

Empowerment of NGOs for Sustainable Transmission of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Korea

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I. General Background of Participation of NGOs in Safeguarding ICH in Korea

The 2003 Convention UNESCO encouraged the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the efforts to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH hereafter) on the national and international levels. More specifically, the text of Convention indicates that NGOs along with other stakeholders should assist government entities in identifying and defining the ICH at the national level.¹ In addition, to the extent NGOs are accredited by UNESCO (accredited NGO hereafter), their support and counsel in the implementation of the Convention internationally and assistance in the gathering of information about ICH was envisioned by the

¹ Text of the Convention, Article 11-Each State Party shall: (b) among the safeguarding measures referred to in Article 2, paragraph 3, identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations. The role of NGOs specified in Article 11 (b) is confirmed in Operational Directives, Chapter III 2, 90.

Committee.² Under this guiding principle, the Korean government is expected to facilitate the participation of NGOs in the process of identifying and defining the ICH. On the other hand, NGOs should also be active in assisting the government and ‘communities, groups, and individuals’³ in the implementation of the safeguarding plans for the ICH. In this paper I will examine the current situation of NGOs in Korea, including two accredited NGOs and present the tentative guidelines regarding the empowering principles of NGOs.

I have reviewed two accredited NGOs and two other NGOs, Goseong Ogwangdae (Goseong Mask Dance, GMD) and Muhyeongjigi (ICH Keepers), whose activities are focused on the safeguarding and transmission of ICH in Korea. There are quite a number of NGOs whose work focuses on ICH in Korea, but only three are accredited and recognized internationally for their activities under the Convention: Inter-city Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ICCN), Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation (CHF), and World Martial Arts Union (WoMau).

II. NGOs’ Major Activities Related to ICH in Korea

Inter-city Intangible Cultural Cooperation Network (ICCN) ICCN was created in 2008. It has been committed to action-oriented policies concerning the safeguarding of ICH. The core membership of the ICCN is comprised of local governments, including Algeria, Cambodia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Egypt, France, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Jamaica, New Zealand, the Philippines, South Africa, Spain, and the United States of America. Its members agree to promote the ICCN as a platform for the worldwide collaboration among mayors

2 Operational Directives, Chapter III.2, 96: Accredited non-governmental organizations who, according to Article 9.1 of the Convention, shall have advisory functions to the Committee, may be invited by the Committee to provide it, inter alia, with reports of evaluation as a reference for the Committee to examine: (a) nomination files for the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding; (b) the programmes, projects and activities mentioned in Article 18 of the Convention; (c) requests for international assistance; (d) the effects of safeguarding plans for elements inscribed on the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. OD 123b: In order to assist the Committee in raising awareness of intangible cultural heritage, the UNESCO Secretariat shall: facilitate the exchange of information among communities and groups, civil society, non-governmental organizations, centres of expertise, research institutes and other entities with expertise or interest in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

3 Following the term used in the Convention, ‘communities, groups, and individuals’ refers to the stakeholders that play central role in the practice, transmission or revitalization of ICH.

and local government units for ICH safeguarding, as envisioned in the Gangneung Declaration of 2004. The ICCN stipulates the following activities among and within its members: regular meetings, gathering and sharing information concerning safeguarding activities, and training local government administrators, professionals, and custodians to build safeguarding capacity.

Korea Cultural Heritage Foundation (CHF) CHF was created in 1980 in order to assist the government in the preservation and promotion of cultural properties. The CHF has executed various projects and programmes for safeguarding ICH such as regular monitoring projects, annual performing festivals of intangible cultural property holders (Living Human Treasure), and youth education. Yet, the organization’s main focus is on those ICH nominated by the government. On the other hand, the CHF is also extensively engaged in tourism. CHF is well known in Korea and abroad.

Goseong Mask Dance Preservation Organization (GMDPO, Goseong Ogwangdae Bojonhoe) Arising out of their collective awareness of the significance of transmission of the mask dance, the community members of Goseong formed a group in 1956. The village community holds the mask dance ritual every 15 January, the full moon day. The mask dance is composed of five acts, each of which is full of lively folk stories, music, and dances. The popularity and good reputation as a performing art has led to be nominated as Important Intangible Cultural Property in 1964. The organization is one of the oldest NGOs in Korea.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Keepers’ Organization (ICHKO, Muhyeongjigi) Currently there are sixty-four ICH Keepers, Muhyeongjigi, in Korea. In 2013, the Cultural Heritage Administration took an initiative to form a new civilian group for advocating and protecting ICH. They are a group of volunteers under the rubric of the spirit of UNESCO’s Convention. The overall objectives of ICHKO are to identify and record ICH elements in rural areas and to find effective ways to safeguard them. The members organize workshops and regional meetings on a regular basis.

