Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
Road for Cultural Heritage
Policy Note on Cultural Heritage and Infrastructure Development in Timor-Leste

July 23, 2013

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EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC
I. Introduction

Rationale
The purpose of this Policy Note is to survey Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage in relation to infrastructure development and offer policy options for conserving and developing cultural heritage assets, particularly in relation to sustainable tourism. Infrastructure development can expose cultural heritage assets to new pressures that require new and/or improved measures for conservation. Equally, such development can unlock the potential of cultural heritage assets to provide opportunities for sustainable social and economic benefits for communities. As Timor-Leste makes major investments in its infrastructure in the coming years, it has an opportunity to maximize the benefits of its rich cultural heritage and minimize the risks of damage to important cultural heritage sites.

Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage is now subject to an unprecedented exposure to the impacts of infrastructure development. From 2008 to 2012, the national budget expanded fivefold, and the 2012 budget allocated 48% of spending for infrastructure, chiefly electricity, roads and the development of the ‘Tasi Mane’ area petroleum infrastructure. The legal framework for safeguarding cultural heritage and for promoting sustainable development based on the cultural value of these sites is, however, still embryonic. In this context, adapting policy to best conserve and develop Timor-Leste’s unique cultural heritage is crucial.

Box: Cultural Heritage in Timor-Leste
Timor-Leste possesses a diverse and internationally significant array of cultural heritage which provides the foundations for peoples’ identities, and indeed for developing the national identity. The United Nations, through the UNESCO, defines culture as a ‘the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs.’ The heritage of a culture is in broadest terms the material or events that are the ‘outputs’ of cultural practice. UNESCO defines two types of cultural heritage, ‘tangible’ and ‘intangible.’ Tangible cultural heritage refers to materials, artifacts, monuments, buildings and sites that are the physical manifestations of a group or society’s culture. Intangible cultural heritage refers to ‘the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.’

In Timor-Leste, cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible, is varied and vibrant. The customary cultural heritage of the nation’s multitude of different ethno-linguistic groups

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is a living culture, a daily necessity and an integral part of individual and social identities. Sacred houses are an unparalleled physical representation of a combination of indigenous culture and resistance to occupation that is a central marker in the contemporary Timorese identity. The social and ritual aspects of customary cultures are permeated with intangible cultural heritage, such as dances and songs, and woodcraft, pottery, and weaving skills, and ‘ritual language’ poetry. Added to this are the heritages of colonial and occupying powers: The influence of Portuguese, Indonesian and Japanese government and culture are found in the tangible heritage remains of administrative buildings, graves, monuments and resistance era sites. One must also recognize the value of pre-colonial heritage, and Timor-Leste is home to internationally significant archeological and rock art sites.

The Policy Context of Cultural Heritage in Timor-Leste
The Government of Timor-Leste emphasizes the importance of conserving the nation’s cultural heritage and supporting communities to increase income and social well-being from their cultural heritage assets. The Timor-Leste Strategic Development Plan (2011-2030) presents this vision:

With Timor-Leste’s natural beauty, rich history and cultural heritage, there is great potential to develop tourism as a major industry to underpin our economic development. Our traditional culture, the living history in our rural communities, our crafts, music and dance will provide visitors with their most memorable experiences (pp. 68).

The constitution of Timor-Leste (Section 59/5) recognizes that ‘Everyone has the right to cultural enjoyment and creativity and the duty to preserve, protect and value cultural heritage.’ While there is currently no Law on Cultural Heritage, the Government Resolution 25/2011, Related to the Protection of Cultural Heritage (See Annex 4) establishes the mandate of the state (specifically the State Secretariat of Arts and Culture [SSAC], now under the Ministry of Tourism [MT]) to ‘defend, protect, conserve and develop’ the cultural heritage of Timor-Leste.

SSAC has been active in strengthening recognition and development of the nation’s cultural heritage. Significant milestones include regular cultural events (such as the ‘Ramelau festival,’ the Dom Boaventura celebrations, and Creative Industries promotions), the National Museum of Resistance, development of historical sites and promoting creative industries in Likisa district, and planning for the establishment of a ‘Museum and Cultural Centre of Timor-Leste’ and ‘Regional Cultural Centers.’

