

MEDLIHER – Mediterranean Living Heritage

Contribution to implementing the Convention for the
Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in
Mediterranean partner countries

BACKGROUND DOCUMENT TO GUIDE NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS ON THE STATE OF SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN EGYPT, JORDAN, LEBANON AND SYRIA

PART 1: OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OUTLINE

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PART 1: OBJECTIVES OF NATIONAL ASSESSMENTS

The Mediterranean Living Heritage (MEDLIHER) project, co-funded by UNESCO and the European Union (Euromed Heritage IV), aims at supporting the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt, as well as to strengthen their institutional capacities in order to:

- facilitate their effective participation in the international mechanisms for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage;
- elaborate safeguarding measures and develop safeguarding projects with the participation of communities and relevant groups.

The MEDLIHER project is also intended to improve regional cooperation and exchange of skills/experiences by establishing a network of institutions and developing a web portal that will serve as interface of a database developed to this end.

The project is to be implemented in three phases:

- I. Assessment of the current situation concerning the state of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in the Mediterranean partners States;
- II. Development of national safeguarding projects and setting up of a regional network;
- III. Implementation of the national safeguarding projects identified and developed in phase II.

The first phase is dedicated to assess the existing national capacities for implementing the Convention. Carrying out the assessment in each participating State Party will allow to identify existing safeguarding measures, activities and programs, as well as governmental and non governmental entities specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage. The assessment also aims at identifying specific needs and priorities in each State in order to develop and implement the measures called for by the Convention and the Operational Directives for its implementation. It will further serve as basis for phases II and III of the MEDLIHER project as it will allow to better prepare national and/or international safeguarding projects adapted to the needs of each participating State, identify main institutions/organizations working in the field of intangible cultural heritage that are to be involved, and provide detailed information for the database as a tool to collect and exchange information among the participating States, and others.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OUTLINE

The UNESCO Secretariat has prepared an assessment outline to guide the national assessments and to be used by all participating States. The assessment outline will not only facilitate the research work at the national level, but also contribute to the consistent exchange of information among the participating States. The assessment outline refers to the main provisions of the Convention and of the Operational Directives for its implementation, which are available at:

Text of the Convention in English, French and Arabic:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=00022>

Operational Directives in English and French:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=EN&pg=00026>

The assessment outline shall include the following items:

A. LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND OTHER MEASURES AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

1. Institutional capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage
2. Legal, technical, administrative and financial capacities and measures available
3. Existing inventories on intangible cultural heritage
4. Involvement of communities
5. Promotion, awareness raising, education and other measures
6. Bilateral, subregional, regional and international cooperation

B. CASE STUDY

1. The element's social and cultural functions
2. Assessment of its viability and the current risks it faces
3. Efforts to safeguard the element and impact of the implementation of safeguarding plan, if any
4. Efforts to promote or reinforce the element and its contribution to raising awareness about the importance of the intangible cultural heritage
5. Participation of communities, groups and individuals in safeguarding the element and their commitment to its further safeguarding

6. Competent body(ies) involved in its management and/or safeguarding
7. Organization(s) of the community or group concerned with the element and its safeguarding

C. IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

1. Problems, needs and possible solutions
2. Priority activities and measures

ANNEXES / SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

- Data sheets for identified Governmental and nongovernmental bodies specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage
- Data sheets for identified activities, projects and programmes in the field of intangible cultural heritage
- Other supporting materials

Information concerning the preparation and submission of the assessment reports

The results of the assessment should be presented in the form of a comprehensive report with information on all items included in the assessment outline.

The assessment report should be preceded by a one page executive summary of the assessment, including the following information:

- 1) a short description of the assessment;
- 2) the problems encountered when carrying out the assessment, such as limited information available, difficulties in identifying institutions, cooperation problems etc.;
- 3) the main needs and priorities identified.

