Applied Methods for Upgrading Documentation of Immovable Heritage in Lesotho

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ABSTRACT

The conservation of African immovable heritage is increasingly faced with the challenge of irreversible change from the development process. There is an urgent need to ensure that those remaining places are properly documented for posterity. This paper reports on action taken to safeguard Lesotho national heritage, through the upgrading of its heritage documentation system and the establishment of a baseline inventory for the national heritage conservation agency. The exercise was carried out over two years, with international partnership, based on regional expertise. The heritage typologies recorded were architectural, archaeological and natural, including rock paintings, in nature. It provides an example of how cooperation of international organisation and exchange of skills among African organisations could assist in solving some of the problems faced by the heritage sectors of countries that lack the capacity to preserve their cultural resources.

KEYWORDS: cultural heritage, inventory, documentation, conservation, Lesotho

Introduction

With the pace of infrastructural development in Africa, numerous heritage places are lost before they are recorded. In Lesotho, the major threats are mining, dam building and agriculture. This paper discusses a recent contribution to the conservation of heritage places in Lesotho, a landlocked nation surrounded by South Africa. There was no consolidated list of heritage sites and places and the few known sites had no documentation. Heritage documentation is a prerequisite for all conservation actions and its absence in Lesotho meant that there were no records to consult in development and conservation processes. Management of heritage places was, therefore, impossible without thorough documentation.

In 2007, the government of Lesotho, through the Department of Culture of the Ministry of Tourism, Environment and Culture (MTEC) approached the Africa 2009 programme⁵ of ICCROM for assistance with its heritage documentation system. In its request, the Lesotho government acknowledged that the effective management of national cultural assets was almost impossible with ‘no clear documentation system’

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⁵ The AFRICA 2009 programme, a 12-year partnership of sub-Saharan African cultural heritage organizations, ICCROM, the UNESCO -WHC, CRATerre-ENSAG, EPA and CHDA, came to an end in 2009. Its main objective was to increase national capacities for the management and conservation of immovable cultural heritage. Financial support for the programme came from various partners.
in existence. It thus sought assistance to enable MTEC to upgrade its existing system, as well as establish a baseline inventory of heritage assets in the kingdom. To meet this need, the Africa 2009 programme proposed an approach spread over two years, to ensure adequate follow up and monitoring of the proposed systems. The Centre for Heritage Development for Africa (CHDA) based in Kenya coordinated the project on behalf of Africa 2009. Three regional heritage professionals and CHDA implemented the project, in partnership with staff of the national institution. The challenges observed within this national context are common to many countries in sub-Saharan Africa. It is hoped that the results of this project, as shared in this paper, will be useful to other African cultural heritage practitioners.

The kingdom of Lesotho is a small country that covers an area of approximately 30,000km². Over 70% of its land surface is mountainous and its population of 2.1 million people is concentrated in urban centres and in the less mountainous areas. Settlement on the Lesotho Highlands is not a recent phenomenon as evidence shows that there were occupied as early as 60 000 years ago (Mitchell 2010). The evidence of this settlement is reflected by the thousands of rock art sites that have been recorded in the kingdom, especially in the Maloti Mountains. The Maloti-UKhahlamba (Drakensberg) World Heritage Cultural Landscape, which is shared with South Africa, is recognition of the cultural richness of the region. There are also Later Stone Age and rock art sites in pristine condition, especially in the Maluti Mountains. With a much colder environment, the Lesotho Highlands are one of the few mountainous areas settled by the Bantu. Recent high concentrations of population on the highlands, however, are a result of the Shaka’s 18th century Difaquane wars which send much of southern Africa into turmoil. After a series of raids, the then Sotho king, Moshoeshoe led his people into the highlands in search of defensive positions that the mountains provided. Their settlement on the highlands also attracted Christian Missionaries who constructed some of the historical buildings that are national monuments today. Lesotho also has numerous paleontological sites with sites at Morija, Subeng Stream and Tsikoane Plateau, Moyeni, Matsieng, and Mohale’s Hoek. With this history of occupation, the Lesotho Highlands have significant cultural heritage resources that require not just research but also documentation and preservation.

