THE HIPAMS TOOLKIT

Community planning for sustainable development through intangible cultural heritage
Patachitra case study

Safeguarding heritage art and sustaining livelihoods

Overview

The HIPAMS project aimed to develop a research base helping communities in developing countries make a sustainable livelihood from their intangible cultural heritage (ICH)-related products or performances. HIPAMS are heritage-sensitive intellectual property and marketing strategies aiming at maximising benefits and minimising risks of promoting ICH-related products and performances in the market, hereby also safeguarding the heritage. The project was funded by a three-year British Academy grant (2018-2021). One of the project outputs is the HIPAMS planning toolkit that can be adapted and applied in other contexts.

This case study is about the Patachitra artists of West Bengal in India, who sing stories to accompany images painted on paper scrolls and other surfaces. The case study describes how Patachitra artists worked with an Indian NGO (Contact Base or Banglanatak.com), and an academic team based in Europe to develop HIPAMS strategies for maximising benefits and minimising risks of promoting their traditions in the market. This case study has been designed to be used in conjunction with the HIPAMS planning toolkit, but can also be used as a standalone case study and/or in conjunction with other case studies exploring how communities in developing countries make sustainable livelihoods from their ICH.

About the tradition and the community concerned

Patachitra is a form of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in India, practised by artists known as ‘Patuas’, or Chitrakaras. There are two main kinds of Patachitra art in India: Bengal Patachitra, which has its origins in a folk art style, and Odisha (Orissa) Patachitra, which has its origins in a more classical style.

In Naya village, Pingla Block at Paschim Medinipur, West Bengal, Patuas make several kinds of Bengal Patachitra art influenced by Santhal (indigenous) traditions, Kalighat (urban) traditions and folk art traditions. The most traditional expressions of this ICH involve a story painted on a sari-backed paper scroll performed through songs called ‘pater gaan’. Stories depicted on the scrolls can be religious or secular, portraying mythological tales or recent disasters or newsworthy events. They often focus on questions of just and moral behaviour, exploring the common humanity of Hindu, Islamic, Buddhist or Santhal perspectives.


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2 Information about the HIPAMS project can be found at hipamsindia.org.

3 The Santhal are an ethnic minority group living in Jharkhand, West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam in India.
Making a livelihood in changing circumstances

Historically, Patuas earned a living by going door-to-door in rural areas receiving gifts in kind for singing the story illustrated by the patachitra scroll. By the 1980s, demand for performances had dropped and some skills were lost; at the same time, artists sought new ways of making a living. They started selling scrolls and offering singing-storytelling performances for free to potential customers. The skills of making scrolls, painting with natural dyes and singing-storytelling in the Patua style were gradually revitalised after 2005.

With the assistance of contemporary Indian design specialists during this time, patuas diversified their products, painting story themes on T-shirts, sarees, teapots and umbrellas, as well as on bamboo products made in neighbouring villages. Government-funded rural craft hubs helped to provide training, and establish infrastructure (such as community resource centres) and marketing channels (such as a village festival, and help accessing trade fairs). Government and aid agencies have now commissioned Patuas to paint and sing stories about environmental programmes and public health issues, such as AIDS or domestic violence.

About 80 Patua families in the village now successfully support their families from their art. Patuas sell to local villagers, city-dwellers in India and international art-lovers. A local POTMaya festival and various third-party websites help Patuas sell their products. The better-known artists already sell to art collectors, researchers, galleries. They do pandal (festival) decorations and wall murals. Patachitra from Naya has been shown in international galleries and museums (such as the V&A in London) and on Discovery Channel. The more well-known artists have established relationships with galleries or NGOs etc. Others also want to build their own established clientele. Other patuas want to expand their markets nationally and internationally as well. The demands of brokers have increased so artists want to do more of their own marketing, but only some of them had their own social media pages.

Strategies chosen by the community

Sixteen Patachitra artists (ten of whom were women) worked directly with the HIPAMS project team using methodologies such as forum theatre and interactive workshops to develop a number of strategies. These focused on four main areas: maintaining heritage skills repertoire (the range of skills and knowledge identified as important by the community), community empowerment, reputation (of the community and their art), and heritage-sensitive innovation. The strategies proposed were then discussed with the broader community and implemented.

