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UNESCO's Role and Action to Protect and Safeguard Cultural
Heritage and to Promote Cultural Pluralism in Crisis Situations

Case Study: Lessons Learned from Mali

Evaluation Office

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ABSTRACT

Following the seizure of northern Mali by armed rebel groups in 2012, the region suffered tremendous losses to its cultural heritage and expressions, including to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Timbuktu. UNESCO became a partner in the international community's response to the crisis in Mali in 2013 and continues to be engaged. This case study is a pilot exercise for a possible future evaluation of the Organization's role and action to protect and safeguard cultural heritage and to promote cultural pluralism in crisis situations.

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Cover photo: © CRA-terre Thierry Joffroy Timbuktu (Mali)

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1. Introduction

In 2012, armed rebel groups seized control of the northern region of Mali encompassing a number of historical towns. Cultural heritage and expressions in the region were deliberately attacked by the rebels, who inflicted heavy and sometimes irreversible damages to centuries-old treasures. The UNESCO World Heritage site of Timbuktu was almost completely destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of people fled south and to neighbouring countries, thereby also disrupting important cultural expressions and practices.

As the United Nations agency with a mandate in culture, UNESCO has been working to protect and safeguard cultural heritage and expressions in Mali for many years and established an office in Bamako in 1998. The Organization became a partner in the international community's response to the crisis in Mali 2013 when French-led forces began to liberate the northern regions. UNESCO held an international experts meeting on the safeguarding of Mali's cultural heritage in February 2013 and sent an expert mission to evaluate the status of Mali's cultural heritage in late May of the same year. A number of partnerships and projects then followed whereby UNESCO reaffirmed its engagement to reconstructing and safeguarding the country's cultural treasures.

1.1 Objectives of the Case Study

This case study was conceived as a pilot exercise for a possible future evaluation of UNESCO's role and action to protect and safeguard cultural heritage and to promote cultural pluralism in crisis situations. The case of Mali was chosen as UNESCO's interventions in the country preceded the development of its [*Strategy for the reinforcement of the Organization's actions for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict*](#) (hereafter the Strategy). The aim of the present case study is to identify lessons learned from the experience in Mali in order to inform the future implementation of the Strategy, as well as other urgent actions in response to crisis situations around the world. The results of this case study are also intended to demonstrate the effectiveness of implemented actions to decision-makers and potential donors, and could be used to attract support for future endeavours and rapidly mobilise resources in time of crisis.

This case study examines UNESCO's role and response to the crisis in Mali, focussing on the following dimensions:

1. Mapping and assessment of UNESCO's action and approach to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural pluralism in armed conflict and natural disasters in the case of Mali. This involves an examination of how UNESCO's standard-setting instruments in culture have contributed to these efforts, and the identification of potential entry points and synergies with other stakeholders; and,
2. The integration of culture into the international community's coordinated response to the crisis in Mali, including broader UN Frameworks and strategies for humanitarian action, peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes and security strategies. This also involves examining the types and nature of international and local partnerships needed to significantly advance this work.

1.2 Methodology of the Case Study

The methodology for the case study included desk reviews and targeted interviews with identified stakeholders conducted during a field mission to Mali in August 2016. Data sources taken into account included published and grey literature, project documents available from government reports and plans, and reports from the UNESCO System of Information Strategies, Tasks and Evaluation of Results (SISTER) and from UNESCO Mali. Limitations included the short timeframe for the assessment and data collection in a complex environment and in respect of strict security measures.

The case study was developed on the basis of a detailed mapping and timeline of UNESCO's action and approach to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural pluralism in armed conflict in Mali between 2012 and 2016 (see overview in Figure 1).

This study is organized in four parts. The first will present a background on UNESCO's cultural mandate and on the crisis in Mali, as well as on UNESCO's interventions in the country. The second part will assess the Organization's action in response to the crisis, highlighting the major achievements and challenges. The third will examine the integration of culture in the broader response to the crisis. Finally, the fourth will present some lessons learned. A snapshot of UNESCO's activities in the country is available in Annex 1.

2. Background

2.1 UNESCO's action for the protection of culture in crisis situations

As the UN agency with a mandate in culture, UNESCO has been working to protect and promote cultural heritage and pluralism for decades. Its seven cultural conventions¹ all aim to safeguard heritage and support dynamic cultural sectors. Following an increase in deliberate attacks against cultural sites and practices around the world, in November 2015 the 38th session of the General Conference of UNESCO adopted a *Strategy for the reinforcement of the Organization's actions for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict* ([38/C49](#)). This document aims to further focus the Organization's work in "redu[cing] the vulnerability of cultural heritage and diversity before, during and in the aftermath of conflict" through two objectives: to strengthen the ability of Member States to prevent, mitigate and recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity as a result of conflict; and, to incorporate the protection of culture into humanitarian action, security strategies and peacebuilding processes by engaging with relevant stakeholders outside the culture domain. The adoption of this Strategy has been followed by the development of an action plan for its implementation, which was presented to the Executive Board in the fall of 2016.

