

Providing Guidance on Evidence for Heritage and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals

Report of Phase 1

13 May 2023

INTRODUCTION:

International heritage organizations have made consistent appeals for the importance and utility of cultural heritage in achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). While there is data collected by the UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) to monitor UN member states' contribution to Target 11.4 to “strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage”, this data only looks at national expenditures to protect, conserve and preserve cultural and natural heritage of the reporting countries. Recent literature argues for a multitude of linkages between cultural heritage and the SDGs. However, in many cases the empirical data to back up these claims and act as an evidence base are lacking. This evidence base is necessary to substantiate these claims, to attract funding and attention to the heritage sector, as well as improving project practice, monitoring and efficacy.

There is a need in the heritage sector, both from the private and public fields to develop guidance to assist heritage managers and practitioners in gathering evidence about how projects contribute to the SDGs. There is a particular need for a practical guide that can be applied by medium and small-scale projects, including those led by the heritage sector itself. Although national governments are starting to provide data to the UIS to report on the current progress of Target 11.4 and many large-scale projects have developed methodologies for data gathering, data captured in these initiatives mostly require specialist knowledge and significant funding. However, at the medium and smaller scales, those in the heritage sector tend not to have had training in impact measurements nor understand how to adapt these existing global statistical methodologies to their needs and budgets.

Data from projects at this scale are required to provide sector-wide and global evidence for cultural heritage contributions to SDGs. For such data to be effective, it is important that they are legible to other stakeholders and can be aggregated to provide sector-wide lessons and evidence.

The key aim of this project is to identify best practices for SDG-related data gathering that small-to-medium scale heritage projects can implement to create key guidance for its wider development and implementation. This project is being conducted by the Global Heritage Fund (GHF) and the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), under the terms of their memorandum of understanding signed in 2021.

GHF has many years of practical field experience of attempting and completing a range of cultural heritage projects that deliver a range of positive social, economic, and environmental outputs. GHF is a key partner to understand the applicability of evidence-gathering methods and its projects can be used as pilots to test and refine methodologies for the chosen indicators and SDGs.

ICOMOS is a global heritage organization which has the international reach and reputation to connect with those within and outside the heritage sector to understand best practice and disseminate results. ICOMOS has a dedicated pool of experts which forms the Sustainable

Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG) who investigates various connections and issues of heritage with the implementation of the UN Agenda 2030. As part of its work, the SDGWG has formed Task Team 6, which looks at Heritage Evaluation Criteria and Indicators. This Task Team identifies tools to assess how heritage and its values serve as a driver and enabler of sustainability that is supported by academic research, applied practice, and qualitative and quantitative data from different contexts, scales and phases.

The resulting guidance from this project could provide the basis for ICOMOS-led expert reviews of heritage projects.

Overall Project Plan

The proposed project plan consisted in four phases:

Phase 1: Identify key data gaps in the evidence base for cultural heritage’s contribution to the SDGs and agree on the priority areas to focus on (e.g., specific SDGs, data gaps, etc.)

Phase 2: Survey existing, and select the most relevant, examples of best practice within the heritage sector and other sectors, for the selected priority areas

Phase 3: Pilot approaches with GHF projects and data

Phase 4: Jointly create and disseminate data gathering guidelines to the heritage sector

A detailed description of each phase and its articulation with the others is presented in Appendix I.

The present report discusses the methodology and findings of Phase 1 of the Project.

Phase 1: Identify key data gaps in the evidence base for cultural heritage’s contribution to the SDGs and agree on the priority areas to focus on.

METHODOLOGY

Gap Analysis

The approach in Phase 1 was divided into two parts. The first part consisted in conducting a gap analysis through a review of the literature concerning the SDGs, beyond Target 11.4 and their usage in the cultural sector.

An initial exploration was conducted using search tools such as Google Scholar using search terms, “Zero Poverty” AND Heritage. This was done for each of the SDGs to establish a substantial body of work that was available for each one of the Sustainable Development Goals (Figure 1). The intention of the gap analysis was not to conduct a detailed literature review but to analyze if there are any fields of the SDGs absent from study in the available literature and also to what extent each of the individual Goals was or was not being used as a measure in heritage based projects. Experts from the SDGWG Task Team 6 recommended several references to be reviewed and these were analyzed by the project team and ranked against each of the Goals on a matrix.

