

# Developing the ICCROM Training Kit on “Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage” - Scope, Features and Challenges

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## **Resumen**

### **Alcance, índole y problemática de la elaboración del “kit” de formación del ICCROM sobre la gestión de riesgos aplicada al patrimonio cultural**

*Si se carece de un marco jurídico de protección, la vulnerabilidad del patrimonio se acentúa no sólo cuando se producen catástrofes inmediatas, sino también en los momentos de extrema emergencia, las situaciones posteriores a conflictos y las etapas de reconstrucción y reparaciones. Asimismo, hay otros factores que contribuyen a la desaparición de las tradiciones y prácticas culturales, por ejemplo el crecimiento de la población, la urbanización, la pobreza, los proyectos de desarrollo económico y los procesos generados por las mutaciones de la sociedad. De ahí la importancia que revisten las actividades de sensibilización, las capacitaciones especializadas en materia de prevención de riesgos aplicada al patrimonio cultural y la elaboración de “kits” prácticos. Como los desastres no tienen un principio ni un fin que puedan delimitarse claramente, se suelen medir en función de indicadores de desarrollo objetivos, y por lo tanto deben tratarse con una perspectiva de continuidad. En este contexto, en la fase de la realización de preparativos destinados a proteger los bienes culturales en situaciones de riesgo, se deben tener en cuenta tres elementos: las comunidades, el medio ambiente y el patrimonio cultural existente.*

## *Résumé*

### ***Développer le kit de formation de l'ICCROM sur “La gestion des risques pour le patrimoine culturel” : portée, nature et défis***

*En l'absence d'un cadre de protection légale, le patrimoine culturel est rendu très vulnérable non seulement par les situations de catastrophes imminentes mais aussi au moment des pics d'urgence, des post-désastres et au cours des phases de réparation. A cela, s'ajoutent d'autres facteurs extérieurs qui contribuent à la disparition des traditions et des pratiques culturelles tels que l'accroissement de la population, l'urbanisation, la pauvreté, les projets de développement et ceux dus aux changements. D'où l'importance de la sensibilisation, des formations spécialisées dans la préparation aux risques appliquées au patrimoine culturel et des kits pratiques. Les catastrophes n'ont ni début ni fin bien définis, elles sont généralement mesurées en fonction des indicateurs de développement objectifs et doivent, par conséquent être traités par la continuité. Dans ce contexte, la phase de préparation face aux risques en faveur des biens culturels doit tenir compte des communautés, de l'environnement ainsi que du patrimoine construit.*

## **Issues and Challenges on Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage**

Cultural heritage is confronted with various kinds of risks, especially in disaster-prone areas of the “developing” world. In the context of South Asia, one of the main issues stems from the limited official understanding of cultural heritage, which is still monument-centred and does not consider many important heritage components as worthy of protection.

In the absence of any comprehensive legal framework for protection, the cultural heritage is most vulnerable not only to impending disaster situations but also during emergency and post-disaster recovery and reconstruction phases. Many post-earthquake reconstruction measures serve to destroy significant components of cultural heritage rather than protect them. This is exemplified in the case of the reconstruction work following the Gujarat earthquake of January 2001, when many historic towns and traditional villages suffered extensive damage and some were completely wiped out. Ironically, during the relief and reconstruction phase, much more damage was inflicted on cultural property through demolition and neglect. In some cases, the fabric of many historic towns was completely replaced with a “modern” urban layout, totally insensitive to the local way of life.

Similar cases of the negative impact of post-disaster reconstruction work (following the 1993 earthquake) can be seen in the Marathwada region in India, where traditional or vernacular knowledge systems were totally neglected in favour of “modern” design and technology seen as a panacea for the development of “backward” rural communities. Ironically, engineers contributed tremendously to the development of a misperception by the local community turned against the use of stone and wood, which were the traditional building materials for vernacular housing in the region.

Cultural heritage also continues to become weaker and more vulnerable on its own, because of the fast pace of transformation processes resulting from the increasing population density, urbanization, development pressures, poverty and also changing perceptions which tend to consider traditional knowledge systems as weak and outdated. All these factors put cultural heritage at grave risk, especially in the context of developing countries.

