

## Progress report

### Strengthening National Capacities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development in the Gambia

Geographical scope/benefitting country(ies)	The Gambia
Type of funding	Earmarked voluntary contribution to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund received from France
Amount	US\$ 135,722
Executing field office(s)	Culture unit in the UNESCO Regional Office in Dakar
Implementing period	24 months (2021-2023)
Reporting period	January 2022 to December 2023

#### I. Background & Summary

The Gambia ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in May 2011. UNESCO carried out a needs assessment in Gambia in 2015, where national stakeholders addressed the importance of promoting local cultures and the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage (ICH). The assessment pointed out the need to raise awareness and support national institutions to reinforce their knowledge on the 2003 Convention and its implementation mechanisms. The importance of building a national strategy to safeguard intangible heritage and to review current strategy documents on culture in general was also underlined. Diverse stakeholders also highlighted during the assessment the need for setting up a community-based inventory and reinforcing their capacities to develop safeguarding plans and project proposals in the field of living heritage.

Recent developments confirmed the commitment from Gambia to enhance the implementation of the 2003 Convention at national level. In 2017, an increased political will to support culture, arts and tourism, was manifested through an increase of the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) annual subvention. Since then, Gambia has also elaborated a National Arts and Cultural Policy to replace the previous 1988 Culture Policy.

In this context, the project aimed at supporting the Gambia in its efforts to safeguard its living heritage, in accordance with the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereinafter the '2003 Convention'). In partnership with the National Center for Arts and Culture (NCAC) of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, UNESCO provided technical support and developed a capacity-building programme based on the needs identified in 2015, in collaboration with national partners.

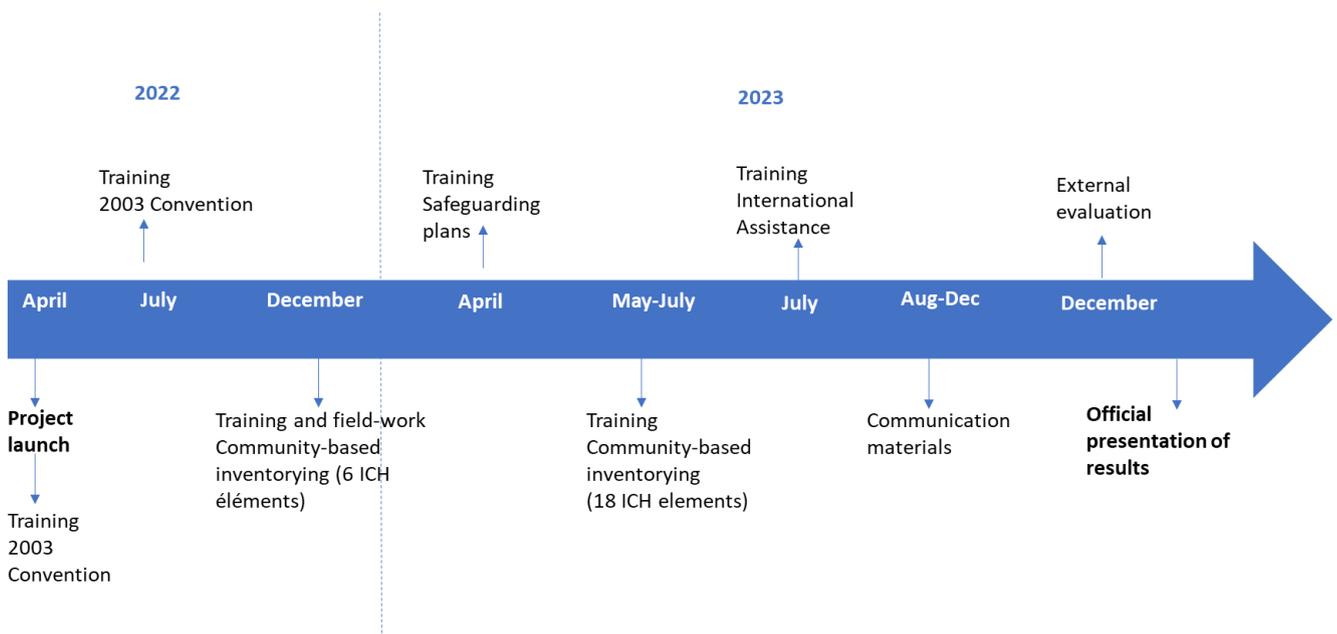
To this end, UNESCO delivered, throughout 2022 and 2023, technical training to different stakeholders involved in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (government officials, associations, academia, communities, groups and individuals). Particular attention was given to setting solid bases on the concept of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and developing adequate planning tools and methodologies for its safeguarding.

