Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Southern Africa
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ACRONYMS
Btv    Botswana television
CSO    Civil society organization
CUT    Chinhoyi University of Technology
ICH    Intangible Cultural Heritage
MBC    Malawi Broadcasting Company
MYSC   Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture
NGO    Non-Governmental Organization
NICHC  National Intangible Cultural Heritage Committee
SAICH Platform
SAICH IMS Southern Africa Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventorying Management System
SDG    Sustainable Development Goal
ToF    Trainer of Trainers
ZITF   Zimbabwe International Trade Fair
MDG    Millennium Development Goal
ROSA   UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa
SADC   Southern African Development Community
SCD    Sustainable Cooperation Development
UN     United Nations
UNESCO United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
“...cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also includes our traditions, beliefs, customs and cultural practices. It captures our living expressions inherited from our ancestors and transmitted from one generation to another.”

PROF. DR. HUBERT GIJZEN

Regional Director and Representative of UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa
Foreword

Beer in Belgium. Yoga in India. Coffee in Turkey. The Jerusarema Dance in Zimbabwe. Tango in Argentina and Uruguay. On first glance it seems to be a summary of randomly chosen cultural practices from each region; five elements that probably come to your mind when you think of these countries. However, the given examples are not randomly chosen. There is a link between them. All are examples of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as they appear in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

UNESCO believes that cultural heritage is not limited to monuments and collections of objects. It also includes our traditions, beliefs, customs and cultural practices. It captures our living expressions inherited from our ancestors and transmitted from one generation to another. It encompasses oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, traditional craftsmanship and knowledge, and practices concerning nature and the universe. This is what we call intangible cultural heritage.

Since its foundation, UNESCO has worked on the safeguarding and promotion of ICH. Among its efforts are programmes such as the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore launched in 1989, the Living Human Treasure system launched in 1993, and the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity launched in 1998. However, a major breakthrough came in 2003 with the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The main goal of this Convention is to ensure the safeguarding of ICH in all its forms. It also aims to raise awareness on the importance of intangible cultural heritage at local, national and international level. Additionally, the Convention provides opportunities to increase international cooperation and assistance.

Since its adoption on 17 October 2003, eight of the nine countries covered by the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa (ROSA) have ratified the Convention. This impressive rate of ratification reflects the great interest in ICH in the sub-Saharan region.

UNESCO, in partnership with the Government of Flanders, has therefore undertaken several initiatives to build capacities at community, national and sub-regional level to strengthen the implementation of the 2003 Convention. In total, three major projects were carried out. Thanks to these projects, awareness on the concept of ICH, the 2003 Convention, and the importance of ICH in society has been raised, and communities, government institutions and civil society have been provided with the necessary tools to inventorize and document their ICH.

UNESCO fully appreciates the support it has received from the Government of Flanders. The support has enabled us to fulfil our commitments to the States Parties of this region. We call upon other development partners to join hands with us in our quest to protect, promote and transmit heritage.
Sustainable Cooperation Development (SCD): that is the golden formula and valuable lesson that our colleagues from Southern Africa are willing to share with us. The government and civil society in Flanders (Belgium), among others via the General Representation of the Government of Flanders at UNESCO, the accredited non-governmental organization (NGO) Flanders Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage (FARO), and other mediators had the chance to be their partner in this series of projects on safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. They were facilitated financially through the Government of Flanders – UNESCO Fund-in-Trust – and implemented by the UNESCO Culture Sector in the UNESCO offices in Windhoek and Harare, the latter of which became the UNESCO Regional Office for Southern Africa in 2015.

I had the luck and the honour to see it all grow and flourish in the last seven years, from afar in Europe and from nearby in Africa. In June 2011, Ms. Freda Tawana (Namibia) and Mr. Christopher Magomelo (Malawi) were part of a delegation that came to Belgium for nine days to meet and work with NGOs, heritage communities and civil servants active in safeguarding ICH in Flanders.

Christopher informed us first-hand about the ongoing pilot projects in “community-based intangible heritage inventorying” in Malawi, next to Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia. A year later, in September 2012, I had the privilege of participating as a facilitator together with Mr. Lovemore Mazibuko (Malawi) in a four day workshop in Harare on strengthening national capacities for implementing the 2003 Convention.
Already at that time, the participants formulated their dream of setting up an exchange platform for the participating countries. When I came back to Harare in March 2014, the sequence of the ICH safeguarding projects multiplied in its impact and brought together seven Anglophone countries of Southern Africa. At this stage, with Mr. Mazibuko and my colleague facilitator Mr. Steven Chifunyise from Zimbabwe, we were joined by a number of other local ICH facilitators from Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Next to serious talks about policy plans, safeguarding and operational directives and the warm musical intermezzos by Mr. Chris Timbe, we have realized that the sustained development of cooperation reached new highs and started taking a more concrete form of a “coordination platform attached to a higher education institution”.

