SDC CAACP Experience Capitalization Report

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Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC

CONTENT

Cover image: Artwork “Emir of Bukhara” 2021 of Sardor Erkinov, a young Uzbek painter. This artwork was exhibited at the at the Bonum Factum Gallery (CAACP Partner organization) in Tashkent.

ACRONYMS

CAACP	Central Asia Arts and Culture Programme
CapEx	Capitalization Exercise
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
LGBTI	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Intersex
LNGO	Local Non-Government Organisation
OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development - Development Assistance Committee
P/CVE	Preventing / Combatting violent Extremism
SDC	The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As the Central Asia Arts and Culture Programme (CAACP) reaches the end of its fifteenth year, the Capitalization Exercise (CapEx) team [1]finds a strong programme delivering results under challenging conditions. As the space for civil society narrows in each of the three targets countries, the CAACP is a highly relevant programme. We endorse the findings of the two external evaluations (conducted in 2015 and 2019), which delivered positive assessments of programme performance. To date, the programme has generally been successful at meeting its programme goals, notwithstanding the interruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. In a highly restrictive context, its signal achievements are:

- it has ***enabled culture and art to exist***, ***creating space for a diversity of art forms*** and cultural expression;
- it has ***provided space for people to discuss important social issues*** against a backdrop of increasing regional social and political conservatism;
- it has ***increased access to artistic products*** and spaces in both urban, and to a lesser extent, rural areas;
- it has ***facilitated regional exchanges of artists*** even during times of heightened geopolitical tensions; and,
- it has ***promoted local forms of art and culture***.

The programme has been defined by three characteristics: a focus on contemporary culture, an objective to create space for dialogue, and a small budget compared to other programmes in the SDC national portfolios. These characteristics have remained relatively constant since programme inception in 2007. Within these parameters the programme has continually evolved in order to find the most effective means of programme delivery:

- It has experimented with a range of different grant agreements, from longer-term partnership agreements, to shorter project grants and small action lines for one-off initiatives. It has engaged with NGOs, art collectives, private businesses, quasi-state institutions and private-

[1] The team comprised an external consultant from Aleph Strategies; a SDC Programme Officer, Culture and Development, within the Knowledge, Learning and Culture Division; a SDC-selected peer for this exercise, Head of Program in Georgia, and CAACP National Programme Officers in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

NGO hybrids. It has supported a diverse range of creative spaces, from contemporary theatre, to traditional music festivals. It has worked with art galleries, film festivals and schools.

- Since 2016 it has embarked on a journey to build the capacity of implementing partners so that they can take on the full implementation of the programme, mirroring the standard donor-implementer model employed in SDC's wider programme portfolio.
- Recognising the need to build organisational capacity to manage donor funding, the programme has provided a variety of training formats, from formal training delivered by specialist providers to on-the-job mentoring by the SDC NPOs. The programme has provided training on a range of topics from technical art/creative skills to business management and marketing.
- It continues to explore ways of reaching artists and audiences who live in peripheral areas (outside the state capitals).
- It supported partners through the Covid-19 pandemic - The pandemic encouraged many partners to switch activities online and to develop stronger digital marketing and engagement skills.

The majority of our recommendations, summarised below, provide suggestions for improving internal functions (mainly directed towards impact measurement and programme management) rather than partnership modalities or types of organisation to fund. Nevertheless, as this is a capitalisation exercise, we take the opportunity to invite some deeper reflection on core programme assumptions. Should the programme continue on the same trajectory, or should it seek new partners? What is the overarching purpose of the programme? What are the national or regional problems that the programme can realistically expect to address?

A detailed list of recommendations is presented at the end of this report. Below is a summary of the overarching findings and recommendations.

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Planning		
Finding	**Recommendation**	**Responsibility**
There is much internal debate about the value of a **regional approach**. This is a recurrent question that SDC has been grappling with over the course of a number of programme iterations.	SDC should conduct a basic problem analysis and theory of change (ToC) exercise amongst SDC programme staff to identify a specific regional challenge that the programme will address. This will help resolve differences of opinion and calibrate a suitable ambition for the next intervention period.	**SDC Country Offices** should participate in this discussion under the direction of the current programme lead in Kyrgyzstan. Participation from senior staff members at SDC should be encouraged to ensure consensus.
For such a small programme (in financial terms), CAACP seeks to achieve a number of highly ambitious **targets** that pull in multiple directions.	Linked to the exercise above, SDC should conduct a planning workshop to identify and simplify core objectives, and recalibrate impact measures. This begins with the basic problem analysis and ToC exercise and should form the basis of the immediate next steps to this capitalisation exercise.	**SDC Country Offices** should each conduct an internal exercise, mapping local issues and needs. A joint workshop should follow (pending decisions whether to continue a regional approach) to agree a common set of challenges and approaches.
In recent years, the programme has been concerned with the financial ***sustainability*** of partners. This is an unrealistic goal in the current context.	SDC should reframe the discussion in terms of *resilience*. A resilient organisation is simply able to survive and continue to deliver powerful creative content. This entails a change of mindset and measurement, within SDC. Measures of *resilience* could still include qualities like 'diversified income / revenue streams' as they do for *sustainability.* The mindset change	This discussion entails the formulation of a context-specific definition for the region (or indeed for each country). **SDC Country Offices** should undertake the exercise individually at first, before holding joint discussions to determine whether a shared or unique definition is required.

	requires SDC to consider resilience as the objective, rather than sustainability.	
SDC has invested time and resource **building the capacity of partner organisations**. It is hard to measure the impact of this investment.	SDC should create a 'Maturity Index' to measure organisational development. The Maturity Index could take the simple form of a performance checklist across a range of operational, administrative, commercial and managerial functions. Indicators should be the same for each country, though the definitions could be calibrated for each country-context.	**SDC Country Offices** should agree on a basic set of common indicators, drawing on colleagues from other programme teams where relevant. A joint workshop should be held with each office to finalise. **SDC HQ staff** working on relevant portfolios (private sector engagement, economic development) could also be engaged at this point to provide technical/commercial inputs.
Programme Management		
Finding	**Recommendation**	**Responsibility**
Financial reporting requirements are considered to be overly complex by partners. They also absorb considerable internal resource.	SDC should conduct a review of all financial reporting requirements for projects and partners with a view to simplification. Though SDC continues to seek partners who can manage the project budget directly, simplifying reporting requirements could provide short-term relief while partner capacity to administer the projects continues to be built.	**SDC Country Offices** should lead this process, engaging with relevant teams within the reporting chain at **SDC HQ** as necessary.
Operational		
Finding	**Recommendation**	**Responsibility**

Awareness of the Culture Percent within SDC varies between country offices.	New staff arriving at the Swiss Representation in each country should be briefed on the Culture Percent and the CAACP Portfolio during upon arrival at the new duty station.	**CAACP NPOs** should brief new staff on the Culture Percent and the current portfolio. SDC HQ staff from the **Culture Unit** could support these briefings to provide additional context and rationale for the Culture Percent if necessary.
SDC implements a broad range of **programmes that could be leveraged** to strengthen the culture programme.	SDC should explore opportunities for leveraging other programmes in the national portfolios to support the culture programme. There may be opportunities to build deeper synergies, leveraging the scale of SDC's programmes in both urban and rural areas. For example, could SDC's work on vocational training be adapted to include professions linked to the culture sector?	**SDC Country Offices** should facilitate these discussions amongst NPOs across the country portfolio.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1. About this Document

Aleph Strategies was commissioned by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) to conduct an experience capitalisation exercise of the *Central Asia Arts and Culture Programme.* This report contains the full findings and recommendations of the capitalisation exercise. A full methodology, bibliography and capitalisation framework are provided in the annexes at the end of the report.

2.2. Purpose and Scope

Aleph Strategies has been engaged to deliver on the following objectives:

- To analyse the results of CAACP over all its phases, in each country as well as in its regional dimension, and how it influenced the cultural scene of Central Asia; to learn what the critical factors were that contributed to or supported the results of CAACP
- To analyse the changes in the context and how the CAACP adapted to those changes
- To provide recommendations for the planning of a new arts and culture intervention in Central Asia: how it could be adapted to the context changes, taking into account the current needs of the independent art scene and its actors and which implementation modalities shall be applied.

As this is a capitalisation exercise, we will give the greatest weight to the third objective, ensuring that lessons from the past 15 years are documented and analysed for their use/relevance to future programme phases. The pronoun 'we' is used deliberately to remind that this report reflects the collective views of the Capitalisation Exercise Team and other SDC colleagues. The team comprised a

- External Project Manager, Aleph Strategies
- Programme Officer, Culture and Development, within the Knowledge, Learning and Culture Division of SDC,
- SDC-selected peer for this exercise, Head of Program in Georgia.
- CAACP National Programme Officers in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

Many of our findings and observations align closely with those contained in the external evaluations of Phases III and IV. These documents are still relevant today, and contain a wealth of insights, lessons and recommendations. In the interest of space, we do not summarise these lessons or recommendations in this report, unless they explicitly corroborate our own observations. The evaluation reports should be read in accompaniment to this capitalisation report.

We are bound by the terms of reference to report against a number of questions, which we summarise in the **Findings** section below. We then summarise some of the broader issues that need to be considered in the design process of the next entry proposal and intervention plan in the **Lessons and Recommendations** section.

3. FINDINGS

Here, we summarise programme experience across eight thematic areas outlined in the Capitalisation Framework (see Annexes). The terms of reference for this exercise are extremely broad given the limited time available for the work. We therefore provide a high-level summary of findings under each of the research questions.

3.1. Results

What are the main achievements of the CAACP?

The programme has achieved good results, as outlined in the two external evaluations conducted in 2015 and 2019. Without conducting an evaluation, it is difficult to provide a critical assessment of programme performance. However, our observations and interviews indicate the following achievements:

- ***Enabled arts and culture activities to exist.*** SDC staff, external stakeholders, partners and projects, often said that the main achievement of the programme is that it has enabled arts and culture activities to exist despite the challenging operational contexts. Arts and culture receive little funding in each of the programme countries. The limited funds provided by national governments are often directed towards programmes that reinforce homogenous national identity along the lines of traditional tropes, leaving little space for creative, free expression and civic dialogue.
- ***Increased access to artistic products and spaces.*** The programme has increased access to art in both urban and rural areas. In Tajikistan, the programme reached 8,400 people (combining creators, participants and spectators) in 2016, growing to 28,637 in 2019 before the pandemic struck. In Uzbekistan we see a similar picture, with numbers increasing from 3000 in 2016 to 10,650 in 2019. In Kyrgyzstan, the proportion of people reached in the periphery (compared to the total number of people reached by the programme) grew from 5% in 2017 to 60% in 2019.
- ***Promoted diverse forms of artistic expression.*** At a time when state culture institutions have pursued largely nationalist cultural agenda through harnessing traditional cultural tropes, CAACP has provided a platform for different forms of expression, whether in the form of contemporary visual art, filmmaking, dance, or contemporary theatre production. Approximately one half (51%) of arts and culture producers supported by the programme were women and 61% were under the age of 25, as of the most complete figures from 2019.

