
I International Initiatives and Cooperation

Susann Harder

Protecting Culture in Crisis – International Cooperation for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Context of the Blue Shield

Abstract: The Blue Shield is an international non-governmental organisation which endeavours to protect cultural heritage in times of crisis. While the main context of the organisation is cultural property protection during armed conflict in accordance with the 1954 Hague Convention, Blue Shield International and its now 31 National Committees have also been active in providing first aid to cultural heritage as well as supporting heritage institutions after major disasters. Following a brief introduction of the organisation the paper will focus on a number of relief measures for cultural heritage sites that the Blue Shield has provided in recent years. Most notably, this will include activities in response to damages after the floods in central European countries in July 2021 and the blast at the Beirut port in August 2020. Thereby, it will illustrate the support the Blue Shield – as a non-governmental organisation and actor of civil society – can deliver in such scenarios, both on the national and international levels.

1 The Blue Shield – In Germany and Around the World

‘Protecting culture in crisis’ is the by-line of the Blue Shield’s logo and, at the time same, the organisation’s core mission. The Blue Shield was founded in 1996 originally as the International Committee of the Blue Shield, uniting four international organisations which are engaged in the conservation of cultural heritage. These so-called ‘Founding Four’ are the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the International Council for Museums and Sites (ICOMOS), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) and the International Council on Archives (ICA).¹ Within the framework of the International Committee, they wanted to combine their respective expertise to support the drafting process of the Second

¹ For further information about the history of the Blue Shield, see Varlamoff 2002; Stone 2017.

Susann Harder, Blue Shield Germany

Protocol to the Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. The name ‘Blue Shield’ was derived from the distinctive emblem of this convention.²

The Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (adopted in 1954, hereafter abbreviated as 1954 Hague Convention) was the first global convention aimed at the protection of cultural property. Since its adoption, however, it has not been implemented well by the High Contracting Parties and as a result its protection mechanisms have been ineffective throughout several armed conflicts, such as the Six-Day-War and the subsequent occupation of territory by Israel³ and the Cambodian-Vietnamese War.⁴ During the Post-Yugoslavian Wars in the 1990s the massive destruction of cultural property again exposed the weaknesses of the 1954 Hague Convention.⁵ As a result, the High Contracting Parties decided to formulate a Second Protocol.⁶

When adopted in 1999, the International Committee of the Blue Shield and thereby its successor Blue Shield International established in 2016 was explicitly recognised as an advisory organisation in the Second Protocol. Article 27 (3) states: ‘To assist in the implementation of its functions, the Committee may invite to its meetings, in an advisory capacity, eminent professional organisations such as those which have formal relations with UNESCO, including the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS) and its constituent bodies’.⁷

The union of the ‘Founding Four’ created one of the defining aspects of the Blue Shield’s identity and way of working, namely that of a network. It showcased the understanding that the protection of cultural property in crises requires such a diversity of expertise and the capacity to act that cannot be generated by one organisation alone, but only in close cooperation with others.

Following the example of the founding organisations, the first national committees were established, for example in Belgium, France, Poland and the Neth-

2 The emblem is defined in Article 16 of the 1954 Hague Convention. In Article 17, its use is clearly stipulated: it marks cultural property protected under the Convention, as well as personnel responsible for its protection and transport. For the full text of the 1954 Hague Convention, see the website of UNESCO, <<https://en.unesco.org/protecting-heritage/convention-and-protocols/1954-convention>> (last accessed 13 March 2023).

3 See Mizrachi 2015.

4 See O’Keefe 2006, 153–154.

5 For example, the destruction of the bridge at Mostar and the bombing of Dubrovnik, see O’Keefe 2006, 182–183, 186–187; Strahl 2018, 267–273, 439–449.