In Chinhoyi University, some 100 kilometres out of Harare, a team of experts, already trained in the framework of the Flanders-financed projects, laid the foundation of what became the Southern Africa Intangible Cultural Heritage cooperation platform, or the SAICH.

I have also observed some original solutions in capacity-building for ICH safeguarding, such as the training of trainers concept aimed at securing the necessary expertise and continuity of ICH safeguarding processes at country level. SAICH, in the meantime, engaged in some important research work in the field of ICH policies and ethics specifically related to the Southern African context.

All these years I embraced the opportunity to meet and listen to my colleagues from Southern Africa in the General Assembly and intergovernmental committee and meetings, with the legendary Namibia meeting in December 2015 as a culmination point. In that Windhoek intergovernmental committee meeting, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN Agenda 2030 found their way in the draft sixth chapter of the Operational Directives of the 2003 Convention. They were adapted and then adopted in 2016 by the General Assembly. That those SDGs will colour the next years of implementing the 2003 Convention is obvious. But I also believe that (sub)regional SCD will be a basic frame and method for organizing capacity-building and for preparing the reports for the 2003 Convention’s results-based framework.

I do hope that intercontinental or interregional exchange, support and results sharing, as I and Flanders had the privilege to experience, can also still be part of that evolution. In any case, the experiments in Southern Africa in sharing and building capacities in (policy-making for) safeguarding intangible cultural heritage have designed a way to go further.

“...I also believe that (sub)regional SCD will be a basic frame and method for organizing capacity-building and for preparing the reports for the 2003 Convention’s results-based framework.”
Mbira/Sansi, a traditional music instrument in Zimbabwe and Malawi”
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What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?

Intangible cultural heritage ICH is not easy to define. When we think of heritage, we mostly think of buildings, ruins, archaeological objects, etc. Heritage, however, does not end at monuments and collections of objects. It also includes the stories we tell, the events we celebrate, the languages we speak, the food we eat and the songs we sing, etc. This is what we call intangible cultural heritage. ICH covers the traditions and living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants.

Intangible cultural heritage can therefore best be defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity”. In this definition we can separate five domains in which ICH is manifested:

- 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.

Intangible cultural heritage is important as it gives us a sense of identity and belonging, linking our past, through the present, with our future. An understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities also helps with intercultural dialogue, and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life. Intangible cultural heritage is of both social and economic importance. It aids social cohesion and helps individuals to feel part of a community and of society at large.

While fragile, intangible cultural heritage is an important factor in maintaining cultural diversity in the face of growing globalization, an understanding of the intangible cultural heritage of different communities helps with intercultural dialogue and encourages mutual respect for other ways of life. The importance of ICH is not the cultural manifestation itself but rather the wealth of knowledge and skills that is transmitted through it from one generation to the next. The social and economic value of this transmission of knowledge is relevant for minority groups and for mainstream social groups within a state and it is as important for developing States as for developed ones.

Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is protecting our legacy from the past. We build our identities from stories, traditions, objects and monuments that conjure up our ancestors’ past.

Intangible cultural heritage is:
- Traditional, contemporary and living at the same time: intangible cultural heritage does not only represent inherited traditions from the past but also contemporary rural and urban practices in which diverse cultural groups take part.
• Inclusive: we may share expressions of intangible cultural heritage that are similar to those practiced by others. Whether they are from the neighbouring village, from a city on the opposite side of the world, or have been adapted by peoples who have migrated and settled in a different region, they all are intangible cultural heritage: they have been passed from one generation to another, have evolved in response to their environments and they contribute to giving us a sense of identity and continuity, providing a link from our past, through the present, and into our future. Intangible cultural heritage does not give rise to questions of whether or not certain practices are specific to a culture. It contributes to social cohesion, encouraging a sense of identity and responsibility which helps individuals to feel part of one or different communities and to feel part of society at large.

• Representative: intangible cultural heritage is not merely valued as a cultural good, on a comparative basis, for its exclusivity or its exceptional value. It thrives on its basis in communities and depends on those whose knowledge of traditions, skills and customs are passed on to the rest of the community, from generation to generation, or to other communities.

• Community-based: intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups or individuals that create, maintain and transmit it – without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage.

“Intangible cultural heritage can therefore best be defined as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.”
One of the most important tools to safeguard ICH worldwide is the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Convention was adopted during the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO and is the result of long-standing efforts that have been in place since the foundation of the organization. It is the first binding multilateral instrument for the safeguarding of ICH, and builds upon and reinforces existing international agreements, recommendations and resolutions concerning cultural and natural heritage, serving as a framework for developing policies that reflect current international thinking in preserving cultural diversity and safeguarding ICH.

The Convention has four primary goals:
1. **Safeguarding** intangible cultural heritage.
2. **Ensuring** respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups and individuals concerned.
3. **Raising** awareness at local, national and international level about the importance of intangible cultural heritage.
4. **Providing** for international cooperation and assistance.

