

Preserving Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age

White Paper

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List of Acronyms

1. 3D – Three Dimension
2. AFCP – Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation
3. AI – Artificial Intelligence
4. ARIPO – African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation
5. CCFU - Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda
6. CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility
7. ICOMOS – International Council on Monuments and Sites
8. KAS – Konrad Adenauer Stiftung
9. IP – Intellectual Property
10. MGLSD – Ministry of Gender, Labour & Social Development
11. NACCAU – The National Arts and Cultural Crafts Association of Uganda
12. NASA – National Aeronautics and Space Administration
13. NLU – National Library of Uganda
14. UNCC – Uganda National Cultural Centre
15. UNESCO – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
16. URSB – Uganda Registration Services Bureau
17. US – United States
18. USAID – United States Agency for International Development.

Background

This White Paper has been borne out of the Day 3 of the 7th KTA Annual Symposium which was also inspired by a Journal Article by Kenneth Muhangi titled: "The Complementarity Between Intellectual Property and Technology as Tools for Preserving Cultural Heritage" and published by the WTO.

The concept underlying intellectual property (IP) is the protection and commercialization of one's ingenuity. This is premised on the theory that those who innovate and create should be rewarded. In turn, the public benefits from this ingenuity as it lays the building blocks for further innovation and creativity.

Recognizing crucial role IP plays in development, Uganda, a least developed country aiming to transform from peasant to a modern and prosperous country within 30 years adopted the National Intellectual Property Policy in 2019. This policy aims to build a robust IP ecosystem that fuels innovation and creativity, driving sustainable development.

The Policy focuses on creating an IP infrastructure that supports creativity, developing skilled professionals for the IP sector, and encouraging utilization of the IP system. Significant progress has been made in this regard as trademark registrations have steadily increased, from an average of 1,626 in 2019 to 2,186 in 2022.

Despite the progress, the level of innovation and creative outputs in Uganda remains relatively low compared to other developing nations such as Kenya. In the 2023 Global Innovation Index (GII), Kenya ranked 100th out of 132 economies featured in GI 2023, while Uganda stood at 121st, with Uganda performing below the regional average in Creative outputs.

This challenge is not unique to Uganda. Least developed countries (LDCs) contribute a small fraction of global IP applications. A United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) report suggests that LDCs need to tailor their IP strategies to their specific needs, development stages, and economic structures. The report emphasizes exploring alternative IP rights suited to LDC contexts, such as those related to traditional knowledge and agriculture. Additionally, considering the large informal sector in LDCs, more flexible and less formal IP protection mechanisms could be explored.

This year's symposium will explore how Uganda can strengthen its IP approach by "localizing" it to Uganda's needs and realities, particularly in the digital era. The event will delve into how Uganda's IP strategy can leverage key sectors like art, music, literature, culture, and the informal sector.

A key focus will be on how IP and technology can be harnessed to preserve Uganda's rich cultural heritage. In this vein, the Symposium will host a digital art exhibition which will a digitized version of the the cultural museum (Eriijukiro) found at the Igongo Cultural Center, Mbarara.

This will showcase a collection of art, crafts and photos that represent norms, customs, traditions and the history of the people of Southwestern Uganda.

In line with the theme, we will also examine how legal frameworks can be used to facilitate cultural preservation and the how to address the socio-economic complexities that may emanate this.

The three-day symposium is set to take place from the 23rd to the 25th of October and will include roundtable discussions and panel discussions on topics exploring how we can align IP with Uganda's creative and technological fields and adapting IP systems for these sectors.

While the concept of traditional IP might seem distant for many Ugandans, the symposium aims to bridge this gap. Through this Symposium, we seek to create a supportive environment where innovation and creativity can flourish in the digital space.

This would entail:

- Developing IP laws and regulations that are relevant to the Ugandan context, considering factors like traditional knowledge, local creative industries, and the digital landscape.
- Creating awareness and education programs to inform creators and innovators in Uganda about IP rights and how to utilize them effectively in the digital economy.
- Establishing efficient and accessible IP registration systems that cater to the needs of Ugandan creators and businesses.
- Addressing specific challenges faced by Ugandans in protecting and commercializing their intellectual property online.

Objectives:

- 1.To examine how intellectual property rights can be contextualized for Uganda's realities.
- 2.To explore how intellectual property and technology can be used as a tool to preserve cultural heritage.
- 3.To digitize the cultural artifacts housed at the cultural museum (Eriijukiro) found at the Igongo Cultural Center, Mbarara.
- 4.To lobby for a law to protect and preserve Uganda's cultural heritage. To expound on the challenges faced by creatives in protecting and commercializing their creations and understanding how policy and regulations can address these challenges.
- 5.To examine Uganda's policy approach towards using intellectual property to support innovation in Uganda and evaluate how effective it has been.
- 6.To sensitize creators and innovators on how they can protect and commercialize their intellectual property rights in the digital era.

1. Executive Summary

This white paper, *Preserving Cultural Heritage in the Digital Age*, examines Uganda's cultural heritage landscape amidst challenges posed by globalisation and digitalisation. It underscores the need for a holistic, multi-stakeholder approach to safeguard traditional knowledge, practices and artefacts while adapting to modern realities.

The paper explores policy solutions, including updating Uganda's outdated cultural policies to counter foreign influences and strengthen intellectual property (IP) rights. It highlights the potential of digital technologies to enhance preservation through tools like online archives and virtual museums, enabling accessibility and safeguarding authenticity.

The document emphasises the critical role of local communities, private sector partnerships and traditional kingdoms in ensuring sustainable preservation. By engaging these groups in IP frameworks and digitisation initiatives, Uganda can protect cultural expressions while fostering economic growth. Key examples include the Swakopmund Protocol, UNESCO collaborations and digital exhibitions like the Eriijukiro Cultural Museum project.

Recommendations include creating a unified cultural preservation policy, enhancing governmental and institutional coordination, leveraging international partnerships and integrating cultural heritage into educational curricula. With these measures, Uganda can address modern challenges while preserving its rich cultural diversity for future generations.

2. Introduction

The preservation of cultural heritage is a critical endeavour for Uganda, a nation distinguished by its diverse traditions and rich cultural expressions. The forces of globalisation and the rapid proliferation of digital technologies have introduced unprecedented challenges to the safeguarding of cultural heritage, exposing it to risks such as dilution, commodification and misappropriation. To counter these challenges, an integrative and comprehensive approach that encompasses governmental policy, community engagement and strategic partnerships is indispensable.

At the symposium, Retired Honourable Justice Patrick Tabaro underscored the critical role of preserving cultural heritage for Uganda, particularly considering its deep-rooted connection to African history and identity. He elaborated on the significance of cultural continuity, linking Ugandan heritage back to ancient Egyptian traditions and highlighted the need to safeguard traditional practices amid increasing globalisation and modernisation pressures.

Private sector actors are among the central stakeholders in cultural preservation, bringing with them substantial resources, innovative solutions and opportunities for economic empowerment. However, their involvement must be meticulously regulated to ensure that cultural assets are not exploited solely for commercial benefit but rather preserved in ways that uphold their intrinsic value and provide genuine benefits to local communities. This paper critically examines the role of private sector partners, explores opportunities for knowledge-sharing and emphasises the importance of strategic partnerships in preserving Uganda's cultural heritage while fostering sustainable development.

