



Renewal evaluation of the International Research
Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the
Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI),
a Centre under the auspices of UNESCO
(Category 2) based in Osaka, Japan

Final Report

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Address: Bourne House, 475 Godstone Road, Whyteleafe, Surrey, United Kingdom, CR3 0BL

Company Number: 11198794

Authors: Agathe Dupeyron, Jonathan Rider

Contact: Jonathan Rider, Co-Founder and Director, j.rider@alephstrategies.org

Photo: Tokyo and Mount Fuji seen from the sky. © Agathe Dupeyron



Acronyms

ACA	Agency for Cultural Affairs (Japan)
The Agreement	The Agreement between UNESCO and the Government of Japan regarding the establishment in Japan, of an International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (Category 2).
Aleph	Aleph Strategies
APHEN-ICH	ICHCAP’s Asia-Pacific Higher Education Network for Intangible Cultural Heritage
C2C	Category 2 Centre
The Convention	The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
C/5	UNESCO’s approved Programme and Budget
CRIHAP	International Training Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region (in China)
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECR	Early Career Researcher
ER	Expected Result
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
ICHCAP	International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (in South Korea)
IRCI	International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region
JSPS	Japan Society for the Promotion of Science
MEXT	Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sports Science and Technology (Japan)
MLA	Main Line of Action
NICH	National Institutes of Cultural Heritage (Japan)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Aleph Strategies conducted a renewal evaluation of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), a UNESCO Category 2 Centre based in Osaka, Japan. We used core criteria from UNESCO's Guidance Note on the renewal assessment procedures of Category 2 Institutes Centres (190 EX/INF.16) as a basis for this evaluation.

We recommend that **UNESCO renews the Agreement** with the Japanese government.

IRCI has come a long way since the last renewal evaluation, and many of the issues highlighted in 2015 (regarding governance, or the ICH experience of its staff) have been significantly improved. Our evaluation has shown that **IRCI acts as a hub promoting and facilitating the production of timely and relevant research**, which has the potential to significantly contribute to ongoing debates in the field of ICH safeguarding, both at the national, and international scales, and could inform policy.

However, several obstacles remain for IRCI to fully fulfil its potential. The communication with UNESCO at Headquarters requires improvement, to provide a platform for IRCI to turn research insights into actionable policy recommendations. IRCI was praised by its partners for the research it managed to coordinate despite a limited budget. To become a more influential voice in ICH safeguarding at the regional and global scales, IRCI would need to hire more permanent staff. To obtain more support within Japan, IRCI also needs to disseminate its activities and research more broadly, and build on its established network and partners.

Our key findings are:

- **Achievement of objectives.** IRCI was praised for its ability to fulfil its objectives, in particular Enhancing the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region, while developing research as a tool for safeguarding ICH; and Fostering, coordinating and developing scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies. It is much harder for IRCI to work towards the promotion of the implementation of the 2003 Convention, as this would require coordination with policy makers, an aspect which is currently not part of IRCI's activities.
- **Conformity of the Centre's activities with the Agreement.** IRCI's activities fully feed into the Agreement. They are articulated around two pillars, *Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding* which involves fostering research networks and ICH research databases in the region, and



Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities, which involves coordinating research with partner institutions in alignment with current ICH priorities (SDGs, climate change, COVID-19 resilience, etc.).

- **Contribution to UNESCO’s C/5.** We find evidence of strong, explicit alignment between IRCI and UNESCO’s C/5, both at the activity planning stage and in reporting.
- **Contribution to the Global Development Agenda.** The IRCI research themes align strongly with the development agenda, tackling themes such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on ICH, natural hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction, and sustainable cities and communities, as well as climate change. In the period 2018-2023, IRCI has focused specifically on SDGs 4.7 and 11.4, and has aligned with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.
- **Quality of coordination and interaction.** The coordination and interaction with UNESCO stakeholders is adequate, but there is scope for improvement. IRCI has good contacts with the Beijing Field Office, but its communication with UNESCO at Headquarters is more limited. IRCI is currently strengthening institutional collaboration with ICHCAP and CRIHAP, but due (in part) to the lack of opportunities to design common strategies at the regional level (which would be coordinated by UNESCO), some degree of duplication of efforts is unavoidable.
- **Quality and relevance of partnerships.** IRCI maintains good partnerships with the relevant government agencies and public/private partners, but it is still relatively poorly known in Japan and its influence and perceived importance to funders could be improved with greater visibility. In terms of partnerships with research institutions, ICH museums, and NGOs (including UNESCO accredited NGOs), IRCI maintains good relationships, particularly outside of Japan.
- **Governance and Management.** The Governance issues noted in the previous evaluation (non-functional Advisory Board, delays in providing documents, lack of ICH professionals) have significantly improved following the previous renewal evaluation process, and the current governance arrangements are perceived as well-functioning. The formats used for monitoring activities on a yearly basis and evaluating their implications are based on the annual reporting template presented to the Governing Board, and are clear and efficient. The roles at IRCI are mostly well defined, though in practice there is much more fluidity and a degree of overlap as the scope of work is greater than the available number of staff. Human resources are limited considering the amount of work that is required, and this precludes IRCI from undertaking more ambitious activities.
- **Funding.** The current funding model is considered adequate for the basic operations of IRCI, but not sufficient for fulfilling its potential of becoming a leading regional hub in coordinating



research into the safeguarding of ICH. While IRCI can apply for project funds and conduct 4 or 5 research projects at a time, it cannot increase its core funding and retain staff. Indeed, the funding model is mainly dependent on earmarked funding from NICH and ACA, allocated on a project basis for research activities. It has proven difficult for IRCI to mobilise funds from additional economic activities.

- **Autonomy:** IRCI 's legal status as an Institute under the umbrella of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH) of Japan confer it with the legal autonomy it requires to comply with the Agreement.

Recommendations

We recommend the renewal of the Agreement. We make the following recommendations for improving on IRCI's activities:

1. **For IRCI to improve the dissemination of its activities in Japan.** We encourage IRCI to intensify efforts to disseminate research, not only to its international network, but also to Japanese ICH researchers and the general public.
2. **For IRCI to obtain relevant training from NICH and UNESCO.** The staff of IRCI have voiced their interest in obtaining additional training, for example on academic writing skills in English
3. **For IRCI to upgrade the computer and library access parameters through NICH.** Currently, the security protocol is too strict as IRCI cannot easily reach the websites of its partner institutions internationally. Additionally, IRCI staff have limited access to library resources, and online library access should be envisaged through one of the NICH partner institutions.
4. **For IRCI to open a call to recruit more participating institutions across the Asia-Pacific region.** To diversify and increase its network of partners in the region, IRCI should post regular calls for cooperation on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) as well as through formal UNESCO channels (UNESCO meetings, newsletters and official calls on the ICH website).
5. **For IRCI to facilitate a side event at the Intergovernmental Committee and invite other C2Cs to present policy insights.** UNESCO can be invited to participate as a discussant. IRCI can also make sure that all research projects produce a policy brief, to provide recommendations for Member States, that UNESCO can also draw from to develop policy guidance.



6. **For UNESCO to promote the collaboration between C2Cs more actively.** UNESCO could host a page where Category 2 Centres globally can share news, events and training resources, and update the information that is already on its C2C homepage more regularly. Additionally, ICHCAP could spearhead an online forum for Asian C2Cs to network. As the mandates of ICHCAP, CRIHAP and IRCI are complementary, it would be beneficial to all three Centres to collaborate more regularly.

7. **For the Agency of Cultural Affairs (Japan) to advocate more firmly for the government to set aside more core funding to IRCI.** Having the possibility to hire one more permanent staff member in the Research Section would alleviate some of the pressure arising from the workload, and enable IRCI to become more established in Japan and abroad. This would help Japan cement its position as a regional leader in safeguarding ICH.

8. **For NICH to consider moving IRCI next to another NICH institution.** This would enable the burden of administration to be shared across institutes, as well resources such as IT support technicians, and accountants.



1. Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose

Aleph Strategies was commissioned by the Living Heritage Entity to carry out the renewal evaluation of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region (IRCI), a Category 2 Centre situated in Sakai City, Osaka, Japan. This evaluation took place from January to March 2024. The purpose of this report is to present the results of our analysis as well as our conclusions on whether the IRCI complied with the objectives outlined in the Agreement between UNESCO and the Japanese government, signed in 2010 and renewed in 2018. This final report presents the evaluation of the activities and achievements of IRCI, and makes specific recommendations to improve its activities.

1.2. Scope of the evaluation

This evaluation was carried out following the modalities outlined in UNESCO's 2012 Guidance Note on the renewal assessment procedures of Category 2 Institutes/Centres (190 EX/INF.16). To provide a holistic assessment of IRCI's functioning and activities since 2018, we have used 190 EX/INF.16 as well as the Terms of Reference of this evaluation to create a Renewal Evaluation Index. This Index structured our data collection and analysis, and was articulated around nine pillars: Achievement of Objectives; Conformity of IRCI's activities with the Agreement; Contribution to UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5); Contribution to the Global Development Agenda; Quality of Coordination and Interaction; Quality and relevance of partnerships; Governance and Management; Funding; and Autonomy. For each of these pillars, we collected and analysed data to assess performance based on a scale from 1=poor; 2=satisfactory and 3=good.

1.3. Methodology

A complete methodology can be found in the annexes of this report. In summary, Aleph carried out a thorough study of the available documentation provided by UNESCO and IRCI (see Annex 4.6). We carried out primary data collection during a 5-day field visit mission to Osaka (Sakai City) and Tokyo, to meet with IRCI staff, key stakeholders and IRCI partners. Further interviews were conducted online to talk with UNESCO at Headquarters, at the regional level, as well as facilitators and members of the Advisory Board outside of Japan. This amounted to a total of 28 interviews. We also distributed an online survey to research institutions and non-governmental organisations which have taken part in joint activities with IRCI since 2018: a total of 23 people replied.



The main limitation of the evaluation was the availability of respondents: while we managed to speak to most stakeholders in Japan thanks to the careful organisation of the field visit by IRCI, not all online respondents answered our request for remote interviews. In particular, we could not arrange an interview with CRIHAP, and several UNESCO facilitators and members of the IRCI Advisory Board did not reply. However, we are confident that our sample (see Annex 4.2) provides a good reflection of views, opinions and experiences across the Centre’s stakeholder universe.

2. Findings

Our analysis shows that since 2018, **IRCI has cemented its position as a hub for research in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly outside of Japan. In light of IRCI’s achievements, we recommend a renewal of the Agreement.**

The Centre has delivered activities in accordance with the Agreement and made significant progress towards its objectives. Its contribution to UNESCO’s C/5 and the global development agenda is explicit. IRCI has, overall, good relationships with the government of Japan, UNESCO stakeholders at the regional level, and its established partners in the region. Nevertheless, we find room to improve communication between the Centre and UNESCO Headquarters. By increasing IRCI’s exposure within the UNESCO network, IRCI would be connected with more stakeholders and policy makers, which would create opportunities to amplify the policy impacts of the Centre’s research outputs.

IRCI has managed to consolidate its governance and internal management, and functions well, with the degree of autonomy highlighted in the Agreement. However, the ability to retain staff and institutional knowledge is limited by the amount of core funding available, as most of IRCI’s income is attributable to project-specific funding.

2.1. Achievement of objectives

Overall, IRCI was praised by our interviewees for its **ability to fulfil its objectives despite very limited resources.**

2.1.1. Promote the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of ICH and its implementation in the Region

IRCI has mainly contributed to the promotion and implementation of the 2003 Convention by raising awareness of the Convention and its key concepts to partner institutions, and providing support to



Member States in the process of implementing the Convention. However, IRCI could still strengthen its contribution by sharing research findings with policymakers.

The survey results show that in a majority of cases, IRCI's partners consider that IRCI has successfully worked towards promoting the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the region (11/23 said this was "very good", 8 "good" and 4 "average"). 20 out of 23 respondents consider that **IRCI has helped them reach a better understanding of the current status of research** for the safeguarding of ICH. In particular, one national institution explains that participating in the IRCI research projects helped them recognise the weaknesses and gaps in their activities and policies. However, some of the survey respondents note that **while IRCI strongly fosters research, this alone is not sufficient for promoting the implementation of the Convention. The research needs to be directly communicated to policymakers** at the UNESCO Intergovernmental meetings (for example at IRCI-convened side events) as well as through national institutions in charge of safeguarding ICH in the IRCI Member States (by inviting their representatives to special sessions on the impact of research on policy). This point was also mentioned by a Governing Board member and UNESCO representatives.

Since the last renewal evaluation, IRCI has built up its network of partners in the Asia-Pacific region to promote the 2003 Convention in a more holistic manner. Regional representation is generally deemed to be quite good: interviewees from the advisory board and UNESCO facilitators could not point to any underrepresented regions in the IRCI's activities. The IRCI's commitment to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the Pacific was also noted. According to a member of the advisory board, IRCI has made a great effort to include more partners. External partners, such as a prominent museum in Japan, have also noted that the number of partners has increased through time, mainly as IRCI multiplies its efforts to engage additional research institutions. IRCI's project entitled "Creation of the Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of Research for the Safeguarding of ICH" focuses specifically on fostering interactions between researchers, ICH practitioners and people involved in ICH safeguarding. A planning committee decides on seminar topics that are timely and relevant and invite guest lecturers: the dedicated Facebook groups announces these events and provides a platform for sharing ICH-related information. Yet, as noted by UNESCO, IRCI needs to ensure they open up to new partners that are currently not on their radar, by publishing open calls for participation.



2.1.2. Enhance safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding ICH

The core of IRCI's activities has been to **mobilise research** as a tool for enhancing the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region. **By gathering researchers in workshops and disseminating the results of this research, IRCI strives to foster a better understanding of best practices in ICH safeguarding among its network.** We find that while IRCI is indeed acting as a regional hub for research and contributing to this objective, the dissemination efforts could be further improved.

According to one member of the Advisory Board, **the workshops are well organised and focus on improving research quality.** Usually, they gather around 8-10 participants and each workshop leads to an edited volume of papers, which is generally considered by participants we interviewed (Japanese partners, UNESCO facilitators and Advisory Board members) to be of good quality. The case study material has been described as 'excellent' by this Advisory Board Member. There is a perception that these publications are targeting Japanese donors, and are shared mainly as a way to ensure that funding will keep being provided in the future.

However, we find there is room to improve the manner and extent to which research outputs are disseminated with key stakeholder audiences. IRCI has made **some progress towards this in the last few years, but more efforts are necessary.** According to the 2023 Board meeting annex documents, the reach of the website is stable/slightly increasing, with 17,146 visits in FY2022. 29 articles were posted in 2022, and a Facebook page was established that same year to increase the reach of IRCI, but its reach remains limited with only 132 followers. A YouTube channel was launched in 2023. However, according to one advisory board member, the material published by IRCI is on the website but is not "aggressively promoted". Some papers are locked and hard to download. **The achievements of IRCI are more well-known outside of Japan than within its national boundaries,** as we will explain further in Section 2.6. This is partly showcasing the need for further support from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and partly for **more dissemination,** which will be key to IRCI obtaining more support in Japan. To engage with a wider audience, IRCI could consider publishing papers in international peer-reviewed journals and foster these skills in the region through the Early Career Researchers scheme, rather than producing what has been described by an Advisory Board member as 'grey literature'. Another possibility is to coordinate publications with ICHCAP: utilising ICHCAP's network could increase IRCI's reach and ensure that the two C2Cs complement each other's activities.

