CASE STUDY 7

A community-based inventorying project in Uganda

In Uganda, a local NGO is implementing a community-based inventorying process in cooperation with the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. This is a pilot initiative conducted under a broader UNESCO-initiated project in Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia: the ‘Community-based Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventorying project in six sub-Saharan African countries’ project (2010–11). The Government of Flanders (Belgium) has supported the broader project financially. The broader project began by holding a capacity-building meeting, organized by UNESCO, in Maseru, Lesotho, in February 2010.

A staff member from UNESCO Headquarters and two UNESCO regional experts led the meeting which was attended by representatives from the six participating countries. Follow-up inventorying exercises are now under way in these countries. They are being implemented by national authorities and/or local organizations and are supported by cultural officers from three UNESCO field offices (Harare, Zimbabwe; Nairobi, Kenya; and Windhoek, Namibia).

#### A community-based inventorying project in Uganda

In Uganda, the objective of the project is to develop an inventory of elements of the ICH of a specific community, prepared with the full involvement of that community. The main aim of the overall project is, however, to strengthen capacities for inventorying and managing ICH in the beneficiary countries and communities. The project is designed to build the capacities of cultural officers and those working in ministries responsible for the implementation of the Intangible Heritage Convention; they will then be able to undertake inventorying on an ongoing basis, with the involvement of the communities concerned, after the project has run its course.

In Uganda, after the Ministry had agreed to participate in the UNESCO project, it selected the Centre for Performing Arts and Culture (CEPAC) as the main agency to undertake the project in the country. CEPAC is an NGO that is active among the Busoga community in the area around Jinja. An expert from CEPAC was identified to attend the above-mentioned Lesotho meeting. A Project Management Committee was formed including representatives from the Ministry, the National Commission for UNESCO, CEPAC and the UNESCO Nairobi Office. Most meetings of the Committee were held electronically because members were not located in the same city.

#### A pilot inventorying project in the Busoga community

CEPAC spent two months carefully selecting twelve fieldworkers, with due consideration to age and gender balance, who expressed a strong interest in their intangible heritage and had good communication skills. A week-long workshop was held in Jinja in May 2010, led by one of the regional UNESCO trainers and the national expert from CEPAC.

The workshop helped to train the fieldworkers for their participation in the seven-month project. The workshop included two days of fieldwork, followed by writing up the information generated in the form of inventory entries. The Ugandan pilot was also launched in the capital city, Kampala, in order to inform relevant ministries and broader stakeholders in the field of culture about the scope and the aim of the project.

The fieldwork lasted from June to December 2010. The fieldworkers were divided into three groups, all of which studied the same element for a particular period in different villages. Data were collected using cameras and handheld sound recorders purchased by the project. The national expert from CEPAC discussed the progress of the project with the fieldworkers as the work progressed and helped them to find solutions for the problems identified.

The Busoga community was involved from the start of the project: community members were made aware of the project at its inception through radio programmes and by word of mouth. Fieldworkers were selected from the Busoga community and they asked community members to identify ICH elements with which to work. Through this process, a number of ICH elements were selected. Community members provided information about the elements being inventoried.

#### Busoga inventory

The project followed the definitions and domains of ICH and safeguarding given in UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Convention. Participants in the initial Ugandan training workshop made the point, however, that the local traditional judicial system did not fit well into any one of the domains mentioned in the Convention and they therefore wished to classify it as a separate domain of ICH in their own community.

By December 2010, information about more than fifteen elements had been collected, including:

(a) the practice and skills of food preservation;

(b) the last rites;

(c) creation myths;

(d) child naming;

(e) traditional dances;

(f) drum-making;

(g) the introduction ceremony;

(h) ceremonies related to twins; and

(i) traditional religious practices.

#### Semi-structured questionnaires

The fieldwork teams used semi-structured questionnaires to guide them through the interviews, asking additional questions where relevant. The national expert from CEPAC developed the questionnaires in collaboration with the fieldworkers. Different questionnaires were developed for each of the elements studied, in both English and Lusoga, the local language. As the work progressed, the fieldwork data were transferred onto inventory forms and transcribed into English, led by CEPAC. The draft inventory, together with updates of the progress of the project, was regularly shared with the Project Management Committee.

The questionnaires consisted of two sections. Section A focused on meta-data, such as information on the interviewees and on the interviewer, and about how consent was sought for the interview and for the recording thereof. Section B contained a broad range of questions on the element concerned, such as a description, origins of the practice, associated tangible elements, ways of transmission, details of community participation, values or beliefs attached to the practice, threats to the practice and transmission of the element.

Having completed the fieldwork at the end of December 2010, the Project Management Committee organized a final workshop in Jinja in 2011 to evaluate the result of the Ugandan component of the project and to discuss how best to continue the inventorying exercise at the national level. Some of the topics to be discussed include how to store the information – especially information of a confidential nature – and how best to make it accessible to the general public.