3. Policy Solutions in Cultural Preservation

Effective and up-to-date policies play a crucial role in safeguarding cultural heritage. In an era where the digital age and globalisation accelerate cultural homogenisation, distinct cultural expressions are at the risk of being diluted or lost without frameworks to protect and promote traditions.[1]

Artists, for example, are incentivised to broaden their market reach using the Internet. However, this increases the likelihood of diluting cultural expression to appeal to a global audience. [2] Uganda's animation industry is expanding, as demonstrated by Creatures Animation Studio's ["Kunda and Friends"](#) a children's animated series that debuted on YouTube in March 2023 and has already garnered over 50,000 subscribers.[3] This growth signifies the studio's—and, by extension, the nation's potential in the creative sector, underscoring the need for timely policies and regulations to ensure authentic cultural representation and prevent dilution before it's too late.

During the symposium, Anna Reisman of Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) outlined several policy solutions that could enhance cultural preservation in Uganda. She noted that the discussions, such as those facilitated by the Identity Talks, focused on building policy frameworks that respect local heritage while also adapting to the modern demands of globalisation.[4] Participants agreed on the necessity of implementing policies that account for both cultural preservation and sustainable development to address the complex challenges that globalisation presents.

3.1 Foreign Influence on Cultural Policy

Uganda's national culture policy, [last updated in 2004](#), underscores the country's limited preparedness to address the evolving global landscape.[5] The policy does not sufficiently account for the rapid rise of digital trends and the accompanying benefits and risks, leaving Uganda vulnerable to cultural erosion. Additionally, foreign policies, particularly those involving the Global North, can perpetuate power imbalances that hinder Uganda's ability to effectively preserve its cultural heritage.

The United States (US), for example, exerts significant influence globally through media and policies that promote modernisation and liberalisation, which can, at times, conflict with local cultural traditions, potentially leading to cultural erosion.[6] However, initiatives like the [Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation](#) have contributed

[1] Alsaleh, A. The impact of technological advancement on culture and society. Sci Rep14, 32140 (2024). [Read More](#) Accessed November 26, 2024.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Creatures Projects – Creature Animation Studio <[Read More](#)> Accessed November 26th 2024.

[4] KTA Annual Symposium <[Read More](#)> Accessed November 28th 2024

[5] Uganda National Cultural Center <[Read More](#)> Accessed 28th November, 2024.

[6] Ibid (n1)

positively to preserving Uganda's cultural heritage by offering financial resources and expertise.[7] That said, the success of these preservation projects depends on the application process, which is evaluated by the US authorities, leaving Uganda reliant on external decision-makers.[8] This further underscores the need for Uganda to implement flexible, self-sustaining measures to safeguard its cultural heritage.

3.2 Approaches to Cultural Policy Development

To preserve cultural authenticity in an increasingly globalised world, a multifaced approach to policy planning is necessary. This approach is crucial because globalisation presents complex challenges that cannot be addressed through single-dimensional policies. The intensification of cultural exchanges, economic pressures favouring homogenisation, rapid advancements in technology and evolving power and social dynamics all demand a complete strategy.[9] The [UNESCO Convention on Cultural Diversity](#) can serve as a blueprint for frameworks, cultural diplomacy and the promotion of cultural industries, trade and intellectual property protections.[10] This Convention is particularly valuable because it provides a panoramic framework that addresses aspects of cultural preservation, offering guidelines for international cooperation, supporting the development of cultural industries, balancing preservation and economic developments and recognising the importance of IP rights in cultural expressions.[11]

Cultural diplomacy plays a crucial role in safeguarding local cultures from misrepresentation.[12] International agreements can be updated to set standards for how foreign media and content creators depict local traditions, preventing the dilution of cultural narratives in global markets. Bilateral cultural agreements may look to set general principles for respectful depiction of each other's cultures in media and arts.[13] Furthermore, harmonising Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance across borders

[7] History for the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024.

[8] US Mission Uganda, "2023 Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation Call for Concepts" < [Read More](#) > Accessed November 26th 2024.

[9] Shallow Insan, "Cultural Homogenization: Causes, Effects, and Solutions" (July 6th 2023) < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November, 2024.

[10] UNESCO "2005 Convention on Diversity of Cultural Expressions." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2025

[11] Ibid.

[12] Riski Muhamad Baskoro, 'The Truth of Cultural Diplomacy' AEGIS | Vol. 4 No. 2, September 2020

[13] Valentina Vadi, Cultural Heritage in International Law, 2023 < DOI:10.1163/9789004347823_003 > Accessed 26th November, 2024.

can [mitigate digital discrimination](#) fuelled by biased predictive algorithms, ensuring Ugandan artists have equitable access to global markets.[14]

3.3 Significance of Preservation Frameworks

Policies that promote cultural tourism [ultimately promote cultural preservation](#) and can benefit Uganda economically while maintaining the integrity of its cultural identity.[15] Thus [inciting community development](#) while protecting heritage sites and traditional practices from the pressures of commercial exploitation.[16] E-tourism has immense potential to contribute to cultural preservation by allowing for greater accessibility and engagement with wider markets and consequently, economic support.[17] Platforms like the “[My Gorilla Family](#)” app evidence this by allowing tourists to remotely contribute to saving the endangered species in Bwindi/Mgahinga conservation areas through \$2 subscription fees.[18] To maximise these benefits, policies must be implemented to balance economic growth and sustainable cultural preservation, especially in combating economic exploitation.

Additionally, implementing trade and IP policies can compel international entities to respect local traditions, pre-empting cultural homogenisation.[19] By safeguarding cultural assets through these protections, Uganda can ensure that traditional knowledge and practices remain authentic and owned by the rightful communities. For example, bark cloth, a centuries-old Ugandan textile made from the Mutubatree, has been recognised by international entities like [UNESCO](#), Nike, USAID, and NASA as an ideal [sustainable material](#) for multiple applications.[20] Without proper trade and IP protections, foreign companies can exploit this cultural asset, undermining its traditional value and displacing local artisans from the economic benefits of their heritage.

[14] Asif Khan, The Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and International Trade Laws: Challenges and Opportunities, 32 IIUMLJ 103 (2024)

[15] Ahebwa et al, “Bridging community livelihoods and cultural conservation through tourism: Case study of Kabaka heritage trail in Uganda”, <doi: 10.1080/14724049.2015.1027211> Accessed 27th November 2024.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Development Policy and Performance “Portal Launch of ‘My Gorilla Family App’” < [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November, 2024.

[19] Mercedes Campi, Marco Dueñas, Intellectual property rights, trade agreements, and international trade, Research Policy, Volume 48, Issue 3, 2019, Pages 531-545, ISSN 0048-7333, <<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.respol.2018.09.011>> Accessed 27th November, 2024

[20] Robertson, Lesli, “Rethinking Material Culture: Ugandan Bark Cloth.” (2014). Textile Society of America Symposium Proceedings. 897 <[Read More](#)> Accessed 27th November 2024.

4. Protecting Traditional Knowledge through Tailored IP rights

4.1 Existing Frameworks

From URSB documents on traditional knowledge, there are extensive frameworks already in place to safeguard traditional knowledge.[21] The [UNESCO Heritage Convention](#) outlines guiding principles for defining natural or cultural sites which can then be protected as heritage.[22] Genetic resources are further protected by the [Convention on Biological Diversity](#) – more specifically, the Nagoya Protocol on access to genetic resources and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from their utilisation.[23] The 1995 Uganda Constitution and the [World Intellectual Property Organisation treaty](#) on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge both make mention of and emphasise the importance of protecting traditional knowledge and forms of cultural expression.[24] Of particular concern, none of the frameworks provides for a separate intellectual property right own to any aspects of cultural heritage of indigenous communities.[25]

Notably, the [Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore](#),[26] enforced by the [African Regional Intellectual Property Organisation](#) (ARIPO), focuses on recognising all forms of traditional knowledge and cultural expression without formality, but rather via documentation by competent national governmental bodies. Practices and artefacts can be registered as heritage by the appropriate bodies who can, therefore, respond to the misappropriation of said practices and artefacts, bypassing the conventional legal frameworks of individual claims by which objects, ideas and procedures are usually protected.[27] In this way, traditional knowledge can be preserved without being possessed. The protocol also allows the expansion of records to account for traditional knowledge that might be shared across national borders.[28] This is highly beneficial for Uganda and any other African nation whose borders were drawn with little regard for population distributions and inter-communal relations of indigenous communities. Uganda has

[21] Uganda Registration Services Bureau Services - Intellectual Property Registry < [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November, 2024.

