Unit 8

Lesson plan

ICH[[1]](#footnote-1) and sustainable development

Duration:

2 hours

Objective(s):

Understand that the ultimate goal of the Convention for the Safegurading of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*[[2]](#footnote-2)* is safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) that is compatible with (among other things) the requirements of sustainable social and economic development. Furthermore, analyse with several case studies (positive and negative) the possibilities of income generation from ICH practices and expressions and the contribution of ICH to social development.

Description:

This unit discusses intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and sustainable development from a social and economic perspective. Topics covered in the unit include: understanding the relationship between ICH and sustainable development, exploring how to sustain ICH and how ICH contributes to social and economic development, risks and opportunities associated with income-generating activities as well as ways to mitigate these.

Proposed sequence:

* What the Convention and its Operational Directives (ODs) say
* Sustainable ICH/ICH supporting sustainable development
* Supporting ICH, supporting communities
* Mitigation of risks

Supporting documents:

* Unit 8 PowerPoint presentation plus facilitator’s notes
* Participant’s text Unit 8
* Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Commercialization’, ‘De-contextualization’ and ‘Sustainability’
* Case studies 14–20

Notes and suggestions

Many examples and case studies are provided in this Unit: the facilitator may select some of them to use for illustration purposes or as material for exercises in which participants are divided into small groups to discuss questions raised in the Unit.

Unit 8

ICH and sustainable development

###### Slide 1.

ICH and sustainable development

###### Slide 2.

In this presentation …

###### Slide 3.

What the Convention and its ODs say (sub-heading)

###### Slide 4.

Definition of ICH

See Participant’s text Unit 3 for a discussion of the definition of ICH in the Convention’s Article 2.1.

The definition of ICH (Article 2.1) was discussed in Unit 3 but is revisited briefly here. It is of particular relevance to the discussion in this Unit that ICH under the Convention is understood to be living, constantly changing and ‘recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment’. The Convention is not designed to ‘freeze’ ICH expressions or to hamper the development of communities, groups and individuals. The definition of ICH also states that, in order to be taken into consideration under the Convention, ICH should be ‘compatible with … the requirements of mutual respect among communities … and of sustainable development.’

###### Slide 5.

Sustainable development

Participant’s text Unit 8.1 discusses the definition of sustainable development (see also Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Sustainability’) and the relationship between ICH and sustainable development.

See also Participant’s text Unit 5.1 on fostering mutual respect between communities through awareness-raising.

It should be emphasized that, in many cases, ICH does not only play a role in the sustainable economic development of communities and the places where they live. Perhaps even more important is the contribution that viable ICH (and its safeguarding) may make to the well-being and social development of communities and more generally to good governance (through, for example, its contribution to health care, mediation practices or the pursuit of non-material values).

Although cultural diversity may be widely appreciated, conflict arising from it is not always easy to manage. Many States with complex socio-political situations may derive great benefit from achieving the aims of the Convention if awareness is raised in an appropriate way (ODs 101 and 102) and the ICH elements prioritized for safeguarding are in conformity with human rights and the requirements of sustainable development, respect and understanding between communities (Article 2.1).

###### Slide 6.

Sustainable development and ICH

See Participant’s text Unit 8.1.

###### Slide 7.

ICH supporting social development: the ‘Literacy through Poetry’ project (Yemen)

Participant’s text Unit 8.2 discusses how and why ICH can contribute to social development.

Case study 14, gives the example of the ‘Literacy through Poetry’ project in Yemen, in which adults were taught literacy skills using traditional forms of poetry. The main points are summarized on the slide.

Example of how ICH can promote social cohesion

In Newfoundland and Labrador (Canada), the local government stimulates the revitalization of ICH practices in villages where cod fishing has collapsed as a source of income; it does so, among other reasons, to reinforce the sense of cohesion and identity of the villages concerned.

###### Slide 8.

Material benefits from ICH practice

Participant’s text Unit 8.3 mentions different ways in which ICH practice and transmission may provide material benefits that can contribute to the sustainable development of communities.

Example of the interrelationship between ICH practices and sustainable availability of specific natural resources

Forests are planted and maintained to ensure a supply of specific kinds of wood for building wooden arched bridges in China. If the supply of this particular type of wood dries up, then certain bridge-building techniques may become more difficult or less durable, or the process of building with wood may become too expensive to continue.