Training activities aimed at strengthening the capacities of these stakeholders in the following areas: (i) better knowledge of the 2003 Convention, (ii) methodologies for participatory community-based inventories for ICH safeguarding in the Gambia, and (iii) the elaboration of safeguarding plans and measures.

This project also offered the opportunity to promote better visibility of ICH, awareness of its significance and function in society, and to raise awareness among communities and the public about its safeguarding. Activities were organized in close collaboration with national institutions responsible for the safeguarding of ICH and ensured the involvement of local community organizations and the balanced participation of women and men throughout the process.

## II. Implementation of the project for the period under review

The following diagram presents a global timely of project implementation. The detailed explanation follows below.



A. The 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of 2022 was dedicated to finalizing the **project preparation phase**, which included creating a common understanding of the project with the national counterparts, agreeing on roles and responsibilities and establishing the necessary contracts for the project coordination and the experts who would be involved. An implementing partnership agreement was signed with the NCAC and three other contracts were established: one for the global coordination, oversight and technical support to the project within the Dakar Office, and two with international facilitators of the Global Network of Facilitators of the 2003 Convention, for them to design and lead the project training activities.

- **Project launch and preparatory meeting:** 1 April 2022



Gambian stakeholders during the project launch © NCAC

On the 1st of April 2022, around 40 project stakeholders met at the National Museum in Banjul for the **official project launch**. This important meeting was organized in two stages and led by the NCAC. It was held both virtually and face-to-face to ensure the involvement of all actors involved and to favor a common understanding of the objectives of the project.

The opening ceremony was presided by the Minister of Tourism and Culture, Mr. Hamat N.K. Bah, and it was an opportunity to review the challenges and the importance of identifying and safeguarding living heritage in The Gambia. The UN Resident Coordinator in The Gambia, Ms. Seraphine Wakana, and the Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa-Sahel, Mr. Dimitri Sanga, also stressed the key contribution of living heritage to sustainable development, intercultural dialogue, and the establishment of a lasting peace in the country.

The event followed with the kickstart of participatory work between the NCAC team, UNESCO and **20 representatives of communities and heritage professionals** from the seven administrative regions of The Gambia. Through interactive presentation sessions, they discussed the issues related to the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, but also the importance of this project, which marks a new step for the country in terms of the safeguarding of its cultural heritage.

B. 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of 2022

- **5-day training workshop on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding for government officials, technical staff and future trainers on the principles and mechanisms of the 2003 Convention:**  
18 – 22 July 2022



Gambian heritage experts during the training on the 2003 Convention © Ana Ruiz – UNESCO Dakar

The preparation and aftermath of the second project training, namely the training workshop on the principles and mechanisms of the 2003 Convention marked the third quarter of the year 2022.

The workshop was divided into two sections: i) a one-day preparatory session focused on raising awareness amongst 20 government officials on living heritage, its importance and its contribution to the different pillars of sustainable development; and ii) a technical, four-day in-depth training on the 2003 Convention targeting the 20 government officials that had participated in the preparatory awareness-raising session. The workshops were led by two facilitators from the UNESCO Global Network of Facilitators.

Day one started with the training's opening ceremony, which counted on the presence of the Deputy Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of The Gambia, the Chairman of the NCAC Board and a representative of the Director of the UNESCO Regional Office for West Africa-Sahel. They all attested to the importance of having key national institutions fully engaged in this project to strengthen the safeguarding of living heritage in The Gambia, and to harness its connection and cross-cutting contribution to the country's sustainable development.

This workshop served to introduce key concepts of the 2003 Convention to officials from ministries whose mandates are deeply intertwined with living heritage (the Ministry for the Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources, the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Welfare, the Ministries of Basic and Secondary Education, of Higher Education, Research, Science and Technology and the Ministry of Health), and to harness their collaboration to engage in ICH safeguarding.