[22] UNESCO, The World Heritage Convention < [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November 2024.

[23] Convention on Biological Diversity Sixth National Report - Uganda (English version) < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November, 2024.

[24] Wipo Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge, 2024 < [Read More](#) >

[25] Kenneth Muhangi, "The Complementarity Between Intellectual Property and Technology as Tools for Preserving Cultural Heritage" WIPO-WTO COLLOQUIUM PAPERS VOLUME 12 (2021)

[26] Swakopmund Protocol on the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Folklore, 2010 < [Read More](#) > Accessed 25th November 2024.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid (n25)

made the progressive step of signing on to the Swakopmund protocol and is currently in the process of ratifying the agreement.[29]

Thus, existing frameworks place a focus on the clear identification of pockets of traditional knowledge to maintain the general public's access to cultural artefacts and practices without endangering their integrity or enabling their misappropriation. Further tailoring of intellectual property (IP) rights could fortify the groundwork laid out by the above organisations, especially through even deeper partnerships with governmental and cultural institutions.

Retired Honourable Justice Patrick Tabaro also highlighted the historical depth of African heritage, which he argued transcends modern national borders and remains a central aspect of cultural identity. He discussed the challenges Uganda faces in preserving cultural identity within the framework of intellectual property (IP) laws, noting that these frameworks are largely influenced by European legal constructs. Justice Tabaro critiqued the Eurocentric nature of existing IP systems for marginalising indigenous knowledge and argued that Uganda should adopt an African-centred approach to intellectual property. He emphasised that a tailored IP framework could better recognise and protect Uganda's traditional knowledge systems, such as traditional medicine and artisanal crafts, which are often overlooked by conventional IP laws.

4.2 Further Opportunities

Museums are instrumental in the documentation of traditional knowledge and cultural expression. Due to [fair use laws](#), museums are well-placed to document a wide array of cultural artefacts and practices and then display them in a manner that thoroughly and accurately documents their origins and significance, allowing both local and foreign visitors to acquire traditional knowledge that is attributed to their rightful community.[30] In this way, museums not only [preserve traditional knowledge](#) but also perpetuate its passage to future generations.[31]

Uganda should consider setting up governmental bodies to whom individuals or communities can report traditional knowledge that they deem valuable; this knowledge can then be publicly documented in museums. In this way, communities that are the owners of traditional knowledge can play an active role in curating how it is presented and preserved.

[29] Chimp Reports, Uganda Signs WIPO Treaty on Genetic Resources & Associated Traditional Knowledge 2024 < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024.

[30] Dennemeyer Group, Everyday IP: How museums put IP on display, < [Read More](#) > Accessed on 27th November 2024.

[31] Monitor, Community museums preserving culture, history. < [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November 2024.

The empowerment of communities to promote their traditional knowledge may also serve the goal of protecting traditional knowledge and cultural expression. Traditional ceremonies, festivals and everyday customs should be encouraged and supported even more than they currently are by governments. Moves like more formal legal recognition of traditional weddings compared to religious or court weddings would legitimise the value of traditional practices, hence reducing their likelihood of dying out.[32] Such efforts would also make more public the origins and nature of traditional ceremonies, making it more difficult for external parties to misrepresent, misappropriate, or otherwise inaccurately recreate such ceremonies in a way that would tarnish their integrity and/or lead to their erasure.[33]

While there are existing policies targeted at protecting traditional knowledge and cultural expression, there is still [insufficient infrastructure](#) surrounding legislature that guarantees IP rights for communities over their artefacts and customs.[34]

IP laws tend only to protect claims made over novel ideas by individuals, small groups or businesses; these claims also expire after a set period and must be routinely renewed.[35] Traditional knowledge usually [does not have a traceable originator](#) or 'owner' under whose name a legal claim can be made.[36] Cultural expressions are usually old and longstanding rather than novel, and they will likely exist and belong to a specific community for an indefinite amount of time in the future.[37]

Similarly, copyright laws tend only to protect objects meeting a [very specific set of descriptive criteria](#), whereas the protection of traditional knowledge would need to encapsulate an array of similar artefacts/collections of artefacts of a given type.[38] In this way, IP and copyright laws are almost entirely unfit for ensuring the protection of traditional knowledge and ensuring communities have access to and control over their own heritage.

4.3 Policy Reform Considerations

Additionally, existing policies aiming to address this fact tend to fall short of offering actionable solutions. The ARIPO (through which the Swakopmund Protocol is enforced) still relies upon the ["holders of traditional knowledge"](#) to submit applications

[32] Alexander Paul Isiko¹ and Joy Mukisa Isabirye, "Fluidity and Hybridity of Customary Marriage Traditions in Contemporary Uganda." Volume 4 Issue 3 – March 2023 pp 357-378 < DOI: [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024. [33] Ibid.

[34] WIPO, Traditional Knowledge < [Read More](#) > Accessed on 27th November, 2024.

[35] Industrial Property Act Cap. 224, Copyright and Neighbouring Rights Act Cap. 222

[36] Prof. Michael Blakeney "Roundtable on Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge 9 What Is Traditional Knowledge? Why Should It Be Protected? Who Should Protect It? For Whom? Understanding The Value Chain" Centre for Commercial Law Studies, Geneva, November 1 and 2, 1999, Queen Mary and Westfield College, University of London.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Clarin Eric, Copyright Law Overview, < [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November, 2024.

for intellectual property rights, meaning there is still too heavy of an emphasis on individual ownership over national recognition.[39]

The Uganda National Culture Policy fails to clearly articulate the role of IP in the protection and promotion of cultural heritage. Similarly, the [National Environment Management Policy](#) for Uganda lacks a clear linkage between IP and access to genetic resources.[40] The [National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan](#) does not properly address IP and only makes a solitary reference to the lack of a coherent policy and regulatory framework that specifically addresses IP rights as one of many issues without offering solutions.[41]

There is also [a lack of manpower in IP law enforcement](#), meaning many of the policies outlined previously never go into effect due to a lack of dedicated staff assigned to ensure their implementation.[42] A more concerted effort, like the statement and maintenance of a national body responsible for documenting traditional knowledge, would greatly improve IP law enforcement.

There is also the issue of [a lack of cultural respect for IP](#), which dissuades individuals and communities from seeking IP rights and encourages some to encroach upon the IP rights of others with little consequence.[43] Adequate IP law enforcement [would help](#) foster more serious cultural attitudes towards IP. This would result in more constructive attitudes against purchasing or promoting content and merchandise that disrespects or misappropriates culture, which would ultimately preserve the integrity of traditional knowledge.[44]

Another beneficial move would be a more comprehensive incorporation of traditional knowledge systems into syllabuses as a form of permanent and public documentation of cultural artefacts and practices. Currently, cultural heritage is a [peripheral tenet](#) of tertiary education in Uganda, and this diminishes public exposure to traditional knowledge and relinquishes a key opportunity to emphasise the importance of IP and the protection of traditional knowledge.[45] More detailed incorporation of cultural heritage into all education levels would ultimately foster more [cultural awareness and patriotism](#) that would bolster communities' sense of

[39] Ibid (n25) [40] UNEP Law and Environment Assistance Platform, "National Environmental Management Policy" < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024.

