

Wildfires in 2019-2020 impacted one-third of the Queensland section of Gondwana Rainforests of Australia
Ben Blanche

Climate change is already impacting natural and cultural heritage across the world. Places, people and processes of recognised value are being affected by short-term climatic events (such as heatwaves, drought, wildfires and intense rain events) and long-term changes in temperature, sea level, wind and ocean currents.

The **Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI)** was developed in response to the need for an effective tool to rapidly assess the vulnerability of our heritage to climate change that:

- can be **consistently applied** to **all types of heritage** (natural, cultural, mixed)
- is a **systematic and repeatable** framework, yet not overly complex
- **proactively** informs action (not waiting for irreversible climate impacts before acting)
- assesses impacts on **human communities** as well as **values and attributes**
- puts climate impacts into **context** (of the many cumulative pressures impacting heritage)
- provides a pathway to develop **adaption strategies** and enables **more-effective management**
- sets a **benchmark** for monitoring and evaluation

The CVI is **values-based**, **science-driven** and **community-focused**. It has now been applied in natural, cultural and mixed World Heritage properties spanning all 10 World Heritage criteria.

Whilst originally developed for World Heritage, the CVI process is applicable to other areas of significance.

First Nations

CVI is working with Australian Indigenous partners to co-develop a culturally-appropriate version of the process. We continue to seek partnerships for further development within Australia and beyond, including interest from North American First Nations' groups and partnership with UNESCO's Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems programme.



Zeila Wallace, Yuku Baja Muliku

Other heritage areas

There are many locations of other heritage recognition and importance that are being impacted by climate change. There has been significant interest in applying the CVI for these in Europe and Australia, including from government, quasi-government and National Trust organisations. Whilst past applications in World Heritage properties have involved such organisations, we are currently working towards applications in areas of other heritage designations.

Testimonials

"The CVI is a leading technique for assessing climate vulnerability of heritage."
Rohit Jigyasu, ICCROM & 2023 UNESCO climate policy

"The work with CVI has been a game changer in the First Nations space."
Karin Gerhardt, Traditional Owner Program, GBR Foundation

"The whole CVI process for Aldabra Atoll has been eye-opening and extremely valuable for our whole team."
Nancy Bunbury, Seychelles Islands Foundation

"The CVI takes a different approach from other vulnerability assessments because it incorporates the vulnerability of the community."
Ewan Hyslop, Historic Environment Scotland (four CVIs)



Strategic next steps

For the CVI to move from a facilitated process undertaken for individual properties to providing insight to a broader array of heritage locations, the key strategic steps are:

- develop **documentation** to guide managers and other stakeholders through the process, incorporating feedback and experiences from past applications
- produce and conduct **training** for regionally-based accredited CVI facilitators to support future applications in several languages
- pilot **applications** of the materials and training in key heritage regions, prioritised in consultation with organisations such as UNESCO
- support management actions through strategic and targeted investments in **adaptive capacity**

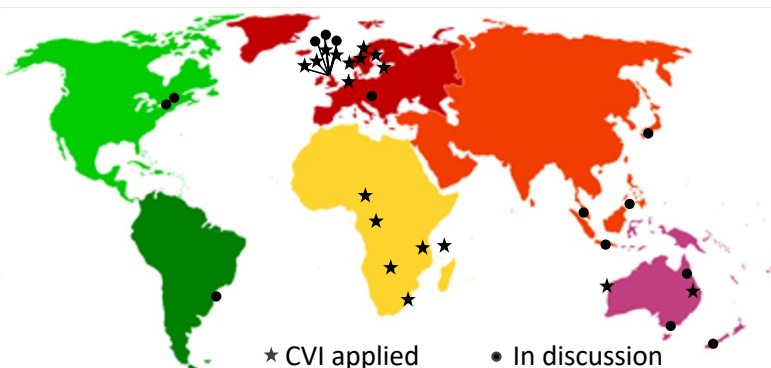
With support through the Getty Global Art and Sustainability Fellows program



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Thematic assessments

Recognising the urgency of both understanding and responding to climate vulnerability, including for the over 1,200 World Heritage properties, we are pursuing methodologies to thematically-group heritage sites. Four thematic assessments have been undertaken to date: attribute-based (coral reefs and seagrasses) and geography-based (sub-Saharan Africa and the Indian subcontinent). Further thematic analyses are being pursued – and suggestions for additional work are welcome!



Global opportunities

Whilst the utility of the CVI has been demonstrated for natural, cultural and mixed heritage and in a range of heritage locations (marine and terrestrial; urban and rural; large and small) there remains opportunity to demonstrate the process across global regions.