

## Integrating ICH into Teaching & Learning to Reinforce Education for Sustainable Development Initiatives of Heritage Education in Pakistan



Lecture on Zardozi (traditional gold thread embroidery) and demo in session at LGS  
THAAP ARCHIVES-ICH Integration UNESCO Bangkok Project 2013



Students of ICG, and their Chunri work with NusratSaleem from Bahawalpur

“Oh there are so many numbers in the *Chunri*, the number of knots multiplied by the number of folds, so how many does that make?” was the response of a Class 6 student, Irfan when a *chunri* (traditional resist dyeing through tie & dye method) bedspread was opened in the class room of boys and girls from 5 to 7<sup>th</sup> grades at a school in Islamabad. The small 11 year old saw a math puzzle in a traditional craft piece when the tradition bearer or Ustad, as we call them in Pakistan, was sharing her craft making with a group of 30 students in a class room setting. The school teachers asked Ustad Nusrat Saleem, the *chunri* expert from a small village, Abbass Nagar in South Punjab, where UNESCO Islamabad had earlier carried out an ICH safeguarding project, whether she too looks at the *chunri* in the same manner? While the teachers watched and learnt the intricacies of the craft making, they continuously made notes and jotted down ideas on what aspect of this well-known craft could be used to develop lesson plans for their students.



A student of ICG practicing Calligraphy

This school, Al-Khuldunia, along with 8 others are participating in a pilot project “Integrating ICH/ESD in Education and Learning in Asia Pacific Region” spearheaded by UNESCO Bangkok office. Pakistan is one of the four countries where the pilot is being tested and executed through UNESCO Office Islamabad, the others being Palau, Vietnam and Uzbekistan. The project is in two stages, the first was a preliminary research report that had to be prepared. UNESCO Islamabad

contracted THAAP Consultancy and Advisory services to prepare the report in collaboration with the Ministry of Information Broadcasting and National Heritage, which was later presented in a plenary of the 4 countries in Bangkok and the framework for the implementation developed. As the research report showed Pakistan had little experience in this area although a few schools had been attempting to enrich their curriculum through extra-curricular activities harnessing ICH elements. At the end of the Pilot Bangkok proposed that each country would develop its own guidelines for the purpose.



Student drawing the Tomb of Shah Rukne Alam Multan on glass. Islamabad College for girls



Students engaged in Pottery project at Islamabad College for Girls

The key aspect of Pakistan's effort for integrating ICH in education and learning is to link tradition bearers, the *Ustads* and practitioners, to the formal school system and to develop mechanisms through which the cultural knowledge and wisdom can be transmitted to the younger generation. A three pronged approach is underway, one being awareness raising and sharing the intricacies of the ICH element with the teachers and the students through either culture clubs or a new subject of Heritage Education introduced in the Curriculum, the second is by fusing knowledge derived and embedded in ICH into school subjects, the third aspect is "Thematic Projects", which are mechanisms for project based learning and opens a hitherto untapped avenue for seeking knowledge. For Thematic Projects, 4 areas have been highlighted, each of which draw students to learning from their elders and their communities thus inculcating respect for the traditional knowledge and its diversity in the region and globally. Starting from themselves the projects lead the students stage by stage to the larger community. Thus, My Home, My Community (I) My Elders, My Identity (us), Our Town, Our Context (ours/ the collective) and My Culture, My Pride ( we) are the four project based learning opportunities. At the end of the Pilot Project Guidelines for Integrating ICH/ESD knowledge in education and learning has been developed through a consultative process.



Ustad Muhammad Hanif and his crew explaining students structure of Tabla and Sarangi



Student of Islamabad College for girls showing the embroidered flower on jute stuff

While teachers are busy exploring and developing lesson plans some interesting insights are emerging. Story-telling and the traditional stories are providing a wealth of knowledge and opportunities for fusing with math, geography and history. For example the epic folk story “HeerRanjha” can become the basis for teaching an entire course of history and geography of the Punjab as has been shown by Ustad Shabbir Hussain Shabbir, the traditional story teller from Lahore while Ustad Hanif’s lessons of folk music have very quickly translated into its underlying math knowledge. Another myth which has been broken in the process of this linking craft-making skills into the schools is the popular view that embroidery is women’s work because we find that boys have opted for *zardozi* (traditional gold thread embroidery) being offered by UstadSaeed and Chunri (tie and dye) of Ustad Nusrat Saleem. Another important finding from the work so far is that the education system has discarded local traditional knowledge and wisdom so effectively that any program to integrate this into the school system requires special attention for building the capacity of the teachers to take on this responsibility and re-orient their thinking in this direction. What is indeed very encouraging is the response of the teachers and the taught to the Pilot Initiative of “Integrating ICH Knowledge into Education and Learning” and the respect that this is creating amongst the young for cultural diversity.



Story telling at a mela organized by Punjab LokRahs - THAAP Archives



Students of ICG engaged in Pottery work

Earlier in this year, to contribute towards peace building and social cohesion in the war affected province of Khyber Pukhtunkhwa (KPK) and FATA, UNESCO Islamabad Office initiated a Project under its RAHA initiative and in collaboration with the FATA Secretariat, the Government of KPK and its implementing partner THAAP-CAS. The concept was to explore the ICH of the communities of this area in particular of the Pukhtun tribes, the main cultural group inhabiting the border areas along Afghanistan which had been badly affected by the war in its neighborhood and where education system needed to be made more relevant to the situation. A Teacher’s Resource Kit on Heritage Education in Schools was the immediate target. The group working on this started to revisit the ICH of the Pukhtun communities to decide which of the living heritage provided the greatest opportunity to bring people together in a respectful harmonious relationship.



Teacher Resource Kit- Promoting Peace and Social Cohesion through Heritage Education

What emerged that several social practices which had been suppressed and weakened in the current scenario but were strong foundations for peace making, conflict resolutions and harmonious living were once again harnessed and introduced in the resource kit and would eventually find their way as strong pillars of the social fabric. Customs and values such as *Ashr* (collective volunteerism) during the harvest and *Melamastiya* (hospitality) and such others as well as Institutions such as the Jirga, the Hujra (Men's Common House) and the Gudor (Women's Social Space) were viewed as important ICH elements. The resource kit which has been developed contains resource material and lesson plans for the teachers which has been prepared with inputs from the teachers of KPK and FATA and has been tested through an intensive process. The kit which comprises of domains such as folklore, traditional games, craft making, social practices and an introductory booklet is being used for the KPK component of the Pilot Project being implemented under the Bangkok Office initiative. While the 3 schools in KPK are using the Resource Kit, others in Lahore and Islamabad, are developing their own resources afresh to participate in the Pilot Project. This pilot activity will hopefully pave the way to bring into the learning and education in the formal school system local content and wisdom which may be irrevocably lost if effort is not made to safeguard the ICH heritage and transmit it to the next generation.



Performance of PushtoKhattak Dance



Pashto poet sits in the centre of a Hujra to recite poetry, THAAP Archives