

立法會
Legislative Council

LC Paper No. CB(2)823/18-19(05)

Ref : CB2/PL/HA

Panel on Home Affairs

**Updated background brief prepared by the Legislative Council Secretariat
for the meeting on 25 February 2019**

Safeguarding, promotion and transmission of intangible cultural heritage

Purpose

This paper summarizes the past discussion of the Panel on Home Affairs ("the Panel") on the safeguarding, promotion and transmission of the intangible cultural heritage ("ICH") in Hong Kong.

Background

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

2. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage ("the Convention") adopted in October 2003 by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ("UNESCO") was extended to Hong Kong in December 2004. The Convention stipulates, among other things, that each State Party shall identify and define the various elements of ICH present in its territory with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations for the purpose of establishing an ICH inventory.

3. According to the Convention, ICH refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills (as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated therewith) that communities, groups or individuals of the territory recognize as part of their cultural heritage. To qualify as an ICH, the item must be transmitted from generation to generation and is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and also provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity.

4. ICH is manifested in the following domains under the Convention:
- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of ICH;
 - (b) performing arts;
 - (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
 - (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and
 - (e) traditional craftsmanship.

The first intangible cultural heritage inventory of Hong Kong

5. In 2006, the Administration commissioned the Division of Humanities of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology ("HKUST") to carry out a pilot study on Hong Kong's ICH. In July 2008, the Home Affairs Bureau ("HAB") set up the ICH Advisory Committee ("ICHAC") to steer and to advise on the territory-wide survey of ICH and measures to safeguard ICH. In August 2009, the Leisure and Cultural Services Department ("LCSD") commissioned the South China Research Center ("SCRC") of HKUST to conduct a territory-wide survey of ICH in Hong Kong, with a view to collecting research data for compiling the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong. In March 2013, SCRC submitted detailed research data on nearly 800 survey cases and a draft ICH inventory of about 480 items to ICHAC. In June 2014, after thorough examination of research information of the draft inventory by ICHAC and the completion of a four-month public consultation, the Government promulgated the inventory which consisted of 480 items.

Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

6. In the 2015 Policy Address, it was announced that the Government would enhance the safeguarding measures of ICH and strengthen such work as identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion and transmission of the heritage. In addition, the Government planned to draw up the first Representative List of local ICH ("the Representative List") based on the first ICH inventory published in 2014 to provide a basis for prioritizing resources and safeguarding measures for ICH items, especially those of high cultural value and with an urgent need for preservation. In August 2017, LCSD announced the Representative List which comprised 20 items (see **Appendix I**).

Funding scheme for the intangible cultural heritage

7. In his 2018-2019 Budget, the Financial Secretary announced that the Government would allocate \$300 million to strengthen the safeguarding, promotion and transmission of ICH. In May 2018, the Administration informed the Panel that it proposed to make use of the provision for LCSD to set up a dedicated funding scheme to engage the community in safeguarding and promoting ICH. Details of the proposed funding scheme are set out in **Appendix II**. The proposal was approved by the Finance Committee on 14 December 2018.

Members' views and concerns

8. The Panel discussed the promulgation of the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong, the proposed Representative List and the proposed funding scheme for ICH at its meetings on 17 June 2014, 27 February 2017 and 28 May 2018 respectively. The major views and concerns expressed by members on the safeguarding, promotion and transmission of ICH at these meetings are summarized in the ensuing paragraphs.

Funding scheme for the intangible cultural heritage

9. At the meeting on 28 May 2018, members noted that the proposed funding scheme would provide support to the identified initiatives organized by or in partnership with community organizations and ICH bearers. Members considered that the Administration should enhance its work in engaging the community and bearer organizations in safeguarding and promoting ICH, and proactively liaise with these organizations in organizing funded projects, particularly those related to rituals and festive events.

10. The Administration advised that the proposed funding scheme would support two different types of projects, namely the Community-driven Project and the Partnership Project. For the Community-driven Project, applicants were required to submit proposals for assessment. As regards the Partnership Project, the ICH Office¹ would initiate projects of specific themes, scopes and requirements, and would invite partnership proposals for this type of funding support. ICHAC would be consulted in formulating the themes and scopes of these projects. The ICH Office would provide technical advice and assistance, and would closely liaise with the bearers or respective organizations to jointly carry out the funded projects.

¹ In May 2015, LCSD upgraded the ICH Unit originally under the Hong Kong Heritage Museum to an ICH Office to heighten various endeavours on safeguarding ICH.

Safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage items

11. Some members suggested that the Administration should make reference to the Mainland, Taiwan and Macau and consider the need to legislate for the preservation and protection of ICH in Hong Kong. There was also a view that ICHAC should be upgraded to be a statutory body so as to further enhance its work. Some other members suggested that the Administration should consider producing television Announcements of Public Interest on local ICH and partnering with District Councils in taking forward the various promotional initiatives.

12. The Administration advised that it had no plan to legislate for safeguarding ICH, and it noted that overseas countries including Australia, Canada, Singapore and the United Kingdom also did not have relevant legislation to safeguard ICH. However, having regard to the differences among various ICH items in terms of their importance, nature and urgency for immediate protection actions, a host of safeguarding measures which covered identification, documentation, in-depth research, preservation, promotion and transmission of the heritage would be devised and implemented. The ICH Office would also organize exhibitions, talks, field visits and demonstrations for promotion of local ICH to the public. Closer collaboration with local educational institutions, communities, as well as the individual bearers and bearer organizations of ICH items would also be strengthened. On the international front, the Administration would strengthen the cooperation with the tourism sector with a view to promoting traditional festivals and Hong Kong's ICH to overseas visitors.