The element Traditional design and practices for building Chinese wooden arch bridges was inscribed on the USL in 2009:

<http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/en/USL/00303>

Example of how ICH practices may enhance modern medical technologies and thus contribute to sustainable development

The integration of traditional and Western medical treatments can bring many benefits for patients. Traditional Chinese medicine has been integrated into the hospital system across most of China. This has had positive consequences. For example, one case study reported ‘effective treatment for diabetic foot ulcers with integration of traditional Chinese medicine and Western medicine’.[[3]](#footnote-3) Similar programmes to combine traditional and Western approaches to health care have been initiated in India and other States.

###### Slide 9.

Income generation supporting ICH: The Royal Ballet of Cambodia

Participant’s text Unit 8.3 explains that in some cases ICH has historically been linked to, and sustained by, income generation – practitioners can be remunerated either for practising the ICH, transmitting the ICH or for creating products.

The following three examples (illustrated by slides) make the same points.

Paying performers: Khmer Classical Dance

The Khmer court supported the Royal Ballet of Cambodia (also known as Khmer Classical Dance) for over 1,000 years, paying the dancers and providing them with a space to train in the palace. Under the Khmer Rouge, the Royal Ballet not only lost its sponsor, it was actively repressed. After Pol Pot’s defeat in 1979, dance troupes re-emerged and performances resumed. The ballet has regained much of its former splendour but still faces numerous difficulties, such as a lack of funding and suitable performance spaces.

The Royal Ballet of Cambodia was inscribed on the RL in 2008 (it was originally proclaimed a Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 2003).

Performances would traditionally accompany royal ceremonies and observances such as coronations, marriages, funerals or Khmer holidays. The dancers were considered the kings’ messengers to the gods and to the ancestors. The dances tell the legends associated with the origins of the Khmer people and represent the traditional values of refinement, respect and spirituality. Four distinct character types exist in the classical repertory: Neang the woman, Neayrong the man, Yeak the giant and Sva the monkey. Each has distinctive colours, costumes, make-up and masks. The gestures and poses, mastered by the dancers only after years of intensive training, evoke the gamut of human emotions, from fear and rage to love and joy. An orchestra accompanies the dance, and a female chorus provides a running commentary on the plot.

###### Slide 10.

Paying for products and the transmission of knowledge:
Chinese wooden bridge-making

Traditional design and practices for building Chinese wooden arch bridges was inscribed on the USL in 2009.

Today, the bridges are found mainly in Fujian and Zhejiang Provinces, along China’s south-eastern coast: many of them are hundreds of years old. In rural areas, the bridges improve communications and trade between villages and act as venues for social gatherings and religious activities. The woodworking master designs the bridge and directs the carpentry work (including the use of techniques such as ‘beam-weaving’ and mortise and tenon joints). He places his name on the underside of the bridge, thus advertising his skills and enhancing his status. He transmits his skills and knowledge orally and through personal demonstration to apprentices within bridge-building clans. Today it is difficult to attract new apprentices or secure work for all woodworkers because new wooden bridges are no longer in high demand. This is due to rapid urbanization, the unsuitability of wooden bridges for carrying heavy vehicles and the scarcity of timber.

Master builders and other wood- and stone-workers building Chinese wooden arched bridges have traditionally been paid for their work; even today, building and repairing such bridges constitutes paid employment. These masters choose apprentices from certain clans.

###### Slide 11.

Paying for products that support ICH: Croatian lacemaking

Lacemaking in Croatia was inscribed on the RL in 2009.

At least three distinct traditions of lacemaking in Croatia persist today, centred on the towns of Pag on the Adriatic, Lepoglava in northern Croatia and Hvar on the Dalmatian island of the same name. Pag needle-point lace was originally used to make ecclesiastical garments, tablecloths and ornaments for clothing. The process, which involves embellishing a spider-web pattern with geometrical motifs, is transmitted today by older women who offer year-long courses. Lepoglava bobbin lace is made by braiding thread wound on spindles or bobbins; it is often used to make lace ribbons for folk costumes and it is sold at village fairs. Aloe lace is made only by Benedictine nuns in the town of Hvar. Thin white threads are obtained from the core of fresh aloe leaves and woven into a net or other pattern on a cardboard background.