[41] NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN II (2015-2025), < [Read More](#) > Accessed on 26th November 2024.

[42] National Intellectual Property Policy, 2019, Uganda < [Read More](#) > Accessed on 26th November 2024.

[43] Ibid. [44] Ibid. [45] Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda, "CULTURAL HERITAGE EDUCATION IN UGANDAN UNIVERSITIES: An overview with a focus on intangible cultural heritage" 2018< [Read More](#) > Accessed 27th November, 2024.

responsibility over protecting traditions, customs, heritage sites, indigenous lands and the accompanying wildlife/genetic resources.[46]

5. Digital Technologies and Cultural Heritage

Symposium discussions highlighted the role of digital technologies in preserving Uganda's cultural heritage. Participants agreed on the importance of digitisation as a means of enhancing the accessibility of cultural artefacts, allowing both local and international audiences to engage with Uganda's history. The idea of creating digital archives, similar to the ongoing digitisation of cultural heritage items by the National Library of Uganda, was suggested as a practical step towards safeguarding cultural legacy in the digital age.

5.1 Current Efforts

In Uganda, efforts to preserve cultural heritage through digital technologies are gradually taking shape. [A significant collaboration between the World Digital Library \(WDL\) and the National Library of Uganda \(NLU\).\[47\]](#) has resulted in [the digitisation of over 300 cultural heritage items, now accessible online.\[48\]](#) This initiative represents a step forward towards creating an extensive network of digital archives of Uganda's political, economic, social, and technological history. The establishment of a digitisation task force to identify areas of Uganda's heritage suitable for digitisation indicates a structured approach to this endeavour, signalling a growing recognition of the importance of digital preservation in safeguarding the nation's cultural legacy.

While not explicitly mentioned for Uganda, technologies such as [Augmented Reality \(AR\), Virtual Reality \(VR\), 3D scanning, interactive displays, and mobile applications hold immense potential for enhancing preservation efforts and public engagement with cultural heritage.\[49\]](#) However, it's important to acknowledge that the implementation of such advanced technologies [may be constrained by resource limitations and digital infrastructure challenges in the country.\[50\]](#) Currently, the focus appears to be on fundamental digitisation efforts to create digital records and

[46] Alice Merab Kagoda, "Integrating Appropriate Indigenous Knowledge in the Geography Lessons in Secondary Schools of Uganda," Current Research Journal of Social Sciences 1(3): 117-122, 200.

[47] New International Institutions Join World Digital Library | Library of Congress < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024.

[48] Sarah Kaddu and Isaac M. N. Kigongo-Bukenya, "Five Years After: Evaluation of the State of Development of Digital Preservation and Conservation of Cultural Heritage and Cultural Archives (DPCCHCA) In Uganda."2016 < [Read More](#) > Accessed 26th November 2024.

[49] Bozorgi, Khosrow and Lischer-Katiz, Zack. "Using 3D/VR for Research and Cultural Heritage Preservation: Project Update on the Virtual Ganjali Khan Project" Preservation, Digital Technology & Culture, vol. 49, no. 2, 2020, pp. 45-57. [Read More](#) Accessed 27th November 2024.

[50] JEPA Africa, "East Africa's Artificial Intelligence Strategy: Crafting National AI Strategies for the Region in the Face of the Global Tech Revolution." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November 2024.

archives of cultural heritage items, laying the groundwork for more sophisticated digital preservation strategies in the future.[51]

These initiatives not only aim to safeguard Uganda's rich cultural heritage but also to make it more accessible to both local and global audiences through digital platforms. The digitisation process itself contributes significantly to the preservation of cultural artefacts, creating lasting digital records for future generations. In fact, these digital archives serve as valuable resources for research and education while also acting as a form of cultural diplomacy by promoting an understanding of Ugandan culture globally. The adaptive nature of digital platforms allows for tailored narratives that can cater to diverse audience segments, potentially increasing cultural inclusion and engagement.

5.2 Digital Exhibitions

Digital art exhibitions offer [numerous benefits](#) for local communities in Uganda, fostering cultural preservation, education, and economic growth.[52] These exhibitions significantly increase accessibility to cultural artefacts and artworks, allowing a wider audience within Uganda to engage with their heritage, including those who may not be able to visit physical museums or galleries.[53] The interactive and engaging nature of digital experiences [enhances educational opportunities](#), deepening the understanding and appreciation of Uganda's art and cultural heritage among local communities.[54] Local artists benefit from increased exposure, potentially leading to greater recognition and opportunities like collaboration, while the exhibitions play a crucial role in cultural revitalisation, attracting younger, tech-savvy audiences and ensuring the continuity of cultural appreciation across generations.[55]

The potential economic impact of these digital initiatives is substantial. Increased cultural tourism and interest in Uganda's art and culture may [arise from enhanced digital presence](#) and accessibility.[56] Furthermore, involvement in digital art projects can help community members, especially youth, develop valuable digital skills, contributing to capacity building and workforce development in the technology

[51] Digital Transformation Roadmap < [Read More](#) > Accessed November 28th 2024.

[52] Kaddu, Sarah, "Collaboration in digitising Cultural Heritage as a strategy to sustain access and sharing of cultural heritage information in Uganda", 2015 < [Read More](#) > Accessed November 25th 2024.

[53] Ibid.

[54] UNICEF, "Effectiveness of Digital Learning Solutions to Improve Educational Outcomes: A Review of the Evidence." April 1, 2021.

[55] Al-Zadjali, Z. (2024) The Significance of Art in Revealing a Culture's Identity and Multiculturalism. Open Journal of Social Sciences, 12, 232-250. doi: [Read More](#)

[56] Richard Kamya, "UTB's Digital Marketing Strategy to Boost Uganda's Tourism Sector." Business Focus 2019

sector.[57] While implementing digital exhibitions requires careful consideration of factors such as digital literacy and technological infrastructure, their potential to enrich and empower local communities in Uganda is undeniable.

5.3 Digitisation of the Eriijukiro Cultural Museum

This year's [symposium](#) hosted a digital art exhibition of the cultural museum ([Eriijukiro](#)) found at the Igongo Cultural Center.[58] This project could serve as a compelling case study showing the potential of digital transformation in Uganda's cultural heritage sector. While it is yet to be implemented, it presents an opportunity to explore the benefits and challenges of comprehensive digital preservation efforts in a Ugandan context. This pathway would involve creating an extensive digital archive of the museum's collections, including high-resolution images, 3D scans of artefacts, and detailed metadata.[59] This digital repository would serve not only as a preservation tool but also as a platform for expanded access and engagement, potentially revolutionising how Ugandans and global audiences interact with the country's cultural heritage.[60]

The proposed digitisation of the Eriijukiro Cultural Museum may aim to enhance visitor experiences both on-site and remotely. Interactive digital displays within the museum could provide deeper context and information about exhibits, offering a more immersive and educational experience for physical visitors.[61] Simultaneously, a user-friendly website and mobile app would allow virtual visitors to explore the collections from anywhere in the world, significantly boosting the museum's reach. This increased accessibility could attract international researchers and tourists while also making Uganda's cultural heritage more accessible to its citizens, particularly those unable to visit the physical location due to geographical or economic constraints.

The digitisation process itself presents unique challenges and learning opportunities that reflect broader issues in Uganda's digital transformation journey. The museum would need to address issues such as selecting appropriate technology, training staff in new digital skills, and developing protocols for digital preservation. Additionally, the project would need to navigate cultural sensitivities, ensuring that digital representations of sacred or culturally significant objects are handled with appropriate respect and care. These considerations mirror the broader challenges

[57] ACOMI, N., et al. Creativity and Arts in Digital Social Innovation. v1, Zenodo, 2023, doi:10.5281/zenodo.8052835

[58] Monitor, "A taste of Ankole's Heritage." 2021 < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November 2024.