Because of these heritage sites, Lesotho has been an important research destination since the 1920s, attracting archaeologists and anthropologists with interest in rock art, anthropology, archaeology, palaeontology, paleoecology, bioarchaeology and montane vegetation. Archaeological interest in the Lesotho area began as early as the 1920s when the Leo Frobenious expedition visited the kingdom. The archaeological sites are important, not only for a better understanding of Lesotho but also for their implication to much of southern African archaeology. Much has been published about the significance of these sites to the understanding of hunter-gatherer lifestyles, the
interaction of later Stone Age communities with farmers and the drawing of inferences that can be used elsewhere in the sub-region (Mitchell 2002, 2009). This is important because hunter-gatherer communities continued to exist alongside farming communities until very recent times (Mitchell 2009). Many archaeological sites have been recorded through this and subsequent expeditions but the records don’t seem to exist within the Ministry that manages the cultural heritage sites.

There are also sites from the occupation of the Highlands by the modern Sotho which include historical routes followed by Moshoeshoe as well as settlement sites established after settlement. Other sites include colonial heritage places, especially mission stations, churches, houses and historical houses build in the early 19th century. One of the unique heritages of Lesotho lies in its vernacular architecture which presents an interesting variation of mountain architecture in Africa. The often-circular buildings that make up the homesteads are made of stone rubble (coursed or uncoursed) laid in mud mortar and often with elaborate entrance mouldings, in earth plaster, around entrances and windows. The thatch roofs are strong enough to withstand the weight of snow during winter (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Example of Sotho architecture in Lesotho (Photo: I. Odiaua)

Much of the research carried out in Lesotho, however, has been done by foreign experts usually with huge research projects in world-renown universities. These research projects have not seen the responsibility to train local archaeologists in the documentation of the heritage sites that they recorded. In most cases, records of sites recorded by researchers have not been deposited with the Lesotho government. Most records are at the University of Witwatersrand (South Africa) and Cambridge (UK) and are not accessible to heritage managers in Lesotho. With a
shortage of manpower (only two BaSotho have training as archaeologists), documentation of heritage places has been impossible.

Lesotho has an aggressive national tourism promotion policy, tapping into its rich cultural and natural heritage as important assets than can contribute significantly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). With little else in terms of natural resources (except diamonds), Lesotho sees tourism as one of its most important industries. Though this depends on the natural beauty of the mountainous landscape, its cultural heritage sites also enhance visitor experiences in the Kingdom. The success of this tourism policy, however, is hampered by the absence of adequate documentation which can be used to identify heritage places suitable for tourism purposes. This combined with the fear of loss of these cultural heritage sites has led to increasing concern about the lack of proper documentation and the absence of information on some of the sites with potential for tourism. In spite of the vast amount of research that has been carried out at various heritage sites in the past, little work has been done to organise the data and results that these studies produced. Many of these studies used varied standards to record sites and there was a need to create a standardised database with an efficient information retrieval system.

In recent times large-scale development projects such as the Lesotho Highlands Water Project⁶ and erosion have become very real threats to the heritage resources of the kingdom. Lack of Environmental Impact Assessment policy and expertise pose a major threat to the cultural heritage in the areas where the Highlands Water Project will be implemented. In addition, there are other threats that include vandalism, natural deterioration and illegal trafficking of rock art, which endanger these non-renewable resources. Panels of rock art are sometimes cut out of the rock and used as decoration in homes in South Africa.

The responsibility to document, research and preserve this heritage is the responsibility of the Department of Culture which is under the Ministry of Tourism. The department is responsible for the safeguarding of cultural and natural heritage in Lesotho, administering it under Act 41 of 1967 but has no infrastructure and manpower to implement the act. Though the act makes an effort to define cultural heritage, its focus is on immovable cultural heritage, mainly archaeological sites and historical building. Being a law from the 1960s, it does not protect intangible cultural heritage and cultural landscapes. This Act, however, protects all sites of ‘value’ (i.e. any sites with archaeological remains) including those that have not been listed. The legislation implicitly calls for the keeping of a register of all ‘monuments, relics, antiques, fauna and flora’ found in the country (Act 41, 1967: 2c).

