

About us - Foundation Cultural Heritage without Borders Sweden (CHwB-S)

We Restore and Build Relations

Cultural Heritage without Borders (CHwB) is a foundation and an independent non-governmental organization that was formed in 1995. To us, cultural heritage is an indispensable element of human rights and democracy and a common resource belonging to all of humanity regardless of nationality, religion, or faith. Threats to cultural heritage are threats to the everyday lives, identities, and realities of people. This is the reason why we work with civil society and institutions at all levels. Their shared values and approaches of interaction with cultural heritage strengthens peacebuilding, sustainable socio-economic and democratic development, and the realization of human rights. Cultural heritage (hereafter heritage) is a force for rebuilding and developing communities, trust, and mutual understanding between people. It is also one of the conditions in the move towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of Agenda 2030.

Our Vision and Mission

Cultural Heritage without Borders Sweden (CHwB-S) is dedicated to the rescue and care for heritage affected by conflict, neglect, or human and natural disasters, as well as environmental and climate changes.

Our **vision** is that everyone has the right to enjoy, have access to, and engage in heritage: landscapes, buildings, monuments, artefacts, traditions, stories, languages etc. People's interaction with heritage creates historical awareness, a base for sustainable socioeconomic and democratic development, social cohesion and realization of human rights, co-existence and peacebuilding.

Our **mission** is the sustainable use of heritage in societies under stress. We promote heritage as a *right* to be treated with *respect* and a *resource* to be used *responsibly*. *Capacity-building* for professionals is essential, helping them to be better equipped to interact with civil society and institutions at all levels. These are our fundamental building blocks that will deliver sustainable results for societies as well as long-term engagement with heritage.



WE RESTORE AND BUILD RELATIONS

Twenty-five Years of Experience

CHwB has worked with societies affected by conflict and those in post-conflict/transition, but also those affected by natural disasters, environmental and climate changes. We have brought civil society and public authorities and bodies together in post-conflict situations. We have bridged the gap between more acute and short-term needs and more long-term development-oriented interventions. This gives us in-depth experience of working in situations where tension exists and where government institutions are weak, especially regarding the management, protection, interpretation, capacity building and sustainable use of heritage as a resource for development.

CHwB has worked in the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe for more than twenty-five years. During this time there has been an end to armed conflict, but the move towards greater stability is uneven and distrust between former adversaries continues and grows from time to time. We have also participated in heritage projects in Tibet, Turkey, India, Kenya, Southern Africa, Ethiopia, Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine. CHwB has been supported by Sida, Swedish Institute (SI), other bilateral funds, the EU, private foundations, and grants. Since 2015 there have been three independent foundations in the Western Balkans – CHwB in Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo. They are important partners to CHwB-S.

Our accumulated experience can be used in international contexts wherever needed. CHwB-S is aware of both the problems and opportunities when bringing together people who were previously in conflict to work in projects in participatory and democratic ways; concretely contributing to reconciliation processes, peacebuilding and to more sustainable societies and the SDG:s. Our experiences of how to build trust and understanding through caring for and using heritage, dialogue, and strong local participation are broad, deep, and evaluated.

Over the years CHwB has built professional capacity in how to interact with civil society and institutions at all levels, as well as the ability to create mutual respect and understanding. Professional competence on how to choose and adapt diverse heritage practices concerning management, accessibility, interpretation, participatory practices, diversity, documentation, and safeguarding heritage has deepened. CHwB has enhanced the awareness of the value of networks and cooperation for safeguarding heritage, and for professional and institutional development and capacity.

Cultural Heritage without Borders Sweden of Today

CHwB-S consists of a working board of nine. Together we have broad experience and networks. We are now dedicated to carry on, and in some respects rebuild, the Foundation with the support of the existing funds and by developing new projects, activities, and new partners. We have a bank of experience of great value for future activities. We operate with a large toolbox, and we work efficiently, applying inclusive leadership who rely on professionalism, competence, and dedication. We are a professional organization dedicated to delivering results.