One of the consequences of these factors is the gradual disappearance of traditional skills, crafts and cultural practices, thereby endangering living elements of heritage, yet many of these living aspects have effectively helped mitigate the impact of disasters and helped cope with and recover from them. Another result of current transformation processes is the negative impact on local ecological systems and processes, threatening the sustainability of traditional habitats by disturbing the delicate balance between humans and the environment. Such components of cultural heritage are at greater risk than the others but do not even come under the official definition of heritage in many countries in the developing world in general and in South Asia in particular.

## **The Importance of Training on Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage**

Considering the issues and challenges described above, there is an urgent need for awareness, education and training among key stakeholders to address the needs of heritage threatened with various types of risks in pre-, emergency and post-disaster phases.

This paper will elaborate on a recent initiative by ICCROM to develop a training kit on "Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage". The kit is designed to make participants aware of conservation concerns and approaches and accordingly define and prioritise heritage values as part of risk preparedness measures. It also aims at integrating heritage concerns in overall planning for risk management so as to have advance decisions on the importance and place of heritage in planning.

The ICCROM risk preparedness training kit was designed as a tool for capacity building at a regional level. It is meant to have a ripple effect, making each region aware of and prepared for risks endangering cultural heritage. The ultimate objective is for participants to be able to develop a proactive strategic approach, i.e. with knowledge on how to develop strategies for advance planning to reduce heritage losses with different types of risk. This may be a by-product of personal initiatives by participants after training on risk preparedness for endangered cultural heritage.

While teachers are the primary users of the kit, it will operate beyond these frontline teachers, addressing the specific needs of the secondary users, who are the main clients/stakeholders for improving risk preparedness for cultural heritage. Of these secondary users, the primary target group is the disaster managers (who have no training in or awareness of heritage values, needs and related considerations), rather than cultural resource managers who are at least aware of these aspects. We must remember that in the emergency situation, rescue teams, administrators and other stakeholders in the disaster management process are in charge of taking decisions which may prove crucial for the protection of cultural heritage in the longer run.

### **Addressing the Subject – Expanding the Scope of Risk Preparedness and its Implications on the Risk Preparedness Training Framework**

One important feature of the training kit is that it endeavours to re-address the subject of risk preparedness from a holistic and dynamic perspective; this has implications for the structure and content of the kit. The idea is for it to be pragmatic and relevant to the context of developing countries.

#### **Holistic and Dynamic Approach**

##### *Understanding Risks and Disasters*

Risks to cultural heritage may stem from exposure to one or more hazards and other determinants. We therefore need to have a holistic understanding of risks to cultural heritage from various hazard sources (fires, earthquakes, etc.) and of vulnerability processes while incorporating specific actions and strategies for specific hazards. We therefore need to link the physical vulnerability of cultural heritage

to the vulnerability that comes with social and economic underdevelopment.

There is a tendency to categorise the different disaster phases (pre-, emergency and post-disaster) for the sake of management, but a disaster has no precise starting and ending point and such points can only be measured by objective indicators. Disaster situations therefore need to be seen as a continuum, with actions taken during various phases having a reciprocal impact. This means we need to establish backward and forward linkages while deciding on the different actions and interventions for different stages.

#### *Understanding Cultural Heritage*

Part of the strategy will be dictated by an integrated approach to understanding the cultural property itself. Three important elements of cultural heritage must be given consideration (both separately and in their inter-relationships), namely local communities (the bearers), the environment or ecology (human-environment relationships) and built heritage (physical interventions). When cultural heritage is endangered one or more of these elements will be at risk. Interestingly, this holds true for all types of cultural heritage, even monuments, as they exist in a set context which defines specific relationships to the three key elements.

Risk preparedness for cultural heritage will therefore involve:

- community preparedness through awareness and training;
- environmental management (including efforts to prevent the natural hazards themselves);
- mitigating risks to built heritage through physical interventions.

This will have clear implications on risk preparedness training and through explicit explanations and understanding, we will be able to raise the awareness of the different stakeholders who manage heritage, either directly or indirectly; (this obviously includes politicians and administrators who often play a crucial role in emergency and recovery). They will be made aware of the need to address the underlying causes of vulnerability of cultural heritage and of the hazards endangering it (within their own scope of action).

#### **Risk Management of Living Heritage**

This is one of the most important aspects of cultural heritage and particularly relevant to many civilizations in Asia and Africa. Living heritage means considering risks threatening the continued existence and development of cultural heritage, assessing patterns of use, crafts and skills in relation to changing needs and the socio-economic context. This approach also provides an important interface bringing together cultural resource management, disaster management and development challenges. This is specifically covered in the training kit.

