

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

PROGRESS NARRATIVE REPORT

Beneficiary State(s) Party(ies):

ARM-01864

Project title:	Community-Based Inventory, Documenting and Safeguarding Folklore of the Syunik Region of Armenia
Reporting period:	From: 01.04.2022 to: 30.11.2022
Budget:	<p>Total project budget: US\$ 74,875.00</p> <p><i>Including:</i></p> <p>Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund: US\$70.855.00</p> <p>State Party contribution: US\$4.020.00</p> <p>Other contributions: US\$0</p>
Implementing agency (contracting partner or UNESCO Field Office):	Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography Academy of Sciences of Armenia
Contact person:	<p>Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Mrs</p> <p>Family name: Melikyan</p> <p>Given name: Gohar</p> <p>Institution/position: Senior researcher</p> <p>Address: Charents 15, 0025, Yerevan, Armenia</p> <p>Telephone number: +374 94844421</p> <p>E-mail address: melikyangohar@gmail.com</p>
Partner agency (in the case of a	N/A

service from UNESCO project):	
Implementing partners:	N/A

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

The ICH of Syunik region of Armenia is notably important due to local identity, geographical peculiarities, and basic processes of historical developments. The peculiarities and distinctive features of the oral heritage of Syunik are explained by the somewhat isolated geographical location of the region, its intra-cultural diversity (villages are somewhat isolated from each other), the distinct dialect which is unique and differs from the dialects of other regions of Armenia and literary Armenian, and the centuries old tradition of Syunik people to transmit their lore by word of mouth from generation to generation. The latter forms the mechanism of oral transmission of living heritage, due to which it has circulated for centuries, enabling local people with knowledge, experience, and skills to preserve their wisdom and local specificities till our days. In some communities, cultural heritage needs intense safeguarding, since oftentimes it is under the influence of either global changes or the influence of literary Armenian, due to which the local ICH is gradually forgotten.

The last time fieldwork carried out in Syunik was in the 1960s, and from all the abundant folklore of the region, only 74 pieces of folktales were published in the 7th volume of «Armenian Folktales» (1979). Some pieces of the oral culture of Syunik can be found in different publications, periodicals (even from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century), as well as in various archives, but they are dispersed, old, in scarce quantity, worn out, and do not present the real picture of the circulation of ICH in the region.

There is a great need to have them all in one place, carefully preserved and presented. Appropriately collected field-work materials along with the available printed sources will be thoroughly studied and classified according to modern standards of folklore studies and promoted by compiling the Syunik ICH Database.

According to our observations, the lack of attention towards the ICH of the region may bring to the losing of it altogether, and consequently to underestimating the role of ICH and its bearers, as well as their knowledge and experience in their communities.

In order to raise awareness among community members and bearers, the project aims to provide a series of informative capacity-building workshops on the importance of ICH and the role of communities in safeguarding and transmitting ICH, highlighting inclusivity in communities, promoting the involvement of secondary and post-secondary educational institutions, and emphasizing the role of bearers as active promoters and safeguarders of ICH. As a result, respect towards the diversity of ICH and its practitioners will grow.

The project intends to carry out one introductory workshop at Goris State University (involving local administration representatives, bearers, practitioners, students and professors, researchers, NGOs, and other interested individuals) and eight interactive workshops in different communities with the presence of community members, particularly bearers, and the youth. Local communities which are under the constant influence of globalization will have the opportunity to realize the importance of their cultural background, their roots, and the transmission and safeguarding of ICH. Hence, the project aims to contribute to passing along core values, sharing a common history, strengthening community union, reinforcing positive expectation, and minimizing conflict.

At the end of the project, a concluding workshop will be held at Goris State University, summing up the outcomes of the project, as well as presenting the Syunik ICH Database with all its features. Launching the Syunik ICH Database is one of the main goals of the project.

Armenia has 3 ICH inventories, and the Syunik ICH inventory will complete the living ICH inventory of Armenia. Some elements will be included in the Armenian inventory of ICH in need of urgent safeguarding and others will be added to the Armenian inventory of ICH cultural

spaces.

