



HERITAGE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK & TOOLKIT FOR TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS IN NIGERIA

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Introduction

Traditional festivals are a living expression of Nigeria's culture, history and community spirit. Keeping these traditions alive is not just about saving the past, it's about celebrating, sharing and passing them on to future generations.

This toolkit is for everyone – tradition bearers, community organisers, youth leaders and policymakers. It gives the user simple tools and guidance to help protect, preserve and promote.

Together, we can ensure that Nigeria's festivals, and the rich traditions behind them, continue to thrive for generations to come.

This guide was made possible through the [EUDiF Capacity Development Lab in Nigeria](#), with support from local festival makers in Ikorodu, Lagos and partners in Germany. It includes advice from cultural leaders in Nigeria's Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments.



WHY PROTECT TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS?

Festivals keep our history, creativity and community alive.

They create pride and bring people together.

To help generate economic value add to support the sustainability.

Youth involvement keeps traditions strong.

Recognition (local and global) brings support and new opportunities.

Festivals can help communities grow through tourism and crafts.

Teaching and learning between generations keep traditions going.

Legal recognition helps protect festivals for the future.

GLOBAL & NATIONAL SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORKS

Festivals are recognised as Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) and globally, the UNESCO 2003 Convention sets the standard for ICH protection and recognises that:

Communities themselves are the true owners and custodians of their heritage.

Heritage is living, always evolving and never static.

Every tradition has value, no matter how big or small.

The safeguarding process involves identifying, documenting, teaching, promoting and protecting these traditions so they remain vibrant for future generations.





Nigeria's approach builds on these global principles, maintains national lists of ICH shaped by community input and provides legal protection for Nigeria's traditions. Safeguarding is led by communities themselves, with support and training from the Nigeria's Ministry of Art, Culture, Tourism and Creative Economy (FMACCE).

By using this toolkit, you are joining a global and national effort to keep our living heritage strong, relevant and celebrated. For further details, you can explore:

[UNESCO ICH Convention](#)

[FMACCE Nigeria](#)

SAFEGUARDING FRAMEWORK

This framework is designed to guide you, as a producer of a traditional festival in Nigeria, to safeguard, develop and sustain your unique cultural heritage. By following these steps, you'll help ensure the preservation, recognition and growth of your festival for generations to come.



Participate in Training

Take part in targeted training programmes created specifically for local cultural custodians. These sessions will cover: ***How to safeguard your festival's heritage*** and ***Best practices in cultural management and preservation***

1

Join the Safeguarding Initiative

Become part of a growing network of traditional festivals committed to safeguarding Nigeria's traditional festivals. Your participation is the first step towards national and international recognition.



2

3

Build Your Heritage Inventory

Work with your team and partners to create a detailed inventory of intangible and tangible cultural heritage assets linked to your festival. This includes documenting traditions, rituals, music, oral histories and other unique elements.



Strengthen Capacity

Identify and develop a dedicated community of people who you will work with. Ensure that you have a clear shared vision of what you want to achieve, clear roles and responsibilities – as well as a clear understanding of how you will work together and with others.

Create management structures and governance systems to ensure better decision making.

Form associations or networks with other festival producers for knowledge sharing and advocacy.

4

Add Value

Work with your community and strategic partners to use the inventory of assets to generate economic and social impact.

Implement data collection and management systems for ongoing documentation and evaluation.

Establish digital and physical archives to preserve your festival's history and practices.

Develop a commercial plan to generate income and ensure your festival's financial sustainability.

Create a strong brand identity and promotional strategy to attract wider audiences.

Expand your festival's programme and activities to engage more participants.

6

5

Develop Strategic Partnerships

Collaborate with diaspora communities, the private sector and international organisations. These partnerships can bring in new resources, expertise and audiences for your festival.



Expected Outcomes for Your Festival

By adopting this framework, you're playing a vital role in preserving your festival's cultural legacy and opening new opportunities for growth and recognition. Some of the key benefits include:

Becoming part of a coherent and collaborative community of traditional festival producers and custodians.

An economic sustainability plan for your festival's future.

Increased engagement and support from stakeholders, including government, private sector and diaspora.

Achieve eligibility for inclusion on the Nigeria Heritage List.

