

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 implemented 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.

One of the major activity focuses under the current Medium-Term Programme of IRCI is ‘Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Societies.’ Under this focus, IRCI has been implementing various research projects exploring the role of ICH, for instance, in relation to disasters, COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change. Research on ICH contributing to SDGs is an important part of this focus, and IRCI has been conducting a series of ICH case studies in relation to SDGs since 2018. In the past two projects, research focused on education incorporating ICH in consideration of contributing to SDG target 4.7 (FY 2018–2019 project) and its relation to sustainable community development (FY 2020–2021). Subsequently, the third project ‘Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities’ was implemented from FY 2022 through FY 2024 to address SDG target 11.4 (strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world’s cultural and natural heritage), by examining the role of ICH as part of the community’s heritage.

This publication is the result of this three-year project. It presents the project summary and the results of the case studies conducted in the project, as well as other papers shared through symposia, highlighting aspects of ICH in heritage safeguarding and management. To approach SDG target 11.4 from an ICH perspective, the project looked at intangible aspects in well-known heritage properties such as cultural/historic landscapes and World Heritage. This enabled us to draw renewed attention to the interconnectedness between the tangible and the intangible and their integration for safeguarding the community’s heritage. In this respect, this publication will be useful to those interested in World Heritage sites and cultural landscapes, as well as to those seeking holistic approaches to heritage safeguarding.

This project would not have been completed without the active engagement of the project partners: APSARA National Authority in Angkor, Cambodia; George Town World Heritage Incorporated in Penang, Malaysia; and the team of Pasifika Renaissance and Waan Aelōñ in Majel that worked together in the Marshall Islands. Taking this opportunity, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to these partners and all those who worked with them in the field, including community members and ICH practitioners who shared their viewpoints. I would also like to thank the researchers who joined the project by sharing their own case studies at two symposia and contributed to this publication, which significantly enriched the discussions in the project. Mr ISHIMURA Tomo (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Japan), Mr ONISHI Hideyuki (Doshisha Women’s College of Liberal Arts, Japan), Ms FUJIEDA Ayako (Kyoto Seika University, Japan), Mr IIDA Taku (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan), and Ms DUONG Bich Hanh (UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia) supported the development of the project activities from the beginning and provided

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It would be a great pleasure to see this publication become widely used, especially among communities living with cultural heritage, and encourage further research projects focusing on ICH in the context of the SDGs in the Asia-Pacific region and elsewhere, demonstrating the significance of ICH in sustainable development.

MACHIDA Daisuke
Director-General
International Research Centre for Intangible
Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)