The term “safeguarding” emphasizes that the main objective of the Convention is to ensure the long-term viability of ICH within communities and groups. “Safeguarding” is defined in Article 2 of the Convention as: “Measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage.”

In order to achieve sustainable safeguarding of ICH, the 2003 Convention has established two lists, an idea that has been borrowed from the World Heritage List. By inscribing elements on one of the two lists, UNESCO wants to help state parties to safeguard their ICH by providing technical assistance and professional training. The lists also encourages state parties to establish management plans to ensure the protection of their ICH.

The first list is the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (“the Representative List”). This list, which contains a massive 365 elements, has been established to ensure better visibility of ICH and raise awareness of its importance, as well as encourage a dialogue respecting cultural diversity. The list is made up of those ICH elements that help demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and increase recognition of its significance.

Article 17 of the Convention establishes the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (“the Urgent Safeguarding List”). This list has been created to take appropriate safeguarding measures for ICH elements under threat, and consists of 47 ICH elements that require urgent measures in order to keep them alive. Inscriptions on this list help to mobilize international cooperation and assistance for stakeholders to undertake appropriate safeguarding measures.

In addition to the two Lists, the 2003 Convention also established the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices, which contains programmes, projects and activities that best reflect the principles and objectives of the Convention. So far, 17 elements have been inscribed.
The 2003 Convention was enforced in 2006, and the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is the body responsible for its implementation. During its annual meetings, the committee evaluates the nominations proposed by state parties and decides whether or not to inscribe those cultural practices and expressions of intangible heritage on the Convention’s Lists. The Committee has several other core functions, including promoting the objectives of the 2003 Convention, providing guidance on best practices, and making recommendations on measures for the safeguarding of ICH.

To help member states effectively implement the Convention, UNESCO has developed a global capacity-building strategy that assists in the creation of institutional and professional environments favourable to the sustainable safeguarding of ICH and the promotion of broad public knowledge and support for the Convention’s concepts and objectives.

The global strategy’s primary objective is to ensure the development of sustainable safeguarding capacities within countries through:

- Adequate policies and legal frameworks;
- Solid capacity (at both central and decentralized levels) to carry out community-based inventorying approaches as a first step in forming safeguarding plans;
- Sufficient knowledge and skills to develop concrete safeguarding plans for the well-being and development of the communities concerned.

This strategy also aims to provide a diverse complement of interventions over the course of several years – designed according to each state’s needs – to strengthen and solidify its human and institutional capacities for safeguarding. While workshops and training activities are the most visible landmarks within the capacity-building strategy, they are embedded within an integrated process of international cooperation and technical assistance to each beneficiary state. In addition, consultancies provide support to states in strengthening national laws and policies for safeguarding ICH. The various activities are organized according to the specific needs of beneficiary states and provide ongoing support for putting the means in place to implement the 2003 Convention effectively.
Kabwe dancers  
Zambia  
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ICH BEFORE THE 2003 CONVENTION

The 2003 Convention is not the first attempt in order to safeguard ICH. Prior to the 2003 Convention, UNESCO had carried out a number of activities to promote the safeguarding of ICH worldwide. Among them are the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore in 1989, the Living Human Treasure system in 1993 and the Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity in 1998. Throughout these activities, the concept of ICH developed in response to political, economic, social and cultural environments.

The success of the 1972 World Heritage Convention and the importance attached to the protection of immovable cultural and natural properties had overshadowed the significance of other forms of heritage and of cultural production as means of development. Therefore a world conference on cultural policies, known as Mondiacult, was held in Mexico City in 1982. The purpose of the conference was to review knowledge and experience gained on cultural policies and practices since the Venice conference in 1970, to promote research about the fundamental problems of culture in the contemporary world, to formulate new guidelines to promote cultural development in general development projects and to facilitate international cultural cooperation. One of the main achievements of the Mondiacult Conference was its redefinition of culture. It stated that heritage now also covered all the values of culture as expressed in everyday life, and growing importance was being attached to activities calculated to sustain the ways of life and forms of expression by which such values were conveyed. The Conference remarked that the attention now being given to the preservation of the intangible heritage may be regarded as one of the most constructive developments of the past decade. It was one of the first times that the term “intangible heritage” was officially used.

In 1989, seven years after Mondiacult, the General Conference adopted the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore. This Recommendation was the first legal instrument of its kind oriented towards the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and therefore reflecting the wishes that had been expressed in the Mondiacult Conference. However, the Recommendation itself raised awareness of the need to devote special attention to intangible cultural heritage related domains.

