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**TOWARDS A
WORLD REPORT ON
CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT**

**CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL
STATISTICS AND INDICATORS**

united nations research institute for social development

united nations educational, scientific and cultural organization

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**TOWARDS A
WORLD REPORT ON
CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT
CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL
STATISTICS AND INDICATORS**

**Report of the Workshop on Cultural Indicators of Development
Royaumont Foundation, France, 4-7 January 1996**



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Foreword on Culture and Development

Culture is both the context for development as well as the missing factor in policies for development. Although such interactions have long been recognized as essential, there has been no worldwide analysis in this field on which new policies could be based. The independent World Commission on Culture and Development (WCCD) was therefore established jointly by UNESCO and the United Nations in December 1992 to prepare a policy-oriented report on the interactions of culture and development.

The Commission, composed of distinguished specialists from all regions of the world and presided by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, held a series of consultations with scholars, policy makers, artists and NGO activists on specific regional perspectives and concerns. The ideas and data gathered during this process have provided new and powerful insights into the relationship between culture and development worldwide. **Our Creative Diversity**, the report of the Commission presented to the General Conference of UNESCO and the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1995, recommended that an "annual Report on Culture and Development be published as an independent statement addressed to policy makers and other interested parties".

As highlighted in **Our Creative Diversity**, economic, governance and social activities are deeply embedded in the value systems and practices of societies. Their impact on the form and content of development is pervasive and profound. There is an urgent need to analyse and monitor the evolution of interactions such as: economic growth, culture and globalization; ethics, democracy and development objectives; ethnic conflicts, indigenous peoples and the rights of minorities; environment and inter-generational ethics; values, customs and gender; culture and the growth of cities; and culture and the information highway.

The preparation of a World Culture Report will open up a new field in analytical and quantitative thinking on the relationship between culture and development while providing scientific and creative inputs that will inform policy makers. This requires that tasks of an exploratory nature, both conceptually and in terms of creating quantitative indicators on culture and development, be combined with the wide-ranging collection of existing data and statistics on this theme.

For this reason, the close collaboration of multi-disciplinary agencies, such as UNESCO and UNRISD, is crucial. The joint UNRISD-UNESCO series of Occasional Papers on Culture and Development is a first step in facilitating and catalyzing an international debate on culture and development based on high-quality research. The present paper inaugurates the series by presenting a summary of discussions at the Royaumont Workshop. Readers will find a wealth of information on the issues brought out by members of the advisory group, including what might be measured by cultural indicators, how cultural indicators might be constructed and data

constraints overcome, the desirability of aggregating statistical data, and a preliminary list of indicators. Thus the present paper also provides valuable background for future papers in the series.

A World Culture Report that takes an attractive and innovative approach to the quantification of crucial cultural phenomena can have profound implications for global development and international peace, security and well-being. Quantitative indicators in this area deserve greater attention at all levels of development action, for they can contribute to the dissemination throughout the world of a message of respect for creative diversity, equity and peace.

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January 1997

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I. Introduction

The World Commission on Culture and Development, created in 1992 under the joint auspices of UNESCO and the United Nations and presided by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, presented its report, entitled **Our Creative Diversity**, to the General Conference of UNESCO and to the United Nations General Assembly in November 1995.¹

Behind this report lies the motivation that "the major problem facing individuals and communities in a rapidly changing world is that of promoting and adjusting to equitable change without denying the valuable elements in their traditions". **Our Creative Diversity** is therefore about "providing present and future generations of humanity with the tools to meet this challenge, to broaden their knowledge, to discover the world in its diversity, and to allow all individuals to lead a life that is decent, dignified and wise, without losing their identity and sense of community, and without betraying their heritage".²

In this vein, the Commission outlined an "International Agenda", the aims of which are threefold: first, to provide a vehicle through which issues of culture and development are discussed and analysed at the international level; second, to initiate a process in which principles and procedures that are a commonplace within nations are extended to the international and global arena; and, third, to create a forum where an international consensus on central issues related to culture and development can be achieved. The Commission thus recommended that UNESCO sponsor an independent team to produce and publish an annual World Report on Culture and Development, along the lines of the **Human Development Report** (published annually by the United Nations Development Programme), in order to:

- a) survey recent trends in culture and development, drawing on a research programme involving several international institutions;
- b) monitor events affecting the state of cultures worldwide;
- c) construct and publish quantitative cultural indicators;
- d) highlight good cultural practices and policies at local, national and international levels, as well as expose bad practices and unacceptable behaviour; and
- e) present an analysis of specific themes of general importance, with policy suggestions.

The full text of the Commission's recommendation appears in Appendix I.

A World Report on Culture and Development would serve as a cultural and ethical counterpart to UNDP's **Human Development Report**, containing comparative data relating to culture and development. The report would aim to be creative and innovative in its approach and methods,

¹ World Commission on Culture and Development, **Our Creative Diversity**, UNESCO, Paris, 1995.

² World Commission on Culture and Development, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

and be based on hard data and the most rigorous research techniques. The set of quantitative indicators would be published annually to illuminate the relationships between culture and development and monitor events affecting the state of cultures worldwide.

This recommendation was generally welcomed by UNESCO Member States at a first informal roundtable held to discuss **Our Creative Diversity** during the 28th General Conference in November 1995, with several delegations expressing enthusiasm about the project. However, some scepticism was expressed about the feasibility of bringing out an annual report similar to the **Human Development Report** because of the difficulty of collecting data on culture and development; a preliminary review of the possibility of bringing out such a report was therefore called for.

As a first step in following up the Commission's recommendation, and in order to make a preliminary appraisal of the possibilities of bringing out a World Report on Culture and Development, a planning workshop on Cultural Indicators of Development was held from 4 to 7 January 1996 at the Royaumont Foundation (France) to plan the research and methodology (see List of Participants in Annex II). The purpose of the workshop was to commence assessing the state of cultural statistics worldwide, based on UNESCO's long experience in this area, and begin devising quantitative indicators that would allow monitoring of events affecting culture and development.

A. Changing views of culture in development

Our Creative Diversity reflects a dramatic evolution in understanding of the role of culture in development. An earlier orthodoxy in development economics maintained that traditional cultures, more often than not, were a hindrance to modernization, development and economic growth. If a country wished to progress, it had to shed the ballast of traditional customs and institutions. It followed that the sooner the influence of the inherited culture could be neutralized, the better. This view has recently been replaced by a contrasting view: that traditional cultures, in all their richness, variety and creativity, should be treated with respect; and that they can make an important contribution to development. They should also be regarded as potential sources of wisdom that modernizers have all too often been disposed to overlook, since they contain values of solidarity and creativity that are actually vital for the development process.

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