**CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE  
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE  
SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

**Seventeenth session**

**Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco**

**28 November to 3 December 2022**

**Item 11 of the provisional agenda:**

**Strategy for the monitoring, evaluation and identification of lessons learnt   
for International Assistance projects**

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| **Summary**  This document presents the Strategy for the monitoring, evaluation and lessons learnt for International Assistance projects, clarifying its objectives and a set of specific actions that will be undertaken to meet the overall goal.  **Decision required:** paragraph 14 |

**Introduction**

1. International Assistance is one of the pillars of the international cooperation mechanism under the 2003 Convention that has been in operation since 2008. This mechanism aims to support the efforts of States Parties, drawing upon the resources under the Fund for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (hereafter ‘the Fund’), to safeguard intangible cultural heritage present in their territories. Chapter V of the Convention defines the purposes (Article 19) and forms (Article 20) of International Assistance as well as the conditions governing the mechanism (Article 22). Furthermore, all States Parties to the Convention may submit requests for International Assistance (Article 23) to the Committee. Once International Assistance has been granted, specific projects are regulated by means of an agreement between the beneficiary State Party and the Committee, and the beneficiary State Party shall submit to the Committee a report on the use made of the assistance provided for the safeguarding of its intangible cultural heritage (Article 24). In addition, the Operational Directives set out details on how the mechanism is administered, including the selection criteria, the timeline, and the procedure for selecting International Assistance requests.
2. The safeguarding projects financed by the Fund have become comprehensive, covering inventorying, awareness raising, transmission, revitalization, as well as building the capacities of communities and national institutions and the inclusion of intangible cultural heritage in education, among others. They are also carried out in different parts of the world by a variety of actors. Through their implementation, International Assistance projects raise pertinent questions on different aspects of the Convention. In this way, this mechanism could be an important source of information regarding the implementation of the Convention.
3. At the same time, it was identified that a robust and systematic system for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the International Assistance mechanism needs to be set up. It has been found that it is difficult to assess and consolidate the outcomes of the funded projects solely through the reports submitted by beneficiary States Parties. The Secretariat therefore reported to the sixteenth session of the Committee (document [LHE/21/16.COM 7.d](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-7.d-EN.docx)) and the ninth session of the General Assembly (documents [LHE/22/9.GA.10](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-9.GA-10-EN.docx) and [LHE/22/9.GA/INF.10](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-22-9.GA-INF.10-EN.docx)) that it intends to develop a strategy aimed at further operationalizing the International Assistance mechanism with a specific monitoring and evaluation system, to be presented to the seventeenth session of the Committee. The preparation of the Strategy has been undertaken by the Safeguarding, Implementation and Monitoring Team, established in October 2019 following the approval by the seventh session of the General Assembly in July 2018 of the creation of three extra-budgetary posts (Resolution [7.GA 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.GA/8)).
4. In parallel, the Internal Oversight Service (IOS)'s evaluation in 2021 of UNESCO's action in the framework of the 2003 Convention, presented to the sixteenth session of the Committee, identified a number of issues and made recommendations for how to better utilize International Assistance (Decision [16.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/10); documents [LHE/21/16.COM/10 Rev.](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-10_Rev.-EN.docx) and [LHE/21/16.COM/INF.10 Rev.](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/LHE-21-16.COM-INF.10_Rev.-EN.pdf)). The Secretariat noted that certain actions relating to the IOS recommendations were already underway and that one of the main challenges for strengthening the monitoring and evaluation was the need for sustainable budgetary resources. This led to the proposal to the ninth session of the General Assembly to incorporate a budgetary mechanism to finance the monitoring and evaluation system for the International Assistance mechanism. In turn, that session of the General Assembly authorized the use, on an experimental basis, of an amount not exceeding 10 per cent of the approved budget of each International Assistance project to monitor and assess the impact of projects supported by the Fund (Resolution [9.GA 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/10)).
5. This document presents the Strategy for the monitoring, evaluation and identification of lessons learnt for International Assistance projects (hereafter ‘the Strategy’), clarifying its objectives together with a set of specific actions that will be undertaken to meet the overall goal.

