

**Zimbabwe:**

**Support to Culture as a trigger  
for national cohesion,  
peacebuilding and shared  
values.**

# Context

- **Socio-economic downturn:** collapse of tourism, limited marketing of existing -and very valid- Zimbabwean cultural and artistic creations, limited production and commercial infrastructures
- **Political downturn:** increased isolation of Zimbabwe on the world's scene over the last decade ; Curtailing of freedom of expression
- Failure to effectively support national reconciliation processes; Insufficient recognition and protection of cultural diversity and the national heritage
- Ideologically manipulative public discourse through an anti-European propaganda

# Analysis

- Culture sector should play a meaningful role in reducing political tensions and promoting national healing and cohesion through shared cultural values;
- Culture sector should contribute to sustainable livelihood.

# Opportunity

The Global Political Agreement and the newly adopted Constitution placed emphasis on freedom of expression and national healing, providing promising ground for Arts and Culture as entry point to improve mutual understanding between the EU and its Zimbabwean partners and to foster freedom of expression and reconciliation within the Zimbabwean society.

# Results

- Result 1: Increased democratic space and improved policy framework through a capacitated civil society;
- Result 2: Improved social inclusion, sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction amongst creative industry workers;
- Result 3: Improved mutual understanding between social and cultural groups.

# Implementation (Ongoing):

## 2 EDF Grants (1 million EUR in total)

- **The Culture Fund project** (EU + SIDA): a Zimbabwe-based organisation pivotal in bridging the gap between individual artists, civil society organisations and the Government (including the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe). Support to activities at grassroots and community levels, in particular in high density ("township") areas, festivals organised outside of Harare and that are traditionally disaffected by artists, advocacy work with the Government for reform of the artists rights and freedom of expression. The Fund has also supported the participation of Zimbabwe in the Venice Biennale for the second time last year.
- **The EUNIC project** (EU + Alliance Francaise, British Council, Goethe Institute) focuses on sustainable livelihoods through a project combining the skills and crafts of women weavers in rural areas, bringing them into connection with European designers, and paving the way for an improved marketing and production of artcraft in Zimbabwe and throughout the world.

# Lessons learnt

- Without a more dynamic policy to preserve national heritage, promote culture and reactivate shared values and national identity, sustainability will prove difficult to achieve.
- > *EU DEL has programmed Culture in NIP to keep the momentum.*
- Difficulties to obtain work permits or organise events due to suspicion from Government.
- > *EU DEL and partners are maintaining an ongoing dialogue with Government for events to be organised lawfully and not suppressed, and artists from outside of Zimbabwe to be able to enter the country.*

# Overall Assessment

- Ensure that the Programme is deep rooted in strategies that seek to promote both the priorities of the Government as indicated in the Constitution and protect the interests of civil society which may sometimes be perceived as antagonistic to the Government policies.
- > *Need to rely on strong, local partners, that will be able to take a constructive approach as to what can be reformed and where breathing space can be open, in what could otherwise be characterised as a very conservative and at times repressive society.*