
**Towards Efficient Roles of NGOs
for Safeguarding ICH
in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Chapter 2

Effective Roles of NGOs between Government and ICH Communities

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NGOs and Governments: Partners for Social Change

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Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) play a vital role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH). There can be NGOs with international reach that consistently work with governments and other international organizations, and there are also smaller NGOs that work on a regional, national, or even local level, strengthening ICH values in their communities. All of them are equally important as they create a global network of interconnected organizations and people working towards the same objectives, in this case, promoting and safeguarding all forms of intangible cultural heritage.

These partnerships can take different structures, sizes, and levels of commitment or responsibility from each part. I'm going to share my experiences in both perspectives: at the national level with Guamanique, a community-based cultural NGO in Puerto Rico, and at an international level with the International Organization of Folk Art, which is an NGO in consultative relations with UNESCO.

I. Local Partnership, Regional Impact, International Reach

Guamanique is a small cultural organization in Puerto Rico with twenty years of operations in the northern region of the main island. Its mission is to promote and safeguard Puerto Rican folkloric dances, traditional music, and theatre. Its work is primarily focused on the youth, and mainly impacts disadvantaged or marginalized communities, low-income families, and students at risk of abandoning school. Guamanique accomplishes its objectives through three programmatic areas, all of which, in order to be successful, involve partnerships with other NGOs and several local governments and governmental agencies. These areas are: education and community outreach, artistic production, and internationalization and export of Puerto Rican ICH.

A. Education and Community Outreach

Preserving Puerto Rican ICH and folk culture has been a top priority for Guamanique since its foundation. Also, it has been proven that integrating arts and culture in education can have a positive impact on the student's progress. That's why over the past twenty years Guamanique has established many arts education programmes throughout its region, consisting of free classes and workshops in schools, communities, and other public spaces. Though these activities, Guamanique shares cultural values, promotes social change, and helps raise awareness in the youth of the importance of learning about Puerto Rican ICH and taking actions to safeguard it. Local governments in several cities and municipalities have been involved in this process, providing access to theatres, classrooms, public spaces, and other areas free of charge so that Guamanique can offer its services. Governments also assist with promoting the classes and disseminating information about the cultural services and activities. This benefits both the NGO and the local governments. For Guamanique, it represents a way of fulfilling their mission with fewer expenses and reaching a large number of youth and communities. For the local governments, this partnership represents an opportunity to offer new specialized services to the public, at no additional costs for the government and in a subject area they lack expertise or the resources.

For many years, Guamanique has offered classes and workshops in different cities. Sometimes these partnerships last many years, like the case of the City

of Ciales, where Guamanique has offered services for more than ten years. In other cities, projects last for less time because of political changes or a lack of commitment from the local governments.

School of Traditional and Performing Arts

The relationship with Ciales has grown over the years, overcoming political changes. In 2014, Guamanique and Ciales entered into a historic partnership, both for the NGO and the local government as well as for the communities and the youth of the region. As part of the agreement, the city will transfer to Guamanique the use of an abandoned school, which Guamanique will transform into a school of traditional and performing arts. The partnership was established initially for five years and will allow the NGO to freely develop artistic and educational programmes in different areas of the arts and ICH. With this partnership, the city and the region will have its first school of arts and culture without government spending, and Guamanique will have a headquarters to offer and expand its cultural and arts education programs. It will also make it possible to arrange for workshops, conferences and other activities by invited guests from other international NGOs like IOV and others with similar interested and fields of work.

B. Artistic Production

Producing high quality performances and events serve many benefits. The youth that participate in Guamanique's educational programs, has the opportunity to engage in creative work, collectively producing theatre, folk dance performances, and other cultural events and sharing with the audiences their accomplishments and passion for ICH. As part of their artistic production work, Guamanique has performed in all seventy-eight municipalities of Puerto Rico.

These projects are possible in part thanks to several partnerships with local governments and other governmental agencies. In Puerto Rico, all local governments arrange celebrations, fairs, and festivals for their citizens. One important contribution from the central government, in partnership with several ICH NGOs in Puerto Rico, was the creation of a law that require all local governments to use at least 25 per cent of their funds for local celebrations and events to pay for folk and traditional performances and other ICH-related artistic expressions. This is a ground-breaking achievement since it serves several purposes.

