

**Challenges and Future Efforts of Government Institutions
in Involving Communities to Safeguard Intangible Cultural
Heritage of the Maldives**

**Cultural
Partnership
Initiative**

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Abstract

This research explores the challenges faced by the government institutions in intangible cultural heritage (ICH) safeguarding and the future efforts government institutions can facilitate in involving communities in this process. The study addresses the lack of research done on ICH of the Maldives. Building on current debates regarding government and community roles, this research explores the partnership governments and communities can have in ICH safeguarding. The research is done in the context of the Maldives.

The study is conducted from a constructivist ontological stance coupled with an interpretivist epistemology. A set of three semi-structured interviews to senior officials were conducted in three institutions working on ICH safeguarding. Three additional interviews were conducted to gain feedback on the study's topic from individuals who have expertise in the field of ICH. Data were analyzed using *a priori* and data driven coding following King's (2004) template analysis method

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Chapter Overview

The opening chapter presents an overview of the research and how this research developed. It begins with the research background followed by the problem statement and research questions and objectives in relation to the literature. The deliberation of the significance of the research and the limitations of the research are then explained along with the research scope. The chapter concludes with structure of the research.

1.2 Background

The interdisciplinary field of heritage studies is now well established in many parts of the world. It differs from earlier scholarly and professional activities that focused narrowly on the architectural or archaeological preservation of monuments and sites. Such activities remain important, especially as globalization and modernization has been leading the world to new developments that has been threatening the natural environment, traditional buildings, archaeological sites, arts and crafts. threaten natural environments, archaeological sites, traditional buildings and arts and crafts. However, they are subsumed within the new field that views 'heritage' as a construct of social and political factors that encompasses these cultural expressions, places and artifacts from past. This is because they validate and reflects a country's identity as a nation, a community, a family and even individuals that has some form of identification, respect and protection.

UNESCO has also been putting extra effort since the end of Second World War to safeguard the global heritage by supporting a series of world heritage initiatives,

starting with tangible heritage, both movable and immovable, and expanding to natural heritage, and most recently to intangible heritage. The most recent model of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) seeks a sustainable living and supporting the conditions necessary for cultural reproduction. The 2003 convention for ICH by UNESCO defines ICH as “*The intangible cultural heritage means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage*” (UNESCO, 2003) bears evidence to this.

ICH results from a selection process, often government-initiated and supported by official regulations. ICH can be used in positive ways to give a sense of community to disparate groups and individuals or to create jobs on the basis of cultural tourism. It can be actively used by governments and communities to foster respect for cultural and social diversity, and to challenge prejudice and misrecognition. Nevertheless, it can also be used by governments in less benign ways, to reshape public perceptions in line with undemocratic political agendas or even to rally people against their neighbors in civil and international wars, ethnic cleansing and genocide. Through this, a connection between heritage and human rights is established.

It is also the time to fully recognize that heritage protection does not depend alone on top-down interventions by governments or the expert in the cultural field, but also with the involvement of local communities and communities of interest. It is important to understand, respect encourage and accommodate the values and practices of the communities along with the traditional management systems. that the values and practices of communities, together with traditional management systems and policy documents if heritage resources are to be sustained in the future. Communities should have a sense of ‘ownership’ of their cultural heritage and traditions that will reaffirm their worth as a community and their culture.

However, this does not mean that the role of government in safeguarding ICH is less. As mentioned earlier, governments are to take the initiative and include ICH safeguarding in the main manifesto which can enhance community support and awareness on the arena. Especially in a tourism driven country like Maldives, ICH can play a crucial role in boosting cultural tourism in the country which will be beneficial to the community as well. And it is imperative for the government

to take responsibility in safeguarding ICH for the future generations to come, by incorporating ways to use it for the benefit of the economy. Regretably, the Maldives has just recently recognized the importance of safeguarding ICH and has a lot of work to do in order to ensure that ICH elements are preserved. Therefore, there is a major role for the government to play in ensuring that awareness among community is enhanced and various activities to safeguard ICH are implemented.

1.3 Problem Statement

The roles governments have played in order to safeguard ICH have been addressed in various journals, articles and books. The important role of community in ICH safeguarding has also been stressed in the literature. However, little research has focused on the main topic of government role and future efforts of governments in facilitating community involvement in ICH safeguarding.

Gradual but tentative acceptance of the importance of intangible heritage internationally has led to various scholars and practitioners to research on the field. To date, various articles, journals and books have been written on intangible heritage relating it to meta-culture, economy, politics, tangible heritage, legal and financial instruments and creativity (Cominelli and Greffe, 2012; Bendix, 2008; Smith and Akagawa, 2008; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2004; Deacon et al, 2004; Mujneri, 2004; Bouchenaki, 2003). Although literature has briefly highlighted on the significant role played by the government in safeguarding ICH in various countries, research on the crucial role governments has to play to get community participation is not fully explored. However such importance has not been explored in the Maldives. There is, therefore the need to investigate the challenges and the future efforts governments can play in mediating and facilitating the bond that exist between ICH and community which can benefit the country economically and socially.

Thus, by probing on the important joint linkages between government, community and ICH, this research will serve implications to the institutions safeguarding ICH locally and internationally.

1.4 Research Questions and Objectives

The context and motivations for the exploration as described above led to the development of the general research question:

What are the challenges and future efforts of the government institutions in involving communities to safeguard ICH in the Maldives?

The focus of this research is on the process and, to some extent the content of ICH. The theme of this research encompasses the challenges faced in safeguarding ICH and the crucial role of government in involving communities in ICH safeguarding. Reflecting on the literature debates earlier, the sub-questions are formulated around the three analytical levels.

Following are the sub-questions which are related to the above main question:

1. What are the experiences and challenges government institutions face in relation to ICH safeguarding in the Maldives?
2. What is the importance of government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding?
3. What are the future efforts of government institutions in facilitating community involvement in safeguarding ICH of the Maldives?

Supporting the research question are six research objectives that have helped shape the research strategy.

1. To evaluate critically the existing literature to establish the link between government, communities and ICH safeguarding, and to identify the challenges faced in practice;
2. To illustrate the challenges faced by the government institutions in the context of the Maldives;
3. To design a methodology to elicit the experiences of ICH safeguarding challenges among senior managers in the government institutions focusing on community involvement in ICH safeguarding;

4. To synthesize the challenges and the role of the government institutions in involving communities in ICH safeguarding with existing literature in order to advance the understand of ICH safeguarding in the Maldives;
5. To make contribution to understand the importance of ICH safeguarding and the role of government and communities, and to inform professional practice in the state level.

1.5 Research significance

This research has probed into the important role government plays in safeguarding ICH and how governments can involve communities in this process. The analysis and findings will be beneficial to the Maldivian communities and government as the research will explore the future efforts governments can put in facilitating community involvement in ICH safeguarding.

The economic and social benefit from ICH safeguarding is vase. Therefore, it is imperative for the government to give more attention on the sector. With domestic and cultural tourism on the rise, boosting ICH tourism by involving communities is one way the government can involve in tackling the intense competition and transform the tourism industry into a quintessential island holiday destination enabling the country to achieve a competitive edge compared to other competitive neighboring countries.

The results obtained from this study will also assist the government in understanding the role it has to play to safeguard ICH. It is pivotal because the literature depicts the importance of government interventions when it comes to ICH safeguarding. It has also highlighted the relationship governments have to have with communities as well. Therefore, by investigating the important associations governments have with communities to safeguard ICH will be an added bone to the body of literature. It is especially imperative to a country like the Maldives where not enough focus has been given to ICH safeguarding before. The conceptual framework used in this research can be a basis for future research.

In a similar vein, the research findings would be beneficial to the international community and institutions such as UNESCO that strive to safeguard ICH. This is because these international bodies do not have any information related to the Maldives ICH.

1.6 Limitations of the Study

As with any other research effort, this study will be subject to several limitations. First, the study will be limited to the institutions in the Maldives working on safeguarding ICH. However, obtaining more respondents from other government organizations will be more beneficial. Second, since the research will be collected from a government institution safeguarding ICH only, the ability to generalize the findings to other industrial sectors is limited. Third, data will be collected from three respondents from each organization via interview. Nevertheless, collecting data from multiple respondents that will represent different organizational levels (i.e., top managers, middle level managers, front-line managers, and employees) in order to enhance the understanding of the role of government in community involvement to safeguard ICH could be more beneficial.

Fourth, the respondents will be sought from the Maldives only. However, collecting data from other countries could bring a valuable affect to the research. Finally, the study will focus on the individuals working in the institutions focusing on ICH safeguarding. However, there might be respondents who are not working in these organizations but are passionate about the field. It will be useful to obtain feedback from these respondents.

1.7 Research scope

This research is about the significant role governments have to play when it comes to safeguarding ICH. And the crucial relationships government should have with communities during this process. It is also about how nations could benefit in ICH safeguarding when proper government interventions are in place.

The research particularly focuses on the role Maldivian government has and the challenges faced by the government of the Maldives in ICH safeguarding by involving communities. The research presents an exploration of government interventions in preserving ICH and has twin, equally important, purposes: to make original contributions to both knowledge and professional practice in this area.

1.8 Research Structure

Chapter 1 of this research which is the introductory chapter begins with a global outlook on the role of government in involving communities in ICH safeguarding. This was subsequently narrowed down to the Maldives as a basis of this research. The problem definition as well as the research objectives was elaborated in the chapter. The subsequent chapters further highlights on the importance of the research.

Chapter 2 provides a more detailed and extensive literature within arena of ICH safeguarding and the importance of government and community. The literature review draws from a range of academic disciplines.

Chapter 3 details the research methodology adopted with rationale and explanation on the exploratory study. The context of the research adopted in this study has been explained as well. The chapter also includes a discussion of data analysis procedures, research quality and ethical considerations, all of which are provided to promote research transparency and to allow this work to guide others should they wish to embark upon similar endeavors.

