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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): **National Heritage and Culture Division,  
Government of Pakistan**

Project title:	Community Based Inventorying and Capacity Building of Indigenous Communities for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provinces
Reporting period:	From: <b>01/03/2022</b> to: <b>30/11/2022</b>
Budget:	Total: <b>US\$104,890</b> <i>Including:</i> Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund: <b>US\$99,990</b> State Party contribution: <b>US\$4,900</b> Other contributions: US\$0
Implementing agency (contracting partner or UNESCO Field Office):	UNESCO Field Office Islamabad
Contact person:	Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Mr Family name: Given name: Muhammad Bilal Institution/position: Senior Joint Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division, Government of Pakistan Address: Fourth Floor, Kohsar Block, Pakistan Secretariat, Constitution Avenue, Islamabad, Pakistan Telephone number: +92-51-9222-755 E-mail address: jsd.heritage@gmail.com
Partner agency (in the case of a service)	

from UNESCO project):	
Implementing partners:	Organization: Heritage Cell – Department of Architecture, NED University of Engineering and Technology (Karachi, Sindh) Consultant: Ms Meeza Ubaid (Sindh) Consultant: Mr Naeem Safi (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)

## 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*

Many indigenous intangible cultural heritage (ICH) practitioners live in under-developed parts of in Pakistan, which quite often results in barriers to achieving the socioeconomic mobility needed for sustainable financial growth. Among many of these communities, there is a worrying trend of increased disassociation from traditional cultural practices. Youth from indigenous communities no longer see value in learning traditional cultural practices – something that in many cases is a result of a lack of focus on teaching and studying cultural heritage in educational institutions. Cultural practitioners themselves are losing a sense of pride in their traditions, and many are choosing to not pass on their knowledge to their children or other youth, often because it is felt that youth have a better chance at achieving financial growth and stability by finding employment in offices etc. As a result, cultural assets are in danger of disappearing altogether as transmission continues to slow down.

With weak infrastructure and limited access to the internet in many under-developed areas, indigenous communities are unable to access resources and tools that could help effectively market their skills and make traditional knowledge economically viable. With the onset of the global recession, the economic impact of the pandemic, and the increasingly dire consequences of climate change, tradition bearers in remote areas are more vulnerable than ever before. Most recently, extreme heatwaves, unprecedented monsoon rainfall, and heavy flooding in Pakistan has put indigenous communities at greater risk. Both the key target areas of the project, namely Chitral in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Tharparkar in Sindh, were affected by these climate calamities in 2022. Tharparkar saw extremely high temperatures over the summer during the heatwave, followed by heavy rainfall and flooding in autumn. Areas of Tharparkar district that were not directly affected by flooding were still temporarily cut off from nearby regions due to the water damage to the roads leading to the district. In Chitral, glacier melt and heavy rainfall caused water level to rise rapidly, resulting in hill torrents and flash flooding. A lack of accessibility in the mountainous northern region made humanitarian assistance and damage assessment measures very challenging in the immediate aftermath of the flooding.

In addition to highlighting the vulnerability of indigenous communities in both the north and south of the country, recent climate disasters have further highlighted the value and need to reintroduce indigenous knowledge (such as water management systems) into mainstream practices. These recent developments in Pakistan further emphasize the importance of the the key aim of the project, that is to safeguard ICH by conducting community-based inventorying to expand ICH databases, building capacity of tradition bearers for growth and sustainable livelihoods, and connecting them to educational institutions to develop valuable linkages.

In the Tharparkar district, education is free in government-run public schools, however, the female literacy rates remain unsatisfactory. Most girls in the district are only able to study up till grade 5, as secondary schools for girls are only present in the two areas of Mithi and Islamkot – a commute not possible for everyone to make daily. Boys, on the other hand, have a higher literacy rate due to easier availability of secondary schools and teachers.