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⁶ The Lesotho Highlands Water Project is a water supply project, with 5 dams, hydropower generation and transmission, canals, roads, tourism facilities developed as a partnership of the governments of Lesotho and the Republic of South Africa. It is supposed to supply water to towns in Lesotho and South African cities in the dry Karoo region.
However, apart from the list of declared monuments, there is no systematic documentation of these sites or other sites of national value. There is also no organisation that is directly responsible for heritage management and preservation in Lesotho. The Department of Culture has many other roles within the cultural sector and is often not provided with a budget for documentation and conservation of heritage sites. With only five members, most of whom who had no training heritage management, the task of creating a database of sites was difficult. The Lesotho government, therefore, sought assistance from ICCROM’s Africa 2009 Programme.

This call for assistance was made at the most opportune moment within the framework of regional field projects (projet situé) of the Africa 2009 programme. Initial visits to Lesotho recognised that one of the challenges in the existing arrangement in the Department of Culture was a critical shortage of human resources in heritage management as well as the poorly organised heritage archives. Documents relating to cultural heritage sites and objects were located in different offices within the Ministry of Tourism, often with the officer whom researchers had left the documents with. Much of the information of the site documentation list was missing or not updated. There was also no support institutions like national museums.

7 Africa 2009 implemented its activities at two levels. The projet situé, at site level, was deeply rooted in the realities of the field while responding to specific needs of selected sites in terms of training and implementation of conservation activities. The project cadre took place at regional level and included training courses, seminars and research projects. These two worked together in a continuous loop of feedback and response, thus creating specific references and models useful for planning and management at both the site and national levels.
or archives that could store artefacts and documents or carry out research within Lesotho. Most artefacts collected from these archaeological sites are in small private museums and much of what was collected during recent archaeological surveys and excavations was presumably taken overseas. This free-for-all state of affairs has not only frustrated researchers who want to carry out further research in Lesotho but has also the Department of Culture which could not audit its own cultural resources or where they were located. The project was thus regarded as very important in the creation of a tourism product as well as in the preservation of cultural heritage. At that time Lesotho was also trying to nominate its part of the Drakensberg (Maloti Drakensberg Cultural Landscape) but did not have records of cultural heritage sites within its part of the property. The project was thus widely publicised in national media and highlighted the problems that the heritage sector faced. There was also a radio broadcast on the results of the project, at the continental level, through the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) Channel Africa radio station.

Though this project did not solve all the problems within the Department of Culture, it highlighted the need to document cultural heritage in Lesotho. With the shortage of manpower, however, some of the problems are still being experienced even today. One of the results of this was the extension of the Maloti-UKhahlamba World Heritage Landscape without an updated list of heritage sites. This was remarked on by the World Heritage Committee which advised Lesotho to continuously update the records of the part of the World Heritage Landscape that lies in the kingdom. It also recommended that Lesotho develops conservation status reports for sites on its inventory.

Methodology

The project supported by the Africa 2009, *Upgrading Documentation System and Undertaking Baseline Inventory study in Lesotho*, took place over two seasons in 2008 and 2009: three weeks in August 2008 and two weeks in July 2009. It was implemented through a variety of hands-on and theoretical applications, which took into consideration the local conditions and manpower capacities. The applied methodology of the project also incorporated hands-on training for national heritage professionals. Staff members of the Department of Culture were trained in the design and operation of a heritage database based on the standards that had were developed with their participation.

