

Refle Kiltirel

'Culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development', PS Kalebi

Sustainable development is woven into the very fabric of a society's character and values, transcending both economic and environmental concerns.

In the Seychellois society, the cultural component is a powerful and sometimes underestimated fourth pillar that helps support the country towards sustainability.

Permanent secretary for the Culture Institute, Cecille Kalebi explores the critical role that culture plays in the sustainable development of Seychelles and how it fits into the larger picture of sustainable development. Since culture ultimately defines what we mean by development and influences how people behave in the world, many voices – including those of Unesco, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and researchers – are calling for the inclusion of culture in the sustainable development paradigm. This strategy takes two approaches to address the relationship between culture and sustainable development. Firstly, it develops the cultural sector (heritage, creativity, cultural industries, crafts, and cultural tourism). Secondly, it makes sure that culture is given its proper place in all public policies, especially those that deal with social cohesion, education, the economy, science, communication, the environment, and international cooperation. This may be reinforced through a multi sectorial cultural policy encompassing all the major stakeholders, operationalised by joint cultural programmes and activities which promote cohesion, wholesome living and the judicious use of resources. The world is dealing with issues outside its economic, social, and environmental realm. Diversity, creativity, and wisdom are the necessary foundations for conversation that leads to peace and societal advancement since these principles are inextricably linked to the progress and freedom of humankind. Seychelles has a rich cultural spectrum, woven with different threads of tradition, language and the arts.

This cultural diversity is not only a source of pride; it also serves as an important basis for preserving the archipelago's unique biodiversity. Indigenous knowledge, rooted in local culture, is a treasure trove of wisdom for sustainable resource management, enabling



PS Cecille Kalebi

communities to live in harmony with nature and protect the delicate ecosystems that make up Seychelles. Traditional practices, be it in craftworks, fisheries or even in our local diet, leads to better resource management and a better outcome for all of us. Culture is a powerful enabler of social cohesion and social inclusivity. Social cohesion, which is based on cultural practices and exchanges, is a key factor in overcoming social ills and promoting social and sustainable development. The Creole language is a strong example of a unifying factor, having a common means of communicating not only facilitates communication, but also deepens the rapport between the people as we have something in common worth defending. It is a common identifier.

Cultural values lead the way for equitable and inclusive social development in our beautiful little corner of the world. Culture also acts as a unifying force, creating a resilient social structure in the process. This interconnection rooted in cultural traditions, becomes a catalyst for addressing social challenges and promoting sustainable development initiatives. In Seychelles, cultural values guide the way towards equitable and inclusive progress. One of the values of the Seychellois people is peace and harmony in our communities. We are worldly known as

a very peaceful nation. This may be taken for granted but it is a powerful image that we are projecting based on our common values and is very endearing to visitors. Beyond its social and environmental impact, culture plays a vital role in driving economic resilience. The promotion of cultural industries, including traditional crafts, music, and tourism, not only generate income but also ensures that economic development aligns with cultural values. By integrating cultural sustainability into the national economic strategies, Seychelles can create a resilient economic framework that benefits local communities and fosters a sense of pride in our cultural heritage. A proper alignment of our national symbols based on our national identity especially those expressed in craft works and other products combined with the tourism marketing policy, can be one of the foundations to create both economic and cultural impact. Education is a cornerstone of sustainable development, and cultural education is no exception and fundamental. In Seychelles, initiatives that promote cultural awareness and heritage preservation contribute to a deeper understanding of sustainable practices. Integrating cultural knowledge into educational curricula empowers the younger generation to appreciate their heritage and become stewards of sustainable development. The current heritage activities being run by the Culture Institute are just a start. A more comprehensive approach will further ingrain into our youth the traditional values of our ancestors and not only produce improved citizens in the process but also very resourceful generation. As Seychelles navigates the complex landscape of sustainable development, acknowledging and promoting culture as the fourth pillar is essential, if not a must. It is the bridge that connects the past, present, and future, providing a unique framework and opportunity for building a resilient and a more harmonious society. By recognising the intrinsic value of culture, Seychelles not only preserves its identity but also paves the way for a sustainable future that embraces the interconnectedness of cultural, social, economic, and environmental dimensions.

