



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



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): BELARUS

Project title:	<b>Implementation of the safeguarding plan for the Spring rite of ‘Jurauski Karahod’ (the element inscribed in the List of ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding)</b>
Reporting period:	From: 23/12/2020 to:30/08/2021
Budget:	Total: US\$ 17,428 <i>Including:</i> <i>Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund::US\$ 17,428</i> <i>State Party contribution: US\$ 0</i> <i>Other contributions: US\$ 0</i>
Implementing agency (contracting partner or UNESCO Field Office):	Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts
Contact person:	Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): Mrs Family name: Stashkevich Given name: Alla Institution/position: senior lecturer, employee of the Centre For the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts Address: 17 Rabkoravskaya St. 220007 Minsk, Belarus Telephone number: +375 29 332 03 94 E-mail address: <a href="mailto:as.belicom@gmail.com">as.belicom@gmail.com</a>
Partner agency (in the case of a service from UNESCO project):	
Implementing partners:	

## **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 Spring Rite of "Juraŭski Karahod" is performed by the residents of the village of Pahost, Zhytkavichy District, Gomel Region on holiday called "Jurja" (St. George's Day), which is one of the most respectful and rich in its ceremonial repertoire among the Belarusian folk calendar holidays. The Karahod ritual ceremony fulfils a symbolic and semantic function, helps preserve the village' cultural identity, and educates young people on how to respect the customs of their ancestors. It is a form of collective memory that translates the harmony between people and nature and reflects the local community's emotional evaluation of this practice. Up to this day, it performs the function of transferring knowledge, skills and artistic achievements (local songs and dances) from the older to younger generations. It is also an effective way to consolidate locals through cooperative activity and offer a unique pass-time to local young people, guests, and visitors. It appears extremely important to safeguard this ICH element in its traditional living form to support cultural diversity, promote intercultural dialogue, and establish the national identity of the Belarusians. It is also essential for the sustainable development of the Pahost community and the neighboring villages engaged in practicing this element for their internal consolidation and development through the preservation and maintenance of the shared values.

Today, however, there are certain risks and threats to the survival of the Rite: 1) Demographic problems. The local population is gradually ageing, young people abandon the village and move to live in the cities. A year ago, the secondary school in the village was closed down. To date, only ten children are living here. The property is often bought by city dwellers, so-called "dachniks", who in practice do not object to observing the local traditions, support them and are happy to participate in the rite and other events that take place in the village. 2) Lack of jobs. There is an evident shortage of jobs in the village today, making many young people abandon it. Partially, the problem is resolved at the expense of the nearby towns, such as Turaŭ and Zhytkavichy, where some locals managed to find a job, but this is not enough. 3) There is a threat to the continuity of the element that exists. However, the community has been making great efforts for safeguarding and passing it on. The oral modes of transmission of the knowledge and skills related to the rite are still practiced. The bearers of the rite pass them on to their children and grandchildren. Older rite participants continuously work with young boys and girls, teaching them songs and dances, embroidery, and local cuisine. The local bearers are joined by the residents of the neighboring villages: musicians and dancers, who are happy to partake in Pahost festivities. Several people bought their houses in the village and moved from the city, and summer visitors participated in the celebration. To ensure the viability and continuity of the element, it is necessary to more actively engage the institutions of education and culture in the tradition and encourage them to develop and implement special programs to explore and develop the local traditions. At the same time, it is deemed necessary to customs the practice of the element over the neighboring villages, which used to practice it but were unable to keep the tradition under the pressure of the external factors. 5) Folklorisation of the element. It is primarily concerned with the local authorities' undue exploitation of the rite bearers at various official events. But the Rite performers can only exist naturally in that environment. Any theatrical forms (performances at formal concerts and other events) cause the loss of the element's context and discredit its bearers, who are naturally not professional actors and cannot look appropriately at the stage. However, borrowing and rethinking the use of the entire singing and dancing creativity of Pahost by the modern youth teams could be possible if it does not affect the practice of the rite itself. The sustainability of the element entirely depends on the sustainability of Pahost itself and the improvement of the social and economic situation in the region. No other threats affect the existence of the element as much because the rite is a consolidating factor for the community and a form of their cultural self-expression, which they are proud of. The fact that it survived the Soviet times when it was banned and the performers were prosecuted proves the viability and adaptivity of the element, which can today remain actual, provided its support continues. It is also worth mentioning that this rite is not the only tradition that Pahost is famous for. The culinary tradition, singing and dancing creativity reflects its originality and artistic potential. The promotion and spread of these forms of local culture would lead to greater visibility of the community. It improves its standing from the point of view of the authorities and motivation for the investors. It will increase the awareness of the people of the rite and its place in the cultural landscape of the region and the country. Financial assistance is demanded providing some activities which will intend to create a basis for the sustainable development of local communities of the Turau area, to support the viability of the mentioned ICH element and to expand its practical embodiment through the increased motivation and engagement of the bearers of the neighboring villages, which used to observe the rite but lost this practice. Participation in the Project will be a good opportunity for other stakeholders to expand their partnership, enhance their skills and competencies. The cooperation between them and locals has real prospects for development in future.

