EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE VOLUNTEERS INITIATIVE 2021
Fostering Youth Commitments toward World Heritage

A. Goals and Objectives:
The goal of this Project is to protect history, strengthen resilience and hasten social, cultural and economic recovery of Sukur people on the Mandara Mountains in North-East Nigeria. The project aim was to raise awareness among young people, volunteers, local communities and concerned authorities on the need to protect and promote World Heritage and involve young people in World Heritage preservation through concrete projects at sites.

It is also to empower young people allowing them to learn skills in basic preservation and conservation techniques and raise their capacity as future decision-makers and global active citizens and mainstream gender equality in all stages of the projects and geographical diversity among the World Heritage properties where the action camps take place.

UNESCO selected Sukur as Africa’s first Cultural Landscape in 1999. Sukur is located in the Mandara Mountains in Madagali Local Government Area of Adamawa State, close to the border with Cameroon. Sukur was Africa’s first cultural landscape to receive World Heritage List inscription. Sukur was selected to be among the 55 action camp projects to be implemented from February to December 2021 at 55 World Heritage properties and sites on the Tentative Lists, by 49 organizations in 32 countries around the globe.

The Recovery Match for Sukur is a participatory conservation programme for Sukur World Heritage Site North-East Nigeria under the UNESCO World Heritage Education Programme focused on fostering Youth Commitment towards World Heritage and to strengthen the resilience of communities. It is designed to draw National and International assistance to the restoration of not just monuments, but to restore livelihoods by sharing experiences through the project activities. The vision of the program is to restore hope for the indigenous tribes, break cultural barriers, build cultural dialogues, and strengthen the cultural exchange engagements to renew confidence in the minds of international communities, research and to engender economic benefits for the State.

The planned 10 days of hands-on activities in the Sukur Action Camp were impacted by the very short 2-day stay on the Sukur mountain-top. Participants learned techniques in the production of iron tools, production of artisanal handcrafts and the maintenance of stonewalls and mountain trails. Four community surveys were carried out, to hear from the Sakun people on the mountain-top what concerns and priorities they have. These community inputs and WHV observations are summarized in Section 4.0 herein with greater detail contained in Annexes B, D, E, and G to this report.

B. Implementing Partners and Their Roles
Prior to the encampment in August 2021, the Implementing partners reached out to potential National and International stakeholders and raising awareness on the need and great opportunities in Sukur. From February – August, 2021 planning meetings were held between AFIDFF and other key Implementing partners: National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM) and Adamawa State Government. The Recovery Match
for Sukur with the theme “Fostering Youth Commitments toward World Heritage” began with a Stakeholders meeting in Yola, Adamawa State in April 2021 hosted by His Excellency, the Executive Governor of Adamawa state and another in Abuja in July,2021 chaired by the Rt. Hon. Yakubu Dogara, the former Speaker of the House of Representatives. The aim of the meeting was to bring all stakeholders together and involve the local communities in achieving the ultimate goal of the project. The Stakeholders meeting was attended by Implementing partners, Government agencies, members of State and National Assemblies, various Diplomatic Missions, Representatives of the private sector, and Representatives of the Sukur Kingdom and Indigenes of Adamawa state. At the meeting in Abuja, as part of the events, a documentary of Sukur site was screened and a picture of Sukur was unveiled on the National Stamp by the Nigerian Postal services to create and promote awareness of the Site.

C. AFIDFF WHV Awareness Programme
AFIDFF was able to garner support with the Adamawa State Government and partners for the encampment activities held in Aug. 2021. The AFIDFF web site: [www.afidff.org](http://www.afidff.org) had promoted the Sukur encampment and this was how Nigerian and International volunteers were recruited. During the course of the program, Fifty-five(55) International and National volunteers as well as twenty (20) Local volunteers from Sukur were engaged in hands-on activities in the Action Camp which includes the methodological study of Sukur traditional architecture mostly composed of dry stone walls, wood, straw, and thatched roof. Participants also learnt the techniques in the production of iron tools, production of artisanal handcrafts, and the maintenance of stonewalls and mountain trails, Basketry, pottery, calabash making, and label designing, the participants took part in different awareness raising activities such as awareness raising walk, hiking on the mountain, tree planting, documentary screening, musical evenings, performing arts, visit to the Modibo’s palace and museum, the American University of Nigeria and the Sobore Farm.

