonwealth bodies with a brief for gender, youth, culture and diversity, while ensuring that their programmes and actions are integrated into the work of all other departments.
5. *Support* greater Commonwealth level networking between culture ministers and senior officials, including civil society and the private sector.
6. *Ratify* the UNESCO convention and meaningfully involve and support Civil Society in its implementation at national, regional and international levels, notably in the development and application of cultural policies and strategies.

8. List of acronyms

CF: Commonwealth Foundation

CCFU: Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda

9. Further resources

A copy of all the background material and papers specially commissioned for the workshop, including a paper by Teweiariki Teaero, (Lecturer at the University of the South Pacific) from Kiribati (not presented), can be obtained by contacting CCFU at ccfu@crossculturalfoundation.or.ug