



Cultural

Annual Report
2024–25

Protection

Fund



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Cover image: Presentation of 'Stories from Historic Cairo: Heritage Crafts and Modern Challenges' at The Reading Room Karachi project (2024–2025) Khalikdina Hall and Library, Numaish-Karachi. Credit: Rahat Rafiq

1. Salman Mirza, a musician from the Êzidi communities in Şengal Mountains, plays his inherited Tambour instrument, passed down from his grandparents, at the Mosul Maqam two-week musical workshop in September 2024 with Amir El-Saffar. Credit: Yunis Khalaf

2. Entrance of the Varendra Research Museum in Rajshahi, Bangladesh © British Council

3. Harvesting wild thyme © Natural Roots Foundation

4. Monitoring aerial drone surveys © MaritimEA

5. A member of the women's group, beading © National Museums Kenya

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Message from the Director

Cultural Protection Fund (CPF) Director

It feels impossible to reflect on the year without first acknowledging what has been happening in the places we work. There has been so much grief, instability, aggression, violence and loss impacting the people and communities that we are striving to support. This has especially affected our partners and has been at the forefront of all our efforts, actions and conversations in the Cultural Protection Fund team. My deepest and heartfelt sympathies are with everyone who has lost something in these wars. I can but care, and hope and try to support in the way that is available to me and the CPF, through the distribution of this fund to protect vital cultural heritage.

Remarkably, but not surprisingly, we also have many positive things to share from this year. The first signs of impact appeared from our successful pilot programmes in South Asia – where houseboats, recipes and valuable ancient collections are better protected and more prepared for the threats of the future.

In Ileret in Northern Kenya, the site of some 1.5-million-year-old hominin footprints in an area known as the ‘cradle of humankind’ have been protected and revitalised. Most importantly, the site has been handed back to the local government ensuring that the community will have an active say in how it is managed and promoted.

We heard a wonderful story from Mosul, Iraq. Amir Safar, a musical mentor in the Mosul Maqam project, was separated from his santur instructor in 2003 when the war started in Iraq. Amir was reunited with his instructor twenty-one years later whilst working on the CPF project.

In December 2024 we came together in Jordan, with many of our funded projects and partners, working collaboratively with International National Trusts Organisation and Petra National Trust. This gathering enabled people from all over the world to highlight and discuss the challenges and opportunities for heritage protection. It was a dream to be part of that partnership – in a strong, all-women team of curators working tirelessly to create an inclusive platform on which a diverse range of voices were heard. You can read more about this conference in this report.

Stephanie Grant,
Director



I travelled from the conference to the West Bank, my first ever visit, to see the incredible work being done by our Palestinian partners. To see how our CPF projects bring communities together through heritage, against the backdrop of check points and separation walls keeping them apart, was equally inspiring and heartbreaking. A couple of months later, the film *No Other Land* won Best Documentary Feature at the 2025 Academy Awards. The film was co-directed by Palestinian lawyer, journalist and filmmaker, Basel Adra and photojournalist and farmer Hamdan Balal who were both trained in heritage research and documentation as part of the CPF-funded *On Our Land* led by Coventry University. The film is a documentary of the Palestinian communities in Masafer Yatta in the south of the West Bank, where villages have faced forcible displacement and violence. The young filmmakers faced and continue to face unimaginable risks to tell their story.

What is shared in this annual report is that despite barriers, people strive to protect what is valuable to them. The Cultural Protection Fund exists to protect more than just the past. Cultural heritage is a living thing and part of how we understand and define ourselves. Through protecting it, we make sense of the world as it is now, address global challenges and improve livelihoods for the future.

As always, I am indescribably grateful to the dedicated Cultural Protection Fund team, whose efforts keep this complex operation a smooth one, and whose wisdom and thoughtfulness teach and inspire me every day. Special thanks also to Charlotte Hanson Head of International Cultural Heritage Protection at DCMS; the partnership remains a strong and valuable one thanks to her guidance and support.

We live in uncertain times. I am writing this knowing that the Cultural Protection Fund will continue beyond 2025 but that we will struggle to cope with the ever-increasing needs for cultural heritage. Nevertheless, we continue because we know that the work we fund, the people we support, and the change we make is valued globally.

The financial year of 2024–2025 marks the final year of the Cultural Protection Fund’s three-year funding cycle under the Operational Alliance Agreement between the British Council and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). The Fund continued to deliver on its mission to safeguard cultural heritage at risk while strengthening the capacity and resilience of communities in target countries.

Executive Summary

This report summarises the outputs, finances and impacts of the CPF’s activities from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It includes quantitative data and analysis relating to budget information, funded lead and partner organisations, as well as impact stories from projects delivering activities. Previous annual reports from 2022–2023 and 2023–2024 financial years are available to read on the CPF website.

In 2024–25, the total budget for the Cultural Protection Fund was £8.5m, of which £8m was allocated to fund activities and projects, while £0.5m was assigned to operational and staff costs relating to the delivery of the programme. At the end of the financial year, 99.97% of the budget had been spent.

18 target countries have benefitted from funding and activities in 2024–25. These countries are: Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Nepal, Palestine, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Tunisia and Uganda. The highest proportion of CPF funding to projects was allocated to those protecting cultural heritage in the Palestine, where 16% of total project funding was spent. This was followed by Sudan (11%), Pakistan (10%) and Iraq (9%).

For the first time in CPF, as part of the South Asia pilot, funding was awarded to projects in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. A total of 150 Expressions of Interest were received across the pilot and 36 applications, resulting in the award of six projects in Pakistan, four in Nepal, and one in Bangladesh.

Funded activities include 35 projects awarded through open calls from previous financial years and a further 11 grants awarded through the South Asia pilot. Overall, 40% of projects protected tangible heritage, 30% focused on intangible heritage, and 30% combined both.

In 2024–25, 22 projects (48%) focused on heritage at risk due to climate change, 24 projects (52%) focused on heritage at risk due to conflict.



A group photo of a trail hike
© Essanoor Associates

In an analysis of the lead and partner organisations, it revealed that more than half (52%) of the 46 CPF projects delivering in 2024–25 were led by Non-Governmental Organisations. Projects were also working with 127 partners, the biggest proportion (28%) of which were university departments. Additionally, 70% of all organisations (lead and partners) participating in CPF projects in 2024–25 are based in the target countries.

This report also shares data submitted by funded projects against the CPF's three outcome areas:

- **Heritage:** Conservation of 58 buildings/monuments and over 10,000 objects, documentation of 16,000 sites, and 10,000 intangible practices.
- **Society:** 215 workshops and 90 performances reached nearly 14,000 people in person and an online audience of 4 million.
- **Economy:** 480 paid roles created and £400,000 leveraged in additional income and funding.

Six project case studies are presented in the report, describing the activities and the impacts of some CPF-funded project work in Iraq, Kenya, Palestine, Pakistan, Sudan, and Syria.

Capacity-building grants supported traditional crafts such as Herati glassblowing and provided training for conservators and local heritage professionals. Emergency support of £361,000 was directed to Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon to assess damage, protect collections, and support displaced cultural practitioners during conflict and crisis.

CPF's 'What Works' approach generated new research, including the *Unlikely Allies* report on engaging armed groups in heritage protection and a *Blueprint* for online peer learning.

CPF co-hosted the Facing Change Conference in Amman with over 110 delegates from 25 countries, reinforcing regional collaboration and leadership on heritage protection. The report shares a summary of the conference, speakers and sessions.

Looking to the future, CPF enters its 10th year in 2025 with 45 live projects and a programme of events to mark the anniversary. The future of the Cultural Protection Fund will be announced in 2026, with a plan to continue its commitment to locally led, evidence-driven protection of heritage under threat.

Financial year	2022–23	2023–24	2024–25	Total
Grant Disbursement	£	£	£	£
Grant Disbursement – Target countries open calls	3.6m	7.1m	6.2m	16.9m
Grant Disbursement – ‘What Works’ programme	0.5m	0.1m	0.05m	0.65m
Grant Disbursement Development – Target countries capacity building	0.3m	0.1m	0.1m	0.5m
Grant Disbursement Development – Direct award – new country set up	0.3m	0.1m	1.0m	1.4m
Grant Disbursement – Heritage First Aid Support	0.5m	0.2m	0.4m	1.1m
Total of Grant Disbursement Funds	5.2m	7.6m	7.75m	20.55m
Staff costs and Operational Expenses for Grant Disbursement	0.6m	0.5m	0.5m	1.6m
Staff costs and Operational Expenses for ‘What Works’ programme	0.4m	0.1m	0.05m	0.55m
Exit costs (<i>costs set aside in case the fund is to cease</i>)	0.0m	0.0m	0.2m	0.2m
Total programme budget	6.2m	8.2m	8.5m	22.9m

Summary of 2024–2025

The Cultural Protection Fund is supported through UK government funding and 2024–25 marked the final year of the three-year funding cycle that began in April 2022. The budget for each year of funding was set at the beginning of the programme and is part of the Operational Alliance Agreement between British Council and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS).

The above table shows the programme budget for each year of the 2022–25 programme.

In 2024–25, the total budget for the year was £8.5 million:

- £6.2 million, most of this budget, was ringfenced to fund the final year of delivery for our grant-funded projects.
- £1 million was budgeted for the delivery of the South Asia pilot programme.
- £0.55m for other grants relating to Capacity Building, Research and Heritage First Aid programmes.
- Operational costs for the programme, including staff and administration were assigned a budget of £0.55 million.
- £0.2m was allocated for exit costs to be deployed in case future funding was not secured. This amount was later reallocated to grants once CPF’s 2025–26 funding was confirmed.

	Expenditure category	Budget	Actual
Grants	Grant Disbursement – Target countries open calls	£6,235,000	£6,384,535
	Grant Disbursement – ‘What Works’ programme	£44,000	£9,766
	Grant Disbursement Development – Target countries capacity building	£100,000	£150,421
	Grant Disbursement Development – Direct award – new country set up	£1,000,000	£1,085,609
	Grant Disbursement – Heritage First Aid support	£400,000	£361,000
Operations	Staff costs and Operational Expenses for Grant Disbursement	£497,259	£509,326
	Staff costs and Operational Expenses for ‘What Works’ programme	£68,041	£41,337
	Exit costs	£200,000	–
Total programme budget and expenditure		£8,544,300	£8,541,994

The above table shows the detailed budget for 2024–25 and the actual spend against each expenditure heading. In the CPF agreement with DCMS, there is some flexibility to move budget between the expenditure categories.

Total CPF spend for 2024–25 was £8.541m – 99.97% of the total budget.

This section shows the profile of projects awarded under open calls. In 2024–25, funding continued for 16 large grants and 19 small grants funded between 2022–24 in the Middle East, North Africa and East Africa. The investment also includes 11 projects funded under the South Asia pilot rounds in Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh.

Investment Profile

A guided tour © Ethiopian Heritage Trust. Support from CPF has supported the complete renovation of the Dessie Museum in Ethiopia's Amhara Region, which was destroyed during conflict in 2021.



Country	Number of projects*	2024–25 Funding	Percentage
Algeria	2	£267,526	3%
Bangladesh	1	£133,063	2%
Egypt	6	£685,174	9%
Ethiopia	3	£435,539	6%
Iraq	7	£737,227	9%
Jordan	4	£459,044	6%
Kenya	5	£345,584	4%
Lebanon	3	£184,450	2%
Libya	4	£296,715	4%
Nepal	4	£185,956	2%
Palestine	8	£1,228,127	16%
Pakistan	6	£788,776	10%
Sudan	2	£887,014	11%
Syria	8	£646,092	8%
Tanzania	2	£204,579	3%
Tunisia	1	£137,133	2%
Uganda	3	£213,436	3%

Projects and funding by country

The above table shows the breakdown of grant funding allocated to each CPF target country in 2024–25. During this year funding was allocated to 17 countries. Afghanistan and Yemen are not included in this list; although they are CPF target countries, projects delivering there were completed in 2023–24.