6 O’Keefe 2006, 236–241.

7 For the text of the Second Protocol, see the website of UNESCO, <https://www.unesco.org/en/heritage-armed-conflicts/convention-and-protocols/second-protocol> (last accessed 23 July 2024).

erlands only a few years after the Blue Shield came into being.⁸ The experts who belonged to these national committees pursued the goal of strengthening the implementation of the 1954 Hague Convention in their own countries, thus contributing to the global effectiveness of the Convention. They had recognised that this required targeted specialist advice as well as lobbying in the High Contracting Parties themselves. At the time of writing (March 2023) there are 31 national committees worldwide.⁹

The foundation of the German National Committee was achieved with some delay despite the commitment of many actors. Ultimately, it required an impulse from the outside which – as is unfortunately so often the case in the protection of cultural property – came about through the destruction of cultural property. The targeted attacks and destruction of heritage sites by the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq, which were followed with horror in Germany, gave the founding initiative the impetus it needed. On 9 February 2017, the key professional organisations and authorities met first for a round table and then, on 16 June 2017, for the founding meeting of the German National Committee of Blue Shield.

The basic structure that has characterised the Blue Shield at the international level is mirrored in the German National Committee. The identity of a network, an association of individuals and organisations who want to work for the protection of cultural property during crises, determines our association's structure. This is particularly evident in the composition of the board. It consists of 12 individuals and institutions, with the presence of the six constituent members being essential. These include – in accordance with the formal requirements of a Blue Shield national committee – the German equivalents of the so-called 'Founding Four' as representatives of the individual cultural heritage sectors: ICOM Germany, ICOMOS Germany, the German Library Association (dbv) and the Association of German Archivists (VdA).¹⁰ In addition, the German UNESCO Commission and the German Society for the Protection of Cultural Property (DGKS) are represented on the Board.

The mission of the Blue Shield, the national committees as well as Blue Shield International is defined in the statutes of Blue Shield International: 'Blue Shield is committed to the protection of the world's cultural property, and is concerned with

⁸ Bogoeski 2017, 20.

⁹ For the current status of national committees, see the website of Blue Shield International, <<https://theblueshield.org/what-we-do/national-committees-around-the-globe/>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).

¹⁰ See the website of Blue Shield Germany. <<https://www.blue-shield.de/vorstand/>> (last accessed 12 November 2023).

the protection of cultural and natural heritage, tangible and intangible, in the event of armed conflict, natural- or human-made disaster'.¹¹

The 1954 Hague Convention and its two protocols continue to form the primary context for the Blue Shield's activities. The 1954 Hague Convention is complemented by other instruments of international law such as the Additional Protocols to the Geneva Conventions (1977) or the Rome Statutes, by strategic policies and programmes of the UN and UNESCO as well as by international initiatives for disaster management such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

In order to work on these topics and their underlying issues the Blue Shield defined six areas of activity for itself. These are:

- Legal compliance, policy and their implementation
- Capacity building activities, education and training in support of the Blue Shield's areas of activity
- Co-ordination – of Blue Shield members and with partner organisations
- Proactive protection and risk preparedness
- Stabilisation, post-disaster recovery and long-term/ongoing support activities
- Emergency response

These areas structure the activities of both Blue Shield International and the national committees. They support the development of the strategic plans guiding the work and the annual action plans.

2 The Blue Shield Approach

Delivering effective cultural property protection in times of crisis is a complex and difficult task. It requires coordinated action of many actors that usually operate in dissimilar ways and with different priorities – and all of that in a situation that does not allow for lengthy negotiations. Recognising this reality, the Blue Shield defined the key aspects needed so that the organisation could realise its mission and contribute to the protection of cultural heritage. This approach is simply called the Blue Shield Approach and is visualised in Figure 1.¹²

¹¹ See the website of Blue Shield International, <<https://theblueshield.org/what-is-blue-shields-mission/>> (last accessed 13 March 2023).

¹² The current version can be found on the website of Blue Shield International, see <<https://theblueshield.org/about-us/approach-ethics-and-principles/>> (last accessed 13 March 2023).



Fig. 1: Visualisation of the Blue Shield Approach. Image: Blue Shield International, 2022

At its core, the Blue Shield Approach recognises that there are three sectors which can contribute significantly to cultural property protection: the heritage sector, the uniformed sector and the humanitarian sector. The Approach aims to ensure that these three sectors develop a common basic understanding regarding a few core points. This includes the cultural heritage sector's argument that the unnecessary destruction of cultural property – whether self-induced or permitted – can undermine the success of military missions, security operations or post-conflict or post-disaster humanitarian assistance, whereas successful outcomes can be achieved by integrating the protection of cultural property first into planning and then into practice. At the same time, advocates of cultural heritage protection – particularly when we focus on objects – must put the security and social, spiritual and economic well-being of people at the forefront of their actions. That being said, as heritage professionals we operate under the premise that people's social, spiritual and economic well-being is to a large extent linked to their cultural heritage. However, it simply does not rank higher than their lives and safety, to put it plainly. So in principle, all three sectors are already working towards the same overarching goal, which is the survival of people and the maintenance or rebuilding of healthy, peaceful, stable and sustainable communities.

