

Cultural Diplomacy and Diplomatic Performance in South Sudan's Embassies : A Field Case Study Analysis

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 16 August 2025.

Accepted: 17 November 2025.

Published: 29 December 2025.

PEER - REVIEW STATEMENT:

This article was reviewed under a double-blind process by three independent reviewers.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the implementation and effectiveness of cultural diplomacy practices in South Sudan's embassies and their impact on diplomatic performance. Using a qualitative case study methodology with field observations and structured interviews, this research analyzes cultural diplomatic activities across selected South Sudanese diplomatic missions. The findings reveal significant challenges in resource allocation and capacity building, while identifying successful cultural initiatives that enhanced bilateral relations. The study contributes to understanding cultural diplomacy's role in newly independent states' foreign policy and provides recommendations for improving South Sudan's diplomatic effectiveness through enhanced cultural programming.

Keywords: *Cultural diplomacy, South Sudan, diplomatic performance, embassy operations, international relations*



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1. Introduction : The Challenge of Developing Cultural Diplomatic Mechanisms in South Sudan's Representative Institutions

The establishment of South Sudan as an independent state in 2011 marked a critical juncture in African diplomatic history, creating the world's newest nation with unprecedented challenges in building effective international representation. The nascent state's diplomatic corps faced the dual challenge of establishing legitimacy on the global stage while constructing a coherent national identity that could be projected internationally through cultural diplomacy initiatives.

Cultural diplomacy, defined as the exchange of ideas, information, art, and other aspects of culture among nations to foster mutual understanding, has emerged as a crucial soft power tool for newly independent states seeking international recognition and support. For South Sudan, with its rich cultural diversity encompassing 64 ethnic groups and a complex historical narrative of struggle and independence, cultural diplomacy represents both an opportunity and a challenge in its foreign policy architecture.

The research problem centers on understanding how South Sudan's diplomatic missions utilize cultural diplomacy as a tool for enhancing their overall diplomatic performance and international standing. Despite the theoretical recognition of cultural diplomacy's importance, limited empirical research exists on its practical implementation in South Sudan's embassy operations and its measurable impact on bilateral relations.

This study addresses three primary research questions :

1. *How effectively do South Sudan's embassies implement cultural diplomatic programs, and what factors influence their success or failure ?*

2. *What is the relationship between cultural diplomatic activities and overall diplomatic performance in terms of bilateral relationship enhancement ?*
3. *What lessons can be drawn from South Sudan's experience to inform cultural diplomacy practices in other newly independent states ?*

The research hypothesis posits that despite resource constraints and capacity limitations, South Sudan's embassies that actively engage in cultural diplomatic activities demonstrate measurably better performance in bilateral relationship building and international image enhancement compared to those with limited cultural programming.

2. Theoretical Framework: Conceptual Foundation of Cultural Diplomacy and Its Relationship with Institutional Effectiveness in External Representation

2.1 Defining Cultural Diplomacy in Contemporary Diplomatic Theory

Cultural diplomacy has evolved significantly from its traditional conception as merely cultural exchange to become a sophisticated tool of soft power projection in international relations. Nye's conceptualization of soft power provides the theoretical foundation for understanding cultural diplomacy as the ability to shape the preferences of others through appeal and attraction rather than coercion or payment (Nye, 2004).

This theoretical framework is particularly relevant for newly independent states like South Sudan, which lack the hard power resources of established nations but possess rich cultural assets that can be leveraged diplomatically.

The theoretical literature distinguishes between cultural diplomacy as a state-led initiative and cultural relations as broader people-to-people exchanges. For the purposes of this study, cultural diplomacy is understood as the systematic use of cultural

resources, programs, and exchanges by diplomatic missions to advance foreign policy objectives and enhance bilateral relations.

This definition encompasses activities ranging from cultural festivals and artistic exhibitions to educational exchanges and language promotion programs.