Gambian heritage experts during the training on the 2003 Convention © Ana Ruiz – UNESCO Dakar

The second phase of the training involved 20 representatives of communities and heritage professionals from the 7 administrative regions of The Gambia. The group actively engaged through the different training sessions, covering topics such as community involvement in ICH safeguarding, implementing safeguarding plans, ICH and sustainable development or development of ICH policies, amongst others. Several engaging participatory discussions showed the strong commitment to support Gambian communities in building mechanisms to help their heritage thrive.

Similarly, the participation of the ICH Focal Person at the Ministry of Culture and Communication of Senegal demonstrated the collaboration between the two neighboring countries and set the tone for upcoming exchanges within this project and beyond.

#### C. 4th quarter of 2022

- **Intangible cultural heritage community-based inventorying training and field activities: 7 - 16 December 2022**

As a prelude to the community-based inventorying training and field activities, a preparatory meeting with **9 selected Gambian supporting facilitators**, which were instrumental for the successful fieldwork activities with communities around the Banjul area, took place in November. The NCAC was engaged with the support of UNESCO and guidance from the 2 international facilitators in a series of **pre-fieldwork visits** to 6 selected communities, in order to brief them and ensure their full engagement. These 6 communities were asked to select one living heritage element each, which formed the basis of the fieldwork activities that took place in December following a first week of theory training on community-based inventorying.

From 7 to 16 December 2022, the cohort of 20 national experts trained since the start of the project

undertook 8 days of specific training in community inventory techniques for elements of intangible cultural heritage. This was the first training of its kind in the country, combining theoretical and practical exercises to provide the tools, knowledge and skills needed to carry out community inventories, and thus ensure the safeguarding and transmission of elements of The Gambia's rich ICH. The training modules were presented in different local languages, to ensure the best possible understanding and appropriation by all participants.



The experts trained were thus able to put into practice what they had learned during the training activities developed throughout the previous phases of project. As mentioned above, they carried out pilot inventories of 6 ICH elements previously identified by the communities themselves, such as traditional techniques for harvesting land and sea products, social practices and ceremonies, and a local conflict resolution tribunal. Among these, there are 3 ICH elements where the main bearers are women.

The training activities also drew on the active participation of media specialized in cultural heritage, as a specific day of awareness-raising and capacity-building on ICH was dedicated to them. A total of 12 journalists took part in interactive presentations on the contribution of tangible and intangible heritage to sustainable development, and on their role as a platform for highlighting the place of living heritage and the work of heritage-owning communities in safeguarding it.

The capacity-building approach included experience-sharing by Senegal's Director of Cultural Heritage and the Director of Intangible Cultural Heritage at the Institute of Cultural Heritage (IPC) in Cabo-Verde, with a view to strengthening South-South cooperation in this field.

The importance of gender equality and the active involvement of women was central and understood at all levels, whether in terms of the choice of living heritage elements or the participation rate of women, which stood at over 50%.

#### D. Implementation in 2023

- **On-line training on developing safeguarding plans:** 11 - 12 April 2023, Banjul, The Gambia

To deepen the national ICH facilitators' understanding of the concept of safeguarding and the associated ethical principles, as well as to enhance their skills in developing realistic ICH safeguarding plans, a two-day online training on safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage was organised. This training aimed at enhancing in-country competence to identify ICH, assess its viability and define measures to safeguard ICH elements.

The training was structured in two parts. The first day focused on the concept of safeguarding, ethical principles, intellectual property, and a

step-by-step guide to developing safeguarding plans and viability of ICH. The second day was dedicated to practice in developing ICH safeguarding plans drawing on examples of ICH elements in The Gambia.

The two-day online workshop on 'Developing Safeguarding Plans' was designed to equip the 20 selected national ICH facilitators with the knowledge and skills to assess the viability of ICH elements and prepare safeguarding plans that correspond with identified threats and risks. The workshop aimed to:



## SAVE THE DATE 11TH & 12TH APRIL 2023

Two-days online training workshop in "developing safeguarding plans" at the National Museum in Banjul, starting at 10 a.m.

