

Chapter 20

Culture

I. SITUATIONER

The enormous impact of culture on the economy and development is a reality that many people do not see. The reason for this, according to scholars, is perhaps a limited concept of culture, which confines it to the arts.

Culture should be seen as central to any form of development in the pursuit of economic prosperity and national unity. Meaningful and sustainable development must emanate from the culture of the people. The protection, development and promotion of culture, therefore, are imperative responsibilities of the government. Policies and strategies sensitive to cultural realities must be pursued, so that the country can embark on a meaningful and relevant development.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) defines culture in its widest sense, as the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual, and emotional features that characterize a society or a social group. This includes not only the arts and letters but also modes of life, values systems, traditions, and beliefs. Culture, however, can also be looked at as an “aggregate and internally inconsistent body of knowledge and meanings, unevenly distributed among individuals of a community, and acquired by these individuals through their experiences and transactions in everyday life” (Karl Anonsen, 1998).

From the perspective of culture and poverty programs, culture is defined as inclusive of creative expression, skills, traditional knowledge and cultural resources that form part of the lives of peoples and societies, serving as bases for social engagement and enterprise development.

Allowing for the varying view on culture, the government stands on supporting culture as a free expression of creativity to serve as the base for a dynamic process of consolidating human rights and supporting poverty alleviation.

For almost four decades now, the challenge of developing the Filipino’s creative spirit has been the inspiration of all organized efforts to raise cultural awareness to the national level. Efforts have been made by past administrations to conserve and promote the country’s cultural patrimony and resources.

Since 2002, initiatives of the culture sector have been focused on the implementation of policies and strategies contained in the Medium-Term Philippine Development Plan for Culture and Arts (MTPDP-CA) 2002-2005. There are seven program thrusts identified in the Plan that addresses certain needs in the sector: (a) Culture and Education; (b) Culture and Development; (c) Support for Artistic Excellence; (d) Promotion of Culture and the Arts; (e) Conservation of Cultural Heritage; (f) Culture and Diplomacy; and towards the end of 2003, the National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA) established the 7th program, i.e., Culture and Peace. These programs were created as the framework for direction and policy development from where project ideas can be developed.

Culture

In 2002, the Philippine Cultural Education Plan (PCEP) 2003-2007 was also formulated to provide direction for cultural education in the country. The plan resulted in the setting up of the Speakers' Bureau in response to numerous requests from schools, arts councils, local government units (LGUs), and other cultural agencies, the conduct of trainings and conferences under its cultural enrichment program for teachers and students, and education courses in tertiary level, and the donation of more than 30,000 copies of different publications/books and almost 2,000 electronic materials to public libraries and schools nationwide.

Through the Institute for Cultural and Arts Management (ICAM), the NCCA's educational arm, nondegree courses for cultural workers and other interested parties have been provided. Training almost 2,500 cultural workers, artists, art managers, cultural officers of LGUs and private corporations, teachers, and cultural attaches, ICAM has reached many regions in the country for the past two years.

The continuing review and development of cultural policies and legislative agenda on heritage protection resulted in the drafting of important bills such as 'An Act to Provide Intellectual Rights of Indigenous Peoples'; 'An Act for Philippine Cultural Heritage Law', and 'An Act Establishing the Artists' Career Services and Special Qualification in Government'. These bills will continually be pushed for until enacted by Congress.

In the conservation of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, feasibility studies and technical assistance for the conservation of the four churches listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, and the 26 churches from different parts of the country recognized by the National Museum as National Cultural Treasures were provided funding. To date, of the 26 churches, six are undergoing various stages of restoration. A grant was given to the Ifugao Provincial Government in support of conservation activities in the Rice Terraces of the Cordilleras. The NCCA signed a tripartite Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) and the Manila City Government for the rehabilitation of the Metropolitan Theater coordinated by the Metropolitan Theater Conservation Committee.

In order to conserve traditional forms of creative expression and knowledge, 18 Schools of Living Traditions (SLTs), where young members of indigenous cultural communities can learn about their heritage and traditional arts, were established. From 1995 to 2003, the NCCA approved the creation of 30 SLTs, 13 of which have already been completed; with eight currently ongoing and nine for implementation in 2004.

A three-year action plan has been formulated for the preservation of the Hudhud Epic of the Ifugaos, which was cited by UNESCO as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. The Darangen Epic of the People of Lake Lanao in Mindanao was also submitted to the UNESCO for nomination and inclusion in the UNESCO Memory of the World Registry as an outstanding masterpiece of oral and intangible heritage of humanity.

