WHAT IS IT? Intangible cultural heritage includes practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills—whether intangible or tangible—that communities and groups consider essential to their lives and their legacy. It is their way of transmitting their identities, traditions and values from one generation to the next. It is the living expression of a group’s deep and collective experience, including its specific way of life. It reflects a group’s or community’s view of the world, as part of its cultural identity, and as a source of communication. Intangible cultural heritage is invaluable to all humanity, and all humanity can contribute to its safeguarding.

WHY DOES IT MATTER? Intangible cultural heritage enriches our collective identity, and is as varied, complex and interdependent as humanity itself. It is an expression of human creativity and diversity. Intangible cultural heritage comprises the essential shared values that give stability and meaning to our communities and promote respect for cultural diversity and cultural expression. It is a living expression of the cultural heritage of humanity, shared by all, regardless of the size or power of the group.

INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (ICH Fund) was established in 2007 by the sixth session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention. The ICH Fund has three goals: to identify and strengthen capacity building efforts; to provide technical assistance and incentives to States Parties; and to support the implementation of safeguarding projects as proposed by States Parties. The Fund is managed by UNESCO, in partnership with the Government of Switzerland, with the aim of promoting the protection of the world’s cultural diversity. The Fund is open for contributions from all parties:

- Individual donations
- Donations from businesses and organisations
- Donations from Governments

A global network of safekeeping projects

The ICH Fund supports the implementation of safeguarding projects, as proposed by States Parties, which are based on and led by communities and groups, and which are inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. The projects are designed to preserve and promote the diversity of human heritage, building capacity to ensure its long-term safeguarding. They are implemented by States Parties, their governments, non-governmental organisations, communities and non-profit private and business sectors. The projects are designed to protect the cultural heritage of humanity.

SECRETARIAT OF THE CONVENTION

The Secretariat of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is responsible for the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat is located at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France, and is headed by the Director of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Section. The Secretariat provides technical support to States Parties and other stakeholders, and works to promote the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. It promotes the exchange of information and best practices, and encourages the implementation of safeguarding projects.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a UN agency with a mandate to promote international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and communication. UNESCO’s role is to promote access to education for all, to foster international cooperation and cultural diversity, and to enhance the role of culture in the global agenda. UNESCO was founded in 1945 and has over 195 Member States. The organisation’s work is guided by the UNESCO Constitution, which was adopted in 1973. UNESCO’s mission is to promote the development of education, science, culture, and communication; to contribute to the achievement of international development goals; and to promote greater equality and inclusion in society. UNESCO is headquartered in Paris, France. UNESCO’s work is guided by the General Conference, which meets every two years in Paris, and is the highest decision-making body of the organisation. The General Conference elects the UNESCO Director-General, who serves a six-year term, and is responsible for implementing the organisation’s programmes and activities.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted by UNESCO’s General Conference in 2003, is the first international treaty to address the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The Convention is based on the principle that intangible cultural heritage is an essential element of the cultural diversity of humanity. It provides a framework for States Parties to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage, and has been ratified by 180 countries. The Convention is implemented through national-level safeguarding projects, which are led by communities and groups, and are funded by national and international partners. The Convention has three main goals: to promote the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage; to foster international cooperation; and to encourage the sharing of information and best practices. The Convention is implemented through national-level safeguarding projects, which are led by communities and groups, and are funded by national and international partners. The Convention has three main goals: to promote the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage; to foster international cooperation; and to encourage the sharing of information and best practices.
The List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity recognizes cultural practices and expressions that are irreplaceable expressions of intangible cultural heritage and are significant as bearers of intangible cultural heritage, such as the practices, performer skills, and associated knowledge and wisdom. The list is maintained by UNESCO, which recognizes and inscribes cultural practices and expressions on the list. The list is updated regularly and includes practices and expressions from various countries and cultures around the world. The list is a valuable resource for understanding and preserving the diversity of cultural expressions and ensuring their survival for future generations. UNESCO works with countries to identify and safeguard intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions, and to ensure that they are transmitted from one generation to another. UNESCO also encourages countries to develop strategies and programs to support the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage practices and expressions.