

Protecting our Shared Heritage in Syria
An International Summit to Promote Collaboration
Washington, 10-11 December 2015

AMAL in HERITAGE

Overview

AMAL in Heritage is a not-for-profit, cultural activity designed to respond to specific needs for emergency management of cultural heritage in times of crisis in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region. Partner organizations in this initiative are the Scientific Committee on Risk Preparedness of ICOMOS (ICOMOS-ICORP), ICCROM, Global Heritage Fund (GHF), and the Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage (ARC-WH).

AMAL in Heritage provides supplementary training materials and emergency management and response tools to any entity or individual seeking to provide protection and conservation of all aspects of cultural heritage in countries and regions at risk of conflict or natural disasters. AMAL offers distance training and emergency management tools through a mobile and web application.

Leveraging the capabilities of mobile technology and the cloud, AMAL is a high-tech solution designed to aid in documenting cultural assets and assessing damage to cultural heritage during high-risk, emergency situations. AMAL will do this by offering hands-on, distance learning tools and technical support applications to experts and other interested parties across the conflict-stricken countries of the MENA region.

The idea of creating an e-platform for distance learning and technical support for MENA region is based on the 2013 ICOMOS e-learning courses for Syrian heritage professionals, in collaboration with ICCROM. These distance-learning courses were organised for the professionals in Damascus and Idlib.

The upheaval in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region and the recent armed conflicts and recurrent natural disasters have highlighted the need for a program for emergency response that can assist cultural heritage professionals and communities to undertake the survey, salvage and stabilization measures for their cultural heritage sites and collections at risk, when international help and assistance are not immediately available on the ground.

AMAL is also intended to overcome the problems associated with the dated techniques for recording and data gathering that are too slow and expensive to be effectively used in emergency situations.

Goals and Objectives

- To provide supplementary training tools and distance learning for emergency management of cultural heritage in conflict and disaster zones
- To develop emergency management tools, including mobile and desktop applications for preparedness, documentation, database, mapping systems, damage assessment, and emergency response;
- To provide technical support for cultural heritage professionals in the conflict zones of MENA region.

Between September 2015 and February 2016, AMAL partners intend to develop a pilot and small initiative with achievable goals in order to explore the possibilities for extending the program after its initial phase in the coming years. This pilot initiative is to create one component of AMAL's App, i.e. "Rapid Impact Assessment tool" and its related training and tutorial materials and guidelines to allow professionals, custodians of heritage, and community members in emergency situation to carry out and/or participate in a Rapid Impact Assessment (RIA) of immovable or movable cultural heritage, or use this tool to train local impact assessment teams. After this pilot phase, AMAL will focus on:

Deliverables

The pilot phase provides a step-by-step guidance as well as forms and other relevant resources for the collection, organisation (including verification) and visualisation of information on damage and losses caused to cultural assets as a result of a specific hazard event. This tool will assist in prioritizing cultural first aid actions and interventions. The app will also help heritage professionals to organise and manage their teams during on-site survey.

- A) An overview base map with ability to crowdsource information from various sources;
- B) Observation sheets and forms for recording as well as categorising damage, losses and vulnerabilities.
- C) Analytical tool with indicators to identify risks and immediate as well as long-term actions.
- D) The ability to input data in form of audio, video and text. It has both online and offline capability and synchronization, depending on the connection.
- E) A step-by-step guidance on Rapid Impact Assessment with typology of damages, references and examples, and a tutorial for AMAL tools.

Before integrating the content of AMAL on the app, it will be tested in a regional workshop in early 2016 by the participation of heritage professionals from MENA region.

Type of information collected

- On Monuments, sites, historic urban area, collections, etc.
- Geo-spatial information
- Information from social-media

Target audience

- Public cultural heritage institutions
- Cultural heritage NGOs
- Civil society

How AMAL activities are unique from other projects

- A secure and bilingual mobile app with references to cultural heritage of MENA region
- The ability to rapidly assess and catalogue heritage in crisis
- The database and mapping system for widespread use will allow conservators to track crisis timelines as they unfold.
- Distance learning options will give crucial support to help laypeople and conservators alike undertake the monumental task of emergency heritage preservation.
- Both online and offline function

Potential ways AMAL may share or collaborate with other groups

- Exchange information
- Create a joint database
- Fundraising
- Disseminate the products among the regional networks of cultural heritage professionals, and introduce or train on how to use them