

HERITAGE MONTH 2020



**Building South Africa together.
Celebrating South Africa's Living Human
Treasures"**

HERITAGE MONTH CONCEPT FOR 2020

Theme and focus for 2020:

“Celebrating South Africa’s Living Human Treasures”

INTRODUCTION:

The national Department of Sport, Arts and Culture is the custodian of the government’s national commemorative programme, of which the national days is an integral part. The national days in particular, are regulated in terms of the Public Holidays Act of 1994, which also include the national Heritage Day. The commemorative calendar was concluded as a result of wide consultative processes, in view of the apartheid’s exclusion of the majority of the population in its national days programme. In the context of the new dispensation, with social cohesion and nation building as among the apex priorities of government, there is an expectation too that the national days programme must be one of the platforms to promote cohesion and nation building. In that regard, the concept will also make a case for the efficacy of the national days programme in general, and in particular, the national Heritage Day, to the broader social cohesion and nation building programme. The concept note will also attempt to offer conceptual clarity around key terminologies including culture, heritage, social cohesion and nation building more so within the landscape of our offering of sport, arts, culture, heritage and recreation as channels utilised to implement our mandate as a department. Given the current context of COVID-19 and the secondary pandemic of Gender Based Violence (including femicide) the concept note will explore these and intimate how culture and heritage are often employed as tropes that become enablers for GBV and femicide. Key is the need to outline within this script - the relevance of “culturally appropriate communication” and the merits thereof in addressing how the impact of patriarchy in rationalising the use of culture as its reasoning for GBV.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Heritage is usually employed interchangeably with culture – though not mutually exclusive, it is important to decode. The White Paper on Arts, Culture and Heritage makes the following broad description for heritage: *“the national heritage system in South Africa consists of Museums; Monuments, Heritage Sites and Resources; Geographical Place Names; Heraldry and National Symbols; Archives and Public Records; and Libraries and Information Services”*. The additional formulation is even more important in the context of the 2020 theme around living treasures: *“it is made up of tangible and intangible heritage resources as well as Living Culture in the form of cultural traditions, customs, oral history, performance, ritual, popular memory, social mores and knowledge of nature and diverse natural resources”*. Culture on the other hand, though part of the heritage accoutrements, since it is passed on from generation to generation and thus become part of the total intangible national heritage estate, is generally defined as *“the complex and broad set of relationships, values, attitudes and behaviors that bind a specific community consciously and unconsciously”*¹.

A quick glance of both definitions presupposes both culture and heritage as the social glue that binds communities together, thus giving traction to the claim that heritage, sport and culture are pivotal platforms in promoting cohesion, human solidarity and nation building.

Furthermore, as a department of Sport, Arts and Culture the expressions of the interface between the two portfolios of namely sport and arts in advancing the mandate of social cohesion and nation building cannot be ignored. Without sport and the arts, there is little common ground upon which to **cultivate a united spirit in a diverse nation.** Art and sport are **cultural practices** - which are analysed from various points of view including cultural history, social structure, philosophical aesthetics as well as political influences to society thus able to promote cohesion, human solidarity and nation building. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights defines Culture as encompasses a way of life though **language**, oral and written literature, **music and song**, non-verbal communication, **religion or belief systems**, rites and ceremonies, **sport and games**, methods of production or technology, **natural and man-made environments**, food, clothing and **shelter**

¹ See Raymond Williams, originally published in N. McKenzie (ed.), *Convictions*, 1958

and the arts, customs and traditions. Individuals, groups of individuals and communities utilise these tools to express their humanity and the meaning they give to their existence, and build their world view representing their encounter with the external forces affecting their lives.

In fact, Sport and arts are - **intercultural mediators' because both are** the two most universal languages we have in conversing during reflections of our history, heritage and preservation thereof through commemorations and celebrations which unify us as a nation whilst en fostering appreciation of our diversities as a nation. They enable us to express ourselves physically, emotionally and even intellectually, allowing us to connect and communicate with each other around the world, crossing borders, cultures, languages and generations. Blending these two languages into one WE create a powerful new vehicle and platform that could reach, and connect with, an even bigger audience - more so as we advance in the delivery of our mandate as a department.

In the context of the national Heritage Month and Day in particular, it is celebrated, among others, because of its potential to unite given the interweaving capability of the month to bring forth how sport, arts and culture promote the preservation of all that is indigenous about our heritage as a country..

