

Museums Emergency Programme Origin, past events and future developments

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Resumen

Museums Emergency Programme - Origen, eventos pasados y futuros desarrollos

Teniendo en cuenta las orientaciones formuladas en la Declaración de Kobe-Tokio de enero de 1997 sobre la prevención de riesgos del patrimonio cultural, el ICOM inició en 2002 la ejecución del programa a largo plazo denominado Museums Emergency Programme (MEP), que representa su aportación a las actividades realizadas en el marco del Comité Internacional del Escudo Azul (ICBS). Este programa consta de distintos módulos, cuyos componentes principales son la formación en materia de gestión de riesgos y la sensibilización a éstos. Su objetivo es tratar de satisfacer la necesidad que tienen los museos de crear competencias en los ámbitos de la prevención de riesgos y la respuesta a las situaciones de emergencia.

Se han adoptado enfoques interculturales e interdisciplinarios para mejorar la calidad de los resultados, teniendo en cuenta a la vez el papel y la responsabilidad de las comunidades en la salvaguarda del patrimonio cultural, la protección del medio ambiente y la conservación de las tradiciones locales.

El programa MEP hace hincapié en la importancia que revisten las diferencias culturales en el enfoque de la gestión de riesgos y, por lo tanto, se ha adaptado y se seguirá adaptando a las especificidades locales gracias a los conocimientos adquiridos en el plano cultural y a la realización de estudios de casos.

Résumé

Museums Emergency Programme - Origine, évènements passés et futurs développements

Prenant en considération les recommandations qui figurent dans la Déclaration de Kobé/Tokyo sur la prévention des risques encourus par le patrimoine culturel (janvier 1997), le Conseil international des musées (ICOM) a lancé en 2002 le projet à long terme intitulé Museums Emergency Programme (MEP). Ce programme peut être considéré comme la contribution de l'ICOM aux actions menées dans le cadre du Comité international du Bouclier bleu (CIBB). Il comprend différents modules dans lesquels la formation et la sensibilisation aux risques jouent un rôle majeur. Il tente de répondre à la nécessité de développer au sein des musées une expertise dans le domaine de la prévention des risques et de la gestion des situations d'urgence. Des approches interculturelles et interdisciplinaires ont été adoptées afin d'améliorer la qualité des résultats obtenus tout en abordant le rôle des communautés et leur responsabilité à l'égard de la protection du patrimoine culturel, de la préservation de l'environnement et des traditions locales.

Le programme MEP insiste sur l'importance de prendre en considération les différences culturelles dans l'approche de la gestion des risques. Il s'est donc adapté aux spécificités locales et culturelles identifiées grâce aux connaissances acquises et aux études de cas.

Introduction

Human and natural disasters are a major threat to cultural tangible and intangible heritage. Hurricanes, floods, earthquakes, landslides, volcanoes, tsunamis, fires, war and other catastrophes wreak havoc on the environment and sometimes completely destroy entire areas of cultural heritage, both moveable and immovable.

Within the framework of the Objective n°8 of the International Council of Museums (ICOM)'s Triennial Programme 1998-2001 - which was to defend the heritage in danger - ICOM drew up a questionnaire in 1999 on disaster management, supervised by the Executive Council and involving National and International Committees and Regional and Affiliated Organisations.

This document was divided into three parts: the first was on the assessment of man-made and natural disasters in specific countries. The second was an overview of endangered heritage not only in museums, but also in cultural institutions such as archives, libraries, public monuments and sites, private movable and immovable cultural property and intangible heritage. The last section concerned the assistance organisations, i.e. public aid services specialised in the safeguard of the heritage at local, national, regional and international level.

ICOM secretariat received replies from 39 countries located all over the world and representing all regions (Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Pacific). This study formed the initial basis for the development of the long term ICOM Museums Emergency Programme (MEP).

The Kobe/Tokyo Declaration on Risk Preparedness for Cultural Heritage¹, which is the result of The International Symposium on Risk Preparedness for Cultural Properties held in Kobe/Tokyo in January 1997 - where ICOM, among all the principal organisations dealing with cultural heritage, was present - was intended to guide governments to improve their ability to integrate concern for cultural heritage within existing emergency planning and response infrastructures. At the same time it gave ICOM the principal guidelines for designing and developing in 2000 a consistent programme within the context of emergency situations and to integrate the suggestions coming from interdisciplinary and multicultural specialists attending the Symposium.

This programme could be considered within the framework of the concerns of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS²). ICBS was established in 1996 by the International Council on Archives (ICA), ICOM, the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), and the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA). Its principal objectives include facilitating international responses to threats or emergencies threatening cultural property, and promoting risk preparedness.