UNESCO recognition under "The Great Traditional Festivals of Nigeria".



HOW TO SAFEGUARD YOUR FESTIVAL

1

Community Involvement

The community leads the way - outsiders are just helpers. Make sure you hold meetings, set goals together and that everyone agrees and can take part.



3

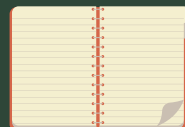
Data Search

Collect information such as old photos, stories, interviews and filmed footage. Use tools like notebooks, cameras and drawings.

2

Planning

Decide what to record, how, who will do it and when. Make a simple plan that everyone understands.



4

Documentation

Keep everything organised and safe. Use files, labels and back everything up. Respect privacy and only share what is agreed.



5

Sharing

Share what you learn in ways that help the community through meetings, exhibitions, books, documentaries or online. Always get permission before sharing sensitive information.



THE KEY ELEMENTS OF TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

When documenting or safeguarding a traditional festival, UNESCO highlights several important elements that together capture the festival's cultural significance. These categories provide a full view of what makes each festival unique and meaningful to its community:

01 Rituals, Ceremonies & Practices

These are the core activities that give the festival its identity, such as processions, dances, blessings, offerings, religious or spiritual acts, and unique performances that only happen during the festival.



02 Oral Traditions & Expressions

This includes the stories, legends and histories shared about the festival, as well as songs, chants, prayers, proverbs and other spoken expressions that are part of the celebration.





03 Performing Arts

Music, dance, drama, masquerades and plays performed during the festival are all essential parts that bring the event to life and foster community spirit.



04 Social Practices & Festival Events

These are the ways people come together; through feasts, games, competitions and special roles for different groups (elders, youth, organisers), as well as activities designed for children, families or guests.



05 Traditional Knowledge & Skills

This covers the know-how required to organise the festival, from planning and logistics to making costumes, setting up venues and preparing traditional foods and drinks.

06 Traditional Craftsmanship

Festivals often feature unique costumes, masks, decorations, banners and musical instruments – any handcrafted objects that are made especially for the event.



08 Spaces & Places

Significant locations such as shrines, village squares, rivers, family homes, parade routes and temporary stages form the physical setting for festival activities.

07 Food & Culinary Traditions

Special foods and drinks, the way they're prepared and served, and the meanings attached to them are all important festival elements.





09 Community Participation & Roles

Festivals rely on the involvement of organisers, performers, helpers and the wider community, including how traditions and responsibilities are passed down to younger generations and how outsiders participate.



10 Associated Objects, Artefacts & Documents

These include photographs, videos, audio recordings, written materials (programmes, posters, invitations) and special items like awards or certificates that help document and remember the festival.

11 Values, Meanings & Symbols

Finally, each festival is shaped by the values, meanings, symbols, colours and designs that are important to the community and give the festival its deeper significance.



By considering all these elements, you can capture the full richness of your traditional festival, ensuring its story and impact are fully recognised and safeguarded for the future.

TOOLS FOR DOCUMENTING TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL HERITAGE ASSETS



Notebooks & Pens

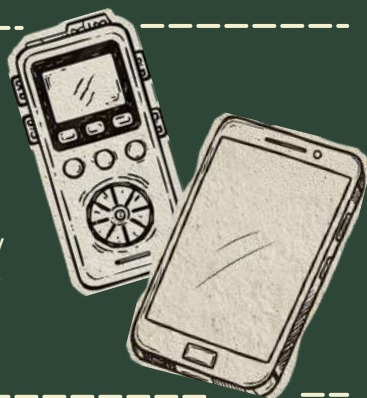
Use: Taking notes during interviews, meetings or observations; sketching maps, costumes, symbols, etc.

Examples: Writing down oral histories from elders; listing festival events and participants, sketching a masquerade costume.

