Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in the
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO

Training course on “First aid to cultural heritage in times of crisis” (2018)

In order to build capacities among cultural heritage experts and emergency response stakeholders alike on when best to intervene and how best to work together, UNESCO and ICCROM, in the context of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2017, partnered on a training on “First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis” for Africa (FAC Africa 2018). From 12 to 30 November 2018, UNESCO implemented this 3-week training course in cooperation with ICCROM, the Ministry of Culture of Mali, the National Museum of Mali (Musée National du Mali), the Alioune Blondin Beye School for Peacekeeping (École de Maintien de la Paix Alioune Blondin Beye), the National Gendarmerie of Mali, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Association for the preservation and valorization of manuscripts for the defense of Islamic culture (Association pour la sauvegarde et la valorisation des manuscrits pour la défense de la culture islamique, SAVAMA-DCI). The training, though based on an established methodology developed by ICCROM, was tailored to the African context and used the humanitarian and cultural response in Mali as a central case study. It benefitted 21 cultural experts and emergency actors from 17 UNESCO Member States (Bhutan, Cameroon, Chad, Colombia, Côte d’Ivoire, Comoros, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Uganda and Zambia), including 17 participants from Africa and 8 women. The course included multiple practical simulations, such as the emergency structural stabilization of a building and evacuation of objects affected by flooding; the emergency evacuation of a museum collection; and the evacuation of objects from a shrine in coordination with military, police, the National Red Cross society and the ICRC following the detonation of an explosive device by an armed group. The training course “First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis” (FAC Africa) was made possible thanks to support from the Heritage Emergency Fund.
Participatory assessment of needs related to intangible cultural heritage in North Kivu (2017)

The Democratic Republic of the Congo, and particularly the region of North Kivu, has been the site of mass displacement and an influx of refugees – a consequence of the protracted political and humanitarian crisis affecting the country and its neighbours. As a result of this profound demographic reshaping, the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of the concerned populations has become a concern. In response, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported a participatory needs assessment exercise for the safeguarding of intangible heritage in North Kivu from 24 July to 15 December 2017, including interviews with a total of 175, both displaced and non-displaced people. The resulting report concluded that the social contexts, the material supports, and the cultural and natural spaces essential for the practice and transmission of the region’s intangible cultural heritage, were either destroyed or inaccessible as a result of the violence affecting North Kivu. Following its assessment, UNESCO compiled a list of needs for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage of the region, which includes support in the creation of cultural spaces that would allow for the reflection, expression and transmission of cultural heritage in a manner adapted to the local context; training in the use of intangible heritage practices for resource generation; awareness-raising regarding the importance of intangible cultural heritage through community media; and the training of teachers in intangible cultural heritage.