Progress report

Strengthening National Capacities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development in the Gambia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies)</th>
<th>Gambia</th>
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<tr>
<td>Type of funding</td>
<td>Earmarked voluntary contribution to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund received from France</td>
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<td>Amount</td>
<td>US$ 135,722</td>
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<td>Executing field office(s)</td>
<td>Culture unit in the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar</td>
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<td>Implementing period</td>
<td>24 months (2021-2023)</td>
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<td>Reporting period</td>
<td>January to November 2021</td>
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I. Background & Summary

The Gambia ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in May 2011. UNESCO carried out a needs assessment in Gambia in 2015, where national stakeholders addressed the importance of promoting local cultures and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The assessment pointed out the need to raise awareness and support national institutions to reinforce their knowledge on the 2003 Convention and its implementation mechanisms. The importance of building a national strategy to safeguard intangible heritage and to review current strategy documents on culture in general was also underlined. Diverse stakeholders also pointed out during the assessment the need for setting up a community-based inventory and reinforcing their capacities to develop safeguarding plans and project proposals in the field of living heritage.

Recent developments confirm the commitment from Gambia to enhance the implementation of the 2003 Convention at national level. In 2017, an increased political will to support culture, arts and tourism, was manifested through an increase of the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) annual subvention. Since then, Gambia has also elaborated and drafted a National Arts and Cultural Policy to replace the old 1988 Culture Policy. The New Cultural Policy – under examination by the Cabinet as of early 2021 – has various provisions on ICH, including on heritage assessment, capacity building, promotion of traditional management systems and harnessing of cultural heritage potential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

In this context, the project aims at supporting the Gambia in its efforts to safeguard its living heritage, in accordance with the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter the ‘2003 Convention’). In partnership with the National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC) of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, UNESCO will provide technical support and develop a capacity-building programme. The programme will be based on the needs identified in 2015, in collaboration with national partners.

To this end, UNESCO will deliver technical training to different stakeholders involved in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (government officials, associations, academia, communities, groups and
individuals). Particular attention will be given to setting solid bases on the concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and developing adequate planning tools and methodologies. Training activities will aim at strengthening the capacities of these stakeholders in the following areas: better knowledge of the 2003 Convention and methodologies for participatory community-based inventories for safeguarding ICH in the Gambia and the elaboration of safeguarding plans and measures. This project will also offer the opportunity to promote better visibility of ICH, awareness of its significance and function in society, and to raise awareness among communities and the public about the safeguarding of living heritage. Activities will be organised in close collaboration with national institutions responsible for the safeguarding of ICH and will ensure the involvement of local community organizations and the balanced participation of women and men throughout the process.

II. Implementation of the project for the period under review

The project has finished the project preparation phase, creating a joint understanding of the project with the national counterparts, agreeing on roles and responsibilities and on the priority activities. These are concretely to be implemented as of December 2021. The UNESCO Dakar Office is establishing the necessary contracts for the project coordination and the implementation of training activities, and evaluation of the project, as well as the necessary contracts with the national counterpart.

III. Challenges and how they were addressed

No challenges were encountered in the project preparation phase, except for the fact that the process took longer in the current context of the pandemic.

IV. Direct Beneficiaries, Key Partners and Other Stakeholders

Beneficiaries and partners

The direct beneficiary of the project is the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of the Gambia. Concerned directorates and departments in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture such as the National Directorate for Cultural Heritage of the NCAC and its Research and Documentation Division may benefit from capacity-building activities.

Institutions such as the Gambian Tourism Board, the National Museum Kankurang Centre and the Copyrights Office will also be involved in the activities and will benefit from training sessions related to the basic concepts of the 2003 Convention, ICH inventorying and the development of safeguarding plans. Other concerned Ministries (Education, Youth and Sports) or the Gambia Radio and Television Service will also be part of the beneficiary group. The beneficiaries of the project participated in the needs assessment conducted in June 2015. They attended the diverse meetings and the restitution session organised during the assessment in the Gambia.

This project is designed to strengthen the capacities of practitioners and community representatives from the seven administrative regions who will participate in the training activities and who will be widely involved in the identification of living heritage.

By contributing to a better knowledge of the principles and concepts of the 2003 Convention, but also by carrying out a pilot inventory of the elements of intangible cultural heritage present in the territory, the activities implemented in this framework will benefit NGOs, experts and academics working in the field of cultural heritage.

I. Communication and Visibility

In order to fully sensitize the public, the stakeholders and the communities on the project, the UNESCO Field Office in collaboration with NCAC shall embark on maximum visibility, communication strategies and plans. A series of communication materials are foreseen to be produced at the end of the project including Catalogues

A catalogue featuring a synthesis of the activities carried out and presenting the elements inventoried will be produced. This tool is aimed at raising awareness of young people and the general public and providing
them with access to the elements of their cultural heritage.

**Video on the project activities**

A video on the key activities carried out will be created. It will compile the different materials produced in the framework of this project in an accessible format to be disseminated on several multimedia platforms.

**Database**

An online database including all elements inventoried during the project will be developed. The NCAC will maintain this database and continue feeding it with further updated information once the project is over, allowing for its sustainability.