

## Work Plan for FY 2024

### 1. Activity Focus and the Overview of Research Projects

The Work Plan for FY 2024 is developed under the scheme of IRCI's new Medium-Term Programme (FY 2022–2026), which was approved at the 10th meeting of the Governing Board of IRCI (17 November 2021).

A total of four projects are proposed for FY 2024: two projects under Activity Focus I (Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding), and two projects for Activity Focus II (Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies) (Figure 1, Table 1). Two out of four projects will see their final stage in FY 2024, while a new project will be developed, which will succeed the achievement of the research project on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and disaster risk management finished in FY 2023.

**Figure 1: Timeline of research projects in Medium-Term Programme 2022–2026**

FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
<b>Activity Focus I. Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding</b>				
Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States				
Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding (Former title: Creation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of Research for the Safeguarding of ICH)				
<b>Activity Focus II. Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies</b>				
Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities				
Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management (FY 2020-2023)		<b>(New Project)</b> Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region		
Research on ICH Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic				

**Table 1. List of research projects in FY 2024**

<b>Activity Focus I. Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding</b>	
Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States	
Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding (Former title: Creation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of Research for the Safeguarding of ICH)	
<b>Activity Focus II. Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies</b>	
Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities	
New Project	Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region

**Activity Focus I: Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding**

Promote research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage through conducting the following activities regarding the practices and methodologies of safeguarding, in cooperation with research institutions and researchers actively working in the field of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region:

- (i) Instigate research activities through regional/international conferences, workshops, seminars, and publications, while strengthening IRCI’s function as a hub of research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region by forming a consortium of research institutes in the Asia-Pacific region
- (ii) Collect research information in the Asia-Pacific region, paying special attention to developing countries and small island developing states (SIDS) and aiming at enhancing their research capacity, while examining and developing strategies for optimizing the use and sharing of research data
- (iii) In implementing activities mentioned above, special attention is paid to the following:
  - (a) foster young ICH researchers in the Asia-Pacific region, and
  - (b) actively promote IRCI’s activities through various media including social networking systems, in collaboration with academic societies and other stakeholders

(Section III (1), Medium-Term Programme (FY 2022–2026))

Activity Focus I aims to further promote the research for safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific region.

In the ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States (FY 2022–2024)’ project, major data collection activities have been carried out since FY 2023 by four cooperating research institutions

(counterparts) in Central Asia and seven in Small Island Developing States (SIDS). To conclude the project, workshops are programmed in both sub-regions to reflect on the outcomes of data collection activities and discuss the situation of ICH research and associated challenges in each country and sub-region.

The 'Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding (FY 2022–2026)' project, which is the project title renamed from the former 'Creation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of Research for the Safeguarding of ICH', will reach a turning year of the five-year project term. Along with an ongoing online seminar series, an international conference and a workshop targeting young researchers are planned to be held in person to address various discussion topics deeply, inviting both young and experienced researchers to the same stage.

### **Activity Focus II: Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies**

Conduct research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific region that is in line with and contributing to ongoing international frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, and Paris Agreement on Climate Change, which are outlined in UNESCO's Medium-Term Strategy (41C/4) and Programme and Budget (41C/5).

(Section III(2), Medium-Term Programme (FY 2022-2026))

Under Activity Focus II, various research projects investigating specific cases of ICH contributing to sustainable and resilient societies have been implemented.

The 'Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities (FY 2022–2024)' project explores the contribution of ICH to target 11.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the final year of the project, a concluding symposium participated by project partners will be organized to extensively discuss the roles of ICH in the sustainable management of heritage landscapes and in terms of integrated safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage.

The 'Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region (FY 2024–2026)' project is newly proposed based on, and to further develop, the knowledge gained in the past research projects on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management (FY 2016–2018, 2020–2023). Preliminary research and case studies will be conducted in selected communities in the Asia-Pacific region, which will lead to the development of methodologies for enhancing the community's capabilities in safeguarding and transmitting ICH confronting the increasing challenges of climate change.

