



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

## Progress report

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<b>Project Title</b>	<b>Strengthening national capacities for effective safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Niger</b>
<b>Target Country</b>	Niger
<b>UNESCO Budget code</b>	199GLO4000.11
<b>Funding source</b>	Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (earmarked contribution from Spain)
<b>Total Budget approved</b>	U\$167,335 (including 10% of programme support costs)
<b>Reporting Period</b>	March 2014 to January 2015
<b>Executing Agency</b>	UNESCO
<b>Implementing partners</b>	National Department for Cultural Heritage and Museums of Niger (Direction nationale du patrimoine culturel et des musées, Niger)
<b>Project starting date</b>	November 2013 <sup>1</sup>
<b>Project completion date</b>	December 2015
<b>Responsible Sector</b>	Culture
<b>Name of Persons completing Report</b>	David Stehl, Programme Specialist for Culture, UNESCO Office Dakar Caroline Munier, Assistant Programme Specialist, Intangible Cultural Heritage Section Susanne Schnuttgen, Chief of Unit, Capacity Building and Heritage Policy, Intangible Cultural Heritage Section

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<sup>1</sup> The official project starting date is the decentralization of funds for all project activities to the implementing field office. However, project preparation may start before, as in the case of this project, where the UNESCO Culture Programme Specialist already undertook the planning and validation mission in August 2013 followed by the preparation of contractual arrangements.

## **I. Summary and background**

Niger is one of the 151 States that have ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This Convention, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003, has experienced an extremely rapid pace of ratification. Enthusiasm and interest have, however, outpaced practical experience in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and it became clear that substantial efforts are required to address the challenges posed by the implementation of this new normative instrument at the national level and in particular to assist Member States to develop ownership of the concepts, measures and mechanisms proposed by the Convention. The UNESCO Secretariat has responded since 2009 with a global capacity-building strategy to support States in creating institutional and professional environments favourable to the sustainable safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and in promoting broad public knowledge and support for the Convention's concepts and objectives. It is in this context that the capacity-building project for intangible cultural heritage was elaborated for implementation in Niger thanks to the voluntary contribution of Spain to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. The project was approved at the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2012.

The project was prepared in close collaboration with the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage (Direction nationale du patrimoine culturel) of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Leisure. It aims to help Niger to fulfil its national obligations under the Convention by developing a sufficient level of national capacity, both within public institutions and among the main actors of civil society and communities. It will thereby contribute to the effective implementation of the Convention at national level and enable participation in the international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention, including Niger's capacity to request international assistance from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.

To this end, a number of activities were identified to support Niger in the ongoing process of building ownership of the concepts and tools of the Convention and to create conditions for effective and sustainable safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The project will benefit from the training and guidance materials that UNESCO has developed and from the network of trained expert facilitators who were trained to use and adapt these materials in the context of training workshops and advisory services. Training workshops are systematically facilitated by a team of two experts, and in the case of this project they have been identified among the network members from Africa (in fact 40% of the expert facilitators trained globally are from Africa). Within the budget envelope of this project, two main areas of intervention were identified: (i) technical advisory services to support Niger in setting up the institutional infrastructure and revise and adapt its national legislation to strengthen the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (a process that already started in consultation with the UNESCO office) and (ii) a combined set of training and pilot activities to develop a methodology and mechanism for inventorying intangible cultural heritage with the participation of communities.

## **II. Description of project implementation for the period under review**

### *Activities undertaken*

After a prolonged preparation phase, which saw delays in launching the implementation of the activities, an Implementation Partnership Agreement (IPA) with the National Directorate for Cultural Heritage and Museums was signed in May 2014. Yet, due to continued constraints in the agendas of the partners in Niger and the facilitators, the operational activities were finally initiated in November 2014.

As a reminder, the main activities identified during a first mission to Niamey in 2013 were the following (see also the last progress report of April 2013):

- Activity 1: Project preparation and launching (see progress report of April 2013)
- Activity 2: Providing training and advisory services on implementing the 2003 Convention and revision of legal frameworks
- Activity 3: Developing and piloting a community-based inventory methodology for intangible cultural heritage
- Activity 4: Project evaluation and reporting

The partners in Niger have set up a steering committee in view of the implementation of the project.

