

# I . Background

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Vanuatu is rich of cultures among these cultures are thriving arts, tradition, heritage and expression of the indigenous peoples. Through time the indigenous people depicted their history, stories, songs, traditional and culture elements through visual art, expressive art, and heritage art. However there are those that go to the extreme of exploitation and misappropriation of works of creativity and innovation by those who tend to gain a great margin of economic return then the actual originators themselves.

Cultural Heritage has been recognized to be economically, intrinsically and environmentally valuable yet it is under threat from a range of processes and impacts, triggering action including expansion of Intangible Heritage law in the past few years. As mentioned earlier Vanuatu is a nation rich of history and culture heritage who is facing similar challengers to many other states.

This project basically is to research the current state of safeguarding efforts in the field of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region.

In the introduction, we'll first explain the Vanuatu context, the islands, the people and the custom what is said "Kastom". Then, according to the UNESCO Convention of 2003, we'll explain the meaning of ICH and his safeguarding. Finally we'll present the field survey and the first step is to look through the laws and policy related to the ICH safeguarding. Also the detail and steps in the ICH Inventory then we'll describe the relevant organization and their objectives. The meetings concerning the ICH and the different lists of UNESCO in which some items of Vanuatu are. To conclude will try to define the pending issues and urgent needs regarding the safeguarding of ICH.

## 1. Vanuatu

The Republic of Vanuatu is made up of dozen of big islands and 80 small islands in the south-western Pacific Ocean. The archipelago is divided into 6 provinces :Torba (Extreme North), Sanma and Penama (North), Malampa (Central-North), Shefa (Central), Tafea (South). The 12 biggest islands are Santo,

Malakula, Erromango, Efate, Ambrym, Tanna, Pentecost, EpiAmbae, Gaoua, Vanoua-Lava and Maewo.

According to the last census made by the VNSO (Vanuatu National Statistics Office) in 2009 the country has a total population of about 234 000 people, of whom over 90% are indigenous. With over 100 distinct indigenous languages, Vanuatu has the highest linguistic diversity (for its population) in the world - if a language group can be considered a "culture", then Vanuatu is the most culturally-diverse nation on earth / Vanuatu is a multicultural nation. This immense diversity characterises the entire Melanesian region, which also consists of the Fiji Islands, New Caledonia, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the Indonesian Province of Papua. With a total population of less than 10 million people, this region has one-fifth of the world's languages. The Pacific Islands region as a whole is made up of over 20 states and territories in an area covering over half of the world's surface. This region has the highest rate of indigenous people within the national population of any region of the world, and also the highest rate of customary or traditional land ownership.

In Vanuatu, the great majority of people live in their cultural and kin-based communities on their ancestral land. They satisfy most of their food and other requirements using traditional methods and forms of land and resource utilization, on their ancestral land. They speak their indigenous language and they are involved to some extent in traditional customary rituals.

Therefore, Vanuatu's culture and cultural heritage has two distinct characteristics:

- 1) it is a "living culture" – the majority of people live and practice their culture on a daily basis;
- 2) it is by and large an "intangible culture" - because the cultures are not literate, and because almost all material forms of the cultural expression use organic biological materials (which quickly disappear in the tropical environment), cultural heritage is made up of almost entirely of 'intangible' elements that are linked to places in the landscape. (This is similar to the better-known aboriginal culture of Australia, which is rich in "intangible" aspects but has no permanent material forms - such as written texts or buildings – apart from stones and sites).

## **2. What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?**

First of all, we have to precise what Intangible Cultural Heritage - ICH or living heritage consists of practices and expressions, as well as the knowledge, skills and values associated therewith, that communities and groups recognize as part of their cultural heritage. All the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge skills, as well as the associated instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces are culture heritage. This heritage is transmitted from generation to generation, for the most part orally. It is constantly recreated in response to

changes in the social and cultural environment. It provides individuals, groups and communities with a sense of identity and continuity and constitutes a guarantee of sustainable development.

Intangible Cultural Heritage is manifested *inter alia* in the following domains, on the understanding that the expressions of intangible cultural heritage can simultaneously belong to several of these domains:

- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
- performing arts;
- social practices, rituals and festive events;
- knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
- traditional craftsmanship.”

(Article 2.2 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage).

### **3. What does Safeguarding mean?**

According to the Article 2.3 of the Convention for the safeguarding of the ICH, safeguarding means “measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”

Article 2 of this Convention states that the intangible cultural heritage provides communities, groups and individuals with a sense of identity and continuity, while the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage guarantees creativity. However, much of the knowledge and skills linked to music, dance, theatre and traditional craftsmanship, for instance, are in danger of disappearing due to declining numbers of practitioners, growing disinterest of young people and lack of funds.

### **4. Field Survey**

We have conducted this field survey with the help of the questionnaire provided by ICHCAP, Korea. This questionnaire has been developed for several countries and we have to adapt it for each situation. This survey is a first step, which leads to a final cultural mapping in Vanuatu.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Efforts project coordinators emphasize in the process of preparing the field survey, it was discovered the benefits and responsibilities of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Vanuatu will be presented and promoted to the communities. Field study and meetings with

cultural dance group from five provinces to research the following Intangible Cultural Heritage of Vanuatu.

Heritage management is well recognized, passing on things of value to the next generation. There is a growing recognition, nationally and globally, that protection, conservation, and promotion of cultural heritage contributes hugely to the social well-being of regions, communities, families and individuals.

It provides a sense of place, instills understanding and pride in who we are, where we have come from and how we can shape the future. In this sense, cultural heritage in Vanuatu is everyone's business. It is an important resource for education purposes. Cultural heritage is an important part of the identity of the island and the people who live there. It is also important for the identity of people elsewhere in Vanuatu. The wise management of cultural heritage can also contribute hugely to the economic well-being of the island, communities, families and individuals, through 'tourism', the business generated by both domestic and international visitors to whom experiencing the stories of cultural heritage is an integral part of visiting the island. It is a general truth that what is good for local communities is also good for the conservation of heritage and for visitors.