Unit 3

Key CONCEPTs In the convention

Published in 2016 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP, France

© UNESCO 2016



This publication is available in Open Access under the Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO (CC-BY-SA 3.0 IGO) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/igo/>). By using the content of this publication, the users accept to be bound by the terms of use of the UNESCO Open Access Repository (<http://www.unesco.org/open-access/terms-use-ccbysa-en>).

The images of this publication do not fall under the CC-BY-SA licence and may not be used, reproduced, or commercialized without the prior permission of the copyright holders.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

The ideas and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors; they are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

lesson plan

Duration:

2 hours

Objective(s):

Understand key concepts used in the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage[[1]](#footnote-1) and its Operational Directives (ODs): ‘intangible cultural heritage (ICH)’, ‘communities’, ‘safeguarding’, ‘viability’, ‘inventorying’, ‘awareness-raising’, ‘revitalization’, etc.

Description:

This unit discusses key concepts used in the Convention and its ODs. It provides non-authoritative explanations and background information for some of the concepts. There are no official definitions other than those in the Convention.

Proposed sequence:

* Word cloud of the Convention
* Exercise: Anchoring the Convention at the country level
* ‘Intangible heritage’ as a concept
* ‘Communities, groups and individuals concerned’ as a concept
* ‘Safeguarding’ as a concept

Supporting documents

* Facilitator’s notes Unit 3
* PowerPoint presentation Unit 3
* Participant’s text Unit 3
* UNESCO. *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (referred to in this unit as Basic Texts). Paris, UNESCO. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00503>.

Notes and suggestions

Two suggestions for ways to present this unit:

1. **Follow the presentation**: The facilitator may follow the presentation as outlined in the facilitator’s narrative below (with the accompanying PowerPoint presentation Unit 3) and discuss with participants the key concepts presented in Participant’s text Unit 3 (adding concepts as needed). Or
2. **Small group discussion**: The unit may be run as a small-group discussion, in which groups debate the definitions of some of the key concepts and discuss how these concepts might be used and translated in their local context. As background for the discussions, participants should use their knowledge of existing terms in heritage and related discourse.

Reference should be made wherever possible to relevant articles of the Convention and its ODs. Participants should be encouraged to refer to the key concepts in Participant’s text Unit 3.

It is important for facilitators to **avoid the term ‘definitions’ when referring to the explanations given in Participant’s text Unit 3**. There are no official definitions other than those occurring in the Convention.

Some of the concepts, such as ICH, may have already been discussed in Unit 1 or 2 and may therefore be covered in less detail in this unit. The concepts of ‘community’ and ‘safeguarding’ will receive detailed attention in later units (Units 7 and 9 respectively), so discussion of these terms may be relatively brief here.

Unit 3

Key CONCEPTs In the convention

facilitator’s narrative

###### Slide 1.

Key concepts

###### Slide 2.

Word cloud of the Convention

The slide shows a word cloud of the Convention. The size of each word indicates the relative frequency with which it appears in the text of the Convention. Unsurprisingly, ‘States Parties’, ‘intangible cultural heritage’, ‘Convention’, ‘UNESCO’, ‘safeguarding’, ‘General Assembly’ and ‘Committee’ are the most frequently used words.

The Convention is an agreement between States Parties, administered by UNESCO. The Organs of the Convention are the General Assembly and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which are responsible for various aspects of the implementation of the Convention, so they are also mentioned frequently. The Convention’s text focuses on safeguarding intangible heritage, thus ‘intangible cultural heritage’ and ‘safeguarding’ are also mentioned quite often.

It should be noted that the word cloud does not represent the relative *importance* of different concepts in the Convention’s text. Some words are mentioned less frequently, but are still extremely important in understanding how the Convention is to be implemented: among them are ‘community’, ‘group’, ‘individual’, ‘practitioner’, ‘sustainability’, ‘viability’ and ‘threats’.

###### Slide 3.

In this presentation …

###### Slide 4.

A flexible instrument

Participant’s text Unit 2.1 introduces the UNESCO Convention in the area of culture. Participant’s text Unit 2.2 focuses on the three that contribute to the promotion of cultural diversity, including the 2003 Convention.