A key starting point was to mobilise local support for the work of the national institution through an awareness workshop for various stakeholders in the heritage sector. It brought together representatives of key government departments and local communities from each of the ten districts in Lesotho. It also provided an opportunity to present the draft heritage recording form and standards (these will be discussed
below) that had been developed in partnership with the national institution. These were discussed and modified as necessary by the workshop and eventually adopted as a national instrument for recording heritage sites. The involvement of local communities was also made on the premise that they would assist with the identification of new sites for recording. Other actions carried out are:

- Identification of existing data, development of recording forms and standards
- Application of recording forms and standards in fieldwork;
- Matching data and record fields
- Development of a national heritage database

Identification of existing data

The existing data was collated through identification of various recording forms from different development and research projects previously carried out in Lesotho. Most of the research projects were carried out by researchers and contract archaeologist from the region, specifically from South Africa and Zimbabwe, as well as from the United Kingdom. There was a corpus of records from several archaeological and paleontological excursions, which had been lodged with the MTEC. Other major projects included environmental impact assessment reports for Mohale, Katse and other Highlands Water Project dams (Smits, 1983). The heritage information captured by each of these projects was different as they all had different fields in line with the interests of the implementing institutions. Researchers, for instance, were more interested in collecting archaeological evidence than information on the conservation status of the sites. Most documentation formats were found to be inadequate for recording the different typologies of sites found in Lesotho. Officials of the Department of Culture seemed to have no control on what was recorded and how it was recorded.

A draft recording form and standards, to be used by everyone undertaking research or field surveys in Lesotho, was developed through a review and update of the existing documentation system. It included all the fields that could possibly be used to identify or classify heritage types in Lesotho, location (in terms of coordinates, topography and district), identification, management and ownership of location area, significance, state of conservation as seen during documentation, existing documents before the recording form was completed, and documents accompanying the form when it is filed. The idea was that this form would capture the core data elements or details of the sites and enable the development of a useful management and conservation profile as well as general identification of the heritage of the country.

During the second season of the project in 2009, the national institution drew attention to the existence of a database from the Maluti Drakensberg Transfrontier
Project (MDTP). The MDTP had recorded 514 sites, mainly of rock painting sites. The ‘discovery’ of this database created another challenge: that of merging its contents with that of the newly created one to ensure that all relevant fields were covered. In order for the records from this database to be useful, there was a need to identify and eliminate duplicated records. The data fields from the MDTP database thus had to be streamlined and matched with those in the newly developed system, to ensure that the information from the MDTP could be entered into the new recording system. This was effectively carried out in smaller working teams.

**Application of recording forms and standards in fieldwork**

The draft recording form was used in field surveys of selected areas as part of an inventory used for the production an electronic database of the cultural sites. The project team also created a consolidated compilation of information on sites from various documentation projects into a single expanded inventory, catalogue and database. During the first phase, the heritage recording form and accompanying standards were tested in the field in a recording exercise that lasted one week. In addition to the recording forms, basic recording tools were used to record sites in the field: GPS, measuring tapes and cameras. The time spent in the field also served as a period of sensitisation of the local communities with members of the identifying some of the important heritage places themselves. All surveys were carried out with members of the local communities and this provided more details about the sites and related features within the landscape.

As part of follow up and monitoring of the effectiveness of the first season, the personnel of the Department of Culture were charged with the task of recording all known sites, in Maseru District, using the new form, ahead of the second phase in 2009. Stakeholders who had actively participated in the development of the recording form at the workshop were also requested to record the sites in their districts using the new national recording form. Between September 2008 and January 2009, the national staff had recorded sixty-nine (69) sites using the standards and recording forms developed in 2008. Currently, over 586 sites have been added to this new inventory.

After the fieldwork, completed recording forms were filed and a file movement register created to ensure the effective monitoring of each site file’s movements within and outside the Department of Culture. Experience has taught that uncontrolled movement of files, even within the same institution, normally leads to loss of documents. The need to record the names of file borrowers was constantly emphasised to national staff.
Figure 3: Map of Lesotho showing some of the sites that were documented during the survey. (Seke Katsamudanga)

Matching existing data and record fields

The development of the heritage database started from the basics of producing index cards for each site. This method was considered as imperative for any eventual development of a database and served as an intermediary phase to electronic recording. It was also selected in view of the lack of requisite technical skills for the effective manipulation of electronic data and the available skills within the national institution. ‘Old style’ catalogues and a filing system would also serve as a back up for the electronic database.

