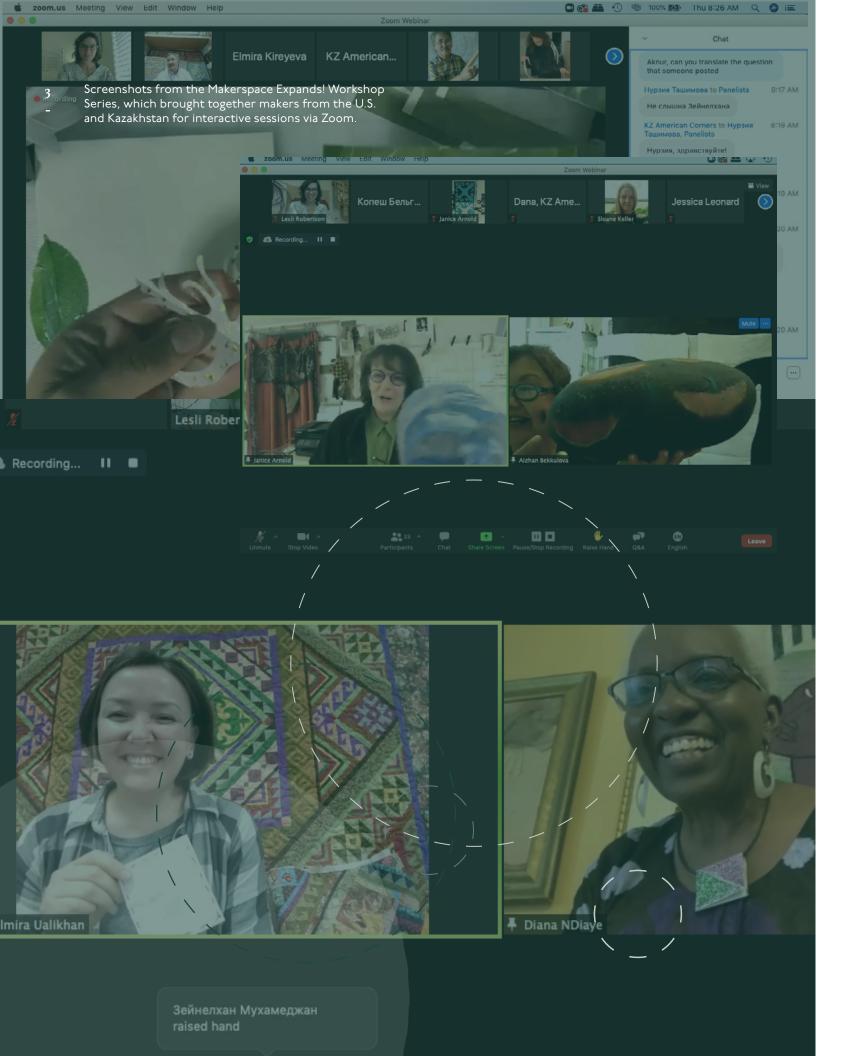




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#### Introduction

It is impossible to overstate the impact the COVID-19 pandemic has had on our lives and our work. In a typical year, the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage reaches nearly one million people through the Smithsonian Folklife Festival and year-round programming. The impact of this programming is deep—providing in-person opportunities for education and meaningful cultural exchange. The physical distancing measures and travel restrictions required to defeat the pandemic immediately curtailed this important means of education, connection, and impact. Around the world, these measures threatened, if not fully diminished, collective cultural practice. At the same time, sheltering in place with loved ones ushered in a return of storytelling and opportunities to create family history in the home. For many, it has been a chance to share, to reconnect with and revitalize traditions of language, cooking and making.