The Intangible Heritage Convention is a text representing a consensus between Member States of UNESCO – it is therefore the result of many compromises. It is also a flexible instrument that leaves considerable freedom to the States Parties as to how to implement it and how to interpret certain key concepts that are used in it, but not defined (or not exhaustively defined).

Why the Convention is such a flexible instrument

When preparing the text of the Convention, it was realized that ICH, its functions in society, and ways of thinking about it, differ from region to region and from country to country, if not from community to community. It was also obvious that ICH constantly changes. An expert meeting in June 2002 at UNESCO prepared a glossary with terms to be used in the Convention, but it was neither discussed in detail by the intergovernmental meeting, nor was it attached as an annex to the Convention. The Member States did not give the definitions in the glossary an official status not only because it would have been difficult to reach a consensus, but also because they explicitly wanted the Convention to be a flexible instrument, in order to give States Parties considerable leeway in its interpretation. This position was confirmed by the Committee in its extraordinary session in Chengdu, China, in May 2007.

This has resulted in a text that contains few strict obligations, many recommendations and a few open definitions. The definition of ICH developed for the purpose of the Convention is an open one although it does introduce a few thresholds. Because of the openness of the definition, it is easier to determine when an element does *not* meet the definition of ICH than when it does. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration is given solely to ICH that is compatible 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 few classifications given in the Convention are not exhaustive; this applies as much to the list of ICH domains presented in Article 2.2 as to the list of safeguarding measures presented in Article 2.3. Several important terms used in the Convention are left undefined, including the ‘communities, groups and individuals’ who play a key role in the implementation of the Convention.

The key concepts in Participant’s text Unit 3 therefore give non-authoritative explanations and background information for terms used in the Convention and the ODs.

###### Slide 5.

‘Anchoring the Convention’

More than 170 States have already ratified the Convention, so its key concepts are discussed in many languages and in many different contexts. The expression ‘intangible cultural heritage’ has been translated into many different languages, as indicated in the slide.

Many different linguistic versions of the Convention

Most of the text of the Convention was originally drafted in French, and to a lesser extent in English. UNESCO has published the text in six languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish (all equally authoritative, Article 39). The Convention has also been translated into some 25 other languages.

See: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00102

It is of the utmost importance that the Convention be translated into as many languages as possible. New concepts – and especially concepts with open definitions – may, of course, acquire quite different connotations when translated into other languages. The translation of the terms in new linguistic contexts should therefore be discussed at length in relation to the spirit of the Convention and the few definitions given in it.

This process may help people in different regions and States to reflect on the concepts used in the Convention and how they can be applied to their own contexts. That will give people interested in the safeguarding of their ICH, or of ICH in general, better access to the Convention and its ideals. It will also facilitate capacity building for safeguarding on the national or local level. As part of capacity building, communities and other stakeholders who are interested in safeguarding ICH on the national level should be encouraged to discuss the Convention, its main concepts and objectives, in their own languages (see ODs 81 and 82).

In several languages – including French, Russian and Spanish – intangible heritage is translated as ‘immaterial’ heritage; in Japanese, it is translated as heritage ‘not having form’. Within UNESCO in the 1980s, the term ‘non-physical’ heritage was used. In Setswana (Botswana), ICH is translated as ‘*Ngwao e e sa Tshwaregeng*’ – ‘heritage that is intangible’. A poet member of a district-level ICH Committee in Botswana created the acronym ‘NEST’ from this translation. In Swahili, too, the English term has been translated literally.

**Exercise: Anchoring the Convention at the country level**

**20-30 mins**

This exercise encourages participants to think about translating the terms ‘intangible cultural heritage’ and ‘community’ into the official or national languages of their countries (other than Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish). Through this exercise, participants may understand the importance, but also the difficulty of translating the ideas behind the Convention, and the importance of understanding the background to a concept in order to ‘domesticate’ it.

Participants who use Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish may also wish to discuss how terms in the Convention have been translated from English and French into the authoritative Arabic, Chinese, Russian or Spanish versions.

