

**Analyzing Impact of International Networking for Safeguarding
Intangible Cultural Heritages in Bangladesh**

Cultural Partnership Initiative

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Abstract

Bangladesh has utilized limited opportunities of international networking for safeguarding its distinctive and diverse Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ICH) elements as the networking activities are still limited to only in policy framing and in discussions, files and trainings of the government officials. No effective measure has been taken so far by the government to safeguard the transmission process of the disappearing ICH elements, though United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (hereafter UNESCO) and some other development partners voluntarily have been providing both financial and technical supports to the government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh to formulate a national inventory of ICH and to take effective measures for safeguarding ICH elements since the beginning of the 21st century. But, so far the plans, policies and guidelines could not be translated into reality. Meanwhile, many practitioners have been giving up practicing traditional art forms, music, customs, knowledges and skills, which they inherited from the ancestors, because of poverty, lack of safeguarding measures, unplanned urbanization, disappearance of spaces, impact of foreign culture, and shirking of their jobs for ever growing popularity of satellite TV channels, gadgets and the Internet. This study, developed through primary and secondary data analyses, explores the causes those stand in the way to achieve the expected goals for safeguarding ICH in Bangladesh and also provides some possible solutions to the problems with the aim of capitalization of the maximum benefits from international networking.

Key words: International Networking, UNESCO, Convention, Bangladesh, Bureaucracy, Politicization, Integrity, Community, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Disappearance

1. Introduction

International networking that means a number of networking events across the world and as the safeguarding of the ICH is concerned, international networking, which has the goal to help the countries know the events taking place around the world under the auspices of UNESCO, encouraged Bangladesh taking some measures for safeguarding its distinctive and diverse ICH elements since the beginning of the 21st century. Soon after the country's ratification of UNESCO'S Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 2003 in July 2009, UNESCO and some development partners voluntarily started providing Bangladesh both technical and financial supports for taking programs to safeguard ICH, i.e., 'traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts' (UNESCO, 2017).

But, as happened in case of the previous promotional projects initiated by the government with public money, projects taken with foreign funds through UNESCO had not been executed as per the plans or following the guidelines. Most of these foreign funds, meant for safeguarding ICH, have been spent for organizing workshops of the government officials, seminars, festivals, paying honorarium to the consultants and participants, publishing workshop-brochures, and service charge of UNESCO Dhaka Office for operating the funds.

But, so far, the country has not been able to make a national inventory featuring comprehensive picture of the country's ICH, which have been practiced and nurtured by over 45 ethnic communities living in different regions of the country. So, the country does not have any detailed study on the current status of its ICH—how many elements exist or how many elements are on verge of disappearance. And no comprehensive program has been taken so far with long-term vision for safeguarding the vulnerable ICH elements like music genres, instruments, performing arts, craft items, folk arts and others following the guidelines of the UNESCO Convention 2003 and its Operational Directives. Bangladesh could not even cash the international assistance for safeguarding ICH as offered in the Convention 2003 and in its Operational Directives. The country could not even comply with its obligations as a signatory of UNESCO's 2003 Convention like inventorying, updating the inventory on regular basis, presenting the Country Report on ICH safeguarding to UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee.

Little achievements that Bangladesh has till 2016 is inscription of three ICH elements named Mangal Shobhajatra on Pahela Baishakh, Traditional Art of Jamdani Weaving and Baul song on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Other than this, the networking with UNESCO and other development partners has no potential impact on the lives of the practitioners and communities resulting in serious threats on transmission processes of the very rich and diverse fine and performing art forms, music, customs, knowledges and skills in the era of globalization. Many community members/practitioners are giving up practicing the heritages that they learned from their ancestors just because of poverty caused by shrinking of job opportunities due to lack of safeguarding measures, unplanned urbanization, disappearance of spaces, impact of foreign culture, and ever growing popularity of satellite TV channels, gadgets and the Internet. They do not want that their successors follow their footsteps rather they want them to pay more attention in education and in other jobs those might give them financial solvency and social dignity. As a result, many ICH elements, which have been practiced and nurtured by the folks for hundreds of years, are on verge of disappearance. And the notion of ICH is not yet quite popular in any discourse on culture currently prevalent in Bangladesh, said Professor Syed Jamil Ahmed, a theatre department teacher at University of Dhaka, in response to structured questionnaire.

2. Background of ICH in Bangladesh

Bangladesh, an economically developing country located in South Asia, holds within its territories material evidence of cultural heritages of over 2000 years. It is the home of more than 45 ethnic groups who practice their distinctive cultural heritages living in diverse areas, including plain land, low-lying areas, forests and hill-tracts. The country, with area of 147,570 km² situated in the largest delta of the world, has unique characters of cultural expressions developed by its nature, history, traditions, customs and long arduous struggles for national identity and survival.

The blending of various beliefs, rituals, traditions and cultures practiced by the people for ages has made those distinctive from other countries in the region. A plethora of peoples and cultures entered this land for imperialistic, proselytizing and trading purposes which combined to create a distinction that is marked by syncretism and inclusiveness (Selim, 2013).

Ninety eight per cent of an estimated 164,713,767 people living in Bangladesh are Bengalis (World Population Review, 2016) and they speak in Bangla. The remaining people belong to over 45 ethnic minority groups and have their own languages and cultural expressions. Majority people in Bangladesh are Muslims followed by Hindus, Christians, Buddhists and others.

The country's per capita income stands at \$1,466 in 2016 (BBS, 2016) and its economy is mainly based on agriculture, garment manufacturing and remittance sent by workers from abroad. Most of the people still live in the rural areas and express their beliefs, social and political views, geographical experiences, expectations and dreams through traditional art, music and performing art forms, which represent their life and way of living. As a result, ICH in Bangladesh mostly are geared towards the masses, created and supported by them and not by the ruling class, temples or churches like many other countries in the region, said Afsar Ahmed, a drama and dramatics department professor at Jahangirnagar University, in response to semi-structured questionnaire.

The ways of life, costumes, ornaments, tools and weapons, farming, housing, rituals, customs, and arts and crafts of small ethnic communities, being sharply distinct from those of the Bengalis, exemplify the cultural diversity of Bangladesh, said historian and museum expert Firoz Mahmed in response to structured questionnaire.

ICH elements in Bangladesh can loosely be categorized into eight groups, including, crafts, music, performing arts, story-telling, festivals, traditional sports, traditional medicine and shamanism. Traditional festivals, music genres, crafts and performing art forms are celebrated by most of the people in the country for their unique expressions of glorifying humanism.

The earliest evidence of performance in the region is dated back to 4th century BC, in "Jataka Katha", a collection of Buddhist tales about moral values and nice behavior, which gives elaborate narration of performing art forms used to be practiced by the masses in Bengal though the Buddhist tales ordered the followers not to practice those, said Afsar Ahmed. A Sanskrit treatise on theatre ascribed to Aryan theoretician Bharat Muni titled "Natyashastra" also documented the distinctive performing art forms of Bengal as "Odro-Magodhi" form, which is not "restricted to dialogue in prose but is rather comprehensive and wide-ranging".