Monitoring and evaluation were undertaken during the project. Baseline surveys were done before the interventions. At the end of the project, individual evaluations were done with 14 artists. A final event was organized in Naya during early 2021 at which 40 Patuas including 18 women, shared their experiences of the project outcomes.

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4 The artists were assisted by a number of external initiatives, including the Art for Life project in 2005, run by a local NGO (Contact Base or Banglanatak.com) with the support of the Zonal Cultural Centre.
5 See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8yf53TlZ0LI
6 In September 2013, the Government of West Bengali (GWB) Department of Micro and Small Scale Enterprises & Textiles (MSME&T) and UNESCO funded the development of 10 rural craft hubs (see www.ruralcrafthub.com) with the goal to ensure socio-economic inclusion of the rural poor by converting the traditional craft skills of West Bengal into viable enterprises. This was designed and implemented by Banglanatak.com.
Maintaining heritage skills repertoire

Pataus can maintain the skills and knowledge to make traditional patachitra scrolls and develop natural dyes. Composing and performing ‘pater gaan’ songs, is a key aspect of the heritage, which distinguishes Bengal Patachitra from other forms of the art. Women are now playing a leading role. There has been a declining interest among young men in learning the arts associated with ‘pater gaan’, even though it was traditionally a male activity.

Through the HIPAMS process (see the ‘heritage skills repertoire’ tool in the HIPAMS toolkit), the artists identified the importance of continued training in singing for boys and girls. The ‘roots and fruits’ tool in the HIPAMS toolkit helped artists in discussing the relation between traditions and modern products. This encouraged artists to reflect on how to communicate information about the traditions to their consumers, and the value of linking the songs to products.

Community empowerment

The HIPAMS project provided training about artists’ rights and digital marketing methods that artists could use to explain their heritage and their art to customers. The training helped to clarify what rights the artists had including copyright, and how they could use the geographical indication name and logo for Bengal Patachitra that they had registered through their artists’ association called Chitrataru. Based on this training, the Pataus designed two storytelling scrolls to illustrate basic information about artists’ rights including copyright and the geographical indication under commission from the HIPAMS project. These will be used for artists’ rights training in other contexts.

Pataus freely share their designs among themselves, but believed it was unfair when galleries asked other pataus to copy their work for a lower price. After the rights training they understood that such activity infringed their copyright in original works. They therefore decided to develop an internal code of ethics to raise awareness about their rights and reduce the problem among themselves. They also worked with the HIPAMS team to develop a Patachitra Art Code, a code of ethics explaining their rights and how they want their individual art and collective heritage to be treated by others such as gallery owners, publishers, film-makers and so on.

The rights training has also encouraged discussion about signing of works, and how that relates to their traditions. Signing a scroll relates to the right of attribution found in copyright law. About a third of the artists now sign scrolls which are either unique designs, or when customers request them to sign. Signing a scroll can increase the reputation of the individual artist. However, others prefer not to do so as they would like to promote the artform collectively without emphasising individual authorship, as part of their tradition. While in law artists enjoy copyright over their original works whether or not they sign the scroll, it is easier to prove authorship if a work is signed. This individual and collective response to signing a scroll illustrates the importance of sensitivity to local traditions when doing intellectual property rights training, and not prescribing a particular approach from outside.

The HIPAMS diagnostic process alerted artists to the fact that they were doing little collective marketing. With the assistance of Banglanatak dot com, they set up a website for the community of artists and included information about Patachitra heritage, Naya village and individual artists on the site. A Facebook page was also set up for community-led promotion.8

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8 The website is www.bengalpatachitra.com and the Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/bengalpatachitra
Building reputation

Income is seasonal, especially for less well-established artists, and generally highest in the festival season (winter), when handicraft fairs are held across the country. The POTMaya festival which is held in the village is also a big crowd puller. The artists now plan to extend the festival from 3 to 5 days to increase its impact.

