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**PAPER TITLE: CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL
GOVERNANCE: PLACING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AT
THE CENTRE OF NATIONAL CULTURE POLICY IN ZIMBABWE**

**CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND CULTURAL GOVERNANCE:
PLACING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE AT THE CENTRE OF
NATIONAL CULTURE POLICY IN ZIMBABWE**

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Introduction

- Zimbabwe, as most African countries embraces the fundamental tenets and applications of cultural diversity and cultural heritage which are pronounced in several regional, continental and international policy agreements to date.
- Nationally, the public discourse on the importance of cultural heritage and, more specifically cultural diversity is evident in several ways including presidential and cabinet statements, leaders of socio-cultural institutions such as the chiefs' council, churches, educational institutions and leaders of key socio-political constituencies of women, youth and the disabled.
- Moreover, Zimbabwe has legislation and different sector policies which directly or indirectly serve to protect and promote cultural material, processes and activities.
- The success and implementation of the Government's national policy trajectory - the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Social and Economic Transformation (ZimAsset) is largely based and driven by social and cultural factors.
- Zim-Asset's people-centered, people-driven approach inherently means that the members of Zimbabwean society and social groups are the key drivers to achieving the ZimAsset goals.
- One of the founding values and principles of the revised national constitution (2013) is recognition of the nation's diverse cultural, religious and traditional values.
- Essentially, this statement means that the growth and development of the nation is premised on the diverse cultures as revealed through Zimbabweans identity and heritage as well the prospects of capitalising on their diversity for creativity and innovation.
- Some of the fundamental national policy principles include a commitment to:
 - Sovereignty and self-determination of Zimbabweans to define their own identity and independence to take charge of their destiny.
 - The cultural values of Unhu/Ubuntu which convey respect for humanity.
 - People-centred growth and development which relies on the potential of Zimbabweans, particularly women and youth.
 - Acknowledging, respecting and celebrating of the value of diversity of cultural identities in Zimbabwe.

- Sustainable transformation and development especially to promote economic development, empowerment and poverty reduction, and to promote social cohesion and environmental sustainability.

National Legislation and Policy on Cultural Diversity and Cultural Heritage

- **The National Constitution (2013)** commits to fostering unity, peace and stability with due regard to the cultural diversity of languages, customary practices, traditions, religious, racial and ethnic groups.
- **Legislation and statutes.** The legal protection of cultural heritage exists within various laws which may concern the protection of heritage (laws on archives, museums and historical monuments), the environment, languages and intellectual property (copyright neighbouring rights of performers and to the rights of researchers and informers).
- **Agreements.** Zimbabwe is signatory to several continental and international agreements which outline policies and guidelines for identifying, protecting and promoting cultural heritage.
- **National Culture Policy.** The Ministry of Sport, Arts and Culture has recently undertaken broad consultations among stakeholders to develop a national Culture Policy. The culture policy development process is predicated by several progressive commitments to cultural diversity within the revised National Constitution.

Priority Culture Policy issues

- Stakeholders in the culture sector have prioritised the following culture policy issues:
 - a. The need to safeguard Zimbabwean culture and identity in the face of the implosion of globalisation, out- and in-migration, intergenerational exposure, new consumption patterns and trade, the pervasiveness of TV and media, the advertising industry and tourism which all foster new cultural dynamics and needs. The disappearance of indigenous languages is also a major concern.
 - b. The importance of acknowledging and appreciating the diversity of cultures and identities within Zimbabwean societies at local, national and in the diaspora.
 - c. The need to build capacity and find opportunities to capitalise on the value of our cultural products and activities for economic development, employment and various social benefits.
 - d. The need to acknowledge the importance of culture to achieve different national sustainable development goals of food security, improved social services (education, health, social support), industry, infrastructure development, economic growth and employment and sustainable environment management.
- The Ministry is presently distributing a draft national culture policy for public comments which is accompanied by an action plan for implementing the Culture Policy before validation and finalisation later this year.

- **Culture stakeholders:** Zimbabwe recognises a wide range of cultural stakeholders who are instrumental in cultural development who include: several sector ministries, parastatals, NGOs, socio cultural institutions of education, health, local government and the Chiefs Council, creative designers, private developers, arts and culture associations, and so on.

Fundamental Concepts of Cultural Diversity, Intangible Cultural Heritage and the National Culture Policy

Cultural Diversity and the National Cultural Policy

- Cultural Diversity implies recognition of different groups within a given cultural community.
- Cultural diversity contributes to identity because it allows creative expression by people.
- Cultural diversity contributes to the expression of national and regional identities and more widely, building Pan-Africanism.
- By acknowledging cultural diversity the national cultural policy helps ensure the values of creativity, dignity and tolerance are entrenched in society as well to achieve national development goals. In other words, the values of creativity, dignity and tolerance are essential for establishing peace, unity and development.
- Diversity also requires inclusion and justice to foster true development.
- Therefore, (for example) no community can thrive without the active participation of women and the political acknowledgement of their contribution in creating and transmitting cultural legacies, nor of people having differences in physical capacities, racial or foreign backgrounds.
- Furthermore, the youth represent the majority of the population and are the key resources for contemporary creation.
- Elder and traditional leaders are cultural stakeholders and their role and importance deserve official recognition in order for them to be integrated in modern activities to address conflict resolution, inter-generational and intercultural dialogue.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

