PRACTICAL TOOL 1

Gathering information

You can collect information in many ways. The easiest way to start might be through desk research, by consulting existing literature or online resources such as the UNESCO web page on the 2003 Convention, the interactive tool Dive into intangible cultural heritage, or a web page dedicated to living heritage safeguarding in your country.

There are also numerous journals, documentaries and online platforms that may provide you with initial iinformation on the living heritage practice that you wish to include in your lessons. However, finding more information on the value and meaning of the living heritage practised within a community – be it the school community or elsewhere – generally requires additional effort. The most valuable way to gather information is to interview living heritage bearers and practitioners. This can be done in different ways: by visiting them in their homes or workplaces or - if appropiate and agreeable - by taking part in the practice. Bearers could give a presentation at school, or you might conduct an online survey among students and their parents, who may be part of the community of the living heritage you are planning to integrate in your lessons. You can check online platforms as well, including social media, to organize individual or group interviews with community members, bearers or practitioners.

Exchanges with community members who are the "experts" of their living heritage are the most insightful ways of gaining a better understanding of the living heritage in question. If they agree, they can share their stories, experiences and knowledge. Your students can play an important role in the safeguarding of living heritage by learning about their own living heritage.

When involving community members in the collection of information about their living heritage practices, there are a number of important considerations:

Ensure you have **free prior and informed consent** from the communities or individuals concerned.

Have your questions prepared.

Listen.

FREE - No one forces them to agree with any action or decision (e.g. whether to provide information on their practice, whether to share their knowledge online, etc.).

PRIOR - They give their consent before any action takes place.

INFORMED - They have all the necessary information before making any decision.

CONSENT - Agreement.

A number of methods are available to record the conversation with bearers and practitioners of living heritage, provided that they are willing to be recorded. Crucially, this is a **participatory research process** based on mutual respect, dialogue and inclusion. It is therefore important to ensure that recordings are made properly so that they are useful for the school project, the community and the interviewee.

Writing/Taking notes

If your school lacks recording equipment, a simple pen and paper will do the job. Together with your students, write down all of your interviewee's answers, trying to capture as much detail as

possible. If one person is giving the interview, another person could be in charge of notetaking, as it may be difficult to concentrate on both at the same time. After the interview session, you might ask the interviewee to check your notes to make sure you understood the ideas correctly.

Audio recording

Many mobile phones offer voice recording applications, which can be useful for such interviews.

Tips for creating a good audio recording:

▶ Indoors: if possible, look for a large room with objects such as rugs or curtains that can absorb ambient sound.

▶ Outdoors: placing the recorder or microphones close to the ground can help. If possible, avoid windy days and crowded or noisy places.

Photography

Photography is often used to complement audio recording in documenting an ICH practice. Photos can be collaboratively interpreted, and explanatory narratives can be added to this documentation for a more comprehensive understanding. Again, you can do this together with your students.

Video and participative video

Video is an excellent tool to capture the whole atmosphere of the interview by mixing image and sound. It can be done by the teachers or the students who are visiting the community, or by community members themselves. The latter case is an example of 'participative filmmaking': community members record the video themselves as opposed to being 'shot' by people outside of their community (e.g. students, teachers). This method allows the community to have its own voice, contributing to inclusive processes of safeguarding.

Participative mapping

Ground and sketch maps are powerful tools that make it easier to identify and analyse place-based patterns and communicate those patterns in a simple and visually realistic way to a broad range of stakeholders. These maps offer local communities a means of spatially visualizing their knowledge and perceptions of ICH.

Note:

Although these methods are explained in the context of collecting information, many can also be used in presentations during the lesson or as an assignment for students.
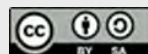
Producing a participative video or photography exhibition based on a theme discussed in class can motivate students to undertake in-depth research of the wider context and help reach the lesson's learning objectives.

Participative mapping can also be used as an assessment tool to determine students' level of understanding relative to the overall lesson or specific learning objectives.

You can find more information in the training materials on community-based inventorying of intangible cultural heritage developed by UNESCO for the global capacity-building programme (Units 18-34).