

International Partnership Programme for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
“**Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**”
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COUNTRY REPORT: Papua New Guinea
Government and Community Mechanisms for Safeguarding ICH

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- a. Governmental Mechanism for Safeguarding of ICH (up to two pages) including;
- ❖ Roles of the National Government
 - ❖ Roles of the Local Governments
- b. Mechanisms of Communities for Safeguarding of ICH (up to two pages) including;
- ❖ Roles of Communities
 - ❖ Cooperation with Other Parties, such as Local Governments, NGOs, etc.

a. The Government of Papua New Guinea, through the Papua New Guinea National Cultural Commission, initially attended a Sub-regional Meeting in the Pacific on the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2007 in Nadi, Fiji. During the course of the meeting, it was recommended for Papua New Guinea to organise a national consultation meeting to basically ratify the Convention. This would then lead to development of projects at the national level to identify and explore common practices and processes applicable to manage intangible cultural heritage in the country.

This resulted when the Director General of UNESCO, Mr. Koïchiro Matsuura met with the Deputy Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea, Hon. Dr. Puka Temu on 21st February 2008 urging Papua New Guinea to take immediate action to ratify the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Based on the above meetings, an Inter-Departmental Meeting was convened on 18th and 19th March 2008 in Port Moresby to endorse Papua New Guinea Government’s support to ratify the 2003 Convention.

During the Inter-Departmental Meeting, it was endorsed that the National Cultural Commission would take full responsibility for the implementation of the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The National Museum and Art Gallery to support the National Cultural Commission on this.

On 11th June 2008, the Papua New Guinea Government formally ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.

At present, the National Cultural Commission is undertaking a preliminary pilot project in the Central Kerema Rural LLG, Malalaua District of the Gulf Province. It has initiated work that it has been anticipating by embarking on documenting and recording some aspects of intangible cultural heritage in Papua New Guinea.

The Toare area in the Kaipi and Melaripi Constituencies as project sites were selected due to previous research work being undertaken by the National Cultural Commission on the Mask Culture, and also staging the annual Gulf Mini Mask Festival, making it possible to access information and related details on the masks in the area.

It is observed that the Local Level Governments do not at this point in time play any major role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage. This means the National Cultural Commission has yet to collaborate with respective provincial and local level governments to develop programmes and processes required for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Papua New Guinea.

b. In Papua New Guinea, local people in certain parts of the country have initiated their own projects in preserving their cultural practices and traditions by establishing cultural resource centres, museums and mini cultural festivals and shows with minimal support from their respective provincial and local level governments. A few of them are made known to the National Cultural Commission, whereas most are by no means acknowledged due to inaccessibility of information and communication systems, and of course due also to lack of funding and backed up resources.

Existing institutional structures such as church groups, schools, business enterprises, law and order systems, clan/tribal groupings, etc, in communities can be utilised to implement activities and projects fundamentally based on the National Cultural Commission to establish networks and collaborate with key state bodies, agencies, non-government organisations and the local people.

Since Papua New Guinea has recently ratified the UNESCO 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, the National Cultural Commission as the implementing agency has yet to outline project activities. My participation in this training course, I believe, will enable me to strategize knowledge to be obtained and implemented coherently in pursuing the activities required for the intangible cultural heritage practices and processes in Papua New Guinea.