- ***Created space for social dialogue.*** The programme has enabled artists and performers to address a broad and diverse range of complex social issues, ranging from gender discrimination, domestic violence, polygamy and alcoholism, to corruption, migration, and urbanization. In a context where spaces for public discourse on these types of subject are either limited or actively discouraged, this is a highly positive achievement.
- ***Maintained regional exchanges.*** In spite of regional geopolitical tensions between each of the programme countries at varying points over the last 15 years, the programme has continued to facilitate a variety of regional exchanges, ranging from simple international exchanges to larger scale multinational events. Full descriptions of these activities are contained in the annual reports, including the annual Ethno-Jazz festivals and the Roof of the World Festival. Even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the programme supported two regional activities: the Sogdiana Festival in Uzbekistan, with online participation from musicians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan; and the Roof of the World Festival in Tajikistan, with participants from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Importantly, the programme has facilitated independent exchanges and collaborations between arts and culture organisations in the region. For example, the Kanibadam Theatre in Tajikistan independently organised a learning trip to the Ilkhom Theatre in Uzbekistan in 2019. This has led to on-going discussions about creating a joint event. The Bonum Factum Gallery in Uzbekistan invited arts critics from Tajikistan to participate in the 'Regional Art Forum', resulting in plans for future joint events. These events, in their own way, have helped foster understanding and awareness of neighbouring cultures by creating opportunities to exchange ideas and cultural influences.
- ***Promoted local cultural expressions.*** The programme has been successful at encouraging forms of independent local artistic and cultural expression. It has generally not 'used' culture to achieve wider development outcomes, and unlike other donors, it has not sought to use culture to promote Swiss values. Though it has encouraged discussion on themes such as Human Rights, it has generally avoided using art for overtly politicised public messaging. SDC is unique amongst donors working in the region, who tend to view culture purely as an instrument for achieving other development initiatives, such as income generation. The programme has been strongly led by the needs of the local arts and culture sectors, providing support and funding for locally-identified needs. This 'bottom-up' approach is refreshing in a global development context of centrally-defined, 'top-down' programmes that do not serve the needs of the populations they purport to serve.

Which *spaces*[2] for alternative artistic expression and reflection have proven successful in the context of Central Asia, which have not, also in terms of audience and why?

We are unable to draw distinctions between the comparative advantages of one art form over another. The portfolio of CAACP-supported initiatives is too diverse, the contexts too distinct and the objectives too ambiguous[3] to allow a meaningful comparison of spaces. As described in the Phase V logframe under Outcome 1, SDC supports culture institutions so that they: *provide artists with open spaces for fostering artistic creativity, diversity of expression and regional interaction.* Within such a broad definition of what *spaces* seek to achieve, and no definition of what constitutes *success*, all *spaces* have proven to be successful in one form or another within the context of Central Asia:

- ***Theatre productions*** allow performers to stage performances that address important social issues. For example, Ustatshakirt in Kyrgyzstan reports that students have put on shows dealing with early marriage, alcoholism, polygamy and bullying, reaching young children in rural parts of the country. The Kanibadam Theatre in Tajikistan provides access to young children in the periphery, using traditional and contemporary productions to engage with social issues. The Ilkhom Theatre in Uzbekistan provides space to discuss contemporary issues like government corruption.
- ***Film festivals***, such as the one hosted by Bir Duino in Kyrgyzstan, and the Didor Festival in Tajikistan, create opportunities to screen documentaries and dramas that address issues like human rights and gender-based violence, and to build networks, inspire collaborations and encourage exchanges. They also create opportunities for filmmakers to screen films that are banned/discouraged in their own countries.
- ***Cultural festivals***, such as the Roof of the World hosted by Amesha Spenta, or the Dushanbe International Ethno-Jazz festival hosted by the Bactria Culture Centre both Tajikistan create opportunities for sharing and celebrating diverse cultural forms. The Sogdiana Orchestra's international music festival achieves a similar purpose in Uzbekistan. This is less about creating a space for dialogue, and more about creating space to foster international interaction, diversity, understanding and tolerance between different communities.
- ***Art Galleries*** like the Bonum Factum Gallery in Uzbekistan have created a vibrant cultural hub for visual artists and musicians to collaborate. Art Collective CI in Kyrgyzstan describes itself as *art activism,* exploring questions around identity and memory through art exhibitions. During

[2] The SDC CAACP team has defined space as a: 'favorable environment (accessible and safe places, platforms, opportunities, resources, consultancy etc.) where artists able to realize their ideas, interact and perform freely' (CAACP Phase V Logframe).
[3] For further discussion on this point, please see the Lessons and Recommendations section below.

the Covid pandemic, it also started delivering art therapy classes online, helping people affected by domestic violence, for example.

- ***Training and learning spaces*** have been supported in order to build technical and creative capacity within the arts and culture sector. For example, in Tajikistan, the Ethno-Jazz Festival provides master classes, roundtable seminars and creative laboratories. The Bactria Culture Centre conducts seminars and training on a continual basis. Though it is still in the early stages of project delivery, Kuduk is providing regional training of trainers for arts management in Kyrgyzstan. Similarly, the Focus Film School is providing rigorous assessment-based training to an upcoming generation of film makers and directors in Uzbekistan.

What are the intended and unintended long-lasting effects and impact of the program?

As before, it is difficult to provide further insight than already offered by the two previous evaluations. However, our discussions with programme partners and projects highlighted a number of effects:

- ***The programme has helped individual artists gain international recognition, sometimes beyond the regional programme area.*** For example, SDC funded Ashod Danielan (Man on Stool Project) in Uzbekistan, when he was relatively unknown. With SDC's support, he created a small publication, helping to prepare him for an art residency in Prague. He is now in the US on an arts residency. Art Collective CI members have been invited to art residencies held in Ukraine and in South Korea. The leader of Ustatshakirt Center has been invited to Saint Petersburg to share their methodology and experiences on new models of general cultural education for children and youth. Kuduk's performances have been invited to tour Ukraine.
- ***SDC funding has enabled artists and organisations to secure additional funding from diverse sources.*** Receipt of SDC funding signals a mark of trust to other donors. According to SDC programme staff, other donors start to show interest in partners once SDC has 'done the hard work' in testing concepts and strengthening operational capacity. For example, Nikita Makarenko's ElectroOko project in Uzbekistan was supported by SDC initially, and was then able to mobilise funding from UNDP, the Government's Youth Union, Tourism Agency and Zamin Foundation (attracting an additional 200,000 USD above SDC's initial input of 35,000 USD). CAAM in Kyrgyzstan reports that it was able to secure additional funding from the Christensen Foundation after receiving funding from SDC. In Tajikistan, the Kanibadam Theatre received additional funding from the Open Society Institute, and the Goethe Institute; the Bactria Culture Centre received additional funds from the Embassies of the UK, Germany, Austria, Belgium and France, and from the Open Society Institute, and the Serena Hotel.

- ***The programme has provided an important market entry point for young artists and creatives.*** The programme provides opportunities for individuals both through its support to partners, and projects. For example, one programme partner, the Bonum Factum Gallery in Uzbekistan, regularly showcases the work of young artists without portfolios, acting as a stepping-stone to larger exhibitions.
- ***The programme has strengthened SDC's visibility in each country.*** The culture programme has provided SDC with a niche 'business card' in each country. SDC is extremely well known and well regarded within the culture sector. In Tajikistan, SDC reports that external stakeholders in the past were more familiar with the culture programme than the wider development programme portfolio. There are some obvious drawbacks here, in terms of visibility for other programme work, but cultural activities can create important entry points for dialogue with new partners and governments. For example, high profile cultural events and festivals, such as the Roof of the World Festival in Tajikistan or performances put on by Ustatshakirt in Kyrgyzstan create opportunities for engaging with potential government stakeholders simply because they wish to be there.
- ***The programme has created a safe space for women, marginal and vulnerable groups to share their perspectives, experiences and reflections on contemporary society.*** The programme has served members of the LGBTI community, ethnic minority groups, youths, children left behind by labour migrants, and those from marginalised religious communities. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, Art Collective CI and Bir Duino have worked extensively with these groups through their various activities. In a wider context of growing hostility to any form of 'otherness', we consider the simple existence of these spaces to be both relevant and important.
- ***The programme has fostered volunteerism.*** For many years, the Ethno-Jazz and Bir Duino Festivals in Kyrgyzstan have been supported by a number of volunteer high school and university students. The regularity of the events has helped to build a small community of volunteers, many of whom continued to organise community-level projects of their own dealing with a variety of issues, including women's rights, food delivery during the Covid-19 pandemic and putting on small cultural events in poor areas around Bishkek.

3.2. Regionality

How effective was SDC at delivering a regional approach?

There is disagreement within SDC programme offices as to what constitutes a regional programme, which is addressed in the Lessons and Recommendations section below. Further, there is no clear regional objective contained in the programme logical framework, rendering judgements on effectiveness near impossible. If we understand *regional* in the sense of facilitating exchange between artists, institutions and the public, then the programme has been fairly effective. In previous programme phases, SDC delivered a 'co-creation' model, requiring large-scale international collaborations with partners from each country. Though this proved beneficial for many of the programme participants, it was extremely costly for SDC in terms of both time and resource. Latterly, SDC has stepped back from the co-creation model and started to support simpler 'exchanges', which can take a variety of forms.[4] Under this approach, SDC facilitates bilateral, trilateral and multilateral exchanges of artists between countries in the region and beyond. The partners themselves design the international activities and request support from SDC. This has proven to be a significantly better use of SDC's time and resource, allowing SDC to adapt to regional geo-political dynamics rather than forcing large-scale multinational collaborations at times when it would not have been feasible to do so.

Individual artists and organisations continue to benefit from the networks established through the programme, both nationally and internationally. The Kanibadam Theatre in Tajikistan continues to collaborate with the Ilkhom Theatre in Uzbekistan, and has been working on a recent collaboration with Kuduk in Kyrgyzstan. One project beneficiary in Uzbekistan was engaged by Bactria to deliver animation workshops for children at the Kanibadam Theatre in Tajikistan and Kuduk in Bishkek. Though SDC often facilitates connections between partners and projects, these networks generate a momentum of their own, resulting in new opportunities unforeseen by the programme. For example, The Focus Film School in Uzbekistan is collaborating with the Didor Festival in Tajikistan, through which they have established connections with the sound editor of a well-known Iranian actress, with whom Focus is hoping to collaborate in the future.

[4] 'Co-Creation' activities required funding from each programme country. here better to improve definition meaning such as in co-production means that art people from three or two countries jointly elaborate art product (concert, performance, conference, movie etc) . 'Exchanges' simply entail participation of artists from one country in events held in another.

What are the benefits of a regional approach and how were those really implemented? What was the regional impact? What were the drawback? How did the regional approach prove to be useful?

SDC CAACP staff conducted a SWOT analysis of the regional approach, highlighting a number of advantages and drawbacks of the regional approach. Among the main benefits of the regional approach, SDC notes:

- ***Connectivity***. The regional approach encouraged a strong degree of ideas exchange and collaboration between the NPOs in each country. In SDC's own words, the programme often acted as a 'catalyst' for new collaborations and opportunities between cultural actors across the region. This has enabled exchanges between artists and organisations across borders, even when political tensions have been running high. The regional approach has created an underlying imperative for all programme partners to include regional activities within their proposals. At the most recent count, SDC estimates that there were 11 regional exchanges in the year before the pandemic.

