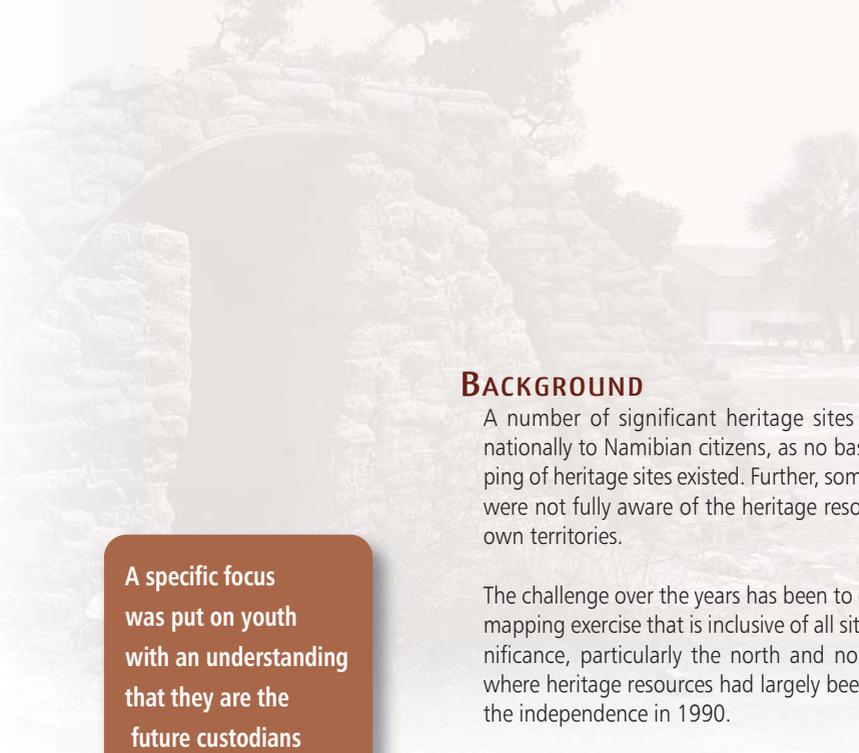




# Heritage Hunt campaign



Outapi Military Base © UNESCO

A specific focus was put on youth with an understanding that they are the future custodians of the country's heritage resources.

### BACKGROUND

A number of significant heritage sites were never known nationally to Namibian citizens, as no baseline national mapping of heritage sites existed. Further, some local communities were not fully aware of the heritage resources found in their own territories.

The challenge over the years has been to designate a national mapping exercise that is inclusive of all sites with heritage significance, particularly the north and north-east of Namibia where heritage resources had largely been overlooked before the independence in 1990.

The Heritage Hunt Campaign was thus implemented by the JP in order to systematically identify and document places of importance to the communities living in each region of Namibia. A national mapping exercise was implemented through surveys and local campaigns.

### PROCESS

The national mapping exercise involved all segments of Namibian society including women and other vulnerable groups, such as the San, Himba, disabled people, as well as youth. A specific focus was put on youth with an understanding that they are the future custodians of the country's heritage resources, and must be at the forefront of the effort to preserve and promote Namibia's rich heritage resources.

Being a locally-driven initiative, the Regional Councils and traditional authorities led the identification and documentation process. They were provided with technical and on-the-job training to identify and document all sites with heritage significance in their respective regions. The Councils thus

'owned' the process, but other stakeholders were involved through local development forums which integrated the Heritage Hunt into ongoing regional and national culture programmes. This exemplifies the bottom-up approach that empowered the local actors to influence local development and ensure ownership and sustainability. Further, the use of existing structures and development forums gave this intervention natural support and ownership from all relevant stakeholders.

Outcomes

The success story compliments ongoing government interventions in the area of culture and development. Local communities are now aware of their heritage resources and they are empowered to initiate income-generating projects using their heritage resources in a sustainable manner. The national mapping exercise will help the Namibian culture sector in its efforts to advocate for culture to take a central role in the development agenda of the country. The project is now considered a model for strategic policy changes regarding heritage sites identification, conservation and management.

One of the key design elements of The Heritage Hunt was an awareness-raising campaign about heritage sites, including their specific natural, cultural, geological and historical significance. This helped local communities promote the importance of heritage preservation, and the approach has already been offered as a tool to other local authorities for future assessment and planning in the domain of heritage resource management.



# Inventorying of Intangible Cultural Heritage

## BACKGROUND

In 2007, Namibia ratified the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). Although perceived as important elements of national heritage resources, ICH elements in Namibia were never systematically documented and inventoried. In the national heritage legislation and related acts, there was no recognition of intangible heritage nor mechanisms for its safeguarding and promotion. Provisions of the Convention indicated the potential solutions but no concrete steps were taken.

ICH requires a participatory approach involving various stakeholders, most importantly local communities. The Convention mentions that each state party shall 'identify and define various elements of intangible cultural heritage... with the participation of communities...'<sup>1</sup> and reiterates the importance to ensure 'the widest possible participation of communities...', in its management.<sup>2</sup> The reason for giving such significant status to community involvement is that intangible heritage can only be identified by the local communities themselves. Without communities practicing and transmitting these traditional practices, they would be in danger of extinction.

Among the obligations of States Parties to the Convention is the duty to undertake inventories of the intangible heritage present on their territories, in a manner geared to their own situations, but always, as noted above, with the participation of the communities concerned. In this context, Namibia took the initiative to use local communities to identify and inventory its ICH elements with the help of the JP.

## PROCESS

Local community members were trained to document ICH elements in their area. Among the stakeholders were traditional authorities, local authorities, regional councils, national heritage institutions, educational institutions, civil society organizations, and the private sector. Women and youth were given preference in both the selection process and for the actual inventorying.

1- Article 11.b  
2- Article 15



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After the training, local communities conducted inventorying in the field. The methodologies used included interviews that were recorded through audio-visual devices. The target beneficiaries were involved through consultation meetings, interviews and the actual inventorying of ICH elements in their areas.

**Outcomes** This story sets the tone for the continuing implementation of the 2003 UNESCO Convention and a strong and growing involvement of the local communities. Further, these communities are empowered to lead the process of recognizing, safeguarding and promoting their heritage assets for their own benefits. It is difficult for an outsider to speak to local people and obtain the required information, firstly because of language and secondly for reasons of trust and sensitivity of certain ICH information. Therefore, the decision to train and use local people for the inventorying exercise helped the programme to overcome this common obstacle. The inventorying process in turn sensitized local people on the importance of ICH and how it can help social development, which promoted a national dialogue on the subject.

The project also helped raise awareness among Namibian citizens on the importance of cultural resources and more specifically the endangered and the not-sufficiently-recognized ICH elements.

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