06

UNESCO'S ROLE IN SAFEGUARDING INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS GLOBALLY

Senarathna, K.I.D.

Department of Library and Information Science, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Email : chapas@kln.ac.lk

ABSTRACT

This study examines the review of literature review on the role of UNESCO when safeguarding ICH in advancing the SDGs. This paper reviews through literature search on selected 10 articles from various e-databases such as Emerald full text, Science Direct as well as Google Scholar between 2014-2024 years. This review focuses on identifying the concepts of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and its process. And examine the role of UNESCO when safeguarding ICH. Also, to review how achieving Sustainable Development Goals is when safeguarding ICH in UNESCO's contribution. The analysis of the study indicates that UNESCO is vital for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage to promote sustainable development, to wrap things up. In addition to contributing to the safeguarding of various cultural practices, UNESCO supports more general goals pertaining to equity and environmental sustainability by encouraging community involvement and global collaboration. Addressing current issues with more financing, education, and awareness-raising campaigns that enable communities to take charge of their legacy is essential to the success of these programs. It is crucial that UNESCO and its member countries continue to be more dedicated to turning the 2003 Convention's tenets into practice. This entails strengthening backing for regional campaigns that advance ICH while guaranteeing that protective measures are community-driven and culturally aware. By achieving this, UNESCO will be able to maintain its revolutionary role in protecting our common human legacy and help ensure a more sustainable future for everybody.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), Safeguarding, UNESCO, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

Introduction

Culture can be described as an important factor that represents the identity of a society or human group (Ankumbura, 2014)That is, culture allows us to physically describe the qualities that exist within a social group. Culture is the collection of all the unique behavioral traits or traditional elements that a society has possessed over time. Intangible culture is the intangible aspect of culture, i.e. the totality of various thoughts, actions, expressions, knowledge, skills, attitudes, arts, etc., passed down from generation to generation through oral tradition (Ankumbura, 2014). Society and culture are two concepts that are inextricably linked. Although they remain intangible, these cultural elements have directly and indirectly contributed to the development of social, economic, and political spheres in the past and present. Intangible cultural heritage is a concept that is associated with the practical activities, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills, and arts of the relevant societies, which cannot be physically identified as part of culture. This knowledge is embedded in the relevant society, groups of people, or individuals and is maintained from generation to generation through their interactions with their environment and history (UNESCO, 2003).

The elements present in culture are of two types, tangible and intangible. Intangible culture is the many elements mentioned above that are inherent in a social group that cannot be physically touched. For each social group, many such intangible qualities can be explored. Cultural elements that have not been discovered and recorded and that should be passed down from generation to generation may also be buried without any evidence (Ubertazzi, 2022). Therefore, it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that the valuable elements of a nation in any country do not fade away and pass them on from generation to generation in the face of sustainability.

According to the United Nations, safeguarding intangible cultural heritage is the transmission or exchange of knowledge, skills and meanings (UNESCO, 2003) the United Nations adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage as a measure to safeguard intangible cultural heritage. The main objective of this convention is to safeguard, that is, to ensure the viability of intangible cultural heritage, including identification, documentation, research, conservation, protection, promotion and enhancement, as well as measures aimed at ensuring its transmission. Education, as well as the revitalization of various aspects of such heritage, are also included in the safeguarding of this intangible cultural heritage.

The history of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and its safeguarding is rich and multifaceted. Initially, the concept of cultural heritage was predominantly focused on tangible assets such as monuments and artifacts. However, since the early 1970s, there has been a growing recognition of the importance of intangible cultural elements, which include practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities, groups, and individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

UNESCO has played a crucial role in the development of ICH safeguarding frameworks. In 1989, the UNESCO General Conference adopted the Recommendation on the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore, marking the first specific international legal instrument on ICH. This was followed by the establishment of programs like the Living Human Treasures initiative in 1994, which aimed to recognize and support individuals who possess significant knowledge and skills related to ICH (Lenzerini, 2011).

