

First Aid to Documentary Heritage under Threat

Prince Claus Fund for
Culture and Development

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Prince Claus Fund, through its Cultural Emergency Response (CER) programme and the Whiting Foundation announce a fourth cycle of the Open Call for First Aid to Documentary Heritage under Threat. We invite proposals for projects in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean to safeguard documentary heritage.

What's at stake

“Documentary heritage” includes objects designed to carry information in writing, such as books, archives, manuscripts, tablets, carvings or inscriptions. These written records are sometimes the local stakeholder’s only surviving tangible connection to their past. Whether etched onto tombstones, drawn onto cave walls, or painted onto parchment these documentary records hold a wealth of information that once lost would be irretrievable. Owing to the effects of time they are incredibly fragile, susceptible to fire, insects, and the effects of our acute climate crisis. They are also sometimes singled out for deliberate destruction by those afraid of their potential to resist narratives that seek to exclude and marginalise. In the face of an interruption – whether natural or man-made, local actors need support to make sure their critical heritage is not lost forever.

What we are doing

Through the three previous rounds of this call, the Prince Claus Fund and Whiting Foundation supported stewards across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to prevent and minimize a loss of documentary heritage by funding 37 projects. They responded to different kinds of threats, urgently safeguarding a wide variety of collections and inscriptions. In Tanzania, we supported the stabilisation, treatment, and subsequent protective storage of the Maalim Idris Library’s collection. The collection, an amalgamation of books and documents collected from historical libraries, were at risk due to the effects of the rainy season in the region. In Yemen, the National Library’s collection of approx. 30.000 arts and culture magazines, dating back to the 1960s, were threatened by the ongoing conflict. Through our support, the library’s staff was trained in digitisation so that the collection would become more accessible. In East Timor, where the archive of Centro Chega! was put at risk by the March 2020 floods, we supported efforts to mitigate the damage, digitise the archive and improve the archive’s storage systems. In Lebanon, recovery actions at two public libraries that were damaged by the August 4th explosions were supported so they could serve the public again.

We have received an overwhelming number of applications from more than 70 different countries over the past three years, illustrating a pressing need for support. Through our scouting, we have also seen a sharp rise in needs emerging from disasters caused by the current climate crisis especially in countries we have not reached during previous cycles. We therefore strongly encourage applications addressing needs related to climate related disasters in South-East Asia, Central Asia, Central Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

This fourth round will continue to expand the scope of this initiative and facilitate the vital work of local actors in safeguarding documentary heritage and making the information they carry accessible to future generations. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the survival of historical narratives of diversity and the strengthening of regional capacities to respond to future needs.

ELIGIBILITY TO APPLY FOR SUPPORT

1. Is my project eligible?

- The project must aim to safeguard documentary heritage (i.e., cultural heritage designed to carry information in writing, such as manuscripts, books, archives, tablets, and carvings or inscriptions).
- The project must respond to an emergency situation, and must be to preserve or disseminate documentary heritage threatened or recently affected by an acute, current, or impending conflict, natural disaster, or other condition that pose an acute risk. Cases of long-term neglect are not eligible.
- The country where the intervention is to take place must be in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, and the applying organisation or individual must live and work in one of these regions.
- The heritage involved must be significant for a specific community, whether local, regional, national, or global.
- Local communities, a local organisation, and/or local authorities must be involved in the emergency response, preferably leading it, and the legal owner must support the proposed measures.
- The intervention must be able to be carried out within a time frame of twelve months, corresponding to the emergency character of the collaboration.
- No direct or indirect support will be provided to individuals or organisations currently subject to US sanctions.
- Through its activities, the project must contribute to increasing the accessibility of the affected documentary heritage and the dissemination of the stories it holds.
- The project could, among other things, fulfil one or several of the following aims:
 - Emergency conservation, preservation, and restoration for the urgent safeguarding and stabilization of damaged and/or threatened documentary heritage.
 - Emergency digitization, documentation, or scanning of damaged and/or threatened documentary heritage.
 - Evacuation and/or relocation of threatened collections.
 - (Re-) organization, cataloguing, inventorying, and documentation to enhance the accessibility of collections for researchers and other users.
 - The restoration and/or improvement of storage facilities, and the enhancement of safety and security conditions for the sustainable preservation of collections.
 - Capacity building and training activities to enhance the abilities of the caretakers of the collection and other stakeholders, for example in restoration and conservation skills, inventory methodologies, and digitization.
 - Dissemination and awareness-raising activities to increase access to the documentary heritage and to bring it to the attention of the larger public, for example through educational programmes, exhibitions, or workshops for the surrounding communities. (*Note: these activities can only be part of a larger project aiming at safeguarding and improving access to documentary heritage*).