The recording form and the standards were used to develop the structure for the electronic database. Data gathered from the field using the standard form was used to populate the database and generate sites index cards and reports from queries. Queries are another example of information retrieval from the inventory. A test catalogue for nine sites was developed in 2008 and further improved in 2009. The catalogue is still being updated.

Development of a national heritage database

Following the development of catalogues and index cards, there was a move towards electronic recording and archiving. To achieve this, the staff of the Department of Culture had to acquire basic skills in the use of Microsoft Access software, in order to be able to develop and manage the database. The training
involved understanding how databases are developed in the MS Access software and
how the software, in turn, organises the input of data. In order to adequately meet
the challenge, the training sessions were very simple and generally focused on data
input into tables, extracting data through queries as well as deriving forms and
reports based on pre-determined criteria.

To ensure the long-term sustenance of the MTEC database, a simple flat-file
format was selected over the usual relational structure of databases. This could
eventually be developed into the relational structure as staff gain understanding of
the system and become versed in its manipulation. The simple-file format, easily
understood within the context of the file system already developed, also has an
added advantage of easy manipulation through queries. The MTEC staff members
were encouraged to try the software manipulation on their own in order to better
understand how it functioned.

Results

The outcome of the fieldwork was an inventory of sites that will serve as a
base for future development of the database of heritage resources. An electronic
database is now available and this can be used without compromising the manual
records. Whoever would want information about archaeological sites in the kingdom,
or to check for where impact assessments have been carried, that information can be
easily accessed and retrieved. The fields in the recording forms are the same as those
in the index cards and electronic database.

![Figure 4: Lesotho Heritage Index card](image-url)
The records will allow the team at the Department of Culture to assess the condition of the heritage place and also allow for management and conservation planning. The project eliminated the duplication of information that resulted from the use of different documentation systems. Over and above this and with relevant software, a map could be generated easily using the coordinates recorded from the GPSs. The mission did not extend into that aspect as this would have required additional training resources and time.

One of the most important sites on the heritage list is Thaba Bosiu which was declared a national monument in 1967. The site is located on a plateau in the Phuthiatsana Valley, 23km south-east of Maseru, the capital city. With very steep cliffs, the mountain was a formidable defence against raids from the Zulu. King Mosheshoe I occupied the hill in 1824 and continued to live there until his death in 1870. Cultural remains include houses, sacred springs, royal graves as well as rock art sites on the cliffs of the mountain. It has continued to be an area of importance for the kingdom as Sotho royals are still being buried here. The father of the present king, King Mosheshoe II was the last to be buried at Thaba Bosiu in 1996.

All these sites were not documented and one of the tasks of the project was to record the cultural remains at this heritage place which the royal family was keen to develop for cultural and tourism purposes. The documentation of Thaba Bosiu which included the conservation of various sites within the landscape resulted in the identification of problems that needed to be solved before visitor numbers increased. One of these was the deterioration of the remains of the royal houses. The

<table>
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<td>Masilise</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Council</td>
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<td>Town</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>Quthing District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Variety of shrubs and trees around the site. It also has an artificial botanical garden with indigenous and exotic trees planted by Rev Ellenberger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 5:** Part of Lesotho’s Monuments Database interface form
interaction of Ministry of Culture staff with experts from the southern African region resulted in the identification of expertise in stone masonry. In 2012, a team of stone masons from Great Zimbabwe completed the restoration of these houses. Work at the site has also included the construction of an interpretive centre, lodges and better access to the top of the hill.

![Image of Thaba Bosiu houses before reconstructions](Photo: Min. of Tourism, Environment and Culture)

**Figure 6:** Thaba Bosiu houses before reconstructions (Photo: Min. of Tourism, Environment and Culture)

![Image of Thaba Bosiu houses after restorations in 2016](Photo: Min. of Tourism, Environment and Culture)

