

Heritage-Based Climate Action

An International Virtual Conference | 25 – 27 March 2024

Concept Note

Transcending disciplinary boundaries and forging vital connections between heritage safeguard, just climate action, disaster resilience and sustainable peace, [ICCROM](#) is excited to unveil an **international virtual conference, *Heritage Based Climate Action*** within the framework of its [FAR](#) - First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis programme.

“We need a culture of we, not me.”

*-Anne Poelina, Chair Indigenous Studies
University of Notre Dame Nulungu Institute
Research*

We invite you to participate in this conference, which celebrates the culmination of the pioneering capacity development project, [Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action¹](#) launched by ICCROM’s FAR programme in 2022 with the generous support of the [Swedish Postcode Foundation](#).

The three-day conference showcases transformative action undertaken as part of the ***Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action*** project, at **five heritage places** – Jodhpur, India; Kasese, Uganda; Rashid, Egypt; Ubatuba, Brazil; and Tuti Island, Sudan – affected by intersecting climate-related disasters, as well as conflicts driven by environmental stresses among other causes.

Supported by **scientific research**, enriched further with **location-specific indigenous and traditional knowledge**, along with the lived experiences of local communities, our compelling discussions aim to shed light on the intricate relationships between climate change, disasters, conflicts and heritage. Through this exploration, we seek to identify the heritage most vulnerable to climate-related risks and understand how processes of heritage conservation can mitigate these risks for both people and heritage. The conversations will extend to promoting equitable and inclusive approaches in reducing emissions while addressing conflicts arising from the scarcity of natural resources.

➤ *Join us as we navigate these crucial discussions, blending scientific insights with indigenous wisdom and community experiences to chart a course towards a more resilient and sustainable future for our heritage and communities.*

¹ ICCROM. First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis (FAR). Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action. <https://www.iccrom.org/news/gathering-indigenous-knowledge-mitigate-climate-crisis-five-climate-hotspots-%E2%80%93-net-zero>

Exciting outcomes have emerged from our Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action Project

- **Jodhpur City Heat Action Plan | India**
Integration of traditional knowledge and practices to cope with extreme heat.
- **Kasese's Flood Mitigation | Uganda**
Planting of native species for flood mitigation and carbon sequestration.
- **Rashid's Soil Fertility Initiative | Egypt**
Enhancing soil fertility to counter food insecurity, accompanied by an early warning system for floods and storms rooted in traditional knowledge.
- **Ubatuba's Emergency Preparedness | Brazil**
Development of a prototype for seed banks and enhancement of emergency preparedness for exposed populations.
- **Tuti Island's Flood Risk Management | Sudan**
Documentation of traditional knowledge and its intergenerational transfer for a sustainable community-led flood risk management and early warning system.
- **Capacity Development Model**
Establishing a model for capacity development, engaging traditional knowledge holders and local communities in leading integrated action to safeguard heritage, enhance adaptive capacities, and reduce emissions while promoting social cohesion.
- **Climate Risk Assessment for Heritage**
Development of a field-tested method for assessing climate risks to all forms of heritage.



Jodhpur, India



Kasese, Uganda



Rashid, Egypt



Ubatuba, Brazil



Tuti Island, Sudan

Designed to **shape broader policies and practices**, the conference will unite a diverse array of partners, visionaries, policy influencers, hands-on practitioners, and the vibrant voices of community and youth leaders.

Embark on a transformative journey with us as we navigate pivotal discussions, seamlessly blending scientific insights, indigenous wisdom, and community experiences. Together, let us craft a narrative of change, resilience, and a collective commitment to safeguarding our heritage and planet.

➤ Your active participation is the driving force behind fostering collaboration and instigating positive change. We look forward to welcoming you to this inspiring event!

Background

An existential threat to life on Earth, the climate crisis is widespread and intensifying.

There has been a significant rise in heatwaves, droughts, wildfires, floods and cyclones, indicating our increasing vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk. The unprecedented rise in sea levels is threatening most coastal settlements – **cities like Alexandria and Venice could disappear forever**. Environmental stresses caused by climate change contribute to food insecurity, displacement and unemployment, thereby feeding into the root causes of an existing conflict or giving rise to new tensions.

Climate change, therefore, must be seen as a complex problem that has intertwined social, cultural, environmental, and economic underpinnings.

Climate change has become one of the primary threats for culture. Culture and heritage shape our perceptions of, and responses to, climate change and the environmental variability it is bringing. But major global approaches have been slow to recognize the influence of culture and heritage on climate action.

In 2022, the FAR programme of ICCROM, launched [Climate.Culture.Peace²](#), a **knowledge-building initiative**, aimed at exploring the interconnections between culture, climate change, peace and disaster resilience.

The virtual Conference was held from 24th to 28th January 2022 and engaged diverse professionals, scientists, thought leaders, policy advisors, academics, community and youth organizers, as well as heritage custodians. Over **1400 attendees from at least 113 countries** joined the Conference live through the Conference knowledge portal and official media platforms.