- The Culture Policy defines culture (as it relates to intangible cultural heritage) as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or social group and all that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs'
- The Culture Policy acknowledges that intangible cultural heritage is manifested in the following domains as outlined in the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage:
 - a. Oral traditions and expressions (language, literature)
 - b. Performing arts (dance, theatre)
 - c. Social practices, rituals and festive events (games)

- d. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe (myths)
- e. Traditional craftsmanship (handcrafts, architecture)
- Examples of intangible cultural heritage in Zimbabwe are traditional dance performances Jerusarema Mbende and Amabhiza; funeral and burial rites, handclapping (kuombera), clan and totem praises, idioms, proverbs, musical instruments such as mbira, ngoma, games nhodo, tsoro and so on
- The Culture Policy also implicitly appreciates that the intangible cultural heritage elements are not only essential for safeguarding tradition-based culture and creations that reflect or represent a community, but also for enabling the creativity and innovation that is also driven by the same elements for what is considered modern or 'popular' culture.
- Young artists in particular are inclined to adapt these elements into creative concepts of design, music, fashion and so on. Many of these cultural forms are commercialised. They may also be represented by certain words, designs and visual, aural or textual features.

Cultural Diversity, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Sustainable National Development and the National Culture Policy

- From the above-mentioned concepts, intangible cultural heritage is intrinsically embedded in cultural diversity and sustainable national development
- The concept of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage involves sustaining it as a living heritage
- Therefore, intangible cultural heritage is not a victim of sustainable development but it is also an enabler or driver of sustainable development.
- Culture, especially cultural diversity is a driver for people-centred development, with community-wide social, economic and environmental impacts.
- The Culture sector makes a significant contribution to the economy and poverty alleviation. For example, cultural heritage, cultural and creative industries, sustainable cultural tourism and cultural infrastructure can serve as strategic tools for revenue generation.
- Culture- and people- driven development which recognises cultural diversity also has important social benefits that are not monetised. These include greater social inclusiveness and rootedness, resilience, innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship for individuals and communities.
- Additionally, culture also helps in the use of local resources, skills and knowledge.
- Respecting and supporting cultural expressions contributes to strengthening the social capital of a community and fosters trust in government and other public institutions.
- By acknowledging and promoting respect for cultural diversity within a human rights approach the nation can facilitate dialogue, prevent conflicts and protect the rights of marginalised groups thus creating optimal conditions for achieving development goals.
- When culture is viewed this way, it makes national development more sustainable.

National mechanism for Identifying, Protecting and Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage

- In Zimbabwe, the process of identifying, safeguarding and promoting elements of intangible cultural heritage is fundamentally essential to achieving the Culture Policy goals as well as several national development goals.
- It also reflects an appreciation and commitment to cultural diversity.
- Forms of intangible cultural heritage are by nature extremely precarious and are at risk of disappearing.
- There is therefore an urgency to develop sustainable systems for identifying and inventorying ICH elements for historical preservation and future opportunities and directions.
- This therefore raises the importance of establishing an ICH framework for identifying, safeguarding and promoting this heritage.
- Because the elements of ICH are present in different sectors, the programmes targeted at safeguarding ICH must also influence educational social, health, environment and economic policies.
- The Ministry has undertaken the following steps to establish an ICH development and monitoring process:
 - a. Held Training of Trainers workshops for practitioners in ICH inventorying (two sessions to date)
 - b. Undertaken nomination process for Jerusarema Mbende dance (in 2006) and currently pursuing other elements.
 - c. We are presently finalising the national Culture Policy which includes fundamental concepts of cultural diversity and intangible cultural heritage.
 - d. Have established a national ICH committee to oversee and advise on the process of inventorying.
 - e. Launched a Southern African Regional Hub for the Platform for ICH inventorying.
- The Lessons learned to date include:
 - a. There is need to assign staff with specific inventorying responsibilities in order to contribute to a national system.
 - b. Need to develop a strategy or plan for trained practitioners to train others.
 - c. Need for strategies for resource mobilization.
 - d. There is need to develop direct links (for feedback or guidance) between the trainers and the national ICH Committee;
- In addition, the Ministry has identified the following as key activities and outcomes over the next few years:
 - a. Assign the Culture Directorate to supervise, plan and guide the inventorying of ICH elements. In particular the need to assign ministry officers in all province and districts to train fellow officers, communities of custodians and practitioners in inventorying of ICH.
 - b. Mainstream the Cultural Policy and implementation action plan in different ministries and culture sector stakeholders.

- c. Translate the documents on domesticating the 2003 Convention into local languages.
- d. Ensure regular networking and exchange among ICH practitioners and researchers through meetings, conferences and workshops.
- e. Establish a budget allocation for inventorying of ICH.
- f. Establish targets and a monitoring and evaluation system for ICH.
- g. Establish an Inter-ministerial committee on culture, arts and heritage
- h. Establish a Language Commission
- i. Ensure language curriculum in education and training.
- j. Develop language products and activities to safeguard and promote languages.

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