The CAACP NPOs identified a number of drawbacks to the regional approach:

- ***Logistical challenges.*** SDC reports that facilitating regional exchanges can be logistically challenging, for example due to border closures following regional geopolitical tensions.
- ***Financial cost.*** In Phases 1-3 of the programme, SDC funded co-productions, which were deemed to be excessively expensive and time-consuming. This modality was replaced by the exchange model, which is more cost/time efficient. Even so, as most organisations have little money to spend on international exchanges themselves, and as there are few, if any, donors supporting these exchanges, SDC must cover these costs if it wants to support exchanges.

How can the regional approach be strengthened?

This is a difficult question to answer, as the programme does not appear to address a specific regional challenge. As colleagues within SDC itself note: *what is the regional problem SDC seeks to address with arts and culture? Just because there are shared challenges in each country, it does not necessarily follow that shared solutions are appropriate.* Without a clear problem statement, it is hard to suggest means of strengthening the regional approach. The Phase 5 logical framework simply encourages 'regional interaction' (see outcome 1).

Implicitly, we understand that the programme seeks to enhance *knowledge* and *understanding* between different cultures, but this too is such a broad concept that it is difficult to make evidence-based recommendations on how to improve programme activities.

In our view, given the current political climates in each of the programme countries, we do not think it is desirable or feasible to scale-up regional activities without incurring considerable financial and resource costs. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that this programme has been formulated as a regional programme for the next four years as outlined in the Swiss Cooperation Programme for 2022-2025, which states that: *'the culture programme's regional dimension will be strengthened to foster cultures of pluralistic expression and exchange.'* At the same time, we must acknowledge too that there are some serious doubts within SDC as to the relevance and efficacy of a regional approach. Further reflection within SDC is therefore required to reconcile these competing perspectives before recommendations can be made for strengthening the regional approach. This point is elaborated in the *Lessons and Recommendations* section below.

3.3. Sustainability

What were promising projects/initiatives, and why? How and in what sense were those projects sustainable and why?

The current portfolio contains a number of promising models. In Kyrgyzstan, SDC is funding Kuduk to provide a training of trainers (ToT) programme in arts management, with a view to building the capacity of potential project managers in the peripheral parts of Kyrgyzstan from where, historically, SDC has received almost no quality grant proposals at all. SDC's experience shows that there is plenty of creativity in the peripheral parts of the country, but they pass unnoticed and underfunded as they are not able to write grant proposals, manage budgets or deliver projects.

SDC also supports human rights NGO, Bir Duino, which is currently hosting a film festival with SDC funds. The festival has grown in scale to such an extent that Bir Duino is considering setting up a new managerial function to oversee project delivery on a full-time basis. In addition, the festival has created a platform for filmmakers to network, collaborate and share information on funding sources. As an established NGO with multiple funding streams from other donors, it certainly shows some early signs of financial independence, though by their own admission, they would struggle if SDC were to remove funds now.

In Uzbekistan, the Focus Film School is promising because there is strong commercial potential to monetise on and offline courses, generating independent revenue streams. It is also promising because it is translating material (film and books) into Uzbek as a way to encourage access to Uzbek speaking marginalised groups in peripheral parts of the country. The Bonum Factum Gallery is promising because it is increasing access to artwork through an online shop, providing an e-commerce platform ('Art Store') for young photographers to sell their photographs and painters to sell their painting. The platform has only been online for a year and has yet to realise a steady revenue stream, but as we move into a post-Covid context, this may prove to be a promising avenue. Moreover, SDC has funded the salary of a grant management officer within Bonum Factum to oversee SDC reporting and to mobilise funds from other potential donors. The Gallery is led by someone with a strong reputation within the regional arts sector, and who is well connected with cultural institutions in Europe.

In Tajikistan, the Bactria Culture Centre is a promising partner in the sense that it essentially has the technical and institutional support of an international development NGO (ACTED). Yet, as ACTED has been trying to establish the Bactria Culture Centre as an independent organisation for almost 20 years, this raises some questions about the feasibility, and indeed the very definition, of *sustainability* in this context. Indeed, whether any of these initiatives can be deemed sustainable is a moot point within the current contexts in each country, and within the context of the arts and culture sectors more specifically. This is further explored in the *Lessons and Recommendations* section below.

Are models, institutions, projects etc. truly responding to the personal interests of the local partners and susceptible to be taken over and further developed by them?

We find that SDC is generally responding well to the interests of the organisations it has supported. Almost without exception, partners and projects were full of praise for the manner in which SDC engaged them in project design, delivery and reporting. We discuss this further under *Collaboration* later in this section. We did not get the sense that SDC had ‘forced’ partners to adopt a social agenda, or to conduct activities that they were not willing to undertake themselves.

For example, as noted above, in Kyrgyzstan, Bir Duino is considering a new management function within the organisation in order to continue delivering the film festival. Ustatshakirt reports that its extra-curricular music initiatives are now being supported by local authorities, who provide teacher salaries and musical instruments. In Uzbekistan, SDC supported social media marketing for Ilkhom, which they continue to do themselves. SDC supported the Bonum Factum Gallery to deliver multi-disciplinary events, bringing together artists and performers from different backgrounds and media types. These events have proven to be highly successful, attracting footfall to the gallery, and helping to establish Bonum Factum as a hub of cultural activity. The Focus Film School received technical equipment (computers, software etc.) allowing them to augment their theory-based training with practical exercises in scriptwriting, production and post-production. In Tajikistan, the Kanibadam Theatre created a PR department in order to promote its performances, which it continues to operate itself.

Are networks continuing to live on and evolve?

We find evidence that the networks formed through the CAACP programme are continuing to live on and evolve, as illustrated by the examples provided under the *Regionality* section above. In Kyrgyzstan, Ustatshakirt has attracted new designers for its theatre productions from the networks created in the co-productions facilitated under phases 1-3. Kuduk has organised an art camp at Lake Issykul, which has attracted participants through its training of trainers network supported by SDC. In Uzbekistan, the Focus Film School has even established its own network for students in order to share ideas and opportunities for work. Focus has set up three active social media messaging boards under the branding of the 'Focus Union' totalling around 150 members. Scriptwriting competitions organised by Focus ensure that the groups remain active. The alumnus of the Ilkhom Theatre laboratories stay connected, often visiting each other's work. At the Bonum Factum Gallery, artists who participated in the POP-ART exhibition have worked together on three further collaborations independently. In addition to these examples, the CAACP Annual Operational Report from 2020 reports that after Covid forced many activities online, partners were able to better develop their networks by participating in international training workshops and events, cultivating new professional connections.

Are there any local or regional/international institutions that could take over the implementation of CAACP? What would be the pros and cons of such model?

We do not find any regional/international organisations in a position to take over the implementation of CAACP. The main difficulty here is that there are so few organisations with the technical capacity, thematic focus or regional credibility to do so. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture, through the Aga Khan Music Initiative, could potentially play this role, but there would be several drawbacks to this arrangement: i) the Aga Khan Development Network is not currently, nor likely to be in the future, active in Uzbekistan; ii) in this region, it tends to focus on music, with a preference for largely traditional forms; and iii) it would incur higher operational costs than working with smaller local partners, which could quickly exceed the available annual budget. This latter point applies to any large international development organisation. In Uzbekistan, the CapEx team met with UNESCO and the British Council, though they tend to focus on different thematic areas: tangible and intangible heritage and the culture creative industries respectively.

Organisations like Helvetas and ACTED are also present in the region, but they tend to have a focus on traditional development programmes such as health and education, rather than culture. Working with such organisations may be feasible, but it would likely require a change of direction away from simply supporting an independent arts and culture sector, and would need to be aligned more closely with other development objectives. We therefore do not envisage a collaboration of this sort within the mandate of the programme as it is currently formulated.

The review team did not find any local organisation with the capacity to take over the full administration of the CAACP programme in any of the programme countries. Local organisations tend to operate in fairly well-defined and separate work streams and each have their own operational requirements (including the perennial need to secure funding) that would distract from large grant management. Though there is collaboration between some of the organisations we met, they each have their own agenda, and are themselves competitors for the same limited funding pool.

The challenge of outsourcing full implementation to a local partner is that it would necessarily restrict the diversity of artistic expression that the programme currently supports. None of the partners we encountered are in a position to administer activities that fall outside of their core areas of expertise. For example, funding directed to the Focus Film School in Uzbekistan would serve to strengthen activities related to film, rather than music, theatre or dance. Bir Duino in Kyrgyzstan is already stretched to deliver the film festival, and would be overwhelmed if it were required to manage small grants for other types of cultural programming. Amesha Spenta in Tajikistan is unlikely to take up similar activities to those currently delivered by the Bactria Culture Centre or the Kanibadam Theatre.

One of the biggest challenges to finding a partner to implement the programme is that no one, as far as this team can tell, has the same level of regional exposure in the contemporary culture sectors as SDC. SDC itself is the lynchpin that connects actors on a regional level. The SDC NPOs in each country are extremely well connected and well-recognised within their respective sectors, with a sensitivity and expertise for the local culture and the promotion of culture. And perhaps most **importantly of all,**

culture sector stakeholders view SDC as an impartial supporter of culture, capable of working across multiple partnerships with state and non-state groups.

Given these points, we do not think it is realistic for SDC to pursue the goal of finding a single implementing partner for each / all of the countries. On the basis of what we have seen, it seems far more realistic to establish a handful of implementing partners working across different types of activity, much along the lines of the current programme formulation. Arts and Culture has a unique position within SDC globally, which, in our view, warrants a unique management structure. SDC NPOs will need to remain actively involved in managing programme activities, both in the short or medium terms (please also refer to the *Lessons and Recommendations* section below for further reflection on organisational development and sustainability).

3.4. Relevance

Have socially relevant issues included in arts and culture products by the artists themselves been taken on board?

Socially relevant issues are reflected in programme activities. Thematic focus areas are identified by programme partners. Please see the *Results* section above, which highlights a number of examples of social issues that have been addressed through programme activities.

To what extent were vulnerable and marginalised groups taken into account in the design and delivery of the programme?

SDC has taken into account marginal and vulnerable groups in the design of the programme. In the latest iteration of the logframe for Phase V, Output 4 specifically requires that *art productions are distributed and circulated to a broad audience*. Targets are set for the following groups: women (40%), youth (60%) and periphery (30%). It is unclear whether and to what extent these targets are being achieved as programme activities have been severely disrupted by the Covid pandemic. However, our discussions with programme partners and SDC staff certainly indicate that these groups have been a core focus historically.

CAACP has attempted to broaden access to art and culture for marginalised groups through a variety of means. In particular, it has focussed on expanding access in peripheral parts of each country. The Roof of the World Festival in Tajikistan provides space for artistic expression for remote Pamiri communities, many of whom endure harsh living conditions, limited economic opportunities and poor quality of life. In Uzbekistan, the Focus Film School will shortly start translating its training materials and other cultural resources (films, textbooks, scripts etc.) from Russian into Uzbek, recognising the need for such materials in order to reach beyond the largely urban-based, Russian-speaking *elites.* In Kyrgyzstan, Bir Duino's focus on promoting human rights ensures that women and youths find a voice through their film festival. Ustatshakirt is also working with school children in rural areas to address social issues affecting their daily lives. In addition, access to cultural events has been increased for disadvantaged groups by keeping ticket prices very low (e.g. Roof of the World Festival is 3 SOM; participation in the Didor Film Festival is free). We recognise that this has some implications for financial sustainability, which we explore later in the recommendations below.