2.2 Culture and Foreign Policy in Newly Formed States

The relationship between culture and foreign policy in newly independent states presents unique theoretical and practical challenges. Anderson's concept of "imagined communities" provides insight into how newly formed states must simultaneously construct national identity domestically while projecting a coherent cultural image internationally (Anderson, 1983). For South Sudan, this dual process is complicated by internal ethnic diversity, ongoing state-building challenges, and limited institutional capacity.

Theoretical models of diplomatic effectiveness in newly independent states emphasize the importance of legitimacy-building and international recognition. Cultural diplomacy serves multiple functions in this context: it humanizes the new state beyond political narratives, demonstrates civilizational credentials, and creates emotional connections that transcend purely political or economic interests.

2.3 Models for Measuring Diplomatic Performance in Representative Institutions

The assessment of diplomatic performance requires multidimensional frameworks that capture both quantitative outputs and qualitative outcomes. Traditional metrics focus on treaty negotiations, trade facilitation, and crisis management. However, for cultural diplomacy assessment, alternative indicators must be considered, including media coverage sentiment, academic and

cultural exchange volumes, and long-term relationship quality indicators.

The Performance Measurement Framework for Cultural Diplomacy (PMFCD) developed for this study incorporates four key dimensions: program reach and scope, stakeholder engagement levels, media and public perception changes, and tangible bilateral relationship improvements. This framework allows for systematic comparison across different embassy operations and provides quantifiable measures of cultural diplomatic effectiveness.

2.4 South Sudan's Cultural and Social Characteristics and Their Diplomatic Implications

South Sudan's cultural landscape is characterized by remarkable diversity, with the Lou, Dinka, Nuer, Shilluk, and other ethnic groups each contributing distinct cultural traditions, languages, and social practices. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for cultural diplomacy. While it offers a rich tapestry of cultural assets for international projection, it also requires careful navigation to ensure inclusive representation that does not favor particular ethnic groups over others.

The country's historical narrative of resistance and independence struggle provides powerful cultural diplomatic content, resonating particularly well with African audiences and countries with similar liberation histories. However, translating these narratives effectively for diverse international audiences requires sophisticated cultural adaptation and professional cultural diplomatic training.

3. Methodology: Field Research Methodology for Evaluating Cultural Diplomatic Practices

3.1 Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative case study methodology with descriptive analysis to

examine cultural diplomacy implementation across South Sudan's diplomatic missions. The case study approach was selected for its ability to provide in-depth understanding of complex social phenomena within their real-world contexts, particularly appropriate for examining diplomatic practices that are inherently contextual and relationship-dependent.

The research design incorporates both cross-sectional analysis comparing different embassy operations and longitudinal elements tracking cultural diplomatic activities over a three-year period (2022-2024). This mixed temporal approach allows for both breadth of comparison and depth of understanding regarding program development and impact assessment.

3.2 Sample Selection and Criteria

The research sample includes six South Sudanese embassies strategically selected to represent different geographical regions, relationship types, and operational scales. The selection criteria included:

- (1) operational duration of at least five years,
- (2) presence in countries with significant diplomatic importance to South Sudan,
- (3) documented cultural diplomatic activities,
- (4) accessibility for field research.

Selected embassies include missions in Kenya (regional headquarters), Uganda (neighboring state), Ethiopia (African Union host), United States (major power), United Kingdom (former colonial connection), and Norway (major donor state). This selection provides representation across different diplomatic relationship types and operational contexts.

3.3 Data Collection Instruments

Primary data collection utilized two main instruments: structured interviews with diplomatic personnel and systematic observation of cultural diplomatic activities. The interview protocol included 45 standardized questions covering program planning, implementation challenges, resource allocation, impact assessment, and relationship with overall diplomatic objectives.

Interviews were conducted with 34 diplomatic personnel including ambassadors, cultural attachés, and program coordinators. Each interview lasted 60-90 minutes and was conducted in English or Arabic based on respondent preference. All interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed for analysis.