The highest proportion of funding in 2024–25 was allocated to projects delivering activities in Palestine.

*The total number of projects equals more than the 48 live projects from 2024–25 as this table counts all countries within multi-country projects. The total grant column is calculated by dividing the project grant equally between the number of countries benefitting from the project, which is an approximate calculation and may not be reflective of the total £ value received in each country.



Funded projects by heritage type

Launch event © Safina Projects

The Cultural Protection Fund categorises projects into four heritage types:

- **Archaeological sites** – any place in which evidence of past activity is preserved, and which has been, or may be, investigated.
- **Built heritage** – such as historic buildings, monuments and structures, sometimes described as ‘immovable heritage.’
- **Museums, Libraries and Archives** – including the protection of artefacts and objects, sometimes described as ‘moveable heritage.’
- **Intangible Cultural Heritage** – such as traditional crafts, languages, practices, music, folklore, stories and anything that is considered part of identity that is not a physical object or structure.

CPF projects can, and often do, focus on protecting more than one type of heritage in any of the above categories. The protection of intangible cultural heritage is becoming more common in Cultural Protection Fund projects.

Analysis of the 2024–25 projects revealed that:

- 40% of projects focused solely on the protection of tangible heritage
- 30% of projects focused solely on the protection of intangible heritage
- 30% of projects included a mixture of heritage protection for tangible and intangible heritage.

The chart shows the number of projects working on each type of heritage category, along with the percentage of total projects this represents.

127 Partners



Workshop participants engaging in an activity with Professor Robin Coningham, at the Varendra Research Museum training programme © British Council

Average of 4 partners per project

2024–25 Analysis of CPF partner organisations

52% of lead
organisations
are **NGOs**

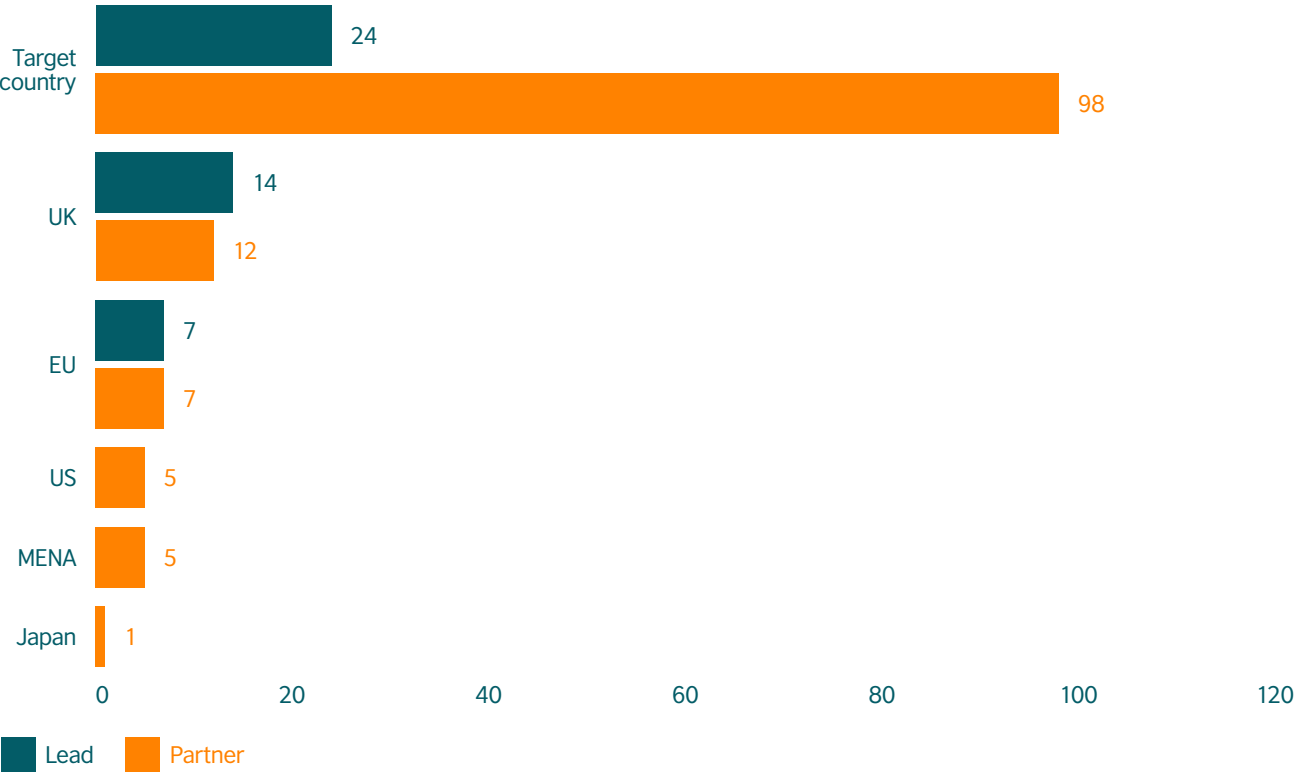
55% of all lead
organisations based
in the **target country**

University departments
made up of **28%**
of the total partners

Digital training activities held at Laetoli.
Credit: Dr Richard Bates



Location of Lead and Partner organisations



Analysis of funded organisations

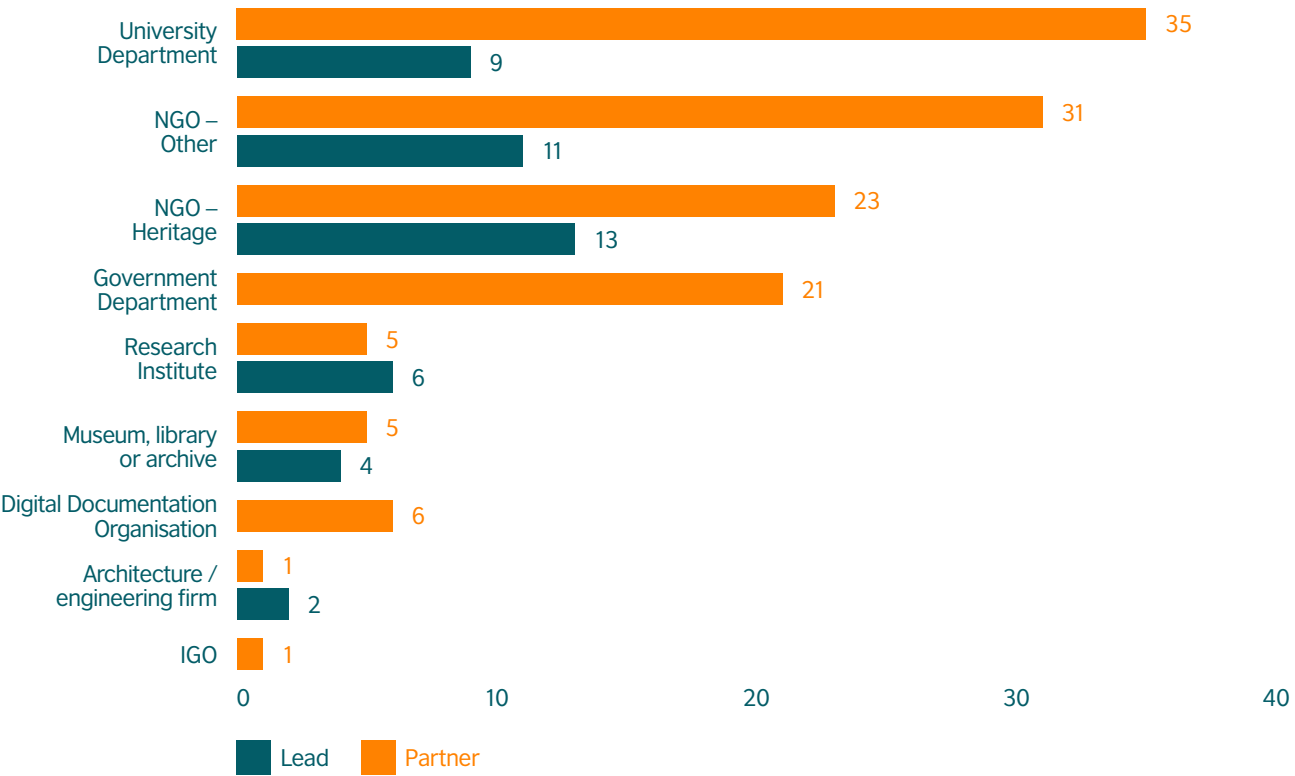
Cultural Protection Fund projects are collaborative as they are managed by a combination of one lead and up to eight partner organisations. CPF encourages working with partner organisations to deliver the diverse expertise that make the projects even more effective. Lead organisations have overall accountability as they manage the contract with CPF, including the ongoing monitoring and reporting for the project. Partner organisations are crucial to the success of the project as they bring in-depth knowledge of the operating environment, the specific heritage which is to be protected and know the best methods to meaningfully engage local communities.

Ordinarily in CPF projects, lead organisations can be based anywhere in the world however it is mandatory that they have at least one partner based in the target country where the project is taking place. In 2024–25,

- The 46 lead organisations delivering projects were working with a total of 127 partner organisations, an average of 4 partners per project.
- 80% of projects were working with at least one other partner organisation.
- For the South Asia pilot, for the Nepal and Pakistan rounds, it was a requirement that the projects were led by an organisation based in the target country.

The above chart shows where both lead and partner organisations were based. While 14 projects (28%) were led by UK organisations, more than half (55%) of all lead organisations in 2024–25 projects were based in the target country.

Lead and Partner organisations by organisation type



We also analysed the kinds of organisations delivering CPF projects. While university departments made up 28% of the total partners, most lead organisations (52%) are NGOs. These are categorised into ‘NGO – Heritage: Non-Governmental Organisations’ whose main mission is heritage and ‘NGO – Other’ which are organisations whose mission is wider than heritage e.g. humanitarian.

Analysis of Applications

Target Country	Expressions of Interest	Applications	Awards	Success Rate EOI – application	Success Rate – application to award
Pakistan	117	19	6	16%	31%
Nepal	33	13	4	39%	30%
Bangladesh	14	3	1	21%	33%

2024–25 Overview of Funding Calls – South Asia pilot

Following scoping and training activities in 2022 and 2023, 2024 saw the launch of three new funding rounds in Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. This resulted in:

- 6 projects funded in Pakistan with a total grant award of £803,776.06
- 4 projects in Nepal with a total grant award of £185,956.42
- 1 project in Bangladesh with a grant award of £133,062.97

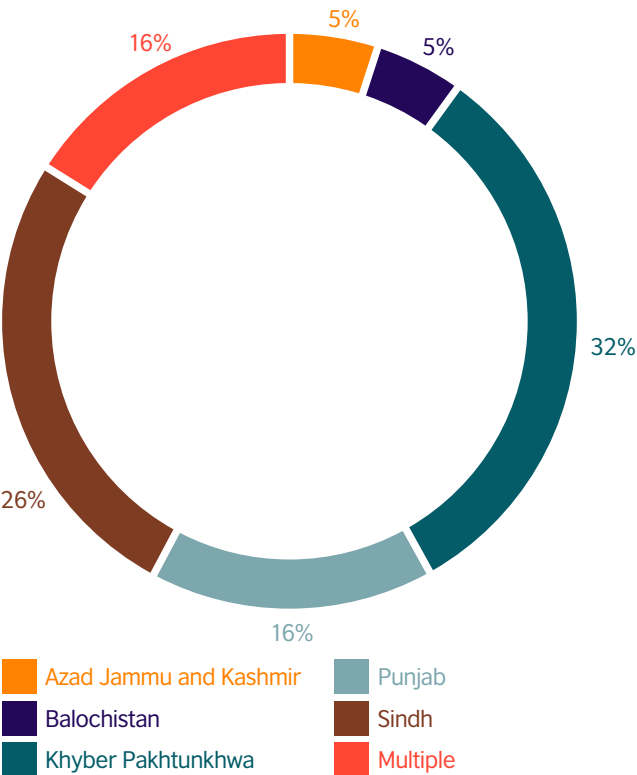
Pakistan

We ran an Expression of Interest phase of around 3 weeks in October 2023. We received a total of 117 EOIs with a financial demand of £20.2 million. We invited 20 to make a full application.

