# unesco

**Intangible Cultural Heritage** 

### **International Assistance**

ICH-04-Report - Form

## INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND PROGRESS NARRATIVE REPORT

Beneficiary State(s) Party(ies): Thailand

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Project title:	Field School for Capacity-building in Safeguarding Living Heritage of Ethnic Communities in Thailand	
Reporting period:	From: 01/05/2023	to: 20/07/2023
	Total: US\$265,800	Including:
Budget:	Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund: US\$100,000	
	State Party contribution: US\$165,800	
		Other contributions: US\$0
Implementing agency (contracting partner or UNESCO Field Office):	Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (Public Organization) under Ministry of Culture, Thailand	
	UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, Culture Unit	
Contact person:	Title (Ms/Mr, etc.):	Mr.
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Partner agency	-	
(in the case of a service from UNESCO project):		
Implementing partners:	Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI)	
	Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD)	

#### **Background**

Provide a brief description of the situation existing at the time of the request and the need that the assistance aimed to address. For safeguarding of a particular element, provide a description of the element, its viability and why safeguarding measures were required. For preparation of inventories, strengthening of capacities, awareness-raising, visibility or other safeguarding not focussed on a particular element, identify gaps that were to be addressed. For emergency assistance requests, describe the nature and severity of the emergency at the time of the request.

Not fewer than 750 or more than 1000 words

Thailand has adopted the Sustainable Development Agenda as the main approach in developing the country. It has also ratified the 2003 Convention since 2017, equipped with the National Act on Promoting and Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2016) to ensure sustainability in national-level implementation. Consequently, Thailand has drawn up national and provincial ICH inventories, in order to document and set a standardized framework for information collection for ICH across the country. Through Department of Cultural Promotion and Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, both of which are under the Thai Ministry of Culture, the governmental sector's actions have increasingly geared toward promoting the role of local and indigenous communities in safeguarding and transmitting their ICH.

Even though with prompted legal framework in place for safeguarding ICH, Thailand still faces several challenges. The primary focus of ICH work has largely been on mainstream forms of cultural heritage, which belies the cultural diversity of the country which comprises over 70 ethnic groups. There have been some attempts to recognize this diverse ethnic cultural heritage, such as the inclusion of certain elements associated with ethnic minorities on national ICH inventories. However, this has not yet resulted in any enhanced recognition, acceptance, safeguarding or transmission. Thus, increased efforts to support the documentation and safeguarding of ICH associated with ethnic groups are urgently needed. To top that, there is widespread lack of understanding of the lifeways of these ethnic groups, creating a deeply ingrained narrative of "otherness", with minority ethnic groups relegated to the periphery. This has exacerbated their vulnerability in terms of losing their cultural identity and knowhow. Their languages are disappearing, along with indigenous knowledge and local wisdom. Their ability to be self-sufficient is accordingly compromised, and this has created a dependency on external bodies such as state agencies.

The project "Field School for Capacity-building in Safeguarding Living Heritage of Ethnic Communities in Thailand" (in short, "the Field School project") aims to fill this challenging gap that prevents social equity and intercultural dialogue within the country. It targets 2 main groups of settlers – one in the mountains and one in the sea: Karen (consisting of Pgakenyaw and Pwo ethnic groups) and sea nomads (i.e. Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi ethnic groups). The status and situation of ICH in these communities vary greatly. Both Pgakenyaw and Pwo Karens are scattered in hundreds of small communities in 15 provinces of the north, west, central and upper south of Thailand. There are approximately 20 Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi communities in 5 provinces in the west coast of southern Thailand.

These ethnic groups – in the overall national context – are encountering similar situation. Certain communities, especially the ones that are quite remote and have knowledgeable elders, can safeguard and pass on their ICH that enable sustainable living with the environment. Whereas, those situating closer to urban encroachments tend to face the generation loss phenomena wherein villages only have only elders and young children as residents, as teenagers and working-age adults left for modern education and factory works in towns.

A good example are Karen villagers in the western forest complex that is now a state non-hunting area, who still keep their rotational farming system and rituals that strengthen community bond. On the other hand, the Karen communities that are connected with larger mainstream society are susceptible to rapid change and value shift which have much impact on ICH.