Visitors to the village often take pictures of the artists in their workshops. Patuas liked the exposure when photos of them were being shared by visitors online, but felt they had little control. The HIPAMS team designed a notice for visitors to the festival, and at other times, explaining the need for photographers to mention artists’ names and the village, and specific hashtags- #BengalPatachitra, #Pingla so that artists are recognized and can expand their customer base. The team also designed a notice requesting that all photographers in the village share their work under a CC-BY-NC creative commons license unless they ask specific permission for commercial use. The CC-BY-NC license allows free sharing as long as the artist is attributed. This notice was displayed in the village to support artists requesting permissions from visitors.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected artists badly, but some were able to use the opportunity to do good. Swarna Chitrakar, an experienced artist well known for her expertise in painting on traditional themes as well as social issues, developed a 7-frame Patachitra and a song on COVID-19 to raise awareness about the health crisis and precautionary measures that should be taken. Swarna represented the virus as a bright red monster in her scroll painting. With the help of her daughter, she made a video of the Patachitra narration and sent it to her contacts via WhatsApp. Her contacts shared it on platforms like Facebook and Instagram and reached over a million people. It was also included on YouTube. The scroll was widely covered in the media, e.g. the Telegraph India and the Times of India, and on the UNESCO website about responses to COVID-19 globally.

After the digital social media training, other artists in Naya, whose income was badly affected by the pandemic, were able to diversify their online offering. They started to earn money from performing and teaching online through YouTube and Facebook. Collective and individual online promotion of Bengal Patachitra helped to address the problem that most information about patachitra heritage online had initially been about another style of the art, Odisha Patachitra. This helped to raise awareness about the specific traditions of Bengal Patachitra.

Heritage-sensitive innovation

The HIPAMS team identified the need for explanatory labels and better, eco-friendly packaging to explain the value of the heritage underlying the Patachitra products, and enable more appropriate pricing of some of them. The community had for some time been experimenting with different packaging approaches, but during the HIPAMS project they were able to implement a common
They designed heritage-sensitive locally-themed eco-friendly packaging, with the assistance of the HIPAMS team, incorporating QR code stickers that created links between painted products and singing performances each artist had placed online. The QR codes helped artists to demonstrate linkages between ‘pater gaan’ songs and products, even after their sale, thus raising awareness of the heritage of Patachitra and its value. The packaging also promoted the reputation of the heritage by including the geographical indication label, Bengal Patachitra. Increased attention to singing associated with product sales has had a safeguarding impact because it has encouraged more boys to learn the singing traditions.

**Evaluation of the interventions**

Some of the outcomes of the HIPAMS strategies will be long term, and others will be visible in the short term. So far, the project has done an analysis of short-term effects based on a survey of fourteen of the artists most involved in the project and an evaluation using some general indicators. This survey was merely indicative, as the larger community of artists in Naya was also involved in the project through training, use of visitor notices, art codes and packaging. Further analysis will have to be done at a later stage.

Overall, the price of Patachitra products increased 5-10% over the course of the project; and an increase in the volume of sales has resulted in increased income for the artists in spite of the pandemic. It is not clear that these outcomes can wholly be attributed to interventions under the HIPAMS project, of course. Nevertheless, more collective marketing and promotional activities were undertaken within the scope of the project: the setting up of a collective website, the development of an art code and the development of packaging and labelling which is being used by artists. Twenty seven artists have now registered as users of the Geographical Indication ‘Bengal Patachitra’, compared to none at the beginning of the project.

After the HIPAMS interventions, the Patuas surveyed expressed satisfaction with several key outcomes. First, they were much more aware of their rights as artists and empowered by this. The signboards supported artists’ requests to visitors for permission capturing photo or recording video and uploading their photos on social media. It also improved their capacity to negotiate in business transactions, where they were supported by the art codes. For example, when artist Suman Chitrakar asked a customer how they would use his artwork, he learned that the customer was planning commercial use of his patachitra design on a candlestick. Knowing his rights under copyright law, Suman was able to negotiate a higher price for the scroll. Within the community, there remains some debate about the benefits or disadvantages of signing of scrolls, with individual artists choosing different strategies. The HIPAMS process does not provide a packaged external solution to such questions, but provided individual artists with the tools to balance considerations of legal rights and their enforceability, and traditions around signing of scrolls, taking individual and collective interests into account.

Second, the Patuas surveyed were also satisfied with their improved online promotion skills, which helped in mitigating the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on their businesses. They were able to reach larger audiences, promoting Patachitra and the artist community. They were also able to create new market offerings online such as paid online workshops, to participate in online exhibitions of their products and received orders by phone much more frequently and effectively than before. Most of them are now quite comfortable in creating such online activities. As Sushama Chitrakar explained,
attend workshop but now I can do all these online. We were unaware about online marketing before, HIPAMS has taught us to do that. We have learnt that business can also be done online by posting pictures of our product.

