

International Partnership Programme for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage
“**Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**”
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COUNTRY REPORT – PAKISTAN

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Role of the National Government

Pakistan is a country of diverse communities with cultural traditions, belief systems, value systems, life styles, dialects and aspirations.

Keeping in view the rich heritage of our culture and to provide a conducive environment for its growth and promotion as enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan, different steps are being taken by the Government of Pakistan to achieve the following goals:

- To awaken the spirit of participation of the people of Pakistan and to safeguard their rights in promotion of culture.
- To record and document all tangible and intangible cultural assets in the country and to frame national cultural strategies to sustain cultural heritage.
- To meet the challenges of globalization by enhancing awareness and dissemination through traditional and modern technological means of our own cultural heritage and quality of cultural expressions in performing and visual arts.
- To further enrich our national language by making it truly representative of our national ethos and to recognize our rich linguistic diversity by promoting historical as well as existing Pakistani languages through research and study.
- To encourage the growth of public-private partnerships and to support civil society cultural initiatives by providing material incentives and support.
- To provide a free and healthy environment for the promotion of all cultural activities at different levels of society.
- To highlight the culture of tolerance, harmony and social integration inherent in Pakistan’s cultural fabric and eradicate the culture of violence, intolerance and fanaticism by affirmative cultural action through education and legislation.

Lok Virsa (National Institute of Folk & Tradition Heritage), established in the year 1974, is the prime institution in Pakistan situated at the federal capital Islamabad dealing with the tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Over the years, the Institute has made notable achievements in the preservation, projection, documentation and dissemination of the cultural heritage including establishment of the first Museum of Ethnology (Heritage Museum) at Islamabad depicting living traditions, Heritage Library with a collection of over 10,000 books and journals, Sound Archives housing over 20,000 hours of professionally recorded tapes of authentic cultural materials,

specialized Publishing House of cultural materials and Media Centre as a state-of-the-art production facility.

Lok Virsa also initiates measures to identify and categories individuals, groups or classes of notable masters and practitioners of all traditional arts and skills to ensure ways and means of their continuance by providing suitable incentives. One of the best examples of this kind is the Artisans-at-Work Festival, popularly know as Lok Mela, which is held by Lok Virsa annually at Islamabad aiming to revive endangered traditional arts of Pakistan.

Role of Provincial/Local Governments

Pakistan has four provinces including Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and North West Frontier Province (NWFP). Each province has its own government called “provincial government” to look after the welfare of its people including preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage of the representative province. Provincial governments have also evolved a system of local or district governments governed by Nazims (administrators) who ensure participation of people from grass root level. The promotion of folk heritage is primarily the responsibility of the provincial governments.

Major Functions of Lok Virsa under the Law

The Government of Pakistan promulgated a law through an Ordinance on 17th September, 2002 to provide for reconstitution of the National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) to effectively preserve indigenous cultural heritage, to project true identity of Pakistan and to safeguard intangible cultural heritage of Pakistan.

- ❖ Research, Collection, Documentation, Preservation, Projection & Dissemination of Oral Traditions, Folklore & other aspects of indigenous cultural heritage.
- ❖ Strengthen & nurture the roots of Pakistani culture and to achieve fundamental objectives regarding its rediscovery and reinterpretation to project the true identity of Pakistan.
- ❖ Improve knowledge, understanding and practices of different aspects of indigenous cultural heritage and devise ways and means for a broader dissemination through employment of modern media technologies.
- ❖ Arrange and provide training and technical assistance to its staff, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), community-based organizations, educational institutes through workshops, seminars, publications and scholarships.
- ❖ Retrieve advance knowledge of the general public for promotion of cultural heritage and cultural industries of Pakistan.

- ❖ Establish cultural industries, art & craft galleries, artisan villages and to hold & organize festivals.
- ❖ Establish cultural complexes and museums for the purpose of displaying living arts & crafts, cultural artifacts and rare objects from all parts of Pakistan.
- ❖ Promote cultural heritage in a way that it plays its rightful role in developmental issues such as economic reforms, investment, industry, education, literature, poverty alleviation, human rights and human development.
- ❖ Establish centres of excellence activate existing institutions and build or innovate new institutions and forge mutually beneficial private-public partnerships.

Lok Virsa and ACCU

ACCU is not new for Pakistan. Lok Virsa has been actively collaborating with ACCU in the past. We participated in the First Experts Meeting for Co-production of Educational Materials on Asian Music held by ACCU in Tokyo in 1975. First National Workshop on Documentation and Preservation of Non-physical, now called Intangible Cultural Heritage was also held by ACCU at Islamabad in 1994 in collaboration with UNESCO. I assure ACCU on behalf of my country our continued support and cooperation in all its future activities and programmes.

As for Pakistan is concerned, like Japan, we are also taking every possible measure to preserve, promote and safeguard the ICH in our country. Government of Pakistan has recently decided to launch a cultural policy to improve the functioning of all national cultural organizations and to effectively administer their activities in a well organized and efficient manner. In order to reinforce the role of Lok Virsa as a representative cultural institution, it has been reconstituted under a law enabling it to carry out all such functions that are essential for the promotion and preservation of Pakistan's cultural heritage.

To renew our previous understanding and to strengthen our existing ties, I would like to suggest the following for consideration of the ACCU:

- (a) Lok Virsa Heritage Library at Islamabad may be provided a complete set of all ACCU and UNESCO related documents and publications on ICH to update and improve its existing reference display for free use by students, scholars and researchers.
- (b) Lok Virsa in its capacity as officially designated correspondent organization for ACCU from Pakistan may be invited for participation in all future programmes/events of ACCU for its effective involvement in ICH-based activities.
- (c) There may be a joint collaboration between National Museum of Ethnology, Islamabad and National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka for exchange of information, expertise and exhibitions on regular basis.

- (d) There may also be a regular interaction between Lok Virsa and Municipality of Kyoto for participation of master artisans, folk artists and rural musicians in the Artisans-at-work Festival at Islamabad and Gion Festival at Kyoto on mutually agreed beneficial terms.
- (e) Due to growing importance of National Museums for safeguarding ICH, ACCU may hold the next training course on the topic “Role of Museums in Safeguarding ICH”. Duration of the course may be at least 15 days giving ample opportunity to the participants to understand and learn effectively from interactive lectures, video presentations and observatory field visits.
- (f) ACCU may also hold short training workshops in different specialized arts in each member country.