



Toolbox Culture and Development

1. Policy and guidelines

What guides our engagement in culture and development as part of international cooperation?

1.1. Policy

The [Culture and Development Policy](#) provides detailed descriptions of the role of culture in development cooperation, as well as principles for the implementation of cultural engagement at the SDC.

1.2. Legal bases

"Cultural rights are the human rights that tell us we are human," writes François Matarasso in the first out of 10 reflection papers on the role of culture in development cooperation. Indeed, access to culture is essential for sustainable development and poverty reduction. It plays an important role, for example, in preserving cultural diversity and protecting freedom of expression.

The following international agreements to which Switzerland is a signatory provide the basis for integrating art and culture in development cooperation and for the SDC's cultural work:

- **The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)**

Article 22 of the [Universal Declaration of Human Rights \(1948\)](#) provides that everyone has a right to social security and is entitled to the realisation of economic, social and cultural rights through international cooperation, for example. Cultural rights are described in Article 27 and include the freedom to create and participate in art and culture.

- **The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)**

The [UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#) provides that culture should be integrated into development strategies and that developing countries should be supported in promoting culture in their countries.

- **The Federal Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid**

Article 6 of the [Federal Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid \(1976\)](#) provides that international development cooperation aims in particular to promote the development of human beings by imparting knowledge and experience and to enable them to help shape their economic, social and cultural development within their own society.

- **The 2030 Agenda and SDGs**

Although none of the SDGs focus exclusively on culture, some of the SDGs specifically include culture. For example, SDG 11.4 refers to efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage and SDGs 8.3 and 8.5 refer to job creation, which can be strengthened through trade in cultural goods. In addition, the promotion of culture can make an essential contribution to Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. <https://en.unesco.org/courier/april-june-2017/culture-heart-sdgs>.

- **Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024**

Arts and culture are part of the Federal Council's [Strategy for International Cooperation 2021-2024](#). In addition to strengthening human rights, SDC cultural programmes contribute in particular to the strategy's sub-goals 8-10, which promote peace, the rule of law and gender equality.

- **Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2025-2028**

Art and culture are part of the Federal Council's 2025-2028 strategy for international cooperation. In addition to strengthening human rights, SDC cultural programmes contribute to the promotion of peace, the rule of law and gender equality in international cooperation partner countries. In particular, it emphasises the contribution of art and culture to promote social cohesion and peaceful coexistence.

1.3. Guidelines and principles

In the following collection of principles, you can find suggestions on how to work with key themes and recurring issues that need to be analysed when planning a cultural programme, which are included in the SDC's credit proposals. The aim is to provide guidance on cultural work, ensuring that all important aspects are taken into account. The tools are a collection of pre-existing SDC guidelines *and* of thematic/methodological areas that we have identified as particularly important based on experience and input from the SDC's Community of Practice "Culture Matters". The existing guidelines should be used and references are provided to help you find the documents.

1.3.1. Fragile contexts

Working with culture in fragile contexts is even more challenging. Whenever conflict-sensitive programme management (CSPM) is implemented in fragile contexts the following question clearly arises: how far can the SDC go to support culture? And how does support for culture fit into the general goals of the SDC's programme? Cultural work is essential in fragile contexts, as it brings a sense of normality and humanity and enables reflection. This can be equally relevant for longer term humanitarian aid programmes and in fostering social cohesion. However, it is immensely important to consider carefully the 'Do no harm' principles. It can be worthwhile to make a stakeholder risk assessment and to monitor the content and character of cultural programmes effectively in order to avoid more division or intolerance. Safety issues should be integrated into the risk assessment.

For further information visit PGEs toolbox on Conflict-sensitive programme management (CSPM).

1.3.2. Do no harm

Do No Harm is a tool for monitoring the intended and unintended impacts of humanitarian aid and international cooperation activities. It helps to prevent activities from contributing to instability and violence. A Do No Harm analysis addresses the question of whether aid assistance causes division or supports connections between conflicting parties and de-escalation. Cultural projects should also, of course, be aware of the potential impacts and make sure that they do not support content that fuels conflict or intolerance.

1.3.3. Interculturality

Cultural sensitivity must always be present in development cooperation efforts, since the cooperation itself is a process of intercultural exchange and dialogue. When undertaking cultural work within development cooperation, 'arts and letters' and 'modes of life' come together and have to be worked with in parallel.

The definition of 'art' and 'culture' is itself constructed from cultural values and may differ from one context to another. The same applies to the criteria for determining that a cultural project is

worth supporting, innovative or creative. In many SDC partner countries there is only a limited budget available for culture. There is a risk that local artists and cultural actors have limited options when looking for funds. Limitations may be created if local artists and cultural actors feel compelled to adapt to the suggested field in order to receive funds, although it is not their area of work. This should of course be avoided and it is important to consider development cooperation as something broad, which must be offered in such a way that is accepted by wider society. It is important to consider the cultural sensitivity of a society.

1.3.4. Climate change

Climate awareness is a requirement in any SDC programme. The [CEDRIG \(Climate, Environment and Disaster Risk Reduction\)](#) tool can be used to analyse whether projects and programmes are at risk from disasters emanating from climate change and whether they have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions. Such an analysis is generally conducted for country programmes, which provides an opportunity to apply the same analysis to cultural programmes as well. Travel, transport and events can have a negative impact on CO2 emissions (and also put a strain on waste management). On the other hand, projects that seek to raise awareness of climate change can bring about positive change. It is crucial to be aware of what influence the project has on climate in order to take the necessary measures.

1.3.5. Leave no one behind

Leave no one behind (LNOB) is the central pledge of the 2030 Agenda, recognising the need to combat poverty and inequalities. In fact, leaving no one behind is indispensable to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Further information is available under the Transversal Themes of 'Gender Equality and Social Inclusion' on the PGE Shareweb.

1.3.6. Reflection papers

Reflection paper Culture and Development 2021: This collection of ten reflection papers describes the importance of culture in several fields of development cooperation and considers culture as a contribution to many different areas of work within the SDC. The author of the reflection papers is François Matarasso and input was provided by the SDC's Community of practice for Culture and Development.

This paper is available together with other inspiring reflection papers related to culture and development on the main page 'Culture and Development/Key Documents'.