Participants discussing the translation of ‘ICH’ into other languages may wish to consider whether, in translation, the concept:

* excludes ICH that is no longer practised (note: the Convention excludes from the definition of ICH all forms that are no longer practised);
* may include ICH of immigrant and nomadic communities (note: the Convention does not exclude such ICH in its definition); and/or
* has connotations similar to ‘(traditional) folklore’ in English (old, unchanging, etc., which would not be compatible with the Convention’s definition of ICH).

The exercise may include a discussion about how to avoid undesirable connotations in translated terms that are not in the spirit of the Convention. For example terms such as ‘universal excellence’ and ‘authenticity’ should not be associated with ICH in the framework of the implementation of the Convention.

In some national or local contexts, other terms (such as ‘folklore’, ‘spiritual culture’ or ‘popular culture’) are used for ‘ICH’. Such terms are often more inclusive than ‘ICH’ as understood by the Convention; they may cover a wide range of practices or expressions in the local context. However, when referring to ICH as defined under the Convention (for example, when submitting a nomination to one of the Lists of the Convention), it is preferable to use a local translation of the term ICH, even if a new term has to be invented for this purpose. This is because the definition of ICH given in the Convention is authoritative in nominating elements to the Lists, applying for funds and so on.

###### Slide 6.

Intangible cultural heritage (subheading)

###### Slide 7.

The Convention’s definition of intangible heritage(1)

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 1.4 and Unit 3: ‘Elements of ICH’ and ‘Intangible cultural heritage’.

If the concept of ICH has already been discussed earlier in the workshop, its discussion here can be brief, or targeted towards additional issues of interest for participants.

Relationship between ICH and related objects:

The first sentence of the definition (Article 2.1 of the Convention) specifies that ICH is enacted and transmitted by people: it mentions ‘practices, representations, expressions, knowledge [and] skills’. This focuses attention on the actions of the communities, groups and individuals concerned rather than on the products of these actions.

At the session of the Committee in Nairobi (2010), it was felt that objects could not be the main focus of an inscription on the Lists of the Convention; accordingly, the name of one of the nominated elements was changed from ‘The Azerbaijani Carpet’ to ‘The traditional art of Azerbaijani carpet weaving in the Republic of Azerbaijan’.

###### Slide 8.

The Convention’s definition of intangible heritage (2)

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 1.4 and Unit 3: ‘Intangible cultural heritage’.

The main message in the second sentence of the definition in Article 2.1 is that ICH is living heritage, changing over time; it carries a group’s identity and values and gives them a sense of continuity and identity. ICH elements have a history of practice and significance but, most importantly, they have a current relevance (function, value and meaning) for the people who practise them. This may not be easy to identify as people within a community may hold different views on this relevance. Establishing canonical, ‘authentic’ or ‘better’ versions of these practices is not in the spirit of the Convention.

The safeguarding of ICH contributes greatly to the maintenance of cultural diversity, and its enormous variety and ever-changing forms and functions are testimony to human creativity.

###### Slide 9.

The Convention’s definition of intangible heritage (3)

Refer to: Participant’s text Unit 1.4; Unit 3: ‘Intangible cultural heritage’ and ‘Sustainable development’; and ODs 170-197.

Sustainable development, human rights and mutual respect

ICH profoundly affects communities and plays a role in relations within and between them; it may also affect the environment, and vice versa, so it is important to examine the quality and consequences of these interactions. In the Preamble of the Convention, intolerance is mentioned as one of the factors that might endanger ICH. Participants can probably think of examples in which there is a lack of respect for another group’s ICH, or where an ICH practice complicates relationships between different communities. So it is not surprising that Article 2.1 states that, under the Convention, ICH can only be taken into account when it is:

compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.

Elements of ICH that refer to actual or past conflicts between groups or communities should not be inscribed on the Lists of the Convention or otherwise be taken into account in the implementation of the Convention on the international level.

The Convention’s definition of ICH mentions ‘the requirements of sustainable development’. Many ICH practices and forms of knowledge contribute to the development of education, agriculture, social relationships, elimination of gender-based discrimination, environmental sustainability and income generation within a community or a State. But practices and expressions that hinder sustainable development – for example, by exhausting natural resources, by impairing the socio-economic development of the group concerned, or by denying the dignity and well-being of those involved – will not be taken into account in the implementation of the Convention at the international level.

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Sustainability’ and Unit 8.