[59] G. Guidi, L. L. Micoli, S. Gonizzi, P. R. Navarro and M. Russo, "3D digitizing a whole museum: A metadata centered workflow," 2013 Digital Heritage International Congress (DigitalHeritage), Marseille, France, 2013, pp. 307-310, doi: 10.1109/DigitalHeritage.2013.6744768.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Hess, M. and Robson, S.: 3D IMAGING FOR MUSEUM ARTEFACTS: A PORTABLE TEST OBJECT FOR HERITAGE AND MUSEUM DOCUMENTATION OF SMALL OBJECTS, Int. Arch. Photogramm. Remote Sens. Spatial Inf. Sci., XXXIX-B5, 103–108, <https://doi.org/10.5194/isprsarchives-XXXIX-B5-103-2012>, 2012.

faced by cultural institutions across Uganda as they strive to balance technological innovation with cultural authenticity and respect.

Furthermore, the Eriijukiro Cultural Museum's digitisation project could catalyse community engagement and education, extending its impact beyond the museum walls. By involving local communities in the digitisation process, perhaps through oral history projects or collaborative curation of digital exhibits, the museum could strengthen its ties to the community and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in the digital archive. This participatory approach not only enriches the digital content but also fosters a sense of ownership and pride in cultural heritage among local communities. The project could also include educational initiatives, such as workshops on digital literacy and cultural heritage, further extending the museum's impact and contributing to capacity building in the local community.

As a pioneering effort in Uganda's cultural sector, this initiative would likely face funding and resource challenges, reflecting broader economic constraints in the country. Exploring innovative funding models, including public-private partnerships, international grants, or crowdfunding initiatives, could provide valuable insights for other cultural institutions seeking to undertake similar projects.[62] Additionally, the museum could explore ways to leverage its digital assets to create new revenue streams, such as through virtual tours or licensing of digital images, to ensure the long-term sustainability of both the digital and physical museum. This approach could serve as a model for financial sustainability in the digital age for other cultural institutions across Uganda.[63]

The potential digitisation of the cultural museum represents a microcosm of the opportunities and challenges facing Uganda's cultural heritage sector in the digital age. By embracing digital technologies while remaining mindful of cultural sensitivities and resource constraints, Uganda can forge a path towards preserving its rich cultural heritage for future generations while also making it more accessible and engaging for current audiences. As these digital initiatives continue to evolve, they have the potential to not only safeguard Uganda's cultural legacy but also to contribute significantly to the country's educational, economic, and social development in the digital era.

6 Engaging Global Stakeholders

According to Joseph Nye, a country's '[soft power](#)'— is its perceived authority and, thereby, acceptance by others—lies in its culture, political ideals, and policies.[64] That being so, cultural heritage is a necessary ingredient for global relationships and

[62] The World Bank, "Crowdfunding's Potential for the Developing World." 2013. infoDev, Finance and Private Sector Development Department. Washington, DC: World Bank.

[63] Dr. Mugwagwa, J et al. New Approaches for Funding Research and Innovation in Africa, The Scinnovent Centre, 2019. < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November 2024.

[64] Huq, S. Soft-power, culturalism and developing economies: the case of Global Ibsen. Palgrave Commun 5, 48 (2019). [Read More](#)

standing.[65] However, cultural preservation is a dynamic and continuous effort. Global stakeholders are gaining greater stakes in cultural identities thanks to the homogenising effect of globalisation, catalysed by digitisation. The International Council on Monuments and Sites ([ICOMOS](#)) encourages international collaboration to combat the threats of globalisation to cultural heritage.[66] In addition to the government, international organisations, academic institutions, and private sector partners play pivotal roles in ensuring cultural authenticity is maintained as Uganda progresses.

6.1 International Organisations

International organisations contribute to cultural preservation by catalysing unified efforts, leveraging their extensive networks and mobilising diverse funding sources.[67] For instance, [UNESCO's](#) project on the preservation of traditional thatching in the Buganda community of Uganda involved the King of Buganda, local craftspeople and researchers, an architect from CRAterre, and Japanese funding.[68] As a result, traditional sites and practices are being preserved, and local communities are empowered as contributors to the maintenance and extrapolation of their cultural knowledge.[69] Similarly, the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda ([CCFU](#)) collaborates with local and international organisations, including the European Union, the Ugandan government, and various NGO's allowing grander scale preservation efforts.[70]

Key successes by the CCFU include managing [cultural awards](#) that recognise Ugandan organisations and individuals for their roles in safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage.[71] While global organisations contribute towards sustainable cultural preservation, it's imperative to remember that a country's progress heavily relies on the knowledge of its citizens, particularly through [education](#) and shared cultural understanding.[72]

Anna Reisman introduced the Identity Talks format, a series of discussions facilitated under Chatham House rules, enabling participants to speak openly and candidly on

[65] Ibid

[66] International Council on Monuments and Sites, Goals of the ISCs < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November, 2024

[67] European Commission, "Main actors on cultural heritage: international organisations - Culture and Creativity." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November 2024

[68] UNESCO, "Introduction Guide to the Preservation of Traditional Thatching of the Buganda Community of Uganda" < [Read More](#) > Accessed 28th November 2024

[69] Ibid.

[70] CCFU, "Cross Cultural Foundation." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 29th November 2024

[71] The Independent, "Six awarded for preserving Uganda's cultural heritage" May 29, 2023 < [Read More](#) >

[72] Centre for Strategic & International Studies, "Investing in Quality Education for Economic Development, Peace, and Stability." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 29th November 2024

matters affecting cultural identity. This was the first occasion that Identity Talks were made a public session. The discussions aimed to emphasise cultural preservation as a foundation for democratic progress and encouraged participants to share insights and unique perspectives. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's ongoing efforts to foster these dialogues align with its broader mission to support civic education and strengthen democratic institutions in Uganda.

6.2 Academic Institutions

International and local academic institutions can enable the sustainable integration of digital advancements into Uganda's cultural preservation efforts. By enabling shared expertise in historical documentation and digitisation, international collaboration can improve preservation standards—especially valuable for heritage that spans regions affected by post-colonial borders.[73] The [Diplomatarium Sebicum Digitale](#) illustrates how partnerships among European universities, cultural bodies, and tech specialists have enhanced Serbia's cultural heritage accessibility, providing a model for Uganda to harness cross-border collaborations in protecting and digitising its cultural records.[74] Additionally, academia plays a significant role in evaluating the dynamic trajectory of cultural interpretations.[75] Even within a nation, multiple cultures exist, spanning across regions, generations and other such sub-groups. Digitised system centralising research on traditional arts, agriculture, medicine, etc, can be set up for periodic updates and collaboration across trusted institutions.[76] It can also be publicly accessible to educate and allow filtered/cross-checked contributions from locals. However, achieving this vision requires substantial funding, as government resources alone are insufficient to support sustainable, high-quality digitisation.

[73] Siliutina, Iryna & Tytar, Olena & Barbash, Marina & Petrenko, Nataliia & Yepyk, Larysa. (2024). "Cultural preservation and digital heritage: challenges and opportunities." *Revista Amazonia Investiga*. 14. 262-273. 10.34069/AI/2024.75.03.22.

[74] EuropeNow, "Thinking Heritage Digitally: Examples from Contemporary Serbia" < [Read More](#) >

[75] Ibid

[76] Potgieter, Andrea & Mabe, Kagiso. (2018). THE FUTURE OF ACCESSING OUR PAST: COLLABORATION AND DIGITISATION IN LIBRARIES, ARCHIVES AND MUSEUMS. 10.20472/BMC.2018.008.012.