In terms of initiating special interventions for Mindanao, the program for culture and peace was crafted and is being implemented to address the need to provide assistance to projects that advocate peace, particularly in Mindanao regions. The Program is based on the belief that cultural dialogue has a key role in the peacemaking process. In a similar view, projects promoting peace and national unity in Mindanao were undertaken. Most of the activities were in support of indigenous festivals, workshops aimed at helping the members of communities develop cultural programs, cultural exchange programs, and strengthening the networking of the NCCA in the regions. One major undertaking

being done by the NCCA is to provide support for the Mindanao Natin Project spearheaded by Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process (OPAPP), particularly on the Mindanao Youth Peace and Development Advocacy Component, which is being done in coordination with the National Youth Commission (NYC), Office on Muslim Affairs (OMA), National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), Philippine Sports Commission (PSC), and the Department of Social Welfare and Development (DSWD).

At present, the sector's major strengths are the following:

- The growing enthusiasm and empowerment among the grassroots in initiating activities on culture as the NCCA continues to give support to initiatives in the regions;
- The stronger linkages being established by the NCCA with LGUs, nongovernment organizations, and educational institutions, which are key partners in the effective implementation of programs and projects; and
- The positive response of the LGUs to NCCA's call for the establishment of a stronger network to promote and enhance activities at the local level, through the establishment of Culture and Arts Councils and other channels of cultural development.

CHALLENGES

The fast developments in the local and global scene continue to pose serious challenges that need to be given attention. Among these are the following:

- The challenge to highlight and harness positive Filipino values and cultural resources in promoting social responsibility, good governance, and sustainable development;
- The need for a strong system of protection and promotion of Filipino cultural heritage;
- The need to democratize and provide mechanisms for opening opportunities for all to participate in the national cultural development process;
- The need to promote a culture of peace and unity and strengthen national identity;
- The need to intensify cultural action towards protecting indigenous peoples' rights, fostering harmony in cultural diversity;
- The need to provide a systematic and institutionalized cultural education program, which calls for, among others, improved collaboration with the Department of Education (DepEd), Commission on Higher Education (CHED), and other educational institutions;
- The need to formulate a widely acceptable set of cultural indicators that will systematize cultural development planning within the framework of national development planning and resource allocation; and
- The challenge of implementing cultural programs amidst the resource constraints facing the government.

II. GOALS, STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

The seven thrusts of the current MTPDP-CA shall continue to be the basis for the priority projects on culture since they respond to the national goal of human and economic development and contribute to the goal of reducing poverty, improving the relevance of education, and ensuring peace throughout the country, particularly in conflict-affected areas and with special focus on Mindanao. Culture shall be utilized as a catalyst for values formation and human rights education, promoting a culture of peace, social justice, and sustainable development.

For the next six years, efforts will be directed to the following priority strategies:

- Mainstream Culture and Development in plans, policies, programs, and projects;
- Institutionalize culture in education and in good governance;
- Continue the implementation of programs for the promotion of culture and artistic development;
- Promote sustainable heritage conservation approaches;
- Create special cultural programs in line with national peace and unification initiatives;
- Encourage the generation of jobs or livelihood from cultural tourism and cultural industries; and
- Expand cultural exchanges and agreements with other countries.

For the coming years, the government shall continue its thrusts and priority projects on culture and further address the urgent need to provide for projects that advocate peace, particularly in the Mindanao region through its newly established Program for Culture and Peace. Government shall continue to award grants for exemplary projects in all artistic disciplines including architecture, cinema, dance, dramatic arts, literary arts, music, and visual arts, in addition to supporting cultural education and information dissemination.

The NCCA shall be the lead agency in coordination with the concerned Cultural Agencies and Government Institutions to implement the plan. The Commission will persist in carrying out its mandate to protect, conserve, nurture, and promote our tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Congruent with its commitment to national development, the agency will focus on projects, which promote national social cohesion and human well being.

Culture-related initiatives shall continue to be guided by the principles of partnership, collaboration, and shared responsibility to achieve effective and efficient implementation of cultural programs. In this way, the sector keeps alive its thrust to empower the Filipino imagination.

A. Mainstream Culture and Development in plans, policies, programs and projects

1. As part of advocacy and policy formulation, the NCCA shall continue to review and develop policies and legislations for culture. This shall be done in cooperation with concerned agencies and the Committees on Culture and Arts in both the Senate and the House of Representatives;
2. Intensify the campaign and partnership with the Department of Interior and Local Government (DILG) as regards the implementation of the DILG Circular No. 2004-81 on the Creation of Local Culture and Arts Councils and continue the support for community

organizing, local cultural exchange projects, and regional empowerment through other collaborative activities;

3. Increase the number of community-based projects in support of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups; support to public school children; and healing and learning through cultural activities;
4. Initiate culture and development policy dialogues and fora among development planners and workers in both government and nongovernment agencies;
5. Promote the use of Filipino in government communication and advocacy programs; and
6. Continue the efforts in formulating cultural indicators.

