

Report on the IRCI Literature Survey on Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Research (2016-2018)

March 2019

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



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage



International Research Centre
for Intangible Cultural Heritage
in the Asia-Pacific Region

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Preface

In 2015, the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) commenced the planning of the 'Literature Survey on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries' (Literature Survey). It was officially formed in the following year as a three-year programme (FY 2016-2018) under the 'Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH' (FY 2013-2019) project. As the Literature Survey concludes at the end of FY 2018 (March 2019), we have reviewed the programme and created this report entitled 'Report on the IRCI Literature Survey on Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Research (2016-2018)'.

To create this report, we requested an assessment of the Literature Survey from three experts: Ms Noriko Aikawa-Faure, Dr Janet Blake, and Dr Hanhee Hahm. We greatly appreciate their expertise, which they kindly shared with us. We would like to take their feedback into account for use in future projects. The contents of the feedback from the three experts are reviewed in this report.

We would also like to express our sincere gratitude for the support and contributions from researchers from 31 countries and 1 region, who have been involved with this programme thus far and shared with us their sources of knowledge and time. The IRCI was established to instigate and coordinate research on ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region as a way of promoting UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003 (hereafter "the 2003 Convention"). Concurrently, we are always acquiring beneficial knowledge and insights from local researchers. Through these collaborative works, we hope that a mutual relationship between researchers and the IRCI can be further developed in the future.

Acknowledgement, of course, goes to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Partnership Program for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage by the Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs. Without its support, the Literature Survey would not have materialised.

I hope that this report, published online on our website (<https://www.irci.jp>), will contribute to the future of ICH safeguarding research in the Asia-Pacific region and promote a wider understanding of the IRCI's activities.

March 2019



Wataru Iwamoto
Director-General, IRCI

Background and Outline of the Literature Survey

The 'Literature Survey on Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries' programme has had the objectives of conducting a survey of publications such as books, journal articles, and reports in addition to mapping research institutes, researchers, and activities specialised in the domain of ICH safeguarding in the countries concerned. This was carried out in accordance with the IRCI's purpose to instigate and coordinate research into practices and methodologies that safeguard endangered ICH elements present in the Asia-Pacific region.

The programme was initiated during the discussion of the International Experts Meeting for the 'Mapping Research on the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region' project, held on 26-27 January 2015 in Kuala Lumpur. It was subsequently carried out within the framework of the 'Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH' (FY 2013-2019) project, until being officially formed into a separate three-year programme entitled 'Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries' in FY 2016.

The *Guidelines*¹ was developed as the Survey's methodologies and for collecting information on researchers, research institutes, and research activities carried out locally as a result of reflection on experts' opinions and updated following two meetings: the 2015 IRCI Experts Meeting on the Mapping Project for ICH Safeguarding in Asia and the Pacific held on 8-9 December 2015 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and the 2016 IRCI Experts Meeting on the Mapping Project for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region held on 18-19 November 2016 in Sakai, Japan. Following the former meeting, a report entitled 'Proceedings of 2015 IRCI Experts Meeting on Mapping Project for Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Safeguarding in Asia and Pacific' was published. Following the latter, a report entitled 'Proceedings of 2016 IRCI Experts Meeting on the Mapping Project for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region' was published.²

Since 2015, the Literature Survey has been conducted in a total of 31 countries and 1 region (French Polynesia). Through the programme, the IRCI has developed contacts and

¹ The *Guidelines* provides general information about the Survey and templates for data collection.

² These publications can be accessed and downloaded from the IRCI website (https://www.irci.jp/report_publication/).

established close relationships with researchers and experts in the field of ICH in the respective countries and region. The countries and the region surveyed in the programme are as follows:

FY 2014: (preliminary survey)

FY 2015 (18 countries): AUSTRALIA, BANGLADESH, CAMBODIA, CHINA, FIJI, INDIA, IRAN, JAPAN, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, LAOS, MALAYSIA, MYANMAR, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, TAJIKISTAN, THAILAND, UZBEKISTAN, and VIET NAM.

FY 2016 (6 countries): MONGOLIA, NEPAL, NEW ZEALAND, PALAU, SRI LANKA, VANUATU.

(Plus five countries already surveyed in FY 2015): CAMBODIA, IRAN, JAPAN, MALAYSIA, and MYANMAR.