IRCI has also known **some success in disseminating to the general public, and needs to pursue its efforts in this domain**. One key avenue for dissemination has been through Sakai City Museum, which is a key interface between IRCI and the general public, and collaborates with IRCI for specific events and seminars, with a noted increase in cooperation since 2022-2023. Recent examples include the 2022 seminar on traditional performing arts in Java, Indonesia, and the panel exhibition on IRCI’s COVID-19 research project (see Case Study 1).

Case Study 1: Exhibition on “ICH Resilience amid COVID-19 pandemic” at the Sakai City Museum

From November 2023 to March 2024, the Sakai City Museum, providing a space for the IRCI Office in the building, is hosting a panel exhibition presenting the results of IRCI’s research on the impacts of the pandemic on the way communities and ICH practitioners experienced the safeguarding of their heritage.

As of February 2024, there had been over 19,000 visitors. Sakai City has been a key advocate of IRCI and its activities ever since its foundation in 2011, acting as a host for the Centre. By providing a physical space to showcase IRCI’s research, the Sakai City Museum has enabled the data collected by IRCI on traditional medicinal practices, and rituals to support mental wellbeing in times of crisis, to reach a greater audience.

Figure 1. Panel display on ICH at the Sakai City Museum. Photo: A. Dupeyron.



2.1.3. Foster, coordinate and develop scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies

The IRCI has made significant contributions towards this objective, by fostering and coordinating research which is **recognised as timely and important** to the stakeholders we interviewed. Research is the bread and butter of IRCI, and since 2018 it has acted as a regional hub for 7 key research projects. These are articulated around two key activity focuses. **Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding** focuses



on building capacity in the Member States, through an ongoing project mapping existing publications, and creating an online Hub of researchers who can share insights on best practices, through webinars, workshops and symposiums as well as a dedicated research group. The second key activity focus, **Research on the Safeguarding of ICH for Building Sustainable and Resilient Communities**, is the umbrella under which research projects are instigated by IRCI staff with collaborators in its State Members. Since 2018, this research has focused on themes that are aligned with UNESCO’s priorities, such as the contribution of ICH to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ICH and Disaster Risk Management, ICH affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (see Case Study 1) and the emergency protection of ICH in Conflict-Affected countries in Asia.

According to a collaborative researcher, IRCI is engaging with topics at the forefront of current academic debates, such as the integration of tangible and intangible heritage for safeguarding (bridging the 1972 and 2003 Conventions), especially in terms of societal resilience. The intersection of Disaster Risk Reduction and ICH is particularly timely for researchers based in the Pacific: while most research institutes focus on disaster mitigation for urban cultural heritage, ICH as a mechanism for recovery is a buzzing topic explored both in the cultural heritage and the international development¹ fields, and by policymakers². To deepen their research, IRCI would benefit from greater visibility, for example organising research projects that last longer than 3 years and explore themes in greater depth.

2.2. Conformity of the Centre’s activities with the Agreement

Since 2018, IRCI has carried out a **significant number of activities in conformity with its mission as outlined in the Renewal Agreement.**

2.2.1. Instigating and coordinating research into practices and methodologies of safeguarding endangered ICH in the region

IRCI has fully complied with this activity, as several of the research projects it instigated have focused on endangered heritage in the region. Case Study 1 has mentioned the issue of ICH and resilience in a wake of a pandemic that affected ICH bearers’ ability to meet or continue practicing their living heritage. Another key example of high relevance for the Member States in the Pacific, is Disaster Risk Management. Since 2020, IRCI has focused on promoting research studying how disasters affected ICH in target countries. Its sequel, starting in financial year 2024, focuses on climate change and how it

¹ An example is the Tomorrow’s Cities research project: <https://tomorrowscities.org/learning-past-envision-future>

² United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, <https://www.undrr.org/words-action-using-traditional-and-indigenous-knowledges-disaster-risk-reduction>



affects ICH. For this research project, IRCI cooperated with leading researchers in the field such as an anthropologist from MINPAKU (Japan’s National Museum of Ethnology). The survey also highlighted a few examples from partner institutions, such as RedR Indonesia, which conducted research on DRR and ICH in Bantul.

2.2.2. Assisting countries in the region in implementing other research activities, while paying special attention to developing States

The research activities organised by IRCI have successfully focused on building capacity and assisting countries to implement their own research. One key activity has been the mapping of existing ICH research: to address a gap in ICH research in Central Asia and SIDS, IRCI has orientated its ongoing Data Collection project in building a database of research publications undertaken in these regions (2022, 2023 and 2024), collecting thousands of entries. This will help researchers in the region identify gaps and prioritise research activities.

IRCI’s research projects involve cooperation with partner institutions that conduct field research, which feeds into case studies enabling cross-regional comparisons and exchanges through seminars. For instance, the minutes of the 2023 governing board meeting mention that in SIDS contexts, the importance of revisiting traditional food storage systems was highlighted in communications with local communities.

2.2.3. Organising regional workshops and seminars focusing on research as a measure for safeguarding ICH and on research on safeguarding practices and methodologies

Between 2018 and 2022, IRCI organised 12 international workshops, symposiums and seminars, both online and in-person, in conformity with the Agreement. Some of these have focused on methodologies such as ICH data collection, or on the general challenges in ICH research in the region; while others have focused on research topics including Education and Community development, and Disaster Risk Management. In 2023, one international symposium on ICH and SDGs was held, and six seminars took place online specifically to discuss the latest trends in safeguarding ICH, including reflections on the Anniversary of the Convention, ICH in a climate of emergency, community involvements, or discussions around what constitutes good practice.

According to the survey, **most beneficiaries are satisfied with the organised seminars** as a way to disseminate research and discuss methodologies (16/23 ranked this as “very good” or “good”). The



main feedback for improvement was that **IRCI could provide more guidance regarding research methodologies, and into how research can contribute to safeguarding at the policy level.**

2.2.4. Encouraging and assisting young researchers in the region engaging in research activities aimed at safeguarding ICH

The involvement of Early Career Researchers (ECRs) is a relatively recent focus of IRCI, and so far progress has been moderate, but it is a promising avenue for the next financial year. A face-to-face ECR workshop has been planned for later in 2024, which will draw on regional expertise from across the region. This is part of IRCI's project on building a collaborative forum for ICH researchers in the region (Project 2, Activity Focus 1: Asia-Pacific Research Forum for ICH Safeguarding) and will be a collaboration between ICHCAP and IRCI (Case Study 2).

Case Study 2: Collaboration between ICHCAP and IRCI to help develop the careers of ECRs engaged in ICH research activities

The process will take place over two years: in mid-2024, 6 to 7 ECRs will be selected and attached to a research mentor, and ICHCAP will help identify mentors by using its Asia-Pacific Higher Education Network for Intangible Cultural Heritage (APHEN-ICH). The ECRs will be invited to participate in the international conference planned by IRCI in March 2025 in Osaka (hosted by MINPAKU, the National Museum of Ethnology), and through the following year they will be turning their papers into publications.

According to ICHCAP, a key obstacle in drafting joint projects is the discrepancy between ICHCAP project timelines (one year) and IRCI's 2-to-3-year research planning cycle. IRCI is interested in turning this venture into a more regular scheme, but will need to first assess the results of its pilot: it is indeed going to be a costly and time-consuming activity for a Centre with limited means.

It is also worth noting that **IRCI's Research staff include a few ECRs, and that the Centre is supportive of their research**, encouraging them to apply for funding from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) to continue their work on a part-time basis, and allowing them to teach in Japanese universities on the side.

2.2.5. Cooperating with other category 2 institutions active in the domain of safeguarding ICH, in the region and beyond

While cooperation with other Category 2 institutions has been limited thus far, IRCI has recently planned collaborative ventures, and there are encouraging signs that this activity can be reinforced in the future (see Case Study 2). This objective overlaps with the evaluation's focus on the quality of coordination and cooperation with other C2Cs (see also Section 2.5.3).



2.2.6. Initiating cooperation among interested institutions, while furthering technical assistance vis-à-vis developing countries in the region

By coordinating multi-country research projects, IRCI encourages the cooperation between institutions that may not otherwise have collaborated, in accordance with the Agreement. The participating institutions feel that they can learn from best practices that have been employed by partner research institutions in other contexts, and identify their own weaknesses. For example, Mongolia's National Centre for Cultural Heritage has been collaborating with IRCI since 2016 on mapping existing research into the Research Database, which enabled them to identify gaps in their research activities.

Furthermore, to instigate research IRCI provides funding to its partners for anthropological fieldwork or survey data collection. **The seed funding provided by IRCI has been instrumental for research in developing contexts,** for example in Mongolia. IRCI funding can attract the attention of UNESCO or other bigger stakeholders. The seed funding gives participants the space to research, write up and present their findings. Examples include the project "Local Visionary Communities in Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kyrgyzstan", which focused on the craftsmanship and traditional knowledge related to Yurt dwellings. The outcomes have been research on local community museums, case studies and presentations at IRCI conferences.

2.3. Contribution to UNESCO's C/5

We find evidence of strong, explicit alignment between IRCI and UNESCO's C/5, both at the activity planning stage and in reporting. To ensure their actions contribute to UNESCO priorities, IRCI staff consult the current version of C/5 when they plan research projects. The activity plans directly refer to the Main Lines of Action (MLAs) and Expected Results (ERs). For instance, IRCI's Sustainable Research Data collection for ICH safeguarding project (2019-2021) as detailed in the documents corresponding to the 8th Governing Board meeting of IRCI (2019) makes explicit reference to 40C/5, MLA2 ER6.

The last Approved Programme and Budget, 41C/5, is no longer organised around MLAs and ERs, yet **IRCI continues to refer to UNESCO's approved programme and budget in a rigorous manner.** For example, the activity report for 2022 focusing on IRCI's Research on ICH Contributing to SDGs project explicitly mentions OUTPUT 5 CLT4 and CLT6 of 41C/5, and cites the specific paragraphs it relates to. **It can be difficult for a Category 2 Centre to directly contribute to the broad, policy-orientated indicators mentioned alongside the C/5 outputs, as those tend to be goals for the entire organisation, yet IRCI's planning remains in alignment with these targets.** For example, in the 2023 report, we can see that



Cambodia, Fiji and Malaysia were selected for case study research, and Fiji is one of the Small Island Developing States prioritised by C/5.

2.4. Contribution to the Global Development Agenda

The IRCI research themes align strongly with the development agenda, tackling themes such as the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on ICH, natural hazards and Disaster Risk Reduction, and sustainable cities and communities, as well as climate change (new focus for 2024).

One of the IRCI research axes specifically focuses on the Sustainable Development Goals. From 2018 to 2021, a dedicated project focused on Education and Community Development, explicitly mentioning SDG 4.7 (Education for Sustainable Development and Global Citizenship) in the activity planning documents. The aim was to organise meetings and international research symposiums on that topic, with case studies undertaken in collaboration with NGOs in Bangladesh, Indonesia and Kyrgyzstan. Since 2022, the research project on SDGs has shifted to SDG 11.4 (Sustainable cities and communities - "strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage"). It focuses on finding partner institutions in Cambodia, Fiji and Malaysia to implement preliminary research which will provide case studies, and so far, one symposium has been organised in Nara (Japan) to explore future directions for research and discussions (2023 Governing Board annexe documents). This activity is underpinned by the goal to find synergies between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which is aligned with current discussions in the field ICH research and at policy level, according to members of the Governing Board.

2.5. Quality of Coordination and Interaction

The coordination and interaction with UNESCO is overall adequate, but requires improvement. In this evaluation, we analyse the communication that IRCI has with UNESCO both at the regional and global scales³. IRCI has good contacts with the Beijing Field Office, but its communication with UNESCO at Headquarters is more limited. IRCI is currently building bridges with ICHCAP and CRIHAP, but due to the lack of a regional strategy coordinated by UNESCO at Headquarters, some degree of duplication of efforts is unavoidable.

³ We have omitted the National Commissions from our analysis. Based on our interviews with IRCI staff, National Commissions have limited engagement with IRCI activities. National Commissions ensure that UNESCO's mandate is promoted and implemented in the Member States. Though they sometimes interact with IRCI, it is when their representative is also a member of a relevant ICH institution (or, in the case of Japan, because the NatCom is also a member of the governing board).



2.5.1. With UNESCO at Headquarters

The communication between UNESCO at Headquarters and IRCI has been identified as an area for improvement, both from UNESCO and from IRCI. From IRCI's point of view, UNESCO itself needs to be more responsive to online correspondence. According to one member of the IRCI Advisory Board, most of the engagement between IRCI and UNESCO happens via the Beijing Field Office, and the engagement with Paris is more distant. While the Living Heritage Entity attends online meetings and events when invited, there is a perception that interaction and engagement has at times been fairly limited.

According to UNESCO at Headquarters, there is very little direct contact with IRCI, as it is in more regular contact with the Regional Office in Beijing. A greater level of communication is usually expected with C2Cs, and contacts with ICHCAP and CRIHAP, for example, are more frequent. **UNESCO feels that IRCI could grow as a resource supporting UNESCO's work regionally.** For example, the thematic areas that the Living Heritage Entity is focusing on, such as ICH and climate change, are also key areas of research of the IRCI, and IRCI's research on disasters has informed the reflection for the UNESCO background documents on ICH and Climate Change. Through the Beijing Field Office, IRCI is helping UNESCO collect and analyse case studies on this issue. Yet, IRCI can still take a more autonomous and leading role in the process. According to UNESCO, **IRCI produces important work, but it is not yet translating into practical recommendations for policy changes at the UNESCO or Member State level.** For this, IRCI would need to make more explicit policy recommendations as a product of the research reports, and communicate those to its Member States, through its Governing Board and other available mechanisms, such as the organisation of side events at Intergovernmental committees.

Conversely, **at a regional level (IRCI and other stakeholders) there is a perception that UNESCO is not making their expectations particularly clear, in terms of what types of activities would most benefit their overarching strategy regionally.** According to a facilitator, C2Cs in Asia have to second guess what parts of C/5 and the Convention to prioritise, and this has been confirmed by an IRCI staff member, who stated that UNESCO could keep them better informed on how they envision Category 2 Centres best contributing to the nuanced evolution of their priorities. UNESCO could be more specific about priorities, perhaps by providing more feedback on what activities are particularly relevant during the annual coordination meeting of ICH C2Cs, so that C2Cs could then autonomously align their strategy and activities and take a more leading role. With a bit more clarity on what UNESCO expects from this partnership in terms of using research to guide the implementation the convention, the governments might see the value of C2Cs and fund them better. With more collaboration, the IRCI and the other category 2 centres could "punch well above their weight".



2.5.2. With UNESCO Regional Field Offices

Communication with the UNESCO Regional Field Office in Beijing is regular and deemed satisfactory by both parties. The programme specialist for culture is supportive and open to enquiries and requests. They also provide feedback prior to the Governing Board meetings (with documents sent by IRCI 6 weeks ahead of time) to ensure alignment with UNESCO priorities.