The Convention does specify some values of ICH, such as its function and importance as a provider of a ‘sense of identity and continuity’ to the communities concerned, its importance as a source of cultural diversity and creativity and its possible role in fostering respect and dialogue between communities. The Convention does not speak about aesthetic value, outstanding value or hierarchy between elements of ICH, however. Neither inventorying nor procedures for preparing nominations to the Lists of the Convention should degenerate into ‘beauty contests’ or award systems. This means that the ICH of all communities present in a State Party should be respected and inventoried. ICH elements included in an ICH inventory prepared in a State Party that do not meet the requirements of human rights, mutual respect or sustainable development are not eligible for inscription on the Lists of the Convention, nor will they be taken into account in other ways in the implementation of this Convention at the international level.

###### Slide 10.

Intangible heritage domains

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Domains of ICH’.

Non-exhaustive nature of the domains

The list of domains given in Article 2.2 is explicitly not exhaustive (‘The ICH…is manifested…*inter alia* in the following domains’*).* Since its fifth session (2010), the Committee inscribed a number of items of culinary heritage and traditional sports and games on the Representative List.

Selection of appropriate domains for an element

The forms that must be used for submitting nominations for inscription on the Lists of the Convention ask the submitting States Parties to indicate to which domain(s) (of those mentioned in the Convention) the proposed element belongs.

Elements of ICH may and indeed, often do, fall under several domains. For example, an element like the Traditions and practices associated to the Kayas in the sacred forests of the Mijikenda in Kenya (inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List in 2009) involves traditional music and dance, prayers and songs, the production of sacred ritual objects as well as ritual and ceremonial practices and an acute awareness and knowledge of the natural world.

See: http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011&USL=00313

What an outsider may see as falling into one domain of ICH may be classified under different domains by different people, even within the community concerned. One community member, for example, might view their chanted verse as a form of ritual, to be classified under social practices; another may prefer to interpret it as song, to be classified under performing arts, or perhaps under oral traditions. There may also be different opinions as to classification in subdomains: what some may define as ‘theatre’ might be interpreted as ‘dance’ by others.

Question of language and religion as domains

Many ICH elements depend heavily on the language traditionally used by the community concerned: this is true not only of oral traditions and expressions, but also of songs and most rituals. The spoken word (‘orality’) is, of course, crucial in the enactment and transmission of virtually all ICH.

Bearers of specific ICH may use highly specialized sets of terms and expressions, or specific registers of a given language. For the safeguarding of such ICH, it may also be necessary to develop safeguarding measures for the use and transmission of such language registers. The Committee has not yet had to deal with the nomination of a language or an assistance request concerning its safeguarding, although some of the former Masterpieces included in the Representative List in 2008 did cover language as such: for example, Language, dance and music of the Garifuna (Belize, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua) and the Oral heritage and cultural manifestations of the Zápara People (Ecuador and Peru).

The question of language was discussed at great length during the preparation of the Convention. It was generally agreed that language is at the core of ICH and that natural languages in principle meet the definition of ICH given in Article 2.1 of the Convention. A minority of UNESCO Member States advocated treating language as a separate domain in the list provided in Article 2.2. A majority of Member States, however, did not want language to figure as a domain in its own right in the list in Article 2.2.

Language was thus deliberately not mentioned as a specific domain when the Convention was being drawn up. Some States Parties do use language as a domain in their inventories, however. The situation on the international level is not clear: language is not explicitly excluded from the definition of ICH in the Convention; and since the list of domains is not complete, it is not certain that the Committee would automatically reject a nomination to one of the Lists of the Convention that focused on a language.

Many States are not in a position to safeguard all the languages spoken within their borders (indeed, there are many States with several hundred indigenous languages and many more with scores of them). The holistic safeguarding of a language, informed nowadays by a large body of research and experience in this field, is a complex and expensive affair. States where many languages are spoken often lack the resources to document and promote all these languages through research, curriculum integration, the media and publications, so as to safeguard that diversity. Many other States do not wish to encourage the extensive use of languages other than their national or official languages.

The UNESCO *Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger[[2]](#footnote-2)* aims to raise awareness about the ongoing loss of linguistic diversity, but it is not associated with a standard-setting text or safeguarding programmes.

