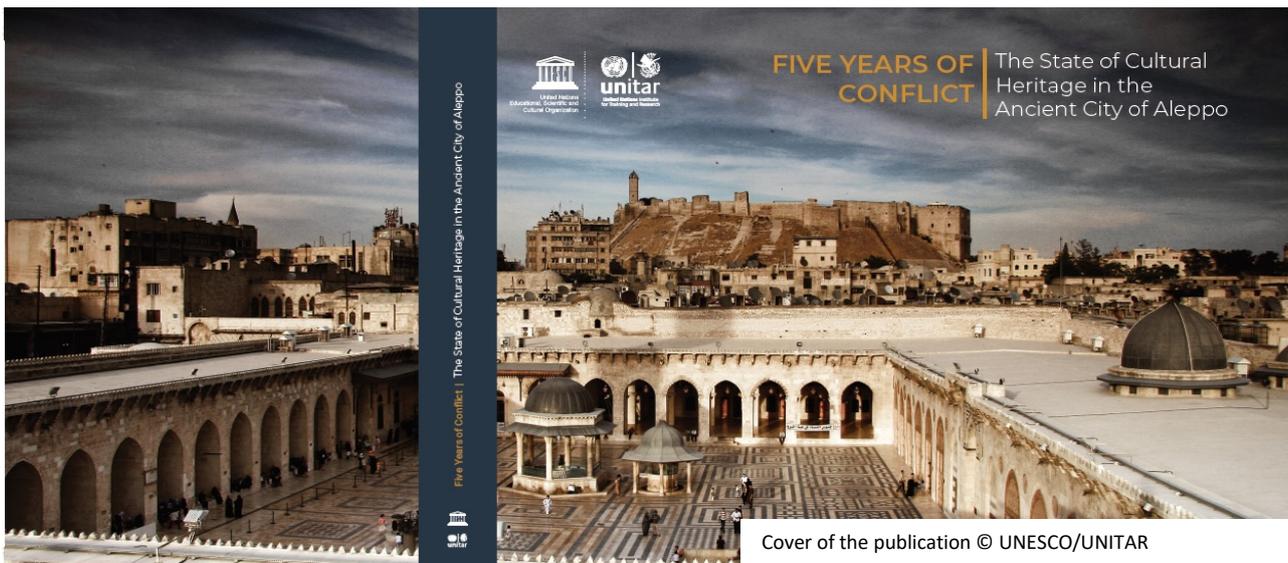




UNESCO

Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in the SYRIAN ARAB REPUBLIC



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Coordination of expert network to support the documentation and mapping of Syrian cultural resources at risk in Northern Lebanon (2019)

The documentation and mapping of Syrian cultural resources at risk was a component of the EU–UNESCO project ‘Protecting Cultural Heritage and Diversity in Complex Emergencies for Stability and Peace.’ The implementation period of this project ended on 30 September 2019. The component of the project concerning Syria, aimed to support the realization of cultural rights and to foster social cohesion and stability among communities affected by the Syrian armed conflict. A notable aspect of this project came through the development of a methodology and a training to collect and map the cultural resources of displaced Syrian communities in Northern Lebanon. In this context and with the aim of building on the project’s momentum and results, the HEF supported the establishment of a network of individual experts and representatives of development and humanitarian organizations. This was done in order to continue supporting the project’s overarching aims and to lead, in a coordinated manner, future actions relating to the safeguarding of Syrian cultural resources. UNESCO subsequently organized a number of meetings with the expert network in order to discuss the scope of possible future actions aimed at enhancing the preparedness of displaced Syrian communities and the safeguarding of their cultural resources. As a result of the meetings, a project proposal titled ‘Supporting Cultural Resources among Forcibly Displaced Syrians in Lebanon’ was developed. This project builds on the achievements of the EU–UNESCO project, while identifying new opportunities for strengthening collaboration and implementation modalities among institutions identified by the expert network. It is intended for the project proposal to be presented to a number of donors in order to receive funding for its implementation in 2020–21.

Publication “Five years of conflict: The state of cultural heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo” (2018-2019)

UNESCO and the Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT) of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) published ‘Five Years of Conflict: The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo’ in English in 2018, as well as in French and Arabic in 2019. The assessment draws on satellite imagery to provide the first detailed account of the devastation wrought on the World Heritage property “Ancient City of Aleppo” in the wake of years of armed conflict. Using satellite images and applying a scientific methodology, UNESCO’s cultural heritage experts worked closely with imagery analysts from UNITAR-UNOSAT, as well as historians, architects and archaeologists, to assess and analyze damage to the city, notably in terms of the historical losses the damage represents. Produced with the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund and in partnership with Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa (EAMENA), the publication assessed a total of 518 sites for damage, including the Citadel and the city’s Great Mosque (Omayyad Mosque) and provides a solid technical basis for the future planning of rehabilitation works, including in the framework of UN-led efforts. The publication, co-funded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, shows that more than 10 percent of the historic buildings of Aleppo have been destroyed, while over 50 percent of all buildings assessed showed severe to moderate damage. The Heritage Emergency Fund also supported the organization of a side event at the 41st session of the World Heritage Committee in Krakow (Poland) in 2017, which raised awareness of the damage to the Ancient City of Aleppo, as well as on the potential of new technologies for the safeguarding of cultural heritage. The Ancient City of Aleppo served as a case study, and elements of the report were presented, including 3D models of cultural assets of the city, as well as data storage and management solutions proposed by EAMENA.