Refle Kiltirel - Editorial

Culture as the fourth pillar of national development

By Gabriel Essack

Can culture be the fourth pillar of development in Seychelles? If that is the case what are the aspects of culture we are talking about as culture has many facets?

Currently, there is the cultural industries model with the creative sector at its core which includes the works of artists of all types and genres as the drivers. There is also the need to define development, as economic development is just one component of the development spectrum. Education is for example considered as fundamental for any developmental process in any given society.

Culture as an omnipresent societal system has always been quietly and pervasively contributing in the education process, especially in the informal education known as acculturation and socialisation processes. These are the transmission of traditional habits and knowledge, beliefs, skills and values from one generation to the next. Culture underpins everything irrespective of the level of sophistication or complexity of your development programme. Climate change experts have for example strongly argued that culture is critical in the mitigation efforts, particularly the engagement of traditional knowledge holders whose indigenous knowledge complements the "hard sciences". The traditional knowledge holders of indigenous agricultural practices, weather and seasons are believed to have had excellent stewardship of the land. The idea of living off the land and making use of what is available locally tend to reduce the carbon footprint in many ways. Living in a sustainable manner is now considered as critical to development. The humble and mundane traditional bamboo fish trap (*kazyé*) is a perfect example of living off the land in Seychelles, by making use of locally available resources to fabricate a trapping equipment for food with almost zero carbon footprint, the nominal carbon cost of carriage excluded; that is sustainability and resilience through application of cultural heritage. Similar areas of cultural heritage application in the sustainable development process could be in traditional medicine, traditional weaving - use of *sak vakwa*, mats, bamboo baskets and locally made *Moutya* drums as musical instruments – just to name a few. A shift from the "throw away culture" to an increase in more repair shops around the country would significantly reduce the size of the dumping sites at Providence. Beliefs as a fundamental aspect of culture also play a significant role in development, as a fatalist approach to climate change is seen as not constructive. The creative industry comprising crafts, paintings, films, fashion, photography, culinary art, large scale musical events, concerts and plays, along with its ancillary infrastructure including stadia, halls, studios, engineers, riggers, producers, suppliers, caterers, security, graphic artists, the media, theatre, photographers, advertisers, printers and models is an ecosystem in itself contributing significantly to the national economy.

There is an urgent need to quantify this economic input so that it is factored into the next national development plan for Seychelles. The cultural industry is also contributing to the national priorities and the 2030 development agenda as well as the 2063 AU development goals. Other areas of contribution are through the national museums and heritage sites which are both educational and revenue generating facilities. Due to the small local market size, most of these activities are organised with the tourism sector in mind which is a must. The local cultural industry especially the creative sector, has to compete with the influx of other cultural materials and content which has a major influence on local pattern of culture consumption in such a small scale society like ours. Is there a way of controlling and managing the influx to encourage local culture consumption leading to more profitable cultural production? Should we be more protectionists and set cultural quotas on incoming cultural content and if so how? Should we have a "culture levy" which could then be used to fund local cultural productions so that we may have competitive edge and hopefully curb cultural erosion and hopefully achieve critical mass in terms of cultural production? Seychelles is a signatory of the World Trade Organisation and protectionism could be very complicated leading to possible trade repercussions. Furthermore, cultural isolation is dangerous as every cultural system has to have exposure and exchange for renewal and growth; a form of "cultural autopoiesis". On the other hand, small, vulnerable and fragile cultural communities like ours could lobby the mega American film and music producers and distributors through the African Union, Unesco or the Asian Caribbean Pacific group for cultural funding for our national museums, cultural research and documentation, heritage sites and local cultural productions. This would assist with the consolidation of national cultural identity and counter wild mass culture consumption in the context of a small island state. A broader comprehensive framework and system for the management of culture as a resource may exponentially increase its contribution to the national development. In order for this to be achieved, first and foremost culture as a national resource must be properly understood, valued and situated in the national developmental spectrum. This means having an in-depth understanding of its potentials as well as its limitations. For culture to thrive as a development catalyst, it has to be through a comprehensive cross sectorial approach and not be a matter of convenience and expediency as is sometimes the case.