See: http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/atlas-of-languages-in-danger/

Similarly, many belief systems, if tolerant of other beliefs, may comply with the definition of ICH in Article 2.1. They might be classified under Article 2.2 (d): ‘knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe’. There is of course much ICH that has spiritual aspects. There is at least one inventory compiled by a State Party that includes ‘pilgrimages’ as a separate domain.

Since States have very different linguistic and religious policies, it would have been impossible to reach a consensus on more precise recommendations about the place of language and belief systems in the list of domains in the Convention. An attempt to define the concept of communities or groups would have met with similar problems and would have significantly delayed the elaboration of the Convention.

###### Slide 11.

Zema liturgical music (Ethiopia)

ICH elements with religious or sacred aspects to them have been inscribed on the Lists of the Convention. These include ‘Hopping procession of Echternach’ (Luxembourg), ‘Semah, Alevi-Bektaşi ritual’ (Turkey), ‘Carnival of Oruro’ (Plurinational State of Bolivia), ‘Ramman: religious festival and ritual theatre of the Garhwal Himalayas’ (India) and ‘Ahellil of Gourara’ (Algeria).

See: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/lists/>

Zema liturgical music is another example of an ICH element with religious or sacred aspects. It has not been inscribed on any Lists of the Convention, but that does not make it any less important than those that have been inscribed.

For further information:

* Kaufman Shelemay, K. and Jeffery, P. (eds). 1993. *Ethiopian Christian Liturgical Chant: an anthology*. A-R Editions Inc. 3 vols.

Exercise: Domains

10 mins

This exercise illustrates the variety of ways in which ICH element(s) can be classified. Participants should be asked to mention various examples of ICH and see if they can reach agreement on one or more domains (either those used in the Convention or others) into which the elements could potentially be classified. The facilitator may also present one or more ICH elements and ask participants to determine to which domains mentioned in the Convention they might belong. The next two slides (Slide 12 and 13) may be used for this exercise.

The goal of the exercise is to show (1) the difficulty of classifying ICH into a single domain; and (2) the non-exhaustive nature of the list of domains in Article 2.2. Classifying ICH into domains is not given particular emphasis in the Convention.

Classification of ICH into domains

The facilitator should remind participants that classification of ICH elements into domains in the Convention is explicitly not exhaustive. States Parties developing their own classification systems have often added one or more domains or made other adaptations to the Lists. The domains mentioned in the Convention are not mutually exclusive either: one element may belong to more than one of these domains. There are, of course, many ways of classifying ICH elements, used in academic contexts. In many instances, these classifications are not meaningful for the communities who must be involved in the identification, definition and management of their ICH. Nor would such classifications necessarily contribute to the safeguarding of ICH, which remains the main objective of the Convention. Too much emphasis should therefore not be placed on inventing complicated classification systems in the framework of the implementation of the Convention at the national level.

###### Slide 12.

Hudhud chants of the Ifugao (the Philippines)

Many elements of ICH could be classified under a number of domains. One example of this is ‘Hudhud chants of the Ifugao’ (Philippines), integrated in the RL in 2008 from the former Masterpieces programme. The element could be classified under oral expressions, ritual practices or knowledge about nature and the universe. Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3, and Case study 33.

See: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00015>

###### Slide 13.

Vanuatu sand drawings

When ICH is discussed, oral and musical performance, dance, ritual and public festivities often take centre stage. ICH also includes social practices, knowledge about nature and the universe, and skills and crafts. In addition, it includes traditional games, a domain not mentioned in the Convention but used in some inventories at the national level.

Another example of an element that covers several domains is ‘Vanuatu sand drawings’, integrated in the RL in 2008 from the former Masterpieces programme.

This rich and dynamic graphic tradition developed as a means of communication among the members of some 80 different ethnolinguistic groups inhabiting the central and northern islands of Vanuatu. It is still practised today, although less frequently than before, and new methods are now used for transmitting the skill to younger members of the community. This multifunctional ‘writing’, more than an indigenous artistic expression, occurs in a wide range of ritual, contemplative and communicative contexts.