As for the Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi, many communities are losing their ICH and language due to enculturation and assimilation. In some parts of Krabi Province, ancestral domains and communities have been fragmented, and transformed into densely populated mixed use zones (tourism, commercial, etc.) Furthermore, sacred sites have been encroached upon by outsiders.

Paradoxically, significant ICH elements of the Karen and Moken have been registered in the Thai national ICH list, namely Ku-Chuei (Karen rotational farming) and Kabang (Moken traditional houseboat). Both reflects the inseparable tie between cultural heritage and sustainable natural resource use. Yet the list is only known on paper and not promoted or used. The young generations of Karen and Moken gradually see these 2 ICH elements as meaningless to their contemporary life.

To sum up, the reasons why priority is given to these 5 ethnic groups (Pgakenyaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Moklen and Urak Lawoi) in this Field School Project are threefold.

First is that these groups have been extremely vulnerable and marginalized compared to the other indigenous groups in Thailand due to their ways of life and livelihoods. The Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi peoples were semi-nomadic, roaming the Andaman Sea in the past, and have faced dire situation because of tourism development and state-led conservation policy; the Karen used to practice rotational farming in the forest, but their traditional practices have been misunderstood as deforestation and thus have been subject to major disruptions.

Second, due to this marginalization, the Thai Ministry of Culture have chosen these ethnic groups as the pilot groups for the Cabinet Resolution on Cultural Revitalization, therefore, some progressive moves have been made since 2010. These include the designation of pilot "Special Cultural Zones" for Pgakenyaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi. However, this is still in the early stage of implementation and additional works need to be done in order to strengthen the safeguarding of living heritage through the inclusive and participatory management of these zones. Moreover, cumulative and complex problems, e.g. statelessness, land and livelihood security, have been difficult to resolve.

Third, several communities of Pgakenyaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi have become active in cultural heritage revitalization. These villagers are familiar with organizing workshops and preparing learning activities for outsiders to raise awareness about their living heritage and other cultural practices. At least 14 Karen communities stood up for themselves and declared their communities as "Special Cultural Zones". Therefore, the first phase of the Field Schools can be organized in these communities.

#### Objectives and results attained

Overall, to what extent did the project attain its objectives? Describe the main results attained, focussing in particular on the perspective of the direct beneficiaries and communities. For each expected result identified in the request, explain whether it was fully or partially attained. Also describe any unexpected results, direct or indirect, whether positive or negative.

Not fewer than 100 or more than 500 words

This project is building and enhancing capacity in safeguarding living heritage of ethnic communities in Thailand. It is establishing a Field School for Capacity-building in Safeguarding Living Heritage of Ethnic Communities. The 6 target ethnic communities are from Pgakenyaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi ethnicities. They have been chosen on the basis of their vulnerability, the regulatory framework which makes possible the designation of "Special Cultural Zones" for these specific groups, and their pro-active willingness to engage in such cultural safeguarding activities.

Starting within the span of 2 years in piloting, the Field School project will be a platform for delivering the following outputs:

- Organizing hands-on trainings for ethnic communities as well as government, academic and development workers in inventorying and safeguarding living heritage of ethnic communities;
- Implementing fieldwork activities to inventory the living heritage, transmit and develop safeguarding plans for living heritage of ethnic Pgakenyaw Karen, Pwo Karen, Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi communities in designated or potential "Special Cutural Zones", as well as undertaking field visits between these different ethnic groups for them to exchange knowledge and build networks;
- 3. Undertaking public communication and advocacy activities;
- 4. Producing technical and policy guidance.

These outputs respond to the realization that the living heritage of ethnic groups in Thailand is in a vulnerable state which could lead to ethnic groups losing their identity and self-sufficiency based on their living heritage. Such loss, in turn, could impact on the stability of the lives of ethnic groups. Building and enhancing the capacity of various stakeholders to safeguard various aspects of the living heritage of ethnic groups is therefore important at the community. It is also important at the national level in terms of promoting cultural capital as an asset to develop the country.

