

WORLD BANK OPERATIONAL POLICY NOTE NO. 11.03
MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL PROPERTY IN BANK-FINANCED PROJECTS

Introduction

1. The United Nations term “cultural property” includes sites having archeological (prehistoric), paleontological, historical, religious, and unique natural values. Cultural property, therefore, encompasses both remains left by previous human inhabitants (for example, middens, shrines, and battlegrounds) and unique natural environmental features such as canyons and waterfalls. The rapid loss of cultural property in many countries is irreversible and often unnecessary. Detailed background information on all aspects of this note are contained in the technical paper of the same title, available from the Office of Environmental and Scientific Affairs, Projects Policy Department, which is ready to provide assistance on request.

Policy Guidance

2. The World Bank’s^a general policy regarding cultural properties is to assist in their preservation, and to seek to avoid their elimination. Specifically:
- a) The Bank normally declines to finance projects that will significantly damage non-replicable cultural property, and will assist only those projects that are sited or designed so as to prevent such damage.
 - b) The Bank will assist in the protection and enhancement of cultural properties encountered in Bank-financed projects, rather than leaving that protection to chance. In some cases, the project is best relocated in order that sites and structures can be preserved, studied, and restored intact in situ. In other cases, structures can be relocated, preserved, studied, and restored on alternate sites. Often, scientific study, selective salvage, and museum preservation before destruction is all that is necessary. Most such projects should include the training and strengthening of institutions entrusted with safeguarding a nation’s cultural patrimony. Such activities should be directly included in the scope of the project, rather than being postponed for some possible future action, and the costs are to be internalized in computing overall project costs.
 - c) Deviations from this policy may be justified only where expected project benefits are great, and the loss of or damage to cultural property is judged by competent authorities to be unavoidable, minor, or otherwise acceptable. Specific details of the justification should be discussed in project documents.
 - d) This policy pertains to any project in which the Bank is involved, irrespective of whether the Bank is itself financing the part of the project that may affect cultural property.

Procedural Guidance

3. The management of cultural property of a country is the responsibility of the government. Before proceeding with a project, however, which prima facie entails the risk of damaging cultural property (e.g., any project that includes large scale excavations, movement of earth, surficial environmental changes or demolition), Bank staff must: (1) determine what is known about the cultural property aspects of the proposed project site. The government’s attention should be drawn specifically to that aspect and appropriate agencies, NGOs or university departments should be consulted; (2) If there is any question of cultural property in the area, a brief reconnaissance survey should be undertaken in the field by a specialist.^b Procedures to be followed upon positive surveys are detailed in Chapter 6 of the technical paper.

^a The World Bank includes the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC).

^b A survey form is attached to the technical paper.