FY 2017 (5 countries and 1 region): BRUNEI DARUSSALAM, COOK ISLANDS, PHILIPPINES, SAMOA, SOLOMON ISLANDS, and the region of FRENCH POLYNESIA.

FY 2018 (2 countries): INDONESIA and SINGAPORE.

Information collected by the Survey is provided to the public through the IRCI Research Database (<https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>) which was published in 2014 under the other programmes of the Mapping Project: Research Data Collection on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region and Optimisation of Its Use (FY 2016-2019). As of March 2019, the data entries stored in the Research Database number at 2,534. This collection of research data is interdependent with the Literature Survey; however, its outcomes are not taken into account in the writing of this report.

Finally, a plan exists to integrate the Literature Survey and the Research Data Collection into a new programme titled 'Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region' (2019-2021). This is further detailed in the Conclusion of this report.

Objectives and methodology of the report

The 'Report on the IRCI Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research' intends to review how the 'Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research' (Literature Survey) programme has been carried out and identify areas of achievement and improvement. This report will be published on the IRCI website to be shared publicly.

The IRCI has received feedback on key questions from three experts. The following is the template for the topics raised.

1. Introduction

- ✓ Why the Literature Survey is important for the safeguarding of ICH.
- ✓ The relevance of the programme to the IRCI's activities.
- ✓ How the reviewers were involved in this programme.

2. Appraisal/Analysis

- ✓ What be accomplished/learnt/benefited.
- ✓ What activities should be undertaken as the following step in order to promote connecting the researchers in the region and enhancing research on ICH safeguarding in the region.

3. Conclusions

- ✓ Challenges.
- ✓ General comments.

The three experts are as follows;

- ✓ Ms Noriko Aikawa-Faure (Advisory Body member of IRCI and UNESCO facilitator for Intangible Cultural Heritage),
- ✓ Dr Janet Blake (Associate Professor of Law at University of Shahid Beheshti),
- ✓ Dr Hanhee Hahm (Professor of Anthropology at Chonbuk National University).

These experts have many years of experience in the field of ICH safeguarding , as well as expert knowledge on ICH safeguarding as an area of academic study. They have been involved with the Literature Survey since its beginning and have closely followed the programme's development.

Feedback from the experts was reviewed by the IRCI and examined focusing on the following items: 1. Achievements, 2. Challenges, and 3. Future orientations. For the purpose of this report, the IRCI faithfully quotes as much as possible from the original points written in the experts' feedback, without interpreting any ideas.

Feedback from experts

1. Achievements

Through establishing contacts with qualified researchers, the Survey has covered 31 countries and 1 region (French Polynesia) from the Asia-Pacific region. Regardless of their ratification of the 2003 Convention, almost of all Asia-Pacific countries have been the subjects of the Literature Survey. One of the experts has noted that the survey has the potential to support the IRCI's work in initiating cooperation among interested institutions of the region and that,

'The fact that three non-Party countries at the time of reporting (Thailand, New Zealand and Australia) were surveyed is a positive point, since it allows for some comparison of experiences between Parties and non-Parties; the cases of New Zealand and Australia they present countries where much ICH-related research is driven by the presence of important Indigenous communities and well-developed legal structures for protecting Indigenous heritage (especially in New Zealand) independent of the 2003 Convention.'

It is further acknowledged that,

'The Survey achieved a certain degree of accomplishment, satisfied its objectives and performance indicators',

whilst another expert points out that,

'In spite of hasty implementation, the quantity of collected information is... more than satisfactory.'

It is noted that the Survey was accomplished satisfactorily in terms of quantity, however the quality of the output is questioned. For example,

'A large amount of the research surveyed did not respond well to the main question being asked in the Survey.'

However, this is pointed out as,

'A paradoxical strength of the Survey in that, this fact that is anecdotally understood by many researchers in the field has been shown through a mapping of the research.'

This suggests that the safeguarding of ICH is a relatively new field for academic study and only scant research data existed prior to it. However, we learnt through conducting the Survey that several studies involving ICH elements have been conducted by researchers,

although not directly concerning its safeguarding. The presence of these latent researchers indicates a potential opportunity for the development of ICH safeguarding research. On the whole, the Survey reinforced the idea, as clearly indicated by an expert that,

'We remain in need of further identify the gaps and weaknesses in current research and strengths of current research, as well as to recommend ways in which research into safeguarding ICH can be more focused and undertaken with more appropriate methodologies.'

