

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

**Call for collaborating institutions to conduct case studies for the IRCI project
Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region**

Background

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) has been conducting research projects on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and emergencies such as disaster risk management (DRM) (FY 2016–2018^{1,2} and FY 2020–2023³), conflict (FY 2017–2020), and the COVID-19 pandemic (FY 2021–2023⁴). The results of the conducted case studies have revealed the dual nature of ICH during disasters: its vulnerable aspects and resilience. They also highlighted the important role of ICH in mitigating, preparing for, and responding to challenging conditions through the recovery process. In further recognition of this nature of ICH, IRCI has expanded its research focus to climate change including global warming and climate-associated hazards, and threats to human life and health, and has started a new project ‘Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region’ (FY 2024–2026) to explore the role of ICH in addressing and adapting to climate change, and heritage-centred strategies and actions for mitigating the negative consequences.

Climate change has been increasingly threatening humanity through extreme hazards and disasters, disrupting ecosystems and imperiling ICH elements deeply rooted in local environments. Rising sea levels particularly endanger small islands and coastal communities, potentially forcing the abandonment of culturally significant areas. While global efforts to address climate change exist, local communities must lead adaptation strategies. Recent research emphasizes ICH’s role in disaster risk reduction (DRR). However, it is important to confirm whether this applies to climate change adaptation by assessing the effectiveness of traditional knowledge and practices in the evolving climate context.

¹ [Preliminary Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region: Project Report for FY 2016–2017](#). (IRCI, 2018)

² [Proceedings of the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters](#). (IRCI, 2019)

³ [Natural Hazards and the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Experiences from the Asia-Pacific Region \(Report of the Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management \[FY 2020–2023\]\)](#). (IRCI, 2024)

⁴ [Case Studies on Intangible Cultural Heritage amid the COVID-19 Pandemic in the Asia-Pacific Region \(Report of the Research on ICH Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic Project \[FY 2021–2023\]\)](#). (IRCI, 2024)

Under such circumstances, UNESCO released a guidance note on climate actions for living heritage⁵, outlining a rights-based and people-centered approach and proposing three key goals: promote and enhance the positive role of living heritage in climate change adaptation, promote and enhance the positive role of living heritage in climate change mitigation, and improve measures for safeguarding living heritage in the climate emergency in developing further initiatives under the 2003 Convention. Through addressing climate change impacts on cultural heritage and emphasizing living heritage's active role in adaptation, this guidance note has called for integrating climate awareness into heritage safeguarding, fostering cross-sector collaboration, promoting research, co-designing inclusive policies, and enhancing capacity through education. The note highlights living heritage's unique insights for climate adaptation and advocates for inclusive engagement in the development of climate action strategies, involving a wide range of stakeholders, particularly marginalized communities. IRCI's new project intends to contribute to further actions responding to this latest development, by initiating research activities in the Asia-Pacific region.

Objectives

IRCI's new project 'Research on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific Region' aims to examine how ICH practices are impacted by climate change, how they can adapt to changing environmental conditions and to encourage the development of community-based methodologies and action plans for safeguarding ICH through environmental adaptation by implementing case studies. These activities are also expected to enhance cooperation among stakeholders to promote community-based ICH safeguarding and climate actions. Through these efforts, the project will explore aspects of safeguarding ICH in relation to climate change, particularly regarding the transmission of ICH in a changing environment affected by climate change, as well as the roles of ICH in climate actions. Additionally, it will contribute to enhancing collaboration and dialogue between ICH, climate change, and disaster risk reduction (DRR) sectors by organizing seminars, expert meetings, and symposia.

In this context, IRCI conducts case studies in collaboration with institutions in the Asia-Pacific region as one of its main activities. The case studies have two main objectives: first, to investigate the current situation of climate change and its impact on ICH at the local and community levels; and second, to seek methodologies that incorporate ICH into community-based climate actions. By focusing on these areas, IRCI seeks to develop effective strategies that not only safeguard ICH but also enhance community resilience against climate change.

⁵ [Guidance note on climate action for living heritage](#). (UNESCO, 2024)

Call for Case Study Plans and Collaborators

For the purpose of identifying specific case studies to be conducted in FY 2025 (commencing in April 2025) and FY 2026, IRCI invites research institutions, governmental organizations, NGOs, and other relevant organizations in the Asia-Pacific region to collaborate with IRCI on the case studies to assess the impact of climate change on ICH and to investigate the roles of ICH in mitigating and adapting to climate change. Applicants must submit a 'Research Plan' using the attached template (see below).

IRCI will select approximately three case studies from the Asia-Pacific region, in consideration of various factors such as the situation of ICH associated with climate change, feasibility of the proposed research plan, expected outcomes, and the geographical balance. A research plan could be an entirely new initiative, but it should be a concrete proposal describing specific situations, ideas for research activities and expected outcomes. IRCI also welcomes proposals building upon existing/ongoing programmes and efforts to add action research dimensions. Assuming that the amount of financial support from IRCI would be modest, having additional funding sources other than the support from IRCI would be helpful, although not required.

As the first step, selected collaborators will be invited to present their research plans at the online kick-off meeting scheduled in the first half of March 2025 (specific date TBD). This meeting will provide an opportunity to share ideas and receive feedback to enhance the plans for case studies. After consolidating the research plans, research activities will be initiated by collaborators in cooperation with IRCI in April 2025. Selected organizations are expected to actively engage in the implementation of respective case studies and all other activities under this project running until the end of March 2027.

Conditions

IRCI will financially support selected case studies (approximately 500,000–800,000 JPY, which is equivalent to 3,211.00–5,136.80 USD as of 21 January 2025), which will be provided as an honorarium after receiving a case study report. Please note that IRCI operates on a post-pay system, meaning that payment is made after the case study is completed and the report compiling the results is submitted. The arrangement of dividing payments may be possible but requires pre-coordination with IRCI. However, IRCI cannot transfer the honorarium before the implementation of the case study. Research activities will be conducted in two stages, following the financial system in Japan (see Provisional Schedule below).

Submission of the Research Plan

Please use the attached [template](#) to complete the Research Plan and send it via email to IRCI (irci@nich.go.jp) by 20 February 2025.

Provisional Schedule

20 February 2025	Submission deadline
Late February 2005	Collaborators will be selected and informed by IRCI
March 2025	Online kick-off meeting
April 2025	Signing of MoU and initiating the case studies
December 2025	Submission of report for 2025 (honorarium to be paid)
January–March 2026	Planning and coordination of research in 2026
April 2026	Starting of 2nd phase of case study
December 2026	Submission of final case study report (honorarium to be paid)

*Additionally, several online/in-place meetings will be programmed in the course of the project.

Contact

For any queries or concerns, please contact the following project coordinator.

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

Hitomi Yamamoto, Associate Fellow

Email: yamamoto-h5b@nich.go.jp / Tel: +81-72-275-8050

Attached: Research Plan Template (MS Word file)