



# UNESCO

## Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in

### INDIA



Restoring the *Koothampalam*, the traditional performing space for *Koodiyattam* © UNESCO / Nepathya

## Post-flood emergency response for intangible cultural heritage and Disaster Risk Reduction for natural heritage in Kerala (2019-2020)

In 2018, UNESCO, with the support of the HEF, led the Post Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) for the culture sector of the State of Kerala in India. The PDNA found that various elements of intangible cultural heritage in Kerala, especially *Koodiyattam*, a 2000-year old Sanskrit theatre tradition included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, was severely affected. The PDNA also identified that the floods had affected three of the seven clusters of the World Heritage property of the 'Western Ghats'. In this context, the HEF supported a follow-up activity in 2019, which aimed on the one hand, to support *Koodiyattam* artists as they continued their practice and on the other hand, to assess indigenous knowledge in the Western Ghats related to disaster preparedness. For the *Koodiyattam* component, 58 new costumes were purchased, while 41 sets of old costumes, 20 musical instruments, and

two office items that had been damaged in floods were restored. One traditional performance space was also restored by three traditional craftsmen and nine technicians. For the component at the Western Ghats, consultative meetings were organised in Trivandrum, Kerala, from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> June 2019 with the Rebuilding Kerala Initiative (RKI) and the Forestry Department. An initial agreement to commence fieldwork in the second half of 2019 was postponed due to the arrival of new floods. As a result, the fieldwork to assess indigenous knowledge for disaster preparedness was finalised in the first quarter of 2020.

## Post-disaster needs assessment for culture in Kerala (2018)

Following record levels of rain in the State of Kerala, India, in August 2018, which led to some of the worst floods in the State's history, UNESCO launched a Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) to determine the impact on the local cultural heritage sector. Historic monuments and archaeological sites – including the natural World Heritage property “Western Ghats” - as well as intangible and movable cultural heritage suffered serious damage. The districts of Alappuzha, Pathanamthitta, Kottayam, Idukki, Ernakulum, Thrissur and Wayanad were among the worst affected. UNESCO, through the Heritage Emergency Fund, worked in consultation with the Culture Department of the State of Kerala to formulate a recovery action plan and strategy for the protection and restoration of the region's cultural heritage. The Heritage Emergency Fund supported a mission to Kerala which resulted in the elaboration of the culture chapter of the PDNA, which included a detailed estimation of the damage, losses, and recovery needs for the cultural heritage sector of Kerala; key recommendations to improve resilience to future disasters; and an overall recovery strategy for the sector.