Official Name: Support to Girls’ Right for Education and Safeguarding Cultural Heritage through Education in Pakistan

Project Duration: 07 September 2017 – 31 August 2022

Actions:

The Makli Necropolis is a UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sindh. Under this project, members of the Makli Union Council were engaged in a series of activities between 2019 – 2020, around the theme of heritage education and preservation. This included site visits, learning activities, and capacity-building workshops with teachers, students, and local community members, including out-of-school youth.

Similar work is underway in three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa – namely Peshawar, Mardan, and Swat. Training resources are being developed which are based around local heritage sites in each district, to serve as a teaching and learning tool for schools. Through these tools, youth are introduced to the concept of heritage entrepreneurship and guided on how culture can become a sustainable means of livelihood for them. Students and teachers are encouraged to visit sites in order to demonstrate the practical implementation of learning tools and emphasise the direct role communities can play in protecting such sites. Consultative workshops with teachers, community leaders, and government officials are a significant part of the project, which help in working towards incorporating heritage education into the school curriculum.

In Punjab, the focus is on local communities living near Rohtas Fort – another UNESCO’s World Heritage Site. The project aims to train local youth to safeguard the heritage site, and build their capacity to engage in heritage entrepreneurship to sustain the local economy. All training activities and resource material are designed around the needs of the local community.
The shutting down of schools as part of the safety measures against COVID-19 was a massive blow for education. In order to address this urgent need, the education and culture sections of UNESCO partnered with a nationwide radio station named Power99 Foundation, to develop an educational radio series for children in grades 1 – 3. The idea behind the radio programme was that a greater number of households have access to the radio, as compared to television or the internet. Therefore it can reach a larger number of children whose education may have been affected by COVID-19 shutdowns, or even those who may not have access to schools at all.

This hour-long show airs six days a week (Monday – Saturday) at 10 a.m. The show is structured in a way that imparts basic knowledge to children, such as alphabets and counting, and uses songs and sound effects to make the lesson engaging. The radio series contains a cultural component, which presents the history and heritage of the country interestingly and engagingly for young children. The segments also emphasise how civic responsibility and respect for cultural diversity are important to help safeguard heritage sites around the country. An archive of the programmes is available on UNESCO Islamabad official website and can be accessed through this link: https://en.unesco.org/news/radio-monologues

**Results:**

In Sindh, 200 students from 8 selected public schools were engaged in a series of interactive workshops on the concepts of protecting, preserving, and preventing damage to heritage sites. A total of 130 teachers from various public schools in the Makli Union Council area were engaged in consultative workshops on incorporating heritage education into the school curriculum. About 150 local community members, including out-of-school youth, were engaged in a series of workshops that emphasised the need to change social behaviours to inculcate respect and care for cultural heritage sites amongst communities.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the concept of using art as a method to safeguard cultural heritage was introduced in schools across Swat, Mardan and Peshawar districts. Educators were trained in the use of painting, drawing, and illustration as a means to document oral traditions and cultural practices. These educators then facilitated art competitions on the theme of preserving cultural heritage in each district. A total of 60 schools from among the three districts were chosen to partake in the art competition, with equal participation by both boys and girls. In Swat, about 1,000 students were engaged in the competition, 569 in Swat, and 646 in Peshawar.

A series of consultative workshops have also been held with students, teachers, government officials and community members in these three districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

**Meaningful Impact:**

With each intervention carried out thus far in the provinces of Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, there has been a positive response from the community, especially youth. In Sindh, the response from out-of-school children was particularly significant, as they affirmed their commitment to preventing vandalism in the Makli Necropolis, and teaching others to clean up after themselves when they visit the site. These are the members of the community who visit these sites most frequently and therefore are well placed to pass along their knowledge of protecting and preserving the site to tourists, visitors, and even vendors who sell their wares at or around the site.

The workshops have aimed to introduce heritage entrepreneurship as a source of sustainable socio-economic growth, which has been well received by the local communities in the wake of the economic uncertainty brought forth by the global pandemic. Community members whose
source of livelihood may have been affected by COVID 19 shutdowns, or who may not hold educational certificates required to gain employment elsewhere are now able to consider utilizing their cultural knowledge as a source of income. This includes (but is not limited to) working as tour guides, site managers, and vendors on-site, as well as producing traditional crafts that can be sold as souvenirs. Recognizing the potential for heritage entrepreneurship is the first step towards developing and strengthening the culture and creative industries across the country.

Teachers who have been introduced to the teaching and learning resources developed in this project have an increased understanding of the importance of heritage education, and how it can be incorporated into the school curriculum. In particular, the training emphasised how cultural learning can be incorporated in every aspect of education – including sports, art, and hygiene. Even teaching students about the importance of observing cleanliness and hygiene as part of COVID precautions can be done through the lens of culture, by exploring how water and purification rituals have been at the center of all religious and cultural traditions, as was demonstrated during a consultative workshop. Despite the hurdles presented by COVID 19 lockdowns, comprehensive teaching and learning modules are under development, which will serve as a useful resource in schools long after the completion of the project.

In each of the three provinces covered so far by the project, government stakeholders have been actively involved in every step. Through consultative workshops and strategic meetings,
the project aims to develop ties between education, culture, and tourism departments, to ensure widespread implementation and sustainable growth for heritage education and responsible tourism. This is of particular significance in the post-COVID 19 world, where the cultural heritage sector needs strong and sustained support from all stakeholders, to survive.