



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Intangible  
Cultural  
Heritage

# Living Heritage and Education

A horizontal bar with four colored segments: light red, teal, orange, and blue.

THE CONVENTION  
FOR THE SAFEGUARDING  
OF THE INTANGIBLE  
CULTURAL HERITAGE



## **INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

– or ‘living heritage’ – is inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants. It includes oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe, and the knowledge and skills related to craftsmanship. It is continuously recreated as it is transmitted from generation to generation, and evolves in response to our environment.

Living heritage is important because it offers communities and individuals a sense of identity and continuity. It can promote social cohesion, respect for cultural diversity and human creativity, as well as help communities build resilient, peaceful and inclusive societies.

As the United Nations specialized agency for culture, UNESCO is tasked with safeguarding living heritage and ensuring its transmission to future generations. In 2003, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, which encourages and supports countries to take the necessary measures to ensure that communities can safeguard their living heritage.





**“Young people are yearning to reconnect with their heritage. They don’t necessarily know how to do it, and schools are a useful mechanism to allow this to take place.”**

**John De Coninck,**  
from the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda

## Safeguarding living heritage in education

### Intergenerational transmission is key to safeguarding

The creative process of intergenerational transmission is at the centre of intangible cultural heritage safeguarding. It is a dynamic, interactive process through which intangible cultural heritage is constantly recreated.

Modes and methods of transmission that are recognized by communities can be strengthened in education programmes. In this regard, education institutions can foster respect for intangible cultural heritage and provide new spaces to ensure its transmission to future generations.

The transmission of intangible cultural heritage in itself is a form of informal education that happens within communities. As such, it can provide both learning content and methods.

Education can play a valuable role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage recognizes the transmission of intangible cultural heritage ‘through formal and non-formal education’ as a key safeguarding measure.

The Convention calls on States Parties to ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage through education programmes. These can include:

- programmes in formal learning environments such as in primary, secondary and post-secondary schools.
- non-formal opportunities such as short courses, community learning and capacity-building activities.

Since 2017, the Living Heritage Entity at UNESCO has been working together with the UNESCO Education Sector, Field Offices and Education Institutes to implement projects, activities and other initiatives related to **‘Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education’**.



## Living heritage improves education relevance

### Reconnecting schools and communities

Incorporating intangible cultural heritage in education can reconnect schools with their surrounding communities. It can foster respect and appreciation for cultural diversity and strengthen a sense of belonging and social cohesion.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



**INTEGRATING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE** in education represents a broader, social approach to safeguarding that can have many positive

benefits. It can provide content and methods for education programmes to improve the relevance of education and learning outcomes.

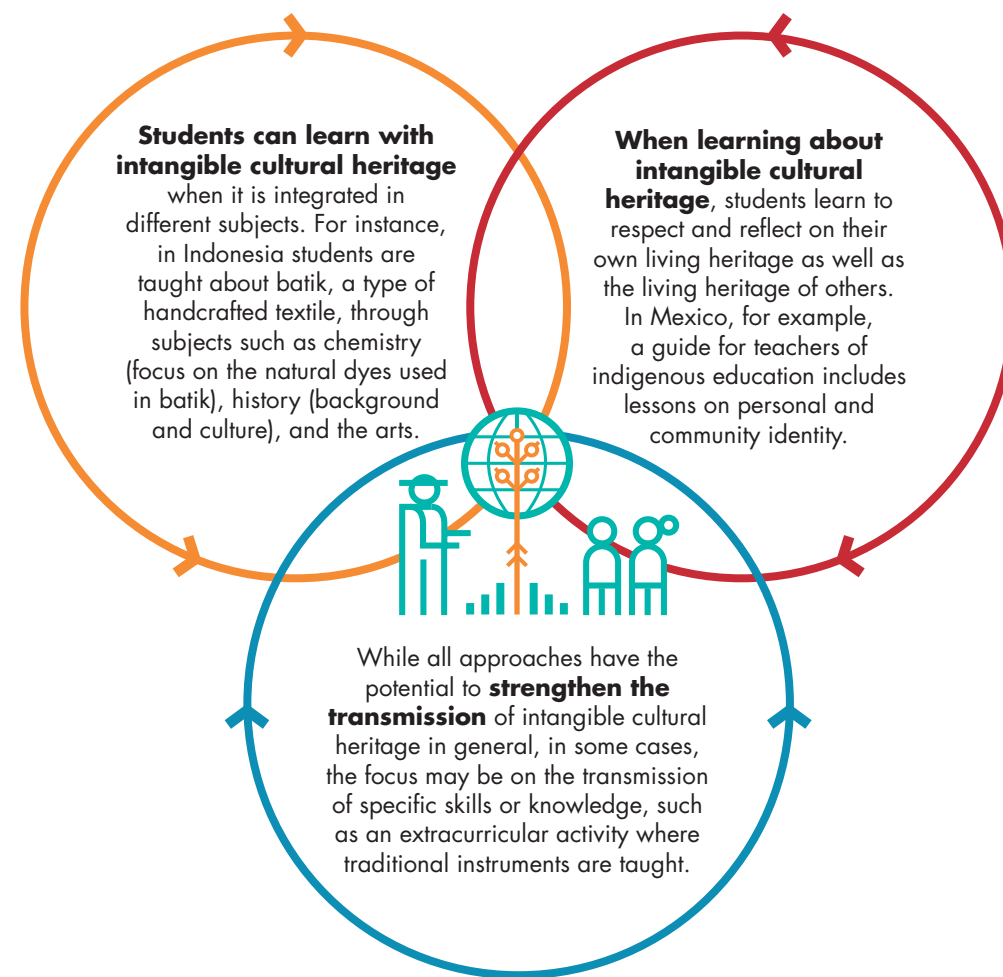
Living heritage is an incredibly rich resource for countries to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 since it includes appreciation of cultural diversity and how culture can contribute to sustainable development.

