PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON ICH SAFEGUARDING AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: PROJECT SUMMARY

PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON ICH SAFEGUARDING AND DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES IN FY 2016–2017

International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)

PROJECT BACKGROUND

'Preliminary Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region' started in April 2016, as a new research project under the new Medium-Term Programme (FY 2016–2020) of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI).

The project specifically focused on aspects related to natural hazards because in the Asia-Pacific region, a great number of countries frequently suffer severe events. Cyclones/typhoons, floods, earthquakes, tsunamis, drought and volcanic eruptions sometimes bring about disastrous consequences for these countries' peoples. Thus, natural hazards and disasters[1] are considered a factor threatening the viability of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

International awareness concerning protecting and safeguarding cultural heritage against disasters has been growing. UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy for 2014–2021 (37C/4) emphasises the urgent need to respond to post-conflict and post-disaster situations (PCPD) (UNESCO 2014), and the UN's Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 also calls for protection of cultural heritage (UNISDR 2015). However, while both domestic and international efforts have been increased for protecting and rescuing cultural heritage affected by severe disasters, such activities largely center on 'tangible' heritage while impacts on 'intangible' cultural heritage (ICH) are frequently overlooked. In the UNESCO policy framework for ICH, Operational Directives for the Implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage added a new paragraph on

1 According to UNISDR (2009), 'disaster' is 'a serious disruption of the functioning of a community or a society involving widespread human, material, economic or environmental losses and impacts, which exceeds the ability of the affected community or society to cope using its own resources', resulting from 'the combination of: the exposure to a hazard; the conditions of vulnerability that are present; and insufficient capacity or measures to reduce or cope with the potential negative consequences'. In this sense, a commonly used term 'natural disaster' is somewhat misleading because a disaster happens when natural hazards intersect with various human factors.

'Community-based resilience to natural disasters and climate change' (VI.3.3), reflecting the discussion on ICH and sustainable development (UNESCO 2016). Since 2016, the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has also discussed this issue under the theme of 'Intangible cultural heritage in emergencies'.

Major disaster risk reduction (DRR) and management (DRM)[2] strategies and frameworks have not succeeded in effectively incorporating cultural dimensions; too, cultural sectors' active commitment to DRR and DRM programmers remains limited. However, it is significant that recent PDNA (post-disaster needs assessment) programmes in the Asia-Pacific region have started to include assessment of culture.[3] In contrast, DRM specialists have shown growing interest and effort to integrate traditional indigenous knowledge within DRR strategies (e.g., Dekens, 2007; Mercer et al., 2010; Shaw et al., 2009). Indigenous knowledge, sometimes referred to as local knowledge, is 'the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings'. For rural and indigenous people, it 'informs decision-making about fundamental aspects of day-to-day life' and 'provide[s] a foundation for locally appropriate sustainable development' (UNESCO, n.d.). Such knowledge consitutes part of ICH, and at this intersection, we envisage a potential ICH contribution to DRM.

This project commenced against such a background, with a preliminary round of research activities. As a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO, hopefully, this project will contribute to UNESCO for enhancing ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region, and especially for strengthening the community's resilience to disasters.

ACTIVITIES IN FY 2016–2017

The project had two main interest areas: 1) understanding the impact of natural disasters on ICH, and, by extension, a consideration of effective measures for ICH safeguarding, and 2) highlighting active roles of ICH for DRR and DRM.

As the project started in April 2016, IRCI established a cooperative relationship with the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, particularly with its ICH Department, which has experience of heritage rescue programmers after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011. Accordingly, various project activities were implemented in close cooperation with the Institute.

Within two years during FY 2016–2017, IRCI undertook activities as summarised in Table 1.