**Figure 7:** Thaba Bosiu houses after restorations in 2016 (Photo: Min. of Tourism, Environment and Culture)

**Discussion**

This project was an eye-opener to the problems that are often faced by African countries in the documentation of cultural heritage. In many African countries, development takes priority over cultural heritage. It is quite clear where priorities for the Lesotho government lie; its citizens require reliable sources of water.
The country has been building dams to provide water for its towns as well as for South Africa’s sprawling cities which lie in the dry Karoo environment. These development projects have had detrimental effects on cultural heritage in a country where that heritage is not fully documented. It is often very difficult to convince governments that cultural heritage could also be preserved during the development process as this can increase the costs of the projects. Cultural disasters from dam constructions, especially in colonial Africa have been documented (Brandt and Fekri 2000) and Lesotho can learn from them. The kingdom could suffer further loses as the massive Lesotho Highlands Water Project with its five dams, numerous canals, feeder roads, electricity generation plants and transmission lines, is implemented. Important decisions, therefore, have to be made to ensure that cultural heritage is not lost through these developments. At the same time, cultural heritage should not impede the development agenda unnecessarily, especially in countries with poor economies like Lesotho.

In Lesotho, numerous heritage sites could already have been destroyed largely because no one knew of their existence. Given the report of cultural losses from dam constructions as mentioned in the Brandt and Fekri (2000) World Commission on Dams report, the need for documentation of heritage resources before construction can never be over-emphasised. It was, therefore, prudent that the nation develops an inventory of this cultural heritage so that decisions affecting that heritage are not made in ignorance.

Figure 7: Erosion is a serious problem affecting heritage sites in Lesotho (Photo: S Katsamudanga).
Lesotho also faces the threat of erosion on its landscape: the country is regarded as the most eroded landscape in the world (Showers, 2005). The mountainous nature of much of the country gives rise to erosion that threatens agricultural land, archaeological heritage and the heritage sites from the formative years of the Kingdom of Lesotho. This challenge, combined with the fact that the Department of Culture is extremely understaffed makes it so difficult to effectively document Lesotho’s cultural heritage.

There were also some of the common problems with the documentation of cultural property, specifically the problem of site definition and identification of cultural periods for the archaeological sites. Theoretical definitions do not always prepare the field technicians on this. However, it is our thinking that other problems cited such as those concerning cultural periods can be resolved through liaison with the local archaeologists. The national staff reported that there had been difficulty using the recording forms as a result of certain ambiguities in the standards. These difficulties had been faced mainly with complex sites and cultural landscapes whose various components might stand alone but are obviously related, inextricably linked, to other features on the vast landscape. This problem starts at recording stage and emerges on filing and extends to influence the complexity of the database so as to make sure that correct spatial relationships are captured.

During the course of this project, it also emerged that the Department of Culture already had a large amount raw data in its possession. In spite of this, there was a lack of capacity to organise this data into a system that could be managed for information retrieval. The weak management and storage organisation of this data further made it difficult to understand how to get information when needed. Some of the data was available in the form of several archaeological impact assessment (AIA) surveys that had been carried out and submitted to the Department. This lack of organisation meant that it was possible that AIAs for future projects could be commissioned in areas that already would have been assessed as the duplication of projects is also possible when records are not properly managed. The MDTP database is a case in point. The experience from working with the Department of Culture showed that documents were being held as personal documents of the office holders, with reports thrown amongst various personal documents with no record of where these documents could be found. This situation was further compounded by a lack of physical space for storage of these important documents.

To deal with this problem, a filing cabinet was requisitioned for the storage of site records, which were sorted and stored therein according to the districts and in alphabetical order and site number sequence. Each site record consists of a site folder in which all documents (recording forms, correspondences, conservation reports etc) relating to the site are kept and sorted according to document type and dates. A file movement register was also created which, if properly maintained would help track the movement of the site files. This is crucial as it was observed that some
documentation files were taken out and never returned to their usual storage area. The option here is that one would borrow the files for perusal in their own offices and the documentation officer will have to track all files borrowed and make sure that they are returned to the specified storage area.