B. Institutionalize culture in education and in good governance

1. Integrate cultural education in the formal, nonformal, and informal learning modalities in partnership and close collaboration with the DepEd, CHED, Technical Education and Skills Development Agency (TESDA), and other educational institutions. Cultural education activities for government agencies and institutions shall likewise be designed and implemented;
2. Fully implement the Philippine Cultural Education Plan (PCEP) until 2007 starting with the 15 special school for the arts;
3. Continue the training of teachers and educators in the field of culture and arts through the conduct of seminars and workshops, particularly in the area of curriculum and instructional materials development. The dissemination of the teaching guides on teaching culture-related subjects shall be fasttracked;
4. Strengthen the capacity of schools in promoting the various traditional Filipino artistic expressions such as the *kundiman*, *balagtasan*, and *dupluhan*;
5. Increase the distribution of books and other instructional materials (such as videos, monographs, and magazines) on Philippine culture in collaboration with the National Library, National Book Development Board, and other concerned agencies;
6. Develop and encourage more culture and values oriented projects on TV, radio, cinema, and theatre. Documentary films and infommercials shall be produced to highlight positive Filipino values and good governance. These shall be lobbied and done in partnership with media entities;
7. Develop materials on Philippine culture in Filipino and other Philippine languages;
8. Continue and expand the activities of the NCCA Institute for Cultural and Arts Management (ICAM) to include more regional satellite courses on Cultural Policies and Governance, Cultural Heritage Management, Cultural Festival Management, Performing Arts Management, and Cultural Resource Management; and

9. Develop programs that shall integrate values formation and practical concepts toward conscientizing a paradigm shift of attitude to displace the values that breed the culture of graft and corruption in the capacity development programs for government workers at all levels (Chapter 20: Anti-Corruption).

C. Continue the implementation of programs for the promotion of culture and artistic development

1. Support young and developing artists and contemporary and new forms of artistic expression with emphasis on values education and good governance;
2. Sustain support for exhibits and festivals with particular focus on community-based initiatives;
3. Provide more opportunities to enhance artists' talents and make their work available to a wider Filipino audience through school tours, coaching activities, and participation in competitions and festivals;
4. Continue to promote recognition for outstanding Filipino artists through awards such as the *Gawad sa Manlilikha ng Bayan* (GAMABA) and the National Artists Award; and
5. Support the study of different Philippine languages and literature.

D. Promote sustainable heritage conservation approaches

1. Conserve existing traditions, indigenous knowledge, and cultural masterpieces through the SLTs. Explore other important cultural traditions and treasures that are endangered and continue its nonformal teaching to the youth. Approximately three to four new SLTs shall be established annually aside from maintaining the already approved SLTs since 1995;
2. Implement a stronger and consistent conservation system for the UNESCO declared World Heritage Sites and those declared as National Cultural Treasures and Important Cultural Treasures;
3. Support the documentation and recognition of historical structures, landmarks, monuments, sites, traditional arts, and other aspects of cultural heritage; and
4. Fasttrack and improve the integration of community-centered approaches in existing and future conservation efforts.

E. Create special cultural programs in line with national peace and unification initiatives (Chapter 14: National Harmony: Peace Process)

1. Continue the projects advocating peace and unity in all conflict areas through the conduct of cultural dialogues, workshops and lectures, performances, and exhibits;
2. Pursue the conduct of Peace summits and cultural forum for military personnel and other individuals involved in the peace process;

3. Sustain support to the Mindanao Youth Peace and Development Advocacy Program in coordination with the OPAPP, OMA, NCIP, NYC, PSC, and DSWD; and
4. Continue the Philippine Cultural Exchange Program started in 2003, in collaboration with the Department of Tourism (DOT), NCIP, and OMA. This exchange program aims to give the participants, particularly various indigenous peoples and host communities a chance to further understand and appreciate each other's distinct histories, traditions, and belief systems.

F. Encourage the generation of jobs or livelihood from cultural tourism and cultural industries

1. Support the production of traditional and contemporary crafts and products such as weaving, pottery, musical instruments, basketry, music, films, and performing arts. This shall be done in cooperation with the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) and other concerned agencies; and
2. Continue the partnership with the DOT on the development of programs particularly in boosting local cultural tourism. The educational value of heritage sites and special events for tourists shall be maximized through the production of effective promotional and reference materials and training of tour guides and site staff.

G. Expand cultural exchanges and agreements with other countries.

1. Continue the implementation of the existing 30 active cultural exchange agreements and explore the possibility of entering into new agreements with other countries;
2. Intensify intellectual and cultural exchanges with other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries through joint activities and research projects;
3. Continue to participate in international competitions and festivals sharing the unique talents of the Filipinos;
4. Actively participate in international conferences and meetings where Philippine participation is necessary; and
5. Continue the programs for overseas Filipinos and the sending of cultural packages to embassies and consulates abroad.