The Blue Shield, at both the international and national level, pursues the establishment, development and maintenance of relationships between these sectors in relation to cultural heritage protection. All three sectors work within a context that is usually defined and limited by laws, politics and the media. Equally important, if not more so, is that the context in which they operate is inhabited by diverse international, national, local and at times even indigenous communities.

As has been argued by Peter Stone, the current president of Blue Shield International, several aspects determine whether this approach is successful.¹³ For one, dialogue among the sectors can only be productive if it is conducted in the spirit of mutually beneficial diplomacy and action. This requires that all three sectors enter into such dialogue with the understanding that they may change their views and practices around the issue of cultural heritage protection. For that to happen, the participants in this dialogue have to accept the differing priorities of each sector and present the requirements of their respective priority in line with the existing agendas of the others. The latter is particularly relevant for the cultural heritage sector. The most crucial aspect, however, is this: to be effective in times of crisis, partnership among the sectors must be developed before a crisis. This is the case for intersectoral action during armed conflict and disaster but also as part of post-conflict and post-disaster stabilisation. This imperative is reflected in the so-called ‘4-Tier Approach’ developed by Peter Stone for the cooperation with the military.¹⁴

3 The Blue Shield’s Activities in the Field of Emergency Response

Emergency response is one of six areas of activity for the Blue Shield, as defined in the Blue Shield Approach. In line with the organisation’s mission it does provide – where possible – emergency support both in the context of armed conflict as well as disasters. Since this paper focuses on the latter it will review how the Blue Shield responded to several crises which – among other things – affected cultural property.

3.1 Support through Volunteers

One of the earliest international missions of the Blue Shield took place in Germany in 2009, in response to the collapse of the Historical City Archive of Cologne on 3 March of that year. This incident had a tremendous effect not only on the people and the institution it directly impacted but also on the field of cultural property protection in Germany. In fact, it significantly contributed to the establishment of the Coordination Office for the Preservation of the Written Cultural Heritage (KEK).

¹³ Stone 2022.

¹⁴ Stone 2013, 166–177.



Fig. 2: Blue Shield delegation and Ulrich Fischer of the Historic City Archive at the site of collapse in Cologne. Photo: National Archives of the Netherlands, 2009

Beneath the Historical Archive construction work had been taking place to build the tunnel for a new subway line. Defects in one of the concrete walls of the tunnel eventually resulted in a collapse of the tunnel itself. With groundwater, gravel and earth rushing into the tunnel, a funnel was formed directly under Archive's building, tearing it down. While the Historical Archive could be evacuated in time, two residents in a neighbouring building died when this building collapsed as well. The primary objective of the emergency forces was the rescue or rather, as became clear later, the recovery of the two missing persons. Salvaging the extensive collection encompassing 30 kilometres of archive shelving was, therefore, the secondary objective. The retrieval of the archive collection began with months-long salvage operations. They were conducted by firefighters and search and rescue personnel but also numerous heritage professionals, many of which volunteered to support the operations.¹⁵ The salvage of archival material above-ground lasted until September 2009. Almost 85% of the collection was saved, albeit in a severely damaged state.

¹⁵ For an overview of the recovery efforts, see Stadt Köln 2017.