From this basis, the MT and SSAC are in a strong position to play a leading role in the conservation and development opportunities consequent of the large increase in the nation’s infrastructure spending, and this Policy Note outlines recommendations to contribute to MT and SSAC’s important cultural heritage policy agenda (see below Table).
## II. Policy Recommendations

**Policy Recommendation #1: Strengthen the Legal Framework and Institutional Capacity for Protecting and Developing Cultural Heritage**

To achieve the overall objective of ‘Strengthening the Sustainable Conservation and Development of Timor-Leste’s Cultural Heritage Assets,’ important steps must be taken at the level of institutional capacity. The increased state spending on infrastructure places new and greater pressures on cultural heritage assets, and institutional and regulatory systems must adapt to these rapid changes. Building the capacity of MT, and SSAC in particular, to more productively engage with communities with cultural heritage assets, as well as with implementers of infrastructure projects, will benefit communities wishing to conserve and develop their cultural heritage. Priority areas in this regard include:

### A. Strengthen the ability of SSAC to work within a clear legal framework for cultural heritage safeguarding.

For example:

- Become a signatory to relevant international conventions (such as the UN Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage);
- Develop the Government Resolution 25/2011 into a law on cultural heritage and/or including cultural heritage in environmental and social protection laws. This can include building capacity for SSAC to proactively engage with...
other Ministries drafting legal regulations impacting cultural heritage, such as the Ministry of Justice (Land Law).

B. Strengthen the institutional and human resource capacity of SSAC.
   For example:
   i. Staff training, improvement of information management, and more community-level operations to better respond to the opportunities and threats of infrastructure projects for cultural heritage assets
   ii. Strengthen the linkages between SSAC and other government agencies whose work impacts upon cultural heritage through infrastructure development and natural resource management.

Policy Recommendation #2: Build Knowledge and Understanding of the Value of Cultural Heritage

A key barrier to the conservation and development of cultural heritage is a lack of understanding of the value of cultural heritage among different stakeholders. This can even be the case for stakeholders for whom the cultural heritage asset is most important. For example, an individual who lives with and uses the heritage asset every day might not recognize its value as an object or practice of interest to an international visitor. Equally, implementers of infrastructure projects might not be aware of the existence or importance of cultural heritage assets in their project area. Raising awareness about cultural heritage among different stakeholders, and, importantly, raising awareness of the different understandings and motivations that different stakeholders hold is a fundamental principle for conservation and development. MT and SSAC have an important role to play in this respect, and have recently partnered with the World Bank to this end (see Annex 1). Recommendations include:

A. Increase knowledge of the nation’s cultural heritage assets for SSAC records, including locations, types, threats, development potential and ownership of assets.
   For example:
   i. Build further on SSAC’s research programming (in particular the Directorate of Cultural Heritage) to conduct general, comprehensive mapping throughout the country, with priority given to areas subject to infrastructure development (such as the south coast).
   ii. Improve the Information Management System (database) of cultural heritage assets maintained by the Directorate of Cultural Heritage.
   iii. Develop further coordination with local and international universities and research organizations to share research findings.

B. Increase knowledge of all stakeholders (community, government, civil society) about threats to and potential of their cultural heritage assets.
   For example:
   i. SSAC can maintain close coordination with the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of State Administration and Territorial Management and the
National Development Agency to identify cultural heritage dimensions of upcoming and ongoing infrastructure projects.

ii. SSAC can coordinate with the new Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Country Safeguard Systems, which is led by the Ministry of Public Works, to ensure that cultural heritage issues are duly addressed.

iii. With a particular focus on regions subject to infrastructure development, SSAC can conduct regular community level consultations with cultural heritage asset owners and/or managers to inform them of potential hazards and development opportunities for their assets. SSAC’s Cultural Heritage and Development Checklist, produced in partnership with the World Bank (see Annex 1), can help guide such activities.

