

THE MUNICIPAL PROGRAMME "MÉRIDA RESILIENT CULTURE"



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21: ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, RESILIENCE, TRAINING,
WELL-BEING, CREATIVE INDUSTRIES, HEALTH,
DIGITAL, COVID



1. Mérida and culture

Founded in 1542, Mérida is the capital and most populated city of the State of Yucatan (Mexico), which is the most peaceful in Mexico according to the 2021 Mexico Peace Index and the second-most peaceful city in the world after Quebec, Canada. It has seen a 72% population increase with the arrival of migrants in the last decade, registering 921,771 inhabitants as of 2020, making it the twelfth-most populated city in Mexico, 7.41% of which are Mayan speakers.

Mérida was the American Capital of Culture in 2000 and 2017, it is a UNESCO Creative City in Gastronomy, and was named one of the best cities to visit in the world and one of the safest in Latin America.

The municipal cultural policy is guided by UCLG's Agenda 21 for culture, which promotes inclusive, peaceful cities, as well as sustainable development. As such it also adheres to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Its strong regional identity, artistic community, a rich and permanent annual cultural program, as well as the fact that it was the first city to have a Charter of Cultural Rights, all make Mérida a cultural hub in southeastern Mexico.

THE "MÉRIDA: RESILIENT CULTURE" PROGRAM FOCUSES ON URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED TO ADDRESS THE PANDEMIC AND ADDRESS THE CITY'S MAIN CHALLENGES.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

The "Mérida: Resilient Culture" program focuses on urgent actions needed to address the pandemic and address the city's main challenges. It was initiated by the City Hall of Mérida to offer alternatives for expression, the exercise of fundamental rights, economic support for families dependent on cultural life, and provide thoughtful entertainment during quarantine, avoiding violence, and taking advantage of the channel for informal education and productive leisure through new technologies.

2.2. Project development

“Mérida: Resilient Culture” implemented six lines of action to guarantee that art and culture will be part of a gradual and supportive return to normal life in the city:

- Caring for common goods;
- Online art education;
- Art for health and environmental care;
- Cultural innovation, digital citizenship, and virtual narratives;
- Memory, solidarity, and tradition;
- Inclusion, women, and non-violence.



“MÉRIDA: RESILIENT CULTURE” IMPLEMENTED SIX LINES OF ACTION TO GUARANTEE THAT ART AND CULTURE WILL BE PART OF A GRADUAL AND SUPPORTIVE RETURN TO NORMAL LIFE IN THE CITY.

Between March 2020 and April 2022, the following actions were carried out:

- Launching of calls for proposals:
 - » “Art at home” aimed at all citizens who wanted to make a 20-minute video recorded at home;
 - » “Dissemination of Cultural Audiovisual Materials”, aimed at all artistic groups with high-level recordings of concerts or presentations made prior to lockdown;
 - » “The Quarantine” contest aimed at photographers, reporters, and citizens interested in portraying reality through photography and video. Participants showed their perspectives of public and private spaces, as well as the circumstances of the pandemic through their eyes.
- Digital laboratories with the objective of training collaborators at the city council, playwrights, theatre companies, cultural managers, entrepreneurs, audiovisual producers, creators, and art sector workers, in the area of:
 - » The seminar “Artistic Practices During a Pandemic” focused on training for new technologies and their applications to “adapt” shows to a virtual format;
 - » An international course on “From Theatrical to Audiovisual Narratives”, in collaboration with the Modelo University, exploring possible languages for broadcasting performing arts in diverse formats;
 - » The Digital Citizenship laboratory for children, which allowed children to create, reflect, enjoy, and think about science and culture through the “Scientific Toys” and “My Interactive and Digital Story” courses, which lasted five sessions each.
- Design, construction, and management of the digital platform [Midvi.mx](https://midvi.mx), created in response to the urgency of selling audiovisual materials during the pandemic that already existed or were in production.
- Construction of a solidarity system that resulted in food outreach programs, high quality recordings ready to be marketed, and direct economic support, with:
 - » The payment of tickets for a show aimed at tourists;
 - » “Olimpo Abierto” provided sound and light booths, stage, recording equipment, among other tools, achieving competitive audiovisual products that were promoted through midvi.mx;
 - » Direct financial support to creators.
- The “Artistic Caravans” that led to the hiring of comedians, singers, musicians, and other live event services to bring entertainment to precincts and neighbourhoods outside the historic centre.



3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

- The investment of \$3.5M pesos (approximately 170,000 Euros) in the calls for proposals, supporting 1,700 projects, economically benefiting 1,600 creative workers, and proposing cultural events to thousands of people through Facebook/MeridaEsCultura, as well as the creation of the "The Quarantine" contest with 800 photography and video entries.
- 360 food packages delivered to Yucatan based troubadours;
- 300 videos were been broadcast with 20 thousand views in Mexico and some US cities with Yucatan communities.

In total:

- 1,700 projects financially benefited 1,600 creators.
- 360 families benefited from food outreach.
- 2,000 creative sector workers disseminated their work, making themselves known for free, or charging fees via online ticketing.
- 125,000 people enjoyed the Artistic Caravans.

1,700 PROJECTS WERE SUPPORTED, ECONOMICALLY BENEFITING 1,600 CREATIVE WORKERS, AND PROPOSING CULTURAL EVENTS TO THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE.

3.2. Key factors

The key factors that facilitated the success of the program include the following:

- Prompt reaction to the extraordinary situation and rethinking of budgets and general resources towards the emergency.
- Integration of the parts of the value chain: production, exhibition, training, dissemination, marketing.
- Strategic use of municipal spaces.
- Strengthening of local identities and hybridization of elements and disciplines to achieve innovative shows such as local reggae with symphonic instruments; Yucatan troubadours and theatre, among others.

3.3. Continuity

"Mérida Resilient Culture" is a growing emergency program. The midvi.mx platform is part of the city's cultural infrastructure and the contents of Art at Home are available via Facebook and their authors continue to share them. The Artistic Caravans maintain their work on special dates such as Children's Day and Christmas. The city is working towards the approval of a Municipal Fund for Digital Creation. As such, the city intends to continue creating products full of diverse symbolic capital and free access on socio-digital networks, as well as the sharing of samples of local talent around the world.

4. Further information

Mérida was a candidate for the fifth UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (February – June 2022). The jury for the award drew up its final report in September of 2022, and requested that the UCLG Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices implemented under Agenda 21 for culture.

This report was written by Irving Gamaliel Berlin Villafaña, Director of Culture of the Municipality of Merida, Yucatan, Mexico.

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