The Tharparkar district is mostly inhabited by Muslims and Hindus. There used to a significant Jain community in this region in the past, however, most have migrated

elsewhere over the years, and only some remnants of built heritage now remain. The rich and diverse cultural practices, history, and traditions of the Thari community are increasingly at risk due to the current social, cultural, and economic situation in the area. Many locals in the area are under heavy loans, and their priority is to invest time and energy into opportunities that may strengthen them financially. Traditional cultural practices, unfortunately, do not offer them many lucrative opportunities in the area. As outlined earlier, the intergenerational transfer of traditional knowledge has slowed down, and in some cases, changing social attitudes have led to an abandonment of traditional practices by youth (seen most clearly in the dying practice of hand-poked tattooing among both the Thari and Kalasha communities). Despite these challenges, Tharparkar still remains connected to its cultural roots, with many cultural festivals being huge tourist draws. Women of the community are very skilled at handmade crafts. Through training, capacity building, and the inclusion of cultural knowledge into classroom learning, there are opportunities for sustainable socio-economic growth for the community, as well as safeguarding ICH.

The overall project is also working to remove disconnect between cultural rights organizations and the indigenous communities in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In the last decade, significant work to support the Kalasha community in Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been carried out. The learnings, successes, and failures of this work allow for new interventions to be better suited to meet the needs of local communities. In Tharparkar, Sindh, this is the first intervention of its kind by to safeguard ICH. Through this project, UNESCO and NHCD intend to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage of Tharparkar and strengthen indigenous solidarity between the Thari and Kalasha communities in the process.

### **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*

Phase I of the project centred around Objective 1, i.e., Community-based inventorying of cultural heritage in Tharparkar, based on similar work which has been previously conducted by UNESCO and NHCD in Chitral.

For beneficiaries in Islamkot, Mithi, and Nagarparkar in Tharparkar, Sindh, this is the first time that focused efforts have been made to document their ICH in a systematic way. Fieldwork results indicate that several long-standing traditions are rapidly becoming less common and are facing an eventual threat of disappearance. Examples include the practice of tattooing, which is becoming less common due to changing societal attitudes towards it; and the preparation of hand-rolled cigarettes, which are being replaced by store-bought cigarettes, which are easier to obtain. Identification of elements at risk is an important result of phase I. This information will set the foundation for phases II and III of the project. Additionally, this information will be used to advocate for the preservation, protection, and promotion of ICH in Tharparkar.

In addition to data collection through CBI, additional steps towards preservation are being taken under Phase I, through photograph and video documentation of ICH elements of Tharparkar district.

A key final output of the project will a publicly accessible ICH database for Sindh, with the endorsement of both the provincial and federal governments. This will be the first database of its kind for Sindh, and the data will also be updated on the existing national-level inventory – thereby strengthening the capacity for ICH preservation at both the federal and provincial levels. Data collection, availability, and accessibility is an important tool for safeguarding, advocacy, awareness raising, and fundraising. The floods of 2022 have

further emphasized the need for good data on ICH. Initial damage and loss assessments in flood-affected areas are unable to capture the effect on ICH, due in large part of the absence of mechanisms to assess this and lack of baseline data for comparison. Developing provincial ICH databases and enhancing the national databases is a vital tool for long-term recovery, rebuilding, and long-term resilience for vulnerable communities against future climate disasters. Additionally, databases will be beneficial for Phase II of the project, which involves working with educational institutions to incorporate ICH into classroom learning in higher education.

Engagement with the community in Tharparkar allowed identification of and engagement with teacher, scholars, and community leaders who have been steadfastly working to promote and preserve their tangible and intangible cultural heritage. For some, this has taken the form of informational videos on local culture and traditions, made for dissemination on video-sharing platforms during the COVID years. Digital resources are a great way to spread information to a wider audience and opens up possibilities of collaboration with other indigenous communities in Pakistan, such as the Kalasha community in the north. Under Phase III of the project, members of both indigenous communities will have the opportunity to explore possible collaborations and information-sharing, especially through online platforms.