There is a divergence of opinion of period of writing *Natyashastra*. Some experts say it was written in 2nd century BC, while some say 1st century (AD). However, according to Afsar Ahmed, aristocrat Bharat, who belonged to upper caste North Indian Hindu community, did not give an elaborate description of *Odro-Magodhi* form performed by the marginalized low-caste people of this region.

The art discoveries from excavation of different historic sites, including, Pundranagar (Mahastan 3rd century BC), Paharpur (8th century AD) and Mainamati (6th century AD) reveal the rich tradition of fine arts in terms of excellent varieties of designs and patterns practiced by the people in the region for hundreds of years. Folk art in Bangladesh can be categorized into six groups, including, painting, embroidery, weaving, modeling, engraving and inlaying.

Traditional music in Bangladesh has also history of hundreds of years and has great verities depending on environment and dialects. These songs are also about social inequality and poverty, about the material world and the supernatural (Chakrobarty, 2003).

And apart from the mediaeval period-- which is regarded as the golden era of arts and culture of the region by many critics—literature, music, traditional performing and fine arts forms practiced by the folks have always faced the onslaught of religious bigotry and cultural diffusion.

The marginalized folks, who had always been oppressed by the ruling classes belonging to upper caste Hindus and Buddhist, in deed, enjoyed a bit artistic freedom during the mediaeval period Bengal from the beginning of the 13th century through the Muslim invasion that made the ruling upper caste marginalized. This socio-cultural change in the mediaeval period in Bengal had massive impact on the folks, who started giving more humane expressions in music and performing and fine arts. The mindset of the masses radically changed as their strong faith in gods and goddesses diminished for not getting help in hardships (Ahmed, 1995). Meanwhile, Sufism was introduced and simultaneously Vaishnavism movement got popularity among the masses.

But, the dimension changed when European traders began to arrive in Bengal from 16th century and introduced Christianity and western customs as well as new goods and services, especially during the British colonial rule of over 200 years that continued till the end of World War II.

In reaction to the British cultural diffusion, which was carried out to make the 'natives civilized,' some scholars and researchers looked back to the age old traditions with a nationalistic notion in the last part of the 19th century and started documenting and promoting those. This trend has been termed by many critics as the beginning of the Bengali renaissance or simply Bengal renaissance. The Nineteenth-century Bengal was a unique blend of religious and social reformers, scholars, literary giants, journalists, patriotic orators and scientists, all merging to form the image of a renaissance, and marked the transition from the 'medieval' to the 'modern' (Sarkar, 1990).

The trend of collecting folklores by the educated people accelerated in the beginning of the 20th century by scholars like Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore, Muhammad Monsuruddin, Abdul Karim Sahitya Bisharod, Poet Jasimuddin, Mohammad Saidur, Dinesh Chandra Sen and Chandra Kumar Dey.

Tagore published a series of traditional Baul songs in the monthly magazine Prabashi in the beginning of 20th century. Jasimuddin collected more than 10,000 folk songs, some of which were included in his song compilations like "Jari Gaan" and "Murshidi Gaan". Compilations of palas (ballads) of Bangladesh titled "Purbabanga Geetika" were published by the Calcutta University in six volumes between 1920 and 1930.

All the volumes of "Purbabanga Geetika" were compiled and edited by Dinesh Chandra Sen and collected by Chandra Kumar Dey. Another major collection of folk songs is "Haramoni", in 13 volumes, which document around 5000 songs collected by Muhammed Mansooruddin from different parts of Bangladesh. University of Dhaka and Bangla Academy mostly published these volumes in 1960s when the Bengali nation got united to fight for rights and to uphold cultural traditions during the Pakistani rules, especially following the glorious language movement in 1950s. And the legacy still continues by the contemporary scholars like Dr. Ashraf Siddiqui, Dr. Mazharul Islam, Professor Abdul Hafiz, Professor Abu Taleb, Mustafa Zaman Abbasi, Bidit Lal Das, Wakil Ahmed, Selim Al Deen, Syed Jamail Ahmed, Afsar Ahmed, Professor Nisar Hossain, Professor Lala Rukh Selim, Dr Firoz Mahmud, Indramohan Rajbongshi, Dr Abul Ahsan Choudhury, Professor Anwarul Karim, and others. They basically documented many songs and performing and fine art forms and also conducted remarkable researches on traditional music and art forms independently and even in collaboration with

world famous scholars and organizations. But, ICH inventorying or impact of international networking for ICH safeguarding had not been their concern.

Many western researchers like Professor Alan Lomax, George Grierson, Mary Frances Dunham, Carol Salomon, Hans Harder, Masahiko Togawa, Khristina Nygren, Dr. Dorson, Professor Henry Glassie and others also conducted documentation and researches on Bangladeshi traditional music and folk art.

Two organisations, named, Bangla Academy and Asiatic Society, both of which were formed in 1955, have published many researches on language, traditional culture and to collect folklores, folktales, music, ballads, and others. But, none of these researches is exclusively on ICH.

Following the independence of the country in 1971, the People's Republic of Bangladesh in its Constitution, formulated in November, 1972, ensures protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions. The Article 23 of the Constitution of the Republic stipulates, "The State shall adopt measures to conserve the cultural traditions and heritage of the people, and so to foster and improve the national language, literature and the arts that all sections of the people are afforded the opportunity to contribute towards and to participate in the enrichment of the national culture."

Again the Article 24 says that the State "shall adopt measures for the protection against disfigurement, damage or removal of all monuments, objects or places of special artistic or historic importance or interest."

In the light of the Constitution, the government incepted state run organizations such as Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Folk Arts and Crafts Foundation and others to promote Bengali cultural heritages.

But, the successive governments after 1975 shifted its attention from patronizing cultural heritages and even the current government in power is also struggling to revive the projects as per the initial plans, said cultural affairs minister Asaduzzaman Noor in response to semi-structured questionnaire.

In the past 46 years since the independence, Bangladesh signed cultural agreement/contracts with 38 countries and ratified ICH Convention 2003 and UNESCO Convention 2005 on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of

Cultural Expressions in 2009, and also developed seven cultural centers in seven districts for promoting and protecting the cultural heritages of over 45 ethnic minority groups like Chakmas, Marmas, Manipuris, Garos, Hajangs, Santhals and others.

ICH in Bangladesh, however, is facing serious threat. Poverty is forcing the traditional artists to concentrate more on other professions for survival. Moreover, commercialization of the ICH elements by chain shops operated by NGOs, satellite television and film industry have adverse impact on traditional elements. To attract these buyers and viewers, traditional artists try to cater to the demand for cheap entertainment, which also is distorting both traditional music and performing art forms. The pattern of urban influence on folk music was intensified to outright destruction, as soon as the capitalist economic system had developed to the point that culture could be widely bought and sold (Karim, 2010).