7. Private sector partners

The private sector, comprising both established corporations and nascent enterprises, plays a [pivotal role](#) in the preservation of cultural heritage in Uganda.[77] Through economic empowerment, the private sector [can significantly contribute](#) to safeguarding cultural assets while fostering sustainable development.[78] However, these contributions must be carefully regulated to prevent [commercial exploitation](#) that could distort or commodify cultural heritage.[79]

At the symposium, the role of private sector partners in preserving cultural heritage was also addressed. Justice Tabaro stressed that private enterprises, while important stakeholders, must ensure that cultural assets are preserved in ways that benefit the local communities rather than merely for commercial purposes. This point was supported by examples such as private-sector-led digital initiatives, which have made traditional practices more accessible without compromising their cultural integrity.

7.1 Economic Empowerment and Cultural Preservation

The involvement of the private sector in cultural preservation offers a unique opportunity for economic empowerment of local communities, thereby fostering both cultural sustainability and economic growth. Established organisations can play a crucial role by investing in projects that preserve cultural heritage, such as funding the restoration of historical monuments, supporting traditional artisans, and digitising cultural artefacts. Startups, particularly those within the creative and technological industries, can also develop [innovative approaches](#) to preserving and promoting cultural heritage, including the creation of digital archives, virtual tours, or mobile applications that highlight traditional practices.[80]

Nevertheless, the involvement of the private sector must be subject to stringent regulatory oversight to prevent the commodification of cultural heritage. Without a robust regulatory framework, there is an [inherent risk](#) that cultural assets may be exploited for profit alone, thereby eroding their intrinsic value and cultural significance.[81] To mitigate these risks, policies should be developed to ensure that

[77] Cross Cultural Foundation Uganda, "Cultural Heritage Safeguarding and Promotion." < [Read More](#)

[78] Žuvela, Ana, Marta Šveb Dragija, and Daniela Angelina Jelinčić. 2023. "Partnerships in Heritage Governance and Management: Review Study of Public–Civil, Public–Private and Public–Private–Community Partnerships" *Heritage* 6, no. 10: 6862–6880. [Read More](#)

[79] Gould, P., Burtenshaw, P. (2014). *Heritage Sites: Economic Incentives, Impacts, and Commercialization*. In: Smith, C. (eds) *Encyclopedia of Global Archaeology*. Springer, New York, NY. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4419-0465-2_508

[80] Varotsis N. *Digital Entrepreneurship and Creative Industries in Tourism: A Research Agenda*. *Economies*. 2022; 10(7):167. [Read More](#)

[81] Lazarus Obed Livingstone Banda, Chigonjetso Victoria Banda, Jane Thokozani Banda, Tapiwa Singini, "Preserving cultural heritage: A community-centric approach to safeguarding the Khulubvi." *Traditional Temple Malawi, Heliyon*, Volume 10, Issue 18, 2024, [Read More](#)

private sector initiatives are aligned with broader cultural preservation objectives and that they respect the rights and interests of the communities that serve as the custodians of these cultural assets.

7.2 Opportunities

First, knowledge-sharing initiatives represent one of the most impactful avenues through which the private sector can contribute to cultural preservation. Collaboration between private entities, academic institutions, and cultural organisations facilitates the exchange of expertise, resources, and best practices for the safeguarding of cultural heritage. An exemplary case is that of [Professor Derek Peterson](#) from the University of Michigan, who has been instrumental in preserving Uganda's national history through the digitisation of photographic negatives. His work underscores the significance of academic-private sector partnerships in the preservation of cultural records.[82] Such collaborations bridge the gap between traditional knowledge holders and modern preservation techniques, thereby ensuring that cultural heritage is thoroughly documented and remains accessible for future generations.

Additionally, knowledge-sharing initiatives can take the form of training programs for local artisans and community members, equipping them with skills in digital technologies, marketing, and cultural tourism. By providing these communities with the tools needed to preserve and promote their cultural heritage, the private sector can contribute to their empowerment and ensure the long-term sustainability of their cultural practices.

Secondly, strategic partnerships between the private sector, governmental bodies, and international organisations are integral to effective cultural preservation. Collaborations with international entities such as the [World Monuments Fund \(WMF\)](#) and [UNESCO](#) can provide access to essential funding, technical expertise, and global networks required for large-scale preservation projects. For instance, the WMF has been [actively engaged](#) in addressing global challenges in cultural heritage preservation, offering crucial resources and expertise to safeguard vulnerable heritage sites.[83] Similarly, partnerships with local cultural organisations help ensure that preservation efforts remain community-driven and culturally sensitive.

A notable example of the importance of international collaboration is the [return of 39 artefacts](#) to Uganda from the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology in 2024.[84] This event underscores the value of partnerships between international museums and

[82] Derek R. Peterson, "The Unseen Archive of Idi Amin." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 29th November 2024

[83] World Monuments Fund, "WMF Announces More than \$10 Million in New Projects." < [Read More](#) > Accessed 29th November 2024

[84] Africanews, "Cambridge returns 39 artifacts to Uganda on loan." < [Read More](#) >

Ugandan institutions in the preservation of cultural heritage. Such collaborations not only facilitate the restitution of cultural artefacts to their rightful context but also foster a deeper appreciation and understanding of Uganda's cultural heritage on the global stage. Private sector companies also have a role to play in raising awareness about the importance of cultural preservation. By incorporating cultural themes into their corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives, companies can help promote cultural heritage to a wider audience, both domestically and internationally. Such efforts enhance the visibility of Uganda's rich cultural heritage and encourage greater public and private investment in preservation initiatives.

The private sector holds considerable potential as a powerful ally in the preservation of Uganda's cultural heritage. Through economic empowerment, knowledge-sharing initiatives, and strategic partnerships, private companies can make substantial contributions to safeguarding cultural assets while advancing sustainable development. However, private sector engagement must be appropriately regulated to prevent the exploitation of cultural heritage for purely commercial purposes.

8 Policy considerations for safeguarding cultural heritage in a digital context

8.1 Risks

It is especially important to protect cultural heritage in the digital age, where content is unbridled and universally available online. Images and videos of cultural artefacts and customs can easily stray far from their initial purpose and become appropriated for other uses. It is very difficult to trace the origins of ideas on the internet, so there runs the risk of traditional knowledge being misinterpreted, stripped of its initial significance, or claimed by individuals not belonging to the cultural group from which it originates. There is also the added risk of images and videos being manipulated, especially with the rise and wide accessibility of AI; this would amplify [the risk of misrepresentation of traditional knowledge](#).

However, the digital age also offers many benefits in terms of safeguarding traditional knowledge. It is easier now than ever before for cultural heritage organisations to document and store pieces of heritage that were previously difficult to record, e.g., videos of traditional dances. It is also now possible to assemble collections of traditional knowledge without removing artefacts from their place within the community from which they originate; for example, images or holograms of artefacts could be used in museums in place of real artefacts, especially those still in use by communities.

Justice Tabaro pointed out that Uganda continues to lag behind other countries in patent applications, citing that only one patent had been filed for a battery design in recent years. He contrasted this with the high rates of patent filings in countries such as Germany, Japan, and the United States. Justice Tabaro stressed that patents could serve as valuable resources for innovation, given that they require detailed disclosures that could inform future research and adaptation. By enhancing Uganda's capacity to protect intellectual property and encouraging more local patent applications, the country could leverage these frameworks to foster innovation and economic growth while safeguarding its cultural heritage.

8.2 Countering the Digital Age

One such solution would be an official, government-regulated traditional knowledge digital library containing thorough and regularly updated banks of traditional knowledge. Such a platform could be accessible on a website or via [mobile apps](#). [Virtual reality](#) is another useful tool with immense potential to bring cultural heritage from around the country to nationwide audiences. Without having to travel to the communities in question, citizens could witness and learn about the traditions, customs and lifestyles of any of Uganda's multitudinous ethnic groups, greatly increasing the scope and reach of digital, traditional knowledge libraries.

