Project Introduction

Bangladesh was among the first countries to ratify the UNESCO 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. Since ratification in 2007, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs and affiliated government and non-government institutions and entities have been implementing the Convention which focuses on the arts, artistic products, and cultural and creative industries. Meanwhile, certain aspects of the implementation of the Convention can benefit from reinforcement and strengthening.

In an attempt to supporting and promoting Bangladesh’s photography sector as a cultural and creative visual arts industry that contributes to the sustainable development of Bangladesh, the UNESCO Office in Dhaka implemented the project “Strengthening National Capacities to Develop and Promote Visual Arts (Photography) in Bangladesh: Contributing to Sustainable Development” with generous funding support from the UNESCO Korean Funds-in-Trust (KFIT) and in close collaboration with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the National Museum of Bangladesh, EMK Center, Prito Reza Production, and other stakeholders over the course of 2019.

Project Objectives

A. To build capacity and to enhance stakeholders’s understanding of photography as an important culture and creative industry in Bangladesh.

B. To provide a neutral platform and to facilitate dialogue between photographers, industry stakeholders, and policy makers on the role and importance of photography in Bangladesh.

C. To sensitize national stakeholders and photographers about the UNESCO 2005 Convention as a platform and tool to strengthen Bangladesh’s photography sector as a cultural and creative industry.

D. To support photographers in their work by providing tools that are of relevance, including learning opportunities, legal frameworks, and professional networking opportunities.

“Before today’s master class, I had frustrations and was unclear about certain things related to photography. Now, I have a vision. I have gained ideas about how to overcome those challenges and how to move forward with a more positive mindset.”

Joyshreel, Documentary and Conceptual Photographer, Dhaka
Project Activities

Assessment and Situation Analysis of National Photography Sector

An assessment and situation analysis of Bangladesh's photography sector as a cultural and creative industry served as a baseline for interventions implemented under the project.

The assessment and situation analysis provides a comprehensive and updated overview of the photography sector and industry, in particular on existing policies, legislation, educational and training opportunities, both within the formal and informal education system, educational provision for labour market match, as well as good practices in the field of protection, promotion and development of creative industries, especially of the photography industry in Bangladesh.

Photography Capacity-building Master Classes for Photographers

Strengthening photographers' skills in areas of photography important to maintaining a sustainable livelihood and contributing to sustainable development, as well as sensitizing photographers about the 2005 Convention as a platform and tool for visual artists. Three capacity building master classes were conducted in partnership with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, EMK Center, and Prito Reza Production.

With facilitation support from national as well as international photographers and industry experts, 76 male and female Bangladeshi photographers participated in the hands-on and engaging master classes, and gained knowledge about:

- Photography as a cultural and creative industry contributing to sustainable development.
- The 2005 Convention as a tool for photographers and policy makers
- Entrepreneurial aspects of photography
- Gender and Photography

Policy Round-Table Discussion Engaging Civil Society

A policy round-table discussion with government and relevant photography stakeholders allowed for dialogue between government and civil society on photography as a cultural and creative industry in Bangladesh.

Discussions included the implementation of the 2005 Convention and national cultural policy, as well as gave the opportunity to participating stakeholders to jointly identify steps, actions, and responsibilities related to the development and promotion of the institutional infrastructure and environment of photography in Bangladesh.

The 2005 Convention provided an umbrella for the policy dialogue. The text of the convention and country case studies provided concrete tools to photographers and policy makers and showcased ways to promote and develop an institutional framework supporting the visual art and photography industry in a given country.

Photography Competition, Exhibition, and Public Talks

Under the theme "COLORS OF BANGLADESH", a photography competition, a photography exhibition, and three (3) public talks were organized that allowed Bangladeshi photographers to come together, to display and discuss photography, as well as that sensitized the public about Bangladesh's vibrant photography sector and its contribution as a cultural and creative sector in Bangladesh.

More than 1300 male and female Bangladeshi photographers submitted their favorite photos illustrating the "Colors of Bangladesh". A diverse panel of national and international judges reviewed submissions and selected 120 photographs (including 5 winning photographs) which were displayed during the 3-day photography exhibition at the National Museum in Dhaka from 15 – 17 Nov 2019.