



## The Hague International Model United Nations

**Forum:** Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

**Issue:** Financing the Protection of Cultural Heritage in Developing Nations

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### Introduction

Cultural heritage is what defines a country. It reflects the history, the beliefs and traditions that shape its national identity while connecting people to a shared history from the earlier and later generations. This is a collection of monuments, artifacts and landscapes, beliefs, traditions, including both tangible and intangible assets that foster an individual and group identity, creating a sense of social cohesion. Cultural heritage also plays a central role in building this cohesion and preserving collective memory that for many developing nations is important for economic resources through supporting tourism and local livelihoods.

Despite its importance and significance, it is always at risk, especially in those developing nations. There are numerous reasons for this case, but it mostly surrounds the limited financial resources, urban development, climate related disasters, and political instability, which at their foundation have the same issue; the lack and insufficient funding for preservation of the heritage.

Financing the protection of cultural heritage is essential but it is very difficult for nations to prioritize cultural heritage when there are other urgent needs. As a result heritage sites and artifacts deteriorate while valuable traditional knowledge is easily lost. In order to address this issue, countries' strategies in funding may vary, in ways such as public and private investment and support from the international community.

### Definition of Key Terms

#### Cultural Heritage<sup>1</sup>

Cultural heritage can be defined as the legacy of physical artifacts (cultural property) and intangible attributes of a group or society inherited from the past. Cultural heritage is a concept which offers a bridge between the past and the future with the application of particular approaches in the present. Due to its attached values for these groups or societies, cultural heritage is maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations (Central European University).

## Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a form of travel focused on exploring the culture, heritage, and way of life of a particular place. It goes beyond surface-level sightseeing and invites travelers to dive into the traditions, values, and stories that shape a community. This type of tourism is all about connection and getting to know a place through its people, history, and creative spirit (Swiss Hotel Management School).

## Conservation<sup>2</sup>

Conservation of cultural heritage is about “a careful preservation and protection of something”, especially : planned management of a natural resource to prevent exploitation, destruction, or neglect (Merriam-Webster).

## Restoration<sup>3</sup>

A word that refers to “something that is restored” and in cultural heritage, “*especially* : a representation or reconstruction of the original form (as of a fossil or a building)” (Merriam-Webster).

## Cultural Infrastructure<sup>4</sup>

At a fundamental level, Cultural Infrastructure is about providing access. It ensures that everyone, regardless of their background, has the opportunity to engage with culture. This engagement can take many forms, from attending a concert to borrowing a book, participating in a workshop, or simply gathering in a public space designed for cultural interaction (Sustainability Directory).

# Background Information

## Cultural Heritage in Developing Nations

Countries use their past for a series of reasons including being able to support their economic position. It is a powerful tool and asset that drives economic growth through tourism and urban revitalization but is still facing threats, such as the ones in the sections below. Slowly even more developing nations receive international support for preservation but funding and technical capacity still remain very limited and as a result they leave many sites vulnerable. On the other hand intangible heritage is very often overlooked in national policies, even just planning them. In general numerous efforts have been made for stronger protection but this still remains in the more developed countries

## Main Threats to Cultural Heritage

### *Underfunding and lack specialization in the field*

Many developing countries usually struggle with a small or very limited budget for preservation, leading to sites and heritage without proper maintenance. As there is a shortage of trained professionals, due to this lack of funding there is limited input for conservation efforts, making it difficult to provide protection in the long run.

