



# CULTURE & COVID-19

## Impact & Response Tracker

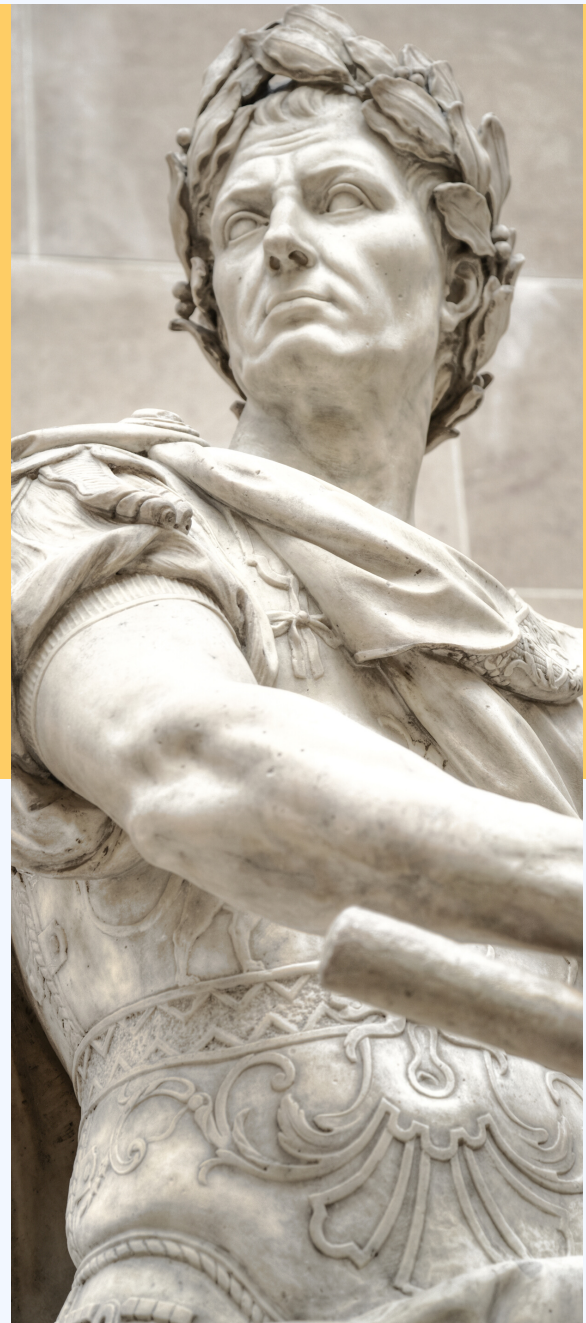
### THIS REGULAR UPDATE

is produced by UNESCO as a snapshot on the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the culture sector worldwide and on the responses initiated at the national, local and regional level. This tracker is not intended to be an exhaustive presentation of measures but instead draws on a variety of sources to provide a broad overview of the evolving situation worldwide.

### IMPACT

According to the International Council on Museums (ICOM), 95% of the estimated 60,000 museums worldwide are closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the immediate term, the closure of museums poses great challenges in terms of access to culture. Whilst many museums around the world have been able to adapt through online solutions such as virtual tours or engaging the public through social media challenges, this is not possible for all museums across the world due to limited capacities or digital infrastructure. For example, the world's most visited museum (9.3 million visitors annually), the Louvre (France) has seen a four-fold increase in virtual connections, to 400,000 per day, whilst hundreds of people have recreated famous works of art using ordinary household objects.

There are also immediate security risks to the collections as many museums only have a minimum of staff on site, as we have seen with the theft of the "The Parsonage Garden at Nuenen in Spring" Van Gogh painting from the Singer Laren Museum in the Netherlands on 30 March. UNESCO's recommendations provide useful guidance for Member States, as well as art collectors, and ICOM and Interpol have issued recommendations for museums to face the current crisis (See "Find out more" section).





A picture of the economic cost of the museum closures is also beginning to emerge through surveys, particularly with data from Europe and North America, as data remains limited elsewhere. Preliminary findings of the Network of European Museums and Organizations show that while some museums have found their budget to be minimally impacted as of yet, other museums, especially the larger museums and the museums in touristic areas, have reported a loss of income of 75-80%, with weekly losses adding up to hundreds of thousands of euros. Many smaller, privately run museums rely almost exclusively on ticket sales for their financing so may lose their entire budget for the period of closure.

