Unit 12

**International Cooperation
and Assistance**

**Participant’s Text**

This unit deals with two main areas: international cooperation between States Parties for the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;[[1]](#footnote-1) and international assistance to States Parties that can be provided from the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Fund. Topics covered in the unit include:

* International cooperation.
* Shared heritage.
* Multi-national nominations.
* The ICH Fund.
* International assistance.
* Procedures, timetables and criteria for making and evaluating international assistance requests.

Relevant entries in Participant’s text Unit 3 include: ‘International, regional, subregional, local’, ‘International assistance’ and ‘International cooperation’.

12.1 INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Convention encourages international cooperation between States Parties on the bilateral, subregional, regional and international levels. The Operational Directives (ODs) encourage the States Parties to work together as much as possible.

The first objective of the Convention is ‘to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage’ (Article 1(a)), which ‘the international community’ should achieve, according to the Preamble, ‘in a spirit of cooperation and mutual assistance’. In line with this, the fourth and last objective of the Convention mentioned in Article 1 is ‘to provide for international cooperation and assistance’. Chapter V of the Convention, Articles 19–24, contains provisions concerning international cooperation and assistance.

#### What does international cooperation involve?

**Article 19.1** explains what is understood by ‘international cooperation’:

For the purpose of this Convention, international cooperation includes, *inter alia,* the exchange of information and experience, joint initiatives, and the establishment of a mechanism of assistance to States Parties in their efforts to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage.

International cooperation may explicitly include joint safeguarding of shared heritage and multi-national nominations (Article 19.1; ODs 13–16). Article 23 of the Convention states that requests for international assistance ‘may … be jointly submitted by two or more States Parties’.

The ODs explicitly welcome such submissions (OD 10(a)). They also encourage cooperation between community organizations, NGOs, institutions at the regional level and cooperation within the framework of category 2 centres about ICH safeguarding (ODs 86 and 88).

The States Parties may network, exchange information and influence the interpretation and implementation of the Convention by actively participating in the General Assembly and other Organs of the Convention (Articles 4–6).

They can do so most effectively when they are members of the Intergovernmental Committee. Since the election of States Members of the Committee obeys, in accordance with Article 6.1 of the Convention, the principles of equitable geographical representation and rotation, any State Party may serve on the Committee in due course.

In the periodic reports that the States Parties must submit every six years to the Committee about the measures undertaken by them for the implementation of the Convention, they are explicitly requested to report about measures taken at the international level and joint initiatives with other States Parties (OD 156).

#### Why international cooperation?

As the Convention’s approach is relatively new, much work remains to be done in developing methodologies and sharing examples of good practice in the field of intangible heritage safeguarding and management. States Parties will benefit from assisting each other (especially at the regional and subregional levels), providing expertise and information, and from sharing experiences about safeguarding ICH. This can make their safeguarding activities more targeted and more cost-effective, contributing not only to the safeguarding of shared ICH, but of the ICH in general in the countries concerned. Joining forces may allow various role players to share experiences and to work in a cost-efficient way, for instance in the fields of capacity building and documentation/research. Common action concerning the inventorying of shared ICH is not explicitly encouraged in the Basic Texts,*[[2]](#footnote-2)* but initiatives are being developed between some States Parties.

12.2 SHARED OR CROSS-BORDER ICH

An ICH element is frequently not restricted to the territory of a single State Party – we then speak of cross-border or shared heritage. Because intangible heritage is linked to people, it travels with them. People move around all the time, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, nowadays mostly as emigrants, refugees or tourists. Communities have often been divided by arbitrary borders – the unwitting victims or beneficiaries of distant political deals. An ICH element is thus frequently shared across borders and, with communities of emigrants, may be shared between more distant countries. ICH can also be transmitted from one community to another, within or between countries.