The months-long salvage operation required large numbers of volunteers, most of which were from Germany, however, there were also offers of help from abroad including from the Blue Shield. More than 140 heritage professionals, most of them from the archive section and hailing from the Netherlands, France, Sweden, Switzerland and other European countries, followed the call from the national committees in the Netherlands and France.¹⁶ In two separate missions (April/May and August 2009), the volunteers supported the operation by administering ‘first aid’ to the salvaged collection objects, by sorting material (rubble vs. collection), separating dry and wet materials, cleaning, registering and drying partly wet material and preparing other material for freeze-drying on secondary locations.¹⁷

This example illustrates one option for the Blue Shield to support an emergency response: organising and at times training volunteers who are active heritage professionals. When needed, such volunteers may be deployed both within the country of the respective national committee or abroad, as was the case in Cologne. Responding to a clear request for aid, the Blue Shield can activate an extensive network of professionals either via the ‘Founding Four’ (ICOM, ICOMOS, IFLA and ICA) or the national committees. The capabilities of this network could be seen again following the extreme flooding events in Belgium in July 2021. Blue Shield Belgium could offer the support of qualified heritage professionals to institutions impacted by the floods, e. g., the flooded Centre de conservation et d’étude de biens archéologiques wallons in Namur where archaeological objects were stored, museums in the city of Verviers and the church of Saint-Gilles in Fraipont.¹⁸

If conducted properly, such volunteering missions provide crucial help for the heritage institutions affected by major disasters and can offer expert advice while on the way to recovery. They also entail a number of organisational issues, however, that need to be addressed. Aside from transport, boarding and lodging there is the question of insurance, concerning any damage caused by a volunteer and – more importantly – any injury a volunteer might sustain during the course of the mission. After all, emergency situations are potentially hazardous and pose various challenges for health and safety, be they physical or mental. Even if the organisation sending volunteers might not be legally liable in either of these scenarios it should at least feel committed to ensuring the safe return of the people sent

¹⁶ The missions were organised in the framework of the then still existing Association of National Committees of the Blue Shield (ANCBS) which had formed in 2008. The ANCBS and the International Committee of the Blue Shield merged in 2016 to form Blue Shield International.

¹⁷ The mission reports are available on the website of Blue Shield International, see <<https://theblueshield.org/download/blue-shield-mission-reports/>> (last accessed 11 March 2023).

¹⁸ For more information, see the report of Blue Shield Belgium, which is available online: <<https://theblueshield.org/disaster-response-throughout-the-summer/>> (last accessed 11 March 2023).



Fig. 3: Volunteers of Blue Shield Belgium at the church of Saint-Gilles in Fraipont, July 2021. Photo: Blue Shield Belgium, 2021

on the mission and identify suitable options in order to provide care in the event of any injury. During the missions to Cologne and Belgium, the mission reports state that insurance (although the exact extent is unclear) was provided by the receiving institutions.¹⁹ A second key issue is personnel and quality management because the specific ability and performance of the volunteers on-site reflect back on the organisation that sent them. Blue Shield volunteers are expected to be heritage professionals providing a particular specialisation that is needed at the receiving institution.

¹⁹ I thank Christina Ceulemans, Secretary-General of Blue Shield Belgium, for providing additional information regarding the insurance of volunteers during missions.

If the expertise of a volunteer is found lacking or he/she is perhaps behaving in a problematic manner, this would have a negative impact on the reputation of the sending organisation – in our context of the Blue Shield. For a non-governmental organisation, public reputation and trust in its (members') expertise are existential; once damaged or lost, they are not easily recovered. Therefore, the professional capacity, expertise and good conduct of the volunteers sent on missions should be sufficiently verified in advance.

3.2 Damage and Post-Disaster Needs Assessments

For any organisation like the Blue Shield that aims to protect cultural heritage during crises it is crucial to know which cultural assets are threatened, what damages have occurred and which specific hazards might still pose a risk to them. The instruments to generate such intelligence are damage assessments and post-disaster needs assessments. Both tasks require sufficient access to verified information or to the cultural heritage assets themselves if the final set of data is to be of sufficient value for whomever is using it to plan first aid efforts. For this reason, qualified staff should conduct such assessments on-site so that they can review all components of the cultural heritage, both tangible and intangible. For this very reason, they require the consent and cooperation of the person, community or institution responsible for it.²⁰ In the context of (international) missions, the Blue Shield might be able to offer the support of experts – qualified members or otherwise associated individuals – if such capacity is missing in the country or region where the damage occurred.