The Beijing Office is the main UNESCO point of contact for IRCI, but could further cement that role. According to a member of the Advisory Board, the regional field offices are in a good position to act as brokers to facilitate the coordination of strategies between the UNESCO, IRCI, ICHCAP and CRIHAP, and could for example host a regular meeting to formalise a strategic horizon. The Beijing Field Office has suggested that to bridge the gap between the research fostered and gathered by IRCI at the regional level, and the global policy processes that are discussed more widely by UNESCO, **it would be important for IRCI to present their research findings to Member States and the UNESCO Committee, in a format that policymakers can easily absorb** : this is not yet taking place, and may be one of reasons why the research is not fully being operationalised.

2.5.3. With other Category 2 Centres

IRCI currently collaborates with ICHCAP and CRIHAP several times a year, an engagement which has recently increased. When CRIHAP does a capacity building event, for instance, IRCI sends them participants or moderators. IRCI, CRIHAP and ICHCAP sit on each other's boards, yet there is **little evidence for alignment at the strategic level** or collaboration. For example, CRIHAP convened a meeting on disasters in the Philippines in 2021 and a month later Paris did as well - neither event involved IRCI, whose research has focused on that theme. The duplication was noted by participants. **Coordinating the agendas between institutions with overlapping mandates would help to present a more coherent strategy.** To this effect, the directors of ICHCAP, CRIHAP and IRCI met at the 11th annual coordination meeting of category 2 centres in Bulgaria, where they broached topics related to possible synergies, especially with regards to youth-related events. One key obstacle to future cooperation is the discrepancy in timelines, which makes it hard to find alignment: ICHCAP works on a yearly workplan basis, while IRCI research projects tend to run for 2 to 3 years.

Beyond the East Asian C2Cs, cooperation is more limited, and IRCI would like UNESCO to provide more opportunities to foster this engagement. For example, the home page for all ICH C2Cs is outdated. Having a collective page to help C2Cs share news would promote greater cooperation between them. There is a missed opportunity to carry out more collaborations with the other Asian C2Cs. There is very



little collaboration with the Tehran C2C, despite the overlap in countries. Recently, there was a tripartite meeting on climate change and building resilience in communities with 8 participants from Central Asia, hosted by Persian Garden Institute for Living Heritage (an IRCI partner), ICHCAP and the Tehran centre. Despite the thematic alignment, IRCI was not present.

2.6. Quality and relevance of partnerships

IRCI maintains good partnerships with the relevant government agencies and public/private partners, but it is still relatively poorly known in Japan and its influence and perceived importance to funders could be improved with **greater visibility**.

2.6.1. With Japanese Government Agencies

The Japanese government appreciates IRCI and its work, but faced with a range of economic challenges, the arts sector is not well funded, as mentioned in all interviews with government stakeholders. This has **significant implications for IRCI's operational budget and visibility in the country**.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA) is the body of the Ministry of Education, Cultural, Sports Science and Technology (MEXT) under whose umbrella IRCI sits. While MEXT is home to the International Affairs section, which oversees international affairs and the work of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, IRCI is supervised by the Cultural Resources Utilization Division of the ACA, which oversees all work on Intangible Cultural Heritage. The ACA is very satisfied with the communication with IRCI, and the transparency with which IRCI organises its Governing Board meetings. They rate the quality of the research carried out by IRCI as high and rarely needs to intervene at the Governing Board to suggest changes to planned IRCI activities. MEXT is less aware of IRCI's activities, but attends the governing board meeting as an Observer. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which oversees the official ratification of the agreement with UNESCO, is also satisfied with the level of communication and reporting from IRCI.

All three bodies acknowledge the importance of IRCI: according to MEXT, it is one of two C2Cs in Japan and represent Japan's ongoing contribution to the development of countries in the Asia-Pacific region in the fields of education, science and culture. ACA finds that IRCI's work is well-aligned with its mission, and wishes to see IRCI expand and further develop its capacities to promote research in the region.

According to a member of the Advisory Board, **the Japanese government, while invested in strengthening ties with UNESCO as a whole, is not fully leveraging IRCI as a resource to stand on the**



international scene. Japan is a world leader on Disaster Risk Reduction and has its own prestigious institutions for the safeguarding of heritage, as well as its own well-established Cultural Protection Law, which somehow overshadow the 2003 Convention and the work of IRCI. The added value of IRCI compared to national ICH institutions is its ability to mobilise an international network. Engaging in heritage policy at the international. regional level would be beneficial for Japan, rather than focusing on bilateral relations with UNESCO in Paris. However, our observation is that what prevents IRCI from becoming a bigger stakeholder in this arena is its limited resources, and its lack of visibility nationally. While these government agencies are supportive of IRCI, the government's ability to increase IRCI's budget is limited in the current economic context (with nationwide budget reductions), despite the ongoing petitions of ACA and NICH. **These government agencies advocate for a greater dissemination of IRCI's work to Japanese policy makers, ICH researchers and institutions, to raise awareness of the Centre's importance and future potential.**

2.6.2. With participating institutions from Member States

In terms of partnerships with research institutions, ICH museums, and NGOs (including UNESCO accredited NGOs), **IRCI maintains good relationships, but has greater visibility outside of Japan.** According to the majority of survey respondents from partner institutions (22/23), **it is easy to communicate with IRCI and obtain information.** Since 2018, IRCI has collaborated with 45 institutions, including 7 in Japan. **This is a testimony to its efforts to reach out and build networks in the region, but hinders its ability to fully leverage resources within Japan and position itself as a key hub for ICH research nationally.** According to UNESCO, IRCI tends to rely on its existing network, which increases through a snowballing effect. While incoming Associate Researchers share their network, the process is slow, and IRCI needs to make a more concerted effort to reach additional stakeholders.

We observe that the visibility of IRCI in the Japanese Intangible Cultural Heritage sector is ambiguous: on the one hand, IRCI is supported financially by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which is the state body in charge of enacting cultural property laws, and has its place among the prestigious institutions of the NICH. Yet, our interviewees from Japanese academia have explained that IRCI is not well-known in the field. For example, the upcoming International Training Course (ITC) on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage 2024, which will be organised in Ritsumeikan University (Kyoto) in partnership with ICCROM and UNESCO, does not involve IRCI.

Some **key local partners include MINPAKU and Sakai City** (see Case Study 2): both institutions are based in the Kansai region, and have collaborated extensively with IRCI for research and dissemination. One



of the key reasons why IRCI is not better networked in Japan, beyond the lack of dissemination, is its geographical location. IRCI's position in Sakai City is isolated from the main academic networks as well as centres of international influence, making it harder to connect, as well as reducing the attractiveness for prospective employees.

2.7. Governance and management

2.7.1. Governance arrangements and Governing Board

The Governance issues noted in the previous evaluation (non-functional Advisory Board, delays in providing documents, lack of ICH professionals) have **significantly improved** following the previous renewal evaluation process, and the **current governance arrangements are perceived as well-functioning**.

IRCI sits under the umbrella of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, whose president chairs the Governing Board. NICH organises a meeting every month to ensure horizontal exchanges across the eight organisations it comprises. While the activities and workplans of IRCI are determined at the Governing Board, IRCI is fully independent in the implementation of activities.

We have only been able to speak with two members of the current **Advisory Board**, who were only appointed in November. However, one member of the Governing Board corroborated that the articulation between the Advisory Board and the Governing Board was functional: all material (activity reports, work plans, budget) is shared with the advisory board at least two months before the annual Governing Board meeting, to give its members time to review and provide inputs. Their views are then integrated into the final list of documents discussed.

All interviewed members of the **Governing Board found it a transparent process**, with the agenda and details circulated two weeks in advance. Participants have relevant technical and political/institutional backgrounds, and include representatives from the Japanese government (ACA and NICH, Japanese National Commission for UNESCO), UNESCO (Beijing Office, representing the institution), three Member States from the Asia-Pacific region, one ICH researcher from a Japanese university, one representative from the museum sector, and the Mayor of Sakai City. To ensure that all participants, even newer ones, can have a say, IRCI provides Q&A online sessions ahead of the Governing Board meetings where they explain how the process operates. According to our interviews, participants feel able to comment during the meetings, and to voice concerns when there are any. The meeting minutes are shared with all participants afterwards. We have also spoken to **observers**, who tend to be relevant



ICH professionals in Japan, or members of CRIHAP/ICHCAP, and find the meetings informative. For example, ICHCAP The Governing Board takes place once a year without fault, and this is aligned with the expectations based on the contractual arrangements between UNESCO and the Japanese government.

2.7.2. Efficiency of Management

The roles at IRCI are mostly well defined, though in practice there is much more fluidity and a degree of overlap as the scope of work is greater than the available number of staff. For example, one of the General Affairs staff focuses on accounting and the other on Human Resources, but in the absence of a Head of General Affairs, they support each other where necessary. Similarly, the Research Associates are assigned a project each but frequently turn to each other for advice or support. The Head of the Research section has a versatile role and ends up supporting most employees: while her focus is supposedly on research, she seconds the Director General where necessary, oversees the elaboration of the annual reports, coordinates the research projects, and provides ad hoc assistance to staff on research methodologies. **This results in a high workload for the staff, which is reinforced by the loss of institutional knowledge due to high staff turnover.**

The onboarding and operational procedures for staff are adequate, and staff feel supported. To help new staff join and be acquainted with IRCI, they have access to an onboarding process which can take several weeks and includes guidance on IRCI and ICH, but also on standard NICH procedures, under whose umbrella IRCI sits. The performance of permanent staff is assessed on an annual basis, but there is no annual review for the research associates as their contracts are short-term.

2.7.3. Efficiency of Accountability Mechanisms

The formats used for monitoring activities on a yearly basis and evaluating their implications are based on the annual reporting template presented to the Governing Board, and are clear and efficient. IRCI does not operate following a Results Framework, however each new activity receives its own set of objectives and indicators. Those are defined in accordance with UNESCO's Approved planning and budget (C/5) and IRCI's medium term and long-term plans. The Director of Research establishes them at the beginning of each project, along with baseline information and objectives by the end of the project.

Each year, the activity reports detail the programmed targets for each activity (with indicators) and whether those were reached. In particular, specific challenges are mentioned, as well as how IRCI solved



them. The reporting is clear, and UNESCO as well as the Governing Board members and the Japanese government have expressed satisfaction with the quality of the reports.

2.7.4. Human Resources

Human resources are limited considering the amount of work that is required, and this precludes IRCI from undertaking more ambitious activities. Staff turnover is high, mainly because there is only provision for 4 permanent positions in the agreement IRCI has with NICH, and in its core funding. This means that the researcher positions have a 3-year contract, renewable for a year twice, up to five years. As this is not a very attractive contract for researchers (no possibility for tenure) many of them apply for more permanent jobs in the interim. While the position is fairly advantageous especially for younger researchers, it is not very attractive to more seasoned researchers because it cannot lead to tenure, and because Sakai City is geographically far from the main centres of Japanese academia: **this comes to the detriment of retention, as staff sometimes leave before the end of their contracts as they find more secure jobs.** Only the Head of Research and the General Affairs staff (currently two people in charge of HR and accounting) have permanent jobs. The DG is a four-year role that can be renewed once. The DG position is now a full-time job, (as opposed to one day a week) but several positions remain unfilled, such as Assistant DG and Head of General Affairs. Administratively and financially, IRCI cannot hire more than three permanent staff members, and therefore cannot hire people for these positions. **The impossibility to offer longer-term contracts has been a key difficulty in the operations of IRCI in the period covered by this evaluation.**

Since the last evaluation, one big change in the structure of IRCI has been a focus on hiring people with relevant technical backgrounds, which has enabled the Centre to increase its research quality and its relevance to current issues in ICH research. The current and previous DGs have experience working for/with UNESCO, and with MEXT. Several of the Associate Researchers have backgrounds in anthropology, East Asian literature, linguistics, or international affairs, which are relevant to the work they are conducting. General Affairs employees are also qualified for their tasks (HR and Management). IRCI fully complies with Japanese employment law and the recruitment process is designed to recruit the best candidates for the job. Researchers are hired based on their skills, and international experience/knowledge of English are a must. About 5 or 6 people apply for each open position. They submit an application, go through an interview process, and have to take an exam ensuring they have good knowledge of key ICH themes. At the moment, the staff is comprised of men and women, many of whom are Early Career Researchers. When the post holder has a doctorate, their salary is higher commensurate with their research experience.



This evaluation has observed that in general, the lack of institutional experience due to high staff turnover has forced employees to learn on the job. This has been particularly evident in the General Affairs section, which has lacked a more senior Head of section over the past 2 years. The process is a bit smoother in the Research Section thanks to the Head of Research, which coordinates the workload and acts as a supervisor for the Research Associates. When Research Associates start their position, they have access to the NICH onboarding process and sometimes have a few weeks or months to familiarise themselves with the work, unless they are assigned to a project straight away. If they need additional support, they usually get it on an ad hoc basis from their colleagues or from the Head of Research. Through their time at IRCI, several research associates have had the opportunity to attend UNESCO training events run by UNESCO facilitators, which they found very helpful to further their understanding of issues in ICH safeguarding and procedures such as periodic reporting. Some of them have also been able to attend Intergovernmental meetings. **However, IRCI staff have mentioned that further training could help them with their tasks.** In particular, language training would help General Affairs staff deal support their Research colleagues more with international affairs, and Associate Researchers, despite their fluency in English, have mentioned they might benefit from English academic writing skills workshops.

2.8. Funding

The current funding model is considered sufficient for the basic operations of IRCI, but not successful: while IRCI can apply for project funds and conduct 4 or 5 research projects at a time, it cannot increase its core funding and retain staff. Indeed, the funding model is mainly dependent on earmarked funding from NICH and ACA, allocated on a project basis for research activities.

NICH provides IRCI with a management expenses grant (core funding) of about 50 million JPY a year, provided by the government, which is just about sufficient for basic operations and for NICH to formally be able to assign three permanent staff members to IRCI. Additionally, IRCI receives a proportion of the donations to NICH, which is reinvested in research projects as the amount can vary from year to year (about 30 million JPY in the 2023 financial year). Each year, IRCI also applies to the Agency of Cultural Affairs for an additional 50 million JPY under the category “International collaborative project for the safeguarding of cultural properties”, which they have a high chance of winning, but is not guaranteed and requires the preparation of a proposal. These funds are also only available for a year: because the application process takes several months, this limits their scope and useability. In 2023, the ACA funded projects were the Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding project, focusing on



Central Asia and SIDS; the Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management project; and the Creation of Asia-Pacific Regional Hub of research for the Safeguarding of ICH project. While this project-specific ACA funding allows IRCI to carry out more research projects, its budget lines are less flexible than the earmarked funding, and for example staff cannot be reassigned.

While activities are delivered within budget, the resource is deemed insufficient for IRCI to be able to fully achieve its objectives of facilitating research in safeguarding ICH in the Asia-Pacific region. For example, IRCI is unable to convene more than one in-person international conference or symposium a year. The ECR forum is envisaged as a pilot, or at best as a scheme that can take place every 3 or 4 years, as it might be a significant drain on IRCI's resources. **All stakeholders we spoke to, including UNESCO and the Japanese government, recognise that IRCI is on a low budget.** Most of these stakeholders mentioned that IRCI's budget is comparatively much lower than the other two C2Cs in the region, ICHCAP and CRIHAP, with whom it aspires to engage on an equal footing for collaborative projects. While the figures may have changed, according to ICHCAP's 2016 renewal evaluation report⁴, ICHCAP's budget is about double that of IRCI (2 million USD vs 133.5 million JPY, which is about 880 000 USD), and ICHCAP has 27 employees. While the activities carried out by the two centres are very different, it is worth noting that **the main limit preventing IRCI from increasing its reach and activities, as observed by IRCI partners, was its limited number of staff.** With a similar budget, CRIHAP can hire more people as salaries are comparatively lower in China. According to IRCI staff, the salaries are aligned with their expectations for research jobs in Japan, and are based on the NICH scale, which differentiates PhD holders and MA holders. However, there is little progression in salary based on age/experience within these scales.