The project will enable local activists to expand the palette of their competencies during the capacity building programme. This knowledge they will be able to use in real practical

## 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 Safeguarding Plan for this ICH element has the following objectives:

*Objective 1: to research the area where Juraŭski Karahod was spread historically and develop an effective strategy for revitalising, performing and transmitting.*

During the first phase of the project, an expedition was organised to study the cultural potential of the Zhytkavichy district. Within ten days, an area of 150 km around the village of Pahost was explored. Meetings with residents were held, about 50 interviews were recorded with carriers of cultural practices, folklore, local artisans and bearers of the "Karahod" ritual. A variety of oral, photo and video materials have been collected, which will form the basis for creating the Anthology of the region's Intangible Cultural Heritage. The expedition was attended by students and teachers of the Belarusian State University of Culture, experts, including local specialists, young people - local activists.

*Objective 2: To enhance the element visibility, disseminate information about it.*

The objectives and the project implementation process are actively discussed at various meetings and in the local press. The project team also spoke to residents at Memorial Day in the Pahost village and at the republican seminar on ICH safeguarding in August 2021.

*Objective 3: To support the consolidation of the community and the bearers of the tradition.*

Since the beginning of the project, several orientation meetings have already been held with various stakeholders involved in the project: with bearers of the Juraŭski Karahod rite, local authorities, local experts from the Turaŭ Museum, workers of cultural and educational institutions, youth activists from non-governmental organisations in Turaŭ, Zhytkavichy. The project development issues, the degree of participation of various actors in it and their role in the implementation of the project's goals were discussed. At a meeting with residents of the Pahost village and the rite bearers, the arrangement of the Local Community Center, the reconstruction of costumes for the rite participants, the organisation of a future festival, etc., were discussed in detail.

## **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*

In August 2021, the project's first phase was completed, following contract No. 4500430240 (paragraph 3.2.1) between UNESCO and the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts. The coordinator and responsible for implementing the project is the Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage of the university. The project is carried out in close cooperation with representatives of the local community of the village of Pahost, local authorities and other interested persons and organizations.

During the implementation of the project at this stage, the following activities were carried out:

1) A project team was created. It is involved different stakeholders as follows:

- representatives of the local community (bearers and practitioners of the ICH from the Pahost village);
- local specialists (employees of the Turaŭ Museum of Local Lore, local cultural and educational institutions);
- representatives of local authorities ;
- an employee of the ICH regional regulator (Gomel Folklore Center);
- National experts from the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, National Inventory of the ICH, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Student Ethnography Society (SET), accredited to UNESCO as NGO).

2) Following the legislation of the Republic of Belarus on gratuitous foreign aid (Presidential Decree No. 3 of 05/25/2020), the registration of funds received from the ICH Foundation (UNESCO) as the first tranche for the implementation of the project was carried out on July 27, 2021, by the Department For Humanitarian Affairs under the President of the Republic of Belarus Administration (the certificate No. 13-08 / 412).

3) Four introductory meetings were held with various stakeholders and partners, and bearers of the 'Jurauski Karahod' (February, May, June and August 2021).

On May 6, 2021, students and teachers of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts (specialization — ethnomusicology) took part in the rite 'Yurauski Karahod' in the village of Pahost. The value of this meeting was that the students could adopt the manner of singing and the songs themselves directly from the ICH bearers. They actively communicated, recorded ritual songs, sang together with residents, learned to dance and comprehend the meaning of what was happening. The ceremony was also attended this year by bearers of traditional ritual singing from neighboring villages - from Azerany, Starazhoutsy, and Khilchytsy. The House of Crafts from the town of Azerany attracted local artisans to organize a craft fair in Pahost on the Yury holiday. The House of Creativity from Turaŭ attracted children and local youth to Pahost for the Yury holiday. There were certain hygiene restrictions (masks, maintaining a safe distance) due to the COVID pandemic, but the ceremony took place this year. The local inhabitants insisted on holding it, arguing that they did not change their tradition even during the Nazi occupation in 1941 -- 1944. The Yury holiday in the Pahost village this year was not as numerous as before the pandemic, mainly locals and residents of the surrounding towns and the city of Turaŭ . But there were enough journalists. They did not always behave correctly, which confirmed our decision to develop a particular Code of Ethics or Community protocol, which would outline certain restrictions on access and rules for participation in the ceremony for external visitors to the village, primarily tourists and journalists.

