

# COVID-19: SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT IN GHANA



Briefing Note #4, May 2020

## Impact of COVID-19 on Culture & the Creative Sector

### Background

While billions of people around the world turn to culture as a source of comfort and connection, the impact of COVID-19 has not spared the culture sector. [More than 80% of UNESCO World Heritage properties have closed down](#), threatening the livelihoods of the local communities and cultural professionals. Cultural institutions and facilities including museums, theatres and cinemas are losing millions in revenue each day, and many have had to let go of their staff. Creative institutions and individuals including Artists across the world, most of whom were already working part-time, on an informal basis or under precarious contracts prior to the pandemic, are struggling to make ends meet. Some have managed through creative and innovative ways taking advantage of opportunities the current situation presents. Many cultural and creative icons like [Manu Dibango](#), have also lost their lives to COVID-19.

### The Ghana Situation

As at 26 May 2020, the total confirmed cases in Ghana were [6,808 with 32 deaths and 2,070 recoveries](#). Ghana Government has instituted measures to mitigate the effects of the Pandemic in line with global trends including a partial lockdown in major cities in greater Accra and greater Kumasi environs and banned gatherings. Churches, mosques, theatres, schools as well as places of entertainment and bars still remain temporarily closed. Artistic performances including live shows have all been cancelled until further notice creating difficult situations for creative and cultural people. We are experiencing a cultural emergency.

Currently, local artisans who ply their trade at tourism destination centres including tour guides have all been disengaged temporarily. Ghana's nine public

### Highlights

- Creative institutions and individuals including Artists across the world, most of whom were already working part-time, on an informal basis or under precarious contracts prior to the pandemic, are struggling to make ends meet
- More than 80% of UNESCO World Heritage properties have closed down[1], threatening the livelihoods of the local communities and cultural professionals
- It is believed the impact of COVID-19 would be such that it could take up to 10 months for the tourism industry to recover from the shock of coronavirus.
- Culture is a common good and as such, it is important to invest and draw on culture as a vector of resilience and socio-economic human development, within the framework of Ghana's policies to overcome this crisis.
- However, at a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture brings people together, keeping them connected and shortening the distance between us. It provides comfort, inspiration, innovation and hope at a time of enormous anxiety and uncertainty, and it rekindles the human spirit, spirituality and resilience.

and seven private museums as well as heritage sites including the two listed serially (Forts & Castles -28 components and Asante Traditional Buildings - 10 components), on the UNESCO World Heritage List and the six on the Tentative List, are closed. The 28 Forts and Castles along the coast of Ghana from Keta to Axim depict Ghana’s engagement with European traders, trade in commodities and enslaved people. The [10 Asante Traditional Buildings](#), are remnants of the Ashanti Kingdom scattered in the Ashanti Region. Their closure is a loss of revenue to the sites and ancillary businesses around these sites.

The [National Tourism Development Plan](#), projects 8 million tourists per year by 2027 to contribute over [\\$8 billion](#) to the economy. 2019 brought large numbers of African-Americans, including many celebrities, as well as others from the diaspora to celebrate the [Year of Return](#) in line with the plan. The Minister of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC), Barbara Oteng-Gyasi, stated that the year-long programme provided Ghana with an economic boost of almost [\\$2 billion](#). The expectation was to build on the gains of the Year of Return this year to grow the sector. However, with the ravaging COVID-19, the industry is under siege. It is believed the impact of COVID-19 would be such that it could take up to 10 months for the tourism industry to recover from the shock of coronavirus. This puts the Year of Return and Beyond initiative by Government, in crisis.

The Ghana Tourism Federation (GHATOF) i.e. travel and tour agents, tour operators, hotels, caterers, etc.

[have been hard hit](#). Referring to the Ghana Tourist Authority Statistics, the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture indicates the Tourism sector will lose [USD170m](#) as a result of the Pandemic. Ken Ofori-Atta, Ghana’s Finance Minister, says “economic activity has been massively disrupted; hotels are closing, industry is tottering, airlines are grounded, and our toast-of-the-region airport lies asleep”.

The Global GDP in 2017 according to the World Bank was USD80 Trillion. The 2017 Report of the World Travel and Tourism Council indicated that the Tourism sector accounted for 10.4 percent of global GDP and 313 million jobs, or 9.9 percent of total employment. The report showed that in Ghana, the total contribution of tourism to GDP was GHC12, 573.3m (USD1, 335.5m), 6.2 percent of GDP in 2017 and was forecast to rise by 4.2 percent to GHC19, 852.8m (USD4, 522.3m), 5.7 percent of GDP in 2028. The report further said that regarding job creation, the sector accounted for 5.3 percent of total employment (882,000 jobs) including jobs indirectly supported by the industry. It was projected to rise by 16 percent to 807,000 jobs in 2028 (4.8 percent of total).