That said, managing living heritage is not only a matter of safeguarding. It should also link academic knowledge with the experience of local communities and policy action based on the principle of "balance and sustainability". It should give priority to sustaining and safeguarding the lifeways of ethnic groups, along with maintaining a balance with managing natural resources and the environment, with the objective of improving the well-being of ethnic groups in a self-reliant and sustainable manner.

#### **Description of project implementation**

Provide a description of the activities undertaken and the outputs they generated (e.g. trainings, consultation process, technical assistance, awareness raising, publications, toolkits, etc.). Also describe any problems encountered in project delivery and corrective actions taken. Describe the role of the implementing agency and of the partner agency (in the case of a service from UNESCO project) and the role of other implementing partners in carrying out activities and generating outputs.

Not fewer than 1000 or more than 1500 words

The Field School project has been implemented with a view to "drive policy on the basis of knowledge and networks". This is the ultimate aim of this project. This project plans to achieve this aim in two ways. First, it will eventually extract lessons learned from project activities as knowledge that will inform long-term work. Second, the project will design and use an implementation mechanism of working with both ethnic communities and public officials. This will lead to the positive collaborative experience, and to the establishment of long-term networks that will be mutually beneficial and supportive to current and future policies for ethnic groups in Thailand.

From the inception of the project in May until October 2023, the project has successfully implemented the following activities per planned timelines:

- 1. **Project preparation** (May-July 2023): including undertaking community-led programme design meetings in the 6 participating communities to encourage bottom-up contribution to the project's output objectives and activities (Annex A) and consultation with governmental stakeholders at local level to ensure mutual understanding of the project's scope, objectives and outputs that can benefit smoother work for the local authorities (Annex B).
- 2. Hands-on trainings on field data collection, cultural mapping and community-based inventorying (June and September 2023, per Annexes C, D, E and F): The first training was organized in Sanepong village, Lai Wo community, Kanchanaburi province, Western Thailand. The training brought together all 6 communities to travel to Lai Wo community (district) and use Sanepong village as the case study for hands-on exercise on cultural diversity and biodiversity data collection and inventorying. Resource persons, such as anthropologists from SAC and CUSRI and GIS experts from Rabbit in the Moon Foundation were mobilized to introduce tools to survey cultural diversity and biodiversity for indigenous communities in protected areas (World Heritage forests and Andaman sea).
- 3. [ongoing] The first series of fieldworks on cultural mapping, inventorying and transmission of vulnerable living heritage to local youth (July 2023 June 2024): The trained youth leaders in the 6 communities went back to discuss the learned methodologies with village members, laid down workplans and started systematically documenting indicators of their cultural diversity and biodiversity, from flora and fauna known in their mother tongues and found only with indigenous knowledge of the place, to seasonal food-based practices, rituals, beliefs and craft skills. The project's resource persons remain to assist them both physically and virtually in categorizing and putting explanation to their photographic and videographic inputs. At the onset of this field process, the project team observed 2 communities becoming highly capable in conducting community-based inventorying that bridges natural and cultural diversity. These are Doi Chang Pa Pae (Pgakenyaw Karen),

Lamphun province, and Lai Wo community (Pwo Karen), Kanchanaburi province.

Therefore, the project team decided to support them even further to become 'peer trainers' for other 4 communities. Resource persons from CUSRI and SAC have been mobilized further to monitor and document the data collection and inventorying process at these communities to extract deeper lesson learned for the draft training guide and to identify potential peer trainers to join the team of resource persons of the project. Such decision can help empowering local people, especially youth, to become the experts themselves, which can contribute to better multiplying effect of this project in the long run.

4. [draft] Training guide on biodiversity and cultural diversity knowledge management: In parallel with the fieldwork period, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre drafted for the purpose of multiplying capacity-building opportunities a training guide and content from information gathered from the community-led design programme meetings and the hands-on training (the full draft in Thai language in Annex G). The training guide can be summary in outline as follows:

#### a. Objectives

- To build a new generation of community researchers by supporting skill development in biodiversity and cultural diversity data collection and management for Indigenous youth living in natural World Heritage Sites;
- To develop a community-based database for biodiversity and cultural diversity that Indigenous communities can access, utilize, and further develop for intellectual and policy progress.