It is in this context that we re-envisioned our approach to cultural vitality work, with reflective and collaborative projects to increase access to knowledge and tools. We swapped in-person exchanges and workshops with virtual versions, adapting and learning alongside our partners. Our Sino-Tibetan Linguistics Research Methodology Workshop went virtual, and we sup-

ported our partners at Nankai University and the Institute on Collaborative Language Research (CoLang) to build websites with access to educational materials. We supported the Mother Tongue Film Festival's pivot to digital, reaching a dramatically larger audience than in years past. We brought our cultural industries work online as well, with new virtual exchanges in Kazakhstan, digitization of training materials in Armenia, and digital convenings of the African American Craft Initiative. We also looked to the future, establishing new partnerships, and writing and winning proposals for cultural vitality projects in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, China, Kazakhstan, and Tunisia. As we look forward to a new normal that will allow us to once again work face-to-face with our community partners around the world, we will do so with a new suite of digital tools and skills to bolster our efforts.

In the pages that follow, we highlight the results of our language vitality, Indigenous media, and cultural industries work through five areas that impact the vitality of cultural practices: increasing awareness and mutual understanding, changing attitudes and motivations, increasing capacity of local partners, increasing market access, and improving overall conditions for cultural practices.

Film still from *The Fishers of Dar* (2001), directed by Lina Fruzzetti and Ákos Östör, screened at the 2021 Mother Tongue Film Festival

"The experience was very impactful for our team because we don't have many opportunities to speak with people from other language communities or with outside experts who are knowledgeable and passionate about language revitalization.

After participating in a panel, team members felt honored and respected. Thank you for making this festival not only happen, but happen with a deep quality, empathy, and understanding of issues and people."

– Mother Tongue Film Festival participant



## Increased awareness & mutual understanding

#### Definition

The audiences for our program activities increase their knowledge, participate in dialogue, and develop shared understanding and empathy for diverse perspectives.

#### How we do this

Creating public-facing events and campaigns.

Utilizing online platforms and engaging with the media.

Promoting broader knowledge sharing across diverse stakeholders.

#### In numbers

The programs have reached a total of 42,164 people.



#### Mother Tongue Film Festival

Like so many other festivals and events, the sixth annual Mother Tongue Film Festival went digital in 2021—extending programming from a four-day, in-person event to one hundred days of virtual screenings and discussions.

Centered around the theme "The Healing Power of Storytelling," the Festival opened on International Mother Language Day, February 21, and ran through the end of May. We presented forty-five films—a mix of feature length, short films, documentaries, and fiction films, covering thirty-nine languages and twenty-six regions of the world. In addition to screenings, we hosted fourteen online events, including an opening ceremony with remarks from Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie Bunch, Q&A sessions, and panel discussions with the filmmakers and cultural activists, the majority of whom are Indigenous.

This year, the Festival experienced a significant increase in interest from both filmmakers submitting their works, inquiries about corporate sponsorship, and private and foundation donations. The Festival was also highlighted on several prominent media platforms, including the New York Times and Cultural Survival. The increased attention is a result of the dedicated communications assistance that supported the Festival this year and its emerging recognition in the field. We also took the time to reflect, preparing a five-year report looking back at the Festival's evolution and impact since its inception.

**July 29** American Craft Forum: Making as Medicine

August 7 American Craft Forum: Design Solutions

August 18 <u>Yerevan Magazine Announcement</u>

August 21

American Craft Forum: (Re)centering Craft in our Social Lives

September 23 African American Craft Initiative Press Release

October 23 Creativity in the "In Between": New Models of Craft Education

November 6 African American Craft Initiative Summit Reflection

**November 13** *Fairytale Spinning Like a Wheel* 

**December 9**Once Upon a Time a Lullaby: Music and Parenting during COVID-19

December 28 Inside Out: A Contemporary Artist's Reflection on the Pandemic and Beyond

**February 18** *What is a Mother Tongue Film?* 

February 19 / Animating the Mother Tongue: An Indigenous Language Playlist

March 30 How Storytelling Heals

**April 6** Center Signs Five-Year Agreement with Union of Artisans of Kazakhstan

April 24 Armenian Genocide & A Culture of Survival

May 7 In Their Own Words: The Himalayan Languages of Sichuan Workshop

May 12 <u>Center Partners with The New Medina to Elevate Tunisian Creativity and Culture</u>