It allows NGOs like Guamanique to present their work and earn revenue to help finance their operations, and it also guarantee that the public will have access to ICH-related artistic expressions, which are threatened by modern expressions.

Cultural Tourism

As a way to share some of Puerto Rico's musical and cultural richness with visitors and tourists, the Puerto Rico Tourism Company (Tourism Ministry) created a festival in which several NGOs showcased different aspects of ICH, like folk dance, music, traditional food, among others, targeted to tourists and visitors. These activities were arranged in piers, airports, and other touristic sites. Also, workshops and cultural educational sessions were arranged for large groups of visitors. Sometimes the activities and performances presented under this programme were the only contact that tourists had with Puerto Rican culture, and at the same time, it was sometimes the only opportunity cultural NGOs had to showcase their work. Thus, this initiative served a dual purpose, benefiting both the participating NGOs' and the government's tourism efforts.

Unfortunately, after more than twenty-eight years of continuous, year-round performances, this programme is no longer active, as the current central government administration has other priorities. Nevertheless, it is included in this discussion since, while it lasted, it was an excellent example of government and NGO cultural collaboration between many participant parties.

Teatro Borinquen (Borinquen Theatre)

Another important partnership Guamanique has accomplished with a local government is with the City of Manatí, which is located next to Ciales. The local government of Manatí is rebuilding an abandoned theatre in the city centre. Upon completion, Guamanique will be responsible for the management and cultural planning. This partnership allows Guamanique to expand their services to new audiences and communities and will serve as a permanent stage where the students can showcase their creative work in different ICH areas.

Furthermore, thanks to these partnerships, Guamanique will be able to integrate cultural activity and planning at a regional level, integrating communities from different cities. Moreover, it sets an example of cultural cooperation since both cities' governments are from different political parties.

C. Internationalization and Export of Puerto Rican ICH

As part of its efforts to safeguard and promote Puerto Rican ICH, Guamanique arranges and participates in international tours and events. To this date, Guamanique has participated in folkloric festivals and ICH themed events in twenty-five countries. These exchanges serve multiple purposes. For the youth and students participating in the educational programs, they are opportunities to visit other countries and learn about those countries' ICH while also representing the students' own country and culture. For the audiences and festivals, they are opportunities to know Puerto Rico and learn about Puerto Rican ICH, thus becoming a learning and teaching experience. Also, they serve to promote Puerto Rico and our ICH at an international level.

Puerto Rico's unique political situation makes it very difficult to accomplish substantial achievements in terms of international ICH recognition and protection. Since Puerto Rico is a commonwealth of the United States of America, it is not a sovereign nation and cannot become a member of UNESCO. And while there is the possibility of joining as an Associate Member, this needs to be requested or proposed by the USA. In fact, there are many elements of Puerto Rican ICH that represent the identity and heritage of the people of the islands of Puerto Rico, that have been passed on from generation to generation and that should be included in world list of ICH. But without direct representation in the process, this is virtually impossible, thus, leaving Puerto Rico's ICH unprotected, neglected, understudied, and restricted from interaction with other forms of ICH in the region.

Nevertheless, Guamanique has achieved significant results exporting Puerto Rican ICH by independently establishing partnerships with other NGOs in different countries and some world organizations, like IOV.

A Collaboration Program with the Department of Education of Puerto Rico

(Ministry of Education) allows Guamanique to train school students on ICH and folk dancing and invite them to participate at international events. The Department of Education provides the funds for the air transportation and Guamanique integrates the ICH into the school curriculum. The ultimate benefit is for the students, who will have a life-changing experience that it was previously not accessible for them. These events, which are organized by international NGOs like IOV or CIOFF, among others, also involve significant collaboration between other

NGOs and governments in order to arrange many aspects, like housing, meals, transportation, audiences, performances and others.

Lastly, the internationalization aspect of Guamanique's work is also achieved by participating and offering lectures and presentations in academic events or conferences involving ICH themes. Individual members of Guamanique have participated in UNESCO or SEGIB conferences to promote ICH discussions that can be implemented in Puerto Rico or to share local experiences and best practices with other cultural NGOs.

II. Global partnerships in support of UNESCO's work

At a global level, an excellent case of cultural cooperation to promote ICH is the International Organization of Folk Art, IOV, which is an NGO founded more than 30 years ago, with members in 122 countries.