Against each SDG, each paper was ranked by the following values:

- 0 = None – there was no mention of the goal or the topic.
- 1 = Some – there was a passing of cursory mention of the Goal or topic of the Goal.
- 2 = Significant – there was a significant mention with clear target discussed in detail.
- 3 = Substantial – there is clear and detailed qualitative or quantitative data directly related to the indicated SDGs

A desk review was carried out by both the SDGWG and GHF, relying primarily on existing expertise and experience found within each organization. Sixteen (16) published research articles and governmental papers were identified and a selection was reviewed to identify the SDGs addressed in each document (see Appendix 2). The consultation with the SDGWG Task Team 6 provided some guidance about the possible documents and sources to be used as reference. The papers reviewed came from a broad geographical context and covered a variety of built cultural heritage and more expansive cultural heritage projects. Along with academic publications, several key government papers were reviewed as well.



Figure 1. The United Nations 17 Sustainable Development Goals

Review of GHF Sustainability Targets

The second part of Phase 1 consisted in reviewing the draft GHF sustainability targets, and comparing them against the SDGs.

GHF projects attempt to create positive economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts. Projects tend to be highly unique in their context and initial desired results, however, they share the desire to improve the ‘quality of life’ (including, but not limited to, as captured by the SDGs) of a targeted community through cultural heritage.

Considering GHF's capacity as a small size NGO and its past philosophy of focusing exclusively in developing regions, many of the organization's long-term projects are located in remote rural areas, indigenous dominant regions, and/or biosphere reserves, where built heritage conservation projects are very expensive and unsustainable to maintain. Should external funding sources from organizations such as GHF be exhausted, it is often very difficult for local community/stakeholders to continue the operation. GHF is oriented towards a community-centric approach to promote economic opportunity, environmental resilience, community transformation, innovation and impact travel; all of which have been tested and implemented in the organizations past projects. Thus the pertinence to define indicators to evaluate the outcome of past projects and identify their impacts and possible challenges or shortcomings. This methodology could be implemented with other small to midsize organizations.

With this mission statement in mind, GHF's primary goals are defined as:

- 1) Support sustainable preservation of cultural heritage;
- 2) Promote the well-being of local communities;
- 3) Enhance the nature-culture link.

While these are overarching goals at the organizational level, the contexts vary between GHF projects, each with its own specific needs and appropriate actions required. Different targets under each goal are further designed to cater to the varying project contexts and desired outcomes.

Under the goal of sustainable preservation of cultural heritage, these targets aim to support the long-term protection of cultural heritage resources through diversified and multilateral funding sources, increase in legal protection, monitoring system and local capacity building. The target to promote sustainable use of cultural heritage resources is primarily tied in with GHF's impact on travel and heritage-related entrepreneurship and design programs associated with an array of broader development goals.

Given the common traits of GHF projects in economically challenged regions and working with vulnerable communities such as indigenous persons and women, the targets under the goal of enhancing the well-being of local communities including income generation and inclusive wealth, ensure sustainability of economic enterprises (including heritage enterprises), promote inclusive society and gender equality, and to create resilient and sustainable living environments.

The third goal of enhancing the nature-culture link includes targets to protect biodiversity within cultural landscapes, combat climate change and environmental degradation and promote sustainable local practices and traditions.

The design of these targets are again tied in with many of the project sites located in Biosphere Reserves or are in rural cultural landscapes, where traditional land management knowledge is still practiced. It is also looking at raising awareness of the impact of climate change on cultural heritage and understanding how protection and uses of cultural heritage assets may contribute towards adaption and mitigation of climate change impacts. This is especially relevant in regions with global economic inequality worsened by climate change, particularly with indigenous people who rely on their land and ecosystems for subsistence and other cultural ecosystem services.

RESULTS

The gap analysis findings were compiled and mapped following the GHF versus SDGs and targets (Figure 2). This first phase produced the results below.