Were the directions and approaches developed throughout the program relevant for the dynamic regional and country contexts? How did the program respond to the evolving cultural context?

The programme has continued to evolve since 2007. In particular, we note the gradual, and on-going, transition from direct implementation to outsourcing. In 2016, the programme began building the organisational capacity of implementing partners, which coincided with an easing of restrictions on NGOs and international organisations in Uzbekistan following a change in regime (though the current situation is rapidly becoming increasingly restrictive once again for NGOs, civil society and media, according to SDC in Uzbekistan and programme partners). We also note that SDC has adopted a more pragmatic approach to regional programming, favouring smaller scale regional activities, which have enabled SDC to respond to improvements or deteriorations in the wider geopolitical context.

How did the priorities and needs, assumptions and risks change over time?

Taking a step back from the changes we observe above, the defining characteristics of the political and social needs have remained largely constant (notwithstanding brief periods of improvement / deterioration in regional tensions and civil liberties). In broad terms, the space for civic engagement is shrinking, and the spread of highly conservative values is felt palpably. The phenomenon of 'creeping Islamisation', highlighted in the Swiss Regional Cooperation Programme draft, is heightened by the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan. The ramifications of this are still unclear and the programme not been required to adapt. We expect this could become an increasingly pertinent issue in the region, particularly in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which have a land border with Afghanistan. Contemporary arts and culture have remained generally underfunded, if not entirely neglected by the respective state administrations in each country throughout the duration of the programme. The programme is therefore deemed to be highly relevant by the CapEx team, and amongst programme partners and external stakeholders, within the current social and political climates across the region. Programme beneficiaries frequently refer to SDC's support as a 'lifeline'. This was especially true during the Covid pandemic, when funds were used to cover salaries and operational overheads at a time of heightened funding and income-generating constraints.

Did COVID-19 affect the program, suggest new avenues and platforms?

The Covid pandemic severely impacted the programme in each country. The pandemic forced many partners to switch to online activities. A detailed summary of these experiences is contained in a separate internal SDC report to the CAACP Steering Committee[5]. The report highlights the limitations of online activities, noting in particular the lack of reliable internet coverage outside (and even within) national capitals and the fact that moving activities online dilutes the potency of physical events.

Nevertheless, the pandemic has encouraged some positive developments. For example, in Uzbekistan, the Bonum Factum Gallery started to deliver art lectures and exhibitions online, and the Focus Film School has started to offer access to paid online courses. In Tajikistan, the Kanibadam Theatre turned to YouTube to broadcast performances and to share marketing content. It will continue to do so as it has helped boost average audience numbers from 400-600 to 1,600. The Roof of the World Festival, also in Tajikistan, was able to double its audience size from 15,000 in 2019 to 31,000 in 2020, and was able to ensure access to audiences in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In Kyrgyzstan, Human Rights NGO Bir Duino mobilised an international online jury for its annual film festival. As this helped to keep operational costs at a minimum, this is something they are considering for future festivals regardless of the pandemic. The Central Asia Arts Management (CAAM) NGO in Kyrgyzstan intends to continue with online formats in addition to physical events as a way to maintain regional participation from neighbouring countries.

3.5. Collaboration

What has worked well in the collaboration between cultural actors and SDC and why?

The switch to a partnership model post 2016 has been positive, both from the perspective of SDC NPOs and from the perspective of partners. For SDC it has reduced the volume of work associated with a project-only approach, as had been the case with previous iterations of the programme. For partners, it has provided greater planning visibility and confidence.

[5] SDC (2020): *Note to SC on COVID Implications.*

Programme partners in each country are extremely positive about their respective collaborations with SDC. We acknowledge a degree of predictability here – it is unlikely that grant recipients would be disparaging about their donors. However, it is conspicuous that several partners highlighted the same positive features about SDC collaboration, suggesting that more than mere sycophancy was at play in their remarks. SDC is praised for being a flexible, adaptable and highly collaborative partner, though a number remarked on the complexity of financial reporting formats. It was clear to the CapEx team that the NPOs in each country were well regarded and highly trusted by programme partners. Partners appreciate the support that SDC NPOs have provided in all aspects of programme implementation from proposal writing to activity design and financial reporting. It is not unusual for NPOs to receive calls from partners asking for ideas or connections. In this regard, the NPOs have been instrumental in the building and deepening of institutional collaborations, in a highly unusual, and in our view positive manner, compared to other donors, who tend to be far more hierarchical, inflexible and regimented according to partners.

What are the challenges SDC has faced in these collaborations?

SDC's collaborations have been characterised by a number of challenges, notably around the quality of reporting. In SDC's experience, programme partners and projects are often poor at reporting on their activities and financial performance, though all NPOs note that the current cohort of partners have now reached a generally adequate level of capacity in this regard. For their own part, a number of programme partners remarked at the complexity of financial reporting requirements. As these requirements tend to flow from SDC's global best practices, it is unlikely that they can be significantly simplified, though the criticisms warrant an internal review of reporting requirements. Further reflections are provided in the *Lessons and Recommendations* section below.

Is there room for more synergies and cooperation modalities with other development partners?

As we note above under the *Sustainability* section, there are very few organisations working in this space in each of the programme countries at national or regional scales, and none with a focus on contemporary culture. There may be opportunities for collaboration with other development partners if SDC wishes to take the programme in a different direction, towards, for example, income generation (in which case the British Council and USAID could be potential partners) or heritage conservation (in which case organisations like UNESCO are present). However, we do not encourage SDC to divert from the core mission of encouraging diversity of expression and civic space through arts and culture, as this is a niche for SDC.

3.6. Capacity Building

How were capacities in the cultural sector strengthened at the individual and organizational level?

SDC has provided two forms of capacity development: technical capacity building to improve organisations' and artists' abilities to create art (which has been pursued from the inception of the progamme in 2007), and organisational development, focusing on strengthening partners' administrative and managerial capability, which has been the priority since 2016. Following the external Phase 3 evaluation, SDC required each programme partner to submit a capacity building plan based on an internal self-assessment of capacity needs. SDC currently mandates 20% of the budget to be allocated for capacity building.

SDC has also provided on-the-job training, mentoring and technical support to partners throughout the partnership agreement timeframe. In addition to capacity building, SDC also provided funding for organisational development. In many cases, this entailed simply covering office rental costs, or paying salaries and consultancy fees. It other cases it entailed purchasing technical equipment, or supporting their social media marketing. It is difficult to assess the impact of this work without an evaluation. SDC itself reports[6] that these inputs enabled: i) increased numbers of cultural events/projects, ii) expansion of geographic activities, iii) improved quality of arts products, and iv) expanded networks. In addition, according to SDC's internal reporting for the CAACP programme, eight out of the nine partners supported in 2018 were able to secure in-kind support from other organisations.

In spite of capacity building and organisational support, maintaining operational capacity is a challenge for some partners, as they experience high turnover when staff seek employment oversees. The phenomenon of 'brain drain' is acute in the region, particularly in Tajikistan. Young people leave Tajikistan in search of work, mostly in Russia. This is especially true for people who have skills or qualifications. Both the Bactria Culture Centre and the Kanibadam Theatre have lost staff to labour migration.

[6] SDC (2018): *Report_SE_CAACP_2018_Fin*

Which of the capacities are the most valuable for their work and why (and which not and why)?

Which competence training was missed and why?

Historically, NPOs noticed that organisations working in the culture sector generally lacked organisational skills related to management, communication, fundraising, documentation and reporting. Under the new partnership modality post-2016, partners received combinations of training in these areas depending on the needs they self-diagnosed during the grant application process. Partners interviewed as part of this capitalisation exercise generally find the training they received to be highly valuable.

As a result of the training that partners have received, NPOs have noticed an improvement in organisational performance in terms of accuracy and timeliness of both financial and narrative reporting in particular. Looking ahead, NPOs report that existing partners still require business training in order to help them strengthen their marketing, fundraising and commercial planning.

At an individual level, there is still a need for arts management training for young people. SDC's experience shows that there are lots of people who want to create art, but they are not able to mobilise funding or manage programmes/projects. SDC is still not receiving proposals from the periphery, and there are very few organisations with strong periphery networks with whom SDC can work. This is why SDC tends to work with established organisations in urban centres who have the ability to connect with audiences in the periphery (the Kanibadam Theatre and Amesha Spenta in Tajikistan are exceptions to the status quo).

In addition, especially post-Covid, some partners would like to receive more training on IT-related skillsets, particularly social media marketing and online PR.

3.7. Needs

For the future intervention, what would be the priorities and needs of the cultural sector and of the general public to be addressed?

The capitalisation exercise has highlighted a number of needs within the culture sector:

- ***Funding.*** The only truly universal need we identified during the fieldwork was funding. This cannot be overstated. There are virtually no other funding sources for contemporary culture and arts in the region. The Christensen Fund used to be present in the region, though has since pulled out, according to a number of interviewees. There may still be small funding opportunities here, but since 2019, they have moved away from a regional programme approach to supporting indigenous communities and human rights (with a predominant focus on Africa and the Americas). The Prince Claus Fund has also been active in the region in the past, though it is unclear how much funding they have currently allocated for contemporary arts in the region today. Though there are other large international funders of cultural programmes, they tend to focus on traditional heritage and / or the culture creative industries.

- ***Business training.*** According to NPOs, there is still a great need for business training in order to help organisations formulate independent revenue streams. As noted above, in a context of little/no funding for contemporary cultural activities, the need for diversified income streams continues to be a priority for the sector. Such training would entail commercial planning, marketing, PR and fundraising, and how to conduct and manage virtual events.
- ***Connectivity.*** Though we find active networks in each of the programme countries, partners and projects with whom we engaged in this exercise emphasised the continued need for networks across the culture sectors within their own countries and abroad. As noted elsewhere in the report, SDC is the lynchpin facilitating much of the regional exchange between artists and arts organisations. Whether there is scope or need to formalise networks further is a point for discussion amongst NPOs in each of the programme countries. Establishing an online or physical platform would entail considerable resource. It may simply be more expedient to continue exchanging ideas and updates between NPOs and facilitating collaborations on a case-by-case basis.
- ***Small Actions line.*** Artists who had received project funding said that the small action lines from previous iterations of the programme were invaluable for people trying to enter the creative sectors. Small action line provided opportunities for young people, particularly in the regions to access cultural funding for small, low-risk activities. We recognise that small action lines were consciously removed from funding modalities in Phases 4 and 5 as they were prohibitively resource intensive to administer. We do not therefore envisage that SDC will re-introduce the small action lines.
- ***Equipment.*** A number of partners expressed needs for technical equipment. Theatres for example often need good cameras and microphones, lighting and quality projectors. This can be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

What could be the contribution/added value of an international agency as SDC in this changing context in regards of the priorities and needs of the culture sector?

