



Properties of Religious Interest – Sustainable Management [PRI-SM] Thematic Paper & General Guidance

Budget Proposed

US\$ 250,000 per year

Duration

3 years

Beneficiary

Global

Category

**Conservation •
Capacity Building**



The issue of the protection and management of properties of religious interest is increasingly prominent in contemporary conservation debates. In today's interconnected world grappling with serious socio-economic difficulties, ensuring constructive dialogue between the world's cultures and religions ranks as one of the most pressing challenges on the international agenda.

World Heritage properties such as living religious and sacred sites, constitute, to this day, one of the largest thematic categories on the World Heritage List. In 2011, the World Heritage Committee requested the World Heritage Centre, in collaboration with the Advisory Bodies, to elaborate a thematic paper proposing to State Parties general guidance regarding the management of their cultural and natural heritage of religious interest, and in compliance with the national specificities Decision 35 COM 5A).

This project aims to develop the thematic paper requested by the World Heritage Committee. It will also provide a platform for establishing cross-cutting approach for enhancing mutual respect, knowledge and understanding between communities that is in line with the UNESCO mandate for peace and dialogue.



Context

The Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest is managed by a Steering Group composed of officially designated representatives from the World Heritage Centre and the Advisory Bodies. The main international and regional institutions having the professional competency to contribute to the activities' implementation are also involved.

The Steering Group is focusing on capacity-building activities and a case-study approach to identify the main challenges in the management of World Heritage cultural and natural sites of religious interest, as well as to collect inputs and relevant information necessary for the thematic paper. The Steering Group has developed a research programme, including data collection, case study analysis and survey activities, as well as a module for regional thematic consultations. Moreover, a module for Capacity-Building workshops for the representatives of religious communities and site managers in charge of World Heritage properties of religious interest, developed by ICCROM, was tested in Greece and the Russian Federation.

In February 2016, a cycle of Regional Thematic Consultations towards the elaboration of the above-mentioned thematic paper was launched at UNESCO Headquarters with the first meeting focused on South-Eastern and Mediterranean Europe. In May 2017, the International consultative workshop on conservation and management of World Heritage of religious interest focused on Asia-Pacific was held in Bangkok and Nakhon Phnom Province of Thailand. The World Heritage Committee, at its 40th session (Istanbul, 2016), reiterated its invitation to States Parties and other stakeholders to continue to support this Initiative.



Objectives

The overall objective is to elaborate a thematic paper proposing to the States Parties general guidance regarding management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest.

More specifically, this activity aims:

1. **To enhance dialogue** with national decision-makers, site managers and representatives of different religious communities from all over the world to allow for the exchange of views on best practices to improve the long-term management of properties of religious interest;
2. **To enhance the role that religious communities should play** in the long-term management and preservation of World Heritage sites of religious interest;
3. **To identify the main challenges** in the field of protection, conservation and integrated management of the World Heritage sites of religious interest.



Relevance

As the only intergovernmental organization with an explicit mandate in the field of culture, UNESCO strives to safeguard heritage in the broadest sense of the term, encompassing not only monuments and sites, but also traditions, lifestyles, values and belief systems.

By launching the Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest, UNESCO plays a leading role in helping integrate a number of guiding principles into cultural policies at the local, national, regional and international levels so as to contribute to the rapprochement of cultures and harmonious relations among peoples.



Outcomes & Beneficiaries

Outcomes

States Parties are provided with a **general guidance** in the form of a publication regarding the management of cultural and natural heritage of religious interest. Their **capacities are reinforced** in view of the management and preservation of this specific heritage.

Beneficiaries

- **Responsible authorities:** international, national, regional and local civil and religious authorities with responsibility for World Natural and Cultural Heritage of religious interest, custodians, World Heritage site managers, and other stakeholders concerned;
- **Communities:** local religious communities and councils of traditional authorities, concerned with or holding custodianship for World Natural and Cultural Heritage of religious interest;
- **National and international agencies** dealing with the wider field of **protection**, conservation and management of World Natural and Cultural sites of religious interest.
- **National and International agencies** and institutions and bodies involved in development **project design** and implementation.



Timeline

The project could be scheduled for a period of three years.

1. Phase I “Regional Thematic consultations”

Reinforce a network of partners, including renowned researchers and experts, to seek views of spiritual traditions from elders and indigenous traditions, custodians, religious authorities, local spiritual communities and other relevant stakeholders that retain a close association with world natural and cultural heritage of religious interest; data collection and survey activities; organise thematic (national/regional) consultation workshops.

2. Phase II “Research, global thematic survey and data analysis”

Collect and analyse data; carry out stakeholders consultation using case-study questionnaire; identify properties for in-depths research on a national, regional, global and transboundary basis, and consult the relevant national authorities and related religious or indigenous communities; define preliminary scope and content of the thematic paper and clarify key terminologies used.

3. Phase III “Consultation/production of thematic paper”

Draft the text of the general guidance; consult with key stakeholders and World Heritage Committee members; collate and analyse responses to the consultation on the draft and incorporate them into the general guidance; select a sample of representative case studies - testing of general guidance; review and analyse results; conclusions: adjustments to be included; finalize the general guidance; establish a network to share experiences and implement the guidance; submit the thematic paper to the attention of the World Heritage Committee, in compliance with its decision.



Visibility

A communication & visibility plan will be developed in consultation with the donor(s), including (but not limited to) the options below:

Visibility material		Placement / Event	Outreach	Audience
Article on the World Heritage Centre's website Homepage	Logo	WHC website: whc.unesco.org	Public	Statistics for 2016: 13,340,000 visits 9,735,000 unique visitors 41,650,000 pageviews
Reports to the World Heritage Committee	Logo	World Heritage Committee session	WH Committee members, Observers, NGOs, site-managers, press	Approx. 2,000 participants from 193 countries
Side-event	Logo + speech			
Article in the World Heritage Review	Logo	"World Heritage Review" Magazine and "World Heritage Information"	Public	Approx. 20,000 targeted subscribers



Budget

An estimated extra-budgetary funding of US\$ 750,000 (all phases) or US\$ 250,000 (for each phase) is foreseen for the implementation of this project.

The support could be provided for the whole activity devised in three phases, or separately by phase. The World Heritage Centre reports to the World Heritage Committee on progress made.



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