One of the biggest threats to the viability of intangible cultural heritage is posed by declining numbers of practitioners of traditional craftsmanship, music, dance or theatre, and of those who are in a position to learn from them. An effective way to safeguard ICH sustainably is to ensure that the bearers of this heritage continue to transmit their knowledge and skills to younger generations. Therefore UNESCO encourages states to establish a national system of Living Human Treasures. In this perspective, exemplary bearers of intangible cultural heritage are identified, among whom some are given official recognition and encouraged to continue to develop and transmit their knowledge and skills. Living Human Treasures are persons who possess to a high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating specific elements of the intangible cultural heritage. The Living Human Treasures programme, which was launched in 1993, aims at encouraging member states to grant official recognition to talented tradition
bearers and practitioners, thus contributing to the transmission of their knowledge and skills to the younger generations.

The Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity was launched in 1998. This programme represented a major step set towards raising awareness on a worldwide scale on the need of safeguarding such forms of heritage and conducted a study on the possibility to develop a standard-setting instrument for the protection of traditional culture and folklore. The aim of the Proclamation was to raise awareness on the importance of intangible heritage by establishing a new form of international distinction. In 2001, 2003 and 2005, 90 elements were proclaimed Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, creating a worldwide movement for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage.
Between 2009 and 2017, the Government of Flanders supported the field of ICH through a series of projects to assist several Sub-Saharan African countries with the implementation of the 2003 Convention and the safeguarding of their intangible cultural heritage.

Unlike tangible heritage that is conventionally managed by heritage experts, such as architects, archaeologists, and conservators, ICH requires a participatory approach, making the communities, the actual bearers of ICH, one of the key actors in the safeguarding process.

With this in mind, the sequence of these projects identified and involved all levels of society in the concerned countries: community, civil society organizations (CSOs), local authorities and central governments. Particular attention was also given to the role of women and youth in safeguarding process.

In the second half of the sequence, in 2013, the process was “elevated” to the sub-regional level, thus bringing closer all seven participating Southern African countries, with the objective of ensuring their expertise become a joint and shared one. In this context, the Southern Africa Intangible Cultural Heritage (SAICH) platform plays the key role in coordinating the efforts among them. The various activities of the projects therefore not only strengthened the relations between the different communities, but also invigorated the ties among the involved countries. The projects provided a voice to the communities, and fostered an active involvement of both men and women in the safeguarding process. In a broader context, these projects demonstrated that safeguarding ICH can provide valuable social and economic benefits and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 Agenda as well as, formerly, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The achievements can easily be interpreted in the context of the African Union Agenda 2063 and more particularly, in the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) regional integration.

This unique example of ICH safeguarding spanning the Southern African region was achieved thanks exclusively to the continuous support of the Government of Flanders, representing an excellent example of good practices. The following sections of this publication outline these achievements in more detail, as well as where the Southern African ICH experts believe this process may lead them.
1. Community based inventorying ICH at Grassroots-Level 2009-2010
The first project that was funded by the Government of Flanders focused on the first goal and main objective of the Convention, namely safeguarding ICH. As stated in the definition, ICH is transmitted from generation to generation, constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature, and their history. Communities and groups are thus the most important actors in this safeguarding process. The project therefore aimed to conduct a series of pilot projects with the objective to inventorize ICH at grassroots-level in six sub-Saharan countries, namely Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland, Uganda and Zambia. The project started in 2009 and ran until 2010, and was conducted and supported by the UNESCO offices in Harare (Zimbabwe), Nairobi (Kenya) and Windhoek (Namibia).

Goals of the project
The project had two main objectives, namely to strengthen the safeguarding capacities of the beneficiary countries; and assist the beneficiary countries in developing capacities for establishing inventories. To reach these goals, UNESCO had to take several steps, including assisting community members to conduct community-based inventorying, documenting and safeguarding of ICH, and training cultural officers and the Ministries of Culture on how to undertake inventorying of ICH with the widest possible participation of the communities. Additionally, awareness about the concept of ICH, the 2003 Convention, and the importance of ICH in society needed to be raised.

Implementation Strategy
The project was implemented in four stages, the first being the selection of communities. Since active community participation is vital to ensure the smooth execution of the safeguarding process, UNESCO requested each beneficiary country to identify and propose one community for the implementation of this pilot approach. The following communities were selected: Kgatleng District (Botswana), Menkhoaneng and Botha-Bothe District (Lesotho), Lhomwe District (Malawi), Malindza and Ntfonjeni District (Swaziland), Budondo District (Uganda) and Chipata District (Zambia). In addition, to optimize the active participation of the communities, various community members were involved in the project, such as school teachers, who took part in workshops on ICH with a view to integrating ICH and the 2003 Convention into school curricula. Local media were also mobilized to broadcast programmes on ICH for awareness-raising.

At the beginning of the project, the selected communities were not familiar with ICH or the 2003 Convention. Organizing capacity-building workshops in order to raise awareness on these concepts was therefore the second stage of the process. One workshop was held in each country, as close as possible to the selected communities. The workshops included 18-24 participants, varying from local/national cultural officers to community members, and gender balance was an important goal in the selection of the participants. Several topics were tackled during the workshops, and participants were trained in the basic understanding of ICH, research planning and design, and technical skills in documentation and description.