### **Training Workshop on the Implementation of the 2003 Convention at national level (Niamey, 10-14 November 2014) – activity 2**

The first workshop on the implementation of the 2003 Convention at the national level took place from 10 to 14 November at the Oumarou Ganda Cultural Centre in Niamey. It gathered 20 participants (about half of whom were women), mainly agents of the Ministry of Culture, including of its decentralized services from the provinces, as well as university scholars, civil society representatives and cultural journalists.

The opening ceremony, covered by local and national media, was chaired by the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Culture; the panel featured the Director-general for cultural heritage (formerly the Director general for Arts), the National Director for Cultural Heritage and Museums, the representative of the Spanish Cooperation in Niamey, and the UNESCO Culture Programme Specialist (based in Dakar).

The workshop was structured in three parts and its facilitation was ensured by two experts from the UNESCO's international network of facilitators and experts on intangible heritage, Ms Claudine Augée Angoué and Mr Sidi Traore, with the participation of David Stehl, Programme Specialist for Culture at the Regional UNESCO Office in Dakar. A participatory and adaptive method has been implemented for the conduct of the training that sought to target participants with no or little prior notions of intangible cultural heritage. It consisted of theoretical presentations (course) followed by comprehension questions, general discussions and practical exercises (case studies, experience sharing).

Part 1 of the training focused on the presentation of the Convention (3 sessions) which allowed participants to gain the necessary familiarity with the Convention, including its goals and key concepts, its organs, its Lists and register, its Operational Directives, the Fund, as well as the obligations and benefits of its implementation.

Part 2 focused on the stakeholders in safeguarding ICH and their roles and obligations. This session allowed identifying stakeholders in Niger that either already are or could be involved in safeguarding intangible heritage in the future. The discussions showed that, for the moment, the various stakeholders are not collaborating or coordination their activities. The Ministry of culture, arts and leisure could play a key role in giving new impetus to promote coordinated action and facilitate the involvement of all stakeholders in the safeguarding of ICH in Niger.

Part 3 on various aspects of implementing of the Convention at the national and international levels, was the largest component (8 sessions). Three days of work were devoted to this important part of the module, which addressed awareness raising, the identification of ICH and inventorying, State obligations and the principle of community involvement in all safeguarding activities. It furthermore discussed the contribution of ICH to sustainable development, different

safeguarding measures, the institutional and legal frameworks for ICH and the mechanisms for inscription of ICH elements on the Lists of the Convention.

Regarding the component related to awareness-raising, several outreach activities to enhance the recognition and importance of ICH were discussed with the participants. In this spirit, a television interview was recorded on Friday, 14 November for the private television channel RJCN for a broadcast Sunday 23 November. The interview included information on the workshop and discussed issues such as the definition of ICH, the role of UNESCO in safeguarding intangible heritage, and the current state of affairs for ICH in Niger.

Concerning the safeguarding of ICH, a practical exercise was conducted, asking participants to develop safeguarding measures for specific elements of ICH based on identified threats and risks.

Finally, the last day of the workshop focused on conclusions and an assessment of the knowledge gained. A multiple-choice quiz (quiz) was used for this purpose followed by filling in an evaluation form requesting feedback on various organizational and content aspects of the workshop.

### **Consultation meeting on the legal, institutional and administrative framework (Niamey, 15 November 2014) – activity 2**

The workshop was followed immediately, on 15 November, by a consultation meeting on the legal, institutional and administrative framework in place in Niger, which provided an opportunity for the Ministry to present the on-going revision of the law n°97-022 of 30 June 1997 relating to the protection, conservation and valorisation of cultural heritage. The letter so far, does not explicitly take into account intangible cultural heritage. The meeting gathered about 12-15 persons proposed to contribute to this revision process. The meeting resulted in a set of general recommendations to be submitted to the Minister of Culture, insisting on the urgency to undertake a larger revision of the law on cultural heritage, addressing not only intangible cultural heritage, but also tangible heritage, cultural objects, archaeological sites, etc.