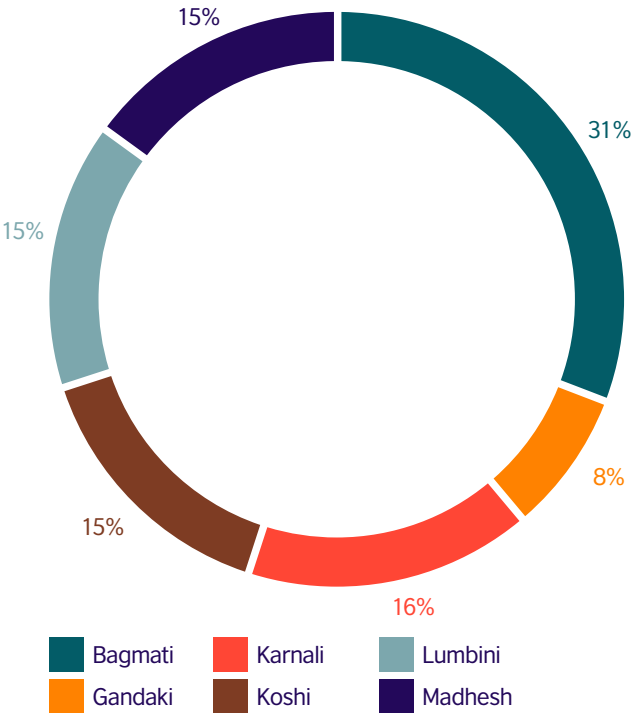
The full application deadline closed on 3 December 2023, and we received 19 applications with a total grant request of £ 3,536,362. The decision meeting took place on 8 February 2024.

The chart shows the number of applications per region in Pakistan. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, in the Northwest of the country, had the highest number of applications. We also looked at the risks to the heritage as described in the proposals. The majority (70%) were protecting heritage at risk due to climate change.

Pakistan applications by region



Nepal applications by province



Nepal

We ran an Expression of Interest (EOI) phase of around three weeks in December 2023 and received a total of 33 EOIs with a financial demand of £1.4 million.

We invited 13 to make a full application. The application deadline was 29 January 2024 and we received 13 applications with a financial demand of £603,217.

Two of the 13 Nepal applications focused on conflict, the rest on climate change. Applications covered six out of the seven provinces in Nepal.

Bangladesh

A priority project to test the CPF’s feasibility was decided by the British Council team in Bangladesh. The project was to deliver conservation and capacity building activities at the Varendra Research Museum. A list of 14 organisations selected between the CPF and British Council Bangladesh teams was considered. From this longlist, five organisations were invited to submit a proposal. Three proposals were received outlining an approach to deliver the project and Durham University was selected at a decision meeting in May 2024.



The interior renovation for 'The Reading Room Karachi' project (2024–25) at the Khalikdina Hall and Library, Numaish-Karachi
Credit: Malika Abbas

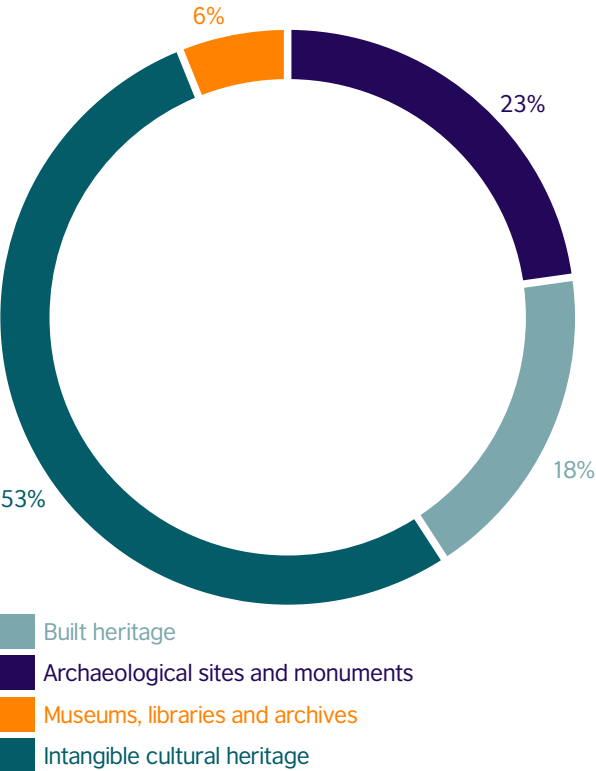
‘The Reading Room Karachi project included the preservation of the physical heritage and protection of the vulnerable collection of rare publications of the Khalikdina Hall and Library. Support from the Cultural Protection Fund has revitalised and opened the historic site as an inclusive, cultural urban retreat – flourishing after being underutilised for over three decades. This transformation has been a catalyst for community engagement and dissolving perceived barriers between disciplines and various sectors.’

Saima Zaidi
Director and Founder of Numaish-Karachi

This pie chart shows the types of heritage the 11 funded projects in South Asia have been safeguarding during the 2024–25 year.

- 53% focus on intangible cultural heritage, from the critically at-risk language of Kusunda in Nepal, to the threatened cultural heritage crafts and practices of the Hazara communities in Pakistan.
- 23% of projects focused on archaeological sites and monuments, including the Buddhist Rock Reliefs in the Swat Valley and the ancient forts in the Indus Valley Delta, both in Pakistan.
- 18% of projects focused on built heritage, such as Gholbasher House in the Yasin Valley, Pakistan and Khalikdina Hall in Karachi.
- 6% of projects had a primary focus of the heritage found in museums, libraries and archives which included our first project in Bangladesh which looked to protect historic objects found at the Varendra Research Museum in Rajshahi.

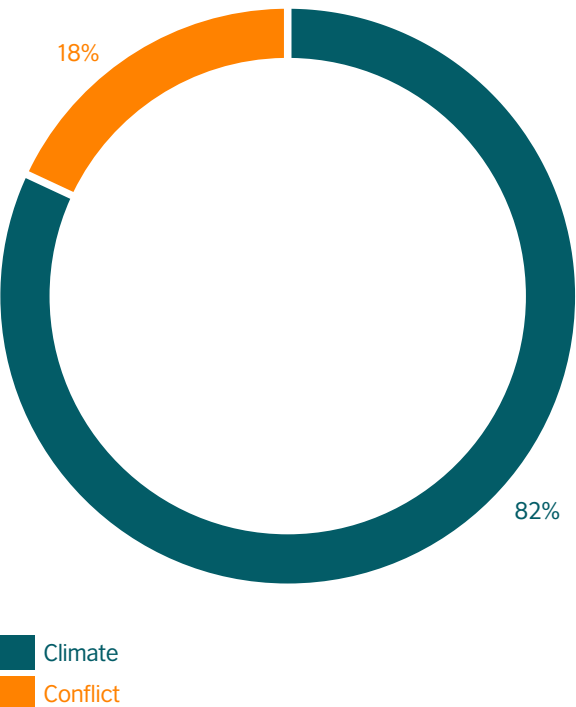
Funded projects by heritage type South Asia



Analysis of South Asia awarded projects

This pie chart shows that climate change is the primary risk facing heritage in our South Asia projects. A range of threats associated with climate change threaten heritage in the region, from rising sea levels in the Indus Valley, to more extreme weather events in Swat, as well as climate-induced migration leading to a loss of connection to a range of heritage, including the houseboat culture of the Mohana communities at Lake Manchar, Pakistan.

Funded projects by risk type South Asia





Project highlights

Impact Data

The Cultural Protection Fund measures the impact of its funded projects against three outcome areas:

- **Heritage:** Cultural heritage under threat is researched, documented, conserved and restored to safeguard against permanent loss for future generations
- **Society:** Local organisations and communities have developed skills, capacity and resilience to care for and protect cultural heritage
- **Economy:** Local economies have been enhanced or diversified.

At the end of each financial year projects funded by the CPF supply our team with quantitative data on their project activities.



1. Women of the Bajuni community performing the sacred, pre-wedding 'Vugo.' Thanks to the advocacy efforts of Twaweza Communications, 2025 marks the first time the endangered Bajuni language is being taught in schools. Credit: Mary Kabui

2. Talented young musicians and maqam reciters from Mosul performing on stage with Amir El-Saffar at Ghabat Park, a site once used by Daesh as a training ground for fighters and a place where children were recruited. This is part of the Mosal Maqam project. Credit: Lana Kamaran

Heritage

In 2024–25, CPF projects reported the:

- Conservation of 58 buildings, monuments and sites and over 10,000 objects
- Conservation of 494 traditional skills and over 12,000 other intangible practices
- Documentation of 16,000 buildings, monuments and sites
- Documented 68 skills. Documented 10,000 other intangible.

Society

In 2024–25, CPF projects delivered:

- 215 workshops, seminars and presentations to 3698 people
- 90 performances & exhibitions to 9782 attendees with an online audience of 4 million
- Creating 232 manuals, guides and factsheets.

Additionally, in their commitment to inclusivity, 70% of projects reported that their projects benefitted multiple demographic groups.

Economy

In 2024–25, CPF projects reported that they had:

- Created 480 paid employment roles
- Recruited 833 interns and volunteers
- Leveraged over £400,000 in additional income and funding.

46 projects
worked with
127 partners

48% focused on
heritage at risk due
to **climate change**

**Stats on 24–25 project
delivery and impact**

52% focused on
heritage at risk due
to **conflict**

Leveraged
over £400,000
in additional
income

Over 12,000
intangible
practices
conserved

Over 10,000
objects conserved

**58 buildings,
monuments
and sites
protected**

**90 performances
and exhibitions**

Reached 9,782
and online audience
of **4 million**

**480 paid
roles created**



Heritage Challenging Fragmented Geographies

Led by RIWAQ Centre for
Architectural Conservation
Location: Palestine

In 2022, with CPF funding, RIWAQ began a regenerative, three-year project working in the West Bank and Gaza, continuing their previous efforts to rehabilitate 50 of the most significant historic centres in Palestine. Their activity in this project has focused on the rehabilitation of sites in the historic centres of Qalandiya, Beit Hanina and Kafr 'Aqab in rural Jerusalem alongside the protection and promotion of a wide range of Palestinian intangible cultural heritage, including traditional crafts, dance, music and oral history. In Gaza, the project focused on the collection of stories and oral histories in Deir Al Balah as well as the design and production of a heritage activity booklet for children in Gaza and the West Bank.

The war has caused insurmountable destruction in Gaza and severely exacerbated the risks to Palestinian heritage and livelihoods the West Bank. Despite enormous challenges, RIWAQ has continued to work closely with communities and local authorities and develop vibrant, functional spaces for Palestinians to engage with and protect their cultural heritage. Together with their partners, RIWAQ has successfully increased the protection of and access to cultural heritage in the West Bank and Gaza and their vital work continues into 2025–26.

