

# SEGOU, A CREATIVE CITY



## AGENDA 2030 - SDGs



## CULTURE 21 ACTIONS - COMMITMENTS

2. HERITAGE, DIVERSITY, AND CREATIVITY
5. CULTURE AND ECONOMY
7. CULTURE, URBAN PLANNING, AND PUBLIC SPACE
9. GOVERNANCE OF CULTURE

HERITAGE, DEVELOPMENT, ECONOMIC, STRATEGY, CREATIVE  
INDUSTRIES, CREATIVITY, IDENTITY, JOBS, ACCESS, PROMOTION,  
COOPERATION, GOVERNANCE

# 1. Context

Segou is the capital of the ancient Bambara kingdom, located in the heart of West Africa on the banks of the Niger River. The city asserts itself as a city of cultural excellence in Mali, multiplying cultural and creative initiatives. With nearly 133,501 inhabitants, Segou has all the assets of a major and structured city. It is the fourth largest region in Mali and it is home to various decentralised State services.

The population of Segou is primarily made up of the Bambara, Bozo, Bobo, Malinke, Sarakole, Peuhl, Somono, Minianka, Dogon, Mossi, Songhai and Samogo peoples.


The three main religions practiced in Segou are Islam, which constitutes 80% of the population, Christianity (10%) and Animism (10%).

## 2. Segou and culture

The “Segou: A Creative City” project is in line with the vision of the Segou region through the territory’s regional development plan (STRAT), specifically: *“Make Segou an attractive region based on its economic, cultural, and tourist assets, and thereby make it the economic capital by 2030.”* As such, one of the three major challenges of this plan is to ensure *“the preservation and economic development of touristic, artisan and cultural heritage.”*

The Festival on the Niger Foundation, with its various programmes (Segou’Art-Festival on the Niger, the Kôrè Cultural Centre, the Kôrè Institute of Arts and Crafts [IKAM], the Kôrè studio, SMARTS) constituted the foundation for the project “Segou: A Creative City”.

Thus, the “Segou: A Creative City” project aims at harmonising and making all these strategies consistent, taking into account the new implications, challenges and potential for local cultural development, and putting culture at the heart of local development.



**THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF “SEGOU: A CREATIVE CITY” IS TO MAKE ART AND CULTURE THE PILLARS OF SUSTAINABLE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF A SUSTAINABLE CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME.**

### **The relations between the Agenda 21 for culture and the project “Segou: A Creative City” are:**

The “Segou: A Creative City” project puts culture at the heart of its city development programme through the implementation of its Sustainable Cultural Development Programme (SCDP); the project responds to the principles 7 and 9 of the Agenda 21 with regard to the promotion of artistic and cultural creativity, identities and cultural diversity; as well as to the point 47 of recommendations which encourages local authorities to put culture at the heart of all local policies with citizen participation and strategic planning.

The project “Segou: A Creative City” is closely related to SDGs 1, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 15 of the United Nations 2030 Agenda.



## 3. Project goals and implementation

### 3.1. Main and specific objectives

The general objective of “Segou: A Creative City” is to make art and culture the pillars of sustainable human development through the implementation of the SCDP.

#### Specific objectives

- To promote and enhance the value of Segou’s cultural identities and artistic and cultural creation by putting art and culture at the centre of local development.
- To ensure the vitality of the cultural industries by implementing development strategies and encouraging citizen participation in artistic and cultural life.
- To support the cultural professions through the city’s creators, artists and cultural actors, and improve their working conditions.
- To strengthen education, training and awareness-raising on arts and culture.
- To promote local cultural tourism in a sustainable way through schools and universities.

### 3.2. Project development

#### Main actions developed

The “Segou: A Creative City” project was launched in 2015 on the sidelines of the 11th edition of the Festival sur le Niger, providing the city with a cultural policy accompanied by the SCDP.

Following a broad consultation, local authorities, civil society and cultural actors chose five key disciplines during the workshop to characterise the city’s cultural identities: music, design and fashion, the visual arts, heritage and gastronomy.

The “Segou: A Creative City” project is focused on the following four components:

1. The city’s territorial marketing and information system
2. The professionalisation of the cultural sector
3. The recognition and enhancement of the city’s cultural identities
4. Access to culture for all.



**THE PROJECT AIMS TO HARMONISE THE CITY'S CULTURAL STRATEGIES BY TAKING INTO ACCOUNT THE NEW ISSUES, CHALLENGES AND POTENTIALS OF LOCAL CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND BY PUTTING CULTURE AT THE HEART OF LOCAL DEVELOPMENT.**

Stemming from these consultations, local actors and authorities proposed 7 pilot projects, based on the five key disciplines chosen, to be implemented within the framework of the programme for sustainable cultural development for a 5-year period:

1. The Segou Marketing and Information System Support Programme (PASIMS).
2. The project for the continuous training and capacity building of artists and cultural actors.
3. Enhance the value of Mali's woven loincloth and cotton.
4. The project to enhance the value of built heritage
5. The project to enhance the value of local gastronomy.
6. The project to promote contemporary art (Ségou'Art-Festival on the Niger).
7. The project Art and Education (Maaya Culture & Citizenship).