Chapter 4 reviews the findings of the qualitative data analysis. The discussions in this chapter will be rich with descriptions of the ICH safeguarding challenges in the respondents' voices, in terms of the original texts.

Chapter 5 provides a thorough description of the results that addressed the research questions in line with the elaboration done in the previous chapter. This concludes the research and gives research contribution, recommendations as well as implications for future research. This chapter ends with personal reflection of the researcher.

1.9 Chapter Summary

The introductory chapter has elucidated the background of the research followed by the problem statement. The research objectives and the significance of the research have also been explained. The limitation is then outlined followed research structure.

The next chapter examines a detailed literature review within the scope of the research.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Overview

The literature review draws from divergent schools of thought. Various academic disciplines have been reviewed to seek information predominantly from academic journals and books written on ICH. The chapter begins with the definition of ICH followed by the government institutions in the Maldives that safeguard ICH and the policies on ICH in the Maldives. The chapter further traces the studies that has been done by various scholars within the focus of this research and discusses the extensive literatures reviewed.

2.2 Defining ICH

The intangible heritage consists of the elements which represent the culture of every community, which are expressed in a variety of actions, manner of speaking and thinking, the symbolic repetition of historical facts and by the setting of ethical or moral rules. The World Heritage Convention included aspects like trance, rituals, ceremonies, rites of passage and taboos as part of ICH elements (Munjeri *et al*, 1995).

UNESCO (2003) defines ICH as “*the means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage*”

The intangible heritage which falls to the definition above is categorized as follows:

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- Performing arts;
- Social practices, rituals and festive events;
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- Traditional craftsmanship.

Even with UNESCO's definition of ICH, the concept of ICH varies from country to country. However, it still remains as the heritage mankind shares in terms of uniqueness, values, historicity, transmission of tradition and traits of locality and culmination of wisdom and creativity of the community. Acknowledging the responsibilities of the government and governments initiating the interactions between local communities and governments is one of the fundamentals of ICH safeguarding. At this point, it is important to note that the Maldives also defines ICH as per UNESCO's definition.

2.3 Government institutions safeguarding ICH in the Maldives

There are three government institutions that are mainly focused on safeguarding ICH elements in the Maldives: Department of Heritage, Dhivehi Language Academy and the National Center for the Arts.

The Department of Heritage is mandated to safeguard both tangible and intangible heritage of the Maldives while the Dhivehi Language Academy focuses on the oral traditions and expressions mainly promoting Dhivehi language and literature. However, the academy also tries to safeguard other ICH elements within the limits of its resources. National center for the arts is more focused on the performing arts element of ICH.

All three institutions are departments functioning under Ministries. Department of Heritage and the Dhivehi Language Academy functions under the Ministry of Education while National Center for the Arts functions under the Ministry of Youth and Sports. Each institution has a political appointee and a civil service official heading the institutions.

2.4 Policies on ICH safeguarding

Heritage Act (Act No: 27/79) of July 1979 is the only existing legislation related to the protection of heritage. This short legal document with one sentence, supplemented by three additional paragraphs/ annotations intends to prohibit the destruction, dismantling or damaging any sites and property of antiques/ archaeological and historical values located in the national territory. Except for the promotion of Dhivehi language with a separate policy, ICH in general has not been the main scope of the Government.

The above mentioned law (Act No: 27/79) has a little focus on ICH and mostly focuses on the protection of tangible properties. The absence of rules and regulations as well as the national inventory of heritage properties and intangible heritage however made it difficult for this law to be effective. The drafting of new heritage law has started and awaiting for final completion and presentation to the Parliament.

At this point it is important to note that Article 39 of the Constitution of the Maldives (2008) refers to the mandate of the State to '*promote education, culture, literature and arts, within the limits of its resources.*' The Constitution, in its Article 67 (g) further refers to the duties of the citizens to '*preserve and protect the State religion of Islam, culture, language and heritage of the country.*' However, unlike the natural heritage of the Maldives which enjoyed strong state protection, policy intervention related to culture and heritage has been relatively limited.

However, the Decentralization act ('Dhivehi Raajjeyge Idhaaree Dhaairaathah Laamarukazee Usoolun Hingumuge Gaanoon'), enforced in May 2010, made a welcoming move by proving the island councils with the authority of preservation and revival of cultural and historically significant activities.

2.5 Importance of involving government in ICH safeguarding

The government has to take the responsibility in laying down national ICH policies, strategies for implementation, the legal and institutional frameworks for ICH conservation and regulations. Initiated by the national governments to assist the locals to develop tools, set up and manage the local conservation and valorization projects, and work with the local ICH experts can be beneficial. A shared vision of the way ICH conservation policies should be implemented and the compatibility of the complementary roles played by the government and the local communities are determining factors of success.

It has been revealed that there is still insufficient awareness at the government as well as community levels on the importance of ICH and the need to ensure that it is effectively identified and inventoried is also a crucial area that needs attention. Capacity-building and expending of capacity in the field of ICH fulfills the obligations of the UNESCO ICH Convention, along with education and awareness raising matters. Such capacity building workshops, seminars and

conferences are to be initiated by the government institutions, especially when it comes to communicating with international bodies such as UNESCO. Without an official party, it becomes near to impossible for international institutions to assist countries. Usually there is a contract or an understanding between two state parties. The same is applied in the context of the Maldives.

In the Maldives, cultural heritage is confined to small government departments and is not seen as a central plank of sustainability. Due to this limited funding is provided by the government of the Maldives to safeguard ICH. As a result, ICH skills and local capacity is lost. With the completion of this research it is hoped that the ICH safeguarding in the Maldives will receive the immediate government attention that is needed.

2.6 Defining communities

A body of people with the same locality can be identified as a community (Appiah, 2006; Johnson, 2000). These communities could be cosmopolitan or insular. For cosmopolitan communities diversity is the hallmark (Appiah, 2006) while insular communities are bounded by their heritage, culture and common ancestry (Wenger, 1998). In addition, communities do operate at different scales such as local, national, regional and global. In terms of geography, local communities live close to the cultural and archaeological resources while national, regional and global communities reside far from them (Johnson, 2000).

In spite of the strong residential bias all community scales should be understood in relation to history and local meanings. This is crucial as people leave their heritage behind and migrate while new individuals settle in creating new relationships and heritage with the old one. For example, in the European settlement in various parts of the world, newcomers are sometimes excluded from their heritage using property rights (Shepherd, 2003a; Meskell, 2007), and local and indigenous groups are evicted from their lands (Ranger, 1999; Watkins, 2000; Rowley, 2002).

Community involvement is in agreement with with the overall movement towards empowering the formerly disadvantaged. The definition of community is entangled with layers of complexity. Whilst the contemporary discourse of community has an implicit residential bias, there are other forms of communities,

among them those based on interests. The meaning of “indigenous’ is another central issue in community involvement. There is some agreement in archeological and anthropological circles that “*the descendants of the original inhabitants of an area are indigenous or native to that area*” (Kuper, 2003; Watkins, 2005; Lane, 2006). For example in San of South Africa, the Saami of Northern Europe, Inuit of Canada, Native Americans and Aborigines of Australia. Examples include the San of southern Africa, the Saami of northern Europe, the Inuit of Canada, the Native Americans, and the Aborigines of Australia (Shepherd, 2003a; Lane, 2006). The question of how much time needs to have passed before newcomers or settlers are considered indigenous especially given the regional and global population movements and the settlement of people globally in the past 500 years also arises (Chirikure and Pwiti, 2008).

Besides, it is not clear in indigenist discourse who defines “indigenous” and who controls decision making (Kuper, 2003; Watkins 2005). While some Native Americans would classify themselves as first peoples (Watkins, 2003), in southern Africa some descendants of the San or Bushmen shun such an identity because of the racism that it has historically suffered (Shepherd, 2003b). The *Giraavaru* people (Tivaru people) of the Dravidian origin are the indigenous people of Giraavaru Island, part of Maldives and are believed to be the earliest island community in the Maldives. However, the distinct Giraavaru culture swiftly disappeared in the Maldives when the Giraavaru young people were assimilated into the wider Male’ (capital of the Maldives) society through intermarriage. With this it is now thought that the ‘pure’ Giraavaru are extinct. Therefore, for the purpose of this research community and indigenous will not be separated and will be treated as one using the term local communities or cultural communities or communities.

Communities have not been defined in the government institutions of the Maldives but it can be said that communities are people who are engaged in transmitting ICH knowledge. For example, in the Maldives Baa Atoll is known for lacquer work so it can be said that it is the community that engages in transmitting lacquer work in the Maldives.

2.7 Government and local communities

ICH includes ideas or beliefs, skills in practices and activities, as in constructions, dances, songs, emotions, and even sacred sounds that cannot be played anywhere

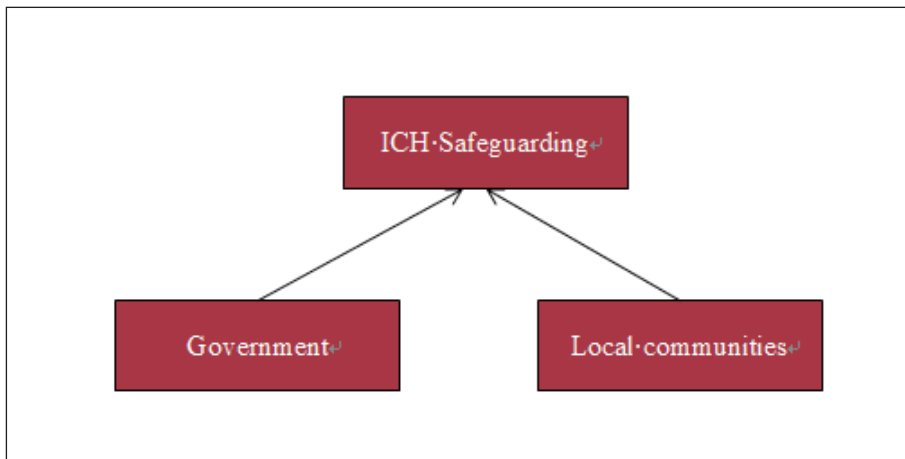
else except in the correct context. This heritage is important and can only be appreciated by people who are able to read the icons of its imprint on the landscape. Since it is acknowledged that is groomed within people, it therefore differentiates one community, lineage or individual from another. It shapes the way community members relate to each other, how they relate to physical environment, the universe and the spiritual world. Politics, subsistence strategies and other day-to-day social activities function within this network of ideas, beliefs, rules and norms of society (Katsamudanga, 2003).