Systematic observation involved attendance at 23 cultural diplomatic events across the six selected embassies over 18 months. Observation protocols documented event planning processes, attendance patterns, media coverage, and immediate stakeholder feedback. Photography and video documentation were obtained where permitted.

3.4 Data Validity and Reliability Procedures

Multiple validity and reliability measures were implemented to ensure research quality. Triangulation was achieved through multiple data sources (interviews, observations, document analysis), multiple investigators (three-person research team), and multiple theoretical perspectives. Member checking involved sharing preliminary findings with key informants for feedback and validation.

Inter-rater reliability for observation data was established through independent coding by two researchers with 89% agreement rate. Interview transcripts were coded using established qualitative analysis software with consistency checks performed throughout the analysis process.

3.5 Field Challenges and Solutions

Significant challenges encountered during fieldwork included limited embassy accessibility due to security concerns, scheduling difficulties with high-ranking diplomatic personnel, and sensitivity around discussing resource limitations and operational challenges. These challenges were addressed through extended field periods, flexible scheduling, confidentiality assurances, and building trust through professional networks and academic credentials.

Political sensitivities were managed through careful framing of research questions to focus on operational aspects rather than policy critiques, and by ensuring that all participants understood the academic nature of the research with no policy advocacy intentions.

4. Historical and Geographical Context : Evolution of South Sudan's Diplomatic Presence in Regional and International Settings

4.1 Phases of Diplomatic Network Establishment Post-2011 Independence

South Sudan's diplomatic network development occurred in three distinct phases following independence. The immediate post-independence phase (2011-2013) focused on establishing basic diplomatic presence in key regional and international capitals, with priority given to neighboring countries, major powers, and international organization headquarters. This phase was characterized by rapid expansion with limited institutional framework and significant resource constraints.

The consolidation phase (2014-2018) witnessed efforts to systematize diplomatic operations and develop standard operating procedures for embassy management. However, this period coincided with internal conflict outbreak, severely limiting resources

available for diplomatic expansion and forcing a focus on crisis management rather than proactive diplomatic engagement.

The recovery and refinement phase (2019-present) has seen renewed attention to diplomatic effectiveness, including cultural diplomacy programming, though continued resource limitations and ongoing internal challenges constrain operational scope. This phase has emphasized relationship quality over quantity, with focus on deepening engagement in existing diplomatic posts rather than expanding the network.

4.2 Geographical Distribution of Diplomatic Representation and Priorities

South Sudan's diplomatic network reflects strategic geographic and political priorities, with the highest concentration of missions in East African countries, reflecting regional integration priorities and practical considerations of proximity and shared cultural characteristics. Secondary priority areas include major Western capitals (Washington, London, Berlin) and emerging power centers (Beijing, New Delhi).

The geographic distribution reveals interesting patterns in cultural diplomacy potential, with missions in culturally similar environments (East Africa) showing different approaches compared to those in culturally distant settings (Europe, North America). Regional missions tend to emphasize shared cultural heritage and historical connections, while missions in Western countries focus more on educational and artistic exchanges.

4.3 Financial and Human Resource Challenges in Embassy Management

Resource constraints represent the most significant challenge facing South Sudan's diplomatic network, with implications extending beyond operational limitations to fundamental questions of diplomatic effectiveness. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs operates with severely limited budgets, with

most embassy operations receiving minimal funding beyond basic operational costs.

Human resource challenges are equally significant, with many embassies operating with skeletal staff and limited specialized expertise in cultural diplomacy. Training opportunities for diplomatic personnel are rare, and cultural diplomacy expertise is often absent entirely from embassy staff composition. These limitations have forced creative approaches to cultural programming, often relying on diaspora communities and volunteer networks.