Audio Recorders (or Smartphones)

Use: Recording interviews, songs, chants, oral stories and prayers

Examples: Capturing a festival song as sung by tradition bearers; recording an elder narrating festival history



Video Cameras (or Smartphones)

Use: Filming ceremonies, dances, performances, rituals, processions

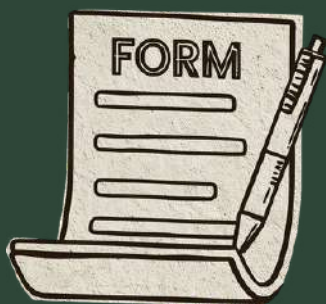
Examples: Documenting the entire sequence of a festival procession; recording the making of costumes or artefacts



Cameras (Digital or Smartphone)

Use: Taking photographs of people, costumes, artefacts, foods, spaces

Examples: Photographing masks, banners, decorated spaces, capturing images of festival activities



Interview Guides & Consent Forms

Use: Structuring interviews for consistency; ensuring ethical documentation with consent

Examples: Using a standard set of questions for all custodians and participants; collecting signed consent before recording

Mapping Tools (Paper, Digital Apps)

Use: Creating maps of festival routes, sites, heritage locations

Examples: Mapping the route of a masquerade procession; identifying sacred spaces or gathering points



Archival Materials (Folders, USB, Cloud)

Use: Safely storing and organising physical/digital records

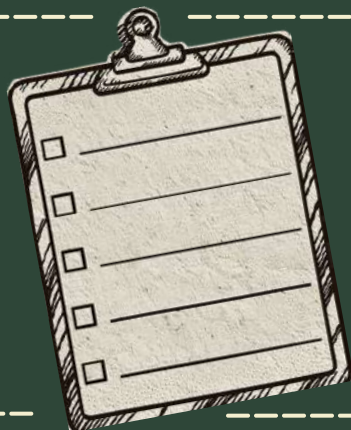
Examples: Saving photos or audio files on USB or cloud; filing original programmes, posters, written notes



Templates & Checklists

Use: Ensuring all relevant information is captured for each asset

Examples: Using a checklist to document all aspects of a ritual; completing a template for each event or tradition



Drawing Materials (Sketchbooks, Pencils)

Use: Drawing costumes, artefacts, or scenes when photography is not allowed or possible

Examples: Sketching a sacred object not permitted to be photographed, drawing the layout of a festival site



Digital Tools (Laptops, Databases, Cloud)

Use: Entering, organising and backing up information; creating and sharing digital lists and inventories

Examples: Compiling documentation into a digital inventory spreadsheet; using Google Drive or Dropbox to store and share files



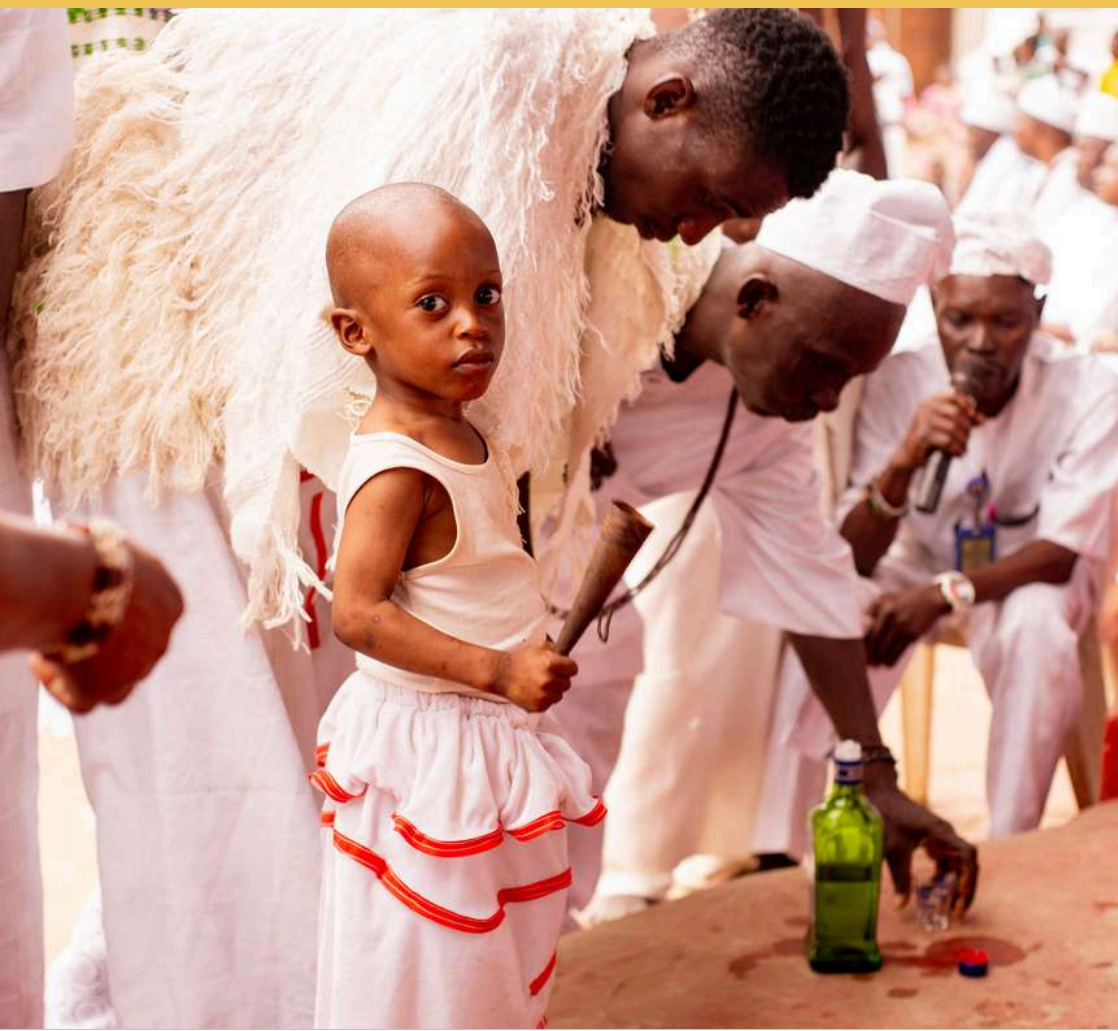
Tip: Always get consent from cultural custodians and participants before adding info to your records. Choose the tools that work best for your group and respect all traditions.



CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

Learning about, recording and celebrating our traditional festivals keeps them strong for today's and tomorrow's generations. Use this toolkit to help your community protect its traditions and share your knowledge to inspire others.

Together, let's celebrate, protect, and share Nigeria's festival heritage for generations to come!





TOOLKIT: TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



TEMPLATE: CREATING YOUR STRATEGY & PLAN

Use this simple form to plan how you will collect and protect information about your traditional festival. Answer each section as clearly as you can. This form will help your team create a strong strategy.

Question/Prompt

Your Response

Step 1: Engage the Community

Who should be involved?
(List names, groups, or roles)

How will you involve them? (e.g., meetings, interviews, awareness sessions)

What should you be careful about?
(e.g., privacy, sacred knowledge, gender roles)

Step 2: Planning the Information Gathering

How will you collect the information?
(e.g., interviews, group talks, video, photos)

Who will do each job? (List who will interview, take notes, take photos, etc.)

When and where will you collect the information? (Give dates, places, or events)

Step 3: Gathering the Information

Where will you get information from? (e.g., elders, performers, archives, personal collections)

What tools will you use? (e.g., consent forms, interview guides, audio recorders, cameras)

How will you make sure everyone feels welcome? (e.g., use local language, respect customs, group settings)

Step 4: Saving the Information

How will you organise and store what you collect? (e.g., folders, digital files, notebooks, database)

Who will look after the records? (Give names or roles)

How will you keep private information safe? (e.g., passwords, limited access)

Step 5: Sharing the Information

What information will you share with others and why?

How will you share it? (e.g., meetings, exhibitions, online, newsletters)

Who will decide what can be shared?

TEMPLATE: TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL ASSET (CHECKLIST)

Use this checklist to identify and record all the tangible and intangible assets linked to each traditional festival individually. Only tick the assets that are linked to the festival you are documenting.

Name of Festival: _____

What is the purpose of this festival: _____

Date(s) - When does it take place: _____

Location(s) - Where does it take place: _____

Check the boxes for each asset linked to the festival.

