

International Partnership Programme for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage  
“**Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage**”  
(21-26 January 2008, Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto, JAPAN)

## **COUNTRY REPORT: THAILAND**

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### **1. Governmental Mechanism for Safeguarding of ICH**

As mentioned in the 2003 Convention, section III article 11 concerning role of States Parties, each State Party shall (a) take the necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, and (b) identify and define the various elements of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant nongovernmental organizations. To fulfill the Convention’s intention, each State Party (article 12) shall draw up one or more inventories of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory and update regularly. Moreover, each State Party shall endeavour (article 13), to ensure the safeguarding, development and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage, to:

- (a) adopt a general policy aimed at promoting the function of the intangible cultural heritage in society, and at integrating the safeguarding of such heritage into planning programmes;
- (b) designate or establish one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in its territory;
- (c) foster scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, with a view to effective safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular the intangible cultural heritage in danger;
- (d) adopt appropriate legal, technical, administrative and financial measures aimed at:
  - (i) fostering the creation or strengthening of institutions for training in the management of the intangible cultural heritage and the transmission of such heritage through forums and spaces intended for the performance or expression thereof;
  - (ii) ensuring access to the intangible cultural heritage while respecting customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage;
  - (iii) establishing documentation institutions for the intangible cultural heritage and facilitating access to them.

In addition, in article 14 the Convention mentioned that each State Party shall endeavour, by all appropriate means, to:

- (a) ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage in society, in particular through:
  - (i) educational, awareness-raising and information programmes, aimed at the general public, in particular young people;
  - (ii) specific educational and training programmes within the communities and groups concerned;
  - (iii) capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage, in particular management and scientific research; and

- (iv) non-formal means of transmitting knowledge;
- (b) keep the public informed of the dangers threatening such heritage, and of the activities carried out in pursuance of this Convention;
- (c) promote education for the protection of natural spaces and places of memory whose existence is necessary for expressing the intangible cultural heritage.

➤ **Roles of the National Government**

In Thailand, the core function on safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage is in line with Office of the National Culture Commission (ONCC), Ministry of Culture's core tasks. According to the National Culture Act of 1942, amended in 1943; and The Office of the National Culture Commission Act of 1979, amended in 1992, the ONCC has obligations as to make plans and projects on the promotion and development, of national cultural affairs, to promote, support and collaborate with the government sector, state enterprise, the private sector and other institutions during the process of implementing cultural undertakings affairs, to enhance promotion, expansion, cooperation and public relations for cultural affairs in any way beneficial to the country, to research, develop, revitalize, promote, transmit, enhance, and exchange culture, and to encourage individuals, group of individuals as well as different institutions to carry out this task, etc.

After the Ministerial Reformation in 2002, ONCC set its new vision (2003-2007) to be “the organization to promote Thai people to have appropriate values and behavior, feel proud and transmit their own culture and make use for their livings and sustainable development.”

To achieve such vision, ONCC has set its missions as follows:

1. promoting people's participation in Thai culture and value promotion process,
2. promoting the making use of Thai cultural capital for Thai people's livings and sustainable development,
3. managing knowledge and developing the cultural learning source, and
4. supporting the capacity building for the cultural networks.

Therefore, ONCC has 4 strategies to fulfil these missions, they are

1. promoting the cultural identity and diversity,
2. enhancing Thai value and dignity,
3. developing the capacity of Thai cultural learning sources and cultural networks, and
4. strengthening capacity building for the organization.

Follow its own tasks and the 2003–2007 Missions and Strategies, ONCC has conducted several programmes related to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage such as

1) The National Artists Award

Since 1985, ONCC has initiated The National Artists project in order to

- promote the compilation of directories of artists (especially national artists)
- promote the search and selection of national artists and persons of outstanding in cultural service
- promote the transmission and dissemination of the national artists' works at national and international levels
- establish the National Artists Centre

Until now, ONCC has awarded 181 national artists.

2) The ICH Database Making (performance and traditional craftsmanship field)

ONCC has implemented the databases for Intangible Cultural Heritage in performance and traditional craftsmanship field. The data has been collected by local scholars and communities who are the holders of these traditional cultures. The project has started since

2005 and still carries on to the current fiscal year under the name “Phum Ban Phum Muang” project.