When considered in this light, it becomes apparent that intangible values form the backbone of communities. Convention also places a heavy emphasis on the involvement of communities concerned in its identification, inventorying and safeguarding. Alkire (2004) noted that governments have a role to play in supporting informed community participation by providing information, countering local patterns of domination and supporting democratic approaches and handing over decision-making to local people. Sen (2004) argued that the local community may face difficult decisions concerning preserving old and traditional forms of living, but at a considerable economic cost to them; what is crucial is that people have the ability to participate in public debate on matters concerning ICH safeguarding. Hence, the effective functioning of local democracy and government involvement is essential to the success of this process.

Heritage protection and management is still publicly perceived largely as the responsibility of government (Cooke, 2006). However, there is a fundamental shift in the relative position of the government agencies involved in ICH preservation, particularly vis-à-vis the local communities' new role in identifying what should be officially regarded as ICH. The significance of this should not be underestimated since it has, up until now, been the prerogative of the state to decide which ICH elements to include within the domain of 'official culture', representing as it does the public interest (Arantes 2007). As Deacon et al. note (2004: 11), including ICH within the national culture or heritage provides opportunities to democratize the process by which we give value to heritage, giving a larger role to local people especially in the developing world.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework shows governments and communities working together in partnership to safeguard ICH.



2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has introduced the government institutions safeguarding ICH in the Maldives as well as the policies that are currently in the Maldives. The chapter further studied different literature focused on the role of government and future efforts of government in involving communities on ICH safeguarding. The chapter also developed the research framework.

The next chapter explains the research methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Chapter Overview

The previous chapter has set out the current debates surrounding the importance of government in ICH safeguarding. This chapter explains how the research questions can be explored effectively using semi-structured interviewed and template analysis.

3.2 Philosophical assumptions

Guba and Lincoln (1994: p.105), argue that questions of research methods are of secondary importance to questions of research paradigm. They note: *“both qualitative and quantitative methods may be used appropriately with any research paradigm. Questions of method are secondary to questions of paradigm, which we*

define as the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation, not only in choices of method but in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.” King and Horrocks (2010: p.6) pose the question: ‘To what extent can methodology and methods adopted be justified in relation to the purpose/rationale for the research?’, and this question resonates with the objective of this chapter highlighted above. Undoubtedly, the above question and research objective force us to evaluate “a host of issues that need to be carefully worked through, examining our philosophical assumptions about reality and associated theoretical perspective(s)” (King and Horrocks, 2010: p.6). The methodological framework of this research is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: Methodological framework of this research

Ontology	Socialconstructivism andsocial constructionism
Epistemology	Interpretivism
Methodology	Discourse analysis
Method (data gathering)	Semi-structured interviews
Method (data analysis)	Template analysis

While Crotty (1998) makes a distinction between constructivism and constructionism, the two terms are difficult to distinguish and easy to confuse (Patton, 2002). My dominant ontological position in this research is constructivism: *‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’* (Crotty, 1998, p.58). I not only believe that reality is socially constructed and meanings are assigned through social interaction (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 2002), but also that *‘everyone has a way of making sense of the world that is valid and worthy of respect than any other’* (Crotty, 1998, p.58). My aim is to ask the senior officials in the government institutions doing the ICH safeguarding work on the challenges of ICH safeguarding and they will have their own understanding and views that are constructed from their own personal experiences. Having said that, I also recognize the influence of culture and the *‘collective generation and transmission of meaning’* described as constructionism by Crotty (1998, p.58), and the Maldivian context in this research does substantiate a recessive ontological position of constructionism.

Following on my ontological positioning I took an interpretivist approach to knowledge generation. This is generally described as *‘idiographic’*, which literally

means describing the social world by offering a detailed account of specific social setting, processes or relationships (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.11), and while ‘recognizes the importance of the subjective human creation of meaning’ (Crabtree and Miller, 1999, p.10). Saunders et al. (2007) recognizes that the challenge for a researcher in an interpretivist approach is to adopt an empathetic stance, which is to enter the social world of the research participants and understand their world from their point of view. This empathic stance leads to a cooperative process of ‘data collection’ and some argue that this widely used phrase should be supplanted by ‘data construction’ (Thomas, 2004) since the data are not independent items waiting to be ‘picked up’ by socially constructed accounts created through an interactive process.

3.3 Research Design and data collection process

This section begins with a brief introduction on how secondary research has been conducted on Chapter Two. It further explains the sampling strategy and justification of semi-structured interviews as the chosen research method for this study. It also covers the development of the interview guide and administration of interviews.

3.3.1 Secondary data source

Apart from primary data that was gathered through semi-structured interviews, this research benefited from secondary data, namely journals, books and other publications from ICHCAP. Secondary data research was conducted for Chapter Two, in which the Maldivian context was discussed. To avoid measurement biasness, the current research included secondary data from a number of independent sources as well.

3.3.2 Sampling strategy

The research questions, objectives and choice of research strategy may dictate non-probability sampling (Saunders *et al.*, 2007, p.226), and of these the most commonly used sampling technique is purposive (Miles and Huberman, 1994). There are different types of purposive or judgmental sampling techniques, and Patton (2002) outlined 16 different types, while stressing that the participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research purpose. This research employs purposive sampling following Patton’s (2002)

notion of ‘criterion sampling’. The logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 2002, p.238). A purely *ad hoc*, opportunistic sampling strategy is not appropriate in qualitative research, rather, as in this case, the sample should relate in some systematic manner to the phenomena that the study seeks to examine (Mason, 1996, May, 2002). This research aims to explore the role governments can play in order to involve communities in ICH safeguarding. The participants or respondents selected as the sample must be able to assist in achieving this aim within the ambit of the philosophical assumptions made in section 3.2 above. Patton (2002) further describes that the logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. He explains that information-rich cases explore issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term purposive sampling.

There are 3 institutions in the Maldives that does the work of ICH safeguarding. Therefore, the sample of the research consists of these 3 institutions. McCracken (1988) summarizes that in the qualitative research, the issue is not one of generalizability but rather of access. In some cases, as described by King and Harrocks (2010), access maybe problematic because it requires the approval of several ‘gatekeepers’ and political sensitivities. As the 3 mentioned institutions are government institutions, political predicament is possible. Usually in the Maldives there is a political appointee and a civil service head. However, the existing relationships I have with the three institutions gave me easy access. In the Maldives, employees on the rank MS3 (Managerial Service 3) and above are considered as senior officials. Therefore, the respondents sought are from employees who are ranked MS3 and above. Three respondents have been sought from each institution. All three institutions explained in Chapter Two participated in the research.

McCracken (1988), in justifying the selection of research participants, states that the first principle is that ‘less is more’. He continues that ‘for many research projects eight respondents will be perfectly sufficient’ (McCracken, 1988, p.17). Though it might seem simplistic or unsubstantiated way of deciding on sample size, McCracken (1988, p.17) justifies that ‘qualitative research does not survey the terrain, it mines it’. Besides, guidelines for determining non-probabilistic sample (purposive sampling) sizes are virtually nonexistent (Guest *et al.*, 2006). However, there are some works that do provide guidelines for actual sample sizes, though differing in opinions. Bertaux (1981) argued that 15 is the smallest acceptable

sample size in qualitative research, while Morse (1994) recommended at least six participants for phenomenological studies. Creswell (1998) recommended six to eight interviews for homogeneous sample. Therefore, the sample size of this research, 9 interviews, meets most of the guidelines proposed by different authors.

Bosewell's (2006) construct of 'employee line-of-sight' explained that employees who are higher in an organization structure have a better understanding of the functions and have greater line-of-sight. These employees have a better understanding on how to contribute for the betterment of the organization. Therefore, senior employees from each institution were selected.

3.3.3 Research interview

"Interviewing is rather like marriage: everybody knows what is, an awful lot of people do it and yet behind every closed door there is a world of secrets"
(Oakley, 1981, p.41).

The interview remains the 'most frequently used method when gathering data in qualitative research' (King and Harrocks, 2010, p.6). Interviews are employed in various forms by 'every main theoretical and methodological approach within qualitative research' (King, 2004, p.11). The purpose of interviewing is to allow researchers into another person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, and interviews allow researchers to gather their stories (Patton, 2002).

Kvale (1983, p.174) defines the purpose of qualitative research interview as: 'to gather descriptions of the life-world of the interviewee with respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena'. McCracken (1988, p.9) added to the body of literature by explaining that interviews '*can take us into the imaginary world of the individual, to glimpse the categories by which he or she sees the world*'. It can also take the researchers into the life-world of the individual, to see the content and pattern of daily experiences (McCracken, 1988). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three senior officials from each of the three institutions.

