



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

EVALUATION OF TWELVE PROJECTS SUPPORTED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE AMBASSADORS FUND FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION

JULY 2019

DISCLAIMER: THIS PUBLICATION WAS PRODUCED BY JEAN-CAMILLE KOLLMORGEN, GABRIELLE PLOTKIN, SOHAM BANERJI, AND DOMINICK MARGIOTTA OF SOCIAL IMPACT, INC. AT THE REQUEST OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE. THE AUTHORS' VIEWS EXPRESSED IN THIS PUBLICATION DO NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE OR THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT>

INTRODUCTION

Established in 2001, the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) provides an avenue for the United States to lead cultural heritage preservation efforts and demonstrate respect for other cultures by protecting cultural sites, objects, and traditions. By preserving cultural heritage overseas in a noncommercial, nonpolitical, and nonmilitary way, the fund also satisfies U.S. treaty and other bilateral obligations, creates opportunities for economic development, and contributes to post-disaster and post-conflict recovery. Each year the AFCP awards approximately \$6 million to an average of 40 of projects across the globe. Since its inception, the AFCP has supported more than 1,000 projects in 133 countries. The Cultural Heritage Center (CHC) in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA) within the U.S. Department of State (DOS) administers AFCP.

EVALUATION PURPOSE, QUESTIONS, AND METHODOLOGY

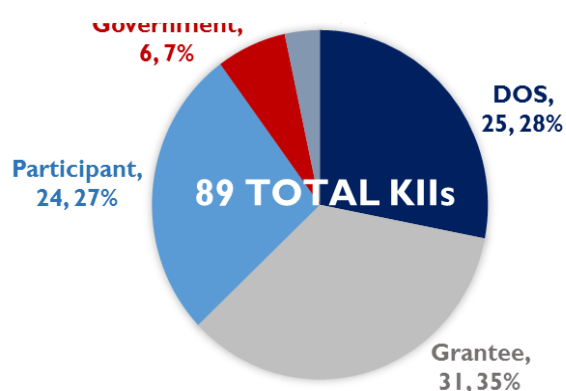
ECA's Evaluation Division contracted Social Impact, Inc. (SI) in October 2018 to conduct an evaluation of a sample of recent projects supported by the AFCP. The evaluation is intended to help ECA management make decisions about AFCP administration and address accountability objectives. The evaluation of the 12 sampled AFCP projects addressed the following Evaluation Questions (EQs):

1. What have been the strengths and challenges of AFCP administration?
2. What are the impacts—intended/unintended, positive/negative—of AFCP projects on foreign publics?
3. To what extent are AFCP projects supporting foreign policy priorities by meeting or exceeding the embassy's stated goals for the project as expressed in the application? Why or why not?
4. What has the impact (either positive or negative) of AFCP projects been on the embassy's relationship with foreign officials?

The Evaluation Team used a mixed-methods evaluation design consisting of a **document review**, **key informant interviews (KIIs)**, **direct observation (DO)**, and **rapid surveys**. The Evaluation Team conducted data collection in the United States and six countries, regarding the following 12 projects:

Country	Project Name	Abbreviated Name	Project Completion Year
Cambodia	Conservation of the 10th-Century Temple of Phnom Bakheng, Phase 5	Phnom Bakheng	2019
	Conservation of 20th-Century Ethnographic Objects at Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum	Tuol Sleng	2018
Egypt	Conservation of Ancient Wooden Coffins at the Egyptian Museum in Cairo	Coffins	2020
	Conservation of the Early 13th-Century al-Imam al-Shafi'i Mausoleum in Historic Cairo	al-Imam al-Shafi'i Mausoleum	2019
Moldova	Conservation of the 17th-Century Church of the Assumption in Causeni, Phases 2-3	Causeni Church	2018
	Preservation of the Endangered Gagauz Language and Cultural Traditions in Moldova	Gagauz Language	2017
Peru	Conservation of 4th-Century BC Astronomical Horizon Markers at Chankillo Archaeological Site	Chankillo	2018
	Preservation of the Ancient Pyramid of the Pre-Columbian Ichma Culture (900–1470 AD) at the Mangamarca Archaeological Site in Lima	Mangamarca	2019
South Africa	Conservation of Objects Recovered from the 18th-Century São José Slave Shipwreck in Cape Town	São José	2019
	Conservation of the 20th-Century Liliesleaf Archive Collection in Johannesburg	Liliesleaf Archive	2017
Sri Lanka	Conservation of the Collections of the Archaeological Site Museum of Anuradhapura	Anuradhapura	2018
	Preservation of Endangered Indigenous Music and Dance Traditions of Sri Lanka	Indigenous Traditions	2019