UNESCO was part of the crisis response in Mali for three years prior to the adoption of this Strategy. In fact, the Organization established a "Special Fund" to support Mali in its efforts to preserve and protect the World Heritage properties affected by the armed conflict. UNESCO also convened a Working Group² on Mali that prepared a special [Action Plan for the crisis](#) in early 2013 to guide its work and raise resources from donors. As the first of its kind, it was adopted at the international experts meeting on the safeguarding of Mali's cultural heritage, organized in February 2013 at UNESCO Headquarters with the support of the Government of France (Ministry of Culture and Communication) and attended by over 200 participants including ministers, experts, and representatives of delegations from UNESCO Member States and international technical organizations.

2.2 Background on the conflict in Mali

Mali is, after Niger, the largest country in West Africa. Divided into ten regions; the five regions of the north, Gao, Kidal, Timbuktu, Ménaka and Taoudéni represent two thirds of the surface of the country but only ten per cent of its approximately 18 million inhabitants. The country currently ranks 177 out of 186 on the 2014 Human Development Index. Factors affecting the environmental, economic, social and political context include limited economic growth and a highly undiversified economy, limited mainly to agriculture (75% of the population) and extractive industries, vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations, high population growth rates, and impact of climate change, among others.

The conflict in Mali began in 2012, but it is worth underscoring that as early as April 2010, Mali, Algeria, Mauritania and Niger set up a joint force to tackle rising threats of armed

¹ [The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions \(2005\)](#); [The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage \(2003\)](#); [The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage \(2001\)](#); [The Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage \(1972\)](#); [The Convention on the Protection of Copyright and Neighbouring Rights \(1952, 1971\)](#); [The Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Traffic of Cultural Property \(1970\)](#); [The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict \(1954\)](#)

² The UNESCO Working Group on Mali was composed of UNESCO, ICOM, ICOMOS, ICCROM, IFLA, EPA, AWHF, and CRAterre-ENSAG.

rebellion and terrorism in the region. Towns in northern Mali were first attacked by rebels in January 2012 and the latter finally seized full control of the region by April, declaring an independent Islamic State, which included the cities of Timbuktu, Kidal and Gao. By May, rebel groups began to impose Islamic law in Timbuktu.

In the fall of 2012, ECOWAS agreed on coordinated military action to recapture the north, with backing from France and the African Union. However, it wasn't until the French-led military forces were deployed in the north in January 2013 that Gao, Timbuktu and Kidal were progressively recaptured. In August 2013, France formally handed over military operations to the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), created in April 2013 by UN Security Council Resolution 2100. Talks between the government and the rebels continued during 2013 and 2014, until a peace agreement was signed in June 2015. The situation in the north remains tense however, with deliberate attacks on the peacekeepers and Malian army continuing into 2017.

2.3 Impacts of the conflict on the cultural heritage of the northern region

The occupation of the regions in the north by armed groups (including extremists) from May 2012 to January 2013, led to a massive displacement of the local communities³ towards the south of Mali and its neighbouring countries. Municipal services and decentralised administrations in the area completely ceased to function. The occupation by armed groups caused significant damage to cultural heritage, practices, and expressions: destruction of countless historical monuments and ancient manuscripts; destruction of places of memory inscribed on the National Heritage List; intense pillaging of archaeological sites and museums; and prohibition and weakening of cultural practices and traditions. In Timbuktu, 14 of the 16 mausoleums on the World Heritage List were destroyed together with the El Farouk independence monument, only the mausoleum of Cheick Al Imam Saïd survived although with significant damage to its roof and walls. The door of the Sidi Yahia mosque, considered sacred by local residents, was torn down and 4,203 manuscripts in the Ahmed Baba Institute for Islamic Graduate Studies and Research (*Institut des Hautes Études et de Recherches Islamiques Ahmed Baba* (IHERI-AB)) were burned or stolen.

In addition, the threat of persistent insecurity and distrust among the local populations prevented the communities from undertaking seasonal communal maintenance work on the remaining historic monuments and settlements. Other impacts included the degradation of buildings due to lack of regular maintenance following the rainy season, the abandon of certain houses in ruins through family inheritance, and the invasion of the streets, alleys and public squares by plastic rubbish and waste waters. Community members were also largely prevented by the extremist armed groups from using the mausoleums and other sites and from continuing to observe their cultural practices.

According to the Malian authorities and the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the country has also recently declared an archaeological emergency over the destructing and looting of its ancient treasures. In December 2016, the Financial Times published an article⁴ to raise attention to the illegal flow of artefacts from Mali across the region's porous

³ UNHCR estimates that approximately 475,000 people have been displaced as a result of the conflict.

⁴ <https://www.ft.com/content/559aa998-c386-11e6-9bca-2b93a6856354>

borders. As a result, a red list prepared by ICOM has been unveiled that reveals items at risk of being illegally exported and these include the manuscripts from Timbuktu.

