



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

International Assistance

ICH-04-Report – Form

INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

FINAL NARRATIVE REPORT

Beneficiary State Party: **Vanuatu**

Project title:	Safeguarding Indigenous Vernacular Architecture and Building Knowledge in Vanuatu
Time frame:	Starting date: 01/09/15 Completion date: 28/07/2016
Budget:	<p style="text-align: right;">Total: US\$44,058</p> <p><i>Including:</i></p> <p>Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund: US\$23,908</p> <p>State Party contributions: US\$6150</p> <p>Other contributions: US\$14,000</p>
Implementing agency:	Vanuatu Cultural Centre
Implementing partners:	Wendy Christie
Contact person:	<p>Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Ms</p> <p>Family name: Laboukly</p> <p>Given name: Brigitte</p> <p>Institution/position: Vanuatu National Museum and Cultural Centre: World Heritage Focal Point Manager.</p> <p>Address: P.O. Box 184, Port Vila, Vanuatu.</p> <p>Telephone number: +678-22612 (work) +678 7766703 (mob)</p> <p>E-mail address: blaboukly@gmail.com</p> <p>Note: Brigitte has since left the Vanuatu Cultural Centre. Further correspondence should be made to: Edson Willie: willie.edson@gmail.com</p>

Background and rationale

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 project was instigated in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Pam (TCP), a Category 5 cyclone that crossed Vanuatu on March 13, 2015. The cyclone caused catastrophic damage to the built environment across Vanuatu, damaging an estimated 80-90% of structures and buildings. Vast areas of forests, crops and plantations were also damaged.

The request to UNESCO was for emergency assistance due to the severity of the conditions post- TCP. The concerns for damage to cultural heritage were raised in the national Post Disaster Needs Assessment, and recommendations for the project were made for both the short- and medium- to long-term recovery needs for the cultural sector.

A debate emerged post-cyclone about the role that indigenous vernacular architecture played during the cyclone, and in particular the role of the nakamal (community meeting house) in sheltering communities in rural areas, which might not have otherwise had access to adequate shelter.

Post- cyclone there was very little known about the condition of the nakamals located in the areas affected by the cyclone. This raised concerns about the potential loss of the nakamals, not only due to the damage made to the structures, but also to the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) elements of the buildings.

Of particular concern was the ability to repair and rebuild the nakamals given that the cyclone had also damaged a significant proportion of local building material resources across Vanuatu, which might prevent communities from being able to repair and renovate their nakamals. This in turn would prevent the transfer of building skills and knowledge to younger generations and the subsequent loss of intergenerational *kastom* (custom) building knowledge.

The nakamal plays a significant role in communities across Vanuatu. It houses the functions for *kastom* governance, and provides a place where disputes are resolved and *kastom* is practiced. The nakamal is central to the maintenance of *kastom* in Vanuatu. The nakamal was also assessed as playing an important role in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in rural areas where it was shown to provide a place of shelter to community members during TCP.

The viability of the nakamal as a built form relies on centuries old building knowledge being transferred from elder to youth, from generation to generation. The report identified risks to this knowledge transfer due to: the proliferation of imported building materials and construction techniques; a lack of heritage recognition; the decimation of traditional building materials by TCP; the inability to grow new plantations due to the El Nino induced drought; the resulting shortage of local building materials required to renovate or reconstruct them; the resulting inability for building and renovation skills to be passed onto the next generation; the very real potential that other cyclones might cross the region over future cyclone seasons, potentially causing further damage to the structures and impacting on the ability of the communities to repair them; and, a lack of funding for communities to provide immediate protection to the existing damaged buildings.

Recommendations for safeguarding measures were required to ensure that the ICH elements of the nakamal are not lost, because the loss of this knowledge would contribute to the erosion of *kastom* in Vanuatu, as well as the eventual loss of the tangible elements of the nakamal, the building itself.

The report instigated an inventory of the nakamals across Vanuatu and recommended that it be developed and regularly updated by the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC). The report also recommended that there be better recognition at a local and international level to raise the awareness of the significance of both the ICH and tangible elements of the nakamal.

The project set out to document the pre- and post- cyclone condition of six significant traditional nakamals that were likely to have been damaged by Cyclone Pam (although ultimately seven were documented). The documentation was to include both the tangible and intangible aspects of each nakamal, which were to be represented through a written and visual medium.

The main objective of the project was to compile a set of best safeguarding practices to encourage the revitalisation of building skills related to the indigenous vernacular architecture in the region, in order to ensure the continuing existence of the nakamal.

