

EUROPEAN UNION



Supporting the Somali New Deal

LEVERAGING SOMALIA'S COMMON HERITAGE TO BUILD SOCIAL RESILIENCE

Notwithstanding the challenging times through which Somalia has travelled over the past several years, Somalis remain a very close knit society, sharing unique and fundamental cultural touchstones. Together, this common heritage transcends the conflicts which are in many respects superficial to what really defines this country.

With valuable insights provided by our previous and current work in Somalia, the European Union and UNESCO are establishing good ties with Somali culture champions. These champions now form a critical mass, important enough to engage in a systematic fashion.

Some work being supported by the EU and UNESCO

Mogadishu Cultural Heritage Restoration

- Raising the profile of cultural heritage, helping Somali's acquire skills and stimulating dialogue among youth on cultural references.
- Exploring culture as important instrument for sustainable human, social and economic development; building on the action plan developed during the UNESCO expert meeting on the rehabilitation of Somali Culture in 2007 and the Strategy for the revitalization of Somalia Culture Sector Plan 2012-2015.
- Supporting the rehabilitation and running of a cultural centre as a place for youth in Mogadishu to have a voice and learn more about their history through art and culture. Involving unemployed youth that will have the opportunity to apprentice under local craftsmen, learn new technical skills and gain employment.



Culture at the Centre - Somaliland

- Creating new spaces for cultural activities, learning, exchange, and inter-generational dialogue in Somaliland; promoting and strengthening a culture of reading and writing; Supporting the development of a new generation of male and female Somali poets, writers, performers and other artists; preserving and recording Somali cultural heritage.



- Establishing a year-round programme of cultural events and activities (public lectures, book launches, performance arts, film screenings, poetry readings); Creating a public library, expanding a mobile library project, and supporting local authorities to establish regional libraries with support from communities; nurturing the annual Hargeisa International Book Fair, the largest cultural event in Somaliland; training in writing, dance, photography, music and other classes for youth; publishing and disseminating best stories and poems written by Somali youth in annual anthologies, with awards for best male and female writers.

UNESCO-EU Culture Scoping Study: What is going on in the Cultural world of Somalia?

This study provides an in-depth understanding of cultural activities taking place in Somalia, the institutions that support them, and the challenges they face in terms of acting as agents of positive change in the country. It identifies a variety of positive contributions currently underway, such as:

- i) Digitalization of radio Mogadishu archives;
- ii) Reconstruction of the National Library;
- iii) The Hargeisa International Book Fair.



The study documents the contributions, both current and potential, of the rich Somali diaspora to restoring the cultural wealth of the nation. It concludes with recommendations for action and identifies strategic priority areas for targeted investment designed to restore the nation's capacity to use culture as a means to promote economic development and a restored sense of national identity.

What next?

The EU and UNESCO have concluded that much more can be done in support of restoration of peace and well-being in Somalia through cultural entry points. We have taken note of the rich and diverse range of champions for Somali culture, within civil society, multi- and bi-lateral supporters, government bodies and the private sector both within and beyond the boundaries of the country.

The EU and UNESCO wish to invite these champions under the common umbrella:

“FRIENDS OF SOMALI CULTURE”

to have more in-depth discussions on needs, strategies and priorities, with the objective of achieving more robust national reconstruction efforts.