Distribution of Total Kils by Respondent Type (#, %)



DATA COLLECTION

Fieldwork occurred from February 5 to March 31, 2019. The Evaluation Team achieved a total of **89 Kils** with 134 key informants (67 females, 67 males), and conducted observation of each project site. SI completed a total of **553 rapid surveys**, including 435 with project visitors and neighborhood residents, and 118 with local businesses.

ANALYSIS

The Evaluation Team coded qualitative data and applied content and thematic analysis using Dedoose, and conducted a separate content analysis of AFCP media. The Evaluation Team analyzed the quantitative survey data in Excel and triangulated the findings with those from other data sources. Survey results were disaggregated by gender, age, and respondent type.

LIMITATIONS/BIASES

Because of the small sample sizes and varying country contexts, findings from this evaluation cannot be generalized from the 12 sampled projects in the six sampled countries to the entire AFCP. Furthermore, political dynamics and respondent availability limited the scope of rapid survey data collection in the six sampled countries themselves. As a result of these factors, SI did not implement surveys for either project in Egypt; the Sri Lanka Indigenous Traditions project; the local businesses survey for the Liliesleaf Archive project; or include politically sensitive questions to Cambodian nationals at the Tuol Sleng Museum. The quality and depth of media content analysis was also limited by the availability of media associated with AFCP projects. Finally, there is potential for selection bias for samples that were not randomly selected, translation bias for interviews conducted through interpreters, and desirability bias for all respondents.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

EQ 1 FINDINGS: WHAT HAVE BEEN THE STRENGTHS AND CHALLENGES OF AFCP ADMINISTRATION?

Strengths and Challenges Faced by ECA and/or U.S. Embassy/Consulate Staff

DOS respondents noted the AFCP administration process—from project identification, to technical review, and final submission—was well-established and worked well. U.S. Embassy/Consulate and DOS respondents in the United States noted as program strengths: strong communication between Washington, D.C., and U.S. Embassies/Consulates during the administration process, clear guidance laid out in the AFCP application process and AFCP cables, and the ability to reach out to subject matter experts (SMEs), specifically within the CHC in Washington, D.C.

Challenges cited included the timing of application deadlines and award announcements, low staffing levels at embassies for the time-consuming task of providing additional support to new applicants, technical issues, and lack of cultural heritage expertise among AFCP Grant Officers (GOs)/Grant Officer Representatives (GORs).

Strengths and Challenges Faced by AFCP Recipients

Grantee respondents stated the standardized application questions, the clarity of application rules, and the templates offered to AFCP applicants were helpful to them. Grantees also appreciated the individualized assistance they received from U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff (especially long-term staff who have many years of experience with AFCP) throughout the application process, and the U.S. Embassy/Consulate allowed them the freedom to implement AFCP projects without much interference.

Challenges for grantees included difficulty in understanding the Systems for Award Management (SAM) and Dun and Bradstreet Number (DUNS) registration requirements; language barriers; exchange rate fluctuations between the local currency and U.S. dollar; financial issues (e.g., reporting, disbursements, budget inflexibility); grant size; and length of



In Egypt, view of the al-Imam al-Shafi'i Mausoleum's dome, which had been cleaned as part of the restoration.

implementation period. For some of these issues, DOS respondents noted AFCP does not impose some of the perceived restrictions, and this may be a miscommunication between the Bureau of Administration, AFCP, GOs/GORs, and grantees.

