



Progress report

Project Title	Strengthening national capacities for effective safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage in Niger
Target Country	Niger
UNESCO Budget code	199GLO4000.11
Funding source	Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (earmarked contribution from Spain)
Total Budget approved	US\$167,335 (including 10% of programme support costs)
Reporting Period	August 2013 to March 2014
Executing Agency	UNESCO
Implementing partners	National Department for Cultural Heritage of Niger (Direction nationale du patrimoine culturel, Niger)
Project starting date	November 2013
Project completion date	April 2015
Responsible Sector	Culture
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I. SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Niger is one of the 158 States that have ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. This Convention, which was adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003, has experienced an extremely rapid pace of ratification. Enthusiasm and interest have, however, outpaced practical experience in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and it became clear that substantial efforts are required to address the challenges posed by the implementation of this relatively young normative instrument at the national level and in particular to assist Member States to develop ownership of the concepts, measures and mechanisms proposed by the Convention. The UNESCO Secretariat has responded since 2009 with a global capacity-building strategy to support States in creating institutional and professional environments favourable to the sustainable safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and in promoting broad public knowledge and support for the Convention's concepts and objectives. It is in this context that the capacity-building project for intangible cultural heritage was elaborated for implementation in Niger thanks to the voluntary contribution of Spain to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund. The project was approved at the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in December 2012.

The project was prepared in close collaboration with the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage (Direction nationale du patrimoine culturel) of the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Leisure. It aims to help Niger to fulfil its national obligations under the Convention by developing a sufficient level of national capacity, both within public institutions and among the main actors of civil society and communities. It will thereby contribute to the effective implementation of the Convention at national level and enable participation in the international cooperation mechanisms of the Convention, including Niger's capacity to request international assistance from the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund.

To this end, a number of activities were identified to support Niger in the ongoing process of building ownership of the concepts and tools of the Convention and to create conditions for effective and sustainable safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The project will benefit from the training and guidance materials that UNESCO has developed and from the network of trained expert facilitators who were trained to use and adapt these materials in the context of training workshops and advisory services. Training workshops are systematically facilitated by a team of two experts each and in the case of this project, they will be identified among the network members from Africa (in fact 40% of the expert facilitators are from Africa). Within the budget envelope of this project, two main areas of intervention were identified: (i) technical advisory services to support Niger in setting up the institutional infrastructure and revise and adapt its national legislation to strengthen the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (a process that already started in consultation with the UNESCO office) and (ii) a combined set of training and pilot activities to develop a methodology and mechanism for inventorying intangible cultural heritage with the participation of communities.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION FOR THE PERIOD UNDER REVIEW

So far the project is still in the preparation phase for reasons explained further below. However, one mission to Niamey was key in the project preparation process and is discussed below:

Activities undertaken

In August 2013, the Project officer undertook a 5-day mission to Niamey to meet with the national counterparts. Together they assessed more specifically the capacity-building needs of Niger in the field of intangible cultural heritage in order to tailor the UNESCO capacity-building

strategy to the local needs and elaborate a sound work plan and budget. The main activities identified were the following (see work plan at the end of this report for more detail):

1. Project preparation and launching event in the country
2. Providing training and advisory services on implementing the 2003 Convention and revision of legal frameworks
3. Developing and piloting a community-based inventory methodology for intangible cultural heritage
4. Project evaluation and reporting

They follow a logical sequence, starting from the assumption that ratification is not enough, and must of course be accompanied by efforts to develop the required institutional infrastructure and integrate intangible cultural heritage fully into cultural and other policies (Activity 2). Within the sphere of policy reform, particular attention will be given to legal reform.

Activity 3 turns to concrete safeguarding activities, namely inventorying – a primary responsibility of States Parties – with assistance aimed at helping countries establish or revise a framework and methodology for inventorying intangible cultural heritage with the participation of communities, groups and relevant NGOs.

Activity 4 foresees a project evaluation to assess the results achieved and the ideas that emerged for ways forward.

Apart from planning the implementation of the project, the mission provided the opportunity to meet with international and bilateral partners to discuss this project, explain its place in the context of the global capacity-building strategy for the implementation of the Convention and thereby raise awareness for the importance of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in Niger, especially the important role it can play in a region that has been hit seriously by a security and humanitarian crisis for several years now.

The project officer furthermore took the opportunity to present the project to the Spanish Cooperation Office in Niamey, as it is thanks to the contribution of Spain to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund that this project was made possible.

As a follow-up UNESCO Dakar started working on the contractual arrangements to implement the activities and secure the availability of UNESCO-trained facilitators from the region. However, due to a number of challenges described in the final section of this report, activities were put on hold until mid-March 2014. Currently the UNESCO Office in Dakar is concluding the Implementation Partnership Agreement with the National Directorate of Cultural Heritage of Niger and the three trainers identified (and confirmed). The implementation of the activities is now scheduled for the beginning of April 2014.