This industry has been adversely impacted due to closure of borders and general slowdown in tourism and demand for international travel is projected to go down 25% according to experts. The National Hospitality Association of Ghana (NHAG) [has petitioned government](#) to implement measures that will cushion its members from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. There has been a decline in trading volumes and values



Fort St. Sebastian at Shama

due to disruption in supply chain globally. This affects the creative industry as it concerns cultural products for example in the film industry.

The Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture indicates that COVID-19 has put the industry under siege as activities such as traditional and cultural festivals, touring of museums / heritage sites, patronage of theatre/ musical and sporting events have ceased. It is important to note that the [informal sector of Ghana's economy is over 60%](#) and this is where most of the creative and cultural people find themselves. As a result of COVID-19, demand is for essential items that support survival and seemingly not life's enhancements through artistic works and expressions.

## Mitigating Measures

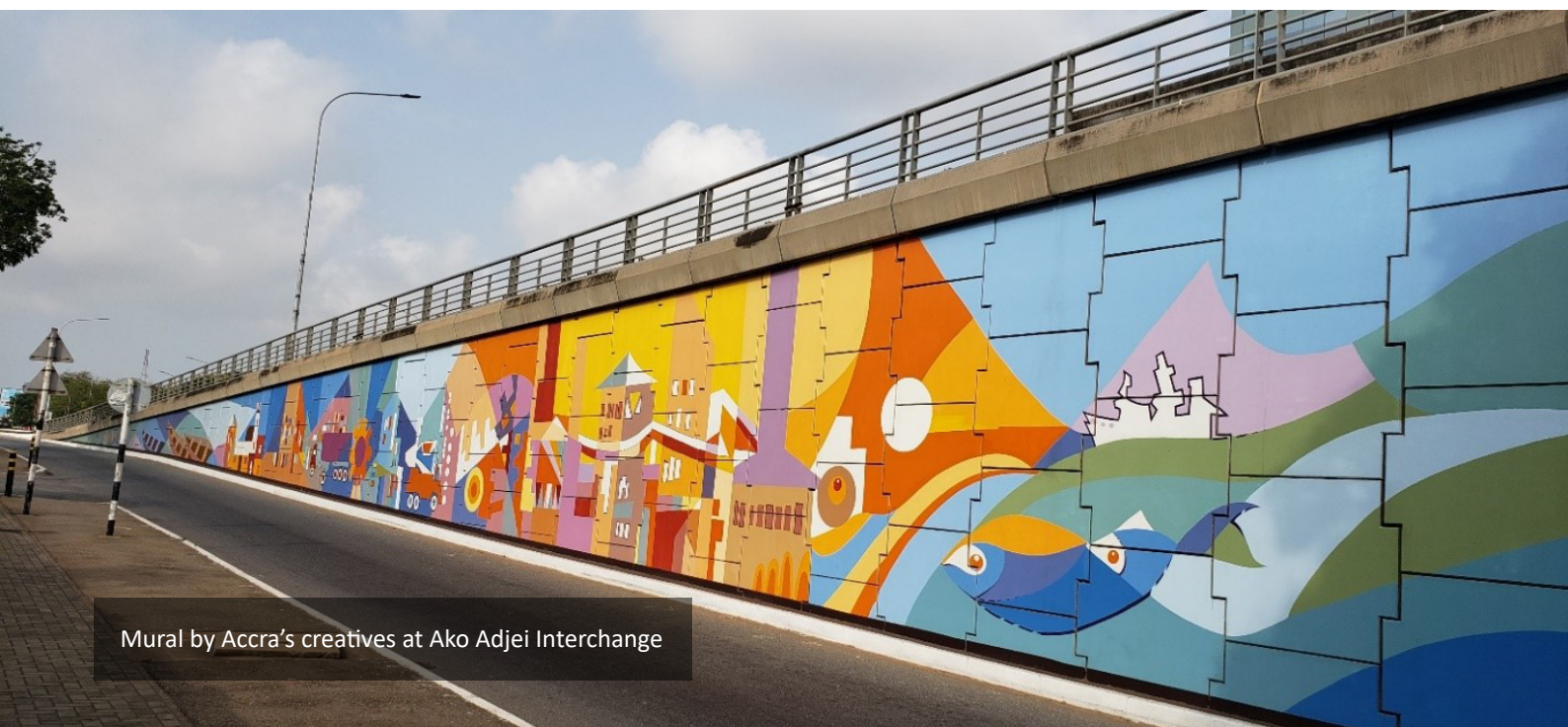
The MOTAC has had a series of stakeholder engagements with the leadership of associations in the sector, to capture data on the impact and recommendations to inform a coordinated government intervention through stimulus packages. Government has contacted the apparel industry a part of the creative industries, to produce personal protective equipment (PPEs) and as a result, some people in the hospitality industry are acquiring new skills to work in production lines. Most of the factories are led by women and this brings up the question of the dynamics of culture and gender. Some creative people, groups and entities such as [Kwan Pa](#), [National Film Authority](#) and members of the [Ghana Culture Forum](#) have drawn on their own

inner strength and used their creativity to support the national response.