A law to promote and protect Seychellois artists and achieve SDG 8 on Decent Work

By Mrs Avril Joffe and Miss Cristina Cusenza – international experts

Seychelles has a vibrant cultural life with unique cultural expressions and many practicing artists. The government of Seychelles has recognised this and established institutions such as the Seychelles National Institute for Culture, Heritage and the Arts (The Culture Institute).

The Culture Institute has requested Unesco, through its Aschberg Programme, to provide technical assistance to support the development of a law for the status of artists, freedom of expression in the arts, and ensuring that artists have equal status as all other professionals in Seychellois society. An international expert, Avril Joffe, and a local legal firm, the Island Legal Solutions, are providing this support by facilitating consultations with artists, cultural professionals, arts agencies, artistic associations, and government stakeholders. This led to a baseline study on conditions of work, social protection, norms and standards, copyright and freedom of expression.

In a first phase held in June 2023, consultations were held on Mahé, Praslin and La Digue to establish what the challenges

faced by artists were, in their diverse artistic and cultural expressions. This resulted in a comprehensive baseline study that is now being considered by all the stakeholders. The baseline study revealed that the arts and culture scene in the Seychelles remains undervalued. However, the government of Seychelles has indicated its political commitment to secure the livelihoods of artists and performers.

Developing a law that promotes the status of artists and protects their employment status will also ensure that Seychelles is able to achieve one of the sustainable development goals, namely promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG 8). This law is required as Seychellois artists and cultural professionals currently fall outside of existing laws such as the Employment Act, the Social Security Act and the Income Tax Act because of the nature of artistic and cultural professional work. Cultural and creative work is often described as ad hoc, inconsistent, or informal, leading to many challenges to

their recognition in the formal employment sector. Therefore, the full protection provided to workers under the Employment Act is not always extended to artists who may be employed as a part-time or casual worker. The legal landscape as it relates to the arts and artists is deficient and urgently calls for legislative reform that takes into consideration the circumstances of artists.

In our second phase, the technical advisors are now back in Seychelles reflecting on this report and offering suggestions for the consideration of all stakeholders to clarify and adopt a definition of the artist that represents the specific conditions faced by Seychellois artists and cultural professionals. For these purposes, the Unesco Recommendations for the Status of the Artist adopted in 1980 has been used as a benchmark, together with good practices from other developing countries and small island states. In vibrant and robust consultations, the Seychellois artistic and cultural community has provided critical guidance for the Culture Institute, with the support of the technical advisors, to finalise the project.



The Seychelles National Institute
for Culture, Heritage and the Arts

"Gardyen Nou Leritaz"

Email: communications@seychellescultureinstitute.org
Website: www.seychellescultureinstitute.org



Refle Kiltirel

Larises ek listwar en mo

idantite 1 n (i) karakter permanan e fondamantal par lekel en dimoun ouswa group dimoun, zannimo oubyen en keksoz i ganny rekonnèt. (ii) karakteristik inik ki en dimoun, zannimo oubyen keksoz i annan e ki lezot napa. 2 az ki servi pour idantifye.

idantite kiltirel: laspe kiltir ki permet en dimoun

santi pros avek en lot dimoun oubyen en group dimoun. **kart idantite:** kart ki servi pour idantifye.

idantiter az ki konsern idantite, karakter inik ki en dimoun ouswa group dimoun, zannimo oubyen keksoz i annan: *en kriz idantiter, en protestasyon idantiter.*



Photos: Michel and Danio Denousse