Unit 5

**raising awareness**

**participant’s text**

This unit deals with raising awareness about intangible cultural heritage (ICH). It covers the following topics:

* The purpose of awareness-raising.
* How awareness can be raised, and about what issues.
* Who are the key stakeholders and audiences for awareness-raising.
* How negative consequences of awareness-raising can be avoided.

Relevant entries in Participant’s text Unit 3 include: ‘Awareness raising’,

‘Decontextualization’ and ‘Emblem of the Convention’.

Examples relevant to this unit can be found in Case studies 2–5.

5.1 Purpose of awareness raising

ICH-related policies and regulations have existed in some countries since the 1950s, especially in the East Asian region, but in many other countries awareness about ICH is still rather low. The Preamble of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage[[1]](#footnote-1) thus states that there is a need to build greater awareness about ICH, especially among younger people. One of the four purposes of the Convention mentioned in Article 1 is: ‘to raise awareness at the local, national and international levels of the importance of intangible cultural heritage, and of ensuring mutual appreciation thereof’.

There is also a very detailed chapter on the subject in the Operational Directives (see ODs 100–123), which demonstrates the importance attached to awareness-raising by the Organs of the Convention.

#### Safeguarding ICH

People who are not aware of the importance and function of ICH will not recognize the need to safeguard it, the main objective of the Convention. Awareness-raising can encourage people to safeguard ICH in general terms, and also to take action to safeguard specific elements. ICH is a repository of human creativity and knowledge about nature and the functioning of societies. As societies face new challenges as a consequence of challenges such as global warming or rapid urbanization, they may need the resources embodied in ICH. Raising awareness within communities about the value and function of their ICH may promote the enactment and transmission of specific ICH elements.

#### Fostering mutual respect

The dissemination of information about ICH, and increased appreciation of its value, can help to foster social cohesion and harmony within communities. By instilling respect for the ICH of other communities and groups can encourage mutual respect and peaceful coexistence between them. Between groups and communities (even within the same country) there can be significant differences in values and aspirations, rooted in different cultural and historical experiences and expressed through their ICH. The Convention is not only concerned with celebrating this cultural diversity, but also with trying to reduce conflict. This is not always an easy task, especially where communities and groups come into conflict because of their different values and aspirations or, for example, in contexts of food scarcity or migration.

5.2 AWARENESS ABOUT WHAT?

Key stakeholders and decision-makers dealing with heritage issues or development policies, as well as the public at large, should be informed not only about the widespread existence and diversity of ICH, and its function and value, but also about threats and risks to its viability, the need for its safeguarding and the actions proposed (or already taken) for its safeguarding. All stakeholders should be aware of the roles of communities, groups and individuals in creating, enacting and transmitting their ICH.

All stakeholders should be informed about the Convention and about the instruments it makes available to recognize, make visible and safeguard ICH. They should also be informed of the correct implementation of the Convention, including the need to mainstream safeguarding and ICH-related considerations in general planning strategies.

5.3 WAYS TO RAISE AWARENESS

Different methods of raising awareness are needed in different States (and in different contexts within States) because of varying levels of existing awareness about ICH and available resources. Appropriate methods of raising awareness should be selected to suit these different circumstances. Possible methods include:

* Developing ICH-related programmes for radio, television or internet distribution.
* Developing ICH-related educational programmes.
* Establishing networks, meetings and seminars for targeted groups.
* Lobbying decision-makers.
* Presenting ICH-related festivals and events.
* Developing ICH-related commercial activities such as tourism.
* Preparing inventories of ICH and disseminating information about inventoried elements.
* Nominating ICH elements to the Lists of the Convention, and best safeguarding practices to the Register of the Convention.
* Developing and publicizing ICH policies.

Case studies 2–5, give examples of different ways of raising awareness about ICH.

5.4 WHO RAISES WHOSE AWARENESS?

The Committee (ODs 118–123) and States Parties (Articles 13–14; ODs 100 and 103–106) take on specific responsibilities for ensuring that awareness is raised about ICH. In Article 13 and 14, for example, States Parties are encouraged to ensure the promotion and recognition of, respect for and enhancement of the ICH in their territories, through policies and through educational, awareness-raising and information programmes.

Other stakeholders, organizations and groups of different types are also encouraged to raise awareness and may be given specific tasks by the State Party. These include establishing contacts with:

* the media;
* educational institutions;
* centres of expertise, research and documentation, museums, etc.;
* NGOs, community-based organizations, etc.; and
* the communities, groups and individuals concerned.