### **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*

For Phase I of the project, the UNESCO Islamabad Field Office engaged a consultant Ms. Meeza Ubaid to train the field team in Sindh on the process of Community Based Inventorying (CBI) and the basic guidelines of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), and to monitor implementation. Ms. Ubaid is an experienced ICH expert in Pakistan, who has previously led CBI in Kalasha Valleys of Chitral, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Ms. Ubaid recently joined the 2003 Convention's Global Network of Facilitators as well, so her experience and expertise has been hugely beneficial for the project. Alongside, a contractor was hired to conduct CBI and develop an online database. The Heritage Cell – Department of Architecture and Planning, NED University (HC-DAPNED) is based in Karachi and has faculty and students with considerable experience in working on the preservation and protection of cultural heritage across Sindh – both in the classroom and outside. Additionally, an ICH expert was hired to oversee project implementation in KP as well. Mr. Naeem Safi is a designer and academic, with extensive experience working with ICH in KP and at the national level.

The hiring process for both consultants and the organization followed UNESCO procedural requirements, and NHCD were kept informed of the process throughout.

NCHD was required to nominate focal persons for the Steering Committee of the project, and the following persons were nominated earlier this year:

- Mr. Sajjad Ahmed – Joint Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division, Government of Pakistan
- Mr. Hamayoon Khan – Manager Culture, KP Culture and Tourism Authority, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
- Ms. Zahida Quadri – Assistant Director, Directorate General of Culture, Government of Sindh

Though Mr. Sajjad Ahmed no longer holds a post in the NHCD, the provincial representatives have been engaged in the process and have committed to supporting work in the field by consultants and contractors engaged by UNESCO. A Steering Committee meeting will be held in 2023 in the premises of NHCD, with the current Joint Secretary, Mr. Muhammad Bilal and provincial representatives to discuss project progress, achievements, and the next steps.

To start the CBI process in the district of Tharparkar, Sindh, the first step was to identify target regions within the district. Three areas were selected, namely Mithi, Islamkot, and Nagarparkar. The key factor in selecting these areas was the rapid urbanization and development of road networks in Mithi and Islamkot, as well as growing tourism in Nagarparkar. Rapid development can be beneficial for local communities, in terms of financial and social mobility, and access to new opportunities. However, at the same time, it can be detrimental for the transmission and safeguarding of ICH, as well as for the protection of the rights of local communities. A significant way to strengthen local communities and prevent marginalization by outsiders is through the promotion of local culture and traditions. These factors helped determine the selection of the three target regions within the Tharparkar District.

Before beginning fieldwork, the field team completed an extensive literature review, consultations with senior experts and the consultant, to be duly informed about the target area, its history, and the communities living therein.

The first reconnaissance field visit took place between June 30, 2022 – July 4, 2022. A four-member research team from HC-DAPNED, namely Professor Dr. Anila Naeem, Professor Farida A. Ghaffar, Senior Researcher Ar. Hussain Khalid, and Junior Researcher Ar. Iraj Bughio, along with the consultant Ar. Meeza Ubaid, travelled to the target areas of Mithi, Islamkot, and Nagarparkar in Tharparkar District, Sindh. The NED University Thar Campus (TIEST) in Mithi was the starting point for fieldwork, as many locals work and study at the university. Conversations with staff members led to the identification of university personnel who were knowledge bearers from the community and agreed to act as liaisons between the field team and the local community. Engagement with local knowledge bearers led to information sharing on the flora and fauna of the area, the use of medicinal herb, and local crafts. The key objective of the initial conversations was to explain the purpose and objective of the project and seek permission and consent from the community for further fieldwork, as this is an important component of the CBI process. In the next few days, the field team travelled around the target areas and met with several members of the community. People shared that dowry-making was a major part of local traditions, where women of the community prepared handmade embroidered clothes, cushions, pillows and more for new brides. Girls learn these embroidery and stitching skills from a young age, and for many, it goes on to become a source of earning later in life. The team also learned of the practice of Sanatan vat – which is a practice of interpreting signs of nature through flora and fauna. For example, observing the pattern of ripening berries on a tree to determine where in the region it is likely to rain that year. The practice is diverse in its application, and practitioners can provide guidelines on a range of matters, such as household construction practices to maximize sunlight and ventilation.

Conversations with locals also revealed that much of the younger generation is moving away from traditional practices, for a number of reasons, which include opting to learn more financially viable skills instead of traditional crafts, dismissing traditional practices as myths, and avoiding visible practices such as tattoos to avoid social stigma and alienation from outside communities. Several elder members of the community highlighted the growing disconnect of their crafts with the younger generations, and how that is accelerating the erasure of traditional crafts and indigenous practices.