Name	ICCN	CHF	GMD	ICHKO
Creation year (accredited)	2008 (2012)	1980 (2010)	1956	2013
Main ICH element	Folk Rituals & Festivals	All Nominated Cultural Properties	Mask Dance (Ogwangdae)	All ICH
Major activity related to ICH	Action-Oriented Policy for Safeguarding	Promotion, Education, and Tourism	Protection and Transmission	Identifying and Recording ICH
Core Membership	Mayors, Administrators, and Citizens	Experts, Citizens, and CP Holders	Mask Dance Performers, Villagers, and Experts	Volunteers for ICH Safeguarding
Reference	www.iccn.or.kr	www.chf.or.kr	www.ogwangdae.or.kr	www.ichpedia.org
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International Initiatives in Safeguarding ICH • High Dependency on Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active • Well-Networked • High Dependency on Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear Identity • Folk Culture Enhancement • Networks Needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newly Formed • Collective Work Needed • Networks Can Be Strengthened

Many NGOs in Korea are focused on working with ICH that is on the verge of disappearing. Some organizations like the GMD have been formed by the ICH community members and have played vital roles in the transmission of ICH. Some organizations, like the CHF and ICCN, have been created to assist governments by running various projects and programmes for the protection and promotion of ICH. Others, like ICHKO, have been established to help the community, groups, and individual holders of ICH and will expand their roles in recording and monitoring ICH located near the areas where each member of ICHKO lives. Upon reviewing these NGOs are all suitable for effectiveness of the safeguarding ICH of the ICH under the directives of the Convention. Yet, most NGOs are vulnerable in viability in its organizational apparatus. Thus it is important to consider the empowerment imperatives in the following sections.

III. Empowerment of NGO

A. The Concept of Empowerment

The term empowerment has been widely used in many disciplines and arenas including gender, development, education, environment, and community studies. Recently the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) also used the term with their slogan—“Empowered lives. Resilient nations.” Many scholars noted that there is no clear definition of the concept. Empowerment is so loosely defined that it can be a construct in a specific field. I adopt the general notion of empowerment in order to clarify the operational concept of the empowering NGOs in the arena of ICH. Empowerment, in its most general sense, “refers to the ability of people to gain understanding and control over personal, social, economic, and political forces in order to take action to improve their life situations (Israel et al., 1994, recited in Kasmel 2011). It implies first that empowerment is multi-dimensional in that it occurs within the aspects of the social, economic, political, and legal. Also, it ensues at various levels, such as individual, group, and community. Second, it is a process by which individuals and communities are enabled to take power and act effectively in gaining greater control, efficacy, and social justice in changing their lives and their environment (Czuba, 1999, Israel et al., 1994 recited in Kasmel 2011).

In sum, I would define empowerment as a multi-dimensional social process that helps NGOs gain control over their activities.

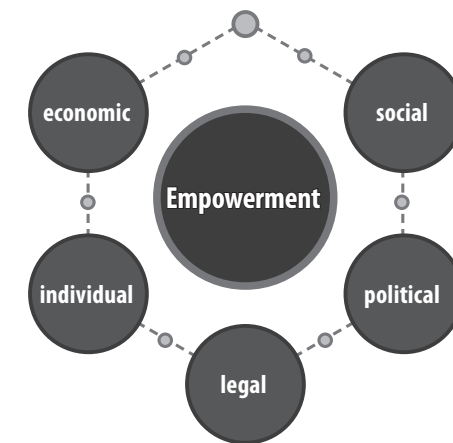


Figure 1 Multi-dimensional Aspects of Empowerment

B. How does Empowerment of NGOs Work

Identity Enhancement

Identity Enhancement The identity of NGOs should be enhanced through an attitudinal shaping process applied both personally and collectively. The identity building is significant with respect to strengthening internal cooperation. Internalization of the new values is seen as the key to new behaviour. Empowerment in this phase is characterized as a psychological process. There may be no change in activity or organizational structure, but each member is trained/educated to feel empowered (a state of mind) and play a more confident role in their assistantship with various stakeholders, such as governments and ICH communities.

Active Commitment

Active Commitment NGOs are expected to be actively involved in identifying and defining ICH. This kind of bottom-up approach is essential in making extensive inventories of ICH on the national level as the Convention suggests. Of safeguarding methods, creating inventories is a very important way for the intangible heritage community members to raise awareness about their ICH. According to UNESCO's indication, the process of inventorying ICH enhances the self-respect of heritage bearers and communities. It can also enrich human creativity. The Convention encourages the involvement of the government, NGOs, experts, and other stakeholders in creating inventories of ICH existing in their territory and regular updates (Article 12).