Awareness-raising can be directed either at the general public or at specific target groups, including the communities concerned (OD 81), State officials at various levels of government, researchers, young people and so on.

5.5 ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

Informed by Articles 16 and 18.3 of the Convention, the Operational Directives (ODs 118 and 123) specifically require the Intergovernmental Committee to ensure that information about ICH inscribed on the Lists and project inscribed on the register of Best Safeguarding Practices inscribed on the Register of the Convention is made widely available for awareness-raising activities. The main reason for the existence of the Representative List of the Convention is to raise awareness about ICH and to give visibility to it.

The Secretariat is tasked to assist the Committee in awareness-raising both by acting as a clearing-house for information and by providing opportunities for information exchange between other parties. All elements inscribed on the Lists of the Convention and the practices inscribed on the Register are thus presented on the ICH website and also in print publications.

The ICH website and printed materials prepared by the Secretariat provide useful resources for awareness-raising by other stakeholders, including schools, museums, universities, research institutions, NGOs and the media.

5.6 ROLE OF STATES PARTIES

States Parties are asked to raise awareness about the importance of ICH, the dangers threatening it and the role of various actors in safeguarding it under the Convention (Articles 1 and 14; ODs 100–107). States Parties must report about their activities regarding awareness-raising in their periodic reports to the Committee (Article 29).

A high level of awareness is required among civil servants who are responsible for the implementation of the Convention. For example, ministerial officials who have been mainly working on tangible heritage may need to learn more about ICH and the opportunities offered, and obligations imposed by the Convention. Officials in other ministries such as education, health and agriculture may also find it useful to learn about the possible roles of ICH in the harmonious and sustainable development of the communities concerned.

Refer to Case study 3, for an example of State involvement in awareness raising, describing the Colombian Government’s nationwide campaign to alert communities, civil society, scientific institutions and State agencies about the importance of safeguarding Colombia’s intangible heritage.

5.7 ROLE OF THE MEDIA

The media can play an important role in raising awareness about ICH at the national level, with or without State support (ODs 110–115). Before media campaigns and programmes can be developed, however, it may be necessary to raise the awareness of journalists and editors about ICH.

In promoting awareness, the media should highlight the role of ICH in fostering ‘social cohesion, sustainable development and prevention of conflict’, in addition to any aesthetic or entertainment value it may have (OD 111). The media can provide information about ICH, but can also create platforms for people to share information with each other at the national or local level.

Campaigns and educational programmes could be developed not only for the benefit of the general public (e.g. using national television, newspapers, radio or the internet), but also for smaller target audiences (e.g. using community radio or local broadcasting channels).

Refer to Case studies 2–4, for examples of media use in awareness-raising.

5.8 ROLE OF INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS

All institutions and organizations that are knowledgeable about ICH and its safeguarding can play a role in raising awareness about ICH, whatever their relationship with the State or their funding sources. They include:

* educational institutions;
* museums and archives;
* non-governmental and community-based organizations;
* centres of expertise, research and documentation; and
* information technology institutions (see ODs 107, 108–109 and 115).

These institutions can promote a better knowledge and understanding of ICH by using their expertise and collections. Some of them may also promote the role of the Convention and provide information about ICH inscribed on the Lists of the Convention (OD 118). Like all awareness-raising actors, they should respect customary practices regarding access to the information disseminated. Information technology institutions and the conventional media can help in dissemination processes.

#### Awareness through education

Awareness-raising is often achieved through educational programmes in schools and universities, assisted by the State (OD 107). The ODs emphasize the importance of experiential learning about ICH through interaction with people, tasks and spaces.

School curricula around the world increasingly include information about intangible heritage practices in domains such as dance, music, oral traditions and traditional crafts. If all goes well, this kind of intervention can illustrate cultural diversity and teach respect for other people and their practices and beliefs. Vocational guidance about ICH-related careers, visits to ICH-related projects and places, and practical experience of ICH-related activities can raise awareness among young people about its value to society.

#### Awareness-raising through documentation

There should be a link between, on the one hand, information generated through documentation processes and management by ‘research institutes, centres of expertise, museums, archives, libraries, documentation centres and similar entities’ and, on the other hand, raising awareness about ICH and its importance (OD 109). Like schools and universities, these institutions are encouraged to work closely with the communities, groups and individuals concerned to help raise awareness about their ICH.