2.4 Overview of the emergency landscape in Mali

With the French led military intervention in January 2013, Timbuktu, Gao and Kidal were liberated, but the security conditions precluded envisaging the reinstallation of the management structures to address cultural issues or commencing interventions on affected cultural elements. It was not until July 2013 that the offices of the Timbuktu Cultural Mission were reopened and daily management activities were resumed. This was also supported by the creation, within the Ministry of Culture, of the National Committee for the Restoration of Cultural Heritage in the northern regions of Mali, which later served as a technical support unit for the implementation of the UNESCO-supported Action Plan.

In April 2013, the United Nations Security Council established the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) by resolution 2100 to support political processes in that country and carry out a number of security-related tasks. The Mission was asked to support the transitional authorities of Mali in the stabilization of the country and implementation of the transitional roadmap. MINUSMA was also tasked with assisting the transitional authorities of Mali in “protecting from attack the cultural and historical sites in Mali, in collaboration with UNESCO” and “to operate mindfully in the vicinity of cultural and historical sites”. (Resolution 2100, 25 April 2013) MINUSMA’s mandate has since been extended by three other Security Council resolutions (2164, 2227, and 2295), the latter extending the mission’s mandate to 30 June 2017. All have emphasized its strong role for cultural preservation in collaboration with UNESCO.

Other coordination mechanisms for the crisis included the UN coordinating office and the Office for the Coordination of Technical and Financial Partners, which had been set up back in 2007 to coordinate all foreign aid to the country. The Office established a number of thematic working groups, though none dedicated exclusively to culture.

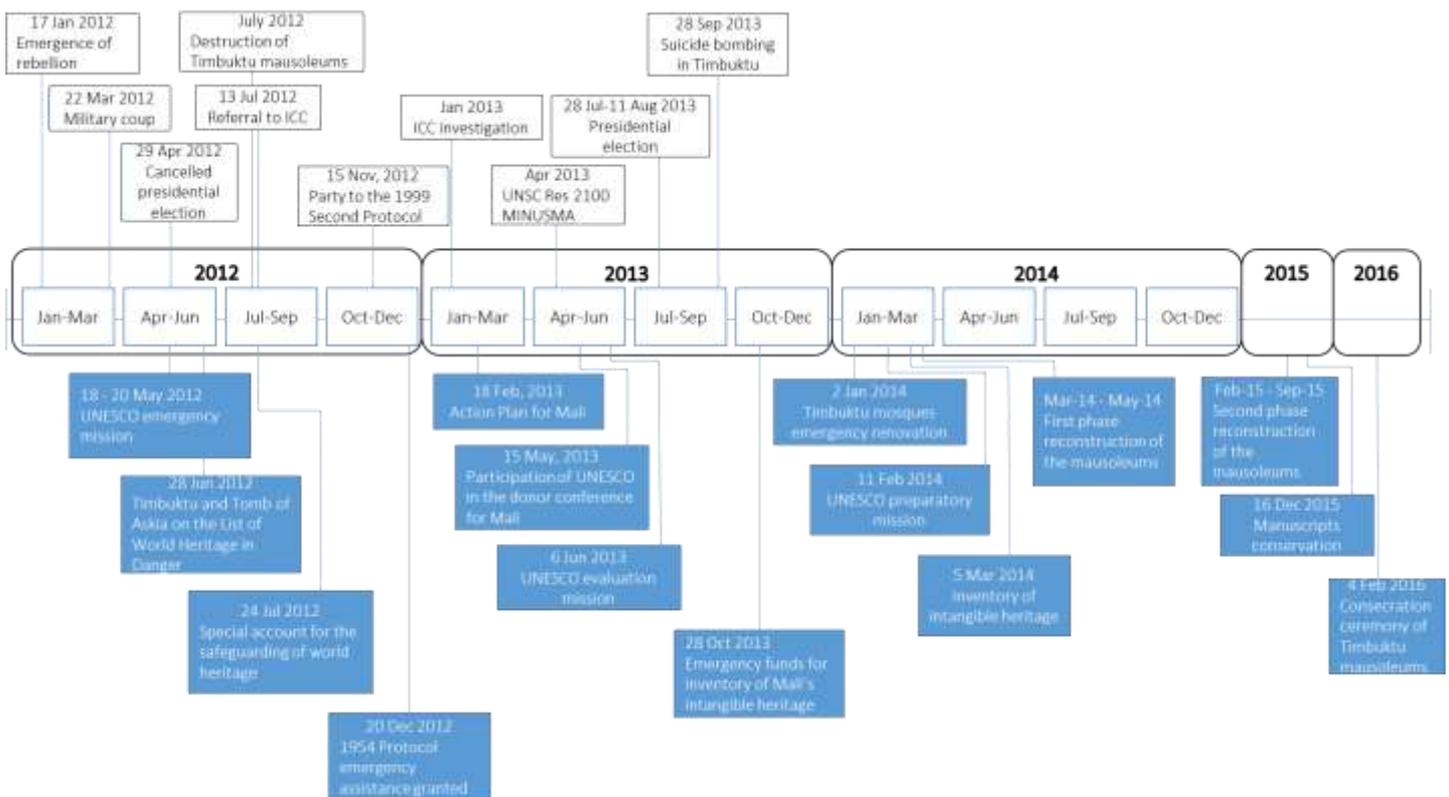
The Government of Mali and the UN Country Team adopted a revised UNDAF for 2015-2019. UNESCO is given a role for two expected results. (More on this in section 5.)