3. Context and Methodology

In this study I have analyzed the effectiveness of international networking in case of safeguarding the vulnerable ICH elements in Bangladesh and also tried to explore the causes those stand in the way of getting maximum benefits of the international networking offered by UNESCO and other development partners. Many ICH elements, as said by the experts and practitioners, have disappeared and many others are on verge of extinction though documentation of the cultural heritages in Bangladesh began in the end of 19th century that accelerated after the independence of the country in 1971. In the past 46 years since the independence, many policies were formulated and many programs were taken with limited resources that the country could effort. But, none of these policies was translated into reality and no program could play effective role to meet the challenges. The country resumed initiating safeguarding measures with a fresh look being inspired by the international communities under auspicious of UNESCO since the beginning of the 21st century. Despite getting financial and technical help from the development partners, Bangladesh could not make even a national inventory and take effective safeguarding measures of ICH elements still remains as a far cry.

To get a comprehensive picture of the ICH related activities in Bangladesh, data were collected from relevant stakeholders in different phases following different methods. Following semi-structured method, in-depth interviews were conducted

with eight traditional singers and craft persons, all of whom are aged over 50 and have vast experiences in the respective fields of art while visiting areas where they live in or when they came to Dhaka to participate at programs. Intention of the questionnaire was to reveal whether they had any idea on ICH safeguarding programs, whether they got any benefit from such programs, whether their living depend on art, whether they were facing financial hardship and planning to switch to other profession, and whether they want their children follow their footsteps.

Six reputed researchers, who have several publications on traditional music, and fine and performing art forms, and also have experiences of working with famous research organizations at home and abroad, were interviewed by sending structured questionnaires consisting of eight questions with the intention to get their experiences working in ICH documentations and researches, problems they identified in case of ICH safeguarding and their possible solutions.

Official statements of responsible government agencies such as Bangladesh National Commission for UNESCO (hereafter BNCU), Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangla Academy and Department of Archaeology have been taken by sending structured questionnaire. The intention was to get detailed picture of the government initiated projects meant for safeguarding ICH in the past 46 years, impact of international networking in government projects, cross checking information collected from interviews of artistes and experts, knowing problems that the government officials were facing to execute the plans and programs. Bangladesh National Museum, however, did not reply to the questionnaire.

Cultural affairs minister was interviewed with semi structured questionnaire to cross check the information gathered from the primary data and also to get the government's position in this regard while he visited South Korea in September, 2017.

Secondary data, mostly from UNESCO's websites, and other journals and books have been analyzed to get detailed picture of foreign funds disbursed in Bangladesh for taking ICH safeguarding programs as UNESCO Dhaka Office did not reply to the structured questionnaire. Official statement of Korea-based UNESCO's category 2 center ICHCAP was taken following structured method.

Though Japan and Republic of Korea, and some organizations based on these countries have been helping Bangladesh by providing both technical and

financial supports for the past few years, structured questionnaires were sent to the embassies of Japan and Korea operated in Dhaka to know the project details, total funding, their evaluations of the projects and their views on the areas that need to be reviewed for better outcome. But, none of the embassies reply to the questionnaires.

Questionnaire was, however, not sent to embassy of Azerbaijan in Dhaka considering it would be too early seeking evaluation on an ongoing project donated by Azerbaijan government through UNESCO to safeguard ICH in Bangladesh.

UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, National Policy of Culture 2006, books and research works on ICH safeguarding in the light of UNESCO Convention, books written by the researchers on ICH elements in Bangladesh, books and research works on bureaucracy in Bangladesh have been analyzed. Moreover, news/features featuring ICH/communities/artistes published/broadcasted in local media and international media have been analyzed.

4. Analyzing impact of International Networking on ICH safeguarding in Bangladesh

Intangible Cultural Heritage as a new terminology was introduced in Bangladesh simultaneously with many other Member States of UNESCO in the beginning of the 21st century through the activities of UNESCO. But, these activities regarding ICH safeguarding was limited to in discussions and files of the government offices until a big buzz was created through the proclamation of Baul song, a popular music genre of Bangladesh, as 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO in November 2005. The news became a great occasion for celebrations for the people, media and the government officials, who 'interpreted' it as a recognition for the music genre as a 'World Heritage' like inscription of the largest mangrove forest of the world Sunderbans (1997) and two other historic sites-- Ruins of the Buddhist Vihara at Paharpur (1985) and the Historic Mosque City of Bagerhat (1985)-- on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Inscription of Baul music genre on the Masterpiece List and continuous support from the development partners through auspicious of UNESCO encouraged the government to formulate National Culture Policy in 2006. The policy was formulated in compliance with UNESCO's "Preliminary Draft of a Convention on the Protection of the Diversity of the Cultural Contents and Artistic Expression-2004"

WTO's TRIP, Copy Right Act, Rome Convention (1961) and Berne Convention as per national ideology and Articles 23 and 24 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, reads the introduction to the National Policy of Culture (2006). The policy stipulates guidelines for different ministries, divisions and agencies to work together for 'proper preservation and maintenance, nourishment and development of national culture and cultural traditions.

The government also supported research-based organization Asiatic Society of Bangladesh to conduct a cultural survey of cultural elements and historical sites, literature and different other characteristic aspects of Bangladesh Culture with descriptions and photographs, reads introduction to Cultural Survey of Bangladesh (2006). The survey titled "Cultural Survey of Bangladesh" was published in 2006 in 12 volumes, including archaeological heritage, architecture, state and culture, cultural history, indigenous communities, language and literature, folklore, art and crafts, Bangla proverbs, folk songs, living traditions and performing arts.

Meanwhile, Baul song was automatically inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity along with 89 other elements those UNESCO had been listing as Masterpieces for Humanity since 2001. Subsequently, Japanese-Funds-in-Trust donated US\$ 67,800 through UNESCO for "Action Plan for the Safeguarding of Baul Songs" as a pilot project of the Register of "Good Safeguarding Practice" in Bangladesh for safeguarding the popular mystic music genre as an exemplary initiative (UNESCO, 2017).

But, the government officials failed to realize the importance of the pilot project that had been offered to the government even before Bangladesh's ratification of the 2003 Convention. Without taking required preparations for initiating an ideal safeguarding project, which could increase the image of the country to the world, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, the implementing organization on behalf of the government, took it lightly like its other routine works and assigned some officials, who had no experience of working on ICH, especially on Baul songs, to negotiate

with Japanese counterparts and UNESCO. The project ended in scheduled time in 2010 with arrangements of some seminars, publication of lyrics of 500 baul songs and notation of 150 selected songs, and launching of a CD. But, the noble initiative of introducing Good Safeguarding Practice, which could be inscribed on UNESCO's Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, did not work and was terminated after three years. As a result, the challenges in the transmission of living heritage still remains as a threat as the community representatives like Kushtia-based baul Osman Fakir and Dhaka-based baul Pagla Bablu in response to semi-structured questionnaire complain that inscription of the music genre on UNESCO's ICH list means nothing to them rather they struggle to survive in the era of globalization.

