

Cultural Emergency Response

Culture is a basic need

The Prince Claus Fund's **Cultural Emergency Response (CER)** programme provides 'first aid' to cultural heritage that has been damaged or destroyed by man-made or natural disasters.

Newsletter
November 2010

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Just started: Cooperation between World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the Prince Claus Fund in Indonesia & Pakistan

Projects to be implemented under the partnership between the World Monuments Fund and the Prince Claus Fund have just been launched. Further to the emergency relief project to restore an ancient monastery (Drametse Lhakang) and an ancient fortress (Trashigang Dzong), both seriously affected by the earthquake that struck Eastern Bhutan on 21 September 2009, the two organisations are now joining forces to help to safeguard heritage in West Sumatra in Indonesia & Pakistan.



Photo: Lubuak Barih Mosque
© Indonesian Heritage Trust (BBPI)



Photo: St. Leo Church
© Indonesian Heritage Trust (BBPI)

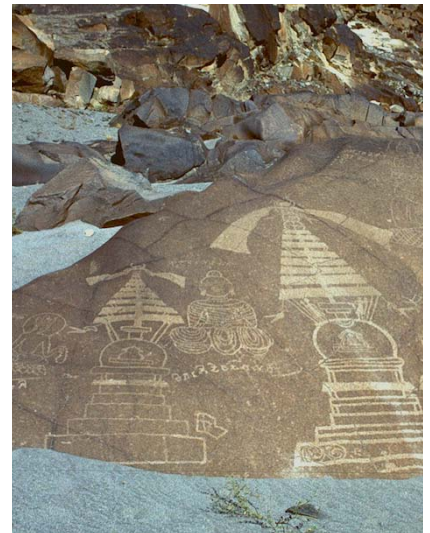


Photo: Ancient petroglyphs in Pakistan
© Wikimedia Commons



A disastrous earthquake on 30 September 2009 hit the coastal region of Padang in West Sumatra, Indonesia. Over 1.200 people lost their lives, thousands became homeless and much of the infrastructure of the island was wrecked. CER came into action after the disaster by launching a rapid damage assessment mission in cooperation with the Indonesian Heritage Trust within a week. From the list of 244 damaged properties, two sites were indicated as a priority for emergency relief: the Lubuak Barih Mosque and the St. Leo Church. Dating from the 17th century, the Lubuak Barih Mosque is a unique mixture of local design, typical Islamic architecture and South Asian influences. The St. Leo Church is the last remaining neo-Gothic building on Sumatra and is an indispensable part of a still very vibrant monastery. Both sites play a significant social and spiritual role in the community and CER action is urgently needed in order to safeguard them and enable them to resume their function.

The Prince Claus Fund and the World Monuments Fund are also teaming up to document and safeguard the ancient petroglyphs of the Chilas Valley which will be submerged as a consequence of the construction of the Diamer Basha Dam in Northern Pakistan. Recognizing the need to balance economic and social development and heritage stewardship, the two organizations will support the documentation of the petroglyphs and the development of a master plan that outlines possible protection measures to prevent these cultural treasures from being lost during the construction of the dam.

In the spotlight: Restoration of Sufi cultural heritage in Yemen

> Interview with Salma Samar Damluji

In September architect Salma Samar Damluji completed the emergency restoration of the Al Faqih Mosque in Aynat and several domes and a mosque in Sah, both in the Hadramaut region in Yemen. These sites were severely affected by torrential rains and floods in October 2008, and in danger of totally collapsing leading to their irreversible loss. Now the work is finished, CER talked to Miss Damluji to better understand the impact that restoring cultural heritage has on the community.



Photo: Aynat Mosque restored
© Salma Samar Damluji



Photo: Sah Dome under construction
© Salma Samar Damluji

What is the value and significance of the buildings restored?