Key Findings from the Gap Analysis

The gap analysis revealed that:

- All SDGs are covered to some extent in the academic literature.
- The SDG Target 11.4 of strengthening efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage is mentioned the most as it related to cultural heritage and that Goal 2 (Zero Hunger) is the least mentioned.
- Several key government papers highlight the importance of cultural heritage especially, its economic value.
- While numerous papers discussed the SDGs, there was little critical analysis of the achievement of the Goals based on defined indicators from the UN, or detailed justification for choosing particular goals to measure the success of a cultural heritage project presented in the publication. From the literature, they appeared to be either set by the project team or from a wider government agenda.
- None of the papers reviewed define what makes a successful [triple bottom line] sustainable heritage project. Instead, they either refer to government agenda or a specific SDG.
- Tourist and visitor heritage values were an important topic in the literature reviewed, but they were not connected to the SDG's directly.
- None of the papers reviewed cover all the SDGs as a review process for the project. Instead, they selected key Goals as their review target. The literature review accepts that this may be due to the limitation of the size of the academic papers reviewed and or funding goals rather than a conscious effort not to evaluate all of the SDG's in relation to the cultural heritage project.

Key Findings from the GHF Goals and Targets Review

The GHF sustainability targets are made up of three key goals, comprising three subcategories each. This makes a total of nine development criteria which relate to cultural heritage projects (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

As shown in Figure 2, this review revealed that:

- All the GHF sustainability targets overlap with the SDGs to some extent.
- As with the gap analysis, Goal 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities was covered the most as it relates to cultural heritage. Goal 14 (Life Below Water) was the least mentioned in the GHF sustainability targets.
- Both Goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) were extensively covered in the GHF sustainability targets. This is to be expected, as these are some of the overarching themes of GHF. The review of the GHF sustainability targets found that Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) was covered explicitly as

a GHF Goal. Goals 9 (Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure), 10 (Reduced Inequalities) and 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production) were also seen to be highly relevant across more than one GHF Goal.

- In addition, Goals 1 (No Poverty), 5 (Gender Equality), 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), 13 (Climate Action) and 15 (Life on Land) were substantially relevant for one of GHF’s sustainability targets.

		UNSDG Goal No.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	
		UNSDG Goal Title	No Poverty	Zero Hunger	Good Health and Wellbeing	Quality Education	Gender Equality	Clean Water and Sanitation	Affordable and Clean Energy	Decent work and economic growth	Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure	Reduced Inequalities	Sustainable Cities and Communities	Responsible Consumption and Production	Climate Action	Life Below Water	Life on Land	Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions	Partnerships for the Goals	
GHF Goal No.	Target Number	Description of Goal or Target																		
GOAL 1: Sustainable preservation of cultural heritage	TARGET 1.1	Strengthen efforts to ensure long-term protection of cultural heritage resources	1-Some	0-None	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	0-None	3-Substantial	1-Some	0-None	3-Substantial	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	0-None	2-Significant	3-Substantial	
	TARGET 1.2	Enhance local capacity to safeguard cultural heritage	2-Significant	0-None	0-None	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	3-Substantial	2-Significant	1-Some	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	1-Some	0-None	0-None	2-Significant	3-Substantial	
	TARGET 1.3	Promote sustainable use of cultural heritage resources	1-Some	0-None	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	3-Substantial	2-Significant	1-Some	3-Substantial	2-Significant	1-Some	0-None	0-None	2-Significant	3-Substantial	
GOAL 2: Enhance well-being of the local community	TARGET 2.1	Income generation and inclusive wealth	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	3-Substantial	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	
	TARGET 2.2	Inclusive society and gender equality	2-Significant	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	3-Substantial	1-Some	1-Some	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	2-Significant	0-None	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant
	TARGET 2.3	Create resilient and sustainable living environments	3-Substantial	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	3-Substantial	3-Substantial	0-None	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant
GOAL 3: Enhance nature-culture link	TARGET 3.1	Protect biodiversity	1-Some	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	3-Substantial	2-Significant	2-Significant
	TARGET 3.2	Combat climate change and environmental degradation	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	0-None	3-Substantial	1-Some	3-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	3-Significant	3-Substantial	1-Some	3-Substantial	2-Significant	2-Significant
	TARGET 3.3	Promote sustainable local practices and traditions	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant	1-Some	1-Some	2-Significant	2-Significant	2-Significant

Figure 2. GHF Goals and Targets vs. UN Sustainable Development Goals

With these findings, the Phase 1 of this project comes to its end. The phase 2 will consist in surveying the existing examples of best practice within the heritage sector and other sectors, and selecting the most relevant one to the selected priority areas (See Appendix I).