2 UNISDR (2009) defines 'disaster risk reduction (DRR)' as 'the concept and practice of reducing disaster risks through systematic efforts to analyse and manage the causal factors of disasters, including through reduced exposure to hazards, lessened vulnerability of people and property, wise management of land and the environment, and improved preparedness for adverse events', whereas 'disaster risk management (DRM)' is 'the systematic process of using administrative directives, organizations, and operational skills and capacities to implement strategies, policies, and improved coping capacities in order to lessen the adverse impacts of hazards and the possibility of disaster'. Although they are used almost interchangeably, DRM could be viewed as the actions that aim to achieve the objective of DRR (PreventionWeb 2015).

3 In Samoa after Cyclone Evan (Government of Samoa, 2013), Vanuatu after Cyclone Pam (Government of Vanuatu, 2015), Fiji after Cyclone Winston (Government of Fiji, 2016), and in Nepal after the 2015 earthquake (Government of Nepal, 2015).

Table 1 Activities in Preliminary Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region FY 2016–2017

FY 2016	
1 April 2016	'Preliminary Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region' began
1 July 2016	First Working Group Session (Tokyo National Museum)
4–7 July 2016	Reconnaissance in Manila, the Philippines
20–22 October 2016	Reconnaissance in Port Vila, Vanuatu
24–26 October 2016	Reconnaissance in Suva, Fiji Participated in 'Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management' Conference in Suva, Fiji
11 November 2016	Second Working Group Session (Tokyo National Institute for Cultural Properties)
14–20 December 2016	Reconnaissance in Hue, Hoi An, and Ha Noi, Viet Nam
30 January 2017	International Working Group Session (Third Working Group Session) (Tokyo National Museum)
31 January 2017	Follow-up meeting with Working Group participants in preparation for FY 2017 activities
14–17 February 2017	Reconnaissance in Majuro, Marshall Islands
13–17 March 2017	Reconnaissance in Yangon, Mandalay, Bagan, and Inle Lake, Myanmar
FY 2017	
3 July 2017 -	Case studies assessing the current ICH situation in association with natural disasters proceeded under contract with researchers in Myanmar, Viet Nam, and the Philippines.
19–23 July 2017	Field survey on Gaua, Banks Islands in Vanuatu, in cooperation with Vanuatu Cultural Centre
26–30 September 2017	Field survey in Ra Province in Viti Levu, Fiji, in cooperation with iTaukei Institute for Language and Culture, and Blue Shield Pasifika
25–31 January 2018	Field survey in Abra and Ifugao in the Philippines, in cooperation with NCCA
25 January 2018	Case studies by collaborating researchers submitted to IRCI
20 March 2018	Final Working Group Session

Reconnaissance Survey in Asia-Pacific Countries in FY 2016

The first required step was to gain basic understanding of DRM in the Asia-Pacific region, how ICH is affected by various disasters, and active ICH roles for DRM. At the same time, developing cooperative relationships for implementing various project activities was critical. Therefore, IRCI sent researchers to selected countries in Asia and the Pacific to have discussions with researchers, specialists and government officials in fields related to DRM

and/or cultural heritage. While we were interested in finding some instances in which ICH was either damaged by a disaster or contributed to DRM, understanding social and cultural interests among those in DRM studies was also very important, along with heritage researchers' interests in examining ICH in the context of natural hazards and disasters.

Countries and organisations visited in FY 2016 are as follows:

Philippines (Metro Manila, 4–7 July 2016)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Tomo Ishimura (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

List of organisations visited: University of the Philippines-Diliman (Department of Anthropology; Archaeological Studies Program); Center for Disaster Preparedness; National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA); Oscar M. Lopez Center; Manila Observatory

Vanuatu (Port Vila, 20–22 October 2016)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Meredith L. Wilson (Stepwise Heritage and Tourism, Australia)

List of organisations visited: Climate Section, Ministry of Climate Change; Erromango Cultural Association; Lelema World Heritage Committee; National Disaster Management Office (NDMO); Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VCC)

Fiji (Suva, 24–26 October 2016)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Tomo Ishimura (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

List of organisations visited: Fiji Museum; iTaukei Institute of Languages and Culture; National Disaster Management Office (NDMO)

*Researchers also participated in the 'Pacific Platform for Disaster Risk Management' Conference held by UNISDR during 24–26 October 2016.