The main modalities of action for the project were to include the following:

1. Conduct research into the background of each nakamal to gain a broad view of the history of its structure and condition prior to Cyclone Pam, including both the known tangible and intangible aspects of each structure;
2. Conduct a damage assessment to document the current structural condition of each nakamal including any damage that was sustained from the cyclone;
3. Conduct an assessment into the risk of loss of the ICH aspects of each structure including the knowledge and skills that are required for building the nakamal that is retained within each community; and,
4. Compile a report listing the best safeguarding measures for each of the nakamals.

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 achieved the majority of its objectives and attained the desired results. The achieved objectives of the project, the results attained, the unexpected results attained and those areas that require further attention are listed below:

Objectives achieved:

1. The project immediately engaged the communities and reinforced the importance and significance of the nakamal. The communities' interaction with the fieldworkers demonstrated the national and international interest in the nakamal.

2. Seven significant traditional nakamals were documented, including the tangible and intangible aspects of each nakamal pre- and post- cyclone, which were represented through a written and visual medium.

Results attained:

1. A set of best safeguarding practices were compiled that can be implemented at the village level by the communities themselves, at the national level by the Vanuatu Government and at the international level through UNESCO. These measures will encourage the revitalisation of building skills related to the indigenous architecture in the region in order to ensure the continuing existence of the structures and their intrinsic ICH elements.
2. A recommendation was made within the report that the nakamal be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. This will hopefully trigger a process whereby the VCC will pursue the potential nomination.

Unexpected results attained:

1. Master of Architecture Students from the University of Adelaide who were participating in an 'Overseas Experiential Studio' (under the guidance of the Project Researcher) assisted with the documentation of the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island. Through this experience the University of Adelaide is now furthering the promotion of traditional architecture, and in particular, the nakamal, through its ongoing international studio programs in Vanuatu.
2. An unexpected finding from the project was the *kastom* practice of singing that forms an important part of the building process in many communities.

Objectives and results requiring further attention:

1. To date only one of the communities (Taloa Village, Nguna) has received a copy of the report and the included Recommended Safeguarding Measures. The VCC should endeavour to deliver the report to the remaining communities as soon as practicable. It should also make sure that a copy of the report is delivered to the National Library for inclusion in its catalogue.
2. An inventory of nakamals was instigated by the project, which should be developed and updated by the VCC.
3. The medium term effects expected to be achieved by the implementation of the project are the rebuilding of the nakamals through utilising a system that ensures knowledge is passed on to the next generation of 'master-builders', and the retention of knowledge within the communities about the process of construction of the nakamals. While it is not possible to measure this yet, the effects of the project will be able to be assessed through the development of the nakamals inventory.

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 implementing partners in carrying out activities and generating outputs.

Not fewer than 1000 or more than 1500 words

The following activities were conducted as part of the project implementation:

Activity 1: Preliminary research:

Preliminary research established the existing documentation of each nakamal. Where existing documentation was found, it provided insight into the history and condition of the structures prior to TCP. As part of this activity, VCC researchers searched the National Library databases, local provincial council office archives as well as the Internet.

Outputs generated:

- Employment experience and income generation for two young ni-Vanuatu university students who conducted the preliminary research in Vanuatu.

Activity 2: Structural and material damage assessment:

An assessment of each nakamal was conducted to establish its current structural/material condition, including any damage that was caused by TCP. Fieldworkers visited each project location and documented the condition of each nakamal through photography and detailed drawings. They also interviewed people intimate with the knowledge related to the nakamals in each village.

Outputs generated:

- Awareness raising within communities regarding the national and international interest in preserving the nakamal.
- Consultation and engagement with community representatives, respected elders and youth.
- Architectural illustration and fieldwork experience for the ni-Vanuatu fieldworkers from the VCC, particularly with regard to traditional architecture.

Activity 3: ICH damage assessment:

An assessment was made of the risk of loss of the ICH elements of each nakamal. Fieldworkers conducted interviews in each project location to document these ICH elements. This included documenting stories relating to the knowledge and skills retained within each community that are required to build and renovate the nakamals.

Outputs generated:

- Awareness raising within communities regarding the national and international interest in preserving the ICH aspects of the nakamal.
- Consultation and engagement with community representatives, respected elders and youth.
- Consultation experience for ni-Vanuatu fieldworkers from the VCC, particularly with regard to traditional architecture.

Activity 4: Indigenous architecture and DRR:

Several of the interviews focused on the role that the nakamals played during TCP, in particular in regards to their capacity to be used as evacuation centres. An assessment based on each structure's role in Disaster Risk Management (DRM) was then made.

