

VI. Pending issues & urgent needs regarding the safeguarding of ICH

1. Is any of the intangible cultural heritages in your country in danger of disappearance or transformation?

Though, modernization is an imminent danger to most of the ICH elements generally but it has proven a death blow to most of the traditional architectural craft specifically. For example; Fresco Work, Tile Mosaic, Stucco Tracery, Pietra Dura, Semi Precious Stones Inlay in Marble, Brick Carving and many others especially from the Mughal and Sikh dynasties. There are hardly few artisans who know or practice this art.

Then there are number of traditional crafts which are also facing the danger of total disappearance e.g. Hand Woven Sussi (stripped cloth used for ladies trousers), Taggar (hand woven floor rug from Tank, Dera Ismail Khan, Khyber Pakhtoon Kha), Wax Painting (Peshawar, KPK) and many others.

Another major threat is to the craft techniques e.g. lacquer art, block printing in natural dye, and of blue pottery etc. etc.

Other than crafts many of other ICH manifestations are also facing the danger of extinction. For example, street folk theatre, Sammi (a folk dance), Saarangi playing (a folk musical instrument), Sarood (String musical instrument) Bait Bazi (a sort of two or four versed folk song competition between two groups), Nut Bazigar (Folk Street Acrobats), Traditional puppet theatre, story telling in Punjab, and Haal Ahwal (practiced in south Punjab and Baluchistan in which when two individuals or groups see each other they give a comprehensive

briefing to each other about their families and clans and about general well being of them and of their area etc).

2. What are the reasons the heritage is in danger and what type of safeguarding measures have been taken? Please be specific.

The major reasons of endangered heritage are the modernization, cash economy, urbanization, industrialization, mass media, and limited scope (both in terms of human and financial resources) of the agencies working for the safeguarding of ICH.

For the safeguarding of the heritage mega folk festivals with the theme of artisans at work, folk dances, folk songs, folk games, folk theatre, and folk cuisines are held every year at different central and focal places.

Photographic exhibitions, cultural troupes, workshops in designing and marketing, seminars, conferences and symposia are also organized for the revival and documentation purposes of ICH.

Research studies, recording and documentation (both audio and video) are also the part of scheme.

Music classes to the new generation by the musical genealogical families' gurus are also underway.

Cultural benefit shows, awards, trophies, pride of performances are also bestowed upon the distinguished folk artisans and folk artists.

3. What are the pending issues for safeguarding ICH in your country that you have found through interviews and the field survey?

High level official commitment and patronage is the immediate requirement to safeguard the speedily diminishing and transforming heritage at war footing.

There is need of systematic recording, documentation and inventory making to better help in highlighting the endangered and worthwhile heritage.

There is high need of extensive field surveys at grass root level to highlight the hidden heritage elements which never came to fore and are facing the danger of extinction without getting the due appreciation.

4. What kind of problems and difficulties were encountered during the safeguarding projects?

The challenge of safeguarding of ICH is very vast and demanding especially when the communities you are dealing with are living below the poverty line. The major hurdle and constraint which we come across is of finances. Due to dearth of finances we couldnot not start new projects and even could not expand the scope of runnig projects.

5. What future plans are there for the safeguarding of ICH (programme information)?

Lok Virsa is planning to complete the cultural mapping of the country in next 10 to 15 years which will definitely help lead in the safeguarding activities of ICH.

Second major planning is to establish same kind of offices and museums as of Lok Virs presenting and safeguarding the living culture in them in all provinces of Pakistan.

Third major plan is to evolve a comprehensive inventorisation of the intangible cultural heritage of Pakistan.

Fourth plan is to expand the scope of running projects to maximise the understanding, appreciation and safeguarding activities of ICH of the country for which all available options of involving profitable and non-profitable organizations of national and international level.

6. What type of contributions and cooperation from the international society is needed for the safeguarding of ICH in your country?

International community need to implement the cultural pacts profusely which are already there. This will help in mutual understanding and mutual learning to make more progress in the common cause of safeguarding of ICH.

7. What role do you expect ICHCAP to play in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the region in terms of programmes, projects, etc.?

ICHCAP can help in arranging workshop wherein countries like Pakistan who are lagging far behind in safeguarding efforts of ICH can learn from states that have made worthwhile progress in the said field.

South Korea herself can train our persons on how to better safeguard and speed up the safeguarding efforts. For example we need an up-dated training for our Media Centre personals on how to make better digital recordings and store them to ensure their long life. We are expecting digital recording (audio and video) system to be received from Japan by the end of this year. We have already thousands of hours audio, video recordings in our archives and all of them have almost been digitised.

We have also succeeded in establishing laboratory in our premises but we need to well equip it with tools and systems to help support the preservation of ICH of the country.

8. Please include any requests and/or suggestions you have on this matter. Advocacy is the key action in the safeguarding of the ICH.

Our request on this is that an international campaign should be started by all the concerneds for the inclusion of the theme in the educational syllabus, electronic media programmes, and constitutions of the nation states in a very comprehensive and elaborate way.

9. What should be considered to encourage or to ensure active involvement from the community in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage?

To ensure the active involvement of the community in the safeguarding of ICH there is high need of making such an environment in which their sustenance is ensured. Only economically viable individuals and communities can appreciate the beauty and niceties of ICH and also can bear the burden of carrying over their precious and worthwhile ICH.

Economic viability of masses at larger level who are actually ICH practitioners and bearers only could be ensured through the concerted efforts, deep understanding and high sense of responsibilities of all higher ups at every level taking from local level to international level (this implies all international players, super powers, states, MNCs, INGOs, NGOs etc.) .

Then a very responsible educational system, very conscious and knowledgeable electronic and print media and corporate sector also will help underline the worth and beauty of local, regional and national cultural heritage.

Otherwise communities do appreciate their ICH and want to safeguard it which is their pride, identity, and a rich and economical source of vibrancy and recreation. However to make this happen we need to work for economic viability, peace and justice as basic norm through collective efforts otherwise we can just dream and wish for the active involvement of communities.