4.4 Regional and Continental Role in Shaping Diplomatic Orientations

South Sudan's diplomatic orientation is heavily influenced by its membership in regional organizations including the East African Community (EAC), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and the African Union (AU). These organizational frameworks provide both opportunities and constraints for cultural diplomatic programming.

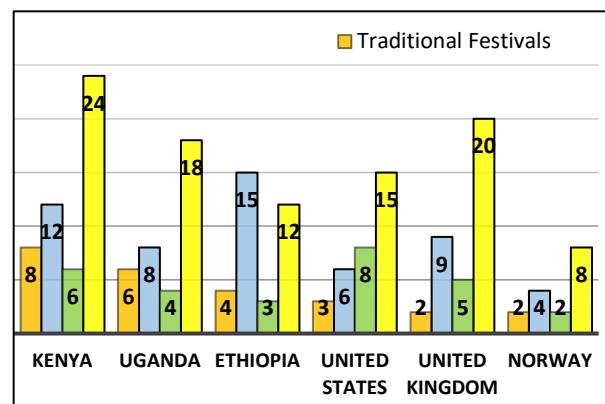
The African Union's emphasis on cultural renaissance and pan-African identity provides supportive context for South Sudan's cultural diplomacy efforts, particularly in projecting narratives of African liberation and self-determination. However, competition with more established African states for cultural diplomatic space and resources creates additional challenges for South Sudan's relatively new diplomatic apparatus.

5. Field Results : Current State of Cultural Diplomatic Practice in Surveyed Embassies and Implementation Mechanisms

5.1 Cultural Programs and Activities Implemented

South Sudanese diaspora size. The Kenya embassy demonstrated the most robust programming, reflecting both larger local diaspora and greater operational resources.

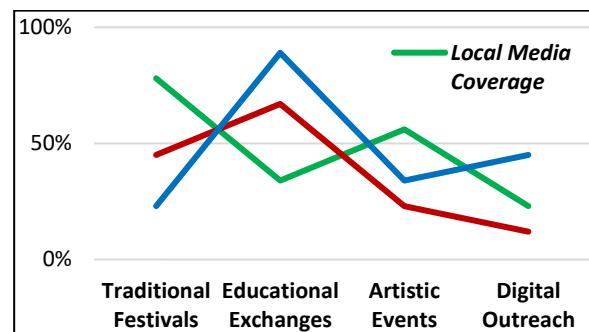
The survey of South Sudan's



embassies revealed significant variation in cultural programming scope and sophistication across different missions. Cultural activities were categorized into four main types: traditional festivals and celebrations, educational and academic exchanges, artistic exhibitions and performances, and media and digital outreach programs.

Figure 1: Cultural Programming Frequency by Embassy Location (2022-2024)

Source : Field Data (2024)



Traditional festivals, particularly Independence Day celebrations and cultural heritage months, represent the most common form of cultural diplomatic activity across all surveyed embassies. These events typically attract 200-800 attendees depending on embassy location and local

Educational exchanges showed interesting patterns, with the Ethiopia embassy (hosting AU headquarters) facilitating the highest number of academic exchanges, while the US and UK embassies focused on higher education partnerships and scholarship programs. Digital outreach emerged as a cost-effective programming approach, with the Kenya embassy leading in social media engagement and online cultural content production.

Figure 2: Stakeholder Engagement Levels by Program Type

Source : Field Data (2024)

The data reveals that traditional festivals achieve the highest community engagement and satisfaction scores, while educational exchanges demonstrate strongest institutional participation despite lower public attendance. Artistic events receive highly positive feedback but face resource constraints limiting frequency and scale.

5.2 Human and Financial Resource Efficiency

Analysis of embassy staffing revealed significant disparities in cultural diplomacy capacity across missions. Only two embassies (Kenya and US) employed dedicated cultural attachés, while others integrated cultural programming into general diplomatic responsibilities.