The project has inspired discussions in the community about the need for more unified approaches not only in online marketing, but also in the offline environment. Occasionally, visitors to the village are escorted upon their arrival by some artists to their homes and people buy products from them before getting to see the work of others. Community members have thus suggested that a map can be placed at the entry of the village to help visitors make sense of the richness of the offer. Or, a volunteer group which may guide the artists through the houses of the artists. These discussions are ongoing as they seek a common solution.

Finally, the packaging solutions have been welcomed and used by Patuas to protect their products in transit. The designs and labels link the value of the product more firmly to the traditions that inspired it. Since consumers have reacted well to the new packaging, this has not only increased the value and reputation of the products themselves, it has also helped to raise awareness about the heritage. As Soniya Chitrakar explained, after selling a saree online through the Facebook Live sale during the pandemic,

The customer said that she loved the sarees as well as the packaging that had information on Patachitra. She said she is going to keep the packaging along with the sarees.

Designing heritage-sensitive marketing strategies can not only improve value and understanding of heritage products, but also contribute to safeguarding. Reinforcing the link between Pater Gaan songs and products through online events, packaging and labels has for example encouraged young boys to better appreciate and seek to learn the songs that form an important part of the tradition within the village.

It is not easy to disentangle the effects of the HIPAMS project interventions from other actions, and the impacts of external events, including the COVID-19 pandemic. Almost all the artists were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting lockdown. Many fairs and festivals were cancelled, and people could not visit the village, so this source of income declined. However, overall the price of Patachitra products increased by 5-10% over the course of the project; and new products were developed. This has resulted in increased income for the artists in spite of the pandemic. The hope for the future is that when the pandemic is over, the measures put in place will help to safeguard the heritage and improve livelihoods.


Baul-Fakiri music case study

Safeguarding heritage art and sustaining livelihoods

Overview
The HIPAMS project aimed to develop a research base helping developing-country communities make a sustainable livelihood from their intangible cultural heritage (ICH)-related products or performances. HIPAMS are heritage-sensitive intellectual property and marketing strategies aiming at maximising benefits and minimising risks of promoting ICH-related products and performances in the market, hereby also safeguarding the heritage. The project was funded by a three-year British Academy grant (2018-2021). One of the project outputs is the HIPAMS planning toolkit that can be adapted and applied in other contexts. This case study has been designed to be used in conjunction with the HIPAMS planning toolkit, but can also be used as a standalone case study and/or in conjunction with other case studies exploring how communities in developing countries make sustainable livelihoods from their ICH.

Baul-Fakiri artists express their joyful, esoteric devotional philosophy through music and song. This case study describes how a group of Baul-Fakiri artists in West Bengal, India worked with an Indian NGO (Contact Base or Banglanatak.com), and an academic team based in Europe to co-create and implement HIPAMS promoting sustainable development through their art.

About the tradition and the community concerned
Baul music is a shared heritage between India and Bangladesh, and as a result common safeguarding and promotional activities are made more difficult. Significantly, the UNESCO inscription of Baul Music in the Representative List of the ICH of Humanity was proposed by Bangladesh, and not India. Our work is with Bauls in West Bengal. Bauls in West Bengal hold regular gatherings in places like Joydev Kenduli and Santiniketan in Birbhum district, and Asannagar, Chapra, Gorbhanga in Nadia district.

Senior artist Khaibar Fakir.
Photo: Banglanatak dot com, 2018 https://www.baulfakiri.com/artist/khaibar-fakir/

The esoteric devotional (bhakti) tradition of the Bauls is focused on achieving sadhana or self-realisation. Bauls focus their lives on realizing the Divine through the human body rather than religious texts. When someone becomes Baul they renounce formal religion, but Baul philosophy has

9 Case study developed by the HIPAMS India team. Thanks to Kavya Ramalingam for research assistance on the case studies. This case study can be freely used under a CC-BY creative commons license. When using the toolkit, please attribute us by stating that “This case study was authored by HIPAMS India and is licensed under a CC-BY license.” Re-use of photographs and images should be accompanied by the captions citing photographer and artist name.

10 Information about the HIPAMS project can be found at hipamsindia.org.

11 In this case study, for brevity, we use the term Baul to cover Bauls and Fakirs.
been influenced by various religious ideas and movements including Sufism, tantric Hindu and Buddhist philosophies, and Vaishnavism. Bauls believe in ‘jinda mara’, or overcoming all greed, and that God dwells within the human body. They reject some social norms such as the caste system, sectarianism, and discrimination, but after initiation, do not separate themselves from broader society.