While continuing discussion is certainly required to clarify appropriate methodologies, it is also acknowledged that the Survey has returned some important conclusions, such as that,

'The Survey should inform researchers in the Asia-Pacific region to undertake studies that are more targeted towards the methods and impacts of safeguarding and, in particular, methodologies that allow for truly participative involvement by local and community-based persons.'

As for the Survey's methodologies, the participative involvement of local communities in the safeguarding of ICH is referred to as one of the major, urgent challenges for the implementation of the 2003 Convention. A number of the projects surveyed demonstrate attempts to involve communities, although the levels of involvement vary. What research means to the communities is noted,

'Research studies can themselves be a powerful form of both awareness-raising and also a form of capacity-building (among communities and the wider local society) whereby they can be trained to identify, inventory and manage their ICH elements.'

In respect to community involvement in the safeguarding of ICH, the Survey favourably contributed to the demonstration of a necessity to,

'... further develop different ways in which researchers can engage with community members in conducting research should be explored further (and localised), and a local and/or indigenous cadre of "community researchers" needs to be built up.'

2. Challenges

Implementing the Survey has been challenging, especially in the beginning stage, when the Survey showed relatively slow progress. This is suggested as,

'... largely due to the insufficiency of awareness raising activities of IRCI... and once activities of IRCI is known both in and outside Japan, it would be easy to find partner institutions and collaborating researchers and network of cooperation can be established.'

This is a noteworthy view for the IRCI, as we have been making efforts to design collaborative projects with researchers and institutions interested in the advancement of ICH safeguarding research since the IRCI's establishment in 2011. However, it is possible that the causes of the lack of progress in the promotion of collaborative works are more complicated than they first appear. The experts unanimously recognise a significant part of the cause as,

'... researchers in many countries may not be fully exposed to the topics of the notion of ICH as understood in the 2003 Convention as well as its safeguarding that has been a new conception all of which hinder the possibility of useful and targeted research into safeguarding.'

Misconception or lack of understanding of the 2003 Convention's notion and ICH safeguarding were briefly mentioned in the previous section. It is further pointed out that,

'Unfortunately, a disjunction between research and implementation (through safeguarding activities) exists such that the focus has hitherto been mostly on the content of ICH and not on the implementation of safeguarding policies/measures.'

As also mentioned above, some countries have existing collections of ICH research in fields such as anthropology (ethnography), archaeology, arts, folklore, history, and linguistics, which have been published prior to the adoption of the 2003 Convention,

'A large amount of research covered in the Survey is not within its framework and is descriptive (ethnographic) in character, mostly of ICH elements, and accordingly does not respond well to the main question of ICH safeguarding being asked in the Survey.'

Perspective on ICH safeguarding is largely lacking in the research, even though the role of the IRCI in this Survey has not been to research ICH elements *per se*, but rather to research safeguarding approaches and their impacts on ICH. Thus, having an overview of

the research on ICH safeguarding conducted in the Asia-Pacific region is extremely challenging. Further, more external factors are precisely analysed,

'The research outcomes are often published in the local languages and not distributed either widely or internationally, the great diversity among the countries surveyed (covering a wide geographical spread) and, in some cases, the internal challenges caused by lack of political stability and even natural disasters have all made it difficult to gather data in some countries... moreover, in other cases, a lack of responsiveness from researchers has proved to be a major stumbling block.'

We have analysed the causes of the lack of progress in implementing the works, yet we must be mindful of the IRCI's position in this situation and should carefully examine what an expert points out as,

'Ambiguity in the Survey's scope and objectives has been a major difficulty faced by the surveyors.'

'There is a need to develop theoretical approaches towards ICH safeguarding.'

This is certainly related the necessity for the creation of appropriate methodologies for the Survey, as already mentioned in the previous section.