It is important to note that the Thari community is predominantly conservative, and cultural sensitivities must be respected during fieldwork. In most areas, male members of the community were comfortable speaking to female members of the field team. However, only

female members of the field team were allowed into private spaces occupied by women and girls of the community.

Following a fruitful first visit, the team returned to Karachi for training and further preparations.

Several CBI training workshops were conducted by Ar. Meeza Ubaid. The first workshop was held on July 21 – 22, 2022 on the NED campus, and workshop participants included students, faculty members, and cultural professionals. The objective of the workshop was to train the field team in key concepts and principles of CBI for ICH, basic guidelines of the 2003 Convention, and provide guidelines on the methodology, techniques, and ethics of CBI. The NHCD has already prepared an Urdu version of the CBI form for use within Pakistan, and the team determined that this would be sufficient for fieldwork, as members from the community had been identified for assistance in translation and communication.

The second workshop was held at TIEST, NED Campus in Mithi. Participants of the workshop included men, women, and youth from the local community. The objective of the workshop was to give an overview of ICH, CBI, and basic guidelines from the 2003 Convention. The facilitator told the participants about the inscription of Suri Jagek on the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, and how such measures can help protect and preserve ICH.

The third workshop was held for community members in Nagarparkar, with separate sessions for men and women, and the format was the same as the second workshop.

During the field visit from September 9 – 15, 2022, the consultant and field team were able to inventory the following ICH elements:

- Badiya (ivory bangle)
- Beerli (hand rolled cigarette)
- Bhagat
- Chownra (traditional abode)
- Dowry (household items, objects for the bride, and objects for the groom)
- Folk songs
- Kaapro (black dress worn by the Rabari women)
- Katho
- Leather tanning
- Lok Danai
- Medicinal plants
- Ralloi
- Sanatan Vat
- Tarai
- Teeto/Teejwa (Tattoos)
- Thari Chunri

The field team was able to collect extensive information during the visit. However, follow up visits will be required to fulfil any gaps once the collected data has been reviewed and recorded. Additionally, the collected data must be shown to the community to get their endorsement before the CBI process can be considered complete.

Alongside data review, photo and video documentation of ICH practices are also being

compiled. Most importantly, an online database for ICH in Sindh is under development.

Simultaneously, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Mr. Safi conducted field research, interviews, and focus group discussions with community members, academics, and government officials to understand the challenges and opportunities for ICH in the region.

As Phase I nears its end, preparations are underway for Phase II, which will involve building on the data collected to work with higher education institutions in both Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to incorporate ICH into classroom learning.

### **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*

Before beginning fieldwork, the field team ensured that adequate desk research was completed to be informed about the target area, its history, and the communities living therein. It is important to be informed, yet it is also important to not carry pre-conceived notions into the field that can negatively impact community engagement and the CBI process. First contact can fundamentally shape the community's perception of outsiders, and so it is important to be respectful of local sentiments. The field team was guided on this by the consultant, prior to beginning field work.

The objective of the project is to engage intergenerational stakeholders from the Thari community of Mithi, Islamkot, and Nagarparkar, irrespective of their religion, age, sect etc., thereby ensuring village elders, youth, women, and minorities are all equitably represented. The main implementing partner of the Sindh component of the project HC-DAPNED is a public university with campuses in both Karachi and Tharparkar. The Mithi campus of the university has played a key role in the fieldwork process, as most of the staff and students at the campus are from the local communities. By working with the Tharparkar campus, as well as by engaging representatives from local organizations during community discussion sessions, the aim is to remove the disconnect between NGOs, cultural rights organizations, and the indigenous communities of Tharparkar. Efforts to document and safeguard ICH in Tharparkar can only be successful when the community itself is at the helm of all such initiatives, and a key aim of the project is to build capacity to make this possible.