« Strengthening national capacities for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and contributing to sustainable development in The Gambia »



1. Improve the knowledge of the national ICH facilitators in safeguarding ICH in the context of the 2003 Convention.
2. Strengthen capacities of the national ICH facilitators to develop and support the development of safeguarding plans.
3. Understand the link between inventorying, safeguarding and inscription of ICH elements.

As a result of this training workshop:

- i) The national ICH facilitators have acquired knowledge in safeguarding ICH in the context of the 2003 Convention.
- ii) The national ICH facilitators' capacity to develop safeguarding plans and understand the link between inventorying, safeguarding and inscription of ICH elements has been strengthened.

The online training was delivered through lectures, participatory tools (such as group work) and plenary discussions to ensure interaction among participants.

A total of 20 ICH focal persons, support facilitators and members of the NCAC project team participated in this two-day capacity-building activity. The online training was facilitated by two UNESCO facilitators (one from Uganda and one from Zambia) who have supported the project from the outset and therefore know the national stakeholders.

The contents and materials prepared for the training were drawn from the UNESCO Capacity Building Programme and adapted to the cultural context of The Gambia.



- o **Carrying out inventories in the different regions of the country:** May - July 2023, other regions, The Gambia



18 elements). The activity aimed to:

The knowledge and skills acquired from the above trainings provided a foundation for selected trainees to carry out the inventory of 18 ICH elements in 6 regions of The Gambia (April – July 2023). During these months, the national ICH facilitators worked with different communities and received remote technical guidance and support from 2 international facilitators. Throughout the course of the process, it was found that some of the ICH elements inventoried were viable and vibrant while other elements were threatened and in need of urgent safeguarding. Regarding gender equality, it is worth noting that the selection of the 18 ICH elements gave priority, when possible, to women-led elements (6 out of

1. Enhance the skills of the national ICH facilitators to develop processes and tools specific to the inventorying of 18 ICH elements in the country.
2. Strengthen the ability of the national ICH facilitators to identify and adhere to ethical principles of inventorying, together with the communities concerned.
3. To enhance the confidence of the national ICH facilitators to engage communities and generate relevant information on ICH elements.



In terms of methodology, a detailed program involving two two-hour online sessions was developed, and the weekly programs were approved by the representative of the National Council for Art and Culture (NCAC). Each ICH element was examined individually, noting the specific questions that should be raised by the field teams, thus refining their research tools.

During the first session, the discussion focused on community participation and consent, as well as on relevant issues concerning the viability of each ICH element, such as threats and risks, mitigation measures, transmission, respect for human rights, gender equality, cultural diversity, as well as the link between the element and sustainable development objectives. The second session focused more on analyzing the feedbacks from the fieldworks by concentrating on results, lessons learned, proposed improvements, as well as gaps to be filled.

- **On-line training on requesting for international assistance from the 2003 convention on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage:** 11 July 2023 – Bwiam, The Gambia



In line with the provisions of the 2003 Convention, technical and financial assistance may be provided to safeguard ICH. A 1-day training on 'Project elaboration and International Assistance' was organised to introduce to the national ICH facilitators the processes and tools available to access financial and technical assistance for ICH elements (especially those that are threatened), and to present the rationale and objectives of preparing requests for International Assistance under the 2003 Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The training was delivered in a hybrid format, and it aimed to:

1. Introduce to Gambian ICH facilitators the organs, processes and tools available for preparing requests for the International Assistance mechanism of the 2003 Convention.
2. Provide an opportunity to reflect on the 18 ICH elements that were inventoried in the previous phase of the project, and their need for international assistance.
3. Discuss on the way forward for the completion of the capacity building component of the project.

As a result of this training workshop: i) the Gambian ICH facilitators acquired knowledge and skills in preparing requests for international assistance; ii) ICH elements requiring international assistance were identified; iii) a clear roadmap for the next steps in safeguarding ICH in The Gambia were defined.

Following the workshop (from 8 May to 14 July 2023), teams of national ICH facilitators met with various communities in 4 regions of the country. During the work performed they were able to identify ICH elements that could potentially be considered for nomination to the urgent safeguarding list and representative list.

