

Emily Drania Drani is passionate about cultural heritage, not only as a source of identity and rich diversity, but also as a source of dignity, confidence and creative energy.

Cultural heritage provides us all with the freedom to express and connect with our origins. We do not have to explain or excuse our cultural differences, but rather embrace our heritage and connect with communities across the universe on equal cultural footing. I am co-founder of the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU), an organisation dedicated to promoting a 'culture in development' approach. During my term of service as the Executive Director of CCFU (2006-2019), I had the privilege to acquire years of professional experience in cultural heritage conservation and development informed by human and cultural rights. I also contributed to the design and implementation of various interventions undertaken by the Foundation that involved heritage education, capacity building, research and documentation, advocacy and promotion of culture at national, regional and international levels. Through the Foundation I learnt to respect cultural diversity and to realize that strengthening means of transmission of cultural values, principles, knowledge and skills is at the core of sustaining our heritage – without which our cherished cultures will die. It is for this reason that heritage education is one of my favourite interventions.

I hold a Master of Philosophy Degree in Development Studies with a focus on Endogenous Development and a Bachelor of Arts in Public Administration. I have also been trained as an ICH facilitator, and I am a member of the UNESCO Global Network ICH experts. I am an ardent promoter of intangible cultural heritage because I believe it provides meaning and value to all aspects of our lives. I have facilitated trainings on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as prescribed by the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and inventorying ICH for Somalia, The Gambia and Ethiopia. I carried out an ICH needs assessment exercise for Kenya and reviewed an ICH nomination dossier for the Seychelles and co-facilitated an UNESCO online Training of Trainers Course on "Living Heritage and Education". All these experiences have reinforced my belief in the importance of restoring and conserving our diverse cultures.

Over the past ten years, I have served on the UNESCO Evaluation Body of the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) as a Vice Chairperson and as a member, as well as a member of four national Boards of Directors. These experiences have strengthened my ability to oversee and advise civil society organisations on their organisational development.

I am inspired by and committed to the goals of the Kuonesha Art Fund because they give life to the creative energy of Uganda's artists and heritage promoters who in turn give us reasons to care about our heritage today.