Shared ICH elements – and the associated communities – may benefit from being inventoried and safeguarded jointly by the countries concerned and through collaboration between all the communities or groups concerned, wherever they live. Shared heritage elements may also benefit from being treated as a single element in other activities. This approach may foster cooperation and understanding across borders between States and communities in cultural and other domains.

The Convention and the ODs thus encourage multi-national nominations, projects and assistance requests concerning cross-border heritage and give priority to them where possible (ODs 10(a) and 13–16).

12.3 MULTI-NATIONAL NOMINATIONS

States Parties are encouraged to submit multi-national nominations for shared elements to the Lists of the Convention (OD 13) and joint safeguarding projects to the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices (OD 15).

#### Encouragement for multi-national nominations

The General Assembly and the Committee actively promote such nominations:

* In 2010 the General Assembly approved a new Operational Directive (OD 14) that provides a procedure for enlarging the number of States Parties concerned with an element that is already inscribed on one of the Lists of the Convention. In 2012 for example, the Committee studied a request for re-inscribing Falconry, a living human heritage, on the Representative List with an enlarged number of States Parties.
* The Committee decided that priority should be given to multi-national nominations to the Representative List in processing nominations for the rounds in 2010, 2011 and 2012. In 2012, when amending the Operational Directives, the General Assembly established an order of priorities in the examination of files by the Committee within which multinational files are second after files from States having no elements inscribed, best safeguarding practices selected or requests for International Assistance greater than US$25,000 approved and nominations to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (OD 34).
* At its seventh session (Paris, 2012), to the Committee adopted an information-sharing mechanism through which States Parties can announce their intentions to nominate elements and other States Parties may learn of opportunities for cooperation in elaborating multinational nominations.

#### Multi-national nominations to the Lists of the Convention

So far there are seventeen multi-national inscriptions on the RL, nine of them former Masterpieces, and none on the USL. The proportion of multi-national inscriptions on the RL is higher than the proportion of transboundary inscriptions on the World Heritage List. This is understandable because ICH elements can easily be shared across borders with new communities or through migration.

Elements of ICH can only be nominated to the Lists of the Convention by States Parties. A major impediment to international cooperation concerning shared heritage under the Convention is that not all States of the world have yet ratified the Convention. Another problem is that in some cases States are not yet ready for such cooperation.. An ICH element that is shared between a State Party and a State that is not yet a party to the Convention can, of course, be nominated by the State Party concerned. Once the other State ratifies the Convention, the two States can together propose a new, extended inscription of the shared element (OD 14).

#### Role of the Register

The Register of Best Safeguarding Practices that the Committee recently initiated, in conformity with Article 18 of the Convention, will also become a major instrument for the exchange of safeguarding experiences between States Parties. One of the eleven practices included on the Register so far has resulted from a multi-national proposal submitted by the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Chile and Peru: Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage of Aymara communities in Bolivia, Chile and Peru.

12.4 The Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund

The Intangible Heritage Cultural Fund (ICH Fund), established by Article 25 of the Convention, supports the safeguarding of ICH by providing international assistance to this end. There are two main sources of funding for the Fund:

* **Article 26.1** of the Convention requests States Parties to pay a contribution to the Fund at least every two years. At the moment, that contribution is fixed at not more than 1 per cent of the States Parties’ annual contribution to UNESCO. When they ratify the Convention, however, States may declare that they will not be bound by Article 26.1 (see Article 26.2).
* States Parties and other agents may make *voluntary supplementary contributions* to the Fund (Article 27; ODs 68–75). The Secretariat publishes an updated list of States Parties, in alphabetical order, that have made supplementary voluntary contributions to the Fund, as well as of States other than States Parties that have made contributions to the Fund. Other countries offer substantial sums for the financing of capacity-building activities through other modalities. This, too, is international cooperation and assistance.

12.5 INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE

International assistance is financial assistance granted by the Committee from the ICH Fund (OD 66) for activities aimed at safeguarding ICH as defined by the Intangible Heritage Convention.