#### b. Learning goals

i. Primary-level goals: Have understanding.

The participants shall gain two aspects of understanding:

- To understand the relationship between biodiversity and cultural diversity, particularly the significance of "local wisdom" as the manifestation of human interaction with the surrounding ecosystem. Therefore, actions that disrupt the traditional way of life (e.g. alteration of land use, displacement of founding communities) can disrupt the balance of century-old human-nature ecosystems;
- 2. To understand the process and tools necessary for managing information on biodiversity and cultural diversity of Indigenous communities and ethnic groups. The participants shall develop skills by independently accessing and attending to information generated by local communities.
- ii. Intermediate-level goals: Know-how to use data management tools.

The participants shall gain skills in using management tools for biodiversity and cultural diversity information generated and collected from their own communities. They shall be able to manage the following aspects of the information:

- 1. **Physical attributes of the areas** using community mapping tools (e.g. such as GIS, walk map, etc). to indicate relationships between the physical geography and social spaces of the community.
- 2. **Community's histories** including settlement, past challenges, internal and external conflicts, etc. This can be studied in local stories and legends, as well as the biographies of elders and leaders in the community.
- 3. **Economic and social attributes** including land ownership, production and supply chains, income, expense, debts, social institution structures (families, relatives), belief systems and religious rituals, etc. This can be realized in an analysis of local assets and the community's doctrine, the community

organizational analysis, and the community's cultural and agricultural calendars.

- 4. **Cultural attributes** that might be of interest to tourism, e.g. festivals, craftsmanship, etc. This can be realized through analyses of the community's assets and limitations, as well as looking at the community calendar.
- 5. **Resource management systems** in order to understand from the community's perspective: How do they think about natural resources? How do they manage the resources (soil, water, forest, livelihood-related biodiversity)? This information can be divided into 3 parts:
  - a. <u>Traditional wisdom</u> includes information on resources that the community uses daily, e.g. vegetables known and used by local people, information collection methods that categorize plants by parts used in cooking (e.g. leaves, roots, buds), medicinal plants (number of species, parts used, sources of recipes). Youth are encouraged to seek knowledge from traditional healers and elders.
  - b. <u>Management systems</u> include information about the community's approaches to managing and conserving resources, for instance, zoning parts of a forest by functionalities, customary rules, etc.
  - c. <u>Thinking processes</u> include belief systems and rituals related to the community's approaches to resource management. For instance, the belief of *pii khun nam* (water lord ghost) who protects the watershed forests. This involves studies of beliefs and practices that have been adapted to contemporary lifeways or which have been discarded as backward.

These types of information are the basis for analysis and assessment of the community's capacity to manage their surrounding resources. They can lead to the ability to design activities and measures for promoting institutional strength within the community, particularly in sustainably managing the area's biodiversity and cultural diversity.

iii. Advanced-level goals / installation goals: Communicate, explain, or transmit knowledge to expand community-based work sustainably.

The achievement of these goals is more useful than the possession of understanding and know-how, for it ensures that the project participants can communicate their knowledge to: (1) others within their own community to know how to use data management tools and create more community researchers into an eventual professional network; and to (2) the general public to learn the community's side of the social narratives and to see the importance of traditional knowledge systems in managing natural and environmental resources toward genuine sustainability.

#### c. Steps in capacity-building

- i. Step 1 Learning the situation of communities: The project participants discuss the overall situation of their sub-district. Specifically, it will cover the causes, rationale, significance, and problems behind local events, as well as the ways individuals have been affected by these histories, solutions that have been enacted, and the social assets involved. It will identify the community's current needs and desires, the factors guiding the ways that community members have mutually decided to use to manage the assets, and the outcomes or impacts of these methods. This step will be carried out through the following activities:
  - 1. The participants will share their diverse experiences and together analyze problems, self-managerial needs, and expected outcomes at the village level.

