

MOVING CULTURE FORWARD



AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

1. CULTURAL RIGHTS
3. CULTURE AND EDUCATION
6. CULTURE, EQUITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

**DEVELOPMENT, COMMUNITY, EMPOWERMENT,
SUPPORT, RESILIENCE, HUMAN RIGHTS, PEACE,
MEMORY, CRISIS, CONFLICT**



1. Ramallah and culture

The Municipality of Ramallah's initiative to develop a participatory Cultural Policy, finalized in March 2022, reflects an understanding of culture as a tool for resilience and resistance. Cultural policy copes with an essential directive of the city, the liberation of Palestine. The Palestinian narrative emphasises the ongoing struggle of Palestinians against occupation, particularly highlighted during the commemoration of the "1948 Nakba" and the subsequent war in Gaza and the West Bank late 2023. It also sheds light on challenges such as displacement, ethnic cleansing, the theft of cultural heritage, forced exile and negation of human, civil, national and historical rights.

Culture emerges as a central element of Palestinian resistance against occupation, serving as a means of preserving identity, memory, and connection to land and heritage. Despite the challenges posed by the occupation, Palestinians demonstrate resilience by leveraging cultural practices to maintain collective narrative and social cohesion and collective narrative. Ramallah cultural policy being flexible and responsive to the local context and needs commendably shows the importance of adapting to the current situation and addressing the specific challenges faced by the people.

2. Project goals and implementation

2.1. Main goal and specific objectives

This is a responsive program initiated as a response to the war on Palestine, the genocide crimes in Gaza and ethnic cleansing policies in Palestine. It is a joint force by the Municipality, civil society organisations, social initiatives and activists to contribute through culture and social activities to the efforts of documenting the narrative of Palestinians during these difficult times, to act against the occupation and to raise the voice of Palestine and reveal occupation crimes.

The program is building strategic interventions alongside with temporary programs and activities that strengthen people's collective ties and efforts, and regains the strength of societies when they stand all together towards a national goal.



DESPITE THE CHALLENGES POSED BY THE OCCUPATION, PALESTINIANS DEMONSTRATE RESILIENCE BY LEVERAGING CULTURAL PRACTICES TO MAINTAIN SOCIAL COHESION AND COLLECTIVE NARRATIVE.

2.2. Project development

The city aims to strengthen its resistance, resilience and social cohesion through:

- » Establishing strategic new required infrastructure for the development of cultural scene and Palestinian collective narrative; Creating mechanisms that promote inclusion and increase cultural and social interventions that responds to the current situation; Creating policies that support entrepreneurship, creativity, and innovation; Ensuring education at every level and professionalization of cultural and creative practices; Improving access, strengthening the possibilities to create and disseminate arts, and increase participation in cultural life; Promoting and supporting culture within the city and providing a framework to support the city's organizations; Creating diverse programs and initiatives pushed by communities with horizontal partnerships; Using its public venues.
- » Establishing the Shireen Abu Aqleh Media Museum (SAMM) in 2026, named after the late iconic journalist, shot dead by an Israeli sniper in 2021. SAMM is planned to have multiple programs, including an educational program for the youth to create ethical digital content.
- » City Museum exhibition's production under process, which focuses on Ramallah social history narrative from different perspectives. The educational program is designed to encourage research on local narratives.
- » Ramallah Youth Innovation hub: a platform that will host young entrepreneurs through a process that includes monitoring and support of creative projects that contribute to local needs and local resources.
- » Artists' Studios Grants for young artists that have community art-based projects with a special focus on the current situation in Palestine.



The city has also developed:

- » Participatory cultural programs in Ramallah schools led professional artists and writers focusing on "Nakba of 1948", "Independence" (emerging); and "readings in Cultural Heritage", the latter focusing on the historical buildings that were occupied in 1948 in Ramallah by refugees who were forced to immigrate from 1948 cities. Students go through readings, discussions, imagining, creation and presentation, and they can choose whatever medium they wish to use (literature, theatre, music, dance, paintings, illustration, photography, films, podcasts, etc.). These programs were designed through a participatory process that included educators, artists, activists and intellectuals in addition to the cultural department staff.
- » Equipping some public schools with smart infrastructure to enable distance learning to some children in Gaza.