Outputs generated:

- Awareness-raising within communities regarding the national and international interest in the role of the nakamal in DRM in rural areas.
- Collection of anecdotal evidence that supported the theory that the nakamal plays a significant role in DRM.
- Consultation experience for ni-Vanuatu fieldworkers from the VCC, particularly with regard to traditional architecture and DRM.

Activity 5: Interpretation of the finding and draft report:

The damage caused to each nakamal was assessed by comparing images taken pre- and post- TCP. Through the interpretation of the notes and audio recordings of the interviews, the potential risk of loss of the ICH of each nakamal was assessed, as well as the role that each structure plays in DRR for its community. A draft report was completed and sent out for comment to the VCC and UNESCO in March 2016.

Outputs generated:

- This draft report formed the basis for the final draft of the report submitted to UNESCO for publication.

Activity 6: Final report:

This final report listing the best safeguarding measures for each of the seven nakamals was then compiled and submitted to UNESCO.

Outputs generated:

- This report submitted to UNESCO in July 2016 is ready for publication.

Exceptional aspects of the project delivery:

- The communities involved in the project were extremely forthcoming and helpful with regard to sharing their knowledge about the ICH elements of their nakamals. Without this outstanding level of cooperation and willingness to share *kastom* knowledge the project would not have been possible.
- The primary field-worker from the VCC, Siri Seoul, made an outstanding contribution to the project. He was initially selected to work on the project due to his artistic and drawing skills, and he delivered outstanding architectural drawings of the nakamals from each site he visited. He also created audio recordings of interviews with community representatives, which were clear and well considered, and instrumental to the overall project success.
- Without the efficient administrative assistance of Brigitte Labouky, the Project Coordinator from the VCC, very little of the fieldwork data would have been collected, and her role in coordinating the fieldworkers should be acknowledged.

Problems encountered in project delivery and the corrective actions taken:

Staff changeovers at the implementing agency (the VCC) during the project activities made communication between the project partner (the Project Researcher) and the VCC very challenging.

As a consequence, the time frames for the project were exceeded, resulting in one of the proposed activities being excluded from the project so that the deliverables could be submitted to UNESCO without further delay.

This excluded activity was the Community Feedback stage, which was aimed at gaining comment from those people who were consulted in the earlier fieldwork stages. The Project Coordinator and Project Researcher had planned to return to the nakamal project sites with the draft report and associated visual aids to ensure that the best safeguarding measures were communicated back to the communities.

This was an extremely important step of the project to ensure that the information gathered during the project fieldwork was returned to the people who are best positioned to safeguard the nakamals for the future. Feedback from this activity should have informed the final report; however, as it was omitted, the final report had to include mention of the fact that this activity still needs to be completed, and that the report should be revised once feedback is finally gained from the communities.

After the final report was submitted to UNESCO, the Project Researcher did return to Vanuatu on an independent fieldtrip, at which time she completed the Community Feedback activity in one of the project sites (Taloa Village Nguna). The feedback received during this consultation did inform minor revisions to the chapter on the Taloa Farea in the report, which were then issued to UNESCO via Revision 1 of the report.

Recommended post- report activities to ensure sustainability of the project:

1. Translate the final report into Bislama to ensure that it is accessible to a wide audience located in rural and remote areas of Vanuatu. If this is not possible, ensure that the executive summary and the recommended best safeguarding measures are translated into Bislama and distributed back to the communities.
2. Distribute the printed and bound copies of the final report as widely as possible.
3. Archive the final report in the National Library so that it can be made publicly available.
4. Publish the report on the Internet for wider circulation.
5. Members of the project team will need to return to the project sites with the final report and associated visual aids to communicate the best safeguarding measures back to the communities. This will be an extremely important step of the project to ensure that the information gathered during the project is returned to the people who are best positioned to safeguard the nakamals for the future. This activity is expected to take the form of a community meeting in each village using visual aids such as posters that highlight the main safeguarding principles.
6. The VCC should endeavour to source funding for these activities accordingly.

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 financial support, but also their active participation in the planning and implementation of all activities.

Not fewer than 300 or more than 500 words

Community representatives in each nakamal location were active participants in the project during the fieldwork. The fieldworkers consulted these representatives, during which time they shared their knowledge about the nakamals ICH elements. This knowledge was imparted via storytelling and *kastom singsing* (singing), and the audio recordings of these consultations formed a rich resource for the project.

As the songs are sung in local language, it would be extremely valuable to have these audio recordings further examined and translated into English to see if their might be any patterns observed across language groups related to the building process and singing.

While the fieldworkers were conducting the damage assessments to the nakamals, community representatives provided information relating to the condition of each nakamal, including what damage had been sustained during the cyclone, and what might have already required repair prior to the cyclone.