PROJECT TEAM

ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (SDGWG)

- James Ritson, Programme Leader, University College of Estate Management, UK
- Andrew Mason, Honorary Research Associate, University of British Columbia, Canada
- Naima Benkari, Assistant Professor, Sultan Qaboos University, Oman
- Gabriel Caballero, ICOMOS Focal Point for the UN Sustainable Development Goals
- With further inputs from SDGWG Task Team 6

Global Heritage Fund (GHF)

- Paul Burtenshaw, Independent Consultant
- Kuang Han Li, Director of Programs, Global Heritage Fund
- Nada Hosking, Executive Director, Global Heritage Fund

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Providing Guidance on Evidence for Heritage and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals: Draft Project Plan (6 February 2022)

The project plan consists of four phases, presented as follows:

Phase 1: Identify key data gaps in the evidence base for cultural heritage's contribution to the SDGs and agree on the priority areas to focus on (e.g., specific SDGs, data gaps, etc.) (1 to 3 months).

Desktop exercise carried out concurrently by both the ICOMOS Sustainable Development Goals Working Group (ICOMOS SDG-WG) and GHF, relying primarily on existing expertise and experience found within each organization. Prioritization will consider the agendas of stakeholders, descendent communities, government agencies and potential funding sources.

Deliverable: Report summarizing the findings of the desktop review (co-authored by ICOMOS and GHF).

Phase 2: Survey existing, and select most relevant, examples of best practice within the heritage sector and other sectors, for the selected priority areas (1 to 3 months)

Carried out by both GHF and ICOMOS. GHF to share what approaches they have tried and what has worked or failed as well as to contribute to wider research alongside the ICOMOS SDG-WG.

Deliverable: Technical report that summarizes best practice and proposed methodologies to address the agreed upon priority areas.

Phase 3: Pilot approaches with GHF projects and data (1 year).

Utilize both retrospective data and new data collection to test and refine proposed methodologies (Phases 1 and 2), evaluate their scalability and applicability in a variety of contexts. Implementation contingent on funding raised by GHF with the support of ICOMOS, and limited to two case studies.

Deliverable: Summary report for each pilot location.

Phase 4: Jointly create and disseminate data gathering guidelines to the heritage sector (6 months)

Combine deliverables associated with Phases 1 to 3 for wider distribution. To be written by both ICOMOS SDG WG and GHF personnel. Contingent on Phase 3 funding.

Deliverable(s): Technical report (co-authored by ICOMOS and GHF) describing the project objectives, methods, results, and recommendations. Also consider a derivative journal article for wider circulation (co-authored by ICOMOS and GHF).

Appendix 2: Biography from the Gap Analysis

Allam, Z & Jones, D. S. (2019) *Climate Change and Economic Resilience through Urban and Cultural Heritage: The Case of Emerging Small Island Developing States Economies*. *Economies* 2019, 7, 62; doi:10.3390/economies7020062

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Francesca Nocca (2017) *The Role of Cultural Heritage in Sustainable Development: Multidimensional Indicators as Decision-Making Tool*. *Sustainability* 2017, 9, 1882; doi:10.3390/su9101882.

Giliberto, F. (2021) *Heritage for Global Challenges. A Research Report by PRAXIS: Arts and Humanities for Global Development*. Leeds: University of Leeds.

Giliberto, F. & Labadi, S. (2022) *Harnessing cultural heritage for sustainable development: an analysis of three internationally funded projects in MENA Countries*. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 28:2, 133-146, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2021.1950026

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Yildirim, E., Sagger, H., Hosagrahar, J. & Grubb, G. (2022) *Evaluating The impacts of Heritage for Sustainable heritage*, *Heritage and Our Sustainable Future Issue 10; 10th February 2022*

Appendix 3: GHF Suggested Priorities and Phase 2 Project Brief:

These priorities reflect where GHF believes knowledge for data collection could be improved for its institutional goals. This is assumed to be a reflection of other small/medium organizations and projects in the heritage sector attempting activities around sustainable development.

GHF Goal 1: Support Sustainable Protection of Culture and Heritage

Heritage and the SDGs: SDG Target 11.4 and beyond

GHF Targets 1.1 and 1.2 are not a priority for this project as these indicators are already well integrated to GHF's heritage conservation outputs and outcomes. These targets are less critical when engaging with wider sustainable development funders and stakeholders. However, there are areas of overlap with indicators under other goals (e.g., definitions for demographics, training, and qualifications) where that work would strengthen reporting for these targets. These targets can be explored at the later phases of the project as more indicators are developed.