According to the OECD, official development assistance (ODA) (net) to Mali during 2013-2015 totalled over USD 3.8 billion. Over a quarter (27%) went to social infrastructure and related services followed by health and population (17%) and humanitarian aid (17%). It is unclear which of the ten categories of ODA established by the OECD culture would fall under.

3. Overview of UNESCO's engagement in Mali

UNESCO's involvement in Mali began as early as 2012, with the first appeals by the Director-General for the protection of cultural heritage and the need for concerted action in response to information received on the destruction of cultural heritage in occupied areas in the North. Figure 1 highlights the main activities implemented by UNESCO between May 2012 and February 2016 including expert missions, awareness raising and capacity building initiatives, setting up an Emergency fund, developing and implementing an action plan and strategy for the reconstruction or rehabilitation of tangible and intangible heritage. Projects implemented in Mali largely centred on the rehabilitation of destroyed / damaged built heritage and the safeguarding of manuscripts; intangible heritage was also addressed, though to a lesser extent, through support to the inventory process. The role of UNESCO in projects implemented in direct response to the crisis has thus ranged from direct implementation to supporting actions and providing guidance for specific projects, as well as awareness raising, enhancing knowledge and documentation of cultural heritage, capacity building and fundraising.

Figure 1 – Timeline of events in Mali and of UNESCO's response 2012-2016



Source: IOS

4. UNESCO's action and approach in Mali

This section provides an assessment of UNESCO's action and approach to the safeguarding and protection of cultural heritage and the promotion of cultural pluralism in armed conflict and natural disasters in the case of Mali. This involves an examination of how UNESCO's standard-setting instruments in culture have contributed to these efforts, and the identification of potential entry points and synergies with other stakeholders.

4.1. Achievements

- ✓ *The Action Plan for Mali provided a clear framework for UNESCO's actions and proved essential to raise awareness and mobilize resources for the safeguarding of cultural heritage and expressions.*

The Action Plan for the rehabilitation of Mali's cultural heritage and the safeguarding of ancient manuscripts was the first of its kind to be presented to the international community at an experts' meeting in February 2013. It articulated three main priorities: the rehabilitation of cultural heritage damaged during the conflict with the active participation of local communities; the implementation of measures to protect the ancient manuscripts remaining in the region; and the provision of training so as to re-establish appropriate conditions for the safeguarding and management of cultural heritage, including manuscripts and intangible cultural heritage. In all, the Action Plan aimed to raise USD 11 million for the Organization's work in response to the crisis in Mali.

UNESCO set up a number of mechanisms to mobilize resources for the implementation of the Action Plan. The Kingdom of Norway supported the first response by granting financial assistance (USD 170,000) to safeguard the manuscripts of Timbuktu. Further fundraising efforts by UNESCO led to contributions amounting to USD 3 million from the European Union, Norway, Switzerland and others. A Special Account to safeguard the cultural heritage of Mali was set up even earlier in July 2012, raising nearly USD 300 000. Emergency funds were made available by the Director-General for an inventory of intangible cultural heritage. Mali was also eligible to apply for international assistance under the 1999 Protocol of the 1954 Convention and received USD 40 000.

Communication and awareness raising conducted by the UNESCO office in Bamako was closely aligned with and supported by initiatives and advocacy measures undertaken by the Director-General and Headquarters. This was a crucial aspect for the prompt response and resource commitment from donors. For example, the participation of UNESCO in the European Union's action plan turned commitments to culture into action by both, securing resources and enhancing concerted action.

- ✓ *The Action Plan for Mali drew on UNESCO's culture conventions for an integrated approach that emphasized both built and living heritage and expressions.*

The principles and domains of a number of culture conventions were integrated into the Action Plan and in the way projects were designed and implemented. The Plan placed a strong emphasis on the safeguarding of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, thereby drawing upon the 1972 and 2003 Conventions. For example, traditional practices

and knowledge were at the heart of efforts in the reconstructions of the mausoleums. It further, focused on the fight against illicit trafficking of cultural objects, the domain of the 1970 Convention. Finally, it drew upon the 1954 Convention for the preservation and conservation of damaged cultural property.

The creation of the Heritage Passport for the north of Mali not only provided essential information on the cultural expressions threatened by the conflict but also allowed for a better understanding of UNESCO's culture conventions. The Passport further explained how the different dimensions of culture, as expressed in the conventions, could be taken into account for the implementation of integrated actions that would serve to safeguard and transmit cultural values while at the same time providing much needed social cohesion to support sustainable peacebuilding efforts.

Box 1 – Heritage Passport

In late 2012, UNESCO jointly with the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage in Mali and the International Centre for Earthen Architecture (CRAterre) developed and produced a document in the format of a passport (8,000 copies) and an A3 format map (2,000 copies) on the cultural heritage of the northern regions of Mali. These documents included information on the importance and geographical location (GPS coordinates) of major cultural properties located in the areas of conflict and were made available to the Mali military authorities. These passports were critical to raising awareness of cultural sites among the military in the north during a period of ongoing conflict when travel to the region by cultural experts was impossible. Later the passports were also used by MINUSMA forces engaged in the military actions, by border customs agents and the police. The documents also aim to raise awareness among civil society and local communities on the importance of safeguarding heritage sites.