This initiative was generously supported by the British Council's Cultural Protection Fund ([CPF](#)) in partnership with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport ([DCMS](#)).

² ICCROM. First Aid and Resilience for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis (FAR). Climate.Culture.Peace. https://www.climateculturepeace.org/event/aa0e10db-006b-46ab-8012-f66df32d910b/summary?tm=SWyi9-wO7_rY27L261jMlaJbiL7ZQjiHmlq2mbaQUGo&locale=en-US

Key findings of the Climate.Culture.Peace Conference

Key findings of the conference highlighted the need for a **paradigm shift** in our approach to culture, heritage, and climate change, urging immediate action. This shift is crucial for incorporating location-specific Indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices, which played a vital role in restoring delicate ecosystems, reducing inequities, and addressing the vulnerabilities of both people and heritage to climate extremes.

1

Coastal, arid, and semi-arid areas are facing the highest risks associated with climate change. Threats such as sea-level rise, frequent flooding, erratic rainfall, and prolonged droughts, are endangering the livelihoods of agrarian, pastoralist, and fishing communities.

2

There is a lack of inclusion of considerations for cultural heritage in flood risk management plans at both city and area levels, emphasizing similar concerns for heritage sites prone to wildfires.

3

Heritage interventions, which lack a people-centric and eco-sensitive approach could escalate tensions, increase injustice, inequality, and contribute to environmental degradation.

4

Traditional social structures and intercommunal ties are crucial for fostering peace and dialogue. By engaging with local communities, heritage institutions can revitalize these ties and contribute to peacebuilding.

5

It is crucial to promote intergenerational knowledge exchange and skill transfer to ensure the continuation of Indigenous and traditional knowledges, as well as practices on sustainable resource management.

Embracing a people-centric and integrated approach to drive action

Based on the findings of Climate.Culture.Peace, the FAR programme of ICCROM took a significant leap forward and initiated [Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action](#), a pioneering **capacity development project** that aims to build a globally applicable foundation for **assessing climate-related risks** to heritage and people, as well as **leveraging Indigenous and traditional knowledge** to develop **integrated strategies for heritage safeguard, climate action, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding**.

To further people-centric and integrated approach, the *Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action* project teams actively engaged the Indigenous and local communities – *the Bakonzo in Kasese, Uganda; Quilombolas in Ubatuba, Brazil; fishermen and farmers of Rashid, Egypt; the Taya practitioners of Tuti Island, Sudan* – to enhance their disaster resilience and coping capacities, while addressing the cross-cutting issues of heritage safeguard, decarbonizing, upholding cultural rights and sustainable development of vulnerable cultural bearers.

Conference Objectives

The international online conference aims to **unite diverse stakeholders across sectors** for comprehensive discussions, knowledge sharing, and collaboration, focusing on integrating culture into sustainable and resilient human responses to climate change while safeguarding heritage. **Drawing evidence from the Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action project's five field projects**, the conference will feature **stakeholder roundtables, ignite talks, video presentations, and reflection sessions** to:



Highlight Key Findings

Showcase concrete evidence from the five innovation sites, demonstrating how cultural heritage can be leveraged for effective climate action.



Disseminate Tools and Strategies

Gather and disseminate tools and innovative strategies for climate risk management, stimulating further research and collaboration in the field.



Share Best Practices

Present exemplary approaches for assessing climate risks to heritage and associated communities.



Engage Stakeholders

Involve policymakers, community leaders, and practitioners from diverse fields to integrate culture-based climate action into local, regional, and national climate adaptation plans.



Pre-Conference Course

Prior to the conference, a **two-day course on "Managing Climate Risks to Heritage and Culture-Based Climate Action"** will be organized from **19-20 February 2024**, targeting multidisciplinary professionals interested in **understanding the nexus between cultural heritage, climate change, disasters, and conflicts**. It will share methods and tools for assessing climate-related risks to heritage, leveraging Indigenous or traditional knowledge for developing integrated strategies for heritage safeguard and climate action.

To learn more about the course, please read the

[Call for Applications](#)

Conference Themes

Three interconnected themes will shape the flow of presentations, panel discussions, and engaging interactive sessions during the conference. Join us as we delve into the essence of these themes, shaping a vibrant and engaging experience for all participants.

Theme 1 | Tracking loss and damage to cultural heritage in the face of climate change

Climate change presents a formidable threat to both tangible and intangible cultural heritage, encompassing gradual physical deterioration processes and sudden extreme events. The risks extend to both cultural and natural heritage.

This theme delves into **comprehending the short to mid-term impacts of climate change on heritage and associated communities**, as well as **envisioning climate-change futures**. It especially outlines the effects of climate change on the lives and livelihoods of communities reliant on natural resources for survival. These communities possess invaluable knowledge and practices shaped by years of human-earth interactions. As extreme conditions displace these knowledge bearers, prioritizing and preserving this heritage becomes essential for the sustainable use of natural resources, biodiversity conservation, enhancing disaster preparedness, and sustaining peace.