The assessment report should be submitted in English or French. One original signed paper copy shall be transmitted by post or express mail to:

UNESCO, Intangible Heritage Section
1 rue Miollis
75015 Paris
France

An electronic version of the assessment report shall also be submitted on a CD-ROM or by email. The assessment report should be prepared in standard .rtf, .doc or .pdf format, using a font size of 10 or larger. Decorative fonts should be avoided and special characters, if needed,

must employ a standard Unicode font.

PART 3: EXPLANATORY NOTE TO COMPLETE THE ASSESSMENT OUTLINE
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In carrying out the assessment and preparing the report, you may find the following notes helpful to fill in the assessment outline. The guidance provided below originates from the Convention, from the Operational Directives, from discussions in the Intergovernmental Committee, and from practical considerations.

Please note that when providing information under each item of the assessment outline, in case no information is available for a specific item, you should specify it and describe the initiatives you took to find the information and the difficulties you encountered.

A. LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY AND OTHER MEASURES AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

When carrying out assessment and providing information under each item of part A of the assessment outline, please use whenever relevant/appropriate, the following data sheets which can be annexed to the assessment report, and referred to, as supporting document:

- Data sheet 1 - Governmental and nongovernmental bodies specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage (specific format will follow soon)
- Data sheet 2 - Activities, projects and programmes in the field of intangible cultural heritage (specific format will follow soon)

These data sheets are aimed at extensive data-gathering. They will provide comprehensive information on any institutions/organisations active in the field of intangible cultural heritage and on any activities, projects and programmes related to intangible cultural heritage that the assessment report refers to under its various items. The compilation of these data sheets will serve as an important information source allowing for the most exhaustive assessment of the country's capacities and experience in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. It will furthermore help to provide detailed information for the database aimed at encouraging the exchange of information among the partners States, and for the preparation of a directory of experts, centres of expertise, research institutes and regional centres active in the domains covered by the Convention.

1. Institutional capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage

This Section should describe institutional capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, as described in Article 13 of the Convention:

1.a. Competent bodies for safeguarding its intangible cultural heritage

Article 13.b provides that each State Party shall designate or establish one or more official competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory.

This section should provide the full official name of one or more competent bodies, officially designated or established, for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in your country. Please provide relevant information by using data sheet 1 (Governmental and nongovernmental bodies specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage)

1.b. Institutions for training in intangible cultural heritage management and transmission of this heritage

This section should provide an overview of your country's existing institutions for training in intangible cultural heritage management and for transmission of this heritage, specifying when available the programmes and activities (for example, do capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage exist, in particular management and scientific research?). You may mention any scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage in danger. Please also identify which universities/research centres are or might be competent to produce scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies in the field of intangible cultural heritage. Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and 2.

1.c. Documentation institutions for intangible cultural heritage

This section should describe existing documentation resources for intangible cultural heritage (inventories, archives, libraries, culture centres, etc.). Please identify the existing sources of information about intangible cultural heritage and the method required to collect such information. You may also wish to address any specific measures adopted to establish documentation institutions and to ensure their accessibility (for example for the general public, researchers, students, communities, etc.). Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and 2.

2. Legal, technical, administrative and financial capacities and measures available

This Section should provide information on existing legal, technical, administrative and financial capacities or measures available in your country to implement the Convention, in particular, as referred to in Article 13.d, those aimed at:

- fostering the creation or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage through forums and spaces intended for the performance or expression thereof;
- ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage;
- establishing documentation institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them.

Please also describe existing legislation on cultural heritage, including basic information on origin, format, date etc. This description should give particular attention to such legislation

that specifically concerns or aims at safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. In your description, you may also include customary laws (for example, tribal laws).

Moreover, please provide information on financial resources available for intangible cultural heritage within the governmental budget and possibly identify any other public or private funding sources in your country that are or may be dedicated to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and/or 2.

3. Existing inventories on intangible cultural heritage

This section should describe existing inventory systems in your country. Article 12 of the Convention provides that “to ensure identification with a view to safeguarding, each State Party shall draw up, in a manner geared to its own situation, one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory”. It is important to note that these inventories are to be drawn up with the participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals, and they have to be neither complete nor exhaustive, but must be updated regularly, due to the changing nature of intangible cultural heritage.