## 2. Individual Project Outlines

Activity Focus I. Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding

### **Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States**

**Period of implementation:** FY 2022–2024

**Geographic focus:** Central Asia; Small Island Developing States (SIDS) within the Asia-Pacific region

#### **Background:**

Since 2013, IRCI has been collecting research data on ICH in various countries of the Asia-Pacific region to map the current situation of research in this field, thereby contributing to the enhancement of research for ICH safeguarding. As of today, the IRCI Research Database covers 48 countries; however, the amount and quality of the collected information remain uneven throughout the region, and particularly the information from Central Asia and the Pacific Islands is still limited. There are some island nations, such as Timor-Leste and Maldives, from which research information has not been collected. In addition, research information concerning ICH and its safeguarding is not effectively shared at regional and international levels, even though sharing research information plays a crucial role in ICH safeguarding.

#### **Purpose:**

The project aims to:

- 1) compile existing information related to research for safeguarding ICH and make collected information available through the IRCI Research Database, thereby facilitating access to the most current trends and situation of ICH safeguarding in each country;
- 2) enhance capacities of research institutions in the Asia-Pacific region to accumulate and analyze research information relating to ICH safeguarding, to identify areas requiring further input and development for safeguarding ICH in respective countries; and
- 3) encourage information sharing related to ICH and its safeguarding among research institutions in each country and also within sub-regions and the entire Asia-Pacific region, leading to the development of further research programmes and active discussions on ICH safeguarding.

#### **Progress:**

Guidelines for collecting research information for Central Asia were developed in FY 2022. Following the guidelines, the counterparts in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan,

and Uzbekistan commenced data collection activities on a pilot basis in FY 2022 and are conducting data collection on a full scale in FY 2023.

Regarding SIDS, counterpart institutions were identified in Fiji, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste, and Vanuatu in FY 2022. By inviting them and the resource persons from the Pacific Community and UNESCO Office for the Pacific States, a workshop was held to discuss guidelines that were tailored to situations in SIDS. The counterparts commenced data collection activities in FY 2023. Institutions in Kiribati and Maldives joined the project in FY 2023, responding to the second call from IRCI.

**Specific activities for FY 2024:**

- 1) For Central Asia, the following activities are planned:
  - a) Full-scale research data collection is continued by applying the data collection methodology developed in FY 2022 for Central Asia, in cooperation with multiple research institutions in each country.
  - b) In the process of collecting research information, a domestic workshop is organized by the counterpart if necessary, inviting its collaborators and ICH researchers in their country to strengthen the data collection network.
  - c) The final workshop is organized in a Central Asian city (specific location to be decided) to report the result of data collection activities during the three years of the entire project and discuss the situation of ICH research and associated challenges in each country and in Central Asia as a whole.
- 2) For SIDS, the following activities are planned:
  - a) Each counterpart institution continues data collection activities, following the data collection scheme developed in FY 2022 for SIDS.
  - b) The final workshop for SIDS is organized to report the result of data collection activities during the three years and discuss the situation of ICH research and associated challenges in each country and in small island nations as a whole.
- 3) A Project report is edited and published.

**Specific outputs:**

- 1) Research information collected in Central Asia and SIDS in FY 2024 will be uploaded to the IRCI Research Database and become accessible to the public by the end of March 2025.
- 2) A project report compiling the results of data collection will be published online by the end of March 2025.

### **Project partners, cooperating researchers, and organizations:**

- Partners in Central Asia: Kazakhstan ICH National Committee; Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication in Mongolia; ICH Center, Research Institution of Culture and Information in Tajikistan; and the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center for Promotion of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan
- Partners in SIDS: Department of Culture, Heritage and Arts, Ministry of Education, Heritage and Arts in Fiji; Belau National Museum, Palau; Papua New Guinea National Cultural Commission; Timor-Leste National Commission for UNESCO; Vanuatu Cultural Centre; Culture and Museum Division, Ministry of Internal Affairs in Kiribati; and National Center for Cultural Heritage, Maldives Ministry of Arts, Culture and Heritage
- Regional organizations: International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS), Pacific Community (SPC), etc.
- UNESCO offices (in Almaty, Apia, Tehran, and Tashkent)

\*See attached PDM (IRCI/2023/12GB/9/Annex 2a) for the detailed project design and targets.

Activity Focus I. Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding

#### **Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding**

(Former title: Creation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of Research for the Safeguarding of ICH)

\*To better reflect the content of the project, renaming of the project title is proposed.

**Period of implementation:** FY 2022–2026

\*The project implementation should be reviewed and revised towards the end of FY 2024.