Croatian lace is an important component of traditional clothes in the region. Rural women have long sold lace as an additional source of income. Nowadays it is mainly sold to tourists or bought by official institutions to be presented to high-status visitors. In the past, as well as the present, the sale of lace products has supported the practice and transmission of the craft.

###### Slides 12–14.

Case study: circumcision procession (Bandung, Indonesia)

Case study 15, which concerns a Sundanese boys’ circumcision procession in Bandung, Indonesia, shows how new safeguarding interventions may be needed as the commercial context of ICH practices changes.

###### Slide 15.

New income-generating possibilities

Participant’s text Unit 8.4 discusses a number of new income-generating possibilities that may arise as a result of safeguarding or awareness-raising activities. These are best discussed through examples; several possible examples are provided in Case studies 15, 16, 17, 19 and 20, and a few others are given below.

OD 116 Commercial activities that can emerge from certain forms of intangible cultural heritage and trade in cultural goods and services related to intangible cultural heritage can raise awareness about the importance of such heritage and generate income for its practitioners. They can contribute to improving the living standards of the communities that bear and practise the heritage, enhance the local economy, and contribute to social cohesion.

Example: Festival of Pacific Arts (Oceania)

This example illustrates how festivals may contribute to ICH safeguarding by building awareness of ICH practices and also by expanding markets for associated performances, services and products.

Initiated in 1972 by the Conference of the South Pacific Commission, the Festival of Pacific Arts (FOPA) is hosted every four years by a different State in Oceania. It aims to raise awareness about traditional Pacific culture, which was once denigrated and suppressed by missionaries in the region. In 2004, over 2,700 participants from 27 countries performed or sold services and products at the 9th festival, which was held in Palau. The festival showcases traditional song and dance forms. Traditional crafts such as weaving, carving, tattooing, storytelling and healing arts also feature alongside other cultural practices such as architecture, fashion and design, film-making and contemporary visual and performance arts.

No entry fees are charged, thus increasing local access to this celebration of Pacific cultural practices. The festival is financed by the host country and local businesses, with the aim of boosting the local economy through tourism and the sale of crafts. At the 9th FOPA, ‘each of the 16 States of Palau earned an average of US$20,000 in sales of food and craft.’[[4]](#footnote-4)

Example: promoting and safeguarding traditional crafts in Penang (Malaysia) [[5]](#footnote-5)

Case study 16, illustrates how a relatively small-scale project improved the transmission of traditional craft skills to younger community members and raised the social status of (and income opportunities enjoyed by) practitioners in Penang, Malaysia.

###### Slide 16.

Risks

Participant’s text Unit 8.5 introduces the potential risks to ICH through pressures introduced by income-generating activities.

Examples of risks associated with income-generating activities

An example of tourism that could jeopardize the sustainability of ICH expressions or practices might be a situation in which tour companies or community members allow large numbers of tourists to witness a ritual to which traditionally there has been limited access, or to visit a sacred site, thus damaging the environment and/or making it unsuitable for the ritual activities that used to be performed there. Raising awareness about an ICH form may increase tourist audiences for song, dance, forms of theatre and festivals to such an extent that community members may lose interest in participating. This may eventually lead to the staging of truncated performances for tourists for financial gain alone, outside the usual community context. If these are the only performances that continue to be offered, the element will be deprived of its former meaning and function within the community and will no longer meet the definition of ICH in Article 2.1 of the Convention.

Commercial activity can threaten the viability of ICH (OD 116) as well as promote it. If, for example, a carving tradition becomes commercialized and the products are created purely for sale, aimed at the export market or tourists, the ICH knowledge and skills associated with the tradition may be lost. Fixed production lines may lead to the ‘freezing’ of designs, and competing with cheaper, mass-produced imitations may affect the quality of local carvings that reach the market.

###### Slide 17.

Warning (1)

Slides 17–19 illustrate a few of the most important ODs concerning risk identification.

See Participant’s text Unit 8.5.

OD 102 All parties are encouraged to take particular care to ensure that awareness-raising actions will not:

…

(e) lead to over-commercialization or to unsustainable tourism that may put at risk the intangible cultural heritage concerned.

###### Slide 18.

Warning (2)

See Participant’s text Unit 8.5.

OD 116 Commercial activities … and trade should not … threaten the viability of the intangible cultural heritage …

###### Slide 19.

Warning (3)

See Participant’s text Unit 8.5.

OD 117 Particular attention should be paid to avoiding commercial misappropriation, to managing tourism in a sustainable way, to finding a proper balance between the interests of the commercial party, the public administration and the cultural practitioners, and to ensuring that the commercial use does not distort the meaning and purpose of the intangible cultural heritage for the community concerned.

###### Slide 20.

Mitigating risks through…

Participant’s text Unit 8.6 outlines some of the possible ways of mitigating risks in the context of sustainable development and income generation. It refers briefly to the use of IPR regimes to protect community rights over their ICH. This is discussed in greater detail in the rest of Unit 8 but a few pointers are given here in case the issue should arise.

See Participant’s text Unit 3: ‘Intellectual property’.

OD 104 States Parties shall endeavour to ensure, in particular through the application of intellectual property rights, privacy rights and any other appropriate form of legal protection, that the rights of the communities, groups and individuals that create, bear and transmit their intangible cultural heritage are duly protected when raising awareness about their heritage or engaging in commercial activities.

OD 116 Commercial activities … and trade should not … threaten the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, and all appropriate measures should be taken to ensure that the communities concerned are their primary beneficiaries. Particular attention should be given to the way such activities might affect the nature and viability of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage manifested in the domains of rituals, social practices or knowledge about nature and the universe.

Example of how economic benefits accrued in the practice of an ICH element may be distributed equitably and help to support the communities or groups involved

In India, a benefit-sharing trust was established in 1997 on behalf of the Kani people to channel benefits into the local community from the cultivation and commercial pharmaceutical use of an indigenous plant. The bioprospecting institute that identified the commercial potential of the Kani traditional knowledge about the usefulness of the plant shared the patent royalties equally with the community.[[6]](#footnote-6)

###### Slide 21.

Case study: tourism and trade associated with Taquile weaving (Peru)

Case study 17, discusses the risks and benefits associated with tourism and trade projects on the island of Taquile, Peru. This case study can be used to introduce a discussion of the importance of mitigating risks associated with income-generating projects. It also underlines the importance of community participation in such projects, and how the community can benefit from them.

###### Slide 22.

Case study: commercialization of traditional knowledge about *Hoodia gordonii* as an appetite suppressant (South Africa and Namibia)

Some of the risks and possible mitigations are illustrated in Case study 18, which shows how benefit-sharing agreements can be negotiated between communities and commercial companies over indigenous knowledge. Even so, communities will not necessarily benefit, financially or otherwise, from the commercialization of their traditional knowledge.

###### Slide 23.

Case study: the *Runa Tupari* tourism project (Ecuador)

Case study 19, is an example of a community-based initiative to promote ICH safeguarding and sustainable socio-economic development through tourism in a rural area of Ecuador.

###### Slide 24.

Case study: Ugandan bark cloth

Case study 20, provides information about two separate initiatives to create broader international awareness of traditional skills and knowledge used in bark cloth making in Uganda while contributing to innovation in the use of traditional materials.

1. ICH” here refers to “intangible cultural heritage”. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . Frequently referred to as the Intangible Heritage Convention and, for the purpose of this Unit, simply the Convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . Xi-Sheng Xie et al., 2009, ‘A Case Report of an Effective Treatment for Diabetic Foot Ulcers with Integration of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Western Medicine’, *Journal of Diabetes and its Complications*, [Vol. 23, Issue 5](http://www.sciencedirect.com.ezproxy.uct.ac.za/science?_ob=PublicationURL&_tockey=%23TOC%235080%232009%23999769994%231474075%23FLA%23&_cdi=5080&_pubType=J&view=c&_auth=y&_acct=C000033878&_version=1&_urlVersion=0&_userid=635696&md5=a9e316a93feb9bff2dbd2fd56d49881e) (Sept.–Oct.), pp.360–64. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . Pacific Islands, Festivals as Catalysts – Commonwealth Statement on Culture and Development, p. 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . Lin Lee Loh-Lim, 2007, ‘Handicrafts in the Context of Sustainable Cultural Tourism’, UNESCO-EIIHCAP Regional Meeting, *Safeguarding Intangible Heritage and Sustainable Cultural Tourism: Opportunities and Challenges*, Hué, Viet Nam (11–13 Dec.). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . R. Wynberg et al., (eds), 2009, *Indigenous Peoples, Consent and Benefit Sharing: Lessons from the San-Hoodia Case*, Heidelberg, Springer Science+Business Media B.V., p. 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)