The IRCI staff have tried to diversify the Centre's funding base, but increasing the core funding has proved challenging as most funding would come attached to a project. This is the case for example of Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) grants, to which associate researchers can apply. These are highly competitive, but when successful, they provide research staff with additional, indirect funds to support their independent research projects on a part-time basis.

It is difficult for IRCI to mobilise funds from additional economic activities. As most of the IRCI Member States and participating institutions are situated in the Global South, IRCI cannot levy annual membership fees: this would be a major barrier to participation and would defeat IRCI's goals to make

⁴ ECI Desarrollo (2016) Evaluation of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP) UNESCO Category 2 Centre



research more widely accessible. Since early 2024, IRCI has been registered as an organisation providing tax reduction for donors based in Osaka: through this mechanism, IRCI will be able to receive donations from local citizens with an interest in Intangible Cultural Heritage.

According to the staff, if IRCI had more core funding, its priority would be to petition NICH to increase the number of permanent staff, with at least one more permanent researcher who could help coordinate IRCI's activities.

2.9. Autonomy

IRCI complies with the legal requirements for Category 2 Centres: our interviews with its staff have shown that through NICH, IRCI is allowed to institute legal proceedings. As its own entity, IRCI is allowed to contract, and is allowed to acquire and dispose of property.

3. Recommendations

Since the last renewal (2018), IRCI has satisfactorily complied with its objectives in accordance with the Agreement, and the stakeholders we interviewed unanimously highlighted the impressiveness of IRCI's achievements despite its limited resources. We recommend the **renewal of the Agreement between UNESCO and the government of Japan**, as well as a few key changes at the IRCI, UNESCO and national levels to enable IRCI to achieve its full potential as a resource facilitating ICH research and promoting its influence on policy in the Asia-Pacific region.

3.1. For IRCI

- **Improving the dissemination of its activities in Japan**

This evaluation highlighted the lack of visibility of IRCI nationally: as a consequence, it is harder for ACA and NICH to advocate for increasing IRCI's budget. We recommend that IRCI pursues its dissemination efforts and explores additional avenues for disseminating research, not only to its international network, but also to Japanese ICH researchers and the general public. This should help IRCI garner more support for its activities. Perhaps a specific project can focus on dissemination, or one of the future Research Associates can be hired specifically with a view to work on communications. For example, the results of IRCI's research can be published in international peer-reviewed publications, and the communication products (newsletters, reports, online seminars) could be disseminated more broadly to ICH institutions in Japan: some of the Governing Board members can help provide advice on how to integrate within the Japanese ICH sphere. While the collaboration with Sakai City has enabled IRCI to



engage with the public, the Centre can capitalise on its existing relationships with MINPAKU and try to collaborate with other museums and institutes in Kansai to offer more public symposiums.

- **Obtain relevant training from NICH, and UNESCO**

The staff of IRCI have voiced their interest in obtaining additional training, for example on academic writing skills in English, as writing documents for an international audience in a non-native language is understandably challenging. Staff have also appreciated the opportunity to participate in UNESCO capacity building events, and would welcome such future opportunities.

- **Upgrade the computer and library access parameters through NICH**

One additional recommendation that was made by IRCI staff and does not come under any of the established categories of this evaluation is for the umbrella institution, NICH, to ensure that the computer security system allows them to visit the websites of their partners in other countries. Currently, the security protocol is too strict for such an international facing institution. Additionally, due to the geographical location of IRCI, its staff have limited access to library resources, with most of them using their alternative academic affiliations. Full online library access should be envisaged through one of the NICH partner institutions.

- **Open a call to recruit more participating institutions across the region**

The number of IRCI's partners is expanding, but this is a slow process. To diversify and increase its network of partners in the region, IRCI should post regular calls for cooperation on social media (Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.) as well as through formal UNESCO channels (UNESCO meetings, newsletters and official calls on the ICH website). This will help UNESCO reach different academic institutes, research centres, and NGOs (including UNESCO accredited NGOs) to become even more representative at the regional level, and especially in Japan.

- **Organise a side event to foster discussions on the policy implications of IRCI's research**

One of the key gaps in the logic underpinning IRCI is the possibility for its research to influence policy. As UNESCO opens its calls for side events at the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of ICH, IRCI can apply to initiate a side event by filling the online form. This would provide IRCI with a platform to disseminate its research further and discuss the possible policy implications with Member States and UNESCO (invited as a speaker or discussant). IRCI can also make sure that all research projects produce a policy brief, to provide recommendations for Member States, that UNESCO can use as appropriate and circulate to its wider network.



3.2. For UNESCO

- **Promote the collaboration between C2Cs more actively**

Currently, C2Cs are not always aware of each other's activities, as the opportunities for sharing are reduced (yearly meeting). UNESCO could host a page where all Category 2 Centres in the world can share news, events and training resources, and update the information that is already on its C2C homepage more regularly. ICHCAP could also consider such a page focused on Asian C2Cs, enabling them to be more aware of each other's activities. More regular, annual bilateral meetings could also be held between IRCI and Headquarters to ensure that all options are explored for cooperation and clarify UNESCO's work plan priorities.

Regarding the collaboration with ICHCAP and CRIHAP, UNESCO through its Beijing Field Office can act as a convenor to field ideas on how to find common strategies and host a yearly meeting before the Governing Board meetings of the three C2Cs take place. This would avoid the duplication of efforts, and be less confusing to Member States which are sometimes covered by more than one C2C. As the mandates of ICHCAP, CRIHAP and IRCI are complementary, it would be beneficial to all three Centres to collaborate more regularly. For example, IRCI can obtain some help from ICHCAP to obtain ICH networking lists and disseminate its research results more effectively, and CRIHAP might benefit from the cutting-edge research conducted by IRCI to update the content of its capacity-building modules.

3.3. For NICH and the government of Japan

We strongly **encourage NICH to secure more funding to hire more personnel for IRCI. This implies that NICH requests a bigger budget allocation from the ACA: the ACA would then need to advocate for the government to adjust the budget as required.** Currently, IRCI struggles to retain institutional knowledge, to attract the best candidates, and most of the coordination and support of research activities hinges on the Director of Research. With a budget of about 130 million JPY per year, IRCI offers good value for money: indeed, the government representatives we interview consider IRCI to be extremely important, as it is the only body under the NICH umbrella to promote the safeguarding of ICH through research at the regional scale. Having the possibility to hire one more permanent staff member in the Research Section would alleviate some of the pressure arising from the workload, and enable IRCI to become more established in Japan and abroad. This would help Japan cement its position as a regional leader in safeguarding ICH. Coupled with the recommendations above (dissemination, networking with Japanese institutions and policy recommendations), IRCI could also facilitate the cross-pollination of cutting-edge ICH research, benefiting Japan's exposure to novel ideas and methods, and enabling other countries in the region to benefit from Japanese expertise.



We also **encourage NICH to consider moving IRCI next to another NICH institution**: this would enable the burden of administration to be shared across institutes, as well resources such as IT support technicians, and accountants. IRCI staff would be better supported. Furthermore, it would be easier for IRCI to position itself as an international centre from a convenient location, for example in Tokyo, live up to its potential, and attract more talent.



4. Annexes

4.1. Methodology

For this evaluation, we used a bespoke **Renewal Evaluation Index**, adapted from previous renewal evaluations, the Terms of Reference, and UNESCO’s Guidance Note on the renewal assessment procedures of Category 2 Institutes Centres (190 EX/INF.16). We based our analysis on the nine pillars that guided this report: i) Achievement of objectives, ii) Conformity of the Centre’s activities with the Agreement, iii) Contribution to UNESCO’s C/5, iv) Contribution to the Global Development Agenda, v) Quality of coordination and interaction, vi) Quality and relevance of partnerships, vii) Governance and Management, viii) Funding, and ix) Autonomy.

Each Pillar is broken down into a series of **Areas** that correspond to measures of success for that pillar. The Areas themselves are further broken into Indicators, which are scored on a scale of 1-3, 1=poor, 2=satisfactory and 3=good to facilitate analysis. The aggregate indicator scores provide a score for the Area, which in turn creates an aggregated score for the Pillar. The scoring system was designed to easily highlight areas in which IRCI is performing well, and areas in which it can improve. For each of these indicators, a ‘**desired state**’ describes the ideal scenario. For example, in Fundraising, the desired state reads as follows: “The Centre is able to mobilise funds to overcome funding gaps from voluntary additional contributions, subsidies, grants and donations”.

To define the indicators, we have primarily used UNESCO’s Guidance Note on the Renewal Assessment Procedures of Category 2 Institutes and Centres.

Our analysis was based on data triangulated from the interviews, surveys, case studies, literature and our field visit to the centre. The analysis focused on assessing the extent to which the desired state has been reached.

The collection of data to populate the Index took place both remotely and in person in Osaka, Sakai City and Tokyo, over a period of three weeks. Our remote data collection methods included qualitative interviews, a survey of Participating Institutions from Member States, and the further review of relevant documents.

The field visit facilitated the interview process with Japanese stakeholders, enabled us to observe the Centre’s achievements and functioning in situ, and focus on a couple of case studies showcasing lessons learned. The itinerary can be found in Annex 4.3.



We interviewed a range of stakeholders online and in person (see list in Annex 4.2.). These included IRCI staff, UNESCO staff (both at Headquarters, and at the Beijing Field Office), members of the Centre’s Governing Board, ICH representatives in Japan, as well as partner institutions. These interviews also enabled us to showcase the two **case studies** presented in the results of the report. The questionnaires we used for the interviews can be found in Annex 4.4.

We also sent an online survey to the entire list of partner institutions provided by IRCI. The purpose of this survey was to obtain an overall view of the engagement of the Centre with its partners, and provide an opportunity for feedback. The survey was elaborated and disseminated on Kobo Toolbox, and we received twenty-three answers, attached in Annex 4.5.

In conjunction with the interviews and survey, we also reviewed relevant literature from the Centre, UNESCO and other organisations working in the sector. This implied an in-depth analysis of the Centre’s Annual Reports, Financial reports and annual work plans, as well as publications from the Centre. A full list of documents consulted can be found in Annex 4.6.

4.2. List of Interviewees



Table 1. List of interviewees. Interviews with a blue background were conducted in person, interviews with a yellow background were conducted remotely. Names with an asterisk are members of the Governing Board.

Type of stakeholders	Institution	Name
Centre Staff	IRCI	MACHIDA Daisuke, Director-General
		ISHITSUBO Naoki, Chief Executive Clerk
		NOJIMA Yoko, Head of Research Section
		YAO Teruki, General Affairs Officer
		YAMAMOTO Hitomi, Researcher (Associate Fellow)
		OKURA Mieko, Researcher (Associate Fellow)
		KIZAKI Chikako; Researcher (Associate Fellow)
		NAMIKI Kanami, Researcher (Associate Fellow)
		YU Le, Researcher (Associate Fellow)
		IWAMOTO, Wataru, former Director-General of IRCI
UNESCO	Headquarters	Susanne Schnüttgen, Chief of Unit, Capacity-Building and Heritage Policy, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO HQ
		Tim Curtis, Director, UNESCO New Delhi Office, and former Secretary of the 2003 Convention
		Nicholas Tan, Associate Programme Specialist and Regional Officer for Asia and the Pacific, Living Heritage Entity, UNESCO HQ
	Field offices	Ms Duong Bich HANH, Chief of Unit and Programme Specialist for Culture, UNESCO Beijing Office*
		Ms Himalchuli GURUNG, Chief of Asia and the Pacific Unit, World Heritage Centre, UNESCO HQ, former Programme Specialist for Culture at UNESCO Beijing Office
	UNESCO Facilitators	Ms Janet BLAKE, Associate Professor, Faculty of Law, Shahid Beheshti University, Tehran
Cultural heritage representatives in Japan	Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs	KINAMI, H., Deputy Director, Office for International Cooperation on Cultural Properties, Cultural Resources Utilization Division
	National Commission for UNESCO	KUROKAWA Hiroko, Member of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO, of the IRCI Governing Board, and Director and Professor/Curator, The University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts, Japan
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs	AMBE T., Deputy Director, Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Division, Minister’s Secretariat.



	Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology	MOTOMURA, H., Director for International Strategic Planning, Office of the Director-General for International Affairs HARADA, T., Senior Specialist for Cooperation with UNESCO, Office of the Director-General for International Affairs
Other members of the Governing Board	National Institutes for Cultural Heritage	SHIMATANI Hiroyuki, President, Independent Administrative Institution, National Institutes of Cultural Heritage, Japan* MIZUTA, I., Director
	Hokkai-Gakuen University	IWASAKI Masami, Specially appointed Researcher, Center for Development Policy Studies*
	Sakai City	URABE Y, Director-General, Culture and Tourism Bureau SUDO K., Director-General, Sakai City Museum
Advisory Board members	The Australian National University	Christopher Ballard, also facilitator
	The Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies	Naomi FAIK-SIMET
Other partners and beneficiaries	Museums and Researchers	YOSHIDA Kenji, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan (MINPAKU)* IIDA T., Professor, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan (MINPAKU)
		ISHIMURA Tomo, Director, Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties Cooperative Researcher of IRCI
	Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia-Pacific (ICHCAP)	Weonmo PARK, Director of the Office of Cooperation and Networking Jinyoung SEO, Programme Specialist