IOV is in Formal Consultative Relations with UNESCO and has continuously worked to strengthen its partnerships within the United Nations system. As a result, in 2010 UNESCO accredits IOV as a Consultant to the Intergovernmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and identifies 40 IOV experts in the ICH. In 2012, IOV enters Special Consultative Relations with The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Its mission is to preserve, protect, and promote all forms of folk art and folk culture as elements of the ICH through its network of individual and institutional members. Thus, its work focuses primarily around the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

IOV Conferences

IOV sponsors international and national conferences, workshops, seminars, and other meetings on topics relating folk art, folk culture, and traditional cultural heritage. These meetings may serve the purpose of educating the public about the meaning and importance of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, and IOV's efforts to do so. Others are designed for academicians and professional folklorists, where the focus will likely be on research and publication.

At least in the past five years IOV has organized over fifteen conferences on

ICH themes. The most recent include:

- China (ICH in general, preparing to safeguard ICH during natural disasters)
- USA (ICH general)
- Sweden (sustainability of ICH)
- Crimea (ICH of Black Sea peoples)
- Ukraine (ICH scientific research)
- Malaysia (traditional food, journey of Rice)
- Philippines (oral legends)
- Azerbaijan (ICH of traditional cooking)

All conferences have in common the goal of contributing to the implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

IOV Festivals and Exhibitions

IOV sponsors international and national folk dance, music and song festivals, culinary festivals, and other festive events. IOV also supports exhibitions of costumes, masks, puppetry, and all types of handicrafts. These events serve to connect ICH artists and researchers with wide audiences around the world who value and are interested in ICH forms of expression.

To successfully hold these festivals and exhibitions, it is necessary to develop extensive partnerships with local governments in host countries, governments of the participants' countries and other local and international NGOs involved. These events also require extensive collaboration and partnerships within IOV as a world NGO. Individual members and national section leaders need to work together with all involved parties and with IOV world leadership in order to meet requirements on deadlines, themes, governmental regulations, sponsorship, among many other factors.

Individual members and regional achievements

Many IOV members are also involved in other ICH NGOs or ICH work, like Dr. Mila Santova from Bulgaria, who was instrumental in the frameworks of the Convention. She implemented it in Bulgaria and then it was adopted by UNESCO. Moreover, IOV is in the process of preparing to print a peer-reviewed, scholarly

journal, the IOV Journal of Intangible Cultural Heritage, and Dr. Santova will serve as Editor.

Another example of IOV collaborating with governments to protect ICH is in China. In 2008 IOV China gave consultation to the Research Institute of Nanjing Yunjin Brocade, which contributed to the brocade entering the ICH list in 2009. Similar assistance was provided to other projects that also entered the list, like the Chinese acupuncture and abacus calculation, and they are now working with other NGOs and governments in China to support the inclusion of Chinese food into the list. Besides consultation regarding the ICH list, IOV China has also established partnerships with local and regional governments to set up a Folk Art Protection Center in Luodai, Chengdu, holding an expo in Guizhou Province and Tianjin, and created the international art festival in Shanghai Baoshan.

In an increasingly complex world, international cultural cooperation is crucial for achieving relationships based on equality and respect. It can also be of vital importance to safeguard cultural diversity, promote sustainable cultural development, and advance soft diplomacy. That is why it is important to develop and maintain working partnerships between NGOs and governments, both locally and internationally to promote projects of ICH safeguarding.

Civil Society Organizations and the Promotion of ICH in the Pacific*

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As my colleague from East Africa did, I'm going to talk about context because I think the context of the Pacific is unfamiliar to many of you. Then I'm going to talk about the role of government in promoting ICH and culture in general, and look at the relationship between government, communities, and CSOs. After that, I'm going to give some examples of civil society organizations in the Pacific, both at the regional level and at the national level. I will finish the presentation with a discussion of some of the issues.

The Pacific is a very large ocean with ancient navigation traditions. Pacific islanders settled the region through navigation. They had incredible technological knowledge about navigation, as they travelled across this enormous ocean on canoes, using the natural elements, such as the stars, the waves, currents, and so forth. Many people who talk about the Pacific, particularly donors and outsiders, tend to focus on the vulnerability and the smallness of the land. However, there has

* This is a transcript of the oral presentation given by Elise Huffer at the Conference, based on her presentation with PPT file, and is not from a submitted written paper.