The programme could also be considered as a response to the needs expressed by museum professionals all over the world. Collaboration with specialised institutions at international and local level has been and will be a priority in order to avoid overlapping of actions in the same field. The Blue Shield National Committees network, together with the National and relevant International Committees of ICOM: the International Committee for Conservation (ICOM-CC) and the International Committee for Museum Security (ICMS), the Getty Conservation Institute (GCI), ICCROM (the International Centre for the Study of Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property), UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), ICOMOS, ICA, IFLA and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other humanitarian organisations have played and will continue to play an active part in the implementation of the programme.

The Programme will respond to the global need for museums to develop expertise in the areas of emergency preparedness and response. It will emphasise training and collaboration within regional communities and at the same time will try to create self-sustained regional networks equipped with basic instruments and reference material. Clearly, consideration will be given to a variety of specific types of natural and man-made disasters, such as earthquakes, floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, volcanoes, armed conflict etc. Attention will be also given to constant underlying hazards at local level, which could provoke disasters. At the same time, it is important to recognise that the vast majority of emergencies facing museums around the world can be managed by a simple, practical, and affordable emergency plan that is understood by its museum employees and that will provide the structure and resources needed to respond. Therefore, consistency and simplicity will be the overriding priorities in this programme.

Objectives and Specificities of the Programme

The aim of the programme is to advance understanding and awareness of the nature of disasters and how to limit and contain damage by using preventive conservation measures and rapid interventions in order to save cultural heritage.

Objectives:

1. Learn from case studies and empirical research findings how rescue, salvage and aftermath operations can be co-ordinated to achieve maximum performance under intense pressure.
2. Improve research and strengthen the capacities of museum professionals in the field of emergency planning, disaster preparedness and response by taking into account all ecological implications, community involvement aspects, and by respecting local traditional techniques and methods.
3. Compare strategies, and share knowledge and insights on a world-wide scale.
4. Enable the creation of a proactive climate where contingency planning is a central element in the preparedness and response of disasters.
5. Produce, translate and diffuse tools in the form, for example, of specific web sites, slide kits, handbooks/guidelines on emergency

- planning, disaster preparedness and response for museums also available on the Web, etc.
6. Train museum professionals in theory and field exercises to enable them to be prepared and respond to disasters.
 7. Publish and communicate survey results on disaster preparedness and response.
 8. Enable the creation of regional networks specialised in disaster preparedness and response for museums and capable of training other colleagues in their region.
 9. Equip those networks with basic instruments and reference material for disaster preparedness and response.
 10. Launch an awareness and fund-raising campaign in order to make regional networks self-sustainable.
 11. Through the evaluation of the entire programme, identify new actions in order to spread the knowledge acquired.

Structure of the Programme

The Museums Emergency Programme is a long-term programme divided into modules which can sometimes be considered as parallel processes:

- Module 1 - Surveys
- Module 2 - International Symposium on Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness and Response
- Module 3 - Creation, Translation and communication of support/teaching materials
- Module 4 - Museums Emergency Programme Education Initiative
- Module 5 - Creation of Regional Networks
- Module 6 - Launch of the Awareness and Fund Raising Campaign

Module 1-Surveys

A questionnaire, in English and translated into French and Spanish, was sent in 2002 to about 2000 museum professionals such as the members of the Advisory Committee of ICOM, ICOM-CC and ICMS and to museums and museum professionals and institutions related to the programme in order to identify the persons directly implicated in a catastrophe in a museum, and to collect information about which museums have already been affected by a catastrophe (human or natural); about the already existing institutions/associations operating in the field of emergency preparedness and response; about the programmes and activities already organised or planned in this respect.

A new data base has been created - and is continuously updated - for the programme, to include around 450 data concerning museum professionals or institutions directly connected to the programme.

A statistical analysis of the 172 answers received from 57 countries all over the world has been undertaken. This represents slightly under 10% of the total questionnaires sent out, but considering the fact that the institutions addressed were spread out all over the world, including some countries where post and communications problems still exist and that probably some addresses were not correct or complete, the response can be considered as satisfactory, especially as all the regions of the world contributed to the survey, although Central Europe made up 50%. Small and medium-sized institutions (between 1 and 100 personnel) were more

prevalent in the Survey (54% of the answers received). 32% of the museums which responded are located in a high risk area: flooding and earthquake are the major risks identified. Only 12% of the museums indicated that are located in a zone of political conflict. 38% of the museums have an evacuation/emergency plan for their collections. 30% of the museums have experienced a disaster in the last fifty years.

By analysing the survey results some interesting case studies have been identified, such as the National Museum in Kabul, Afghanistan (war); the Zemaljski Muzej Bih in Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina (war); the Museo Arqueológico in Sogamoso Boyaca, Colombia (earthquakes and forest fires); the Musée National du Togo in Lome, (flooding); the Musée de la Gendarmerie Nationale in Moramañça, Madagascar (tropical low pressure) etc., as well as persons directly involved in a catastrophe in a museum.

