

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

TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR THE GLOBAL FACILITATORS' NETWORK

LIVING HERITAGE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

**27 and 28 March 2025
Online**

**Session I: 27 March 2025, 10.00 a.m. – 1.00 p.m.
Session II: 28 March 2025, 2.00 p.m. – 5.00 p.m.**

Report

I. BACKGROUND

1. As part of the 2025 Training Programme for the Global Facilitators’ Network of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, the Secretariat of the Convention organized an online training session on Living Heritage and Disaster Risk Reduction. See List of invitees (document [LHE/25/TRA DRR/1 Rev.](#)) and Programme (document [LHE/25/TRA DRR/2](#)). The training was held over two sessions:
 - Session I: Thursday, 27 March 2025, 10 am – 1 pm in English (Paris time)
 - Session II: Friday, 28 March 2025, 2 pm – 5 pm in English and French (Paris time)
2. The purpose of the training was to introduce facilitators to the newly developed training materials on intangible cultural heritage and disaster risk reduction. This included:
 - [Unit 63](#): Basics in disaster risk reduction and intangible cultural heritage; and
 - [Unit 64](#): Integrating disaster risk reduction into intangible cultural heritage inventorying.

In addition to familiarizing the facilitators with the training materials and concepts, the session provided a forum for facilitators to exchange of experiences and ideas about the topic more broadly.

3. The session was co-facilitated by facilitators Chris Ballard to present the training materials and Andrea Richards as moderator. An online survey was also conducted before the sessions to gauge the depth of knowledge and practical experience of facilitators in this thematic area. In total, 124 facilitators attended the two training sessions (see). In addition, UNESCO Field Office colleagues and representatives from Category 2 Centres were invited to attend as observers. All documents and recordings from the sessions are available on the [dedicated webpage](#) of the Secretariat.

II. SUMMARY OF ONLINE SURVEY RESULTS

4. An online survey titled ‘**Pre-Seminar Facilitators’ Survey: Living Heritage and Disaster Risk Reduction**’ was shared with facilitators before the session. In total, **83 responses** were received, which provided detailed and insightful information regarding the intersection of living heritage and disaster risk reduction and the knowledge and experiences of facilitators. These responses will also enable the Living Heritage Entity to make more targeted interventions in support of facilitators in the future, as well as address any gaps. A summary of the survey results is presented below.
- **Question 1: What is your existing experience working on living heritage safeguarding in disaster contexts?**

The majority of facilitators (over 60%) had a basic familiarity with key concepts and had some hands-on experience.



- **Question 2: If you have experience, in which region have you worked?**

Responses were almost evenly spread throughout all regions. The majority of experiences came from Africa (28%), followed by Latin America and the Caribbean (23%), and Asia-Pacific (17%). Europe and the Arab States had 16% each.

- **Question 3: What type of support did you provide as a facilitator in such contexts?**

The majority of responses suggested that facilitators were providing support almost equally in conducting intangible cultural heritage inventorying workshops or other activities, developing intangible cultural heritage safeguarding plans, policy advice and research. A smaller number of facilitators were supporting country-led post-disaster needs assessments (PDNAs). This low number is also connected to challenges with conducting PDNAs, which was highlighted by facilitators.



- **Question 4: Elaborate briefly on experiences.**

Specific responses not mentioned above include working as part of a broader project on policy and intangible cultural heritage safeguarding, guiding safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in post emergency contexts, working with communities on intangible cultural heritage inventorying, and in the identification of deep local knowledge of DRR; evaluating International Assistance requests for intangible cultural heritage impacted by emergencies.

- **Question 5: Are you currently collaborating in your work with any DRR agencies, organizations, or actors?**

Most responses (almost 50%) indicated there was no collaboration taking place, with very small numbers indicating that collaboration was taking place with national disaster management agencies, NGOs working in disaster management, community-based disaster response groups, the agencies of the UN or academic and research institutions.

- **Question 6: Provide more details on your collaboration with actors**

Facilitators further indicated that they were collaborating with government partners and international organizations such as the British Council through its Cultural Protection Fund (CPF), various NGOs and ICCROM.

- **Question 7: What areas would you like to learn more about as a facilitator to support your work in this area?**

Respondents indicated that they wanted to learn most about case studies and good practices on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding in disaster contexts, followed by assessing risk for intangible cultural heritage in disaster contexts. Engaging communities in intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and DRR and Tools for inventorying intangible cultural heritage in disaster settings received a large number of responses, with slightly fewer responses for Links between climate action and DRR and Policy and legal frameworks for intangible cultural heritage and DRR. The number of responses ranging from 70 to 51 suggests that these are all very important areas for facilitators.

