



# Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals in the Pacific



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Cluster Office for the Pacific States

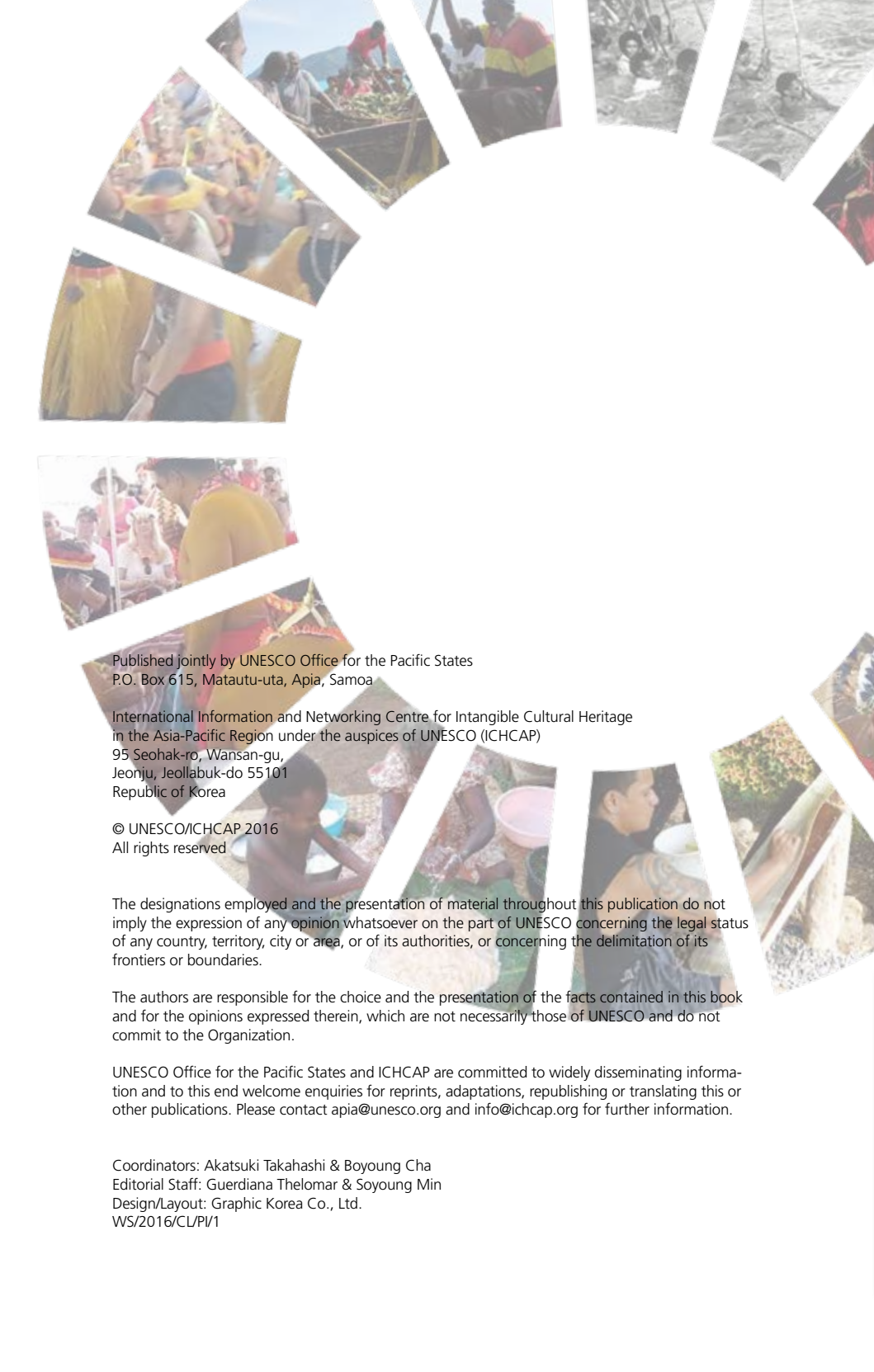
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International Information and Networking Centre  
for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region  
under the auspices of UNESCO



Published jointly by UNESCO Office for the Pacific States  
P.O. Box 615, Matautu-uta, Apia, Samoa

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in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP)  
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WS/2016/CL/PI/1



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# Introduction

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN Member States on 25 September 2015, is an action plan for tackling the most challenging issues of our world today. The hope is that within the next fifteen years, the sustainable development goals (SDGs) will encourage universal efforts to end all forms of poverty and ensure that no one is left behind.

