

V. Pending issues & urgent needs on safeguarding of ICH

Q1. *Is any of the intangible cultural heritage in your country in danger of disappearance or transformation? (Please include name of the heritage, location, problems encountered, etc.)*

Intangible cultural heritage is a growing awareness here and abroad. Considering Papua New Guinea 850 plus languages and over 1000 living cultures, the country's vast wealth of intangible cultural heritage is on the verge of disappearing. This was evidently shown from the first regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Project when such issues were raised. Hence, the regional cultural mapping pilot projects will provide the platform for more discussions at the national and provincial level to ensure that data documentation is prioritized from the most endangered to the least.

Q2. *What are the reasons the heritage is in danger and what type of safeguarding measures have been taken? Please be specific.*

The reason why PNG's intangible cultural heritage is in danger is due to non existence of a specific legislation. PNG through the National Cultural Commission has taken a step forward in the recent drafting of the Draft National Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture Policy and Draft Bill for the Protection of Traditional Knowledge and Expressions of Culture. Four regional and a national consultation was held recently for the above-indicated draft Policy and Bill to formulate into a final National Executive Council Policy Submission for Cabinet endorsement.

Further to that, the inventory collection such as the detailed cultural mapping program is a new initiative in the country assisting in the documentation and safeguarding of the country's both tangible and intangible cultures.

However, before the concept of cultural mapping program was introduced in PNG, the National Cultural Commission did not have a safeguarding

mechanism on hand to specifically document and safeguard intangible cultural heritage in the country. It concentrated on the staging of cultural festivals on a regional basis. Some of the cultural festivals are coordinated with support from respective Provincial Governments and Administrations. Moreover, there are several cultural festivals entirely funded by the Provincial Governments.

Apart from cultural festivals staged at the national and provincial level, schools, churches, and other non-government organizations host cultural festivals and shows for certain occasions within their organizations.

In the school curriculum, the National Department of Education introduced the use of local vernaculars at the elementary level in communities especially in the rural areas. This introduces the young children to understand and translate English words and expressions to their local vernacular and vice versa.

Q3. *What are the pending issues for safeguarding ICH in your country that you have found through interviews and the field survey?*

During the course of the first regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Project, a lot of issues emerged such as the loss of owners and holders of intangible cultural heritage in which their knowledge is not transmitted and eventually disappears or does not exist anymore. Through the cultural mapping project, the National Cultural Commission has formulated a draft Cultural Mapping Framework for the entire country. Presently, it anticipates conducting its second regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Project for the New Guinea Islands Region in the West New Britain Province. This will be followed by another two regional pilot projects for the Momase and Highlands Regions respectively.

For the continuation of the three remaining regions before the actual project starts, the funding component will be another challenging issue, however, the National Cultural Commission continues efforts in seeking assistance from the National Government for funding and it hopes to secure funding from other sources as well.

Q4. *What kind of problems and difficulties were encountered during the safeguarding projects?*

The vast wealth of PNG's cultures and traditions lies in its intangible cultural heritage. As mentioned in the initial part of this paper, one of the main

problems and difficulties encountered during the first regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Project was the issue of language barrier and dialect difference stands as a barrier. Within the first regional pilot project area, the Taure-Lakekamu Local Level Government, there are villages with different population numbers, some located on the river banks whilst other uphill, those from uphill spoke totally different language from those living by the river banks. The translation of information and processes involved from interviewees to interviewers may not best describe the real meaning of the intangible cultural heritage.

Another major problem that was encountered was education and effective awareness. Most villages (pilot project sites) visited were not aware of the concept of cultural mapping, hence, rejected the idea of having interviewers from visiting their villages.

The lack of manpower knowledgeable with the whole cultural mapping concept was another major difficulty encountered whilst in the field. The National Cultural Commission recruited researchers to conduct the first regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Project, however, not all were fully aware of the concept.

The National Cultural Commission also lacks manpower to educate and train researchers from outside.

As indicated above, funding is also a major problem in the continuation of the project.

Being the second largest island in the world from the rugged mountains to the coastal lands, another challenging issue is the difficulty in accessing some of the villages in certain parts of the country.

Q5. *What future plans are there for the safeguarding of ICH (programme information)?*

The future plans for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage are indicated in the previous responses where cultural mapping pilot projects are currently conducted on regional basis. The four regional Cultural Mapping Pilot Projects in each selected province will form the basis of inventory work for the entire country.

This exercise will also assist the National Cultural Commission is establishing its national inventory database in a systematic manner.

Q6. *What type of contribution and cooperation from international society is needed for the safeguarding of ICH in your country?*

Papua New Guinea would definitely need international assistance in the form of training and capacity building, technical advice and of course financial contributions to enhance safeguarding mechanisms in the country.

Q7. *What role do you expect ICHCAP to play in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the region in terms of programmes, projects, etc.?*

The Pacific Island States and Territories pride itself with some of the most rich and colourful cultures and traditions in the world. UNESCO Regional Office in Western Samoa has been very supportive in assisting the region in recognizing its cultures and traditions, and the importance of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage has been made aware to the region urging them to ratify. So far, Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga and Vanuatu have ratified the Convention, whilst others are still in the process of ratifying. In implementing this Convention, complex and diverse countries like Papua New Guinea would have difficulties in its inventory collection exercise compared to the smaller Island States and Territories, hence, the four regional Cultural Mapping Pilot projects.

The current survey ICHCAP is undertaking is very helpful in finding out the status of inventory work in the Region, however, it would be good to have ICHCAP provide training and capacity building as well as technical assistance to effectively carry out its safeguarding activities and programmes.

Q8. *Please include any requests and/or suggestions you have on this matter.*

With regards to the above-indicated problems and challenges faced in the course of the inventory work in our country, the National Cultural Commission would be grateful to suggest the following;

- To strengthen cooperation and exchange ideas with other Pacific Island States and Territories;
- Papua New Guinea does not have an element of intangible cultural heritage inscribed under the Representative List and the List in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The NCC would appreciate the provision of technical assistance in the processing of nomination documents for possible inscription of ICH elements;

- The NCC would further appreciate technical and financial assistance on its cultural mapping programmes, the setting up and maintenance of its database registry system;

Q9. What should be considered to encourage or to ensure active involvement from the community in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage?

- For communities to get actively involved in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, it would be good to enhance the current cultural festivals by rotating them to different locations that have not staged a festival.
- The National Cultural Commission should also encourage respective Provincial Governments to further encourage Local Level Governments to develop programmes and activities for their respective wards (villages).
- Furthermore, the *Organic Law on the Provincial and Local Level Government Section 42 & 44* states subject matters that have direct bearing on culture. This compliments the *National Cultural Commission Act 1994* which must assist with cultural centre establishments so as to assist and facilitate traditional cultures of indigenous people. This legislation empowers the Provincial Governments to directly correspond with Local Level Governments in their provinces to further interact with ward councilors and ward members to consider the establishment of cultural resource centres to maintain the upkeep of their cultural resources and other related materials.