EQ 1 Conclusion



The AFCP grant application and administrative processes were generally working well in the six sampled countries, with high levels of satisfaction by DOS and grantees alike and appreciation for communication channels and styles. Areas for improvement include adequate alignment of skills and time to support and complete the application, and mitigating obstacles with respect to financial management.

EQ 2 FINDINGS: WHAT ARE THE IMPACTS —INTENDED/UNINTENDED, POSITIVE/NEGATIVE— OF AFCP PROJECTS ON FOREIGN PUBLICS?

What Is the Public Response to AFCP Projects?

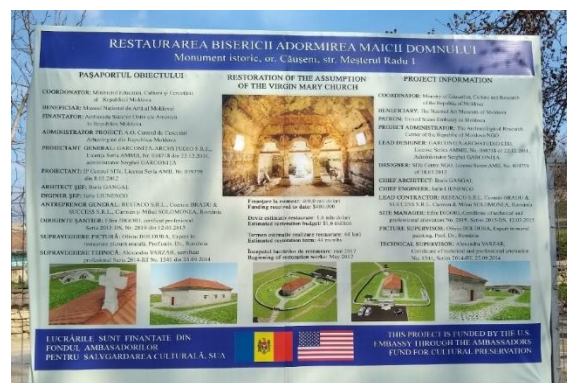
Respondents stated awareness of AFCP is not widespread and was likely limited to technical circles, government officials, media, visitors, or communities in close proximity to AFCP projects. Survey results from the 12 sampled projects aligned with KII findings: the majority of survey respondents were not aware of U.S. funding for the AFCP project prior to being surveyed. Some KII respondents admitted they could not speak confidently about wide-scale reactions to AFCP projects, yet respondents believed public response has been overwhelmingly favorable and provided examples of positive public commentary by people who do become aware of AFCP projects.

“I’m positively impressed that the U.S. government is willing to put funding to something like this. Otherwise this project would have never happened. There’s no other funding source knocking at the door.”
—Participant, South Africa

Reported positive public reactions to the 12 AFCP projects included surprise the United States invests in cultural heritage projects, astonishment over project quality and scope, interest in the subject matter and technical aspects of AFCP projects, and appreciation the project was being undertaken by the United States. Survey results showed some initial evidence that knowing the United States provided support for a project has a positive effect on changing public opinion of the United States.

What Is the Media Impact (Both Traditional and Social)?

KIIs and media analysis indicated that media type varied widely, and most media coverage occurred at the beginning and conclusion of projects. KIIs and DOs showed AFCP signage was applied inconsistently. Many KII respondents concurred that media coverage often mentioned U.S. funding for the project and other basic descriptions, but only in a few cases did respondents report messaging around the project emphasized a higher-level intention of the project. AFCP projects varied regarding the extent of the media, publicity efforts expended by both U.S. Embassies/Consulates and



Signage about the restoration of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Church in Causeni, Moldova.

grantees; and the extent to which they could draw external media attention. Reported external media coverage did have a favorable tone, even among news sources known for being critical of the United States. Survey results, KIs, and media analysis agreed public response to AFCP media is generally positive. KI respondents received favorable comments about projects via social media, email, or in-person.

What Is the Economic Impact of AFCP Projects?

For all 12 sampled projects, a percentage of respondents indicated they had experienced some positive

“It’s a kind of good assistance because AFCP provides for both improvement of human capital and practical work on conservation. Not just implementing projects, but also training people. I find that AFCP is very good, very supportive to conservation of cultural heritage.”

—Foreign Government Official, Cambodia

effect as a result of being located near the associated AFCP project, although the majority of survey respondents reported “no effect.” Current and potential economic impacts noted by some KI and survey respondents included local employment generation, promotion of the cultural heritage sector as a career choice, increased standard of living for project employees, skills development, increased tourism, and increased patronage of local economies. Although respondents noted economic shifts, there were few examples of grantees or U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff systematically measuring these impacts.