Exploring three key aspects:

- Assessing **climate-induced loss and damage** to tangible and intangible cultural heritage, including Indigenous socio-ecological systems.
- Strategies for **managing and protecting at-risk heritage** sites, collections and their associated communities.
- **Responses to unavoidable losses** of cultural heritage, especially from sea-level rise, increased erosion, and displacement of populations.

Theme 2 | Indigenous knowledge, traditional practices and worldviews - A source for transformative climate action

Traditional and Indigenous knowledge, essential for **place-based governance and sustainable resource management**, offers insights into the natural world. It plays a critical role in **preserving biosphere** reserves, developing **legislation for multi-species justice**, and guiding how-to live-in **balance with the environment**. This knowledge is a powerful resource for understanding climate change impacts, facilitating localized adaptation and mitigation solutions, and promoting inclusive climate policies.

Despite international recognition of the nexus between culture and climate change, the recent '[Call to Action](#)'³ at [COP28](#) emphasizes the need for national governments to prioritize Cultural Heritage, Arts, and Creative Sectors in climate policy and planning. However, the significant contribution of cultural heritage to climate resilience strategies often goes unnoticed in wider practice.

This theme explores:

- The **synergy between Indigenous and Local Knowledge and climate science**, providing hyperlocal data for climate risk management and peacebuilding.
- The **role of Indigenous and local knowledge in enhancing biodiversity sustainability, risk reduction**, and ensuring more **equitable and effective adaptation** outcomes.
- **Intergenerational knowledge transfer** for preserving traditional wisdom and practices.
- Incorporating Indigenous law and including **local voices in climate governance** and just transitions.
- Meaningful engagements with knowledge bearers and stakeholders to underscore the importance of **trust, reciprocity, and cultural sensitivity** in climate action.

Theme 3: An integrated approach towards disaster risk reduction, peacebuilding and climate action

The changing climate is rapidly heightening the vulnerability of cultural heritage and its communities to disaster risk. The [Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023](#)⁴ emphasizes the complexity, introducing the concept of "**poly-crisis**," where bio-climatic hazards interact with conflicts, financial crises, or epidemics, resulting in widespread destruction.

Climate change is a driver of disaster and conflict risks. Simultaneously, conflict heightens individual vulnerability, weakening coping capacities for managing disasters and adapting to climate extremes. These intertwined dynamics undermine disaster resilience, peacebuilding, and sustainable development.

Key findings from the Working Group II (WGII) contribution to the [Sixth Assessment Report \(AR6\)](#)⁵ of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) of highlight that prioritizing integrated actions for risk reduction, equity, justice, and peace enables climate-resilient development. Collaboration with local communities and acknowledging the value of past lived experiences are essential to address the multidimensional and interconnected nature of risks.

³ Global Call to Put Cultural Heritage, Arts and Creative Sectors at the Heart of Climate Action. 2023. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/62fbf293c4912c5514ac3b2a/t/654d150531c765799805615c/1699550469786/Global+Call+Key+Message+FAQs+2023.08.11.pdf>

⁴ GAR Special Report 2023: Mapping resilience for the Sustainable Development Goals. 2023. <https://www.undrr.org/gar/gar2023-special-report>

⁵ The Sixth Assessment Report (AR6): Working Group II (impacts, adaptation and vulnerability). <https://www.ipcc.ch/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-2/>

This theme will feature a focused discussion on how the innovation sites of the *Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action* project implemented developed and implemented integrated strategies for heritage safeguard, disaster risk reduction, climate action and peacebuilding.

The theme includes:

- The **interplay between** culture, climate change, disasters, and conflicts.
- **Cross-sectorial dialogues** and inclusive frameworks for integrated action.
- **Building resilience to risks** and addressing underlying vulnerabilities of heritage and people.
- **Mainstreaming culture** in climate action, disaster risk management, and development planning and policies.

Conference Partners

The *Heritage Based Climate Action* conference is a participatory initiative aimed at building and sharing knowledge.

The initiative will showcase innovative strategies for heritage safeguard, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding, with the support of **eight technical partners** from the Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action Project, spanning **Brazil, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Guatemala, and Kiribati**, along with the active contribution of the organizations from the Project's five innovation sites.

The conference will engage the existing network of [Climate.Culture.Peace](#), comprised of **55 institutions, representing six sectors, drawn from 31 countries**. These partners will facilitate cross-disciplinary exchanges, invite participation from their respective countries, and disseminate conference results to enhance the recognition of heritage preservation within climate action, disaster risk management, and peacebuilding policies and practices.

The network of ICCROM-FAR's **2000 cultural first aiders** will ensure diverse participation. ICCROM will also invite **national and regional government representatives** from the five sites of *Net Zero: Heritage for Climate Action*, along with relevant international agencies, to establish avenues for collaborative efforts in upscaling culture-based climate action.

[Click here to register for the conference](#)

<http://bit.ly/NZconference>

