

# STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT FOR SUKUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE

Name of Property:	<b>SUKUR CULTURAL LANDSCAPE, ADAMAWA STATE</b>
State Party:	<b>NIGERIA</b>
Identification Number:	<b>938</b>
Year of Inscription:	<b>1999</b>
Criteria:	<b>III, V &amp; VI</b>

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Sukur Cultural Landscape is located in the Mandara Mountains, which straddle the Nigerian and Cameroonian borders. The site is located in the North-east of Nigeria about 290km from Yola, the Adamawa State capital, in Sukur District of Madagali North Development Area in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State. Sited at an elevation of 1045 Metres above sea level with a distance of 3.8 kilometres from the base of the hill to the Hidi's palace, Sukur is an ancient hilltop settlement with a recorded history of iron smelting technology, flourishing trade, strong political and cultural traditions.

The World Heritage Committee examined previous reports from Istanbul (2016) and Manama (2018) respectively along with the Reactive Monitoring Mission Report (2018) in making some observations and decisions at the delayed 44<sup>th</sup> session at Fuzhou, China in 2021 regarding Sukur Cultural Landscape with the goal of ensuring continuous conservation of Outstanding Universal Value and community development. This was a welcome observation to continue with further conservation and enhancing protection of the property. The State Party acknowledges with gratitude the commendation of the World Heritage Committee on the initiatives taken on the restoration of property values and the rehabilitation of Sukur community after the 2014 insurgent attack. The actions taken by the State Party to further address the deterioration resulting from climate change started with the updating of the Conservation Management Plan from 2021 to 2026 including Disaster Risk Preparedness Management Plan in order to outline strategies to continue with necessary conservation works and also to collaborate with the community and relevant stakeholders in providing necessary infrastructure to the community living on the hilltop.

For protective measures on climate change, ICOMOS Nigeria in partnership with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments organized an intensive online weekly deliberation from June to September 2021 on Climate Vulnerability Impact Assessment on Sukur Cultural Landscape. To conclude the workshop in September 2021, a five-day workshop for stakeholders and the local community was organised at American University of Nigeria (AUN), Yola Adamawa State, to appraise the online training sessions. The outcome of the training workshop was the identification of three climate stressors namely temperature, windstorm and drought which led to the establishment of a mini-meteorological station at Sukur World Heritage Site that will provide more accurate records and data on temperature and rainfall.

Another important heritage conservation project was an international assistance via the UNESCO Hungarian Funds-in-Trust for social infrastructural development in partnership with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments. The project included restoration works in the Hidi's Palace and the Palace Square, rehabilitation of Primary Health Care Center and water provision via wells. The project started in 2021 and was concluded in November 2022. In addition, the National Commission for Museums and Monuments provided funds for restoration works on monumental structures and sacred places and resuscitation of the National Yawal Festival along with appointment of casual security Guards in 2021 and 2022.

Finally, significant efforts have been made by the Nigerian Government and the Cameroonian Government on the proposed extension of Sukur Cultural Landscape to the Diy-Giy-Biy (DGB) Cultural Landscape as a serial Trans-Boundary World Heritage Property. Between January and November 2022, the Nomination Dossier was produced and sent to the World Heritage Center along with Trans-Boundary Management Plan which was jointly produced by Nigeria and Cameroon. In September 2022, an evaluation mission to the DGB Cultural Landscape was carried out by ICOMOS at the instance of UNESCO World Heritage Center which had joint participation by Nigeria and Cameroon.

## **2. RESPONSE TO THE DECISION OF THE WORLD HERITAGE COMMITTEE**

- a) The State Party appreciates the commendation of the World Heritage Committee on the initiatives undertaken for reconstruction and rehabilitation of structures and property values in and around the Hidi's palace and the rehabilitation of Sukur community after the 2014 insurgent attacks.
- b) The hilltop community continues to thrive especially with the improved presence of the Nigerian Military supported by local vigilante groups for enhancing the security of the larger area surrounding the site in the lowland settlements. With the gradual return of relative peace to the region, the community has returned to their terrace agriculture, animal husbandry, inter-communal trade and other socio-economic activities for their economic livelihood. The mobilization of Youths to support heritage conservation and continuity of cultural practices has progressed with the World Heritage Volunteer initiative programme by the African International Documentary Festival Foundation (AFIDFF) from 2020 to 2022 in partnership with the National Commission for Museums and Monuments and the Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO. The projects carried out under this programme have led to significant sensitization of Sukur Community and surrounding communities for the conservation and protection of cultural heritage and promotion of cultural festivals. Collaboration between NCMM and the National Orientation Agency has conducted enlightenment programmes for students through Museums outreach programmes.
- c) The UNESCO Hungarian Funds-in-Trust has supported the NCMM working with the community to carry out additional conservation works within and beyond the Hidi's palace and palace square. Community efforts have also resulted in the restoration of some stone walls and sections of the paved walkway within clusters of traditional houses. The gradual return to agricultural activities and practices has led to the rebuilding of some of the agricultural terraces. It is important to note that while the impact of the insurgents attack on these attributes of Outstanding Universal Value was minimal, the resurgence of community life on the hilltop has ensured their preservation as they form an integral part of the living culture on the landscape.
- d) The Nigerian Government had set up a Joint Task Force headed by the Nigerian Army to fight the insurgents in the region. Several military formations and other security operations were established in the region under the supervision of the General Officer Commanding 7 Division at Maiduguri. Additionally, every community has local Vigilante and Hunters Associations which the Nigerian Government has recognized to partner with the Military and the other Security

