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Intangible Cultural Heritage

Information and exchange meeting on capacity-building approaches under the 2003 Convention

18 June 2026
Room IX and online
Report

Eleventh session of the General Assembly of the
States Parties to the Convention for the
Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

REPORT

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVE

Organized in the context of the eleventh session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the 2003 Convention (17 to 18 June 2026, UNESCO Headquarters), this information and exchange meeting presented the Convention's capacity-building approaches as a key means of support to Member States in ratifying and implementing the Convention, in line with the Intergovernmental Committee's decision at its twentieth session to maintain capacity-building as a funding priority for the quadrennium 2026-2029 (Decision [20.COM 13](#)).

Capacity-building has been central to implementing the 2003 Convention since the launch of the global capacity-building strategy in 2009, supported by voluntary supplementary contributions to the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the 2003 Convention. Since then, capacity-building interventions undertaken under the Convention have strengthened the safeguarding of living heritage across all regions through tailored support delivered by members of the global facilitators network, which has grown from a small core group to over **240 experts**. In the 2022 – 2025 quadrennium alone, it has supported over **125 States Parties** in strengthening policies and safeguarding frameworks, as well as more than **40 countries** through specific initiatives linking intangible cultural heritage with sustainable development, education, foodways and disaster risk reduction. It has also enhanced capacities in nomination processes, responses in contexts of conflict and displacement, and periodic reporting (the latter reaching over 180 States Parties, with submission rates ranging between 87,5% to 100% across regions).



240+

experts composing the
Global facilitators network



125

States Parties supported in the
2022 – 2025 quadrennium alone



180+

States Parties reached with the
Periodic Reporting cycle

40+

countries supported through
specific initiatives

87.5%-100%

submission rates across regions

OBJECTIVE

The meeting aimed to demonstrate how Member States can access and benefit from the programme's capacity-building approaches. Particular attention was paid to:

- Recent developments and innovative initiatives which reflect increasingly flexible, multi-modal modalities (including the UNESCO [Learning Platform for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage](#) launched in May 2025).
- The role and functioning of the facilitators network as the operational backbone of implementation support. It will highlight tools and opportunities for engagement.
- The future directions of Funding Priority A (2026-2029) 'Enhancing capacity-building approaches for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage with a focus on human well-being and community empowerment', which places inclusion at its core and seeks to further strengthen the facilitators network, amongst others.

MAIN DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The meeting was attended by over 140 participants, both in-person and online, bringing together delegates from Member States of UNESCO, facilitators from the global network, Unesco Chairs, category 2 centres and NGO representatives. In the first part of the meeting, the Secretariat provided an overview of capacity building approaches under the 2003 Convention, explaining the importance of capacity building and how it links to safeguarding, the main components and levers of action offered by UNESCO, and how these approaches are operationalized.

In the second part of the meeting, three members of the Global facilitators' network shared their experience in three key areas of capacity-building work:

- **Janet Blake, Director of accredited NGO Persian Garden Institute for Living Heritage (Iran)**, shared an experience on supporting States in the development of strategies for policy implementation. She highlighted her role as a co-facilitator with a national expert, a combination that made it possible to bring global insights into local experiences. A key outcome was the creation of a network of provincial officers in the area of living heritage policy. She also emphasized that one of the main conditions for success being the needs-analysis operated in preparation for capacity building activities.
- **Monalisa Maharjan, Resident Representative (Nepal) in the South Asia Institute of Heidelberg University**, presented an experience of accompanying communities and national authorities in a community-based inventorying exercise. She explained the important role of local governments and emphasized that the facilitator's role extends beyond delivering content. Facilitators also act as a bridge between institutional and community stakeholders, conveying the importance of inventorying for transmission and overall viability of living heritage elements. Ensuring women participation and engagement was another key aspect of the facilitator's role. As a result of the exercise, the element was included in the national inventory, which further strengthened the community's engagement with living heritage safeguarding.
- **Martin Andrade, Researcher at the Erigae Foundation (Colombia)**, and Lecturer in Cultural Heritage at the Reinwardt Academy (Amsterdam University of the Arts, The Netherlands), presented an experience of capacity building for living heritage safeguarding in situations of conflict and forced displacement. He emphasized the value of working in tandem with a facilitator from the region, which allowed for a combination of thematic and regional expertise. As cultural sensitivity and mutual respect are of utmost importance in such contexts, the global network of facilitators enabled collective reflection on the most appropriate approaches to adopt. Mobilizing important stakeholders and raising awareness for living heritage safeguarding among humanitarian actors were key outputs of the activity, which explored the relation between host communities and refugees, and developed recommendations based on community experience. Overall, the facilitator underlined how the experience highlighted the importance of working on living heritage safeguarding in situations of conflict and forced displacement.

Following the experience-sharing panel on capacity building approaches in action, UNESCO's Assistant Director-General for Culture, Mr Nayef Al-Fayez, welcomed participants and emphasized the importance of UNESCO's action and ongoing its collaboration with Member States for safeguarding living heritage. Finally, an open discussion allowed participants to raise key areas where States expressed a need for guidance and support from UNESCO, notably on artificial intelligence and living heritage safeguarding, particularly regarding its implications for

human rights, intellectual property rights, cultural sovereignty and digital equity. The exchange highlighted the ongoing work and reflections, underscoring the relevance of UNESCO's standard-setting instruments, in particular the 2021 Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence, as well as current considerations and opportunities and challenges posed by artificial intelligence within the framework of the 2003 Convention, in partnership with UNESCO Chair on Intangible Cultural Heritage in Public and Global Governance from the University of Warsaw (Poland).

States Parties, including some of the most recent to the Convention, also took the floor to emphasize the important work carried out by UNESCO at the country level through the field offices, which play a key role in identifying the needs and tailoring capacity-building approaches to local needs and contexts.

In conclusion, the meeting met its objectives and reaffirmed the importance of capacity building under the 2003 Convention. Through a combination of key figures and information, experience-sharing by facilitators, and an open exchange with participants, it provided an opportunity to engage all major stakeholders of the 2003 Convention in a meaningful dialogue on the complementary roles of each actor. These include facilitators, communities, States, Unesco Chairs and category 2 centres active in the field of intangible cultural heritage, in the design and implementation of capacity-building approaches that respond effectively to current and emerging challenges in safeguarding living heritage around the world.