

Report
Inventory - Making in Vietnam
(Abu Dhabi, 1 - 4 April 2007)

I. Situation on ICH Inventory- Making in Vietnam

1.1. Context and Legal Framework

Vietnam is a country with a long history and a multi-ethnic culture which is very rich and full of national cultural identity.

Beside the positive impacts by the globalization and modernization in the present time, in Vietnam, the rapid socio-economic mechanism changes lead to the changing of cultures and are threatening to eliminate various items of intangible cultural heritage, and thus, leading to the elimination of the country's cultural identity. In response to these threats, the Government of Viet Nam views the identification, protection and promotion of intangible cultural heritage as vital and has created a government mechanism for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, ensuring that the country's diverse culture of the 54 ethnic groups play a role in promoting social and economic development. In 2003, our Department of Cultural Heritage was assigned with a new function of doing state management on intangible cultural heritage.

We have already had a Law on Cultural Heritage (2001), in which, the whole chapter III is dedicated to intangible cultural heritage. The Law acknowledges that Cultural Heritage has played a significant role in the national development and preservation of the Vietnamese people. As defined in the Law on Cultural Heritage, *"The State's policies shall encourage work to collect, compile, translate, inventory, classify and preserve works of literature, art, science, oral tradition and folklore of the multi-ethnic Vietnamese community. These shall be disseminated domestically as well as through foreign cultural exchange."* (Chapter III, Article 23).

The appearance of the 2001 Law on Cultural Heritage for the first time provides an explicit legal framework defining the responsibilities of the State, citizens, and other organizations and bodies in protecting and promoting intangible cultural heritage. One of the means is inventory.

Further actions for intangible heritage protection were promoted in the "Decree on the Detailed Regulations to Implement some Articles of the Law on Cultural Heritage" (passed on November 11th 2002 by the Government

of Vietnam). Chapter II, Article 7 defines "The State shall protect and promote the values of intangible cultural heritage through the following means:

- Organizing the implementation of the projects on nationwide research, collection, inventory, classification of intangible cultural heritage;
- Conducting regular and periodical collection, inventory, classification of intangible cultural heritage".

To do ICH management task as defined in the Law, since 1997, the Ministry of Culture and Information has been carried out a national Target programs for the safeguarding of cultural heritage in which, there are programs for survey and inventory-making. In the frame work of this program, hundreds projects, including 64 projects for the comprehensive ICH survey and inventor-making in various provinces. Priorities were given to various small - population ethnic groups. Up to now, the number of provinces that have completed their mission is rising, such as: Phu Tho, Dien Bien, Thai Binh, Hung Yen, etc,. Some gained positive results, but the others failed to give an explicit number due to the limitation of ability in identifying or overlapping in counting ICH items.

These projects aim at :

- Identifying the number and evaluating the status of ICH items.
- Having awareness of those items, which have fallen into oblivion, which can be revived and which are at risk of disappearing and in need of urgent protections;
- Building a list of those with academic research results, and list of all the ICH known in a given province.
- Basing on the evaluation results to build relevant policies, strategies or action plans for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage of our nation.
- Systemizing and archiving step by step the items of intangible cultural heritage from province to province in all over the country; Basing on these, select a number of representative ICH items to publicize nationwide and internationally (in the forms of publications, CD, VCD and scientific films...)

- Providing a basis for the Establishment of a database of Vietnamese intangible cultural heritage for the reference of researchers and future generations.

1.2. Institutions and Organizations involving in ICH inventory-making and management:

- *The Ministry of Culture and Information* is a state managed organization, which bears the primary responsibility within the Government for implementing state management of cultural heritage (tangible and intangible). It is responsible for the direction and guidance, recommending strategies and policies to carry out the mission of safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage.

- *Under the Ministry of Culture and Information:* There are institutions directly involving in safeguarding and managing ICH, such as: the Department of cultural Heritage (DNCH), Institute of Culture and Information, Vietnam Musicology Institute, etc,

- *At the provincial level,* there are Departments of Culture and Information of the 64 provinces in the whole country. They were assigned with the tasks of implementation of the *National Targets Programs for Culture*, aiming at safeguarding tangible as well as intangible cultural heritage of the nation.

- *Other professional institutes and organizations* from different branches also do the documentation, collection and research on intangible cultural heritage. They are: the Ethnology Museum, the Han - Nom Research Institute and the Institute of Culture Studies (belonging to the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences); the Association of Vietnamese Folklorists, etc...

- *The Vietnam Committee for Intangible Cultural Heritage* (Established in 2001) whose members have technical expertise as well as heritage managerial capacity at a senior level.

- *The Vietnam Cultural Heritage Association* (Established in 2004 under the auspice of the Ministry of Culture and Information) and the Association of Vietnamese Folklorists. This shows the fast expansion of the involvement of public sectors to the safeguarding and promoting of intangible cultural heritage.

1.3. Funding sources:

- Government

- Provinces
- Individuals, local communities.

This mechanism has created favorable conditions for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Vietnam. However, it is fair to say, that of the ICH research and documentation projects were well done, but most of the ICH comprehensive survey or inventory – making projects are not yet completed, or if yes, the results gained are only the modest ones. None of the ICH lists has been set up, neither the list of all the ICH known in the whole country. While conducting these projects, we are facing a number of difficulties as below:

- There has never been before, a state organization or institution to be officially responsible for a comprehensive ICH inventory. Therefore, there has not been a common and effective method or criteria for this work.
- Limitation in the awareness of the importance and ability in recognizing or identifying ICH while making inventory. This sometimes leads to the inaccurate data in the inventory results.
- Lack of labor source and the implementers are very limited in experience, awareness and knowledge in recognizing and defining or categorizing intangible cultural heritage,
- Lack of scientific tools (equipments, guide book, inventory sheets...)
- Shortage of budget, etc, .