The methods and practices to accomplish these goals will vary depending on the context. In the Pacific region, incorporating intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is crucial to accomplish any of the SDGs since it plays an important role as a “driver, enabler and guarantee of sustainable development.”<sup>1</sup>

Although each nation in the Pacific has its own diverse ICH, they all share a sense of longing for sustainable development and community well-being. Traditional and local knowledge have always played a pivotal role in protecting clean water supplies, coral reefs, and rainforests; healing the sick through traditional medicine; and building homes resistant to climate change. Ensuring the success of the SDGs in the Pacific will require an understanding of how ICH can be incorporated in the SDGs from the local perspective.

<sup>1</sup>

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United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. 2014 Edition. Paris: UNESCO, 2014.

# Ways ICH Can Help Achieve the SDGs in the Pacific





Young boy playing traditional drum in Port Moresby, PNG  
© UNESCO/A.Takahashi



**SDG**  
1 and 2

- \* Building upon local knowledge and practices related to traditional farming, fishing, food gathering, and food preservation and incorporating them into modern practices instead of depending on imported foods
- \* Adopting measures to recognize and respect the customary rights of communities and groups to their respective land and sea ecosystems and help promote biodiversity



Beqa villagers traditional fish drive, 1947  
© National Archives of Fiji



Young man demonstrating skills of climbing a coconut tree  
© UNESCO/G.Thelomar



**3** GOOD HEALTH  
AND WELL-BEING**SDG**  

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3

- \* Supporting research and training on the diverse health care practices of traditional birth attendants and healers
- \* Preserving traditional and organic ways of food cultivation, fishing, and cooking; examples include a traditional earth oven that serves as a healthy alternative because it promotes farm-to-table lifestyles that decrease reliance on artificial food processing