4.3. Schedule of the Field Visit

Provisional Itinerary for Interviews Concerning the Evaluation of IRCI

As of 29 February 2024

Date	Time	Schedule	Location	Notes
3 March (Sun)	14:30	Move to Shin-Osaka from Tokyo by Tokaido-Sanyo Shinkansen (Nozomi No 41 for Hakata)	Tokyo station, Tokyo	Meeting at the central ticket gate of Shin-Osaka station by IRCI (DG, Machida)
	17:00		Shin-Osaka station, Osaka	
			Move to Hotel (Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji)	Tennoji station, Osaka
		Hotel* check-in Briefing with DG at Hotel lobby*	Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji	*Hotel lobby is at the 7th floor of the building.
4 March (Mon)	08:45	Meet with IRCI staff* at Hotel lobby and travel to IRCI (local train) Arrival at IRCI office (Sakai City Museum)	Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji Tennoji to Mozu station (Sakai) IRCI Office	*H Yamamoto (Associate fellow) meet you in front of the front desk JR Hanwa line
	09:20	Introduction by DG IRCI Interviews: D. Machida (DG) and IRCI staff members	IRCI office in Sakai City Museum	
	12:00	Lunch		
	13:30	IRCI Interviews (continued): DG and IRCI staff members	IRCI office	An interpreter provided for the slot of IRCI general affairs staff
	16:00	Interview with Sakai City Government officials Mr Y. Urabe (Director-General, Culture and Tourism Bureau) Mr K. Sudo (Director-General, Sakai City Museum)	Sakai City Museum	An interpreter provided
	17:00	End of interviews Return to Hotel (local train)	Mozu to Tennoji station	JR Hanwa line Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji
5 March (Tue)	08:45	Meet with IRCI staff* at Hotel lobby and travel to IRCI (local train)	Tennoji to Mozu station	*H Yamamoto meet you in front of the front desk JR Hanwa line
	09:20	IRCI Interviews (continued) DG and IRCI staff members	IRCI office	
	11:00	Move to National Museum of Ethnology Lunch	Mozu to Senri-Chuo station (via Tennoji) Expo Park, Suita	JR Hanwa line & Osaka Metro Midosuji line Attended by DG and IRCI staff
	14:00	Interview at National Museum of Ethnology Mr K. Yoshida (Director-General) Mr T. Iida (Professor)	National Museum of Ethnology (Expo Park, Suita)	
	16:00	End of interviews Return to Hotel (local train)	Senri-Chuo to Tennoji station	Osaka Metro Midosuji line Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji
6 March (Wed)	AM	Online interview/meetings, desk work Hotel check-out*	Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji	*Late check-out option is suggested
		Lunch		
	13:00	Meet with Y Nojima (Head of Research Section of IRCI) at Hotel lobby* and move to Shin-Osaka	Via Inn Abeno-Tennoji Tennoji to Shin-Osaka station	*Nojima meet you in front of the front desk Osaka Metro Midosuji Line
	13:30	Interview with Y Nojima	Rental meeting space	TBD
	15:00	Move to Shin-Osaka Station on foot		Attended by Nojima/IRCI staff
	15:30	Take Tokaido Shinkansen to Tokyo (Nozomi No 98 for Tokyo)	JR Shin-Osaka to Kanda via Tokyo station	Attended by IRCI staff
	17:57	Arrival at Tokyo Move to Hotel (Keio Presso Inn Kanda)		
18:30	Hotel check-in	Keio Presso Inn Kanda		



7 March (Thu)	08:40	Meet with IRCI staff* at Hotel lobby and move to Kasumigaseki	Keio Presso Inn Kanda	*Ishitubo and Yamamoto meet you at Hotel lobby
	09:30	Interview with officials of Agency for Cultural Affairs Mr H. Kinami (Deputy Director, Office for International Cooperation on Cultural Heritages, Cultural Resources Utilization Division)	Agency for Cultural Affairs (Kasumigaseki/Toranomon)	An interpreter provided
	11:30	Interview with Ms M. Iwasaki (Governing Board Member; Specially Appointed Researcher, Hokkai Gakuen University)	Agency for Cultural Affairs	
	12:30	Lunch (Short-distance walking)		Attended by IRCI staff
	14:00	Interview with officials of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) Mr H. Motomura (Director for International Strategic Planning, Office of the Director-General for International Affairs) Ms T. Harada (Senior Specialist for Cooperation with UNESCO, Office of the Director-General for International Affairs)	MEXT (Kasumigaseki/Toranomon)	
	15:30	Move to MOFA (short-distance walking)		Attended by IRCI staff
	16:00	Interview with officials of Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Mr T. Ambe (Deputy Director, Multilateral Cultural Cooperation Division, Minister's Secretariat)	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kasumigaseki/Toranomon)	
17:30	End of Interviews Return to Hotel	Keio Presso Inn Kanda		
8 March (Fri)	09:00	Hotel Check-out Meet with IRCI staff* at Hotel and move to NICH HQs at Ueno	Keio Presso Inn Kanda National Institute of Cultural Heritage (NICH) HQs	*Ishitubo and Yamamoto meet you at Hotel lobby
	10:00	Interview with Ms H. Kurokawa (Governing Board Member; Member of the Japanese National Commission for UNESCO; Director and Professor of the University Art Museum, Tokyo University of the Arts)	NICH HQs @Tokyo National Museum (Ueno)	
	11:00	Lunch		Attended by IRCI staff
	13:00	Interview with Mr T. Ishimura (Director, Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)	NICH HQs @Tokyo National Museum (Ueno)	
	14:30	Interview with Mr W. Iwamoto (Former DG of IRCI)	NICH HQs@Tokyo National Museum (Ueno)	
	15:30	Interview with officer of NICH HQs Mr H. Shimatani (President) Mr I. Mizuta (Director)	NICH HQs@Tokyo National Museum (Ueno)	An interpreter provided.
	17:00	End of interviews Move to Hotel (Hotel Mystays Haneda Airport)	JR Ueno to Keikyu Anamori-Inari station (via Shinagawa)	Attended & Transfer arranged by IRCI staff JR Keihin-Tohoku line Keikyu line
18:00	Hotel Check-In	Hotel Mystays Haneda	Ota-ku, Tokyo	
9 March (Sat)		Hotel Check-out Move to Haneda Airport	Hotel Mystays Haneda	Free shuttle bus service to airport provided
	08:30	Departing Haneda to Heathrow, London (via Beijing, China)	Haneda Airport	Flight:CA184, CA855



4.4. Data collection instruments

Stakeholder Group	IRCI Staff
Participants	
Date	

Topic 1: Background

1. Can you tell us about you became involved and started working at the Centre?

Probe: How long have you worked at the Centre? Can you tell us about how you became involved, and the recruitment process?

2. What is it like starting a job at the Centre?

Probe: What is staff turnover - high or low? What is the average staff employment expectancy at the Centre? What policies are in place to ensure equity and inclusion in hiring and management practices?

Probe: Does the Staff have many vacancies? How long does it take to fill key positions? How often do staff leave? What is the average staff employment expectancy at the Centre?

3. What have you been working on over the last few years? (Sub questions 4, 5 and 6)

4. What have been the main challenges to your work?

Probe: To what extent did they affect your activities? How did you overcome these challenges?

5. Can you tell us a bit about the dissemination activities organised by the Centre?

Probe: What publications has the Centre disseminated?

How has the Centre supported and promoted research both in Japan and outside Japan?

What activities has the Centre conducted with Sakai City?

How has the Centre improved access to information about ICH?

6. Can you tell us a bit about the research activities organised by the Centre? (Specifically for each researcher, ask about their own research project, collaboration and resources)

Probe:

How do you decide which research activities to undertake?

How do you integrate Early Career Researchers?

How is IRCI’s research communicated to UNESCO and other policy makers to support the 2003 Convention?

7. To what extent is the Global Development Agenda integrated to your work?

Probe: Is the Centre focusing on any specific Sustainable Development Goals, and if so, which?

How is the Centre measuring their progress towards the Global Development agenda?



Topic 2: Management

8. How clearly defined are the roles at the Centre?

Probe: Is there a clear management line for projects? When you encounter an issue, who do you talk to? How easy is it to collaborate with other staff members to solve issues? How segregated are the tasks?

9. As a staff member, what access to training and guidance do you have? What are the possibilities for capacity improvement?

Probe: To what extent do manuals and guiding documents exist for staff to ensure efficient implementation of activities? Are staff aware of these documents? Do they comply?

How often does the Centre assess the performance of its staff?

Is the Centre's technical expertise commensurate with the task it is required to perform? What training does the Centre provide to build the capacity of its staff?

Topic 3: Accountability and Learning

10. What mechanisms are in place for monitoring the implementation of the Centre's activities?

Probe

Probe: Has the Centre collected information regarding the research needs of UNESCO member states?

11. How is the Annual Report elaborated and drafted?

Probe: How long does the process take? Who is involved? Does the reporting lead to significant changes in the organisation? How are lessons and best practices communicated within the Centre?

12. What would you improve in the Centre's organisation and activities?

Probe: What are the mechanisms for improving the Centre?

Topic 4: Collaboration

13. Can you describe the stakeholders you collaborate with?

Probe: How do you organise the work you do together? How, and how often do you communicate? Has the Centre increased its network of partners? How has it increased participation? Who are the main stakeholders in research institutions in Member States, and what is the scope of their participation in IRCI activities? Is the Centre actively seeking new partnerships, or deepening existing ones?

To what extent do you collaborate with ICHCAP and CRIHAP and other C2Cs?



How would you describe your collaboration with UNESCO (both at Headquarters and at the regional offices)? To what extent is it satisfactory, to what extent does IRCI receive from them what it needs to operate?

Topic 5: Funding

14. How successful do you think the current funding model is?

Probe: To what extent do you think the Annual Budget is sufficient?

Is there a shortfall? If so, how has the Centre ensured continuous funding for its activities?

Who are the main donors and how good does the Centre think their relationship is? To what extent has the Centre tried to diversify its funding base? Has it been successful in this endeavour?

15. How do you mobilise additional funds for your work?

Probe: Can you give examples of how you obtained funding in the last few years?

Has the Centre been successful in fundraising for activities externally?

How does the Centre mobilise funds from induction fees and annual membership fees? What percentage of its extra-budgetary resources does this represent?

What additional economic activity does the Centre undertake? What further sources exist?

What percentage of its extra-budgetary resources does this represent?

16. Do you have information about the long-term sustainability and impact of your activities?

Probe: Do you know if the activities you carry out continue after your involvement? Do you have any reports on their long-term effects?

Topic 6: Autonomy

17. What is the Legal status of the Centre?

Probe: what is it and is it not allowed to do? Is it allowed to contract? Is it allowed to institute legal proceedings? Is it allowed to acquire and dispose of property?

18. How influential is the Japanese government in the decisions of the Centre?

Probe: To what extent is the government trying to have a say in the activities of IRCI? To what extent does IRCI align with Japanese ICH research priorities? To what extent do you find that the support from the government (aside from financial) is adequate?

To what extent can the work of IRCI inform policy at the convention level? What are the opportunities to do so?



Stakeholder Group	Governing Board members
Participants	
Date	

Topic 1: Background

1. In what capacity have you engaged with the Centre and its work?

Probe: How did you become a Governing Board member? What does the process entail? What is your role as a member of the Governing Board?

Topic 2: Governance

2. Can you tell us about the organisation of the Governing Board?

Probe: How is it organised, who participates? How involved are the different stakeholders making up the Governing Board (Japanese Cultural Heritage agencies and representatives of UNESCO and its member states)? How involved are member states in the Centre's governance? Are there any other mechanisms for feedback beyond participating in the Governing Board?

3. How are decisions made?

Probe: To what extent do you feel involved? Is the process transparent? Have there ever been any instances of challenges in the governing board (disagreement among members, etc)? If so, how did the members of the board manage to reach an agreement?

4. How satisfied are you with the Governing Board and its processes?

Probe: How often does the Governing Board take place? Is this considered to be adequate? How clear is the governance of the Centre? How diverse is the Governing board? Does the Governing board contain people from relevant technical/political backgrounds etc.? To what extent does the participation of ICHCAP and CRIHAP help the category 2 centres share common projects?

5. Do you feel the Governance of the Centre needs to improve? If so, how?

Probe: How transparent is the appointment of the Governing Board? To what extent are the meeting minutes, or the decisions of the Governing Board shared with all the relevant stakeholders?

Topic 3: Fulfilling expectations

6. To what extent does the Centre fulfil its objectives?

Probe: How has the IRCI promoted the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the Region? How has the IRCI enhanced safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage?



How has the IRCI fostered, coordinated and developed scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies?

7. To what extent does the Centre help your work and activities?

Probe: Would you change anything with your engagement with the Centre? What would you expect from the Centre in the future?

8. What other suggestions for improvement do you have for IRCI?

Stakeholder Group	Japanese Government representatives
Participants	
Date	

Topic 1: Background

1. In what capacity have you engaged with the Centre and its work?

Probe: Who are the main national stakeholders in the Japanese government that collaborate with IRCI, and what is their role? Do stakeholders consider the partnership with the Centre to be generally positive or negative?

Topic 2: Communication

2. How does the Japanese Government rate the level and quality of communication it has with the Centre?

Probe: How do you communicate? Email, online meetings? Has anything changed since 2018, and have there been any positive or negative changes? How satisfied are you with the degree of communication? Is the information provided by the Centre generally relevant, accurate and useful? Is the Centre responsive to requests for information?

3. How satisfied are you with the Governing Board and its processes?

Probe: How clear is the governance of the Centre? Does it align with your expectations? Do you feel the Governance of the Centre needs to improve? If so, how?

Topic 3: Fulfilling expectations

4. To what extent does the Centre meet your expectations?

Probe: Are you aware of the Centre’s objectives, and do you feel they fulfil them? If so, how? To what extent do IRCI activities contribute to the Japanese government’s understanding of the 2003 Convention, and the potential of research to safeguard intangible cultural heritage? How does the IRCI help support the government’s strategy in that field? Do they consider the Centre to be responsive to their needs? Does the Centre meet their expectations?



5. To what extent are you satisfied with the current relationship with the Centre?

Probe: Would you change anything with your engagement with the Centre? What would you expect from the Centre in the future?

SOME OF THESE STAKEHOLDERS WILL ALSO BE GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS, AS THERE IS SOME OVERLAP. SEE GOVERNING BOARD QUESTIONS.

Stakeholder Group	Centre partners (NGOs, research institutions, museums, and other stakeholders)
Participants	
Date	

Topic 1: Background

1. For how long have you and your institution worked with the IRCI?

Probe: Can you tell us how you became involved? How do they feel about the quality of their engagement with the Centre? Are there specific examples of partnerships or collaborations that have been formed? How long do these partnerships last?

Topic 2. Communication

2. How would you characterise your communication with the Centre?

Probe: How do you communicate? Email, online meetings? Has anything changed since 2018, and have there been any positive or negative changes? How satisfied are you with the degree of communication? Is the information provided by the Centre generally relevant, accurate and useful? Is the Centre responsive to requests for information?

Topic 3. Quality of work

3. What do you see as the objectives of the Centre? To what extent you consider that the IRCI has fulfilled its objectives, and why?

- Probe: How has the IRCI promoted the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the Region? How has the IRCI enhanced safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage? How has the IRCI fostered, coordinated and developed scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies.*
-

4. To what extent does the IRCI carry out its tasks efficiently and effectively?

Probe: How did the Centre help you or your organisation? Can you give specific examples of activities you carried out together, and their strengths and weaknesses?



5. What are your suggestions for improving your relationship with the Centre?

Probe: Would you change anything with your engagement with the IRCI? What would you expect from the Centre in the future?

Stakeholder Group	Sakai City
Participants	
Date	

Topic 1: Background

1. For how long have you and your institution worked with the IRCI?

Probe: Can you tell us about the partnership between Sakai city and IRCI emerge? How do Sakai City stakeholders feel about the quality of their engagement with the Centre?

2. Are there specific examples of research activities or dissemination events for the public or collaborations that have been formed? How long do these partnerships last? How well received are they by the public and by the research community?

Topic 2: Position within the Governing Board

3. Can you tell us about the organisation of the Governing Board and Sakai City’s position within it?

How are decisions made?

Probe: To what extent do you feel involved? Is the process transparent?

4. How satisfied are you with the Governing Board and its processes?

Probe: How often does the Governing Board take place? Is this considered to be adequate? How clear is the governance of the Centre? How diverse is the Governing board? Does the Governing board contain people from relevant technical/political backgrounds etc.?

