



Enhancing Regional and Sub-regional Collaboration among ICH Stakeholders

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Abstract

This paper aims at providing a basis for discussion on how to enhance regional and sub-regional collaboration among ICH stakeholders. The paper begins with identifying ICH stakeholders at local and national levels, and then looks at ICH stakeholders at sub-regional and regional levels. Sub-regional integration bodies in Asia and the Pacific region are introduced as potential partners for ICH safeguarding, while specific functions assigned to three Category II Centres in the field of ICH established in the region are highlighted for the sake of clarification. Based on that, the paper suggests three actions with a view to enhancing regional and sub-regional collaboration among ICH stakeholders; i) set clear goals and results to be achieved within the framework of global vision, ii) formulate a strategy and action plan, and iii) ensure monitoring and evaluation. Most of the examples used in this paper are taken from the Pacific region with which the author is familiar.

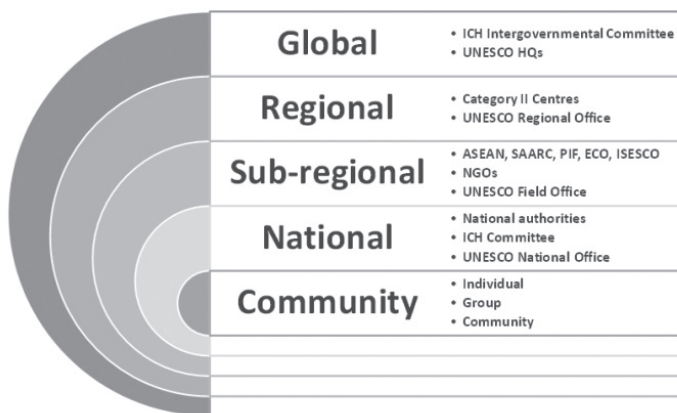
I. Introduction

The Asia-Pacific region is geographically vast. The region could be organized into different sub-regions. For example, Central Asia, West Asia, South Asia, South-East Asia, North-East Asia and Pacific.

The Asia-Pacific region is composed of countries at different levels in terms of economic development – developed, emerging economies, developing, etc. Some countries put emphasis on social and spiritual aspects of development. Example is Bhutan and its Gross National Happiness indicator. Some countries are facing challenges in post-conflict and post-disaster situations.

The regional integration is in-making in the Asia-Pacific region known for its diversity.

The title given to my presentation is “Enhancing Regional and Sub-regional Collaboration among ICH Stakeholders”. Before discussing this topic, I would like look at ICH stakeholders at local and national levels.



II. ICH Stakeholders at Local and National Levels

One of the important stakeholders is “community” as custodians of ICH. The community in this sense usually coincides with local community living in a certain place, although there are cases that community as custodians of specific ICH are

found across borders - local, national, and even regional – such as ICH shared by diasporas community. Community is one of the most important stakeholders in ICH safeguarding, since they are the ones deciding which practices are part of their cultural heritage. Also, communities themselves must take part in identifying and defining intangible cultural heritage.

Besides community, one can list a number of stakeholders within a country as follows:

- i) Civil society including NGOs, museums, library, archives, cultural centres, universities, researchers, etc. ICH custodians and communities often form Association for specific ICH element for ICH safeguarding.

Cultural centre, museums and universities are important knowledge base and pool of experts for ICH safeguarding. For instance, the Centre for Samoan Studies attached to the National University of Samoa has been active in undertaking field survey and organizing conferences on selected topics on the Samoan culture that are open not only to students but also to the general public.

National and local researchers play key roles in the ICH safeguarding owing to their local knowledge and language skills.

- ii) Government authorities in charge of ICH matters at different levels – municipal, provincial, regional, state, federal, etc. As representative of a State Party, they are responsible for the implementation of the ICH Convention within its territory by putting in place safeguarding policy and measures including ICH inventories.

Traditional leaders are important stakeholders of the governance of Pacific islands countries where top-down integration from central government and bottom-up integration from villages/communities are taking place to create unique system of governance. Their support for ICH safeguarding is very important in order to ensure community ownership and long-term sustainability of safeguarding efforts.

iii) ICH Committee which could be established in accordance with Article 13 of the ICH Convention as a competent body for the ICH safeguarding plays an important role in the ICH safeguarding at country level. Ideally the ICH Committee/Council is composed of representatives of community, experts, civil society representative, etc, in order to serve as a multi-stakeholder forum on ICH safeguarding.

iv) UNESCO Country Office (in the case of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Nepal, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Viet Nam) provides policy advice and technical assistance to Member State when needed.

v) UN Country Team (UNCT) is composed of UN specialized agencies and programmes (FAO for agriculture, WHO for health, UNICEF for children, UNDP for development, etc.) which have representatives in a country.

UNCT has been strengthening efforts to provide international assistance in more coordinated manner, which is called One UN or as “Delivery as One”.