The drawings are produced directly on the ground, in sand, volcanic ash or clay. Using one finger, the drawer traces a continuous meandering line on an imagined grid to produce a graceful, often symmetrical, composition of geometric patterns. The drawings also function as mnemonic devices to record and transmit rituals, mythological lore and a wealth of oral information about local histories, cosmologies, kinship systems, song cycles, farming techniques, architectural and craft design, and choreographic patterns. Most sand drawings possess several functions and layers of meaning: they can be ‘read’ as artistic works, repositories of information, illustrations for stories, signatures or simply messages and objects of contemplation. A master sand drawer must therefore possess not only a wide knowledge of graphic patterns but also a deep understanding of their significance. In addition, sand drawers should have the ability to interpret the drawings for spectators.

As attractive symbols of Vanuatu identity, the drawings are often showcased as a form of decorative folklore for tourists and for other commercial purposes. If left unchecked, this tendency to appreciate sand drawings on a purely aesthetic level may result in the loss of the tradition’s deeper symbolic significance and original social function.

Safeguarding measures are now being implemented, aimed at encouraging the practice of sand drawing in a meaningful way within the communities concerned.

See: <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/RL/00073>

###### Slide 14.

Communities, groups and individuals (subheading)

###### Slide 15.

Defining the ‘community concerned’

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Communities, groups and individuals’.

The Convention repeatedly uses the terms ‘communities, groups and, in some cases/where appropriate, individuals’, without explicitly defining them.

Unit 7 provides a full discussion of the ways in which the Convention and the ODs foresee the involvement of the communities, groups and individuals concerned in the implementation of the Convention.

Reason for the lack of a formal definition

The government experts who prepared the text of the Convention in 2002–2003 left the concepts ‘communities, groups and individuals’ undefined. The reasons are explained below.

Most States have considerable cultural and ethnolinguistic diversity and deal with this in different ways. States (often highly centralized ones) that are engaged in a process of nation building or nation consolidation may not wish outsiders (or a Convention) to prescribe how they should define and deal with communities and/or groups in their territory. Some States recognize indigenous communities, for example, whereas others do not. States that have just emerged from a difficult period of internal problems usually wish to focus on common identities rather than internal differences.

Another reason for the lack of a formal definition is that it is not easy to define a community either in general terms or indeed within the specific framework of ICH safeguarding.

Some communities and groups are more formalized and more strictly organized than others, and they may differ enormously in size. Some groups may be well defined (such as the group of practitioners of a specific healing tradition or craft, or one family of puppeteers). Other groups are less well defined (for example, townspeople celebrating carnival, audiences for festivals or community members who enjoy attending ritual events as part of experiencing and living their cultural heritage and feeling a sense of community). People within a group or community can have different roles in the enactment of their ICH: for example, as practitioners, as custodians, as transmitters or as members of an audience. People may join or leave these groupings at various stages during their lifetime; they can be part of different communities at the same time.

States have defined ‘communities and groups concerned’ in different ways for the purpose of inventorying the ICH present in their territory. Communities may be defined (by themselves or by others) according to administrative, geographical, ethnolinguistic, religious, gender, or other criteria. In many cases, communities are defined first and then their ICH is identified later. In other instances, ICH elements are identified first and then the people associated with them are defined as the community concerned. Whatever approach is used, no community or its ICH should be identified or defined without the full agreement and consent of the people concerned.

###### Slide 16.

Relationship between an element and the community concerned

There is thus a close relationship between an ICH element and the ‘communities, groups and individuals’ concerned. The communities concerned are involved in the creation enactment and transmission of their ICH, which only manifests itself through them. Practising and transmitting their ICH, and safeguarding it where necessary, contributes not only to the viability of their ICH but also to their sense of identity and continuity, their well-being and development. There is no ICH without a community to practise, enjoy and transmit it, and the identity of a community may depend on the ICH shared among its members.

The Convention and the ODs fully recognize the crucial role that communities play, or must play, in safeguarding their ICH:

**Article 15**

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.

In Unit 7, participants will hear more about – and have the opportunity to discuss – the involvement of the communities, groups and individuals concerned in all actions concerning their ICH that are undertaken by States Parties to the Convention. In Unit 38, participants will learn about the Ethical Principles for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage, which emphasize the primary role of communities, groups and individuals in safeguarding their own ICH.

