



The programme for Heritage Emergency Preparedness and Response, implemented through the

HERITAGE EMERGENCY FUND

1. The impacts of disasters and conflicts on heritage and their consequences on sustainable development, peace and security

World Heritage properties and cultural and natural heritage resources, including intangible expressions, are increasingly affected by disasters and conflict situations throughout the world. These threats to cultural heritage can result from a variety of underlying factors, including natural hazards, climate change and political instability, which often reinforce each other.

Earthquakes, fires, floods, landslides and typhoons have caused over the past several years extensive damage to, if not the complete loss of, innumerable cultural and natural heritage sites, museums, cultural institutions and intangible practices. In a conflict situation, heritage is particularly at risk, both because of its inherent vulnerability and for its high symbolic value. As culture is often used as a target and a source of financing of conflict, the protection of cultural heritage also has important implications in terms of international security.

Often, heritage is caught in the crossfire of hostilities between belligerent parties, or it is the victim of pillage and looting in times of chaos and political unrest. More troublingly, heritage is at times the target of deliberate destruction, with the intention of obliterating the very identity of individuals and groups, severing their links to the land and breaking the bonds that keep them together as a community. This occurred in 2001 with the Buddha statues of Bamiyan, in Afghanistan, and as we have tragically witnessed, in the northern region of Mali, as well as in Syria and Iraq more recently.

In addition to the loss of the unique records of our past of great historic, aesthetic and scientific value, the destruction of cultural and natural patrimony has a very negative impact on communities, since it affects the ability of heritage to serve as a fundamental resource for their sustainable development. It also impedes its ability to act as an anchor for their spirituality and identity, around which affected communities can rebuild in times of distress.

Immediately after a disaster and particularly during active conflict periods, people often find in heritage an essential element of material and psychological support. To be able to access one's heritage – be it a religious building, a historic city, an archaeological site or even a landscape – or simply to know that it is still there, is not only a human right. It also provides a much-needed sense of continuity and supports resilience. In complex emergency situations, culture can moreover be a vehicle to foster tolerance, mutual understanding and reconciliation, mitigating social tensions and preventing renewed escalation into violent conflict. Film, dance and theatre, for example, have been used to build mutual understanding among diverse refugee communities.

In the post-disaster and post-conflict phase, the rehabilitation of heritage may contribute to strengthening the resilience of a community, and to healing the scars caused by war, by helping vulnerable people recover a sense of dignity and empowerment. The acknowledgment and restoration of heritage, based on shared values and interests, may also foster mutual recognition, tolerance and respect among different communities, which is a precondition to a society's peaceful development.

Heritage, on the other hand, is not just a liability when it comes to disasters. A vast literature has shown that well-maintained heritage sites and structures may reduce disaster risks. They transmit traditional knowledge associated with building techniques and environmental management.

Protecting heritage from the risks associated with disasters and situations of conflict, including when lives are at risk and humanitarian concerns become a priority, is therefore a fundamental development imperative and security issue.

2. The challenges to be addressed

Within this context, many countries are both unaware of the risks affecting their heritage and unprepared to address them. Typically, heritage site managers are preoccupied with day to day issues, or with raising funds for ongoing restoration or conservation work. Little opportunity or leeway is provided for disaster risk management concerns and even less for possible situations of armed conflict. Despite preparation for potential disasters, they do often occur and inflict considerable damage.

Once disaster strikes, the capacity to respond quickly is often lacking. This results in lost opportunities to control and reduce the extent of the damage. When a disaster occurs or when conflict situations arise, heritage is indeed often exposed to greater and unforeseen risks which may lead to catastrophic consequences, unless immediate safeguarding measures are taken. These risks include the collapse of destabilized structures, the looting of materials or collections and the loss of precious archival records.

UNESCO, in cooperation with a number of partners such as ICOMOS, IUCN, ICCROM and ICOM,¹ has developed a variety of tools over the years to manage risks to heritage from disaster and conflict situations. These organizations address all stages of the disaster risk management cycle, that is, before, during and after an emergency situation. Activities implemented range from the development of guidance materials² and training programmes to response and recovery initiatives in the field.

The unprecedented attacks against culture and heritage, notably in the Middle East, together with the increased occurrence of disasters have, however, called for new and more effective approaches to meet these challenges.

¹ ICOMOS is the International Council of Monuments and Sites; IUCN is the International Union for the Conservation of Nature; ICCROM is the International Centre for the Study and the Protection of Cultural Property; ICOM is the International Council of Museums.

² See, for example, the Resource Manual on Managing Disaster Risks at World Heritage properties (<http://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/630/>); the UNESCO Cultural Heritage Protection Handbooks Series covering movable heritage (see: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/movable-heritage-outreach-programme/cultural-heritage-protection-handbooks-in-local-languages/>); and the UNESCO/ICOM Museum Studies Training Programme (see: <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/museums/unescoicom-museum-studies-training-package/>).

Therefore, at its 38th General Conference in November 2015, 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*, and, at its 39th General Conference in November 2017, the related *Addendum concerning emergencies associated with disasters caused by natural and human-induced hazards*. In 2017, an *Action Plan* for their implementation was endorsed by the UNESCO Executive Board at its 20st session.

