

Findings

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Good Practice
Infobrief



Findings Infobriefs reports on Good Practice in ongoing operational, economic and sector work carried out by the World Bank and its member governments in the Africa Region. It is published monthly by the Knowledge and Learning Center on behalf of the Region. The views expressed in Findings are those of the author/s and should not be attributed to the World Bank Group.

Eritrea

Cultural Assets Rehabilitation Project

The primary objective of the proposed project is to assist the Government of Eritrea in testing several approaches, on a pilot basis, for integrating poverty reduction and growth objectives with the conservation and rehabilitation of the country's cultural assets, focusing in part on the unique architectural heritage of Asmara and other urban centers, as well as on selected historic sites, and on its rich written, oral and artistic traditions.

The project would work closely with communities in historic areas and in urban sites, to revitalize their economic and cultural life through conservation – for example, by providing support for building skills, and for small and medium-size building enterprises.

Job creation and skills development were to be supported through a modest civil works programs, and important groundwork for local tourism laid.

The project aimed to strengthen the management of public records in order to contribute to the development of a historiography of Eritrea while improving the efficiency of the public sector.

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Progress in meeting the project's Development Objectives was to be assessed by focusing on and disseminating good practices for cultural asset conservation and management activities piloted by the project, and the effectiveness of the Steering Committee in catalyzing action, setting priorities, and mobilizing resources for accomplishing national goals.

The project contains four components:

- Component A: Site Planning, Conservation and Museum Development
- Component B: Conserving the Built Environment
- Component C: Supporting Living Culture
- Component D: Documentation and Information Management

Impact

Overall the project was able to meet its objectives of testing out and developing the means for more fully integrating the conservation and management of cultural assets into local and national economic development. Furthermore, it promoted learning in many areas that are central to development at an institutional and skills level.

The main achievements of the project are:

- Urban development plans take into account impacts on archaeological and built heritage.
- Strengthened capacity for management of the historic built environment.
- Development of a robust and capable institution (RDC) to serve as the National archives.
- Increase in skill base for historic building restoration.
- Increased knowledge base and access for archaeological and architectural heritage, and written and oral traditions.
- Dissemination of oral history and oral traditions through publications and performances targeting communities and school children.
- Documentation of oral traditions of all nine ethnic groups with emphasis on fold songs, poems, stories etc.
- Significantly raised awareness of the significance of Eritrea's cultural assets at both a national and international level.
- Trained cadre of survey archaeologists, urban planners, archival and record management staff, and recorders of oral history.
- Creation of an acknowledged institutional forum for the management of heritage and culture. Prior to the project cultural institutions were fragmented with little cohesion.
- Procurement experience with reference to selective bidding on archaeological outputs and restoration civil works.
- Building social capital around cultural restoration as embodied in the Restore Asmara Campaign.

Lessons learned

- There must be a common institutional umbrella for management of the culture sector.
- The project has built strong links between culture and education, and demonstrated the importance of culture to national identity and integration.
- The project demonstrated the important role that non-government players have in supporting and safeguarding culture.
- Donors see the value of investing in cultural assets.
- Long-term links should be established with international funding and technical resource institutions.
- Culture can be a unifying force in post conflict societies.
- Project design should be simple, not overly ambitious; activities should be tailored to capacity and management skills.
- Bank engagement and management need to be sustained.

This summary was derived from World Bank Implementation Completion Report No. 0000708 from which broader and more detailed information can be obtained.