Upon completion of the workshop, participants carried out a two-day field exercise, the third stage of the process, during which they practiced their newly acquired skills. They also noted the challenges they encountered for future improvement of the techniques and methodologies used. The fieldwork was led by a local coordinator who was responsible for centralizing the collected information, as well as ensuring that the information was available in one of the national languages for the purpose of information sharing. While the community members were the primary beneficiaries of these training exercises, other experts from relevant CSOs and governmental agencies responsible for culture also participated. Their full immersion in the inventorying process was important for a better understanding of the ICH safeguarding context at the country level, thus contributing to the sustainability of the Convention implementation.
The fourth and final stage of the process was an evaluation of the project, which consisted of follow-up sessions in order to evaluate the quality of the conducted exercises and improve the methodologies used. The follow-up sessions also served as a debriefing session for the fieldworkers and encouraged discussions about the ways in which the communities and national authorities will continue the inventorying process in a sustainable manner. The question of storage of the acquired information was addressed as well. While it is desirable that the documentation is stored at national level to ensure safe keeping, it should also remain within the community for easy access, consultation and updating. The documentation was therefore stored at community centres where such centres existed, and, in cases where such a centre was did not exist, the development of community centres was encouraged as a way of enhancing community activities and fostering a sense of ownership of the ICH documentation by the communities.

2. Strengthening national capacities for safeguarding ICH(2011-2013)

As a result of the remarkable achievements of the first project, and in order to consolidate and further build upon its efforts and results, the Government of Flanders extended its support. The safeguarding process, the first goal of the 2003 Convention and focus of the first project, was continued and the scope was expanded to include its other three goals, thereby ensuring a more complete and profound implementation of the Convention.

The second project was implemented between 2011 and 2013 by the UNESCO office in Harare (Zimbabwe), and focused on four Southern African countries, namely Botswana, Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Goals of the project

The objectives of the project were twofold, namely to strengthen the safeguarding capacities of the beneficiary countries at the local, national and regional level; and ensure a better visibility of the African ICH at international level.

Implementation Strategy

The project was divided into four phases, starting with the selection of ICH focal points. These focal points were responsible for the implementation of the 2003 Convention in their respective countries and served as contact points with UNESCO. The designation of ICH focal points also created a platform for a smooth implementation of the project and facilitated implementation modalities.

The second phase focused on two major topics: (1) the inscription of ICH elements on one of the two lists; and (2) the request for International Assistance. By inscribing ICH elements on the Urgent Safeguarding List or the Representative List, UNESCO aimed to demonstrate the diversity of this heritage and to raise awareness on its importance. The lists also encourage States Parties to establish management plans to ensure the protection of the inscribed elements. In order to inscribe an ICH element on one of the two lists, a nomination file has to be completed. Completing a successful nomination file is, however, a challenging process. Training of trainers (ToT) was therefore carried out with five participants from each country during a multi-country workshop. They formed a core group that assisted in developing nomination files for their respective countries, and are also able to train other people on the concepts of the 2003 Convention, on raising awareness on ICH, and on submitting nomination files. The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of ICH decides which elements are being inscribed and also provides funding to assist countries with the completion of nomination files and to support safeguarding activities. How to submit an International Assistance Request was therefore also addressed during the regional workshop. During phase three, the beneficiary countries were assisted in establishing or strengthening their institutional and policy frameworks for safeguarding ICH, and consultants were engaged to assess existing policies with regard to the implementation of the 2003 Convention in order to identify gaps and make recommendations for the future. All four countries developed National Action Plans for the implementation of the 2003 Convention and organized awareness-raising activities.
Goals of the project
Consolidating the results of the two previous projects undertaken in Southern Africa with support from the Government of Flanders, this project was designed to address particular needs common to the beneficiary countries, such as the adequacy of the institutional environments, the ability to set up or revise legislative and policy frameworks, and the availability of expertise in the field of ICH.

In addition, networking among countries in the sub-region was perceived as particularly important. The seven targeted countries share many ICH elements, as well as the socio-economic context for ICH safeguarding. In this sense, the networking clearly called for a creation of a sub-regional centre for ICH. The project therefore sought to explore the possibility of establishing such a centre, where it should be located, and how to support the initial period of activities, thus testing its mandate, capacity and impact.

From the very beginning of the project, and based on its previous involvement, the FlemishInterface Centre for Cultural Heritage (FARO) was involved as a key international partner by providing examples and assisting with the issues related to the regional cooperation and the policies related to the ICH safeguarding.
Implementation Strategy
Considering that some countries were involved in the previous project(s), and others approached the same targets through different modalities, it was necessary to determine the existing level of the Convention’s implementation and impact. The project therefore started with a needs assessment. A country-specific approach made an effective and more sustainable implementation of the project and Convention possible. At this stage, the challenge was to address the common and shared objectives and obstacles. Indeed, the assessment demonstrated that the countries followed a very similar path and the methodology developed at the beginning of the process by using the Convention’s capacity-building materials.