Policy Recommendation #3: Empower Communities to Conserve and Develop their Cultural Heritage Assets

There is a variety of heritage sites valued by local communities in Timor-Leste, and many of these sites are intimately linked to the living traditions of customary culture and society. The highly localized and small-scale nature of much of Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage suggests that community-level decision-making and initiatives are best suited to their development. This is equally relevant in the context of the still emerging national identity because it offers different groups the opportunities to express their cultural heritage in their own ways. Coordinating and funding bodies from government, civil society and the private sector can support conservation activities as well as development through small-scale enterprises and community level management (see Annex 2).

A. Support participatory planning for community-level management of their cultural heritage assets.

For example:

i. Support the constitution of community groups based on the recognition of their cultural heritage as an asset for conservation and development. In a similar way to water user groups or farmers’ association, such ‘cultural heritage asset groups’ can be focal points for multi-stakeholder engagement with cultural heritage.

ii. Introduce a granting facility / national fund for cultural heritage asset groups for supporting the conservation and development of their cultural heritage assets. Contributions to such a fund could be sought from private developers of infrastructure projects.

iii. Introduce a ‘cultural heritage extension’ program whereby district staff of SSAC would provide regular information and capacity building for cultural heritage asset owners and/or managers.

B. Support gender and social inclusion in community level decision-making about heritage assets.

For example:
i. Through extension services and granting, provide dedicated support for the conservation and development of cultural heritage assets that are customarily owned, managed and/or used by women.

ii. In a broader context, cultural heritage activities (such as creative industries) can be a means through which vulnerable groups can be supported. For example, social support and/or income generation for the elderly and disabled can be achieved through their involvement in programs focused on cultural heritage.

**Policy Recommendation #4: Develop Markets for Sustainable Tourism and Creative Industries**

Facilitating the connection of owners and managers of cultural heritage assets to buyers is an essential part of realizing the income generation potential of the assets. Through their Creative Industries events, and through the signposting of a number of cultural heritage sites in Likisa, MT and SSAC have experience and a proven track record in this regard. International experience highlights that when managed and marketed well, cultural heritage assets can support sustainable income generation (see Annex 3). The small-scale and disperse nature of Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage requires that attention is given to establishing ‘zones’ of multiple sites to collectively attract visitors, and to associating cultural heritage with potential environmental and adventure tourism activities. Recognizing that the continuation and expansion of these efforts is a priority for MT and SSAC, new or expanded activities in relation to infrastructure projects can be oriented by the advantages in access that are afforded by better public infrastructure.

**A. Expand existing programming for market development, further promoting cultural heritage tourism in the context of other tourism activities and highlighting accessibility occasioned by infrastructure development.**

For example:

i. Support an industry advisory group for sustainable tourism and creative industries that brings together public and private sector interests, and which includes representatives from infrastructure-related agencies.

ii. Promote cultural heritage tourism domestically and internationally, both as an attraction in and of itself and through linking it to environmental and adventure tourism activities. Cultural heritage tourism is a niche market, and requires targeted marketing, but can also benefit from its association with other activities, such as hiking/climbing, diving, fishing and cycling, which connect people with local communities. Cultural heritage tourism is also a ‘hidden market,’ as the remoteness and ‘exoticism’ of the object of interest can be bridged through more conventional recreational activities.

iii. Infrastructure development reduces remoteness, but does not necessarily increase knowledge and understanding between stakeholders. MT and SSAC can help to build bridges between cultural heritage asset owners and tourists. The establishment of district cultural centres will help in this regard. Additional measures can include supporting the professional development of guides and a guiding association.
Annex 1
A Case Study of Cultural Heritage Development: The Road to Promoting Cultural Heritage for Development

The project *The Road to Promoting Cultural Heritage for Development*, which involves a partnership between Timor-Leste’s State Secretariat of Arts and Culture (Ministry of Tourism, Commerce and Industry) and The World Bank, had the objective of identifying cultural heritage assets and support culturally sensitive development of such assets for sustainable tourism and other income-generation initiatives. The project was designed to link with the Government’s *Road Network Upgrading Sector Project*, which includes the *Timor-Leste Road Climate Resilience Project* (supported by a World Bank loan) to improve the country’s north-south road from Dili to Ainaro. The infrastructure upgrade, beginning in 2013, will bring substantial change to the lives of Timor-Leste’s primarily rural population in these areas, particularly for those living along the road corridor.

