

REPRESENTATIVE LIST OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF HUMANITY

**Deadline: 31 March 2025
for possible inscription in 2026**

*Instructions for completing the form are available at:
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/forms>*

A. State Party or States Parties

The Kingdom of Cambodia

B. Name of the element

B.1. Name of the element in the languages and scripts of the community(ies) concerned

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B.2. Name of the element in English

Traditional Khmer Wedding

C. Name of the communities, groups or individuals concerned

The traditional Khmer wedding is widely observed among Cambodians. The bearers of the element are Cambodians at large, whereas its practitioners are the *achar pelea* (shortened as

achar) (officiant priests), the acting agents for the bride's parents, known as *meba*, *neak plov* (match makers) and *maha* (appointed men who speaks on behalf of the groom's parents in the wedding ceremony), the traditional orchestra troupes, *neak phnuong*, sometimes called *khnae* or *neak sam ang* (costume and makeup specialists) and cooks. The representative communities, groups and individuals concerned include *achar*, *meba*, *neak plov chau maha*, traditional orchestra troupes, cooks and costume and makeup specialists from 18 different provinces of Cambodia namely Kandal, Kampong Cham, Kratie, Kampot, Koh Kong, Tboung Khmum, Pailin, Pursat, Prei Veng, Preah Vihear, Preah Sihanouk, Mondul Kiri, Ratanak Kiri, Siem Reap, Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Svay Rieng and Phnom Penh. Their names and locations are attached along with the consent forms.

1. General information about the element

For **Criterion R.1**, States **shall demonstrate that 'the element constitutes intangible cultural heritage** as defined in Article 2 of the Convention'.

1.1. Provide a brief description of the element that can introduce it to readers who have never seen or experienced it.

Not to exceed 300 words

Passed down for generations, the traditional Khmer wedding—known in Khmer as *arpia pipia*, *mongkol kar*, or simply *kar*—is widely observed as an auspicious ceremony in Khmer society. The wedding ceremony is normally preceded by two ancillary rituals and social practices—*chae chov* (“seeking the bride’s hand”) and *phchop piek* (“engagement”). These may take place months or even years before the wedding itself. The wedding ceremony is held on an auspicious date selected by a traditional astrologer who calculates the date, based on the birth dates of the bride and the groom. The wedding celebration is traditionally held at the bride’s home to formally accept the groom into the bride’s family and to gain social recognition. This acceptance requires the approval of both living parents and deceased ancestors, collectively known as *meba*. Through sophisticated rituals such as “picking areca flower”, “dowry procession”, *kart sork* (“hair cutting”), *bangvil popil* (“circling lit candles around” the couple) and *barch phka slar* (“showering areca flowers” over the couple), the celebration is intended to bring the newlywed blessings of good health, wealth, happiness, and fertility.

Historically, the celebration lasted for seven days. Today, two-day celebrations are widely observed, though one and three-day formats also occur. Families with sufficient means and a strong commitment to tradition may observe the full three-day ceremony with its complete set of rituals and social practices, whereas one-day ceremony condense the rites due to time and financial considerations.

The celebration features ritual performances, social practices, ample feasts and entertainment such as popular dance and music that honor and entertain both living relatives and deceased ancestors. As an auspicious rite (*mongkol kar*), all participants are expected to dress formally, especially in traditional attire. The bride and groom also wear different traditional costumes according to each sequential stage of the ceremony.

1.2. Who are the bearers and practitioners of the element? Are there any specific roles, including gender-related ones or categories of persons with special responsibilities for the practice and transmission of the element? If so, who are they and what are their responsibilities?

Not to exceed 100 words

Certain groups and individuals hold key roles in practicing and transmitting the element:

- Ritual specialists: This group includes the *achar pelea*, *neak plov*, *maha*, and *meba*, who lead, guide, and perform the ritual components of the ceremony.
- Musicians: These musicians play a special genre of music, known as *pleng kar* (wedding music) at the *achar*’s cue during each ritual sequence and provide accompaniment

throughout the ceremony.

- Costume and makeup specialists: They dress and prepare the bride, groom, bridesmaids, and groomsmen in accordance with each sequence of the ceremony.
- Cooks: They prepare food for ritual offerings and for participants.