3.3.3.1 Semi-structured interview

Semi-structured interviews are non-standardized interviews, and are often referred to as qualitative research interviews (King, 2004). Flick (2009) refers to the technique as semi-standardized interview, while Patton (2002) simply calls it a combined interview approach (referring to the combination of a conversational style interview and standardized or structured interview). In these interviews, the researcher will have a list of themes and questions to be covered (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

To keep up with interpretivist epistemology, and with the aim of allowing research participants freedom to report their own meaning making, the interview was framed in semi-structured format. It was structured in the sense that it focused on certain aspects of government and communities role in ICH safeguarding; and flexible in the sense that additional questions may be asked depending on the flow of the conversation (Saunders *et al.*, 2007).

3.3.4 Interview guide design

Flexibility is the key requirement of qualitative interviewing (King and Horrocks, 2010). McCracken (1988, p.34) observes that '*genuinely qualitative questions are not so easily or mechanically identified*'. My initial experience in developing the interview guide was challenging, given it was my first attempt at conducting qualitative interviews, and developing an interview guide for research purpose. I presumed interviewees would have to follow a structured format of interview questioning and answering. Though this assumption remains an important construct, '*the objective of the qualitative interview is also to allow respondents to tell their own story in their own terms*' (McCracken, 1988, p.34). The interview guide was quite 'mechanical' in the beginning when the pilot interviews were conducted. After reflecting on my initial experience, I improved in flexibility, both in form of questions and style of questioning.

As mentioned above, developing the interview guide was challenging, and initially, I drew on my own experience as a senior official in a government institute that strives to safeguard ICH (King and Horrocks, 2010, p.35) relating to the challenges in ICH safeguarding. As a current government employee, I imagined being interviewed on this topic and what I feel would be relevant to the discussion. Although I had first-hand experience, I was cautious of the distance

I had to manufacture to avoid assumptions that can create a treacherous sense of familiarity (Chock, 1986; Greenhouse, 1985).

Secondly, I developed the interview guide to address the research questions which I had formulated based on an extensive review of literature. I ‘consulted’ the literature in the field and subsequently the interview guide was developed to address the issues raised by the research questions. Table 2 illustrates how the interview guide is linked to research questions

Table 2: Interview guide in relation to research questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
	Government Institutions
What are the experiences and challenges government institutions face in relation to ICH safeguarding in the Maldives?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What are the specific policies that you follow in safeguarding ICH? 2. How do you think the existing government policies prevent your organization from safeguarding ICH? 3. Has there been a situation where the intended policies related to ICH were not realized? How did you face such a situation? What were the reasons? And how did you tackle the challenging situation?
What is the importance of government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What does the organization do to safeguard ICH? 2. Do you think enough emphasis is placed by the government institutions to safeguard ICH? If not, how can the government institutions prioritize ICH? 3. Is it important for the government institutions to play an important role in ICH safeguarding? What are the reasons? 4. What are the policies or regulations prepared to safeguard ICH that is being followed in your organization?
What are the future efforts of government institutions in facilitating community involvement in safeguarding ICH of the Maldives?	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How do you define communities when it comes to ICH safeguarding? 2. How important do you think it is to involve communities in ICH safeguarding? 3. How do you ensure a partnership exists between your institution and local communities? What challenges do you face here? 4. How do you think that ICH could assist the country economically? And how can the involvement of communities in this process could be beneficial to the government institutions and communities?

3.3.5 Conducting the interviews

This section provides details about the conduct of the interviews. I sent an initial email to all respondents, followed by a phone call, after one week or so, if no reply was received through email. The email introduced me and my research topic, expected participants' time commitment and benefits of participating in this research.

For the purpose of anonymity and easy reference, the interviews with the respondents representing the institutions are referenced from GI A1 to GI C3, indicating the first Government Institution (GI) as A, second as B and third as C accordingly. The numerical prefix indicates the first, second and third interview in each institution. In total 9 interviews were held with senior government officials in the three institutions safeguarding ICH elements in the Maldives. Triangulation is a strategy for improving the quality of qualitative research by extending the approach to the issue under study (Flick, 2009). As highlighted in section 4.4.1 three industry experts were also interviewed (interviews IE1-IE3), to cross-check the consistency of data derived by comparing their perspectives.

The first three interviews in GI A formed the pilot, as being an employer at the institution, access was relatively easy and I was familiar with the institution and the interviewees. This did help in terms of dealing with the anxiety and pressure I felt at the time, as these were the first for this research project coupled with my lack of familiarity with using this method. The pilot interviews lasted for about 45 minutes approximately. The interview guide used for the pilot interview was quite closed and leading which possibly contributed to information soliciting. Henceforth, the information guide was modified accordingly.

The organization of the interviews did not flow smoothly. Most interviews were rescheduled due to the unavailability and busy schedule of respondents, especially because the research dealt with senior officials in the government.

Table 3: Chronology of interviews

Interview number	Reference Number	Date	Office
1	GI A1	2017.10.03	Department of Heritage
2	GI A2	2017.10.03	Department of Heritage
3	GI A3	2017.10.05	Department of Heritage
4	GI B1	2017.10.09	Dhivehi Language Academy
5	GI B2	2017.10.09	Dhivehi Language Academy
6	GI B3	2017.10.15	Dhivehi Language Academy
7	GI C1	2017.10.16	National Center for the Arts
8	GI C2	2017.10.22	National Center for the Arts
9	GI C3	2017.10.24	National Center for the Arts
10	IE1	2017.10.30	Industry Expert
11	IE2	2017.11.05	Industry Expert
12	IE3	2017.11.06	Industry Expert

Most interviews lasted for an average of one hour. Some slightly exceeded one hour as well. In my introductory email to the participants I had indicated that the interview will take approximately one hour. All interviews were conducted by phone and were recorded in order to easily transcribe the interviews. The interview timings were decided by the respondents and I agreed with their choice to ensure psychological comfort. I had requested all interviews to be conducted one-to-one because I felt that the presence of another party in the interview could lead to indirect intimidation or lack of participation by the respondent.

Good transcription is dependent on good recording. As the respondents are in the Maldives and I am based in South Korea, I had no choice but to use call recorders for the first three pilot interviews. I transcribed every interview which, although time-consuming, can be seen as the first step in the analysis itself (King and Horrocks, 2004). Those methodologies of transcription than the basic kind, with notation used to indicate length of pauses, overlapping speakers, voice intonation, and so on (King and Horrocks, 2010).

3.4 Data analysis using template analysis

This section explains the data analysis process, using template analysis, after the interviews were transcribed. The term ‘template analysis’ does not describe a

single, clearly delineated method; it refers rather to a varied but related groups of techniques for thematically organizing and analyzing textual data (King, 2004).

Template analysis is a 'branch' or one of the many versions of thematic analysis used in qualitative research (King and Harrocks, 2010). The 'template' style of analysis were described by Crabtree and Miller (1999), and the approach has been further developed by King (1998, 2004b). Though there are surprisingly little discussion in the methodological literature of what is meant by the concept 'theme' (King and Horrocks, 2010), they went on further to suggest some guidelines to go about it:

1. It involves the researcher in making choices about what to include, what to discard and how to interpret participants' words;
2. The term 'theme' implies some degree of repetition – an issue raised just once (however powerful) should not be called a theme, although it may still play a part in the analysis;
3. Themes must be distinct from each other, although some degree of overlap is unavoidable.

Similar to thematic analysis, template analysis too is an exercise of relating preliminary coding relevant to the data or text to higher order themes. However, in the 'heart' of the approach as described by King and Horrocks (2010, p.166), is 'the construction of a coding structure – the template – that is applied to the data and revised as necessary until it captures as full a picture of the analyst's understanding as possible'.

I was drawn to using this technique of analysis as I found it flexible and user friendly 'permitting researchers to tailor it to match their own requirements (King, 2004, p.257)'. Template analysis allowed me to interpret participants' responses to the interview questions by structuring and coding the data from an analysis of common themes within and across the data. After conducting three pilot interviews, I constructed an initial sample comprising 9 codes. At this stage, as it was my first experience in using any form of thematic analysis, and with minimum data at hand, I did not organize the coding into levels of hierarchy, which is the heart of this method. Table 4 shows the initial template that was developed after the first three pilot interviews. The 9 codes are shown in a random order, rather

than hierarchical order. However, the codes are linked to the key themes of the literature review and subsequently linked to the research questions.

Table 4: Initial template after pilot interviews

Research Questions	Initial themes
What are the experiences and challenges government institutions face in relation to ICH safeguarding in the Maldives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Policies ■ Challenges
What is the importance of government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Emphasis placed on ICH safeguarding ■ How to prioritize ICH safeguarding ■ Important role of government
What are the future efforts of government institutions in facilitating community involvement in safeguarding ICH of the Maldives?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Defining communities ■ Importance of community involvement ■ Partnership between government and communities in ICH safeguarding ■ Economic benefits of ICH safeguarding.

At the pilot interview analysis stage, I had been more inclined towards *thematic* rather than template analysis. This was partly because the distinction or rather the similarity between the two was not clear to me at that point. I had constructed descriptive codes from reading through the transcripts, planning, at a later stage, to focus on my interpretation of their meaning, drawing upon the guidelines offered by Langdridge (2004). From further detailed reading about template analysis, I appreciated that template analysis does not systematically differentiate between ‘descriptive’ and ‘interpretative’ coding (King and Horrocks, 2010). Furthermore, in template analysis, the researcher may define some themes in advance of the analysis process – referred to as *a priori* themes. These may relate to important theoretical concepts or perspectives that have informed the design and aims of the study (King and Horrocks, 2010).

Moving forward, I followed King and Horrock’s (2010, p.166) advice that ‘it is normal to construct an initial template on the basis of a sub-template of the data set (e.g. six out of 20 interviews), and then apply that to code subsequent transcripts’. After conducting the 12 interviews that includes industry experts as well, I revisited the initial ‘thematic’ template and modified it by incorporating hierarchical coding levels.