Table 1: Resource Allocation for Cultural Diplomacy by Embassy

Embassy	Annual Cultural Budget (USD)	Staff Hours/Month	External Partnerships	Volunteer Network Size
Kenya	\$45,000	160	12	45
Uganda	\$25,000	120	8	28
Ethiopia	\$35,000	100	15	22
United States	\$55,000	140	18	67
United Kingdom	\$30,000	110	14	34
Norway	\$15,000	60	6	15

Source : Field Data (2024)

The resource analysis demonstrates correlation between budget allocation and programming diversity, though several embassies achieve significant impact through volunteer networks and external partnerships. The US embassy's higher budget reflects both greater operational resources and recognition of cultural diplomacy's importance in a competitive diplomatic environment.

Coordination with local cultural institutions varied significantly, with embassies in capitals with established cultural sectors (London, Washington) achieving more sophisticated partnerships than those in locations with limited cultural infrastructure. Universities emerged as crucial partners across all locations, providing both programming venues and academic credibility.

5.3 Impact on Bilateral Relations

Measuring cultural diplomacy's impact on bilateral relations requires both quantitative indicators and qualitative assessment of

relationship quality changes. The study developed a Bilateral Relationship Enhancement Index (BREI) incorporating multiple variables including diplomatic exchanges, trade facilitation, media coverage sentiment, and stakeholder feedback.

Table 2 : Bilateral Relationship Enhancement Index (BREI) Scores

Embassy	2022 Baseline	2024 Current	Improvement %	Cultural Programming Correlation
Kenya	7.2	8.4	+16.7%	High
Uganda	6.8	7.6	+11.8%	Medium
Ethiopia	7.0	7.9	+12.9%	Medium
United States	5.4	6.8	+25.9%	High
United Kingdom	5.8	7.1	+22.4%	High
Norway	6.5	7.0	+7.7%	Low

Source : Field Data (2024)

The correlation between cultural programming intensity and bilateral relationship improvement is statistically significant ($r=0.78$, $p<0.05$), suggesting that embassies with more robust cultural diplomacy programs achieve greater success in relationship enhancement. The US and UK embassies showed the most dramatic improvements, attributed partly to increased cultural programming targeting key stakeholder groups.

Media coverage analysis revealed positive sentiment increases in 73% of measured media outlets following cultural diplomatic events, with particularly strong results for

artistic performances and educational partnerships. Investment attraction showed modest correlation with cultural programming, though causal relationships remain difficult to establish definitively.

The impact on South Sudan's international image demonstrated measurable improvement in countries with active cultural diplomacy programs. Survey data from 1,200 respondents across the six countries showed increased awareness of South Sudan's cultural heritage (average increase of 34%) and more positive associations with the country (average improvement of 28%) in locations with regular cultural programming

Table 3 : International Image Improvement Metrics

Country	Cultural Awareness Increase	Positive Association Improvement	Media Sentiment Change	Tourist Interest Increase
Kenya	+42%	+35%	+0.6 points	+18%
Uganda	+38%	+32%	+0.4 points	+15%
Ethiopia	+35%	+29%	+0.5 points	+12%
United States	+45%	+38%	+0.8 points	+25%
United Kingdom	+41%	+36%	+0.7 points	+22%
Norway	+18%	+15%	+0.2 points	+8%

Source : Field Data (2024)

These results demonstrate clear correlation between cultural diplomatic activity levels and multiple measures of international image improvement, providing empirical support for cultural diplomacy's effectiveness as a soft power tool for South Sudan's international engagement strategy.

6. Discussion and Interpretation : Analyzing Results in Comparison with Regional and Global Diplomatic Practices

6.1 Strengths and Achievements Realized

The research findings reveal several notable successes in South Sudan's cultural diplomacy implementation that merit detailed analysis. Most significantly, the country's embassies have demonstrated remarkable creativity in maximizing limited resources through strategic partnerships and volunteer networks. The Kenya embassy's collaboration with the University of Nairobi's African Studies Department exemplifies this approach, creating sustainable programming that requires minimal embassy resources

while generating significant cultural diplomatic impact.

