

traditions. The safeguarding process under AFL renewed community pride and strengthened their identity. Most ICH bearers are marginalized and deprived, devoid of social recognition and respect. Conventional pathways of development do not recognize traditional skills. A Baul singer may be illiterate but knows hundreds of songs. The nomadic and indigenous artisan making intricate Dokra craft using primitive lost wax methods of molding metal has rich knowledge of nature and natural elements. The ingenuity of Patua, who may not be able to write but can create a song and framed animation of any story in a long scroll, demands appreciation. In the absence of social recognition, communities often give up their traditions in search for better income and social status. Strategies for revitalizing heritage need to address reinstilling their lost pride. This way the marginalized communities feel included in the development process when they gradually witness their own transformation from art laborers to art entrepreneurs. Safeguarding these intangible heritage elements as a means of livelihood has proven to be driver of local development. Key drivers are recognizing skills as asset for development and social recognition for ICH practitioners, investing in their development by transmitting and rejuvenating their skills and enabling an environment to promote community-based creative enterprises.

## References

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## What Are the ICH Safeguarding Tasks? Voices from the Pacific Region

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## Abstract

This paper begins with a brief introduction to the history of the Pacific region and its cultural cooperation centering on past and on-going projects, such as the Festival of Pacific Arts (FOPA), community-based Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), and Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS). The introduction is followed by a progress report on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) safeguarding and the promotion and implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Pacific. Activities both at country and regional levels as well as those carried out in partnership with other organizations are highlighted in the progress report. The paper then presents three areas for the future tasks for ICH safeguarding in the Pacific:

- i) ICH and community resilience,
- ii) ICH and community well-being, and
- iii) ICH policy and strategy.

In doing so, the paper uses the information and data obtained through the field projects and observations on the ground. The paper concludes by presenting a way forward and showing major cultural events as opportunities for further promoting ICH safeguarding and the ICH Convention in the Pacific Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

## Introduction

Total surface area of the earth and comprises over one thousand islands and atolls. Australia in Near Oceania or west to the Solomon Islands was settled by the indigenous Australians some 50,000 ago while the Pacific islands in Remote Oceania or east to the Solomon Islands were settled by Austronesian people around 3,500 ago. New Zealand was settled by Polynesians migrating from the Cook Islands between 1250 to 1300 CE, and they developed Maori culture. These migrations show that traditional navigation systems are among the most important ICH in the Pacific.

Since the 1600s, when the Pacific region was “discovered” by European explorers such as Captain James Cook, the region has experienced an unprecedented period of change. Most notably of these changes were the adoption of Christianity, colonization, occupations during two world wars, and the progressive integration into a cash economy. Even today, some islands remain overseas territories of European and North American countries. The decolonization process of the Pacific region is still on-going.

The Pacific region is blessed with all forms of cultural diversity and heritage. Its heritage is first and foremost ICH, a living heritage. The region’s indigenous communities are playing an important role in ICH safeguarding as custodians transmitting Pacific heritage.

The Festival of Pacific Arts (FOPA) is a pioneering project in ICH safeguarding. It was launched by Pacific leaders in 1970s with a vision to revive the indigenous arts and culture and reunite Pacific islands and territories<sup>1</sup>. Under the coordination of the Council of Pacific Arts and Culture (CPA), an advisory body to the Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC), FOPA has been held every four years in different Pacific islands and territories<sup>2</sup>. FOPA celebrated its fortieth anniversary at the eleventh event,

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1 Karen Stevenson: *The Festival of Pacific Arts Celebrating 40 Years* (SPC, 2012).

2 Fiji (1972), NZ (1976), PNG (1980), French Polynesia (1985), Australia (1988), Cook Islands (1992), Samoa (1996), New Caledonia (2000), Palau (2004), and American Samoa (2008).

which was held in the Solomon Islands in July 2012. Over two thousand visitors enjoyed the traditional Pacific music, dances, and performances as well as the arts and cultural expressions.

In 1984, the UNESCO Office for the Pacific States was established in Apia, Samoa. With an initial focus on education, the Office expanded its fields of competence to for culture (1985), communication (1990), and science (1991)<sup>3</sup>. Within the framework of the UN World Decade for Cultural Development (1989–1998), “Vaka Moana: the Ocean Roads” was launched with the aims of gaining better appreciation of the cultural heritage and diversity of Pacific peoples.