Training to counter antiquities trafficking in the Mashreq (2018)

To counter the phenomenon of illicit trafficking of antiquities and to protect cultural heritage, UNESCO organized the training workshop “Countering Antiquities Trafficking in the Mashreq – A training programme for specialists working to deter cultural property theft and the illicit trafficking of antiquities”, from 16 to 20 April 2018, in Beirut (Lebanon). With the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, the programme aimed at providing governmental authorities, art professionals, academics and decision-makers who work in fragile countries affected by cultural property theft and illicit trafficking of antiquities, with professional skills to counter such phenomena. 31 professionals from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey, including 11 women, benefitted from the training. The 5-day training, animated by experts from the International Institute for the Unification of Private Law (UNIDROIT), INTERPOL, the International Council Of Museums (ICOM), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) as well as the Association for Research into Crimes against Art (ARCA), was structured around four modules, each designed to address issues of common concern in affected source and transit countries.

Monitoring of the state of cultural heritage via satellite imagery (2017-2018)

In the framework of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between UNESCO and UNITAR-UNOSAT in 2016, the Heritage Emergency Fund continued to support the emergency monitoring via satellite imagery of cultural heritage sites. In this context, in 2017 and 2018, satellite imagery was received and analyzed for four cultural properties in the Syrian Arab Republic: the Tetracylon and Roman amphitheatre at the World Heritage property “Site of Palmyra”, the World Heritage property “Ancient Villages of Northern Syria”, the archaeological site of Mari, on the country’s Tentative List, and the archaeological site of Ain Dara.

Support to the coordination and planning of emergency interventions in Aleppo (2017-2018)

In line with the needs prioritized at the Technical Coordination Meeting for Aleppo in 2017 and in the resulting Action Plan, the Heritage Emergency continued to support in 2018 on-site monitoring, coordination and planning of emergency interventions and first rehabilitation measures, through the Programme Coordination staff based in the city. In doing so, UNESCO increased its response capacity and its ability to better assume its leading role in the coordination of efforts in the Ancient City of Aleppo by appointing a dedicated staff member to liaise with local, national and international stakeholders. Monthly reports provided detailed information on the state of conservation of the World Heritage properties in Syria. The Heritage Emergency Fund supported a fact-finding mission to Damascus, Syrian Arab Republic, by the UNESCO Programme Specialist for Syria. The mission, undertaken from 3 to 6 September 2018, allowed identifying priority areas for the cultural sector in Syria.

Coordination of the follow-up to UN Security Council Resolutions 2199 and 2253 (2016 and 2018)

In 2016, a UNESCO Focal Point was supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund to ensure the follow-up of UN Security Council Resolutions 2199 (February 2015) and 2253 (December 2015), concerning a world-wide moratorium on the trade in artefacts of illicit origin from Syria and Iraq. Its purpose also was to provide advice and support to Member States on other issues related to the prevention of illicit trafficking of cultural property from these countries. In 2018, the Heritage Emergency Fund enabled UNESCO to proceed to an analytical assessment of reports from Member States on their implementation of Resolution 2199. These reports revealed the most commonly used trafficking routes and contributed to the establishment of a list of seized artefacts originating in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Yemen.

Emergency consolidation works on the bridge leading to the citadel of Aleppo (2017)

Following extensive clashes within the city, the World Heritage property “Ancient City of Aleppo” sustained severe destruction that left large parts, including the Citadel, heavily damaged. In particular, the 13th century external gate of the Aleppo Citadel, as well as the 700-year-old wooden door, sustained severe damage. In the context of the priority of interventions in the Ancient City of Aleppo identified in the framework of the damage assessment carried out on behalf of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) between May and September 2017, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported emergency consolidation works at the entrance and bridge leading to the Citadel of Aleppo. The consolidation project was initiated on 25 September 2017 and completed on 10 December 2017.