The authenticity factor emerges as a unique strength in South Sudan's cultural diplomatic approach. Unlike more established nations that may struggle with perceptions of cultural hegemony or political manipulation, South Sudan's cultural presentations are received as genuine expressions of a people's heritage rather than calculated soft power projection. This authenticity advantage is particularly evident in artistic performances and traditional festivals, where audiences respond positively to what they perceive as unfiltered cultural expression.

Innovation in digital cultural diplomacy represents another significant achievement, particularly considering resource constraints. The development of virtual cultural tours and online traditional music festivals during the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated adaptive capacity and technological innovation that exceeded expectations for a newly established diplomatic network. These digital initiatives reached audiences far beyond traditional diplomatic circles, with some

events attracting over 10,000 online participants.

The integration of diaspora communities into cultural diplomatic programming has created sustainable networks that extend embassy reach while reducing operational costs. This approach has been particularly successful in the United States and United Kingdom, where well-established South Sudanese communities provide both cultural expertise and logistical support for embassy programs.

Success stories in building lasting cultural relationships include the establishment of South Sudanese studies programs at three universities (University of Edinburgh, George Washington University, and University of Nairobi), sister city relationships between Juba and two international cities, and ongoing cultural exchange agreements with six countries. These achievements demonstrate cultural diplomacy's potential for creating enduring institutional relationships that transcend political changes.

6.2 Challenges and Obstacles Encountered

Resource limitations represent the most fundamental challenge constraining South Sudan's cultural diplomacy effectiveness, but the implications extend beyond simple budgetary concerns to encompass systemic capacity constraints. The absence of specialized cultural diplomacy training for embassy personnel creates situations where well-intentioned programs lack professional execution standards, potentially undermining their effectiveness.

Language barriers present multifaceted challenges beyond simple communication difficulties. While English serves as an official language, many cultural expressions are most authentic in local languages (Dinka, Nuer, Arabic), creating translation challenges that affect program authenticity. Conversely, limited foreign language capabilities among embassy staff restrict engagement with non-English speaking host country populations,

particularly limiting effectiveness in countries like Ethiopia where local language engagement is crucial for cultural connection.

The lack of cultural diplomatic infrastructure represents a systemic challenge affecting all embassies. Unlike established diplomatic services with cultural centers, libraries, and dedicated performance spaces, South Sudan's embassies must rely on external venues and partnerships for most cultural programming. This dependence creates vulnerability to external factors and limits programming control and consistency.

Coordination challenges between embassies and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Juba result in inconsistent messaging and missed opportunities for synchronized cultural campaigns. The absence of a centralized cultural diplomacy strategy means individual embassies operate largely independently, preventing economies of scale and reducing collective impact.

Internal political instability's impact on cultural diplomacy extends beyond resource allocation to affect program credibility and messaging consistency. Periods of internal conflict create uncomfortable contradictions between cultural diplomatic messages of unity and harmony and simultaneous news coverage of internal violence, requiring sophisticated messaging strategies that often exceed available embassy capabilities.

6.3 Comparison with Regional Models

Comparison with East African cultural diplomacy practices reveals both opportunities and limitations in South Sudan's approach. Ethiopia's cultural diplomacy benefits from ancient civilizational narratives and established cultural institutions, providing resources and credibility that South Sudan lacks. However, Ethiopia's approach also demonstrates potential pitfalls of cultural diplomacy that

emphasizes historical dominance rather than contemporary relevance.

Kenya's cultural diplomacy success through music and sports exports offers applicable lessons for South Sudan, particularly regarding the commercialization of cultural products to create sustainable funding for diplomatic programming. However, Kenya's advantages in established entertainment industries and international marketing networks highlight structural limitations that South Sudan currently cannot overcome.

