

## SUMMARIES OF INVESTMENT PROJECTS UNDER IMPLEMENTATION AND IN PREPARATION

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### AFRICA

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#### *Eritrea*

#### **CULTURAL ASSETS REHABILITATION PROJECT**

#### **Cultural Heritage Sector**

**Project Number:** P058724 – Learning and Innovation Loan

**Loan Amount/Project Costs:** \$5.0 million/\$5.4 million

**Cost of Cultural Heritage Component:** \$5.4 million (100 percent of total project costs)

**Task Manager:** Arlene K. Fleming

**Fiscal Year of Bank Approval:** 2002

#### **Project objectives, activities, and preparation plans or implementation status**

This multifaceted project will use aspects of Eritrea's cultural practices and expression for social and economic development. Its activities include:

- Promoting community-based planning and management of cultural sites in rural areas and in urban Asmara and Massawa.
- Developing the National Museum.
- Collecting and disseminating, through curricula, the oral traditions from the country's nine ethnolinguistic groups.
- Documenting the nation's history and struggle for independence.
- Conserving, expanding, and training management in the national archives.
- Conducting an inventory and promoting conservation of Christian and Islamic manuscripts.

As a new country, Eritrea does not have a national policy or central government authority for culture. This project is managed through a national Cultural Heritage Steering Committee comprised of officials from two municipalities and various government agencies with responsibilities for culture. During project preparation, support was given for the drafting of a national cultural policy. In addition, a national workshop on culture and sustainable development provided a forum for presentations and public discussions on the draft policy and on the use of traditional cultural assets in the process of modernization.

#### **Project benefits**

The project is related to and reinforces the objectives of several larger projects in the International Development Association's investment portfolio for Eritrea. Intended benefits include fostering economic development through community-based initiatives, strengthening school curricula as part of education reform, strengthening the civil service, and building social capital. So, while focused on the role of culture in development, the project is multisectoral, and enhances the investment strategy for Eritrea as a whole.

During project preparation and implementation the Bank provided technical assistance and examples of good practice. The Bank's investment also attracted interest and financial resources from other

sources. A grant from the Institutional Development Fund, together with support from the Bank-administered Norwegian Trust Fund, enabled thorough preparatory work. During the first year of implementation a U.S. nongovernmental organization, Pedals for Progress, contributed 800 used bicycles and spare parts to the project's Renovate Asmara Campaign, which has also stimulated in-kind contributions from owners of historic structures and small enterprises in Asmara.

An illustrated book on the unique Italian modernist architecture of Asmara will be published in the United Kingdom and marketed internationally in September 2003, and a documentary film on the city is being prepared. In addition, products resulting from the project will be sold to the Eritrean diaspora through an agreement with the U.S.-based Eritrean Development Foundation. Support for project activities is also being negotiated with the governments of France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom through their representatives in Eritrea. And the Italian Trust Fund for Culture and Sustainable Development, administered jointly by the Bank and the Italian government, has awarded a grant to train Eritreans in conservation and maintenance of historic structures in Asmara and Massawa.

**Preparation or implementation challenges**

Eritrea's slow demobilization after the end of its recent war with Ethiopia has exacerbated the scarcity of public and private workers, creating uncertainty about the execution of planned project activities. Moreover, government bans on travel and a variety of other activities are unpredictable and complicate the achievement of project objectives.