LET'S DISCOVER AND PROTECT THE MARITIME CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE GAMBIA

#Protect_Senegambian_maritime_heritage
From 13 to 15 July 2021, The Gambia launched a series of awareness-raising activities for the protection of its underwater cultural heritage. With the technical support of the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar and the Gambian National Commission for UNESCO, the aim was to show the importance of its preservation to young people, the educational community and decision-makers in order to encourage the imminent ratification of the 2001 Convention.

A first workshop was organised with students and teachers from 15 schools of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. Through practical and theoretical exercises, the participants discovered the different aspects of underwater archaeology and the protection of underwater heritage.

Reaching a mutual understanding of the stakes involved in preserving the submerged heritage was key throughout the different activities, going from the presentation of the underwater diving equipment and the techniques of research in underwater archaeology to the review of the different stages of the research until the dissemination of results.

In addition to the activities, the 15th of July was marked by a meeting at the Gambian National Assembly, which allowed members of the Culture-Tourism Commission and the Environment Commission to debate on the need to take concrete legal measures in this field.

These activities are a continuation of the January 2021 capacity building session held in Dakar, Senegal, which trained a first-ever team in underwater archaeology in a South-South cooperation effort between the two countries.

For more information:
Read the online article on the initiative: here
I learn a lot from the workshop that is about the underwater cultural heritage with NCAC and UNESCO team. First of all, in the first day we were introduced to the diving team who teaches a lot on the importance of diving and some of the measurements that are done in the island and how they are done. We were also invited to a video show that gives us more understanding and some pictures of the ships that have an accident in the island. So with this two little things that's how I was able to draw the ship and the people diving who are measuring the things they found in the island.

Saikou Sanyang, student of bottrop senior secondary school, about the arts education exercise
The Gambia’s geostrategic position, thanks to its river with the same name and its openness to the Atlantic Ocean, grants the country significant underwater archaeological potential and maritime heritage to be discovered and preserved. The Gambia River and its island Kunta Kinteh were the scene of many battles between European powers competing for trade rights between 1400 and 1600.

Hassoum Cessay, Historian and Director of the National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC)

Ratifying the UNESCO 2001 Convention offers many possibilities and opportunities for The Gambia, such as building local capacity in underwater archaeology, cooperation with other States Parties in the fight against looting and commercial exploitation of submerged cultural property, and the possibility of benefiting from the expertise of the Convention's scientific and technical council.

Guiomar Alonso Cano, UNESCO Regional Adviser for Culture / West Africa - Sahel
ABOUT THE DIGITAL CAMPAIGN

JULY 2021

These activities were showcased through the communication campaign #Protect_Senegambian_maritime_heritage was launched from the social networks of UNESCO Dakar which reached more than 16,357 internet users.

The purpose was to raise awareness of the importance of protecting the underwater heritage in The Gambia through key messages and the dissemination of a virtual exhibition on the history and maritime culture of The Gambia and the recent activities undertaken to protect its underwater cultural heritage.

We invite you to re.discover it in the next few pages...

BACK TO THE VIRTUAL EXHIBITION

To download the materials: here
REVISIT POSTS

- Facebook: here
- Twitter: here
- Instagram: here

*Did you know?* With UNESCO’s support, the Gambia was able to train the first team in Senegal in basic underwater archaeology techniques. This initiative is a model of South-South cooperation.

This training allowed the Senegalese team, composed of underwater archaeologists from the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar and instructors from the Oceanium Dakar diving centre, to share their experience with their Gambian brothers in the field of underwater cultural heritage protection.
The Gambia River was one of the first European trade routes into Africa since 1446. The River begins as a deep estuary navigable by ocean-going ships for 120 miles upstream and for 80 additional miles by smaller ones. Ships sailed throughout the year, making the River one of the busiest waterways in the continent until the mid-1800s.

It was the scenario of many battles between European powers fighting over trade rights between 1400 to 1600s as well as for the control of the Kunta Kinte Island. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is today a symbol of the inhumanity of slave trade and a site of memory for the hardship suffered by Africans. Many sunken ships and wrecks in the Gambian River bear witness of this turbulent history and make the River a key element in assessing the underwater cultural heritage of The Gambia.
REVISIT POSTS

- Facebook: [here](#)
- Twitter: [here](#)
- Instagram: [here](#)

Did you know? Nearly all major European colonial powers including the British, the French, the Germans, the Portuguese, or the Spanish have had at one time or the other maritime presence in the Gambia.

The bastion of these powers was Kunta Kinteh Island in the Gambia River. In addition to facilitating the movement of slaves, the River served as a key artery for transporting goods (peanuts and animals, gum...). History is replete with episodes of ships taking refuge due to bad weather, being attacked by ships from a rival European power or by African chiefs opposed to the European presence. This rich history of inestimable interest can be revealed by the underwater and maritime archaeology.
Did you know? Almost one third of the Fort James Island, now called Kunta Kinte Island, is today underwater. This is due, both, to deliberate destruction of sea defenses during the many battles to conquer the settlement and to the rise of the sea level.

This UNESCO World Heritage Site located about 20 miles upstream from the Gambia River’s mouth is one of the most popular tourist destinations in The Gambia. Underwater archaeology allows us to rediscover the parts of this site that are now sunken.

Facebook: [here](#)
Twitter: [here](#)
Instagram: [here](#)
Did you know? The Gambia is a country rich in maritime cultural landscapes with many sites of archaeological interest such as the site of Berefet, which allows us to understand the thousand-year-old activity of collecting and processing oysters.

The 2001 UNESCO Convention on the protection of underwater heritage also contributes to the promotion of these maritime cultures.
Did you know? The Gambia River has played a key role in European exploration and colonial expansion from 1446 to the present. This is a well-established and documented historical fact.

The River hold rich and diverse underwater archaeological resources from different periods of the past. Discovering and preserving them will contribute to uncover this unique maritime cultural landscape in Africa.
REVISIT POSTS

- Facebook: here
- Twitter: here
- Instagram: here

Did you know? With UNESCO’s support, the Gambia was able to train the first team in Senegal in basic underwater archaeology techniques. This initiative is a model of South-South cooperation.

This training allowed the Senegalese team, composed of underwater archaeologists from the Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar and instructors from the Oceanium Dakar diving centre, to share their experience with their Gambian brothers in the field of underwater cultural heritage protection.
Did you know? From 13 to 15 July 2021, a first workshop was organised for a panel of students and teachers from 15 schools within the UNESCO Associated Schools Network. This activity, based on practical and theoretical exercises, provided an opportunity to discuss the importance of protecting underwater cultural heritage.

It introduced the students to underwater diving equipment and taught them the techniques of underwater archaeology, in particular "how archaeologists work underwater" to preserve our submerged heritage. This allowed the students to go through each of the different stages of the research until the dissemination of the findings through a simulated case study imagined on Kunta Kinte Island.
Contact

Guiomar Alonso Cano
UNESCO Regional Adviser for Culture / West Africa - Sahel
g.alonso@unesco.org

Moussa Wélé
Underwater Cultural Heritage Specialist
m.wele@unesco.org

Lamin Jarjou
Senior Programme Officer and ASPnet National Coordinator
Gambia National Commission for UNESCO (NATCOM)
jaja9700@yahoo.com