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## **A survey on damage assessment in historic Yemeni urban fabrics finalized**



Field visits covered private buildings and were made possible thanks to involvement of local communities in the four cities



A survey on damage assessment in historic Yemeni urban fabrics finalized Yemen is home to a number of landmarks with valuable cultural and historical importance. Several of these have been recognized by UNESCO as World Heritage Sites because of their Outstanding Universal Value and importance to the collective interests of humanity. In the context of the ongoing conflict, UNESCO and the Social Fund for Development have finalized a comprehensive damage assessment survey focusing on four historic cities (Sanaa, Shibam, Zabid and Aden). This survey is part of the regional EU-funded Project “Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace”. It was implemented in close partnership with the General Organization for the Preservation of Historic Cities in Yemen (GOPHCY) and the General Organization of Antiquities and Museums (GOAM).

According to Ms. Anna Paolini, Director of UNESCO Regional Office for Arab Gulf States and Yemen, “In times of conflict, culture is particularly vulnerable to collateral damage, looting and deterioration. Because of the strong connection between culture and peoples’ identities, the deterioration of heritage could represent obstacles to dialogue, peace and reconciliation”. UNESCO’s senior consultant in Yemen, Mr. Nabil Monassar, highlights that “the cultural heritage of Yemen continues to be vulnerable, owing to the current security situation, ongoing social change, and lack of resources for both heritage management and physical conservation.”

The comprehensive damage assessment survey shed the light on the diversified urban typologies and states of conservation of the four above-mentioned cities and analyzed the varying degrees of deterioration that are linked to the conflict or to the lack of maintenance and to governance gaps (economic conditions, lack of maintenance, weak administrative monitoring). The levels of damages were classified into categories and applied to public and

private buildings, public spaces, equipment as well as infrastructures (water, sanitation, pavement, telecommunication and electricity). The survey also provides recommendations for immediate and long-term interventions and outlines costs of urgent repairs and restorations.

The survey relies on cutting-edge methodologies, combining rapid-assessment tools and digital applications developed by UNESCO with satellite visualizations techniques. A significant number of local experts including young people were involved in the field assessments that required consultations of local communities. The findings of the damage assessment will serve as a foundation of future rehabilitation plans. UNESCO will use those findings to determine priority intervention sites through cash-for-work schemes in the target cities.

### **In Focus: Emergency works implemented in Sanaa Museum**

As part of this UNESCO/EU/SFD partnership, pilot emergency works were also implemented in the National Museum of Sanaa aimed at stabilizing and securing the building. The building suffered from collateral damages following airstrikes that happened in neighboring areas, resulting in cracks for both walls and ceilings. This caused a leakage of rainwater into the building. The works also included windows repairs and plaster works. In addition to those interventions, UNESCO set up a capacity-building program on preventive conservation of museums collection. A first training took place in Amman in July 2019 and benefitted to 9 museum professionals from Yemen.

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