The Strategy builds on the six culture conventions administered by UNESCO by strengthening their synergy and operational capacity to achieve the dual objectives:

- To strengthen Member States' ability to prevent, mitigate and recover the loss of cultural heritage and diversity as a result of conflicts and disasters.
- To incorporate the protection of culture into humanitarian action, security strategies and peace-building processes.

This involves strengthening existing collaboration with traditional partners and establishing new forms of cooperation with actors beyond the field of culture such as the humanitarian and security sectors.

By protecting cultural heritage and promoting cultural pluralism in emergency situations, UNESCO contributes towards protecting human rights, preventing conflicts and building peace, upholding international humanitarian law and enhancing resilience among communities.

3. A Programme for Heritage Emergency Preparedness and Response

In order to be able to assist the Member States of UNESCO in responding to critical situations and managing disaster and conflict-related risks to their heritage, a **Programme for Emergency Preparedness and Response**, coordinated by a dedicated Unit within the Culture Sector of the Organization, has been established, in close cooperation with the relevant entities at Headquarters and UNESCO Field Offices.

This programme concerns **emergencies affecting culture**, defined as follows:

a situation of imminent threat to heritage, resulting from natural or human-made hazards, including armed conflict, in which a Member State finds itself unable to overcome the severe consequences of the situation on the protection, promotion and transmission of heritage or on efforts to foster creativity and protect the diversity of cultural expressions, and where immediate action is required.

The programme is supported through the **Heritage Emergency Fund**, whose mandate is to address, through short-term and first-aid activities, the critical needs that arise between the occurrence of an emergency and the implementation of long-term and large-scale recovery projects. It thus fills a strategic gap, as it supports critical interventions that rely upon funding immediately available and in standby, and that in consequence cannot be sustained under traditional financing mechanisms, which are based upon time-taking planning processes. By filling this gap, the HEF plays an effect of catalyst of further funding, as those interventions provide the necessary baseline information for the development of recovery projects.

The programme supports short-term small-scale **activities** in three main areas:

3.1 Preparedness

The effects of a disaster or conflict can be mitigated if appropriate measures are taken to anticipate them in the first place. Typical activities include:

- Provision of technical assistance for the implementation of emergency preparedness and risk mitigation interventions on cultural heritage and diversity
- Development of capacity-reinforcement materials on the implementation of emergency preparedness and risk mitigation interventions on cultural heritage and diversity
- Organization of training workshops in different Regions, on the implementation of emergency preparedness and risk mitigation interventions on cultural heritage and diversity, for professionals in cultural heritage as well as disaster risk reduction, crisis response and emergency management, including women
- Development of studies on cultural heritage and diversity in emergencies
- Organization of or participation in coordination meetings with potential or current partners
- Development or update and dissemination of awareness-raising materials on culture in emergencies
- Advocacy for the importance to protect and promote cultural heritage and diversity in emergencies at information and statutory meetings, or promotional and fund-raising events.

3.2 Response

When disaster strikes, there is no time to waste in identifying exactly what the situation calls for. By sending a small team of experts within hours of a disaster, UNESCO will be able to quickly assess the needs and advise government agencies and international donors on the most critical actions required to avoid the further loss of heritage.

Furthermore, it is within the first few days or two to three weeks that the worst can be avoided in a disaster, if material support can be quickly provided. This could consist of the erection of temporary structures to stabilize weakened buildings, the provision of new equipment to replace damaged ones, or the rapid reconstruction of field stations to ensure that the site management authority can maintain a presence in sensitive areas.

The recovery / rehabilitation stage can be a long process requiring the participation of teams of experts as well as the establishment of multi-stakeholder management group to support national authorities and coordinate the relief effort. Activities in the context of response include:

- Deployment of rapid assessment and advisory missions, including Post-Disaster Needs Assessments (PDNA) and Recovery and Peace-Building Assessments (RPBA)
- Implementation of urgent interventions on the ground
- Documentation and monitoring activities

- Implementation of Post-Conflict or Post-Disaster training activities targeting professionals in cultural heritage as well as disaster risk management, crisis response and emergency management, including women
- Organization of or participation in coordination, advocacy or fundraising meetings
- Temporary staff support to UNESCO Field Offices for emergency response.

3.3 Mobilization of resources

In addition to the above components, the programme also involves initiatives for communication and outreach, aiming at mobilizing resources for this strategic area of work. These include:

- Development or update and dissemination of promotional and fundraising materials related to the Heritage Emergency Fund
- Presentation of the Heritage Emergency Fund and its programme of activities at information meetings, statutory meetings or promotional events.

4. Implementation, monitoring and evaluation

The implementation of the programme is coordinated by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Unit (EPR), based at UNESCO Headquarters and operating within the Culture and Emergencies entity of the Culture Sector. The Unit plays a coordinating role and concentrate its input in the planning stages of the interventions and in the immediate response, in coordination with the responsible Headquarters and Field officers.

Periodic evaluations of the programme are undertaken in accordance with UNESCO's evaluation policy and guidelines.