

## **Culture, a crucial dimension of development and a key tool for the success of the Post-2015 Agenda**

### **Summary**

The post 2015 process aims “to define the UN Development Agenda, to continue the fight against poverty and diseases, and to support sustainable development as a focus of the international community”. A Development Agenda cannot be successfully implemented if only three pillars (economy, social inclusion and environment) are considered. This approach is not useful to read the world, and is not useful to provide operational tools to transform the world. It is an old fragmented approach that has failed because it lacks the soul, the glue providing coherence and meaning to development in cities, nations and our existence as human beings. It lacks culture.

Culture is about creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity. These values are intrinsically connected to human development and freedoms. These values are being recognised as the cultural dimension (or the fourth pillar) of sustainable development at local, national and international level.

There are standard-setting documents and international benchmarks that perfectly allow the explicit inclusion of culture in the UN Development Agenda with measurable targets, goals and indicators.

### **Why culture?**

People and places cannot be threatened by globalization but, instead, invited and empowered to become actors of globalization, that is, to generate new meaning without losing the identity. This is a cultural process. The humanity is learning that a plurality of knowledge systems (“cultures”) is critical for our future.

- Development is not understood in the same way as it was in 1972, 1987 or 1992, the years in which the current model of three pillars (economy, social inclusion and environment) was coined.
- Amartya Sen, Arjun Appadurai, Edgar Morin or Martha Nussbaum (to name but a few) wrote their main contributions to what development means after 1992.
- In-depth analysis of development policies proves culture is key. When the cultural dimension is ignored, development processes remain incomplete or fail.
- Activists, scientists, policy-makers need to change the model when the current one is not useful any more.
- Well-being, happiness, balance, harmony and identity, which are always explicit and fully integrated in the conception of development that many traditional and indigenous people have, appear now in the vision for the development of rich countries.
- Specific goals, targets and indicators on the relation between culture and development already exist, and are implemented mainly by cities and local governments.

People and places cannot fight against poverty unless they are given the tools and skills to become active actors in a society. Some of these tools are literacy, beauty, critical thinking, sense of place, empathy, trust, risk, respect, recognition... These

tools and skills can be summarized in creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity, the values that shape the cultural dimension of sustainable development.

Today, development means freedom, widening the choices, putting human beings - children, men and women- at the centre of the future.

- Culture boosts the economic dimension: it generates income and employment, it is the engine of many development processes and it has impact on entrepreneurship, new technologies and tourism. Culture brings creativity and innovation to the economy.
- Culture is linked to the social dimension: it is the accelerator of resilience and rootedness, it gives tools to fight against poverty, it facilitates participation of citizens, intercultural dialogue and equality of rights.
- Culture embraces the environmental dimension because it explains the identities and raises awareness on ecological responsibility.
- Key values for development like creativity, heritage, knowledge and diversity must shape culture as the fourth pillar of development. A holistic and integrated approach to development will only be achieved when these values are explicit and operationalized.

### **International benchmarks**

The Millennium declaration and the MDGs were approved in 2000. Since that year, the international community has approved sound documents (international benchmarks and standard-setting documents) to boost the relation between culture and development.

UNESCO approved the Declaration (2001) and the Convention (2005) on Cultural Diversity. UNDP devoted a HDR to cultural freedom in 2004 and opened a "Culture and Development" window in the MDG Achievement Fund in 2006. UNCATD has published several Creative Economy Reports. UCLG approved the Agenda 21 for culture (2004) and the Declaration "Culture is the Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development" (2010). Rio+20 (2012) "acknowledges the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognizes that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to sustainable development". The General Assembly of United Nations approved two resolutions (65/166 and 66/208) on culture as a driver and an enabler of sustainable development. All these standard setting documents are being successfully implemented.

The international community is ready to include culture as an important dimension of development in the Post-2015 Agenda. A specific Goal on "culture and development" must be agreed; several targets and measurable indicators can be easily designed.

### **The way forward**

The cultural dimension of development should be encouraged at local, regional and national levels. The cultural dimension of development relies on two complementary strategies:

(a) Integrating culture into governance, with the elaboration and the implementation of an explicit cultural policy, in close cooperation with civil society, and based on the needs and the expectations of inhabitants.

(b) Capitalizing culture's contribution to the economy, the social cohesion and the environmental balance, with the assessment of the cultural impact of these policies based on measurable targets and indicators.