Consulate General
of the Federal Republic of Germany
Kolkata

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CONTACT BASE

Documenting and Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Nagaland

Toolkit for Storytelling and Inventorying

Introducing the Toolkit

Contact Base is documenting and promoting Nagaland's cultural heritage with the support of German Consulate General, Kolkata for safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH). The participation of community for documenting ICH is important to ensure accurate storytelling by tradition bearers, and proper recording of traditional knowledge to uphold the cultural richness and diversity of the region. This toolkit provides guideline for ethical and heritage sensitive documentation.

What is Intangible Cultural Heritage ?

"Intangible cultural heritage" refers to the practices, knowledge, skills,and cultural spaces of people, recognized as part of their heritage.Transmitted across generations and continuously recreated, it provides a sense of identity and continuity, fostering respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

UNESCO categorises ICH as follows :

- Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of intangible cultural heritage
- Traditional craftsmanship
- Performing arts
- Social practices, rituals, traditional sports and festive events
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

What is an inventory?

An inventory is a list. Inventorying or inventory-making of ICH is the process of documenting living heritage, which involves the collection and presentation of all information in a systematic way.

Ethics of documenting ICH

- Guarantee the permission of communities and groups about whom you are documenting.
- Ensure that the ICH identified to be documented has been done with the involvement of the relevant communities, groups, and individuals.
- Respect customary practices while documenting, and do not document anything that would offend the community.
- Ensure that the context of the ICH being documented is fully captured to generate respect and understanding and avoid misrepresentations.

What is storytelling?

Storytelling is the cultural practice of sharing stories with others. Storytelling is universal and is as ancient as humankind. Before there was writing, there was storytelling. It occurs in every culture and at every age. Storytelling serves a purpose such as entertainment, cultural preservation, or instilling moral values.

What can you document?

- Communities and their cultural histories and lifestyle
- Regional attire
- Craft making: weaving, basketry, jewellery, wood work, etc.
- Architecture
- Music and dance
- Musical instruments
- Cultural landscapes
- Legends, fables, mythologies and folklore
- Poems, chants, rhymes, proverbs
- Food and ingredients
- Festivals
- Rituals and customs
- Cultivation and natural resource management techniques
- Social values, norms, and practices
- Any other component of the living heritage

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, but tips about what can be done. Please feel free to develop your own ideas and stories too.

Ideas for documentation

- Interview elderly people in your family or village (e.g., your grandmother or grandfather, seniors in your community, etc.).
- Record the process of making a craft, the significance of the craft to the community, and any songs or stories associated with it.
- Capture your unique architecture of houses, morungs, and villages. Document through audio-visuals the associated stories, descriptions, and functions of these structures or places.
- Film your unique food varieties, ingredients you use, along with descriptions.
- Capture traditional kitchens and utensils, family heirloom, etc.
- Record songs, dances, festivals, and rituals, along with their meanings, context, history, and how they are practiced now.
- Capture the stunning weaves and jewelry. Write about their cultural significance and how they build a community's identity.
- Record your traditional cultivation techniques and unique crop varieties, their conservation, and their medicinal values.

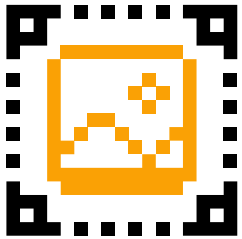
Basic tips for digital story creation

Using photographs, video and music in a digital story

- Digital stories should not be more than two to three minutes long.
- A short film for social media can be ideally around 1-3 minutes.
- If using photographs, then have about 10-20 photos for a digital story.
- Try creative techniques like using 3, 6, or 9 separated images to make a collage, or use the carousel feature to engage the user.
- Add music, and/or voiceover as necessary; any images or music taken from the internet or any other secondary source will have to be copyright-free.
- If you are telling your stories in pictures, never forget the importance of brief captions.

What is a good photograph?

- A good photo has some all of the following qualities
  - Is interesting
  - Captures a moment
  - Makes the viewer want to know more
  - Tells a story
  - Is well composed
  - Has no distractions
  - Has good light
  - Is technically correct
  - Has correct exposure
  - Has correct focus



- At all times, the photographer's goal is to keep the viewer's gaze within the frame of the image. Compose the image/ subject with the main elements kept away from the edge of the frame.
- Every image needs a strong base structure/ composition in order to attract the viewer's attention. This structure can be referred to as the fundamental composition of elements. It does not explicitly refer to a particular subject in the image, but rather the basic elements such as shapes, patterns, colours and contrasts.
- Light is the most important base element of any image. Always look for beautiful light. Observe how the direction and colour of light changes throughout the day and alters the appearance of everything in the frame.
- Try not to shoot when the sun is high in the sky as this will create a harsh light. Where possible, aim to have your light come from the side as this will add the perception of depth and texture to the image.

Creating a good video

- When creating your video content, you can always produce one video that can be snipped into shorter videos.
- Or you can film your videos in small segments and put them together in post-production ensuring smooth transitions between the shots.
- Plan what will be your video about.
- Develop a script/storyboard.
- When shooting, try to ensure an attractive backdrop that complements your video's content.
- The scenes should be well lit.
- Ensure your camera is stabilised and does not have any unwanted shaking to keep your videos sharp and your shots focused.
- Make sure that the sounds/ audio used are crisp and clear.
- Aspect ratio of a video: aspect ratio is how wide and tall your video is or would be:
  - The most common options are landscape (16:9), vertical (9:16), and square (1:1). Depending on where you will be sharing your videos, you will need to choose the appropriate format.
  - For YouTube or short films, use landscape format.
  - For sharing audiovisuals on Instagram Stories, film in vertical mode (4:5).

UNESCO Conventions on Culture & Heritage

The World Heritage Convention (1972)

Aims at protection of the World's cultural and natural heritage

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003)

Aims at safeguarding ICH and ensure respect for the communities concerned

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005)

Promotes respect for cultural diversity and raising awareness of their values at the local, national, and international levels

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