Information has been collected on the already existing institutions/associations operating in the field of emergency preparedness and response; the programmes and activities already organised or planned; the professionals already trained or suitable to be trained for emergency preparedness and response; the scientific materials already existing and in which format and language they have been collected as well as bibliographies and literature such as books, essays and articles, and didactic material and existing web sites on disaster preparedness and response.

The Survey offers constantly updated lists of conferences and workshops, training activities and web sites concerned by cultural heritage and disasters.



Antananarivo (Madagascar), Rova - Queen's Palace after the 1995 fire

Two case study missions were organised in 2003 in Venezuela and in Madagascar in order to study more in depth the situation of countries concerning the risk preparedness and response related to museums, by meeting the local authorities in charge of the risk management and planning and the local museum professionals in charge of the protection

of the collections, collecting existing documentation related to disasters (local case studies, reaction, publication, training activities, etc.); to identify resource people for future developments of the programme and to evaluate the possibility of organising in the country a future training workshop for the region.



Inventory cards of the collection, housed in the Rova - Queen's Palace, rescued from the 1995 fire

Module 2 - International Symposium on Cultural heritage disaster preparedness and response

The Symposium took place in India, Hyderabad, at the Salar Jung Museum from 23rd to 27th of November 2003.

Its objectives were: to establish a network of museum professionals (curators, security officers, directors, technicians, etc.) who have had first hand experience with catastrophes, and a network of specialists on heritage emergencies all over the world who could collaborate in disaster situations especially in co-ordination with ICBS; to identify proposals and resource persons for the other modules of the programme; to review the evolution of the research in the fields of education, management, legislation, methodologies and techniques concerning disaster preparedness and response, and to produce recommendations on movable heritage emergencies, stressing legal and Government decisional aspects and public involvement.



Participants in the International Symposium on Cultural Heritage Disaster Preparedness and Response in front of the Salar Jung Museum

Various case studies were presented during the plenary sessions of the Symposium, from concrete “first-hand” experiences like those reported by Pavel Jirásek, Chair of ICMS, concerning the flood in Prague in 2002, by Franz Grupp from Peru, concerning the earthquake of 2001 in Arequipa or by Corine Wegener about her personal networking collaboration in wartime at the Iraq National Museum of Bagdad; to “cross profile interventions” such as that of Jan Hladik from UNESCO on international legislation in support of the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict, and that of Manuel López from Médecins sans frontières about the key issues in emergency projects from the humanitarian point of view.

During the working group sessions³, the participants developed recommendations that are addressed to the ICOM Executive Council, to ICOMOS to ICCROM and to the museum community in general.

The focal points of the recommendations can be summarised as follows:

- a dialogue between different cultures should be established in order to communicate the value of cultural heritage and the need for direct implication of the entire population for the protection of the cultural heritage;
- a dialogue, a collaboration and a coordination of efforts should be implemented among different cultural heritage organisations and cross-profile professional entities in order to broaden the scopes of the MEP and to create a synergy of activities concerning the cultural heritage and the emergency situations;
- ICOM and its specialised International Committees have been requested to start acting on the field;
- ICBS and its National Committees should develop more as functional and operational structures for response to emergency situations;
- cultural emergency response teams need an operational support structure drawing on the experience of organisations such as Médecins sans frontières, the International Committee of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and others.

The Salar Jung Museum organised a mock exercise concerning a bomb emergency where collections and human beings were evacuated from the museum. This exercise brought a practical and participative approach to the Symposium. A debriefing and discussion session followed the exercise, during which participants exchanged their different experiences.

Module 3 - Creation, Translation and communication of support/teaching materials

Taking into consideration the analysis of the Surveys undertaken, the third module concerns creation, translation and adaptation to different cultural and geographic situations, and communication of support/didactic materials on emergency preparedness and response. These tools could be in the form of specific web sites, slide kits, cultural heritage mapping systems⁴, handbooks on emergency planning, disaster preparedness and response for museums, also available on the Web, publications containing the guidelines and recommendations on movable heritage emergencies, with emphasis on legal and government decisional aspects and public involvement, glossaries, bibliographies, lists of worldwide organisations specialised in this specific field, legal instruments already available, a list of instruments and technical support companies and other useful documents. They will be produced at least in English, French and Spanish⁵. If necessary, translations in other languages will be possible with the support of ICOM National Committees.

Cultural and language diversity is a characteristic strength of ICOM which is determined to facilitate broader accessibility to information.

Revised editions of basic ICOM publications on museums and security have been envisaged for the coming biennium as well as new publications on museums and emergency management in close collaboration with the specialised ICOM International Committee for museum security.

