



creative exchange the network for culture and development

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## *Introducing Culture: Hidden Development*

We are enclosing a complimentary copy of our new report, funded by the Department for International Development, which is intended to serve as a practical working guide to Culture and Development for the international development sector.

Culture is gaining a higher profile as a development policy issue. As the Nobel Economist, Prof. Amartya Sen noted in 2004: "The issue is *how* – not *whether* – culture matters. What are the different ways in which culture may influence development?"

The Commission for Africa has also endorsed the need for a cultural dimension to African development strategy: "We want culture to become an inherent component of all development strategies – not just in terms of cultural products, but also in defining the terms of the development debate and the actions that follow. Culture becomes a way of working as well as an end in itself."

## *Culture is already part of your work*

Culture: Hidden Development emerged from research funded by DFID, which explored the use of culture and creative activities within the work of five UK-based development agencies – ActionAid, Comic Relief, Health Unlimited, Save the Children UK and Tearfund.

One of our most significant discoveries was the degree to which culture was embedded in our partners' work and thinking. We found that over two years, these five agencies spent a conservatively estimated £30 million on 350 projects in 40 countries. Yet, though culture was a thread running through all work it was largely invisible at policy level.

Culture: Hidden Development is trying to make culture visible, by inspiring development thinking and action – informed by examples from other development actors – in which culture is taken into account, whether as a social landscape in which communities evolve, as a source of rich content and expression, or as a means of communication on key issues such as HIV/AIDS and human rights.

## *Joining the cultural debate*

In his Foreword, Richard Graham, Head of International Grants at Comic Relief, says: "How aware are we of our own and others culturally embedded assumptions, attitudes and prejudices? And how does this, in turn, influence the manner in which development takes place?"

He issues a call to action for development professionals to start thinking more about the relationship between culture and development, by reading this report, and by getting involved in the vibrant ongoing debate about this issue.

We aim to organise a seminar in autumn 2005 for the UK development sector. Further details will be available on the Creative Exchange website ([www.creativexchange.org](http://www.creativexchange.org)) and E-forum later this summer.

To stay in touch with this work, please join us as a Partner (see enclosed leaflet) or subscribe to our email-based E-forum at <http://mailman.greenet.org.uk/mailman/listinfo/creativx-l>.

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