Following the country's ratification of 2003 Convention on June 9, 2009, UNESCO, its regional and local offices, development partners like Japan and Korea and organizations based in those countries like Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), Japan Foundation, Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and International information and Networking center for intangible cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP) voluntarily came up with more documentation and capacity-building of the country for implementation of UNESCO Convention 2003 and its Operational Directives in Bangladesh. Mostly government officials attended in such workshops organized in Bangladesh and abroad.

Funded by Azerbaijan; UNESCO Dhaka, in association with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, initiated a three-year capacity-building program titled "Strengthening the Capacities of Bangladesh for Implementing the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage". The US\$ 200,000, project, with the implementation period between July 2016 and June 2018, sets objectives like enhancing the understanding of the national authorities of the obligations entailed by the ratification of the UNESCO Convention and its implementation, building up sustainable framework for safeguarding ICH and implementing the Convention, developing an inventory for ICH at the national level and sensitizing national authorities about the importance and significance of safeguarding ICH, and in particular ICH elements in need of urgent safeguarding (UNESCO, 2017).

ICHCAP with Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy initiated a US\$ 40,000 project titled “Bangladesh ICH Book Publication Project”, of which ICHCAP is supposed to donate US\$ 30,000 and remaining money is supposed to be funded by the academy. Bangla Natak dot Com from Kolkata, India is also collaborating with Bangladeshi cultural organization Shadahona on ICH safeguarding, said dancer-researcher Lubna Marium in response to structured questionnaire.

But, Bangladesh could not meet its basic obligations being a signatory country of 2003 Convention like inventorying, submission of a periodic report featuring detailed description featuring assessments of the implementation of the Convention in every six years to UNESCO’s Intergovernmental Committee. It was due in 2015. But, even after extending the deadline till 2016, Bangladesh failed to submit the periodic report meeting the revised deadline (UNESCO, 2017).

While ratifying the Convention, Bangladesh submitted and recognized the Cultural Survey of Bangladesh, a survey of the tangible and ICH of the country prepared by the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh in 2006, as ICH inventory of Bangladesh. But, it has not been updated as per the requirement for a signatory state of the Convention.

Recently, Ministry of Cultural Affairs on its website has uploaded a list of 57 ICH elements, mostly practiced by the majority Bengali ethnic community, in five categories, including, traditional art related ICH (14 items); indigenous performing art related ICH (23 elements); social practice, tradition and festival related ICH (16 elements); traditional sports related ICH (2 elements) and one cultural practice related ICH named bakharkahnai, a traditional bread usually taken in the breakfast by the people living in Old Dhaka. The ministry’s website states that the list, with the title “Aporimiyo Sanskritik Oitijhya” is not yet been completed (Ministry of Cultural Affairs, 2017).

Cultural Affairs Minister in response to semi-structures questionnaire said the government took initiative to make a “comprehensive inventory, even though it is a difficult task.”

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy officials said the academy already took an initiative for making a national inventory and already had formed an expert

committee with the representatives from relevant departments, prominent universities, Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Education, BNCU and UNESCO, Dhaka office.

Till November 2017, the country applied for inscription of six elements on the Representative List of which Mangal Shobhajatra on Pahela Baishakh and Traditional art of Jamdani weaving were inscribed respectably in 2016 and 2013. Applications for inscriptions traditional performing art from Jatra and Nakshi Kantha embroidering on the Representative List had been rejected while application for inscription of Traditional art of Shital Pati weaving of Sylhet will be evaluated in December 2017 and application for inscription of Rickshaws and rickshaw painting in Dhaka will be evaluated in 2018 (UNESCO, 2017).

Following the inscription of Jamdani weaving on the Representative List, BNCU, under Ministry of Education, jointly with Korean National Commission for UNESCO (KNCU) implemented a project titled “Safeguarding ‘Jamdani’ – the Intangible Cultural Heritage from Bangladesh and Promoting Creative Economy” in 2014 with the aim to discover economically viable and alternate uses of this superb creation with its special design and to ultimately promote and safeguard it as ICH, reads official statement of BNCU in response to the structured questionnaire.

Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy in July, 2017 launched a collection of 13000 tradition songs in CD version with its regular budget. Bangla Academy with its own fund has made its own inventory of 10 elements with detailed descriptions and has also initiated making database of its activities of the past 60 years regarding researches on folklores. Bangladesh Folk Arts and Crafts Foundation recently has revived its support program for helping crafts artiste. Already, 50 artists have been provided shelter at the karupalli situated in the Foundation and it is also providing training for the craft artists and introduced awards to inspire them.

Cultural heritage has partially been introduced in some textbooks at the school level, yet, Ministry of Education has not taken any intensive programs focusing on ICH, reads official statement of BNCU in response to structured questionnaire.

Still, the country has a long way to go to comply with the fundamental clauses of the 2003 Convention, its Operational Directives like making national inventory, taking effective ICH safeguarding programs, growing awareness on ICH

safeguarding and respect for ICH practitioners, creating income opportunities for communities/artistes without hindering the transmission process, ensuring their basic amenities and providing legal support for ensuring their rights on ICH, observe experts in response to structured questionnaires.

5. Challenges those stand in the way to reach goals

Like many other developing countries, Bangladesh is facing some common problems in case of safeguarding ICH elements, which are practiced by different communities living in the country for ages. But, it is also true that the country has failed to capitalize the assistances offered by UNESCO and other development partners due to lack of vision and plan, poor budget allocation for culture sector, bureaucratic tangles, lack of specialization and commitment of the bureaucrats, lack of transparency in case of initiating and executing programs, unavailability of technical equipment and resource persons and lack of coordination among the concerned ministries and agencies.

Bangladesh is like many other countries in the world where people still battle to survive with less than two dollars a day and thousands of people regularly go hungry. The country is also facing multifarious problems those jeopardize future of transmission process of ICH such as climate change, widening social disparity, the depletion of resources and loss of biodiversity, poor governance, over population, unregulated urbanization and more. Enduring hunger, poverty and negligence in a society where disparity between the rich and the poor is ever increasing; many artistes, craftsperson or people having special knowledges are trying to quit those for earning bread and butter through alternative ways and are not showing any interest that their children follow their footsteps, said several artistes and community leaders like the lead singer of a Gaibandha district-based pala gaan troupe (a traditional performing art form) Shova Mohanto and Narayanganj-based nakshi kantha stitching artisan Hosne Ara, who won the best prize of embroidered quilt making competition organized by Bangladesh Loko O KaruShilpa Foundation in 2010, in response to semi-structured questionnaire.