#### **Risk Preparedness is Integrated Risk Management**

Risk management itself is a well developed subject with well defined components and universally accepted terms and definitions. It includes various proactive tools, techniques, strategies and actions for risk

assessment and control at the various stages in a disaster situation. The subject of risk preparedness should then be seen in the universally accepted phases of risk management (impact assessment, risk evaluation, monitoring, prevention/mitigation, disaster preparedness, emergency response, long-term recovery etc.) before addressing the needs of the different types of cultural heritage on the one hand, and the different types of risk on the other.

This has an impact on the structure and content of the training programme which has a holistic rather than a sectarian approach. The modules, therefore, have not been categorised per type of hazard (e.g. fire or earthquake), but cultural heritage has been placed as the central focus and the risk factors threatening it are grouped together. All aspects concerning prevention and mitigation tools come under one topic and the specific topic starts with an understanding of what risk prevention means, what the essential components are and then addresses risk prevention for the type of hazard and type of heritage property.

### **Structure of the Training Kit**

#### *Key Considerations*

The kit has been designed as a creative and flexible tool, not as a rigid textbook or document. It will have a core base, which may be the existing risk preparedness manual<sup>2</sup> plus other sources highlighting principles, tools and techniques for risk preparedness. Sufficient space will be provided for local issues, concerns and strategies so that participants can voice opinions and ideas. A large degree of autonomy is left to the course coordinator or facilitator to include what is needed, to decide on extending or reducing the scope and content and to choose the means of communication.

#### *Key Components*

The following items are the main components in the training kit:

- a detailed user's guide with suggested "rules" for direct users (teachers or trainers) to run training courses using the kit;
- information sheets with core material (based on the ICCROM manual of risk preparedness for world cultural heritage and other key references), and including suggested references and a bibliography of back-up material. A guideline format is included to help instructors prepare their courses, covering important points to produce a uniform result. Links will be provided to relevant exercises and case studies.

Exercises illustrate and substantiate the lessons/courses with practical applications. Activity sheet matrices are provided for instructors to design their own exercises and are linked to worksheets for use by students as exercises e.g. damage assessment through visual diagnosis.

Proactive case studies can be used to illustrate arguments, as back-up for the principles, tools and techniques of risk preparedness and as learning tools for studying past practical experiences. All these cases can be used to focus on issues (conflicts and constraints) and opportunities (strategies and solutions) for endangered cultural heritage. There is provision for both cross-regional and local case studies, with case study matrices included for instructors and participants to work on their own direct experience.

The appendices provide links to key definitions and major charters, e.g. UNESCO world heritage convention, Hague convention and Blue Shield initiatives.

### **Case Study Approach**

The kit emphasises the case study approach. The case studies are categorised according to the depth and scope of information available and course coordinators can select one or more of the following options:

- Primary case study

For cases where the information is detailed enough to undertake a thorough analysis. In some cases, more than one aspect can be highlighted so that a number of secondary case studies can be part of a primary study. To undertake such a case study, the course coordinator must have made an on-site appraisal of the situation.

- Secondary case study

For case, where one key aspect of a situation can be highlighted, but this is not as detailed as the first. Most of these are from secondary sources with enough detail giving the background to the case to complete the case study matrix designed for such cases. (As stated above, these may be part of a primary case study).

- Case examples

Examples of work done in individual contexts can sometimes be integrated into course notes with proper references. These are mostly initiatives based on sound principles, universally accepted or cited as relevant to a particular context, e.g. the emergency response and salvage wheel developed by FEMA (US) could be combined with course notes on the different stages of emergency management.

The standardised format or matrix (as mentioned above) can help teachers develop their own case studies. The format is objective on certain points so as to produce a uniform result, but is also open-ended for flexibility.

### **Testing the Kit**

The operational objectives of the current project are to produce a training kit and test it on a training course, then modify it to factor in this experience.

It is hoped that the contents of the kit will be expanded further to address specific types of risk confronting each cultural and geographical context. Over time, the initiative will need to grow at both regional and local levels, to gain from the synergy of work conducted at multiple levels and ultimately reduce risks threatening cultural heritage.

<sup>1</sup> The author developed the draft of the training kit on 'Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage' in his capacity as independent consultant to ICCROM.

<sup>2</sup> Herb Stovel, *Manual for Risk Preparedness for World Heritage*, Rome, ICCROM, 1998.