**MUSEUMS IN THE US ARE LOSING AT LEAST \$33 MILLION DAILY DUE TO CLOSURES. UP TO 30%—MOSTLY THOSE IN SMALL AND RURAL COMMUNITIES—WILL NOT REOPEN WITHOUT EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID.**

AMERICAN ALLIANCE OF MUSEUMS



**“ AT THE BLACKITUDE MUSEUM, WE HAVE HAD TO FURLOUGH A CERTAIN NUMBER OF PEOPLE.**

TCHUISSEU NANA CHRISTIAN, GENERAL DIRECTOR

Even when museums reopen, some institutions are contingency planning for significantly reduced visitor numbers for the next 18 months, due to the reduction in international tourism, as well as school visits. This is likely to have a significant impact on jobs. Preliminary data from the US, for example, shows that over 3000 people working in museums have already been made redundant (museums support 726,000 jobs and contribute US\$50bn to the national economy per year). Furthermore, due to reduced staffing and safety risks, the opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum has been postponed until 2021. UNESCO is conducting a worldwide survey to assess the impact of the pandemic on the museum sector worldwide and will share information when it becomes available. In Ibero-America a survey is ongoing by the Ibermuseos Programme, a cooperation and integration initiative of the Ibero-American countries for the support and coordination of public policies for museums. This survey will allow the region to better understand the current impact on their museums.





## EXAMPLES OF GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Several governments have already announced measures to address the social and economic implications of the pandemic. Some of these measures are financial, targeting the whole economy or - increasingly - packages particularly targeting the cultural sector. There are also several creative initiatives to ensure continued access to culture in these times of confinement.

### INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

**Germany** is continuing its support through aid to cultural and creative entrepreneurs in the Middle East and Africa

### SHARING KNOWLEDGE

**Bahrain** held an online press conference on its recent archaeological discoveries, including what is thought to be the legendary Dilmun Garden

### ARTISTS FOR THE COMMON GOOD

In **Jamaica**, the government raised US\$50m in a telethon with musicians and comedians who performed for free to raise money for healthcare

### AWARENESS RAISING

In **Vietnam**, the Ministry of Culture has commissioned a documentary on tackling COVID-19, keeping a film crew in employment

### DOORS OPEN TO CULTURE

In **Senegal**, the Museum of Black Civilizations is filming guided tours of all the exhibitions to be broadcast on television and online

# #dontgoviral

### ARTISTS AS ADVOCATES

WE NEED TO #SHAREINFORMATION TO COMBAT DISINFORMATION, MISINFORMATION, AND LACK OF INFORMATION

- BOBI WINE

MUSICAL ARTIST AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, UGANDA



Mobility restriction measures have curbed populations' access to cultural heritage. The repercussions of the restrictions are also major for intangible cultural heritage, with festivals and cultural events being cancelled or postponed. The survey and web platform on living heritage and the COVID-19 pandemic, launched by UNESCO, shows the effects on bearers and practitioners of living heritage around the world: In **Japan**, for example, the Yamahoko floats procession at the Kyoto Gion Festival, which has been held since the 9th century, will be cancelled. In **Zambia**, the Kuomboka ceremony, which usually takes place in March or early April when the rivers are full or flooded, will not take place this year. The cancellation of such events not only affects the social and cultural lives of communities but can result in loss of income for many bearers and practitioners. For example, the earthenware pottery in **Botswana** is still being produced but the pandemic has interrupted the markets where they are sold.

At the same time, living heritage can be a source of resilience in such difficult circumstances, as people continue to draw inspiration, joy and solidarity from practising their cultures. The survey also shows that transmission of living heritage to younger generations in crisis situations help to boost mental health in the immediate term, as well as benefit the longer-term recovery of communities.

### LIVING HERITAGE PROVIDING SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS



Living heritage, with its wide array of local knowledge on sustainable use of resources, is providing new ways to enhance and sustain livelihoods in times of crisis. Due to the halt in tourism, the government of **Palau** is promoting local businesses in tree planting and fisheries for conservation, as advised by the elders of the community. In **Dominica**, the government is encouraging backyard traditional gardening to tackle food insecurity and maintain local traditions of gardening and cuisine. In **Colombia**, **Costa Rica** and **Jamaica** there has been a resurgence in interest in traditional recipes using local ingredients. There are also reports that in **Lebanon**, there is increased interest in a return to traditional organic farming, particularly amongst young people.

## CREATIVE WAYS OF SHARING LIVING HERITAGE

# 2

Many communities around the world have found digital solutions to share intangible cultural heritage in accordance with social distancing measures. For example, the government in **Czechia** organised the Prague Spring Festival to be celebrated in virtual form. Traditional music groups in **Costa Rica**, the **United Kingdom** and **France** have been rehearsing or performing online. Certain initiatives focus on enhancing the inter-generational transmission of living heritage while giving online access to relevant resources. Members of the Shui Ethnic group in Guizhou province, **China** have been live-streaming courses on traditional horsetail embroidery. At the same time, in the **British Virgin Islands**, the government is conducting an oral history project with elderly island residents via Zoom, recognising that the elderly are vulnerable and that “every time an older person dies, it is a library that burns”, to paraphrase the words of Malayan writer Amadou Hampate Ba.