Since 2002, when a Regional Framework or Model Law for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge was adopted at the Conference in Noumea, Pacific island countries have been developing a Pacific norm for community-based intellectual property rights (IPRs) with WIPO assistance. With its informal sector being progressively integrated into the formal sector, and civil society being better organized, the region has recently begun to explore the possibilities of developing a regional IPR system to protect products deriving from traditional knowledge and cultural expressions.

More recently, capacity-building workshops on Access and Benefit-Sharing (ABS) within the framework of the UN Convention on the Biodiversity (CBD) are being held with the assistance of development partners, addressing ICH safeguarding as part of their program.

## Progress in the Pacific

The UNESCO adoption of the ICH Convention in 2003 provided an opportunity for the Pacific to better structure the above initiatives, projects, and activities as a sustainable program anchored in cultural policy and strategy at country and regional levels. Since 2007, with UNESCO’s assistance, two regional consultations and twelve multi-stakeholder national consultations on ICH safeguarding were held in Pacific island countries. At present, seven Pacific island states are parties to the ICH Convention as shown in Table 1 below.

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3 From an initial focus on education, the office has expanded its fields of competence with the addition of responsibilities for culture (1985), communication (1990), and science (1991).

	1954 Hague	1999 Protocol of 1954	1970 Illicit Trafficking	1972 World Heritage	2001 Underwater	2003 ICH	2005 DCE
Australia	1984		1989	1974			2010
Cook Islands				2009			
Fiji				1990		2010	
Kiribati				2000			
Marshall Islands				2002			
Micronesia				2002		2013	
Nauru						2013	
NZ	2008		2007	1984			2007
Niue				2001			
Palau				2002		2011	
PNG				1997		2008	
Samoa				2001			
Solomon Islands				1992			
Tonga				2004		2010	
Tuvalu							
Vanuatu				2002		2010	
Total	2	0	2	14	0	7	2

Table 1: Ratification status of UNESCO Conventions in culture by Pacific Member States

The youngest States Parties in the Pacific are Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) and Nauru.

FSM consists of four states—namely, Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae—that are spread across the Western Pacific Ocean. The first ICH workshop in FSM took place in March 2013 in the State of Yap, which is particularly rich in ICH among the four states of FSM. One of the most well-known heritage elements combining tangible cultural heritage (TCH) and ICH is Yapese Stone Disk. In ancient times, Yapese people travelled to Palau to quarry stone disks and brought them back with them by canoe. The disks were exchanged on special occasions, and those disks that experienced most adventurous voyages according to oral traditions were considered valuable. The workshop participants included representatives from the two Councils of Traditional Leaders—namely, the Council of Pilung (for the main island) and the Council of Tamol (for the outer islands).

Nauru, another island country, is twenty square kilometers and has population around nine thousand. Nauru has a unique ICH called Frigate Bird Catching. At the consultation held in Nauru in 2011, one of the participants made his presentation next to a frigate bird that was brought in the conference room.

Each Pacific island is unique, but what is common to all the Pacific island states is

that Pacific ICH is a living and integral part of community life. I have had the pleasure of visiting twelve out of fourteen island states since I joined the UNESCO Office in Apia in January 2010. It has been an eye-opening experience, and whichever islands I went, UNESCO and ICH Convention received warm welcome and enthusiastic support.

As for international recognition by the ICH Convention, Vanuatu Sand Drawing and the Tongan Lakalaka are inscribed on the ICH Representative List. Several other nominations are being prepared by Pacific island states.

Despite its wealth of cultural heritage, the culture sector in most Pacific island countries has a relatively low profile in government administration. The responsibilities for cultural matters are often assigned to the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which is responsible for community life especially in outer islands. In most Pacific island states, only handful officers are working and then only with limited resources. Capacity building in ICH safeguarding is therefore critically important in the Pacific. In 2012, UNESCO launched the Asia-Pacific Capacity-Building Program for ICH Safeguarding with funding under the UNESCO/Japanese Funds-in-Trust. From the Pacific, PNG and Samoa were selected as participating countries from the Pacific, and several workshops were held with Ms. Noriko Aikawa and Mr. Anthony Parak as facilitators<sup>4</sup>.

