Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in the FEDERATED STATES OF MICRONESIA

Risk assessment mission to the underwater cultural heritage site of Chuuk Lagoon (2017)

The Pacific Ocean contains a wealth of unique underwater cultural heritage, including ancient sunken villages, traditional fish traps and shipwrecks, and aircraft dating from the Second World War (WWII). However, some of these sites are affected by corrosion and aggressive dynamite fishing and some of the shipwrecks contain Unexploded Ordnance (or unexploded bombs) from WWII. From 14 to 19 May 2017, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported a mission to the Federated States of Micronesia (Chuuk and Pohnpei) to conduct a risk assessment of the Chuuk Lagoon. The mission included meetings with Government officials and diving tourism operators. Since the mission, the Government, in partnership with an NGO, launched a programme that seeks to identify and implement relevant mitigating measures to reduce the risks from fuel that is still contained in the shipwrecks. In this specific context, the assessment mission supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund catalysed additional financial resources to support the urgent safeguarding of underwater cultural heritage in the Chuuk Lagoon and to reduce risks for the safety of communities and visitors, and the environment.