

Building Sustainable Conservation Capacity in Kenya and Nigeria

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The Nigeria-Kenya Conservation Training is a Legacy Project of the British Museum International Training Programme (BM ITP) facilitated by three Fellows: Ogechukwu Elizabeth Okpalanozie (Nigeria), Rodah Lange (Kenya) and Lillian Amwanda (Kenya). The goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of conservators in Nigeria and Kenya through collaborative training, knowledge exchange and sustainable preventive conservation practices. A total of 16 conservators are participating in the training.

The training, which is done virtually, commenced on 4th August 2026 with a Meet and Greet session where the Facilitators and the Trainees introduced themselves (see Image 1).



Image 1: Greet and Meet Session

Since then, there have been two training sessions: Introduction to Conservation and the Ten Agents of Deterioration, facilitated by Ogechukwu Okpalanozie and Lillian Amwanda. Ogechukwu explained to the trainees the meaning of conservation - its importance, the principles of conservation and the different types of conservation. She also put the trainees through Condition Reporting and explained why it is a core aspect of conservation. An interesting aspect of her training was a case study of using a sustainable indigenous knowledge and method to conserve a deteriorated leather object. The steps involved in this method include dry cleaning, humidification and application of native oil on the leather. The relevance and usefulness of the indigenous method lie not only on its sustainability potential, but it also portrays ethical stewardship in the conservation of indigenous collections. Assignments were given to the trainees which they did and submitted for review by the Facilitators.

The assignments were discussed in the following session by both the facilitators and trainees. The photos posted below show the assignments done by trainees.



Image 2: Assessment of a leopard skin for distortion caused by friction

Image 3: Shock absorber pads placed to reduce the friction on the leopard hide (a control measure)



Image 4: Conservators carefully removing fragments of a pot within a terracotta pavement during archaeological excavation.



Image 5: Sorting and documentation of excavated pot sherds. All the recovered fragments were laid out, washed, and sorted.



Image 6: Reassembling stage of the pot sherds. Large sections are dry-fitted and bonded. Paper tape and clips were used to hold joints. Team members collaborate to align the curved body of the pot.



Image 7: A talking drum before restoration (Type of damage: detached straps).



Image 8: Restoration process (mending of detached straps by sewing)



Image 9: The talking drum after restoration

Lilian Amwanda trained the conservators on the Ten Agents of Deterioration. She explained the major risks that could cause a heritage object to get damaged or lose its value. Lillian went further to describe how each agent of deterioration causes damage of heritage objects. She also gave assignments to the trainees which they will submit in the upcoming session in September. All the training sessions were interactive. Questions were asked and knowledge shared.

The next training session will be on Collection Care by Rodah Lange. The trainees look forward to an educative session. It is noteworthy to mention that this is a collaborative project done with another team of BM ITP Fellows doing a Legacy Project. The team, which is led by Chantal Umuhzo Nyambo, comprises Junior Bigira, Beatrice Bamigbade and Kolawole Samson Adeyara. With the success achieved in the sessions conducted so far, the training facilitators believe that by the end of the project, the trainees will be better equipped both with knowledge and skill to preserve the various collections in the museums where they work.