**Geographic focus:** Entire Asia-Pacific region

#### **Background:**

Research is considered one of the measures for safeguarding ICH; however, opportunities to share/learn about the research for safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific region are still limited. IRCI's mission is to instigate and coordinate research into practices and methodologies of safeguarding endangered intangible cultural heritage elements present in the Asia-Pacific Region, and thus strengthening its capacity and function as a 'research centre' is crucial for promoting research activities.

IRCI has carried out more than 10 years in the past various research activities in cooperation with researchers and various research institutions within the Asia-Pacific region, including universities, museums, government sections, and NGOs, while organizing a series of expert meetings, researcher forums, and conferences aiming at promoting research for safeguarding ICH. In this project, such efforts are strengthened by developing a new common framework for active interaction among researchers and research institutions in the Asia-Pacific region.

**Purpose:**

This project aims to enhance the research for safeguarding ICH and strengthen ICH researchers' network, by creating and managing the Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding and by offering through the forum various activities focusing on ICH and its safeguarding such as seminars, research forums, symposia, and international conferences that are principally open to any interested individuals. Making use of an online webinar format, forum programmes are expected to invite a wide range of participants, including researchers, government officials, museum staff, and ICH practitioners within the Asia-Pacific region. Programmes specifically targeting young researchers in the region are also considered to encourage their active contribution to ICH safeguarding.

**Progress:**

As the first step of the project, IRCI established the Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding in FY 2022. A planning committee consisting of experts from Australia, Fiji, India, Japan, Kyrgyzstan, and Malaysia was set up to develop various programmes as part of the forum.

With an online platform employing the Facebook group, an online seminar series was inaugurated in December 2022. A total of three seminars were held in FY 2022, and for FY 2023, three seminars have been programmed, two of them as the special seminar dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Convention.

A programme targeting young researchers, originally scheduled in FY 2023 as an online session, has been postponed to FY 2024 and will be held as a face-to-face workshop for better benefitting young researchers.

**Specific activities for FY 2024:**

- 1) Online seminars on ICH are continued. At least two seminars are held, which might be organized by coordinating activities with a new project of Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region.

- 2) An international conference is organized, to be held in Japan for 2-3 consecutive days. The conference aims to put together and discuss the latest trends in ICH research in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.
  - a) This should be organized as an academic and interdisciplinary conference inviting leading experts working in the field of ICH from various standpoints to have in-depth discussions. Specific contents and themes are discussed by the planning committee reflecting regional needs and interests.
  - b) Open calls for session topics or presentations may be sought to expand the network of ICH researchers. Also, an online live-streaming option may be considered to accommodate researchers who may not be able to join the conference in person.
- 3) A workshop targeting young researchers is held to encourage their active engagement in the research for safeguarding ICH.
  - a) A face-to-face workshop consisting of presentation, discussion, and paper writing sessions is under consideration to help them develop professional skills. Liaising this workshop with the international conference will be explored, as this will be a great opportunity for young researchers to interact with leading ICH researchers and scholars.
  - b) Expected participants are not limited to literal 'young' but include graduate students, early-career scholars, and individuals engaged in ICH research. Considering the practicality of the workshop and the availability of human and financial resources, five to six participants are selected from applicants who have submitted research topics and presentation abstracts, taking into account geographical balance.
- 4) Planning Committee meetings are held three times, which discuss the following:
  - a) Planning and organization of an international conference and young researchers' workshop
  - b) Online seminar topics to be continued in FY 2025
  - c) Review of the performance of the project activities in the first three years

**Specific outputs:**

- 1) Audio-visual recordings of seminars to be published on IRCI's YouTube channel.
- 2) Publication based on the international conference (to be published in the years that follow).
- 3) A workshop report with the collection of final papers by young researchers.



**Project partners, cooperating researchers, and organizations:**

Planning committee members (experts from six Asia-Pacific countries)

\*See attached PDM (IRCI/2023/12GB/9/Annex 2b) for the detailed project design and targets.