As a solution, more detailed guidelines for conducting the Survey are requested and suggested to include,

'A few examples of research explaining approaches for the safeguarding of ICH'

'Analysis of threat and viability taking into account environmental evolution and sustainable development'

'Analysis of the degree of community participation in the evaluation and monitoring of safeguarding measures'

To address the need for the clarification of appropriate methodologies and development of guidelines, further consideration is required on how to deal with the collections of publications on the subject which do not focus of the safeguarding of ICH. One expert notes that,

'...(the Survey's findings) urge a better understanding of the role of existing historical as well as general anthropological and ethnographic studies pre-dating the 2003 Convention. This includes studies from previous centuries, which are mostly descriptive in character and possibly not even "scientific".'

The Survey's scope and objectives should be constantly clarified, updated, and reflected in

the *Guidelines*. Hence, the IRCI continues its efforts to establish and ensure the sharing of a more detailed concept of ICH safeguarding with the surveyors and researchers in Asia-Pacific countries. Apropos, it is noted that,

'More time for information gathering for surveyors should be needed to allow dialogues between the surveyors and the IRCI in order that the IRCI could monitor closely the process of the Survey.'

Being at the core of the notion of ICH safeguarding in the 2003 Convention, again the importance of participative involvement by local communities can be highlighted. It is explained as,

'ICH elements must be allowed to adapt new ingredients (within reason) to answer external needs of society and, in particular, the community in the implementation of safeguarding activities which has been a key concept of the 2003 Convention.'

The expert accordingly emphasises concern about the lack of community involvement, (which comprises the bottom-up approach),

'There is a tendency for research still to be conducted on a top-down model, in which scientific experts take the lead and community members are mostly passive interviewees.'

To tackle these commonly voiced challenges concerning community involvement, she adds that,

'The lack of financing for studies on community-based ICH research which is also a key driver of research agendas called for further consideration from policy-makers who can develop research in this area.'

Furthermore, the expert suggests ideas to ensure community involvement/participation,

'Audio and visual digitization of ICH elements, especially when done by practitioners and community members, possibly with the collaboration of external experts, provide an effective tool for the safeguarding ICH which needs more research focus of which is on the process more than the product.'

'The need for digitalization of research results and for better dissemination of digital research data, for example through multimedia channels, needs to be considered further to make them available to ICH communities (while respecting any customary norms relating to secrecy and access).'

'The evaluation and monitoring of the safeguarding measures whereby making them

carry a close examination and assessment of the long-term impacts of safeguarding actions as well as research studies.'

3. Future orientations

We have conducted the Literature Survey and have stored a total of 2,534 items of literature in the IRCI Research Database as of March 2019. Regarding the management of this database, one expert notes,

'The collected data need to be reviewed to improve its accuracy and regularly updated to make the database viable.'

The IRCI is willing to continuously work on the development of the database within the 'Research Data Collection on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region and Optimisation of its Use' (FY 2016-2019) programme and its succeeding programme. This programme is being launched in FY2020, and is explained in more detail in the Conclusion. In parallel with the database's development, we are eager to continue creating literature surveys/analyses and systematically collecting up-to-date information. To carry this activity out more effectively in the future, one expert advises,

'The Survey should be continued in partnership with a specialised institution (rather than researchers individually).'

To respond to this expectation, we are continuing survey works under the new programme in partnership with institutions. We elaborate on this later. With regard to the core issue of the research and the researchers lack perspective on implementing ICH safeguarding policies/measures because they mostly focus on the content of ICH, it is expected that,

'One important goal of the Survey should be to shift the research agenda towards the question of the disjunction between research and implementation through safeguarding activities.'

'There is a need for more systematic documentation not only of elements themselves, but also of how they change over time and the relationship of this to safeguarding.'

'IRCI could consider a follow-up to identify some of the scant but valuable research conducted in languages that are not easily accessible to the international research community.'

Referring to the 'valuable research' mentioned in the last quotation, specific topics are

suggested,

'Exploration of methodological approaches (such as cultural mapping in Pacific region countries)'

'The linkages between ICH research and/or safeguarding with policy-making'

'The impacts of safeguarding on elements and their communities'

'Ways of involving community members more deeply in all stages of research'

For the highlighted research to be of value to the research community and allow a better overview of the nature of research being conducted around the Asia-Pacific region, one expert advises that,

'As a first step, the IRCI to produce a publication containing information on these studies/publications with abstracts... as a next step, it could consider translating and publishing some of its key articles in English.'