Singing is a key component of Baul spiritual practice, and a way of expressing their philosophy. Some Bauls perform as a group with many different instruments, not just the traditional single-stringed ektara. Their songs are generally short compositions of three to four verses with a refrain, ending in a signature line revealing the name of the lyricist and sometimes his/her Guru. The songs are the vehicle for sharing the Baul philosophy with others, and are written in local dialects, but they are highly metaphorical in nature, and opaque in varying degrees to their audiences. This metaphorical language is related to the ‘intentional language’ of tantric Buddhist Carya songs (10-12 centuries CE), and the enigmatic language of other esoteric tantric Indian traditions. For example, the body can be represented in a song as a house, bird-cage or tree. This alternative understanding of the body is a major spiritual focus for Bauls.

Making a livelihood in changing circumstances
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Bauls were often criticised or marginalised in their local communities. Gradually, they became more widely celebrated for their music and their philosophy of love and universal harmony, perhaps most famously by the Indian poet and composer Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941). In the 1960s, Baul music was popularised in the West by artists like Bob Dylan and Peter Gabriel. In south Asia today, Baul music is now a popular genre that features on the radio and in popular TV programmes and films and it is well known around the world. Singers like Purna Das Baul, Paban Das Baul, Satyananda, Late Gour Khyapa, Late Tarak Khyapa are renowned singers having global audience.

Increased public appreciation has opened up new opportunities for Bauls to earn a livelihood, beyond the traditional practice of madhukari (literally, honey gathering, or asking for alms), although Bauls do not seek material wealth. Today, many Bauls perform in private houses and at events in cities and towns; a few enjoy international recognition.

Making a livelihood from paid performances brings fresh challenges, however. Increased interest in Baul music and philosophy has led some researchers or film-makers to reveal or misrepresent private aspects of Baul beliefs and practices, which can cause Bauls both reputational and physical harm. Bauls do not always have sufficient negotiating power in relations with festival organisers or private clients. They face greater competition from performers who have no link with Baul philosophy, but have learned the songs from recordings without knowledge of the context or content. Bauls abhor discrimination, but the situation of women within the Baul community is not completely equal to that of men; the sadhana\(^\text{12}\) remains largely male oriented. Nevertheless, today Baulanis (female Bauls) are performing beyond their districts and also on national stages. Some of them are also travelling abroad to perform.

Strategies chosen by the community
The Baul-Fakiri artists involved in the HIPAMS project wanted to ensure that all of their fellow community members have opportunities to perform and earn a basic livelihood. For the project, 26 artists (including four women) worked with the HIPAMS project team using methodologies such as Theatre in Development and interactive workshops to develop a number of strategies. These

\(^{12}\) The word ‘sadhana’ refers to the Bauls’ disciplined and dedicated practice or learning.
strategies focused on four main areas: maintaining heritage skills repertoire (the range of skills and knowledge identified as important by the community), community empowerment, reputation (of the community and their art), and heritage-sensitive innovation.

Monitoring and evaluation were undertaken during the project. Baseline surveys were done before the interventions. At the end of the project in early 2021, individual evaluations were done with 14 artists. A broader group of artists was invited to give feedback at two final events. At the event at Bannabagram Baul Ashram, Gushkara, 47 artists including nine women participated, sharing their experiences of the project outcomes.

**Maintaining heritage skills repertoire**

Bauls face some challenges in maintaining their heritage skills repertoire: not all Bauls can easily access the training provided by Gurus today, and some of the traditional instruments are less widely played. Bauls develop an understanding of their philosophy and practice under guidance from a Guru or Mursid. At each of the steps in this process, Bauls learn new kinds of knowledge, some of which is secret to them; this knowledge is usually expressed in metaphorical terms through their songs and poems. Learning the deeper aspects of the tradition, its philosophical underpinnings, takes many years. Transmission of Baul heritage within the community is changing, in some areas, however, where Bauls sometimes learn the songs and music from cassettes and CDs before seeking out a Guru, who may live some distance away. Bauls need to be supported in their training. There are fewer good lyricists now within the Baul community but there are living Mahanjans (lyricists who have written thousands of songs). Many Baul singers do not know the names of the Mahajans who should be credited for the songs. Fewer instrument makers are available to make traditional instruments.