1.3. *How are the knowledge and skills related to the element transmitted today?*

Not to exceed 100 words

Although there is no formal training concerning the element today, the knowledge and skills required are transmitted orally through the master-apprentice mechanism. The *achars* are, for example, always accompanied by assistants who take part in the wedding and learn from them through observation and participation. The methods and mechanisms are similar for the *neak phnuong*, the cooks and the traditional musicians. However, the Ministry of Cults and Religions has recently begun to provide short capacity building courses for *achars*. Moreover, the musicians can also be trained at a formal art school such as the Secondary School of Fine Arts.

1.4. *What social functions and cultural meanings does the element have nowadays for the communities concerned?*

Not to exceed 200 words

In Khmer society, the marriage of one's children is often a central parental wish. The wedding ceremony symbolizes filial respect, fosters harmony between generations, invites ancestral blessings and bestows protection upon the concerned families. Accordingly, the wedding ceremony not only satisfies living parents and relatives but also ritually appeases and honors deceased ancestors. Moreover, it plays a crucial role in welcoming and recognizing the newlyweds within their families and in society. The participants take part in the ceremony by contributing money and gifts to the newlyweds while bearing witness to their marriage. The marriage ceremony serves not only to form a new family but also to create and strengthen social bonds and networks. Through sophisticated ritual performances and social practices, the celebration is believed to bestow blessings of good health, wealth, happiness, and children upon the couple.

Moreover, the ceremony involves many participants—from relatives and officiants to wedding stylists and cooks, who contribute to the building and reinforcement of social relationships among friends and families, while also making a significant contribution to the socio-economic fabric through the consumption of services and goods.

1.5. *Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element is incompatible with existing international human rights instruments?*

Not to exceed 50 words

Nothing in this element is incompatible with existing international human rights instruments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, particularly Article 16, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; moreover, interfaith and inter-community marriages are accepted within Khmer tradition.

1.6. *Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element could be perceived as not compatible with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals?*

Not to exceed 50 words

Nothing in the element is perceived as not compatible with the requirement of mutual respect among communities, groups, and individuals. Instead, the element serves as a platform and occasion for gathering, unification and reconnection, demonstrating mutual respect and care among friends and relatives.

- 1.7. Can the State Party or States Parties confirm that nothing in the element could be perceived as not compatible with the requirement of sustainable development?

Not to exceed 50 words

Nothing in this element is incompatible with sustainable development. On the contrary, it supports job creation and local economic development with stakeholders including *achar*, cooks, costume and makeup stylists, and local businesses benefiting economically.

- 1.8. Are there customary practices governing access to the element? If yes, describe any specific measures that are in place to ensure their respect.

Not to exceed 100 words

There are no customary practices restricting access to the element. All members of society are free to engage with it and draw on it for their own benefit and social legitimacy, regardless of gender, age, social status, religious beliefs, or geographical location.

2. Contribution to visibility, awareness, dialogue and sustainable development

For **Criterion R.2**, the States **shall demonstrate that 'Inscription of the element will contribute to ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of the intangible cultural heritage and to encouraging dialogue, thus reflecting cultural diversity worldwide and testifying to human creativity'**. In addition, States are encouraged, with reference to Chapter VI of the Operational Directives, to recognize the interdependence between the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage and sustainable development.

Given its extensive nature, criterion R.2 will be assessed based on the information provided in the nomination file as a whole including the answers provided in this section.

- 2.1. Do communities concerned consider that the element contributes to the following?

- ☒ Ensuring visibility and awareness of the significance of intangible cultural heritage
- ☒ Encouraging dialogue
- ☒ Reflecting cultural diversity and testifying to human creativity

- 2.2. Do communities concerned consider that the element contributes to the following? (select only relevant options)

- ☐ Food security
- ☒ Health care
- ☒ Quality education
- ☒ Gender equality
- ☒ Inclusive economic development
- ☐ Environmental sustainability including climate change
- ☒ Peace and social cohesion
- ☐ Others (please specify):

- 2.3. Provide explanations in support of the statement(s) made above, as appropriate.

Not to exceed 200 words

Bearers, practitioners, and communities concerned expressed appreciation for the opportunity to present their heritage internationally through UNESCO's listing mechanism and felt that generations of safeguarding efforts had been recognized. The wedding ceremony also serves as a platform for dialogue, where a wide network of bearers, practitioners and communities exchange views on shared and diverse beliefs and practices, discuss current challenges, and coordinate safeguarding measures.