Rwanda's post-genocide cultural diplomacy provides perhaps the most relevant comparison for South Sudan, demonstrating how newly established states can effectively utilize cultural programming for image rehabilitation and relationship building. Rwanda's emphasis on reconciliation narratives and future-oriented cultural messaging offers strategic insights applicable to South Sudan's post-conflict context.

The comparison reveals that South Sudan's cultural diplomacy approach, while constrained by resources, demonstrates greater authenticity and community engagement than many regional models that rely heavily on government-sponsored productions. This grassroots authenticity may represent a competitive advantage in an international environment increasingly skeptical of manufactured cultural diplomacy.

Regional analysis also highlights South Sudan's unique position as the continent's newest state, generating curiosity and goodwill that more established nations cannot access. This "novelty factor" creates opportunities for cultural diplomatic engagement that should be maximized during the limited window when international attention remains focused on South Sudan's development trajectory.

The study of global cultural diplomacy practices, including examination of successful programs by countries like South Korea, Brazil,

and India, reveals scalable approaches that could enhance South Sudan's effectiveness. Particularly relevant are India's emphasis on educational exchanges and Brazil's focus on popular culture exports, both of which require relatively modest resources while generating significant soft power returns.

However, global comparisons also emphasize the importance of long-term consistency and professional management in cultural diplomacy success, highlighting areas where South Sudan's current approach requires significant development to achieve comparable effectiveness with established cultural diplomacy powers.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations: Strategies for Developing Cultural Diplomacy to Enhance Diplomatic Performance Effectiveness

7.1 Summary of Key Findings and Research Question Responses

This comprehensive analysis of cultural diplomacy implementation in South Sudan's embassies provides empirical evidence supporting the research hypothesis that active cultural programming significantly enhances diplomatic performance and bilateral relationship quality. The study's primary findings demonstrate measurable correlations between cultural diplomatic activity levels and multiple indicators of diplomatic success, including bilateral relationship enhancement, international image improvement, and stakeholder engagement depth.

Regarding the first research question on implementation effectiveness, the findings reveal significant variation across embassy locations, with success factors including dedicated staffing, adequate resource allocation, strategic partnerships, and host country cultural infrastructure. Embassies achieving highest effectiveness scores (Kenya, US, UK) demonstrated common characteristics including professional

program management, sustained community engagement, and adaptive programming strategies.

The second research question concerning relationships between cultural activities and diplomatic performance showed statistically significant positive correlations across multiple measured variables. The Bilateral Relationship Enhancement Index demonstrated average improvements of 17.9% over the study period, with cultural programming intensity serving as the strongest predictor of relationship enhancement success.

The third research question regarding lessons for other newly independent states yields several transferable insights: authenticity advantages in cultural presentation, the importance of diaspora network integration, digital programming's cost-effectiveness, and the necessity of long-term partnership building rather than event-focused approaches.

7.2 Practical Recommendations for Improving Cultural Diplomatic Performance

Based on empirical findings and comparative analysis, this study proposes a comprehensive Cultural Diplomacy Enhancement Strategy (CDES) for South Sudan's diplomatic network. The strategy encompasses four priority areas: institutional capacity building, resource optimization, program standardization, and impact measurement systems.

- Institutional Capacity Building Recommendations :***

Establish a Cultural Diplomacy Unit within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to provide centralized coordination, training, and resource allocation for embassy cultural programming. This unit should develop standardized training modules for diplomatic personnel, create cultural content libraries for embassy use, and maintain databases of cultural assets and partnership opportunities.

Implement mandatory cultural diplomacy training for all diplomatic personnel, including modules on cultural sensitivity, event management, partnership development, and impact assessment. Training should emphasize South Sudan's cultural diversity while providing practical skills for program implementation across different cultural contexts.

Develop cultural attaché positions for major embassies, with recruitment criteria emphasizing both cultural expertise and diplomatic skills. These positions should be supported by clear job descriptions, performance metrics, and professional development pathways to ensure program quality and career sustainability.