- **Question 8: What do you see as some of the key challenges for facilitators working on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding initiatives in disaster contexts?**

The responses provided by facilitators were quite varied. Summarized responses include challenges in relation to: how communities could be better engaged while they were also dealing with loss (i.e. their homes); how to better engage knowledge bearers and practitioners under these challenging circumstances; how to better address the cross-sectoral nature of the issue and how to work with non-heritage agencies and other stakeholders; facilitators needed better training or to be sensitized in relation to trauma reactions of individual practitioners; how to better understand the relationship between shifting baselines of disaster affected living heritage; how to address and understand the long-term cultural, social, and economic losses resulting from the disappearance of intangible cultural heritage in the aftermath of disasters; challenges with quantifying damage and loss in the PDNA exercise; the fluidity and flexibility of intangible cultural heritage makes it challenging to effectively plan for risks and disasters related to intangible cultural heritage safeguarding; if a facilitator is not attached to a formal institution or recognized project, the legitimacy to support communities and/or contribute to action planning and implementation of disaster related plans and action may be weak.

- **Question 9: Is there a specific experience you would like to share during the session**

During the training activity, interventions were received in relation to activities in Carriacou, Bonaire, India, the Bahamas, Afghanistan, and Honduras, as well as projects funded by the Cultural Protection Fund (CPF). For the CPF, it was highlighted that the fund had expanded its project base to accept more living heritage related projects.

III. TRAINING SESSION DISCUSSION

5. A number of key challenges had been identified by respondents to the survey and, along with a few short, prepared interventions by practitioners, these were invaluable in opening up discussion. Group discussion was lively and provided numerous examples of important initiatives in the integration of DRR and intangible cultural heritage globally. Some of the key points raised within the group included:
 - **The importance of understanding how communities regard and describe disasters and evaluate risk from their own perspective, and allowing communities to guide processes of intangible cultural heritage identification and risk evaluation.** It was discussed that risk indices should be used sparingly, as disasters are typically local. Local risks often differ significantly from national-level risks. Facilitators discussed tools for assessing risk at the local level, noting there is no shortage of approaches, some of which could incorporate intangible cultural heritage, such as the example of ecosystem and biodiversity assessments. Examples were given of efforts in Honduras and the Philippines where inventories at the local level involved defining disasters, hazards, and vulnerabilities according to how communities understand, experience and assess them.
 - **The cross-sectoral nature of the DRR intangible cultural heritage conversation, and the challenge of learning to work with non-heritage agencies and other stakeholders.** Local administrations—often the key decision-makers in funding—frequently lack familiarity with concepts like intangible cultural heritage. Culture managers are rarely included in emergency planning or response, and even as awareness of culture’s relevance to DRR grows, many disaster professionals are unsure how to engage. Encouragingly, there is rising interest, as seen in workshops in the Philippines and Mongolia where disaster managers began recognizing the value of intangible cultural heritage. Examples from Pakistan, Spain, and the Caribbean further illustrate both the existing disconnect and the potential for progress when intangible cultural heritage bearers are included in disaster training and planning.
 - **The need to research and document long-term cultural, social, and economic impacts resulting from the loss of living heritage in the aftermath of disasters.** One framework

introduced in the training materials is the people-place-story framework. This approach was piloted after Hurricane Beryl in Barbados. This is one framework for understanding both the vulnerability of living heritage and how it could support communities to cope with disasters. The framework should always be developed in collaboration with communities to ensure that it reflects local realities and perspectives.