The first Blue Shield missions providing damage assessments were carried out in response to the disastrous earthquake in Haiti on 12 January 2010 which claimed more than 220,000 lives.²¹ A small team led by Danielle Mincio from IFLA and Christophe Jacobe, the then president of Blue Shield France, travelled to Haiti in April 2010 to conduct damage and post-disaster needs assessments. During the mission, they visited archives and libraries in particular, such as the National Library of Haiti, several smaller public libraries and what then remained of the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs whose building had completely collapsed.²² In their report they documented the damage in a brief summary, listed the work already

²⁰ See, for example, the description in ICCROM 2016, 42–66, especially 46.

²¹ United Nations 2011, 16.

²² The report of the first mission is accessible via the website of Blue Shield International, see <<https://theblueshield.org/icbs-mission-to-haiti-april-2010/>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).

done by Haitian staff and other professionals and proposed follow-up measures required in the short and long-term. A second mission followed in June 2010.

Based on the mission findings, the mission scope quickly expanded from conducting assessments to developing a project designed to respond to the needs identified. The first report already mentioned that a mobile treatment centre was planned to be established where damaged archival material and books might be restored or at least might benefit from basic first aid measures. Due to the climate in Haiti, tents and containers were ruled out for such a centre. Instead, the concept opted for a wooden structure, the parts of which could be preassembled and shipped from Europe (Switzerland and France, to be exact) to Haiti. For the development of the facility, the concept and fundraising, a separate entity was founded, the association *L'Arche du Bouclier Bleu*.²³ Unfortunately, the building was never realised. According to Sanne Letschert of the Prince Claus Fund in the Netherlands, which was supposed to serve as one of the funding bodies, the project was stopped in January 2014 after it had been delayed due to problems with the designated plot of land, the lack of cooperation with relevant government departments and the building materials being stuck at customs.²⁴ In the end the complex situation in Haiti, both the dysfunctional state of official institutions²⁵ as well as the added pressure resulting from the disaster created a barrier too high for the project team to overcome.

Two other more recent assessment missions should be noted here: Blue Shield Turkey conducted a damage assessment in the region of Manavgat (Antalya) after the extensive wildfires in August 2021, documenting the loss of rural architectural heritage buildings and damages to archaeological remains.²⁶ In 2020, Blue Shield Cameroon carried out a mission to assess the state of conservation of seven cultural sites and museums.²⁷ The assessment revealed that built structures at several heritage sites listed on the country's Tentative List for the UNESCO World Heritage Convention,²⁸ such as the Bafut Palace, the Tower of Goto Goulfey and the Babungo Museum, all had sustained damage. Stone sanctuaries had been demolished, mon-

²³ At the time of the presentation in November 2021, information was still available on the website of the association (former link: <<http://www.arche-bouclierbleu.org/>>). It has since then been deleted. The treatment centre, the so-called 'Arche', is briefly mentioned in Deschaux 2018.

²⁴ Information provided via e-mail on 26 November 2021.

²⁵ See the introductory remarks of Edmond Mulet, Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Haiti, in United Nations 2011, 4.

²⁶ The report is available on the website of Blue Shield International, see <<https://theblueshield.org/disaster-response-throughout-the-summer/>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).

²⁷ Nana 2021, 17–18.

²⁸ See the website of UNESCO: <<https://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/?action=listtentative&state=cm&order=states>> (last accessed 12 November 2023).

uments been hit by bullets, some museum collections were destroyed and many communities had been displaced, which not only destroyed tangible cultural artefacts but also disrupted practices and expressions of intangible cultural heritage.

3.3 First Aid Efforts

Since the early missions in Cologne and Haiti there have been other efforts to provide first aid to cultural property following disasters, but little information is available about them.²⁹ To my knowledge, no other project comparable in complexity to the mobile treatment centre had been attempted until 4 August 2020, when a massive blast occurred in the Beirut port area. The incident had its origin in welding works in a storage building, which set off fireworks stored therein. This, in turn caused 2,750 tons of Ammonium Nitrate that had been improperly stored in the harbour since 2013 to explode.³⁰ As a result, at least 218 people were killed and c. 7,000 were injured.³¹ The blast mostly affected the districts of Medawar, Rmeil, Port, Saifi, Bachoura, Zoukak el-Blat and Minet el-Hosn where many of Beirut's heritage buildings and institutions are located.