Module 4 - Museums Emergency Programme Education Initiative

The Teamwork for Integrated Emergency Management is a course organised in partnership with the Getty Conservation Institute, and ICCROM.

The course and related educational activities will focus on risk assessment and emergency preparedness and response- or *integrated emergency management*- for museums and other cultural institutions. The course will be offered as a strategic project lasting several years that aims to assist museum and other heritage personnel to assess, prepare for and respond to natural and man-made threats.

Education plays a vital role within MEP's overall strategy of enhancing emergency preparedness in the heritage field. The course Teamwork for Integrated Emergency Management will reflect a capacity building approach to both risk assessment and emergency preparedness, by combining training workshops with practical experience gained over an extended period of time. The course will guide participants through the processes of undertaking a risk assessment, and implementing emergency preparedness plans and strategies that are suitable for their own institutions.

The course will be offered on a regional basis, starting with a pilot course that will begin during the second half of 2005, at a site to be determined in Asia. The curriculum will be tailored to each specific region where the

course will take place and will be adapted to local contexts, traditions and methods.

The Integrated Emergency Management curriculum will be realized through a combination of classroom-based teaching with distance learning and practical work that will be carried out at participants' own institutions. The curriculum will engage participants in the processes associated with various aspects of integrated emergency management, and allow them to adapt and implement locally sustainable approaches to emergency preparedness. Participants will gain experience performing an institutional risk assessment, forming contacts with emergency and security personnel, and developing an emergency preparedness plan corresponding to the specific situation of the institution.

The participants of the course will be institutions rather than individuals in order to obtain a major local sustainable effect and to implicate the trained institutions in training other museums in the same region. Teachers for the workshops will include professionals from the heritage and security/ emergency preparedness fields coming in particular from the region where the training activity will be put in place. In addition, mentors will be used to assist participants in the practical aspects of performing a risk assessment and in implementing emergency preparedness.

Module 5 - Creation of Regional Networks

The fifth module of the Programme will focus on the creation of regional networks specialised in disaster preparedness and response for museums and able to train other colleagues in their region. In the countries where National Committees of the Blue Shield already exist, they will serve as reference. Collaboration with ICOMOS, IFLA and ICA and other specialised organisations will be envisaged.

It is hoped that these groups could be composed at least by some participants to the training courses and that all groups could be trained and act as advisors/emergency responders to regional disasters.

Module 6 - Launch of the Awareness and Fund Raising Campaign

The sixth module concerns the launch of the awareness and fund raising campaign in order to make regional networks-self sustainable, to make response actions possible when a disaster strikes a country or a region and to implement prevention activities to limit the possible damages. This kind of action could be for example the "Museums at risk day" including differentiated fundraising activities at local level.

Conclusions

The Programme was launched in 2002, overlapping two key periods in the recent history of the destruction of cultural heritage (Afghanistan in 2001, Iraq and Iran in 2003 both striking examples of such disasters).

By the means of this programme interesting information concerning risk management in "isolated countries" such as Kyrgyzstan, the Cayman Islands and Madagascar, has been retrieved, analysed and placed at the disposal of a larger community.

Intercultural and interdisciplinary⁶ approaches have been taken into consideration enhancing the quality of the results obtained while the role of the communities and their responsibility vis-à-vis the cultural heritage protection, the preservation of the environment and of the local traditions have also been tackled.

MEP has emphasised cultural differences in the approach of risks management and it has adapted, and will continue to do so, knowledge acquired to other situations and cultures.

The Programme will continue to develop other activities especially in order to cover the lack of specific training and support tools in different regions of the world.

¹ Published by H. Stovel, 1998.

² Taking its name from the symbol (the blue shield) specified in the Hague Convention - Convention for the protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflicts, 1954 – which marks cultural sites (http://www.unesco.org/culture/laws/hague/html_eng/page1.shtml).

³ Each working group session was accompanied by a pertinent introduction to the discussion themes identified in advance. The themes of the working groups were: Community responsibility and involvement in emergency preparedness and response, Preserving the environment and local traditions in emergency preparedness and response, Networking: coordination and collaboration among diverse institutions and organisations in emergency preparedness and response.

⁴ An Italian project entitled *La carta del rischio* (The Risk Map) <http://www.icr.beniculturali.it/rischio/rischio00e.htm>, could be mentioned here. The Risk Map of cultural heritage is an initiative aimed to provide both the responsible for the protection of territory and Central Administration with support for scientific and administrative activities. This project is covered by a national law which ensures its implementation.

⁵ ICOM's official languages.

⁶ MEP has put in contact and involved institutions and organisations with different backgrounds, profiles and experience, such as emergency services, fire fighters, NGOs, Red Cross and Médecins sans frontières together with museum professionals.

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