

## Cultural Heritage Protection and the Humanitarian Ecosystem Video Series

### Script: Introduction Presentation

**Slide 1:** Hello and welcome to the introduction presentation in this video series on cultural heritage protection and the humanitarian ecosystem. This is the first presentation in a set of 4 videos that will briefly discuss issues relating to cultural heritage protection and humanitarian response. This series is supported by Swansea University, and has been researched and developed by Jennifer Price-Jones, the Humanitarian Consultant for Blue Shield International. Blue Shield International is based at, and is supported by Newcastle University, which also holds the UNESCO Chair for Cultural Property Protection and Peace.

Each video in this series will be presented by a different person connected to Blue Shield, and they will introduce themselves at the beginning of the presentation.

My name is Nigel Pollard. I research and teach cultural heritage and conflict at Swansea University in the UK, and I've been a member of Blue Shield for about ten years.

**Slide 2:** The objective of this video series is essentially to explain why cultural heritage protection is important to people affected by crisis and why it should be considered a humanitarian issue. More specifically, we will cover the topics listed on this slide. Namely:

- To briefly explain what cultural heritage is and why and how it's enshrined in international law;
- To provide an overview of the Blue Shield movement, its origins in international humanitarian law, its mission, goals and work in practice;
- To briefly introduce the importance of cultural heritage protection to crisis affected people and how this impacts an overall humanitarian response; and
- To outline how the humanitarian ecosystem can support cultural heritage protection, thereby delivering a more inclusive and effective response, contributing to durable solutions and building the capacity of affected communities to meet their own needs.

We're aware that everyone is very busy and we don't have much time with you to cover these issues in detail, so we'll keep the presentations as short as possible. This is designed to be a brief introduction, not a deep dive into the topic, but where we feel you may want more information, we have included links to extra materials in the 'Additional Resources'.

**Slide 3:** So before the more detailed presentations, I would just like to highlight a few of the salient points to introduce some of the concepts. The first issue is, what is cultural heritage? Although this is a difficult question to answer definitively, broadly speaking, cultural heritage provides links to the past that are tangible (such as objects, buildings, sites, and monuments) and intangible (such as stories, songs, and dances) that help to provide individuals and

communities with a sense of place, identity, and belonging, contributing to individual and communal well-being and dignity.

It is also important to note here that people and their cultural heritage are intertwined and completely indivisible. People are linked to their heritage because heritage is the expression of people, their culture and their history. It's people who create cultural heritage, give it value and express themselves through it, creating unique communities all over the globe. Consequently, the loss of cultural heritage during conflict and disaster can be catastrophic.

**Slide 4:** Also important to note is the difference between legal definitions of 'cultural property', and the broader, more inclusive term of 'cultural heritage'. The term cultural property is important because it's the term used in the 1954 Hague Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols of 1954 and 1999. These instruments are part of international humanitarian law and codify the deliberate destruction of cultural property in armed conflict as a war crime, albeit with certain exceptions.

As we can read on the slide, Article 1 of the 1954 Hague Convention defines cultural property as: movable or immovable property of great importance to the cultural heritage of every people (with many examples), buildings whose main and effective purpose is to preserve or exhibit the movable cultural property, and centers containing a large amount of cultural property (called 'centers containing monuments'.) When considering the 1954 Hague Convention, only cultural property can benefit from its protections under international humanitarian law, and only during situations of armed conflict.

**Slide 5:** However, cultural property is actually only a subset of cultural heritage. Cultural heritage includes cultural property, but also natural areas of importance, as well as songs, traditions, languages, and other intangible elements of peoples' culture. Many communities, especially those in the global south where much humanitarian action takes place, make no distinction between the different types of heritage, and see them all as one.

More recent international conventions use the term cultural heritage, like the World Heritage Convention of 1972, signed by almost every country in the world.

Blue Shield values cultural heritage in all its forms. While the 1954 Hague Convention, to which Blue Shield owes its origins, takes quite a narrow and conservative view of what it terms 'cultural property' and its protection in conflict, Blue Shield works beyond the definition of the Hague Convention to include all cultural heritage.

This is especially important when we consider the importance of culture to crisis affected people during a humanitarian emergency. The loss and destruction of intangible and natural heritage may be just as important as the loss of tangible heritage, sometimes possibly even more so. Consequently, we will be recommending that the humanitarian ecosystem include

all forms of heritage when considering potential humanitarian needs, not just the heritage defined by the 1954 Hague Convention.

**Slide 6:** Moving on to a point I want to emphasise very clearly is that protection of cultural heritage is not as important as protection of people.

One of the criticisms of the Blue Shield and other heritage experts or heritage organisations that work to protect heritage sites and artifacts during crises and emergencies is that we are prioritising old things over living people who are often in extreme danger or crisis. We must make it completely clear to everyone that the Blue Shield would never prioritise, or ask anyone else to prioritise, protecting heritage before protecting people. However, what we do argue is that the protection of heritage is an integral part of protecting individuals and communities, and in some cases, crisis-affected peoples' humanitarian needs also include cultural heritage protection.

I will also note here that Blue Shield is not recommending that the humanitarian community should divert resources away from crisis-affected peoples' humanitarian needs; - rather that cultural heritage protection can be included within existing humanitarian programmes with some simple adjustments, and this will be discussed further in the fourth presentation "*How can the Humanitarian Ecosystem Support Cultural Heritage Protection*".

**Slide 7:** In the next presentation, Professor Peter Stone will discuss in more detail what the Blue Shield Movement is, but, as an introduction, I'd like to share the Blue Shield's overall goal, which is to protect the world's cultural heritage and thereby build towards the creation of healthy, peaceful, secure, stable, and sustainable communities, a goal which we believe aligns closely with that of the humanitarian ecosystem. We are both working towards the creation of peaceful societies.

**Slide 8:** At this point you may be thinking "This is all very interesting, but why does cultural heritage matter to the humanitarian ecosystem?" We'll be covering this through the rest of the video series, but as an overview, cultural heritage can define who people are, but also, of course, and not infrequently contentiously, who they are not, thereby sometimes placing people at risk of harm. That means that protection of cultural heritage and the protection of people are linked.

Cultural heritage destruction, whether deliberate or unintentional, can have profound impacts on affected people, exacerbating the impact of any particular emergency and increasing other humanitarian needs, such as security and mental health.

However, cultural heritage can also be an opportunity for the humanitarian ecosystem. If cultural heritage needs are included in a humanitarian response, research findings suggest that this helps build the capacity of affected communities to meet their own needs, contributes to durable solutions and supports reconciliation, peace, and security.

**Slide 9:** As we come to the end of this introductory presentation, I'd like to finish with this excerpt from an article written for the Humanitarian Law and Policy blog by Jennifer Price-Jones, the Blue Shield Humanitarian Consultant. "Heritage is a part of all of us, it is part of our identity and sense of belonging ... By recognizing that culture is an extension of human beings, their dignity, their identity, and their history, we then understand the protection of culture as a humanitarian concern as much as education, shelter, and protection."

The link to the full article is available in the 'Additional Resources'.

**Slide 10:** Thank you for listening to this introduction. In the next presentation, my colleague Professor Peter Stone, the President of Blue Shield and the UNESCO Chair in Cultural Property Protection and Peace, will introduce the Blue Shield Movement and discuss what it is.

Thank you and goodbye.