The project is underpinned by the expectation that improved access to services and markets, as well as more opportunity for travel and tourism, will also afford more access to cultural heritage assets. The impending exposure of cultural heritage assets to a wider audience underscores the importance of establishing a practical plan for the management and conservation of these assets. The project has piloted a multi-step process whereby potential cultural heritage assets are identified, mapped and catalogued, and options for conservation and development are created and decided upon through inclusive multi-stakeholder consultations (see Box: Project Results). In sum, the project has aimed to help mediate the exposure of cultural heritage assets afforded by infrastructure development, so that the diverse values and expectations of different stakeholders are mutually understood.

Thus far the project has focused only on mapping and cataloging tangible assets, such as buildings and monuments. The focus on tangible heritage is not intended to lessen the importance the significant intangible aspects of Timor-Leste culture (see Section 3). The focus on physical sites has been prioritized as a reflection of the project’s link with the road upgrade. In effect, the nature of the roadwork has informed the nature of the cultural heritage that has been explored to date.

**Box: Project Results**

In October and November 2012 the *Road to Promoting Cultural Heritage for Development Project* carried out GIS mapping of 90 cultural heritage assets in the districts of Dili, Aileu and Ainaro. The assets were identified through broad-based community consultations, and mapping focused only on assets within or close to the road corridor. Details about the assets, such as ownership, current use, and local importance were also collected through field research and interviews with local stakeholders. The catalogue includes 37 colonial era sites (these include sites such as Portuguese, Chinese, and Catholic Church architecture and monuments), 3 World War
Two sites, 10 Indonesian era sites, 6 Independence era sites and 34 Customary sites. From this foundation, the project has also conducted management assessments for five sample assets. These assessments describe in more detail the cultural values of the assets, and set these values in context to conservation and development options. That is, through analyses of the assets’ meaning in the local and national consciousness, the management assessments put forward options that can then form the basis for the creation of participatory management plans.

The project also has the objective of contributing to the broader policy discussion regarding the relationship between cultural heritage and infrastructure development.

The project has demonstrated a model in which donors, government and communities can partner to develop cultural heritage beyond the level of project safeguards. The project has shown that while the *Timor-Leste Road Climate Resilience Project* does not trigger the World Bank’s Operational Policy (4.11) on Physical Cultural Resources,\(^4\) there are still many opportunities whereby the infrastructure development can be leveraged to bring to light the importance, and potential, of cultural heritage assets in the nation’s social and economic development. Such work can also contribute directly to efforts to strengthen relationships between local communities and infrastructure project implementers (see Box: Strengthening community relations through cultural heritage).

**Box: Strengthening community relations through cultural heritage**

The public road works of the *Timor-Leste Road Climate Resilience Project* has highlighted that the spiritual leaders of local clans can be part of the development process. Along the roadway, the sacred houses (*uma lulik*) of several clans are located very close to the road, such as those of the clans Kai Liti, Ulu Kai, and La Keu in Madabeno village (Aileu district). The leaders of these clans can be consulted to measure their willingness to ‘sanctify’ the roadwork according to local custom. A clan in the village of Lahaek, Dai Lor, whose territory is crossed by the road, explicitly stated that they wanted to conduct such a ritual, which would be aimed at obtaining the blessing of ancestor spirits to ensure the safety and success of the project.

The mapping and cataloging of sites through community consultations has shown that there are a multitude of tangible assets that are locally valued and have national significance. The project has piloted a model whereby the definition of a nation’s cultural heritage assets is achieved through an on-going and pluralistic dialogue that reflects the values and identities of diverse stakeholders.