Volunteers were involved in drafting the reports and provided pictures. AFIDFF has produced a documentary on all the activities and also working on developing a virtual reality of the landscape including an aerial view of the cultural landscape taken by drones. We will continue to search for partners to support and fund the two-year Recovery program activities planned between now and July of 2023.

D. WHV Encampment & Program
Based on recommendations the encampment was initiated by a 4-and-a-half-day stay in Yola, Adamawa state where team building and cultural awareness training occurred. A day of travel to the base of the Sukur mountain, a tree planting ceremony and the trek up the stone pathway to Sukur. We overnighted on the mountain-top for two nights and teams focused on their assigned tasks. We were able to carry out empowerment programs for women and youth, a medical outreach for the inhabitants of the community, an educational program for the children, distribution of food items, clothing and agricultural equipment to the community and program survey of the landscape.

E. Key Findings from the Sukur Encampment Surveys
SAFE WATER: The unanimous input from the Community Focus Groups Discussion (FGD) was for access to water throughout the dry season. Our observation is that the quality of water needs to be determined - the reality that the mountaintop population has increased 10 fold from violence on the plains puts intense pressure on the fragile and ancient water sources. Life, livelihood and even the very
survival of this Sakun community depends on implementing simple water solutions that have been proven around the world.

**HEALTHCARE:** A sick person receives very little supportive care and a 4-hour trek to Michika is required to see a doctor. Many chronic health conditions (malaria, diabetes, hypertension, etc.) go untreated.

**EDUCATION:** Finances appear to largely restrict attendance in school, especially for girls who are often forced into early marriage, recounted by both men & women. With very few jobs available to those living on the mountaintop, a return to farm and to marry is the normal ‘choice’ for both males & females after any primary/secondary education.

**SECURITY:** Adamawa state Governor, Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri provided meticulous security for the Volunteer encampment of the World Heritage Volunteer Initiative in August 2021, but can this security prevail to allow Nigerians to visit Sukur mountain, let alone attract international Researchers, Volunteers, and Tourists?

Much more research needs to be accomplished on the stone pathways, the iron works, and solving the universal problem of potable water during the dry season. Additionally, lack of medical care on the mountaintop, the lack of vehicle access to the mountaintop, sustainable energy, and quality education and livelihood training for the Sakun requires the best and brightest minds in Nigeria to contribute to solutions.

**F. Key Recommendations**
1. AFIDFF is recommending reasonable and easily implementable actions (“Low-Hanging Fruit”) to improve the quality of life for the Sakun community at the mountain-top and those on the plains. The recommendations for the first year of the 2-year Recovery Plan are short-term solutions. Improvements should be made for the Sakun living on the mountain top as well as the plains dwellers, in order to stabilize the population and to avoid creating a false incentive for more relocations of plains-inhabiting dwellers of Sakun to the fragile mountain-top. A study of the paved ways requires a detailed survey followed by professional archaeological excavation in the presence of a civil engineer or specialist conservator, whose expertise is needed to identify their extraordinary resistance to erosion. If Sukur’s paved ways are to survive in anything like their original form, there must be a serious program of conservation and reconstruction informed both by archaeological and civil engineering expertise.

**Other Recommendations**
- a) Education: Provision of easy access to Educational facilities, good classrooms and library facility for 710 pupils on the mounting-top.
- b) Introduction and implementation of efficient and proper Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) projects and provision of portable drinking water on the hill-top through motorized solar-driven power system.
- c) Provision of a Clinic on the hill-top for Sukur community and provision of good Toilet system for the community and school children which is lacking.
- d) Provision of clean energy by using Solar powered lightings for the community which is presently absent on the mountain top.
e) Training of community health extension officers and environmental health officers for the hilltop community.

f) Training of some eligible Sukur youths as school teachers at NCE level.

g) Conducting of researches on the environment and cultural landscape in collaboration with research institutions.

h) Engaging the Youth Corps members to serve in the community periodically.

i) Empowerment programs for 500 women and youth in different skills and introduction of self-help groups/co-operative.

j) Introduction of economic and fruit trees.

k) Restoration of the Hidi’s palace and the gallery at the hilltop.

l) The Provision of loom machine to make weaving easier for the women and ensure faster production.

m) The women need to be exposed to more professional training on the techniques of weaving.