To What Extent Are AFCP Projects Developing Mutual Understanding and Deepening Trust Between Foreign Publics and the United States?

The type and amount of personal understanding developed through AFCP differed between respondents, with respondents with previous exposure to the United States reporting fewer changes. Respondents noted their personal experiences with AFCP built trust between individuals, between institutions, and trust in U.S. funding and work standards. Respondents of the 12 sampled projects gave examples of how AFCP increased their understanding of U.S. interest in cultural preservation, U.S. systems/professionalism, and American culture.

Respondents had difficulty determining AFCP impact on trust/understanding for the wider public, and did not expect changes to occur because of a lack of public awareness of AFCP. KIs and the rapid survey indicated the general public does not know about AFCP projects, and changes in trust/understanding could not yet be realized for projects not designed to be or not yet open to the public. For people aware of AFCP projects, KI respondents noted an increased understanding of U.S. interest in cultural preservation. Respondents thought AFCP influenced public trust/understanding because projects promote a positive image of the United States and U.S. values but often did not provide concrete evidence to support their beliefs.

“Before, I was never a supporter of the U.S. government. Now since they have invested in my community it has increased my level of trust. . . . Now I can say [the U.S.] is an amazing country, and they invest in our culture and community [. . .] now we have to protect what they invested.”

—Participant, Peru

EQ 2 Conclusions



According to available data sources, the sampled AFCP projects and media generated about them appeared to be impacting foreign publics in positive ways. However, it is difficult to ascertain more generalized trends regarding AFCP impact on foreign publics because impacts have not been actively or consistently measured.



Public awareness of the 12 sampled AFCP projects and U.S. funding for them did not appear to be widespread, which may limit the extent of the program's impacts on foreign publics.



For members of the public aware of AFCP projects in the six sampled countries, the reported response was generally positive, with few documented cases of negative criticisms.



Media impacts on foreign publics have generally been positive for sampled projects, though projects and countries varied in the amount and type of media U.S. Embassy/Consulate and grantees generated about AFCP projects, as well as the amount of media attention from external media sources.



Sampled AFCP projects appeared to be generating mostly positive economic impacts, though countries and projects varied in the extent and nature of their economic impact.



Sampled AFCP projects appeared to positively impact trust and understanding toward the United States for individuals directly involved in the projects. Though it is harder to determine the impact on the wider public, available data indicated that AFCP projects could positively influence public trust and understanding toward the United States.

EQ 3 FINDINGS: TO WHAT EXTENT ARE AFCP PROJECTS SUPPORTING FOREIGN POLICY PRIORITIES BY MEETING OR EXCEEDING THE EMBASSY'S STATED GOALS FOR THE PROJECT AS EXPRESSED IN THE APPLICATION? WHY OR WHY NOT?

In KIIs, DOS respondents articulated the foreign policy goals to which AFCP grants were supposed to contribute, but the goals sometimes differed from those noted in the applications. Respondents were able to explain how projects logically contributed to foreign policy goals, but few were able to provide measures of how AFCP projects have helped achieve the goals. The anecdotal examples respondents were able to provide related to employment creation, increasing tourism revenue, or demonstrating partnership with host countries. No respondents mentioned systematic monitoring of foreign diplomacy goal achievements. Respondents offered some



Conservation of the 10th-Century Temple of Phnom Bakheng at Angkor Park, Cambodia.

explanations for lack of measurable change, including projects not being sufficiently visible or it being too early to see the effects.

Respondents provided anecdotal evidence of how AFCP projects contribute to host countries' priorities, such as promoting economic growth and satisfying national mandates for cultural preservation. There was also evidence AFCP contributes to improving host countries' management of cultural heritage, including local ownership of AFCP site management and leveraging AFCP to obtain additional preservation funding.

EQ 3 Conclusions



Sampled AFCP projects were aligned with a variety of foreign policy and national policy goals, though these goals were sometimes different from those originally cited in the grant applications.