There would also be a need for the Ministry of ICT and National Guidance to take an active role in ensuring the proper integration of IP law into the ICT sector. Algorithms could be put into place to detect harmful and/or unauthorised alterations made to digital records of traditional knowledge. Laws around the distribution of content online could be amended to explicitly protect traditional knowledge, and legal consequences for violation of these policies should be consistently enforced.

The Ugandan [National IP Policy](#) outlines plans to fast-track utilisation of WIPO's Technology and Innovation Service Centers (TISC) program in higher education and research institutions, which would foster the ingenuity required to set up digital heritage inventories, as universities are concentrated zones of innovation and forward-thinking research. Collaboration with higher learning institutions would also help the Ugandan government develop the human capital needed to develop and maintain the IP value chain by employing researchers and students in their areas of expertise to carry out heritage preservation objectives.

9 Allow Dynamic Continuity

To address the evolving demands of cultural preservation in Uganda, it is imperative to develop a framework that enables adaptive change while safeguarding cultural heritage against dilution. Such a framework must not only protect traditional practices and knowledge but also accommodate future societal shifts, ensuring cultural continuity. Government intervention is pivotal, potentially through the establishment of a dedicated cultural preservation office or by expanding the mandates of existing institutions.

Dr. James Isagara provided a historical perspective on the formation of Uganda, highlighting that the country's regions shared a deep heritage long before colonial borders were established. He described Toro as a region that has, over the centuries, absorbed various ethnicities, thereby creating a diverse and inclusive identity that contributes significantly to Uganda's national identity. Dr Isagara argued that Uganda should foster a national identity that respects and values regional identities rather than suppressing them, thereby promoting cultural continuity and unity across the country.

Such an approach ensures that the nation's diversity is preserved while fostering a cohesive national identity.

9.1 Governmental Role and Institutional Support

The Ministry of Gender, Labour, and Social Development ([MGLSD](#)) stands at the forefront of Uganda's cultural preservation efforts. Through its departments, the MGLSD implements policies aimed at promoting cultural heritage and supports the [Uganda National Cultural Centre](#) (UNCC). Established under the [Uganda National Cultural Centre Act of 1959](#), the UNCC fosters artistic activities and serves as a platform for cultural societies.

However, the [fragmentation of mandates](#) across various ministries, including the Ministry of Education and Sports and the Ministry of Culture and Community Development, often leads to overlapping responsibilities and inefficiencies. To address this, Uganda could consider establishing a dedicated cultural preservation office or expanding the mandates of existing ministries to unify their objectives. Such restructuring would enhance coordination across local, national, and international initiatives, thereby strengthening the management and protection of Uganda's cultural heritage. For example, a more unified institutional framework could facilitate the effective implementation of the [Museums and Monuments Act 2023](#), which replaces the outdated [Historical Monuments Act of 1967](#). This updated legislation offers comprehensive protections for Uganda's tangible and intangible heritage and emphasises the importance of community involvement, providing a robust legal foundation for more coordinated preservation efforts.

9.2 Coordinating Cultural Initiatives

First, the establishment of a centralised body or enhanced roles for existing institutions would facilitate the alignment of cultural initiatives across different levels. Local engagement is particularly crucial, as Uganda's diverse communities possess unique traditions that contribute significantly to the nation's identity. A streamlined framework could ensure that local initiatives align with international standards, such as those promoted by UNESCO, thereby safeguarding Uganda's cultural expressions against the homogenising effects of globalisation that threaten to dilute local practices. Moreover, partnerships with international organisations like the [International Council on Monuments and Sites \(ICOMOS\)](#) could enhance Uganda's access to global expertise and resources for cultural preservation.

Secondly, a fundamental aspect of dynamic continuity is ensuring that local communities maintain control over their cultural assets. The MGLSD's focus on promoting community rights is central to this goal, as it seeks to recognise and integrate traditional knowledge into broader cultural policies. This approach is particularly pertinent given that cultural practices are inextricably linked to community identity. By empowering communities through policies that acknowledge and protect their heritage, Uganda can ensure that local traditions are preserved and continue to yield economic benefits for the communities themselves. The Museums and Monuments Act 2023, for instance, [enforces community involvement](#) in the preservation of monuments and cultural sites, thereby allowing local voices to play a central role in cultural heritage management.

10 Role of Kingdoms in intellectual property policy and development

Uganda's rich cultural tapestry, made up of 65 indigenous communities, presents both an opportunity and a challenge for IP policy development. The country's diverse cultural landscape, recognised in the Constitution and celebrated through various cultural institutions, forms the foundation of its national identity. However, the task of preserving and protecting this heritage while fostering innovation and economic growth requires a delicate balance, one that can significantly be enhanced by involving traditional kingdoms in the IP policy-making process. The kingdoms of Uganda, such as Buganda, Bunyoro-Kitara, Tooro, Busoga, and Ankole, are not just historical entities; they are living institutions that embody the cultural values and practices of their communities. Their engagement in IP policy can ensure that these values are respected and integrated into modern legal frameworks.

At the symposium, the role of cultural institutions such as kingdoms in shaping Uganda's intellectual property policy was a major point of discussion. Participants noted that these institutions hold valuable traditional knowledge that can be harnessed to inform national IP policies. The integration of cultural representatives from kingdoms like Toro and Buganda into policy-making bodies was recommended as a way to ensure that local customs and traditional knowledge are properly reflected in Uganda's legal frameworks.

10.1 Ongoing Initiatives

The [Uganda Community Museums Association \(UCOMA\) has been at the forefront of efforts to safeguard Uganda's intangible cultural heritage. Since May 2020, UCOM has been implementing a project supported by UNESCO](#) to strengthen the capacity of community museums to promote inscribed elements of intangible cultural heritage. This initiative has highlighted the crucial role that local institutions can play in preserving and promoting cultural heritage. [The project has focused on six UNESCO-inscribed intangible cultural heritage elements, including Bigwala trumpet music and dance, Male-Child cleansing ceremony, Madi bow-lyre music and dance, Empaako naming ceremony, Koogere tradition, and Bark cloth-making.](#) These elements are not mere relics; they represent living traditions that are vital to the identity and continuity of their respective communities. By involving traditional kingdoms in the safeguarding process, UCOMA can enhance its efforts to ensure these practices are not only preserved but also thrive in contemporary society.

The involvement of traditional kingdoms in IP policy development can address several critical challenges facing Uganda's cultural heritage. For instance, the Madi community museum, responsible for safeguarding the Madi bow-lyre music and dance, faces difficulties due to restrictions on obtaining materials traditionally used in instrument making. This situation illustrates the need for IP policies that balance conservation efforts with cultural preservation. By involving kingdom representatives in policy discussions, such nuanced issues can be addressed more effectively, ensuring that IP regulations do not inadvertently hinder cultural practices. The inclusion of local knowledge holders in this discussion is essential for creating policies that resonate with the communities they aim to protect.

[The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda \(CCFU\)](#) provides an exemplary model of civil society engagement in cultural policymaking. CCFU has built credibility through research, documentation, and community engagement, positioning itself as a trusted partner in policy deliberations. This approach demonstrates how traditional kingdoms could enhance their role in IP policy development by leveraging their deep cultural knowledge and community connections to inform and shape policies that are both culturally sensitive and economically beneficial. By collaborating with organisations like CCFU, kingdoms can amplify their voices in national discussions about IP rights and cultural preservation.