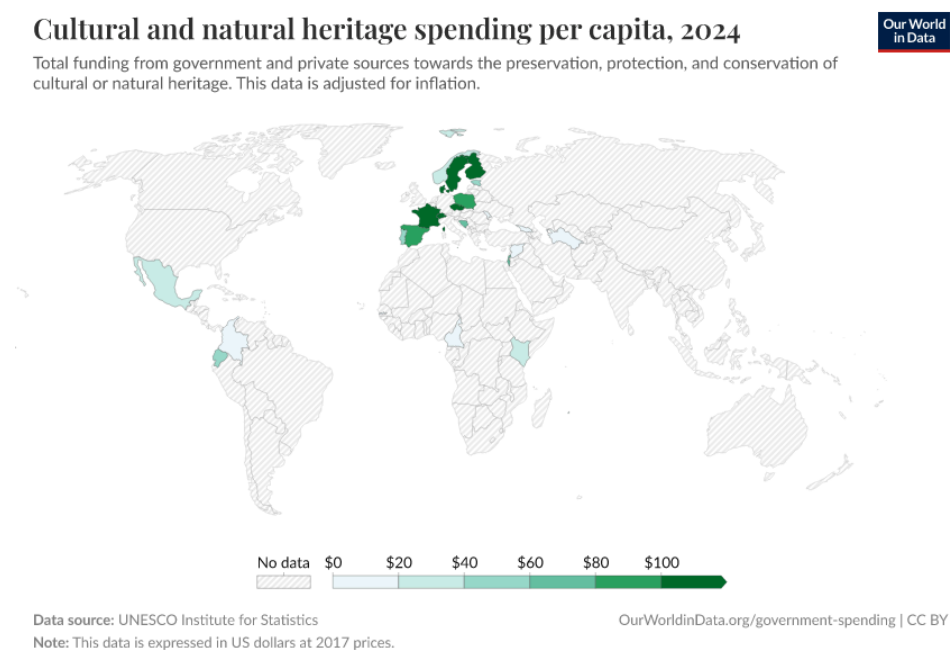
### Environmental Issues

Global environmental issues such as climate change and natural disasters are serious threats both for tangible and intangible heritage, and so without proper resources the countries don't have the opportunity to implement protective measures to mitigate such damage.

### Damage from political Instability

Political instability includes weak governance and conflicts often leading to destruction of cultural heritage due to neglect. It also is a cause for reducing investment as for collaboration, once again leaving heritage unprotected and vulnerable.

Figure 1: Cultural and natural heritage spending per capita in 2024, sourced by UNESCO Institute for Statistics



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## Current Financial Situation

### Domestic Funding

Local governments, particularly in developing countries usually allocate only small portions of the funds for cultural preservation. Other priorities such as healthcare or school systems take the lead pushing heritage down the priority list.

### International Funding

Global organizations and donor countries that support the developing ones provide valuable support but it is often inconsistent and on specific projects. The majority of LEDC's depend on external assistance so planning for such long terms projects is challenges

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### The International Council on Monument and Sites (ICOMOS)

The ICOMOS is an international Non-Governmental Organization that works for the conservation of monuments and sites from all around the world, making a great effort to support both Less Economically Developed Countries (LEDC's) and More Economically Developed Countries (MEDC's). This organization has as one of the foundations supporting World Heritage and according to ICOMOS "the idea that certain places in the world have a cultural and/or natural significance that is so exceptional it transcends international boundaries."<sup>5</sup>

### Italy

Italy is one of the many countries that is of cultural significance and specifically they preserve and restore sites such as the Colosseum or Pompeii with conservation projects that are reinforced with strict heritage laws to protect the history.

### United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is the host of many monuments and sites in various locations. They protect sites such as the Tower of London and much more through bodies such as *Historic England*.

### Spain

Spain preserves sites like the Alhambra and Sagrada Familia through regulated tourism and thus funded restoration projects. It is also one of the few countries that has national legislation, specifically the Spanish Historical Heritage Law 16/1985 <sup>6</sup>, that divides responsibility within the central and autonomous government.

## Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
November 16 <sup>th</sup> , 1972	Adoption of the UNESCO World Heritage convention
March 26 <sup>th</sup> , 1999	Adoption of the Second Protocol on the 1954 Hagues convention
October 16 <sup>th</sup> , 2011	The Establishment of the Emergency International Assistance mechanism.

## Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

## UNESCO World Heritage Fund

The UNESCO World Heritage Fund, was established under article 15 of the World Heritage Convention. Overseen by the World Heritage Committee.<sup>7</sup> It makes the decisions relating to the budget that the fund will use. Its main source of financing includes assessed contributions paid by the Member States. Until now there has been notable success in funding such projects.

## The Global Heritage Fund

The World Heritage Fund is a non-profit organization that operates internationally and was founded in 2002 with the main mission to "transform local communities by investing in global heritage"<sup>8</sup>. They protect cultural and natural sites on the World Heritage list while focusing on emergency aid and conservation

## ICCROM Capacity Building Program<sup>9</sup>

The ICCROM is an initiative that allows countries to communicate and build the ability to protect and manage their cultural heritage. It accomplishes this by providing training and workshops while improving management issues and strengthening local skills.

## Possible Solutions

### Create National Heritage Funds

Call for the establishment of a Heritage Fund that will be established in every developing country, which is going to be a dedicated fund with constant and consistent financial support, both by the country itself but also the international community. The funding will be solely focused on persevering and protecting the monuments and sites with priority to cultural significance upon each.

### Strengthen International Financial Support

As the nations are not able to fully finance the protections on their own, the international community helps cover costs for the restoration and maintenance while supporting training and adopting better planning strategies for the issue.

### Partner with Academic Institutions

It is vital for this issue to be addressed correctly and one of the most important ways that will be known and understood is by raising awareness with the help of academic institutions.

Universities, schools, or institutions will be able to educate individuals on the depth of this issue and how the lack of protections influences culture.

### Encourage Business Responsibility

By inviting businesses to be part of the financing, the developing nations with limited public budgets will allow the companies to contribute financially, without further using government resources. These companies will also provide a higher level of expertise, technology and volunteers that ultimately enhances the efficiency in perseverance projects.

## Endnotes

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