Target 1.3, concerning the use of heritage, may have more overlap with other goals as it can cross over with tourism, the creative industry, and other relevant fields with wider social and economic implications. Capturing and measuring of such overlapping impact is an issue that needs to be further explored. For instance, how can innovation and creativity be measured based on heritage assets? SDG 9 speaks about innovation in the industrialization and technological contexts, and other forms of innovations such as artistic creativity have been disregarded.

GHF Goal 2: Promote Inclusive and Equitable Economic Development of Local Communities

Social Inclusion and Prosperity: SDG 1, 4, 5, 8, 10

The GHF Targets under Goal 2 aim to create benefits for communities in an equitable and inclusive way. The impacts under this goal are the priority for this project so that GHF can improve existing data collection and performance to learn how to be more effective and communicate with potential funding partners. GHF Targets 2.1 and 2.2 overlap in what we would like to measure. Therefore, they are dealt with thematically.

Beneficiary Demographics:

- Need for consistent and universally accepted definitions of beneficiary groups, particularly 'youth', gender categories, disabled, and indigenous communities.
- SDG Targets 1.4 and 10.1 refer to the 'vulnerable' and 'poor' and 'bottom 40% of the population'. How does one define whether 'community' is within these definitions?

Impact of Poverty (mainly SDG 1):

- What poverty indices could be used and how should they be applied? SDG 1 targets (target 1.1 and 1.2) refer to both \$1.25 per day, and ‘national definitions’. What are best practices available?

Target 1.5 talks about economic resilience for communities and vulnerable groups – how is this defined and measured?

Generating ‘Employment’ and sustainable businesses (mainly SDG 8):

- How should heritage projects track if the jobs they create are ‘decent’ (e.g., benchmarking against local minimum wage? How to manage informal and formal incomes?). Mentioned in SDG 8.3, 8.5. 8.6.
- We often create small enterprises. What definitions of MSMEs should be used – local, global? How should projects track the sustainability of MSMEs they create or encourage (i.e., their longevity in creating decent work), and the quality of the work that they produce?
- As a sub-set of the above, how do we assess if a heritage site is itself ‘sustainably’ financed? i.e., there are the resources to continue to maintain that site?
- When carrying out education and skills training of any sort, how should the outputs and outcomes of that training be measured? E.g., counting participants (and the demographics or these), certifying or not, whether the training meets certain standards and whether the skills learned leads to employment or some other life improvement (e.g., what is the usual timescale for this? How do you track it?)?

Equality and Social Justice:

Outside of equitable economic impacts outlined above, a priority for GHF is to track impact of the social status (thought of widely) for vulnerable groups. A priority within this would be for women and indigenous groups (encompassed by SDG 5 and 10.2). So demographic definitions are important (as above). In particular the questions for GHF are:

- How do heritage projects track their impact on inequality, particularly gender inequality?
- How do heritage projects promote better education for girls and providing them economic opportunities?
- This of course requires long-term tracking and concerns a variety of complex factors, usually beyond the scope of medium- and small-scale projects. As such, what guidelines are there for projects to track their impact alongside wider initiatives and use pre-existing and more long-term data?

Goal 3: Enhance Nature-Culture Link of Heritage Projects

Planet and Environmental Resilience: (SDG 6, 7, 12, 13, 14, 15)

GHF has had less experience in tracking impact indicators for the environment and climate change. As such the below questions are simply initial suggestions

Sample question

- Environmental Impact Assessments are difficult for small- and medium-scale projects to conduct and track over the long-term. How do projects at this scale work best with wider environmental projects and data?
- What mitigation measures are integrated to heritage management plans that prepare for natural disasters brought about by climate change?
- Are there long-term strategies for projects or heritage sites integrated to national adaptation plans?
- Are there management strategies developed by heritage projects to manage and protect ecosystems to avoid significant adverse impacts, and restore native biodiversity in the surrounding terrestrial and marine areas?
- What are the sources of energy, Percentage from sustainable and renewable resources?
- Impact on local biodiversity and identification of key natural resources for protection
- Management of waste and sanitation
- Integrating intangible heritage and world views of nature to management systems
- Sustainable use of local materials
- Resources of site and accessibility to services and infrastructure.
- Integrated management systems that protect biodiversity and protect lands
- Does the project promote traditional sustainable practices of food production and consumption?
- How do projects generate biophysical and climate data that can be applied to improve the sustainability of certain practices? (e.g., sustainable harvest, water management, soil conservation, etc.); (lots of opportunities with archaeological data)