5. Do you feel the Governance of the Centre needs to improve? If so, how?

Probe: How transparent is the appointment of the Governing Board? To what extent are the meeting minutes, or the decisions of the Governing Board shared with all the relevant stakeholders?

Topic 3. Communication

6. How would you characterise your communication with the Centre?

Probe: How do you communicate? Email, online meetings? Has anything changed since 2018, and have there been any positive or negative changes? How satisfied are you with the degree of communication? Is the information provided by the Centre generally relevant, accurate and useful? Is the Centre responsive to requests for information?



Topic 4. Quality of work

7. What do you see as the objectives of the Centre? To what extent you consider that the IRCI has fulfilled its objectives, and why?

- *Probe: How has the IRCI promoted the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the Region? How has the IRCI enhanced safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage? How has the IRCI fostered, coordinated and developed scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies.*
-

8. To what extent does the IRCI carry out its tasks efficiently and effectively?

Probe: How did the Centre help you or your organisation? How does it support Sakai City's objectives in terms of fostering and disseminating research? Can you give specific examples of activities you carried out together, and their strengths and weaknesses?

9. What are your suggestions for improving your relationship with the Centre?

Probe: Would you change anything with your engagement with the Centre? What would you expect from the Centre in the future? Do you have any other recommendations for IRCI?

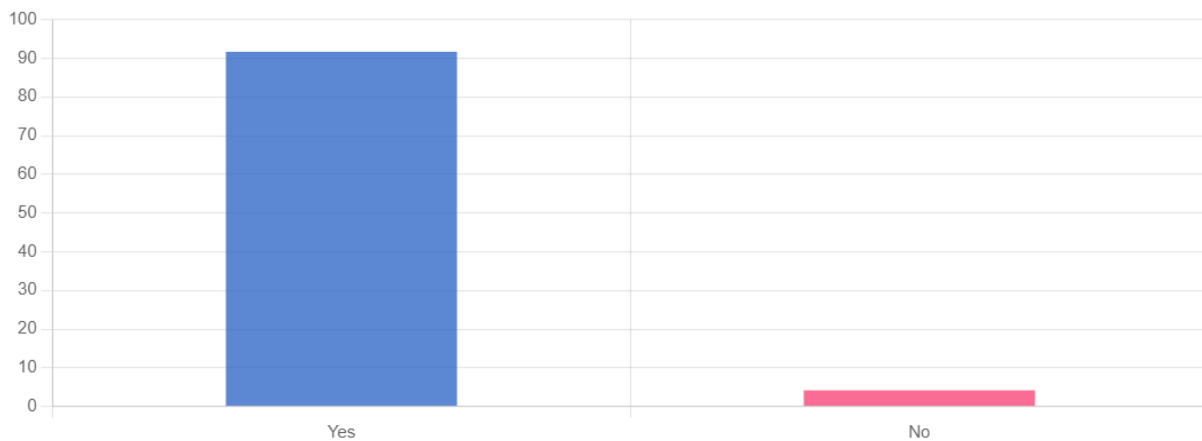


4.5. Results of the online survey

23 respondents have answered, from the following institutions:

Universiti Malaya	Malaysia
Cultural Heritage Risk Management Center, Japan	Japan
The Viet Nam Institute of Educational Sciences (VNIIES)	Viet Nam
National Museum of Ethnology	Japan
ICH National Committee	Kazakhstan
Pasifika Renaissance	Japan
Pasifika Renaissance	Japan
Pasifika Renaissance	Japan
National Centre for Cultural Heritage	Maldives
Dhaka Ahsania Mission (DAM)	Bangladesh
RedR Indonesia	Indonesia
Umrbokiy Meros	Uzbekistan
Bhabanagara Foundation	Bangladesh
Institute of Papua New Guinea Studies	Papua New Guinea
Craft Revival Trust	India
Taalim-Forum Public Foundation	Kyrgyz Republic
Taalim-Forum Public Foundation	Kyrgyz republic (Kyrgyzstan)
Tohoku University	Japan
Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU)	Japan
National Center for Cultural Heritage	Mongolia
National Commission for Culture and the Arts	Philippines
Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties	Japan
Aigine Cultural Research Center	The Kyrgyz Republic

1. Are you currently collaborating/participating, or have you collaborated/participated since 2018 on any activity for the safeguarding of living heritage with IRCI??



Yes (22); No (1)

2. If yes, please give details below (how long did the partnership last, can you give examples of your collaboration?).



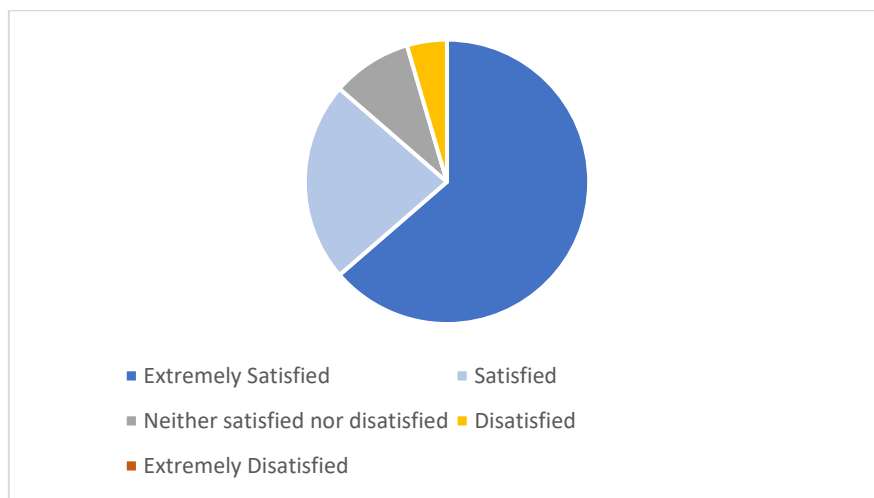
- My collaboration with IRCI has been 5 years. We collaborate in few projects on safeguarding of ICH - Data gathering of ICH Safeguarding in Asia-Pacific, particularly Malaysia. Collaborate in organising workshop on Safeguarding of ICH among young researchers, collaborate in seminars and conferences since 2019 until 2023.
- 3years
- The joint project on "Intangible Cultural Heritage Education in Vietnamese Schools Towards Sustainable Development Goals", carried out by VNIES and the Viet Nam Museum of Ethnology and funded by IRCI. The partnership lasted for 3 years and ended successfully.
- Disaster Risk Management Workshop, Planning Committee
- Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in 2022-2024
- This is one year project (could be extend to the second year) that IRCI requested us to conduct research related to SDGs.
- We are participating a one-year research project about SDGs.
- Since last year, one year research project on ICT and SDGs in the Marshall Islands
- we have officially been in partnership since 2023
- DAM conducted a study on present situation and exploring preservation of Dhamail folk song with support of IRCI. Shared the findings in international conference. Also Shared follow-up activities with IRCI.
- RedR Indonesia began collaboration with IRCI since 2021 to identify intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in relation to disaster risk reduction (DRR) and presentation of the ICHs in an online discussions. The project continued to conduct research in Bantul focusing on relation of ICH and DRR and presented in a report.
- For 2 years
- Field Research in FY 2022 to be implemented under IRCI's Project 'Research on ICH Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic' (FY 2022-2023)
- 2021 - 2022 Research on the Impact of COVID-19 on ICH
- Questionnaire based survey in preparation for new project "Research on ICH in the Asia Pacific Region affected by Covid-19 Pandemic" + participation in webinars
- Thanks to IRCI we implemented the project "Local Visionary Communities in Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage in Kyrgyzstan". The first phase of the project focused on the knowledge and craftsmanship of Kyrgyz yurt (nomadic dwelling) and related knowledge and skills. The continuation of the project involved researching local community museums and writing case studies. We presented the project key findings at the IRCI's conferences.
- Joint symposium on Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters (2018) and the joint participation to the 14th Intergovernmental committee for the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in Bogota (2019). I also participate in the IRCI disaster prevention project (2020-)
- IRCI has been an active member of the UNESCO Future Co-creation Platform Project Steering Committee since we took over the secretariat role in 2022. The project aims to promote multi-sectoral collaboration of UNESCO activities in Japan, engage youth population in its endeavour, and disseminate the results to broader public in Japan and abroad. In this respect, IRCI has contributed by participating in the regular meetings and providing technical inputs from ICH perspectives. In 2022, it also coordinated one of our grass-root projects as an implementation partner, the outcome of which was widely disseminated through the platform.
- Our institution has been collaborating with IRCI on several research projects since 2016. These projects include the Mapping Project for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, Research on ICH Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, and Research Assessing the Potential Risks and Effectiveness of ICH in relation to Natural Hazards and Disasters in the Asia-Pacific Region. The National Center for Cultural Heritage coordinates the research program between



IRCI and our accredited NGO, Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication, on the Research Database project.

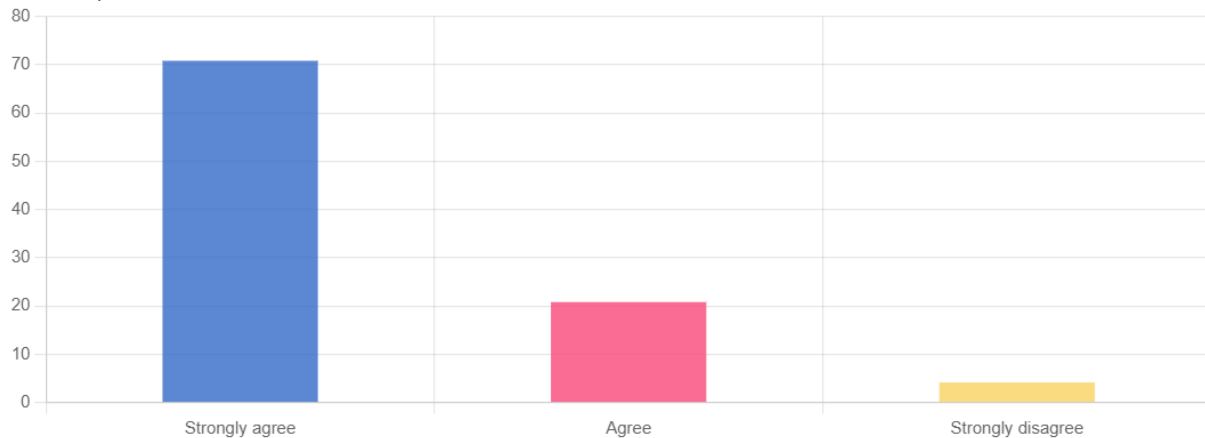
- Study of Emergency Protection of ICH in Conflict-affected Countries in Asia Marawi City, Lanao del Sur Philippines; Multi-disciplinary study on Intangible Cultural Heritage's Contribution to Sustainable Development focusing on Education; Webinar on ICH Contributing to SDGs: Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Cities and Communities; Forum_Register of Good Safeguarding Practices
- I am an collaborative researcher of IRCI since 2018
- My partnership lasted for one year, 2023-2024, I was a committee member for promoting research for ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region

3. To what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with the level of communication you have with IRCI?
From 1 (extremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied).

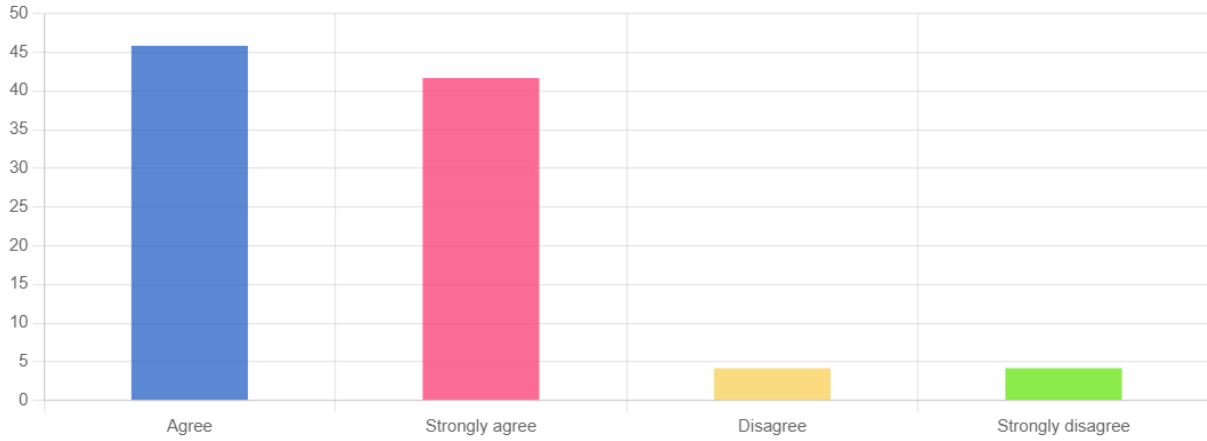


4. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

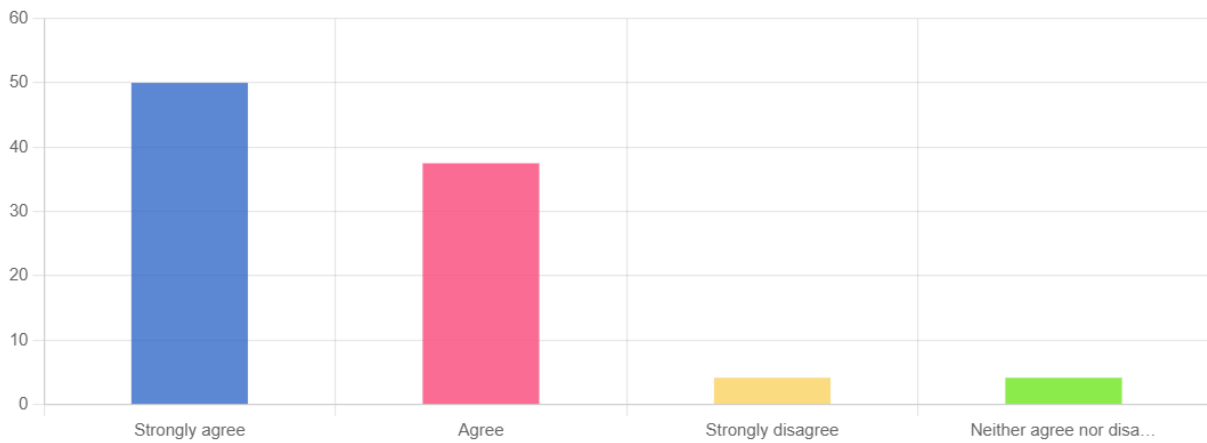
It is easy to communicate with IRCI and obtain information



IRCI is in contact with relevant research institutions in my country and is fostering a better ICH research culture at the international scale



The research carried out in collaboration with IRCI has increased my institution's awareness of the current status of research for the safeguarding of ICH