Community-managed centres and associations can play an important role in raising awareness among the general public about the importance of ICH to their communities (OD 108).

5.9 ROLE OF COMMUNITIES

Awareness may have to be raised within communities about the increased opportunities created by the Convention for the recognition and safeguarding of their ICH (OD 81), especially in the case of communities that had previously been prevented from freely enjoying and practising it. Activities undertaken by community members to raise awareness within their communities about, for instance, functions, possible threats to its viability and enhancement of elements of their ICH, are vital in assisting safeguarding. Such activities deserve support, if required, from government agencies and other organizations.

Needless to say, communities are well placed to organize or participate in awareness-raising activities about their ICH. If these activities relate to specific ICH elements of a community or group, the ODs recommend that the communities, groups and individuals concerned are fully involved, and that they give their consent (OD 101).

Case study 4, discusses the ‘Indians as Seen by Indians’ project in Brazil, which shows how communities themselves can raise awareness about their ICH and increase their sense of civic pride and identity while challenging discriminatory stereotypes and providing opportunities for the development of marketable skills among young people.

Participant’s text 7.5 and 7.12 discuss community benefit from and community rights protection in awareness-raising.

5.10 EMBLEM OF THE CONVENTION

The emblem of the Convention is intended to give better visibility to the Convention and can be used in certain awareness-raising campaigns. The emblem should only be used in combination with UNESCO’s logo (OD 125). The use of the two logos is subject to rules (see OD 128).

Only the Organs of the Convention and its Secretariat have the right to use the emblem without prior authorization. Such authorization may be given to others by the Organs of the Convention and, in specific cases, by the Director General of UNESCO. The use of the emblem may only be authorized by them if the project or manifestation concerned is relevant to the Convention’s purposes and in compliance with its principles (OD 134). Further criteria and conditions for the use of the emblem are mentioned in ODs 137–139.

Authorization for commercial use of the emblem is possible, though only within the context of the activity with which the emblem is associated (OD 141) and only under a special contractual arrangement (OD 142).

5.11 Responsible awareness Raising

Following the guidelines provided by the ODs helps to ensure that activities for raising awareness do not threaten the viability of ICH. It is important, for example, to protect ICH and the communities concerned from misrepresentation or exploitation through awareness-raising activities (ODs 101 and 102). ICH elements should not be de-contextualized in awareness-raising activities (ODs 102 and 120).

At both the national and the international level, awareness-raising should not only focus on the aesthetic appeal or entertainment value of ICH elements, but also emphasize their contribution to social cohesion, sustainable development and the prevention of conflict (OD 111) and their value and meaning to the communities concerned (OD 120).

Access to information about ICH should, of course, be managed in accordance with the wishes of the communities, groups and individuals concerned. The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (Case study 5), for example, enforces provisions for confidentiality and access for users of intangible heritage databases.

#### Codes of ethics

States Parties may wish to develop codes of ethics to encourage responsible awareness-raising (OD 103). Some of the issues these codes of ethics might address include:

* *Community involvement and consent*: the widest possible participation of the communities concerned in awareness-raising activities about their ICH should be ensured and their free, prior and informed consent for the planned activities obtained (OD 101(b)).
* *Respect for customary restrictions on access*: awareness-raising activities should fully respect any customary restrictions on access to ICH (Article 13(d)(ii); OD 101(c)).
* *Mutual respect*: to ensure that the principles of mutual respect and human rights are observed, ICH featuring in awareness-raising processes should comply with the definition in the Convention (Article 2.1; OD 101(a)) and ensure that the awareness-raising activities do not contribute to justifying any sort of discrimination (OD 102(c)).
* *Protecting viability*: awareness-raising activities should not decontexualize or denaturalize the ICH element (OD 102(a)), for example by staging performances that are normally performed within a certain context outside of their usual time or place.
* *Fair representation*: awareness-raising activities should not misrepresent the ICH element or the communities concerned (OD 102(b)).
* *Fair benefit*: the communities concerned should benefit from raising awareness not just in terms of increased viability of their ICH (OD 101(d)) but also from any financial rewards of increased visibility or awareness of their ICH. Over- commercialization, misappropriation of their knowledge and skills and unsustainable tourism should be avoided (ODs 102(d) and 102(e)). States Parties should try to ensure that community intellectual property rights in regard to their ICH are protected when awareness-raising activities are implemented (OD 104).

1. 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)