May 14 La Prochaine Génération: The Next Generation of Louisiana French Speakers

May 19 In My Grandmother's House: Lessons in Visual Anthropology and Storytelling

June 2 Language Revitalization in Reflection: Six Years of the Mother Tongue Film Festival

## Cultural Vitality in *Folklife Magazine*

While implementing the cultural vitality initiatives, the team is also writing articles about the programs for the Center's online Folklife Magazine to share the work to an even larger audience. Within the past year, twenty articles were published, reaching thousands of readers.



The opportunity to write for the Folklife Magazine's Chronicling Culture in Crisis series fostered the creation of new collaborations between different artists from diverse countries (France and Armenia) and showed that artists didn't stop creating during the pandemic and lock down and their voices became nurturing in scope and bold in scale.

— Nairi Khatchadourian Senior Museum Specialist, My Armenia Program

## Changed attitudes and motivations as foundation for action

#### Definition

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As a result of our projects, community members and other stakeholders feel valued, respected, seen, and included in cultural vitality work. Accordingly, they are motivated, enthusiastic, and inspired to sustain their cultural practices.

#### How we do this

Acknowledging the relevance and importance of the cultural practice.

Utilizing an inclusive, collaborative process to develop and design our projects.

Creating and/or using replicable platforms, tools, and media that effectively serve our audiences and benefit our partners.

#### In numbers

286 cultural heritage professionals trained.

#### Sakha Youth Video Workshop

Language vitality depends greatly on the community members' attitude toward their own language. We design programs with community partners to foster motivation and positive attitudes among language users and learners. In the Sakha community in Russia, there is a pronounced language shift among children and teenagers aged eight to thirteen. This summer, we're partnering with the community to offer a social media and video-editing workshop, which aims to increase language use while instilling a sense of ownership and belonging in Sakha youth.

#### Tus Maith "at-home" Irish Language Training Series

This series is developed by Sustaining Minoritized Languages in Europe (SMiLE) researchers at Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhn, a community organization located on the Dingle peninsula. It supports caregivers in using Irish with their children through the production and dissemination of nine high-quality online videos, each of which is designed to encourage and model language use for different types of family-life scenarios.

#### Makerspace Expands! Workshop Series

Developed in collaboration with the U.S. Department of State, American Councils for International Education, and the Union of Artisans of Kazakhstan, this four-part series of STEAM-focused cultural heritage workshops brought together makers from the U.S. and Kazakhstan for interactive sessions pairing storytelling with opportunities to make and learn. The workshops targeted youth and tested practices to build interest in traditional culture through fun, collaborative virtual experiences.

#### Sino-Tibetan Language and Linguistic Research Methodology Workshop

As with other events, we partnered with Nan-kai University to offer the workshop virtually in August 2020. The two-week workshop trained fifty-two students from Tibetic and other minority nationalities languages in linguistics and language description, language and cultural documentation, and approaches to multilingualism. The workshop was bilingual in Mandarin and English and participants discussed the basics in linguistic elicitation methods and cultural documentation.

To motivate and attract youth, the workshop demonstrated how students can film cultural activities and use these films to elicit linguistic information. Dr. Mary Linn presented a lecture on how attitudes impact whether you use a language, highlighting what different groups across her research are doing to maintain languages and how these actions can and will make an impact. She also co-taught a workshop on video documentation.



"I started to pay more attention to the current situation of my own language and gained a deeper understanding of my first language."

"The workshop helped me improve in all aspects such as language survey, linguistic analysis, and thesis writing."

— Participant comments from the Sino-Tibetan Language and Linguistic Research Methodology Workshop impact survey

# Increased capacity of local partners to support cultural vitality

#### Definition

We support local partners to strengthen their networks, improve access to resources, and increase their ability to use skills and knowledge to sustain cultural practices.

#### How we do this

Understanding the specific needs, challenges, and opportunities in each community.