10.2 Opportunities for Growth

However, integrating traditional governance structures into modern IP frameworks is not without challenges. The varying levels of capacity and resources among different kingdoms pose significant hurdles that must be addressed. Some kingdoms may lack the infrastructure or expertise to engage effectively with national IP offices or to understand complex legal frameworks. Additionally, potential conflicts between kingdom-specific concerns and broader national IP objectives could complicate collaborative efforts. A significant advancement in this context is the [Museums and Monuments Act 2023](#), which repeals the outdated [Historical Monuments Act of 1967](#). The new Act provides a more comprehensive framework for managing both tangible and intangible cultural heritage in Uganda, recognising the importance of community involvement that was previously inadequately addressed. While this legislative update marks progress towards effective cultural preservation, challenges remain regarding its implementation and adequate support for community museums.

To overcome these challenges and fully leverage the potential of traditional kingdoms in IP policy development, several steps are necessary. First, there is a need for capacity building among kingdom representatives to enhance their understanding of modern IP concepts and their intersection with traditional knowledge systems. Training programs could focus on educating leaders about their rights under existing laws while also equipping them with tools to advocate for stronger protections for their cultural expressions. Second, formal mechanisms for regular consultation between kingdoms and national IP offices should be established to facilitate ongoing dialogue about cultural preservation needs. Third, adequate funding must be allocated for kingdom-level IP initiatives and participation in national policy processes to ensure that local voices are heard.

[The National Arts and Cultural Crafts Association of Uganda \(NACCAU\)](#) exemplifies how cultural institutions can contribute to economic development while preserving heritage. NACCAU empowers local artisans through training programs that enhance craftsmanship while promoting community pride. By providing resources and market access to artisans creating culturally significant works, NACCAU helps sustain traditional practices that might otherwise fade away.

Finally, existing IP laws should be amended to formally recognise the role of kingdoms in protecting traditional cultural expressions and knowledge. This recognition would empower kingdoms to take an active role in safeguarding their heritage while also contributing to national development goals related to culture and tourism.

11. Comparative Analysis of Cultural Preservation and Identity Initiatives

Aspect	Bhutan	Tanzania	Rwanda	Lessons for Uganda
Policy Integration	Cultural preservation is a pillar of the Gross National Happiness (GNH) framework , linking culture to national well-being.	Policies emphasise cultural tourism , focusing on iconic practices like Maasai traditions and Swahili coastal heritage.	Post-genocide unity is central to policy, with reconciliation efforts fostering a collective identity through national narratives.	Integrate cultural preservation into overarching policies, linking it to education, well-being, and economic goals.
	Mandatory cultural representation in public and government projects, such as traditional architecture in urban planning.	The Antiquities Act ensures the protection of historical sites but focuses more on tangible than intangible heritage.	Institutions like the National Commission for the Fight Against Genocide highlight cultural preservation alongside rebuilding.	Ensure policies balance local cultural autonomy with national development goals, focusing equally on tangible and intangible heritage.
	Continuous updates to cultural preservation policies to reflect changing societal needs, especially in response to globalisation.	Policies struggle with the prioritisation of economic gains over cultural integrity, especially in urban and tourist regions.	Regular policy reviews incorporate traditional practices into the evolving national identity framework.	Regularly review cultural policies to align with digital advancements and protect local practices against global homogenisation.
Traditional Practices	Dzongkha (national language) is taught at all education levels to ensure linguistic preservation.	Cultural festivals like Serengeti's " Maasai Week " promote traditional dances and attire but are primarily tourism-driven.	Preservation focuses heavily on commemoration practices, such as Genocide Memorials , which celebrate resilience and continuity.	Establish mandatory cultural education in schools, promoting local languages, traditional crafts, and ceremonies.
	Traditional music, dance, and crafts are sustained through dedicated government-funded programmes .	The Makonde woodcarving tradition has been revitalised, integrating traditional art into contemporary global markets.	Traditional performance arts (e.g., Intore dance) are maintained as tools for national pride and community healing.	Incentivise traditional artists and craftspeople to sustain and adapt practices to modern contexts while preserving authenticity.
	Festivals like the Paro Tshechu ensure continuity of religious and cultural practices, involving youth participation.	Despite economic benefits, practices risk losing authenticity when overly adapted for tourism .	Rituals like Umuganura (harvest day) combine pre-colonial traditions with modern development initiatives.	Promote traditional events and crafts with safeguards against commercial dilution to maintain authenticity.
Institutional Support	The Royal Academy of Performing Arts ensures preservation of traditional dances and music as part of school curriculums.	The Antiquities Division under the Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism manages heritage sites but lacks focus on intangible heritage.	The Institute of National Museums of Rwanda oversees tangible and intangible heritage but prioritises genocide-related preservation.	Strengthen institutions like the Uganda National Cultural Centre to expand their scope and focus on both tangible and intangible heritage preservation.
	Institutions receive consistent funding and political backing, enabling large-scale preservation projects .	Efforts are often decentralised , leading to inconsistent implementation across regions.	National Unity and Reconciliation Commission collaborates with cultural groups to embed traditional practices into healing efforts.	Secure consistent funding and clear mandates for institutions managing cultural heritage, ensuring broad and equal regional application.
	Collaborations with NGOs and international bodies (e.g., UNESCO) align Bhutan's preservation efforts with global standards.	Partnerships with local and global stakeholders, such as UNESCO and the World Bank, often target specific regions, leaving gaps in national initiatives.	International collaborations focus on cultural diplomacy, enhancing Rwanda's global reputation and fostering international support for cultural projects.	Partner with international organisations for funding and technical expertise while ensuring alignment with national preservation priorities.

12. The Legal and Policy Recommendations

Following the promulgation of the Museum and Monuments Act Cap. 149, there's need to curate and implement a Promotion and Preservation of Cultural Heritage Policy whose sole aim will be to;

- Unify Ugandans given their cultural and ethnic diversity.
- Eliminate discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or tribe.
- Harness and sell Uganda's soft power to the world.
- Preserve our rich cultural heritage.
- A separate law or clause that recognises aspects of cultural heritage as Intellectual Property Rights owned by indigenous communities where the heritage arises.

13. Conclusion

Uganda is a nation of rich, diverse cultural heritage. The protection of this heritage has always been an urgent matter, but new challenges have arisen in the digital age, necessitating innovative policies and collaborative strategies to overcome them.

Many of Uganda's policies surrounding cultural heritage have become outdated and are currently incapable of protecting traditional knowledge, as they do not address the risk of cultural misappropriation born from rapid digitisation. This risk burgeons as foreign influences pose a threat to cultural authenticity. Existing policies also lack the infrastructure to protect collective knowledge, as they are geared towards products made by individuals.

Uganda must develop comprehensive policies on cultural heritage that address digital preservation. Intellectual property rights and community engagement with traditional knowledge. Digital technologies can be leveraged as a tool rather than a threat to cultural heritage preservation. Online archives, virtual museums and educational resources can spread cultural awareness, preserving traditions for the knowledge and enjoyment of future generations and cementing their origins and significance as a way of preventing their dilution or misappropriation. It is essential that dedicated government offices be established or incorporated into the mandates of existing bodies and that cultural preservation efforts are streamlined and enforced effectively.

The involvement of local communities in cultural preservation efforts and an emphasis on ensuring local communities can access and benefit from economic opportunities arising as a result of their cultural practices is another key consideration for the Ugandan government to take forward. Additionally, international partnerships can offer valuable expertise and lead to strengthened cooperation via collaboration with organisations like UNESCO and ICOMOS to safeguard cultural heritage.

By taking active steps to identify and address obstacles to adequate cultural preservation, both in the past and moving forward into the digital age, Uganda can ensure that its vibrant cultural landscape will continue to thrive, fostering national pride, economic pride, and rightful esteem on the global stage.

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