- **Creating communication elements (database, catalogue and video) and awareness-raising:** August to December 2023

This period was and will be dedicated to highlighting project results through the creation of communication materials and awareness-raising as defined in the project, such as:

- i) Video on the project activities (shooting and editing): video coverage in communities on the enactment of inventoried ICH elements.
- ii) Database development and completion: with a national team to review all data on the 18 ICH elements.
- iii) Conception and printing catalogue: development of a comprehensive catalogue for all the inventoried ICH elements through fieldworks.

UNESCO is also supporting the creation of the catalogue, and has provided guidance on how to carry out these design activities, notably through the sharing of communication materials produced in Senegal ([catalog](#) ; video : [National capacity-building - safeguarding Senegal's ICH](#)).

- **External evaluation and results-sharing**

In order to finalize the project on schedule, the first half of December 2023 will be dedicated to the external evaluation of the project. An evaluator has been identified in mutual agreement with the State Party, and will report on the evaluation results during an online session with the stakeholders involved. UNESCO is supporting the selected evaluator by facilitating access to all required information. This process will be instrumental to help guiding future implementation in The Gambia or for similar projects.

On **December 20, 2023** an official event is scheduled to take place share to all project stakeholders and government official the results of the project.

### III. Challenges and how they were addressed

Project sustainability and the continuity of solid actions in favor of living heritage safeguarding is the main challenge identified, due to the lack of resources and dedicated structures. During the 1-day training on the mechanisms of the 2003 Convention many opportunities for intersectoral work were identified by senior officials representing ministries of Education, Gender (a new policy for Gender and Women's Empowerment is underway, an opportunity to integrate ICH) and Environment. However, to date there is no national platform where these stakeholders can get together to exchange on the important linkages and contribution of ICH to the goals of each of the ministries. Although in the current Arts and Culture Policy of The Gambia (2018 to 2028) living heritage and its contribution to sustainable development is briefly mentioned, the country could benefit from support to develop an overarching national ICH policy that contemplates intersectoral linkages and establishes collaboration mechanisms. Limited national funds dedicated to safeguarding living heritage is also a constraining factor for solid developments after the implementation of the project.

### IV. Direct Beneficiaries, Key Partners and Other Stakeholders

#### **Beneficiaries and partners**

The direct beneficiary of the project is the National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC) under the Ministry of Tourism and Culture of The Gambia. Concerned directorates and departments in the Ministry of Tourism and Culture, such as the National Directorate for Cultural Heritage of the NCAC, and its Research and Documentation Division, have benefited from capacity-building activities.

Institutions such as the Gambian Tourism Board, the National Museum Kankurang Centre and the Copyrights Office have been involved in the activities and have benefited from training sessions related to

the basic concepts of the 2003 Convention, inventorying and the development of safeguarding plans. Other concerned Ministries (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; Ministry of Environment, Climate Change and Natural Resources; Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare), as well as The Gambia Radio and Television Service, were also involved in the project.

Finally, this project has strengthened the capacities of practitioners and community representatives from the five administrative regions of the country, who took part in the training activities and who were widely involved in the identification of living heritage elements to be inventoried.

By strengthening knowledge on the principles and concepts of the 2003 Convention, but also by carrying out a pilot inventory of intangible cultural heritage elements in the country, the activities implemented under the project had positive spillover impacts on NGOs, medias, experts and academics working in the field of cultural heritage. During the implementation, the project has built the capacities of 20 Government Officials, 20 Gambian heritage experts, including the selection and training of 11 potential Gambian living heritage facilitators.

The long-standing partnership between The Gambia and Senegal, two neighboring countries who share [common heritage](#), has been reinforced by inviting the focal person responsible for living heritage at the Ministry of Culture and Historical Heritage of Senegal to take part in the training workshop on the principles and mechanisms of the 2003 Convention held in July 2023. The media have also been sensitised (12 journalists) so that they are better equipped to communicate on and highlight the importance of living heritage. The workshop to be conducted in December 2023 provide an opportunity to engage Senegal and Cabo-Verde in sharing best practices and working together to safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the sub-region (South-South cooperation). During the two phases of the inventory (the pilot exercise in December 2022, and in the other regions of The Gambia), 24 elements were inventoried, involving the participation of 24 communities across the country.