In PNG, the National Culture Commission (NCC) held an implementation workshop in Port Moresby and an ICH inventorying workshop in Goroka last year. And this week, the NCC is holding a follow-up ICH inventorying workshop in Alotau for stakeholders in the southern provinces of the country. This Alotau workshop is being facilitated by Mr. Parak, who is the UNESCO trainer from PNG and a member of NCC staff trained at Goroka Workshop. As you see, PNG national authorities have gradually taken ownership of ICH inventorying as it is rolling out to the provincial level. This is one of the most remarkable results of the UNESCO regional capacity-building project. In applying international standards to the region, attention needs to be paid to some specificities of the Pacific in relation to its strong third sector or “traditional sector”. The field visit to Solosolo Village arranged during the Samoa Implementation Workshop illustrates well such specificities.

4 PNG organized ICH Implementation Workshop (Port Moresby, May 2012) and ICH Inventorying Workshop (Goroka, October 2012), while Samoa organized ICH Ratification Workshop (Apia, February 2012), ICH Implementation Workshop (Apia, February 2013) and plans to organize ICH Inventorying Workshop in Savaii Island in October 2013.

Solosolo Village is known for the production of Samoan fine mats. As a background, Samoan fine mats are traditional wealth item in Samoa. They are made of special pandanus leaves. Fine marts are exchanged on special occasions, such as marriage, funerals, and title-giving ceremonies. On such occasions, an orator, or speaking chief, displays his talent of public speech as fine mats are passed one from one village to another. The role of traditional chiefs is to ensure fair distribution of the received fine mats. The fine-mat exchange connects villages, families, and Samoans together. This traditional social network created by the fine-mat exchange well goes beyond the national boundaries, reaching out to overseas Samoans. Fine mats, iconic Samoa ICH, are not just products but a part of the greater socio-cultural system.

The visit to Solosolo Village started with customary protocols, including ava drinking; exchanging oratory and greetings by the matais (chiefs) followed government officers’ presentations; and exchanging gifts with elaborate rituals. Only after the traditional protocol was completed were the participants allowed to talk to the Women’s Council of the Village and women who actually weave the famous Solosolo fine mats. The protocol established and developed a relationship with the communities so it could not be skipped. Table 2 shows the current situation on the organization of different capacity-building workshops hosted by Pacific Member States.

	Awareness Raising	Ratification	Implementation	Inventorying	Nomination
Australia					
Cook Islands	2010				
Fiji	2009				
Kiribati	2011				
Marshall Islands	2011				
Micronesia			2013(Yap)		
Nauru	2011				
NZ					
Niue					
Palau	2010				
PNG	2009		2012	2012	
Samoa	2010	2012	2013	2013	
Solomon Islands	2010				
Tonga	2009				
Tuvalu					
Vanuatu	2008				
Total	11	1	3	2	

Table 2: shows the current situation on the organization of different capacity building workshops hosted by Pacific Member States.

At regional level, ICHCAP has been holding annual information and networking meetings, first in Fiji (2010) and followed by Tonga (2011), the Cook Islands (2012), and Vanuatu (2013). Each meeting was held under specific topic, such as ICH information systems, ICH visibility, and publications.

Furthermore, CRIHAP, a Category 2 Centre in China, organized two capacity-building activities for the Pacific States Parties. One was in Beijing in 2012 and the other in Chengdu in 2013. The Chengdu workshop looked at ICH and community resilience, and the participants had an opportunity to visit the villages of the Qiang people, who were affected by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. The participants learned how international recognition of the ICH Convention helped safeguard and revitalize the Qiang people’s ICH in the post-disaster phase.

In February 2013, Pacific Heritage Hub (PHH) was established at the University of the South Pacific (USP), a regional intergovernmental university. PHH is a facility created by and for the Pacific people under the vision “Our Pacific islands’ cultural and natural heritage is restored, enriched, cherished, and protected for present and future generations”. Since the establishment, PHH has been active in networking through communication activities, including websites and social media<sup>5</sup>, and organizing meetings and events by using USP’s ICT facilities.