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

The project started in April of 2022. It has been already 9 months that the project team has been working on it. During this time, we have done everything that was planned according to the timetable of the project. We have contacted all the communities that we are going to work with, agreed on work format, time and arrangements of visits and collaboration, introduced the objectives to be implemented. The collaboration with Syunik Armenological centre and Goris State University has been officially confirmed. In September there was a training of the project team by UNESCO global Facilitator Dr. Janet Blake. In the result of the training the project team is ready to work in communities according to the approaches and regulations of Convention.

The detailed plan of community activities has been developed. The work with archive materials on the search of ICH pieces has been successfully finished. The materials retrieved are collected and classified for the future use. The guidelines for the work in communities has been completed. The materials for the workshop in Goris State University have been prepared.

We have met all the objective that were presented in the project for the 9 months.

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 the 9 months of the implementation of the project “Community-Based inventory, documenting and safeguarding folklore of the Syunik region of Armenia” the team has successfully finished all the planned activates for the time mentioned.

Activity 1: The project team, first of all, made work division and created a detailed timetable for short- and long-term activities. Several online meetings have been held with the community representatives and those who are responsible for cultural affairs in communities. They got general idea about the project objectives and confirmed their interest in the participation of the project. Also, meetings were held with the Syunik Armenological centre, which is a research centre on the folk life of Syunik, Goris State University authorities and some NGOs that agreed to collaborate with the Project team. The team finalized the list of communities where the workshops and field works are going to be held. The necessary equipment was ordered and purchased by the Institute

of Archaeology and Ethnography according to the rules of purchasing equipment in State Scientific Institutions of Armenia.

Activity 2: In September of 2022, 5 full day trainings were held for the Project team by UNESCO Global facilitator Dr. Janet Blake. During the training the project team got insights about working directly with tradition bearers according to UNESCO convention and directories. It was an interactive event with a lot of examples and question-answer sessions and due to it the team was trained according to Convention requirements and could distinguish between traditional Folkloristic approach for working in communities and UNESCO approach towards safeguarding ICH. The best practices for safeguarding were analysed. Dr. Blake answered all the questions we had and showed us the possible solutions to the issues that may arise. As a training follow up the project team compiled a tentative agenda for community activities as well as plan of mini projects to involve the bearers into preservation of ICH in the communities. During the stay the Global facilitator of UNESCO had a meeting with authorities of the Ministry of Culture and gave several interviews for public TV on the Implementation of the project. During that period the project was well promoted by the Ministry and public TV of Armenia.

See the News on Public TV of Armenia (from 44.57 min).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-bKwf6q2Fo>

The link on project promotion from the official website of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sport.

https://escs.am/am/news/13906?fbclid=IwAR1bRFQbA5F4w3xAtnKlfYTNCiQqj5WrAPgrLsr6wzJpG_1hSQfGXV247dA

This is the live program on the Public TV of Armenia to promote the project. The Ministry representative, UNESCO global facilitator and Project coordinator were invited to it.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5CdjTe7VXgs>

Activity 3: The next stage was desk research. The team members explored all possible publications from periodicals, archives and various collections where ICH pieces of Syunik were published in different time periods starting from 1892 to the 2000s. The aim of the desk study is to bring together the texts of ICH collected at different times from the region for the ICH database and for collecting the repertoire of Syunik ICH before starting the field work in Syunik communities and holding community workshops. These texts will be included into Syunik ICH Database which will be created within the scope of the assistance by the end of the project. This was a hard task, and so far, at this point we have the list of ICH pieces classified according to their genre specificities. The ICH pieces from published sources show the diversity of the repertoire of Syunik heritage. There are almost all genres of oral heritage like folktales, songs, legends, proverbs and sayings, riddles and so on. Getting idea of the ICH repertoire will help to raise interest among bearers and collect new variants or observe transformations among ICH bearers. The list of publications was compiled from which ICH pieces have been taken (See Annex 2).

Activity 4: The project team created a draft of methodological guidelines to be used during the field work in communities. These guidelines include the consent forms for the

ICH bearers for interviews and collaboration in general, for taking photos and videos. Another document is the questionnaire with interview questions for the records of the project. Recently community representatives provided the names of potential known tradition bearers from their communities that they are aware of. The methodological guidelines are documents that the team is going to apply and distribute in communities where the principles of field-work, methods used and objectives of the project are described.