Aim of the study

The purpose of the study is to explore the literature on identifying the concepts of safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage. And examine the role of UNESCO when safeguarding ICH. Also, to review how achieving Sustainable Development Goals is when safeguarding ICH in UNESCO's contribution. This literature survey started from 2014 to 2024 aims to investigate the below-mentioned research objectives.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are to explore the literature through the research articles regarding concepts of the identifying role UNESCO when safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and examine how is achieving Sustainable Development Goals when safeguarding ICH in UNESCO's contribution.

Research Questions

1. What role does UNESCO play in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage?

2. How does safeguarding intangible cultural heritage contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through UNESCO's efforts?

Research Methodology

The review of literature provides the researcher with a bird's eye view of the research done so far in that area. It also suggests new avenues of approach to the solution of a chosen problem. The review of literature is a source from where research ideas are drawn and further developed into concepts, and, finally, into theories and it is a key component of any research study and process (Deshapriya & Senevirathne, 2023)

This study will provide an extensive and comprehensive literature review on safeguarding process and strategies of Intangible Cultural Heritage to achieve Sustainable Development Goals taken by the UNECSO from the selected materials including scholarly articles, journal articles, and web-based open access research articles. It will be used to identify the role of UNESCO when safeguarding ICH, mainly covered in scholarly articles and web documents are the main sources of information, as well as other sources of information such as newsletters and other Internet resources. The primary research method for this study is literature review, which surveys books,

scholarly articles, and any other sources relevant to a particular issue, area of research, or theory.

The sample will be selected from the source of publications within the specified time limit. So, the source of the study area sample will retrieve 10 articles through key databases for service marketing were used, such as Emerald full text, Science Direct as well as Google Scholar between 2014 to 2024 years.

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to ensure the selection of credible, relevant, and up-to-date literature that directly supports the study's objectives. The inclusion parameters focused on scholarly and institutional publications that examine UNESCO's role in safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that only academically rigorous and contextually appropriate materials were reviewed. Limiting the time frame to 2014–2024 enabled the study to capture recent developments and contemporary perspectives on ICH safeguarding practices. Similarly, restricting the review to English-language publications ensured consistency and accessibility in analysis. The exclusion of non-academic, duplicate, or tangential sources helped maintain analytical depth, reliability, and relevance, ensuring that the findings accurately reflect UNESCO's current role in linking cultural preservation with sustainable development.

Literature Review

The safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is a critical aspect of preserving cultural diversity and promoting sustainable development. UNESCO plays a pivotal role in this endeavor through the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2003. This literature review examines the role of UNESCO in safeguarding ICH and its contributions to advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Intangible Cultural Heritage

The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO, 2003) defines intangible cultural heritage (ICH) as "the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills together with the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith"

"The term 'cultural heritage' has changed content considerably in recent decades, partially owing to the instruments developed by UNESCO. Cultural heritage does not end at monuments and collections of objects (UNESCO, n.d.)." The concept of "cultural heritage" has changed over the past few decades, indicating a change in its meaning and broadening. It suggests UNESCO's role in expanding the definition beyond conventional components like monuments and tangible items and credits the change, at least in part, to their efforts and instruments. Establishing the groundwork for a more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage, the sentence probably leads to conversations about

intangible or living heritage. It strikes a compromise between acknowledging the dynamic change in cultural attitudes and perceptions and maintaining a historical viewpoint.

"Intangible cultural heritage can only be heritage when it is recognized as such by the communities, groups, or individuals that create, maintain, and transmit it without their recognition, nobody else can decide for them that a given expression or practice is their heritage (UNESCO, n.d.)." This highlights how important communities, organizations, or individuals are in identifying intangible cultural heritage. It argues that heritage status is determined by the recognition and acknowledgment of those who produce, preserve, and transmit it rather than being imposed from without. An activity or phrase cannot be regarded as heritage unless they agree with it, or it is recognized as such. This viewpoint supports the idea of self-determination in cultural identity and emphasizes how community-based intangible cultural heritage is.