> The two mosques of Sah and Aynat are historical as well architectural landmarks. Both mosques are built by Sufi sages (wise old men, eds.). Shaykh 'Umar Bawazir was the constructor of the mosque in Sah. The 'Aynat Mosque was the first mosque built by Shaykh Abu Bakr bin Salim. Sufi sages inhabited this region over the past eight centuries at least. They brought knowledge and learning to the region having immigrated from Basrah in Iraq. Sufism is a highly refined and spiritual form of Islam, built on tolerance, enlightenment, love and knowledge. Schools were established in Wadi Hadramut and those of Tarim are in practise still. The sages have a special place in the hearts of the community and their shrines and mausoleums are an indication of the

blessed nature of their town, and a reflection on the dignified and spiritual inhabitants who left a legacy in its foundation. On an architectural level, the design carries the features of original mosque architecture that was developed in the once important capital of Wadi Hadramut, the city of Tarim. Preserving and restoring these two mosques is a cultural asset to the communities of both towns.

What were the biggest problems you encountered while implementing these projects?

> The Bin Hibras Dome in Sah was the first monument I saw after the devastating floods hit the area in autumn 2008. The site of the magnificent collapsed dome was heartbreaking. Locals helped us find the other tombs that had suffered. It was ironic therefore that as we were half way through restoring this dome, the builders were not allowed to continue the work. The local Shaykh of the the Bin Hibras tribe objected, saying: 'he had orders from the descendants of the buried not to reconstruct the dome [...] and that they did not wish to preserve the legacy of their dead in domed mausoleums...'. Despite waiting and negotiating for several months, with the elders of Aynat and the Deputy Governor of Hadramut getting involved to assist us, their position was intractable and we were not able to continue with the restoration. We moved the builders to reinforce the 'Aynat minaret instead.



Photo: Sah tombs destroyed
© Salma Samar Damluji



Photo: Sah Mosque under Construction
© Salma Samar Damluji

Did the political situation in Yemen affect the projects?

> The political situation in Yemen didn't help. If we hadn't had the support and sponsorship of Shaykh Abdullah Bugshan, who provided travel, hospitality, logistics and protection to carry out the projects – I very much doubt we would have been able to continue. The security situation was difficult, and exacerbated since the floods. Distances from the main city (Say'un) are not all that far but made uncomfortable by the roads to Sah and Aynat that have not been rebuilt, which added to the difficulty and ease of accessibility. In general, not enough international assistance had reached the communities of the Wadi and whatever funds were donated and designated had been either been blocked in Sanaa or squandered along the way.

How were the communities of Sah and Aynat involved in the project?

> Because the Sah locations are not directly encroaching on the housing town, we had little assistance from the community there except that the keeper of the mosque was very helpful and encouraging and asked us to restore the water wells as well. In 'Aynat we had great moral support from the elders of the city. We worked quietly, without drawing much attention and respected the inhabitants wishes, particularly when they required 'Aynat mosque during Ramadan in 2009, which delayed the work there. In that part of the world, restoring public buildings, mosques or tombs in particular is a benevolent act. Therefore I was repeatedly told that my rewards will be doubled in heaven because I have restored these Saint mausoleums!



Just launched: Restoration of the Ricardo Güiraldes Gaucho Museum in San Antonio de Areco, Argentina

On 26 December 2009 the region of San Antonio de Areco experienced the heaviest rainfall and flooding of the past 70 years. The Ricardo Güiraldes Gaucho Museum suffered severe water damage. The museum's collection and display cabinets were submerged under 1.10 m of water and the building desperately needs restoration. The museum plays an irreplaceable role in preserving and promoting the heritage linked to the figure of the gaucho that is a powerful symbol of Argentinean identity. It was established in 1937 to honour the memory of the famous Argentinean novelist Ricardo Güiraldes. Since 1999 the museum figures on the list of national monuments protected by the state. Restoration will re-establish a secure environment for the valuable collection and enables the museum to open to the public again in the near future and regain its principal source of income.



Photo: Inside the museum
© Ricardo Güiraldes Gaucho Museum



Photo: Outside the museum
© Ricardo Güiraldes Gaucho Museum

In progress: repair and conservation of the library collection of Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes (I.B.L.A.), Tunis, Tunisia

A disastrous fire on 5 January 2010 in the storage room of library of the I.B.L.A. caused great damage to the unique collection and 17.000 works were forever lost. Some 5.000 books have a burned cover and wet pages due to the fire and the extinguishing water, others are covered with ash and dust. The biggest concern was a further degradation of the remaining collection, therefore swift action was needed. With CER support the most urgent and important documents of the library collection can be saved for future generations. Furthermore, this seed money will help I.B.L.A. to raise more funding for further restoration and rehabilitation.