CULTURE EMERGES AS A CENTRAL ELEMENT OF PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AGAINST OCCUPATION, SERVING AS A MEANS OF PRESERVING IDENTITY, MEMORY, AND CONNECTION TO LAND AND HERITAGE.

- » Ramallah Youth city council (15-17 years) – an elected body from Ramallah schools have been working on a campaign in solidarity with Gaza (creating a song, animation films, posters and broadcast videos and activities for “land day”).
- » Support Cultural Production.
- » Support community cultural activities, such as the “Thank you” stand to South Africa’s at Mandela Square/ Ramallah for contribution to support Palestine in the International Court of Justice.
- » Support to the citizen initiative “Ramadan aid campaign in cooperation with neighbouring municipalities and city’s institutions and the Red Crescent in Palestine”.
- » Support a group of artist’s initiative to create a local attraction spot for events in solidarity with Gaza (a continuation the campaign “unmute Gaza”).
- » Alongside Qattan Foundation, Sakakini Cultural center, Riwaq and the Palestinian Museum, the launch of “Spaces” with an open call to document “Gaza”, including resources sharing, spaces, mentorship, etc. Moreover, the city joined forces with the Palestinian Museum and the Institute of Palestine studies in the City’s archive project to preserve archival material in this war.
- » Proposal of a collective fund from festival’s budgets to transfer it into open grants to artists to document this important period of Palestine’s history, and support them financially.



- » Connecting with twin cities for the campaign to stop “War on Gaza.”
- » Creation of an emergency budget at the start of the war, meaning that all the allocated funds for 2024 will be used relying on priorities.

Despite the budget for the cultural department projects are almost one third of the annual budget for programs, there are many obstacles. The allocated financial resources are much less than what is required as a result of the war and the bad economy, the cut of public employees' salaries, the limitations of international grants, etc. However, Ramallah believes in culture as a main pillar of social cohesion and sustainable world.

3. Impacts

3.1. Direct impacts

Thorough analysis of the city's resources and existing initiatives, the program has highlighted the potential of systematic support for the cultural sector and allowing citizens to express themselves, act, participate and be actively involved in projects implemented at various levels, thus impacting the integration of the local community.

For the cultural sector of Ramallah, this 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.

The Municipality promotes that in the face of uncertain and emergency times, culture stands as a crucial tool for asserting the own identity, treasuring the values of diversity, inclusion, equity, sustainable development, active citizenship, gender equality and intellectual freedom.



THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROJECT PRIMARILY LIES IN ITS MULTI-LEVEL AND INCLUSIVE NATURE AND FLEXIBILITY, INVITING AS MANY ACTORS AS POSSIBLE, LEADING TO A SITUATION WHERE THEY OWNED THE PROJECT.

3.2. Evaluation

A full evaluation of the project will be implemented by the end of 2024. An analysis of the held resources will also be repeated and compared with those of 2023. Also, the Municipality will perform a self-evaluation based on the achievement of the primary and detailed objectives, the implementation of 17 SDGs, and the implementation of the commitments of Culture 21 Actions.

Moreover, the program will be evaluated by invited representatives of local partners, subsequently comparing the results to those obtained by the Municipality. Then, it will be passed on to other partners on the international level.

3.3. Key factors

The effectiveness of the project primarily lies in its multi-level and inclusive nature and flexibility, inviting citizens, representatives of as many cultural institutions, educational centers, NGOs, as well as artists and local communities, leading to a situation where they owned the project. This is also visible in the “action plan” created, whose offer is addressed at a possibly broad group of residents.

It was also key to carry out a thorough analysis of resources and needs beforehand, which allowed to create a wide range of partnerships and diverse inputs to the program, as well as to involve other urban entities in cultural activities (social affairs, education, etc.).



3.4. Continuity

The program is part of a larger policy for the city consisting of a number of interventions built over action plans and it benefits from sharing experiences, knowledge and best practices; pilot projects, partnerships and initiatives associating the public and private sectors, and civil society; professional and artistic exchange programs and networks; studies, research and evaluations policies and measures for sustainable urban development; communication and awareness raising activities.

Moreover, it is embedded in the Municipality's annual plans, supported by allocated core funds and action plans.

4. Further information

Ramallah was selected as a Special Mention for the sixth UCLG – Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award (November 2023 – March 2024). The jury for the award drew up its final report in June 2024, and requested that the Committee on Culture also promoted this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

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