One specific challenge the project faced was how to further the experts’ capacity development. Because the presence of well-trained individuals at all levels (such as community, provinces, country and the sub-regional) has proven to ensure a sustainable and enduring safeguarding of ICH with the broadest participation of communities, the next activity introduced was therefore a ToT workshop in each country. The ToT approach is an efficient way to spread the knowledge and importance of ICH safeguarding and build capacity at both community and government level. The use of the ToT approach also ensures that each country has its own local trainers who can roll out capacity-building activities at a more frequent rate and are less dependent on external financial input.

Good training of people is only one step in the sustainable safeguarding of ICH. It is also necessary to strengthen national institutions, and so, the establishment of National Intangible Cultural Heritage Committees (NICHCs) and their recognition as part of the national structures dedicated to cultural heritage resources management was the third activity of the project. The NICHCs consist of government officials from the Department of Culture and selected cultural practitioners from communities, civil society, academia, and so forth. It is important to highlight that almost 100 per cent of the NICHC members were trained during the ToT workshops or other parts of the previous projects.

Another element to secure the sustainable implementation of the 2003 Convention is to review the current policies and legal framework on ICH, which was the fourth intended outcome of the project. Support was provided to Lesotho, Namibia and Swaziland to assess their policies and laws for consistency with the 2003 Convention. For the other four countries where the assessments were done, support was provided to initiate processes of having stand-alone national ICH policies and implement other recommendations put forward in the assessment reports. By extension, a possibility of having a Southern African ICH Policy was also explored.
Threshing of the mavele with sticks
Zimbabwe © Zimbabwe Natcom
Results of the Projects

Thanks to the unique cooperation of the participating countries, sub-Saharan Africa is now one of the leading examples in the world in terms of the safeguarding of ICH. This could not have been realized without the UNESCO/Flanders cooperation.

1. Raising Awareness on ICH

One of the most tangible results of the UNESCO/Flanders projects is the raised awareness on ICH. As a result of the three projects, the involved countries and communities are now aware of the concept of ICH, the 2003 Convention, and the importance of ICH in society. Despite globalization, which brings people into contact with other cultures and ways of life, understanding the importance of their ICH has, to a large extent, led people to cherish and practice their traditions and brought about interest in ICH by young people, demonstrated in their ardent and great number of participation in these cultural traditions. The raised awareness on ICH is attributed to the workshops that were part of the three projects. The workshops consisted of several specific modules, starting with one on the 2003 Convention. During this module, questions like “What is the purpose of the Convention?” and “How to implement the Convention?” were answered. The second module handled the inventorying exercise. Inventorying ICH elements enabled governments to set up databases and to chart their ICH. In the third module, participants were trained in the understanding of the procedures of inscribing elements on the Representative List and List of Urgent Safeguarding, as well as how to prepare the nomination files. In the last module, training on how to submit International Assistance Requests was provided. Wide media coverage also contributed to awareness-raising on ICH. Newspapers and television and radio stations frequently reported on ICH, the organized workshops, and the implementation of the projects. In Botswana, the weekly Ministry of Youth, Sport and Culture (MYSC) television programme aired on Botswana television (Btv) endeavoured to cover activities that promoted ICH. In order to encourage partnerships that will foster collaboration with the media, the national radio and broadcaster is now a member of the National ICH Committee.

“My understanding of ICH was very poor prior to my participation in the projects.”
Lovemore Mazibuko – Trainer of Trainers – Malawi

“Shangani man with traditional headgear”
Photograph: ©Eugene Ncube
The Malawi Broadcasting Company (MBC) recorded the official opening of several workshops and broadcast it during the evening news bulletin. In Zimbabwe, media interviews were done by journalists from The Herald, The Mirror and The Masvingo Star. The activities in Lesotho were covered through the private newspaper (Informative Newspaper), national radio (Radio Lesotho Daily News), Catholic Radio Daily News and Lesotho Television. Zimbabwe produced a brochure on ICH that was distributed among various institutions. In addition, specific awareness-raising workshops for the media were also held in Botswana, Malawi and Zambia.

The 10th Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was held in Windhoek, Namibia from 30 November to 4 December 2015. Having ratified the Convention in 2007, Namibia acquired substantial expertise in ICH through the implementation of these Flanders-financed projects, and hence, with the encouragement of other Southern African countries, decided to successfully host the 2015 Committee meeting.