What then is social cohesion and nation building – if, at the very heart of the celebrating national Heritage Month and Day is its potential to forge unity among a cross section of South African society? The National Strategy for Developing an Inclusive and Cohesive South African Society was approved in 2012. In the national strategy, social cohesion is defined as “*the degree of social integration and inclusion in communities and society and the extent to which mutual solidarity finds expression among individuals and communities*”. Related to social cohesion is nation building (which tends to be employed interchangeably with social cohesion). In the same national strategy document, nation building is said to be “*the process whereby a society of people with diverse origins, histories, languages, cultures and religions comes together within the boundaries of a sovereign state*”. In other words, nation building tends to be inward and insulated and speaking to notions of citizenship and sovereignty while social concerns co-existence on the basis of shared common

humanity. However, both are not mutually exclusive of each since social cohesion itself can provide a foothold onto which nation building might take root.

Conversely, nation building is necessary in advancing the goal of a socially cohesive and inclusive society. Nation building includes the following defining characteristics: a sovereign state with a unified constitutional and legal dispensation, a national public education system, an integrated national economy, as well as shared values and national symbols. A nation building process entails a commitment to work together to eradicate the divisions and injustices of the past, to foster unity and to promote countrywide conscious sense of being proudly South African. Nation building cultivates a collective consciousness in terms of who we are as a people.

SITUATIONAL CONTEXT: COVID-19, Gender Based Violence and Heritage Transformation

The 2020 national Heritage Month and Day also happens within the context of COVID-19 national emergency, which is also a global health emergency. Lives have been affected in more fundamental ways; with the vast majority of South Africans, especially black, poor and working class – out of work and in great distress. In other words, the COVID-19 national emergency has lifted the lid on the triple challenge of unemployment, poverty and inequality. In marking 2020 national Heritage Month and Day, this situational context must be brought to bear i.e. in recognising that South Africa, as the rest of the globe, is a nation in distress. Thus, the format, the substance and tenor of the main event must take this fact into account, while at the same time conjuring a positive and hopeful posture.

Gender Based Violence (GBV) is another social ill, which has become a concern at all levels of society, with women and girls living in fear. In his address on 17 June 2020, President Ramaphosa outlined: "At a time when the pandemic has left us all feeling vulnerable and uncertain, violence is being unleashed on women and children with a brutality that defies comprehension." This affirms the narrative that indeed GBV has become a secondary pandemic, whose sting has been accentuated even more by the effects of COVID-19, with women having to face their abusers in private spaces without much reprieve, given the effects of the national lockdown. There are multiple factors that may explain the extreme violent nature of South African society, particularly its menfolk. Most of socio-historical analysis point to violent nature of the past system of apartheid, under which most perpetrators of

violence grew and into which they were then socialised. Other empirical studies point to the widening inequality gap and rising levels of poverty that tends to push people to the edge. Some accounts in social psychology point to poverty and unemployment as necessarily an emasculating phenomenon for men in a society that remains deeply patriarchal – as men increasingly under the pressure to providers. Whatever the reasons may be, there can be no denying the fact that the levels of violence against women and children remain unacceptably high. President Ramaphosa has further communicated Violence against women is a man's problem: It is men who rape and kill women. There is, therefore, an obligation on the men of this country to act, and to end crimes of such behaviour.” This statement within the context of how culture has been used to promote patriarchal structures and societal modes of conduct and communication, heritage month should endeavour to demystify the misuse of culture in condoning and promoting GBV in the name of patriarchy. Therefore, in developing programmatic responses and key messages for Heritage Month, the COVID-19 phenomenon and GBV must be part of the key messages, which would go some way in bolstering the 365 days campaign against GBV.

While the efficacy of heritage to the broader social cohesion and nation building has been intimated already, it would be important to also just briefly highlight the standard flagship strategic interventions, especially around heritage transformation, in giving an added traction to this broader programme on social cohesion and nation building. Part of the heritage transformation is about ensuring that the South African heritage landscape tells the fuller story of South African heritage estate, and that those they were previously excluded are brought into the mainstream. At the very heart of this effort is about saying all sections of South African society matter, and not only some. Heritage transformation is about restoration of dignity. The naming and renaming of towns and cities is part of the package, as well as erection of new statues and monuments. The Resistance and Liberation Heritage Route, for which plans are now at an advanced stage is one indication of government's commitment to correcting the historical meta narrative for posterity.

