

PREFACE

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) was established in 2011 within the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH), Japan, as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO. Since its establishment, IRCI has conducted extensive projects to enhance research for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the Asia-Pacific region, in cooperation with research institutes, museums, NGOs, and government sectors within and outside the region.

Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management is a theme IRCI has been working on since 2016. This was around the same time that UNESCO initiated the discussions on ICH and emergencies, and within Japan, the revitalization of ICH after the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011 was highlighted as part of the community's recovery. The first phase of the project ended in FY 2018 with the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters held in Sendai, Japan, with the adoption of 'Statements and Recommendations for Safeguarding ICH in Disasters and Mobilising ICH for Disaster Risk Reduction' that called for further research and collaboration between ICH and Disaster Risk Management (DRM) fields. This outcome document guided the development of the current phase of the project.

The second phase of the project started in FY 2020 amid the global crisis and disaster caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which slowed down the start of project activities and limited our possible research to desk-based activities avoiding travel and interaction with communities. However, this difficulty led us to develop an alternative methodology to understand the disaster impact on ICH and the active roles of ICH in the DRM process through a desk study. In FY 2021, desk study was carried out in Bangladesh, Fiji, Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Vanuatu, and Viet Nam, and based on this desk study, researchers in these countries continued their cooperation in the project by conducting further research in specific communities in the following years. Case studies in Japan were also incorporated into the project, thanks to the cooperation of the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties (Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage) and the Cultural Heritage Disaster Risk Management Center established in 2021 within the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage. Their engagement in the activities over the three years was indispensable for the success of the project. The entire project was financially supported by the Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan.

In recent years, the effects of climate change have been a serious concern, and the Asia-Pacific region has experienced an increasing number of extreme hazards, some of which have resulted in disasters. In Japan, the year 2024 started with a catastrophic earthquake in Noto that caused a considerable number of casualties and significant damage to houses, roads, and other infrastructure. The region is known for various ICH elements including traditional lacquerware, and their revitalization and transmission as part of the recovery process will be critical. Even if we now have a better understanding and knowledge of ICH and disasters, it is not possible to entirely prevent an unexpected disaster from occurring. Therefore, it is extremely important to be better prepared for times of difficulty to

effectively safeguard ICH by assessing the potential risks.

This publication, composed of the results of the case studies that were carried out under the project, showcases a variety of ICH elements threatened by disasters, efforts for safeguarding, and challenges in improving DRM for ICH. The project summary provided by IRCI would be a useful reference for understanding the development of the effort for safeguarding ICH in the context of disasters, and for developing programmes and activities. It would be a great pleasure to see this publication become widely used and encourage further research projects integrating ICH and disaster risk reduction in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere.

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