Please indicate if there are inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in your State’s territory. If yes, please provide the following information when available:

- the number of inventory/ies;
- the ordering principles used for structuring your inventory/ies. For example: according to communities/groups of tradition bearers; to domains of intangible cultural heritage; to territorial principle (national, regional, local), etc.;
- the criteria used for inscription of intangible cultural heritage elements in your inventory/ies;
- whether your inventory/ies take(s) into account the viability of intangible cultural heritage (for example, intangible cultural heritage element threatened by disappearance);
- the format/approach of your inventory/ies (like catalogues just giving summary information about elements listed, or more informative, providing abundant information and documentation on elements listed, etc.);
- the responsible entity for designing, filling in and updating the inventory/ies;
- the method and frequency for updating inventory/ies;
- the way communities are involved in the identification of ICH to be included in the inventory/ies, and in their preparation and updating.

Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and/or 2.

4. Involvement of communities

Article 15 of the Convention provides that “Within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the intangible cultural heritage, each State Party shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve them actively in its management”.

This Section should describe existing mechanisms aimed at ensuring effective participation of communities in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. You may therefore consider the following items:

- functional and complementary cooperation mechanisms among communities, groups and individuals, as well as experts, centres of expertise and research institutes;
- consultative body or coordination mechanisms to facilitate the participation of communities, groups and individuals, as well as experts, centres of expertise and research institutes (for example in the identification and definition of the different elements of intangible cultural heritage present on their territories; the drawing up of inventories; the elaboration and implementation of programmes, projects and activities; the preparation of nomination files for inscription on the Lists of the Convention; etc.);
- activities/measures to sensitize communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals to the importance and value of their intangible cultural heritage, as well as of the Convention, so that the bearers of this heritage may fully benefit from this standard-setting instrument;
- activities/measures ensuring the capacity building of communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals;
- access by communities, groups and individuals to information relating to intangible cultural heritage, in particular results of research carried out among them;
- respect of practices governing access to specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage, as stated in Article 13.d (Access to certain specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage is sometimes restricted by customary practices governing, for example, its transmission or performance or maintaining the secrecy of certain knowledge. Specific measures might therefore be needed to ensure such respect).

Please also describe how and in what ways the community, group or individuals concerned may be actively participating in the process of nominating elements to the Lists of the Convention, at all stages. Indeed, when submitting a nomination to the List of the Convention, the “State Party should demonstrate that the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent”. You may therefore also consider how the free, prior and informed consent to the nomination of the element from the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned may best be demonstrated (for example, through written or recorded concurrence, or through other means, according to the legal regimens of the State Party and the infinite variety of communities and groups concerned).

Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and/or 2.

5. Promotion, awareness raising, education and other measures

This Section should describe existing measures at the national level to ensure greater recognition of, respect for and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage, in particular those referred to in Article 14:

- educational, awareness-raising and information programmes aimed at the general public, in particular to young people. (You may for example specify whether intangible cultural heritage is integrated, and how, in school curricula);
- educational and training programmes within the communities and groups concerned;
- capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage;
- non-formal means of transmitting knowledge; (you may address, for example, how non formal ways of transmission are perceived and recognised by the general public and at national level);
- education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage.

Please also describe under this section the general awareness in your country about the importance of intangible cultural heritage. You may wish to distinguish between the levels of visibility among different groups of population (youth, minorities, academic world, etc.), or the visibility of specific intangible heritage domains (such as music, oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, etc.).

You may wish to consider also other measures aiming at promoting intangible cultural heritage, such as:

- general policy aiming at promoting the function and the importance of the intangible cultural heritage in society;
- measures aiming at integrating the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage into planning programmes;
- means to keep the public informed of the dangers threatening intangible cultural heritage;
- means to keep the public informed of the activities carried out in pursuance of the 2003 Convention;
- means to involve media in promoting and raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage (please consider which type of media would be the more appropriate: television, radio, films, documentaries, Internet, specialized publications, etc.).

Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and/or 2.

6. Bilateral, subregional, regional and international cooperation

This section should describe existing measures at the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels for the implementation of the Convention, including measures of international cooperation such as the exchange of information and experience, and other joint initiatives, as referred to in Article 19 of the Convention.

You may, for example, consider the following issues:

- sharing documentation concerning an element of intangible cultural heritage present on the territory of another State Party, which shall make that information available to the communities, groups and, where applicable, individuals concerned, as well as to experts, centres of expertise and research institutes;
- participating in activities pertaining to regional cooperation including for example those of Category II centres for intangible cultural heritage that are or will be established under the auspices of UNESCO;
- existence of networks of communities, experts, centres of expertise and research institutes at sub-regional and regional levels to develop joint and interdisciplinary approaches concerning the elements of intangible cultural heritage they have in common.

Please make sure to use when appropriate the data sheets 1 and 2.

B. CASE STUDY

Please select one element of the intangible cultural heritage present in your country that you know well, and that is if possible already included in an inventory, to respond to the following questions aiming at assessing its current status. If relevant, you may wish to take into consideration an element of intangible cultural heritage already inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity (items proclaimed Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity and automatically incorporated in this List).

1. The element's social and cultural functions

This section should provide a brief description of the element as it exists at present, bearing in mind that it should show that the element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention:

- the element is among the “practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith”;
- “communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize [it] as part of their cultural heritage”;
- it is being “transmitted from generation to generation, [and] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history”;

- it provides communities and groups involved with “a sense of identity and continuity”;
- it is not incompatible with “existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development”.

The description should include an explanation of its social and cultural functions and meanings today, within and for its community, the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners, and any specific roles or categories of persons with special responsibilities towards the element, among others.

2. Assessment of its viability and the current risks it faces

Please describe the current level of viability of the element, particularly the frequency and extent of its practice, the strength of traditional modes of transmission, the demographics of practitioners and audiences and its sustainability.

If any, please also identify and describe the threats to the element’s continued transmission and enactment and describe the severity and immediacy of those threats.

3. Efforts to safeguard the element and impact of the implementation of safeguarding plan, if any

Please describe the current and recent efforts of the concerned communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals to ensure the viability of the element. Please also describe efforts of the concerned State(s) Party(ies) to safeguard the element, taking note of external or internal constraints, such as limited resources.

If pertinent, identify and describe the various safeguarding measures that have contributed to safeguard the element or that are elaborated that may, if implemented, safeguard the element.

If applicable, please provide a succinct description of the safeguarding plan and its main elements. If it is completed or in-progress, please describe what actually happened or is underway. If it is only planned, describe what is intended and can reasonably be expected to happen within its scope. You may describe specific safeguarding measures included in the safeguarding plan and why they were selected. You may also wish to underline any innovative methods or modalities that are involved.

If already completed, please show how implementation of the safeguarding plan has demonstrated effectiveness in contributing to the viability of the intangible cultural heritage concerned. If it is still underway or planned, show how it can reasonably be expected to contribute substantially to the viability of the intangible cultural heritage concerned.

4. Efforts to promote or reinforce the element and its contribution to raising awareness about the importance of the intangible cultural heritage

Please describe any measure that have contributed to promote and reinforce the element or that are elaborated that may, if implemented, promote and reinforce the element.

Please also explain how efforts to promote and reinforce the element have or may contribute to ensuring visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and raising awareness at the local, national and international levels of its importance. You may also explain how such measures aim at promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity, and mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals.

5. Participation of communities, groups and individuals in safeguarding the element and their commitment to its further safeguarding

Bearing in mind that the feasibility and success of safeguarding depends in large part on the aspirations and commitment of the communities, groups or, if applicable, individuals concerned, please describe how and in what ways the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have participated (or will participate) actively in safeguarding activities. You may therefore wish to provide an explanation of their involvement in past and ongoing safeguarding measures and of their participation in the formulation and implementation of future safeguarding measures.