## Resilience of the Artists

UNESCO in the area of Culture is focusing on i. Communication, advocacy and awareness raising, ii. Impact assessment of the cultural sector and support for public policies, iii. Support for artists, culture professionals and communities and iv. Capacity-building and resources to safeguard cultural heritage. On 15 April 2020, UNESCO launched a global movement – [ResiliArt](#), which sheds light on the current state of creative industries amidst crisis through an exclusive global discussion with key industry professionals while capturing experiences and voices of resilience from artists – both established and emerging – on social media. Together, it raises awareness about the far-reaching ramification of COVID-19 across the sector and aims at supporting artists during and following the crisis.

In Ghana, on 21 May 2020 (which was also [International Day for Cultural Diversity and Dialogue](#)), UNESCO supported a webinar with the cultural and creative sector on the impact of COVID-19 on the sector, in collaboration with the Ghana Culture Forum (which unites over 80 Associations), policymakers, cultural and creative entities as well as other interested stakeholders. Ensuing is a debate with industry professionals expected in June 2020 while discussions with Traditional Authorities on Cultural Heritage and COVID-19 are foreseen.



## International framework / Ghana participates in UNESCO Culture conference

UNESCO supported the Minister for Tourism, Arts and Culture to participate in an online meeting for Ministers of Culture on 22 April 2020. The Ministers shared their thoughts on the impact of the health crisis on the cultural sector, as well as on their recommendations within the framework of their respective policies, and to pursue the ministerial dialogue that they had all supported under UNESCO's leadership.

UNESCO has undertaken a wide data collection and analysis effort on a global scale, in order to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the cultural sector and to identify measures of support deployed by governments for the sector. This data collection and analysis will allow UNESCO to inform action in the short, medium and long term, and to better support public policies such as Ghana's Culture Policy under review.

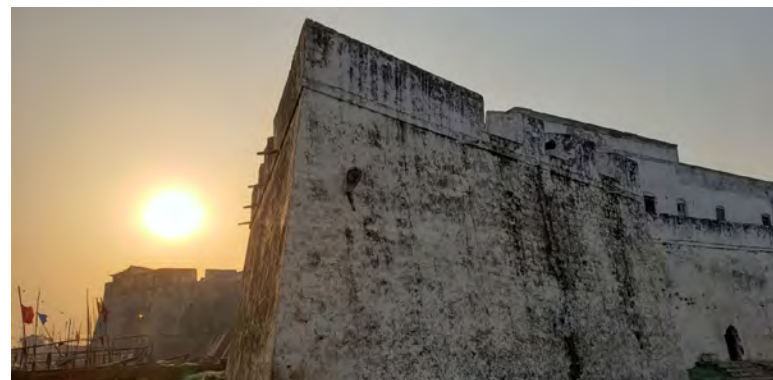
## Recommendations

- It is recommended that Government maps out the sector, to provide support where it is most needed and that it undertakes a detailed impact assessment to guide policy.
- Policies designed to support the creative and cultural industry will anticipate and mitigate future shocks of this nature. For example, social protection programmes should be extended to creative and cultural people badly hit by COVID-19.
- When designing responses to COVID-19 it is important to have the involvement of MOTAC and agencies such as the National Commission on Culture with reach in the communities and the Ministry of Chieftaincy and Religious Affairs.
- It is important that cultural people and institutions with large following are included in media messages on COVID-19, to ensure that they are conveyed in a culturally appropriate manner that facilitate social cohesion within the social distancing prescription.
- The idea and possibilities of moving culture online and supporting the production of cultural services and products offered by online platforms should be explored.

## Conclusion

Culture is a common good and as such, it is important to invest and draw on culture as a vector of resilience and socio-economic human development, within the framework of Ghana's policies to overcome this crisis. Creative and cultural industries have the potential for job creation thus contributing to GDP. The Coronavirus pandemic could be a re-set button for individuals, families, communities and nation to prioritize and invest in what really matters. Our social lives may change even after COVID-19, including community greetings (hugging, handshaking, etc). However, at a time when billions of people are physically separated from one another, culture brings people together, keeping them connected and shortening the distance between us. It provides comfort, inspiration, innovation and hope at a time of enormous anxiety and uncertainty, and it rekindles the human spirit, spirituality and resilience.

By UNESCO



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