The families those have been practicing ICH for generations are paying more attention to the ‘future of their children’s financial solvency’ and finding it “unnecessary and perhaps even demeaning to practice the art honed by hundreds of years of specialization” (Selim, 2013). [] more than ever before, the threat of

losing languages, music, objects, practices, and spaces which have evolved through thousands of years due to rapidly changing socio-economic conditions that has played havoc with the living traditions (Selim, 2013).

But, the government has no plan to incorporate ICH in the country's development programs even though the high placed officials of the concerned government agencies admit that many customs, festivals and traditional performing and fine art forms are on the verge of disappearances as communities/artistes are giving up practicing those for poverty or as an effect of the change of lifestyles and environment for unfettered urbanization.

The ever increasing popularity of TV channels, and mobile and gadget users are creating adverse impact on the ICH practice and transmission (Shamsher. & Abdullah., 2012).

But, the alarming thing is that the designated government agencies not even the independent researchers have any specific data that refers to how many such customs festivals and traditional performing or fine art forms are on verge of extinction, how many artistes/practitioners have given up practicing their age-old traditions or how many traditional music instruments, crafts, tools and others have been abolished in the past.

They mostly use 'magic figures' like 'hundreds' or even 'thousands' while narrating the sorry state of ICH in the country but can name only a few elements like Shokher Hari, Lakshmi Sara, Art Of Cinema Banner, Rickshaw Painting, Jari Gaan, Jogir Gaan, Kushan Gaan, Manikipirer Gaan, Pat Gaan, Ashtak Gaan, Chinitikri Ornament, Patachitra, Pidichitra, Shankhashilpa, Sholashilpa, and others. [] some organizations have initiated documentation projects, research and publications on different crafts and other traditions in material culture, but they can hardly be considered comprehensive (Selim, 2013).

Karika, a handicraft and marketing cooperative, in its study on country's traditional crafts conducted in 1986-87, commissioned by Ford Foundation, stated that the number of folk art element was over 2000 in 20 craft categories. Independent researchers who focused only on performing art forms in their studies mentioned names ranging between 87 to 400 while the musicologists mention name of over 100 music genres and even greater number of traditional

instruments are found in Bangladesh. The list of 57 elements uploaded by Ministry of Cultural Affairs on its website under the title “Aporimiyo Sanskritik Oitijhya” as part of its “ongoing inventorying” features descriptions of only seven craft items. And inscription of some elements as ICH like Kalajadu Bidya (black magic practice, Sapureder Tantra/Mantra Jharphuk (magic practice by snake charmers to cure a snake-bitten person) goes against the spirit of the laws and social norms of the country as many people had reportedly been cheated by such black magic practitioners. Government officials, however, said these elements were inscribed with the intention to show the diversity of the cultural heritages in Bangladesh.

But, the researchers complain that the government officials made the list by blindly following inventories developed by Korea and Japan, where Shamanism is regarded as an art form. The inclusion of just 57 elements on the list also frustrates the researchers who believe that the number of ICH elements would be 12 times higher if fine and performing arts, traditional games, music, customs and cuisines of all the ethnic groups living in the country were included.

They believe making a complete inventory featuring all ICH elements practiced by all of the ethnic communities in the country would be very challenging task for the government as it does not have the latest data on number of total ‘ethnic groups’ in the country. A census published by the government in 1991 shows that the number of ethnic communities is 29 and their total population is 1205978. But many community leaders and individual researchers rejected arguing that both number of groups and population would be higher. Most of the researchers in their documentations claim that the number of such groups could be 46 while community leaders in their statements and publications claim that the number of ethnic minority groups is over 90.

Another major challenge for making the national inventory is that different elements having similar presentation styles have different names in different regions while many elements having same titles are presented in different ways by the artistes living in different areas. The story of Ramayana-based presentations has different names in different places such as Ramer Panchali, Ramjatra, Kushan Gaan and Ramlila. Similarly, story of goddess Monosha is presented in performing art forms having different names in different places like Royani Gaan in Barisal region, Bishorar Gaan in Dinajpur area, Bhashan Jatra in the middle part of the country, said Professor Afsar Ahmed.

Documentation of Baul songs usually refers that the mystic music tradition is found in the Southwest region of Bangladesh. Such documents only mention name of Fakir Lalon Shah, the most popular guru of the Baul tradition hailed in the area, and his followers living the Southwest region and exclude names of other gurus and composers of Baul music traditions living in Southwest region, greater Dhaka region, greater Sylhet region and Chittagong region. Songs composed by the bards, who claim themselves as Bauls in their songs, have been documented by many researchers with different terminologies like maromi (mystic), murshidi and others.

More challenging task is that the government agencies those have been working on promotion and protection of folklores and traditional cultural elements for decades do not have any database and cannot provide the list and descriptions of the elements documented so far in the past few decades. Due to lack of initiatives and negligence, rich archives of some government organizations like 'transcription service' archive of Bangladesh Betar that had collection of authentic tune of over a thousand traditional songs are now on the verge to distinction, said musician and also a music researcher Mustafa Zaman Abbasi in response to structured questionnaire.

The government officials defend their position saying that they cannot take initiatives for making database and other protective measures like preserving the documents, tracks and videos digitally for lack of budget and very complicated disbursement process of funds against the allocated budget. They claim that lion shares of the allocated budget are spent for non-productive sectors like paying salaries of the officials at 17 government agencies and utility bills, renovation works and construction purposes. For the fiscal year 2017-18, government allocated Tk 417 crore (US\$ 52million) for culture sector (New Age, 2017). In the previous fiscal year, amount was Tk 421 crore.

When the government is not wealthy enough to give huge subsidy for culture sector like many other developed countries do, the government did not even take alternative measures for generating income of the ICH practitioners by incorporating ICH in the country's Sustainable Development Goals in the light UNESCO's Convention 2003 and its Operational Directives that acknowledge culture as a 'driver and enabler of development' and also its roles in supporting socio-economic development and social cohesion.

The Operational Directives of the Convention, however, suggest the Member States to provide basic amenities such as food, cloth, housing, treatment and education to the practicing communities for ensuring smooth transmission of ICH. And complying with such guidelines of the Directives would be quite impossible for Bangladesh set against the present socio-economic condition where an estimated 100,000 beggars beg on the streets of the capital city Dhaka alone (SFGATE Online, 2009) and over a million of people earn little money by doing labors jobs like rickshaw pulling or hazardous jobs in the factories and tanneries. The country in its SDG, however, has set ambitious target to end poverty, fight inequality, tackle the adverse effects of climate change and ensure a sustainable future for all by the year 2030.

Like many other policies formulated by different governments in the past 46 years since its independence in 1971, the 'holy words' stipulated in the National Policy of Culture have not been translated into the reality and no comprehensive program had been taken so far by involving different ministries, divisions and agencies in the light of the Policy that suggests develop a 'living cultural economy through interactive patronization among cultural activities, cultural traditions, tourism and trades', and also gives guidelines to different ministries like ministry of Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Commerce, Ministry of Industries, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Religious Affairs to work together and take comprehensive plans in preserving, nourishing, fostering and flourishing the cultural heritage and traditions.