The above-illustrated progress in ICH safeguarding in the Pacific provide good grounds for celebration. A special event was held by Vanuatu Culture Centre in June 2013 to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the ICH Convention. The three-day program included lectures, sand drawing demonstration, and other cultural expressions of the diverse communities in the country. Adding to this celebration was the announcement to inscribe Arthur Bernard Deacon’s (1903-27) collection (MS 90-98) to the UNESCO Memory of the World Register in July 2013. Being preserved at the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, this collection was created when Deacon visited Malekula and other islands of New Hebrides (now Vanuatu) in 1926. It includes notes, geometrical drawings, diagrams, plans, and maps relating to sand drawings.

5 <https://www.facebook.com/pacificheritagehub>

## What Are the ICH Safeguarding Tasks in the Pacific?

Building on the above progress, what are the ICH safeguarding tasks in the Pacific? There seem to be three important areas.

### *ICH and community resilience*

Pacific island states are exposed to a wide range of natural disasters, including cyclones, earthquakes, and volcanic eruptions. Adapting to these hazards, island communities have built locally specific governance systems, knowledge, and practices to reduce damage and minimize losses.

The following is an example of Cyclone Evan that hit Samoa in December 2012, causing significant damage and losses. At least five people were killed, and the cyclone severely damaged or destroyed homes. And some 600 households or roughly 4,200 required assistance with reconstruction. The total estimated damage and losses are equivalent to about 28 per cent of Samoa's 2011 GDP.

UNESCO took part in the UN/WB Post-disaster Needs Assessment following Cyclone Evan<sup>6</sup>. The assessment of the culture sector highlighted the damages and losses relating to the integrity and authenticity of the Fagaloa-Uofato protected area. This area is on Samoa's World Heritage Tentative List. The area is known for its tropical forest and also rich oral traditions as well as handicraft production. Interestingly, during the assessment visit to the area, it was observed that the roofs of some western style houses were blown away by strong winds while traditional Samoan fale withstood and suffered only minimal damage

During the following six month recovery phase, Samoan culture played an important role. With the assistance of the international community and government, the village councils quickly resumed critical community services including health and education services. These community-led services played important roles in the post-disaster phase when relevant public services were interrupted. Extended families are traditional safety net in Samoan society, which were activated and Samoan villages received financial and material support from overseas Samoan

6 [http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/WSM\\_PDNA\\_2013\\_TC\\_Evan.pdf](http://www.pacificdisaster.net/pdnadmin/data/original/WSM_PDNA_2013_TC_Evan.pdf)

communities. Cultural activities provided opportunities for communities, especially women and youth, to get together and support each other. These activities included the Annual Fine Mats Festival in March 2013 and the traditional long boat race on Independence Day in June. By around July, cruise ships returned to the Apia port, bringing in tourists and visitors.

The published report on the post-disaster needs assessment following Cyclone Evan contains one chapter on cultural heritage while the quantitative damages and losses were assessed and presented across three sectors—namely, environment, housing, and tourism. This reflects a major challenge facing the culture sector; cultural contributions are not recognized as property in the existing national accounting system.

### *ICH and community well-being*

A second area for the future ICH safeguarding in the Pacific is related to ICH and community well-being. The recent UN General Assembly Resolution 65/309 “Happiness: towards a holistic approach to development” states that happiness is a fundamental human goal and universal aspiration and that GDP by its nature does not reflect that goal. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness (GNH) is widely known as an attempt in Asia to promote a more inclusive, equitable, and balanced approach to development. In the Pacific, a similar on-going project is looking to develop alternative indicators of well-being for Melanesia.

In 2012, with the support of the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, the Malvatumauri National Council of Chiefs in Vanuatu compiled a pilot study that considers variables reflecting Melanesian values as a way to measure well-being. The Melanesia region (Vanuatu, the Solomon Islands, and PNG) is among the last places in the world where the subsistence economy still outweighs a cash economy. In Vanuatu, roughly 80 per cent of people live in rural areas with other members of their extended families. They satisfy most of their food needs using resources from the land and sea, and they take part in a variety of traditional ceremonies that enhance a sense of belonging to the community<sup>7</sup>. The Vanuatu Pilot Study Report

7 Ralph Regenvanu, “The traditional economy as source of resilience in Vanuatu”, In *Defence of Melanesian Customary Land* (AID/WATCH, 2010)

(2012) explored three domains—resource access, cultural practices, and community vitality—as important domains for community well-being<sup>8</sup>. It is interesting to note that ICH is closely related to all three domains analyzed in the report. The project that is now being carried out in PNG deserves continuing monitoring and support from an ICH perspective.

