

VII. Pending Issues & Urgent Needs regarding the Safeguarding of ICH

1. Is there any of the ICH in your country in danger of disappearance or transformation?

[As mentioned in the earlier pages, a national inventory has yet to be conducted in Tonga. The information below is abstracted from the Cultural Mapping Report, Tonga, 2010]

- i. The Ministry is aware that the cultural identity of Tongans is changing. With two spoken languages – Tongan and Niufo’ou Languages - the Niufo’ou language is rarely written but mostly spoken. The Niufo’ou children do not learn their mother tongue at school and the language is therefore under threat. On the other hand, because one of the features of the Tongan language is the use of allegory and metaphors whose meaning is only understood by those with knowledge of the events, time and place, there are already signs that some of the younger generations no longer understand this art.
- ii. All Tongans are ranked: sisters’ rank is higher than the brother’s and older persons are higher than younger ones. One of the relationships that is

included is the respect awarded to father as head of the household, to the father's sister and the head of the clan. Studies have shown that there is a shift in the way people practice and maintain these relationships which is reflected in such social issues as domestic violence, child abuse, alcohol and drug abuse.

- iii. The Tongan Traditional Knowledge Systems are under threat because the younger generations do not know about them since it is not in the curriculum. Evidence of loss in the practicing of traditional navigation, Tongan time, music, traditional performing arts, agriculture, fishing, medicine, rituals and customs was acknowledged in the cultural mapping report. There are obvious changes to the practice of rituals including the adoption of foreign ideas, eg. in the practices of funerals, traditional presentation of mats and tapa are replaced with money and flowers.

2. What are the reasons the heritage is in danger and what type of safeguarding measures have been taken?
- i. The Niufo'ou language is not taught in schools in addition to the fact that Niufo'ou only has a population of 600 in accordance to 2011 census. There are no teaching and learning materials available and it is rare to find a Niufo'ou text. For implementing purposes of the (Draft) Tonga National Cultural Policy, there is a list of suggested policy directions to develop Niufo'ou language into the curriculum; to include teaching and learning materials; develop a Language council specifically for the protection, promotion and development of the Niufo'ou language. As for the Tongan language, there is already signs of change with the loss of older words and grammar usage. Influence of technology – shortened version of Tongan spelling attributes to this change. Suggested policy directions for the Tongan language are: develop new words to describe new phenomenon; develop a body to oversee appropriate usage of language (language commission); develop courses at Tonga Institute of Education a Tongan literate body to focus on promoting written Tongan text for all reading levels.
 - ii. The linkages to the traditional clans [*ha'a*] are weakening as younger generations do not understand the functions and ties of the traditional clans. The relationships within the *ha'a* themselves are deteriorating and one of the leading cause to the breakdown is migration. Weak leadership skills of nobles and traditional leaders in the village further add to the weakening of this system. The Cultural Mapping Report emphasizes that one

way of protecting the traditional social structure is by encouraging festivals for the *ha'a* to come together; to document and archive the genealogies and to publish this. By developing village/district based councils for protection, documentation and promotion of *ha'a*, its relationships and its associated traditional roles could be achieved.

- iii. There is gradual loss of the Traditional Knowledge System (TKS). As climate change becomes a major global issue, the impact of sea level rise on the land and ocean makes it more important to seek some solutions for the TKS of fishing and agriculture. Promotion of the preservation of Tonga's TKS could be through educational programs, through festivals, encourage the use of TKS where it is still appropriate, promote using the media and documentary films to raise awareness of TKS and to promote performing arts in schools, churches and communities through festivals.

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

A project proposal should be submitted to UNESCO by November each year for the Establishment of the Tonga's Living Human Treasures System. Needless to say, this program has a double safeguarding nature as it not only involves in the transmission of knowledge and skills as but it also awards recognition of the practitioners.

The Culture Division will encourage and support the development of cultural related legislations for the protection of Tonga's cultural and natural heritage as well as promoting the Culture Division as the main body for leading cultural development in Tonga.

4. What type of contributions and cooperation from the international society is needed for the safeguarding of ICH in Tonga?

The contributions and cooperation from the international society is very much needed for the safeguarding of ICH in Tonga in sharing their knowledge, skills and wealth of experiences on what they have done on the same. Moreover, there are obstacles and challenges faced and it is better to share how to solve and overcomes them.

5. What role do you expect ICHCAP to play in the safeguarding of ICH in the region in terms of programmes, projects, etc.?

- Funding for:
- Technical assistance
- Consultancy assistance
- Provision of equipment
- Training
- Work Attachment to other Member states who has done inventory - making

6. What should be considered to encourage or to ensure active involvement from the community in safeguarding ICH?

- Develop programs that will strengthen understanding and use of TKS associated with handicrafts, arts, music, performing arts;
- Develop programs that will exhibit, showcase and encourage the use of traditional skills associated with handicrafts, arts, music, performing arts;
- Develop program/activity to assess the economic potential of the traditional cultural industry, ie. how much money the industry earn?
- Develop education and training programs that will encourage the earning a livelihood through handicrafts, arts, music, performing arts. Education and training programs to include the creation of unique Tongan products, production and reproduction of these products (branding, copyright, etc), promotion, communication and marketing strategies;

- Develop mechanisms that will supervise and maintain quality check on all products and set standards on all products;
- Develop program/activity to assess the economic potential of the contemporary cultural industry, ie. how much money the industry can earn?
- Ensure sufficient funding available from Government of Tonga to promote cultural development programs with the community;
- To make sure that Government of Tonga include culture in one of their priorities;

As to conclude, this field survey report focus particularly on the questions provided and the photos and images supported only part of the work being done on some of the domains in safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage. It is kindly noted that the majority of the work is not documented but only verbally transmitted from one generation to another generation. This project would be an avenue to identify intangible cultural heritage, record and document into a more systematic way. Furthermore, archiving will also an important activity to be considered in a way which would be safely stored for future reference and usage by the people of Tonga.