Activity Focus II. Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies

**Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities**

**Period of implementation:** FY 2022–2024

**Geographic focus:** Entire Asia-Pacific region

**Background:**

While the importance of cultural heritage for sustainable cities and communities has been emphasized in SDG target 11.4, by and large it refers to the tangible aspects of heritage, and how ICH contributes to this process has not been investigated in detail. Since ‘Yamato Declaration on Integrated Approaches for Safeguarding Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage’ was adopted in 2004, the importance of the integrated approaches for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage has been recognized. For more than a decade, however, there has not been much progress in deepening our understanding of this topic. Sustainable cities and communities in the context of SDGs would provide an ideal ground to enhance the discussion on the integrated approaches for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

**Purpose:**

The project investigates the role of intangible cultural heritage for sustainable cities and communities, particularly focusing on the cases of the management of cultural/historical landscapes, and demonstrates how ICH could contribute to the achievement of SDG target 11.4. Assuming that local communities having historical architecture, cultural landscapes, and World Heritage sites are more aware of the management of their heritage, the project explores various ‘intangible’ aspects that shape their heritage. The project is expected to provide some insights for elaborating the integrated approaches for safeguarding tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

**Progress:**

IRCI has concluded an agreement with APSARA National Authority (ANA) in Cambodia and George Town World Heritage Incorporated (GTWHI) in Malaysia on research activities for FY 2023 and started the full-scale case study in cooperation with ANA and

GTWHI. For monitoring the case study in Malaysia, IRCI visited George Town in July 2023 and had a chance to directly hear voices from community members about their ICH practices and current situation and challenges in safeguarding their cultural heritage. As to the case study in Cambodia, a community-based workshop is planned, and the content of the event is under consideration.

However, IRCI needed to reconsider the implementation of the project in Fiji with the iTaukei Institute of Languages and Culture (TILC) due to the difficulty in establishing reliable communication. To add an alternative case study from the Pacific, IRCI requested an NGO specializing in Pacific heritage to start a case study in the Marshall Islands.

**Specific activities for FY 2024:**

- 1) The final symposium is organized in the first half of the fiscal year to discuss the roles of ICH in sustainably managing heritage landscapes, including the issues of integrated safeguarding of tangible and intangible heritage. Project partners are expected to present the result of the case study conducted in FY 2023. Additional speakers are invited from several countries in the Asia-Pacific region to share their cases and practices in which intangible cultural heritage is utilized and highlighted for sustainable heritage management.
- 2) Supplementary field research may be conducted by project partners, depending on the availability of funding.
- 3) Project partners are expected to write a comprehensive research paper based on the case study, which will be included in the final report to be published by the end of March 2025.

**Specific outputs:**

A project report, including a collection of case studies and the results of the international symposium.

**Project partners, cooperating researchers, and organizations:**

- APSARA National Authority
- George Town World Heritage Incorporated
- Pasifika Renaissance (2023–)

\*See attached PDM (IRCI/2023/12GB/9/Annex 2c) for the detailed project design and targets.

Activity Focus II. Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies

### **Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region (New project)**

**Period of implementation:** FY 2024–2026

**Geographic focus:** Asia-Pacific region (with special attention to coastal and small island communities)

#### **Background:**

Climate change has been an issue of utmost importance affecting humanity today. Most often, it is recognized as extreme hazards that are more frequently causing disasters. Disturbance of the ecosystem associated with pronounced climatic anomalies threatens the transmission of many ICH elements that are deeply rooted in the local environment, such as a wide range of subsistence practices (agriculture, fishing, hunting, etc.), knowledge and practices for sustainable resource management, craft productions relying on localized materials, and even rituals and festive events associated with the nature. Furthermore, the impact of sea level rise is more prominent in small island nations and low-lying coastal communities, which in the long term may force some communities to abandon culturally important places and associated practices.

There are growing interests and efforts at the international and national levels to address emergencies associated with climate change. However, specific impacts of climate change are experienced locally, and the response and adaptation to this emergency have to be made with the community's initiatives. In this respect, it is critical to enhance the community's capacity to cope with the ongoing climate change. Knowledge and efforts have been accumulated around ICH and disaster risk reduction in recent years, and the active roles of ICH are highlighted. However, traditional knowledge and practices that have been useful for disaster risk reduction have to be reviewed whether they remain effective under the changing climate conditions.

#### **Purpose:**

This project addresses the importance of ICH in climate actions. By conducting case studies targeting selected communities in the Asia-Pacific region that are vulnerable to the impact of climate change, it aims to develop community-based methodologies and action plans to safeguard ICH while adapting to the changing environment and ecosystems. Through these case studies and other relevant case studies for reference, it would also be possible to come up with some general guidelines/tools for community-based safeguarding of ICH and adaptation to climate change.