- **The significant secondary threat posed to intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and transmission by “inappropriate” humanitarian interventions and education programmes.** The danger of introducing external models without considering cultural context was mentioned. Inappropriate food and other relief efforts can undermine local knowledge, as mentioned in the Vanuatu and Honduras examples. One example from India highlighted a failed seed distribution effort following a cyclone, which was later corrected when communities reverted to traditional seed banks and rice varieties. This had a long-term impact in that there was greater awareness about the importance of local rice varieties, and an increase in the conservation of traditional seeds and related intangible cultural heritage, such as stories and rituals.
- **The challenge of access for intangible cultural heritage professionals to emergency teams and situations, and of knowing when exactly to seek to intervene and interview impacted communities.** A key question raised was how to prioritize intangible cultural heritage during emergencies when immediate concerns like food, water, and security take precedence, and when it is appropriate to address intangible cultural heritage in the face of urgent survival needs. Another question concerned how to go about setting up emergency teams, and it was emphasized that this preparation should occur well before a disaster, rather than waiting for post-disaster situations.
- **The value of establishing intangible cultural heritage inventory baselines which can then be used to evaluate loss and damage through processes such as the PDNA framework.** Periodic reports by countries and NGOs could be used to obtain information on intangible cultural heritage and disasters. Additionally, addressing pre-disaster planning for intangible cultural heritage is essential to ensure more effective response and recovery efforts. Examples were provided from El Salvador, Honduras, and Malawi on the value of inventorying for post-disaster work.
- **The need for more dynamic inventories of intangible cultural heritage that are capable of integration in DRR planning and response strategies.** These inventories should serve as dynamic management tools, regularly updated to improve preparedness. Currently, regional and local inventories are often underdeveloped and more like representative lists rather than practical tools for managing living heritage in disaster scenarios.
- **The need to promote local and Indigenous knowledge as systems or sciences in their own right, with equal standing on the territory of their bearers.** Several examples were given by participants. For example, in flood prevention, intangible cultural heritage is used to construct defences with local materials, and this knowledge is shared across communities. In Africa, land management projects involve intangible cultural heritage related to deforestation and water management. In Honduras, traditional knowledge and strategies, such as agricultural practices, mitigation measures, and rituals, are deeply linked to disaster risk reduction. These practices, including pottery techniques and the rituals that ensure the availability of clay, play a significant role in all stages of the disaster risk cycle.
- **The need to address trauma issues in intangible cultural heritage DRR, both the secondary trauma experienced by heritage professionals and the dangers of reawakening trauma for practitioners.** The timing and approach to engaging with communities post-disaster must be handled carefully, as both heritage professionals and community bearers may experience emotional strain and ethical dilemmas when re-engaging with damaged practices or places.
- **The importance of precise identification of bearers as part of the inventorying process, including geo-localization of key bearers and critical tangible resources for living**

heritage. For example, in Chile, the importance of identifying vulnerable communities and localizing resources during earthquakes, floods, and fires was emphasized. Another example was the Philippines' disaster management office which has integrated intangible cultural heritage-related risks and bearers into their assessment system. However, ethical considerations, including adherence to Indigenous protocols, are vital when conducting geo-localization to ensure respect for local cultural practices.

- **The risks in disaster contexts are often compounded by factors like conflict and displacement.** For example, in Afghanistan, the overlap between climate change impacts and ongoing conflict underscores the complexity of emergency situations. In Sudan, a British Council-funded project highlighted the challenges of safeguarding living heritage amid climate change and armed conflict. The discussions also stressed the importance of preserving cultural spaces where intangible cultural heritage practices are carried out, noting that access to these spaces is crucial for sustaining intangible cultural heritage.
- **Ongoing efforts are required to more effectively integrate living heritage approaches into damage assessments, which have traditionally prioritized tangible heritage.** For instance, following the 2023 earthquake in Morocco, response operations largely centered on tangible assets, such as World Heritage sites, while intangible cultural heritage was overlooked. In Bonaire, an initiative utilized oral histories and existing archives to inform the development of a “climate table” to map the impacts of climate change across six key areas, including “people and culture.” However, the emphasis remains predominantly on tangible elements, underscoring the continued need to incorporate intangible cultural heritage more fully into disaster risk reduction and recovery strategies.

IV. CONCLUSION

6. The sessions were broadly successful in meeting their aims, and the format appeared to promote engagement. The iterative move between introductions to the training materials and periods of discussion was quite productive. Ideally, more case studies could have been introduced and short exercises used to familiarise participants with the concepts and processes, but the limitations of time and the numbers of participants for each session rendered these considerations impractical.
7. Looking ahead, facilitators highlighted the need for future discussion forums on the role of living heritage in conflict settings. Exploring the nexus between climate change, disasters and conflict (and epidemic disease) will be an important area for further development. Additionally, better methods for capturing and synthesizing discussions, such as appointing a rapporteur, should be considered, alongside increased efforts to build case studies, pedagogical tools and a practical field guide on disaster risk reduction for use at the community level.