

UNESCO HERITAGE EMERGENCY FUND

A lifeline for culture in times of crisis

During emergencies, culture and the cultural rights of affected communities are particularly vulnerable due to their symbolic significance. However, culture also plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and recovery.

To address these threats, UNESCO established the Heritage Emergency Fund (HEF) in 2015. This fund is a flexible and rapid-response mechanism designed to protect culture during emergencies. It supports preparedness and response activities that mitigate the impact of emergencies on both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, cultural institutions and artistic creation.



WHY HEF?

- **Rapid:** With a straightforward request submission and evaluation process, funds are quickly decentralized to UNESCO's Field Offices, enabling swift interventions.
- **Flexible:** The non-earmarked nature of the Fund allows UNESCO to intervene as needed, regardless of location or method.
- **Interdisciplinary and intersectoral:** The Fund supports activities across all domains of UNESCO Culture Conventions and Recommendations and collaborates with all UNESCO Sectors to address complex needs.
- **Present on the ground:** UNESCO's Field Offices ensure activities align with community and government priorities, adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Sustainable:** By providing capacity-building and rapid seed-funding, the HEF lays the groundwork for informed, large-scale follow-up interventions.



IMPACTS ACROSS THE YEARS

Since its establishment, the HEF has mobilized over **US\$ 16 million**, supporting more than 180 activities in **over 100 countries**, including 35 in Africa and 20 Small Island Developing States (SIDS). It has provided capacity-building for nearly 4,400 people (48% women) and protected nearly 2,400 monuments, including some marked with the Blue Shield emblem. Additionally, it has supported over 40 World Heritage sites, 470 artists, nearly 70 cultural institutions, 30 museums, over 21,000 cultural goods in museum collections, and 3 living heritage practices inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Over 10,000 people have benefited from community outreach and engagement initiatives.

For more information, visit [UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund webpage](#)

PRIORITY AFRICA: SUPPORTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS



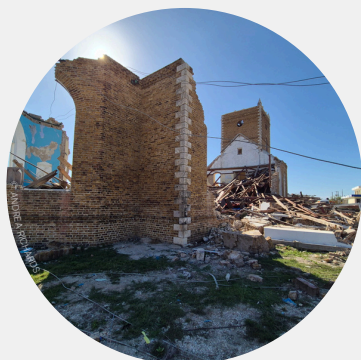
Between 2015 and 2025, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported 35 African countries, making it the leading beneficiary region. In 2025, HEF prioritized Africa within its efforts to strengthen disaster resilience for culture. A focus was placed on climate resilience, by leveraging regional expertise and close collaboration with national authorities. In partnership with the Ecole du patrimoine africain (School of African Heritage), a standardized methodology was developed and applied in Burundi, Equatorial Guinea and São Tomé and Príncipe. This included field assessments, capacity-building and the adoption of national strategies for disaster resilience together with related standard operating procedures.

GENDER EQUALITY: ADDRESSING THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF WOMEN

A gender perspective is integrated in activities supported by the Fund, transforming the lives of girls and women. In 2024-2025 for example, the HEF partnered with Turquoise Mountain to provide on-the-job training to 67 women in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, facilitating mentoring and capacity development of female weaving artisan entrepreneurs. In 2025, UNESCO launched a Survey on Women, Culture and Emergencies. The results of this survey now serve to guide UNESCO, decision makers and civil society organizations in better responding to the needs of women artists, cultural and heritage professionals, and better valorizing their unique strengths to contribute to resilience and recovery.



SIDS: BUILDING RESILIENCE



Out of the 107 countries that have benefited from the Fund since its establishment, 20 are Small Island Developing States (SIDS). Activities for SIDS included post-disaster needs assessments in Cabo Verde, Cuba and Jamaica (2025); strengthening climate resilience for culture in São Tomé and Príncipe (2025); and urgent interventions to support the post-earthquake rehabilitation of the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (2025-2026).

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