Their key successes include:

- Enhanced use of two public spaces in Qalandiya, a community garden in Kafr 'Aqab, and two historic homes in Qalandiya and Beit Hanina.
- Strong cooperation with local authorities to continue the management and protection of cultural sites in the future.
- Cultural events with communities in Gaza, resulting in the documentation of oral histories made available in a lively, interactive and innovative way for children and their families.
- A specialised internship for 5 architectural students and 2 Summer training programmes for 12 architectural students focusing on restoration, documentation, and adaptive reuse.
- Digitisation of 70,000 items, including valuable documents and photographs held in the RIWAQ archive, as well as physical upgrades to the archive itself.
- Employment of 29 local workers, generating 4,542 working days across all sites.

‘The rehabilitation of Beit Hanina has led to growing interest in heritage within the community, more gatherings and discussions on common topics, needs and initiatives are brought up. Cultural heritage is playing a key role in social cohesion and change. The planned physical and non-physical activities in Gaza and Deir Al Balah once implemented will contribute to the healing and recovery process.’

Shatha Safi, Director of RIWAQ

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1. Summer internship, practical training
© RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation

2. Ad Dur Building, Beit Hanina
© RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation

3. Summer internship
© RIWAQ – Centre for Architectural Conservation

3





Led by SCA Initiative
Location: Syria

Syrian Cassette Archives

Years of conflict in Syria has threatened the vibrant musical heritage found on cassette tapes in numerous private collections. Dated from the seventies onwards, these wide-ranging collections reflected the traditional and contemporary styles of Syria's diverse communities which includes Arabs, Assyrians, Kurds, Armenians and Iraqis.

This project which began in September 2023, aimed to safeguard this Syrian musical heritage as much of these tapes were in a poor condition and at risk of complete degradation.

To empower local communities in future preservation efforts, Syrian Cassette Archives has consistently spotlighted the importance of keeping the physical archives in Syria, preserving Syrians' emotional connection to the collections.

Their key achievements include:

- A series of hands-on digitisation training workshops with the archive owners.
- Over a thousand cassettes preserved.
- 11 written articles published on Syria's musical heritage.
- Nine Syrian professionals trained in archival management.
- Four events in the UK and Syria, including panel discussions, concerts, and an exhibition.
- An updated SCA website with enriched visitor and researcher experiences.



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1. Cassettes © SCA Initiative

2. Cassette Kiosk, Damascus
2006 © Mark Gergis3. Cassette Kiosk, Damascus
1997 © Mark Gergis

3

‘Heritage belongs to the people – it is the foundation of civilization. The culture of the Houran is not exclusive to its own people; it is part of a shared history that deserves recognition and preservation.’

Ahmad Al Kossem –
renowned singer from
the Syrian Houran region



Led by Transformedia
Location: Sudan



Protection and Participation: IAAS Archive of Sudanese Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Institute of African and Asian Studies Archive at the University of Khartoum contains a plethora of audio-visual material representing the diversity of Sudanese intangible cultural heritage. Its rich collection includes oral traditions, folk stories, musical heritage and crafts.

Although decades of conflict have affected the IAAS Archive, it was the eruption of conflict in 2023 which threatened its very survival. This is especially due to the forced closure of the institution and displacement of individuals previously involved in the physical management of the collections.

Beginning in January 2024, to scale up protective measures, the project rapidly enhanced the archive's longevity through digital restoration and metadata creation, and launched *Toshna*, a platform for community-led documentation of Sudanese intangible heritage.

Transformedia's decentralised approach empowered Sudanese communities to safeguard their heritage on their own terms. Without relying on institutions, their agility ensured that Sudanese living heritage could be rapidly recorded and kept alive during the ongoing conflict.

Their key feats include:

- Creating over 7000 metadata records to better manage the archive.
- Over 2500 audio records digitally restored.
- Recruiting 18 community ambassadors to drive locally-led heritage documentation.
- Establishing two digital backups should the archive face future physical threats.
- Building a smartphone app for remote community documentation of endangered heritage and community access to archives, with awareness raising sessions about Sudanese intangible cultural heritage.



2

1. Communities explore 7oshna smartphone app © 7oshna

2. Dance at 7oshna Workshop with Aumgulja Displaced Camp © 7oshna

3. Youth documents his heritage with the 7oshna smartphone app at a Rashaida Village, southwest of Kassala © 7oshna



3

1



Led by MaritimEA Research
Location: Pakistan

Digital Heritage Trails Project

With a keen focus on awareness-raising, the Digital Heritage Trails Project tackled the digital preservation of archaeological sites vulnerable to erosion caused by rising sea levels in Sindh, Pakistan.

MaritimEA Research have created high-precision 3D representations of Banbhore, Ratukot, Jam Jaskar Goth, Ranokot and Lahiri Bandar. They worked with the local community to gather local knowledge and folklore around the rich history of the surrounding area and promoted the importance of archaeology through outreach activities for schools and museums.

Through using the sites to highlight the Sindh area's central role in trade and culture, MaritimEA's project has been pivotal in highlighting the wider challenges climate change is causing for heritage in similar geographies too.

Their accomplishments include:

- Documenting five separate sites to improve conservation efforts.
- Engaging 356 students and local fishing communities.
- Training ten local heritage professionals in 3D photogrammetry.
- An online, immersive experience of the Indus Delta region generated by the creation of a tri-lingual website (English, Urdu, and Sindhi).



2

1. MaritimEA survey team and local fisher folk surveying remains of the Jam Jaskar Goth site during low tide © MaritimEA

2. School children viewing the Lost Cities of the Indus Delta in Virtual Reality © Mohammad Ahmed, MaritimEA

3. The survey team planning a site survey © MaritimEA
4. Assessing archaeological remains at Lahiri Bandar with Dr. Jun Kimura © Shabib Asghar, MaritimEA



3

‘If we cannot save our history, cannot save our sites, cannot save our past, what can we do? If we let our sites get destroyed, what is left?’

Community member Mr. Abubakar Shaikh



4



1

Led by National Museums of Kenya
Location: Kenya

Insitu Preservation of 1.5-Million-Year-Old Footprints at Ileret

The 1.5-million-year-old Ileret Footprints are crucial to the study of early human morphology as they provide a tantalising glimpse into some of our earliest ancestors' interaction with their environment. Located near Lake Turkana, along the Ileret seasonal river, the footprints have suffered from increased erosion due to high winds and heavier rainfall caused by climate change.

Led by National Museums Kenya, this project has been working to protect the site and develop and promote it as both an educational and tourist destination that benefits the local community.

In January 2025, the site was handed over to the Marsabit County Government who will be responsible for the administration of the site and enable the local community to have an active say in how the site is managed, promoted and protected.

The project has successfully delivered:

- Installation of protective measures i.e. gabions and drainage pits to prevent sediment erosion and absorb flood waters and a canopy to safeguard the site from rain and drought.
- A new Interpretation Centre with an exhibition that provides employment for local people as site custodians.
- An awareness campaign with workshops that have improved the understanding of the site's global importance and diversified its visitors.
- Training for Ileret local women and young people in heritage crafts and entrepreneurship so that they can make and sell these crafts in Ileret.

A key outcome of the project is the improved relations and mutual understanding between National Museums Kenya, local Marsabit County officials and the Dassenach community who live and work in the area, which will ensure a strong future for the Ileret Footprints.



2

1. Rajah, one of the Ileret youth, working with the project team in digital technology
© National Museums Kenya

2. The Principal Secretary in the State Department of Culture, The Arts & Heritage, Ms. Ummi Bashir (3rd right) and the Governor of Marsabit County Government H.E. Mohamud Ali (3rd left) together with the Director-General of National Museums of Kenya Professor Mary Gikungu (2nd right) cut a ribbon to open the Interpretation Center at the Ileret Footprint site. © National Museums Kenya

3. Casting of footprints
© National Museums Kenya



3

‘The Ileret Footprint Project is anchored on three pillars: Culture, Climate Change and Community. These are the project’s foundation in a mission to protect cultural heritage against climate change, promote research, raise public awareness, engage the local community and develop sustainable tourism opportunities at this significant site.’

Purity Kiura – Project Lead and Chief Research Scientist in Archaeology and Heritage

1



Mosul Maqam

Led by University of Exeter,
Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies
Location: Iraq

The musical heritage of Maqam, dating back to the Abbasid Caliphate (750–1258 CE) which encapsulates traditional and folk tales, love stories and spiritual ceremonies is a significant component of the shared musical culture of the MENA region. It was at risk in Mosul due to a concerted effort by Daesh in 2014 to destroy this form of artistic expression. Since Maqam was shared orally between generations, there is little existing documentation of it and the few surviving Maqam experts and pioneers are elderly.

To safeguard this vital intangible cultural heritage, from 2024–25, the University of Exeter worked alongside partners in Iraq. This included the University of Mosul, Kashkul Center for Arts and Culture at the American University of Iraq Sulaimani (AUIS), and Volunteer With Us in Mosul.

The project broadened engagement with Maqam in Mosul through a range of forums including social media outreach, a dedicated Maqam festival, oral history recordings, and training for local individuals in the essential skills to continue this heritage.

The project enhanced access as evidenced by:

- 94% workshop attendees reporting that they engaged with individuals who were not from their own communities.
- An all-women team who created a Maqam focused graphic novel, targeted to women Maqam practitioners, broadening engagement with Maqam, an historically male-dominated musical style.
- The Maqam training at Mosul University exceeded its targets, reaching 50 people instead of 20.
- The Maqam Festival, described as a joyous and healing experience, which took place in Mosul Forest celebrated Mosul's resilience and the commitment of its people to revitalise their community following violence and was attended by more than 600 people.

Not only did the project help foster connections across communities in Mosul, it led to a deeply personal and unexpected reunion. During an artist workshop, the trainer – an international Maqam performer – discovered that one of the participants was his former santur teacher, one of Iraq's most respected santur players and a Maqam expert. The two had lost contact in 2003 due to the Iraq War.



‘They say music is food for the soul, but when Maqam gatherings happen, the food walks to the soul. If the soul has been sullied by life, problems, or other troubles, attending these events polish it. It restores it to its original, pure state. It was love, love – it was pure love.’

Maqam master Ramiz al-Rawi

2

1. An oral history interview of Ban Shakeeb, Mosul Scholar and Pianist. Photo taken by Tahany Saleh

2. The collage technique is used in creating the graphic novel which places special emphasis on female Maqam practitioners who are often less visible in the Maqam community. Illustrator: Aya Hasseb

3. Workshop with globally renowned Amir El-Saffar and fourteen talented artists whose musical creation was recorded in a full album and performed at the Mosul Maqam festival. Credit: Yunis Khalaf.

3



Capacity Building

Some of the annual budget was allocated to capacity building activities to address gaps in infrastructure, skills and readiness for applying to the fund across the CPF target countries. These activities were designed and commissioned in collaboration with local British Council teams.



Examples of Herati Glass
© ISHKAR/ Herati Glassblowers

The restoration of Sursock Palace

Since 2023, CPF has funded important restoration work on the Sursock Palace in Beirut, which was severely damaged by the Beirut Port explosion in August 2020.

In 2024–25, Beirut Heritage Initiative completed a project that was initiated in the year previous. The project focused on structural repairs, roof waterproofing, and conservation of the Ground Floor Main Hall ceiling. It also restored the Palace's four towers, the western entrance dome, and decorative Baghdadi plasterwork, helping to protect the building and revive its artistic legacy. All works were completed in early 2025.

The project reopened key cultural spaces to the public and provided on-the-job training for young conservators, supporting traditional skills and local capacity in heritage preservation.

Glassblowers in Herat

The thriving tradition of glassblowing in Herat, Afghanistan dates back 2,000 years. However, years of conflict has restricted market access and impaired the ability for glassblowers to consistently respond to orders, and with it, train the next generation. As a result, the industry is reduced to a single workshop, and the rich tradition of Herati glass risks being lost altogether.