**The objective of the Strategy**

1. The objective of the Strategy is to establish a systematized approach whereby the monitoring and evaluation of each individual International Assistance project granted under the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund will also feed into the overall monitoring and evaluation of the International Assistance mechanism. The goal is to better track the effectiveness of the mechanism in contributing to the implementation of the Convention, and to do so by aligning its monitoring and evaluation with the Overall Results Framework of the 2003 Convention, which was adopted by the seventh session of the General Assembly of the States Parties to the Convention in 2018 (Resolution [7.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.GA/9)). Reflecting the spirit of the 2003 Convention, which places communities, groups and individuals at the centre of its implementation, the monitoring and evaluation of International Assistance shall be carried out by incorporating the views of the project beneficiaries.

**Alignment with the Overall Results Framework of the Convention**

1. The overall results framework was prepared as a tool to measure the impact of the 2003 Convention at various levels through clearly identified objectives, indicators and benchmarks. The framework is composed of two tables: the first table includes the high-level framework, where the impacts, expected outcomes and eight thematic areas are identified and a set of twenty-six core indicators have been established; the second table presents the core indicators and an associated set of eighty-six assessment factors arranged by thematic areas. The alignment of the evaluation and monitoring of the International Assistance mechanism with the Overall Results Framework was recommend by the 2021 IOS evaluation of UNESCO's action in the framework of the Convention (Recommendation 6, see below).

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| **Recommendation 6**  The Living Heritage Entity should strengthen the quality of project design, monitoring and outcomes reporting to be guided by the Overall Results Framework. Specific attention should furthermore be given to community engagement, sustainable development and gender equality, among other areas. |

1. The idea is to connect the indicators for the objectives and results of individual International Assistance projects with the twenty-six core indicators which cover all key aspects of the Convention on issues related to: a) institutional and human capacities; b) transmission and education; c) inventorying and research; d) policies as well as legal and administrative measures, e) the role of intangible cultural heritage and its safeguarding in society; f) awareness raising; g) the engagement of communities, groups and individuals as well as other stakeholders, and; h) international engagement. This approach would allow for a holistic understanding of the impact of the International Assistance mechanism on the implementation of the Convention, beyond a mere reference to the purposes of International Assistance as given in paragraph 9 of the Operational Directives.

**Enhanced monitoring**

1. Timely and pertinent monitoring is important for keeping track of the implementation of each International Assistance project during its implementation. To this end, the following plans have been made:

* The current ICH-04 Form for submitting International Assistance and reporting form on the implementation of projects (narrative interim report(s) as well as a final report), will continue to be filled out by the beneficiary States. The structure of these forms is being revised by the Secretariat. The aim is to collect meaningful qualitative and quantitative data at the individual project level on sustainable development and including gender equality, amongst other areas.
* The monitoring form shall contain information on the implementation of the project, as against the objectives and timeline initially established, as well as on community involvement, the sustainability of the results and any remedial actions required.
* Monitoring will be undertaken both by the implementing agency and by the Secretariat (the latter including through the relevant UNESCO field offices and in collaboration with the implementing agency). The Strategy is based on the idea that the communities and stakeholders involved in the project should play a central part in its monitoring, so that their concerns and aspirations are reflected.
* As a general rule, monitoring is a continuous process. However, the frequency of monitoring will be determined with the implementing agency at the time at which the contract is established with UNESCO, along with the project duration and payment schedule.