The aim of the first field visit to Mithi, Islamkot, and Nagarparkar regions was for the field staff and community members to meet, engage, and discuss what the process of CBI is, what it entails, and how any data collected is intended to be used. Permission to conduct field activities was sought and secured from the community in each area. The orientation sessions led to the identification of locals who were knowledge bearers themselves, and also willing to be community guides for the field team. Some communities of the area were reluctant to allow male members of the field staff to interact with girls and women. This highlighted the importance of having a gender-balanced field team, to ensure information is collected from all segments of society, and nobody's voice is left unheard. This was especially significant for Tharparkar, as much of the handmade crafts are prepared by women.

Community feedback and focus group discussions have helped the field team adjust and refine the CBI process to best suit the needs of the target area. A core group of researchers, including men, women, elders and youth, from Mithi, Islamkot, and Nagarparkar, has been formed to support the field team. This research group was given brief trainings on the CBI process and UNESCO guidelines for safeguarding ICH.



## 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*

The project activities emphasize the sustainability of expected results, with a focus on strengthening capacity of educational institutions, government departments, CSOs, as well as the indigenous communities themselves. The sustainability of Phase I interventions first and foremost depends on the acceptance of the Thari community (Muslims and Hindus) in acknowledging the process of community-based inventory (CBI). To make this a reality, meaningful community engagement has been at the helm of each activity. The elements to be inventoried have been identified with the help of the local community. Representatives from the local communities have been selected and trained by the ICH expert on the basic methodology of CBI, and the role it plays in safeguarding heritage. These trained community members have participated actively in the CBI process, and in verification of the collected data. As a result of active participation from the very beginning, community members now have increased capacity to continue the CBI process even after the project team has left and the project has ended. Furthermore, a key output of the project will be a publicly accessible online ICH database for Sindh province, which is intended to be constantly updated. Through this project, UNESCO and NHCD are working to create a solid foundation for CBI, upon which future interventions can be built.

## 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*

Phase I of the project is nearing completion, and it has been a hugely successful phase, despite several challenges. The main challenges in implementation have been climate-related extreme weather conditions. In the summer of 2022, even though contractors had been engaged to carry out fieldwork, the team was unable to visit Tharparkar district due to first an extreme heatwave, followed by unprecedented heavy monsoon rainfall. After the first field visit was able to take place, the second field visit had to be delayed due to damaged roads in the region following the devastating floods of 2022 in Pakistan. Similarly, in KP, the target area was impacted by the monsoon rainfall and flash flooding, causing disruption in work and access to the communities. Considering this, an important lesson learnt is the need to re-evaluate risk assessment and contingency planning for future interventions, as climate-induced disasters are only going to get more intense.

Another key takeaway is the importance of engaging community members from the very beginning of any CBI exercise. The contractor hired for the intervention, HC-DAPNED has a significant number of students from Tharparkar, and has a campus in Mithi, one of the

target areas. This existing Inroad into the community not only helped with logistics and planning, but also with crossing language and cultural barriers, and winning the trust of the community.

A close working relationship with government officials at both the provincial and federal levels is necessary for the smooth execution of project activities, as well as for long-term sustainability and success.

Findings from Phase I of the project findings have further emphasized the fact that several of the challenges faced by indigenous communities in Pakistan are quite similar, even if the communities are geographically far apart – as the Thari and Kalasha communities are. The threats to ICH are shared across communities, and there must be an urgency in the actions taken to preserve, protect, and promote ICH in these areas, while also working towards responsible and sustainable socioeconomic growth for the communities.

### Annexes

List the annexes and documentation included in the report:

- publications, evaluation reports and other outputs, when applicable
- progress reports prepared during the contract period
- list of major equipment provided under the project and status after termination of contract period
- other (please specify)

1. **Inception Report** (Tharparkar, Sindh) by Ms Meeza Ubaid
2. **Fieldwork Report** (Tharparkar, Sindh) by Ms Meeza Ubaid
3. **Work Plan and Reconnaissance Report** (Tharparkar, Sindh) by Heritage Cell – Department of Architecture, NED University of Engineering and Technology
4. **Mid-Project Progress Report** (Tharparkar, Sindh) by Heritage Cell – Department of Architecture, NED University of Engineering and Technology
5. **Inception Report** (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh) by Mr Naeem Safi

### Name and signature of the person having completed the report

Name: Muhammad Bilal  
Title: Senior Joint Secretary  
Date: 07 March, 2023  
Signature: 