✓ *The implementation of the Action Plan was accompanied by several capacity building measures that focused on both tangible and intangible heritage to ensure ownership of various stakeholders and local communities for longer-term sustainability.*

UNESCO's work integrated capacity building even prior to the adoption of the Action Plan. In December 2013, UNESCO organized a training workshop in Mopti for masons from Timbuktu, Gao, Djenne and Bandiagara to enable the exchange on different construction and maintenance techniques. A strategy document was then prepared for the reconstruction of the mausoleums.

Through joint initiatives with MINUSMA, such as the development of the Heritage Passport, UNESCO engaged in building the capacity of the mission's forces, as well as those of the Malian army to identify and protect cultural heritage and practices. (See Box 1 above.) Between October 2013 and April 2015, 1577 people (MINUSMA forces, police, military, and government officials) were trained in recognizing and protecting cultural heritage. Trainings continued further into 2016.

At the field level, the project design and implementation for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the mausoleums and mosques in Timbuktu took into account both the impacts on the material fabric as well as on the intangible processes associated with these elements. This translated into the effective integration of both professional expertise, to meet national and international standards, and local know-how, to promote the

intergenerational transmission of practices and inclusion of diverse social groups. The restoration process itself became a forum for the recognition and respect of diversity and the promotion of social cohesion.

During the implementation work, further capacity building activities were carried out to sensitize communities in regard to the significance of the heritage places and to provide a forum for exchange on traditional masonry practices and their applicability to the different areas. This fostered the transmission of know-how and the creation of capacities among the younger generations. It also ensured that traditional practices were taken up in the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the mausoleums.

Work on safeguarding of manuscripts has been twofold, centring on the rehabilitation of manuscript libraries and on the cataloguing and physical conservation of manuscripts themselves, both those remaining in Timbuktu and in Bamako. It included capacity building at the national and regional level on the fight to prevent illicit trafficking, mainly tailored to police and customs officials in Mali and neighbouring countries. Capacity building activities have been based on the assessment of current vulnerabilities and the identification of cultural objects in danger, such as archaeological artefacts and manuscripts, as well as training on the concepts of the different applicable international conventions (UNESCO and UNIDROIT, and existing tools and methods, including those by Interpol, Object ID and ICOM's Red list.

✓ *UNESCO activities also considered that intangible heritage will play a crucial role in inter and intracommunity reconciliation and in facing the challenges after the conflict.*

An inventory of intangible heritage was implemented by the Ministry of Culture and of the Handcraft and Tourism, through the National Direction for Cultural Heritage, in partnership with UNESCO and MINUSMA. The inventory particularly aimed at identifying and documenting knowledge and practices related to nature, oral traditions, rituals and festive events, traditional crafts and traditional practices related to the prevention and resolution of conflicts.

The reconstruction of Timbuktu's physical fabric has contributed to the first steps in the reconstruction of the social fabric; the reconstructed mausoleums have become emblematic spaces for exchange and for cultural expressions as well as means to enhance diversity, tolerance and identity.

Notwithstanding the emphasis on Timbuktu, assistance was provided by UNESCO to MINUSMA to support the recovery of musical instruments that had been destroyed during the occupation of Gao, and their subsequent use for musical festivals, recognising the significance of these interconnected actions in promoting reconciliation and social cohesion. Support was also lent to recovery of cultural expressions, such as religious and musical festivals, that had been prohibited during the occupation of the northern regions.

UNESCO's support for continuing inclusive and community based cultural heritage restoration initiatives will be crucial for the sustainability of the achieved results. Conservation and maintenance practices of heritage places have been historically embedded in the essence and fabric of the communities that have been affected and displaced by the conflict in the northern regions. An indicator for the effectiveness of such processes will be the moment when these practices are inherently undertaken without the need for involvement from international stakeholders.

The inventorying of intangible cultural heritage and the mapping of cultural industries in the northern regions have also been crucial processes and tools for the creation of community based and sustainable livelihoods, in raising awareness and valorising know-how, and in using culturally sensitive processes for conflict resolution and promotion of a culture of peace.

4.2. Challenges

- ✓ *Securing funding and long-term investments was a particular obstacle to the implementation of the action plan, considering that of the estimated 11 Million USD only 3,5 Million USD have been mobilised. Fundraising for intangible cultural heritage has proven particularly challenging.*

The Action Plan developed for Mali in 2012 provided an overarching framework to articulate the response to the crisis. It was largely centred on the conservation of the affected mausoleums and mosques and the safeguarding of manuscripts and did not explicitly include other dimensions such as for example the potential of traditional processes/practices in conflict resolution as means for reconciliation, for the creation of inter and intra community cohesion and for peacebuilding. Consequently, in a context of conflict and humanitarian crisis, garnering resources and support for other crucial aspects related to cultural dimensions, for example safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, recovery of cultural practices and traditions, - although achieved to a certain extent - has been more difficult.