**“When you produce education materials with communities, the children see themselves and their grandparents in the materials. That is a source of pleasure. It provides the opportunity for the survival of the heritage into the future.”**

**Nigel Encalada,**  
Director of Belize’s  
Institute for Social  
and Cultural Research  
of the National Institute  
of Culture and History

## Approaches to integrating living heritage

INITIATIVES TO BRING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE into classrooms and non-formal education spaces can take different approaches depending on the local context, needs and educational level. In cases where it is possible, intangible cultural heritage can be included in curricula.



### Teacher training

APPROACHES TO INTEGRATING LIVING HERITAGE IN EDUCATION should take into account training and support for teachers and non-formal educators. They can help create a conducive learning environment for integrating living heritage and facilitate the involvement of community members and bearers in learning activities. Teachers are essential to the success of all initiatives.

# Connection with education themes



**GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION**  
Integrating intangible cultural heritage can foster respect for diversity and a sense of interconnectedness between communities, countries and populations, which are core values at the heart of global citizenship education.

**TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
Through technical and vocational education and training institutions, young people and adults can harness the heritage from their communities to develop skills for employment while strengthening the practice and transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

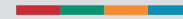
**EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**  
Education for sustainable development uses local knowledge, including intangible cultural heritage, as a resource for integrating sustainable development issues in teaching and learning.

**MOTHER TONGUE AND MULTILINGUAL EDUCATION**  
The Convention recognizes language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage. Through language, knowledge and skills for practicing intangible cultural heritage are passed from one generation to the next. For this reason, mother tongue and multilingual education plays an important role in supporting the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.



In Uganda, heritage education clubs at secondary schools promote cultural diversity through extracurricular activities including cultural exhibitions, performances at school events and more. The clubs encourage students and teachers to learn to live together despite their different beliefs and practices.

The **Heritage education clubs** are a project of the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda, a non-governmental organization accredited under the Convention.



Çini are handmade glazed tiles and ceramics in Turkey. One way that the traditional craftsmanship, knowledge and skills

are passed on is through vocational schools of higher education where it is possible to obtain a two-year degree on the art of çini. These vocational schools equip young people with relevant skills, creativity and design knowledge to provide job opportunities.

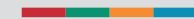
**Traditional craftsmanship of Çini-making** is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (2016).



In Southern Africa, the 'Advanced regional training programme in education for sustainable development'

recognizes that intangible cultural heritage related to knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe can be especially relevant to teaching sustainable development principles in a way that is culturally resonant with students. Teacher educators are carrying out change projects that are integrating traditional or indigenous knowledge in teacher training.

The **Advanced regional training programme in education for sustainable development** (2018-2022) is a UNESCO project funded by Sweden.



In El Salvador, the small number and advanced age of Náhuat speakers seriously threaten the continuity of oral traditions. A project

engaged students and teachers in community-based inventorying of local narratives, encouraging dialogue between younger and older generations of Náhuat speakers.

**Titajtakezakan. Speaking across time, oral tradition and use of information and communication technologies** (2017-2018) was an International Assistance project funded by the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Need help getting started?

Contact [ICH-capacity@unesco.org](mailto:ich-capacity@unesco.org) for more information on how to safeguard living heritage in formal and non-formal education.  
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/education-01017>

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