Viet Nam (Hue, Hoi An, and Ha Noi, 14–20 December 2016)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Hiromichi Kubota (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

List of organisations visited: University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University (Department of Anthropology); Hue University of Sciences (Department of Sociology); Hanoi University of Natural Resource and Environment; Hoi An Center for Cultural Heritage Management and Preservation; Hue Monuments Conservation Centre; Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry; Institute of Human Geography, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences (VASS); Institute for Social and Environmental Transition (ISET)-Vietnam; Vietnam Institute for Culture and Arts Studies (VICAS); Vietnam Museum of Ethnology

Marshall Islands (Majuro, 14–17 February 2017)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Huy Nguyen (ISET-Vietnam)

List of organisations visited: Environmental Protection Authority (EPA); Chief Secretary's Office; Waan Aelõñ in Majel (WAM); National Disaster Management Office (NDMO); USP Center

Myanmar (Bagan, Inle Lake, Mandalay, and Yangon, 13–17 March 2017)
Researchers sent by IRCI: Meredith L. Wilson (Stepwise Heritage and Tourism, Australia); Shigeaki Kodama (National Museum of Ethnology)

List of organisations visited: University of Yangon (Department of Anthropology; Department of Archaeology); Group of Geographers (from Pathein University, Taunggyi University, and Yangon University); Intha Literature, Culture, Development Association; Ministry of Culture (Archaeology Department; Bagan Branch); MKRC&WKRC/SEEDS Asia Myanmar Office; Myanmar Engineering Society; Myanmar Upper Land; National Museum; SEAMEO CHAT; UNDP Myanmar Office; University of Mandalay (Department of Anthropology; Department of Archaeology); Yangon Heritage Trust

Through discussions with both DRM and heritage researchers, the general situation of ICH in relation to DRM was recognised.

1) Because many Asia-Pacific countries are frequently exposed to various natural hazards, heritage researchers, and specialists are very keen to understand ICH in relation to DRM. However, most existing efforts to protect heritage from hazards and disasters are made for 'tangible' cultural heritage, whereas examining the situation of ICH in this context was recognised as a new approach to be developed.

2) Governmental culture sectors and museums are interested in this approach and find it significant for enhancing the country's ICH safeguarding, but natural hazards and disasters do not necessarily take top priority in heritage management. Part of these entities' understanding is 'Yes, we need to protect ICH from natural disasters, but the challenge is how to achieve this goal'. Discussion with IRCI for this project provided an opportunity to start thinking about what we can do in the area of ICH.

3) DRM research and practices are dominated by science and technology approaches, and in most cases, culture is not part of them. However, some researchers are trying to incorporate 'indigenous knowledge' for DRM. Some examples are the use of traditional architecture (e.g., local materials enable faster recovery, structural characteristics withstand disasters), traditional hazard indicators, and food preservation techniques. These are all ICH, even though DRM researchers have not used this terminology.

4) The 'indigenous knowledge' exemplified above is recognised as the intersection of ICH and DRM. Some ideas emerged during discussions: The culture sector could promote such positive aspects of ICH through museum exhibitions and educational materials by making use of their existing collections.

Working Group Sessions

In FY 2016, IRCI also held a series of working group sessions, inviting researchers from related fields as guest speakers to explore the potential of various approaches and to discuss issues related to ICH and disasters, while familiarising ourselves with cultural approaches for DRM.

On 1 July 2016, at the Tokyo National Museum, the first working group listened to Professor Hiromu Shimizu of Kyoto University share his experiences during the Pinatubo eruption in the Philippines and transformation of Aeta societies based on his long-term research. Considering the ICH focus of IRCI, he added a brief presentation introducing his research in Ifugao. His presentation was timely because the session was held a few days before IRCI's first trip to the Philippines. Especially for the beginning of exploring ICH approaches for DRM, his talk was insightful in emphasising that culture is always changing and that a disaster becomes an opportunity for cultural change that often involves certain creative aspects during the recovery process.