Disasters, conflict situations, environmental changes and the humanitarian demands that follows are part of the human experience. However, the complexity seems to be increasing, and so do the means to cause damage and despair. Read more about this in our external analysis *Our Working Landscape – Contexts and Trends*. (Work in progress)

What CHwB-S believes in

Our working values are:

- the universality of heritage and its capacity to be an influential power in sustainable development, poverty reduction, building trust and understanding, and supporting peaceful co-existence processes
- the force of dialogue and mutuality
- strong public and local participation

- internationalism and exchange of experiences and engagement between professionals from different parts of the world
- practices and relationships based on equality, non-discrimination, respect, transparency, and the accountability of heritage institutions

What CHwB-S promotes

Fundamental in our projects and activities are:

- participation of rights-holders
- ownership of partners when collaborating
- involvement and accountability of government institutions, public bodies, civil society, and NGOs
- partnerships between professionals and local, regional, and national organizations
- introduction and respect of international laws and standards
- sustainability and respect for the wellbeing of staff and workers
- problem-solving and participatory management culture

CHwB-S approach

CHwB-S has two approaches combining people's rights and the use of heritage to an end, with the respect of and responsibility towards heritage as such. In our projects and activities, CHwB-S is set on combining these approaches as parts of a cycle of cultural heritage. To make this cycle turn the first step in our strategy is to build professional capacity.

A basis for CHwB-S's work is the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. CHwB-S is dedicated to the implementation of international and European conventions, charters etc. relating to heritage.

Rights and Respects Approach

This approach is based on The UN Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that states that 'everyone has the right to take part in cultural life' and that a state shall take steps to ensure the safeguarding of culture. These rights should be combined with a respectful use of heritage when it comes to social cohesion. The history and the connotations of heritage are not always positive. Facts must be verified and communicated, and the existence of different perspectives treated carefully. Skilled professionals are needed to interpret and communicate this. To make this sustainable in the long-term, civil society must be involved.

We:

- encourage and strengthen dialogue and community participation to build trust and promote peace building between people and societies affected by conflict or in pre-conflict situations
- promote activities that build on human diversity as a creative force for peaceful co-existence
- promote participation and integration of everyone of all abilities in heritage activities, and developing museums as democratic meeting places
- promote collaboration between civil society organizations and public institutions
- respect and strengthen partners' equal commitment and responsibility, and everyone's knowledge, skills, and desire to influence project processes, policy, and outcome
- strengthen duty-bearers in fulfilling their obligations, and civil society organizations to hold public institutions accountable to relevant human rights and heritage conventions
- support the right of civil society groups to participate and influence public sector decision making regarding local heritage
- promote common knowledge of and debate about heritage in danger
- promote heritage as a force for creating a better understanding of today and our shared and diverse pasts
- support civil society organizations and their networks in developing respectful ways of interacting with contested/disputed and combatted heritage

Resource and Responsibility Approach

Heritage is to us a resource for sustainable social and economic development, and a way to achieve the SDG:s. It is a resource that makes use of local assets and techniques, creating employment opportunities, reducing poverty, and supporting environmental sustainability. The responsible treatment of heritage when seen as a resource is fundamental when it comes to its safekeeping and importance for generations to come. To make this resource sustainable in the long-term, all relevant parties must be involved.

We:

- strengthen local professional capacities and support local craftspeople to develop their skills in conservation to improve and create opportunities for employment
- support restoration/conservation projects that rely on local traditional techniques, locally sourced renewable materials, and sustainable local business initiatives
- support states and local authorities in adopting standard EU or other compatible legislation and policies related to the role heritage can play for development, such as sustainable tourism, and sustainable urban and spatial planning processes
- support civil society organizations and their networks to function as watchdogs to alert and influence governments when heritage is at risk
- support government institutions that safeguard heritage in adopting best practices and democratic and transparent ways of working
- develop professional capacity to understand and use interpretation as a way of strengthening mutual understanding, creating debate, and exploring stories



Building capacity as a strategy

These two approaches are supported by CHwB-S:s capacity-building strategy. Professionals with the right tools and perspectives can build knowledge, awareness and understanding of heritage as a means for sustainable social and economic development among local communities/civil society, decision makers and politicians. An expanded body of quality heritage professionals are prepared to meet challenges such as abuse and misinterpretations.

We:

- develop mutual enterprises involving people from two or more countries with different conditions and experiences
- develop capacity in documenting and assessing various threats to heritage
- develop capacity in management and interpretation of heritage
- develop interdisciplinary approaches to heritage activities used as opportunities for intercultural education and training based on mutual respect and understanding, including the strengthening of groups that experience discrimination and marginalization
- use and develop digital ways of working that makes it easier to access experts and connect professionals
- provide small capacity development grants for NGOs (not in Sweden) in cooperation with the Foundations in the Western Balkans
- provide grants for professional staff in Sweden to partake in the activities above