



Ministry of Cultural Heritage & Activities & Tourism



DAFA

Delegation  
Economico-Commerciale  
in Afghanistan



Ministry of Mines & Petroleum, The World Bank Group  
Ministry of Information & Culture,  
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization

# CULTURAL HERITAGE and DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES

A challenge or a contribution to sustainability?

CONCEPT NOTE

May 2016, 25-27  
Palazzo Barberini Rome, Italy



## 1. Background

In the last few years, the contribution of 'Culture' to sustainable development has taken central stage within the international debate on sustainability, as *culture represents a source of identity, innovation and creativity for the individual and community; and is an important factor in building social inclusion and eradicating poverty, providing for economic growth and ownership of development processes*.<sup>1</sup> This international discussion has recently led to the mainstreaming of culture into development policies and strategies, including the new 2030 Development Agenda for Sustainable Development. Indeed, it clearly fosters the protection and safeguarding of the world's natural and cultural heritage as an essential enabler to achieve urban sustainable development<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the above, the compatibility of development and the protection of cultural assets have yet to be achieved in a number of countries. While the international debate has moved forward in embodying 'Culture' into this new generation of sustainable development goals and targets, cultural heritage and priorities are not easily integrated into current development initiatives, and many actions remain to be done.

Unfortunately, too often insufficient attention is paid to cultural and heritage policies in government strategies, especially in post-conflict and developing countries. Heritage protection is frequently perceived as a luxury and non-prioritized action, compared to challenges such as hunger, health or poverty, deemed as being of primary importance. In addition, it is also commonly seen that the preservation of heritage properties and traditions are regarded as a barrier to the modernization, the improvement of living conditions and the economic growth of a country.

The tension between conservation and development objectives has often resulted in the rapid destruction of natural settings, rural landscapes, urban historical centers, historical sites and monuments, thus failing the overall objectives fostered within the framework of sustainability. For these reasons, there is an immediate need that heritage protection and development initiatives are compatible. For instance, the exploration of natural resources within or around cultural heritage sites is both a challenge and an opportunity for balanced approaches to development. Yet it remains a challenge to identify and preserve cultural heritage before natural resources exploration begins for economic gain.

This message should be promoted especially in those countries currently facing a new era of rapid development, thus preventing the risk of extensive destruction of cultural properties. In many of these countries, the absence of strong governance and management mechanisms often exacerbates the tension between heritage and modernization, resulting either in extensive destruction of their valuable cultural heritage or in delaying development initiatives.

The integration of heritage protection in the development strategies and the creation of adapted regulatory tools are essential conditions for the management of heritage. Indeed, the preservation of

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<sup>1</sup> Refer to E/HLS/2013/1. Ministerial Declaration of the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council, United Nations General Assembly, 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Refer to A/S/70/1. Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, United Nations, September 2015. In particular, refer to Goal 11 - *Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable*.

cultural heritage cannot be achieved without promoting sustainable development policies and programmes.

UNESCO, its partner agencies and the international community have adopted important policy instruments in recent years, including the *Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction at World Heritage Properties* (UNESCO, 2007); the Hangzhou Declaration “*Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies*” (Hangzhou, 2013); the *Recommendations of the International Expert Meeting on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Resilient Communities* (Tokyo, 2015); the *Sendai Framework on Disaster Risk Reduction* (Sendai, 2015); the *Bonn Declaration* (Bonn, 2015); the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* (UNGA, 2015); the *Strategy on the Reinforcement of UNESCO’s action for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict* (UNESCO, 2015); and the *Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2015), among others.

With a view to promoting this approach and raising awareness among communities, heritage site managers, decision makers and the private sector, it is imperative to advocate that cultural heritage preservation be included into national policies of development. Within the framework of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, further action is needed to share common challenges and good practices.

## **2. Symposium Objectives**

The Symposium is specifically addressing the issue of protecting cultural heritage within development initiatives. This can be made by sharing experiences and good practices among countries that showcase the contribution of ‘Culture’ to the three dimensions of sustainable development, as also advocated in the recent UNESCO *Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention* (UNESCO, 2015). The specific objectives are to:

- Raise awareness amongst the international and local communities, including development agencies and the private sector, of the importance of protecting cultural heritage in the context of development initiatives, especially in post-conflict/least-development countries;
- Share experiences and best practices for promoting the inclusion of cultural heritage protection in the planning phase of new development initiatives, as key contribution to Environmental Sustainability;
- Identify current obstacles and opportunities for the integration of cultural heritage into development initiatives and institutional frameworks for managing sustainable development;
- Improve management and governance tools to reduce risks to cultural heritage as a consequence of development initiatives;
- Raise awareness within the participants that cultural heritage protection can play a key role for Inclusive Social and Economic Development of a country.

