Bagan Archaeological Area and Monuments, Myanmar Post-disaster Rehabilitation Procedures and Guidelines 2016



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Preamble

Bagan Archaeological Area and Monuments is a cultural site located in the central dry zone of Myanmar. The heritage site spans across the Ayeyarwady River from Nyaung U Township in Mandalay Region to encompass the relic stupa of Tangyi Taung in Magway Region. The heritage site consists of over 2500 monuments spread across an agricultural landscape. Most of these monuments originate from the Bagan Period, which reached its apogee as ancient capital city of Myanmar during the eleventh and thirteenth centuries CE. There are even earlier remains from the Neolithic and Pyu Periods and wonderful temples and mural paintings from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Exceptional architectural and artistic achievements are manifested in the exquisite ensembles of monuments with their intricate ornamentation and outstanding mural paintings. The site incorporates two towns and ten villages where elaborate living cultural heritage continuing from ancient times along with archaeological vestiges of ancient palaces, water management systems and fortifications. Till today many of these Buddhist monuments are revered. The festivals linked to the pagodas and Buddhist holidays are widely celebrated. Pilgrims visit the various temples and pagodas for private prayers and offering. There are traditional crafts that have survived such as lacguer ware production. Bagan is a major tourist destination for both local as well as international visitors.

An earthquake of magnitude 6.8 occurred at 17:04 local time on 24 August 2016 with the epicentre some 25 kilometres west of Chauk at an estimated depth of 84.1 kilometres. A total of 389 monuments are considered to have been damaged to varying degree within the Bagan Heritage Area. These numbers might vary depending on further detailed assessments. Though prioritization will be required to conserve and rehabilitate the monuments, a policy must be followed to ensure that all monuments are given adequate consideration and that measures are taken to safeguard them.

The Department of Archaeology with assistance from various government agencies, communities and international experts responded immediately to assess and secure the monuments as well as salvage displaced objects and manage material from damaged parts. The response phase will continue till the end of the 2016. In the meantime there is already great pressure to begin with the prioritized rehabilitation phase (2017-2018) planned for the following two years. Prioritized monuments shall be conserved and rehabilitated. This will be followed by a further three years of overall rehabilitation and review of management (2019-2021).

Taking into account that Myanmar is a country that experiences recurring earthquakes, it is essential that lessons are learnt from each earthquake and applied in preparedness, response and rehabilitation. The traditional building technology evolved over the centuries and adapted to the specific conditions of the location which includes the impact of earthquakes. These monuments that have withstood the wear and tear of natural and human impact for nearly a millennium are testimony to the resilience of traditional building technology. Such technology must be understood before any interventions are carried out. Any use of modern technology and