Activity 5: For the reporting period this activity included preparation of materials for the first information workshop at Goris State University. This workshop is intended to host 50 participants which are going to be region authorities, NGO representatives, community representatives, students, teachers, and other interested individuals. It is the first event within the scope of the project to be held in Syunik region of Armenia. The preparatory materials for the event at Goris State University include creating the content for the brochures for participants, its compiling, editing, doing research for choosing the appropriate and popular examples of ICH of Syunik. For raising awareness among the participants, the best examples of safeguarding of ICH have been researched from the UNESCO ICH website, and those which can be relevant to this project have been chosen. The project team has preliminary agreement with the printing house to carry printing of brochures, banners and posters. These activities will be carried during the next stages.

Overall, the project team is working enthusiastically and is open to learn and collaborate with stakeholders and interested individuals. The meetings are held regularly with the Department of Cultural heritage of the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports on the progress and implementation of the project.

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

From the very start of the project, the project team had online meetings with community authorities concerning the works that are intended to be carried out within the scope of the project in communities. Workshops will be held in Goris State University and in 8 communities, field-work will be carried in 20 communities of Syunik.

The communities were informed that the main activities of the project are going to take place in communities with the active involvement of bearers and raising their awareness about the importance of safeguarding their living oral heritage. The role of bearers in safeguarding ICH in communities was highlighted. Communities confirmed their readiness to work within the framework of the project and be a part of it. We constantly keep touch with them and clarify the details upon request. In spring and summer of 2023, according to the project timeline, visits to communities will start and the selected communities are already informed about their share of involvement and the format of events to be carried there. It is planned to create ICH cells in bigger communities which will keep touch with the Institute of Archaeology

and Ethnography even after the end of the project. The safeguarding of ICH in communities should be the responsibility of bearers and communities so first of all the bearers themselves should realise their role in this process. It is agreed to have a meeting with teachers and students as well during the visits. The workshops that are going to be held in communities are going to be interactive, and with active not passive participation of bearers. By the best examples and brainstorming we would try to involve communities in ICH safeguarding practices.

For some objective reasons there was a change in the initial list of communities after the 44-day war in 2020 between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

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

This project is the first Assistance project carried out in Armenia. It started in April of 2022. During the training delivered by the UNESCO global facilitator it was clear that the traditional folklore methods of working in communities are old and not effective and this project is a pilot try for collecting documenting and safeguarding ICH from all ethnographic regions of Armenia so its successful completion will contribute to the sustainability of ICH documentation in Armenia. It has been agreed with the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports that this first attempt of ICH documentation can become a model for further successful practices of ICH safeguarding in Armenia.

So far, we have already outlined the ways and mechanisms that will promote ICH in the selected communities. These are trainings with bearers on the importance of ICH safeguarding, promotion of ICH of Syunik communities by the bearers on social media, that will continue after the end of the project. Thinking about safeguarding ICH should become a part of their everyday life-style. The project will promote creating ICH cells in communities that will collaborate with the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography after the end of the project, Awareness raising in communities will contribute to the development of sustainability in the region in general.

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 most important lessons learnt up to now are the principles of working with ICH in communities according to UNESCO principles, convention and directives. The convention and directives have been studied thoroughly, as well as examples of good safeguarding practices have been examined.

Communities realise their role in the safeguarding of ICH, the output of the project will be beneficial for sustainability in the communities. The awareness raising events and practices will long serve the needs of ICH safeguarding in communities, because of the involvement of the youth, students and teachers, as well as bearers and interested individuals.

The project team will continue working with other ethnographic regions of Armenia with the same approach to ICH documentation and safeguarding.

On this stage of project implementation speaking about difficulties of project implementation in communities is not relevant, as community visits will start during the next stages of the project.

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)*

Annex 1 – The list of already published pieces collected from different old publications and classified according to the genre.

Annex 2 – The list of publications where Syunik ICH pieces were found.

Annex 3 – Agenda of UNESCO facilitator visit

Annex 4 - List of links of Global facilitator visit

Name and signature of the person having completed the report

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Date: January 12, 2023

Signature: Gohar Melikyan

