



World Monuments Fund Receives Grants from U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation

Bringing more than \$1M to projects in Egypt, Peru, and Sierra Leone

November 8, 2021, New York, NY—World Monuments Fund (WMF) announced today that it has received three major grants totaling more than one million dollars from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) for projects at Takiyyat Al-Gulshani in Cairo, Egypt; Cerro Sechín in Ancash, Peru; and Old Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

The Ambassador's Fund is a highly competitive program that receives proposals from cultural museums, ministries of culture, NGOs, and other organizations around the world for a limited number of sponsorships. This year marks the AFCP's twentieth anniversary and a 13-year-long partnership between the AFCP and WMF. Since 2008, the Ambassadors Fund has supported 33 World Monuments Fund-led projects with 46 grants totaling \$17 million.

Physical conservation and local capacity building are core to each of these World Monuments Fund-led projects. At Takiyyat al-Gulshani in Egypt, WMF will work with local professionals to develop a plan for the site's adaptive reuse, while hands-on conservation at the complex will allow interns from local universities to work with WMF staff. Similarly, the project at the archaeological site of Cerro Sechín in Peru is grounded in a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach that incorporates the training of the local community in monitoring for the future sustainability of the site while working to conserve the site's intricately carved stone slabs. And, at Old Fourah Bay College in Sierra Leone, planning and design for the stabilization and adaptive reuse of the structure will involve close collaboration with the community to develop a future educational facility and visitor destination that can create economic opportunities and help revitalize the historic Freetown neighborhood where the site is located.

"Our new projects in Egypt, Peru, and Sierra Leone, supported by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, reflect our shared commitment to working with local communities to build sustainable long-term solutions through capacity building, training local professionals in proven preservation strategies, and working with them to protect their heritage for future generations," said Bénédicte de Montlaur, President and CEO of WMF. "Spanning more than a decade, our partnership with AFCP has led to important work at places such as ruins of the city of Great Zimbabwe, in Masvingo Province, Zimbabwe; Wat Chaiwatthanaram in Ayutthaya, Thailand, and Babylon in Iraq, among many others."

Takiyyat Al-Gulshani, Cairo, Egypt

Built between 1519 and 1524 by Sheikh Ibrahim al-Gulshani, the Takiyyat Ibrahim al-Gulshani complex was the first religious foundation established in Cairo after the Ottoman conquest in 1517. Designed to accommodate both religious and secular functions, the architecturally unique and diverse complex included residences, retreat cells, a small mosque for devotees, a communal kitchen, commercial shops, and a domed mausoleum, the site's grand centerpiece.

By the late twentieth century, the complex was left in various states of ruin, a result of earthquakes, financial limitations, looting, and changing religious administrative structures. Recent interest in its rehabilitation by local authorities has given new hope for the complex. With the site's inclusion on the 2018 World Monuments Watch, WMF supported initial research and documentation of the site. As the first step, the project team reviewed historic reports, studies, drawings, photographs, and archival information to more accurately assess its condition.

A new grant from the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation will support the second phase of the project focusing on physical interventions to conserve and restore the exterior of the site's most outstanding feature, al-Gulshani's mausoleum, and the surrounding raised courtyard. Additionally, WMF will engage the local community near the al-Gulshani site about adaptive reuse and ways in which the conservation can contribute to economic revitalization of the neighborhood. WMF will also work with the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MoTA) to improve documentation standards and define a conservation action plan. Working in coordination with WMF, MoTA staff and local conservation professionals will acquire experience and perspectives that may extend to other projects designed to safeguard historic Cairo. In addition to utilizing Takiyyat al-Gulshani's conservation as a classroom, WMF is creating partnerships with educational institutions, which will allow interns from local universities to work at the complex with WMF staff.

Cerro Sechín, Ancash, Peru

One of the oldest coastal Andean civilizations in Peru, Cerro Sechín is located 230 miles (370 km) north of Lima near the Sechín River in the Casma Valley. Early excavations uncovered 98 carved stone slabs along the outer wall of one building. The carvings date from 1770 to 1510 BCE and depict combat rituals as well as human sacrifice. Further studies determined that the site is made up of six structures that were part of a later complex that enveloped earlier earthen structures. Polychrome murals dated between 2290 and 2020 BCE have been found on the surface of the older earthen structures and depict stylized feline figures. In total, over 300 stone slabs have been uncovered, representing one of the earliest ornamented sites in the Americas.

Due to the absence of conservation interventions since the 1970s, the unique monoliths suffer from cracking and erosion due to exposure to the elements and seismic activity. Cerro Sechín was included on the 2014 World Monuments Watch to encourage timely action to address the site's decay. In 2020, WMF supported a condition assessment of the stone slabs. The research concluded that the stone slabs, mainly in the east and west flanks, face irreversible loss of the carved surfaces without immediate intervention.

Thanks to support from the Ambassadors Fund, WMF will execute a conservation intervention to clean, stabilize, and consolidate the stone slabs. Additionally, the project will build the capacity of community members and local residents in monitoring and maintenance techniques as well as introduce guided tours and workshops aimed at engaging nearby communities in the long-term preservation of Cerro Sechín.

Old Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone

Established in 1827, Old Fourah Bay College was the first university of Western education in sub-Saharan Africa. For a century, the college was a center for learning, focused on governance, religion, political organization, and public service bureaucracy. When civil war engulfed Sierra Leone from 1991

to 2002, Old Fourah Bay College was taken over by internally displaced people. During the conflict, the Rebel United Front (RUF) laid siege to Freetown, eventually occupying the eastern part of the city where Old Fourah Bay College is located. In 1999, shortly after the siege, a catastrophic fire broke out at the building consuming the roof and wooden floors. Miraculously, the main masonry superstructure survived and remains standing today, but without urgent conservation, its survival is severely threatened.

World Monuments Fund placed Old Fourah Bay College on the World Monuments Watch in 2006 to bring international attention to the surviving cultural heritage of a country devastated by war and poverty. Old Fourah Bay College is a symbol of freedom and a monument of immense importance, not only in the history of Sierra Leone, but for the region.

With support from the Ambassadors Fund, WMF has embarked on a project to carry out emergency stabilization of Old Fourah Bay College and to implement a planning and design process for the structure's eventual rehabilitation. The goals of the complete three-phase project are to save an iconic monument in West Africa and develop a plan for its reuse as a museum and cultural hub in close collaboration with the community, thereby creating an educational facility and visitor destination that further stimulates the nascent tourism industry, creates economic opportunities, revitalizes a historically important district of Freetown, and helps build a stable and prosperous society.

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About World Monuments Fund

World Monuments Fund (WMF) is the leading independent organization devoted to safeguarding the world's most treasured places to enrich people's lives and build mutual understanding across cultures and communities. The organization is headquartered in New York City with offices and affiliates in Cambodia, India, Peru, Portugal, Spain, and the UK. Since 1965, our global team of experts has preserved the world's diverse cultural heritage using the highest international standards at more than 700 sites in 112 countries. Partnering with local communities, funders, and governments, WMF draws on heritage to address some of today's most pressing challenges: climate change, underrepresentation, imbalanced tourism, and post-crisis recovery. With a commitment to the people who bring places to life, WMF embraces the potential of the past to create a more resilient and inclusive society.

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