- 2. The participants will practice forming informal interview questions and approach elders and knowledge holders to seek explanations of past or present events and issues facing the community, focusing on topics that became problems and the reasons and factors behind them. From this, participants will identify place-specific methods that the community has used to solve past issues with existing resources and social assets and formulate constructive questions that lead to the ability to learn from histories, solve current problems, and prevent future problems.
- ii. Step 2 Identifying informants: The participants choose their informants from:
  - Those participating in village-level situation-review seminars, which allow different groups of people in the community to voice their rationales behind decisions, to exhibit the prominent social groups/institutions, as well as the mutually prideful successes or milestones.
  - 2. Those met during their field studies / grand tours.
- iii. Step 3 Customizing research questions: The participants will practice formulating questions to community leaders and representatives to collect information about: (1) the village's situation overview, (2) information about leaders, important and talented people in the village throughout its history, (3) important events that have impacted the local people, (4) operational processes that reflect the community's ability to self-manage (solving problems, self-reliant livelihoods), and (5) organizations, entities, or funders that support the community's solutions, livelihood improvement, and resilience.
- iv. **Step 4 Collecting and documenting data:** The participants will use techniques (e.g. participatory observation, in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, etc.), and experiment with collecting information on social assets and the community's capacity, to reveal actual the social situation from the community's point of view as well as secondary information related to the way the community has developed. The participants will work together to collect, analyze, summarize, record, and review the information daily. They will identify data gaps and missing information for further fieldwork planning and prepare information to create comprehensive communication materials.

#### **Community involvement**

Provide a description of the mechanisms used for fully involving the community(ies) concerned. Describe not only the participation of the communities as beneficiaries of the project, but also their active participation in the planning and implementation of all activities.

Not fewer than 300 or more than 500 words

The Field School project focuses on 6 communities as follows:

- 1. Doi Chang Pa Pae (Pgakenyaw Karen), Lamphun province, Northern Thailand
- 2. Lai Wo community (Pwo Karen), Kanchanaburi province, Western Thailand
- 3. Phu Rakam Bang Kloy communities (Pwo Karen), Ratchburi province, Western Thailand
- 4. Surin island (Moken), Pang-nga province, Southern Thailand
- 5. Tab Pla (Moklen), Pang-nga province, Southern Thailand
- 6. Cham island (Urak Lawoi), Krabi province, Southern Thailand

These communities belong to 5 ethnic groups: Pgakenyaw Karen and Pwo Karen (who mostly reside in the highlands of northern and western Thailand) and Moken, Moklen and Urak Lawoi (who are native sea nomads in Southern archipelagos and coastal provinces). They have been considered by the government as vulnerable groups in terms of economic and social livelihood, hence, some recently were granted the rights to declare their communities as "Special Cultural Zones".

In involving inclusively all groups within these communities, the project team, consisting of coordinators from UNESCO Bangkok and Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (SAC), along with resource persons from Chulalongkorn University Social Research Institute (CUSRI) and Pgakenyaw Association for Sustainable Development (PASD), since the project preparatory step, travelled to each of the communities to organize community-led programme design meetings with village heads, youth groups, traditional practitioners and elders (Annex A). The meetings resulted in bottom-up design of the agenda and content for hands-on trainings on field data collection, cultural mapping and community-based inventorying and the afterward fieldwork process.

Moreover, as mentioned in previous section, the project has taken additional course to build up a pool of 'peer trainers' among highly capable Karen youth researchers in Lai Wo and Doi Chang Pa Pae, so that in long term they are able to be the advisors to other participating ethnic communities and beyond.

#### Sustainability and exit/transition strategy

Describe how the benefits of the project will continue after the project has been completed. Where appropriate, describe the steps undertaken to ensure the following:

- Sustainability of activities, outputs and results, including with reference to how capacity has been built under the project. Also describe any planned follow-up measures to ensure sustainability.
- Additional funding secured as a result of this project, if any. Indicate by whom, how much and for what purpose the contributions are granted.

Describe how the ownership (of activities, outputs, results) by stakeholders and the community(ies) in particular has been promoted.

Describe, if relevant, how tools, processes, outputs, etc. have been adopted, adapted, replicated and/or extended for future use (e.g. in other regions, communities, elements, or fields of intangible cultural heritage).

