



## ICOMOS Joins New Project to Support Climate Action in Africa Through Cultural Heritage

ICOMOS is proud to be a part of a global team which today is launching a new project to support climate action in Africa through cultural heritage. The project, which is led by institutions in Africa and the United Kingdom, will pilot application in Africa of the Climate Vulnerability Index for World Heritage properties (the CVI-Africa project).

In 2019, ICOMOS released the report 'The Future of Our Pasts: Engaging Cultural Heritage in Climate Action'. The report concluded that responding to climate change requires adjustments in the aims of heritage practice. CVI-Africa is an important example of the type of innovation needed across all aspects of culture heritage methodologies in the face of the climate emergency.

'ICOMOS is proud to be partnering with African and global colleagues on the CVI-Africa project, which aims to deliver new approaches to heritage conservation for World Heritage sites and communities on the frontlines of the climate emergency' said Professor Toshiyuki Kono, President of ICOMOS.

Across the globe, climate change poses an existential threat to people, communities and their heritage. Africa is projected to warm more rapidly than most other regions in the world, meaning this already vulnerable continent will be hard-hit by the impacts of climate change.

Dr Albino Jopela of the African World Heritage Fund, a co-investigator on the project, said: 'Despite the intensifying threat, there remains a lack of attention to the cultural dimensions of climate change and this is especially true across the African continent. The CVI-Africa project will help fill this gap.'

'These climate change impacts are already resulting in the loss and damage of cultural heritage across Africa' said Dr Will Megarry of Queen's University Belfast, the project's lead investigator and a member of the ICOMOS Climate Change and Heritage Working Group (CCHWG). 'How those who care for Africa's cultural heritage respond to the threat of climate change has profound implications for the resilience of the broader community.'

'There is an urgent need to respond to climate change, and the CVI-Africa project will work closely with heritage professionals and researchers from across the continent to better understand this ongoing challenge. The project has great potential to effect action on climate change through

[Insert appropriate institutional footer]

detailing the impacts of climate change on these internationally important sites' said co-investigator Professor Jane Downes of the University of Highlands and Islands, also a CCHWG member.

Decisions on conservation and preservation of cultural heritage in the face of climate change begin with a detailed understanding of a place's vulnerability. The Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI) is a systematic methodology for assessing this vulnerability. The CVI-Africa project will undertake the first CVI application in Africa.

'The CVI is a rapid evaluation tool that was developed to analyse climate risk for World Heritage properties by considering historical and projected climate impacts on the recognised values' said Jon Day, who co-developed the CVI along with Dr Scott Heron at James Cook University (Australia).

Dr Heron added, 'It not only assesses the vulnerability of heritage values but, unlike many other tools, also looks at the vulnerability of associated communities based on their economic, social and cultural relationships to those values and their capacity to adapt.'

The CVI was first applied in 2018 at Shark Bay, a natural World Heritage area in Western Australia. The following year, the CVI was applied to cultural heritage at the 'Heart of Neolithic Orkney' World Heritage Site in the UK.

The CVI-Africa project will provide foundational training in the CVI method to six African heritage professionals. The project will culminate in workshops at two World Heritage Sites impacted by climate change -- the Sukur Cultural Landscape in Nigeria and The Ruins of Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara in Tanzania. These workshops will include the six heritage professionals, local and national experts and stakeholders, and international partners. Workshop partners include the Tanzanian Ministry of Natural Resources and Tourism and the Nigerian National Commission for Museums and Monuments. The results will be published and publicly available.

More broadly, the CVI-Africa project will support communities in their efforts to safeguard cultural heritage, respond to climate change and seek sustainable development options.

Speaking about the Sukur Cultural Landscape, Dr Ishanlosen Odiaua of ICOMOS Nigeria said: 'Sukur reflects the complexity of assessing vulnerability. Located in the Mandara Mountains along the Cameroon-Nigeria border, the impacts of climate change have induced shifts in the political and local economies, with attendant risks to cultural heritage. Supporting local communities and national authorities to develop tools that build on local experience and realities, can help them manage these risks and plan for the future.'

Fostering new relationships and encouraging knowledge exchange lies at the heart of the CVI-Africa project. The members of the project consortium were brought together by the Climate Heritage Network (CHN). The CHN was formed in 2019 to promote the critical role that arts, culture and heritage can play in moving towards a low-carbon, climate resilience future. ICOMOS serves as the Secretariat for the CHN.

The CVI-Africa project is made possible through a generous grant awarded by the UK Arts and Humanities Research Council's Global Challenges Research Fund. The grant was funded through a demonstration scheme arranged by the UK Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS).

Project Website: <https://cvi-africa.org/>

[Insert appropriate institutional footer]

Generously funded by,