***Gender and ICH***

All ICH expressions carry and transmit values, norms and behaviours related to the roles and relationships of and between gender groups in a given community. In such a way, ICH is a significant context for shaping gender roles and identities and transmitting them. At the same time, access to and participation in specific expressions of ICH are also determined by gender. Thus while gender norms influence ICH, ICH influences gender norms. Understanding the relationship between gender and ICH is significant for safeguarding in two ways: it can open up new avenues to safeguarding and strengthen steps towards gender equality.

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Gender and ICH’ 

###### Slide 17.

Safeguarding (subheading)

###### Slide 18.

Safeguarding concepts

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 1.5 and Unit 3: ‘Safeguarding and safeguarding measures’ and ‘Threats and risks’.

Not all ICH should be, or can be, safeguarded or revitalized. If enough members of the community or group concerned no longer consider specific elements of their ICH to be relevant or meaningful, then these elements can probably not be safeguarded. The elements may then be recorded before they stop being enacted. Without strong motivation and commitment on the part of practitioners and other tradition bearers, safeguarding actions (in the sense of the Convention) are doomed to failure.

###### Slide 19.

Key safeguarding measures

Refer to Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Safeguarding and safeguarding measures’.

Safeguarding measures are deliberate activities aimed at addressing specific threats and risks to the viability of an ICH element. The nature of an ICH element and the specific threats and risks to its viability help to determine the appropriate safeguarding actions, which should also take into account the available budget and the level of commitment of the community concerned. The Ethical Principles also recognize that communities, groups and individuals should play a significant role in determining what constitutes threats to their ICH, including the decontextualization, commodification and misrepresentation of it and in deciding how to prevent and mitigate such threats.

According to Article 2.3 of the Convention, safeguarding measures may include various types of activities. The list of measures presented there, just like the list of domains given in Article 2.2, does not pretend to be exhaustive; moreover, many safeguarding actions could be classified under several of these measures at the same time. Other measures are mentioned elsewhere in the Convention.

Examples of safeguarding measures will be discussed in Unit 9. It might be useful to stress the fact that the term ‘safeguarding’ is used both for broad activities that encourage safeguarding of ICH in general and for (revitalizing) measures that target specific ICH elements with impaired viability.

Three types of safeguarding measures may be highlighted for discussion in this session: raising awareness, inventorying and revitalization.Issues such as commercialization **and de-contextualization could also be discussed (refer to Participant’s text Unit 3).

###### Slide 20.

More safeguarding measures

Other safeguarding measures mentioned in the Convention include the following (refer to Participant’s text Unit 3):

* ‘Documentation and research’;
* ‘Identification and definition’;
* ‘Preservation and protection’;
* ‘Promotion and enhancement’; and
* ‘Transmission’ (e.g. through education).

For further discussion of these measures, see Unit 9.

###### Slide 21.

Role of communities, groups and individuals in safeguarding

The communities and groups (and where relevant, individuals) concerned are the stewards of their ICH and the main stakeholders responsible for its transmission and enactment. Article 2.1 of the Convention states that it is up to the communities or groups of tradition bearers to determine whether a given practice or tradition constitutes part of their cultural heritage or not. For this process to be beneficial to all members of a community, the voices of different age and gender groups need to be taken into account.

They are also best placed to determine whether a specific practice or expression is important to their identity or sense of continuity, whether or not it is endangered, and whether or not there is enough commitment in the community for safeguarding measures to be successfully undertaken. A key element is the appreciation by the community of the different roles and measures – including gender roles and gender-specific measures – that contribute to a successful safeguarding plan.

This is why States Parties are asked to ensure that the relevant communities, groups and individuals (or their representatives) have participated as widely as possible in any activity involving elements of their ICH that is undertaken while implementing the Convention.

**This is discussed further in Units 4 and 7.

###### Slide 22.

In conclusion

1. . Frequently referred to as the ‘Intangible Heritage Convention’, the ‘2003 Convention’ and, for the purpose of this unit, simply the ‘Convention’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . C. Moseley (Editor-in-Chief), 2010, Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger, 3rd edn, Paris, UNESCO. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)