G. Next steps

Follow-up and implement the “LOW HANGING FRUIT” (Short-Term) recommendations listed below for 2021 - 2022 after discussion among the Implementing Partners, the Hidi, the Sukur community and concerned organizations.

The Low Hanging fruits:

1. SUSTAINABLE RURAL WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE PROJECT (WASH):

   • Training volunteers and families on improving WASH practices such as; correct way of hand washing, Storing and drinking safe water, building and maintain a simple toilet and maintaining good hygiene and clean environment and also discuss other water strategies like cisterns, water catchment off tin roofs, capping a spring, sand wells, and emerging technologies like Atmospheric Water Generators (AWG).

   • Working with Sukur Development Association (SDA) and the Hidi to establish two WATER DEVELOPMENT & MAINTENANCE BOARDS - One in JIRA (mountaintop) and one on the plains (location TBD) to shift from project based to system based approach in actualizing efficient supplying, operating and repairing water facilities provided in the community as a sustainable option.

   • Construction of motorized Solar powered water system(well) on the hilltop.

   • Maintenance of existing wells is a priority and local personnel must be trained to maintain and repair all boreholes on the plains.

   • A Research partner assess monthly water quality of existing springs and water in the two dug wells in Jira throughout the 2022 dry season. Assess the functionality of the Sukur wells and approximately how many persons are using the two Jira dug wells and streams for water during the dry season.

   • Building of good toilet/waste systems for the school and community in Sukur as a pilot project.
2. HEALTH:

- Identify an existing building suitable for a temporary clinic in Sukur
- Train three (3) Sukur mountaintop residents or volunteers on community/environmental health to man the clinic.
- Assessment of children of ages 2 to 10 for stage of malnutrition, provide families of malnourished children with training and support on prevention of malnutrition
- Partner with stakeholders to ensure that a broad spectrum of vaccination is administered on the mountaintop.
- Liaise with the Adamawa State Governor about assigning medically trained youth required to perform annual compulsory Youth service in Sukur to support the temporary medical service.

3. EDUCATION:

- Setting up a book library to be located in one of the three visitor round thatch huts near the Hidi Palace for school children and also liaise with relevant organizations to equip the library with books, computers and creative materials.
- Begin a children’s “WATER” (What a Time - Everyone Reads) outreach to Sukur children with stories read 3x per week (and picture book sharing and arts & crafts to stimulate creativity of a child’s heart)
- Assess the teaching skills of current NCE holders on the mountaintop to select some as “Volunteer Teachers/Tutors”.
- To partner with the American University of Nigeria(AUN) and other education partners to train mountaintop NCE holders in their elementary school project and use of other materials in the library.
- Work with the Adamawa State Government on the need to assign educationally trained Youth to serve their one-year compulsory youth service in Sukur as teachers, engineers for water projects, agronomists for agriculture projects, geographers and archeologists for researches on the preservation of their cultural landscape.
- Creation of Self-help groups and livelihood training in sustainable products for women and youth e.g. shea butter, crafts, etc. and in cultural preservation e.g. iron ore smelting, thatch roofing, and pathway repairs, etc.

4. Detailed Tourist/Survey Map: To work together with the American University of Nigeria (AUN), Office of the Surveyor General of the Federation, and relevant partners and institutes to have a detailed tourist map of Sukur cultural landscape showing visual relationship of cultural and architectural features of the site that will serve as a guide for tourists or users to familiarize themselves with objects location, geographic space, navigation as well as planning trip to the
cultural site. The detailed survey of the site will provide spatial information about the travel destination, access routes, distance, time and attractiveness of the tourism destination.

5.0 CONCLUSION: EVALUATION OF ENCAMPMENT

The Sakun people have a strong community unity rare in today’s Africa, reminiscent of the traditional African village [that 50 years ago was typical of Africa, but is now largely gone]. The unique history of those living along with their chief, the Hidi, atop a mountain in the Mandara Mountains (near the Cameroon border) accessible (until recently when a motorbike rail was established from south of the mountain to the Dalak market) only by foot over stone pathways dates back hundreds of years and is fragile due to poor infrastructure and little access to services that humanity has come to expect: safe drinking water, medical care, quality education for children and livelihood, network access, and electricity. In spite of the absence of these key services and nearly 10 years of violence on the plains around the Sukur Mountain, the Sakun people struggle to preserve the public works, principally the paved ways and the Hidi house, in the UNESCO World Heritage site. The inhabitants of the Sukur plateau constitute a paradox in North East Nigeria, a relatively safe refuge from insurgency, but also an isolated group of villages far away from the 21st century. Significant WASH projects, medical care, livelihood concerns and transportation by vehicle are needed before the World can visit Sukur to appreciate what UNESCO recognized in 1999.

