Preserving the country’s national identity and heritage through Culture

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Our Approach and Support

Culture has been an integral part of the EU policy framework in the area of human development, as enshrined in the European Consensus on Development. The Communication on a European agenda for culture in a globalising world highlights the role of culture in building bridges across countries and regions as well as being an important instrument for sustainable development. The EU is one of the main donors in the cultural sector worldwide.

The EU is also one of the main donors in the cultural sector in Somalia. Following findings on a 2013 "Scoping Study on the Culture Sector in Somalia" financed by the EU, and carried out by UNESCO the study recommended a strategy for the revitalisation of the culture sector in Somalia, focusing on 4 priority areas: (i) strengthening the capacity of State and non-state actors engaged in the preservation and development of cultural heritage; (ii) safeguarding Somali heritage for the promotion of inclusive dialogue and peace building; (iii) protection, safeguarding and restoration of immovable cultural property and movable cultural property; and (iv) Raising awareness about Somali culture internationally through the promotion of cultural industries. These are designed to help the culture sector play a more pro-active role in establishing stronger foundations for the country.

Through EU thematic programmes, targeted support has been provided to a number of actors working in the area of tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as cultural industries in Somalia. The focus of current interventions funded in the sector include the continuation of support to the Hargeisa Cultural Centre, strengthening Somali identity, cultural heritage and diversity for inclusive peace-building and state-building, rehabilitation of the Somali National Academy of Science and Arts, support to cultural events and exhibitions, and establishment of small businesses for youth in the cultural sector.

Our Results

Amongst most relevant results achieved thanks to EU support in this sector include:

- Rehabilitation of two blocks of Somali National Academy of Science and Arts.
- Establishment of cultural heritage Task Force and Management Board.
- Advocacy activities for the ratification of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.
- Set up of poetry clubs in 19 schools (More than 600 school children engaged in weekly activities) and supporting youth to conduct cultural activities, including exhibitions, publications.
- Training of teachers from 20 schools on how to initiate and run poetry clubs in schools.
- Organisation of the annual Book Fairs in Hargeisa and Garowe.
- Establishment of a Cultural Centre in Hargeisa (HCC).
- Establishment of a public library within the centre (accommodating over 16,000 titles, journals and magazines).
- Preservation of and digitizing cultural heritage.
- Sensitization workshops on protection and management of cultural heritages with cultural sector line ministries and Civil Society Organisations.
Our Ongoing Support in Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Title &amp; Implementing Partner</th>
<th>Amount (EUR)</th>
<th>Main objectives</th>
<th>Action locations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Promoting a Culture of Inclusion in Somalia - CISP &amp; SOMAC</td>
<td>499,900</td>
<td>To increase contribution of CSOs and other actors in the cultural sector, in promoting culture to foster sense of citizenship, inclusion and economic integration</td>
<td>Mogadishu and Galkayo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Culture at the Centre: the Expansion and Consolidation of Hargeisa Cultural Centre – Red Sea Online Cultural Foundation &amp; Rift Valley Institute</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Support the development of an open and inclusive society by engaging young women and men in a programme that promotes culture as a source of knowledge values and identity and supports reconciliation, good citizenship, and diversity</td>
<td>Hargeisa, Somaliland</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fostering Somaliland’s Heritage: Creating links between Cultural heritage and job opportunities for Peace and Cohesion in Togdheer Region, Somaliland – SOYDAVO</td>
<td>487,288</td>
<td>Contribute to the use of culture for improved cohesion and peace among communities in Togdheer region of Somaliland</td>
<td>Togdheer Region and Burao</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program on Enhanced Civil Society Engagement in Somalia (PRECISE) - ADRA Somalia</td>
<td>500,000</td>
<td>Contribute to strengthening Somali identity, cultural heritage and diversity for Galkayo inclusive peace-building and state-building.</td>
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The power that art and culture can have over people is often underestimated, have enormous symbolic value and by its very nature represent the country’s history, tradition and identity, attributes often lost in times of chaos. Culture, or DAQAN in Somali, is a fundamental pillar for the reconstruction of the Somali social fabric. It can effectively contribute to the revival of the Somali identity, recognition of diversity, socialization and pride - roles that are vital in times of conflict and rapid social change; and be a development opportunity for future generations. However, after more than twenty years of conflict and civil strife, Somalia’s once vibrant cultural sector has been largely destroyed, with buildings and institutions of national cultural significance such as theatres, museums, libraries, and archives dilapidated, and cultural activities a shadow of their former dynamism. The two decades of insecurity have also caused many talented poets, playwrights, artists, and writers to flee the country. Despite Somalia’s oral cultural tradition (including proverbs, poems, songs) a great deal of cultural memory has now been lost in the absence of the country’s chief cultural actors.

Important to the culture sector is the role of Somali youth in preserving the country’s national identity and heritage. Somalia’s youth are a potential economic engine of the country as over 70% of its population is below the age of 30. Having witnessed a civil war, this generation of future leaders knows relatively little about Somalia’s history and the value of its culture. A focus on preserving and restoring the culture sector will therefore reinforce a national identity among the youth that has, for so long, been lost.

Community-based organizations and civil society institutions have played a role in attracting donor support for the rehabilitation of some cultural sites. Currently there are some governmental...
institutions, national and regional, mandated to administer the culture sector in Somalia. However, many challenges exist, including the absence of government structures to coordinate the management of cultural property, the lack of legal and policy frameworks, the absence of conservation practice, including lost memory related to culture and traditional practices and the limited awareness at institutional and community level regarding the value of promoting cultural policies and activities.

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