*Umu*, a Samoan earth oven, preparation  
© UNESCO/A.Takahashi

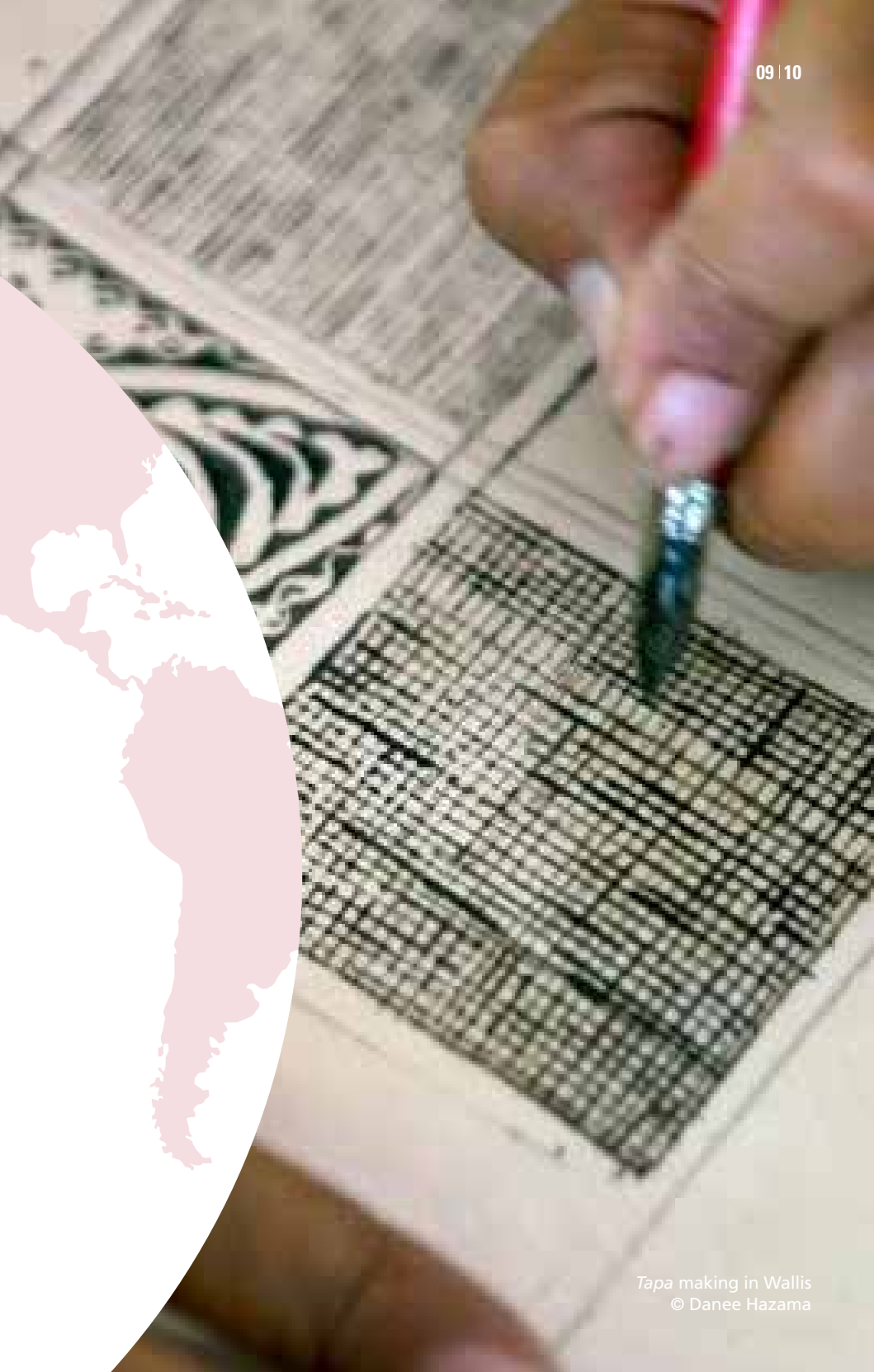


SDG  
4

- \* Valuing and supporting traditional educational methods, such as the master-apprentice relationships involved with learning traditional navigation systems
- \* Using ICH and local languages in formal and non-formal education systems



Larry Raigetel of Waa'gey observes as a student demonstrates knowledge of the star compass used by Yapese navigators  
© Stefan M. Krause





SDG  
5 and 10

- \* Understanding the diverse gender roles within a community
- \* Enhancing and recognizing women's traditional knowledge and skills through regional and national qualification systems



French Polynesian Tapa-making © UNESCO



Young woman beginning the process of making *siapo* cloth in Samoa  
© UNESCO/G.Thelomar



**6** CLEAN WATER  
AND SANITATION



**7** AFFORDABLE AND  
CLEAN ENERGY



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES  
AND COMMUNITIES

**SDG**

**6, 7, 11**

**12, 13, 14 and 15**



**12** RESPONSIBLE  
CONSUMPTION  
AND PRODUCTION



**13** CLIMATE  
ACTION



**14** LIFE  
BELOW WATER

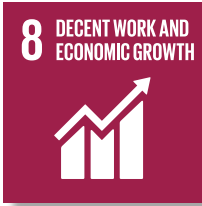


**15** LIFE  
ON LAND

- \* Understanding diverse traditional water management systems
- \* Supporting research and revitalization of built-in resilience of indigenous architecture
- \* Recognizing and valuing traditional and sustainable methods of protecting the land and sea
- \* Recognizing navigation communities as bearers of traditional knowledge about nature and the universe as it relates to traditional wayfinding systems in the Pacific



*Avai, Traditional men's house in Palau*  
© UNESCO/A.Takahashi



SDG  
8 and 9

- \* Supporting sustainable livelihoods using ICH (performing arts and traditional craftsmanship) through community-based organizations and cooperatives (e.g. women's committees and youth committees at the village level)
- \* Mobilizing various sectors to ensure the inclusive methodologies of assisting youth to secure decent work and productive employment by the use of traditional skills
- \* Safeguarding the traditional safety nets that are historically nurtured by gift-giving practices



Traditional baskets in the Solomon Islands  
© UNESCO/A. Takahashi





Traditional dance from Tanna Tafea province, Vanuatu  
© UNESCO/A.Takahashi



Settling a customary conflict in Ulighembi village, East Sepik province, PNG  
© Steven Winduo



**SDG**  
16 and 17

- \* Supporting the mutual reinforcement of traditional chieftain systems and modern systems of governance
- \* Safeguarding ICH with the collaboration of all stakeholders, such as ICH bearers and practitioners, governments, traditional leaders, civil society organizations, community-based organizations, academia, and private businesses



Samoa chief and fine mats © UNESCO/G.Thelomar

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