Unit 19

Developing an inventory framework where no system exists

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:

2.5 hours

Objective(s):

Develop participants’ ability to elaborate questions that will assist them in identifying and defining ICH elements for the purposes of an inventory, and then structure these questions according to a sample inventorying framework.

Description:

This unit covers the knowledge and skills required to elaborate an inventory framework. In the training process participants contrast traditional forms of ICH ‘inventorying’ with the community-based approach, relate inventorying to safeguarding ICH and propose and prioritize indicators required for identifying and defining ICH elements. Participants are asked to collectively develop questions to guide the inventorying process, which are then discussed in light of existing frameworks. The facilitator initiates a reflection on issues of ethics, free, prior and informed consent and data organization, but does not discuss them in-depth, as they are core subjects of other training units.

Proposed sequence:

* The facilitator chooses one or more elements. Participants are invited to propose questions that can be asked to obtain information on the element/s for inventorying purposes.
* The facilitator distributes the Unit 19 Hand-out and presents the sample framework.
* The facilitator reviews the questions one-by-one with the participants and to decide where they fit in the sample framework.
* Finally the facilitator leads a discussion on data collection and processing.

Supporting documents:

* Unit 19 Hand-out: Sample framework for organizing information on intangible cultural heritage elements.

Notes and suggestions

This unit is a key component of the community-based inventorying workshops. It is intended to provide a starting point for thinking about the most suitable choice of questions, methodologies and techniques to employ in community-based inventorying of ICH, building on what workshop participants already know and relating the subject to concrete ICH domains, elements and contexts which are of concern to them.

The facilitator should emphasize that it is for each State to decide how it wishes to carry out its inventorying. In fact, State Parties are free and encouraged to design their own inventories and to develop their own questionnaires; the framework simply offers a few suggestions, reflecting categories of data typical of many inventories, which can be adapted to the specific needs of each State or each institution responsible for inventorying. If the workshop is organized within the context of a concrete inventorying exercise, it may serve as a milestone for the development of the required framework.

This unit will be followed by an overview of methods and techniques. These techniques are then developed more fully in the subsequent units.

This unit can be oriented towards the field practicum in Unit 31 and its goals (e.g. expanding or concentrating on certain parts of the framework, or as a tool to better identify appropriate techniques for follow-up collection). Alternatively, it may be approached as a tool to be used by participants in future, larger inventorying efforts.

Finally, in helping participants to develop the framework, the facilitator should take into account the following aspects: knowledge and experience of workshop participants relating to ICH; information about the level of community involvement in past or ongoing inventorying exercises; the present level of community interest and consent for undertaking community-based inventorying to safeguard their ICH; and information on expectations and purpose regarding a community-based inventorying of their ICH.

Unit 19

DEVELOPING AN INVENTORY FRAMEWORK WHERE NO SYSTEM EXISTS

Facilitator’s narrative

#### Introduction

Intangible cultural heritage has existed among communities since time immemorial. However, when technical terms such as ICH are adopted to categorize intangible heritage, it can result in older versions being discarded. This is also true with inventorying exercises. Although institutions, communities and even individuals have safeguarded their intangible heritage in some form, it is common for workshop participants to indicate that no framework exists in their respective countries. This is mainly because they do not associate previous efforts with the concept of ‘inventorying’ intangible cultural heritage. It is therefore imperative that a facilitator point out examples that could constitute ‘an older version’ or form of inventorying. This is particularly relevant for people working in developing country museums, cultural centres, community libraries and so on, who in most cases have been involved in ethnographic work among communities for a very long time. Where they exist, these forms of documentation have to be acknowledged and appreciated as building blocks towards the whole inventorying process. The existence of an old form of inventorying may give the participants involved (mainly those from the implementing institution), greater motivation to carry the project forward, knowing that they are building upon an existing framework.

It is important that participants are encouraged to use local contexts to derive their understanding of an inventory form or framework. The facilitator should therefore endeavour to select one of the elements that have previously proven to be of interest to participants during discussions of domains or safeguarding measures. Similarly, the facilitator might choose an element that could be the object of the upcoming field practicum (e.g. an element that most participants know of but do not necessarily know well) or, if this workshop marks the beginning of a concrete inventorying activity, an element that is likely to form part of that specific exercise. The element should be sufficiently complex to stimulate the participants’ curiosity and provoke a number of questions in their minds, but should not immediately lead to an excessive level of detail. For this exercise, it is also best to avoid elements that have strong associations of class, caste or clan, or those whose practice has been or continues to be subject to social stigma or governmental restriction. There will be time later to deal with difficult problems of taboo, stigma or stereotype: the purpose of this exercise is rather to stimulate and channel the participants’ curiosity and to build knowledge essential for inventorying an ICH element with the communities concerned for their well-being and that of future generations.