In 2024–25, CPF awarded a grant to ISHKAR to provide targeted capacity building to support Herat's glassblowers and increase their income. This support will cover two areas: production capacity and training in logistics and market development. The workshop facilities will be upgraded, and apprentices will be recruited to support with making orders and learn the skills from expert artisans. This will protect the important and much-valued heritage of Herati glassblowing.

Damage Assessment Report for Gaza

In February 2024, the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) based in Bethlehem, completed a comprehensive report outlining the damage caused by conflict and assessing the urgency of the needs to heritage in Gaza. Following that, CCHP was awarded a CPF grant to respond to the most pressing areas of the report and this work continued into 2024–25.

Given the restricted access to Gaza, much of the physical interventions needed could not be carried out. However, the team continued with non-invasive condition assessments, documentation, and the development of preliminary intervention strategies to inform future planning.

Emergency Preparedness for valuable collections in Lebanon

During the conflict, heritage was destroyed and collections at risk. CPF awarded a grant of £100,000 to The Beirut Museum of Art (BeMA) to deliver an emergency response initiative to protect the collections.

The project combined urgent support for at-risk heritage with a programme of public cultural activities designed to foster resilience and social cohesion. Through creative workshops, exhibitions, and storytelling interventions, the initiative provided opportunities for cultural expression, strengthened local engagement, and contributed to safeguarding heritage during a time of profound socio-political and economic instability.

Emergency Response

In 2024–25, the Cultural Protection Fund was able to allocate some of the annual budget to support heritage in urgent need of protection. £361,000 was dedicated to emergency response activities in Gaza, the West Bank and Lebanon.

Cultural Emergency Response support for Palestinian heritage

In 2024–25, the Cultural Protection Fund awarded a grant to the Cultural Emergency Response (CER) programme to support an emergency initiative in Palestine, in collaboration with RIWAQ and the Hebron Rehabilitation Centre. The intervention was developed in response to the urgent need to protect cultural heritage in Gaza as a result of the war leading to widespread displacement.

Project activities included carrying out rapid damage assessments, delivering essential tools and materials to displaced cultural practitioners, and supporting the logistical coordination of local teams working on the ground. In addition to safeguarding physical heritage, the programme placed strong emphasis on protecting intangible cultural practices that are vital to local identity and community cohesion.

The Cultural Emergency Response's approach prioritises local ownership, rapid coordination, and protection of both tangible and intangible heritage. This intervention underlined the importance of acting swiftly in cultural emergencies, and following the lead of local actors who understand the context better. Despite the many challenges, the initiative helped communities preserve key elements of their cultural life and strengthened their ability to recover and rebuild.

Cultural and Humanitarian Relief in Lebanon

When conflict erupted in Southern Lebanon in October 2024, it caused a devastating loss to human lives and further exacerbated the already fragile infrastructure and economy. The Cultural Protection Fund awarded a grant of £80,000 to Action for Hope and Ettijahat's programme supporting Lebanese artists and cultural workers and their families.

The programme had diversity and inclusion at its heart by focusing on migrant and refugee artists and those from marginalised groups. It also aimed to provide displaced communities with opportunities for creative expression, and to document and showcase the resilience and creativity of artists in times of crisis.

The grant resulted in:

- Supporting 158 workers in the art and culture sector with grants ranging from \$800–\$2,400. These grants enabled them to continue their artistic practice and meet their basic needs.
- Meaningfully contributing to relief efforts at grassroots level in Bekaa and Beirut by providing grants to three organisations delivering urgent support to families.
- Beyond financial aid, beneficiaries were connected to cultural networks for mentorship and collaborations.

The reports from the supported institutions emphasised how even modest support significantly enhanced the resilience of those affected.



Facing Change Conference in Jordan

Held in Amman from 2–6 December 2024, the Facing Change conference connected over 110 cultural heritage professionals, advocates, and practitioners from 25 countries. Organised in partnership between the Cultural Protection Fund, International National Trusts Organisation and Petra National Trust, the three-day event provided a platform to explore how cultural heritage can support resilience, inclusivity, and leadership in times of uncertainty and change.

Commencing with a welcome reception hosted by UK Ambassador Philip Hall at his residence in Amman, the conference programme offered ample opportunities for reflection, networking, and exchange. Delegates described the conference as ‘inspiring’ and a ‘once-in-a-lifetime experience’ with its featured keynote speeches, interactive panel discussions, breakout workshops, and visits to key heritage sites in Amman and As-Salt.

Each keynote speech emphasised the power of heritage as a unifying force. HRH Princess Dana Firas, President of the Board of Directors of Petra National Trust, opened with the power of heritage in building inclusive, resilient communities. Dan Snow, historian and broadcaster, spoke about the importance of preserving cultural heritage in times of crisis and change, reflecting on his recent visit to Jordan where he spent time with local stonemasons supported by the Cultural Protection Fund and the World Monuments Fund. Hilary McGrady, Director-General of the National Trust, explored the evolution of the Trust and its role as a collaborative movement, stressing that ‘togetherness’ is needed now more than ever to protect heritage and inspire future generations.

The future-facing sessions delved into the conference’s three key themes: ‘Withstanding Change’, ‘Heritage Leaders’, and ‘Inclusive Heritage.’ A session led by Sofya Shahab, Social Anthropologist at the Institute of Development Studies, explored how young people living amidst violence and displacement engage with heritage as a form of embodied peace, protest, and resilience.



2

1. From left to right: Stephen Stenning (Director of Culture in Action, British Council), Dan Snow (Broadcaster), Charlotte Hanson (Head of International Cultural Heritage at DCMS), Stephanie Grant (Cultural Protection Fund Director, British Council), and Alex Lambert (Country Director Jordan & Levant Cluster Lead, British Council) © Aram Agency

2. Participants learning traditional techniques in jewellery making led by Hana Faouri © Aram Agency

A discussion moderated by Charlotte Hanson, Head of International Cultural Heritage Protection at DCMS, uncovered how living heritage – including language, music, crafts, food, and customs – has a vital role in helping communities reconnect and rebuild in the aftermath of crisis.

The conference also surveyed the evolving landscape of heritage and technology through a session on the 'Future of Digital Cultural Heritage.' It was led by Hannah Andrews, British Council Director of Digital Innovation in Arts. Research findings on this area is now published in a 2025 report commissioned by the British Council. *Digital Cultural Heritage: Imagination, innovation and opportunity* can be downloaded from the CPF website.

The conference drew praise for platforming a diversity of voices, creating the opportunity for peer learning, and the collaborative tone fostered by CPF and its partners. During and after the event, the dynamism of regional exchange led to strengthened professional networks, the conception of new ideas and several new partnerships. It led to a collective reaffirmation of a shared commitment to using heritage as a force for connection, healing, and hope in the face of global challenges.

As one attendee put it: 'Thank you for the opportunity to learn, to grow, and to feel unified in our common cause – no matter our differences.'

The Cultural Protection Fund uses a ‘What Works’ approach to evaluation, ensuring that research, insight and learning are fed into the programme to identify and address gaps in our knowledge and understanding and to improve the conditions for the protection of cultural heritage.

Research and Evaluation

Unlikely Allies: Engaging Armed Groups for the Protection of Cultural Heritage

In 2024, CPF commissioned Aleph Strategies in partnership with the Centre on Armed Groups to research how heritage actors engage and cooperate with non-state groups to deliver heritage protection activities. The *Unlikely Allies* report was published in March 2025.

The report offers new insights into the role of non-state armed groups in both the protection and endangerment of cultural heritage in conflict settings. It draws on real-world case studies, expert interviews, and field-based experience to examine the motivations behind armed group behaviour and explore how engagement with such actors can contribute to broader conflict transformation.

‘Cultural heritage protection in conflict zones is not just about safeguarding the past – it’s about preserving identity, supporting stability, and strengthening resilience. It is, fundamentally, a humanitarian and peacebuilding concern.’ – Jonathan Rider, Director and Co-founder of Aleph Strategies.

The report was launched during an online event, providing a platform to share key findings with heritage professionals, researchers, and partners working in crisis-affected regions. The publication continues to serve as a valuable resource for those working at the intersection of heritage protection and conflict response.



Follow-up of a one-day workshop held in Cairo © Megawra Built Environment

Blueprint: International, Online Peer & Collaborative Learning Programme

In 2023 and 2024, the Audience Agency, commissioned and funded by the Cultural Protection Fund, devised a peer-led learning programme with 30 participants from Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Nepal, Pakistan, Palestine, Syria, and Uganda. They all came from CPF's network. The aim was to find a way for people working in cultural heritage who share similar challenges all over the world to come together, learn from each other and form a supportive network.

The Audience Agency compiled the learning from this programme into a *Blueprint*, intended to support anyone interested to run a similar programme.

Scan this QR code to find both reports



The future of CPF beyond 2026 is confirmed, although with a smaller budget and programme than in previous years because of the reduction to the UK ODA budget. We are now planning for a renewed partnership with DCMS and the programme will be announced in early 2026.

Looking Forward

The Cultural Protection Fund is now in its 10th year, and we are counting down to our 10th birthday with a series of events, conversations, publications and celebratory moments, alongside continuing to fund 45 projects protecting heritage at risk.

What has not changed is that we remain determined to strengthen capacity across the heritage sector to prepare organisations and communities for further threats to heritages and livelihoods.

We will continue to work collaboratively with other heritage funders, as a committed member of the Grantmakers for Cultural Heritage Protection (GCHeP) network. Our aim as a network is to provide efficient and relevant support to the global heritage sector; ensuring that our initiatives are complementary and cooperative, and they generate learning and insight that we can share back into the network and with our partners and stakeholders.

Our objectives and activities will continue to be informed by evidence, learning and research and we will gather as much as possible from as many voices as possible through our projects and engagement activities this year. What we already know, is that we should prioritise local knowledge, leadership and decision making to ensure diverse perspectives are heard, respected and protected.

**To receive regular updates
on the Cultural Protection Fund,
sign up to our newsletter**



1



1. Attendees gained hands-on experience and saw small samples created by skilled stonemasons, in a project led by the World Monuments Fund, with support from CPF.
© Aram Agency

2



2. With support from CPF, artists from Action for Hope, who empower young people to promote their musical heritage, taught participants how to create the traditional Yraghoul instrument.
© Aram Agency

3. Delegates of the Facing Change conference at the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Petra
© Aram Agency

3



Appendices

Appendix 1: 2024–25
Large Grants projects data

Please note that project descriptions are accurate at the time of award. Projects may sometimes need to change their focus and objectives in order to adapt to changing circumstances.

Large Grants projects completed 2024–25

Projects:

Withstanding change: heritage amongst climate uncertainty

Led by the International National Trusts Organisation, this project will restore six historic buildings in six countries across the Middle East, North Africa and East Africa, protecting them against the severe impacts of climate change, installing new exhibition spaces to engage local communities. Positive connections will be made between National Trust properties in the UK and the sites in each country enabling knowledge sharing around safeguarding the heritage in the face of climate-induced threats. The project will culminate in a conference to cement learning and strengthen international relationships.

Target Countries:

Egypt, Ethiopia, Jordan, Syria, Tanzania, Uganda

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£1,720,319

Grantee:

The International National Trusts Organisation (INTO)

Partners:

The Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, Uganda; Heritage Watch Ethiopia Association, Ethiopia; The Zanzibar Stone Town Heritage Society, Tanzania; Egyptian Heritage Rescue Foundation, Egypt; Petra National Trust, Jordan; Turathuna Foundation, Syria

Middle East People’s Culture Conservation Collective

This project will empower young people across Syria, Iraq and Egypt to protect the heritage of marginalised religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities within their own communities. Where heritage is at risk due to the effects of conflict, training in digital archiving and data preservation will mean that oral histories, interviews, photos and videos capturing dance, language, festivals, feasts, music, pilgrimages and more are archived and preserved for future generations.