➤ **Roles of Local Governments**

In the Chapter 14, Section 289 of the Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand 2550 B.E. (2007 A.D.) mentioned that a local government organization has the duty to conserve the local arts, customs, knowledge and good culture.

Moreover, Thai local governments has been obliged for years, under the Decentralization Plan and Procedure Act 2542 B.E. (1999 A.D.), to preserve, revitalize and maintain their local arts, customs, knowledge and good culture.

The ONCC has conducted the research on the title “Towards Formulation for Policies and Mechanism of Preservation, Transmission and Protection of Traditional Cultural Expressions and Expressions of Folklore” (April – December 2007), one part of the research mentioned that the local governments should

1. ensure recognition of and respect for the intangible cultural heritage or traditional cultural expressions in communities through awareness-raising and capacity building for the community leaders,
2. ensure enhancement of the ICH through specific educational and training programmes for all communities concerned,
3. build local cultural networks consisting of temples, schools, associations and groups and support technical, administrative and financial measures aimed at capacity-building activities for them,
4. create capacity-building activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage and promote the local community participation in local policy making, and
5. use local and public media to ensure recognition of, respect for, and enhancement of the intangible cultural heritage in society.

**2. Mechanism of Communities for Safeguarding of ICH**

Since the Constitution of Kingdom of Thailand 2540 B.E. (1997 A.D.), Thai Government has decentralized its own power to local communities. For the cultural agencies like the Office of the National Culture Commission (ONCC), one of its policies was to encourage local people to involve and have their own cultural policy and also resource management. Since 1997, ONCC adopted the Cultural Council Regulation and established a cultural council in every province all over Thailand including Bangkok. Its members consist of local governmental agencies, private sectors, communities, business agencies, academicians and local wisdom holders or artists. Until now, ONCC has 76 Provincial Cultural Councils, 796 District Cultural Councils and 7,000 Sub-district Cultural Councils.

The roles of the Cultural Council are

1. to be a center for exchanging knowledge, experience and concept in cultural management in local, national and international levels,
2. to promote and strengthen the local culture management,
3. to be a center for local cultural networks,
4. to mobilize resources from governmental agencies, state enterprises and private sectors to support the local cultural management and establish the cultural fund in provincial level,
5. to transmit Thai culture and adhere to the intentions of the United Nations on the World Decade for Cultural Development,

6. to develop culture to meet the changing social standard and suitable for local circumstances,
7. to create activities or programmes to preserve, promote, disseminate and develop local culture, and
8. to undertake works as assigned by local governor, Ministry of Culture and Office of the National Culture Commission.

➤ **Roles of Communities**

The research on “Towards Formulation for Policies and Mechanism of Preservation, Transmission and Protection of Traditional Cultural Expressions and Expressions of Folklore” mentioned the roles of communities in safeguarding their intangible cultural heritage that they should

1. provide and promote education and awareness raising, in particular through:
  - (a) community learning center and/or local museum,
  - (b) organization which provide cultural service in communities,
  - (c) formal and non-formal educations;
2. transmit and create new innovation including establish rules and conditions to conserve, preserve and develop their cultural heritage, in particular to
  - (a) promote community’s cultural identity,
  - (b) enhance the understanding on cultural diversity,
  - (c) preserve, foster and revitalize local culture;
3. strengthen and build capacity for cultural capital/fund management, by promote local communities participation in these processes:
  - (a) strengthening and capacity building their cultural fund to solve their own problems,
  - (b) cooperating with other local networks and government agencies,
  - (c) capacity building for their own rights protection; and
4. enforce their own customary laws/regulations.

➤ **Cooperation with Other Parties, such as Local Governments, NGOs, etc.**

In order to reach the mission of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, local communities should cooperate with other parties such as local governments, NGOs in 5 processes, they are

1. *process of participation:*  
that means participation of people in communities in any cultural affairs which results in the continuity of safeguarding process;
2. *process of learning together:*  
communities and other stakeholders should learn together in order to plan their policies and programmes to manage their own cultural resources;
3. *process of teamwork (gathering together):*  
this process will strengthen their bargaining power and enhance the opportunity to solve their problems;
4. *process of cultural revitalization, reproduction and renovation:*  
communities, incorporation with other stakeholders, should manage and make use of their own cultural resources in order to maintain their own cultural heritage;
5. *process of community rights:*  
all stakeholders should pay respect to community rights and shall endeavour to ensure the widest possible participation of communities.