The niche for SDC is supporting independent contemporary culture and support space for freedom of expression. As far as this CapEx team is aware, there are no other donors or international organisations working in this space. SDC has a strong role to play in facilitating connections and exchanges between arts and culture organisations.

With national offices in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, SDC has the capacity and the resources to connect artists and creatives to new audiences, acting as a conduit for creative activity. Through its project portfolio, the CAACP programme continues to search for and test new artists and organisations, creating an important 'pipeline' for the contemporary culture scene in each country. There may also be scope for SDC to play a stronger role in encouraging other donors and international organisations to support contemporary culture. SDC has strong convening power and is well placed, as a long-standing funder of cultural programmes in the region, to spearhead efforts on a national and regional scale for further support to the sector. We discuss this in more detail in the *Lessons and Recommendations* section below.

4. LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we move away from the minutiae of programme delivery mechanisms summarised in the previous section, in order to extract strategic-level lessons that can guide to formulation of the next intervention period.

Since inception, the programme has been defined by three key parameters: budget, a focus on governance/civil society and (partly by virtue of this fact), a preference for contemporary cultural activities. Though there have been some important contextual changes in each of the programme countries, they have not substantively altered the basic programme parameters.

Within these parameters, the programme has continued to evolve, adapt and experiment with new approaches. It has transitioned from direct implementation to a hybrid model with implementing partners. It has experimented with technical skills training, business management training, budget and reporting training. It has delivered regional activities through large-scale co-productions, and facilitated the exchange of individual artists and performers from one country to another. It has encouraged partners to develop revenue streams through ticket sales and online shops; it has hired staff for partners to fulfil capacity gaps; it has worked with NGOs, businesses, state organisations, and individuals.

At this stage, assuming no major shift in the fundamental parameters of *budget*, *governance* and *contemporary art*, we see little room, or indeed necessity, for further significant adjustments. Contemporary culture (in the broadest sense) still provides the most effective 'space' within the wider realm of culture, for strengthening civic engagement. The programme has been pragmatic about incorporating more traditional art forms where it has served the purpose of enabling access to culture in peripheral areas (whether Ustatshakirt's traditional music classes in Kyrgyzstan or the Kanibadam Theatre's productions in Tajikistan).

The first external evaluation conducted in 2015 was extremely helpful for the programme team as this was the first real opportunity to take stock of achievements and offer constructive course-corrective measures. The evaluation conducted in 2019 was unable to provide any further substantive recommendations, as the basic parameters remained the same. This team finds itself in the same position. In an effort to advance discussion about the programme, we have taken a step back from the individual programme activities and delivery mechanisms and sought to provoke deeper thinking about critical issues that are both internal and external to SDC.

4.1. The Culture Percent

Lesson: There is wide recognition among senior leaders and wider programme NPOs in SDC for the importance of culture in development. However, the CapEx team found mixed levels of familiarity with the Culture Percent amongst SDC staff outside of the CAACP programme. International staff rotations in the country offices leave NPOs feeling that they are continually having to make the case for why their country office is engaged in cultural activities. The external review conducted in 2019 highlighted a similar challenge.

SDC national offices are mandated to commit 1% of their budget to cultural activities, as outlined in the SDC Guidance for the Elaboration and Approval of Cooperation Programmes (2020)[7]. It is thus obligatory for all countries. Further, the Culture Percentage was also integrated into all new programme frameworks of the global programmes (e.g. water): *"the GPx will strive to invest at least 1% of its operational budget for culture".*

Moreover, in the Dispatch 2021 - 2024[8], the Eastern Law explicitly includes the promotion of cultural development as a requisite for economic and social development. In addition, culture is listed in relation to "Strengthening of human rights", namely cultural rights. This means the right to 'live one's own culture', including artistic expression, as well as participation in cultural life. Furthermore, in Sub-Goal 10: "Promote good governance and the rule of law, and promote civil society", culture is mentioned as an important contributor to diversity of opinion and freedom of expression in a society, just like the press. An independent cultural sector is thus an important element of a functioning (democratic) government system. In this sense, artists are important actors in civil society, as they bring their views

[7] SDC (2020): *SDC Guidance for the Elaboration and Approval of Cooperation Programmes,* p.4: *"A CoopProg sets the criteria for the selection, design, planning, implementation and evaluation of all operations of Swiss international cooperation for the country in question. This includes in particular the alignment and contribution to selected objectives of the IC Strategy, integration of transversal themes (Gender and Governance), financial commitments to culture and climate change." In the footnotes on the same page it adds: "Every geographical division of the SDC is to spend at least 1% of its operational budget on culture, which may or may not contribute to sub-objectives of the IC Strategy".*

[8] Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024 https://www.eda.admin.ch/dam/deza/en/documents/die-deza/strategie/broschuere-IZA-strategie-2021-2024_EN.pdf (page: 16, 30, 41)

on important global, social and political issues to society. Furthermore, the SDGs recognise culture/cultural diversity as a general prerequisite for sustainable development.

The SDC Culture Policy itself provides further clarity on the importance of investing in culture: *i) Culture as a resource and a right; ii) Cultural diversity as a part of the heritage of humanity; iii) Intercultural dialogue and exchange as a foundation for peace; and iv) Artistic expression as a driver of change*[9]. In principle, therefore, SDC could support any art form it wishes, because culture *per se* is good for development. There is no ambiguity here, and we see no further need to justify the culture budget. This is unique in the donor community, and should be upheld without exception across the region.

- **Recommendation 1:** There is a continual need for the principles of the Culture Percent and the Culture Policy to be socialised more widely within and across SDC offices. We strongly endorse the conclusions of the 2019 external evaluation, which stated: *With the SDC* [Culture 1%] *policy and logic, time should not be spent on justification but on implementation.*[10] New staff arriving at the Swiss Representation in each country should be briefed by the NPOs on the Culture Percent and the current portfolio. SDC HQ staff from the Culture Unit could support these briefings to provide additional context and rationale for the Culture Percent if necessary.

4.2. Instrumentalisation of art

Lesson*:* The CapEx team had a number of discussions with colleagues about the role of culture in international development – whether culture should be used as a tool to deliver broader development outcomes. By linking culture explicitly to human rights/cultural rights and governance in the 2021-2024 Dispatch as mentioned above, and in the Culture Policy, SDC considers culture to be an integral part of sustainable development. Just how far SDC wishes to steer the specific agenda, or topics to be addressed by art is an open question. This is an important question/reflection because it determines how SDC selects programme partners, and how it measures the impacts of the programme. If SDC promotes culture as a means simply of creating space, then it can pursue a diverse range of activities, art forms and cultural expressions. If SDC wishes to promote culture in order to achieve very specific social objectives, then this confers a very different set of considerations about thematic focus areas, type of partner and measures of success.

[9] SDC (2016): *Culture and Development Policy,* pp.6-7
[10] SDC (2019): *CAACP_Phase4_ExternalReview*, p.6

Helpfully, the Switzerland draft Cooperation Programme for Central Asia 2022-2025 clearly frames the purpose of the cultural programme in terms of simply creating space for dialogue: *Independent arts and culture organizations as "actors of change" play a key role in keeping and enhancing open spaces of free expressions and diversity of views and opinions. Consequently, the Swiss Cooperation Programme will leverage its investment through the Culture Programme. It creates a favourable environment for regional exchanges, promotes the artistic vision of social issues, as well as ultimately tolerance and peace.*[11]

The promotion of an independent cultural sector is therefore at the forefront of SDC's cultural engagement in this regard. Artists of the independent arts (versus mainstream artistic platforms, such as the national theatres and galleries) usually take up social, global or political themes in their works. For instance, when the CapEx team asked Ilkhom Theatre how they choose the themes for their performances, the artistic director replied: 'Time itself decides which topics should be in focus.'

- **Recommendation 2:** SDC should continue to uphold the principle of an independent arts and culture programme in successive iterations of the culture engagement strategy. The CapEx team endorses the view that the programme should remain free from an overt development agenda, as highlighted in the Phase 3 external evaluation, and reiterated in the Phase 4 external evaluation.

4.3. Sustainability

Lesson*:* In a context of little/no funding, limited disposable income among potential consumers, and unsupportive national governments, the consensus view across the SDC CAACP team, external stakeholders and programme beneficiaries is that sustainability must be understood in terms other than financial. Markets in Switzerland, Europe, the US and other advanced economies are characterised by radically different consumer behaviours, interests, needs and priorities, enabling arts and culture organisations to generate healthy revenue streams from ticket sales, art sales, and public fundraising campaigns. In the UK, substantial grant funding is generated through a national lottery prize scheme, which has channelled £8 billion into the culture sector since 1994.[12] In Switzerland, the funding context is similar. Cultural institutions are mostly supported by the municipalities and cantons, and if of national importance, they also receive funding at a federal level. Yet even within this context, many arts and culture organisations receive substantial grant funding from local and national government bodies.

[11] SDC and Seco (2021): *Final Draft CP Central Asia main text and annexes*, p.11
[12] Heritage Fund (2019): *Strategic Funding Framework 2019-2024.*

We recognise that 'good practice' within the international development community encourages (rightly) financial sustainability among grant recipients, but we question whether this definition is relevant within the contexts of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, or within the context of the region's contemporary art sector. For many of the partners we interviewed, if SDC were to stop funding, they would struggle to operate. As mentioned above, cultural institutions of the independent arts are rarely supported by the government. There are very few funders who support contemporary arts and culture in the region. Indeed, we encountered none during the CapEx. Though the Christensen Fund has been active in the space in the past, their funding for contemporary arts in the region has ended. SDC can continue to invest resource in building the capacity of culture organisations to write proposals for grant funding, but if there is no funding available, these efforts could be wasted. From experience supporting purely *commercial* enterprises in frontier markets in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Zambia, Kenya and beyond, we know that even for organisations whose sole purpose is to generate revenue, they often struggle to achieve more than a state of quasi-subsistence, earning little more than the bare amount necessary to meet household needs.

The Ilkhom Theatre in Uzbekistan is a good case in point. It has been in existence for over 45 years, generates income through ticket sales and art sales, delivers a range of performances and masterclasses, collaborates with lots of artists and organisations throughout the region, has a good international reputation, and is something of an 'institution' in Uzbekistan. However, SDC learned that its senior leadership was only paying itself $100-120 a month. In their own words, the leadership team said they 'could probably find a way to survive without SDC funding'.

The Bactria Centre in Tajikistan is another good example. It was set up 20 years ago by ACTED and delivers a wide range of programmes, has the continued institutional backing of ACTED's capacity, tools and systems, delivers a diversified portfolio of activities and has good reach into local communities. However, as ACTED admitted, it has taken 20 years to build the organisational capacity of Bactria and it is still neither independent nor financially sustainable.

The question of sustainability would have significantly greater relevance if this were a market development programme working within the culture creative industries.

It is right that SDC continues to question and challenge its support to partners, especially those who have received funding for long periods of time, but we do not think it is realistic to conceive of a moment in the future when SDC's partners will become fully independent. Consumer markets are still nascent, and funding is extremely limited if not entirely absent. Unless SDC works at creating a more conducive enabling environment for art and culture (i.e. encouraging other donors to invest in the sector), SDC's effort at capacity building will have a limited impact on sustainability. Encouraging arts and culture organisations to explore alternative funding streams is commendable so long as this is not fundamentally to the detriment of the organisation's raison d'être, which would contravene the principles of *do no harm.* The Phase 3 external evaluation comes to a similar conclusion.