On 11 November 2016, at the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, the second working group session invited Professor Isao Hayashi of National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, who talked about the culture to cope with disasters, or 'disaster culture', referring to several cases in Japan, Indonesia, and Papua New Guinea. Introducing the concept of 'indigenous knowledge', his presentation encouraged us to explore how ICH contributes to DRM. Notably, he indicated the major functions of disaster culture to be protecting people, transmitting the memory of disaster to following generations and healing the minds of the affected. This could be applied to ICH as well.

On 30 January 2017, at the Tokyo National Museum, the third working group session was convened as the 'International Working Group Session', with presenters invited from Asia-Pacific countries. Dr Rajib Shaw, DRM specialist at IRDR, was the guest lecturer delivering a talk on science and technology gaps and indigenous knowledge, extensively referring to various case studies in the Asia-Pacific region. The session also provided us a great opportunity to learn DRM viewpoints for indigenous knowledge and ICH. Eight Asia-Pacific participants shared information on current DRM and heritage situations, with their experiences in Bangladesh, Fiji, the Philippines, and Vanuatu, respectively. This full-day event provided an opportunity for Asia-Pacific researchers in both culture and DRM fields to gather for active discussions on ICH in the DRM context. On the following day, possible project activities for FY 2017 were casually discussed among Asia-Pacific participants.

Records of these three working group sessions are included in this volume. For the first two sessions, we provided lecture summaries because the original talk was in Japanese, and the lecture, participants' presentations and discussions were transcribed for the International Working Group Session.

Field Research in FY 2017

In 2016, IRCI's activities, which primarily involved discussions with related institutions and researchers, helped capture the current DRM/DRR situation, possible disaster impacts on culture and ICH's potential roles for DRR. However, assessing the situation at the local, community level is necessary for developing effective strategies and action plans allowing

future integration of ICH into DRR/DRM. Therefore, activities for FY 2017 focused on field research to assess current ICH situations in natural disasters by interviewing local people and ICH practitioners living in disaster-prone or disaster-affected areas, paying special attention to remote, rural areas. Specific areas for the case study were determined in close communication with project counterparts in given countries.

Goals of the field research were as follows:

1) Identify varieties of ICH in areas that are related to natural disasters

2) Identify the impact of natural disasters on ICH

3) Identify positive aspects of ICH and understand the mechanisms of community resilience in which ICH has a significant part to play

4) Understand the community's needs and priorities in developing action plans for ICH safeguarding in disaster situations and the possible integration of ICH into future DRM/DRR planning

The researchers' network, established in FY 2016, was highly beneficial in identifying cooperating/collaborating partners; this action enabled effective implementation of a survey exploring various cultural and disaster settings in five Asia-Pacific countries. Three field research activities involving IRCI researchers were conducted in Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Philippines. In addition, collaborating researchers independently undertook six case studies in Viet Nam, Myanmar, and the Philippines.

To facilitate the survey and interview process, IRCI developed common guidelines (Table 2), which were used for all field research. These guidelines attempted to include major issues related to ICH and natural disasters; however, because of the project's preliminary stage and a limited timeframe for field activity, thoroughly covering all guideline items was not intended. Alternatively, each case study addressed aspects fitting specific field conditions and maintained overall goals to identify impacts on ICH, and active roles of ICH.

Table 2 Assessing the Current Situation of ICH in Association with Natural Disasters: Guidelines

1) Introduction to the project
a) About IRCI and ICH
* Introduce IRCI
- Category 2 Centre under auspices of UNESCO, established in 2011 in Japan
- Mission: Contribute to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage through facilitating research for ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region
- Activity Focus on 'ICH safeguarding and disaster risk management' under its medium-term programme (2016–2020)
* Explain ICH
- UNESCO's categories: a) oral traditions and expressions; b) performing arts; c) social practices, rituals and festive events; d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; e) traditional craftsmanship
- Note that ICH here is not limited to the elements that are inscribed on the UNESCO representative list, but includes any knowledge, skills and practices that are held and transmitted by people from generation to generation, and are part of their culture and livelihood.