The participation of women has been central in this project. Gender balance was ensured in key activities, and the participation of women during ICH trainings has been ensured as follows:

- 40% (at least) of all participants trained were women.
- Women represented more than 60% of participants during fieldwork activities with communities (December 2022).
- 5 out of 11 national supporting ICH facilitators are women.
- 3 women-led ICH elements, where women are the main bearers (out of 6 which were the focus of the pilot inventorying experience in Banjul).

## V. Communication and Visibility

### Online communication campaigns

A [project flyer](#) was developed and shared with partners and project beneficiaries during trainings. Each project activity was accompanied by a digital communication campaign went live on the [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) channels of the UNESCO in Dakar, and echoed by the [NCAC Facebook channel](#) and the Twitter account of the [UN Gambia Resident Coordinator's Office](#).

Additionally, web news were published on the UNESCO Dakar and the UNESCO 2003 Convention websites after each project milestone (i) [The Gambia reaffirms its commitment to safeguard its living heritage / La Gambie réaffirme son engagement dans la sauvegarde de son patrimoine vivant](#); ii) [Gambia capacity-building project advances to strengthen links between living heritage and sustainable development / Le projet de renforcement des capacités en Gambie avance pour renforcer les liens entre le patrimoine vivant et le développement durable](#)). Significant efforts were made to promote the visibility of the project during implementation, through the preparation and dissemination of a communication materials (such as banners, a photobank, cards with quotes, save-the-date posters, among others).

Example of testimonies of participants were captured and [showcased in a series of lively visuals](#) to engage

the online public and further disseminate the project activities and key concepts of ICH:

Capacity building for Government officials and technical stakeholders  
July 2022 #GambiaforICH #IntangibleCulturalHeritage

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**When thinking about how to preserve the Intangible Cultural Heritage of our communities, we need to always keep in mind basic human rights, including those of women.**

**Neneh Touray,**  
Gambia's Directorate of Gender  
Equality and Women Empowerment

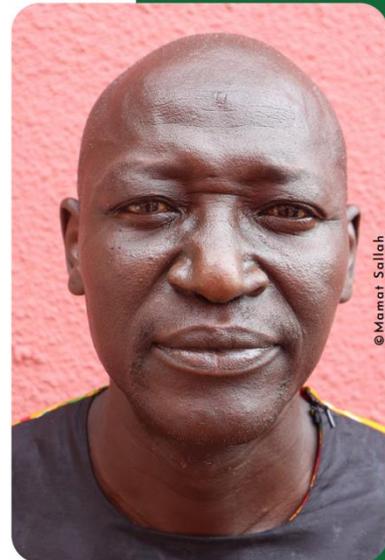


Capacity building for Government officials and technical stakeholders  
July 2022 #GambiaforICH #IntangibleCulturalHeritage

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**There is a common enemy that we need to pay attention to when we speak about our living heritage, and that is climate change. We need to work hard to regenerate the plants that have been used for millennia and are a vehicle for our ICH.**

**Sheikh Alkinky Sanyang,**  
Gambian National  
Environment Agency



## Catalogue

A catalogue featuring a synthesis of the activities carried out and presenting the elements inventoried during pilot-inventorying activities in the Banjul area and the other Gambian regions will be produced by the end of the project. This tool aims at raising awareness of young people and the general public on living heritage and providing them with access to the elements of their cultural heritage.

The catalogue will also include 6 ICH elements that were inventoried in June 2021 by the Gambian National Centre for Arts and Culture (NCAC), in close collaboration with community representatives from 10 villages located around protected natural areas. This initiative, which was also supported by UNESCO, aimed to

study and inventory the elements of living heritage that contribute to environmental protection and sustainable resource management. The activity also included the development of educational materials for highlighting the contribution of living heritage to education.

### **Video on the project activities**

A video on the key activities carried out will be created at the end of the project. It will compile the different materials produced in the framework of this project in an accessible format to be disseminated on several multimedia platforms.

### **Database**

An online database including all elements inventoried during the project will be developed. The NCAC will maintain this database and continue feeding it with further updated information once the project is over, ensuring its sustainability.