Within the sporting landscaper, Indigenous Games in advancing heritage transformation merits inclusion within this discussion. The annually hosted

Indigenous Games Festival is hosted to celebrate the cultural diversity of our nation and is a programme which is a sports transformation platform because through the competitive channels provided for giving all the provinces to be part of the celebration to compete to win the championship it:

- Encourages increasing participation in a under-profiled sporting codes.
- Impresses the mandate of increased participation in sport and recreation throughout the country
- Puts media spotlight an attention to under-profiled sporting codes It is a driver of social cohesion and diversity through the exposure of the different cultures and tribes as represented by the different provinces.
- Has a Festival product ring-fencing packaging which encompassing attraction of 3-tier activation to patrons, community, fans and spectators giving them an opportunity to be taught, to embrace as well as to appreciate the rich history of our cultural experiences as curated through the games, the food and the entertainment (fashion, arts and crafts and music) on offer through the 6 days

The question of living human treasures is very relevant in this instance since it is being acknowledged that most of what still needs to be excavated, coded and stored is available from the many living archives and therefore highlights the need to extract as much knowledge as possible from these living treasures within the sport, arts and culture space. Given that commitment, it is unsurprising that the 2020 theme for Heritage Month is: “***Celebrating South Africa’s living human treasures***”. The national Heritage Month and Day will be hosted virtually, with Heritage Day’s format packaged in a manner which will see President Ramaphosa making a televised address to the nation because of restrictions on public gatherings.

STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- i. Promote the rich and diverse indigenous knowledge systems of South Africa
- ii. Create awareness around the evil of Gender Based Violence and encourage our living human treasures to champion the care of women and girl children within communities.
- iii. Expose learners and the youth to the richness of South African indigenous heritage

- iv. Advance the profile of South Africa's outstanding indigenous knowledge holders as the moral compasses in our communities
- v. Promote the appreciation of and economic potential of products, goods and services made by indigenous knowledge holders
- vi. Enhance social cohesion and nation building through indigenous knowledge
- vii. Promote "cultural appropriateness" and cultural feminism in how women and the children are meant to be spoken to and cared for as inculcated in our societal values within our history and heritage.

STRATEGIC PARTNERS

- i. The Presidency
- ii. DSAC entities
- iii. The Department of Traditional Affairs
- iv. The Department of Social Development
- v. The Department of Tourism
- vi. GCIS
- vii. The Pan South African Language Board
- viii. The Moral Regeneration Movement
- ix. All Provincial Governments
- x. Indigenous Knowledge Holders
- xi. The Khoi and San communities
- xii. The Public Broadcast media

DISCUSSION:

Living Human Treasures are in most instances bearers of our indigenous knowledge and should be used by communities to educate our youth positive moral values based on Ubuntu. These positive moral values reinforce the respect and cherishing of our mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. Any abuse and killing of our women is completely inconsistent with the notion of Ubuntu and should be discouraged whenever our living human treasures interact with our members of the public, especially our youth. The indigenous knowledge that the living human treasures pass to the younger generation should be knowledge that will take South Africa forward and build better men and women who cherish and protect their women and children.

South Africa has rich, unique and diverse indigenous knowledge systems that have endured for generations. These indigenous knowledge systems have sustained our indigenous communities through times of plenty, droughts, floods, famine and throughout all phases of life. Many of the manifestations of our living heritage such as rituals and rites of passage, indigenous games, traditional conservation of the environment, technology, legal and governance systems, indigenous languages, indigenous animal husbandry, agriculture, indigenous clothing, and indigenous architecture are disappearing and are not accorded the same status as other western and eastern knowledge systems. Although South Africa's constitution promotes and recognises the right of communities to practice their culture, religion and languages, there is a continuous loss and neglect of South Africa's unique and rich indigenous knowledge systems within the sport, arts and culture sector. This is perpetuated by amongst other things the adoption of foreign traditions due to urbanisation, globalisation and a lack of affirmation of our own knowledge systems within our society.

In spite of this reality, indigenous knowledge systems of Africa have survived and have continued to be practices and have sustained many communities in Africa and throughout the world. In South Africa, we have individuals who have continued to become reservoirs of our unique indigenous knowledge and skills. These living human treasures are individuals who possess to a very high degree, the knowledge and skills required for performing or recreating specific elements of our indigenous knowledge. These people are invaluable to the transmission and the reviving of our indigenous knowledge and need to be publicly recognised by all of South Africa. As an example, a wedding ceremony is not limited to a single indigenous knowledge element but consists of multiple elements like, music, dance, and lobola negotiations between families, rites of passage, exchange of gifts and numerous other events. Similarly go phasa may include songs, dance rituals, rites and offering of drinks and animal sacrifices to the ancestors.

