

WHV – Protection and maintenance of the Bafut Royal Palace heritage site

La Chefferie de Bafut, Cameroon

PROJECT DATES

Cultural property inscribed on the Tentative List (2018)

05 August - 19 August 2025

THE SITE - Of undoubted aesthetic value, the Bafut Chiefdom is one of the most successful and best-preserved architectural experiments in the Grassfields region. The Chiefdom represents a tradition, that of the Bafut people and a living culture of the Grassfields cultural area. The layout of the space is characteristic of the culture of the region: a main hut and multiple elements such as the wives' huts, shrines, a sacred forest, places of worship, etc. The Bafut chiefdom is at the heart of a traditional social organisation marked by a way of life and age-old religious practices. Although the current chiefdom is a reconstruction, it was built on the same site and was designed according to the same spatial organisation model. Moreover, the current use and function are still in line with local traditional practices, which are organised around the chief's hut on the one hand, and the wives' huts and the sanctuary on the other. As far as the current Palace is concerned, although certain elements have undergone transformation and colonial influence, it retains its original general appearance. As a result of urban development around the Palace, it is now under some reversible threat from the appearance of nearby roads. The sacred forest, on the other hand, retains all its integrity.

OBJECTIVES - The project aims to preserve and protect the Bafut Palace by providing security materials and raising awareness about the importance of heritage conservation, particularly among young people in the Bafut community. By fostering a sense of civic responsibility toward cultural heritage, the project seeks to strengthen community engagement. It also aims to enhance the overall security of the palace by 60% by 2025, while actively promoting youth involvement in heritage protection efforts.

ACTIVITIES - The volunteers will lead awareness-raising efforts by sharing radio documentaries—developed under the 2023 project—through the Bafut community radio. They will host interactive call-in programs to engage listeners in conversations about heritage sites and the importance of preserving cultural heritage. In addition, the volunteers will produce a new documentary highlighting youth participation in heritage conservation and emphasizing the broader need for protecting historical landmarks. This documentary will be distributed via social media platforms and broadcast on Cameroon Radio and Television to reach a wider audience. The volunteers will also carry out hands-on conservation activities, including the installation of solar-powered security bulbs, motion-sensor lights, alarms, and surveillance cameras to improve site safety. They will clean the palace surroundings, clear brush around newly planted trees, and treat wooden sculptures and architectural elements to prevent deterioration. A general cleanup of the palace area will ensure the site remains welcoming and well-maintained.

PARTNERS - ESSOKA security; Bafut council; Association for sustainable change and development(ASCAD);Direct Action for Rights, Equity and Development (DARED); Bafut Royal Palace.

Regional service of Cultural Heritage and Museums

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