Despite the creation of the special account for the safeguarding of World Heritage in Mali, and strong advocacy such as through participation in the EU donor conference in May 2013, the funding target of USD 11 million for the full implementation of the action plan has not been attained. As mentioned earlier, culture was not made into a separate thematic group by the Office for the Coordination of Technical and Financial Partners. With so many other urgent priorities, safeguarding of cultural heritage was not seen within the UN System in Mali as being one of the urgent needs to be expressed in the Consolidated Appeals Process.

- ✓ *Lacking a strategy for intervention in emergency situations UNESCO's action was deployed in a more reactive (reconstruction and rehabilitation) than proactive and preventive manner. This has consequences for the sustainability of the Organization's actions.*

UNESCO's work in Mali has focused on recovery and has been an effective reaction to a crisis situation. However, warning signs were noted before the full emergence of the conflict and no action was undertaken until the occupation of the North.

The Action Plan was an effective response to the conditions and priorities derived from the crisis situation; however, its limited scope did not lend itself to include longer-term actions that will be needed for sustained peacebuilding and sustainable development efforts. In this regard, UNESCO needs to establish a strategy for its work in Mali by integrating the work of all its sectors in order to provide an articulated framework whereby sustainable development perspectives, peacebuilding, rights-based approaches, gender equality and youth inclusion, are explicitly planned for.

5. The role of Culture in the broader Response Frameworks to the Crisis in Mali

This section focuses on the integration of culture into the international community's coordinated response to the crisis in Mali, including broader UN Frameworks and strategies for humanitarian action, peacebuilding and peacekeeping processes and security strategies. This also involved examining the types and nature of international and local partnerships needed to significantly advance this work.

5.1 Achievements

- ✓ *UNESCO was instrumental in integrating culture in the mandate of MINUSMA, which translated into effective coordination for a variety of actions.*

The Security Council Resolution (Resolution 2100, 25 April 2013) that tasked MINUSMA with assisting the transitional authorities of Mali in “protecting from attack the cultural and historical sites in Mali, in collaboration with UNESCO” and “to operate mindfully in the vicinity of cultural and historical sites” demonstrates strong recognition of the relevance of UNESCO’s mandate in culture as well as a key role for the Organization in cultural preservation. It marks the first time that the protection of culture is an integral part of the mandate of a peacebuilding force. The inclusion of the protection of cultural heritage in the MINUSMA mandate was by many stakeholders considered as a result of UNESCO’s advocacy efforts.

The creation of an Environment and Culture Unit within MINUSMA further helped to operationalise this mandate. Collaboration between UNESCO and MINUSMA went beyond simple project support, but translated into effective coordination for a variety of actions ranging from constant capacity building for civil, military and police personnel to raise their awareness of Malian cultural heritage, to the joint drawing up of emergency security plans to prevent additional attacks and coordinated action to address damage to heritage buildings, manuscripts and other cultural expressions affected by the crisis, including intangible heritage. The cooperation between UNESCO and MINUSMA further enabled access of the north’s cultural sites to experts, donors and delegations, as the two worked together to arrange visits to these sensitive areas.

- ✓ *In close consultation with other co-leading agencies, UNESCO’s mandate and advocacy resulted in including culture into the UNDAF for 2015-2019.*

The national consultations on "Culture and Development", implemented by the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) - in particular UNESCO, UNFPA, UNDP as co-leads of the consultations, have been crucial to inform culturally sensitive policy development. Most importantly, the results from the national consultations were streamlined into the development of the UNDAF and provisions made for its comprehensive integration. UNESCO has been given a role for two of the expected results in the revised UNDAF adopted for 2015-2019 by the Government of Mali and the UN Country team.

Although culture is not a specific axis for integration, one expected result in the UNDAF focuses on Culture and Peace Education (2.3). The result also has a large focus on the

restoration of tangible and intangible cultural heritage as well as the promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (2.4). UNESCO is also given a role in expected result four, which focuses on quality social services and education opportunities.

- ✓ *UNESCO's advocacy considerably raised the visibility of how destruction of heritage affects different social actors, and was further underlined by the 'destruction of cultural property' for the first time being considered a war crime and main grounds for prosecution to come before the ICC.*

In 2016, the International Criminal Court (ICC) tried and convicted Ahmad Al Faqi Al Mahdi, a member of Ansar Eddine, a movement associated with Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, of the war crime of intentionally directing attacks against historic monuments and buildings dedicated to religion, including nine mausoleums and one mosque in Timbuktu, Mali, in June and July 2012.

The destruction of heritage during conflict situations has always been documented, but the case of Al Mahdi has been the first time that under international criminal law, the destruction of cultural property as a war crime has been the main ground for prosecution to come before the ICC. This landmark case has been crucial also for the recognition of how the destruction of heritage affects different social actors. The participation of victims in the trial has also evidenced the social, cultural, and historic connections that exist between heritage places and communities, and how their destruction causes not only economic but also emotional and psychological damage. As stated by the Director-General of UNESCO, the case is also important, as it has highlighted the role of multilateral frameworks and interagency cooperation in the protection of cultural expressions during crisis situations. UNESCO was instrumental in cooperating with the Government of Mali and the ICC in preparing the case.