Target Countries:

Egypt, Syria, Iraq

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£950,318

Grantee:

Institute of Development Studies

Partners:

Refcemi, United Kingdom; The University of Duhok, Iraq

Safeguarding the cultural heritage of the Bajuni dialect of Swahili, oral traditions and poetry

Working directly with local communities in the northern area of Kenya’s Swahili Coast, this project will record and document the Bajuni dialect spoken by more than 15,000 people in the region. The project will also work with teachers and government to embed education on indigenous languages in schools as well as conduct public performances of Bajuni poetry to engage community members more widely.

Target Countries:

Kenya

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£161,641

Grantee:

Twaweza Communications Center Ltd

Partners:

Swahili Resource Center, Kenya; Shungwaya Welfare Association, Kenya

Large Grants projects completed 2024–25

Projects:

EAMENA: Mitigating Conflict and Climate Change Risks Through Digital Heritage, Capacity Building, and Consolidation

This project will build upon the transformative work undertaken by the EAMENA project across the Middle East and North Africa, working with national NGOs and governments to embed critical skills in the management of built historic and archaeological assets in 6 countries. A range of heritage professionals will be engaged to assess the condition of nationally important sites that have been damaged as a result of climate change and will utilise these as case studies to inform future safeguarding work across the region. This will result in a more robust EAMENA database, capable of rapidly tracking changes to sites, enabling swift intervention to prevent further damage. A conference will bring government officials together to influence policy change at a regional level to ensure the better care of their globally important heritage assets.

Target Countries:

Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Palestine, Syria

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£970,448

Grantee:

University of Oxford

Partners:

Department of Antiquities of Jordan, Jordan; Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Palestine; Department of Antiquities, Libya; Université d'Alger 2 Abou el Kacem Saâdallah, Algeria; ICOMOS Jordan; Ministry Of Culture – Directorate General of Antiquities, Lebanon; Heritage for Peace, Spain; St Catherines Monastery and St Catherines Foundation, Egypt

Partnership for Heritage: Safeguarding Traditional Architecture and Intangible heritage of Tataouine (Tunisia) and the Nafusa mountains (Libya)

The rich and varied heritage of the indigenous Imazighen communities living in the Nafusa Mountains (Libya) and in Tataouine, Tunisia will be documented and conserved through the protection of two ancient, fortified granaries at risk due to climate change. Alongside the restoration of these unique buildings, a programme documenting and reviving local craft and associated skills will support the development of female-led local businesses.

Target Countries:

Libya, Tunisia

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£499,675

Grantee:

University of the West of England

Partners:

Durham University, UK; Institut National du Patrimoine de Tunisie, Tunisia; Department of Antiquities of Libya, Libya; Azzaytuna University, Libya; Institut supérieur Des Arts et Métiers de Tataouine – Association du Ksour, Tunisia; Aran NKabaw Foundation for Restoration of Ancient Buildings, Libya; Association Chenini pour la responsabilité sociale, Tunisia; Ecole Nationale d'Architecture et Urbanisme, Tunisia

Safeguarding endangered oral traditions and minority heritages in Syria

This project will safeguard a wide range of Syrian intangible heritage, including oral traditions, folk stories and proverbs which are central to communities' identities. The project will create podcasts and web-series around mythological storytelling to engage large numbers of people and provide heritage safeguarding training to empower local organisations to conduct research on minority heritages. Training for young people in the traditional craft of woodblock printing will be provided, boosting skills and employment opportunities in the region.

Target Countries:

Syria

Award date:

October 2022

Grant Amount:

£416,502

Grantee:

Ettijahat – Independent Culture

Partners:

Hakawati Inc., USA

Athar Lina Heritage Climate Change: Conservation and Capacity Building

This project will oversee the protection of Yahya al-Shabih and Safiyy al-Din Jawhar, two medieval Islamic monuments that are currently at risk due to climate-change related threats, while re-opening the sites to visitors and the local community. Situated in Historic Cairo, the conservation of these buildings will include a programme of on-site training, workshops and community outreach, where 200 professionals and technicians will learn techniques to protect heritage from climate change and urban greening climate-change action projects will provide opportunities for local women and children.

Target Countries:
Egypt

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£973,776

Grantee:
Megawra Built Environment

Partners:
The Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA), Egypt; Mansour for Architecture and Conservation, Egypt; 10Tooba, Egypt

On the Tracks of Music – Folk Music in the Levant and Mesopotamia

This project will preserve and promote the disappearing traditional folk music and musical instruments of marginalised rural communities, in areas severely affected by conflict and climate change, across Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Syria. The rarely documented folk music is specific to each community's history and these traditions are thought to date back to 2500 BC. Musicians and instrument makers will participate in research and trainings to record and document 100 folk music pieces and historic processes, an ambitious awareness raising campaign will promote folk music of the Levant and Mesopotamia to local and global audiences.

Target Countries:
Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£537,497

Grantee:
Action for Hope ASBL

Partners:
MedeArts, Jordan; Sumer Foundation for Artistic Talents Development, Iraq; The Book Forum, Iraq; Inherit, UK; Smart History Ltd, UK

Preserving the past, safeguarding the future: protecting cultural heritage at risk in Gaza through restoration and community engagement

This project initially aimed to support the complete renovation of the Dar Al-Saada Dome, an important example of Mamluk masonry and architecture in Gaza, for its adaptive reuse as a multi-purpose community education and exhibition centre. The restored dome was planned to create a safe environment for manuscripts from the 13th century library of the Great Omari Mosque, its conservation being used as part of a specialised training programme for local conservators.

A community outreach programme will support efforts to improve the school's heritage curriculum through the development of a cultural heritage education programme.

Following destruction of the Dar Al-Saada Dome in 2023, the project shifted activity in 2024-25 to focus primarily on the safeguarding and awareness raising of Palestinian intangible cultural heritage through cultural education activities for children and provided training for cultural heritage educators to build their capacity to share knowledge of tangible and intangible Palestinian heritage. In addition to the implementation of salvage and rescue steps for the manuscripts from underneath the destroyed Dome.

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£200,125

Grantee:
CISS – Cooperazione Internazionale
Sud Sud

Partners:
University College of Applied Sciences (UCAS), Palestine; Recanati e Restauro, Italy

Large Grants projects completed 2024–25

Projects:

Safeguarding Sudan's Living Heritage

This ambitious project will completely renovate the currently inaccessible Ethnographic Museum in central Khartoum, protecting it from the impacts of climate change induced flooding, create a new landmark domed roof and improved facilities for visitors. The project will also meaningfully engage pastoralists in Darfur and Kordofan, empowering local communities to record accounts of their own living heritage. This will inform new displays in the Ethnographic Museum, enabling people to engage with the critically important collections related to Sudanese intangible culture.

Heritage Challenging Fragmented Geography

This project will restore and enhance significant and endangered buildings and public spaces across four historic centres in the West Bank. These processes will be documented and supported by a heritage training programme for young architects and transformed spaces will be adapted for reuse as community centres to be led by active cultural organisations. Collaborations at a regional and international level will support the creation of new records of traditional practices, provide new opportunities for knowledge exchange and showcase Palestinian cultural heritage to global audiences.

Protection and promotion of Palestinian tangible and intangible cultural heritage at local, national and international levels

This ambitious project will undertake a number of preventive and emergency interventions at three important archaeological sites in the Gaza Strip, including the Roman Necropolis of Ard-al-Moharibeen discovered in January 2022 and the newly discovered Mosaic of Al Bureij, a spectacular mosaic pavement, which is currently considered to date back to the 5th – 7th century. An oral history training programme will enable young people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank to develop new skills. An inclusive and varied series of cultural activities in collaboration with civil society and youth focused groups will also engage local audiences and celebrate Palestinian cultural heritage.

Target Countries:
Sudan

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£1,987,756

Grantee:
Mallinson Architects

Partners:
Sudan National Corporation for Antiquities and Museums, Sudan; British Institute Eastern Africa, UK; ICCROM-ATHAR Regional Conservation Office, UAE; Cambridge Heritage Research Centre (CHRC) and Mapping Africa's Endangered Archaeological Sites and Monuments Project (MAEASaM), UK; Centre for Darfur Heritage, University of Nyala, Sudan; Durham University: Archives and Special Collections, Sudan Archive, UK; British Museum, UK; Sudan Memory, France

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£1,216,264

Grantee:
RIWAQ-Centre for Architectural Conservation

Partners:
The Municipality of Kafr 'Aqab, Palestine; The Municipality of Gaza, Palestine; NAWA for Culture and Arts Association, Palestine; The Municipality of Beit Hanina, Palestine; Qalandiya Village Council, Palestine

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£1,297,120

Grantee:
Première Urgence Internationale

Partners:
The French Biblical School of Archaeology of Jerusalem – École biblique et archéologique française de Jérusalem (EBAF), Palestine; Centre for Trust Peace and Social Relations (CTPSR), Coventry University (CU), UK; Institut National des Sciences Appliquées de Strasbourg, France; The University of Palestine, Palestine; Islamic University of Gaza, Palestine

Insitu Preservation of 1.5-Million-Year-Old Footprints at Ileret, Northern Kenya: Evidence of Early Hominin Foot Morphology And Paleobiology

National Museums of Kenya will work with international partners to safeguard the globally important heritage of the 1.5-million-year-old hominin footprints found at Ileret, near Lake Turkana, an area known as the ‘cradle of humankind’. A physical canopy will protect the site from the effects of wind erosion driven by climate change and the local community will gain skills in heritage management in order to protect the site into the future and present the heritage at a new exhibition and community space.

Dessie Museum Renovation

This project will support the complete renovation of the Dessie Museum in Ethiopia’s Amhara Region, which was destroyed during conflict in 2021. Through a combination of physical interventions to restore and upgrade museum facilities, community focused heritage trainings and a collections growth initiative to replace damaged and lost objects, the museum will reopen and continue as an important regional centre for culture and education.

Target Countries:
Kenya

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£384,151

Grantee:
National Museums of Kenya

Partners:
Harvard University, USA; Chatham University, USA; Technical University of Kenya, Kenya; Rutgers University, USA; George Washington University, USA; International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), Italy

Target Countries:
Ethiopia

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£305,811

Grantee:
Ethiopian Heritage Trust (EHT)

Partners:
Ethiopian Heritage Conservation Authority (EHCA), Ethiopia; Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development, Ethiopia; Wollo University, Ethiopia; Amhara Region Culture and Tourism Bureau, Ethiopia; Dessie Culture and Tourism Department, Ethiopia

Large Grants projects completed 2024–25

Projects:

Abbas Bazaar, Recovery Lab of Port Said Ark for Iraq (Phase 3)

This project will protect the 19th century Bazaar Abbas in Port Said, Egypt. The Bazaar is a unique hybrid of local architectural style and European modernism that has suffered extensive damage as a result of past conflicts on the Suez Canal. Its partial reconstruction will preserve original features, including the timber verandas, and the combined research, education and training initiatives will capture the collective memory of the Bazaar’s sociocultural importance and provide a model for future urban heritage interventions in the historic core of Port Said.

This project is an expansion of an ambitious initiative to protect and promote Iraq’s unique and endangered inland watercraft heritage, that is in rapid decline due to the ongoing impact of climate change. Working across locations in Southern Iraq, skilled artisans will work with local students to document and create new models of traditional boats and associated crafts with varied historic use along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. A series of workshops and field testing will support new research into climate mitigation measures and a diverse range of educational, sports, leisure and tourism activities will engage local communities and civil society groups.