Some scattered programs that had been taken by different ministries like Ministry of Cultural Affairs and its subordinating agencies, Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism, Ministry of Women and Children Affairs and Ministry of Religious Affairs or Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation, under the Ministry of Industries, had not been initiated consulting with other ministries and had no significant impact for generating income for the communities/artistes or making historical sites attractive tourist destinations as suggested in the National Policy of Culture. The other guidelines of the Policy like enactment of law (if required) for protecting cultural heritage and creating a central cell to deal with cultural heritage have not yet seen light of the day.

Even the Ministry of Cultural Affairs has failed to develop coordinated programs among its 17 departments and autonomous institutions like Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangladesh National Museum, Bangladesh Folk Art and Crafts Foundation, Department of Archaeology and Museum and others, admits official statements of different government agencies in reply to the structured questionnaires.

Such lack of coordination among the government agencies is not only creating hurdles to achieve the goals set in the Policy of Culture but also stands in the way to comply with Bangladesh's obligations being a ratifying country of the UNESCO Convention 2003, Convention 1972 and Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

Three agencies, including, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh National Museum have been preparing applications on behalf of the government for inscription of ICH elements on UNSECO's Representative List. Department of Archaeology, which is mandated for identifying, excavating and safeguarding tangible heritage sites, also carried out capacity-building programs with financial support of UNESCO on ICH safeguarding (UNESCO, 2013). Department of Archaeology, however, in response to structured questionnaire stated that it had no more program related to ICH safeguarding. Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy and Bangladesh Folk Art and Crafts Foundation have placed several proposals separately to the government to get assignment for making the national inventory and the officials of the these agencies informally told that a tug of war was going on among these agencies to get the job of inventorying.

It is happening as each bureaucrat wants to have maximum powers and believes in departmentalism and concentration of power, said economists and development experts in their researches. They opine that bureaucracy in Bangladesh has been facing different layers of problems due to politicization of the government institutions since the independence of the country in 1971, resulting in lack of specialization, vision, skill, dedication and integrity. In this system there is tendency for empire building resulting in frequent departmental clashes on the one hand and corruption on the other. Their [bureaucrats'] transfer and posting to suitable locations and positions, their promotion, and career are now decided on the basis of their political loyalty, (Jamil, 2007).

Such situation contributes to the unfairness and poor distribution of public service, which tends to boost the practices of corruption, collusion and nepotism (Khan, 2012). Though these politically backed bureaucrats do not serve at an agency for a longer period as the full-time employees holding subordinating positions at those agencies do; these political beneficiaries mostly take part in seminars, workshops and other ICH safeguarding related programs organized by UNESCO and other development programs at home and abroad, government officials working at different agencies unofficially said. As a result, bureaucracy never gets required specialization for taking effective and comprehensive programs for ICH safeguarding and dealing with international development partners to cash provisions for international assistance offered by UNESCO and other international partners in the light of Articles 19 and 20 of the Convention and Article 27 of the Operational Directives.

Cultural affairs minister Asaduzzaman Noor also admits that Bangladesh was facing problems in case of inventorying and fulfilling other obligations of a signatory state of the 2003 Convention due to lack of skill of the bureaucrats, researchers and technical equipment. He blames the same causes for not being able to cash the advantages offered by UNESCO and other development partners.

The government officials seem busy forming committees, attending national and international seminars and looking for funds from donors for their scattered programs those have no impact in case of ICH identification, giving benefit to the practitioners, raising awareness among masses on ICH or taking any comprehensive program for safeguarding, said Professor Nisar Hossain, dean, Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Dhaka, in response to structured questionnaire. Despite attending several seminars and workshops, the bureaucrats failed to understand the spirit of the 2003 Convention and cannot even differentiate it from that of 1972 Convention on Tangible Heritage. To exercise their power and to cash the benefits, the bureaucrats never even involved community members, who as per the 2003 Convention are the owners of the ICH elements, or competent scholars and researchers in ICH safeguarding programs, said musician and researcher Mustafa Zaman Abbasi in response to structured questionnaire.

So far, Bangladesh has not applied for inscription of any element on Urgent Safeguarding list when both government officials and independent researchers claim that many ICH elements in the country are on verge of disappearance. Rather,

the country has applied for inscription of some disappearing ICH elements like Nakshi Kantha weaving and Jatra on the Representative List and the applications had been rejected by UNESCO respectively in 2014 and 2015. The government is also planning to apply for inscription of Rickshaw Painting and Shokher Hari on the Representative List though the researchers say these traditional art forms are also on verge of extinction.

In fact, government officials, researchers, NGO and media in Bangladesh are still under the influence of the World Heritage Convention 1972's listing system, in which The World Heritage List seeks to recognize the 'outstanding universal value' of a site while The World Heritage List in Danger is a warning system to let the world know that a heritage site is in danger due to external causes like earthquake or other threats like lack of proper management

Bureaucrats in Bangladesh consider that inscription of an element on the Urgent Safeguarding List is 'dishonoring' like placement of a site on the List of World Heritage on Danger or so called 'Endangered List'. But, UNESCO on its website has clarified it stating that Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding is composed of intangible heritage elements that concerned communities and States Parties consider require urgent measures to keep them alive, which is also the main goal of the 2003 Convention (UNESCO, 2017). The website also defines that The Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity is made up of those intangible heritage elements that help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and raise awareness about its importance.

But, not only Bangladesh but no country in the South Asian region has any element inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List. Rather, all these countries are engaged in a kind of competition for inscribing common ICH elements shared by the communities living in more than one country in the region as sole ICH element of one country. As a result, no common application has been filed so far from the region and no question arises of jointly applying for international assistance for safeguarding even though the fact is that both the Convention 2003 and its Operational Directives encourage States Parties to jointly submit multi-national nominations to the Urgent Safeguarding List and the Representative List when an element is found on the territory of more than one State Party. Both the Convention and Operational Directives also encourage joint submissions stating that joint application for international assistance would get priority.

And the problem is prevailing not only in South Asia but all across the globe. Till December 2016, the UNESCO website shows that 370 elements were inscribed on Representative List while 40 elements were inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List from across the globe. This apparent imbalance seems to imply that States Parties are giving more importance to raising awareness than to safeguarding though the aim of the Convention 2003 is safeguarding ICH (Duvelie, 2009).

[] an additional challenge as for preparing a multi-national nomination [is] that [it] requires long and complex negotiations, as well as laborious administrative procedures, in several countries (Aikawa-Faure, 2009).