Baul musicians in West Bengal have been working for some years to develop their own safeguarding strategies, with the assistance of various NGOs. Regular training programs have been organised in initiatives supported by Banglanatak dot com. Subhadra Sharma, Rina Das, Arati Biswas are leading Baulanis. During the HIPAMS process, artists considered ways to keep the traditional skills of musicians and lyricists alive, and may wish to innovate in regard to songs. Artists thus supported ongoing training for Baul performers, especially women, in centralised training venues, but also wanted increased training by Gurus in their localities. Training could promote the use of local dialects and ensure that traditional instruments can be made and played.

More attention could be paid to linking the UNESCO inscription with Bauls in West Bengal. Promotion of specialist festivals and making links to the UNESCO inscription could also help expand the market for traditional music and songs. The HIPAMS team thus developed a notice for the non-commercial Baul-Fakiri Utsav (festival) promoting this link, and supported artists in doing the same on their websites and social media. However, use of the logo itself by the community for such purposes has been hampered.
because of the strict rules for its use that involve an application through the National Commission for UNESCO.\textsuperscript{13}

Community empowerment and governance

Bauls are informally organized to some extent into Akhras under individual Gurus, for learning and exchange, which helps in transmission of heritage. They do not have collective community-run organizations to protect their rights and interests. These rights are not always respected. For example, many artists find that they are not paid the agreed amount after a performance, and clients sometimes change arrangements at the last minute. Also, photographs of famous artists have been used to promote events at which they are not invited to perform. Awareness regarding such rights infringements is also low among the Bauls.

It is expensive to enforce legal rights in court. After receiving training about the rights of artists, artists worked with the HIPAMS team to develop a Baul/Fakiri code of ethics for event organizers, publishers, film-makers and researchers. For example, the Code says that:

People who organise music events and performances can help us by:

1. Respecting our Baul heritage, both music and philosophy
2. Telling people about the meaning and value of our Baul heritage
3. Not misrepresenting us or revealing our secret and sacred knowledge
4. Treating us with respect
5. Paying us fairly and as agreed for our performances
6. Attributing us and acknowledging our contributions
7. Not advertising events using our names and images when we are not performing there
8. Not engaging performers who say they are Bauls, when they are not

The HIPAMS team helped the artists promote the code with different stakeholders and on the community website (see below). The artists hope it will help them to raise awareness about their rights, and help them to be treated fairly and respectfully by external stakeholders. The HIPAMS project also devised a model contract that Baul artists could use in negotiating with promoters.

Building reputation

Bauls are not very interested in setting up their own organizations or in collective promotion, being more focused on the individual links between Gurus and their followers. However, they do find externally organized websites and festivals useful for promotion and networking. Because Bauls have no overarching community organization, various NGOs have supported Bauls in collective promotion of Baul music. These include the West Bengal’s Government Rural Craft & Cultural Hubs of West Bengal’s (RCCHWB) project,\textsuperscript{14} Banglanatak.com,\textsuperscript{15} Sahajiya,\textsuperscript{16} Marfat and the Daricha Foundation.\textsuperscript{18} These efforts by external stakeholders are not coordinated, and most of the online promotion is not done by Bauls.

At the beginning of the HIPAMS project, artists expressed the need to control their online promotion better because audience members sometimes post bad quality recordings of performances online, which affects their reputation. While some artists are internationally acclaimed stars who can be easily reached by prospective clients, most Baul artists have limited digital or social media skills and

\textsuperscript{13} See for example https://ich.unesco.org/en/8-steps-for-patronage-00402
\textsuperscript{14} See http://rcchbengal.com/art/BAUL-AND-FAKIR
\textsuperscript{15} See in particular the website www.folklibrary.com
\textsuperscript{16} http://sahajiya.org/
\textsuperscript{17} http://marfat.in/what-we-do/preservation-of-folk-heritage
\textsuperscript{18} See http://www.daricha.org/sub_genre.aspx?ID=52&Name=Baul-Fakir
find it difficult to promote themselves online. None of the respondents use any digital payment methods at this stage, they are more comfortable with bank transfers. The HIPAMS project thus provided training on digital storytelling and social media skills so that artists could create stories about their work and share on social media.\(^{19}\) With artist agreement, a community website was set up by Banglanatak dot com on which artists could share performances and contact details, with links to the art code to promote ethical treatment of performers.\(^{20}\) It also aimed to promote traditional Akhras and Baul festivals as cultural destinations.