Damage assessment mission to the World Heritage property of the Ancient City of Aleppo (2017)

With the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, and on behalf of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), staff from Aleppo Antiquities Museums (AAM) mapped damage to the built cultural heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo from 26 May to 7 September 2017, with a view to ensuring that future rehabilitation work is compliant with antiquities legislation, regulations and standards. In addition, the intervention allowed for the management of debris and the prioritization of needs for rapid interventions. The team took the necessary measures on the ground, in coordination with the Municipality

of Aleppo, to manage debris not containing archaeological elements in order to clear the streets leading to the Umayyad Mosque and the Aleppo Citadel. Moreover, damage to 170 public historic buildings was assessed in view of their restoration, while valuable fragments of stonework were stored in safe locations.

Technical coordination meeting and Stakeholders meeting for the Ancient City of Aleppo (2017)

Following the improvement of security conditions in the city, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported the organization of a technical coordination meeting with key representatives of international and national stakeholders involved in the documentation, protection, conservation of, and strategic planning for the World Heritage property “Ancient City of Aleppo”. The Technical coordination meeting, held in Beirut, Lebanon from 1 to 3 March 2017 brought together more than 50 participants, including representatives of the DGAM, the Aleppo City Council, the Ministry of Tourism, the Directorate of the Aleppo Awqaf (Ministry of Religious Endowments), NGOs and universities. Participants mapped ongoing initiatives, plans and mechanisms, as well as coordination mechanisms at the international and national levels, defined technical guidelines and identified short, medium and long term technical assistance needs for the recovery plans of the World Heritage property “Ancient City of Aleppo”. The meeting also resulted in the drafting of an Action Plan outlining the most urgent activities for the Ancient City of Aleppo, notably a Coordination Workshop in Aleppo under the umbrella of UNESCO, the recruitment of Programme Coordination staff based in Aleppo, support for further damage assessments and debris management, as well as emergency works at the entrance of the Aleppo Citadel, all to be carried out with financial support from the Heritage Emergency Fund. As a follow-up to the Technical Coordination Meeting, a Coordination Workshop was organized in Aleppo from 15 to 16 March 2017, in order to set a common vision among stakeholders for the future of the Ancient City of Aleppo.

First Aid meeting on the Ancient City of Damascus (2016)

Thanks to the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, UNESCO organized in Beirut, Lebanon, from 14 to 16 November 2016, a First Aid meeting on the World Heritage property “Ancient City of Damascus”. The meeting was organized at the request of the Syrian Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), following the fire that devastated the Al Asrooniya neighbourhood in April 2016, and the works undertaken at the property by the Municipality. The meeting provided a detailed understanding of the damages caused by the fire, and the safety, restoration and reconstruction work conducted; developed recommendations in the areas of risk mitigation, management, documentation, and restoration techniques and approaches; identified follow-up actions for the implementation of the recommendations, with a special focus on: site management plan, capacity-building, documentation, conservation, legal framework and awareness-raising.

Survey on intangible cultural heritage of displaced Syrians (2016)

Thanks to the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund, a survey on the intangible cultural heritage of displaced Syrians was conducted between August and November 2016, in order to gather a better understanding of the changing role and function of intangible cultural heritage in the context of displacement, its potential for resilience and the ways in which communities try to continue its transmission. The results of the survey illustrate the role of intangible cultural heritage for displaced Syrians in various locations, the main threats and challenges to be faced in expressing and transmitting such heritage and the main initiatives undertaken in this regard.

Emergency interventions at the museum of Palmyra (2016)

Following the destructions produced by ISIS militants' attacks in May 2015, emergency interventions were conducted at the museum of Palmyra in May and June 2016 thanks to the support of the Heritage Emergency Fund. In a first phase, an assessment of damage to the building and the collections was conducted and a conservation survey of the collection and the building was carried out, including proposals on how the building could be repaired and defining protective measures at the museum to prevent looting. In a second phase, documentation work was conducted, in cooperation with the French firm ICONEM, in order to record the situation at the museum by using 3D processing and simulations. More than 14000 high-resolution photographs of the artefacts were taken. In the third and final phase, fragments of damaged sculptures and mosaics were collected and prepared for transportation to Damascus.

Rapid assessment mission to Palmyra (2016)

On 12 April 2016, the UNESCO Executive Board adopted a decision regarding the role of UNESCO in the «safeguarding and preservation of Palmyra and other Syrian World Heritage sites». Following this decision, the Director-General decided to dispatch a Rapid Assessment Mission to Palmyra to assess the damages and identify emergency measures at the property and at the museum. The mission, supported through the Heritage Emergency Fund, took place from 23 to 27 April 2016. It noted that considerable damage had been inflicted on the museum building, and most of its collections had to be evacuated to a safe location before the occupation of the site. The intentional destruction of the remaining artefacts at the museum, including the Lion Statue of Athena at the entrance of the museum, was also noted. The mission also confirmed the deliberate destruction that were reported by aerial photos and propaganda images when the site was inaccessible, namely the destruction of the Cella of the Temple of Baal-Shamin, the Cella and surrounding columns of the Temple of Ba'al and the Triumphal Arch.