

CONCEPT PAPER

SAARC RESEARCH SEMINAR & RESEARCH GRANTS FOR PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FROM THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTERS ON CULTURAL HERITAGE, MALDIVES

1. INTRODUCTION

In the words of Antonio Guterees, the UN Secretary General, “Making peace with nature is the defining task of the 21st Century. It must be the top, top priority for everyone, everywhere.” According to United Nation’s Environment Programme (UNEP), 2020 was selected to be the super year for nature, but with the COVID-19 pandemic, the expected processes and alleged activities were delayed significantly. However, the urgent need to address the impact of climatic changes to sustain the life span of the global atmosphere and the hemisphere have become even clearer with the ongoing pandemic.

Apparently, man has enjoyed so much of environmental resources and climatic variations, throughout the human evolution, and developed significant socio-cultural and geo- political boundaries that have resulted in enumerating to cultural identities and amenities for the wellbeing and comfort of the mankind. The advancement of new technologies and the rapid development processes that took place in order to provide more comforts, nevertheless have drastically ruined the environmental and climatic balance that finally caused to the daunting experience of climatic imbalances all over the globe.

The consequences are so unlimited that the global community is experiencing its worst phases with the first hand witness of being victimized in the global pandemic of COVID-19. The new inventions and interventions of medical and allied fields have proved to be failed in this setting however, the natural and eco-friendly prescriptions, and traditional climatic and environmental adaptations have become more prominent and evocative to address by means alleviating distressing geographic, ethnographic circumstances and to sustain the diverse needs

of the human equilibrium. It is to note that the climatic changes involve not only rising temperature, but also extreme weather events, rising sea levels, shifting wildlife population and habitats, and a range of other impacts causing adverse effects in day-to-day life also perpetuating a major threat to our cultural heritages. Needless to say, the damages are irreversible and can completely destroy both movable and immovable heritage assets.

During the recent past, South Asia has become a victim of extremely vulnerable natural disasters and a significant portion has been exposed to more than one type of hazards. The Global Climate risk index 2019 further shows that countries in South Asia are among the most vulnerable global territories to experience the adverse effects of climate changes. It is evident that socio-economic impacts of climate change are cross cutting and require immediate attention as pressure exerted by such developments can adversely impact the built heritage and their landscapes. It is apparent that what happens in South Asia will clearly have a profound impact on the world. Therefore, the impact of climate change and disaster calls for immediate action on preservation and restoration of the valued cultural heritage.

Having such alarming notions in its list of implications, the SAARC Cultural Center proposes a **Research Seminar to oversee the Impact of Climate Change and Disasters on Cultural Heritage** to bring the SAARC member states together to discuss on the importance of educating and making aware of the effects of climate change, particularly on cultural heritage in light of natural disasters and emergency situations. As per the approved calendar of activities schedule the workshop will be hosted held in Maldives on **30th September 2021** (originally proposed to be held in August 2021).

2. PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

The SAARC regional seminar on the “**the impact of climate change and disasters on cultural heritage**” was proposed at the annual governing board meeting of the SAARC Cultural Center in 2019. The program was originally scheduled to be held in 2020, and like other events of the SCC, this seminar was also postponed to 2021. In reference to the SAARC Secretariat’s note verbale, Ref. SAARC/ADMIN/2020 dated 23rd March 2020, the Research Seminar will be held on **virtual mode**. Thus, adhering to the health guidelines issued, this program is proposed to be conducted virtually, organized and hosted by the member state of **Maldives**. The SCC takes its highest pleasure to collaborate with the host member state in carrying forward the planned seminar with highest safety measures put in place.

3. PROPOSED RESEARCH SEMINAR FORMAT

3.1. SAARC regional seminar on *“The impact of climate change and disasters on cultural heritage.”*

Research Seminar will be held **virtually from the member state of Maldives**, and the SCC would like to request the program format to be designed by the host member state, strictly following the COVID-19 protocols adhered by the esteemed member state of Maldives.

3.2. SAARC Research project awards on the *“Impact of climate change and disasters on cultural heritage.”*

Award for **SAARC Research projects** will be continued for a period of 12 months by the selected presenter from the date of the award (**Please refer to below No.5-THEMES**).

4. OBJECTIVES

- i. To Identify Cultural Heritage sites in the SAARC regions that needs urgent intervention from disaster risk due to climate change
- ii. Identify current situation of such cultural heritage sites in the member states.
- iii. Identify effective ways of preserving and conserving Cultural Heritage
- iv. Identify challenges of Cultural Heritage management
- v. Demonstrate importance of cultural Heritage sites
- vi. Identify research approaches and methods for further research.

5. THEMES

- i. Cultural Heritage conservation and protection in the wake of climate change
- ii. Cultural Heritage and Climate change
- iii. Cultural heritage and disaster risk
- iv. Climate change- induced disaster and cultural heritage

- v. Cultural heritage: Climate change adaption and risk reduction/disaster resilient cultural heritage
- vi. Cultural heritage management through digital intervention.

Considering the above factors, the nominated resource persons/ scholars/ professionals from each member state shall make their presentations on the above subjects but not limited to. A detailed research project shall be carried out as the outcome of the Seminar.

At the completion of the seminar, a panel of jurors including the Director, SCC will select the best presentation and the extended abstract from each member state. The selected best presentation will be awarded the research grant worth US \$1000 to continue the detailed research. The grant period is 12 months and the awardees must submit a progress report after six months of the research, while the final report should be submitted by the due time line.

6. DATES AND VENUE

SAARC regional seminar on “The impact of climate change and disasters on cultural heritage” will be hosted by the member state of Maldives on a virtual mode, and **proposed to be held on the 30th of September 2021.**

7. PARTICIPATION AT THE REGIONAL SEMINAR

7.1. Official members from the host member state

Maximum of 15 persons can be nominated by the host member state from amongst the experts and academicians of their country.

7.2. Official Nominees from the other member states

The SAARC Cultural Centre invites all the member states other than the host member state (Please refer to 7.1) to send a **minimum of five (05) nominations (maximum 08 persons)** from amongst the experts and academicians of their country.

7.3. Other participants

The SAARC Cultural Centre would also accept the participation of other experts from the SAARC region other than the nominees of the desired Organizations/ Institutions (please refer to below No 8) to be channeled through the respective member state.

The SAARC Cultural Center, however reserves the right to accept or reject any request for participation in the seminar.

8. EXPECTED ACADEMIES/ INSTITUTES TO BE INVITED FOR SEMINAR

- Heritage Site Managers
- Conservation architects
- Art Historians
- Academics and Scholars on Heritage Management
- Disaster Management team
- Meteorologists
- Tangible and Intangible Heritage experts
- Archaeologists
- Conservators
- Curators

Member states are kindly requested to send the nominations covering diverse areas of interests.

9. LANGUAGE

The official language for the seminar would be **English** as per the SAARC practice.

10. SEMINAR OUTCOME

10.1 The extended abstracts submitted by each presenter will be published by the SAARC Cultural Center as a Reviewed abstract volume after the Seminar.

10.2 The **best presentation of each member state will be awarded a US\$ 1000** as per the approved budgetary allocations of the Governing Board and the Programme Committee meeting held in 2020, as a grant to carry on an extensive study on the project. The project **duration is 12 months** from the date of commencement and required guidelines will be provided to the selected awardees. The full project/ research reports will be published as a full paper volume.

11. IMPORTANT DATES

Due date to receive nominations	- 10 th September 2021
Due date to submit the extended abstracts	- 20 th September 2021
Conduct Research Seminar	- 30 th September 2021