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WHAT IS UNESCO'S PRIORITY AFRICA?

Africa, like Gender Equality, is one of UNESCO's two Global Priorities and therefore lies at the heart of all UNESCO's actions in the field of culture. African Member States are the main beneficiaries of financial and technical assistance provided by UNESCO under its Culture Conventions and programmes. This includes assistance for the inscription of elements on UNESCO registers and lists, as well as capacity-building activities. In line with "[Priority Africa at UNESCO: an operational strategy for its implementation, 2014-2021](#)", UNESCO's work in support of Africa focuses in particular on harnessing the power of culture for sustainable development and peace in a context of regional integration.

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WHY CULTURE FOR AFRICA?

Africa is the world's youngest, fastest growing and most rapidly urbanizing continent. It is also home to an extraordinary cultural and natural heritage, as well as dynamic cultural and creative industries, making it one of the world's most culturally vibrant. In 2017, the cultural and creative industries were estimated to represent US\$ 49 billion in revenue and 2 million jobs in Africa and the Middle East. Africa is home to over 100 World Heritage properties and more than 50 living heritage practices inscribed the lists of UNESCO's 2003 Convention. Culture offers significant potential for promoting social cohesion, freedom of expression, and job creation, particularly female employment and entrepreneurship, in Africa. Long before culture was recognized as a driver of development in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the African Union adopted the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance in 2006. It boldly affirmed that Africa's rich cultural diversity would be the primary engine of peace building, democracy and development on the continent. This was followed by the adoption of the African Union Agenda 2063, which, among its seven Aspirations, calls for an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics in its Aspiration 5. UNESCO's work in Africa focuses on accompanying African Member States and communities in this effort, so that Africa's future is built upon its rich culture.

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HOW DOES UNESCO PROTECT AND PROMOTE CULTURE IN AFRICA?

- i. **Promoting the safeguarding and recognition of Africa's cultural heritage.** In order to support the nomination of more African sites to the World Heritage List, the [African World Heritage Fund](#), a UNESCO category II centre, has organized nomination training courses across the continent that have led to successful nominations in Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Kenya Eritrea, South Africa, and Sudan, among others. [African World Heritage Day](#) is celebrated every 5 May, alongside the African World Heritage Youth Forum. More than 50% of international assistance from UNESCO's [Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund](#) has been directed to Africa since 2008, notably targeted at safeguarding activities, including the community-based inventorying of intangible cultural heritage.
- ii. **Supporting African artists and creators.** Africa is the main beneficiary of the project "[Reshaping Cultural Policies for the Promotion of Fundamental Freedoms and the Diversity of Cultural Expressions](#)". UNESCO and Japanese film director Naomi Kawase have launched a new [joint initiative](#) to support young female directors from Africa through multi-generational female mentorship. 40% of funds from UNESCO's [International Fund for Cultural Diversity](#) have gone to Africa.
- iii. **Supporting peacebuilding through culture.** UNESCO will support the social cohesion and resilience of communities suffering from years of armed conflict in central Mali as part of a [major new project](#), made possible through USD 1 million in funding from ALIPH. After years of conflict, UNESCO supported [Somalia](#) in its successful efforts to ratify the World Heritage Convention and the 2003 Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention. UNESCO is engaged in a major project to support the fight against the illicit trafficking of cultural property in Southern Africa.
- iv. **Addressing the climate crisis.** Following fires in Mount Kenya National Park, UNESCO organized a [capacity-building workshop](#) on climate-related disaster risk management for site managers. In 2018, UNESCO launched a major project to counter climate change through culture in the [Lake Chad Basin](#).

CULTURE & AFRICA

KEY MESSAGES



As one of UNESCO's two Global Priorities, Africa is at the heart of UNESCO's work in the field of culture. UNESCO's work in support of Africa focuses in particular on harnessing the power of culture for sustainable development and peace in a context of regional integration.



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For more information, visit: <http://en.unesco.org/themes/culture-sustainable-development>