\(^{4}\) To view the Policy, see [http://go.worldbank.org/IHM9G1FOO0](http://go.worldbank.org/IHM9G1FOO0)
Annex 2
Example of High Potential Heritage Asset - Lacoto Sacred House

Lacoto is a sacred house (*uma lulik*) located on the outskirts of Dili district. The Lacoto clan histories speak of their ancestry as the original inhabitants of Dili, but that they left the coastal area because of a natural disaster (migrations due to floods, earthquakes and volcano eruptions are common themes in the mythic-histories of clans in the region). During the Indonesian occupation period the sacred house was used to protect Kay Rala Xanana Gusmao and other resistance leaders as they were conducting military activities close to Dili. In this way, the Lacoto sacred house represents both the key role of customary culture during the resistance period, and post-independence revival of tradition. These factors, as well as the location convenient to Dili, suggest that it has good potential to attract tourists. As the site is under customary ownership by the Lacoto clan, and clan leaders (such as hereditary seniors and ritual specialists) have responsibility for ensuring the appropriate use of the site, the assessment recommends that these figures, with facilitation from SSAC, be mobilized to lead the development of a community organization and management plan for the site. This organization can coordinate with government and civil society to seek funding for their initiatives when necessary.

The development of *uma lulik* Lacoto for sustainable tourism can contribute to improving international understanding of Timor-Leste’s land and people, and an important part of this process is to establish a tourism experience that is both sensitive to local custom and sensitive to the aspirations of tourists. The meaning of the *uma lulik*, and the behavior required of visitors, will be unknown for many international tourists – just as the expectations and behavior of tourists may be unknown by local communities. Thus, in the development of Lacoto for heritage tourism, opening channels for mutual understanding is a key principle underpinning the development options. This can include identifying local community members who would be willing and able (having the necessary linguistic skills and local knowledge) to act as guides. The government and civil society can provide support for the training for guides in language and tourism, and in the broader scope help establish an ‘association of cultural heritage guides’ as a peak body that promotes good practices, a code of ethics, and other organizational support. A Lacoto community organization can also coordinate between local community members and Dili retailers to make available for sale Lacoto crafts, such as woven cloth, pottery and woodcraft.
Over time, many governments moved through different stages of approaching cultural heritage – initially from a ‘do no harm’ approach, to supporting the dedicated protection of important sites, to the present day ‘integrated approach,’ which treats cultural heritage as a means to economic and social development. Within the integrated approach particular options for development are determined based on the unique context and kind of cultural heritage that is at issue.

The World Bank has been involved in supporting cultural heritage development around the globe, from large city wide restoration projects, to small community-based grants. In Jordan, for example, since 2007 a $70 million project for urban cultural heritage and tourism development has worked in five historical cities to help improve road networks, facilitate the renovation and cleaning of historical buildings, rehabilitation of public spaces, and support for traffic management.

An example of smaller, community-based development is that of Guizhou. Located in southwestern China, this region has a population of almost 40 million people, and the World Bank supported cultural heritage development in 17 villages of ethnic minorities, four historic towns and four national parks, using a community-based approach. Villages decide on priorities and manage their cultural heritage assets, developing community organizations to manage assets, and with facilitators help link tradition crafts to supply chain. A successful approach to community-based cultural heritage development has been the use of Community Foundations (CFs). CFs are based on a Community Driven Development platform, whereby competitive grants are awarded to community initiatives. For example, in Slovakia, Europe, the ‘Healthy City Community Foundation’ in Banska Bystrica has supported local organization to rehabilitate tourist trails and bike paths, and theatre groups to handicapped youth.

Aside from the social and culture importance of preservation, the income-generating benefits from investments in cultural heritage are significant. For example, the World Bank and the government of Zanzibar partnered to preserve the town’s traditional stone waterfront. The initial investment of $8.3 million has yielded a net value of $15 million – a 47% internal rate of return. Other projects, such as that in Azerbaijan, have shown that the conservation of cultural heritage sites also leads to substantial increases in local property prices.
The Program of IV Constitutional Government, in point 3 related to the Arts and Culture, expresses the Government’s determination in “placing culture at the use of affirming the Timorese Nation and State”. Besides that, this document states that it should be “through culture that Timor-Leste should reposition itself, preserving, enriching and safeguarding its identity”, since “the protection of Culture ensures an enduring transmission through generations of the historical and ethnographic legacy of our ancestors, and of the contemporary achievements, accomplishments and values”.

