

BUILDING CULTURE FORWARD



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY AND CREATIVITY
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING AND PUBLIC SPACE
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

**SOCIAL, COMMUNITY, SUPPORT, CROSS-SECTORIAL,
RESILIENCE, GOVERNANCE, PUBLIC SPACE, REGENERATION,
HERITAGE, COVID**



1. Ramallah and culture

Ramallah, located in the Palestinian West Bank, is an open and plural city that hosts citizens from all over Palestine with different backgrounds. It is increasingly taking on the role as Palestine's cultural Center, and hosts most of the important Palestinian cultural organisations.

The City of Ramallah creates projects and programs, including "Building Culture Forward", to promote civic participation; a sense of belonging and ownership for all; safe, socially inclusive, green and high-quality family-friendly public spaces; an enhanced social and intergenerational interaction; cultural rights of expression and political participation; and social cohesion, inclusion and security, while meeting the needs of all residents, especially the most vulnerable.

THE CITY AIMED TO STRENGTHEN LOCAL RESILIENCE THROUGH CULTURE AND BE PART OF THE GLOBAL DISCUSSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

With "Building Culture Forward", and in the face of uncertain times and emergencies of all types, Ramallah Municipality aimed for culture to become a crucial tool for asserting its own identity as a place that treasures the values of diversity, inclusion, equity, sustainable development, active citizenship, gender equality and intellectual freedom. In this light, the city aimed to strengthen local resilience through culture and be part of the global discussion on sustainable development.



The specific objectives of the program are:

- Creating mechanisms that promote inclusion and increase participation in cultural life.
- Creating policies that support entrepreneurship, creativity and innovation. Ensuring education at every level and professionalization of cultural practices.
- Improving access, strengthening the possibilities to create and disseminate arts, and increase participation in cultural life.

2.2. Project development

Ramallah has adapted an integrated Cultural Strategy based on culture as a human right, promoting and supporting culture within the city, and providing a framework to support the city's organizations to integrate culture and arts into their work. It has also involved communities and horizontal partnerships in cultural initiatives and programs.

Due to the pandemic, the city developed the use of local public venues and created new spaces for artists and cultural professionals to support entrepreneurs and independent young artists, also allocating small grants for them. The city also supports initiatives from the local community to connect people, and support them mentally and physically. Also, two local historic houses will be restored and preserved to narrate the rich and social story of Ramallah. Moreover, the city also started to work on the city archive to preserve the cultural heritage of the city.

During lockdown, diverse cultural programs dedicated to several audiences were developed all over the city in a participatory process (virtual). These were awareness, entertaining, cultural and artistic programs that responded to the needs of artists to engage with citizens. Through its international networks, Ramallah and the local artists participated in different cultural campaigns such as WeCulture, different international art programs that discussed the concepts of community, solidarity, co-existence, co-living, co-experience, connection, etc.

Also, the city also contributed to the smart infrastructure of Ramallah Governmental schools, which are the only public schools in the West Bank that are equipped to cope with e-learning. During lockdown, different online programs were also launched to encourage students and families to create different environmental and agricultural practices.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

With "Building Culture Forward" the local authorities have become even more aware of the relationship between culture and sustainable urban development. Thanks to an analysis of the city's resources and existing initiatives, the program has highlighted the potential of a systematic and systemic support for the cultural sector, which positively affects the image of the city in the eyes of its inhabitants, allows them to be involved, and affects the integration of the local community.

For the cultural sector of Ramallah, the implementation of the project has provided an excellent opportunity to reconsider existing activities, verify the resources available, identify needs and have a consistent impact on the development for the present and future, also enhancing the spirit of sharing and solidarity to overcome the existing situation.



THANKS TO AN ANALYSIS OF THE CITY'S RESOURCES AND EXISTING INITIATIVES, THE PROGRAM HAS HIGHLIGHTED THE POTENTIAL OF A SYSTEMATIC AND SYSTEMIC SUPPORT FOR THE CULTURAL SECTOR.

3.2. Assessment

A full evaluation of the project has been planned for 2022. An analysis of the resources will be carried out at the beginning of the project implementation and its results will be compared with the "zero status" from 2019.

First, the Ramallah Municipality will perform a self-evaluation based on the level of achievement of the primary and detailed objectives of the project, the implementation of the SDGs and the commitments of Culture 21 Actions (of Agenda 21 for Culture).

Next, "Building Culture Forward" will be evaluated by invited representatives of the local partners based on similar criteria, comparing this to the results obtained by the Ramallah Municipality, and then passed on to other partners at the international level.

3.3. Key factors

The effectiveness of the project lies primarily in its multi-level and inclusive nature, implicating many cultural institutions, education centers, NGOs, individual artists and local communities. Also, with the consultation of the program at different stages, the citizens also identify themselves with the project.

Another key factor was to precede the creation of the program with a thorough analysis of resources and needs. This allowed for creating a wide range of partnerships and diverse inputs to the program.

The program is part of the city's policy in culture, and as such, it is a structural approach that allows for involving other urban entities in cultural activities, such as social affairs, education, etc.

3.4. Continuity

"Building Culture Forward" is a recovery project that responded to the Covid-19 pandemic. However, it was also in line with the unpublished cultural policy that the city was developing, which consists of a number of interventions built over action plans that facilitate the evaluation of the programs' implementation. Moreover, the program is already embedded in the Municipality's annual plans, supported by allocated funds and action plans.



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT LIES IN ITS MULTI-LEVEL AND INCLUSIVE NATURE, IMPLICATING MANY CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS, EDUCATION CENTERS, NGOS, INDIVIDUAL ARTISTS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

Ramallah can become an example for other cities whose political situation considerably limits the possibilities of free, unrestrained development, showing how, despite obstacles, it is possible to create programs and infrastructure for culture through systemic work, as well as to build a local community centered around culture and strong social values through culture and social initiatives.

4. Further information

Ramallah 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 2022, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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