Sampled AFCP projects are plausibly contributing to various foreign policy goals, but the actual extent to which grants are meeting or exceeding these is largely indeterminable because of a lack of tracking or the long-term nature of such goals.

EQ 4 FINDINGS: WHAT HAS THE IMPACT (EITHER POSITIVE OR NEGATIVE) OF AFCP PROJECTS BEEN ON THE EMBASSY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH FOREIGN OFFICIALS?

All respondents from the 12 sampled AFCP projects reported that the projects helped establish or maintain positive working relationships between U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff and foreign government

“[AFCP] opens doors. To give a concrete example, we had a Laos program restoring a Buddhist temple in the town of Luang Prabang. The temple is a picture every Lao government official has hanging in their office. The former ambassador told me before this restoration that it was hard to get ahold of anyone in the Lao government.”

—DOS, United States

officials at different levels of the host country government, from communities to national governments. These positive working relationships, in turn, led to foreign government officials having a more positive perception of the United States in some instances—according to these respondents. However, as with foreign policy goal achievement, most examples of these changes were anecdotal and not systematically tracked. DOS and government respondents in all six sampled countries revealed that positive working relationships established or maintained by AFCP projects are primarily concentrated within

ministries of culture or other related institutions. Respondents also described AFCP as a tool to establish working relationships with foreign government officials and/or maintain existing relationships in the face of political turmoil.

EQ 4 Conclusions



In general, AFCP programming in sampled countries has had positive impacts on the relationships between U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff and their national government counterparts, though these impacts varied by country, project, and political climate. Furthermore, the extent of the impact is not known definitively because of a lack of consistent monitoring data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

AFCP PROGRAM STAFF SHOULD

- Continue to maintain ongoing dialogues between stakeholders in Washington, D.C. (AFCP program staff and Regional Bureaus) and U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff.
- Update AFCP competition guidance and other resources that can assist U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff and grantees with common issues encountered throughout the AFCP project administration.
- Leverage institutional know-how of long-term U.S. Embassy/Consulate staff who have worked with AFCP projects to engage government counterparts as well as prospective applicants.
- Clarify roles and responsibilities around implementation of media and outreach plans, as well as encourage/enforce contextually appropriate media and outreach plans.
- Consider investing in public perception data to better understand potential impacts of programming.
- Develop guidance to U.S. Embassies/Consulates for messaging on promoting trust/understanding.
- Collect success stories about grants and make them publicly available.

U.S. EMBASSIES/CONSULATES SHOULD

- Engage with current and potential partners earlier in the competition process to discuss proposal development, and meet with grantees more frequently once projects are awarded to discuss expectations and United States Government (USG) requirements.
- Remind applicants grants can last up to five years.
- Codify roles and responsibilities around media plans, post updates about projects on websites/social media pages, and ensure consistent messages on why U.S. funding is being provided through AFCP.
- Leverage AFCP projects to engage or collaborate with other ECA public diplomacy efforts.
- Consider working with grantees to systematically track economic benefits of grants.
- Complement AFCP programming with other funds when possible.
- Work with grantees to develop several success stories for each AFCP grant.
- Where feasible, increase dedicated staff time to supporting AFCP application and administration.

RECOMMENDATIONS INTO ACTION: PHASE II STUDY

Given the evaluation's limitations and inability to fully answer all evaluation questions, ECA's Evaluation Division has contracted SI to conduct a phase II study to gather information from a broader swath of projects and help ECA put in place a strengthened monitoring system for the AFCP program. Phase II will consist of two parts. In the first part, SI will conduct a 'Pilot Survey.' This one-time survey will collect retrospective data from a larger number of Posts than was feasible during the evaluation's fieldwork period. In the second part, SI will develop an Ongoing Project Monitoring Survey. This survey will be used to routinely collect information to feed into key program indicators and capture project successes in an organized format on an annual basis. SI will use the findings of this evaluation of 12 sample projects to guide the development of Phase II and the selection of survey questions. The Pilot Survey will be completed by the second quarter of 2020; followed by the Ongoing Project Monitoring Survey in the third quarter.