In regards to specific cultural heritage, the National Cultural Policy, approved by the Council of Ministers on the 23rd of September 2009, envisages the creation of “legal mechanisms that allow an efficient management and preservation of Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage”, in order to “defining the rights and duties of all citizens before the country’s cultural heritage, contributing to its safeguarding and valorisation”.

Since it is the responsibility of the State to protect and value cultural heritage as an instrument of democratization of the access to culture, as well as a fundamental element in the process of consolidating the national identity and sovereignty, and considering that the classification and the protection of Timor-Leste’s immovable cultural assets should always be undertaken with the ultimate purpose of creating a fair and equal society, assuming cultural diversity as humanitarian and development fundamental principles, the Government recognises that it is up to the State Secretariat of Culture and the services under its supervision, to secure the legal framework indispensable to the inventory, management, protection and valorisation of the cultural and architectural heritage of Timor-Leste.

The approval of a set of strategic and regulatory guidelines towards the protection and the preservation of Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage, as a fundamental tool to preserve and consolidate national unity and national identity, will be further improved by the future Cultural Heritage National Law, currently under preparation.

Therefore, the Government decides, following paragraph a) of Article 116 of the Constitution of the Republic, and in pursuit of the Program of the IV Constitutional Government and its National Cultural Policy, the following:

a) The current Resolution is approved, defining the concept of cultural heritage and measures for its support, defence, preservation and conservation.

b) The current Resolution is in use until the Cultural Heritage National Law is approved.

c) Cultural heritage is defined as all assets, moveable and immovable, tangible or intangible, which for its unique importance and value contribute to affirm the cultural identity of a community, country or region and that for such reason, should be the target of identification, research, classification and conservation
and protection measures. Timor-Leste’s cultural heritage should reflect values of memory, antiquity, authenticity, originality, rarity or exemplarity of its People.

d) The types of cultural heritage existing in the country include:
- Archaeological heritage, on land and underwater, including archaeological sites and materials from excavations and archaeological sites;
- Architectural heritage, including several types of buildings from the Portuguese and Dutch colonial periods (including religious heritage), the Japanese occupation period and the Indonesian occupation period;
- Ethnographic and traditional heritage, moveable and immovable, including traditional architecture, sacred architecture and sites, as well as ethnographic and traditional objects associated with living cultures;
- Intangible heritage, including traditions, oral expressions and languages, social and ritual practices and festivities, knowledge and practices associated with nature and natural resource management, as well as traditional arts and performance, including music, dance and singing.

e) The body within the State that holds tutelage of all cultural heritage in Timor-Leste is the State Secretariat of Culture, or the body within Government that will replace it in its competences, according to the expressed delegation of powers consecrated in no. 2 of Article 49 of the Decree-Law 22/2010, of December 9, which approves the Organic Law of the Ministry of Education. It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to supervise the activities of the State Secretariat of Culture.

f) The tutelage now consecrated comprises the defence, protection, development and conservation of the Cultural Heritage of Timor-Leste, having the power to technically control and examine all type of interventions on the cultural heritage of Timor-Leste, through the use of measures and mechanisms defined in the current Resolution or in any relevant legislation to be produced.

g) The power of controlling and examining is applied through technical judgments and the relevant technical accompanying reports and it is applied to all institutions, public or private whom, through collaboration with the State or by their own initiative, on assets of public or private domain, intend to acquire, modify, recover, develop and/or intervene in any type of asset, public or private, which fall under the scope of the current diploma and are duly identified and classified through a dispatch from the tutelage body.

h) Included in the above-mentioned are all specific projects developed by the Catholic Church of Timor-Leste in the cultural heritage under its ownership, as long as this heritage is classified.

Approved by the Council of Ministers on the 7th of September, 2011.

To be published.
The acting Prime-Minister,

José Luís Guterres