King and Horrocks (2010) recommend researchers do not identify too many *a priori* themes as this may lead to a blinkered approach to analysis. Though the logic is to arrange the themes in accordance with the steps in strategic process, it was not my intention to hold any theme superior to another or to differentiate systematically between descriptive and interpretive coding. The organization of the hierarchy of the themes is on the basis of scope, with lower level themes representing the distinct manifestations in the participants' interview transcripts of the concept identified by the higher level theme. It is also worth noting that this does not mean that template analysis rejects any distinction between descriptive and interpretation; rather it treats them as more like the poles of a dimension than a dichotomy (King and Horrocks, 2010).

The main focus of the research is on the role of government in involving communities to safeguarding ICH. Hence, as read and re-read the transcripts, the themes in Table 3 underwent changes and finally 2 main themes with the first theme having 4 sub-themes and second theme with three sub-themes were developed as illustrated in Table 4.

Table 5: Final template after conducting 12 interviews

Main themes	Sub-themes
<i>Theme 1:</i> Importance of government institutions and challenges faced in ICH safeguarding.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Policies and regulations of ICH safeguarding. 2. Absence of clearly defined strategies. 3. Support from policy makers. 4. Perception of policy makers.
<i>Theme 2:</i> Future efforts of government institutions in involving communities in ICH safeguarding.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Defining communities. 2. Importance of community involvement 3. Partnership between government institutions and communities

Ezzy (2002) recommends that the decision in considering whether to use a software package should be made in advance, which I did not do for this research. Believing that manual analysis brings a researcher much closer to his/her subject and thereby provides much richer data, I therefore decided to continue using the manual approach. Several ethical issues rose in the process of designing interviews and data gathering, as discussed in the next section.

3.5 Ethical considerations

To begin with this section it is worthwhile to ponder on the quote by Edwards and Mauthner (2002: p.16) that captures how ethics and morality are intertwined:

“Ethics concern the morality of human conduct. In relation to social research, it refers to the moral deliberation, choice, and accountability on the part of researchers throughout the research process.”

There were two ethical issues in particular that were highlighted before the primary research began:

- (i) The data provided by the participants may be of a sensitive nature by virtue of the fact it is pertaining to the government. Therefore the raw data must not go to the public domain;
- (ii) A further potential ethical issue, is the discussion could lead to damage to the image or reputation of the institutions.

To address the above concerns, the following remedial steps were taken:

- (i) All data were stored securely, either electronically in computer or in hard copy version in a locked drawer;
- (ii) There will be balanced and fair reporting of the challenges faced by the respective parties being interviewed, as well as masking of individual and associated organizational identities. Anonymity and masking of organization in the research report was offered to all institutions. The participants were all fine with revealing the names of the organizations. However, none of the participants wanted their identity or the institution they are associated with to be revealed in this report. Therefore, anonymity has been maintained for the details of the research participants, through using a code or pseudonym on the transcripts and in the research report.

In securing informed consent from all participants, full disclosure of the reasons for the study was made in advance. Participation was voluntary and the participants were told that they may terminate the interview at any point. Participants were also informed on the time commitment, anonymity and confidentiality of the

interviews. Nevertheless there was a challenge, initially, in call recording the interviews. Some of the participants were not comfortable with this method. They preferred not be on record and feared that their personal opinions and comments could cause them ‘harm’. To address this challenge, I briefed the participants on the process of transcription and their right to view the transcripts after the interview. This reduced the uncertainty and skepticism among the participants and encouraged participation.

To summarize the above ethical consideration the following actions were taken to ensure the overall ethical considerations in this research:

- *Informed consent*: All participants were made fully aware of the purpose and nature of the research and were also asked to indicate their willingness to participate through signing and emailing a consent letter.
- *Participation*: It was explained to all participants that they were under no pressure to participate and could request to stop the interview and leave at any point.
- *Confidentiality and Anonymity*: While it is recognized that the findings of this research will be a matter of public record, no names and identity of respondents will be publicly available. Although the names of institutions interviewed will be revealed, the name of the participants and their association with the institutions will be masked.
- *Ownership and transparency of data*: All participants were given a copy of the interview transcript, via email, to verify and approve its contents. They were also provided with the interview guide before the commencement of the interview to highlight if there are any questions that they do not wish to respond to.

As King and Horrocks (2010) put it, ‘*we have ethical responsibilities not only to those who participate, but also to those for whom the knowledge is produced*’, which includes the wider academic community. This leads to the consideration of research quality criteria, which is discussed in the next section.

3.6 Quality criteria

This section clarifies and justifies the quality criteria of the research. Flick (2010), posed two interesting questions:

- (i) Should qualitative research be assessed with the same criteria and concepts as quantitative research?
- (ii) Can research be “valid” and “reliable” without being subject to the traditional ways of assessing validity and reliability?

Such questions have dominated the discussions about the value of qualitative research as a specific approach in empirical research (Flick, 2010). Concerns with the validity and reliability of the research findings are most commonly posed questions to qualitative researchers (Merriam, 1995).

Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest trustworthiness, credibility, dependability, transferability, and confirmability as criteria for questions for validity and reliability. They suggested credibility represents internal validity; transferability represents external validity; dependability represents reliability and confirmability represents objectivity. In total, they viewed the above four criteria as addressing ‘trustworthiness’ of qualitative research, which they term as ‘rigor’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1986, pp. 76-77). The strategies that can be adopted for ensuring validity and reliability in this research include triangulation, member checks and peer feedback (Merriam, 1995).

Triangulation is used as a strategy for improving the quality of qualitative research by extending the approach to the issue under study (Flick, 2010). The logic of triangulation is on the basis that no single method is sufficient to adequately explain something as each method reveals different aspects of empirical reality (Patton, 2002). In explaining triangulation of qualitative research Patton (2002, p.559) clarifies that triangulation helps in cross-checking the consistency of data derived by ‘comparing the perspectives of people from different points of view’. I conducted three non-government based interviews with three ICH experts in the Maldives.

Though there was not ‘purpose-built’ interview guide for these respondents, I based questions around the same questions as other respondents. The decision to

seek the opinions of these respondents was made on the basis of their extensive involvement with the research topic on the one hand, and their ‘independence’ as direct research respondents, on the other.

To further explain the validity and reliability characteristics of this research, two strategies were adopted, namely “peer debriefing” and “member checks” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). “Peer debriefing” involves regular meetings with other people who are not directly involved in the research. This is to identify one’s own blind spots.

‘Member checks’, on the other hand, is a process of ‘*communicative validation*’ of data and interpretations with members of the fields under study (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). I emailed transcribed interviews to all respondents for two reasons. First, it allowed them to validate and approve the conversion of verbal discussion to written transcription that took place after the interviews. Secondly, it was to thank them for their support and contribution to my research. However, the process of member check has its limitation, as the exchange of readings and reactions between the participants and the researcher could continue almost indefinitely (Banister *et al.*, 1994); Mercer, 2006; Silverman, 2006).

Patton (2002) argues that the credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on, among things, training and experience, is another measurement of quality in quantitative research. He further states that the researcher is the instrument in qualitative inquiry and therefore what experience and training the researcher brings to the field is important. Besides working as a senior government official in the Department of Heritage of the Maldives, I have reasonable experience and exposure to the subject.

This research has been transparent from its inception. This claim is substantiated with the methodological discussions that provide an audit trail for the whole research process. According to Kirk and Miller (1986) the quality of recording and documenting data becomes a central basis for assessing their reliability and that of succeeding interpretations. All interviews were recorded using phone application, and documentation of data in the form of verbatim transcription enhanced the transparency.

3.7 Chapter Summary

The chapter began with a justification of the philosophical assumptions made in this research. The research design and data collection processes were explained through discussion on sampling strategy, interview guide and conduct of interviews. Data analysis, using template analysis was also explained. A discussion on ethics followed and the chapter ended with a consideration of research quality through discussion on validity, reliability and the process of triangulation.

The next chapter will highlight the research findings.

Chapter 4: Research Findings

4.1 Chapter Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a picture of the role government plays in involving communities to safeguard ICH in the Maldives. The challenges of ICH safeguarding and involving communities in this process will be explored through the analysis of 9 interview transcripts. This chapter begins with a brief reminder of the template development process. This is followed by the presentation of the final template. A detailed discussion of thematic analysis on the challenges in strategic formulation is then presented, followed by a discussion on the findings on challenges for the government institutions to involve communities in ICH safeguarding.

4.2 Template development

An initial template extracted from 12 interviews was illustrated in Table 5 in Chapter Four. The pre-defined codes emerged based on the literature review. The *a priori* themes reflect the ICH safeguarding process based on the literature which was used as guideline in framing the research questions as well as the interview guide. There were two *a priori* themes and a total of seven sub-themes in the initial template.

The main focus of the research is on how the government institutions can involve communities when it comes to ICH safeguarding. The findings are analyzed

according to the themes that emerged from the data in two main headings. King (2004b) proposes that there are three broad approaches to presenting an account of interpretation of the data using template analysis shown in Table 6.

Table 6: Common approaches to presenting interpretation of data using template analysis

Approaches to Presentation	Advantage	Disadvantage
1. A set of individual case studies, followed by a discussion of differences and similarities between cases	This gives the reader a good grasp of the perspectives of the individual participants, and can help to ensure that the discussion of themes does not become too abstracted from their accounts of their experiences	Where there is relatively large number of participants, this format can be confusing for the reader, and it does rely on there being sufficient space to provide an adequate description of each case.
2. An account structured around the main themes identified, drawing illustrative examples from each transcript (or other text) is required.	This tends to be the approach which most readily produces a clear and succinct thematic discussion	The danger is of drifting towards generalizations, and losing sight of the individual experiences from which the themes are drawn
3. A thematic presentation of the findings, using different individual case-study to illustrate each of the main themes.	This can be a useful synthesis of the above two approaches.	The key problem is how to select the cases in a way which fairly represents the themes in the data as a whole.