#### Purpose of international assistance

According to **Article 20** of the Convention, the Committee may grant international assistance to support the following activities:

* safeguarding of elements on the USL;
* preparation of inventories;
* support for programmes, projects and activities aimed at the safeguarding of ICH at the national, subregional and regional levels; and
* any other purposes the Committee may deem necessary. This includes capacity building and preparatory assistance (i.e. for preparing nomination files for the USL and the Register: see ODs 9(d), 16, 18, 66 and 67).

#### Preparing a request

Any State Party may submit requests for such assistance. Only States Parties, not individuals, communities or institutions, may apply for international assistance to the Intergovernmental Committee. Joint applications from two or more States Parties are welcomed (ODs 10(a) and 16). Three different forms – ICH 04, 05 and 06, which can be downloaded from the website of the Convention – are used for requests for international assistance, two for requesting preparatory assistance and one for all other types of requests.

Requests for support from developing countries that are States Parties to the Convention will be prioritized (OD 10). The Fund currently has ample funds available for these purposes.

#### Budget line items

There are no specific guidelines on what kinds of budget line items are permitted in International assistance requests – each project is assessed on its own merits. For example, expenditures for personnel, equipment, transport and materials are all permitted, as long as they are priced at a level the Committee considers reasonable, and if they are relevant and appropriate. Budgets should be detailed enough to enable assessment and tracking of expenditure. It is difficult to change budget line items after funding has been granted and contracts drawn up, so it is important to ensure that budgets are likely to remain appropriate as the project progresses. Examples of budgets are available in Form ICH-04.

The UNESCO Secretariat cannot provide technical assistance for the development of specific nomination files, and no costs associated with the travel and expenditures of UNESCO personnel can be included in an assistance request.

12.6 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR PREPARING NOMINATION FILES

States Parties may request assistance from the ICH Fund for developing nominations for the USL using form ICH-05, and for the Register using form ICH-06. For the preparation of nomination files to the RL, no preparatory assistance is foreseen.

Possible activities to be funded through preparatory financial assistance for nominations to the USL include: the preparation of required audio-visual material for the nomination file; the provision of expert assistance or translation services; and the organization of community consultations. Possible activities to be funded through preparatory financial assistance for proposals to the Register include writing an assessment of the project and translation costs. States Parties cannot use preparatory assistance to implement the proposed project or programme. In both cases, no fixed amounts are determined for the assistance, but the assistance awarded will normally be in the range of between US$5,000 and US$10,000.

The deadline for submission of preparatory assistance requests is 31 March every year. The assistance requests are examined at short notice by the Bureau of the Committee. The first deadline for nomination files prepared with such assistance, however, is 31 March of the following year, which means that there will be at least thirty months between the deadline of the submission of the request for preparatory assistance and the time that the Committee examines the nomination file itself.

12.7 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR OTHER PURPOSES

As mentioned in Participant’s text 12.5 above, ordinary financial assistance can be granted for various activities under the Convention, including safeguarding, the preparation of inventories and capacity building. States Parties may, for example, request financial assistance for safeguarding projects contained in nominations proposed to the USL – such requests have high priority (OD 9(a)). Funding may, of course, also be requested for safeguarding ICH elements that are in need of safeguarding and that are not inscribed on a List of the Convention (OD 9(c)). Safeguarding measures for elements inscribed on the RL do not receive special consideration for international assistance, as they are supposed to be viable and healthy.

#### Three categories of assistance requests

Assistance requests are treated differently, depending on the amount requested and whether the request concerns regular or emergency assistance. The requests are divided into three categories:

* regular assistance up to US$25,000;
* regular assistance greater than US$25,000; and
* emergency assistance (of any amount).

These categories are subject to different deadlines and different evaluation procedures.

#### Forms and deadlines

Form ICH-04 is used for requesting international assistance for all activities other than preparing a nomination file, so all three categories of requests mentioned above use this form.