- ✓ *By setting a roadmap for addressing the profound underlying causes of the conflict, the peace agreement supported by UNESCO translated into the development of key policy documents that recognise the relationship between culture and sustainable human development.*

An important issue for recovery and peacebuilding is the recognition of the relationship that exists between culture and sustainable development. The crisis in Mali has exacerbated pre-existing conditions on the political, socio-economic and humanitarian levels, and on security and human rights. The peace agreement sets a roadmap for addressing the profound underlying causes of the conflict and has been translated into the development of key policy documents that aim at sustainable human development. The threading of cultural dimensions in both policy design and implementation offers unique opportunities for context responsive actions to recover social cohesion, promote inclusion, improve well-being, support livelihoods, and to recover traditional practices that enhance bio cultural diversity.

UNESCO's Executive Board (Decision 197 EX/39) and the General Conference (Resolution 38C/11) recommended to support the implementation of the Peace and Reconciliation agreement for Mali and to accompany the peace and reconciliation process. The framework for action considers four major challenges: social, political, economic, and cultural and ideological. To further contribute to the promotion of the culture of peace, the UNESCO

Office in Bamako in collaboration with the Ministry of National Reconciliation finalized the draft National Programme for a Culture of Peace in Mali, which was later approved by the national authorities. The main objective of the programme, developed through a participatory and inclusive process, is to ensure and sustain a culture of peace and non-violence between communities in Mali. The programme considers three priority areas: the development and promotion of intercultural dialogue as the foundation for a culture of peace; the development of a culture of peace through formal and non-formal education; and the promotion of social inclusion and a policy for women and youth.

5.2 Challenges

- ✓ *Although potential cross-sectorial synergies have been recognised, culture is not reflected as a priority in key planning and strategic documents.*

Despite strong advocacy by UNESCO, the cultural pillar does not yet constitute a separate axis in Mali's new UNDAF. Not one of thematic groups established by development partners at the national level focuses specifically on culture nor do any of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. This has had important consequences for the mobilization of resources for cultural projects, especially in crisis settings. Without a clear demarcation, culture continues to be on the sidelines for many donors.

- ✓ *Keeping the momentum and seeking ways to prioritise the dimensions of culture in practice remain challenging in crisis situations when security issues and humanitarian priorities are prevailing.*

UNESCO faced a major challenge in keeping up the momentum for culture as a priority for action. Achievements such as stating cultural aspects in policy documents such as the UNDAF or National Policy documents were only the first step, while translating the policies into explicit action for integration of culture is another matter. Convincing partners to prioritise culture in crises and conflicts when security issues and humanitarian priorities are prevailing requires a careful approach, tact and continued awareness raising and demonstration of the social, economic and cultural dimensions inherent in tangible and intangible heritage.

Sustaining the momentum created by the high visibility of UNESCO's work will be crucial for the next steps and for effectively translating the developed policy frameworks and action plans, such as UNDAF, the National Policy for Culture, the National Policy for Education, among others, into action.

As aforementioned, cultural dimensions have been taken into account both as areas for intervention or threaded in the discourse of other programmes and/or projects. However, significant challenges remain in prioritising the investment on culture during times of crisis, where security and humanitarian aid is prioritised. For peacebuilding, there is still a need to explicitly integrate culture, in all its dimensions, in policy and planning tools at the national level. The gap between the integration of culture in the discourse and the implementation of sustained and meaningful actions will need to be addressed if the dimensions of culture are to play their key roles as both drivers and enablers of sustainable development. The remaining challenge lies with securing longer term financing for reconstruction and maintenance while crisis situations are growing and donor priorities shifting.

6. Lessons Learned

1) Crisis Prevention:

The crisis in Mali took place prior to the development of UNESCO's *Strategy for the reinforcement of the Organization's actions for the protection of culture and the promotion of cultural pluralism in the event of armed conflict* and the establishment of a specialized unit to support field offices and countries in need. UNESCO also did not have a system for monitoring regions prone to crises and disasters to facilitate prevention work in Mali, such as for example in developing preventive safeguarding practices with local populations.

Lesson learned: An observation/early-warning system for crises established in the framework of UNESCO's organizational risk management system can enable undertaking regular risk mappings and establishing risk registers to feed into the development of the Organization's workplans in crisis-prone regions.

2) Framework Agreement for Culture in Peacekeeping:

The crisis in Mali marks the first instance of the protection of culture being an integral part of the mandate of a peacebuilding force. The resolutions that created and extended MINUSMA's mandates explicitly mentioned that it is to work with UNESCO. While the two continue to work together closely on the protection of cultural heritage in Mali, their cooperation has not been formalized in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding or other type of arrangement.

Lesson learned: A formal framework agreement with a respective peacebuilding mission for integrating the protection of culture into peacekeeping operations can greatly facilitate the joint work of UNESCO and a stabilisation mechanism such as MINUSMA and serve as a standard for future peacekeeping operations around the world.