You may also describe how the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have consented to the safeguarding plan.

If customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage exist (Article 13), please describe any specific measures that have been - or that might need to be - taken to ensure such respect.

6. Competent body(ies) involved in its management and/or safeguarding

Please provide the name and contact information of the competent body(ies) (for example, agency, museum, institution, or manager) with responsibility for the local management and/or safeguarding of the element.

7. Organization(s) of the community or group concerned with the element and its safeguarding

Provide the name, address and other contact information of organization(s) of community or representatives, or other non-governmental organizations, who are concerned with the element such as associations, organizations, clubs, guilds, steering committees, etc.

C. IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES AND NEEDS

As a conclusion to the assessment, this section aims at identifying specific needs and main priorities in each partner State to implement the Convention.

1. Problems, needs and possible solutions

On the basis of the information and experiences collected while carrying out the assessment, this section should describe the main obstacles and problems that may be encountered when implementing the Convention in your country. You may describe what you consider to be the most relevant obstacles to implement/adopt safeguarding activities/measures (lack of budget, of technical knowledge, of staff, etc.).

Considering the state of safeguarding ICH, please also list the main needs you have identified to enable the implementation of the Convention, and describe what solutions could be given, and how they could be achieved.

2. Priority activities and measures

2.a. Priority activities and measures to implement the Convention

Please indicate the activities and measures you consider to be the more appropriate and urgent to ensure safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage present in your territory. You may therefore select from the indicative list of activities/measures below:

- the three activities/measures that you consider to be the most urgent priority. Please explain why they were chosen.
- another group of three activities/measures that you consider as a secondary priority. Please explain why they were chosen.
- for the remaining activities, please explain in general why these are not urgent priorities for the moment (for example, some may already have been accomplished, others are premature, etc.).

Indicative list of activities/measures:

- Develop legal, technical, administrative and financial measures;
- Establish documentation institutions with the task of facilitating documentation about safeguarding intangible cultural heritage;
- Ensure accessibility to documentation institutions;
- Draw up inventories (including developing and/or updating inventories) with the participation of communities, groups and individuals;
- Develop capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular management and scientific research;

- Develop specific educational and training programmes;
- Develop activities aiming at transmitting intangible cultural heritage;
- Develop educational, awareness-raising and information programmes, aimed at the general public, in particular young people;
- Identify governmental and non governmental entities in the field of intangible cultural heritage;
- Collect information about activities project and programmes in the field of intangible cultural heritage;
- Develop activities/measures to ensure to widest possible participation of communities, groups and individuals that create, maintain and transmit intangible cultural heritage;
- Other (please specify) :

2.b. Prospective listing

Please indicate what you believe your State may wish to present to list on the Registries of the Convention:

- The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Article 17);
- The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Article 16);
- Safeguarding programmes, projects and activities as examples that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention (Article 18).

2.c. Main concern activities/measures under MEDLIHER project

Please indicate the activities/measures you may wish to consider as priority for the following phases of the MEDLIHER project (phase II and III) which foresee the selection, the elaboration and the implementation of national and/or international safeguarding projects.

ANNEXES / SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

The assessment report should include a number of supporting documents that will serve as an important information source allowing for the most exhaustive assessment of the country's capacities and experience in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. It will furthermore help to provide detailed information for the database aimed at encouraging the exchange of information among the partners States, and for the preparation of a directory of experts, centres of expertise, research institutes and regional centres active in the domains covered by the Convention.

To this end, please make sure to use whenever relevant/appropriate, the following data sheets:

- Data sheet 1 - Governmental and nongovernmental bodies specialized in the field of intangible cultural heritage (specific format will follow soon)
- Data sheet 2 - Activities, projects and programmes in the field of intangible cultural heritage (specific format will follow soon)

Please note that other supporting materials (such as excerpts of laws, status of organizations, photographs, etc.) may also be attached to the report, together with English or French translation when necessary.