As discussed in Unit 6 Identification and inventorying, Article 12 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage[[1]](#footnote-1) requires States Parties to draw up one or more inventories of the ICH present on their territory. Inventorying, or inventory-making, involves collecting and presenting information on ICH elements in a systematic way. The States Parties may organize ICH inventories in whatever manner seems most appropriate to them. ICH inventories should be comprehensive and regularly updated. Inclusion of information on a specific element in an inventory of ICH should be preceded by the identification and definition of elements of ICH in close cooperation with the communities and groups concerned and – if appropriate – with NGOs.

This unit should be thought of as a springboard for the identification and definition of elements of ICH, to be followed by the collection and presentation of ICH elements. (Unit 23 is geared towards a discussion of relevant methods and techniques for collecting ICH elements).

It cannot be emphasized enough that the Convention requires inventorying to contribute to safeguarding, which suggests that the state of viability of the inventoried elements should be assessed and indicated. Inventories may also contribute to awareness-raising, one of the main objectives of the Convention. Drawing up inventories will always remain a work-in-progress, as the nature of ICH is dynamic with elements constantly re-created by the practising communities (Article 12.1).

An inventory can be disseminated as a paper list, a multimedia database or another type of publication. At the request of the communities concerned and in compliance with human rights, access to certain types of information may be restricted.

#### Step 1

Attributes of an element: what do we want to know?

Ask the participants to generate a list of questions that can be asked to obtain information about an element.

If the participants are unable to supply any questions, guiding questions like those below can be used as a catalyst. It is, however, preferable to let the participants devise their own questions, which the facilitator can record for later use in the UNESCO format provided after this exercise.

Another approach that can be adopted when participants become stuck is to ask them to switch to another ICH element about which they are curious.

The main challenge for the facilitator is to avoid influencing participants in terms of which factors to focus on, while at the same time encouraging them to refer back to the key concepts of the Convention (ICH, safeguarding, transmission and recreation). The facilitator’s task is rather to stimulate discussions such that participants themselves supply the indicators for inventory. It is acceptable to derive questions from various elements, rather than focusing on only one element, thereby generalizing them.

In carrying out this step, the facilitator might encourage participants to start reflecting on how to respect ethical requirements and community consent in the inventorying process (if they have not already done so). These aspects were briefly mentioned in Unit 7, and are further discussed in Units 21 and 22. In addition, the participants may also wish to raise some initial questions regarding how to process data (and create a repository) following collection. This aspect is addressed more fully in Unit 23, which provides an overview of information-generation methods and techniques, and Unit 33 on organizing information. The facilitator will return to the framework at different moments, notably in the context of the field practicum or initial fieldwork (in the case of a planned inventorying exercise).

*Key observation*: When participants fail to supply questions the main reason is frequently minimal interest in the element for various reasons. It is advisable to choose various elements so that almost all participants can take part.

Questions to ask if participants are stuck:

* (What is the name of the element?) Name the element
* What is the geographic location of the element?
* What is the supposed origin of element?
* Who would you ask for information about it?
* Is it practised? If so, who are the custodians?
* Is it widely known or little known?
* How do practitioners learn? How do they teach?
* What, if any, are the threats to enacting the element or to its continued transmission?
* Does it require raw materials, artefacts or tools, or a special place for its practice?
* Can it be performed anytime, or only at certain times?
* What other traditions are associated with it?
* What, if any, are the measures undertaken to address current or foreseeable threats to the continued practice and transmission of the element?
* To what extent is access public and how far is it restricted?

Someone operating a computer with an LCD projector or writing on a whiteboard should assist the facilitator. But the assistant need not necessarily transcribe the questions exactly as asked. In many cases, the facilitator will first paraphrase the question or reformulate it in a more general or open-ended way before transcription. For example, if a participant suggests the yes-no question ‘Are women allowed to practice XXX?’ the facilitator might rephrase the question as, ‘Who is allowed to practice XXX (women, men, old, young, etc.)?’ If a participant suggests the question ‘Can you do XXX during the rainy season?’ the facilitator might rephrase it as ‘During which season or seasons can you do XXX?’ Similarly, questions can often be generalized, rather than referring specifically to the element under discussion. The facilitator should avoid posing questions or anticipating answers, but can nudge the questions into a suitably general formulation.

The facilitator should solicit questions on the same element, or a second or third element, for approximately 45 to 60 minutes. These can be supplied in any order and are transcribed without categorization. Subsequent questions on a similar topic can, if possible, be grouped together or connected through lines or arrows. Once 20‑30 general, open-ended questions have been collected, the discussion can move on to step 2 (below).

Example 1: results of step 1

Questions posed by participants in a community-based inventorying workshop on the cultural space of gongs, in Dak Nong, Viet Nam, August 2007:

* Are there any gong sets in your village? How many sets?
* In your village, do you need to play gongs when drinking rice wine?
* What are the ancient gong melodies? How many can your community play?
* When gongs are broken is any ritual is carried out? How are broken gongs treated?
* Does your family still worship the god/holy spirit of the gong?
* Who is not allowed to play gongs?
* Who can teach others to play gongs? At what age?
* Who will lead the blessings during the festival where gongs are performed?
* Do your family and your children want to keep gongs in your house?
* Who are the master artists who still play gongs in your community?
* How many sets are played during a festival?
* How should gongs be stored? How can gongs be protected from damage and detuning?
* Are gongs played with other instruments?
* Where did you first learn to play gongs? At what age?
* What rules exist for using new gongs? Are there any rituals?

#### Step 2

The facilitator now distributes the sample framework for inventorying (Unit 19 Hand-out). This topic has already been discussed in some depth in Unit 6, but given its importance the facilitator may wish to briefly review the following information, depending on the particular group of participants.

The Unit 19 Hand-out presents general categories of information that would typically form part of an inventory. *The facilitator should emphasize that it is for each State to decide how it wishes to carry out its inventorying*. In fact, State Parties are free and encouraged to design their own inventories and to develop their own questionnaires; the framework simply offers a few suggestions, reflecting categories of data that are typical of many inventories and can be adapted to the specific needs of each State or each institution responsible for inventorying.

After presenting the sample framework, its purposes and limitations, the facilitator returns to the questions formulated by the participants. Taking each question in turn, the facilitator asks the participants where it would fit within the sample framework. If using a computer and projector, the facilitator may prepare a table beforehand (see example 2) with the left column presenting the categories of the framework. Each question is then assigned to the most appropriate category. If working with a whiteboard, consider each question in turn then indicate alongside the corresponding number from the framework. Once each question has been assigned to its appropriate category, the facilitator returns to the top and asks participants to elaborate additional questions for each category of the sample framework.

By the end of the exercise, workshop participants will have developed their own instrument for inventorying the particular element(s) or domain(s) that served as the focus of the exercise. If the questions are formulated in general terms, they can easily be adapted to many other elements and domains, once participants have understood the relation between the basic categories of information in the sample framework and the specific kinds of questions needed to elicit such information.

Finally, there should be a discussion on methods of data collection and processing. This topic is covered in the following units (Units 23 to 28), but is of particular importance if no repository has yet been created for data entry. If no such place exists such information would stay within the community and not necessarily feed into larger processes.

Example 2: results of step 2

Framework for inventorying elements of intangible cultural heritage with additional questions formulated by the members of the workshop in ‘Community-based inventorying of the gong culture of Dak Nong Province, Viet Nam’, August 2007.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Sample framework | Questions elaborated in Dak Nong |
| **1.** | **Identification of the element/heritage** |
| 1.1 | Name of the ICH element, as used by the community concerned | * What do your villagers call the element/heritage? Does it have another name?
* What do people in other regions call the element?
 |
| 1.2. | Short, informative title of the ICH element (including indication of the ICH domain(s) concerned) |  |
| 1.3. | Community(ies) concerned | * Which ethnic group do you belong to? Which local area?
* Which other ethnic groups are you related to?
* Do any other communities use the same element as you do?
 |
| 1.4. | Physical location(s)/distribution frequency of enactment of the ICH element | * What is the scope of this element?
* When are gongs used? On what occasion?
* How often are gongs played? Why?
* In which festival are gongs played the most?
* How many sets of gongs are played during a festival?
* When are gongs not used?
 |
| 1.5. | Short description of the ICH element |  |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Sample framework | Questions elaborated in Dak Nong |
| **2.** | **Characteristics of the element** |  |
| 2.1.  | Practitioner(s)/performer(s) – name(s), age, gender, social status, and/or professional category, etc. | * Who are the master artists who still play gongs in your community?
* In your community, who are the best gong players?
* Who is the first owner of the gong set?
* Who taught you how to play gongs?
* Who is not allowed to play gongs?
* Who can both play gongs and perform other musical instruments? Can you name some of these instruments?
 |
| 2.2. | Other people in the community who are less directly involved, but who contribute to the practice of the ICH element or facilitate its practice or transmission (e.g. preparing stages, costumes, training, supervising) | * Who will lead the blessings during the festival where gongs are performed?
* Who is gong playing transmitted to?
* Who provides the food during the festival where gongs are performed?
* Who will do the cooking?
* Are there people in your village who know how to tune the gongs?
* Who will take part in dancing performances and who will use other musical instruments during the festivals where gongs are played?
 |
| 2.3. | Language(s) or language register(s) involved | * What is the language used in prayers or blessings?
* Are there any special words/phrases used in prayers or blessings?
 |
| 2.4. | Tangible elements (such as instruments, specific clothing or space(s), ritual objects) (if any) associated with the enactment or transmission of the ICH element | * How old is the set of gongs?
* What are the ancient values of the set of gongs?
* How many generations have used this set of gongs? How did your ancestors acquire the set of gongs?
* What are the remaining gongs? What types? Name of each type? Meanings and methods of playing each gong type? What material?
* What costumes/accessories/jewellery accompany each performance?
* Where are gongs played?
* Are gongs played with other instruments?
* How are gongs played? What tool is used to play the gongs?
* Where are the gongs stored/kept?
* Are any objects/materials not placed near gongs?
* How are the gongs stored? How can gongs be protected from damage and detuning?
 |
|  | Sample framework | Questions elaborated in Dak Nong |
| 2.5. | Other intangible elements (if any) associated with the enactment or transmission of the ICH element | * What are the ancient gong melodies? How many can your community play?
* Are there any other associated dances or forms of music?
* How do the gong melodies serve the festivals and religious ceremonies?
* What is the origin of each gong melody?
* What prayers or blessings are accompanied by gong playing?
* Are there any taboos in using gongs? When are gongs not used?
* What are the rules when using new gongs? Are there any rituals?
* When gongs are broken is any ritual carried out? How are broken gongs treated?
* When purchasing new gongs are any blessings or rituals carried out?
* Are there any taboos in playing gongs? Are there any days that gongs should not be played?
* Why are gongs buried with deceased people?
 |
| 2.6. | Customary practices (if any) governing access to the ICH element or to aspects of it | * Are there any factors of the gong culture that are not passed on to the next generation?
* Is there any factor of gong culture that is only passed on under special conditions?
* Is there anyone who is not allowed to learn to play gong?
* When are gongs not taught/learned?
 |
| 2.7. | Modes of transmission to others in the community | * Who can teach others to play gong? At what age?
* Who can learn to play gong? What age can they start?
* Where can gongs be taught? And how can they be taught?
* Where did you first learn to play gongs? At what age?
* How did you learn to play gongs?
* How do you teach your children to play gongs?
* Which form of transmission is the easiest?
* Do the learners have to pay/exchange anything to learn how to play gongs?
 |
| 2.8. | Relevant organizations (community organizations, NGOs, others) (if any) | * What are the activities organized in the common house?
* What activities/approach does the local department of culture do to preserve the gong culture?
* What are the roles of the chief of the village?
 |
|  | Sample framework | Questions elaborated in Dak Nong |
| **3.** | **State of the element : viability** |  |
| 3.1. | Threats (if any) to the continued enactment of the ICH element within the relevant community(ies) | * Do people in your village still play gongs? Why?
* Do your family and your children want to keep gongs in your house?
* Does your family still worship the god/holy spirit of the gong?
* Why does your family not take part in the gong festival in the community?
* Do people sell gongs in your village?
* Are there any ancient traditions that are/are not practised in the community?
* What rituals attached to gong culture no long exist? Why?
* How does the new socio-economic model affect the life of gong culture?
* How does your new life affect the practice of gong culture?
* Is the common house suitable for practising gongs?
 |
| 3.2. | Threats (if any) to the continued transmission of the ICH element within the relevant community(ies) | * Do children in the village enjoy learning to play gongs? Why?
* Is there any government policy/regulation that affects the teaching/learning/practising of gongs?
* Does religion have negative effects on the gong culture?
* What leisure activities do the young people in the village enjoy more than learning to play gongs?
* Are there people in your village who have the knowledge and skills to teach others to play gongs?
 |
| 3.3. | Threats to the sustainability of access to tangible elements and resources (if any) associated with the ICH element | * Are there any gong sets in your village? How many sets?
* Is there any space/place in your village for gong practice?
* Are there any natural resources to serve for gong practice?
* What financial resources are available to organize gong practice?
 |
| 3.4. | Viability of other intangible heritage elements (if any) associated with the ICH element | * Are there any factors that indirectly affect the gong culture?
* In your village do you need to play gongs when drinking rice wine?
* Do people in your village play gongs in the new social setting of the community?
 |
|  | Sample framework | Questions elaborated in Dak Nong |
| 3.5. | Safeguarding or other measures in place (if any) to address any of these threats and encourage future enactment and transmission of the ICH element | * Does your community have any measures to safeguard the gong culture?
* Do the local authorities have any measures to safeguard the gong culture?
 |
| **4.** | **Data restrictions and permissions** |  |
| 4.1. | Consent from and involvement of the community(ies) concerned in data gathering |  |
| 4.2. | Restrictions, if any, on the use of or access to collected data |  |
| 4.3. | Resource person(s): name and status or affiliation |  |
| 4.4. | Date and place of data gathering |  |
| **5.** | **References concerning the ICH element (if any)** |
| 5.1. | Literature (if any) |  |
| 5.2. | Audiovisual materials, recordings etc. in archives, museums and private collections (if any) |  |
| 5.3. | Documentary material and objects in archives, museums and private collections (if any) |  |
| **6.** | **Inventorying data** |  |
| 6.1. | Person(s) who compiled the inventory entry |  |
| 6.2. | Proof of consent of the community(ies) concerned for (a) inventorying the element, and (b) for the information to be provided in the inventory |  |
| 6.3. | Date of entering the data into the inventory |  |

Note to facilitator:

The facilitator may be working with participants who understand the local cultural context and may be nostalgic or emotionally attached to specific elements. It is possible that this will cloud participants’ research/documentation skills. In certain instances they may unconsciously ask questions that address individual, rather than inventory needs. The facilitator should thus encourage participants to place themselves in the situation of someone who knows nothing of the culture, and therefore endeavours to ask relatively neutral questions.

However, when workshop participants are from government departments and/or participants from local communities, the presenter should allow room for grassroots communities ‘to tell their story’ through inventories. Questions asked should therefore provide room for local community members to bring out all aspects of an element that might be included in the inventory.

Further observation from preceding workshops on inventorying intangible cultural heritage has also shown that some communities derive a sense of empowerment from the project objectives. In some cases individual participants may want to use the workshop as a platform to air their views on restoring a particular form of ICH that they believe is ignored or overlooked by the State, but that has the potential to reinforce a particular community’s cultural identity. Communities that have experienced oppression or discrimination are likely to express stronger views than communities that have always enjoyed the full respect of their cultural heritage and practices.

Such issues commonly surface in workshops. It is important therefore for the facilitator to gauge how much attention to give these issues (which are often politically sensitive), and how to ensure that the workshop focuses on its mandate – using the experiences to learn how to handle the process of inventorying. One method is to request that participants relate issues to the topic at hand – coming up with components of an inventory. It is also useful to emphasize that the workshop is meant to teach various communities methodologies that they will be able to use in the future to inventory the elements that surround the heritage which concerns them.

Various questions will have to be considered concerning the organization and management of inventorying in a specific country (some of which are not easily answered). The following questions were previously proposed in Unit 6 (Hand-out), but the facilitator may wish to raise them again here:

* Will there be one or more than one inventory?
* If more than one inventory is envisaged, what will be the relationship between the different inventories?
* How will inventories be set up – by administrative entity, by community, by domain or according to other criteria? If there is more than one inventory, will they be set up along similar lines?
* How will the inventorying exercise and its later updating be financed?
* Who will develop the questionnaire(s) for the inventory(ies)? (A model for such a questionnaire is presented below.)
* What information will be collected on the elements to be inventoried?
* What definition of ICH will be used?
* What system of domains or categories will be used?
* How comprehensive is the inventorying exercise intended to be?
* Who will facilitate the collection and generation of the information?
* How will relevant communities and/or groups be identified?
* How will relevant communities be informed about and involved in the data collection?
* How will relevant non-governmental organizations and institutions be involved in the exercise, if at all?
* Who will control the input of data onto the inventory(ies)?
* Who will manage and control access to the information?
* How will sensitive information be managed to ensure respect for customary restrictions on access?
* How will elements that are shared by more than one community be dealt with?
* How will elements that also are found outside the country be dealt with?
* How will the inventories be published or disseminated?
* How will change be accommodated and updating be organized?
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)