### *ICH policy and strategy*

Pacific Member States are gradually establishing national policies and strategies for ICH safeguarding. The Pacific Regional Cultural Strategy (2010–2015) endorsed at the second Ministerial Meeting for Culture (Honiara, 2012) and emphasized the UNESCO ICH Convention<sup>9</sup>. Taking into account the unique governance in the Pacific—blending traditional chieftain system with modern democracy—efforts are being made to leverage mutual reinforcement between community-based customary practices and laws with government-supported programs and legislation.

With regard to infrastructure-related policy, Pacific island states are in urgent need of cultural facilities, such as museums and multimedia centers to provide places to maintain and manage ICH inventories and run educational and community reach programs.

Also, there is a need to develop the research capacity of indigenous researchers and research-related organizations in Pacific island states. The Pacific region has long been a subject of research and surveys conducted by overseas anthropologists and ethnomusicologists. The outcomes of such research have not necessarily been shared properly with custodian communities and ICH holders. In this connection, the ICH Convention and ICH inventorying provide an opportunity for the Pacific to develop a corps of indigenous researchers and institutions. Networking and information is vital task for ICH safeguarding in the Pacific. Getting the traditional sector and its stakeholders and system, including traditional chiefs and the village council, and fostering partnerships with them is the key to the future of ICH safeguarding in the region.

8 Alternative Indicators of Well-being for Melanesia: Vanuatu Pilot Study Report (VNSO, 2012).

9 [http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=cat\\_view&gid=184&Itemid=44](http://www.spc.int/hdp/index.php?option=com_docman&task=cat_view&gid=184&Itemid=44).

### A Way Forward

The Pacific region is aware of the need for further advocacy and awareness-raising for ICH safeguarding targeting stakeholders in the region's three main sectors—namely, public, private, and traditional. There are several opportunities already lined up for this task.

First, the fifth Melanesia Festival of Arts and Culture (MAF) is planned for July 2014 in Papua New Guinea. MAF was created by the Melanesia Spearhead Group (MSG)<sup>10</sup> in 1995 to promote traditional and contemporary cultural expressions from the Melanesian sub-region<sup>11</sup>. The 2014 Festival in PNG will be organized by the National Melanesian Arts and Culture Committee and coordinated by the PNG National Cultural Commission.

Second, Samoa will host the third UN International Conference on Small Islands Development States (SIDS) in August/September 2014. Following the Conferences held in Barbados (1994) and Mauritius (2005), the third conference in Samoa will bring together representatives not only from SIDS but also from UN Member States to discuss the sustainable future of SIDS. As part of its preparatory process, a thematic brief on Culture and Sustainable Development in the Pacific has been prepared by a working group composed of UNESCO, UNESCAP, and SPC<sup>12</sup>. UNESCO convened the Roundtable on Culture and Sustainable Development in Nadi, Fiji, on 9 July 2013<sup>13</sup>. The Roundtable Outcome Statement reiterates that international development partnerships and programs need to recognize, support, and invest in culture for sustainable development. Furthermore, the outcome document of the Barbados Inter-regional Preparatory Meeting held in August states that “Measures to protect and preserve the natural, tangible, and intangible cultural heritage, practices, and traditional knowledge of SIDS has been inadequate”. The document also calls for “increased resources for the development and strengthening of national and regional cultural

10 MSG comprising of Vanuatu, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and New Caledonia's FLNKS (National Kanak Socialist Liberation Front).

11 MAF was first hosted in Solomon Islands (1998), Fiji (2006), and New Caledonia (2010).

12 <http://www.forumsec.org/pages.cfm/documents/briefs-sustainable-development-working-group/>

13 Final Report on Round Table on Culture and Sustainable Development and the post 2015 Agenda (UNESCO, August 2013)

activities”.

It is hoped that the Pacific region will be able to get their voices heard at the third SIDS Conference and turn their aspirations into reality for a sustainable future.



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**Appendix**  
Summary of Discussion  
Profile of Participants

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