- **Recommendation 3***:* SDC Country teams should build consensus on a definition of 'sustainability' within the context of the region's social, political and economic constraints. An alternative way to think about sustainability in this context is *resilience.* A resilient organisation is simply able to survive and continue to deliver powerful creative content. The term *resilience* also implies 'existence in spite of something'. This is appropriate in the context of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, where the enabling environment for cultural activities is increasingly inimical. This entails a change of mindset rather than measurement, within SDC. Measures of *resilience* could still include qualities like 'diversified income / revenue streams' as they do for *sustainability.* The mindset change requires SDC to consider resilience as the objective, rather than sustainability.
- **Recommendation 4***:* SDC should not use resilience as a signal to stop funding. Organisations that have become increasingly resilient as a result of SDC's support may be in a better position to pilot new activities, scale existing operations or provide visibility for the Swiss Representation. It could also be used as a criteria for selecting potential partners. Those organisations that are deemed not to be resilient (see also recommendation below on Maturity Index), will not be given funding.
- **Recommendation 5***:* SDC should encourage partner organisations to conduct research to explore opportunities for raising commercial sponsorship and advertising. Partner organisations themselves should be responsible for securing the funding, should these opportunities actually exist. Key questions to ask include: Is there a market for commercial sponsorship? What is the legislation that governs corporate sponsorship for arts/culture? Is this legislation supportive or obstructive? Which businesses could be open to sponsorship? How can SDC facilitate sponsorship? Is there a role for advertising? What impact would this

have on the artistic integrity of arts and culture organisations? What are the institutional risks and opportunities for SDC in harnessing corporate finance for culture organisations?

4.4. Management

Lesson: There were concerns expressed by SDC leadership in country offices that the CAACP programme is resource-heavy, particularly for the comparatively small size of the budget. Though the programme budget covers the salaries of one NPO in each country, other members of the SDC country teams spend time reviewing financial reports or supporting/facilitating management decisions. There is a perceived need, therefore, to improve efficiencies, freeing up capacity of the NPOs themselves so that they can deliver against wider mandates within SDC (such as Gender Focal Point). We note that there have been steady improvements over the last fifteen years, referencing in particular the transition from direct implementation to outsource delivery, and the elimination of both regional activity lines and small action lines from the funding modalities, all of which have significantly reduced the operational bottlenecks and resource constraints placed on the NPOs and other colleagues.

However, we observe that the culture programme requires a degree of pro-active engagement from the NPOs that is different from other NPO roles within SDC, who manage programmes delivered by implementing partners. As noted before, the culture NPOs have been instrumental in driving this programme forward over the last few years. The culture sectors are small in each country, and within them, the SDC NPOs are well-known and well-respected. In our view, if they were to step back from their commitments to the culture programme in order to deliver non-culture related work, this would be to the detriment of the programme, particularly from the perspective of achieving regional exchanges. The culture NPOs are in close and continual dialogue with one another, and continually finding opportunities to connect artists and organisations across borders.

- **Recommendation 6***:* SDC should ensure that the NPOs have adequate time and managerial support needed to deliver the culture programme, and should not be drawn into wider operational roles, other than those they currently have. The question should not be 'how do we reduce the time they spend on culture', but 'how can we ensure the time they spend on culture is most effectively employed'. The capacity bottlenecks that occur are more a function of internal reporting requirements than external pressures. See next lesson below.

Lesson: SDC's financial reporting procedures are complex. Programme partners and projects often find the administrative requirements of SDC funding exasperating. Though partners have received training on financial reporting, and though there have been some improvements according to NPOs, this is still an issue. In an extreme case, one organisation in Uzbekistan sought professional accountancy advice to navigate the financial reporting requirements of SDC and the national government. One project quipped that the only way they can provide proof of payment in a context where receipts are often non-existent is to take a picture of cash in hand, and another with no cash in hand. The CapEx team observed first-hand the large volume of paperwork needed to administer the project portfolio in particular. We note that the Phase 4 external evaluation also called for a 'streamlining' of application and reporting processes, and we acknowledge the Management Response, which stated: '*the program has one general Implementation Concept describing the processes, criteria and formats of application and reporting that has been elaborated jointly and is applied by all three countries.'*[13]

- **Recommendation 7**: SDC should conduct a review of all financial reporting requirements for projects and partners with a view to simplification. Though SDC continues to seek partners who can manage the project budget directly, simplifying reporting requirements could provide short-term relief while partner capacity to administer the projects continues to be built.

4.5. Prioritising objectives

Lesson: The CapEx team finds that the CAACP programme is unnecessarily complicated by the number of thematic development objectives to which it is bound. For such a small programme (around CHF200,000 per annum/per country), it serves a wide range of thematic areas and transversal themes, including 'leave no one behind', gender, people with disabilities, youths, human rights, civil society and sustainability. Terms like *inclusion, cohesion* and *diversity of expression* were often used to describe the importance of the CAACP programme. Pressure to generate income introduces additional concepts like *economic development, organisational capacity, diversified income streams.* It is further bound by a regional ambition, which creates its own set of additional partner selection, management and reporting priorities. While none of these terms is mutually exclusive (though there is often friction[14]), they create multiple pressures on programme design criteria, partner and project selection, and reporting requirements. In our view, this generates a lot of 'strategic noise' and pulls the programme in multiple different directions. Is the programme about creating space or creating income? Is it about inclusion or building sustainable organisations? Should the programme encourage equitable access to art for poor/marginalised groups by keeping admission prices low/free, or should it strengthen revenue

[13] SDC (2019): *CAACP_Phase4_ExternalReview_ManagementResponse*

[14] For example, SDC would like programme partners to develop independent revenue streams from ticket sales or art sales. This automatically excludes consumers who do not have a disposable income, which runs counter to the *leave no one behind* agenda advocated by SDC's global policies.

generating activities to ensure organisational sustainability? We echo the direction provided by the Steering Committee in 2019[15], when it advocated for a streamlined approach to programme design and implementation.

Refining the strategic focus of the programme will enable SDC to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of different partnerships. For example, if SDC feels that the programme should be about creating *access*, *inclusion*, and *leaving no one behind* then partnering with NGOs (such as the Bactria Culture Centre or Bir Duino) is appropriate. If the objective is to promote *diversity of expression* and *fostering artistic creativity* then supporting arts organisations like Ilkhom, the Bonum Factum Gallery and Art Collective CI is more appropriate. If the objective is to create *sustainable* organisations within the arts and culture sector, then working with businesses like the Focus Film School is likely the most effective use of resources.

- **Recommendation 8:** SDC should conduct a problem analysis and theory of change planning workshop to identify and simplify core objectives, and recalibrate impact expectations. This begins with the basic problem analysis and ToC exercise and should form the basis of the immediate next steps to this capitalisation exercise.

4.6. Measuring Impact

Lesson: One of the core challenges we observe with the culture programme, both historically, and today, is the difficulty of measuring and reporting on impact. There is no quick fix solution to this challenge. Measuring the impact of cultural programmes, especially those that simply seek to create space for dialogue is extremely difficult. The problem with this is that it continually invites the question: *what have investments in culture actually achieved?* In our view, such questions can only be countered with the statement that not everything can be measured. Measuring behaviour or attitudinal change – which is ultimately what the programme implicitly seeks to do – requires highly complex and expensive instruments, such as knowledge, attitude and practice studies that incorporate randomised control trails.

Nevertheless, there is certainly room to strengthen the way in which the programme defines and reports on results. For example, the outcome indicators provided in the Phase V logframe are quite vague: *number and quality of the open spaces and platforms are available for diverse, alternative and*

[15] SDC (2019): *SCM_Annex2-Minutes_Feb_2019*

innovative expressions. How is *quality* assessed? What is the difference between a *platform* and a *space*? What does *available* mean? That is simply exists, or that people use / engage with it? What do *alternative* and *innovative* mean?

We suggest creating an overall goal (impact) statement that focusses on simply creating a space for diverse art forms, rather than referencing the impacts these spaces have on people's willingness / ability to debate and address societal issues (as it is currently formulated in the Phase 5 logframe). This goal is unmeasurable and unrealistic with the available programme budget. In essence therefore, we think that accountability within this programme should stop at the output level, i.e. *number of spaces created*, rather than *people's impressions* or *types of issue addressed.* The exception to this rule is organisational development, which we consider separately in the recommendation below.

- **Recommendation 9*:*** SDC must define an 'accountability ceiling' for its work. The accountability ceiling refers to the limit of SDC's influence. We strongly advise that SDC should not let the *important* be held hostage by the *measurable.* In other words, SDC should not try to measure the wider impacts of the programme as this will be impossible with the available budgets for implementation and for research. The social benefits that may accrue from funding independent and diverse art forms are a by-product of the art form itself. They should not form the programme goal. One alternative would be organisational development (as elaborated in the lesson and recommendation under 3.7 below). This would require consensus-building with SDC HQ and country offices to ensure that the accountability ceiling is suitably aligned to SDC's global reporting frameworks.
- **Recommendation 10:** SDC should include clear definitions of core terminology within the programme logical frameworks in order to ensure a standardised approach to data collection and reporting. These definitions will also be helpful in describing the programme impacts to non-culture colleagues within SDC.
- **Recommendation 11:** SDC should continue to use qualitative reporting formats to capture higher-level outcomes. In this regard, SDC could explore ways of encouraging partners to create small pieces of work (short films, exhibition etc.) based on the outcome and impact indicators contained in the programme's logical framework. This may not be possible or relevant for all partners, but for those with the means and capacity, it could create more accessible and impactful evidence of impact. This would fill an important gap in development literature and research methodologies, and create valuable advocacy resources for SDC.

4.7. Organisational Development

Lesson: Many of the discussions we held with colleagues in SDC were about organisational capacity development. This has been a core focus of the programme since 2016. SDC has experimented with different approaches to measuring the impact of their support to organisational development. This is linked to the discussions about sustainability above.

- **Recommendation 12:** SDC should create a Maturity Index to measure organisational development. As noted above, it is extremely difficult to measure the outcomes of the culture programme because many of the higher-level objectives are extremely qualitative. One way to mitigate this problem is to recalibrate the results frame and theory of change, placing greater emphasis on organisational development at the outcome level. In the current logical framework for Phase V, organisational development appears as an output. This is incorrect. Training is an output. Development is an outcome.

  Acknowledging that NPOs have already invested thinking in a similar measurement instrument, the Maturity Index could take the simple form of a performance checklist across a range of criteria. Defining these performance criteria will require a collaborative internal consultation with the culture teams in each country and with other SDC colleagues working on organisational development (for example with CSOs or enterprises). On the basis of what we have observed, the criteria could include:

Table 1: Maturity Index Concept

Maturity Criteria	Example indicators	Status		
		Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Leadership	The leadership is committed and passionate about the organisation			
	The leadership is well connected in the art sector			
	The leadership has an international network			
Marketing	The organisation has a marketing function			
	The organisation engages in social media marketing			
	The organisation engages in offline marketing			
Finance	The organisation has multiple donor funding streams			
	The organisation has commercial revenue streams			
Physical assets	The organisation has the technical equipment necessary to conduct activities			
	The organisation has a physical building/office space			
Reporting	The organisation is able to produce accurate financial reports			

	The organisation is able to produce accurate narrative reports			
Inclusion	The organisation actively includes people from marginalised communities			
	The organisation conducts activities in the periphery			
Etc				

The advantage of the Maturity Index is that it would enable SDC to evidence organisational development across a range of different areas, beyond simple financial sustainability (the challenges with which we have already discussed above).