Engaging cultural practitioners and professional educators in our activities.

Convening stakeholders to forge new networks and relationships.

#### In numbers

There were twenty-eight capacity-building activities including twelve trainings, six events, and the development of ten educational resources.

#### African American Craft Summit

Grappling with the dual-pandemics of racism and COVID-19, we began a series of dialogues with African American makers in 2020 to assess their needs and establish a foundation for networking and exchange between community members and crafts organizations. From October 6 to 8, we hosted the African American Craft Summit, bringing together sixty-eight makers from across the United States to collaboratively develop a list of recommendations for how the broader cultural sector can best support African American makers. A summary of the Summit with the list of recommendations and feedback was published in the Summit Report.

#### African American Craft Organizations Think Tank

Following the African American Craft Summit, we hosted the African American Craft Organizations Think Tank from May 25 to 27, 2021, bringing together thirty-three African American organizations working in the craft sector. Just as the aim of the Summit was to connect and ensure the Initiative was hearing directly from African American makers and understanding their specific needs, perspectives, and concerns, the Think Tank provided an oppor-

"I am very happy to be able to participate in the workshop. I was able to preserve audio and video recordings of my hometown's language and let myself know that the protection of my ethnic culture is very important."

— Participant at the Online Workshop for Speakers of Eastern Himalayan | Languages of Sichuan

tunity to center the voices of African American organizations that are oftentimes overshadowed in broader craft discussions. A report on these conversations is forthcoming.

Online Workshop for Speakers of Eastern Himalayan Languages of Sichuan Situated in Southwestern China, Sichuan Province is home to as many as thirty-one diverse languages. Many of these languages have become endangered or threatened by the ongoing process of urbanization as speaker communities shift towards using dominant languages such as Standard Tibetan or Standard Chinese. To address these issues, in June 2020 we supported an online workshop for community linguists in Sichuan to develop language-documentation projects. Forty-five students participated in lectures and meetings with experts on linguistic diversity issues, project design, video documentation best practices, and grant-writing for language and cultural documentation funding sources. Participants then created project designs and pitched ideas to a panel of experts for feedback and revision. Three of the pitched projects were used for group collaborative capstone projects. Students left the workshop with an understanding of language-documentation

best practice, experience in language-documentation projects, pitching project ideas, and writing grants to access the necessary resources. The project reflects a replicable training model and a proven project design with constructive feedback for future iterations. The team is currently working with the same scholar to provide a second iteration of the workshop in summer 2021 that incorporates feedback from the first project

### An Indigenous Language Advocate's Guide to Reflection

We partnered with the Multicultural Initiative for Community Advancement (MICA) on its Next Steps pilot project, which provides intensive training and mentoring in leadership and capacity-building for North American Indigenous language programs. Through this partnership, we are developing a self-study digital guide for Indigenous leaders of community language programs to strengthen their activities through reflection exercises. This guide to self-study follows the Center's success with the Oral History Interviewing Guide (translated into Kazakh, Russian, and Tibetan).

## Increased access to new markets

#### Definition

As a result of our activities, partners and stakeholders have access to new markets, providing opportunities for increased income and a better understanding of their customer and/or consumer base.

#### How we do this

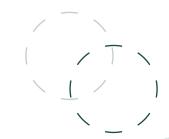
Research and build understanding of existing local markets.

Cultivate networks and relationships in desired markets.

Directly connect artists to new markets opportunities.

#### In numbers

We connected 144 culture bearers to new markets.



#### Folklife Festival Marketplace

We worked with the Folklife Festival team on the launch of the Center's new collaboration with NOVICA, the world's largest social impact retailer for artisans and craftspeople around the world. We supported the inclusion of Armenian artisans, who reported a great deal of satisfaction with the opportunity to be represented in the international craft market, especially during the pandemic. Several have already received restock orders in larger amounts than the initial orders placed. Over the next year we will be working with NOVICA to include artisans from other cultural vitality projects.