## **3. Rationale**

The aim of this International Symposium is to share and discuss good practices and actual programmes as examples of the possible integration of cultural heritage into development initiatives, thus attempting to achieve the overall goal of sustainable development. The Symposium will be convened in the framework of

'The Afghanistan Heritage & Extractive Industries Development Initiative', a specific UNESCO programme financed by World Bank via the Afghan Ministries of Mines & Petroleum and of Finance and specifically focused on ensuring the protection of cultural heritage sites within mining areas in the country.

This event is intended to share experiences from a number of countries and provide an opportunity to discuss challenges encountered, mitigation strategies adopted and results achieved. The Symposium will invite representatives from both developed and post-conflict/developing countries, in order to facilitate a broad and inclusive discussion on the preservation of heritage and modernization.

Given the fact that modernization cannot be stopped and that the preservation of cultural heritage has to be ensured, the capacity to manage a dynamic process of change is required: *'...in addition to protecting the OUV of World Heritage Properties, State Parties should recognize and promote the properties' inherent potential to contribute to all dimensions of sustainable development and work to harness the collective benefits for society...'*<sup>3</sup>. However, there is still an uncertainty of a preferable way of development initiatives which ensures to protect and promote the value of cultural assets.

There are a number of countries where these questions have been answered through actual implementation of programmes: the preservation of cultural heritage is practically integrated into development initiatives. After the significant results achieved by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, it is now time to share these good practices and showcase feasible methodological approaches to be used as a practical model, especially in those countries where the tension between 'heritage' and 'development' is still an unresolved issue.

The opportunity to integrate heritage as a part of development initiatives is also closely related to the presence of suitable governance systems at local and national levels. The sharing of information and comparison of regulatory and management tools, including national laws and strategies for the protection of cultural and natural heritage, can be also one of the ways to pursue these common goals. Despite the diversity of such legislative tools, a preferable sustainable governance scheme at both national and local levels can be explored, based on feasible management mechanisms.

The Symposium will contribute to increase the visibility of social and economic benefits deriving from the sustainable management and preservation of cultural heritage. There is a plethora of ways that heritage can contribute to the promotion of a country's economy and inclusive social development: contribution to equity and inclusion of local communities; job creation in the areas of rehabilitation and preservation of heritage sites; the promotion of creative industries; sustainable tourism, and others. Despite this potential being well recognized in a number of states, there are still many countries where this possibility is not pursued, especially in large-scale development initiatives.

The presentation of actual programmes and policies with regard to the below three main topics of the Symposium should help reduce the existing gaps and provide governments with realistic and practical guidelines for immediate actions, in line with the general policies as established by pertaining International Regulations.

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<sup>3</sup> General Assembly of State Parties to the *World Heritage Convention, Policy Document for the Integration of a Sustainable Development Perspective into the Processes of the World Heritage Convention*, 20<sup>th</sup> Session, UNESCO, November 2015.

#### **4. Expected Outcomes**

The key expected results are:

1. A clear understanding of how the integration of 'Culture' into the three dimensions of the sustainable development agenda can be enhanced;
2. A possible methodological approach for the protection of cultural heritage within development initiatives, including possible preventive actions, will be explored;
3. Preferred governance mechanisms and legal frameworks will be investigated as models for enhancing national and local regulatory and management tools;
4. Importance of integrating the protection of cultural heritage in actual development initiatives will be explored;
5. Awareness of contribution of heritage to the social and economic development of a country will be raised.

#### **5. General Agenda**

##### **WEDNESDAY, 25 MAY 2015**

- Opening Ceremony
- SESSION I- *Cultural Heritage as a vector for sustainable development*
- SESSION II - *Cultural Heritage Preservation & Development Initiatives – Challenges & Good Practices for Environmental Sustainability*
  - Panel 1: *Understanding the values to plan sustainable changes*
  - Panel 2: *Rooting development in the local cultural and natural environment*

##### **THURSDAY, 26 MAY 2015**

- SESSION III- *Sustainable regulatory & management tools: governance mechanisms for a dynamic process of change through a long-term perspective*
  - Panel 3: *Aligning national priorities and heritage management for integrated planning*
- SESSION IV- *Culture as a possible vehicle of inclusive social and economic development*
  - Panel 4: *Heritage – led sustainable economy for community development*

##### **FRIDAY, 27 MAY 2015**

- Round-table discussion
- Adoption of the Symposium outcomes
- Closing Ceremony