

Culture: The Panacea for Sustainable Development

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CULTURE: THE PANACEA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Culture, in all its dimensions, is a fundamental component of sustainable development. As a sector of activity, through tangible and intangible heritage, creative industries and various forms of artistic expressions, culture is a powerful contributor to economic development, social stability and environmental protection. Culture is who we are and what shapes our identity. No development can be sustainable without including culture.

In September 2015 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the “2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, with seventeen (17) SDGs to transform our world. UNESCO ensures that the role of culture is recognized through a majority of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including those focusing on quality education, sustainable cities, the environment, economic growth, sustainable consumption and production patterns, peaceful and inclusive societies, gender equality and food security.

Cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism, and cultural infrastructure can serve as strategic tools for revenue generation, particularly in developing countries given their often-rich cultural heritage and substantial labour force. Respecting and supporting cultural expressions contribute to strengthening the social-capital of a community and fosters trust in public institutions. Cultural factors also influence lifestyles, individual behaviour, consumption patterns, values related to environmental stewardship, and our interaction with the natural environment. Local and indigenous knowledge systems and environmental management practices provide valuable insight and tools for tackling ecological challenges, preventing biodiversity loss, reducing land degradation, and mitigating the effects of climate change. Furthermore, development interventions that are responsive to the cultural context and the particularities of a place and community, and advance a human-centered approach to development, are most effective, and likely to yield sustainable, inclusive and equitable outcomes. Acknowledging and promoting respect for cultural diversity within a human right based approach, moreover, can facilitate intercultural dialogue, prevent conflicts and protect the rights of marginalized groups, within and between nations, thus creating optimal conditions for achieving development goals.

Thus, Culture is related to traditional livelihoods such as cultural forms and local practices whose skills and knowledge may be passed on from generation to generation and in artistic expressions such as buildings and architecture, literature, art, dance, music, crafts, storytelling, and films. It could also be in form of social practices which includes language, religion, education, family practices, decision-making systems and institutional processes. Cultural practices and processes are rooted in local knowledge, accumulated over time, including practices, knowledge and technology of farming, health, nutrition, childbirth, building materials, natural resource use, and environmental management.

Culture helps in the dissemination of knowledge that fosters creativity, innovation, and the intellectual development of individuals and groups while getting rid of detrimental practices opposing to global ethics.

Globalization provides opportunities for development, while also presenting broad challenges to local communities, livelihoods, and identities. Culture, in all its multiple forms, is essential to

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address these global challenges, through its role in economic growth, in human development, as a depot of environmental knowledge, and as an emblematic force to bring stability and meaning to communities everywhere. Principles of inclusiveness and global ethics enable even the most marginalized individuals. Further, global challenges such as conflicts and wars, endemic poverty, financial calamity, swift urbanization, and environmental degradation have rendered people more vulnerable to change and to natural disasters, which have led to the increasing loss of local cultures. In conclusion, Culture provides solutions that respond to local specificities, as a panacea of development in its own right as well as a desirable result of development achievements. Culture is a panacea of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Culture contributes to development by enabling more effective development intervention, promoting inclusiveness, equity and diversity, non-monetized benefits, promoting sustainability, and economic benefits.