Target Countries:
Egypt

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£236,701

Grantee:
Brandenburg University
of Technology Cottbus

Partners:
Al-Yakaniya for Heritage and Arts, Egypt;
Galala University, Egypt; Port Said Ala
Adeemo, Egypt; Alliance Française de
Port-Said, Egypt

Target Countries:
Iraq

Award date:
October 2022

Grant Amount:
£779,737

Grantee:
Safina Projects CIC

Partners:
Basrah Museum (managed by Basrah
Directorate of Antiquities and Heritage),
Iraq; University of Basra, Iraq; Natural
History Museum, University of Basra, Iraq;
British Institute for the Study of Iraq, UK;
Al-Turath al-Sha’bi (Journal) / Shanashil
Foundation for Humanitarian Heritage
Revival (NGO), Iraq

Appendix 2: 2024–25 Small Grants projects data

Small Grants 1 projects 2024–25

Turath Benghazi (Building Heritage Capacity & Local Engagement in Benghazi's Historic City Centre)

The historic city centre of Benghazi in Libya hosts many important religious and cultural sites and has suffered significant damage due to civil war. This project will provide local architects and officials with training in cultural heritage preservation and urban design, building capacity for conservation and restoration of this ancient city.

Khan Musallah, Najaf, Iraq

This impressive 19th century monument in Iraq was built to accommodate pilgrims travelling between the holy cities of Najaf and Karbala and was a key point for contact and exchange along the Silk and Ottoman trade routes. It suffered significant damage during conflict and faces further deterioration due to climate change. This project will improve the condition of the site, create a conservation plan and support local heritage professionals and the community to care for and protect this and other local heritage sites in the future.

Global Bethlehem: Securing the Archives of a Travelling Merchant

The 19th century Dar Jacir house and its rare archival collection in Palestine, are in danger of being lost due to ongoing conflict. This project will protect the building against further damage, provide access to new areas for collections and display and will enable the creation of a professional standard archive room.

Target Countries:
Libya

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£113,483

Grantee:
World Monuments Fund Britain

Partners:
Historical City Administration Authority/
Benghazi, Libya; Create Streets Foundation
(UK), UK; Barah Organization for Culture and
Arts, Libya; Institut français d'archéologie
orientale (IFAO), Egypt

Target Countries:
Iraq

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£69,074

Grantee:
Living Mesopotamia CIC

Partners:
State Board of Antiquities,
Iraq – Najaf branch, Iraq

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£99,839

Grantee:
Dar Yusuf Nasri Jacir for Art and Research

Partners:
Khalidi Library – Khalidi Waqf, Palestine

Small Grants 1 projects 2024–25

Projects:

Cultural Heritage Preservation and Responsible Tourism for Sustainable Development of the Ik community in Northern Karamoja, Uganda

The Ik community in Northeast Uganda have a unique language and culture that is under threat due to marginalisation and displacement through conflict and climate change. This project aims to protect their cultural identity through documentation, community engagement and training.

Emergency intervention and damage assessment in Manbij, Syria

This project will see the implementation of emergency and consolidation interventions to stabilise three at risk monuments in Northern Syria, dating from the late Byzantine to early 20th century.

Revitalise the Roots: Bikaptooris

The Endorois were some of the first inhabitants in the Baringo and Laikipia Counties in Kenya and their intangible heritage is at risk due to the rising water levels of nearby Lake Bogoria. The project will deliver training in oral history skills and record conversations with Endorois Elders focusing on the knowledge systems, practices and rituals connected to their pastoralist culture.

Target Countries:
Uganda

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£76,191

Grantee:
Kara-Tunga Foundation

Partners:
Ik Agenda Development Initiative, Uganda;
EyeOpener Initiative, Uganda; Urithi Studio
Enterprises Limited, Uganda

Target Countries:
Syria

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£79,987

Grantee:
Heritage for Peace

Partners:
Rehabimed, Spain

Target Countries:
Kenya

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£100,000

Grantee:
Jamii Asilia Centre

Partners:
Global Wisdom Collective, USA; Endorois
Welfare Council (EWC), Kenya; Endorois
Indigenous Women Empowerment Network
(EIWEN), Kenya

Small Grants 2 projects 2024–25

Documentation and Conservation of Lebanon's Coastal Castles

The coastal heritage of Lebanon is at risk of erosion due to climate change. This project will carry out conservation, documentation and 3D photogrammetric digitisation of four historically significant archaeological sites, as well as building capacities by providing local training in heritage preservation.

The Protection of Sakiya's Cultural Heritage Site

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage at a site in Palestine is at risk of loss due to ongoing conflict and instability.

Led by Sakiya – Research and Experimental Development, this project will support the ongoing rehabilitation and preservation of the site, through research, documentation and restoration of its ancient Ayyubid architectural features and the mythologies, rituals and practices associated with it. An established education and cultural programme will give the local community opportunities to participate in the creation of visual and performance pieces and to learn new skills in traditional building methods, heritage management and protection.

Protection and Participation: IAAS Archive of Sudanese Intangible Cultural Heritage

Over 6000 hours' worth of historic material is held by the Institute of African and Asian Studies (IAAS) Archive of Sudanese Intangible Cultural Heritage. Much of the material is irreplaceable and, in some cases, it documents intangible cultural heritage that is no longer practised.

The collection has been damaged in past conflicts, and the current conflict continues to threaten its security. This project led by TransforMedia hopes to conduct remote digitisation to permanently preserve the collection and make it more widely accessible.

Target Countries:
Lebanon

Award date:
February 2023

Grant Amount:
£86,747

Grantee:
Iconem Fund

Partners:
Lebanese Ministry of Culture – DGA
(General Directorate of Antiquities), Lebanon

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£99,999

Grantee:
Sakiya – Research and Experimental
Development

Partners:
Not applicable

Target Countries:
Sudan

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£99,000

Grantee:
Transformedia CIC

Partners:
Institute of African and Asian Studies;
University of Khartoum, Sudan

Small Grants 2 projects 2024–25

Projects:

The traditional tattoos of Babylon, Iraq: documenting and preserving a threatened heritage

Deq is an endangered custom of tattooing, often used as a way to remember important people and events. As the practice of traditional tattooing declines, this project led by The American Academic Institute in Iraq (TAARI), will document the knowledge of Deq held by its elderly practitioners, to enable greater understanding of the roots of this tradition and its significance and role in local society.

The project will focus on the ancient province of Babylon, collecting and documenting images of the tattoos and the stories of the women who wear them, which will be shared in an exhibition in the Museum of Babylon.

Target Countries:
Iraq

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£45,155

Grantee:
The American Academic Research Institute in Iraq (TAARI)

Partners:
Not applicable

Mosul Maqam

Maqam is an Arabic musical tradition with a highly structured system of melody, poetry and vocal technique that is currently at risk of total loss due to conflict and instability. In a project led by the University of Exeter, this historic art form will be preserved and rejuvenated. It will focus on the musical and lyrical heritage of the city of Mosul, where Maqam is uniquely precious to the local population in the form of folk tales, love stories and spiritual ceremonies. The project will collate, document and digitise records of authentic Maqam practices, inspiring the creation of new musical and visual artworks which will connect future generations in and beyond Mosul with this significant element of Iraq's cultural heritage.

Target Countries:
Iraq

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£99,992

Grantee:
University of Exeter

Partners:
American University of Iraq Sulaimani (AUIS), Division or Department: Kashkul centre for arts and culture, Iraq; University of Mosul, Iraq; Volunteer with Us Foundation for Relief and Development NGO (Mosul Branch), Iraq

#NBOLibraries: New Futures for Kenya's Archives

The McMillan Memorial Library is the oldest library in Nairobi and the second oldest in Kenya. Its contents span Kenya's colonial and post-colonial history and are of significant value to the country's culture, heritage and identity.

A project led by Book Bunk Trust will build on existing work to preserve and digitise additional endangered collections which include paper, glass film slides, photographs and film reels, while also increasing public engagement by making the library more accessible.

Target Countries:
Kenya

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£102,908

Grantee:
Book Bunk Trust

Partners:
Studio NBO, Nairobi, Kenya; African Digital Heritage Foundation, Kenya

Storytelling as Safeguarding: Protecting South Sudanese Women's Cultural Heritage in Refugee Settings in Uganda and Kenya

In Uganda and Kenya, South Sudanese women in refugee settings will document folk songs that have been passed down through generations, thanks to a project being led by the Likikiri Collective. These songs document the robust heritage of South Sudanese communities who have migrated to neighbouring countries due to fluctuating conflicts in their region.

Target Countries:
Kenya, Uganda

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£113,050

Grantee:
Likikiri Collective

Partners:
Community Development Centre (CDC), Uganda; SheLeads Kakuma, Kenya; University of London (SOAS) School of Arts, Department of Music, UK; British Library Sound Archives, UK; British Institute for Eastern Africa (BIEA), Kenya

Tell Baya'a Mission House Rehabilitation, as a community centre, and archaeological site of Tuttul protection

In northern Syria, several structures at the remains of an ancient city in one of the oldest archaeological sites have been severely impacted by the effects of conflict.

Damage assessment and consolidation will be carried out by project lead Asociacion RehabiMed on these structures and highly significant artefacts and archaeological materials at risk of being looted will be documented and stored. Local architects and archaeologists will also be trained in assessment, monitoring and preservation techniques.

A number of people living around the site will be trained in traditional building skills before assisting in the renovation of an on-site complex. Upon completion this will provide an invaluable community and civil society resource.

Target Countries:
Syria

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£97,587

Grantee:
Asociacion RehabiMed

Partners:
Rafekatuna, Syria; Heritage for Peace, Spain

Restoration and Conservation of Ge'ez Manuscripts in War Affected North Gondor and North and South Wollo Zonal Districts

Gospels, hymns, civil law, patristic literature, medicine, magic, astronomy and bibles are just some of the contents of manuscripts written in Ge'ez, a language only fluently used by a small number of priests in some war-affected parts of Ethiopia.

The project team from Bahir Dar University will work on conserving manuscript preparation knowledge through providing intergenerational training and workshops in conservation and restoration for the local community.

Target Countries:
Ethiopia

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£99,989

Grantee:
Bahir Dar University (BDU)

Partners:
Amhara National Regional State Culture and Tourism Bureau (ANRS-CTB), Ethiopia; Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCCH), Ethiopia

Small Grants 2 projects 2024–25

Projects:

Urgent Action: Safeguarding the Diverse Cultural Heritage of Jerusalem

The Khalidi Library – Khalidi Waqf will lead a project to support the preservation of, and efforts to increase public access to East Jerusalem’s written and archaeological heritage, which is at risk due to conflict and instability and climate related changes. The creation of a comprehensive architectural and archaeological study will inform planned future physical interventions to rehabilitate an important cultural centre.

A separate intensive programme in the emergency preservation of ancient manuscripts will allow trainees to develop theoretical and practical skills, before applying this learning to safeguarding endangered collections.

Target Countries:
Palestine

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£96,650

Grantee:
Khalidi Library – Khalidi Waqf

Partners:
Not applicable

Developing Capacities in Marine Cultural Heritage Management and Protection

A project that focuses on the protection of endangered marine cultural heritage in Gaza and Libya through capacity building in maritime archaeology.

Target Countries:
Libya, Palestine

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£73,852

Grantee:
The Palestine Exploration Fund

Partners:
Maritime Endangered Archaeology Project (MarEA), UK; Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Palestine; Department of Antiquities Libya; Alexandria Centre for Maritime Archaeology and Underwater Cultural Heritage, Egypt; Department of Archaeology, University of Benghazi, Libya

Mitigation of Present and Future Climate Change Impact on the 3.6 million-years Laetoli Footprint Site and Winde Slaves’ Warehouse along the Tanzanian Coast

The Laetoli footprint site in Tanzania is the oldest unequivocal evidence of human ancestors walking on two feet. It is currently at risk due to erosion caused by increasing storms and rainfall. In Winde, a 19th Century slave warehouse complex faces similar erosion caused by rising sea levels. Both sites will be documented in a project led by the University of St. Andrews.