Source: King (2004b)

Since some themes had been identified in advance as highlighted in Chapter Four, King's (2004b) first approach was not appropriate. I then explored the idea of using his third approach due to its resource efficiencies, but found great difficulty in justifying the selection of cases. I finally opted to use his second approach as it readily gave a clear and complete picture of the data. The notion of system for relating specific data extracts to the participants is explained in Table 7.

Table 7: Notation system for relating specific extracts to the research participants.

Government Institution (GI)	Government Institution (GI) Senior Official 1	Senior Official 2	Senior Official 3
Department of Heritage (A)	A1	A2	A3
Dhivehi Language Academy (B)	B1	B2	B3
National Center for the Arts (C)	C1	C2	C3
Industry Experts	Policy maker	Consultant	Historian/ Author
	IE1	IE2	IE3

4.3 Thematic analysis for the importance of government institutions and challenges faced in ICH safeguarding

This section presents the detailed findings of the four themes related to the importance of government institutions and challenges faced by these government institutions in ICH safeguarding in the following areas:

1. Policies and regulations of ICH safeguarding.
2. Absence of clearly defined strategies.
3. Support from policy makers or top management
4. Perception of policy makers or top management

4.3.1 Policies and regulations of ICH safeguarding

In a gist, all the senior officials agreed on the importance of having proper policies and regulations of ICH, but at the same time admitted currently not having clear policies formulated. *“There is no concrete policy set, but the Department of Heritage follows international policies. The department has drafted a policy related to cultural heritage although it still requires amendments when it comes to ICH safeguarding especially”* (A1). This shows that the Department of Heritage (DOH) as of now has no local policies formulated in relation to ICH safeguarding.

The National Center for the Arts (NCA) claimed that there are no policies and regulations to safeguard ICH in the institution as well. *“We are not mandated to safeguard all the ICH elements. We are focused more towards performance arts.*

However, there are no such policies that we follow at the moment” (C3). “We do not have any policies to safeguard the ICH element of performance arts. Maybe because we are more concentrated on the contemporary performance arts, but I think it’s important to have a policy for ICH performance arts as well” (C1).

One respondent highlighted on a law that was enforced related to cultural heritage. *“Law No 27/79 which was enforced in 1979 is the law that the Department of Heritage follows. Other than this, there are policies related to monuments and artifacts that the Department follows. However, there are no policies related to ICH yet. The brief law 27/79 does give the department authority to safeguard cultural heritage including ICH for future generations. Department of heritage has drafted a bill to properly safeguard cultural heritage and have highlighted the ICH component as well. We hope to take it to the parliament next year” (A3).*

Respondents from Dhivehi Language Academy noted about having a regulation to safeguard language. They also agreed about not having a policy or regulation on other ICH elements. *“Although we are called the Dhivehi Language Academy, and we are more focused on promoting and safeguarding language and literature, we also work towards safeguarding other ICH elements. This is mainly because when the former NCLHR [National Center for Linguistic and Historical Research] was divided, the staff that was working on ICH and history came to our Academy and the staff focused on tangible heritage went to Department of Heritage. At the moment, we have started formulating a policy related to ICH as well” (B2). “We have a regulation for language, but we do not have for any other ICH elements. We are in the process of drafting one” (B1). “There is no regulation or policy for ICH safeguarding. We have one for language though” (B3).*

When asked this question to people who are not from government institutions but are passionate about the sector as part of triangulation strategy for quality analysis, the three respondents stated their sentiments on not having any policies or regulations on ICH. *“I feel that if enough effort and determination is put, a policy should have been formulated a long time ago. The sector is just not prioritized enough. There are some very committed and determined people working in each of those institutions. I guess they do not get the support they want. It is sad that a proper policy is still not formulated” (IE3). “I do not know why no office came up with any policy. From what I know, there are no policies yet. I heard that the Department of Heritage has drafted a bill and hope that this would be a good start” (IE2).*

The findings also suggested that not having resources and people who are specialized in the area has made it difficult to come up with a proper policy or regulation. *“I agree that we do not have a policy or regulation to safeguard ICH. We also need people with expertise and people who understand what ICH safeguarding is, to come up with a concrete policy”* (A1). *“To formulate a policy, we will also need people who completely understand what ICH is”* (C1). *“It is sad to say that no policy or regulation is there to safeguard ICH. I think that the government offices that are responsible of doing this do not get enough support to do this. Or maybe, they do not have expertise to do so”* (IE1).

4.3.2 Absence of clearly defined long-term strategies

All respondents agreed to not having any long-term plans or strategies when it comes to ICH safeguarding. Not knowing the budget or the funding the institutions will receive for the upcoming year is one reason for this.

“We do plan for the year ahead, when we are preparing the budget for the upcoming year, but, it is not confirmed as we do not know what percentage of the budget we will actually get” (B1).

“We do want to have long-term strategies or an inventory list, but, it is not always done especially because the funding is limited. We have to make plans as we get funding” (A2).

“It depends on the budget, so we cannot have a long-term strategy or plan. We plan for the year and when we receive budget, we decide on the activities we can do” (C1).

“We plan yearly. Most of the times, we are unable to execute all our plans due to limited budget. So, having long-term strategies is not an option for us. Even coming up with an inventory has become challenging because of budget constraints” (C3).

“It is essential for us to plan this year... for the next year. We have to submit the budget plans to the Ministry of Finance and Treasury. This does not mean that we will get budget for what we plan. Every year when we get the budget, we have to plan again based on what we receive. Because of this it is not very easy to have long-term strategies” (A3).

“We do have plans made. It is just difficult to execute it because we do not get funding” (B3).

“We plan yearly. No longer than that. We need to ensure that we have enough budgets to actually do the things we plan. So long-term planning is difficult” (C2).

Apart from not getting enough funding, having limited expertise to plan and execute the plans is also an issue faced by these institutions. *“We do not have long-term plans. Funding is one problem for this. Another challenge is not having enough technical staff that can execute the plans especially when it comes to ICH safeguarding. Experts in the field is needed even to come up with an inventory list” (A1).* *“Not having long-term plans is because of two main reasons. One is difficulty in getting budget and the other is not having enough experts on this area” (B2).*

4.3.3 Support from policy makers or top management

All the respondents agreed that the support from the policy makers or top management is limited when it comes to ICH safeguarding. According to seven respondents, this is because the tourism industry of the Maldives relies exclusively on its beaches and cultural heritage is not the main focus of the government’s investment, although their symbolic value to uphold nation’s identity has been constantly acknowledged.

“I would say that we do not get a lot of support from policy makers. This is evident from the funding we receive. This can change if ICH is integrated into tourism” (C2).

“We do not get a lot of support from policy makers. The budget we get is only for staff salary. We completely depend on international parties. I think this is because people do not see the economic and social benefit from ICH safeguarding. Perhaps if we can have ICH tourism things will get better. Our country is more than natural beauty” (A1).

“It is sad to say we do not get enough support from policy makers. The sector is just not prioritized. Maybe, we need to show them the economic benefit that the country can get from ICH safeguarding. One could be through tourism. When we say tourism, people automatically think about the blue sea and white beaches, this should change” (B3).

“It is time visitors stop seeing the Maldives as just a beautiful country. We are also a country with rich heritage. If we can integrate ICH into tourism, I am sure government will start prioritizing ICH. At the moment, the sector is not given much importance” (A3).

“I think this is the sector that is least prioritized by the government. I am not saying this to criticize; I am just stating a fact. I am sure if we can get tourists attracted to ICH in the Maldives, we can get the government to give importance to the sector” (B1).

“I must say, that we do not get all the support we need. I think this is because they do not see any benefit of safeguarding ICH. Developments that are happening are at the cost of heritage. It is the sad reality. Maybe ICH tourism could be a way to change this” (A2).

“Well, I will not say that support is received. They do not see the benefit of ICH safeguarding. We have to try to link ICH to tourism and I am very sure this can change” (C3).

The respondents also felt that lack of awareness in the field is also a contributing factor to this.

“As I mentioned earlier, I do not think the offices doing this job get enough support even to come up with a policy for ICH safeguarding or people are just not aware of the importance of ICH safeguarding. If support is given, it is about time a policy is formulated, don’t you think? Also, with proper support, awareness on the importance of ICH safeguarding could also be enhanced” (IE1).

“Enough support would be getting proper budget to actually do things and make a difference. We do not get this. So how can I say that we get support? Because less support is given, people do not think this is an important field. There are less people aware of the economic benefits that this sector can bring” (C1).

“We do get support especially when it comes to preserving our language and literature. To other ICH elements, more support is needed I suppose. Awareness needs to be built on the importance of ICH safeguarding. Perhaps then, more support will be given to this field” (B2).

4.3.4 Perception of policy makers or top management

The findings of this sub-theme are presented based on the experiences and perceptions of the respondents. The rationale behind this is to see the perceptions of policy makers based on the perception of senior officials in the three institutions. The findings show that while some respondents could appreciate the importance and relevance of ICH safeguarding, most of the respondents think that ICH safeguarding is seen from a very narrow perspective.

“As we discussed earlier, this sector needs more support from the policy makers. We need them to see the benefits the country can get by safeguarding ICH. As of now, I do not think they have a positive perspective on this” (A2).

“We have been aware on the topic of ICH safeguarding...but nobody really did anything on it. This is the least prioritized sector. People are even more concerned on infrastructure, health, education and so on. The perception is seen from how this sector is treated” (A1).

“When it comes to safeguarding language and literature, I think policy makers have a good perception about it. A lot has been done to preserve language in the past few years. And we are still doing a lot. I cannot say the same for other ICH elements though” (B1).