The wedding forges bonds between families and friends while strengthens neighborhood solidarity. Rooted in respect for ancestors, the ceremony sustains intergenerational continuity, reciprocity, and care, while feasts and convivial gatherings create opportunities for intergenerational learning, conflict mitigation, and collective support, contributing to local social stability. The wedding also contributes to physical, mental, and social well-being for families for whom marrying their children is a lifelong wish, while gaining relief by symbolically honoring and propitiating ancestors. Quality education and intergenerational transmission are central to the element's viability and occur through mentorships, rehearsals, and workshops in which skills associated with wedding such as ritual performances, music and wedding stylists are shared. Various stakeholders benefit economically, while the ceremony promotes gender equality by recognizing and valuing the contributions of women and men across preparation and performance.

2.4. States are encouraged to submit audiovisual materials that convey the communities' voice in support of the statements made above (optional).

☒ Materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) are submitted (referred to as 'R.2 materials')

3. Safeguarding measures

For **Criterion R.3**, States **shall demonstrate that 'safeguarding measures are elaborated that may protect and promote the element'**.

What safeguarding measures are put in place to protect and promote the element?

Include in your answer:

- the description of the safeguarding measures;
- the communities' role in the planning of measures described;
- the communities' role in the implementation of measures described.

Not to exceed 500 words

Amid rapid socio-economic change and pressures to modernize for economic gain, the traditional Khmer wedding faces over-commercialization and the erosion of its social and cultural significance. Several ritual performances, objects, and social practices (some dating to the Angkor civilization 9th-15th centuries) are now partially or fully neglected. In consultation with relevant stakeholders during the preparation of the nomination dossier, the following safeguarding measures for 2025–2029 were agreed.

1. Raising awareness and visibility

- Exhibitions: Organize annually on March 3 (National Culture Day) at national and provincial levels and at Cambodian embassies abroad. Rotate themes (ritual music, attire, ceremonial objects) to showcase diversity.
- Workshops, seminars, and lectures: Hold annually or biennially at the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MCFA), the Research Center of the Royal University of Fine Arts (RUFA), public and private high schools and universities, as part of the MCFA's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) awareness campaign.
- Publications and media: MCFA's ICH experts will lead research and publications on the element and encourage Provincial Departments of Culture and Fine Arts (PDCFA) to do the same, highlighting diverse local forms. Publish in print and digital formats, with public access via the MCFA's and RUFA's websites and on-site repositories. MCFA will also encourage public and private partners to produce documentaries and short video clips on varied practices and effective safeguarding, disseminated via broadcast and social media.

MCFA will allocate approximately USD30,000 annually and necessary staff and welcomes

partner support. Bearers, practitioners, and communities will contribute in-kind and, where possible, financially by participating in research, presentations, and local showcases.

2. Transmission

- Support hubs and apprenticeships: Sustain master-apprentice transmission in performance settings and at home. Provide targeted support, especially for musicians through instruments, mentorship, and advanced training coordinated by the Department of Performing Arts and PDCFAs. MCFA in collaboration with private sectors offer small grants for community-led trainings including wedding music, ritual performances as well as rehearsal spaces.

3. Research and documentation

- MCFA will promote systematic research and documentation in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, with results shared through exhibitions, peer-reviewed and publications, open digital repositories, and social media. All documentation will follow ethical standards, including informed consent, proper crediting of bearers, and community access to outputs.

4. Awards for best safeguarding practice

- MCFA will issue annual awards recognizing practitioners who safeguard traditional Khmer wedding practices and train the next generation. PDCFAs with participation and suggestion from local communities may nominate candidates; MCFA will evaluate submissions based on transparent criteria (impact, continuity, inclusivity, and innovation). Awardees will be honored on the National Culture Day with a Certificate of Recognition for Best Practice in the Safeguarding of ICH from possibly Prime Minister of the Kingdom.

5. Monitoring and coordination

- MCFA will establish a coordination team with RUFA, PDCFAs and communities to oversee implementation, collect participation data, and compile annual progress reports, including budget execution and lessons learned. Findings will inform adjustments to programming and resource allocation for the following year.

4. Community participation in the nomination process and consent

For Criterion R.4, States shall demonstrate that ‘the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent’.