* With respect to natural disasters, ecological and environmental knowledge (e.g. traditional resource management) is important.

b) Why ICH for DRR/DRM
* Natural disasters as a potential factor threatening the transmission of ICH:
  - Directly damage places and objects associated with ICH practice; natural resources required for ICH (e.g. local craft production)
  - Indirect impact: transformation of lifestyles affecting ICH (e.g. local materials and techniques replaced by commercial materials and technologies)
* ICH has significant roles to play in community-based DRM process (positive roles of ICH)
  - Importance of indigenous knowledge and practice (built upon generations of experiences)
* Note that a natural hazard only become a disaster when the affected people and communities are vulnerable. While cultural factors may be part of vulnerability, they also contribute significantly to DRR. In this respect, ICH may be able to strengthen community resilience in self-sustainable ways.

c) Objectives and Goals of the activity
* Understanding the situation of ICH in relation to natural disasters
* Recognizing the importance/significance of ICH in the process of DRR against natural disasters
* Discuss with the local community and counterparts possible ways to strengthen disaster-related ICH, and to incorporate such elements into their own DRR/DRM actions

2) Understanding the locality and community situations

a) Geographical settings of the area: natural and social environment, access to urban centres, information, etc.

b) Baseline information of the community/village/settlement: population, history, economy, livelihood, resources, etc.

3) Identifying known natural hazards and risks in the area

a) Varieties of natural hazards (types, severity, frequency)
* Be aware of slow-onset hazards such as droughts, or ENSO-related climatic extremes
* Any influence of climate change?

b) Local perception of natural hazards and disasters
* Local terminologies (when appropriate)
* What is considered a disaster? Any positive aspects?
  (e.g. River flooding accumulates fertile soils for agriculture and is not necessarily a disaster.)

c) History of recent disaster events that have affected the community
* What were the major impacts/consequences?
* Any environmental/social/cultural transformation triggered by the disaster? (Loss of resources, places, relocations, etc.)
* How did they recover?
* Difficulties and challenges they faced
* Any local DRR strategy used? (related to section 4 below)

d) Assess the community's risks and vulnerabilities (based on sections 2 and 3).

4) Identifying local ICH in association with natural hazards and disasters (ICH-based DRR/DRM)

a) Map ICH-based DRR/DRM techniques (traditional indigenous knowledge and practice for DRR)
* Maybe easier to do this with respect to each disaster type and asking how the locals prepare for, confront, and recover from the disaster.
* How such knowledge and techniques are learned and transmitted?
* Whether certain practices have changed due to adaptive advantages

b) Knowledge and techniques that were used in the past but no longer in practice
* What caused/contributed to the cessation of such practice?

c) Instances in which ICH is used in conjunction with introduced (scientific) technologies

d) Traditional systems/mechanisms of social cohesion and cooperation (within and between the community) contributing to DRM, including traditional social events and festivals

* Local governance arrangements used in preparation, response, and recovery, and the roles of women, youth and the elderly
* Specific function and roles in the process of disaster

e) Memories of the disaster as ICH
* Sites/places and stories transmitting the memory/lessons of past disaster events
* New stories, chants, songs or performances, and other social practices that are emerged from recent disaster experiences, and why they emerged
* How they are performed and transmitted?

f) Community's priorities and willingness to promote such ICH based DRR techniques
* Consideration of practicality, effectiveness, etc.
* Ask people to identify positive/negative outcomes when particular techniques are used/not used.

