

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

ICH Webinar Series Session 1: Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Asia-Pacific Region	
Opening Remarks (17:00-17:10)	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>	
17:10-17:25	UNESCO Online Survey Results on Living Heritage Experience and the COVID-19 Pandemic Juliette Hopkins, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO
17:25-17:40	Reviving the Living Landscape System of Lai Chi Wo for Urban Sustainability Anna Yau, Project Manager, The University of Hong Kong
17:40-17:55	Living Heritage Experiences in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic in Singapore Yeo Kirk Siang, Director, Heritage Research and Assessment, National Heritage Board of Singapore
17:55-18:10	Disaster as Opportunity Christopher Ballard, Professor, The Australian National University, Australia
18:10-18:25	<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> Eric Zerrudo, Professor, University of Santo Tomas University, Philippines
18:25-19:00	Q&A

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?

6. BIOGRAPHIES

DR. SAIFUR RASHID is a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh and has been a member of the faculty since 1993. He obtained his PhD in Anthropology in 2005 from Curtin University of Technology, Australia, and worked there as a Post-Doctoral Research and Teaching Fellow between 2006 and 2008. He has published several books and written many research articles in refereed scientific journals. His recently authored and co-authored books include *Connecting State and Citizens: Transformation Through e-Governance in Rural Bangladesh* (2018), *Traditional Medicine: Sharing Experience from the Field* (2017), and *Pains and Pleasure of Fieldwork* (2016). Professor Rashid is a member of the ICH National Expert Committee of the Ministry of Cultural Affairs of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and member of APHEN-ICH (Asia-Pacific Higher Education Network for Intangible Cultural Heritage) of ICHCAP. His areas of research interest include heritage, indigenous knowledge, ethnicity, migration, and issues of the development of excluded groups.

JULIETTE HOPKINS is an Associate Programme Specialist in the Secretariat for UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. She currently works in the Capacity Building and Heritage Policy Unit, where she is the focal point for issues relating to intangible cultural heritage and emergencies. Before joining UNESCO in 2016, she worked as an anthropologist with indigenous communities in Australia on heritage management and community development projects. She also has professional experience as a journalist in Cambodia and France. Her academic background is in social and medical anthropology with degrees from The University of Sydney and University of Oxford.

ANNA W Y YAU is a Project Manager for HSBC Rural Sustainability Programme at The University of Hong Kong. He has BA (Japanese Studies), MA (Cultural Management) from The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and PgDip in Cultural Heritage Management from The University of Hong Kong. She is an accredited heritage conservationist (HKICON), Project Management Professional (PMI), as well as a member of the Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods of the Modern Movement (Docomomo) Hong Kong Chapter. She has been involved in heritage revitalisation, management, and education since 2009. Her experience includes establishing heritage museum and community network for Mei Ho House Revitalisation Project – awardee of 2015 UNESCO Asia Pacific Heritage Conservation Award; project planning for Bridges Street Market News-Expo Museum; as well as lecturer and academic coordinator for Cultural Heritage Management related programmes and training in the Asia Pacific region. In 2015, she was selected as the delegate of China to participate in UNESCO first World Heritage Youth Forum in Asia.



YEO KIRK SIANG is currently the Director of the Heritage Research and Assessment Division (HRA) at the National Heritage Board (NHB) of Singapore. The division focuses on the research, documentation, and commemoration of Singapore’s tangible heritage and the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, in partnership with non-government organisations and public agencies. He is also the coordinator for the “Our SG Heritage Plan”, which outlines the broad strategies for Singapore’s heritage sector from 2018 to 2022.

DR. CHRISTOPHER BALLARD is Associate Professor in the College of Asia and the Pacific at the Australian National University. He has worked for more than thirty years as an archaeologist, historian, and anthropologist in Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu and West Papua. He has also taught at the University of the South Pacific and the University of French Polynesia. He was principal researcher and co-author of Vanuatu’s successful nomination of Chief Roi Mata’s Domain to UNESCO’s World Heritage List (2008), where he continues to work with Indigenous community heritage and tourism managers, and co-author of a recent UNESCO report on intangible heritage and disasters. His current research interests are focused on Indigenous oral traditions, cultural heritage management, and disasters and epidemics.

ASSOC. PROF. ERIC BABAR ZERRUDO is the Director of the University of Santo Tomas Center for Conservation of Cultural Property and the Environment in the Tropics (CCCPET) and faculty of the Graduate School-Cultural Heritage Studies program. Concurrently, he serves as the national coordinator of the CBCP Episcopal Commission for the Cultural Heritage of the Church and heritage consultant for Department of Tourism and NCCA-Philippine Cultural Education Program. He was a former UNESCO Philippines Commissioner for World Heritage Convention and Focal Person for Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention. Recently, he contributed to the development of the ASEAN Heritage Competency Framework. He is a member of the ICOMOS ISC PRERICO and APHEN-ICH.