While we would consider this option, the IRCI is working on the project in close collaboration with partner institutions in participating countries to digitise locally-archived materials. This is explained further in the Conclusion. Moreover, we need to further analyse the idea of 'community' that is specified in,

'A better understanding of the central role to be played in safeguarding by community-based organizations and NGOs, as well as by independent researchers and the private sector, should be promoted.'

'The issue of funding community-based research requires much more consideration.'

Thus, to thoroughly carry out investigation into the ideas of community and safeguarding, it is further observed that,

'There is a need for better coordination between different research organisations, such as museums, libraries, universities, scientific institutions, and NGOs.'

'More inter-disciplinary approach to research into that matter (e.g. between folklorists and cultural anthropologists, between cultural and environmental experts, between legal and non-legal experts) that can feed into a poorly covered area of research in the field of policy- and law-making areas of government and the setting of future strategies.'

We are grateful to the three experts for their reviews and useful insights, which benefit our future initiatives. We have received their additional opinions and suggestions from broader

perspective. Even though these are not concerned directly with the Survey, it should be quoted here as follows,

'In parallel with the Literature Survey, the IRCI could launch a new project to promote and coordinate research into the contribution of ICH to the sustainable development in Asia-Pacific region' (the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable development is the principal pillar of the UNESCO culture programme) ... and the collected results of the research could be entered into IRCI database for further diffusion.'

*'To enhance the research on the safeguarding of ICH, it would be productive and rewarding for IRCI to formulate short-term and long-term plans to ensure the implementation of the Overall Results Framework (ORF) in the Asia-Pacific region.'*³

The above demonstrates that we have received various opinions, some of which emphasize the issue of community involvement in safeguarding activities and the research process for the implementation of the 2003 Convention. The current status of ICH research and safeguarding, as well as the challenges they face, are presented. This indicates that it is necessary to deepen discussion on the issue among researchers and to grasp further the essence of these challenges. Indeed, the IRCI is determined to pursue the promotion of these activities. The Literature Survey's future direction and its substantial part in the collection of data/information will be explained in the Conclusion of this report.

³ ORF was approved at the 7th General Assembly of the States Parties to the 2003 Convention (7. GA/item 9).

Conclusion: Future direction of the Literature Survey

As the 'Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries' programme concludes at the end of FY 2018 (March 2019), this report reviews the programme in order to identify areas of achievement and improvement, and further investigate the Literature Survey's future direction and its data/information collection. It is necessary that the feedback we have received from the three experts is incorporated in designing the programme that will succeed the Literature Survey. In addition, prior to the experts' assessments, the IRCI's work plan for FY 2019 was approved at the 7th IRCI Governing Board Meeting on 26 September 2018. Their suggestions shall be taken into consideration and referred to in the new programme's development. The new programme is described in the section below (please also refer to Figure 1 at the end of this section).

New Programme: '*Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region*' (FY 2019-2021)

The upcoming programme, which will succeed the Literature Survey,⁴ is focusing on the activities mainly for the collection of literature information and the development of the IRCI Research Database. It will continue serving as a platform for sharing information related to research on ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region through the collection of information for the database.

Whereas the Literature Survey was mostly implemented effectively in cooperation with individual researchers in various countries, we are willing to further develop our collaboration strategy. With this, we aim to collect information systematically and even more readily with the help of specialised organisations in the subject countries. The collaborating organisations, are assumed to be the research institutes of universities or museums in Asia-Pacific countries. For the programme's first year (FY 2019), around six partners who have worked with the IRCI on past projects will be identified. Accordingly, the new programme will provide further dialogue among partner institutions, researchers, and the IRCI to identify the gaps, weaknesses, and strengths of current research. This will promote the concept of ICH and its safeguarding among the institutions. Consequently, it can be expected that more information closely related to ICH safeguarding will be obtained,

⁴ The 'Research Data Collection on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region and Optimisation of Its Use' (FY 2016-2019) programme is also going to be integrated into the new programme after its completion in FY 2020.

allowing the Research Database to be continually updated.

This strategic development of collaborations with partner institutions aims to ensure the strengthening of the concept of ICH and its safeguarding, facilitate effective communication among institutions, and contribute to the enhancement of the network of connections. Thus, in the upcoming years, the IRCI develops this research data collection scheme.

