CASE STUDY 52

Inventorying intangible cultural heritage in Bawi

Disclaimer: the facts in this scenario are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance with actual facts is mere coincidence.

#### Notes to the facilitator

This case study outlines the dual system of inventorying ICH in Bawi. Participants in the workshops should be encouraged to use this case study to reflect on different ways of inventorying ICH in the spirit of the Convention in their own contexts if the inventorying process has not yet started; or to discuss processes already in place. They could, for example, use the case study to:

* Comment on the advantages and challenges associated with research-driven approaches to inventorying and the use of existing research data in creating ICH inventories (for example, going back to communities to discuss updating and to renew or gain consent for an element’s inclusion);
* Consider the advantages and challenges associated with the model in which communities compile their own dossiers for submission to ICH inventories (for example, capacity building in communities);
* Consider how community members/practitioners might work together and with NGOs where necessary to identify elements of their ICH and create inventory entries;
* Consider the reasons why States might choose to recognize or compile more than one inventory of ICH in their territory, and to consider the implications of doing so (for example, the use of different criteria, or how to reconcile elements being on more than one inventory); and
* Consider appropriate ways of addressing challenges that may arise during the inventorying process in their contexts (for example, challenges in inventorying all the ICH that is found in their country or countries).

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#### Introduction

There are two separate inventories of ICH identified in Bawi. The first is the ‘Mekulanon Database’ and the second is an inventory called ‘Declarations of Cultural Heritage of Bawi’.

Both inventories are managed by the Ministry of Culture through the Institute for Intangible Heritage (IFIH), which is responsible for ensuring the safeguarding of the ICH in Bawi, and for inventorying it. IFIH has technical staff with ample knowledge of Bawi’s ICH and significant field experience, working with communities. IFIH has contributed to safeguarding efforts in the following ways:

1. Giving official commendations to artists and groups that have devoted significant effort to ICH safeguarding;
2. Disseminating research conducted by IFIH in books or documentaries, and publishing music and oral narratives to raise awareness about different ICH elements in Bawi;
3. Promoting ICH-related research, and encouraging networking between researchers in universities and research centres, as well as technical or financial research cooperation agreements, both national and international;
4. Providing communities and other agencies with information about ICH elements and tools to promote ICH safeguarding; and
5. Providing counselling and training to communities and practitioners about national regulations with respect to their ICH.

#### The Mekulanon Database

Between 2004 and 2009 the Ministry of Culture in Bawi surveyed the natural sites associated with the Bawi Nature Reserve. In gathering information to support a possible World Heritage nomination they recognized the importance of including oral histories associated with the communities surrounding the Bawi Nature Reserve. They collected data related to ICH practised by 10 communities currently living within the area. First, between 2004 and 2006, basic information was collected on ICH in domains such as crafts, the calendar of festivals, music, dance, traditional medicine, and oral expressions. This was done by means of interviews with community representatives and key informants, a survey sheet and audiovisual documentation. Then, from 2008, more in-depth studies of ICH in this area were added to the database.

The Mekulanon Database now constitutes the first of the ICH inventories recognized by the Bawian government for the purposes of the ICH Convention. It has been organized according to territorial categories (regional and local) and domains of ICH (e.g., visual and creative arts, textiles and garments, music and dance, oral tradition, culinary culture, rites and ceremonies, festivities, traditional systems of local authorities, ethnobotany and ethnomedicine). The information is stored in a digital database managed by the IFIH. This database is periodically updated when in-depth studies of ICH are carried out.

#### Declarations of Cultural Heritage of Bawi

The second inventory recognized by the Bawian government for the purposes of the Convention is called Declarations of Cultural Heritage of Bawi, which is referred to as a ‘national intangible heritage list’. As of 2015, Bawi has included 150 items in the inventory, which is maintained and updated by IFIH, and posted on the website of the Ministry of Culture. The first entry was made in 1985, and a large number of ICH elements have been included every year since 2003, when the Intangible Heritage Convention was adopted by UNESCO.

The inventory includes practices, representations, expressions and knowledge (mainly from the domains ‘music and dance’ and ‘festivals and celebration rituals’) that communities, groups and individuals in Bawi acknowledge as part of their cultural heritage. The inventory is organized according to ICH domains as established by Bawian legislation. Domains specifically included in the inventory are, inter alia:

* Indigenous languages and oral traditions
* Rituals and traditional festivities
* Music and dance
* Art and craft
* Traditional customs and regulations
* Traditional political institutions
* Traditional knowledge and technologies
* Skills, knowledge and practices such as traditional medicine and cuisine
* Cultural spaces related to cultural practices

The Ministry of Culture requires that each request for inscription of an element in the inventory is backed up by a file of information prepared and presented by the community of bearers, including an explicit statement of informed consent and approval for the nomination of the element to the inventory, using an application guide that is posted on the Ministry of Culture’s website. The aim is to ensure that communities themselves systematize the information on expressions of their cultural heritage, and that they gain official recognition for their cultural expressions to aid in safeguarding.

The file must describe the essential characteristics of the ICH element, its importance and significance and its impact on the reinforcement of collective, local, regional, ethnic, communal and/or national identity. In the file, the geographic spaces in which the ICH is practised must be clearly defined, as well as the group that carries out these practices. The dossier has to include information on intergenerational transmission dynamics, the material and technological resources associated with the expression and, if applicable, any evidence of historical continuity.

In order to be included in the inventory, the ICH element has to form part of a tradition of verifiable duration, and be actively practised in the rituals or everyday life of a community today. The ministry places special emphasis on ICH expressions whose viability is threatened by external factors.

The IFIH evaluates each file presented to the Ministry of Culture and issues a report endorsing its inclusion in the inventory, or not. Elements are added to the ‘Declarations’ inventory by the Ministry of Culture; a national decree issued by the Vice-Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Industries designates the element as ‘cultural heritage of Bawi’.

The IFIH has completed more than 20 in-depth research projects on Bawian ICH, and has contributed to awareness raising about that ICH in the communities concerned. It has a photographic and audiovisual archive that is accessible to all. However, IFIH has limited financial resources to carry out the extensive work of inventorying and safeguarding ICH in the country, particularly in the Bawian Nature Reserve due to geographic and logistical difficulties that restrict access.

#### Other work related to inventorying in Bawi

The Vice-Ministry of Interculturalism has been recently created within the Ministry of Culture. Its main function with respect to intangible cultural heritage is to formulate policies to promote social integration, intercultural awareness and appreciation of Bawi's multicultural diversity at a national level. The Directorate of Traditional Knowledge at the Vice-Ministry of Interculturalism is conducting a pilot project in neighbouring regions to identify and recognize senior citizens who possess skills and knowledge related to Bawi’s intangible heritage, especially in terms of oral tradition. The project aims to make this information available in the curriculum of local schools.

Various NGOs work with communities in the Bawi Nature Reserve and assist them, including preparing documentation for inventorying. The National Heritage Society, for instance, is a NGO committed to research and application of traditional medicines of the Bawi Nature Reserve in combination with modern scientific knowledge.

The Directorate of Creativity and Technology (DCT) is responsible for implementing Bawian law 28 for the protection of the collective knowledge of indigenous peoples linked to biological resources.

#### Questions to consider:

1. There are two ICH inventories in Bawi. Why do you think this dual inventory system has been used in Bawi? What are the differences between these two inventories?
2. What institutions have helped communities inventorying their ICH in Bawi? What challenges do these institutions face in doing so? How could such challenges be addressed?
3. How have communities been involved in inventorying their ICH in Bawi? What challenges (if any) might communities face in compiling their own files for the inventory? How could such challenges be addressed?