

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 inherent fragility and symbolic significance. However, culture also plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and recovery. It contributes to social cohesion, economic development, psychological healing, and reconciliation within communities.

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.



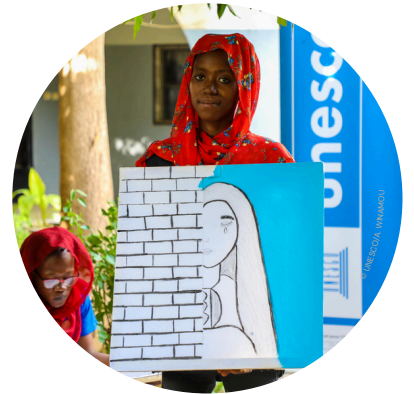
WHY HEF?

- **Rapid:** With a straightforward request submission process and efficient evaluation, 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 the six Culture Conventions and collaborates with all UNESCO Sectors to address complex needs.
- **Present on the ground:** UNESCO's Field Offices ensure activities align with community priorities and are endorsed by local authorities, adapting to changing circumstances.
- **Sustainable:** By providing capacity-building and rapid seed-funding during emergencies, 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\$ 15.6 million**, supporting **more than 170 activities** in nearly **100 countries**, including 28 in Africa and 17 Small Island Developing States (SIDS). It has provided capacity-building for nearly **3,500 people** (44% women) and protected **over 1,300 monuments**, including some marked with the Blue Shield emblem. Additionally, it has supported **over 40 World Heritage sites**, **470 artists**, **50 cultural institutions**, **20 museums**, **21,000 cultural goods in museum collections**, and **2 living heritage practices** inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. **Over 7,000 people** have benefited from community outreach and engagement initiatives.



PRIORITY AFRICA: SUPPORTING EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Between 2015 and 2024, the HEF supported 28 African countries, making Africa the leading beneficiary region, alongside Asia and the Pacific. In 2024, amid increased risks from extreme heat, desertification, and seasonal flash floods, the HEF facilitated the sustainable safeguarding of the documentary heritage of the desert libraries in Chinguetti, Mauritania, part of the UNESCO World Heritage site "Ancient *Ksour* of Ouadane, Chinguetti, Tichitt and Oualata". Support included providing storage facilities to 13 family libraries, comprising 11 library buildings. These facilities included shelving units, storage boxes, air-conditioning units, chairs, computers, printers, and new signage. Additionally, the 11 library buildings were marked with the distinctive emblem of the 1954 Hague Convention, the first time cultural buildings in the Maghreb region were officially marked with the Blue Shield emblem. This recognition underscores the cultural value of the libraries and highlights their protected status under international law.

GENDER EQUALITY: ADDRESSING THE SPECIFIC NEEDS OF WOMEN



A gender perspective is integrated into both the overall approach of the Fund and the implementation of its activities. This includes considering the impact on beneficiary communities and involving women in preparedness, response interventions, and capacity-building. Since 2015, HEF-supported activities with a capacity-building component have benefited 3,500 people, 44% of whom were women. Additionally, some activities have a gender transformative component. For example, in 2022, the HEF partnered with the Finnish NGO Artists at Risk to support 38 Ukrainian female artists and their dependents, providing them with safe artistic residencies in 27 cultural institutions across 13 European countries. This initiative allowed them to continue their creative work and connect with peers and audiences.

SIDS: BUILDING RESILIENCE

Out of the 98 countries that have benefited from the Fund since its establishment, 17 are Small Island Developing States (SIDS), representing 17.4%. These include 9 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 2 in Africa, and 6 in Asia-Pacific. Activities for SIDS included post-disaster needs assessments in Belize (2023), Dominica (2017), Haiti (2016), and Vanuatu (2023); participation in regional trainings, such as African peacekeepers on cultural property protection (2017); risk assessments on underwater cultural heritage, like the Chuuk Lagoon site in Micronesia (2017); and participatory assessments of needs related to intangible cultural heritage, such as within the Ambae community in Vanuatu (2018).



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