



Participatory policy making: Policies for cultural and creative sectors discussed

ISLAMABAD: A diverse group of young and successful creative entrepreneurs gathered on Thursday to discuss the state of affairs of country's creative sectors.

The consultative workshop organised by UNESCO aimed at learning about challenges faced by them, their needs for business development, opportunities and challenges lying ahead, and what governmental measures they wished to see in the future. The project is supported by Danish Centre for Culture and Development.

Young creative entrepreneurs across a wide range of sectors including designing, publishing, visual art and crafts, and publishing had participated.

The overall purpose of the project was to empower government and civil society actors including the private sector to take part in participatory policy making for the creative sector.

The meeting aimed at finalising recommendations on protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions, and raising awareness on UNESCO 2005 Convention. It was the final consultation of a series with two meetings having being organised earlier in Lahore and Karachi during the past 10 days.

UNESCO Representative to Pakistan Vibeke Jensen, while briefing about the convention said it was about diversity of cultural expressions, as transmitted through cultural goods and services, locally, nationally and internationally.

She said the UNESCO 2005 Convention providing a policy framework for the creative sector was ratified by 144 out of 195 countries. "Pakistan is yet to ratify this convention," she added.

"Cultural goods, services and activities have important economic value. They are not mere commodities or consumer goods that can only be regarded as objects of trade," she said. "Without artists and creators, there is no arts and culture. But without creative entrepreneurs, access to arts and culture will not be evident," Jensen said.

"In the increasingly globalised world, the protection and promotion of the 'diverse' cultural expressions require public-private partnerships, and the creative entrepreneurs are the indispensable stakeholders in this endeavour," she said.

While highlighting the importance of smart investment in the field of culture, Jensen quoted UNESCO figures, saying that Pakistan's total exports of cultural goods have increased from \$60 million in 2004 to \$437 million in 2013.

Andrew Senior, an international expert in creative economy, briefed the participants about the convention and its guiding principles, creative economy, changing business models and impact of digitisation and building markets at home and abroad.

Discussing the convention, he said it was critical at a moment of systematic change.

Museums, galleries, libraries and archives are a critical part of creative economy, he said. He explained the triangulation concept of entrepreneurship, creativity and management. "Creativity is the only natural resource spread evenly around the world," Senior said. "Critical entrepreneurs are a critical part of civil society," he added.

There is great potential in Pakistan, partly because it is far behind and there is a lot more to do and also because there is diversity, he said.

Participants highlighted the lack of systematic data collection in creative sectors of the country, which make it difficult to grasp real potential of the sector.

They also discussed the gap between policy formulation and implementation.

The workshop provided a great networking opportunity for young entrepreneurs, to engage in conversation regarding business models in creative sector.

Participants also had an in-depth discussion with Senior on intellectual property rights, copyrights and lack of documentation.

To the range of questions he was asked by the participants, he remarked, "Creative people are very good at asking difficult questions."

Arooj Javed of Paper Miracles said the initiative aims to create economic opportunities for underprivileged Pakistani women by transforming recycled paper into paper beads and innovative products in home textiles and accessories. The major challenge, she said, was to

create market for the products and reach international platform to promote artisans globally.

Shazia Bibi, another participant, said such conventions needed to be translated into local languages to increase their understanding and utility

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