“There is a positive perception when it comes to contemporary performing arts... but safeguarding the traditional performing arts is a challenge. It is not perceived as something that could be beneficial” (C1).

“The perception is not all good at the moment. Things may change in future. More awareness is needed for that” (B2).

“We get a lot of support to preserve language. I can't say the same to other ICH elements....but with awareness things can change” (B3).

“Government priorities at the moment are different. More towards necessities I suppose. However, I strongly believe that with the economic benefits that ICH can bring...that is if we know how to do it, the perception will change” (A3).

“The perception is not good. I hope things will get better. We need to do a lot for them. We need to work together. Communities, experts and people who has passion for the field need to come together” (C3).

4.4 Thematic analysis for measurements to take in involving communities

This section presents the detailed findings for the four themes that are related to the measurements taken in involving communities in ICH safeguarding:

1. Defining communities
2. Importance of community involvement
3. Partnership between government institutions and communities

4.4.1 Defining communities

The 2003 Convention places a heavy emphasis on the representative character of intangible cultural heritage, the involvement of communities concerned in its identification, inventorying and safeguarding was also stressed. However, the Convention does not provide with a definition of communities and groups. Therefore, this was a very relevant question asked to all the respondents. The justification of this question is to find out how the respondents view communities and possibly in future these definitions can help the institutions to come up with an agreeable definition of communities.

“In simple terms, communities are ICH practitioners. They are the people who actually keep the ICH alive. Without them, ICH will not exist” (A1).

“Communities are people who have the skill, experience and knowledge to transmit the ICH elements to future generations” (A2).

“Communities are people who practice, engage and transmit ICH knowledge and skills to the present and future generations” (A3).

“It is a network of people who are connected with ICH through practice, engagement and transmission of the ICH elements” (B1).

“Communities are the local people who has more knowledge on the ICH of the Maldives....the practitioners” (B2).

“The people who create, maintain and transmit the ICH” (C1).

“The people who carry and transmit the ICH....it is because of these people or communities, it can be said that the lifespan of ICH is longer in comparison to the tangible heritage which can be destroyed in a short time” (C2).

“Communities are a network of local people who are cultural practitioners... through these people we can transmit ICH to future generations” (C3).

4.4.2 Importance of community involvement

All respondents agreed on the importance of ICH safeguarding. Respondents agreed that heritage must be recognized by communities who are responsible in creating, maintaining and transmitting ICH before it is inscribed on any list. *“Of course, without communities where is ICH? Communities should be involved and that should be the most important thing” (A3).* *“They are the people who maintains the ICH...who transmits it...we have to involve them” (B2).* *“There was a workshop held last year by UNESCO New Delhi to introduce the Convention to us. I participated in it and I learned the importance of community involvement. It is very much stressed in the Convention as well” (A2).*

The findings also showed that it is the communities that ensure vitality of ICH and is identified as the respondents as one of the reason on the importance of community involvement in ICH safeguarding. *“The enactment of societal condition and actual ICH representation are well-defined and adapted in life by the communities. So I stand by what I said earlier, without communities ICH will not exist...so without community involvement, it will be impossible to safeguard ICH” (A1).* *“ICH only exists within these communities that we are talking about. It is through them the ICH knowledge, skills and understandings are passed down to the next generation. They are the people who ensure the importance of ICH...and we have to know that their involvement in this process is significant” (C2).*

Furthermore, it is revealed from the findings on the importance of community involvement in sustaining and maintaining ICH as well. *“Community perspectives and opinions must be regarded as important concerns in ICH decision making process. It promotes social, economic and political aspects of the country” (B1).* *“By*

involving communities in ICH safeguarding, the sustainability is maintained. This is because sustainability rests on the ability of people to be involved in the contribution to the wellbeing of the society...and this can be done through involving communities in ICH safeguarding” (C3).

4.4.3 Partnership between government institutions and communities

The respondents were asked about the importance of forming a partnership between the institutions they work for and the communities. It was revealed that most respondents agree on having a partnership. *“Yes, a partnership is significant. We can identify the ICH communities and try to establish a relationship with them. Besides, we need them in this process of ICH safeguarding” (A1). “There is a need to build a state/community partnership. The role of the government institutions like us should be supportive and communities should be given more ICH rights...but I agree that government institutions also should play an important role. So a partnership is necessary” (C2). “Yes, a partnership is imperative. Cultural communities play the most important role of ICH safeguarding. Our role has to be to provide finances and expertise. The rest is for the communities...but we also have an important role. Therefore, a proper partnership is required in this process” (B1).*

All the respondents agreed on the importance of a state/community partnership and some of the respondents noted on the difficulty in establishing a relationship or partnership with the communities. The important role of the government institutions in safeguarding ICH has also been highlighted. *“We have tried establishing a partnership with some cultural practitioners. It is not easy. They do not see the benefit of such partnerships. Some of them refused to even meet us. We are needed to include elements on lists, but without communities there will be nothing to include” (B2). “A partnership is not easily constructed although I also understand the importance of it. We have tried and the negotiation was difficult. We have to try and assure them that we cannot do the safeguarding on our own. I believe that we cannot leave it completely to communities too...government also has an important part to play. The issue is that some of them have no trust in the government because they also know that the sector is not prioritized” (A2). “Yes, partnership is important... but for that we need to enhance awareness among them. We need to show them the benefits that they could get from ICH safeguarding. Without doing this, they will not agree to any partnership. I do have some experience regarding this. Most of the cultural practitioners are old and need convincing because they have not seen government institutions doing anything to safeguard ICH before. They feel that we*

have to do all the work. I agree that the institutions have a significant role to play too, but so does the communities” (A3). “I agree on having a partnership. Safeguarding ICH is a collaborative effort with the active involvement of communities. To gain trust of the communities, government institutions need to show them that they care, these institutions need support from policy makers, they need to give assurance to the communities that they keep their word and they need to gain the trust of the communities” (IE2). “A partnership is important...because government institutions are also equally as important as communities when it comes to ICH safeguarding” (IE1).

It was also revealed that disputes related to ICH can be resolved through state/community partnerships and to build partnership cultural intermediaries could be used *“Of course, a partnership is a must. It is a difficult process but it is very relevant...especially because it will resolve disagreements regarding the meaning and management of ICH. This could be a difficult process and by involving mediators such as NGOs or independent experts can make the process less complicated” (C1). “Another importance of the partnership is to solve disputes which will definitely occur if the cultural practitioners are not involved” (A1). “Both government and communities should be equally responsible in ICH safeguarding. I do agree that communities should be involved in every process and I agree on having a partnership. This does not mean government institutions have less work to do too. Both parties are equally important in this process especially when it comes to solving conflicts and disagreements that can easily arise in relation to the ICH meaning and management. This is why we need independent parties such as NGOs or NPOs to act as an intermediary” (IE3).*

Some respondents highlighted on the importance of integrating ICH into the tourism sector and noted that the benefits seen can assist the government institutions in getting government support too. These respondents also highlighted that ICH tourism can help them gain the trust of communities as well and will assist in building a partnership. *“Showing the communities the benefits that they can get from ICH safeguarding can be a way to easily tackle this challenge. One way is ICH tourism” (A1). “I will repeat, we need to show them the advantages of ICH safeguarding. They really need convincing. If they see the economic benefit, they will most likely be on-board. Perhaps integrating this sector to tourism can help with this” (A3). “Like I said, to have a partnership, trust is important. So to gain trust communities should achieve something from ICH safeguarding. Domestic tourism is on the rise, government can come up with cultural tourism” (IE2).*

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed on the research findings. Template analysis was used to analyze the research findings. The challenges, future efforts and importance of government and community collaboration have been found.

The next chapter contains a detail discussion on the research findings.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Recommendation and Conclusion

5.1 Chapter Overview

This chapter gives a more detailed discussion on the research findings that has been elaborated in the preceding chapter. Following this, implications are explained. The areas for future research and recommendations based on the analysis and discussion are highlighted. The chapter ends with conclusion and personal reflection.

5.2 Discussion

The main purpose of this research was to find out the challenges and future efforts of the government institutions or the role of government in involving communities to safeguard ICH in the Maldives. The overarching research questions were formed based on this and were further broken down to three sub-questions:

1. What are the experiences and challenges government institutions face in relation to ICH safeguarding in the Maldives?
2. What is the importance of government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding?
3. What are the measures government could take to involve communities in safeguarding ICH in the Maldives?

This section details the results and findings in relation to the research questions.

5.2.1 Experiences and challenges government institutions face

In the Maldives, cultural heritage is confined to the smallest government departments and is seen as a small, discrete policy area rather than a central plank of sustainability. Not much of funding is provided by the government of the Maldives to safeguard ICH and the squeeze on local authority budgets has resulted in a loss of ICH skills and capacity at a local level. The ICH safeguarding activity in the Maldives is in dire straits and immediate government intervention is needed.

However, in the Maldives, not having proper policies and regulations to safeguard ICH is one of the primary challenges that the government institutions face. Research findings showed that none of the institutions have a proper policy formulated yet. Various challenges in doing this were also noted by the respondents such as not having expertise and not getting enough support from the policy makers. Unfortunately none of the government institutions have long-term strategies planned mostly due to budget constraints. Having limited expertise in the ICH field is another reason that was highlighted for the lack of long-term strategies.

It has been found that there is a general lack of institutional basis for ICH safeguarding in the Maldives, exacerbated by a limited availability of financial and human resources. One of the most important safeguarding measures is to come up with accessible ICH inventory lists. However, not having enough expertise and lack of awareness has made it challenging for the government institutions in the Maldives to come up with a list. Capacity building and awareness measures can be a solution that can be implemented by the government institutions to tackle these challenges. Assistance from international bodies such as ICHCAP can be sought to train people on ICH safeguarding and public debates and forums can be organized to involve communities in this process.