5) Assessing natural disasters' impact on ICH (natural disasters as a factor threatening the safeguarding of ICH)

a) Representative ICH elements in the area
* They may not be directly related to disasters, but would constitute fundamental part of the people's identity, livelihoods, and community's solidarity.
* Note that all categories of ICH (according to the definition of UNESCO) are introduced to the community for consideration.
* Also note the importance of daily subsistence practices and resource management strategies with its close connection to the cultural landscape. (Elements that are part of their daily lives may be overlooked.)

b) Instances in which ICH practices were interrupted by disasters (with reference to recent disaster events)
* Temporary disturbance to natural resources, gardens and crops, damage to/loss of places, facilities, and tools to perform ICH, etc.
* Duration of the impact, and how they revived/transformed.

c) Indirect-impact and long-term transformation triggered by disasters
* e.g. replacement of raw materials (for houses, craft making, etc.) from traditional resources to imported commercial products may lead to the decline/loss of traditional knowledge and practices
* Note that natural disasters create opportunities for cultural changes. ICH in general is often under the endangered situation due to other common factors such as globalization, industrialization, and modernization. A disaster event that happens in such circumstances may lead to considerable transformation of ICH, especially in the process of recovery.

Supplement: When prominent ICH practitioners are available (e.g. wood carvers, potters, weavers, performers, etc.), information regarding the disaster-impact may be collected through additional, separate interviews.

a) Whether any past disasters interrupted the practice or not. If so, how it happened (what were damaged/lost) and how long it was interrupted.
b) Risks and concerns they have (in relation to, but not limited to natural disasters).
c) Transformation of ICH and its transmission before, during, and after the disaster. Did a disaster event contribute to the decline of the tradition?

IRCI undertook the following three field studies:

Gaua (Banks Islands), Vanuatu (19–23 July 2017)
Counterpart: Vanuatu Cultural Centre

Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Meredith L. Wilson (Stepwise Heritage and Tourism, Australia); Edson Willie (Vanuatu Cultural Centre)

Focus: Gaua is an island with an active volcano, Mt Garet. The latest eruption in 2009–2010 forced the locals living on the western and northwestern sides of the island to evacuate to other parts of the island for about 6 months. The Banks Islands are one of the most isolated areas in Vanuatu, and the local people's livelihood is largely based on subsistence agriculture. These islands are also known for their distinctive cultural expressions. Researchers expected that the people retained rich knowledge for dealing with various natural hazards, including volcanic eruptions and tropical cyclones.

Naocobau and Namarai villages, Ra Province, Viti Levu, Fiji (26–30 September 2017)
Counterpart: Blue Shield Pasifika/Fiji Museum; iTaukei Institute for Language and Culture

Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Tomo Ishimura (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties); Elizabeth F. D. Edwards (Blue Shield Pasifika/Fiji Museum); Ilaitia Senikuraciri Loloma (iTaukei Institute for Language and Culture)

Focus: These two villages were devastated by Tropical Cyclone Winston in February 2016. Therefore, the research specifically focused on villagers' experiences of Winston, its impact on their ICH, and the situation of ICH during the recovery process.

Abra and Ifugao, Cordilleras Region, Philippines (25–31 January 2018)
Counterpart: National Commission for Culture and the Arts (NCCA)

Researchers sent by IRCI: Yoko Nojima (IRCI); Tomo Ishimura (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties); Cecilia V. Picache (NCCA); Norma A. Respicio (University of the Philippines-Diliman)

Focus: Indigenous peoples live on both Abra and Ifugao, and researchers intended to understand hazards and ICH situations among communities in mountainous areas. The Ifugao possess both World Heritage sites and ICH elements inscribed in the list of the 2003 Convention of UNESCO; thus greater awareness concerning their ICH and its safeguarding are expected.

