Unit 55

Hand-out 1:

the impact of public policies on ich safeguarding: Group work exercise

*Disclaimer: the facts in this case study are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance with actual facts is mere coincidence.*

Please read the following facts and find your task for this group work exercise below.

**The Fanoko cheese-makers of Kassen**

The Fan community, who speak a language called Fanese, comprise about 300,000 people living in Kassen, a developing country with a population of about six million. Although Kassen was once rather poor, the economic situation in the country has improved somewhat due to the exploitation of oil and precious metal deposits in the country. It has a democratic governance system with an elected president and a parliament.

The Fan community has always had a rather egalitarian traditional governance system with no specific leadership hierarchy. The president’s grandmother was from the Fan community, but only very few Fan hold high public office. Generally, they tend to see their community as rather separate from the rest of Kassen society, although younger people are becoming more integrated.

Around 1950, most of the Fan community was still nomadic, taking their goats and camels across a wide range of territory in the region. Gradually members of the Fan community began to settle in small farming villages and to grow crops. When the borders of Kassen were drawn up at the end of a period of colonial occupation, the Kassen Fan community was separated from the remainder of the Fan now living in a neighbouring state to the east of Kassen. Ongoing conflict between the countries in the border regions of the east has prevented frequent contact between the two groups.

In the last twenty years, owing to prolonged drought, lack of work, conflict and the general trend towards urbanization in the country, many young and middle-aged people from the Kassen Fan community have migrated from the small farming villages in the rural hinterlands to the cities of southern Kassen. About one third of the Fan can now be found in peri-urban settlements on the outskirts of these cities. Their economic position is often precarious, and they are among the poorest migrants there.

Groups of cheesemakers within the Fan community make what they call Fanoko cheese. Making the cheese is a social event. Fanoko cheeses are made using unpasteurized goat and camel milk strained through a cloth. The milk is usually mixed with a secret coagulating ingredient, and sesame seeds, before the cheese is matured for several months. The secret coagulating ingredient is a wild plant endemic to the region (i.e. it only occurs in certain areas of Kassen). Knowledge about how to use it is passed down through the cheese maker groups. Maturation is traditionally done by storing the cheese underground in a ceramic pot.

The Fan particularly like to eat Fanoko with flatbreads on their ‘Day of Bread’ (10 November each year) when they celebrate the mythical story of a Fan group who survived on bread and cheese for 60 days when the rains were late. To most Fan today, eating the cheese (which traditionally only Fan people have enjoyed eating) provides a bond between Fan people in the rural areas and the cities, and between Kassen and the neighbouring country. They feel that it is an important part of their identity as a community, and it represents the bounty of the earth.

As many Fan now live in peri-urban settings far from the villages, transmission of the skills to make the cheese is rather more haphazard than before. City cheesemakers have difficulties getting supplies of fresh unpasteurized goat and camel milk from the rural areas because of poor transport networks. They avoid making the cheese with pasteurized milk as Fan communities find that this changes the flavor too much and do not purchase it.

Although other people in Kassen have generally not eaten Fanoko cheese in the past, famously derided in the 1950s by a major literary figure as ‘the taste of goat dung rubbed on camel carcasses’, it has recently become a fashionable after-dinner snack in the smart bars and restaurants of the cities. This has created demand for Fanoko cheese in urban areas. This demand cannot be met by village cheese makers alone.

**New public policies being formulated**

The Republic of Kassen has recently ratified the Intangible Heritage Convention, and at the same time a new President has come to power. Under pressure to develop a stronger public policy framework, the new president asked her ministers to set up a number of advisory committees on public policy to help develop some initial suggestions to put before the public and the parliament. Each of these committees has suggested different approaches, some of which may affect ICH or culture more generally. There is no ICH policy or inventory system in place yet.

**Policy recommendations from Committee 1**

These policy suggestions were included in the various recommendations prepared by the University of Kassen’s public policy department after consultation with various community representatives from minority groups including the Fan.

1. In the constitution: recognising the value of cultural diversity in the constitution.
2. In foreign policy: prioritizing cross-border cooperation in regard to policy towards minorities.
3. Institutional provisions for ICH in the culture sector: appointing the university to do research into authentic minority cultures, focusing attention on historical traditions in the rural areas in a programme called ‘ways of the past’.
4. In health policy: Food regulations requiring pasteurization of milk (these will apply only to cow’s milk).
5. In intellectual property policy: intellectual property protection for traditional cultural practices, including those in the public domain.
6. In development policy: investment in transport infrastructure to boost international travel to and from the cities.

**Policy recommendations from Committee 2**

These policy suggestions were included in the various recommendations prepared by a consultant to government after consultation with different government department representatives in the capital city.

1. In the constitution: recognition of the contribution of all people and groups to the cultural richness and economic prosperity of the country, while particularly celebrating the contribution of the Fan communities as the cultural ‘mother-node’ for the country.
2. In foreign policy: promotion of ‘national culture’ events for foreign dignitaries, serving local foods made ‘acceptable to foreign tastes’.
3. In cultural policy: promotion of Fan cuisine as Kassen public heritage.
4. In health policy: food-marketing regulations requiring pasteurization of all milk (including goat and camel milk) sold in the country.
5. In intellectual property policy: promotion of open access to public domain information (including traditional knowledge).
6. In development policy: promotion of commercial and infrastructural projects to improve transport between rural and urban areas for extraction of natural resources.

**Your task**

Some of these policy recommendations may affect ICH safeguarding in the country. Consider the possible consequences (positive and negative) of the policy approaches recommended by the two committees on Fan communities and on the viability of their ICH practices, with particular reference to cheese-making in both rural and peri-urban settings. (If you have time, you can comment also where relevant on the possible consequences of these policies for the majority group and other minorities.)

*Groups may consider the recommendations of either one or both committees, depending on the time allocated for the exercise.*