“ICH safeguarding through these projects has widened my perception of ICH to the whole spectrum of human life, now and in the future.”
Munukayumbwa Munyima – University of Zambia – Zambia

2. Southern African ICH platform
The Flanders-funded projects clearly demonstrated the advantages of a coordinated approach in implementing the ICH activities in countries in the sub-region. It therefore became very clear that a sub-regional entity could guarantee the sustainability of the process. The projects consequently introduced a gradual shift from UNESCO project coordination to a newly established sub-regional body dedicated to capacity-development and safeguarding of ICH in the form of the SAICH platform, which consolidates the results of the Flanders-funded projects as well as any other initiatives that may contribute to the improvement of ICH safeguarding. The SAICH platform was launched at a workshop in March 2016 by conducting an exercise in the aspects of permanent storage of ICH inventories as well as addressing challenges on policy-related work. SAICH is hosted by the Chinhoyi University of Technology (CUT) in Zimbabwe.

3. Southern Africa ICH Inventorying Management System
An online database was perceived to be the best mechanism to ensure the visibility and promotion of Southern African ICH richness. SAICH therefore used the CUT’s Department of ICT and Electronics to develop an online database called the Southern Africa ICH Inventorying Management System (SAICH IMS). It is divided into segments which allows each of the participating countries to manage their own inventorying lists with securely managed access. Along with the IMS, the SAICH platform contains a fully functional website and blog.

The first issue of SAICH News, the platform’s newsletter, was published in 2016. The publication you are currently reading is following in this vein.

4. ICH inventories
Setting up inventories is a sustainable way of documenting and safeguarding gathered information. The first project on community-based inventorying of ICH saw the birth and expansion of ICH inventories at community level. The creation of such databases ensures easy access, consultation and updating. The second project extended these local inventories to the national level. Each country created a national inventory that contains all the recorded ICH elements. A database at national level is recommended since it allows government institutions to see gaps in the inventorying exercise, which in turn facilitates the identification of future projects. The third project further built on these achievements with the creation of the SAICH IMS, which consolidates the national inventory by bringing together inventoried ICH elements of the involved countries.
“It is expected that the museum will continue implementing all the projects related to safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.”

Bathusi Lesolobe – Community Member – Botswana
The establishment of such a system eases the sharing and accessibility of the inventoried elements in a user-friendly way, and creates potential for further visibility of ICH. All the databases are accessible for researchers, students, teachers, policy-makers, and other interested parties. The easy access to the information enlarges the visibility of ICH and enlarges the use of the gathered data.

5. Increased number of nomination files
The projects also resulted in a significant increase in the number of nomination files for possible inscription on the Representative List and Urgent Safeguarding List, facilitated by the ToT workshops, which resulted in the trainers contributing to the preparation of nomination files in their respective countries. Thanks to the training and expertise, each country that participated in the UNESCO/Flanders projects submitted at least one nomination file. Three of the submitted files have already been successful: Botswana’s Earthenware Pottery-Making Skills from Kgatleng District was inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List in 2012; Malawi’s Tchopa Sacrificial Dance (of the Lhomwe people of southern Malawi) was inscribed on the Representative List in 2014; and Namibia had its Oshituthi Shomagongo, Marula Fruit Festival inscribed on the same list in 2015.

For 2017, two ICH elements are being considered for the inscription on one of the lists, namely the DikopeloFolkMusic from Botswana and the Malawi Nsima Culinary Tradition. An additional three nomination files have been submitted for possible inscription in 2018 as well: Malawi submitted two files, one for the ThumbPiano (Snasi) in cooperation with Zimbabwe, and one for the MwinogheJoyous Dance, while Zambia nominated the Mooba Dance.

6. National ICH Committees
Except for Zimbabwe, none of the other countries had National ICH Committees at the beginning of the projects. The Zimbabwean NICHC, which had been established during the period of the Proclamation of Masterpieces, was used as an example for the creation of the other countries’ national committees, which were put in place as a result of the projects. The committees are composed of members that have been trained on their roles and responsibilities. The functioning of the committees has improved over the years, but continuous support and cooperation through the SAICH platform remains imperative.

Focusing on strengthening national committees for safeguarding ICH also ensures that each of the countries has an institutional platform that will continue implementing the 2003 Convention beyond the projects’ duration. The development of national policies on ICH will ensure that ICH becomes a permanent feature of government planning and budgeting. Only this step will make the achievements of the projects sustainable and ensure ICH safeguarding in the long term.
7. Review of the ICH policies and legal framework
The participating countries were supported to review their legal frameworks and policies with a view to developing stand-alone ICH policies and laws that domesticate the 2003 Convention. The exercise was very useful in terms of revealing what subsists in the countries. However, the process of having national ICH policies was not finalized in most of the countries, mainly because policy formulation, just like law making, takes time because of the extent of consultations involved.

8. Training of experts
Capacity building was at the core of these projects. The seven countries trained more than 300 people in the implementation of the ICH Convention, with a focus on inventorying, preparing nomination files, and requests for International Assistance, among others. Owing to the workshops, the countries that participated now have adequate expertise to be able to implement the 2003 Convention, and further increase awareness about the importance of ICH and the safeguarding process.