Agencies in mitigating any security threats. While the loss of any life in the occasional sporadic attacks by insurgents is abhorrent, the cases have significantly reduced with concerted efforts to end the insurgency by the Federal and State Governments of the State Party.

- e) The rugged terrain and high altitude make Sukur a natural haven for communities on the lowlands especially in times of danger or conflict. This is not a new trend but the intensity and widespread impact of the insurgency has increased the pressure for these communities to seek refuge on Sukur and other hilltop locations in the area. This situation with the growing population has certainly exerted pressure on environmental resources such as farmland and water. However, with the growing relative peace due to combined military and local vigilante security operations many have returned to their lowland communities. The ripple effect of massively increased use of resources which have not been naturally replenished and faced with the added effect of semi-drought and irregular rainfall resulting from climate change further strains the balance and availability of traditional building materials. If these materials are not available, alternatives will of necessity require new construction techniques. The Hidi Palace, Palace Square and immediate surroundings as well as several clan locations spread amongst the hilltops have retained the use of traditional building materials especially thatch for roofing, more cases of alternative use of corrugated zinc sheets have emerged in parts of the community. Through dialogue with the Hidi-in-Council as well as community stakeholders, the issue is being checked by the NCMM.
  
- f) The State Party through the NCMM and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, including state agencies for agriculture and environment has increased sensitization of the Sukur community starting with the Hidi-in-Council on the need to actively conserve this heritage especially with respect to the traditional architecture, building techniques and terraced agricultural practices. While strategies are being developed to further promote cultural heritage conservation with the deployment of practical incentives for this; it is necessary to state that the associated intangible cultural heritage has mostly being un-impacted due to the several conservation projects on the hilltop that restored key features contributing to OUV such as the initiation house (*buk*) on the hilltop.
  
- g) In response to the submission of the nomination dossier for the Diy-Giy-Biy Cultural Landscape as an extension of Sukur Cultural Landscape to the World Heritage Centre, an Evaluation Mission of ICOMOS experts from Nigeria and Cameroon at the instance of UNESCO visited the site in September 2022 for validation of the nomination dossier of the site as a Serial Trans-Boundary World Heritage Property.
  
- h) The State Party had once again in April 2022 written to the World Heritage Centre inviting a joint World Heritage Centre/ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring mission to Sukur. While persisting security challenges have not made this mission possible, the NCMM is yet to receive a response from

the World Heritage Centre. The State Party looks forward to the possibility of such a mission in 2023 on the basis of improved security situation with appropriate security clearance granted.

### **3. OTHER CURRENT CONSERVATION ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE STATE PARTY WHICH MAY HAVE AN IMPACT ON THE PROPERTY'S OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE**

There are no other conservation issues that may have an impact on the outstanding universal value of the property. Some significant progress has been made over the past two years in conserving the key attributes that contribute to the outstanding universal value of the sit while ensuring sustainable management of the site.

### **4. IN CONFORMITY WITH PARAGRAPH 172 OF THE OPERATIONAL GUIDELINES, DESCRIBE ANY POTENTIAL MAJOR RESTORATIONS, ALTERATIONS AND/OR NEW CONSTRUCTIONS INTENDED WITHIN THE PROPERTY, THE BUFFER ZONE AND/OR CORRIDORS OR OTHER AREAS, WHERE SUCH DEVELOPMENTS MAY AFFECT THE OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE OF THE PROPERTY, INCLUDING AUTHENTICITY AND INTEGRITY**

The African International Documentary Festival Foundation (AFIDFF) through a political philanthropist constructed a block of three classrooms for Junior Secondary school just outside the buffer zone to augment educational facilities for several communities' clusters living on the hilltop. Recall that the primary school facility on the hilltop which was damaged by insurgents has been reconstructed during projects executed under UNESCO International Assistance funding. AFIDFF further supplied Six Laptops to the e-library for the hilltop primary school. None of these have any effect of OUV, Authenticity or Integrity of the site.

### **5. PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE STATE OF CONSERVATION REPORT**

The State Party has no objections to the granting of public access by UNESCO to this report.

### **6. SIGNATURE OF THE AUTHORITY**

Name: **Victoria N. Osuagwu**

Designation: **Director, Department of Monuments Heritage and Sites/ World Heritage National Focal Person**

Organization: **National Commission for Museums and Monuments**

Signature: 

Date: **28<sup>th</sup> November, 2022**