Activities supported by the Heritage Emergency Fund in TONGA

Damage assessment mission to Tongatapu Island (2018)

On 12 February 2018, Tropical Cyclone Gita struck the Kingdom of Tonga and caused severe damage to several historical buildings and cultural heritage sites in the country. At the request of the Government of Tonga, a team of three experts funded by the Heritage Emergency Fund undertook a mission from 16 to 23 June 2018 to Tongatapu Island in order to conduct a detailed damage assessment at the affected sites, including those on Tonga’s Tentative List for World Heritage, and numerous historical buildings. The mission, which sought to assist the Government in the preparation of a recovery plan for the damage sites, was conducted in close cooperation with the Culture Division of the Tonga Ministry of Tourism and in partnership with the Tonga National Commission for UNESCO. The damage assessment process also involved the local community, which contributed to the capacity building of Disaster Risk Reduction (DDR) of cultural heritage in the country. The results of the mission were integrated into a final assessment report, which highlights the importance of involving the local community in the recovery process. This report will be used by the Government to undertake comprehensive measures to recover and preserve Tonga’s cultural heritage.