As a small island nation, preservation of cultural identity should be an important part of the national agenda. Although the constitution of the Maldives also stresses on cultural heritage preservation, the management of arts and culture sector has changed hand several times over the past 10 years. Initially under the mandate of Ministry of Information, Arts and Culture, the subject was subsequently attached to the Ministry of Tourism and then to the Ministry of Youth and Sports and recently to Ministry of Education. This frequent change of administrative framework for appears to be on the key obstacle in the development and implementation of strategic framework for the culture sector.

5.2.2 Importance of government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding

The importance of government institutions was well stressed in the interviews especially during the discussion of state/community partnership. →→Majority of the respondents stated the importance of communities as well as government institutions when it comes to ICH safeguarding. Government institutions have a key role to play in ICH safeguarding by enhancing community participation and countering local patterns of domination. The government institutions also should actively participate in supporting democratic approaches and give the decision-making power to the cultural communities.

In a similar vein, these cultural communities should be given opportunities to participate in public debates related to ICH safeguarding. It is the government institutions that should create such platforms. Also, it is through the national constitutions, laws and policies that will determine the extent to which communities are involved in ICH safeguarding.

Moreover, the government has to take responsibilities in formulating the policies and regulations on ICH safeguarding. It is the role of government to involve communities when coming up with legal and institutional frameworks for ICH conservation and preservation. The government should also take lead in implementing a shared vision between the government institutions and local communities on ICH safeguarding policies.

Within this backdrop, an official body will be required when it comes to communicating with international parties such as UNESCO. In the Maldives, for international bodies to assist the country, it has to go through proper protocols that involve government institutions. Therefore, government institutions also play a key role in ICH safeguarding. It is also understood that only having a state level intervention can directly impinge social and cultural processes that takes place within cultural communities. Therefore, equal involvement of state and community is vital in ICH safeguarding.

5.2.3 Future efforts of government institutions in involving communities

Lack of community involvement in cultural activities can cause social break between the country and the community that will consequently result in social incoherence and a reduced sense of identity. True ICH is only found in community perceptions and knowledge. ICH safeguarding needs to allow communities to explore, maintain and develop their ICH elements and reconstruct their collective memory. A continued creation of ICH is secured only through communities. Therefore, there has to be a strong connection between ICH and communities and the involvement of communities cannot be eliminated from this process.

It has been identified that communities are cultural practitioners. Community is *'a network of people whose sense of identity and connectedness emerges from a shared relationship that is rooted in practice and transmission of or engagement with ICH'* (UNESCO UIHS/ ACCU 2006: 7 and 9). Therefore, the community itself becomes a mechanism and phenomenon whose continuity is sustained by the ICH that is enacted. The communities create ICH and this creation replicates itself as a result giving life to the community continuation. This is one of the reasons why the ICH Convention also gives communities a central role of recognition in ICH safeguarding.

Moreover, the research participants agreed on having a state/community partnership that is both bottom-up and top-down. Here, the role of the government is important though it can be a supportive one. Constructing a partnership may be challenging and a complex process with difficult negotiations. However, cultural mediators such as Non Profit Organizations (NGOs) can play an important intermediary role. Apart from NGOs, cultural mediators can also be community representatives, cultural custodians, and administrative personnel of government institutions, political activists involved in institutional practices, entrepreneurs seeking to develop businesses related to culture, independent experts, and non-profit organizations (NPOs). In order to institute safeguarding measures with local communities, these mediators can combine their efforts with state parties to stimulate transmission of ICH.

It is also revealed that having a community/ government partnership can make it easier to understand the meaning and also to manage ICH which will

resolve disputes. These disputes are believed to occur more in relation to ICH than monumental heritage. This is because unlike a monument, site or artifact with a material existence beyond a society or an individual that created it, ICH has any current existence only through its enactment by cultural practitioners and it is only through the active transmission that it can have a future existence. Therefore, any safeguarding activity has to heavily rely on collaborative efforts from both government and communities.

It is crucial to note that ICH will not be able to survive or retain its designation if it is only appropriated by the government officials or the people who are not members of the cultural community. ICH can never be preserved in national museums or archives. It is preserved in communities that practice and manifest its forms. Communities are the members that will keep the traditions alive. If the traditions survive, are vital and are sustainable in the cultural communities, ICH will be safeguarded. Concerning participation, Article 15 of the ICH Convention states that “*within the framework of its safeguarding activities of the ICH, each State Party shall endeavor to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups and, where appropriate, individuals that create, maintain and transmit such heritage, and to involve actively in its management.*”

Culture is gaining increasing importance in the modern tourism industry and represents a significant force of attraction for tourists (both domestic and international). Great efforts are made by national governments and regions in order to obtain official designation regarding the relevance of historic/ cultural attractions. Such an aspect seems particularly relevant for a country like the Maldives, which as a unique culture and history together with other tourist attractions and is a well-known destination. Nevertheless, as the Maldives' key attraction lies in its pristine natural environment, culture has not been the main driving force of the country's tourism industry. The effort can nonetheless be made to link culture with tourism. By doing so, communities will see the economic and social benefits that they could get from ICH safeguarding. This will assist the government institutions to gain the lost trust that the cultural communities have in them.

5.3 Research contributions

This research contributed to the knowledge of ICH in the Maldives by examining an unexplored area of ICH in the Maldives. It also addressed the gap of limited studies probing the role of government in involving communities and future efforts from government institutions to safeguard ICH. Through this research, it was also found that the cultural heritage preservation may not be the main focus of the government as it is not a driving force of the country's tourism industry, but there is significant amount of awareness among the senior officials on the role of communities in ICH safeguarding.

The research also contributed to the professional practice of ICH safeguarding as it enhanced the awareness of government officials and policy makers on the challenges faced by the government institutions in safeguarding ICH. The future efforts of government institutions in facilitating community involvement have also been detailed out in the research that can assist these institutions on deciding a way forward.

5.4 Recommendations and future research

It has been revealed that the senior officials in the government institutions are well aware of the importance in community involvement in ICH safeguarding. However, the insufficient awareness at both the community and political or policy levels on the importance of ICH and the need to ensure that it is effectively identified and inventoried is a crucial issue to address in the Maldives. To do this, capacity building and expanding of capacity in the field of ICH along with education and awareness raising measures are the steps that can be taken in order to fulfill the ICH Convention's obligations in the field.

It is understood that any actions aimed at ICH safeguarding must heavily rely on collaborative efforts and active involvement from cultural communities or ICH practitioners and its members. Therefore, the government institutions need to find new forms of operating in the ICH field. The government institutions need to move away from the traditional top-down approach where the main domain of these institutions is decision and policy making and where these institutions act as custodians of the national cultural patrimony. Particularly, in relation to ICH safeguarding, the cultural communities should be the significant actor with

whom the government institutions must interact directly and always seek to build a partnership.

While the Maldives is experiencing unprecedented levels of progress and modernization, globalization is leading slowly to the loss of a sense of Maldivian identity and community especially among Maldivian youth. This phenomenon is of concern because it is the sense of national identity, that forms the foundation of national pride and stability that has allowed for growth and modernization. Thus, a redefining of the Maldivian national identity through its culture and heritage has become of utmost importance. Therefore, there is an urgent need for documentation and preservation of the ICH of the Maldives. The potential for to tourism to enhance and conserve the Maldivian cultural heritage needs to be recognized. At the same time inter-ministerial and institutional coordination, which is essential to preserve and promote Maldivian heritage, needs to be strengthened. ICH and traditions of the Maldives are disappearing. No enough documentation and research has been done to make this heritage relevant to modern day life or to develop it for the tourist market. A clear mandate needs to be granted for a competent authority to research and promote traditional Maldivian handicrafts and explore the unsatisfied demand for local traditional products.

This research set out to explore the challenges and future efforts of government institutions in involving communities to safeguard ICH. Whilst the nature of the experience from the perspective of the participants has been explored and illuminated, one acknowledged limitation is that the outcomes of this research are not transferable or generalizable to other contexts. Although this research was conducted in a specific context, the Maldives, government institutions outside the Maldives may reflect on how this study resonates with their own situations in order to assess how these findings may inform their ICH safeguarding strategies. Therefore, future research can examine this research in the context of Asia Pacific region. Due to time constraints and as the Maldives has not yet identified the cultural communities; this research focus was only the government institutions. Future research could explore the view of communities in the context of the Maldives.

5.5 Conclusion

In conclusion, it has been revealed that ICH safeguarding can be effectively done by having a collaborative effort between government institutions and communities. It is also evident that integrating ICH into tourism sector can be beneficial to the country economically and socially. And by doing so, government and communities will see the benefit they can get from ICH.

In addition, ICH safeguarding can only be achieved through recognition of the central role communities play in its creation and safeguarding. Although ICH safeguarding has been traditionally missing in the government's planning document, through this research it is hoped that the government starts showing interest in this aspect.

5.6 Personal Reflection

The process of undertaking a research on intangible cultural heritage has been transformational for me. Though this has been challenging in terms of cognitive and time management demands, I have been able to appreciate the process of knowledge generation. At times, pulling through and maintaining focus was difficult, but with the support I received from those around me made things easier. As a novice researcher, developing the research knowledge and skills to undertake this inquiry was very challenging. Though I have come to an end of this research journey, I realize that this is only the beginning of my on-going research and development in the field of ICH safeguarding.

As a government official in an institution that fights to safeguard cultural heritage, this research broadened my understanding and appreciation of ICH. I notice I have more confidence in approaching the topic of ICH. With the networking established with various policy and decision makers in the course of this research, I feel very positive about the future endeavor of safeguarding ICH of the Maldives.

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