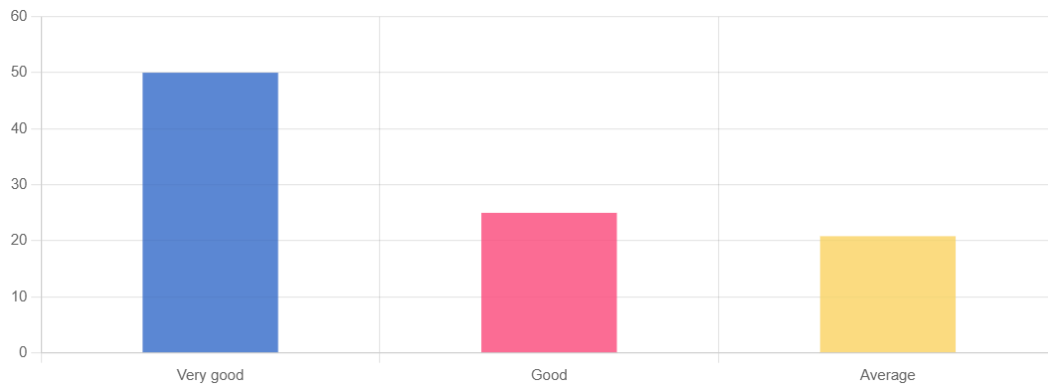


5. How would you rate IRCI's performance in each of these areas, which correspond to its main objectives?

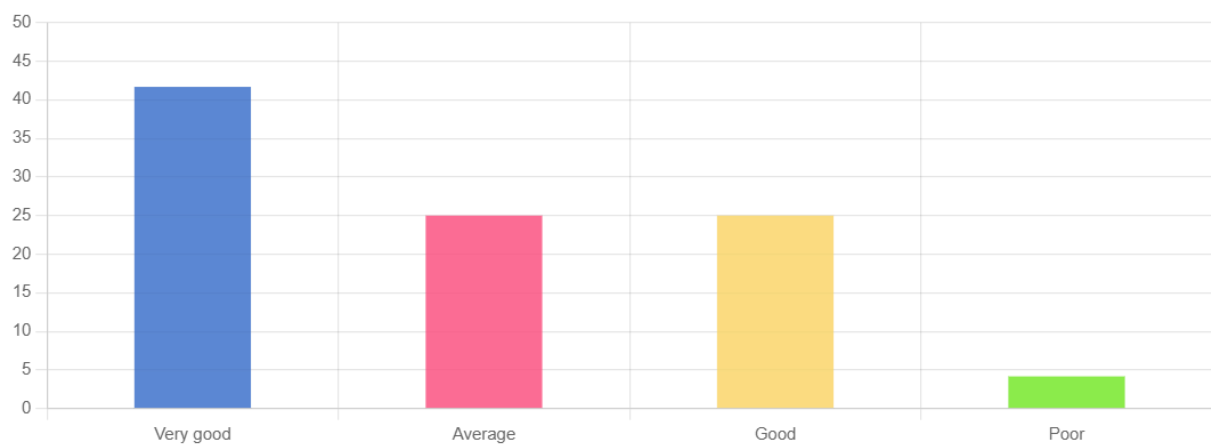
- Promote the implementation of the 2003 Convention in the Region



- Enhance safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage



- Foster, coordinate and develop scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies



6. Can you give us details? (Examples of IRCI fulfilling its mission, or possible obstacles encountered)

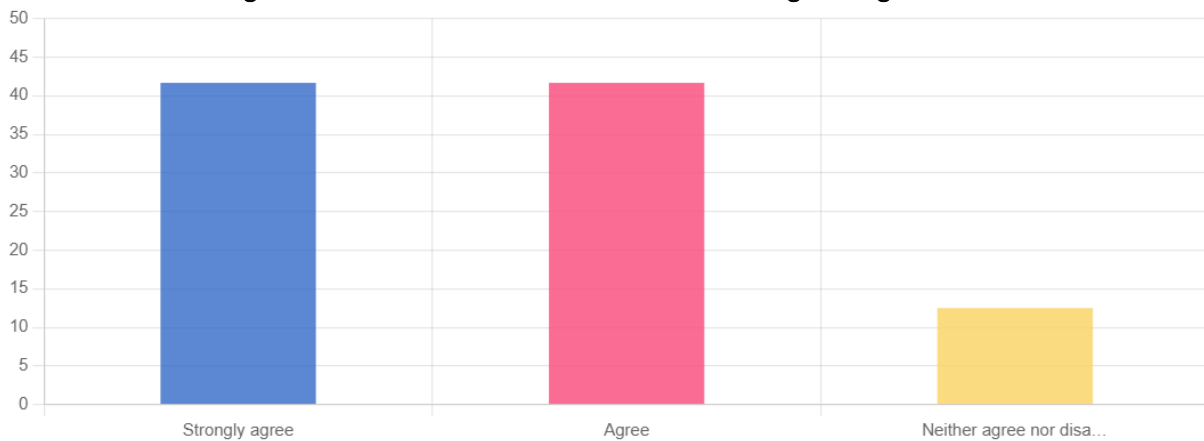
- IRCI has planned many projects on safeguarding of ICH, i.e - research on data collection of Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia Pacific since 2019-2022, Organised meeting for planning on projects on safeguarding ICH pre, during and post-COVID 19, organised many seminar and workshop to enhance on methodology of ICH safeguarding. IRCI also organised big conference to gather widely experts and practitioners on ICH safeguarding and preservation.
- IRCI has a very strong commitment to ICH safeguarding and education to young people, demonstrated via its long term plans with partners; IRCI management and staff are very professional in working manner, yet still very friendly and open minded; we almost have no obstacle working with them.
- While the activity of IRCI is principally specified into research, this latter itself is not sufficient for the safeguarding.
- Lack of guidance in research methodology
- IRCI initiatives were wonderful and the team was committed to the mission. A key challenge for reaching out to the community level for such kind of study is language barrier. Most of the indigenous communication languages are in local languages, whereas the study language in this case was English.
- IRCI facilitate the implementation of the research by providing proper guide and clear communication.
- It is conducting conferences, webinars and in data collecting process they are very helpful
- To fulfill IRCI's mission, more investment, in terms of finance, time, capacity building and technical supports should be increased.



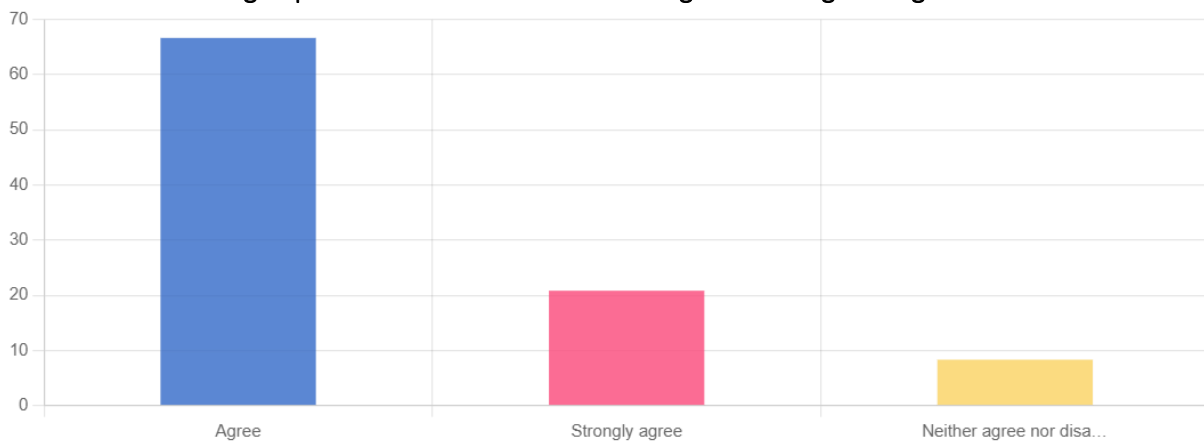
- Some funding for research should be given prior to the fieldwork.
- In all the projects that I know off or have participated in I find the objectives laid out have been well met.
- Through participation in our research, attending Regional meeting in Korea as well as through online webinars I was impressed with the high level of research on ICH conducted in the region with the support of IRCI
- Very supportive and fruitfull communication and partnership with IRCI
- Participating in these projects as a national institution allows for gaining experience and promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) at regional and global levels. Additionally, not only governmental organizations but also NGOs can gain knowledge, research methodologies, and experience, build capacity, and establish networks at the regional level. Moreover, participating in regional research allows us to recognize the weaknesses and gaps in our activities and policies.
- Publication of a learning guide for the Subanen Schools of Living Traditions
- The Centre is taking initiatives particularly in the following areas: ICH and Disaster Risk Management, ICH contributing to SDGs, and ICH and pandemic.

7. To what extent do you feel your knowledge of the 2003 Convention and your institution’s capacity in ICH research has changed thanks to your involvement with IRCI?

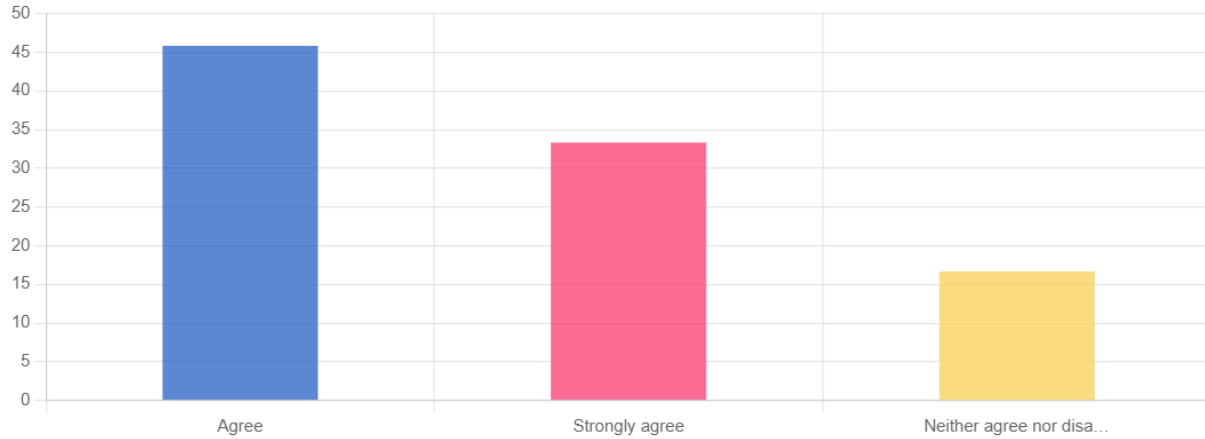
Better understanding of the current status of research for the safeguarding of ICH



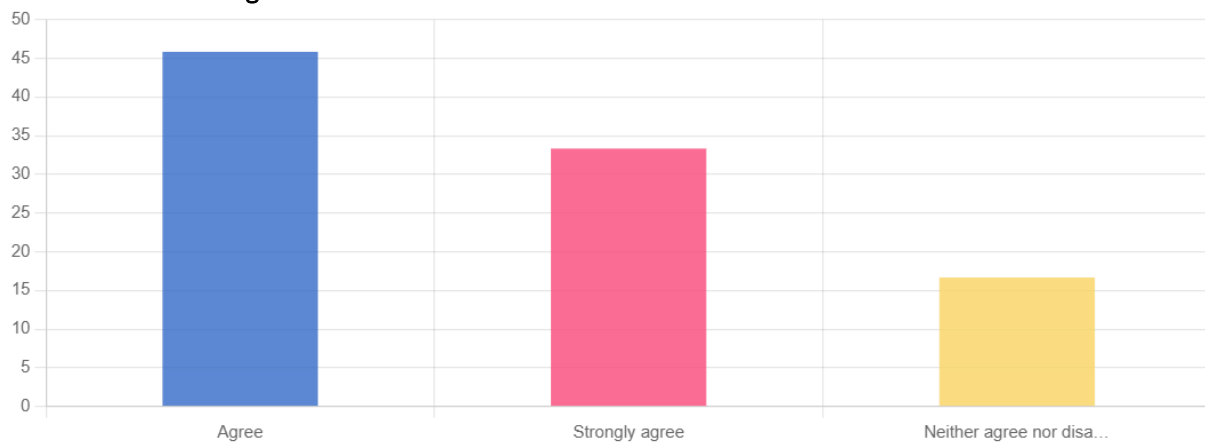
Better understanding of policies and research methodologies for safeguarding ICH



Better understanding of good practices in the safeguarding of ICH



Better understanding of the 2003 Convention



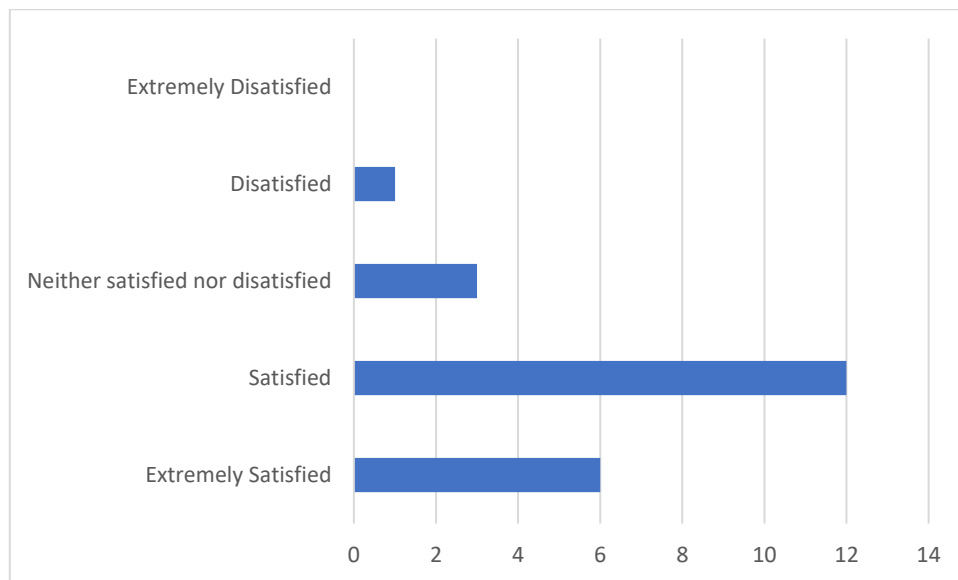
8. Please explain.

- IRCI always looking forward in promoting ICH safeguarding particularly aligned with 2003 Convention.
- The joint project among three parties - in which 2 of them are working in ICH domain - has helped us as an educational institution, improve our own awareness, attitude and actions towards ICH safeguarding and education. The whole process of carrying out the project is truly a learning path for all partners.
- I just follow what takes place at the inter-governmental meeting.
- Most of knowledge has been obtained from other sources
- My evaluation is due to the circumstance that our involvement with IRCI is very limited.
- We have rather limited involvement with IRCI.
- DAM study team could go in depth of the 2003 Convention and its country level implications.
- RedR team feel to have improved understanding of relation between ICH and DRR, opportunities to collaborate of the two, and ideas to follow up the research. To improve understanding of the related policies.
- They are very helpful to collect data in safeguarding ICH
- Bhabanagara Foundation published Bangla Translation of the 2003 Convention, and this research was an opportunity for us to document the transitional feature of Bangladeshi ICH aligned with the 2003 Convention.
- By being involved in IRCI research activities, I am better informed of the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage.



- By attending and participating in IRCI's activities, studying the literature produced, following their website have all added to CRT's better understanding of ICH.
- Our understanding and awareness on safeguarding ICH increased since we became part of the network of researchers in our region
- It was interesting and useful to learn about cases/initiatives, concepts, programs of safeguarding intangible cultural heritage through webinars, symposiums, conferences
- Engaging in projects not only provides opportunities to gain experience but also enables us to comprehend the best practices of others, recognize our own weaknesses, and subsequently improve upon them. Moreover, such endeavors allow us to deepen our knowledge of Convention 2003, thereby honing our expertise in the matter.
- Through the IRCI partnerships measures such as research, documentation, publication and more importantly, the exchange or sharing of knowledge provided greater awareness on ICH safeguarding and viability
- I mainly research domestic ICH, but it's good to be able to interact with overseas research through IRCI.