Using a maturity index could enable SDC to learn about the most effective 'growth stage' to support. For example, is SDC more effective at supporting small / new organisations, or is it more effective at supporting larger, well-established institutions? It will also enable SDC understand where it can make the biggest impact on organisational growth.

The Index may also help SDC understand which type of organisation yields the most effective results, whether an NGO, business or other type of institution. For example, working with a large development NGO confers several advantages: scale of access to local communities, potential funding pipeline, wider portfolio of activities, stronger reporting mechanisms, familiarity with donor funding cycles and reporting requirements. On the other hand, they may have under-developed / non-existent commercial revenue streams, they may lack creative ideas or technical skills for creative expression. These qualities could be assessed and compared using a standardised index, facilitating analysis within and across organisation types, and helping SDC to build a body of knowledge

4.8. Leveraging existing programmes

Lesson*:* SDC delivers a broad suite of governance and economic development programmes across the region. There may be opportunities to leverage budgets and activities within these programmes in support of the culture programme. Encouragingly, we learned that these discussions have already started to happen. For example, in Tajikistan, SDC's economic development programme delivers enterprise development training, which could be extended to culture programme partners.

- **Recommendation 13***:* SDC should continue these discussions. There may be opportunities to build deeper synergies, leveraging the scale of SDC's programmes in both urban and rural areas. For example, could SDC's work on vocational training be adapted to include professions linked to the culture sector?

4.9. Regionality

Lesson: There is debate within SDC as to what constitutes a regional programme. Some consider the CAACP to be regional, while others do not. Those who are sceptical ask: *what is the regional problem the programme seeks to address?*

The rationale for a regional approach stems from SDC's analysis of regional dynamics (see Credit Proposals and Annual Reports for further background). Rising nationalism, isolationism and hostility between the three programme countries encouraged SDC to support artistic exchanges and co-creation projects in order to combat these trends.

We note that the regional ambition for the next intervention phase has already been set out by SDC in the draft Swiss Cooperation Programme for Central Asia 2022-2025: *the Culture programme's regional dimension will be strengthened to foster cultures of pluralistic expression and exchange*[16], which has remained faithful to the original objective outlined in the Phase 1 Credit Proposal: *enhance knowledge and comprehension across cultures and communities.*

Nevertheless, differences of opinion within SDC encourage important reflection on exactly what the regional impact should be and how it could be measured.

- **Recommendation 14:** To begin with, we strongly advocate a basic problem analysis and theory of change exercise amongst SDC programme staff to identify a specific regional challenge that the programme will address. This will help resolve differences of opinion and calibrate a suitable ambition for the next intervention period. On the basis of the current situation, we do not advocate a return to regional co-productions as this was extremely resource intensive, and within the current geo-political climate, it would be increasingly complicated to deliver. If the programme wishes to strengthen its regional dimension as outlined in the draft Cooperation Programme, it may be more realistic simply to consider allocating more internal budget to facilitate regional exchanges or events within each partner grant agreement.

[16] SDC (2021): *Final Draft CP Central Asia main text and annexes*, p.9

4.10. Research

Lesson: As the programme reaches the end of Phase V in 2022, there is an opportunity to look beyond the existing parameters of the programme and engage in some internal research and reflection before new partnership agreements are signed. We think this should be an internal exercise for a number of reasons: i) SDC NPOs probably have better networks within the culture sectors of their respective countries than any external consultant, providing a good starting point for further exploration; ii) hiring external consultants is expensive. Assuming that SDC continues to allocate limited funds for external research, these funds should be directed to evaluations in order to provide external perspective at key strategic moments in the programme life-cycle; and iii) conducting the research internally will help to raise visibility of the programme by ensuring that the NPOs themselves are front and centre of meetings with new potential partners.

- **Recommendation 15**: SDC should allocate time and resource for the NPOs to conduct a preparatory research phase to set the tone for the next 10-year intervention period. Speaking to CAACP NPOs and to SDC in other roles, there is a need to conduct some basic stakeholder and sector mapping in order to provide an updated assessment of the organisations, activities and opportunities within the contemporary culture scene, and the needs/expectations of the general populations (particularly youths, women and other marginalised groups) with regards to culture. Though we acknowledge that the NPOs likely have a lot of this information ready to hand based on their experience, we do advocate for a concerted push to travel and to meet people beyond the national capitals in order to provide a refreshed and invigorated appraisal of opportunities in the sector.

4.11. Policy and advocacy

Lesson: The contemporary culture sector is poorly funded and poorly supported in each of the programme countries. International development funding tends to focus on the culture creative industries and traditional heritage, and the national governments in each country continue to view culture as an instrument of state building. We do not see many opportunities for direct engagement with any of the national government culture ministries. However, the culture programme has created potential entry points for dialogue, as government officials are often more than willing to participate in high-visibility cultural events and festivals as we have seen over the course of the last programme phase.

- **Recommendation 16**: SDC globally, and within each country, should encourage other international organisations to support contemporary culture. SDC is well regarded in the international development community, and especially within the culture sector. It could do this by reinvigorating culture sector working groups in each country, bringing together key regional donors like the US and EU, as well as cultural organisations like UNESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture. The working groups would provide opportunities for exchanging ideas, identifying potential collaborations and comparing experiences in the culture sector. In Uzbekistan, we saw how easily SDC could convene big players like the British Council, USAID, the French Embassy and UNESCO.[17] The CapEx team did not engage with international government donors in Tajikistan or Kyrgyzstan given time constraints, but the principal of a working group is still relevant. Representatives from national government could be invited to chair the meetings on a limited number of occasions to improve coordination with government initiatives and, if appropriate, for some soft advocacy on core needs – whether more funding for culture, support to particular art forms etc.

4.12. Capitalization exercise

Lesson: This capitalisation exercise provided a useful basis for initiating the planning process for the next entry proposal. However, a number of the questions contained in the terms of reference for this work are more suited to an evaluation (particularly those concerning results). In addition, the sheer breadth of topics covered precluded a detailed assessment of specific issues or topics.

- **Recommendation 17:** For future such exercises, we suggest that a deeper internal consultation takes place *before* an external team is mobilised to gather lessons and develop recommendations. This will require an allocation of budget, time and resource that was not available in the months preceding this CapEx. SDC should first identify core problems, challenges or unresolved questions from previous programme phases internally. The more explicit and focussed these items are, the better. The capitalisation exercise should then focus on gathering lessons that inform how these issues can be overcome in the future.

[17] NPO Uzbekistan organised a working lunch at short notice during the field mission, attended by USAID, the British Council, the French Embassy and UNESCO.

ANNEX 1: METHODOLOGY

Overview

To conduct this work, SDC appointed a project team, led by Aleph Strategies. The team comprises:

- External Project Manager, Aleph Strategies
- Programme Officer, Culture and Development, within the Knowledge, Learning and Culture Division of SDC,
- SDC-selected peer for this exercise, Head of Program in Georgia.
- CAACP National Programme Officers in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

The team conducted a literature review of CAACP programme documentation, and a series of qualitative interviews, meetings and workshops with programme partners, projects and external stakeholders (see table below).

Table 2: List of CapEx participants

	Kyrgyzstan		Uzbekistan		Tajikistan		Total
Workshop with partners	1	Ustatshakirt, Sakhna Theatre, other local experts					**1**
Focus group meeting with project grant applicants			1	Various project grant applicants		Didor PO/ filmmakers	**1**
Interview with partners	4	Bir Duino, Art Collective, Kuduk, Ustatshakirt	4	Bonum Factum Gallery, Ilkhom Theatre, Focus School, Sogdiana	4	Kanibadam theatre, Amesha SpentaBactria CC	**12**
Interview external stakeholders	3	Aga Khan Music Programme, Soros Fund, British Delegation	1	UNESCO, British Council, US Embassy, French Embassy	2	Aga Khan Music Programme; Deputy Minister of Culture Mr. Obid Nazariyon Okilzoda; Munosib Madimarov, Open Society Institute Tajikistan	**5**
SDC Summative Workshop	1	Ambassador/Head of Cooperation, Head of Governance Domain, NPOs	1	NPOs+ Ambassador	1	Head of Cooperation, Deputy Head of Cooperation, NPOs	**3**

Limitations

Breadth versus depth. The scope of work for this exercise is extremely broad, encompassing three distinct programme streams across the CAACP countries. It has not been possible within the confines of the timeframe to fully explore each of the issues contained in the terms of reference. Programme activities are highly individualised to each country, partner and programme, rendering generalisations near impossible. We therefore avoid, wherever possible the temptation to make judgements about the comparative strengths of one form of art over another.

This is not an evaluation. Though the exercise seeks to analyse the results of the programme, it does so with a view to extracting lessons learned rather than providing a rigorous assessment of performance. This is an extremely important distinction, as an analysis of programme results would entail a significantly altered methodology than the one employed here, and additional time and financial resource. The recommendations that flow from this exercise will be derived primarily from SDC's insights and experiences, unlike an evaluation, where they are based on an external assessment of programme results. This exercise does not seek to compile or analyse programme monitoring data or financial reporting information. This exercise will provide a 'topline' assessment of the programme based on insights provided by SDC participants and external stakeholders.

This exercise is conducted within limited time parameters. As noted above, the short timeframe for this exercise precludes a more detailed investigation into programme performance. It also restricts our capacity to engage with programme stakeholders and beneficiaries working in the so-called 'periphery' areas outside urban centres during the fieldwork. We therefore have limited capacity to verify or corroborate the results reported by SDC.

aleph strategies

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Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Capitalization Framework

The terms of reference for this CapEx contained a number of specific questions. These were included in a Capitalization Framework, which provided the conceptual basis for the exercise.

Capitalisation Themes	Questions
Results	What are the main achievements of the CAACP?
	Which spaces for alternative artistic expression and reflection have proven successful in the context of Central Asia, which have not, also in terms of audience and why?
	What are the intended and unintended long-lasting effects and impact of the program?
Regionality	How did the regional approach prove to be useful?
	What are the benefits of a regional approach and how were those really implemented? What was the regional impact? What were the drawback?
	How effective was SDC at delivering a regional approach?
	How can the regional approach be strengthened?
Sustainability	What were promising projects/initiatives, and why? How and in what sense were those projects sustainable and why?
	Are models, institutions, projects etc. truly responding to the personal interests of the local partners and susceptible to be taken over and further developed by them?
	Are networks continuing to live on and evolve?
	Are there any local or regional/international institutions that could take over the implementation of CAACP? What would be the pros and cons of such model?
Relevance	Have socially relevant issues included in arts and culture products by the artists themselves been taken on board?
	To what extent where vulnerable and margialised groups taken into account in the design and delivery of the programme?

