

## ICH Webinar Series

### Session 1: Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the COVID-19 in the Asia-Pacific Region

#### Concept Note

##### 1. OUTLINE

- **Date** 18 June 2020 | 17:00 (Korea time)
- **Venue** Webinar
- **Language** English
- **Co-organizers**
  - International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP)
  - UNESCO Office in Bangkok

##### 2. BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has seriously altered our modes of living. Without seeing a realistic end to this global health crisis that the world is grappling with for more than four months, it is highly likely that we have yet to see the dire consequences we all need to face. As of 29 May 2020, more than 5.9 million cases of coronavirus infections have been reported from 233 countries and territories. This results to a third of the world population under varied forms of lockdown, 91% of school students experiencing school shutdown, and as many as 25 million people are projected to lose their jobs.

In the field of intangible cultural heritage (ICH), many significant festive events and rituals have been cancelled or postponed while some communities can no longer access the cultural and natural spaces and places of memory necessary for expressing their intangible cultural heritage. Without a doubt, the social distancing scheme, though implemented differently by governments, has a common implication to those whose lives are closely connected to ICH: restriction, a temporary halt to public expression and enjoyment of ICH.

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only caused disruptions in the social and cultural lives of many, but has also resulted in loss of income for many bearers and practitioners of ICH and a significant impact on their livelihoods. Those working in the performing arts and traditional crafts, who largely operate in the informal sector, have been particularly hit. ICH, as it is known, is dynamic in nature and has the capacity to adapt and evolve.

With experiences gathered through an ongoing [online survey](#), UNESCO reports a pervasive disruption of heritage-related activities in the Asia-Pacific region: cancellation of the International Women Folk Dance Festival annually held in India, affecting more than 2 000 artists; practitioners of ritual folk theatre and folk martial arts in Bangladesh having to suspend performances; and stoppage of transportation of raw materials and

craft items in Sri Lanka, giving traditional craftspeople no other recourse but to stop their activities. These challenging scenarios are more or less experienced in the entire region.

Interestingly, ICH proves to be a source of survival, faith, and creativity despite the pandemic unthinkably hitting economies and public activities. In Hong Kong, people are revisiting local production of food source, consequently enriching their traditional culinary knowledge. In Indonesia, there's a surge of consumption of *jamu*, a traditional medicinal remedy, to boost the immune system. Similarly, the people of Laos are using mannequin-like effigies to ward off COVID-19 in a number of villages, reinforcing local spiritual beliefs on community protection.

While conditions of instability such as the COVID-19 pandemic could extra-ordinarily constrain human interactions, they nevertheless give us opportunities to ponder questions such as the ways communities have given new meaning to their ICH and how they ensure its safeguarding and transmission in such critical times. The first session of this Webinar Series will discuss the impacts of the pandemic on ICH in the Asia and the Pacific region and the roles ICH might take to address the situation of crisis. We will also discuss how the pandemic requires us to identify new trends and innovative solutions for ICH safeguarding and transmission, considering the limited access to cultural spaces, goods and services, restricted mobility, and other persistent difficulties we are facing during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

### 3. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To assess the impacts of COVID-19 on ICH in the Asia-Pacific region;
- 2) To identify the possible roles ICH might take in crisis; and
- 3) To discuss new trends and identify creative and innovative solutions for ICH safeguarding and transmission.

### 4. PROGRAMME AND SPEAKERS

<b>ICH Webinar Series Session 1: Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Asia-Pacific Region</b>	
<b>Opening Remarks</b>	Keum Gi Hyung, Director-General, ICHCAP Duong Bich Hanh, Head, Culture Unit, UNESCO Bangkok Office
<i>The programme proper is chaired by Boram Kim and moderated by Dr. Saifur Rashid.</i>	
<b>1</b>	<b>UNESCO Online Survey Results on Living Heritage Experience and the COVID-19 Pandemic</b> Juliette Hopkins, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO
<b>2</b>	<b>Reviving the Living Landscape System of Lai Chi Wo for Urban Sustainability</b> Anna Yau, Project Manager, The University of Hong Kong
<b>3</b>	<b>Living Heritage Experiences in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore</b> Yeo Kirk Siang, Director, Heritage Research and Assessment, National Heritage Board of Singapore

4	<b>Disaster as Opportunity</b> Christopher Ballard, Professor, The Australian National University, Australia
4	<b><i>Te-er/Tengao: The Significance of the Compulsory 'Rest' Day of the Bontoks in Mt. Province in the Context of COVID-19 Pandemic</i></b> Eric Zerrudo, Professor, University of Santo Tomas University, Philippines
5	<b>Q&amp;A</b>

## 5. WEBINAR QUESTIONS

The first session of the Webinar Series is guided by the following questions:

- What role can ICH play in a crisis? How can ICH be a source of, among other things, resilience or solidarity for communities? What other cases of natural and man-made disasters show ICH as (a) crucial component(s) of coping and recovery mechanisms?
- How does the pandemic impact the viability and transmission of ICH? How do social restrictions introduced limit or totally collapse the involvement of communities, groups, and individuals in ICH safeguarding?
- In the developing discourse around the COVID-19 pandemic, there's an idea of a new normal, a way of life after the pandemic, and that includes limiting social activities. If this "new normal" were to be put in place, how then can we imagine the new ways for ICH to be practiced, safeguarded, and transmitted?