Safeguarding ICH

"Safeguarding' means measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the intangible cultural heritage, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission, particularly through formal and non-formal education, as well as the revitalization of the various aspects of such heritage (UNESCO, n.d.)". The concept of "safeguarding" in connection with intangible cultural assets is explained in full in this sentence. It defines safeguarding as a set of preventative actions intended to ensure such heritage's continuous existence and significance. Identification, documenting, study, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, and transmission are all on the list of acts, with formal and informal education being emphasized as a crucial strategy. It also places a strong emphasis on reviving historic components to keep them alive and significant in their own cultural contexts. A comprehensive strategy for preserving and safeguarding intangible cultural customs and practices is reflected in the concept.

The term "safeguarding" refers to a broad range of measures intended to safeguard and ensure the sustainability of intangible cultural treasures. It specifies actions, like recognizing, recording, studying, conserving, safeguarding, advancing, improving, and passing along cultural practices and information. It also emphasizes how important formal and informal education is to the process. Thee and comprehensive approach to cultural preservation, the sentence also emphasizes the significance of revitalizing many facets of intangible heritage to adapt and sustain it in changing situations.

UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage proposes five broad 'domains' in which intangible cultural heritage is manifested:

1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;
2. Performing arts;

3. Social practices, rituals and festive events;
4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe;
5. Traditional craftsmanship (UNESCO, n.d.).

The convention for the safeguarding of ICH

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the ICH is the cornerstone of UNECSO's efforts in protecting ICH. The Convention aims to safeguard ICH by ensuring respect for the cultural heritage of communities, groups, and individuals, and by promoting the function of ICH in society. Key provisions of the Convention include the establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee to promote the objectives of the Convention, provide guidance on best practice, and prepare plans for the use of resources. States Parties are required to take necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of ICH within their territories, including identifying and defining elements of ICH with community participation, adopting general policies to promote ICH, and designating competent bodies for its safeguarding (UNECSO, n.d.).

Key provisions of the Convention include the establishment of an Intergovernmental Committee to promote the objectives of the Convention, provide guidance on best practices, and prepare plans for the use of resources. States Parties are required to include identifying and defining elements of ICH and designing competent bodies for its safeguarding (International Agreements Committee, 2024).

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted on October 17, 2003, is a comprehensive international treaty aimed at protecting and promoting intangible cultural heritage globally. Here are the key aspects of the Convention:

Purpose and Scope

The Convention has several primary purposes:

- To safeguard the intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, n.d.); (International Agreements Committee, 2024)

- To ensure respect for the intangible cultural heritage of the communities, groups, and individuals concerned.

- To raise awareness at the local, national, and international levels of the importance of intangible cultural heritage.

- To provide for international cooperation and assistance (UNESCO, n.d.).

National and International Implementation of the Convention

At the national level, States Parties are required to take necessary measures to ensure the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage within their territories. This includes:

- Identifying and inventorying intangible cultural heritage with the participation of the communities concerned.

- Adopting policies and establishing institutions to monitor and promote it.

- Encouraging research and other appropriate safeguarding measures, always with the full consent and participation of the communities (UNESCO, n.d.); (UK Parliament, 2021).

At the international level, the Convention promotes cooperation through the exchange of information, joint initiatives, and the establishment of a mechanism of assistance to other States Parties (UNESCO, n.d.).

Lists and Recognition of the Convention

The Convention establishes several lists to recognize and safeguard intangible cultural heritage:

- *Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity*: This list aims to ensure better visibility of the intangible cultural heritage and awareness of its significance

- *List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding*: Items on this list may benefit from financial and other support provided through the mechanisms established by the Convention

- *Programs, projects, and activities for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage*: These can benefit from financial and technical assistance (International Agreements Committee, 2024)

Intergovernmental Committee

The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, established within UNESCO, is composed of representatives of States Parties. The Committee is responsible for promoting the objectives of the Convention, providing guidance on best practices, and managing the lists of intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO, n.d.); (International Agreements Committee, 2024).