- 4.1. *Describe how the communities, groups or individuals concerned have actively participated in all stages of the preparation of the nomination.*

Not to exceed 300 words

In line with UNESCO's core principles for listing ICH elements, which are also adopted by Cambodia, the MCFA research team consistently sought the free, prior and informed consent of the communities, groups, and individuals they visited while updating the National Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Cambodia. Inspired by Cambodian ICH elements already inscribed on UNESCO's Lists, practitioners, including ritual specialists, traditional wedding musicians, cooks, and wedding stylists, proposed that the MCFA nominate the traditional Khmer wedding for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Following the element's inclusion in Cambodia's National Inventory in 2019, the MCFA prepared the nomination dossier with active community participation through meetings, discussions, and interviews, as well as consultation workshops. Approximately 300 people, including 120 women, across 18 provinces were consulted to discuss contemporary social functions, cultural meanings, and safeguarding measures to ensure the element's viability and visibility. The final draft was then reviewed with selected representatives of communities and practitioners, as well as NGOs, academics, media, and relevant ministries, during a workshop

held on 11 March 2024 dedicated to finalizing the nomination file.

- ☒ Consent (written, audiovisual or any other way) to the nomination of the element from the communities, groups or individuals concerned is attached in support to the description above (referred to as 'consent materials')

4.2. Community organizations or representatives concerned

Contact person for the communities:

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): H.E. Mr.

Family name: CHHUM

Given name: Menghong

Institution/position: Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts/ Director General

Address: #227, Preah Norodom Blvd., Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamkar Mon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Telephone number: +855 95 688 868

Email address: menghong.arch@gmail.com

Other relevant information:

- ☒ Additional contact information for main community organizations or representatives, non-governmental organizations or other bodies concerned with the element are attached in a separate annex, and their details can be published on the website of the Convention as part of the nomination

5. Inventory

For Criterion R.5, States shall demonstrate that the element is identified and included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) in conformity with Articles 11 and 12 of the Convention.

5.1. Name of the inventory(ies) in which the element is included

Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Cambodia, 2019

5.2. Name of the office(s), agency(ies), organization(s) or body(ies) responsible for maintaining and updating that (those) inventory(ies), both in the original language and in translation when the original language is not English or French

The Directorate-General of Techniques for Cultural Affairs, the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, is responsible for maintaining and updating the inventory and its translation into English.

5.3. Reference number(s) and name(s) of the element in the relevant inventory(ies)

Reference number: 5.8

Name of the elements: Apea Pipea Khmer (Khmer Traditional Wedding)

5.4. Date of the element's inclusion in the inventory(ies)

2019

Is the information concerning the updating and periodicity of the inventory(ies), as well as the participation of communities, groups and NGOs concerned to the inventorying process, included in the periodic report on the implementation of the Convention?

- ☒ Yes, the information is included in the periodic report. Specify in the box below the year in which that

report was submitted

☐ No, the information is not included in the periodic report. Provide information in the box below

Not to exceed 200 words

2024

☒ An extract of inventory(ies) in English or in French and in the original language, if different, is submitted

6. Checklist for audiovisual materials

Confirm that the following audiovisual materials have been submitted:

- ☒ 10 recent photographs in high definition submitted
- ☒ Form ICH-07-photo is attached to grant rights for the 10 photographs submitted
- ☒ A video (from 5 to 10 minutes) is submitted
- ☒ Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the video submitted
- ☒ R.2 materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) submitted (*optional – with reference to section 2.3; audiovisual materials should last no more than ten minutes*)
- ☒ Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the R.2 materials submitted (*only if the materials are audiovisual*)
- ☒ Consent materials (written, audiovisual or any other way) submitted (*with reference to section 4.1; audiovisual materials should last no more than ten minutes*)
- ☒ Form ICH-07-video is attached to grant rights for the consent materials submitted (*only if the materials are audiovisual*)

7. Correspondence and signature

7.1. Designated contact person

Provide the contact details of a single person responsible for all correspondence concerning the nomination. For multinational nominations, provide complete contact information for one person designated by the States Parties as the main contact person for all correspondence relating to the nomination.

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.): H.E. Ms.

Family name: SARETH

Given name: Sreychanraksmeay

Institution/position: Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts/ Cambodian National Commission for UNESCO/
Secretary General

Address: #227, Preah Norodom Blvd., Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamkar Mon, Phnom Penh,
Cambodia

Telephone number: +855 12 556 488

Email address: cambonac@gmail.com

Other relevant
information:

7.2. Other contact persons (for multinational nomination only)

Provide below complete contact information for one person in each submitting State, other than the primary contact person identified above.

Title (Ms/Mr, etc.):
Family name:
Given name:
Institution/position:
Address:
Telephone number:
Email address:
Other relevant information:

7.3. Signature on behalf of the State Party or States Parties

Name:	PHOEURNG Sackona
Title:	Minister
Date:	20 September 2025
Signature:	

7.4. Name(s), title(s) and signature(s) of other official(s) (for multinational nominations only).

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