In June 2021, a meeting of representatives of the local community and partners (experts, representatives of the NGO's) took place. The concept and structure of the document above were discussed. Its development and approval are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021. The meeting with representatives of the local community of the village of Pahost took place during the expedition in August 2021.

3) In August 2021, a 10-day expedition took place to the Zhytkavichy district of the Gomel region. Its task is to monitor and provide the mapping of this area to study its artistic and natural potential and identify the scale of the spread of the Yury ritual, an original song and dance traditions close to that which exists in Pahost. It was necessary to fix the common cultural markers of this territory, to identify artisans, various traditional knowledge and practices that can become a practical resource for the sustainable development of this region.

The expedition was attended by students and teachers of the Department of Ethnology of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, experts in the field of ICH from the Belarusian State University, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the Folklore Center of Gomel, a journalist and operator (16 people in total). Numerous

interviews with bearers of the 'Yorauski Karahod' rite, artisans, teachers and cultural workers were recorded. Audio and video recordings of meetings with ICH bearers were made; video and audio of folk songs and dances and oral traditions were recorded. A meeting was held with representatives of local authorities in Turaŭ and Zhytkavichy. The further plan for implementing the project and the role and contribution of local authorities and business to its development was discussed.

The expedition materials are now being processed by the project team, systematized and transcribed. A video film about the results of the expedition is being edited. The expedition results will form the basis of a future publication - Anthology of the ICH of the Turau area, and become a resource base for the formation of the Strategy for sustainable development of the Pahost village and its ICH safeguarding.

4) Another result of the project was the development and manufacture of traditional costumes for the participants of the Yorauski Karahod (15 outfits). For systematizing the data and create a design project, a professional designer and, at the same time, a researcher of the Belarusian folk costume - Lyudmila Domnenkova, was invited. She is PhD in art history, associate professor of the Department of Decorative and Applied Arts of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts. The design project of the costumes was developed in cooperation with the bearers and practitioners of the Pahost village during the discussion. Traditional costumes from the collections of the Turaŭ Museum of Local Lore were also used for the work. Local artisans from Pahost and Azerany are engaged in creating costumes (tailoring, weaving, embroidery). It is planned to complete this work by the end of 2021.

5) The promotion of the first stage of the project implementation was conducted through interviews in local media and social networks. It was also discussed at the National workshop on the ICH safeguarding and periodic reporting on implementing the 2003 Convention (held on August 26, 2021, at the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts). In September, a student presentation of the expedition's results will also be organized by the Department of Ethnology and Folklore. The expedition results will also be presented at workshops in Turaŭ and Gomel in October 2021.

## 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*

To ensure the project success, the local community has been engaged in discussing the Safeguarding Plan and development for the element since the very start. Partners from non-governmental organizations, local educational and cultural institutions, and expertise centres have also been engaged, increasing the ICH element's visibility.

The primarily responsible for the implementation of the Safeguarding Plan lies in the members of the community. They carry out its practical implementation, particularly involving the local youth, the representatives of the educational and cultural institutions. They are engaged in implementing numerous planned activities, along with non-governmental organizations and centres of expertise.

At the first stage of the project, particularly in organizing and conducting the expedition, constant communication was carried out with members of the local community and bearers of the rite and local authorities and other stakeholders. During the expedition, meetings and discussions were held with teachers in 10 secondary schools, employees of the Turau museum, Crafts Houses in Azerany, Zhytkavichy, Turau were involved in solving expeditionary problems. The issues affecting children's creative activity related to ICH were discussed at the Turau House of Children's Creativity. Local young people directly participated in the expedition and process of data collection.

ICH bearers and practitioners are actively involved in the development and manufacture of ritual costumes. They work together with a professional designer, researchers and experts of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts and specialists of the Turau Museum.

During the implementation of the first phase of the project, a meeting of representatives of the local community, government, and business took place to discuss a plan for further actions within the framework of the project.

The locals are especially interested in obtaining additional knowledge on the safeguarding of the ICH element and incorporating the international experience and practices into their activities in that field. The organization of workshops and training for the local people on the second phase of the project will be performed both by the NGOs mentioned above and partners, and the representatives of the community of experts from the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, and the Ministry of Culture of Belarus. It is assumed that the residents of the villages and settlements in the vicinity of Pahost, who also appreciate the tradition of Juraški Karahod as their cultural heritage, will also go through the training.

## 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*

All activities in this project are intended to provide a basis for the sustainable development of the local communities of Turau area, to support the viability of the mentioned ICH element and to expand its practical embodiment through the increased motivation and engagement of the bearers of the neighboring villages, which used to observe the rite but lost this practice.