They also provided details about the role in which their nakamal may have provided shelter to community members during TCP. Several representatives also discussed the important role that their nakamal plays in DRR to their village. This information assisted in creating a picture of what role the nakamal plays in DRM in rural areas Vanuatu.

Community elders played a significant role in this project, as it is the elders who retain the *kastom* building knowledge that is passed onto them from previous generations. At most of the project sites community elders were asked to talk about what they know about the history of the nakamals, as well as the processes required for building them. This storytelling was recorded in journal notes, and also within the audio recordings. This documentation formed a significant body of knowledge related to the ICH aspects of the nakamals, which was central to the report.

Community youth members were also active participants at the Taloa Farea on Nguna Island, where they assisted the fieldworker to measure the buildings.

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

Capacity building:

Capacity building was central to the project aims, and was been built into the project at both the community and Project Team level.

The Project Coordinator and Fieldworker were ni-Vanuatu staff members from the VCC, who had the opportunity to develop their skills within the post-disaster environment, particularly with regard to traditional architecture.

While they already had skills and knowledge related to culture and history, this project provided them with new skills and experiences related to working within the post-disaster environment.

Capacity building at the community level is also expected to be significant; however, this is likely to occur as a result of the outcomes of the project that will include the implementation of the best safeguarding practices for the safekeeping the nakamals.

Sustainability:

The main purpose of the project was to formulate a set of best safeguarding measures for the communities to ensure that the nakamals are retained and maintained adequately for the benefit of current and future generations. Ultimately this project sought to encourage communities to repair or rebuild their nakamals.

The project is expected to encourage and trigger a new wave of indigenous traditional building where the real sustainability of the project occurs via built precedents that implement and demonstrate the recommended safeguarding measures, as well as through the dissemination of knowledge beyond the seven project sites to other locations in Vanuatu.

The report also recommended further safeguarding mechanisms under UNESCO. Proper recognition via national or international heritage status would encourage communities to build nakamals in their island vernacular, using centuries old knowledge passed down from generation to generation. Formal recognition of the nakamal would also set in place opportunities to secure funding for educational and research forums related to traditional building in Vanuatu.

Follow up measures:

The main follow-up measures that need to be completed to ensure the sustainability of the project are as follows:

1. Each nakamal in this report should be immediately placed on the VCC Heritage Register.
2. The inventory of nakamals that has been instigated by this project should be expanded and regularly updated by the VCC.
3. The nakamal should be nominated to the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity or the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.
4. This report should be translated into Bislama and made available to the communities who have generously shared their knowledge and stories, so that they have access to the best safeguarding recommendations.
5. This report should be published and made accessible to the public for the dissemination of knowledge to the broader Vanuatu community, as well as those organisations working in the field of DRM and Shelter Reconstruction in Vanuatu.

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 financial assistance*

Not fewer than 300 or more than 750 words

The key lessons learnt during the project were as follows:

Working in post-disaster contexts:

It is well known that while often essential, projects implemented within post-disaster contexts can be fraught on many levels.

The capacity of people may be reduced due to factors beyond their control that are driven by surviving within a post-disaster context. Those living and working in these situations may have personal matters to deal with that affect their capacity to perform at work, such as being displaced from their homes or families, lacking access to fresh food and water as well as limited access to basic essential services and infrastructure.

It has also been well documented that many people became "over-consulted" in the months after TCP as a result of being flooded by surveys and questionnaires that were delivered by charities, international aid programs and government organisations.

This project was planned to commence within less than six months since the event of the cyclone, at which time Vanuatu was still reeling from the effects of the disaster: food shortages continued; essential services were scant; homes were still being rebuilt. This was all very much apparent, and as result the initial programming and onset for the project was postponed.

Extended time frames required within post-disaster contexts:

The main lesson learnt from this project is that within a post-disaster context, activities and programs take more time than they would normally require.

While the majority of objectives and results for this project were successfully achieved, the project report was delayed and submitted after the proposed project completion date. This was due to the delayed programming and initial commencement date, and also to the activities taking longer than had originally expected.

For future projects implemented within a post-disaster project, a time frame that is double or even triple that which would normally be expected would be more appropriate. Depending on the nature and immediacy of the project, the postponement of the commencement date might also be worth considering should it be deemed appropriate and considerate to those people working on 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)

Please refer to the final report submitted to UENSCO:

Safeguarding Indigenous Vernacular Architecture and Building Knowledge in Vanuatu:
Revision1: July 28, 2016.

Name and signature of the person having completed the report

Name: Wendy Christie

Title: Architect and Cultural Heritage Consultant

Date: 26/09/2016

Signature:



