

Inspiring the youth: Linking community museums to heritage education



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NATIONAL TRUSTS



BY THE CROSS-CULTURAL FOUNDATION OF
UGANDA

This presentation is about:



1. An attempt by a local NGO, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, to foster heritage education in secondary schools
2. A few reflection points arising from the first phase of this initiative

The context



The context (ct'd)



1. Amongst the poorest countries on the planet
 - ➡ heritage often seen as irrelevant
 - ➡ mostly to do with dance and music

2. Very much an artificial colonial creation, with 65 different ethnic groups, many of them straddling international borders
 - ➡ common cultural identity elusive, fragmented appreciation and promotion of heritage

The context (ct'd)



3. However, a rich heritage:

- Intangible and tangible heritage of 65 ethnic cultures
- Knowledge (traditional medicine, clan - governance systems) and skills (bark cloth...,)
Historical sites
- Natural resources – flora and fauna

The Context (c'td)



Hence:

- Virtually no public funding, unless generates money (national parks)
- No Ministry of Culture
- Government planning to destroy single national museum for office block
- Heritage conservation detached from ordinary Ugandans' daily lives

The context (ct'd)



In the education sector:

- Primary schooling compulsory but of poor quality; but introduction of local language teaching
- Secondary schooling: no focus on heritage – school MDD clubs
- Tertiary: mushrooming of ‘universities’, providing low quality education to rapidly growing numbers, little focus on the arts – no cultural anthropology, museum/heritage studies

CCFU's Heritage Education project



Based on:

- Realisation that change must rest on young generation
- Focus on extra-curricula activities for secondary school children and influencing policy makers
- Linking with 'community museums' – informal private initiatives; about 25 in the country

The project



How?

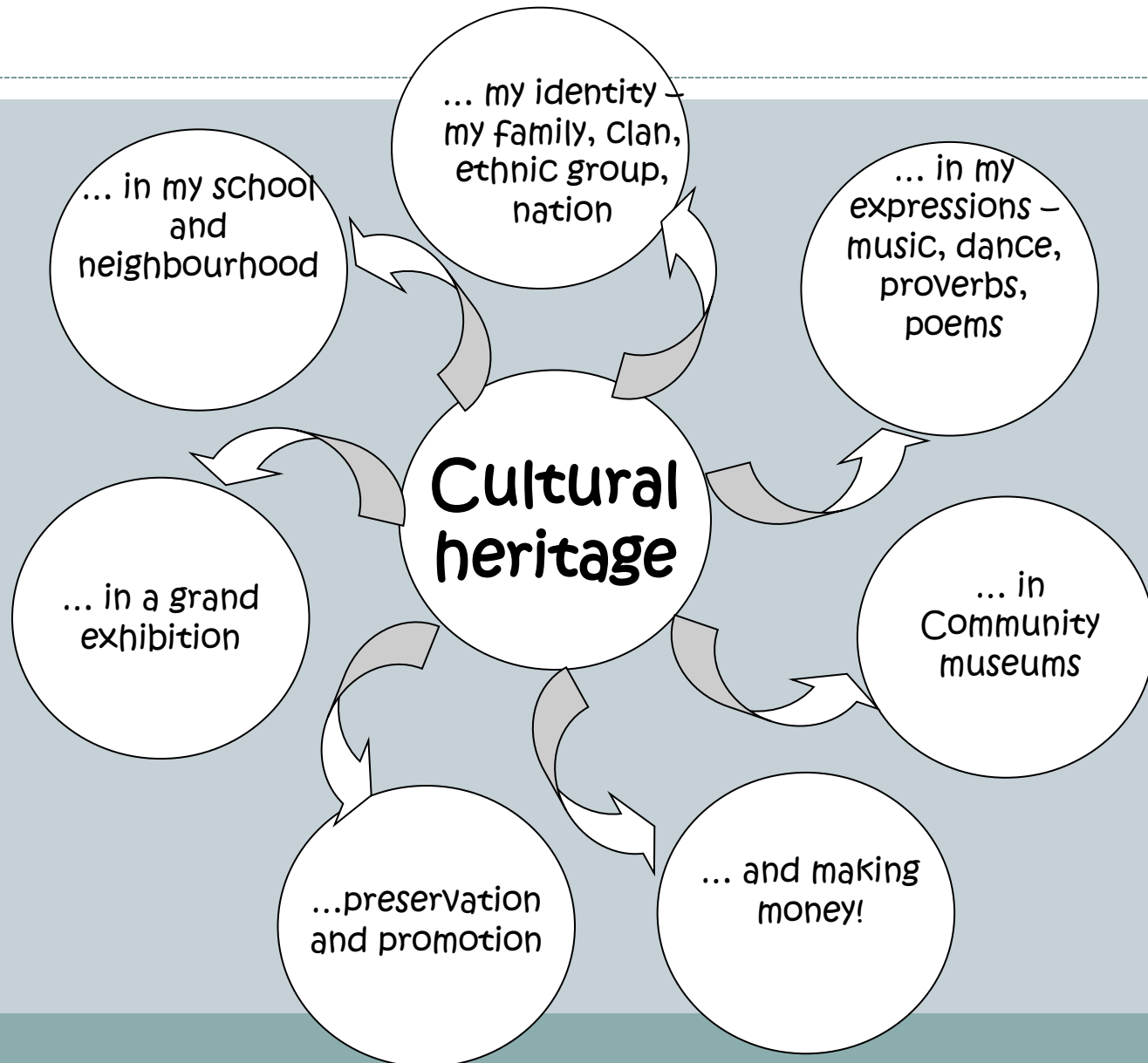
- Initial phase with 12 secondary schools and 3 community museum in their vicinity (widening next year) - synergy
- Toolkit for teachers
- Nationwide Competition to raise profile
- Policy brief and engagement
- Next year, pilot with out-of-school youth; link up clubs internationally?

Appeal of the project



- fosters appreciation of individual as well as national identity
- promotes tolerance and pluralism
- creative learning approach stimulates youth interest
- complements the existing, but unimplemented National Culture policy

The Toolkit - 7 themes in a year



The toolkit



Sample activities:

- Illustrations - a family tree, cultural resource maps
- Discussions & debates – within the club and with cultural resource persons
- Creative expression - singing, proverbs, tongue twisters
- Experiential learning - exploring heritage in the schools, neighbourhood and tourism sites
- Skills development: producing handicrafts for sale
- Showcasing heritage – at a grand cultural exhibition

Lessons so far...



- Positive response from Government
- Teachers and community museum managers also interested but feel that they need more knowledge and support, in a sustainable manner.
- Need to influence the curriculum
- Need to reach out-of-school youth, who represent the bulk of Uganda's teenagers and young adults.

Reflection points



- Let us not assume that heritage will be automatically appreciated - it has to be taught
- Long term impact requires government commitment
- Heritage vs. “development”: a false dichotomy...