

## 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 which is Nigeria's first UNESCO World Heritage site is located in the Mandara Mountains of North-east Nigeria about 290km from Yola the Adamawa State capital. The site which straddles the Nigerian and Cameroonian border is situated in Sukur District of Madagali North Development Area in Madagali Local Government Area. It sits 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 dating back to 16<sup>th</sup> Century AD.

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.

Taking these into cognizance, the State Party has made efforts to strengthen collaborations with key governmental, non-governmental and community stakeholders to ensure the continued preservation of the Outstanding Universal Values of the site through strategic conservation management programmes and activities.

Working with the Adamawa State Government, Madagali North Local Government Authority and Community security organizations, the State Party continues to make progress in securing the site as the overall security situation also improves. Engagement with these stakeholders is also vital to the goal of providing essential community facilities that impact positively on the well-being of the people.

Finalizing the updated Conservation Management Plan for the site has been further delayed due to several administrative and logistic challenges confronting the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the Federal agency of the State Party responsible for the conservation and management of the site. However, these have been resolved and the reviewed/updated Conservation Management Plan which includes an updated Disaster Risk Preparedness

Management Plan will be submitted to the World Heritage Centre, tentatively in April 2025.

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

- a) Following the 2021 workshop on Climate Vulnerability Impact Assessment on Sukur Cultural Landscape organized by ICOMOS Nigeria, a mini-meteorological station was established at Sukur World Heritage Site hilltop to provide more accurate records and data on temperature and rainfall, in determining the impact of the severe variability of climatic conditions on the hilltop and its effect on the conservation of the site as well as the livelihoods of the people. Data already received from the station and experiential indigenous knowledge demonstrates that there has been more prolonged dry seasons and drought regimes that significantly impact on vegetation. This consequently affects the availability of the raw materials used for the thatch roofs and woven mats (Zana). Discussions are on-going with the community and some other stakeholders such as ICOMOS Nigeria to seek viable solutions, which include seeking plant resources from other locations outside the Madagali area as well as the possible introduction of drought resistant variety of plants for cultivation in some areas in surrounding communities downhill and in the plains.
- b) The challenge with availability of materials necessarily creates a need for alternatives which may sometimes require new construction techniques. The site is a living heritage site and as such requires constant maintenance of the structures to support the shelter, ritual/ceremonial and other socio-cultural needs of the hilltop dwelling people. The Hidi Palace, Palace Square and immediate surroundings as well as homesteads in several clan locations spread amongst the hilltops have retained the use of traditional building materials especially thatch for roofing. The newer cases of alternative use of corrugated zinc sheets have emerged more significantly in parts of the community where settlement expansion occurred to cater to the growing population.

Through dialogue with the Hidi-in-Council as well as community stakeholders, the issue is being closely monitored by the NCMM. Discussion with stakeholders is also in progress to develop viable solutions that create economic incentive for job-creation and poverty alleviation while ensuring appropriate conservation of the features of the site that contribute to OUV especially the thatch roofs. Discussions with cultural experts is also ongoing, to determine if the use of local corrugated zinc roofing sheets which have been a feature of building development in the larger area since the 1980's erodes the OUV of the site

when dry stone and mud are still the primary building materials. This is in consideration of the reality of the increasing cost of thatch based on unavailability and which also requires more frequent replacement.

- c) The security situation continues to improve, although advisories from relevant security agencies need to be followed carefully. The State Party is hopeful that before the end of 2025 it would be possible to obtain a favourable travel advisory especially for non-Nigerians interested in travelling in the region.

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

Some portions of the stone paved walkway from the foot of the hill to the Hidi's Palace uphill were eroded by flash floods from torrential rain fall in September 2024. This also affected some stone terraced farms on the slope of the hills. Remedial action is already being taken by the community with guidance from NCMM; while ICOMOS Nigeria has proposed to undertake a detailed documentation of the stone paved way and carryout some restoration work within the context of its 2024 US Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation Grant which is to be implemented fully from 2025 with NCMM as its strategic partner.

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

There are no new constructions, major alterations planned within the property or the buffer zone affecting OUV.

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

The State Party has no objection to the grant of public access to this document by UNESCO.