#### Aslamazyan Sisters Gallery Shop

Museum shops can be an excellent source of revenue for artisans. We worked with the Aslamazyan Sisters Gallery and Teryan Cultural Center in Armenia to pilot a new model for artisan collaboration with museum shops. The project enabled the renovation of the museum shop, along with participation of more than twenty artisans from across Armenia who created handmade products inspired by the Aslamazyan sisters' paintings and sculptures. To promote the shop and the collaboration, the My Armenia team also made short artistic videos featuring selections of the products. Despite low tourism numbers, the shop reopened with record sales in September 2020.



An arrangement of handmade crafts for sale in the Smithsonian Folklife Festival Marketplace, operated in partnership with NOVICA. Photo courtesy of NOVICA

Handbags

Kenyan Recycled Sculpture

ecorative Plates

"We value each chance to represent
Armenian culture with of our hand-painted scarves. Every piece transmits the Armenian spirit and this unprecedented opportunity to collaborate with NOVICA and to be a part of the Smithsonian Folklife Festival Marketplace allowed us to make our country and culture known to the world.

Accents

With this cooperation we were able to expand our production and create employment spaces for the community."

—Azatuhi and Anna Stepanyan, Sunny Art

Necklaces

Area Rug

Jars and Bottles

## Improved conditions for cultural practices

#### Definition

We support our local partners to improve civic, structural, organizational, economic, or physical contexts for the cultural practice.

#### How we do this

Advocating for official recognition and status of the cultural practice.

Inspiring change in organizational structures, such as government bodies, the education sector, and funding agencies.

Activating institutional leverage and expertise to establish partnerships and develop frameworks.

Establishing new spaces to practice, such as trainings and workshops, cultural centers, websites, or other places to learn or perform.

#### In numbers

We activated two memoranda of understanding (MOU) agreements and three websites.

## Extension of five-year MOU with Nan-kai University

Originally signed in 2016, this agreement set the foundation for the Sino-Tibetan Language and Linguistic Research Methodology Workshop. This extension of the MOU recommits to our partnership with Nankai University to collaboratively develop trainings in linguistics and ethnographic field methods, promote academic and educational exchanges, facilitate research, and provide access to expertise and publica-

tion opportunities. The MOU and the resulting partnership have brought structural and organizational changes in Trans-Himalayan language education and will now continue through 2026.

#### Website for the Sino-Tibetan Language and Linguistic Research Methodology Workshop

Given the implications of more than a year without travel, our team recognized the need for improved access to information in digital formats. Working with Nankai University, we developed a multilingual website to host workshop content from past Institutes, which will not only serve the Trans-Himalayan language communities, but also serve as a model and resource for other language vitality training.

### Institute on Collaborative Language Research (CoLang) website

Similarly, with our planned CoLang workshops for 2020 canceled, we began discussions around improved access to information. CoLang is a biennial summer institute for community-based, collaborative linguistics and language revitalization, which blurs the lines between community and academia, learners and facilitators. The collaborative, non-institutional project migrates host institutions every two years and is controlled by a rotating board of community-language workers and linguists. The lack of institutional framework and consensus-driven governance makes it difficult for the project to maintain a centralized website.

We leveraged our expertise in institutional framing and consensus-driven project design to lead the CoLang advisory board to create a web committee and develop a centralized website. The goal of the forthcoming site is to create a functional digital space for training materials from previous Institutes while also building the capacity of the CoLang committee's web design

decision-making framework to allow the committee to easily collect feedback and react with meaningful changes to the site.

### New MOU with Union of Artisans of Kazakhstan

This agreement recognizes our joint efforts to research, promote, and sustain Kazakhstan's cultural heritage and creative industries. It covers commitments to building knowledge and skills related to traditional Kazakh crafts, including documentation processes, and developing and co-hosting trainings targeted at youth and craftspeople. The five-year agreement also lays the foundation for building national and international awareness of, and market opportunities for, Kazakhstan's craft enterprises and craftspeople.

## Research studies on youth attitudes and textile consumption in Bhutan

Over the past three years of collaborative work with the Royal Textile Academy of Bhutan (RTA), we have heard repeated concerns over the future of hand-loomed textiles. This year, we worked with a local research firm to conduct nationwide surveys capturing data on the consumption of hand-loomed textiles and youth attitudes toward weaving. The analysis and reports from these surveys will shape future programming at the RTA and will serve as a critical evidence base for national policy to protect this cherished cultural practice.



"The webinar with the participation of recognized Kazakhstani and American artists and masters in their field has become a valuable experience for us. We discovered new things for ourselves and tried to be interesting and useful to the participants. We hope that we will be remembered by them for our love and dedication to art."

— Aizhan, Makerspace Expands workshop participant

Our team brings diverse experience and knowledge to the Center, and over the last year we've contributed to improvements in administrative, project management, and communications processes and procedures.

## Communication strategy and website redesign

To address a long-standing challenge of effectively communicating the Center's work online, we conducted a thorough analysis of the Center's digital outputs, reach, and engagements. The findings, collected in this report, include a home-page redesign to support better reach and communicate the depth and breadth of the Center's programs, research, and expertise. Our team is leading the Center's first user-experience research project to inform the redesign.

## Innovation of the Center's project management

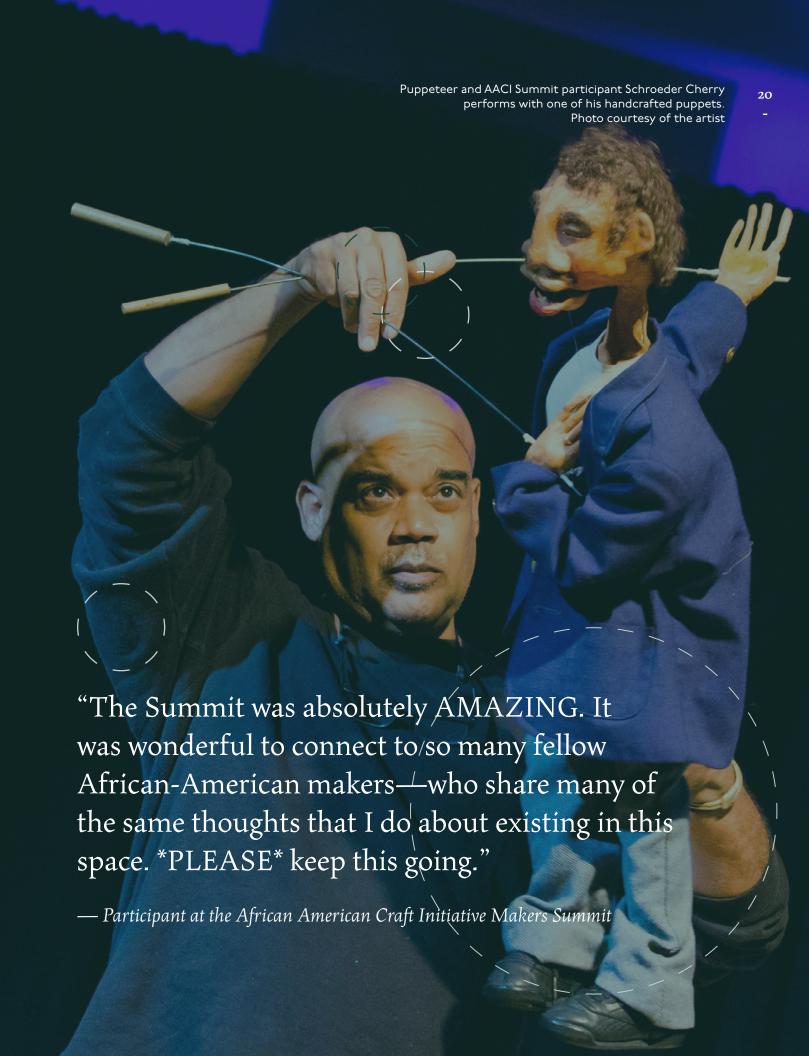
We are committed to impact at all stages of our work. This commitment starts with evaluative thinking at the early project design phase, developing project descriptions with clear goals, strategies, and methodologies. An example is the African American Craft Initiative 2020 Program Description. The evaluative process includes working with the Results Framework Model to imagine different steps of the project and the intended outcomes. This process has led curators and program staff to think more strategically about impact and how to communicate the impact of their programs. Examples include the SMiLE 2020 Impact Report or the African American Craft Summit Report.

## Benchmarking and improving the Center's internship program

Developed in collaboration with the U.S. DeOur evaluative thinking methods also led to a closer look at the Center's internship program. In 2019, we surveyed 111 former interns, which led to the creation of a Center-wide Internship Review Committee. The Committee investigated the findings of the survey with a focus on the need for internship stipends, networking opportunities, and the direction and structure of the Center's internships, providing a full report for Center leadership to implement improvements in the program.

## Improved administrative processes and tools

As our work expands and more resources flow into cultural vitality work, we are working closely with administrative staff across the Center to ensure efficient and effective workflows. To date, this has resulted in an improved onboarding procedure and the development of a procurement planner platform to make procurement processes more transparent for staff.





#### Where We Are Headed

Over the last year we've engaged in significant relationship and opportunity development, writing more than \$1.9M in new project proposals.

## Continuing cultural industries work in Armenia

We led the proposal process for an additional \$375K in USAID project funding for the My Armenia Cultural Heritage Tourism Program before it ends in December 2021. Building on My Armenia's activities and impacts, we worked with the Armenian government and Diaspora organizations to move forward on the Homecoming campaign, an effort originally designed as part of My Armenia but postponed due to the pandemic and the 2020 war with Azerbaijan.

To date, Diaspora organizations have committed an additional ~\$650K to the effort, which will encourage Armenians around the world to travel to Armenia. We are also in the process of writing proposals for ongoing artisan and festival work in Armenia, as well as a training series on protecting heritage in complex emergencies—a partnership with Smithsonian's Cultural Rescue Initiative.

### Extending our work with Tibetans in China

Our USAID-funded work with ethnic Tibetans in China began in 2014, with extensive documentation of nomadic cultural practices, language vitality work, and artisan training programs. In June 2021, USAID officially extended the program through FY2024 (~\$140K), with ongoing activities to support exchange opportunities for Tibetan cultural heritage practitioners and new projects to support Tibetan artisans and community-based cultural heritage tourism experiences.

## New cultural industries projects in Tunisia

In June 2021, we kicked off work planning for a new three-to-five-year project with Chemonics International (~\$694K), supporting their work on the USAID Visit Tunisia program. Building on activities developed through the My Armenia Cultural Heritage Program, our team will support efforts in community-based cultural heritage tourism development and an artisan initiative. This exciting new project builds on Tunisia is Life, a new collaboration launched this spring with The New Medina in Tunisia.

## New cultural industries trainings in Bosnia and Herzegovina

In July 2021 we will kick off a new partnership with Chemonics International in Bosnia and Herzegovina (~\$32K). Our team will lead in-person trainings in community-based, cultural heritage tourism development and festival-making.

Digitizing endangered Georgian music In June 2021, our colleagues at the Ralph Rinzler Archives were notified of their successful application for the U.S. Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation. Our team will support the archives staff and local partner V. Sarajishvili Tbilisi State Conservatoire to digitize endangered Georgian choral recordings. This project funds Center staff to travel to Georgia and will complement our future efforts in the country.

"In this moment of challenge and possibility, Tunisia Is Life reminds us of the creative innovation that exists globally and of creatives who embrace heritage to evolve society. Perhaps our stories will be a catalyst for more to ask: what can America learn from Africa? And what can Tunisia teach the world?"

— Mark Gonzales, New Medina Co-Founder