Several seminars, workshops and sessions were organised to launch the project, identify the cultural identities, actors and cultural components of the city and mobilise all relevant actors. Capacity building programmes for artists and cultural actors were also set up with the support and partnership of IKAM.

Numerous projects and programmes have been promoted and implemented within this framework: "Segou' Art-Festival on the Niger" (contemporary art fair), enhancement and promotion of woven loincloth and cotton from Mali through the "pagne tissé" (woven loincloth) project, the art and education project (maaya culture and citizenship), enhancement of local gastronomy, and exchanges of artists between Segou, Nouakchott (Mauritania) and Pointe-Noire (Congo-Brazza).

A coordinator has been recruited to ensure coherence in the development of various key documents, such as the city's cultural policy and the SCDP.

The "Segou: A Creative City" project is managed by a coordinator and a management committee that meets once a quarter.





The project is composed of:

- A representative of the Segou town hall
- A representative of the Regional Directorate of Culture
- A representative of the cultural mission
- A representative of the Festival on the Niger Foundation
- A representative of the Centre Culturel Kôrè

A committee of experts in charge of steering the project has been set up. This committee is made up of the President of the Fondation Festival sur le Niger, the Mayor of the Urban Commune of Segou and a personality from the cultural civil society.

### Partners

- Town hall of Segou
- Segou's Regional Department for Culture
- Council for the Promotion of the Local Economy
- Kya Network of Malian Cultural Organisations
- Fondation Festival on the Niger
- Creative Cities Exchange Network (CCEC)

### Obstacles

- Lack of understanding of the potential of the cultural sector by elected officials and civil society.
- Lack of adequate documentation related to the project.
- Mobilisation of funds for the project.
- The limited capacities of cultural actors and local elected officials.
- Difficult security, sanitation and economic context in Mali.



**THE INVOLVEMENT AND COMMITMENT OF ALL CULTURAL ACTORS WITH THE TOWN HALL AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS IS A FACTOR OF STABILITY.**

## 4. Impact

### 4.1. Direct impact

#### **Impact on local government**

- Culture is being taken into account in the Programme for Economic, Social and Cultural Development (PDESC).
- Structuring and consistency of actions of cultural development.
- Provision of a Programme of Sustainable Cultural Development.
- Capacity building of local elected officials.
- Change in the mentality of local elected officials with relation to their perception of culture.

#### **Impact on culture and local cultural actors**

- Improvement in the quality of cultural expressions.
- Creation of synergies among cultural actors around the cultural programme and creative collaborations among artists.
- Capacity building of the city's artists and cultural actors.

#### **Impact on the city and its population**

- Improved self-esteem.
- Recognition and promotion of cultural identities in the city.
- Strengthened and promoted local economy with decent jobs.
- Better educated youth through art and culture.
- Strengthening of the city's image and branding.
- Development of cultural and economic infrastructures in the city.





## 4.2. Evaluation

The project has an expert committee composed of an elected official from Segou, an expert in cultural management from Mali and a representative of civil society who supervise and validate all the activities of the project with the coordination of an expert in territorial marketing, the project coordinator. To this end, throughout the implementation phase, it is planned to carry out continuous monitoring-evaluation activities and a mid-term review of the project through a moral and financial report.

## 4.3. Key factors

The key aspects of the success of this project can be summarised as follows:

- The existence of Segou'Art-Festival on the Niger and its various programmes.
- The characteristics of the city and its heritage, historical and cultural potential.
- The existence of political will among the elected officials of the municipality.
- The existence of cultural actors committed to capacity building and professionalisation.
- The existence of quality infrastructures.
- Collaboration among cultural actors, Civil Society Organisations (CSO) and local authorities in a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) framework.

## 4.4. Continuity

The implication and commitment of all cultural actors together with the town hall and the civil society in the implementation process is a factor of success for the project. This commitment and strong will on behalf of the local actors and the local government, along with their technical and financial partners, is a guarantee that the project will be able to continue with no major difficulties. The technical and financial support of the Festival sur le Niger Foundation with all their programmes and partners from African creative cities, which are maintained over time, is also a marker of continuity.



## 5. Further information

Segou was a candidate for the third “UCLG Mexico City – Culture 21 International Award” (November 2019 – May 2020). The jury for the award drew up its final report in July of 2020, and requested that the Committee on Culture promote this project as one of the good practices to be implemented through Agenda 21 for culture.

This article was written by the coordination team of the “Segou: A Creative City” programme, Segou, Mali.

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