Community members, researchers and NGOs in Bangladesh, in response to questionnaire, blame UNESCO Dhaka for not inviting community members, leading NGOs and media in the capacity-building workshops and seminars those Dhaka Office organized in the past eight years. The Final Report of the Implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Bangladesh organized by UNESCO Dhaka Office and Department of Archaeology, under Ministry of Cultural Affairs, in 2013 also recommend for organizing more programs from capacity building of the bureaucrats, community members, researchers and others (UNESCO, 2013). The recommendations, however, were not followed by UNESCO Dhaka Office in the ongoing three-year US\$ 200,000-capacity-building program titled “Strengthening the capacities of Bangladesh for implementing the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage”, which has been funded by the Azerbaijan government, said practicing communities and researchers. The researchers who have been documenting and experimenting on traditional cultural elements for many years were also not involved in such programs. Only those who maintain good connections with government officials and development partners got a little benefit, said researcher-singer Mustafa Zaman Abbasi. This is why the government failed to make even an inventory since ratifying of the Convention in 2009, observes Professor Nisar Hossain.

And no effective promotional programs on ICH safeguarding or raising awareness among the masses was carried by the government agencies though the 2003 Convention suggests the States Parties to include ICH in the formal and non-formal education system. The government officials still do not understand the impact of environmental change on ICH transmission even though the fact is

that ICH elements, especially in the riverine country like Bangladesh have been created, nurtured and practiced by the folks in midst of nature but not by the elites in the courts of the kings or in the temples, said Mustafa Zaman Abbasi. [] all these elements like trees, sun, moon, sky in different seasons have impacts on the folks to compose songs (Rahman, 1982).

6. Recommendations to overcome challenges

Bangladesh needs to take a holistic approach to safeguard its rich ICH elements by exploring the maximum benefits from the international networking. Efforts could also be given for initiating activities to promote ICH at the local, national and international levels, which in the long run will create a positive image of the country to the global audience.

The first step that the country requires to take is to make a complete national inventory by identifying and documenting all the existing ICH elements practiced by the communities belonging to all the estimated 45 ethnic groups living in the country with the notion that the inventory will provide an empirical study of each element so that it represents a comprehensive picture of ICH elements, help safeguarding those in the light of the Constitution of the Republic, Country's Policy for Culture and 2003 Convention, and also becomes an invaluable compendium for scholars, researchers, promoters, government and NGOs at the local, national and international levels.

Considering the vastness and diversity of ICH in Bangladesh, inventorying should be a continuous process and should be monitored centrally by a dedicated organization as found in other countries in the world. (Mahmud, 2013)

The national inventory must be drawn up with community participation and consent, as indicated in the Article 11(b), Article 12 and Article 15 of the 2003 Convention. Following the guidelines of the convention, the Ministry of Cultural Affairs needs to create a Consultative Committee or a similar coordination mechanism to engage communities/artistes, experts, centers of expertise, research institutes and relevant government officials for identifying, describing and nominating ICH elements with authentic audiovisual and written documents.

Multiple elements under each broad category have to be identified by communities concerned in a participatory way being assisted by the ICH researchers and anthropologists. The committee also needs to solve contradictions and disputes regarding the number, titles and descriptions of ICH elements as found in the documentation/research works of the independent researchers and government agencies, which differ a lot from one to another and everybody claims his/her work as the most authentic.

The committee needs to conduct a nationwide field survey by the region-based sub-committees that will include community representatives, researchers and ethnographers. These sub-committees need to do field survey in each and every areas of the country for collecting information and photographs of ICH elements. At the same time, Ministry of Cultural Affairs needs to initiate projects for its subordinating agencies and departments like Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh National Museum, Bangladesh Folk Art and Crafts Foundation and National Archives of Bangladesh to make databases of their documentations on folklores, music, performing and fine arts, customs and others and also to share those with the central committee mandated for inventorying. It is the responsibility of the ministry, especially the minister to ensure coordination and to establish a professional zeal in the subordinating agencies by resolving the existing 'unprofessional competition' and 'non-cooperative attitude' in question of taking programs on ICH safeguarding and management.

Based on the field survey reports, databases and popular documentations of the independent researchers; the central committee can take initiatives of making the inventory by taking technical support of the internationally recognized experts, who have vast experiences of inventorying and their audiovisual documenting. Access to the inventory needs to be ensured and there must be scope for giving dispute to it in the interest of making the inventory more authentic. Following the guidelines of the 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives, national inventory must be updated regularly considering the fact that ICH evolves with time and various other factors.

And special attention can be given to those elements that are in need of urgent safeguarding like Jari Gaan, Jogir Gaan, Kushan Gaan, Manikpirer Gaan, Pat Gaan, Ashtak Gaan, Shokher Hari, Gazir Pat and others. In the interest of keeping the ICH in Bangladesh as diverse as it is, the government needs to pay more attention

for inscription of disappearing elements on the Urgent Safeguarding List and taking pro-active initiative for seeking international assistance for safeguarding those in the light of Article 20 of the UNESCO's 2003 Convention.

For developing a well-organized and well-synchronized system in ICH management that requires involvement of different ministries, divisions and agencies; the government has no option but to reform the bureaucracy and the appointment policy of officials for establishing an easier and more effective system to materialize its policies and also to take maximum benefits offered by the international partners. The depoliticization of bureaucracy is an essential precondition for administrative reforms to rid the civil service from Gresham's law syndrome [an economic theory developed by 16th the merchant and financier to British kings Sir Thomas Gresham where the "bad" drives out the "good"], Khan (2015).

The government officials' skill needs to be developed for initiating effective programs in the light of the rules and laws of the republic, for preparing nomination files for their inscriptions on Urgent Safeguarding List and Representative List, preparing country report to UNESCO's Intergovernmental Committee, applying for international assistance following 2003 Convention and its Operational Directives, supporting communities, NGOs and other relevant stakeholders and thereby go forward for establishing a Register of Good Practices as stipulated in Article 18 of the 2003 Convention.

Being the designated government agency to communicate with UNESCO headquarter and other similar organizations, BNCU, under the education ministry, needs to play more effective role for patronizing both tangible and intangible heritages of the country. A mechanism must be established so that the concerned ministries, divisions and agencies share relevant information with the commission. It also needs to improve its bargaining capacity to cash the benefits from UNESCO and the other development partners.

The government also needs to update the National Policy of Culture 2006 to give more effective guidelines to the concerned ministries and agencies addressing the ground realities of the country for taking appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures. The Policy guidelines regarding the formation of a designated organization for protecting and promoting traditional

culture of the country at national and international level needs to be executed immediately.

Other guidelines of the policy like developing a “Sustainable Economic Culture” through coordinated programs by involving Civil Aviation and Tourism Ministry and Ministry of Cultural Affairs with the aim of creating alternative job opportunities for ICH practitioners needs to be executed. Similar guidelines have been stipulated the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994) and the Yamato Declaration (2004),

Comprehensive programs can be taken to attract tourists in historic sites such as Kotila Mura, Lalbagh Fort, Salban Vihara, Somapura Mahavira and others by involving traditional artistes, cultural troupes, NGOs, government agencies like Bangladesh Shilapakala Academy, Department of Archaeology, Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation and Department of Tourism.

