Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in TOGO

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 (Ecole 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.
Damage assessment mission to the World Heritage property of Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba (2018)

Following heavy rains in Togo in August 2018, the Heritage Emergency Fund supported an emergency mission to the World Heritage property “Koutammakou, the Land of the Batammariba”, to assess the scale of the damage, notably to the two-storey mud tower-houses known as Takienta. The mission, which took place from 19 to 24 October 2018, was comprised of seven experts and consisted of visits to the villages of Bassamba, Warengo, Pimini and Nadoba, as well as consultations with the local Batammariba people, the Prefect of Kéran, the Minister of Culture of Togo, and the National Meteorological Service. During the mission, it was found that a number of Takienta houses had either partially or completely collapsed. This affected the ability of the local community to practice and transmit its intangible cultural heritage, given that some of the damaged Takienta served as temples for gods and ancestors and were central to various initiation rites and funeral ceremonies. Following the damage assessment, the experts provided several recommendations for urgent measures for the consideration of the national and local authorities. These included the preparation of an emergency response plan, inventory, and map of the Takienta, and the installation of an early warning system in collaboration with the national meteorological services. Pursuant to these recommendations, local masons and artisans have been engaged in a community effort to restore some of the Takienta in the villages of Koutougou, Nadoba, and Warengo.