	Were the directions and approaches developed throughout the program relevant for the dynamic regional and country contexts?
	How did the program respond to the evolving cultural context?
	How did the priorities and needs, assumptions and risks change over time? Did COVID-19 affect the program, suggest new avenues and platforms?
Collaboration	What has worked well in the collaboration between cultural actors and SDC and why?
	What are the challenges SDC has faced in these collaborations?
	Is there room for more synergies and cooperation modalities with other dev partners?
	How was 'Swissness' promoted?
Capacity Building	How were capacities in the cultural sector strengthened at the individual and organizational level?
	Which of the capacities are the most valuable for their work and why (and which not and why)?
	Which competence training was missed and why?
Management	To what extent is the programme adequately resourced in terms of key positions and technical capacity?
	How are results collected and reported?
	How could SDC communicate its results more effectively? Is there scope for more creative reporting formats such as video, photography, podcasts etc?
Needs	For the future intervention, what would be the priorities and needs of the cultural sector and of the general public to be addressed?
	What could be the contribution/added value of an international agency as SDC in this changing context in regards of the priorities and needs of the culture sector?

ANNEX 2: SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Embassy of Switzerland in Uzbekistan

Reference: 771.221_7F-05029.04.02

Tashkent, 18.04.2019

Management Response to the External Review Report of the Central Asia Art and Culture Program, Phase IV, 2016-2019 (CAACP)

This is management response on the External Review of the CAACP Phase IV, self-implemented program by the Swiss Embassies in Kirgizstan, Uzbekistan and Swiss Cooperation Office in Tajikistan. The purpose of this response is to present the view of the implementers regarding the findings and recommendations of the External Review.

The External Review team (Jan van Esch (Netherland) and Timothy Williams (UK) presented detailed analysis and positive assessment of the program results. The clarified, raised questions and presented recommendations made by Review team provide useful inputs for the design of the CAACP next phase planning. The final external review report is presented in a detailed form with useful annexes.

The main findings presented as an extracts from the Review are:

- *The Swiss intervention in art and culture (a/c) is of great relevance to the region and the separate countries, as they are one of the few donors that support alternative artists and cultural organisations. This is especially important as the there is little room in the state cultural budgets of the region to fund things outside of infrastructural support for existing art institutes.*

- *The Swiss are also able to 'separate' a/c from other development agendas. This means developing a/c is the focus of the program, instead of it being used as a development tool. That gives society and the a/c sector room for alternative thought and expression.*

- *CAACP works in three different but fragile contexts and in administrative-heavy countries, where freedom of expression is culturally, religiously and politically sensitive. Consequently, the logistics of working with a/c partners and projects is complicated.*

- *CAACP's longevity and experience in the region provide a rich institutional memory on a/c. The program has a strong portfolio of partners and projects. Almost all current important players have been or are on one or another way connected to CAACP and continuing their work in the a/c sector, which is a sign of sustainability*

Overall, the CAACP agrees with the conclusions of the Review; some more detailed comments to the recommendations are presented in the attached table.

Olivier Chave
Ambassador

Recommendations	Steering Commitee Members Position
	Rationale and priorities
The program's **focus should place arts and culture at the core** of the programme, developing (independent) arts and cultural actors, and their strength should be stimulated.	We agree and this approach will remain at the core of the programme's next phases. This being said, CAACP's potential to advance inclusive, tolerant and reflective values is precisely what makes it relevant for a development agency such as SDC; In this sense it is in full alignment with SDC's Culture and Development Policy, the program will continue to identify partner, local a/c actors who share this same very approach and are committed to sharing and exchange.
The CAACP should develop the SDC Culture Policy into its regional theory of change that identifies not only which agents of change it wants to support, but also what audiences it wants to reach.	We agree that besides the identification of the agents of change that the program supports, it is important to clarify what audiences are to be reached. We consider that the program's outcomes are aligned with the SDC Culture Policy and should be kept at least in spirit. This being said, the system of objectives – Logframe and indicators – should and will be simplified.
The defining the role of a/c in the changing environment is a high priority in all three countries, which might indicate that **strengthening contemporary art is the most relevant in all three**, and this gives interesting ways to work with state vs non-state.	Partially agree: We agree that contemporary art forms are more preferable and promising in order to achieve SDC Culture Policy priorities and program outcomes such as freedom of expression, diversity, open to alternative voices and pluralistic dialog. However, in many rural and remote areas traditional forms of arts might be more appropriate and serve as a starting point for any cultural activities and initiatives. It is important to apply a DNH approach to avoid cultural/art project to have negative unexpected effects.

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CAACP should internally decide how they want to **relate to the state sector**. Especially how far should CAACP support state institutions' funding gaps or replace the role of the Ministry of Culture.	We agree that the program should determine possibilities and limits of cooperation with state and "para-state" entities. In the current context in Central Asia, cooperation with the state institutions is important and in many cases necessary, as long as it is aligned with the SDC's views and contributes to the program's objectives.
Implementation	
Streamlining everything into partnership, that provide core grant funding with a commitment by the partner to explore certain new avenues over the course of the funding period. **Grantees could be identified by a panel of experts** rather than an application process, or a call for projects, could become a 'rolling', all-year-round, open call for proposals for partners and projects.	We agree that "call of proposals" process be neither efficient nor appropriate in our case that is why it was removed from the implementation mechanism in early stage. However, the program will continue using two types of grants (partnership and project). The project grant type is one of the appropriate option to react on creative initiatives and scouting new actors. The partnership model enables SDC to support institutional development as well as capacity building and also to establish the basis for strategic dialogue. Taking to account previous experience of involving experts to the selection, this process would be done without officially involving panel of experts. A necessary expertize will be used when it requested.
Help them to produce **documents that reflect on arts and culture.** Including portfolios of their work, which also reflect on audiences and their feedback, should be part of their application and reporting processes. Streamline the application and reporting processes regionally, with a standard organizational, financial and	We agree that documentations (applications, reports) should be revised with the principles of guiding and simplicity in order to better reflect a/c components, visualize results. However, we have to note that the Program has one general Implementation Concept describing the processes, criteria and formats of application and reporting that has been elaborated jointly and is applied by all three offices.

arts and culture format that would support regionality and comparison.	Some particularities of the processes have occurred in the course of program implementation due to country contexts and partners' competences.
Communication and visibility	
Develop a communication platform that could help artists share ideas and knowledge. Make the CAACP 'products' more visible to the world, think how a CAACP platform can help build artists' portfolios, increase their visibility and support their future applications with a wider range of donors.	The program made at least two attempts to create the communication platform - *imhoart.net* and *cacan.info.* The partners of the program did not have interest to invest time and resources in maintaining the platform. That is why the program will continue supporting its partners in developing their own visibility.
Bring CAACP grantees together in each country using an artistic collaborative format, to exchange ideas and organically start collaborations.	We agree, and the program will continue proactively looking for opportunities of cooperation and exchanges at the national and the regional levels.

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
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Embassy of Switzerland in the Kyrgyz Republic

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External Review of the Regional Art and Culture Program Central Asia, Phase III (2012-2015)

Management Response

The RACP would like to thank the Review team for the detailed analysis and the positive assessment of the results of the program. The identified questions and challenges, and valuable recommendations made by the Review team provide a good ground for the planning of the next phase of the program and will certainly be useful for its future implementation.

The Review report is well structured, excellently written and answers all the questions defined in the Terms of References. Despite the very limited period of time for the visit of three countries and the variety of partners met, the Review team took into account the diverse particularities of the context and partners in their analysis.

In general, we agree with the conclusions of the Review; some more detailed comments to the recommendations are presented in the table below.

René Holenstein
Ambassador

We recommend that **the Regional Arts and Cultural Programme should be continued** after 2015, for a three or four year period before review. The **programme rationale should be maintained** and linked as directly as possible to grants through the planning framework.	We fully agree.
Priorities and resourcing We recommend that the **focus on independent arts and cultural actors** be maintained, and that steps be taken to strengthen the NGO and civil society networks that sustain their work. We further suggest that: - The commitment to **peripheral and culturally disadvantaged areas** be strengthened; - The programme should aim to achieve **equal participation by females and young people** under 30 during the next phase. - A **presumption in favour of intercultural dialogue** and exchange be applied across RACP; - A stepped increase in the programme budget should be considered	We agree that the focus on independent arts and cultural actors should be maintained. However, the extent to which NGOs and civil society are involved, and the engagement in peripheral areas will be decided in each country according to the context. Participation of women and youth is an objective, and must be promoted, however no "quota" can be defined in general . A possible increase of the program budget will be discussed with SDC HQ.

Planning framework We recommend that the current planning, monitoring and reporting system be reviewed and that consideration be given to **adjusting the planning framework for the next phase** of the programme, but that it is understood that this framework exists to guide not to restrict. It should not be the only way of evaluating the RACP's results but establish a single clear line through all it does. We also propose that **criteria for assessing proposals and grants** should be established for RACP IV.	We agree with the adjusting of the existing planning, monitoring and reporting system, in terms of simplifying it according to the actual and realistic needs for the programme. We fully agree with the recommendation for establishing criteria for assessing proposals and grants.

Management We recommend that the **regional character of the programme should continue** but that simpler management systems, based on the principle of subsidiarity, should be adopted. Rather than designating certain projects ‘regional’ the presumption in favour of cultural exchange should mean that opportunities to promote such contact should be explored in every project (though it will not always be possible or desirable in every case). We also propose that: ▪ **National Programme Managers** should be understood to be doing development work for a proportion of their time, and empowered to work actively with partners. ▪ **The Steering Committee** and regional management system with its backstopping should be maintained. ▪ More contact between programme staff should be encouraged, including a third possible meeting between NPMs.	We fully agree with the recommendation on keeping the regional character of the program and promotion of cultural exchanges in all the projects where possible. The possible changes in management processes will be discussed during the planning process: - NPMs are to different extent according to the country both administrators, coaches and self-implementers; - NPMs should meet on concrete transboundary projects, or to visit a specific event.

Funding mechanisms We recommend that the established **pattern of funding is maintained** in the next phase, though there may be changes in terms of individual NGOs, and that attention is given to helping key partners to become stronger and more sustainable over the next phase. We propose that funding be awarded, on the basis of criteria and agreements linked to the planning framework, through **three funding mechanisms** only: ▪ **Partnership Grants, for multi-annual support to two or three key partners in each country.** ▪ **Project Grants, for time-limited arts and cultural projects lasting up to a year.** ▪ **Learning Grants, for residencies and exchanges outside the international training activities directly supported by the RACP and its partners.**	Good proposal, we agree. A "window of opportunity" for out-of –the-frame, coup-de-coeur projects should be kept in the Project Grants category.
Communication We recommend that steps be taken to **improve knowledge of RACP**, its purpose and its achievements, within the Central Asian region, within the SDC community and among interested parties in Switzerland, both to build support for its work and to share lessons from its practice with interested parties. As a first step, we suggest that work should be done on: ▪ **An internet and social networking strategy**, built in close dialogue with RACP partners and stakeholders and reflecting their needs; ▪ Producing or commissioning materials (text, video, images) that can help **tell the story of RACP** to political, development and other audiences.	We fully agree. The new internet and social networking strategy for existing platforms is under elaboration. Visibility should be considered carefully in terms of the context of each country.