“ **THIS CRISIS IS MAKING US MORE CARING AND MORE RESILIENT**  
DATO HAJI AMINUDDIN IHSAN ABIDIN, MINISTER OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS,  
BRUNEI DARUSSALAM (UNESCO ONLINE MINISTERIAL MEETING, 22 APRIL)

## RESPONSES AND RESILIENCE TO CRISIS

# 3

Many elements of intangible cultural heritage are being adapted in the context of the pandemic to support public health responses. In Sri Lanka, traditional strong puppet drama tell stories of confinement and social distancing. Similarly, in **Laos PDR**, the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre reports that effigies are appearing in the countryside, hanging from the fences of homes to protect against COVID-19 and as a sign of confinement. In some cases, people are responding by creating new rituals. In Europe, people applaud healthcare workers at the same time every night for their tireless service and teddy bears appear in windows for children to point out along walks around the neighbourhood. These collective rituals give meaning in times of uncertainty and are powerful tools for resilience and solidarity during crisis.



## FIND OUT MORE...

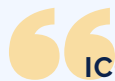
UNESCO works with its partners on various aspects of culture. Many have made public statements or calls for action. We will feature in this section a few each week. Full statements are available on partner organizations' respective pages.



MUSEUMS HAVE REMAINED OPEN DURING OTHER CRISES IN THE PAST, THEIR SPACES AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITIES TO EXCHANGE, MEET AND HEAL... OUR FIELD IS BEING FORCED TO CHANGE AT AN ACCELERATED PACE. WE HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY AND THE POWER TO MAKE THE END OF THIS STORY BETTER THAN IT CAN OTHERWISE BE.

ICOM

**ICOM** international  
council  
of museums



ICCROM WOULD ALSO LIKE TO EXPRESS ITS CONCERNS FOR THE INCREASING VULNERABILITY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION, AS WELL AS OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES AND LIVING HERITAGE, WHICH MAY CAUSE HARDSHIPS FOR CRAFTSPERSONS AND ARTISTS, AMONG MANY OTHER CULTURE PROFESSIONS. ICCROM CALLS UPON [THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY] TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE ESSENTIAL QUALITY OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR HUMAN WELLBEING.

ICCROM

### USEFUL LINKS

- [ICOM-Interpol Recommendations](#)
- [UNESCO International Code of Ethics for Dealers in Cultural Property \(1999\)](#)
- [ICOM Codes of Ethics](#)
- [Interpol Works of Art Unit](#)
- [UNESCO Recommendation concerning the protection and promotion of museums and collections \(2015\)](#)
- [Intangible Cultural Heritage in emergencies](#)
- [Dive into Intangible Cultural Heritage platform](#)
- [Intangible Cultural Heritage capacity-building materials](#)





FIND OUT MORE...

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NEW



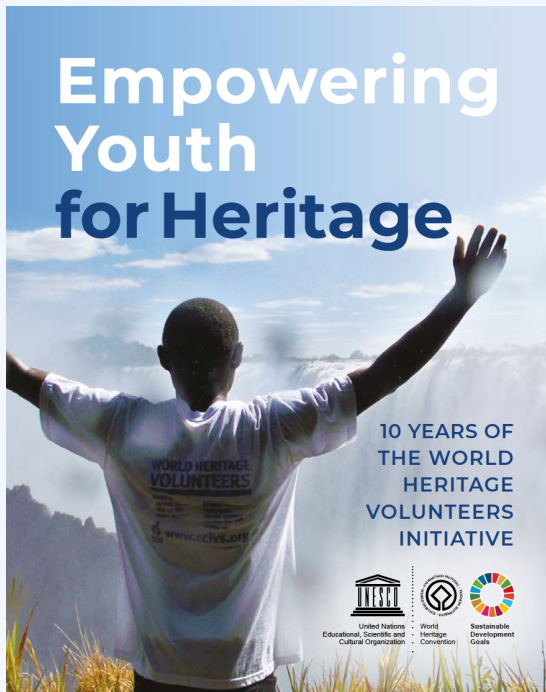
## NEW UNESCO PUBLICATION FOR WORLD PRESS FREEDOM DAY

The profound disruptions to cultural life and livelihoods caused by COVID-19 have revealed and magnified the creative sector's pre-existing volatility. It has also made clear that artistic freedom is as essential to the flourishing of cultures as it is to the functioning of democratic societies. "Freedom & Creativity" explores issues of artistic freedom, including legal rights, as well as the social and economic rights of artists and cultural professionals.

Report available in these 3 languages



JOIN THE #RESILIART MOVEMENT TO SUPPORT ARTISTS IN THE FACE OF COVID-19



## IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH FOR HERITAGE: NEW UNESCO PUBLICATION

This retrospective of the first 10 years of the World Heritage Volunteers Initiative traces the programme's development from its humble beginnings in 2008 and presents good practices learned after work at 138 sites inscribed on the World Heritage List and sites on the Tentative Lists in 60 countries, involving 5000 volunteers. It highlights the impact that the rich hands-on and heritage-focused activities have on the youth and how this intercultural learning experience influences their development on a personal, societal, and heritage level.

Report available in English



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