Moreover, following the consultation meeting on the legal framework for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage, it is expected that a concrete time plan for the finalisation of the revision of the law will be presented and possibilities to further accompany this process within the framework of this project should be assessed.

### **Preparing for Activity 3 – Training workshop on community based inventorying**

The mission of the UNESCO Culture Programme Specialist furthermore allowed to prepare the second training workshop on community based inventory making (activity 3) which is to be followed by 2 pilot inventory-making activities in the field. The two identified communities are the city of Agadez and the village Boubon near Niamey. The facilitators were identified from UNESCO's expert network and the dates proposed for the workshop within the second half of January 2015.

## **III. Progress towards results**

This first training workshop allowed to build knowledge and capacities on the implementation of the 2003 Convention to about 20 persons, mainly from the Ministry of culture and its decentralized offices, but also to university scholars, civil society representatives and cultural journalists.

The main component of the project, however, i.e. the community-based inventory making is still in the final planning stages, in particular with regard to the identification and selection of the participants. The planning of the inventory-making component (workshop and field activities) is well advanced, yet the selection of the participants and the overall workplan still need to be revised.

Moreover, with regard to the inventory of intangible cultural heritage in Niger, possibilities of linking the project to other related initiatives or projects were also discussed, in particular the database of cultural objects, which initially was set up for the National Museum of Niger, but has been expanded to also include tangible cultural heritage and sites. This database was set up with financial support of Spain<sup>2</sup>, and it is planned that the present project will examine the integration of ICH in the database, which offers already modalities of involving various actors, as for example community representatives. However, the maintenance of this database would require the appointment of a permanent informatics professional in Niger, which until today is not given. As for the ongoing revision of the national legislation, initiated in 2013 in order to better align it with the requirements of the 2003 Convention, the consultation meeting allowed to assess the advancement of the process and identify opportunities and gaps for integrating ICH. During the consultation meeting held on 15 November, initially meant to inform on the major revisions and advancements it became clear that much work still remains to be done. One suggestion made was to draft an entirely new law instead of complementing the existing text. The meeting asked whether the present project could include support to this revision, but this question can only be answered, if a clear request is presented to UNESCO. A set of recommendations was drawn up to be presented to the Minister of Culture and which concerns the revision of the entire text also with regard to the other Conventions.

#### **IV. Sustainability**

This project has been devised to maximize its sustainability and multiplier effect. It aims to create in Niger a critical level of national capacity, both in government institutions and among key players from communities and civil society, constituting a sustainable foundation for safeguarding intangible heritage and implementing the Convention.

By involving stakeholders from both the culture sector and other development fields, the project facilitates the integration of provisions for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage into larger development strategies and programmes, thereby further sustaining the viability of intangible cultural heritage and harnessing it for the well-being of communities and societies.

The planned activities aim in particular to build capacities, knowledge and experience for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, with particular attention to inventories of intangible cultural heritage with the participation of the community. It is for this reason that Niger wished to conduct two pilot activities, instead of one, in a community still to be identified. This experience is expected to benefit the elaboration of a broader, country wide inventory of Niger's intangible heritage.

This project includes evaluation of the training and services provided and the UNESCO materials adapted to respond adequately to the identified needs in Niger. These assessments will inform future action in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

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<sup>2</sup> Within the Capacity building project for the National Museum Boubou Hama, funded by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation and Development, a "Informatic system for the cataloguing of cultural property of the National Museum Boubou Hama" was developed and is potentially available to integrate an ICH inventory that would respect the requirements of community participation in its management and updating.

## **V. Workplan**

Considering the delays due to a preparatory and launching phase of the project longer than expected, an extension of the project is planned until December 2015 in order to complete the remaining activities.

The revised workplan is annexed to this report.

## **VI. Visibility**

The necessary publicity of the project is provided by both, the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section and the UNESCO Dakar office through their respective websites and press releases.