2. What expenses are eligible to be covered?

- Grants will average about €15.000.
- Grant funds can only cover project-related expenses, not running (operating) costs for organisations.

- No support will be provided retroactively (i.e., to projects already implemented).

SELECTION CRITERIA

Projects will be evaluated by Prince Claus Fund staff and external expert reviewers. The selection criteria are:

- Urgency of the need identified – the threat of imminent loss of the affected heritage must be pressing.
- Soundness and sustainability of the plan for preservation and/or dissemination – the plan must be feasible, realistic, and well thought out to prevent or limit future vulnerability.
- Significance of the threatened documentary heritage to local, regional, and/or world communities – the heritage must be of value to an identified group of people

This grant selection aims to ensure that projects are selected in a transparent and fair manner, according to clear criteria, and through a rigorous process giving due consideration to all proposals that meet the eligibility requirements.

HOW TO APPLY

Proposals will be accepted throughout the call. The budget for this call is limited and the most urgent applications are given priority.

To apply, please follow these steps:

1. Create an account on the [Cultural Emergency Response portal](#) and start a new entry;
2. Fill in the required fields and upload attachments. You can save your application and complete it later up until the deadline. If you have any questions along the way, please contact cer@princeclausfund.nl
3. The deadline for applications is **30 November 2021 at 23:59 Amsterdam time (CET)**. We know that many people have intermittent access to the internet, or unstable connections. Please keep this in mind when planning your submission. Applications received after the deadline cannot be considered. **We recommend applicants not to wait until the deadline but to apply as soon as possible after your documentary heritage is affected by conflict, natural, and/or man-made disaster.**
4. All applicants will get an email confirmation once their submission has been successfully received.

Please note: In order to make sure you receive our notifications, please make sure you agree to receive notification emails from CER on the registration page.

CONTENTS OF THE APPLICATION

This application will ask for information on:

1. The applying individual/organisation
2. The affected documentary heritage
3. The disaster that has caused the urgency
4. The first-aid activities you would like to implement under the grant
5. The project budget
6. Pictures of the affected heritage and/or links to information about the affected documentary heritage

Please note: While the application questions are only available in English at the moment, you can submit your answers in English, French, or Spanish. To translate the questions, feel free to use an online translation software – for example, <https://www.deepl.com/translator>

ABOUT THE WHITING FOUNDATION

The Whiting Foundation supports literature and the humanities. We believe that it is imperative that the collective treasures of history and memory be passed on to the future with as little loss as we can manage. Recognizing that irreplaceable cultural heritage is being destroyed at an alarming rate around the globe, we are committed to supporting the urgent fight to save the fruits of human civilization.

ABOUT THE PRINCE CLAUS FUND

Based on the principle that culture is a basic need, the Prince Claus Fund's mission is to actively support, connect and celebrate artists and cultural practitioners where cultural expression is under pressure and to stand firm with those who create, who believe in the transformative power of culture, who advance new ideas and explore new perspectives.

Through its Cultural Emergency Response (CER) programme, the Fund provides rapid and effective emergency relief for cultural heritage affected by man-made or natural disasters. By taking immediate action, CER aims to prevent further damage and implement basic repairs. Launched in 2003 in reaction to the looting and demolition of artworks from the National Museum of Iraq, CER believes that rescuing cultural heritage provides hope and consolation to affected communities and thereby contributes to restoring human dignity, continuity and a sense of identity. Culture is a basic need and cultural emergency relief should therefore be an integral part of humanitarian aid.