“The National ICH Committee have positively influenced the perception of the Directorate of Culture. It also strengthened the relationship between the Directorate and the traditional authorities in different communities.”
Erastus Kautondokwa – Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture – Namibia
The existing capacity also allows for the sustainable continuation of the inventorying process and training of new experts beyond the projects’ duration. The presence of trained staff also facilitates the integration of the National ICH Committee into the national ministries responsible for culture, thereby securing sustainable safeguarding and monitoring of ICH elements.

9. Increased number of International Assistance Requests

The 2003 Convention provides assistance to States Parties in their efforts for safeguarding ICH, who can request funding to prepare nomination files or to inventariate ICH elements. Each country that participated in these projects submitted at least one International Assistance Request, which is a great improvement when compared to the period before the UNESCO/Flanders projects.

In terms of the specific support, the ToT made this change possible. The ToT framework primarily aimed to train members of the NICH Committees in the International Assistance Requests drafting and submission procedures, but also used the revision of specific requests as training sessions. Over the projects’ implementation period, this process reached the level where the countries have completely eliminated the need for external expertise in preparation of International Assistance Requests. Hence, in terms of sustainability, using this approach in the annual budgetary planning, the participating countries are much better equipped to plan and conduct their ICH safeguarding activities. The staff is also able to continue the inventorying process beyond the projects’ duration. The presence of a trained staff facilitates the integration of the National ICH Committee into the Ministries of Culture. It also allows the training of new experts which ensures a sustainable safeguarding and monitoring of ICH elements.

“There is a paradigm shift whereby policies and the ICH committee main focus is on ICH unlike before whereby the main focus was on tangible heritage.”

Moliehni Ntene – Director of Culture – Lesotho

Among the successful projects were the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Amount Approved (USD)</th>
<th>Year of Approval</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>Promotion of earthenware pottery-making skills in Kgatleng district</td>
<td>68 261</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lesotho</td>
<td>Inventorying of intangible cultural heritage elements in Thaba-Bosiu in Lesotho</td>
<td>24 998</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Safeguarding of Nkhonde, Tumbuka and Chewa proverbs and folktales</td>
<td>90 533</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>Development of an inventory of intangible heritage of Malawi</td>
<td>24 947</td>
<td>2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Inventorying of proverbs of Lala community of Luano District of Zambia</td>
<td>25 000</td>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>Inventorying of the music and dance of the Lozi and Nkoya people of Kaoma District</td>
<td>24 928</td>
<td>2015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Manyanga Misumo protocol</td>
<td>12 000</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>Safeguarding cultural heritage aspects of Njelele</td>
<td>25 000</td>
<td>2010</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“We realize now that we have something quite unique.”
Prof. Herbert Chimhundu – Chinhoyi University of Technology – Zimbabwe

Shangani women in traditional dress
Zimbabwe © Zimbabwe NatCom, Photograph: Eugene Ncube
Drum Player
Namibia ©Namibia NatCom
TOWARDS THE FUTURE

The energy and creativeness were injected by the close collaboration of all participants in these projects, were, for the first time, seven countries united to safeguard their ICH.

The impact of the UNESCO/Flanders series of projects in Southern Africa is evident; their remarkable achievements proof of their success. The way the projects built on each other ensured a seamless flow of activities and consolidation of gains made at each stage. The projects yielded positive results, even from the first implementation year. The reasons for this are the solid goals, clear results, well-formulated strategy and, above all, the ownership the local communities and experts started building from the very beginning. The projects were very much welcomed by the beneficiaries and the involved countries. It is thanks to their active participation and steadfast dedication that made the projects so successful. Energy and creativeness were injected through the close collaboration of all participants in these projects who were, for the first time, seven countries united in safeguarding their ICH. Especially important was the donor’s strong commitment and support, without which these projects would not have been possible. The projects gave a voice to the local communities. They reinvigorated ancient traditional dances and rituals and, most importantly, triggered the interest of the youth. The governments of the participating countries have therefore recognized the need for giving more attention to the benefits of sustainable safeguarding ICH, particularly in terms of its contribution to the SDGs and the Aspiration 5 of the African Union Agenda 2063.
“Even young people are getting interested in ICH.”

Tokelo Mapena – Former Culture Officer, UNESCO National Commission, Lesotho
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UNESCO ICH Website.
https://ich.unesco.org/

ONLINE RESOURCES

FARO, Flanders Interface Centre for Cultural Heritage
https://faro.be/

Flanders UNESCO Trust Funds

Southern Africa Intangible Cultural Heritage Platform (SAICH)
http://saich.org/saich/

UNESCO ICH Website
https://ich.unesco.org/
“UNESCO and its partners in Southern Africa work tirelessly to ensure the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. With the production of this book, SAICH and UNESCO aim to showcase the richness of ICH elements in Southern Africa, but beyond this, to raise the awareness of the role of ICH in social and economic sustainable development.”

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