**Enhanced evaluation**

1. In order to assess the results of each individual project, an evaluation will take place at the project level, for which the following plans have been made:

* The ICH-04 Form for submitting International Assistance requests will be revised and will now include a new evaluation form in order to support the Strategy and to ensure a common framework for assessments.
* The evaluation of individual International Assistance projects may be entrusted either to an expert from the directory of the UNESCO Evaluation Knowledge Hub with experience in assessing projects in the field of culture and cultural heritage, or to one of the facilitators of the global capacity-building programme of the Convention.
* The evaluator will work according to a plan and timetable, conduct a mission if and when necessary, and collect data using the evaluation form together with other tools (interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, community meetings, fieldwork reports, critical event / incident analyses and participatory evaluations, among others).
* The frequency with which projects are evaluated will be established according to the project's total budget. Typically, there will be one evaluation at the end of a project. In certain cases, either for large projects or when specific problems arise, an evaluation may be carried out during the implementation of a project.

**Improved knowledge management system**

1. The effective monitoring and evaluation of International Assistance projects and the International Assistance mechanism as a whole will generate a large amount of technical information. Consequently, the expansion of the Convention's knowledge management system forms an important part of the Strategy. The enhanced system should be able to cope with a large amount of qualitative and quantitative data as well as to consolidate the combined results of individual projects. The information obtained will also be made visual and disseminated to the stakeholders of the Convention in order to communicate the results, impact, lessons learnt and good practices.

**Ways forward**

1. The Strategy can begin to be implemented in January 2023 and will be applied to International Assistance projects approved during the second half of 2022 and beyond. This will follow the publication of the ICH-04 Form and the associated forms for reporting, monitoring and evaluation, which is scheduled to take place by the end of 2022 at the latest. The implementation status of the Strategy will be reported to the Committee regularly; a substantive report will be made on an annual basis as part of the item of the Committee agenda relating to reports by States Parties on the use of International Assistance from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. The financial implications will be reported on a biannual basis as part of the financial report concerning the use of the resources of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. Reporting to the Committee will be complemented by reporting to the General Assembly of the Convention, which meets every two years.
2. The overall idea of the Strategy is based on the premise that the substantive follow-up and analytical review of the impact of such projects will help States Parties to safeguard their intangible cultural heritage in the long term. The combined safeguarding experience of different individual projects will in turn make up the ‘operationality’ of the mechanism in terms of its contribution to the implementation of the Convention as a whole. The successful implementation of the mechanism largely depends on the quality of each individual project – which should include a clear description of the objectives and activities, accompanied by a realistic budget and timetable that is prepared carefully and realistically with the engagement of the communities and other stakeholders concerned. To this end, additional actions have been undertaken or planned to support the promote of the International Assistance with a capacity-building approach, particularly amongst those regions that have not yet benefitted fully from this mechanism. The [Toolkit on International Assistance of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund](https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/53724-EN.pdf) is one example of such actions, as it presents background information on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, as well as basic tools to plan a project and draft effective proposals for International Assistance.

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1. The Committee may wish to adopt the following decision:

DRAFT DECISION 17.COM 11

The Committee,

1. Having examined document LHE/22/17.COM/11,
2. Recalling Resolutions [7.GA 8](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.GA/8) and [7.GA 9](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/7.GA/8) as well as Decision [16.COM 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/16.COM/10),
3. Further recalling Recommendation 6 of the 2021 Internal Oversight Service evaluation of UNESCO's actions in the framework of the Convention,
4. Also recalling Resolution [9.GA 10](https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/9.GA/10) authorizing the Secretariat to use, on an experimental basis, resources under the Fund of the Convention for the monitoring and evaluation of International Assistance projects,
5. Welcomes the proposed Strategy for the monitoring, evaluation and identification of lessons learnt for International Assistance projects, in line with the 2021 Internal Oversight Service evaluation, appreciating in particular that the Strategy is aligned with the Overall Results Framework of the Convention in order to assess the effectiveness of the International Assistance mechanism for the implementation of the Convention;
6. Takes note that the Strategy will be supported by the revised ICH-04 Forms which is accompanied by the new evaluation form;
7. Requests that the Secretariat begin rolling out the Strategy and that it report regularly the progress of its implementation from a substantive perspective and on the use of the resources of the Fund, through the established statutory reporting systems, for examination by the Committee.