Knowledge and insights gained through the IRCI project 'Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management' (2016–2018, 2020–2023) would be useful for starting up this project. Building on this existing foundation, the project further incorporates the notion of adaptation to better understand and address the changing nature of ICH practices in the face of rapid environmental alteration due to climate change.

In the course of the project, opportunities of exchange sessions such as seminars, expert meetings, and symposia are sought to enhance the impact of the project and synergies with related initiatives concerning ICH and climate change and dialogues among ICH–Climate Change–Disaster Risk Reduction.

**Preparatory activities:**

IRCI has implemented the project, 'Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management' (FY 2016–2018, FY 2020–2023), and has accumulated knowledge and expertise concerning ICH and disaster risk reduction. This will provide a baseline for approaching issues related to climate change.

IRCI has been in communication with UNESCO and its experts concerning its ongoing process to highlight ICH and climate actions for possible synergies and enhancing the project's contribution to UNESCO activities.

**Specific activities for FY 2024:**

The project will be implemented for three years from FY 2024 to 2026, and the first year will be a preliminary phase to set up cooperative partnerships and explore the potential of the project activities.

- 1) Preliminary research is undertaken by IRCI in cooperation with potential collaborators to understand the impact of climate change on ICH, including the identification of ICH elements (knowledge and practices) that are closely linked to the environment and climate.
  - a) Potential collaborators, partners, and resources are explored through an examination of existing case studies, including the materials produced by the UNESCO Living Heritage Entity and Local and Indigenous Knowledge Systems (LiNKS) programme.
  - b) Online hearings are carried out with potential collaborators and partners to understand the current situation of ICH in relation to climate change. Some of

the hearing opportunities from the experts could be organized as 'online seminars' that are open to any interested individuals.<sup>1</sup>

- 2) Specific cases that are targeted for further field research (case studies) in the following years are selected (three to four cases).
  - a) Small island and coastal communities as well as remote and marginalized communities are prioritized as the scope of the case study under the project.
  - b) The case study to be conducted in the following years aims to enhance the capacity of the community to adapt to climate change while safeguarding their ICH in the context of changing environmental settings. Possible activities include but are not limited to the community-based identification of knowledge and practices related to the environment, assessment of risks for ICH that are associated with climate change, and so on.
  - c) Depending on the availability of the budget, IRCI may visit a few target countries to discuss and prepare for the field research in the next fiscal year.
- 3) An inception workshop/symposium is organized to explore the potential of the project, through sharing information concerning ICH in the context of climate change.
  - a) Some climate change specialists are invited to create an opportunity for dialogue with ICH researchers and specialists.
  - b) The format of the event will depend on the availability of the project budget, but a hybrid format combining online and on-site participation is considered feasible.

Based on the outcomes of the activities in the first fiscal year, full-scale field research will be implemented in the following years.

**Specific outputs:**

- 1) A project report compiling several case studies on community-based approaches for safeguarding ICH in the context of climate change.
- 2) Guidelines for safeguarding ICH in climate emergencies or some tools that could be utilized for community-based efforts for safeguarding ICH

---

<sup>1</sup> This could be arranged in conjunction with ongoing IRCI project, 'Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding'.

**Project partners, cooperating researchers, and organizations:**

- Researchers and research organizations in the Asia-Pacific region
- Experts familiar with ICH, climate change issues, and disaster risk management in the Asia-Pacific region, including UNESCO

\*See attached PDM (IRCI/2023/12GB/9/Annex 2d) for the detailed project design and targets.

APPROVED

### 3. Cooperation with Sakai City

In accordance with the Medium-Term Programme (FY 2022–2026), and within the framework of its mandate as specified in the Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Japan, IRCI has been contributing to the projects carried out by Sakai City for promoting ICH to the general public.

In FY 2024, IRCI plans to collaborate with Sakai City on the following activities:

- 1) Seminar for Understanding Intangible Cultural Heritage programmed by Sakai City  
IRCI has collaborated on this event yearly since 2021, coordinating one seminar by assigning a lecturer. In FY 2024, too, IRCI will arrange a lecturer to speak on ICH topics.
- 2) Panel exhibition featuring IRCI's activities  
The content of the exhibition is updated annually with a specific focus.
- 3) Distribution of IRCI brochures and other promotional materials  
Sakai City Museum cooperates on distributing IRCI brochures and other materials promoting ICH to its visitors.

Through these activities, IRCI aims to raise awareness among the general public of the importance of ICH, while enhancing the visibility of IRCI itself.