II. Orientation on the ICH Inventory- Making in the coming years

As mentioned above, in Vietnam, understanding the importance of cultural heritage as the basis for the people’s cultural development, and carrying out the State’s policy, during the last decades, many organizations and institutions all over the country have done inventories, collected documents and created databases on ICH. Some inventories were made based on types, such as music, traditional medicine or epic, others on geographical areas. Some were done by the State’s research institutes, some by local institutions, and others by trade agencies and non-governmental organizations. Regardless of these efforts, a lot of work needs to be done in order to make an inventory that meets the requirement of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on ICH. Therefore, it is necessary that we carry out research and evaluate the existing and recent inventories in order to propose methodologies and working path to create one or more national inventory on ICH of Vietnam .

1. Evaluation on the Existing Inventories in VN

- **Research Scope**

It is not realizable to do research on all inventories that have been made so far because it requires large labor and budget. Therefore, we will select some inventories that were made according to geographic areas, some to topic or type, to study and evaluate thoroughly. Then, based on the research results, we will draw necessary lessons and make a guideline for making the new inventory on ICH.

- Select one or two provinces from different geographic areas that have done inventories on ICH, such as Phu Tho in the highlands, or Thai Binh in the delta.
- Select 5 organizations/institutes for study on available inventories:
 - + the Institute of Culture and Information (ICI), under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture and Information,
 - + the Institute of Musicology (IM), under the auspices of the Hanoi Conservatory,
 - + the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology (VME), under the Vietnamese Academy of Social Sciences.
 - + the Institute of Traditional Medicinal and Pharmaceutical Studies (ITMPS), under the auspices of the Ministry of Health
 - + the Association of Vietnamese Folklorists (AVF)

- **Methodologies**

Methodologies for carrying out this project are as follows:

For research:

- Combine archival research with open-ended question forms, and researchers will complete the questions based on their interviews and analysis of their research.

For management and analysis of data:

- Researchers will access database in the above research institutes to have a full list of inventories, then select a certain number of projects and those people who made the inventories or the related ones to interview, collect related information and data to fill the question forms to make the basis for evaluating the inventories.

Management of survey data:

Survey data will be managed, analyzed and access to the ICH database.

- **Research Team**

Requirements for selecting participants: Participants will be researchers who graduated from University of Culture or University of Social Sciences, who have a sense of responsibility and who did not participate in doing the inventory that will be studied.

- **A Working Plan need to be scheduled,**

- + Making plan for carrying out research:
- + Meeting with collaborators:
- + Making research plan:
- + Making measures for research:
- + Drafting report:
- + Evaluating available inventories by outside expert(s):
- + Completing final report.

Based on the evaluation results and recommendations of UNESCO specialist, the DCH will make "Guideline for doing inventory on ICH" for local areas (planned for the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008)

- **Responsibility of participants**

- + *Researchers*: study database/documents at research institutes, gather information, interview some people who participated in doing inventory, fill in the question form, and make report based on personal profile,
- + *Institutes*: Facilitate researchers to access the ICH Database and provide full information on inventories,
- + *The DCH*: Gather information and reports from researchers to make drafted report, work with invited outside specialist(s) to evaluate studied inventories; make final report based on recommendations of the expert; make guidelines for doing inventory at local levels.

- **Expected Results:** Good as well as not very good lessons on inventory making withdrawn.

2. Proposed measures of implementing New ICH Inventory from 2007 onwards

Since in Vietnam, we have a firm administrative system, from the Central Government and 64 provincial levels to the local authorities (see pow point) and it is easier to manage the ICH inventories through this system.

We plan to implement inventory making on the direction of both, bottom up and top down so that we can involve in as many communities as possible. The central government and researchers play the roles of supporters, providing facilities and technical assistance to the communities in this mission.

Based on the lessons with drawn from the existing ICH inventory evaluation work, we will understand the state or viability of the elements to decide the scope, the elements or the depth of information that an inventory in Vietnam should be.

Methodology to be used:

- Community – based implementation;
- Experts consultancy ...

And,

The action plan should consist of the following activities:

- Establishing a plan and schedule; creating inventory sheets;
- Providing professional training workshops on the significance of the safeguard and technics of ICH inventorying for the local authorities and implementing individuals (might be people from the old – aged people clubs, Women club, ; provide guidance/ give instruction on how to fill in the inventory sheets;
- Conducting quantity survey;
- Conducting quality survey (in details of ICH items following contents different categories);
- Synthesizing and writing reports on the situation of ICH of the Districts.
- Synthesizing and writing reports on the situation of ICH of the provinces.

3. Building the 2 Lists

Basing on its inventories, which have been set up and agreed by the local communities, each province will work with the representatives of communities to set up an ICH Representative List and submit to the central government. These will be the basis for the ICH Committee to build a National Representative List. The List of ICH in danger of safeguarding will also be prepared in the same methods.

III. Expectation from the workshop :

As mentioned above, until the very recent years, Vietnam had legal framework for the safeguard of intangible cultural heritage. Based on the National Objective Program, a number of projects of small scales as well as of State level in intangible heritage field were solely carried out by various organizations, institutions or individuals, focusing primarily on conducting documentation through audio-visual means. We still lack of experiences in doing inventory. Taking advantage of this opportunity, I would like to share our ideas and would like to learn experiences from all of you in the field of safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage./.

Thank you very much for your attention !

NKD.