Ratification of the Convention

The Convention entered into force in 2006 and has been ratified by 180 States Parties as of October 2022. Its adoption marked a significant milestone in international policies for promoting cultural diversity, recognizing the need to support intangible cultural manifestations and expressions on a global scale (UNESCO, n.d.); (Akagawa & Smith, 2018).

UNESCO's role in safeguarding ICH contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

UNESCO plays a crucial role in safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and, through this effort, significantly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Here are some keys in which UNESCO's initiatives in ICH safeguarding align with and support the SDGs.

There are various discussions and seminars that have been organized by UNESCO regarding the topic contribution of safeguarding ICH to achieve Sustainable Development Goals. According to the below image no.01 it can be shown.

(UNESCO, n.d.)

Those specific questions are discussed with subject specialties via interviews. And UNESCO had been organizing such kinds of sessions to make people aware.

The linkage between Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is rooted in their shared focus on fostering inclusive, sustainable, and resilient societies. ICH, encompassing traditions, skills, and cultural expressions, directly contributes to achieving several SDGs by promoting cultural diversity, community identity, and sustainable practices. It supports quality education (SDG 4) by facilitating the intergenerational transmission of traditional knowledge and skills, and advances gender equality (SDG 5) by recognizing and empowering the role of women as cultural custodians. ICH drives economic growth (SDG 8) through sustainable tourism and creative industries, while contributing to sustainable urban development (SDG 11) by preserving the cultural vibrancy of cities and communities. Moreover, traditional ecological knowledge embedded in ICH supports climate action (SDG 13) by promoting sustainable resource management and adaptation to environmental challenges. By fostering dialogue, social cohesion, and intercultural understanding, ICH also

strengthens peace and justice (SDG 16). Thus, safeguarding and promoting ICH is not only about cultural preservation but also about leveraging cultural heritage as a catalyst for achieving a sustainable and inclusive global future(HERITAGE, n.d.).

Some literature shows the ICH safeguarding efforts taken by the various information centers including libraries to achieve each Sustainable Development Goals.

(Ubertazzi, 2022)was indicated on his research of Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Environment in article no 2 of the Convention for the safeguarding ICH must be compatible with sustainable development. And it discussed the relationship between sustainable development and culture. There is a consistency of Three intertwined dimensions such as, Society, Environment and Economy. The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the relationship between ICH and environmental sustainability. This paper emphasizes that there is a significant relationship between environmental sustainability and ICH. It is contributing to biodiversity conservation, Sustainable Natural Resources Management and Natural Disaster Preparedness and response. And UNESCO is paying attention to evolving and adapting for a more sustainable use of natural resources when necessary permitting communities to better face natural disasters and the challenges of climate change.

(Galluccio & Giambona, 2024) had discovered through the Italian survey on Museums and other Cultural institutions offers extensive data on heritage conservation, accessibility and visitor services. In their findings they divided Italian museums into Three homogeneous sustainability states based on their sustainability practices. Furthermore, this paper presented the museums and cultural heritage sites represent a powerful resource for local development. And they can contribute to social cohesion, Civic engagement, Health and wellbeing. As an international council of museums (ICOM) has pointed out, the contribution of museums to sustainable development is now an essential element of its agenda.

(Perez-alvaro & Boswell, 2025) were conducted a systematic review of "Social Sciences and Humanities Open Integral Oceans Heritage of Indigenous Communities: Its value for health and wellbeing examines the importance of local values. And this paper shows the linkage between SDG No.14 (Life below water). It discussed about the Oceans heritage and related indigenous communities. And it's related to the 11th SDG of Sustainable Cities and Communities. Furthermore, this paper mainly discussed achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and wellbeing).

(Qiu et al., 2022) identified that ICH is a valuable tourism resource for both government and local communities. That systematic review has been emphasized as ICH tourism research tends to discuss mainly Three themes. Such as, resource planning and sustainability, the impact of tourism development and tourist behavior and destination marketing. This study concluded ICH definition given by UNESCO. It has given a full picture of the ICH tourism by the Five ICH domains. Because of the domain of "Social

practices, rituals and festive events" introduced by UNESCO, the large number of tourism resources could be described.

