

VIII. Living Human Treasures System

The Living Human Treasures System was introduced by the Republic of Korea to the UNESCO Executive Board at its 142nd session in 1993. The aim of this system is to encourage Member States to take prompt and vigorous measures to safeguard their traditional culture and folklore.

Living Human Treasures are persons who possess to a very high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage. Each Member State should choose an appropriate title to designate the bearers of knowledge and skills, the title of “Living Human Treasures” proposed by UNESCO being indicative.

Among the systems in existence, there are already a variety of titles: Master of Art (France), Bearer of Popular Craft Tradition (Czech Republic), National Living Treasure (Republic of Korea), Holder of an Important Intangible Cultural Property (Japan and Republic of Korea).

In Vanuatu, the transmission of traditional knowledge is through Kastom School and also the Living Human Treasure. The Moun Kastom Skul of Malekula located in Lawa village, South West Bay was opened in August 2011. Traditional Dance, Language and Kastom are taught here.

Chief Alben Reuben is the Living Human Treasure in Malekula. He is the founder of the Le Nakamal, teaching and passing down traditional knowledge and kastom to the young generation today.

*UNESCO & KNCU, Guidelines for the Establishment of Living Human Treasures Systems, 2002: 6-13