Transmission of intangible cultural heritage items

13. Some members considered that the transmission of the ICH items was most important and urged the Administration to support traditional craftsmanship and help the relevant trades find market space for survival. Members also suggested that the Administration might collaborate with the Tourism Board in establishing a "cultural estate" to showcase the ICH items on a long-term basis. In their view, relevant policy bureaux should be involved in providing policy support for the promotion and sustainability of traditional craftsmanship. HAB might also consider collaborating with social enterprises in the education and promotion of those items.

14. According to the Administration, due to dwindling market demand, there were difficulties for the transmission of certain ICH items. The Administration would step up efforts in the education, promotion, transmission and safeguarding of the ICH items on the Representative List through exhibitions, talks, seminars, bearer demonstrations, workshops, in-depth

research and publications to enhance the public awareness and understanding of those ICH items.

Recent developments

15. The Administration will brief the Panel on its plan to promote the 10th anniversary of inscription of Cantonese opera onto UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity at the next meeting on 25 February 2019.

Relevant papers

16. A list of the relevant papers on the website of the Legislative Council is in **Appendix III**.

Council Business Division 2
Legislative Council Secretariat
19 February 2019

Appendix I

The First Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

Item No.	ICH Domain	Item
1	Performing Arts (4 items in total)	Cantonese Opera *^
2		Hakka Unicorn Dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung *
3		<i>Quanzhen</i> Temples Taoist Ritual Music *
4		<i>Nanyin</i> (Southern Tunes)
5	Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events (10 items in total)	Cheung Chau <i>Jiao</i> Festival *
6		Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade *
7		Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community *
8		Mid-Autumn Festival – The Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance *
9		Wong Tai Sin Belief and Customs *
10		Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans
11		Tin Hau Festival (or Birthday of the Goddess of Heaven) in Hong Kong
12		Mid-Autumn Festival – The Pokfulam Fire Dragon Dance
13		The Taoist Tradition of the <i>Zhengyi</i> (Orthodox Unity) School
14		<i>Sek Pun</i> (Basin Feast)
15	Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe (1 item)	Herbal Tea *

Item No.	ICH Domain	Item
16	Traditional Craftsmanship (5 items in total)	The Arts of the <i>Guzin</i> (The Craft of <i>Qin</i> Making)*
17		Hong Kong-style Milk Tea Making Technique
18		Paper Crafting Technique
19		The Sewing Techniques of Hong Kong-style <i>Cheongsam</i> and <i>Kwan Kwa</i> Wedding Costume
20		Bamboo Theatre Building Technique

* The ten local items already inscribed onto the national list of ICH would automatically be included in the Representative List of Hong Kong.

^ Cantonese opera was inscribed onto the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, making it a world ICH item.

Appendix II

The Proposed Funding Scheme for ICH

(a) Objective

The objective of the proposed funding scheme is to engage the community for participating in the safeguarding, research, education, promotion and transmission of ICH, and to enhance public awareness and understanding of ICH.

(b) Scope and Criteria

The proposed scheme will provide financial support to projects/activities related to all the items on the ICH inventory of Hong Kong. Projects/activities to be funded must be non-profit by nature. For achieving the objective of the funding scheme, the resource will be prioritised to support the following projects/activities:

- (i) Projects/activities related to the items on the Representative List or inventory items with an urgent need for preservation;
- (ii) Projects/activities allowing participations of bearer organisations and stakeholders and showing cultural substance of ICH items;
- (iii) Training programmes for ICH bearers or practitioners, especially for programmes in different forms to nurture the next generation of bearers;
- (iv) Research projects to collect, record, preserve, organise, publish or disseminate (on the Internet) the information of local ICH, including oral history, audio-visual recordings, documentaries and other information with preservation value;
- (v) Projects/activities to promote and further the development of ICH in the community;
- (vi) Projects to develop ICH educational resources or school education programmes;
- (vii) Projects/activities allowing young people to participate in or to develop ICH; and
- (viii) Other new projects to revitalise fading ICH items.

(c) Target Recipients

The proposed scheme will accept applications from Hong Kong residents; approved charitable institutions, recognised non-profit making organisations, local societies and groups; and local tertiary education

institutions. Major target recipients include bearers or bearer organisations of local ICH items; individuals or organisations related to local ICH items, holding techniques and knowledge, or transmitting ceremonies and traditions of local ICH items; cultural organisations or academic institutions conducting researches on local ICH; and individuals or organisations promoting local ICH items in the community.

Appendix III

Relevant papers on Safeguarding, promotion and transmission of intangible cultural heritage

Committee	Date of meeting	Paper
Panel on Home Affairs	14.6.2013 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	17.6.2014 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
	11.5.2015 (Item VI)	Agenda Minutes
	27.2.2017 (Item V)	Agenda Minutes
	28.5.2018 (Item IV)	Agenda Minutes
Legislative Council	31.10.2018	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 108 to 112
	9.1.2019	Official Record of Proceedings Pages 155 to 162

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