Through digital documentation, training and community engagement, the project will address the threats facing the physical sites as well as capturing local stories, myths, dance and rituals which are linked to them, ensuring that the heritage is permanently preserved and available to future generations.

Target Countries:
Tanzania

Award date:
May 2023

Grant Amount:
£84,029

Grantee:
St Andrews University

Partners:
University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Syrian Cassette Archives: Three New Collections

Recorded in Syria between the 1950s and 2010s, audio recordings including a wide range of Syrian music-related heritage are currently stored in privately owned archives across the country.

Featuring raw folk recordings, live wedding concerts, studio albums, soloists, classical and children's music, the audio represents decades of Syrian intangible heritage and reflects the lived experience of large numbers of Syrian people.

The material is currently at risk due to the effects of conflict in Syria, worsening the physical deterioration of the cassettes as well as causing the displacement of collectors and distributors of the music. As part of this project, the music will be documented, digitalised, recorded and safeguarded for future generations.

Target Countries:

Syria

Award date:

May 2023

Grant Amount:

£91,585

Grantee:

SCA Initiative

Partners:

Not applicable

Appendix 3: 2024–25

South Asia Grants projects data

Pakistan Pilot Grants 2024–25

Preservation of the Late Buddhist rock heritage of Swat – digitization and preventive conservation)

Seasonal drought and heavy rainfall which cause increased instances of landslides, flash floods and rapid erosion, are endangering the Buddhist rock reliefs and inscriptions of the Swat Valley. The fund is supporting Essanoor Associates to lead a project to include community-based climate change adaptation training for local people to better care for the sites as well as digital documentation of the reliefs and conservation of 30 reliefs requiring urgent intervention.

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£146,085

Grantee:
Essanoor Associates (Pvt.) Ltd.

Partners:
Italian Archaeological Mission (ISMEO/ Ca' Foscari University of Venice), Rome, Italy; Heritage Management Organization (HERITAGE), Greece

Preserving & Promoting the Hazara Heritage

In Balochistan, where the Hazara community's intangible cultural heritage is at risk due to the effects of conflict, Faiz Foundation Trust will protect elements of this heritage by documenting it through film and photography. The Trust will also offer capacity building for local artisans in skills associated with the promotion and protection of making kilim (a flat-woven rug or mat), Sawatkari (handmade silver jewellery) and embroidery, while the importance of the heritage will be highlighted through an advocacy and awareness raising programme.

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£116,720

Grantee:
Faiz Foundation Trust

Partners:
Human Rights Commission Pakistan, Punjab, Pakistan; We the Humans, Balochistan, Pakistan

The Reading Room Karachi

The Khalikdina Hall and Library is one of only two remaining Reading Rooms in Karachi. Conflict-related instability has led to the building and its collections lacking appropriate management and care. This new round of grants will support Numaish-Karachi to revitalise the space through improved access to the newly conserved and digitised literary assets. They will also provide a range of cultural activities for local communities.

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£128,602

Grantee:
Numaish-Karachi

Partners:
Sadiq and Polack Architects, Sindh, Pakistan; Anjuman Tarraqqi-e-Urdu (ATUP), Sindh, Pakistan

Manchar Lake Mohannas – Safeguarding the last surviving houseboat village from extinction

The living heritage of the Mohana people who live around Manchar Lake, Sindh, is currently at risk due to increasingly severe seasonal drought and flooding brought about by climate change. In this round of grants, the NED University of Engineering and Technology will work with the community to restore all 35 of the remaining Mohana houseboats and will train young volunteers in restoration techniques to keep the way of life of the Mohana alive.

Digital Heritage Trails Project (DHTP)

In the Indus Delta region of Sindh, five endangered maritime archaeological sites are at risk of rising sea levels and erosion as a result of climate change. The Cultural Protection Fund is supporting MartimEA Research to lead a project to document the five sites and develop a digital trail of them across the Delta. Community engagement will capture local knowledge and folklore about the sites and the project will raise awareness of the archaeology locally through outreach activities for schools and museums.

Community Based Conservation of Silk Route Heritage

Severe weather events caused by climate change are putting the unique architectural features of the 18th century Kharmang Palace and the 600-year-old Gholbasher House in the Yasin Valley at risk. We are supporting Laajverd and partners to work closely with the local communities at both sites to digitally document and repair elements of each building and hold a design residency for Shu craftspeople to help revitalise the practice.

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£146,086

Grantee:
NED University of Engineering
and Technology

Partners:
Wadero Umer Village (Jirga) Committee,
Sindh, Pakistan; Indus River Valley Institute
(IRVI), Punjab, Pakistan

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£145,893

Grantee:
MaritimEA Research

Partners:
Kaspar Consulting Services, Punjab,
Pakistan; A.P.P.A.R.A.T.U.S. LLC, Japan

Target Countries:
Pakistan

Award date:
February 2024

Grant Amount:
£120,390

Grantee:
Laajverd

Partners:
Not applicable

Nepal Pilot Grants 2024–25

Projects:

Preservation and revival of Maithil women’s wall painting and sculpting arts

The project focuses on Maithil women’s paintings and mud art heritage, which is a form of earthen architecture used to decorate mud houses with symbolic imagery that represents religious tradition of the Maithil community.

Maithil women have great pride in their traditions, as this skill was traditionally passed down from mothers to daughters, upheld by women for centuries through art on walls of their mud houses.

The drought has led to limited sources of income, and women’s role in society has been limited to taking care of their households while men seek employment abroad, which has led to their artistic skills and heritage to be unpractised and forgotten.

Training local women in Maithil painting and mud work will ensure local people have developed skills to protect the heritage and practice the unique craft of Maithil tradition. The interviews with elderly Maithil artisans will allow local communities to better understand and value their cultural heritage.

By decorating the houses in Kuwa village, using the acquired Maithil artwork tradition, local communities will play an active role in protecting their cultural heritage through training and practice – and the local area is enhanced for the benefit of communities and visitors.

Target Countries:
Nepal

Award date:
April 2024

Grant Amount:
£50,000

Grantee:
Janakpur Women’s Development Center

Partners:
Not applicable

Safeguarding the Kusunda (The Ban Rajas) Language and Culture for future generation

The Kusunda Language is a distinct and critically endangered language spoken fluently by just a small number of remaining individuals in Bagmati Province, Nepal. The language represents a link to the past for the remaining Kusunda people and has unusual characteristics, including the absence of words for ‘yes’ or ‘no.’ The language is therefore irreplaceable if it is lost.

The language is at risk of dying out as more Kusunda people move away from the area and lose connection to this important piece of their heritage due to the impact of climate change on their livelihoods and way of life.

Through courses for students at local secondary schools and the development of an online learning programme, Archive Nepal and partners hope to increase the speakership of this language and will promote the language further through the production of dual language Nepali and Kusunda books for children.

Target Countries:
Nepal

Award date:
April 2024

Grant Amount:
£46,443

Grantee:
Archive Nepal

Partners:
Uday Raj Aaley, Lumbini, Nepal;
Kathalaya Inc., Bagmati, Nepal

Towards Protecting the Cultural Heritage in the High Himalayas of the Shey Phoksundo National Park of Dolpo

In the Upper Dolpo region, one of the most remote areas of Nepal, monastic sites, historic settlements, and monuments are at risk of deterioration due to conflict related instability, which impacted traditional management systems to maintain and protect these sites.

Sampada Samrakshyan Samaj Nepal (ICOMOS Nepal) will work with local government and members of the community to document and improve capacity to care for built heritage that remains an important part of socio-cultural life for the Dolpo community.

A training programme in the documentation and condition mapping of built heritage, will address the existing lack of records and support the development of guidance and procedures for the continuation of this work beyond the project end, further supported through series of workshops and discussions on community-led heritage protection.

Target Countries:
Nepal

Award date:
April 2024

Grant Amount:
£39,513

Grantee:
Sampada Samrakshyan Samaj Nepal (ICOMOS Nepal)

Partners:
Shey Phoksundo Rural Municipality, Karnali, Nepal

Preservation of Indigenous Food Heritage in Nepal

National Indigenous Women’s Federation will deliver this project, which focuses on diverse culinary practices in the highland regions of Nepal.

Food heritage, foraging and associated cultural practices are intrinsically connected to the environment; changes in weather patterns including increased drought, heavy rain, and flooding as a result.

Varendra Research Museum

This project will deliver training and capacity strengthening for local heritage professionals in preservation techniques, documentation and archiving and storytelling, to support the Varendra Research Museum in Bangladesh in safeguarding its collections and associated intangible and oral traditions through strengthened connections with local communities.

Target Countries:
Nepal

Award date:
April 2024

Grant Amount:
£50,000

Grantee:
National Indigenous Women’s Federation (NIWF)

Partners:
Natural Roots Pvt. Ltd., Bagmati, Nepal

Target Countries:
Bangladesh

Award date:
July 2024

Grant Amount:
£133,063

Grantee:
Durham University

Partners:
Rajshahi University, Bangladesh;
Varendra Research Museum, Bangladesh

Appendix 4: Meeting group members

Programme Board

The Cultural Protection Fund programme board core membership is made up of Senior leaders from British Council and DCMS (2 from each) and reported to by the Cultural Protection Fund Director and team. The following includes everyone who attended the 2024–25 board meetings.

Core membership

Stephen Stenning
Director Culture in Action, British Council – Chair

Mark Stephens
Director Cultural Engagement, British Council

Cortina Butler
Director Arts, British Council

Duncan Parish
Deputy Director, Tourism & Cultural Diplomacy, DCMS

Charlotte Hanson
Head of International Cultural Heritage Protection, DCMS

Ian Ascough
Head of International Cultural Heritage Protection, DCMS

Emily Driscoll
Head of Cultural Diplomacy, DCMS

Cultural Protection team

Stephanie Grant
Director Cultural Protection Fund, British Council

Daniel Head
Senior Grants Manager, Cultural Protection Fund, British Council

DCMS Attendees

Joanne McCafferty
International Cultural Heritage Protection Programme Officer, DCMS

Jack Dryden
Finance Manager, DCMS

Pakistan Pilot Approvals Panel (February 2024)

Stephen Stenning

Director Culture in Action, British Council – Chair

James Hampson

Country Director, British Council Pakistan

Jill Richens

Director Arts South Asia. British Council

Aparna Tandon

ICCROM

Lorraine Finch

Specialist Assessor

Bangladesh Pilot Approvals Panel (May 2024)

Stephanie Grant

Director Cultural Protection Fund

Susan Winter

Grants Manager Cultural Protection Fund

Jill Richens

Regional Arts Director South Asia British Council

Sadia Rahman

Head of Arts Bangladesh British Council

Nepal Pilot Approvals Panel (April 2024)

Stephen Stenning

Director Culture in Action, British Council – Chair

Cortina Butler

Deputy Director Arts, British Council

Jill Richens

Regional Arts Director South Asia. British Council

Cathy Costain

Head of Arts, British Council Egypt

Shahida Macdougall

Country Director, British Council Nepal



Cultural Protection Fund

Working in 19 countries:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt,
Ethiopia, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya,
Nepal, Palestine, Pakistan, Sudan, Syria,
Tanzania, Tunisia, Uganda, Yemen

£16 million funding

The Cultural Protection Fund in 2022–25

Supported 176 organisations

Engaged 10,000 in project activities



In partnership with



Department
for Culture,
Media & Sport

For further information on the
Cultural Protection Fund, please contact:
culturalprotection@britishcouncil.org