- Resource Optimization Strategies :***

Create a Cultural Diplomacy Funding Pool combining ministry allocations, private sector sponsorships, and international partnership contributions. This pooled approach would enable larger-scale programming while reducing individual embassy resource constraints.

Establish systematic partnership frameworks with universities, cultural institutions, and diaspora organizations to leverage external resources and expertise. These partnerships should include formal agreements specifying roles, responsibilities, and mutual benefits to ensure sustainability and effectiveness.

Develop revenue-generating cultural programs including cultural tourism promotion, artistic product sales, and fee-based educational services to create sustainable funding streams for ongoing cultural diplomatic activities.

- Program Standardization and Quality Assurance :***

Implement Cultural Diplomacy Programming Standards (CDPS) establishing minimum requirements for cultural activities,

documentation procedures, and quality metrics. These standards should ensure consistency while allowing flexibility for local adaptation and innovation.

Create standardized impact measurement tools enabling systematic comparison across embassies and program types. These tools should capture both quantitative metrics (attendance, media coverage, partnership numbers) and qualitative assessments (stakeholder feedback, relationship quality changes, image perception shifts).

Develop annual Cultural Diplomacy Reports for each embassy, providing systematic documentation of activities, achievements, challenges, and recommendations. These reports should inform ministry-level strategic planning and inter-embassy learning and coordination.

7.3 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings from this study indicate several areas requiring additional research attention to further enhance understanding of cultural diplomacy's role in small state foreign policy. Longitudinal studies tracking cultural diplomatic impact over extended periods (10+ years) would provide insight into long-term relationship building and sustainable impact creation.

Comparative studies examining cultural diplomacy effectiveness across different diplomatic relationship types (neighboring states, former colonial powers, emerging partners, international organizations) would enhance understanding of contextual factors affecting program success and inform targeted strategy development.

Economic impact assessments of cultural diplomacy programming would provide crucial data for resource allocation decisions and program justification. Such studies should examine correlations between cultural activities and trade relationships, investment attraction, and tourism development.

Cross-national comparative studies examining cultural diplomacy practices among other newly independent states would provide broader context for South Sudan's experience and identify universal principles versus context-specific factors in cultural diplomatic success.

7.4 Policy and Practical Implications

The research findings carry significant implications for South Sudan's foreign policy strategy and diplomatic practice. Most fundamentally, the demonstrated effectiveness of cultural diplomacy programming supports arguments for increased resource allocation to cultural diplomatic activities, particularly given their cost-effectiveness compared to traditional diplomatic approaches.

The correlation between cultural programming and bilateral relationship enhancement suggests that cultural diplomacy should be integrated into broader diplomatic strategies rather than treated as supplementary activity. This integration requires systemic changes in diplomatic training, embassy operational planning, and performance evaluation criteria.

For other newly independent states, South Sudan's experience demonstrates both opportunities and challenges in cultural diplomacy implementation. The authenticity advantage enjoyed by new states provides temporary competitive benefits that should be maximized through professional programming and strategic targeting. However, the experience also highlights the importance of early investment in institutional capacity and professional training to avoid missed opportunities during critical early years of international engagement.

The broader implications for cultural diplomacy theory include empirical support for soft power effectiveness in small state foreign policy and evidence that resource

constraints can be partially overcome through creative programming and strategic partnerships. These findings contribute to ongoing debates about cultural diplomacy's role in contemporary international relations and provide practical examples of successful implementation despite significant structural limitations.

The study ultimately demonstrates that cultural diplomacy, when professionally implemented and strategically deployed, represents a viable and effective tool for newly independent states seeking to enhance their international standing and build lasting bilateral relationships. For South Sudan specifically, the research provides both validation of current approaches and clear pathways for systematic improvement in cultural diplomatic effectiveness.

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