III. PROGRESS TOWARDS RESULTS

At this stage, and because of the challenges explained below, progress towards the expected results is still minimal. However, the regular exchanges between UNESCO and the national partners in Niger have already informed the ongoing revision of the national legislation in order to better align it with the 2003 Convention. This process has been underway since 2013 and the project foresees a meeting of various stakeholders to present the results of this review and discuss the operationalization of this legislation.

IV. SUSTAINABILITY

This project has been devised to maximize its sustainability and multiplier effect. It aims to create in Niger a critical level of national capacity, both in government institutions and among key players from communities and civil society, constituting a sustainable foundation for safeguarding intangible heritage and implementing the Convention.

By involving stakeholders from both the culture sector and other development fields, the project facilitates the integration of provisions for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage into larger development strategies and programmes, thereby further sustaining the viability of intangible cultural heritage and harnessing it for the well-being of communities and societies.

The planned activities aim in particular to build capacities, knowledge and experience for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, with particular attention to inventories of intangible cultural heritage with the participation of the community. It is for this reason that Niger wished to conduct two pilot activities, instead of one, in a community still to be identified. This experience is expected to benefit the elaboration of a broader, country wide inventory of Niger's intangible heritage.

This project includes evaluation of the training and services provided and the UNESCO materials adapted to respond adequately to the identified needs in Niger. These assessments will inform future action in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

V. WORKPLAN

See the workplan at the end of the report.

VI. VISIBILITY

The Intangible Cultural Heritage Section will provide necessary publicity of the project through its website (www.unesco.org/culture/ich/) and press releases. UNESCO together with the beneficiary countries will attempt to mobilize the media to cover the activities locally and nationally. The UNESCO Field Office in Dakar which is managing the implementation will be certain to liaise with the Spanish Development Cooperation and to invite representatives to public events organized in the context of the project such as the opening or closing ceremonies of different activities. As the development of a community-based inventorying methodology is the most important component of this project, it is also planned to hold a workshop of the field inventory activities in order to communicate the results and promote the intangible heritage of the two participating communities.

VII. CHALLENGES, LESSONS LEARNT AND MODIFICATIONS TO THE PROJECT THAT NEED THE DONOR'S ATTENTION (AND APPROVAL)

The project was due to begin in 2013, yet experienced significant delays, mainly due to three reasons.

The first reason is related to the reform of UNESCO's field office structure in Africa, which affected this project, since it involved a move from the project officer from Bamako, Mali to Dakar, Senegal, which led to a delay in planning and undertaking the planning mission to Niamey described above.

Secondly, in August 2013 (during the mission) UNESCO learnt that the Government of Niger reorganized its administration and appointed a new Minister for Culture. In the following, this new administration took stock of the various existing programmes across different departments

in the Ministry and undertook a restructuring of the Ministry. While these processes were ongoing, it was difficult to advance the project preparation.

A third challenge that needed to be resolved was confusion about the specific funding modality of this project, i.e. an earmarked contribution to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund (different from the granting of an international assistance to a beneficiary State), and the related roles and responsibilities of UNESCO and the national counterparts. By approving the contribution of Spain to the Fund to support the present project, the Committee entrusted UNESCO to deliver technical services to Niger for the project implementation. The clarification process took some time, but resulted in a shared comprehension by all concerned, which allowed the Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure to approve the implementation of the project in mid-March 2014.

Work Plan: Strengthening the Capacity of Niger for the implementation of the Convention

for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
		2013								2014							2015					
		8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4
1. Launching and preparation																						
1.1a	1.1 Project planning and validation Mission	█																				
1.1b	Preparation of contractual arrangements and clarifying pending questions with partners		█	█	█	█																
1.1c	Development of the contract with the national partner						█	█	█													
1.2	Meeting of the National Steering Committee ; communication to the media									█												
2. Workshop on the implementation on the 2003 Convention at national level (IMP) and follow-up																						
2.1	Preparation of IMP workshop, including the identification and invitation of participants						█	█	█													
2.2	Training Workshop (implementation of the Convention) and consultation on national institutional, administrative and legislative frameworks (6 days)									█												

3. Development of an inventory methodology with the participation of community (training and pilot activity)																				
3.1	Workshop preparation: identification of participants, including the field team and members of the community concerned (1/3 of the group); obtain the free, prior and informed consent of the community identified																			
3.2	Training Workshop (inventory) 10 days																			
3.3	Pilot inventory (10 months, 2 field locations) *																			
3.4	Restitution of inventory work and communication to the public																			
4. Closure and reporting																				
4.1	Evaluation of the project and conclusions																			
4.2	Communication to the media																			
4.3	Drafting of the report																			