I was in Port Moresby two weeks ago where One UN or Delivery as One project is taking place in order to attend UNCT meeting to discuss a document called UN Development Assistance Framework for 2012-2015. I have found out that the document is prepared around 4 thematic fields, namely, Governance, Health, Education and Environment (including disaster management). Even in the country like PNG, which is, for us, treasure of ICH and cultural and linguistic diversity,

this UN document includes little reference to culture. This is the reality on the ground, showing how culture tends to be still ignored in favor of economic and infrastructure development.

In order to convince other UN agencies and development partners who are more oriented to economic development and industrialization, UNESCO has been making efforts in promoting culturally sensitive approach and advocating the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

In recent years, UNESCO has been addressing a linkage between culture and sustainable development, social cohesion and culture of peace and highlighting the cultural dimension of the internationally agreed goals including Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Education for All (EFA). For example, the local system of production to reduce extreme poverty and environmental sustainability (MDG 1 and 7), transmission of knowledge and skills at family setting and non-formal education (MDG 2), recognition of traditional knowledge and skills of self-educated crafts women (MDG 3) training and qualification of traditional birth attendants for the protection of children and mother (MDG 4 and 5), etc.

The above list of stakeholders is not exhaustive one. However, one can easily observe the wide range of ICH stakeholders that we have to work with at country level.

III. Regional and Sub-regional Collaboration among ICH Stakeholders

Based on the above, I would now look at ICH stakeholders at sub-regional and regional levels.

Sub-regional: At sub-regional level, one may add some bodies of sub-regional scope which are involved in ICH safeguarding as follows;

- i) Sub-regional integration organizations such as ASEAN, ASEAN + 3, SAARC, ECO, ISESCO, PIF, etc. These entities are basically geo-political and economic organizations composed of a group of countries in a certain geographical

region of Asia and the Pacific. Their aims are primarily focused on economic growth and social progress, while recently some of them have started to pay serious attention to the importance of culture for sustainable development and support activities for cultural development among its members.

For example in the Pacific, the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) is an intergovernmental organization established in 1971 with the aims of enhancing economic and social-well being of the Pacific Community through regional cooperation. The Pacific Plan 2005 adopted by PIF states; “We treasure the diversity of the Pacific and seek a future in which its cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honored and developed”. PIF assumes a higher level of political visibility among Pacific small islands countries. UNESCO Apia Office works in partnership with PIF in order to strengthen advocacy for cultural development.

- ii) Several NGOs in State Parties in the Asia-Pacific region have been accredited as advisory bodies to the ICH Convention, making the ICH Convention as one of the most inclusive legal instruments among UNESCO Conventions in culture. For example, Pacific Islands Museum Association (PIMA) has been actively engaged in ICH safeguarding in the Pacific.
- iii) UNESCO Field Office covering multiple countries such as UNESCO in Almaty, Apia, Beijing, Jakarta, and New Delhi, provides policy advice and technical assistance to member states as needed.

Regional: At regional level, one may add the following ICH stakeholders;

- i) UNESCO Category II Centers including CRIHAP for training in China, IRCI for research in Japan, ICHCAP for information and networking in Republic of Korea. The specific functions defined in the relevant Executive Board documents are as follows (181 EX/17);

CRIHAP in China : (a) organize long-term and short-term training courses including classroom training and field-based training on the following subjects, and grant financial support to trainees in need of assistance: the

2003 Convention and its Operational Directives, different examples of policies including legal, administrative, technical and financial measures fostering the safeguarding of ICH, introduction to UNESCO publications on identification and documentation of ICH and their application in the field work, teaching ICH in formal and non-formal education, including courses of theory and practice training, (b) mobilize international and Chinese experts as well as scientific NGOs specialized in the different domains of ICH to work as instructors and advisors of the above-mentioned training activities, (c) enhance international regional cooperation with institutions active in the domain of ICH, notably those established under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2).

ICHCAP in the Republic of Korea: (a) establish an information system to ensure effective management of ICH data through the construction of a database, support identification and documentation of ICH, conserve and digitize archival materials and support the development of metadata standards, (b) make use of the accumulated information and data on ICH for the purpose of dissemination, produce and publish informational and promotional materials, and promote the protection of intellectual property rights of ICH practitioners and creators, (c) build networks among concerned communities, groups and individuals to reinforce transmission and dissemination of ICH, organize public events and meetings at the regional and international level, (d) strengthen international and regional networks to exchange information and knowledge concerning the safeguarding of ICH, particularly among ICH centres and institutes including those established under the auspices of UNESCO (category 2) as well as among individual ICH specialists.