Such projects might include different facilities for the tourists by involving the local villagers and at the same time might organize cultural shows, displays of crafts, and traditional games by involving traditional artistes of the locality. Such initiatives will not only be helpful to generate income for practicing communities but also be supportive for the existing practitioners to continue their activities to nurture the new young generation. They can also enhance the local economy, and contribute to social cohesion.

Such integration program is also important to protect ICH that is in need of urgent safeguarding and to review systems regarding the restoration of ICH and the discovery of the intangible value in the tangible heritage (Seong-yong, 2011).

The government also needs to include ICH in its sustainable development program to create alternative income source for the practitioners by maintaining a balance between the three dimensions of sustainable development, including, economic, social and environmental as suggested by UNESCO and also United Nations in its Action Plan for people, planet and prosperity entitled “Transforming Our World: 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” by taking under consideration that culture is a driving force for sustainable development..

It also needs to be ensured that such trend does not distort or force the communities to change styles and at the same time no alteration or damage is done

to the sites just for attracting viewers. For this reason, tourism-based integration programs of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, particular attention needs to be paid for avoiding commercial misappropriation or distortion of the ICH elements and its natural ambience by ensuring a balance between the interests of the communities, heritage sites as directed in the Articles 116-117 of the Operational Directives of the Convention.

Effective measures need to be taken following the guidelines of National Policy of Culture 2006, UNESCO Convention 2003 and its Operational Directives for inclusion of folk culture in the curriculums of higher education, encouraging local media, especially the state-run and private radio and TV channels to broadcast more programs highlighting traditional culture, framing law with a view of giving ICH practitioners legal coverage for protection of ICH elements from misappropriation. As suggested by the Cultural Affairs Minister in response to the questionnaire, Ministry of Education can take necessary steps for organizing field visit for the schoolchildren to get practical knowledge on the ICH and practicing communities.

The existing Intellectual Property Rights Act also needs to be updated to make it easier for the artistes/communities for taking action against commercial use without taking any consent and royalty sharing.

The annual budget allocation for culture needs to be increased significantly considering the ground realities for taking effective programs to patronize cultural activities, including the ICH safeguarding. Disbursement process of the fund allocations and skill of utilizing the funds by the bureaucrats need to be improved. Transparency in case of fund management must be ensured. Financial supports for the communities/ artistes needs to be increased. A transparent annual evaluation process for selecting the artistes for the state support program can be introduced as it is found in many countries like Korea and Japan. The government can encourage and assist them to participate in cultural exchanges programs demonstrating their performances and skills abroad.

For generating awareness among the teen-age group and youths, who are more fascinated by the gadgets and Internet contents, information technology institutions can be patronized by the government and development partners for developing games and interactive apps for enhancing non-formal means of

transmission of intangible cultural heritage in the light of the Article 115 of the Operational Directives.

For raising-awareness on ICH among the common people, especially among the youths, the government might announce ICH Day, and also can encourage the educational institutions, public and private cultural organizations, NGOs, community members, and the media to celebrate the day with special importance.

As mentioned in the Articles (188-190) of the Operational Directives, the government also needs to acknowledge the contribution of the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage to environmental sustainability, especially in the land like Bangladesh where nature and art are inter-related, and so requires taking sustainably managed natural resources and the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Besides mounting pressure on the government for developing a national inventory and to comply with the clauses of the 2003 Convention, UNESCO and other international partners can come forward with technical and financial support for making the national inventory, developing skill of community representatives, government officials, aspiring researchers and NGOs for safeguarding ICH and ensuring their transmission.

More international workshops needs to be organized for community representatives so that they acquire knowledge on their roles and rights on ICH, ICH safeguarding and management. Such workshops also need to include representatives of the ethnic minority groups for developing researchers from them for contributing to inventorying and safeguarding.

UNESCO and other international organizations can also come up with integrated region-based programs for the South Asia so that the States Parties of the region can collectively select and promote national, sub-regional and regional programs, projects, nominate collective applications of ICH elements shared by communities living in the region and take comprehensive programs for safeguarding by seeking international assistance through UNESCO in the light of 2003 Convention and in its Operational Directives.

UNESCO Dhaka office also needs to review its programs for felicitating ICH safeguarding in Bangladesh by taking ground realities of the country and also by following clauses of the 2003 Convention, its Operational Directives and 1972 Convention. Following the guidelines of the Convention and recommendations of the international experts, UNESCO Dhaka Office also needs to include communities, NGOs and media in the capacity building workshops so that these communities can play effective roles in case of government's execution of its plans and policies regarding the ICH safeguarding.

7. Conclusion

Embracing the realities of the era of globalization, there is no option but to work together to face the problems that are creating threats to distinctive ICH elements in Bangladesh. International networking through UNESCO and bilateral/multilateral collaborations can help developing countries like Bangladesh take effective programs for safeguarding ICH elements and their smooth transmissions in the interest to keep the world as diverse as it is.

The primary task needs to be started from the government of People's Republic of Bangladesh for better execution of the plans and policies regarding to the ICH safeguarding by overcoming the above analyzed bureaucratic tangles. The country has no option but to take effective programs by increasing allocation of the national budget for promoting the traditional culture and also to develop the skill of the government offices and officials to cash the maximum advantages of the international networking for safeguarding ICH, which represents the history of a community and the nation as well. The national inventory needs to be prepared immediately, based on the nationwide survey by involving the communities and experts, to get a detailed and dependable picture of the country's ICH for taking effective plans based on the survey. Following the guidelines of the country's National Policy of Culture and UNESCO's Convention, effective programs need to be taken to create alternative income for the practicing communities without distorting the element.

International networking with UNESCO and other development partners can promote greater understanding of the purpose of the 2003 Convention (Article 1) and of the definition of ICH (Article 2) through their networking activities, in order

to ensure that the ground rules of the Convention are correctly understood by the government, institutions, experts, practitioner communities, civil society, NGOs and media. The networking can also raise awareness of the purposes, meanings, and functions of UNESCO's two lists and the register of good safeguarding practices so that Bangladesh can prepare adequate nomination files accordingly. It can also help Bangladesh to develop its skill to fulfil its requirements as a signatory of the Convention, seek international assistance for safeguarding ICH through UNESCO (Article 19 of the Convention) and also for taking some model programs to be included in the register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

The networking also can have significant roles in addressing operational challenges, like building of networks among the communities and groups concerned for fostering the transmission and dissemination of ICH. Such networks can also be helpful in promoting multi-national nominations, research institutions, and individuals specializing in the ICH of the region.

It is true that the living traditions are subject to change and cannot be kept 'frozen' but at present we are faced with a situation where change is very fast and dictated often by concerns of marketing and profit, imposed, rather than developing organically. So, time has come to work together so that these living traditions survive for the future generations.

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