In the aftermath of the incident, the Blue Shield together with key partners implemented the most extensive, complex and – in the view of the organisation – successful protection efforts in its history.³² The operations were carried out in close cooperation with the 'Founding Four' and coordinated on the ground by Blue Shield Lebanon and its local partners. Several international funding bodies such as the Prince Claus Fund, Aliph and the Gerda Henkel Foundation provided the necessary funds. In a joint approach, the different partners utilised their networks and expertise and collected information on the types of tangible cultural heritage represented within the Blue Shield: libraries, archives, museums and built heritage. They shared information about damaged cultural heritage on an online platform, making it available to governmental institutions, cooperating organisations and the funding bodies. The assessment surveys were conducted by heritage professionals and volunteers, many of them students from the field of architecture, engineering and conservation, using standardised forms.

Based on the results of the damage assessments, the Blue Shield – enabled by the funding bodies – provided resources to deliver first aid to affected cultural

²⁹ Bogoeski 2017, 21–22.

³⁰ Action on Armed Violence 2021, 6.

³¹ Action on Armed Violence 2021, 8.

³² Blue Shield Lebanon 2021.

property. In the delivery, the organisation cooperated with the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Lebanese Armed Forces and the Ministry for Culture. One of the heritage buildings which sustained severe damage and became part of the mission was the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. As part of the first aid measures, the remaining roof tiles were cleared away and the roof closed again using a temporary emergency cover. Inside the building debris had to be cleared away, the roof structure had to be supported through scaffolding and architectural fragments were salvaged and stored for restoration at a later date. The stabilisation work was carried out by trained craftsmen procured by the Lebanese Armed Forces. The entire project spanned five weeks.

After the blast the post-disaster needs of Beirut were immense even when reviewed through the focused lens of cultural property protection. According to the Ministry of Culture, about 640 historical houses were damaged and almost 60 of them were close to structural collapse due to the blast.³³ Such a disastrous situation, which was again embedded in a much larger, life-threatening scenario, required more than one network of partners to achieve recovery and rehabilitation of cultural heritage. Therefore, the Blue Shield was one contributor and part of a thankfully wide array of institutions and organisations supporting the emergency response, stabilisation and ongoing restoration.

For the Blue Shield, the emergency operations in Beirut confirmed key aspects formulated in the Blue Shield Approach. This includes the significance of previously established contact and cooperation with the uniformed sector, in this case the Lebanese Armed Forces and UNIFIL. At the time of the blast, there had already been a very active initiative to form a national committee of the Blue Shield, known today as Blue Shield Lebanon, which truly hit the ground running when coordinating the emergency response together with its local partners. The interdisciplinary structure of the Blue Shield, uniting experts for the different types of tangible cultural heritage, could be brought to full fruition. The different organisations had access to their specialist networks for the damage assessments and then united their findings in a multi-disciplinary process. Finally, the coordinated approach among the partner organisations established sufficient information so that international funding bodies were able to back the emergency response with financial resources. In the mission in Beirut many of the necessary requirements for a successful emergency response were met, which cannot yet be expected in every country or region where the Blue Shield has a formal presence. However, the Beirut mission illustrated an almost ideal model for the way in which other national committees of the Blue

³³ Action on Armed Violence 2021, 11.



Fig. 4: Group photo of Blue Shield International and UNIFIL celebrating cooperation on 27 October 2020. Photo: Blue Shield International, 2020

Shield need to set themselves up so that they can make an effective contribution to cultural property protection if a disaster should occur in their country.

4 Outlook

The Blue Shield missions described above highlight a varied portfolio of actions through which both Blue Shield International and the national committees can contribute to the protection of cultural property in times of crisis. From large numbers of professionally trained volunteers to experts conducting damage and post-disaster needs assessments, to complex, coordinated operations as part of wider disaster response, the Blue Shield has demonstrated how it can support first aid efforts for cultural property. It is not a certainty, however, that such missions are successful or even possible in every crisis, as was illustrated by the eventually cancelled project after the earthquake in Haiti in 2010.

