

Cultural heritage



PHOTO: JERKER ANDERSSON

Through its cooperation with the Swedish Concert Institute, Sida supports the preservation of old forms of music. To date, the institute has recorded traditional music from Guatemala, Ecuador, Tanzania, Vietnam and elsewhere — music that might otherwise have died out. All profit, if any, from sale is spent on new folk-music recordings.

Lullabies for children, an old royal palace in Benin, the history of the South African struggle for freedom — all these are parts of our human cultural heritage.

Sida supports many projects and networks focusing on preservation of the cultural heritage in Africa, Latin America, the Middle East and Asia. The purpose is to pave the way for sustainable preservation and use of the cultural heritage.

Our history lives on in everything we have created — buildings, cultural environments, languages, music, old traditions or stories or narratives — and these creations are known, in everyday parlance, as the cultural heritage.

Our living environments reflect the interplay between edifices, places of symbolic meaning and social relationships. The cultural heritage is all humankind's non-renewable asset. It includes both tangible and intangible values. If regeneration and further development are to be successful and sustainable, they must be based on understanding and knowledge of indigenous cultural traditions.

Not knowing about one's history affects people's identity. This is one reason why preservation of culture and monuments is important, and Sida supports institutions engaged in this work.

Sida's priorities

Preservation of cultural heritage is a priority area for the Culture and Media Division.

Sida supports:

- documentation of oral storytelling traditions, indigenous languages, minority cultures, musical heritage and traditional dance forms
- preservation of buildings and cultural environments in both urban and rural areas; methods that take popular culture into account and engage the local population in the work should be given priority
- ethnography, archaeology and research on local history, especially with regard to ethnic groups that lack written historical documentation.

Cultural workers are a key target group for Sida's support. People who manage their own cultural heritage, investigate contemporary phenomena and contribute to their

‘The international community spends millions on saving frogs and pandas threatened with extinction, but forms of music are dying out daily.’

Sten Sandahl, a producer at the Swedish Concert Institute, who has worked on recording folk music from all over the world for the past ten years.

Examples of projects relating to the cultural heritage:

Nicaragua — restoration of the San Francisco monastery in Granada

Laos — renovation of the old Royal Palace in Luang Prabang

Kenya — renovation of the marketplace in Lamu

West Bank/Gaza — rebuilding of streets, market and Manger Square in the Old Town of Bethlehem

Tanzania — rebuilding of the Stone Town in Zanzibar

Bosnia and

Herzegovina —

Kursumlija mosque in Maglaj

home country’s innovation are key figures in the emergence of cultural self-esteem and identity, based on indigenous traditions.

Minority groups and women, too, are important carriers and preservers of valuable cultural heritage that is at risk of disappearing without deliberate support.

Forms of work

Sida strives for coordination of cultural cooperation, from support for individual projects to long-term programmes, funds, networks and institutional collaboration. It enhances the scope for reaching more people and using resources more effectively.

Sida’s principal partners in its cultural cooperation are ministries of culture, cultural institutions, NGOs, culture and media producers, regional and global networks, and Swedish cultural and media institutions.

Project examples

African networks

Cultural heritage and museum cooperation make up a sector that has grown within Sida’s cultural support, especially through the emergence of African networks. Africa 2009 developed out of these networks.

The purpose of Africa 2009 is to provide better scope for preservation of cultural monuments in the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa. Through regional courses and seminars, professionals have the opportunity of further education in the field of cultural preservation. Africa 2009 also seeks to boost awareness among politicians and the public of the importance of preserving the cultural heritage, and to establish and develop local knowledge in order to preserve specific cultural monuments.

Palestinian houses preserved

Since 1994, the Palestinian architect group Riwaq has been receiving support for the task of surveying all the buildings of interest in terms of cultural history in West Bank

and Gaza. Many unique old buildings there are falling into disrepair owing to poor maintenance. A wave of building is also under way, with uncontrolled demolition as a result. The outcome of Riwaq’s documentation is that no building more than 50 years old may now be demolished without a permit. There is also greater awareness that old built environments restored in keeping with past traditions may be financial advantageous to, for example, the tourist industry. Riwaq is establishing a kind of Palestinian counterpart to the Swedish National Heritage Board that can make the current register of buildings a national concern and serve as a public authority that preserves cultural monuments.

Music preserved and disseminated

Sida supports the preservation of old musical forms by collaborating with the Swedish Concert Institute. To date, the Institute has recorded traditional music from Guatemala, Ecuador, Tanzania and Vietnam that might otherwise have died out. These recordings have been issued by the Caprice record company as part of its series of folk music from around the world, and also disseminated in the countries where the recordings were made. All profit, if any, from sale goes to making new recordings of world folk music.

Policy

The overall objective of Sida’s cultural cooperation is to create preconditions for cultural diversity, creative activities and sustainable development based on human rights.

Making sustainable preservation and use of the cultural heritage possible is a key subsidiary objective. This can be done by supporting preservation of buildings and cultural environments in both urban and rural areas. Methods that engage the local population are to be given priority.

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Internet links: Africa 2009: www.iccrom.org/africa2009/home.htm Swedish Concert Institute: www.srk.se