

## VI. Pending Issues and Urgent Needs

***Q1. Is any of the intangible cultural heritage in your country in danger of disappearance or transformation? What are the reasons the heritage is in danger and what type of safeguarding measures have been taken? Please be specific. (Please include the name of the particular heritage, location, problems encountered, etc.)***

The National Library and Archives had a project (from 2011 – 2014) with the funding support of ICHCAP, South Korea, to survey and document ICH in Bhutan. The research team during the project period undertook trips to several places and met with several ICH practitioners and bearers. From the trip it was learnt that some of the ICH elements are in danger of disappearance and in need of proper attention of ICH guardians.

List of ICH which needs immediate research, documentation and safeguarding measures:

SL. No.	ICH Name	Location	Transformation foreseen	Remarks
1	Shamanistic practices such as pawo, pam Nenjom. Terdag, jomo, etc.	Across the country		Needs documentation to safeguard
2	Oral History/folklore	Across the country	This aspect of ICH is in threat of being lost completely	Needs urgent mapping and recording /documentation
3	Traditional healing practices such as ruto tsugmi (bone setter), dug jibmi (Poison-sucker), etc.	Different districts		Needs documentation

4	Traditional skilled arts such as: a) Chagzo (Iron work/black smithing) b) Slate carving c) Pottery (dzazo) d) Bone work (ruezo) e) Leather work (koso)	Identified places		Needs safeguarding measures
5	Rituals, folk and religious festivals and dances	Across the country		

**Some of the reasons why ICH is in danger are:**

**- Education**

With children going to school these days, the rituals and festivals are beginning to lose their original place of importance and priority in the minds of the younger generation; some of the children and even some grown-ups show disinterest in their own customs and traditions such as death rituals. This being the case, there is a real threat to their transmission within the community as educated youth will drift away from the villages to the urban centres for employment, thus losing the touch with the Lhop community and its cultural practices.

**- Socio-economic Development**

Due to rapid socio-economic development in Bhutan, people are increasingly exposed to modern ways and amenities, thereby threatening the authentic core practices of their customs and traditions. With the changing times and attitudes in the community towards materialism, the traditional character and way of thinking is also changing. Younger generations are now driven by modern thoughts and over time, their age-old culture and traditions is threatened.

**- Oral Tradition**

Most of the customs and traditions are based on oral tradition and do not exist in written form to this day. At present they exist purely in oral form and thus stand the risk of extinction with the passage of time and the passing away of the elderly people who are the keepers of the traditions. Already, the present generation seems to have lost a great deal of the past due to lack of any written documents.

**- Measures taken:**

Realizing the threat posed to ICH, the Royal Government of Bhutan, through different government and non-government organizations, is supporting and encouraging preparation of policies and bills, carrying out research and documentations, conduct of workshops/meetings and bringing of publications on ICH. But what we are doing at present is just a small part, we have long way to go before we could put proper safeguarding measures in place.

***Q2. What are the pending issues for safeguarding ICH in your country that you have found through interviews and the field survey?***

The main issue found through this survey is that there is lack of collaboration and interactions between different organizations which work towards safeguarding of ICH. One organization does not know what other organization is doing in the field of ICH. This may give rise to duplication of safeguarding works. Hence, there is strong need that different organizations meet and discuss, and then seek each other's support. And also through this forum, one organization will know in what field of ICH the other organization working.

This survey in a way helped (the present researcher) to know what different organizations' plan and activities in the field of ICH. The following chart will give glimpse of activities being carried out by different organizations:

SL. No.	ICH Name	Location	Status	Remarks
1	Festivals/ folk rituals	Lhuentse District	Documentation to be carried out	To be implemented by NLAB
2	ICH elements documentation	Select districts	Documentation started	Implemented by NLAB
3	Oral History	Across the country	Mapping to be carried out	funding support to be explored (to be initiated by NLAB)
4	Calligraphy and print heritage			Implemented by NLAB
5	Folks songs/music	Across the country	Documentation underway	??
6	Local dialects	Across the country	Documentation underway	Bhutan Oral??
7	Written heritage and oral traditions	Across the country	Work in progress	Shejun Agency

***Q3. What kind of problems and difficulties were encountered during the safeguarding projects? What future plans are there for the safeguarding of ICH (program information)?***

It is learned that lack of law or legal guidelines and funding support pose main difficulties while undertaking safeguarding projects. As Bhutanese ICH bearing communities are less aware of the importance of safeguarding ICH, receiving cordial support from them is also a problem while undertaking safeguarding activities (i.e. documentation and research) in the field of ICH.

It is hopeful that once Cultural Heritage Bill is passed by the National Assembly, there will be Act and rules and regulations to guide the researchers while carrying out safeguarding activities. As already pointed out above, some ICH safeguarding activities are ongoing while some are awaiting funding support to implement.

***Q4. What type of cooperation from the international society or sub-region is needed for the safeguarding of ICH in your country?***

We need funding support from the international society to implement projects to document some of the endangered ICH elements (as mentioned below) and also need ICH experts' guidance while carrying out safeguarding activities. Besides our ICH researchers or those working in the field of ICH need exposures through participation in the international workshops/meetings so that they know how other countries are working in the field of ICH.

***Q5. What role do you expect ICHCAP to play in safeguarding ICH in the region in terms of programs, projects for information and networking on ICH? Please include any requests and/or suggestions you have on this matter.***

We would like ICHCAP to disseminate ICH related information; organize exhibitions, performances of ICH; organize ICH-related tour programs and ICH international festivals. We would also like to support research and documentation of ICH.

As already mentioned above under Q1, there are some ICH elements which are under threat of being lost forever and they need immediate research and documentation for preservation and public awareness. To mention three important ICH of Bhutan which require immediate documentation:

- 1) *Hungla Sa-nyen (ritual to ward of evils being practiced in Trashigangtse);***
- 2) *Nubi Zhey (classical song and dance of Nubi Gewog of Trongsa);***
- 3) *Ache Lhamo (drama depicting the life of Thangtong Gyalpo, the highly accomplished saint known for building “Iron Chain Bridge”)***

The National Library and Archives, Department of Culture (Royal Government of Bhutan) would like to request ICHCAP to provide funding support for the documentation of the above three ICH. We would like to submit a project proposal if ICHCAP consents to kindly support our request.

Of course, the request we put up may not be directly linked to information and networking which is ICHCAP's primary responsibility, but it may be reminded that to make information available, it is important that we first carry out research and documentation of ICH and it is after this that information will be available for networking.

***Q6. What should be considered to encourage or to ensure active involvement from the community in safeguarding ICH?***

There is need to create awareness-raising of importance of safeguarding the ICH to general public, especially to ICH holding communities, bearers and practitioners and decision makers. And also there is need to institute avenues and opportunities to recognize and honour outstanding efforts of cultural preservation and promotion.