One of the undisputed key conditions that can indicate the chances of success for a mission is the formal presence of the Blue Shield in a country. The level of this presence can vary significantly, from a well-established, fully accredited national

committee to an advanced initiative close to forming a national committee or perhaps ‘only’ a national correspondent of the Blue Shield. Depending on the type of presence the quality of the network with national or local governmental institutions or other NGOs and the capacity to act in response to an emergency would be either stronger or weaker. The stronger the capabilities of the organisation or network, the better it can respond and, if need be, integrate aid from other regions or even countries.

Expanding the Blue Shield network by forming well-established national committees has, therefore, been a key objective to the organisation. The organisation has experienced a slow but steady growth in the number of national committees which has strengthened the movement considerably. Ideally, these national committees can learn from the experiences – what worked and what did not work – of the Blue Shield in the field of emergency response so they can form their organisational structure and build institutional capacity, allowing them to serve as hubs for information and coordination if a disaster should occur in their country – as was demonstrated in Beirut in 2020.

References

- Action on Armed Violence (2021). *An Anatomy of the Beirut Blast*, London. <<https://aoav.org.uk/2022/an-anatomy-of-the-beirut-port-blast/>> (last accessed 13 March 2023).
- Blue Shield Lebanon (2021). *Emergency response to the Beirut Blast: End of mission report (Blue Shield Mission August 2020–November 2020)*. < <https://biladi.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Beirut-blast-mission-Final-Report-BSI-LCBS-Biladi.pdf>>.
- Bogoeski, Krste (2017). ‘Twenty years Blue Shield (1996–2016)’, *E-Shield*, 3: 20–24.
- Deschaux, Jocelyne (2018). ‘Le Bouclier bleu protège le patrimoine culturel: de la prévention à l’intervention’, *arbido*, 2018/1: no pp.
- ICCROM (2016). *First Aid to Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis (Handbook)*, Rome.
- Mizrachi, Yonathan (2015). *Archaeology in the Political Struggle over the Temple Mount / Haram al-Sharif*. <<https://emekshaveh.org/en/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Har-Habayit-Eng-Web.pdf>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).
- Nana, Christian (2021). ‘Le Comité camerounais du Bouclier bleu – The Cameroon Committee of the Blue Shield’, in Blue Shield Germany (ed.). *Protéger le patrimoine en temps de crise. Bouclier bleu en Afrique – Protecting Heritage in Crisis. Blue Shield in Africa*, 15–18. <www.blue-shield.de/publikationen/> (last accessed 14 August 2024).
- O’Keefe, Roger (2006). *The Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stadt Köln (2017). *Bergen, Ordnen, Restaurieren – Der Wiederaufbau des Historischen Archivs der Stadt Köln*, Köln: Pieper GbR. <<https://www.stadt-koeln.de/mediaasset/content/pdf44/bergen-ordnen-restaurieren.pdf>> (last accessed 14 August 2024).
- Stone, Peter G. (2013). ‘A four-tier approach to the protection of cultural property in the event of armed conflict’, *Antiquity*, 87: 166–177.

- Stone, Peter G. (2017). 'Protecting cultural property in the event of armed conflict: the work of the Blue Shield', *Research Unit on Military Law & Ethics (RUMLAE) Research Paper Series*, 17/02: no pp.
- Stone, Peter G. (2022). 'Protecting Cultural Property in Armed Conflict: The Necessity for Dialogue and Action Integrating the Heritage, Military, and Humanitarian Sectors', in James Cuno and Thomas G. Weiss (eds.). *Cultural Heritage and Mass Atrocities*, Los Angeles: Getty Publications, 531–549.
- Strahl, Tobias (2018). *Kultur, Erbe, Konflikt. Kulturgutzerstörung in Kroatien, Bosnien-Herzegovina und Kosovo 1991–2004*, Wien, Köln, Weimar: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht Verlage.
- United Nations (2011). *Report of the United Nations in Haiti 2010: Situation, Challenges and Outlook*. <<https://reliefweb.int/report/haiti/report-united-nations-haiti-2010-situation-challenges-and-outlook>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).
- United Nations Development Programme (2010). *Haiti – 1 Year Later*. <<https://www.undp.org/publications/haiti-one-year-later>> (last accessed 15 March 2023).
- Varlamoff, Marie-Thérèse (2002). 'The Blue Shield Initiative: Joining efforts to preserve our cultural heritage in danger', *Liber Quarterly*, 12: 275–282.