

Heritage Management Programme

Background Note

As Africa, moves towards the realization of Agenda2063 (a blueprint to achieve inclusive and sustainable socio-economic development for its citizens), and Agenda2030, the Sustainable Development Goals, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa is committed to championing this critical agenda by delivering ideas that translate into action. Our dynamic continent has been naturally gifted with incredible resources and, with the right strategy, its unique diversity and heritage can empower local communities to become a singular force for sustainable education, local pride, and economic development.

Based on the call from the UN to contribute to the Cultural and Creative Industries sector and recognizing the socio-economic importance of arts, culture and heritage as a potential powerhouse in creating employment for millions of people, promoting social cohesion, and strengthening national and regional identities as underscored by the UN Secretary General during the 2021 Africa Dialogue Series on the theme, “Cultural identity and ownership: reshaping mindsets”, The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) is implementing a Heritage Management Programme with the goal of contributing to continental initiatives on the Cultural and Creative Industries (CCIs) sectors and to the African Union theme of 2021 titled, “*the year of the Arts, Culture and Heritage: Levers for Building the Africa We Want*”.

The objective of the program is to build on continental initiatives on empowering local communities and experts in the arts, culture, and heritage through capacity building and other areas of intervention in the cultural, creative, and heritage management sector, thus maximizing a powerful strategic advantage of the continent, its heritage. This will in return strengthen the Arts, Culture, and Heritage sectors consequently fostering economic development in member countries.

The program is anchored on the following pillars: (a) capacity development (b) development of an online platform bringing together information and knowledge on the arts, culture, and heritage management sectors; (c) establishment of a continental forum/Network to convene various stakeholders regularly for discourse on pertinent issues in these sectors; (d) mobile exhibitions on African heritage.

The following are the programme expected outcomes: (a) improved institutional and country wide capacity in key skills in heritage management in Africa; (b) greater regional collaboration on cultural heritage management among stakeholders in capacity development, regulatory and advocacy work at regional, subregional, and national levels; (c) increased awareness of the value of heritage in Africa through uptake and application of capacity development and regulatory support by policy makers, senior officials, sector experts, civil society organizations and communities.

Accordingly, from October 2021 to December 2022, ECA partnered with several stakeholders including the African Union Commission, Heritage Management Organization (HERITAGE) to implement some of the programme activities including capacity building. The capacity development program targeted three pilot countries, Benin, Ethiopia, and the Gambia.

To date 30 heritage experts from Ethiopia have been trained on Project Management for Cultural Heritage, 42 experts from the Gambia trained on Community Engagement for Heritage Managers, while 27 heritage experts from Benin were trained on Project Management for Cultural Heritage. In addition, scholarships were awarded to 20 heritage management experts under the Executive Leadership courses and 10 on the Summer School Programme focusing on Digital Tools for Cultural Heritage Management and Engaging Communities. Ten member states countries namely Tanzania, Namibia, Rwanda, Morocco, Kenya, The Gambia, Egypt, Ghana, Zimbabwe and, Ethiopia, were offered scholarships on Digital Tools for Cultural Heritage Management and Engaging Communities in Cultural Heritage Management.

ECA has also been partnering with AUC to provide other capacity building services for various heritage management issues. In 2022 a workshop was facilitated on Community Engagement for Community Leaders focusing on the Promotion and Protection of Heritage Resources (restitution of heritage resources). The Workshop attracted community leaders and heritage experts from 12 member states countries namely -Cameroon, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Sahrawi, Senegal, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Uganda, Zimbabwe. The workshop resulted in the drafting of a Framework of Action for guiding Community Leaders on the Promotion and Protection of Heritage Resources.

Through the programme we are currently leading the ECA team to develop content for the Africa Hall Visitor Centre permanent exhibition. We are implementing the programme activities in collaboration with key stakeholders implementing heritage initiatives in Africa. These include UNESCO, AWHF, AUC, ICCROM and the host country Ministry of Sports & Culture and Ministry of Environment & Tourism. We had several stakeholder meetings in 2023 and beginning of the year where we identified potential areas of collaboration and we are planning to collaborate in their implementation.