Collaborating researchers conducted case studies as follows:

Batangas, Philippines by Soledad N.M. Dalisay (University of the Philippines-Diliman)

Ayeyarwady region, Myanmar by Khin Kay Khaing (Pathein University)

Rakhain state, Myanmar by Chan Myae Myittar Development Association

Bac Ha region (Lao Cai), Viet Nam by the Centre for Advanced Research on Global Change (CARGC), Hanoi University of Natural Resources and Environment

Black Hà Nhì and Red Dao Communities (Lao Cai), Viet Nam by Phan Phuong Anh (University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University)

Bo River basin (Hue), Viet Nam by Le Van An and Ngo Tung Duc (Hue University of Agriculture and Forestry)

The final portion of this project report ('Assessing the Current Situation of ICH in Association with Natural Disasters: Case Studies') includes these case study reports.

SUMMARY AND PROSPECTS

During the past two years, our study identified several points associated with ICH. Major damage caused by disasters is as follows:

- Important places associated with oral traditions, ritual performances, social activities, and subsistence practices such as gardens and fishing places could be damaged or lost.
- Tools and equipment required for performing arts, rituals, festive events, and subsistence practices could be damaged or lost.
- Natural resources required for craft production, for instance, weaving, basket making, and pottery making, could be depleted or lost, leading to interruption and recession of practices.
- Disaster relief and aid items from outside sometimes disturb or replace local practices.
- Social events, ritual events, and ceremonies may be postponed or cancelled.

In some cases, positive sides of natural hazards were noted:

- In river basins and deltas in Southeast Asia, moderate flooding is part of subsistence systems—not considered disasters.
- In the Pacific, the local people can sometimes gain unusual fish harvests and excellent crop harvests.

Positive aspects of ICH include the following:

- Local knowledge systems associated with nature and the environment, including local resource management, conserve their environment and also protect from natural hazards. Traditional hazard indicators enable the local people to prepare in advance.
- Having environmental knowledge enables people to build their villages and houses in safer locations.
- Traditional houses have abilities to withstand major hazards. Traditional local houses utilising local materials are strong against cyclones and earthquakes. In Gaua, Vanuatu, thatched roofs last longer than corrugated iron roofs against volcanic ashfall. Houses in Viet Nam's mountainous areas protect people against cold weather. Houses along rivers in Southeast Asia are equipped with systems to reduce the impact of floods. Certain houses function as shelters during disasters.
- Traditional food preservation techniques and the knowledge of wild 'bush' food could increase food security.
- Memories of past disasters are transmitted as epics and songs, sometimes associated with particular places and monuments.
- Rituals are performed to mitigate risks or to avoid disasters. Such practices may not

be scientific, but are important in the community and function well to maintain social order.

- After the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Northeast Japan, reviving local festivals and performances assisted the community's recovery.

In fact, rich knowledge exists concerning hazards and disasters, and it is effective for DRR. Possibly the biggest problem, however, is that such knowledge is no longer practiced in the contemporary context. Thus, the problem lies in transmitting such knowledge. Furthermore, recent introduction of the DRM framework and strategies intended to increase communities' DRM abilities are generally top-down; they sometimes override existing practices. Recognising and utilising local knowledge effectively is important for enhancing communities' resilience.

While disasters certainly impact ICH, it seems unlikely that the disaster itself leads directly to loss of ICH. Even before disasters, many ICH elements are already endangered because of long-term processes of modernisation and 'development'. In such a context, a disaster could easily lead to the loss of ICH. Recognising that ICH is always changing, disaster events are that happen at the edge of this process, and thus long-term research will be necessary to fully understand how a disaster transforms ICH.

Post-disaster revitalisation of local rituals, festivals, and performing arts in Northeastern Japan was highlighted and promoted as a means of consolidating the community's cohesion and enhancing the recovery process. When we conducted various research activities during this project, this case was always in mind. Interestingly, however, this seems unique to Japan. As an activity in FY 2018, IRCI has been planning an Asia-Pacific regional workshop on ICH and natural hazards to further examine this issue in the Asia-Pacific context.

Finally, the critical issue is still local awareness and perception of ICH. This is a fundamental part of ICH safeguarding and thus has to be further promoted, regardless of disasters. In such a process, knowledge and practices relating to DRR could be promoted and safeguarded.

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