Not fewer than 100 or more than 500 words

Project implementation is on the ground of 2 important aspirations:

First, the project will eventually **build participatory mechanism between ethnic communities**, **government officials**, **academia and development agencies**, in order to create strategic partnership to drive the management of biodiversity and cultural diversity within the World Heritage forests in a balanced and sustainable manner. Attention is given to building consensus and sense of stewardship to all concerned stakeholders by identifying clear roles and responsibilities for each of them.

Secondly, the project aims to **establish a culture-based network of communities** by giving significance to knowledge and experience exchange between these communities. Since each community has unique context of geography and priorities, peer-assist approach to knowledge sharing is utilized to enable interchanging of work rationale and lessons learnt. This does not only build synergy for culture-based community network, but also contributes to building new body of knowledge and perspective toward problems from bringing 2 unalike communities to ponder on each other's challenges and solutions.

This project has laid the foundation for leveraging additional support and future expansion. The various local- and national-level activities have raised the profile of these issues and their underlying principles, not least within the Department of National Parks and Wildlife Conservation. Moreover, the project has also strengthened the network of organizations and partners, helping to amplify the voices of organizations that have long championed the cause of Indigenous involvement in forest management, such as PASD.

On top of that, one of the outcomes of this 2003 Convention International Assistance Fund project will support the current legal and regulatory process underway to adopt the draft Act on the Protection and Promotion of the Way of Life of Ethnic Groups. This project will contribute to the efforts under the draft Act in establishing pilot "Special Cultural Zones" which will allow ethnic groups to carry out their ways of life in an unimpeded manner. This provision is an important element in the draft Act in protecting cultural rights and supporting ethnic groups to be self-reliant on the basis of their Indigenous knowledge and wisdom. The 6 pilot communities have already been designated or are identified as potential future pilot "Special Cultural Zones", and the cultural mapping undertaken in this project will feed into a process of designing management regimes for occupation and use within these pilot zones.

As part of the strategy for fostering the self-reliance of these communities, additional spin-off activities are also being devised to seek additional funding support. The on-site engagement with the pilot local communities has identified a strong entrepreneurial spirit, particularly among youth groups in making use of local products and know-how to create innovative and environmentally friendly products, such as locally branded honey and coffee items. Such activities would create additional value added to sustainably harvested products, offering an alternative means of economic viability rooted in cultural identity, particularly for the young generation, who are prone to out-migration in search of more lucrative opportunities. Private foundation support from Thailand is being sought for this.

All in all, such extended intervention from private third party can still be monitored and discussed for ways forward that sustainably benefit local communities among the network of the 6 participating communities between Karen and the sea nomads. This is for the fact that they were initially chosen to this project, based on their vulnerability and their proactive willingness to engage in such cultural safeguarding activities.

#### **Lessons learnt**

Describe what are the key lessons learnt regarding the following:

- Attainment of expected results
- Ownership of key stakeholders and community involvement
- · Delivery of project outputs
- Project management and implementation
- Sustainability of the project after the assistance

Not fewer than 300 or more than 750 words

The project attempts to address systemic challenges at both local and national levels. While the national legislation on protected area management in Thailand has begun to create more space for the recognition of local communities, the overall national legislative and regulatory framework, on-the-ground implementation and administrator mindsets still do not recognize the status of indigeneity and claims to land and cultural expression in a full-fledged manner. That said, at the ground level, depending on the local politics and individual protected area managers, there may be opportunities to make headway. This has been seen in other successful pilot projects conducted in conjunction with sympathetic local administrators and park personnel.

For this reason, the project has invested a relatively long time in selecting pilot sites through an engagement process with a range of local community representatives and authorities, to ensure that meaningful progress can be made at the local level which would generate benefits for both communities and park personnel. This could see a shift from purely protective regimes for biodiversity conservation to participatory practices that recognize and draw upon the knowhow and lifeways of local communities as an essential part of holistic forest management from both a biodiversity and cultural diversity point of view.

At the same time, it is hoped that such concrete outputs at the local level would then translate into larger impacts at the national level, for instance, within the national system of forest governance. The selection of 6 communities, all within current and future World Heritage designations was particularly intentional in this respect, with an intention to affect national policy-making for World Heritage management, by encouraging greater alignment with international norms regarding participatory management, notably with indigenous peoples and local communities.