States Parties are required to submit regular international assistance requests greater than US$25,000 to the Secretariat by 31 March, the same deadline as for the two types of preparatory assistance. Other types of requests, i.e. emergency requests of any amount and other non-preparatory requests up to US$25,000, may be submitted at any time (ODs 19–24).

#### Examination of requests

All requests up to US$25,000 and emergency requests will be examined and the outcome decided by the Bureau of the Committee. Whereas the Committee meets, in principle once a year, its Bureau also meets more frequently between the sessions of the Committee. Therefore, the examination process for emergency and preparatory assistance requests, as well as for requests up to US$25,000, is in principle much shorter (it takes a few months) than the process for evaluating requests over US$25,000 (which takes about eighteen months).

Requests greater than US$25,000 are evaluated by the Consultative Body (established annually by the Committee and which also evaluated nominations to the USL and proposals for the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices), before final examination and decision by the Committee. After the deadline of 31 March, this whole process takes about eighteen months. After submission, the Secretariat may ask the States Parties concerned for additional information, if necessary. In November of that first year of the process, the requests are submitted to the Consultative Body for evaluation, and it is only the following year that the Committee can examine the request and make a positive or negative decision (OD 26).

For deadlines and procedures for international assistance requests, see ODs 54 and 55.

12.8 EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ORDINARY INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE REQUESTS

Evaluation criteria include the following (see OD 12 for the full list):

* The communities, groups and individuals concerned have participated in the preparation of the request and will participate in the implementation or management of the activity for which funding is requested, as appropriate.
* The amount requested is appropriate.
* The proposed activities are well conceived and feasible.
* The intervention may have lasting effects, and aims at capacity building for safeguarding.
* The beneficiary State Party shares the cost, within the limits of its resources.
* The beneficiary State Party has a good record for implementing previously financed activities (or at least not a bad record).

When the Committee examines requests for international assistance and there is a need to prioritize, priority is to be given to requests from developing countries and to projects that may have multiplier effects. An additional consideration is to ensure the equitable geographical distribution of funded projects (OD 10).

International assistance is supplementary to national efforts for safeguarding (ODs 8 and 12 (A.5)).

12.9 REQUESTS PROCESSED SO FAR

So far the Committee has received thirty four requests for international assistance greater than US$25,000 for examination nine of which have been approved:

* From Kenya, for a project entitled Traditions and practices associated to the Kayas in the sacred forest of the Mijikenda, for an amount of US$126,580 (note that at the same session the Committee inscribed these traditions and practices on the USL).
* From Mauritius, for Documentation and inventory of ICH in the Republic of Mauritius, for an amount of US$52,461.
* From Mauritius, for the Inventory of ICH elements pertaining to the indenture experience in the Republic of Mauritius, for an amount of US$33,007.
* From Belarus, for Establishing the national inventory of the ICH of Belarus, for an amount of US$133,600.
* From Mongolia, for Safeguarding and revitalizing the Mongolian traditional epic, for an amount of US$107,000.
* From Uganda, for Inventorying the intangible cultural heritage of four communities in Uganda, for an amount of US$216,000.
* From Burkina Faso, for the Inventory and promotion of intangible cultural heritage in Burkina Faso, for an amount of US$262,080.
* From Senegal, for Inventory of traditional music in Senegal, for an amount of US$80,789;
* From Uruguay, for Documentation, promotion and dissemination of the Candombe traditional drum calls, expressions of identity of the Sur, Palermo, and Cordón neighbourhoods in the city of Montevideo, for an amount of US$186,871.

The numbers of requests submitted to the Committee remains low and the Fund remains seriously underused. Once the States Parties start submitting larger numbers of requests, the amounts granted per project may be less generous than in some of the cases mentioned above.

1. 1. Frequently referred to as the ‘Intangible Heritage Convention’, the ‘2003 Convention’ and, for the purpose of this unit, simply the ‘Convention’. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . UNESCO, *Basic Texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* (referred to in this unit as Basic Texts), Paris, UNESCO. Available at <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00026>. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)