The recent activities have been reported on on the following sites:

- The newspaper "Le Sahel":  
<http://www.lesahel.org/index.php/component/k2/item/7158-lancement-du-projet--renforcement-des-capacit%C3%A9s-pour-la-sauvegarde-du-patrimoine-culturel-immat%C3%A9riel--au-niger--valorisation-du-patrimoine-culturel-immat%C3%A9riel>
- The website of the 2003 Convention:  
<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/news/Niger-launches-a-capacity-building-programme-for-the-safeguarding-of-its-living-00103>
- The UNESCO Dakar website: [http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/single-view/news/niger\\_intensifies\\_efforts\\_to\\_safeguard\\_its\\_living\\_heritage/](http://www.unesco.org/new/en/dakar/about-this-office/single-view/news/niger_intensifies_efforts_to_safeguard_its_living_heritage/)

Efforts are being made to mobilize the media to cover the activities locally and nationally. To this end, the UNESCO Field Office in Dakar is working closely with the national partner with a view to adopting a more targeted communication strategy which goes beyond the mere newspaper or TV news coverage of the workshops. A newly created network in Niger of cultural journalists was invited to the first workshop, and a 45 minutes TV show was recorded that lined up the national Director of cultural heritage, one of the facilitators and the project officer (aired on 23 November 2014). As the development of a community-based inventorying methodology is the most important component of this project, it is also planned to hold a workshop of the field inventory activities in order to communicate the results and promote the intangible heritage of the two participating communities.

## **VII. Challenges and lessons learnt**

The choice of suitable participants for the capacity-building activities is a key to maximize project impact. Therefore, UNESCO requests national counterparts to provide the list of proposed participants well in advance. This gives facilitators the opportunity to learn about participants' profile and hence tailor the training to their specific needs. However, despite efforts made, the choice of participants was not finalized prior to the workshop. Therefore, the facilitators could not tailor the workshop in advance. They actually learnt upon arrival, about the profile and backgrounds of the participants, who, as it turned out, had hardly any or no prior knowledge of the Convention. The training therefore filled an important knowledge gap. However, while UNESCO had provided working documents for participants in advance, they were only distributed to the participants upon their arrival. Hence, they could not prepare for the training. Given the crucial importance of timely preparation and a best possible match between the training offer and the beneficiaries, continued efforts will be made in this regard in light of the next workshop on inventory making. Some persons from the initial training should certainly

continue to benefit with others joining based on the role they are going to play in future inventorying activities and ensuring adequate presence of community members.

Another critical aspect of project success is the level of ownership for the project in the beneficiary country. Responsiveness and the active involvement of all stakeholders are important in this regard (the Ministry, civil society actors, local communities etc.). However, challenges were encountered and while some were overcome, efforts will continue, as discussed with the Directorate for cultural heritage and also with the Spanish cooperation in Niamey and the facilitators.

The UNESCO Culture Programme Specialist took the opportunity of the participation of the Spanish Cooperation Office in Niamey to meet with them in order to increase cooperation in the framework of this project. This meeting allowed addressing possibilities of working more closely together in the implementation of upcoming activities following the wish of the Spanish Cooperation Office in Niamey to be involved in the project. Good working relationships with the technical cooperation office in Niamey have been established and will be an asset to support the implementation of the project as UNESCO is not a resident organization in Niger. The support of the AECID Office in Niamey is indeed very much appreciated.

**Work Plan: Strengthening the Capacity of Niger for the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (updated in November 2014)**

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		2013									2014									2015												
		8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
<b>1. Launching and preparation</b>																																
1.1 a	1.1 Project planning and validation Mission																															
1.1 b	Preparation of contractual arrangements and clarifying pending questions with partners																															
1.1 c	Development of the contract with the national partner																															
1.2	Meeting of the National Steering Committee ; communication to the media																															
<b>2. Workshop on the implementation on the 2003 Convention at national level (IMP) and follow-up</b>																																
2.1	Preparation of IMP workshop, including the identification and invitation of participants																															
2.2	Training Workshop (implementation of the Convention) and consultation on national institutional, administrative and legislative frameworks (6 days)																															
<b>3. Development of an inventory methodology with the participation of community (training and pilot activity)</b>																																