(del Valle, 2023) discussed in his article that (Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Development: The case of traditional Salt activity) UNESCO has given a significant amount of effort to the definition and classification of this type of heritage, recognizing the diverse ways in which it manifests itself to promote its social appreciation, as evidenced by its 2003 convention of ICH. Also, in 2003 ICH convention showed such a domain of knowledge and practices relating to nature and universe practices relating to nature and universe (e) traditional craftmanship related to traditional Salt activity. Alonso and Medici (2014) described other important international benchmarks, like methodological manual of the UNESCO indicators of culture for development. This demonstrates the significance of sustainability administering the assets of our heritage to protect the current use of heritage and to contribute to use of heritage for future generations.

According to (Adell, 2015)UNESCO's concern for decline contradicts, may be paradoxically, the idea of "Living Heritage" for UNESCO, change somehow means progress. Furthermore, he described UNESCO 2003 ICH convention should add more about "Living Heritage". It means something like a "Certificate of good heritage", In the ICH convention, heritage is "One in source, One in experience". But according to Adell he discussed that UNESCO creates a phantasm: A heritage of humanity without humans, but which individuals who "participate".

(Bortolotto, 2015)identified that the 2003 UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of the ICH mainly focuses on community participation. That is the main challenge to implement this convention. There are Four things to be improved to implement this convention. Such as Community participation, including inventorying, elaborate safeguarding programs and projects, and preparation of nomination of files. This paper focuses on the challenges and ambiguities of the participatory policy principles put forward by the ICH convention. Furthermore, this paper described the difficulties faced when implementing the convention were UNESCO's "heavily governmental" decision making whereby ICH policies can "easily become overly state-dominated" (Bake 2013; as cited by Bortolotto).

(Zhang et al., 2023) described on this paper (Can AI-generated art stimulate the sustainability of Intangible Cultural Heritage? Quantitative research on cultural and creative products of New Year prints generated by AI) whether AI-generated cultural and creative products can promote the sustainability of ICH. The main objective of this study is to measure the effectiveness of AI technologies in promoting the sustainability of ICH. This paper discusses in its findings the attraction of an interest and participation in AI-generated Yangliuqing New Year print cultural and creative products have a positive effect on perceived value. And has a positive impact on cultural identity. And   cultural identity has a positive impact on the sustainability of ICH.

(Tan et al., 2018) The study explores the impact of tourism on cultural heritage at World Heritage Sites (WHSs) and emphasizes the importance of local community involvement in preserving intangible cultural heritage. Focusing on place attachment, it identifies key elements of 'person-place bonding' Sense of Loss,' 'Sense of Justice,' and 'Sense of Mission' which drive community participation in sustaining heritage. Through in-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis in George Town and Melaka, Malaysia, the research highlights how community awareness and creativity are essential for maintaining the ecosystem of WHSs and ensuring the sustainability of both intangible cultural heritage and heritage tourism.

(Xiao et al., 2018) Cultural Heritage (CH) is recognized for its historical, social, and anthropological value and its role as a catalyst for sustainable development, reflected in SDGs 11.4 (heritage protection) and 8.9 (sustainable tourism). This paper reviews geoinformatics technologies, including photogrammetry, remote sensing, and spatial information science, and their application to CH preservation and sustainable tourism. Case studies from diverse regions highlight the challenges and opportunities of employing geoinformatics for CH protection, promoting local culture, and supporting SDG indicators. The analysis concludes that geoinformatics significantly contributes to CH-related SDGs, emphasizing CH's critical role in achieving the United Nations' sustainable development agenda.

Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

Discussion

UNESCO's role in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) is intricately linked to advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, adopted in 2003, has laid a foundational framework that recognizes the cultural dimensions of sustainable development. Through its efforts, UNESCO has highlighted how ICH contributes to fostering social cohesion, environmental sustainability, and economic resilience.

One of the significant contributions of UNESCO's ICH safeguarding efforts is its alignment with SDG 11, which aims to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable. By emphasizing the preservation of traditional knowledge systems and practices, UNESCO ensures that cultural heritage becomes a cornerstone for community identity and continuity. For example, the transmission of oral traditions, performing arts, and rituals fosters intergenerational dialogue and strengthens community bonds, directly contributing to societal well-being.