Photo: burned books of the remaining collection
© Institut des Belles Lettres arabes (I.B.L.A.)



Photo: restoration of the burned books
© Institut des Belles Lettres arabes (I.B.L.A.)

CER actions

Afghanistan

Khisti Koprak Hamam in Kholm,
damaged by flooding in May 2010

Argentina

Guiraldes Museum in San Antonio de Areco,
damaged by flooding on 26 December 2009

Burkina Faso

Musée de la Musique in Ouagadougou,
devastated by heavy rainfall and flooding in September 2009

Ghana

Bume old cemetery in Santrokofi-Bume,
damaged by heavy rainfall in March–Augustus 2009

Ghana

'European' cemetery in Mampong,
damaged by heavy floods in March–Augustus 2009

Haïti

Damage assessment mission to the Gingerbread Houses
in Port-au-Prince, following an earthquake on 12 January 2010

Haïti

4 Vodou Sanctuaries in Noailles/Croix-des-Bouquets,
following an earthquake on 12 January 2010

Honduras

Roof of the Episcopal Palace in Comayagua,
damaged in a fire on 15 April 2009

India

Damage assessment mission to the remote villages in Ladakh,
following severe flooding in August 2010

Indonesia

Lubuak Barih Mosque & St. Leo Church in Padang,
damaged by an earthquake on 30 September 2009

Mongolia

Mongolian National Modern Art Gallery,
damaged by a fire on 7 May 2009

Somalia

Damage assessment mission to the Sufi shrines in Somaliland,
damaged due to enduring conflict

Tunisia

Institut des Belles Lettres Arabes (I.B.L.A.) in Tunis,
damaged by a fire on 5 January 2010

Turkey

Library and archive of the Nesin Foundation in Istanbul,
damaged by floods due to heavy rainfall, 9 September 2009

Vietnam

Nguyen Thai Hoc house, Hoi An,
damaged by the typhoon 'Ketsana' September/October 2009

Vietnam

Traditional house of the Kty, Doi Village,
damaged by the typhoon 'Ketsana' September/October 2009



CER is researching damages to cultural heritage resulting from

- torrential rains in Brazil in April 2010;
- clashes and looting in Kyrgyzstan in April and June 2010;
- floods and landslides in Myanmar in June 2010;
- monsoon floods in Pakistan in July 2010;
- floods in Southern China in August 2010;
- floods in Democratic People's Republic of Korea in August 2010;
- looting in Iran in September 2010;
- floods and torrential rains in West Africa in August and September 2010;
- torrential rains and tropical storms in Central America in September 2010;
- typhoon 'Megi' in the Philippines in October 2010;
- floods in Thailand in October 2010;
- tsunami in Indonesia in October 2010;
- the eruption of the Merapi volcano in October/November 2010;
- hurricane 'Tomas' in St. Lucia in November 2010;
- an earthquake in Central Serbia in November 2010

On show

Vietnamese artist and Prince Claus Award laureate Dinh Q. Lê at the Prince Claus Fund Gallery
Scars & Other Remnants is the first solo exhibition of works by Dinh Q. Lê to be held in the Netherlands. Dinh Q. Lê (born 1968) is considered one of the most important and influential contemporary Vietnamese artists, and is one of the recipients of a 2010 Prince Claus Award of EUR 25,000. Dinh Q. Lê has exhibited extensively internationally, his work was the subject of a solo-exhibition at the MoMA in New York last July, where his work is also included in the permanent collection. Dinh Q. Lê lives and works in Vietnam and holds an MFA in photography from the School of Visual Arts (New York, NY).

Date 16 December 2010 till 18 March 2011

Opening hours 10 – 17 hrs at working days (Mo–Fri)

Location Prince Claus Fund Gallery
Herengracht 603, Amsterdam

Contact

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Development Cooperation
Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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