Sukur is a “good news” story that should inspire Nigerians of all ages and across this great land to be part of the solution to support the fragile Sakun mountaintop communities with simple solutions to the needed services discussed above. Adamawa state Governor, Ahmadu Umaru Fintiri provided meticulous security for the Volunteer encampment of the World Heritage Volunteer Initiative in August, 2021, but can this security prevail to allow Nigerians to visit Sukur mountain, let alone attract international Researchers, Volunteers, and Tourists? The Sukur Development Association, with a membership of many indigenous Sakun continues to work both on the plains and the mountaintop to better the lives of the Sakun people.

This quote - a conclusion from a paper published in 2010, “Rural tourism as a factor of sustainable development: a case study of Sukur World Heritage Site in Adamawa State, Northeastern Nigeria” by W. Nzeda Tagowa still bears great wisdom for the future of the Sukur Kingdom.

This paper has established that despite the potentials of the Sukur Cultural Landscape, the development of tourism facilities and infrastructure to meet the needs of visitors has been slow. The stakeholders have adopted a conservation, preservation and management master plan, but the implementation of the plan had been carried on an ad hoc basis and this slows the pace of tourism development of the site. The master plan was designed within the context of the Nigerian National Tourism Development Master plan which requires synergy among the federal, state and local governments as well as institutions, communities and individuals to package Nigeria’s tourism resources to the international community. Stakeholders in the Sukur Cultural Landscape project and their agencies are the Federal Government, Adamawa State Government, Madagali Local Government and the United Nations agencies like UNESCO and the UNDP. They have all shown interest to cooperate to develop the tourism potentials of the site for sustainable development. There are other private interests and individuals in the project like the African International Documentary Festival Foundation.
Tourism is a global industry that needs international standards and best practices. The Sukur project requires the basic international standard to be able to attract tourists. But the sad side of the project is that the Sukur Community is one of the poorest in Nigeria and this poverty manifests in all strata of the community due to the collapsed economy. Therefore, a pro-poor strategy of management which is built on community participation and holistic livelihood approach is here canvassed and recommended. This approach should be able to address social and environmental factors that is not only community based but a kind of tourism that is just, fair and equitable. The pro-poor approach should be matched with the integration of traditional and modern methods of management that will bridge the gaps between the two approaches by addressing the social, political, economic, cultural and environmental needs of conservation, preservation and management. This will put the community at the center stage of management and sustainability.

Above all, a comprehensive risk management system should also be put in place. The greatest risk in this area is poverty and this can give birth to many things. There are other risks associated with tourism development such as natural disasters and criminal activities. The risk management system should also be taken alongside the environmental impact of assessment through rigorous scientific analysis of hazardous conditions that would have a negative impact on sustainability of Sukur cultural Landscape.”

This report summarizes the inputs received from the Sakun living atop the mountain and the observations of the participants of the WHV encampment organized by AFIDFF (See Annexes A - G). The maintenance of the landscape alone is a daunting task for such a large and isolated location. Much more research needs to be accomplished on the stone pathways, the iron works, and solving the universal problem of potable water during the dry season. Additionally, lack of medical care on the mountaintop, the lack of vehicle access to the mountaintop, sustainable energy, and quality education and livelihood training for the Sakun requires the best and brightest minds in Nigeria to contribute to solutions. AFIDFF now understands the magnitude of the issues facing the Sakun Kingdom and requires the assistance of many current and new partners to assist the Sakun people over the next two years in identifying and implementing short/near-term projects to meet these glaring needs. AFIDFF has developed a two-year recovery program with our implementing partners and the Sakun people. Middle-term projects will be identified in the report to UNESCO in December, 2022 from relevant agencies. Long-term goals should be envisioned and discussed now among the myriad of stakeholders to this UNESCO World Heritage Site, otherwise, another 20 years will pass without significant progress and the fragile Sukur cultural landscape is in danger of crumbling before our eyes.
Pictures from the encampment and stakeholders meetings
INTERVENTION AREAS

Wells
Eco-Lodges

Part of Hidi’s palace
Interpretation center

Museum/Gallery

Stone Paveway