Under normal circumstances, Baul artists depend on visibility at fairs and festivals and word-of-mouth promotional opportunities to make a living. Bauls from all over West Bengal and even Bangladesh have historically gathered at Poush Mela, an annual festival in Santiniketan in late December.\(^{21}\) This is useful for artists, not only to earn money, but for networking with each other and potential sponsors. Baul Festivals take place all around the year across West Bengal and many of them are large and notable. A Baul Fakir Utsav\(^{22}\) has been held in Kolkata since 2004, featuring Bauls and Fakirs from both West Bengal and Bangladesh. Since 2011 a Village festival has been held in Gorbhanga in Nadia to promote the singers and musicians and popularize the village as cultural tourism destination. In 2019, the festival took place in the Tepantar village in Bardhaman\(^{23}\) This festival had a small social media presence and a website, but no Tripadvisor entry at the start of the project.

During the HIPAMS project, the Baul-Fakiri Utsav (festival) was promoted through the community website and Tripadvisor. Visitors to the festivals were encouraged to share photos, crediting the artist and using common hashtags such as #BaulFakiri and #BaulMela.

No trademark or geographical indication has been registered by the Baul community in India to date, and they currently have no need for such a registration. The Baul name is well known internationally, however, and is being used commercially by third parties. On the WIPO trademark database, the HIPAMS team found that there were 133 entries using the name Baul in August 2019; there are also trademark registrations in Europe and India using the word. None of these appear to be derogatory towards or misrepresenting the Baul community. Therefore no action was taken to challenge such registrations. Further monitoring of this situation may be needed.

**Heritage-sensitive innovation**

The commercial demand for staged performances, professional competition among performers, and the availability of inexpensive audio recordings, have led to greater diversification of Baul-Fakirs’ musical repertoires and encouraged new compositions.\(^{24}\) These innovations have not significantly

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\(^{19}\) See [http://hipamsindia.org/community/baul-and-fakir/](http://hipamsindia.org/community/baul-and-fakir/)

\(^{20}\) See [https://baulfakiri.com/](https://baulfakiri.com/)

\(^{21}\) See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poush_Mela](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Poush_Mela)

\(^{22}\) See [http://baulfakirutsav.in](http://baulfakirutsav.in)


\(^{24}\) [https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/currency-crunch-on-baul-lips/cid/1320710](https://www.telegraphindia.com/states/west-bengal/currency-crunch-on-baul-lips/cid/1320710)
reduced the spiritual significance of the Baul traditions for the community, since artists distinguish clearly between different kinds of performances: participatory gatherings at homes and in ashrams; ritually significant events held in honour of a specific Guru; and commercial events for the general public. In the course of the HIPAMS project, artists created many innovative compositions and performances, including performances highlighting the value of traditional instruments.

Evaluation of the interventions

In the evaluation interviews, artists confirmed that they had been made more aware about their rights as artists through the HIPAMS workshops, including the importance of being attributed when photos and videos of their performances were shared. They reported that they have found the Art Code useful in negotiating with clients. Using the model contract for performances, artists have increased use of written and audio contracts (depending on literacy levels) to record agreements with event organizers. Knowledge of their rights has increased the confidence of artists. As Rina Das Baul reported,

*This project taught us to claim our rights. Last year I did a program with Akash 8. They called me but they did not pay me. Even after asking for it innumerable times they did not give me the payment. Previously we were unable to communicate with people. We had fear of talking to unknown people. Now we are able to do that.*

Only one of the respondents noted he prefers to keep his relationships with clients informal, based on goodwill. Some event organizers have objected to the use of contracts and prefer to sign artists who do not require a contract (or, in their words, who do not have the ‘tantrums’ of contract). Working conditions for Bauls may improve when more of the artists request contracts.