Making Networks

Making Networks The NGOs' web of network can raise their power in safeguarding important folk culture-based ICH that has been largely ignored by the government. Since the 1960s the Korean government has made efforts to protect and preserve cultural heritages at the national level.⁴ Both legal and administrative measures have been undertaken affecting the national treasures containing both tangible and intangible cultural heritages. The government's imperative to safeguard such national treasures is acknowledged being exemplary and draws international

⁴ The Cultural Properties Protection Law was legislated in 1962.

attention. Given this, UNESCO's initiatives in the area of ICH are not new to us Koreans. Because the Korean government already had an existing protection policy and legal enactment for protection, it was taken aback by UNESCO's initiatives. Korea had developed its own system of protection and preservation of cultural heritages but is now facing a shift within the existing system. There are some conflicts and differences between the existing system in Korea and UNESCO's new system regarding the safeguarding measures. It is necessary to carefully take into account the differences between the two systems. NGOs focused on non-designated ICH in rural areas are expected to be actively involved in research, discussions, and debates with various stakeholders of ICH and their involvement and assistance would greatly contribute to filling in any gaps between the two systems.

Systemic Change

Systemic Change These steps will help NGOs change members' attitude, capacity building by active involvement in documentation, and inventory making, and multi-faceted networks from the bottom (communities, groups and individuals of ICH) to the top organizations (the central and local governments and UNESCO).



Figure 2 A Social Process of Empowerment

IV. Tentative NGO Empowerment Principles

The tentative NGO empowerment principles are a set of principles that provide a guideline for how to empower NGOs with respect to the safeguarding activities of ICH. After reviewing the current situations of the NGOs and analysing their main activities, several principles are suggested herein. The principles emphasize the safeguarding activities for promoting bottom-up strategies and local initiatives. The principles seek to point the way towards best practice by building upon the multi-dimensional aspects of NGOs and their roles in the sustainable transmission of ICH.

Principle 1 : Establish high-level esteem

Principle 2 : Reconsider local ICH (e.g. folk culture) as national and global assets

Principle 3 : Respect local knowledge and cultivate relationships with ICH holders, groups, and communities

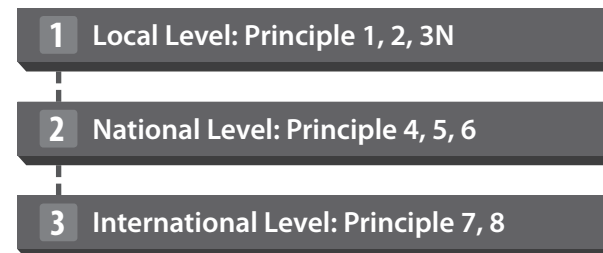
Principle 4 : Promote education and training of members to be ICH experts

Principle 5 : Implement a broader concept of ICH

Principle 6 : Promote the involvement of other stakeholders in safeguarding ICH

Principle 7 : Enhance international activities by networking with NGOs in other countries

Principle 8 : Promote involvement of the NGOs in various UNESCO's activities, such as NGO forum, advisory group, etc.



As stated above, under Korea's existing protection policy of ICH, the central government has executed a top-down policy in the implementation of legal measures, the administration of preservation and transmission of cultural heritages, and the nomination of cultural properties. On the contrary, the 2003 Convention makes it clear that State Parties are advised to ensure the widest possible participation of communities, groups, and individuals whose heritage is to be identified and defined. The community and civil society such as practitioners of ICH, facilitators of enactment of ICH, NGOs with cooperation with experts and the State Party are encouraged to participate in documentation and inventory-making processes, and other safeguarding measures as well.

V. Concluding Remarks

The lists of State Parties, the lists of inscription to the Convention, and the Representative lists have all been continually increasing since the Convention was proclaimed. At present, the Committee (UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of ICH) incorporated ninety elements in 2008 (items formerly proclaimed Masterpieces) and inscribed seventy-six elements in 2009. In 2010, forty-seven elements were added to the list. The first cycle of implementation (June 2009 to November 2009) shows that each country is eager to inscribe their ICH to the Representative List but is less attentive to list ICH in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The imbalance between the two list indicates that overheated competition may occur among the State Parties concerned. It is crucial to spread the spirit of the Convention, promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity, rather than simply focusing on increasing the number of inscriptions on lists. Empowered NGOs together with communities, groups, and individuals of ICH, will restore the principal spirit of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.