It is important to note that the creation of guidelines and methodologies to share among the institutions is necessary to ensure that this cooperative work becomes established and is carried on in the future. Through this work, the IRCI hopes that a cadre of cooperative partner institutions will be created to further encourage research studies and activities relating to ICH and its safeguarding.

As mentioned above, another focus for the new program is the development of the IRCI Research Database. For this, we are focusing on the improvement of its contents and usability. In particular, to improve the substantiality of the contents, we are going to attempt adding locally-archived materials through collaboration with partner institutions.

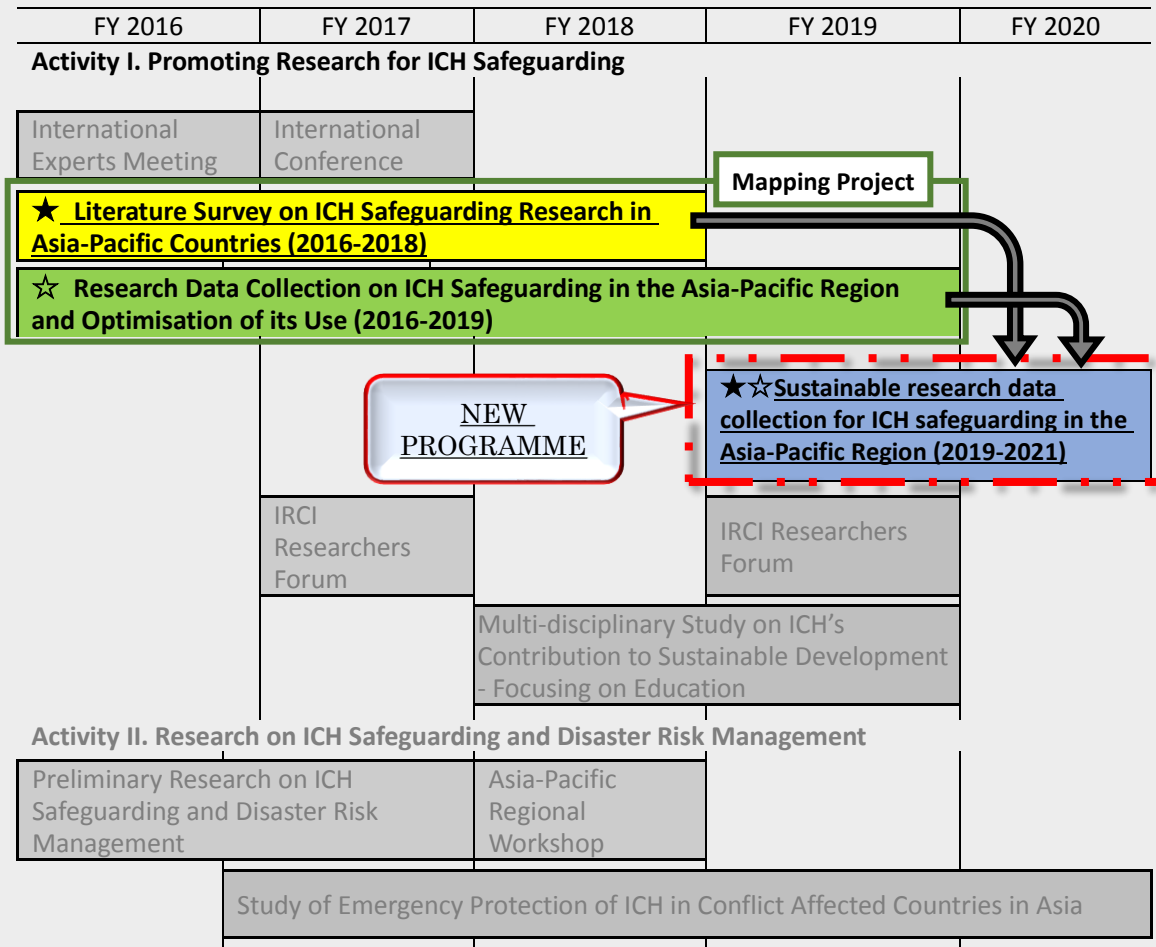


Figure 1: the new programme entitled ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region’ in the IRCI’s framework of activities.

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