3) Mobilization of Resources for Crisis Response:

UNESCO began communicating on the urgency of protecting and safeguarding Mali's cultural heritage very early on in the crisis. However, mobilising resources for cultural projects in the context of ongoing conflict humanitarian crisis with many other urgent priorities has been very challenging.

Lesson learned: Attempting to raise funds for cultural projects cannot be done by UNESCO alone. UNESCO's efforts need to be underpinned by promoting an intersectoral approach that touches upon key priority areas identified by the respective government and other crisis response actors, but also involving other UN agencies in the framework of "Delivery as One" and UN Country Team action. Clear positioning and creating a space and budget for UNESCO's contribution to the protection of cultural heritage within the peacebuilding mission at the outset is key for system-wide integration. Fund mobilisation can also benefit from increased awareness by all stakeholders of the impact of the destruction of cultural heritage and expressions on the livelihoods and wellbeing of communities. Communication efforts need to be expanded through UNESCO's networks to wider audiences beyond the traditional donors to culture, particularly on the regular replenishment of the Organization's Heritage Emergency Fund.

4) Crisis Coordination:

UNESCO's response to the crisis in Mali began at a time when the Organization did not have a dedicated unit for emergency work. An Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit has since been set up to support staff in the field.

Lesson learned: Crisis response and the mobilization of resources requires effective coordination and synchronized coordination between the concerned Field Office and Headquarters, which includes the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit, the Office of the Director-General and the specialized sections for strategic planning and resource mobilisation in the Bureau of Strategic Planning. The action in response to the crisis needs to be synchronised and addressed as a priority by all entities concerned, taking into account the frameworks under which the UN System and Peacekeeping Mission is operating at country level.

5) Rapid Response Mechanisms:

As shown by the response to the crisis in Mali and as pointed out by the internal audit on Frameworks and Capacities for the Organization's Emergency Response, UNESCO lacks adequate frameworks and mechanisms for rapid response.

Lesson learned: To deploy timely and effective crises response the Organization needs to establish response mechanisms that enable the rapid mobilization of resources and the transfer of adequate capacities from Headquarters to the field.

6) Capacity-building on all UNESCO's Culture Conventions:

UNESCO is able to draw upon a set of seven international normative instruments in the field of culture for its response to crisis situations. However, national stakeholders and partners often have a very poor knowledge and understanding of these instruments, especially in a context of urgent priorities, such as in Mali.

Lesson learned: Advocacy work in terms of clearly explaining and communicating the role of each culture convention to the relevant national stakeholders and international partners and accompanied by the dissemination of guidelines, operational tools and frameworks can contribute to prevention and preparatory work in crisis prone areas. Furthermore, streamlining the provisions of the Culture Conventions into peacebuilding and sustainable development processes requires extensive capacity building at both national and decentralised governance levels.

Annex: Snapshot of UNESCO's activities in Mali 2014 – 2016

Culture activities are highlighted in grey.

Project	Budget
<u>Appui de l'Union Européenne à la réhabilitation des patrimoines endommagés dans les régions nord du Mali</u>	US\$ 670,241
<u>atelier de sensibilisation pour la préservation et le renforcement de la scolarisation des filles dans les régions de Gao, Tombouctou et Kidal</u>	US\$ 23,000
<u>Emergency education interventions to build resilience in the Sahel: Support for Mali</u>	US\$ 500,000
<u>Empowering Adolescent Girls and Young Women through Education in Mali</u>	US\$ 5,000,000
<u>Etude sur la question enseignante au Mali</u>	US\$ 50,000
<u>La finalisation de la Politique Nationale de Science, Technologie et Innovation au Mali (PNSTI)</u>	US\$ 14,600
<u>La promotion des filières scientifiques et techniques pour les filles</u>	US\$ 10,000
<u>National Consultation on Culture and Development in Mali</u>	US\$ 40,000
<u>Patrimoines endommagés des régions nord du Mali : Sauvegarde, Reconstruction, Réhabilitation, Revitalisation.</u>	US\$ 1,100,000
<u>Préserver et valoriser notre patrimoine exceptionnel (Fonds Culturel Arts & Ouvrages)</u>	US\$ 420,000
<u>Promoting regional partnerships and research for integration and implementation of Education 2030</u>	US\$ 190,280
<u>Renforcement des capacités des forces armées et institutions publiques pour la protection des biens culturels dans le contexte de conflit armée au Mali</u>	US\$ 31,000
<u>Renforcement des politiques et de la gouvernance de l'Etat malien en matière de ressources en eau pour l'atteinte des Objectifs du Développement Durable</u>	US\$ 22,000
<u>Soutien de l'UNESCO à la mise en œuvre d'un programme national culture de la paix au Mali</u>	US\$ 42,450
<u>Special Account for the safeguarding of World Heritage properties in Mali</u>	US\$ 287,843
<u>Support Social Rehabilitation of Child soldiers victims of the Malian crisis</u>	US\$ 190,299

Source: UNESCO Transparency Portal