IRCI in Japan: (a) instigate and coordinate research into practices and methodologies of safeguarding endangered intangible cultural heritage elements present in the Asia-Pacific Region, while cooperating with universities, research institutions, community representatives and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in Japan and elsewhere in the region, (b) assist, in terms of research, countries in the Asia-Pacific Region in implementing such measures as referred to in Articles 11, 12, 13

and 14 of the 2003 Convention, while paying special attention to developing countries, (c) to organize workshops and seminars focusing on the role of research as a useful component for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage and related practices and methodologies, involving experts, community representatives and administrators from the Asia-Pacific Region, (d) to encourage and assist young researchers in the Asia-Pacific Region engaging in research activities related to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, (e) to cooperate with other category 2 centres and institutions active in the domain of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond, and (f) to initiate cooperation among all other interested institutions active in the domain of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, while furthering technical assistance vis-a-vis developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region.

As mentioned above, the Asia-Pacific region has at present three Category II Centres relating to ICH with specific functions. Obviously it is important to respect respective functions in order to ensure coordination and greater impact through combined efforts among them. And the adopted ICHCAP programs and workplan do include coordination meeting among 3 Centres.

On the other hand, this presents an *interesting* opportunity for us to demonstrate to the international community how effectively the three Category II Centres can collaborate through ICH safeguarding and demonstrate “Delivery as One” for common goals and objectives.

- ii) UNESCO Regional Office in Bangkok, which de fact is coordinating the UNESCO cultural programme in the region. UNESCO Office in Bangkok works closely with UNCT in Bangkok with “Delivery as One” approach.

IV. How to Enhance Regional and Sub-regional Collaboration among ICH Stakeholders

Now coming to the topic given to my presentation, the following three points seem to be important as a way forward in order to enhance regional and sub-regional collaboration among ICH stakeholders,

i) **Set clear objectives and results to be achieved within the framework of global vision**

Global vision on the ICH safeguarding comes through the deliberations the General Assembly of the States Parties of the ICH Convention which is the sovereign body of the ICH Convention, as well as the ICH Intergovernmental Committee. It is important to set clear objectives and results to be achieved by Asia and Pacific region, which must be consistent with the global vision.

What are the goals of ICH safeguarding in Asia and Pacific region? Certainly it is not to increase the number of inscriptions from the region on the ICH Representative List. Priority is placed on safeguarding of ICH in need of urgent safeguarding and ICH of vulnerable communities as ICH custodians. This could be done by empowering communities and putting in place relevant cultural policy and measures at different levels

ii) **Formulate strategy and action plan**

Once goals and results are agreed upon among ICH stakeholders, it is recommended to formulate a strategy and action plan with mid-term perspective. This is very important in order to ensure coordinated approach among numerous ICH stakeholders involved.

Take an example of the implementation of the World Heritage Convention in the Pacific. Since the adoption of the World Heritage Convention in 1972 and being aware of the need for coordinated actions, the Pacific countries have established a practice to formulate a mid-term action plan. The first

Action Plan prepared with its target 2009 (Pacific 2009 Programme) has been succeeded by the current Action Plan covering a period from 2010 to 2015.

This Action Plan identifies regional and national actions with its emphasis on regional actions. Examples of regional actions are; regional workshop on thematic topics such as cultural landscape, the early human settlements in the Pacific, Pacific sites relating to the Pacific navigation, trans-border site management, information and education materials, research and actions on identified threats (climate change, etc), follow up of Asia-Pacific periodic reporting (2011), etc.

The Action Plan has been discussed, reviewed and updated at Pacific World Heritage Workshops. The Pacific World Heritage Workshops have been held four times (Cairns, Tongalio, Maupiti, and Apia) in the Pacific thus far with extra-budgetary funding from development partners (such as Australia, NZ, France, Norway, etc.). Hosted by one of the Pacific countries/territories, the Workshop brings together basically two (one for cultural sites, the other for natural sites) World Heritage focal points in each Pacific countries and territories together with representatives of ICOMOS and IUCN as well as regional NGOs (ICOMOS Pacifika, PIMA) and regional university (University of South Pacific).

The Pacific region hosted the World Heritage Committee Meeting in Christchurch in NZ in 2007 under the chairmanship of Mr. Te Heuheu, Paramount Chief of the Ngati Tuwharetoa Maori people of New Zealand. After almost 40 years collaboration, as of July 2011, 14 countries out of 16 Apia cluster countries are parties to the World Heritage Convention. Five sites (Kuk Agricultural Site in PNG, East Rennell in Solomon Islands, Bikini Atoll Nuclear Tests Site in Marshall Islands, Chief Roi Mata's Domain in Vanuatu) from the Pacific islands countries and 5 sites in the Pacific territories (Lagoon of New Caledonia Reef Diversity and Associated Ecosystems in New Caledonia, Rapa Nui National Park in Chile, Henderson Islands in the Pitcairn Island, Volcanoes National Park and Papahānaumokuākea in Hawaii) are inscribed on the World Heritage List.

iii) **Monitoring and evaluation**

The Asia-Pacific region is rapidly evolving. Monitoring and evaluation are therefore important to measure progress of implementation of a strategy and action plan against agreed results so that the strategy and action plan will be adjusted as necessary.