ICH also has a strong link to SDG 4, which focuses on ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education. UNESCO has promoted the integration of ICH into educational curricula, enhancing learners' appreciation of cultural diversity and fostering global

citizenship. This approach not only preserves heritage but also empowers communities by providing them with knowledge and skills rooted in their traditions.

In relation to SDG 8, which promotes decent work and economic growth, UNESCO has facilitated the safeguarding of traditional crafts and artisanal skills. Such efforts have led to the creation of sustainable livelihoods, especially in marginalized communities, by linking heritage practices with tourism and entrepreneurship opportunities. For instance, the promotion of traditional weaving or culinary practices as cultural tourism assets has strengthened local economies.

Additionally, the role of ICH in achieving SDG 13, which addresses climate action, is noteworthy. UNESCO has documented and promoted indigenous knowledge systems that provide sustainable solutions to environmental challenges. Traditional agricultural practices, water management systems, and ecological conservation methods embody the wisdom accumulated over generations, contributing to climate resilience.

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. Globalization, urbanization, and socio-economic changes threaten the viability of ICH. UNESCO's efforts are further complicated by the need to balance heritage safeguarding with development imperatives. Funding constraints, political instability, and a lack of local capacity often hinder effective implementation.

Conclusion

UNESCO's work in safeguarding intangible cultural heritage has demonstrated the profound role of culture in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals. By integrating ICH into policies, education, and community development initiatives, UNESCO has underscored that cultural heritage is not merely a relic of the past but a dynamic resource for sustainable futures.

However, the path forward necessitates a collaborative and inclusive approach. Governments, communities, and international organizations must work together to ensure that ICH safeguarding aligns with local needs and global priorities. Investment in capacity-building, technology, and research will be crucial to overcoming existing barriers.

Ultimately, UNESCO's vision reflects the interdependence of cultural heritage and sustainable development. By preserving and promoting ICH, we not only honor human creativity and diversity but also create resilient, cohesive, and equitable societies that can adapt to the challenges of the 21st century. This synergy between heritage and development is a testament to the transformative potential of culture as a driver of sustainable progress.

This research highlights UNESCO's critical role in safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). UNESCO's efforts, through frameworks such as the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, have demonstrated that cultural preservation is not merely about protecting traditions but about empowering communities to thrive sustainably.

The findings underscore that safeguarding ICH contributes significantly to multiple SDGs, particularly those related to quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11), and economic growth (SDG 8). By fostering inclusive policies and facilitating community participation, UNESCO bridges cultural preservation with socioeconomic development, ensuring that ICH remains a living, evolving resource for future generations.

Ultimately, this research reaffirms the indispensable link between cultural heritage and sustainable development. It calls for strengthened global and local efforts to support UNESCO's mission, ensuring that the rich diversity of ICH continues to serve as a foundation for innovation, resilience, and inclusive progress in the face of global challenges.

Recommendation

To strengthen UNESCO's role in safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), it is essential to adopt a multi-dimensional and inclusive approach. UNESCO should intensify its efforts to empower local communities, recognizing them as primary custodians of ICH, by fostering participatory frameworks that integrate their voices into policymaking and project implementation. Member states should be encouraged to embed ICH preservation into national and regional development strategies, ensuring alignment with key SDGs such as quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), decent work and economic growth (SDG 8), and sustainable cities and communities (SDG 11). Enhancing public awareness through targeted educational programs and capacity-building initiatives is crucial for fostering a deeper understanding of ICH's value and its role in sustainable development. Furthermore, UNESCO should leverage technological advancements, including digital documentation and virtual heritage tools, to ensure the accessibility, promotion, and preservation of ICH in an increasingly interconnected world. Strengthened monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be implemented to assess the effectiveness of ICH safeguarding efforts in contributing to SDGs, with measurable indicators that track progress and identify areas for improvement. In addition, fostering global partnerships between governments, non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and the private sector can provide the necessary resources and expertise to address challenges in ICH preservation. By prioritizing these strategies, UNESCO can enhance its impact in

safeguarding ICH, ensuring its vitality for future generations while leveraging its potential to foster cultural diversity, social cohesion, and sustainable development worldwide.