9. To what extent do you feel that the activities of IRCI adequately support research into the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage present in your country?



10. What suggestions, if any, do you have for IRCI to improve in the delivery of its activities and/or become a better partner in the future?

- Keep engaging with ICH practitioners (beholder of the traditions), other stakeholders include academics with or without institutions..
- No suggestion; I just wish IRCI become more successful in its endeavours to ICH safeguarding both regionally and internationally.
- Further collaboration with Korean and Chinese category II centers. All the three centers have their strengths and weaknesses.
- Concentrate on analyzing and sharing the best practice of the ICH research methodology and practice
- IRCI needs more staff to become permanent to accumulate knowledge and experiences in the organization and expand their activities. Due to this limitation, their influence over the regions is very limited.



- Currently, most IRCI staff are not permanent. Due to this, the accumulation of knowledge and experiences is largely limited. This probably caused IRCI achievement in the regions rather limited.
- One of the shortages that IRCI has is that they don't have many staff, especially those of permanent status. This cause the accumulation of knowledge and experience limited.
- There need to be continuity of activities in phases for this these type of studies. Tangible results cannot be visible from one-off study.
- So far, the collaboration is well directed by IRCI. Sharing of information to enable implementation of initiatives, including joint funding will be valued.
- They can have good collaboration with other ICH sustaining companies of our country
- IRCI may undertake the activities of research capacity building, technological support and provide adequate financial support for safeguarding ICH in Bangladesh.
- More capacity building on the appropriate research methodology for investigating ICH is needed in Papua New Guinea.
- They are doing a great job. Need to retain these high standards
- Arrange more exchange study tours and support ICH education on the school level
- Continue its wonderful work on networking, conducting research by local experts, raising awareness among local communities, consolidating efforts through the IRCI small grants programs
- IRCI should have more publicity on their activities to the domestic researchers and policy makers
- IRCI has been doing an excellent work in terms of regional cooperation through research. Its activities should be more recognized in Japan, especially among the stakeholder in other sectors (i.e., ASPnet, youth organizations). While we understand the IRCI's mission as an international organization, it would be great if IRCI could try engaging more local partners so that they can also benefit from the IRCI's work in the area.
- If authorized, we would like to undertake on-site joint research and organize workshops about climate change. We aim to contribute towards a better understanding of the various aspects of this critical issue and propose practical solutions to mitigate its potential impacts. We believe these activities will help us enhance our knowledge base and provide valuable insights to our colleagues and stakeholders.
- Thank you for your kind assistance and support. Congratulations!
- I think it is necessary to increase the number of IRCI's full-time research staffs and improve the capacity of the Centre.



4.6. Documents Consulted

Aleph Strategies (2022) Renewal Evaluation the Regional Centre for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in South-Eastern Europe. Final report.
Aleph Strategies (2023) Evaluation en vue du Renouveau du Centre régional pour la sauvegarde du patrimoine culturel immatériel en Afrique (CRESPIAF), un centre de catégorie 2 de l'UNESCO basé à Alger, en Algérie. Rapport final.
Archaeological and Heritage Management Solutions (2015) Review of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region (IRCI): Report to UNESCO (Final)
ECI Desarrollo (2016) Evaluation of the International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (ICHCAP) UNESCO Category 2 Centre
IOS (2021) Evaluation of UNESCO's action in the framework of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
IRCI (2013) Long-term Programme 2013 – 2020 (Revised)
IRCI (2013) Medium-Term Programme 2016-2020 (Extended to 2021)
IRCI (2018) 2019 Approved work plan
IRCI (2018) Estimated 2019 Budget
IRCI (2019) 2020 Approved work plan
IRCI (2019) The 8th Governing Board Meeting of IRCI: Minutes and Annexes
IRCI (2020) 9 th Governing Board Meeting and Annexes: 2020 activity report, Work Plan for 2021
IRCI (2020) Activity Report: Research on ICH Safeguarding and DRM
IRCI (2020) Activity Report: The Third IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region
IRCI (2020) Activity Report: Research on ICH Contribution to SDGs – Education and Community Development
IRCI (2021) 10 th Governing Board Meeting and Annexes: 2021 activity report, Work Plan for 2022
IRCI (2021) Activity Report: Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States
IRCI (2021) Long-term Programme 2022 – 2031
IRCI (2021) Medium-term Programme 2022 – 2026
IRCI (2022) 11 th Governing Board Meeting and Annexes: 2022 activity report, Work Plan for 2023
IRCI (2022) IRCI Brochure 2022
IRCI (2022) Research on ICH's Contribution to SDGs: Education and Community Development. Project Report FY 2020–2021
IRCI (2023) Draft work plan 2024



IRCI (2023) ICH Resilience amid COVID-19 Pandemic (March 2023)
IRCI (2023) IRCI Brochure2023
UNESCO (2012) Policy Brief 1: Improving UNESCO's Category 2 Centre network
UNESCO (2012) Category 2 Institutes and Centres: Guidance Note on the renewal assessment procedures of Category 2 Institutes/Centres
UNESCO (2018) 39 C/5 Approved programme and budget 2018-2019: first biennium of the 2018-2021 quadrennium
UNESCO (2018) Overall Results Framework for the 2003 Convention
UNESCO (2018) Management Framework Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO
UNESCO (2019) Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres Under The Auspices Of UNESCO (2019)
UNESCO (2020) 40 C/5 2020-2021 Approved Programme and Budget, Second biennium of the 2018-2021 quadriennium
UNESCO (2020) Basic texts of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. 2020 Edition
UNESCO (2020) Eight annual coordination meeting of Category 2 Centres active in the Field of Intangible Cultural Heritage
UNESCO (2022) 41 C/4 Medium-Term Strategy 2022-2029
UNESCO (2022) 41 C/5 2022-2025 Approved Programme and Budget, First biennium 2022-2023
UNESCO and Government of Japan (2018) Agreement between the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Government of Japan regarding the Continuation, in Japan, of an international Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the Auspices of UNESCO (Category 2)
Websites
IRCI website: https://www.irci.jp/
UNESCO ICH website, section on Category 2 Centres with access to the main documents: https://ich.unesco.org/fr/cat%C3%A9gorie2



4.7. Terms of Reference

The UNESCO Living Heritage Entity is looking for a team of experts/evaluators to carry out a renewal evaluation of the International Research Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), a UNESCO Category 2 Centre based in Osaka, Japan.

Proposals should reach UNESCO (ICH-capacity@unesco.org) no later than 3 September 2023 (midnight, Paris time).

Context

Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are a global network of institutions of excellence in the Organization's domains of competence. Given their expertise, these institutes and centres contribute to the implementation of UNESCO's priorities, programmes, and global development agendas during a defined period. They foster international and regional cooperation, research, knowledge production, policy advice, and capacity enhancement. Though independent of UNESCO, category 2 institutes and centres are a privileged partner of the Organization with access to international and intergovernmental bodies and networks, and may leverage UNESCO's international reach and convening powers. Category 2 institutes and centres under the auspices of UNESCO are an integral part of the Organization's Comprehensive Partnership Strategy.

The UNESCO Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO¹ provides that an agreement for the establishment of a category 2 institute or centre is for a defined time period, not exceeding eight years. The agreement may be renewed by the Director-General, with the approval of the Executive Board, in light of an evaluation of the activities of the institute/centre and of its contribution to the strategic programme objectives of the Organization and the aforementioned Strategy.

The 35th session of the General Conference, in its 35 C/Resolution 52, approved the establishment in Japan of the International Research Center for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (hereafter, 'the Centre'). An agreement between the Government of Japan and UNESCO was signed accordingly. Following the first evaluation undertaken in 2017, a new agreement was signed between UNESCO and the Government of Japan for the period of six years (2018-2024). The Government of Japan submitted a request for renewal of the agreement. To this end, an evaluation of the Centre will be carried out. The objectives of the Centre are to:

- a. Promote the 2003 Convention and its implementation in the Asia-Pacific Region;
- b. Enhance safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region, while developing and mobilizing research as a tool for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage in the sense of Article 2.3 of the 2003 Convention; and



- c. Foster, coordinate and develop scientific, technical and artistic studies, as well as research methodologies, in the sense of Article 13(c) of the 2003 Convention, in the Asia-Pacific region.

The functions of the Centre are to:

- a. Instigate and coordinate research into practices and methodologies of safeguarding endangered intangible cultural heritage elements present in the Asia-Pacific Region, while cooperating with universities, research institutions, community representatives and other governmental and non-governmental organizations in Japan and elsewhere in the Region;
- b. Assist, in terms of research, countries in the Asia-Pacific Region in implementing such measures as referred to in Articles 11, 12, 13 and 14 of the 2003 Convention, while paying special attention to developing countries;
- c. Organize workshops and seminars focusing on the role of research as a useful component for safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage and related practices and methodologies, involving experts, community representatives and administrators from the Asia-Pacific Region;
- d. Encourage and assist young researchers in the Asia-Pacific Region engaging in research activities related to safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage;
- e. Cooperate with other category 2 institutes and centres active in the domain of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, in the Asia-Pacific Region and beyond; and
- f. Initiate cooperation among all other interested institutions active in the domain of safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage, while furthering technical assistance vis-à-vis developing countries, in the Asia-Pacific Region.

Purpose

The main objectives of this evaluation are to assess the Centre's performance with respect to its objectives and functions (see above), and its contribution to UNESCO's Approved Programme and Budget (C/5), including global strategies and action plans as well as sectoral programme priorities.

The conclusions of the renewal evaluation shall be submitted to the UNESCO Intersectoral Review Committee that will make the recommendation to the Director-General as to whether an agreement with the Centre should be renewed or not. Based on this recommendation, the UNESCO Executive Board will examine the renewal request, decide on the renewal or non-renewal of the designation of the Centre as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO and authorize the Director-General to conclude an agreement with the Government of Japan.

The conclusions of the renewal evaluation shall be shared with the Government of Japan and the Centre, and will be made available on the website of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ich.unesco.org).



Scope

The following parameters shall be considered by the independent experts contracted to undertake the renewal evaluation. The independent experts shall have had no prior affiliation with the Centre, nor its partners in the carrying out of its activities and shall draft the renewal evaluation in English:

1. the extent to which the Centre's objectives as set out in the agreement signed with UNESCO were achieved;
2. the relevance of the contribution of the Centre's programmes and activities to the achievement of UNESCO's programme for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and the effective implementation of the 2003 Convention as specified in the Approved Programme and Budget covering the period under evaluation (39 C/5 and 41 C/5), in particular the achievements of the 2003 Convention's global capacity building programme and the programme for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in formal and non-formal education, in accordance with the agreement;
3. the relevance of the contribution of the activities of the Centre to global development agendas, notably to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related SDGs;
4. the quality of coordination and interaction with UNESCO, both at Headquarters and in the field, as well as with National Commissions, other thematically-related category 1 and 2 institutes or centres with regard to planning and implementation of programmes;
5. the partnerships developed and maintained with government agencies, public or private partners and donors;
6. the nature and efficiency of the Centre's governance, including organizational arrangements, management, human resources and accountability mechanisms;
7. the financial resources available for ensuring sustainable institutional capacity and viability, and,
8. the extent to which the Centre enjoys within its territory the autonomy necessary for the execution of its activities and legal capacity to contract, institute legal proceedings, and to acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property.

Methodology

The renewal evaluation of the Centre will include:

- A desk study of relevant documents, provided by the Centre and UNESCO Secretariat and
- Preparation of an inception report, including a methodological note, a workplan and schedule, and a travel plan;
- A visit to the Centre, including interviews with the Centre's management and staff;
- Interviews (telephone, online and/or via e-mail) with the Centre's stakeholders, collaborators, and beneficiaries as well as UNESCO staff concerned;
- Preparation of the renewal evaluation report and recommendations to be included in the draft agreement to be concluded between UNESCO and the Government of Japan, based on the model provided by UNESCO, in case the evaluation recommends the renewal.



Draft evaluation report

A draft report will present findings, conclusions and recommendations, with a draft executive summary. The UNESCO Culture Sector, the Government of Japan and the Centre itself will have the opportunity to comment and give feedback to the evaluation team.

Final evaluation report

The final report (max. 20 pages, excluding annexes) should be structured as follows:

- Executive summary (maximum four pages);
- Introduction (background, purpose and scope);
- Methodology;
- Findings;
- General recommendations to the Centre for improving the effectiveness of its operations and for UNESCO for improving the effectiveness of its coordination and interaction with the Centre; specific recommendations for amending the provisions of the agreement in order to improve the functioning and activities of the Centre;
- Annexes, including, interview list, data collection instruments, key documents consulted, and terms of reference as well as recommendations regarding the draft agreement to be concluded between UNESCO and the Government of Japan in case the evaluation recommends the renewal.

The language of the report shall be English.

Requirements for the renewal evaluation team

The evaluation shall be conducted by a team of 2 independent experts (ideally gender-balanced). A single proposal/expression of interest must be submitted on behalf of the team.

The team should have the following qualifications:

- At least 7 years of professional experience in research and/or capacity-building in the field of cultural heritage, cultural diversity, cultural policy or culture and development; experience in intangible cultural heritage will be an asset;
- At least 7 years of professional experience in policy and programme evaluation in the context of international development;
- Excellent knowledge of English (written and spoken)
- Knowledge of the role and mandate of UNESCO and its programmes;
- Knowledge and experience in qualitative and quantitative data analysis
- Knowledge of UN mandates in gender equality and human rights will be an asset

Roles and responsibilities

Local travel, materials, secretarial support and office space will be provided by the Centre during the visit. The experts will be responsible for telecommunications and printing of documentation.



The Living Heritage Entity of the UNESCO Culture Sector will facilitate and oversee the renewal evaluation process, to the extent possible, by providing any relevant information, and will be responsible for evaluating and approving the final report.

Schedule

The renewal evaluation shall be completed by 3 September 2023.

The schedule for the evaluation is as follows:

- A desk study of background documents (to be completed prior to the visit to the Centre)
- Writing and submission of the inception report no later than 31 October 2023;
- Developing the questionnaire and conducting interviews.
- Visit to the Centre;
- Writing and submission of the draft evaluation report no later than 15 December 2023;
- Submission of the final evaluation report (before 15 January 2024).

The date of the mission to the Centre will be defined by UNESCO in coordination with the Centre and taking into account the availability of evaluator(s).

Submission of proposals

Proposals should be submitted in English, consisting of:

1. Curriculum vitae of expert(s)/evaluator(s) and, if applicable, a company profile;
2. Letter expressing interest and clearly identifying how the team meets the required skills and experience;
3. An approach and methodology for the assignment, a Workplan and comments on the Terms of Reference if any (in brief);
4. On the basis of the proposed and required tasks, please prepare a budget estimate/budget proposal, including an indication of the travel expenses. Please provide the estimate in a separate document.

Proposals should be submitted no later than 3 September 2023, midnight (Paris time) to the Living Heritage Entity (ICH-capacity@unesco.org). Please note that proposals submitted through other channels will not be considered. Selection will be made on the basis of best value for money.