On national Heritage Month and Day President Ramaphosa will address the nation and highlight the vastness and richness of our indigenous knowledge systems represented by our rites of passage, our festivals, our music, our crafts, our science, our innovation and our knowledge about and our relations with the universe. The President will encourage our indigenous knowledge holders to be at the forefront in

the fight against GBV and teach our youth to cherish and protect our women and girl children. Our indigenous knowledge holders should also become ambassadors against the spread of COVID-19 by encouraging all South Africans to practice hygiene through the wearing of masks, washing of hands and practicing social distancing.

The Department of Sport, Arts and Culture (DAC) appreciates that our indigenous knowledge systems deserve to be recognised and appreciated and given the parity of esteem as the western knowledge systems in our education, culture, religion, science and innovation. The National Living Heritage Policy has been approved and it provides for the identification, promotion and preservation of South Africa's vast and diverse indigenous knowledge that has thus far been neglected and is not accorded official recognition and promotion that the western knowledge systems enjoy.

The Department is presently appointing a National Indigenous Knowledge Authentication Panel that will assist the department with advice on the compilation of a national register on all South Africa's indigenous knowledge that needs to be preserved in a representative register. The panel will also extend its scope to include compilation of the oral history of Indigenous Games in as far as their origins and their role in promoting nation building and social cohesion. The Panel will also advise the department on IKS that is in danger of disappearing and deserves special measures of safeguarding. The IKS Panel will also advise the department on our IKS that is sacred and secret and how government will need to assist with its protection without interfering with the sacred and secret nature of such indigenous knowledge.

HERITAGE MONTH IMPLEMENTATION

Heritage month 2020 will focus the spotlight on South African indigenous knowledge holders who have been producing goods and services within local communities but have not received the national and international acclaim and recognition accorded to the western knowledge holders. These indigenous knowledge holders are still going strong in spite of the double pandemics of GBV and COVID-19 in our communities. On national Heritage Day, the President will pay a tribute towards their endurance and ability to preserve our diverse and rich cultural traditions and practices in the light of urbanisation, globalisation and systematic undermining of our indigenous knowledge systems by both the colonial and apartheid governments in our country. It is expected

that he will also encourage our indigenous knowledge holders to be at the forefront in the fight against GBV and against the COVID-19 virus within our communities.

All national, provincial and local museums, art galleries and libraries will be encouraged to promote virtual excursions by putting up virtual exhibitions and webinars. This intended to encourage South African audiences to engage with these exhibitions especially the youth are encouraged to take an interest in appreciating our indigenous knowledge systems through our handicraft, indigenous food, artefacts and other items of interest. During these exhibitions, indigenous knowledge holders will be invited to address our youth and share their perspectives on their knowledge and skills. This will be aimed at stimulating our youth to appreciate our indigenous knowledge and potential that it holds for them in terms of future careers and livelihoods.

The indigenous knowledge holders that provincial governments, museums, art galleries and libraries should invite to share their knowledge with South Africa should be:

- i. Individuals who have contributed through their actions to revive and preserve different aspect of our indigenous knowledge systems in their community;
- ii. Individuals who have contributed through tangible activities towards the revitalisation of a cultural tradition that is at risk of disappearing;
- iii. Individuals who have proof of excellence in the application of skills and techniques that are unique; and
- iv. Have wide recognition and respect due to their indigenous knowledge within their community and are involved in the transmission of their indigenous knowledge, skills and technique to the youth.

KEY MESSAGES DURING HERITAGE MONTH

(To be shared separately.)

CONCLUSION

Heritage engenders the nation's collective memory and identity. It is one of the visible identifying markers of who we are as a people. It is important that this year, a deliberate choice was made that there be a dedicated focus on the intangible aspects

of heritage, with living human treasures the focus of attention. Focusing on living human treasures is about affirming and valuing other forms of knowledge that have been suppressed under colonialism and apartheid. Bringing these other forms of knowledge, with the living human treasures as authentic knowledge sources, is an attempt to restore dignity of the indigenous people. It is in keeping with the founding values of the Constitution and the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights.

Throughout the entire month of September, South Africa's diverse heritage will be in fine display, with the living human treasures providing talking points to this national discourse on heritage. In decoding Indigenous Knowledge Systems through the living human treasures as the primary and authentic sources of knowledge, the current context of COVID-19 and GBV (itself a secondary pandemic) will frame the national discourse on living human treasures. Again, given the context of COVID-19, all planned engagements will be virtual, including the main address to the nation by the President, on national Heritage Day, in keeping with the COVID-19 public health safety protocols. South Africans are urged to mark Heritage Month and national Heritage Day, in line with the theme and gazetted protocols on COVID-19.