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English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**

2025 session

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Item 8 (a) of the provisional agenda *

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: Geographical names
as culture, heritage and identity**

A Place called Quitungo

Submitted by Brazil**

Summary

The report provides an example of the implementon of strategies 4 (i), 4 (ii), and 4 (iii), also aligned with aim III of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names strategic plan and programme of work 2021-2029. It contains an exploration of the use of geographical names as a tool for learning and for empowering minorities in schools, in accordance with the core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "leave no one behind."

A short video is presented as the outcome of a project conducted at a school in a non-privileged neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The project, centered around the study of the geographical name "Quitungo", brought together a wide range of subjects, such as history, geography, text creation, music, fine arts and audiovisual production. The video was produced entirely by the teenage students, who crafted it from scratch. In addition, the songs featured were written and performed by the pupils.

The report provides a description of the project and background information on the school and pupils. The significance of the video's creation is highlighted. The project demonstrates how the exploration of a place name can have a meaningful impact on people's lives and serve as a catalyst for connecting various subjects, motivating pupils to create something that is both personally inspiring and academically engaging.

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** Prepared by (Ana Cristina Resende, Brazil, Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics - IBGE)

A Place Called Quitungo

Um Lugar Chamado Quitungo (A Place Called Quitungo) is the title of an inspiring animated short film on the theme of geographical names as Cultural Heritage.

The film is the result of a school project conducted in 2006 at a state school in a lower middle-class neighborhood in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which serves many students from a nearby area marked by poverty and urban decay. These students struggled with low self-esteem and often expressed disdain for their own community. Additionally, reinforcing a cycle of stigma, their peers from more privileged backgrounds also looked down on the area, whose name is *Quitungo*, which derives from a river that flows through it. While not explicitly stated by the organizers of the project, it may be assumed that there could have been some degree of bullying coming from the more affluent students towards the ones who lived in *Quitungo*.

To address this issue, the school's "Center for the Arts" initiated a multidisciplinary project centered around the study of the geographical name *Quitungo*. The project integrated subjects such as History and Geography as well as Text Creation Workshop, Music, Fine Arts and Audiovisual Production Workshop. From concept to completion, the short film—about three minutes in length—was entirely created by the teenage students. They wrote the script, composed and performed the music, and produced the animation themselves. Full credits are included at the end of the film.

The narrative follows two boys from modern-day *Quitungo* who encounter a mysterious figure from the past. This character guides them on a time-traveling journey to the origins of their community and its name. Through this experience, the boys come to understand the resilience, resistance, and historical value embedded in their neighborhood. They begin to view *Quitungo* not as a place of shame, but as one of strength, survival, and reclaimed freedom.

The video was shown to the school community and made available online (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lobh93XmkJc>). The film had a transformative impact, fostering the same sense of empowerment in viewers as it depicted in its characters. Students living in *Quitungo* began to feel pride in their origins, and the broader community grew more aware of the cultural significance of *Quitungo* and its name. This increased awareness potentially encourages the community to take actions to improve and preserve the area's identity and heritage as well as its geographical name.

It is worth highlighting the successful use of geographical names in early toponymic education as a catalyst for connecting various subjects, motivating students to create something that is both personally inspiring and academically engaging, raising awareness from a young age to the importance of geographical names for the preservation of cultural heritage and of the geographical names themselves.

In the context of the UNGEGN Strategic Plan and Programme of Work 2021–2029, this project directly supports Aim III: "Recognize, respect and promote the value of geographical names as significant elements of cultural heritage, language and identity, including those of indigenous peoples and regional and minority groups."

Specifically, it exemplifies the implementation of strategies:

- **4.i:** Declare, promote, celebrate, and demonstrate that geographical names matter because they recognize unique culture, heritage and language that connect people to physical locations.
- **4.ii:** Promote good geographical naming practices that acknowledge people's place in the world.
- **4.iii:** Recognize that geographical names are a source of identity, encourage recognition of heritage and equality, and support indigenous, regional and/or minority groups' language revitalization and preservation.

By using geographical names as a tool for learning and empowering minorities in schools,, this project and its resulting animated short film embody the core principle of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: "leave no one behind."

Watch the animated short film with English subtitles here: <https://youtu.be/zE2o7DUxbrA>

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Consider the positive impact on young people in knowing the origins of where they live – learning their history, where they came from, how their traditions are preserved, and the pride that can be restored/attached to the place they call home.
- (2) Share similar projects conducted in their countries and their outcomes.