The end result of this project was an electronic database from which information about the sites in any district can be easily retrieved. The database can generate reports in set formats but the advantage is simplified updating. It was also configured to generate a catalogue that refers to the files in the filing cabinet. If one is looking for information about a particular site, they can start with the electronic catalogue and then go the filing cabinet knowing where to look for the site documents. With advances in information technology, some of the physical records and documents about the sites can be scanned and integrated with the rest of the database. The Department’s current electronic resources are sufficient to facilitate easy development, update and management of the electronic database. The staff of the Department of Culture, however, seems to consider working on the database as extra work. Indeed, the manual inputting of data into the electronic database can be a tedious process. As it stands, the recording form has to be filled in manually in the field and the data in it manually fed in to update the database. However, with increasing IT skills and database knowledge this can be easily solved. The latest version of MS Access can export a form, or table to external sites from the database. These can be filled in and then sent back to the database administrator and the information is automatically transferred into the database. Thus, an electronic form on a laptop can be filled out in the field and it can be used to update the database directly. A hardcopy of the completed form can then be printed for filing purposes. It is hoped that the MTEC staff will continue to acquire IT skills and knowledge to ensure further development of the documentation system as well as the maintenance and improvement of the database. The responsible government ministry will further have to show its commitment to safeguarding national heritage, as national assets, by building up staff capacity through training in heritage documentation and information technology.

The Department of Culture will also have to enforce the standards that were created through this documentation project, especially with research teams and impact assessment experts. During the course of the two-year project, it was noticed that the Department had been weak in enforcing this, even though its staff had participated in inventory development. It was brought to the attention of the regional team that a researcher from Europe had carried out an archaeological impact assessment soon after the 2008 phase. Although an MTEC staff member who participated in the recent archaeological surveys had been involved in the development of the national recording standards, he failed to alert the researcher to the existence of these new national standards. As a result, the AIA consultants
collected archaeological information using their own standard forms. This kind of situation compounds the challenge of the Department, especially the inclusion of the information from the AIA to the new national database.

The major problem has been a lack of capacity in terms of both human resources and funding on part of the Department of Culture. The department currently does not have a heritage manager with experience in archaeology, architecture or palaeontology and this has meant that some of the suggestions that are made by experts who carry out AIAs are never implemented (see Cain 2006). However, since 2010 most of the staff members have had some training in heritage management with one undertaking an ICCROM course in Rome (Conservation of Built Heritage) and also enrolling for a Master in Heritage Studies with the Central European University in Hungary. The Ministry of Culture also now has plans to build a National Museum which will be the base for those engaged in the documentation and conservation of Lesotho’s heritage.

Conclusion

The situation of heritage documentation in Africa, as exemplified by the Lesotho example, is fraught with many challenges. The development and choice of a database system for Lesotho was based on consideration of the local conditions at the Department of Culture: its organisational structure, available human capacity and available relevant infrastructure. In view of this, each staff member of the Department was involved in the creation and population of the database so that everyone would be able to input, update and retrieve information from it. The protocols of access and management of the database were left to the discretion of the Department.

Understaffing and the absence of a dedicated heritage infrastructure may reflect the lack of regard for cultural heritage in government circles. In the particular case of Lesotho, there is no dedicated heritage organisation and all heritage sites are managed by the Department of Culture which is also responsible for other forms of heritage like the arts, crafts, drama, dance, as well as music. Immovable heritage is not always on the top of the list as it competes with other industries that the government think can be developed enough to generate foreign currency. While regional bodies and private institutions dealing with cultural heritage can offer assistance, it will be a daunting task to sustain the momentum where there are such human resources challenges to document, conserve and manage the heritage. The lack of a dedicated heritage organisation and trained manpower has meant that EIA reports are not reviewed resulting in numerous sites being destroyed especially in dam building and erection of water pipelines. The establishment of the anticipated National Museum is expected to bring changes in how heritage is managed in Lesotho.
The setting up of regional teams to assist in the development of strategies for the effective management of Africa’s heritage is perhaps a new concept in the management of cultural heritage that should be supported. It brings in skills from various sources on the continent, more attuned to the local realities, and helps with the development of adapted solutions clears the technical challenges involved. However, all that has to be supported by a local structure that makes sure the benefits of the regional expertise are sustained. Ideally, what remains for Lesotho is implementation or application of the procedures developed during this project and the respect of these procedures by researchers.

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