References

Adell, N. (2015). Polyphony vs. Monograph: The Problem of Participation in a French ICH Dossier. In *Between Imagined Communities of Practice Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage* (pp. 237–247). Göttingen University Press. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/ books.gup.234.

Akagawa, N., & Smith, L. (2018). Safeguarding Intangible Heritage: Practices and Politics. In *Safeguarding Intangible Heritage: Practices and Politics: Vol. c* (Issue 2006). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429507137

Ankumbura, M. (2014). *Sri Lankave Rodi Jana Smajaye asparshaya sanskrutika urumaya pilibanda adhyanayak*. University of Kelaniya.

Bortolotto, C. (2015). UNESCO and Heritage Self-Determination: Negotiating Meaning in the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the ICH. In N. et al. Adell (Ed.), *Between Imagined Communities of Practice Participation, Territory and the Making of Heritage* (pp. 249–272). Göttingen University Press. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4000/ books.gup.234

del Valle, L. (2023). Safeguarding intangible cultural heritage for sustainable development. The case of traditional salt activity. *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development*. https://doi.org/10.1108/JCHMSD-05-2022-0088

Deshapriya, U. H. R. S., & Senevirathne, W. (2023). Service Marketing Concepts Suitable for Public Libraries in Sri Lanka: A Review of Literature. *Sri Lanka Library Review*, *37*(2), 72–96. https://doi.org/10.4038/sllr.v37i2.65

Galluccio, C., & Giambona, F. (2024). Cultural heritage and economic development: measuring sustainability over time. *Socio-Economic Planning Sciences*, *95*(March), 101998. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.seps.2024.101998

HERITAGE, N. I. F. C. (n.d.). *INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH CENTRE FOR INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION UNDER THE AUSPICES OF UNESCO (IRCI)*. https://www.irci.jp/research/sdgs/#:~:text=With regard to the 17,(partnerships for the goals).

International Agreements Committee. (2024). *Scrutiny of international agreements: UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

Lenzerini, F. (2011). Intangible cultural heritage: The living culture of peoples. *European Journal of International Law*, *22*(1), 101–120. https://doi.org/10.1093/ejil/chr006

Perez-alvaro, E., & Boswell, R. (2025). Social Sciences & Humanities Open Integral oceans heritage of indigenous communities : Its value for good health and well-being. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, *11*(January 2023), 101245. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2024.101245

Qiu, Q., Zuo, Y., & Zhang, M. (2022). Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tourism: Research Review and Investigation of Future Agenda. *Land*, *11*(1). https://doi.org/10.3390/land11010139

Tan, S. K., Tan, S. H., Kok, Y. S., & Choon, S. W. (2018). Sense of place and sustainability of intangible cultural heritage – The case of George Town and Melaka. *Tourism Management*, *67*, 376–387. https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TOURMAN.2018.02.012

Ubertazzi, B. (2022). *Intangible Cultural Heritage, Sustainable Development and Intellectual Property: International and European Perspectives*.

UNESCO. (n.d.). *Why Safeguard ICH*. https://ich.unesco.org/en/why-safeguard-ich-00479

Xiao, W., Mills, J., Guidi, G., Rodríguez-Gonzálvez, P., Gonizzi Barsanti, S., & González-Aguilera, D. (2018). Geoinformatics for the conservation and promotion of cultural heritage in support of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. *ISPRS Journal of Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing*, *142*, 389–406. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.isprsjprs.2018.01.001

Zhang, B., Cheng, P., Deng, L., Romainoor, N. H., Han, J., Luo, G., & Gao, T. (2023). Can AI-generated art stimulate the sustainability of intangible cultural heritage? A quantitative research on cultural and creative products of New Year Prints generated by AI. *Heliyon*, *9*(10), e20477. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20477