1. Rituals, Ceremonies & Practices

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Festival rituals or ceremonies (e.g., processions, blessings, offerings) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Religious or spiritual practices | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Re-enactments or symbolic acts | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2. Oral Traditions & Expressions

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| • Stories, legends, myths, histories | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Festival songs, chants, prayers, recitations | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Proverbs or sayings used during the festival | <input type="checkbox"/> |

3. Performing Arts

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| • Music (live, instrumental, songs) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Dance (traditional, ceremonial, social) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Drama, masquerades, performances | <input type="checkbox"/> |

4. Social Practices, Rituals & Festive Events

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| • Communal feasting, games, competitions | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Roles of elders, youth, women, other groups | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Activities for children, families or visitors | <input type="checkbox"/> |

5. Traditional Knowledge & Skills

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Festival organising or planning | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costume-making, set/stage design, logistics • Food/drink preparation techniques and skills 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
6. Traditional Craftsmanship	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costumes, masks, regalia, accessories • Decorations, banners • Instruments, tools or objects made for the festival 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
7. Foodways & Culinary Traditions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special festival foods, drinks, recipes • Food preparation and serving methods • Symbolic/ritual meanings of foods 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
8. Spaces & Places	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sacred or significant sites (shrines, squares, rivers) • Processional routes, gathering points • Temporary structures, altars, stages 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
9. Community Participation & Roles	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key individuals/groups (custodians, performers, organisers) • Intergenerational knowledge transfer • Diaspora/external community involvement 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
10. Associated Objects, Artefacts & Documents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photos, videos, audio recordings • Written records, programmes, posters, invitations • Awards, certificates, commemorative items 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
11. Values, Meanings & Symbolism	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key values, beliefs, meanings • Symbols, colours, motifs 	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

TEMPLATE: DOCUMENTING TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL ASSETS FORM

Use this form to record everything that you can about a specific Traditional Festival Asset

Traditional Festival: Asset Report

1. Festival Name:

2. Asset Name/Title:

3. Type of Asset (tick all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ritual/Ceremony | <input type="checkbox"/> Food/Culinary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Oral Tradition/Story | <input type="checkbox"/> Place |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Event | <input type="checkbox"/> Object/Document |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Knowledge/Skill | <input type="checkbox"/> Value/Symbolism |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Craftsmanship | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

4. Description: What is it? Who is involved? When and where does it happen or is used?

5. Who knows about this? (List people, families, or groups)

6. How is it taught or shared? (e.g., families, apprenticeships, schools, ceremonies)

7. Why is it important? (What values, beliefs, or identity does it show?)

8. Current condition:

Thriving

Rarely practised

At risk

Recently revived

Other: _____

9. Challenges: (e.g., loss of knowledge, migration, lack of interest, funding)

10. Existing records? (Are there photos, videos, or documents? Where are they?)

11. Ideas for protection or promotion: (How can it be better protected, shared, or taught?)

12. Extra notes or stories:

Documented by: _____ **Date:** _____ **Location:** _____

Consent: I confirm that I got permission from the community or custodian before collecting this information. (Link to consent form or recording)

TEMPLATE: FESTIVAL DOCUMENTATION CONSENT FORM

Festival Name:

Date:

Location:

What will happen:

We would like to record information about this festival. This may include taking notes, photos, videos, or audio recordings and collecting stories or memories.

Your rights:

- You can choose what you want to share.
- You can ask us not to record or share certain things.
- You can change your mind at any time.

For Adults

Agreement:

I agree that my information, stories, or images can be collected for the purpose of documenting and safeguarding this festival.

Signature:

Name (print):

Role (if any):

Date:

Contact (optional):

For Children (Under 18)

Child's Name:

Age:

Parent/Guardian's Name (print):

Relationship to Child:

Parent/Guardian's Signature:

Date:

Contact (optional):



“Traditional festivals are living heritage and safeguarding them isn’t just about saving the past; it’s about celebrating, sharing and passing culture on to future generations. My hope is that this toolkit gives tradition bearers the tools to preserve, protect and promote their cultural assets in ways they can truly own — and that strengthen and empower their communities.”

Yemisi Mokuolu, Creative and Cultural Industries
Development Expert, Hatch Ideas



The Capacity Development Lab in Nigeria is a partnership project between the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MTAC) and the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM). The project benefits from the expertise of Hatch Ideas and IGA Nigeria Ltd., and is supported by the EU Global Diaspora Facility (EUDiF), implemented by the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) and funded by the European Union.