Participation in the project became an excellent opportunity for Belarusian students and local young people to expand their partnership, enhance their skills and competencies. The cooperation between them and locals which was established has real prospects for development in future.

The project will enable local activists to expand the palette of their competencies during the capacity building programme, which is planned to implement in the next phase of the project. This knowledge they will be able to use in real practical work.

The achieved activities within the project will provide an effective platform for delivering support and boosting the local ICH, its inclusion into the current cultural policy and raising awareness about the ICH and its lofty humanitarian promise. After the Project implementation, the Centre of Local Traditions and the ICH festival will continue to practice within the community, based on the established partner network and funding in the Regional sustainable development programme framework for the Eastern Palessie using the other sources of financing. Financial support of the ICH Fund will stimulate the further funding and support the ICH heritage in Pahost village by means of the integration of the local ICH safeguarding plan and sustainable development strategy into the Regional development strategy of Eastern Palessie.

Evaluation and promotion of the project results at each stage of its implementation will allow to development of specific models and tools for the management of ICH at the regional and local levels. The practice of safeguarding and managing ICH with the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders and partners, activities to build the capacity of local activists and young people can serve as a good experience for other communities and groups of ICH in Belarus and other countries.

## **Lessons learnt**



## Lessons learnt

Describe what are the key lessons learnt regarding the following:

- *Attainment of expected results*

At the first stage of the project, there were no particular difficulties in achieving the assigned tasks. All planned actions have been implemented or are being completed. However, according to the Belarusian legislation, the risks associated with registering funds received from UNESCO were somewhat underestimated. Registration, unfortunately, dragged on for several months, which, of course, will be taken into account by the project team at the subsequent stages of its implementation.

- *Ownership of key stakeholders and community involvement*

Community members and ritual bearers are the primary beneficiaries of the project and have been actively involved in the planning and implementation process. During the reporting period, the project coordinator and the project team organized and held several meetings with representatives of the local community and other stakeholders. The project strategy, implementation of its activities, and the necessary tools and approaches were discussed. Locals were involved in exploring the area where the rite was spread and studying the local ICH, discussing real opportunities to increase the creative potential of local artisans and activists. The creation of costumes for the participants of the ceremony is also carried out by representatives of local communities (women who master traditional weaving, embroidery, and sewing). At meetings with representatives of local authorities and businesses, the sides discussed opportunities for attracting additional funds to implement the tasks of creating a Center for Local Traditions and an ICH festival in Pahost.

Students and teachers of the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, experts from the National Academy of Sciences and the Belarusian State University, are also widely involved in implementing the project. We believe that the broad participation of young people (academic and local) is an essential aspect of the project. It contributes not only to the dissemination of knowledge about ICH, its bearers, its importance for the preservation of cultural diversity and sustainable development of certain territories. Still, it indeed ensures the continuity of traditional knowledge and practices.

- *Delivery of project outputs*

The first stage of the project and its results allow us to predict the final results and the implementation of the set goals. This will be facilitated by the activity and flexibility of the project team, active participation in the project of its primary beneficiaries - representatives of the local community and bearers of the 'Yorauski Karahod' ritual.

- *Project management and implementation*

A special team created under the Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts' ICH Centre manages and implements the project. The comprehensive staff includes employees of this university, experts from the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, the National Inventory of the National Culture of Belarus, representatives of the Student Ethnographic Society, employees of the Turau Museum of Local Lore, the Gomel Center of Folklore, the cultural management body of the Zhytkavichy District, representatives of the bearers of the 'Yorauski Karahod' rite. Depending on the tasks, individual consultants and experts are involved. A narrower range of functions related to the solution of organizational and administrative tasks is directly solved by the Project Manager and several project staff in the framework of the ICH Center. All issues are resolved in collective discussion and close communication with representatives of the local community. In the first phase of the project, such management has already demonstrated its efficiency and flexibility.

- *Sustainability of the project after the assistance*

How we plan to ensure the project's sustainability after its implementation - see in the section above. At this stage, we strive to provide such stability through active communication with local authorities and lobbying for a long-term plan to protect the "Yorauski Karahod" ritual in the local, sustainable development program in the Zhytkavichy district.

## 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 (1)**
- *list of major equipment provided under the project and status after termination of contract period*
- *other (please specify): **photos***

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

Name: Alla Stashkevich

Title: Senior lecturer, employee of the Centre For the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts

Date: 13/09.2021

Signature:

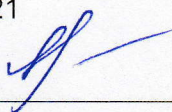
**Name and signature of the person having completed the report**

Name: Alla Stashkevich

Title: Senior lecturer, employee of the Centre For the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts

Date: 13/09.2021

Signature:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized initial 'A' followed by a horizontal line.