Unit 19

Hand-out:  
Sample framework for organizing information on intangible cultural heritage elements

Each State Party is required by the Intangible Heritage Convention (Article 12) to draw up one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) present in its territory *in a manner geared to its own situation*; this leaves considerable leeway. However, the Convention and the Operational Directives (ODs) are clear that inventories:

* Should only present elements defined and identified with the participation of the communities and groups concerned and relevant NGOs;
* Should try and ensure the widest possible participation in the inventorying process of communities, groups and individuals concerned (OD 80);
* Should be designed in such a way that they may contribute to safeguarding;
* Should cover the ICH present in the territory of the State Party concerned;
* Should be regularly updated and therefore should be developed in such a way that they can be easily updated;
* Should not violate customary practices concerning access to ICH, and any associated places, persons and materials; and
* Should not include information on an element without the consent of the community, group or individual concerned.

Inventorying is an important step towards safeguarding, and in some cases, towards nomination to the Lists of the Convention, as only ICH elements that appear on an inventory of the State Party concerned may be nominated. Inventories drawn up by States Parties do not have to employ the same definition of ICH as the Convention. However, any elements nominated to one of the Convention’s lists will have to comply with that definition and the other inscription criteria laid down in the Operational Directives of the Convention (OD 1‑2).

Inventorying will be an ongoing process in most States because of the large number of ICH elements requiring inventorying in all regions of the world, and the necessity to regularly update inventories.

Inventorying is not a simple listing of intangible heritage elements, although the information provided in an inventory may be quite limited. It is a process that raises awareness and identifies elements with impaired viability that may lead to safeguarding. It can also be used to establish relationships between various stakeholders who may be involved in later safeguarding efforts. Inventorying may boost the sense of identity and continuity of the communities concerned and will certainly create greater awareness about ICH both within and outside of these communities.

#### Sample framework for organizing information on ICH elements[[1]](#footnote-1)

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| **1.** | **IDENTIFICATION of the ICH element** |
| 1.1. | Name of the ICH element, as used by the community concerned |
| 1.2. | Short, informative title of the ICH element (including indication of the ICH domain(s) concerned) |
| 1.3. | Community(ies) concerned |
| 1.4. | Physical location(s)/distribution frequency of enactment of the ICH element |
| 1.5. | Short description of the ICH element (preferably no more than 200 words) |
| **2.** | **Characteristics of the ICH element** |
| 2.1. | Practitioners(s)/performer(s) directly involved in the enactment or practice of the ICH element (include name, age, gender, professional category, etc) |
| 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) |
| 2.3. | Language(s) or language register(s) involved |
| 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 |
| 2.5. | Other intangible elements (if any) associated with the enactment or transmission of the ICH element |
| 2.6. | Customary practices (if any) governing access to the ICH element or to aspects of it |
| 2.7. | Modes of transmission to others in the community |
| 2.8. | Relevant organizations (community organizations, NGOs, others) (if any) |
| **3.** | **State of the ICH element: viability (see comment below)** |
| 3.1. | Threats (if any) to the continued enactment of the ICH element within the relevant community(ies) |
| 3.2. | Threats (if any) to the continued transmission of the ICH element within the relevant community(ies) |
| 3.3. | Threats to the sustainability of access to tangible elements and resources (if any) associated with the ICH element |
| 3.4. | Viability of other intangible heritage elements (if any) associated with the ICH element |
| 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 |
| **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(s) and place(s) 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 |

#### Further comments and clarifications

Points 1.1 and 1.3: The community concerned

Refer to Unit 3.

‘The **community** concerned’ refers to a group of people that recognize an ICH element as part of their cultural heritage. Sometimes the group in question may be very large: France indicated that all French people constitute the community of bearers of the ‘gastronomic meal of the French’ (inscribed on the Representative List in 2010). The element may be part of a larger set of ICH expressions with which a community identifies itself, but in which not all members of the community are necessarily actively involved. There may be a limited group of individuals who are active in enacting and transmitting a specific element, while the other members of the community identify with the element and participate as a knowledgeable and appreciative audience.

The Convention does not define the concept of ‘community’. Those who prepared the Convention agreed that one person may belong to more than one ICH community and that persons during their lifetime may join different communities, or leave a community. One and the same person, for instance, may associate him or herself with a national community, a regional community, an ethno-linguistic community and, for instance, a supra-national religious community, or with a group of people who are involved in the practice of one or more ICH elements.

Point 1.4: Distribution

Refer to Unit 7, as well as notions of community in Unit 3.

ICH elements may be associated with one specific location where their practice or expression is enacted and transmitted. For example, the Belgian carnival of Binche, inscribed on the Representative List in 2008 is limited to the town of Binche. In other cases, the geographical area is much broader: for example, the Mongolian tradition of telling the ‘Long story’ (inscribed on the Representative List in 2008) is practised throughout Mongolian speaking areas in Mongolia itself and in neighbouring China.

Point 2.6: Customary practices governing access to the element

Refer to Unit 7, as well as Unit 2.

In many cases, only specific people can traditionally perform a certain practice or expression. Often, specific roles may only be enacted by men, women, older people or by those having a specific background. There may also be restrictions on audience attendance. The Convention wishes such restrictions to be respected, if that is the wish of the communities concerned. Sometimes in safeguarding projects community members propose, and the community at large accepts, that specific roles can be fulfilled by other categories of persons than was traditionally the case.

Article 13.d(ii) of the Convention requests States Parties to take measures that aim at *ensuring access to the ICH while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of that heritage*. If ICH practices, for example, cannot be attended by everyone (e.g. not by men), but are recorded or documented, there has to be a discussion with the communities and groups concerned as to whether the recordings can be made accessible or shown in places that are open to all. Recordings can of course only be made with the explicit prior and informed consent of the tradition-bearers concerned.

Section 3: Viability

Refer to Units 2 and 3.

Viability refers to the likelihood that the ICH element will be practised in the future; threats to its viability include anything that may prevent its enactment or transmission.

Section 5: References

Refer to Unit 6.

Inventorying refers to the identification and definition of ICH; it is different from documentation or research. For insertion in an inventory no extensive research or documentation is required. If versions of the element have already been recorded, studied or otherwise written about, then the appropriate references can be indicated in this section. Any information concerning the existence of a collection of objects or instruments that are associated with *living* ICH expressions or practices can also be entered under this section.

1. . This form is adapted from the one presented on UNESCO’s website. States Parties are free and encouraged to design their own inventories and to develop their own questionnaires: this form just offers a few suggestions. Please note that inventories are meant to identify and define, not to fully document ICH elements. The answers to questions 1 to 5 should, therefore, preferably be quite brief. (http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00080). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)