The artists surveyed welcomed the online sites and platforms, and promotional videos, sharing information about their work and promoting the festivals, although these were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, their own efforts regarding promotion were done on an individual basis, and this was supported by the digital storytelling training. Half of the artists surveyed said that their social media skills have improved considerably after undergoing the HIPAMS digital storytelling training. While before the project their use of social media was minimal, nearly a third of the respondents used social media frequently for marketing and promotion by the end. Of the 14 respondents, 11 now have Facebook accounts, four have YouTube channels, two are on Instagram. As Sadhu Das Baul explained,

*We have received training for the online platform from the [HIPAMS] workshops which has benefitted us. Now we can host live programs in facebook. I received the knowledge of Instagram from these workshops.*

However, three of the respondents are not yet on any social media platforms and a third of the respondents make minimal use of digital storytelling and a fifth of them still use social media very seldom for promotion. Only 35% of the artists surveyed use hashtags with their posts.

Baul artists continued to place great importance on training younger artists in the Baul philosophy and art, spending considerable time on educational work in this regard. This commitment was reinforced by the project, and by the pandemic. Most (85%) of those surveyed said they make it a point to talk about Baul music, philosophy, name of the composer of the particular song, genre of

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25 HiPAMS collective information sharing was done through [www.baulfakiri.com](http://www.baulfakiri.com), and a collective Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/westbengalbaul](https://www.facebook.com/westbengalbaul)
the song that they are performing and also the meaning to the audience. This, and information accessible on the website, helps to raise awareness of the heritage associated with Baul music. Online interactivity creates opportunities to share this information more widely and inspires artists to improve. Pradyut Bala said,

*We are now able to share our performances for the global audience. We can also share our thoughts and needs on social media. People are able to know about us. I have created a YouTube channel. Without which I wouldn’t have been able to share my performances. I even upload the videos of my skill transmission trainings. The appreciation in the public platform inspires us to perform better.*

It is not easy to disentangle the effects of the HIPAMS project interventions from other activities of artists and others, and the impacts of external events, including the pandemic. After the project, nearly 60% of participating artists who were interviewed for the evaluation said that their fees for performances had increased. However, performance opportunities at festivals and events had decreased due to COVID-19, reducing total earnings. The digital storytelling training done under the HIPAMS project created new opportunities for online earning. Artists reported, however, that the income from online performances was still low, compared to in-person events. The hope for the future is that when the pandemic is over, the measures put in place will help to safeguard the heritage and improve livelihoods.

**More information**


Knight, Lisa I. ‘Contradictory Lives: Baul Women in India and Bangladesh’ (2011). OUP.


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UNESCO, Mid-term evaluation, Rural Craft and Cultural Hubs (UNESCO 2018)

Overview

The HIPAMS project aimed to develop a research base helping developing-country communities make a sustainable livelihood from their intangible cultural heritage (ICH)-related products or performances. HIPAMS are heritage-sensitive intellectual property and marketing strategies aiming at maximising benefits and minimising risks of promoting ICH-related products and performances in the market, hereby also safeguarding the heritage. The project was funded by a three-year British Academy grant (2018-2021). One of the project outputs is the HIPAMS planning toolkit that can be adapted and applied in other contexts. This case study has been designed to be used in conjunction with the HIPAMS planning toolkit, but can also be used as a standalone case study and/or in conjunction with other case studies exploring how communities in developing countries make sustainable livelihoods from their ICH.

This case study is about the Chau dancers and mask makers of Purulia, West Bengal in India. Purulia Chau dance is a dynamic acrobatic dance performed with elaborate masks. The case study describes how Purulia Chau dancers and mask makers worked with an Indian NGO (Contact Base or Banglanatak.com), and an academic team based in Europe to develop HIPAM strategies for maximising benefits and minimising risks of promoting their traditions in the market.

Chau dancer Binod Singh Mura performing at Nimdih, Purulia. Photo: Charlotte Waelde 2018

About the tradition and the community concerned

Chau dance is a form of dance drama inscribed in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2010. There are three main styles of Chau dance found in eastern India: Mayurbhanj, Seraikella and Purulia Chau.

What distinguishes Purulia Chau from the other types of Chau is its use of dynamic acrobatic movements, elaborate masks and demonstrations of bravery (Rongbaaji). It belongs to the tandava (characteristically masculine, energetic) tradition as found in Indian classical dances. Even the epic heroines (such as Sita or Draupadi) take on more masculine features when depicted by the male dancers. The dance moves include somersaults, acrobatics, and animal and bird-like movements (known as chaal). In Purulia, Chau dancers mainly come from the

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26 Case study developed by the HIPAMS India team. Thanks to Kavya Ramalingam for research assistance on the case studies. This case study can be freely used under a CC-BY creative commons license. When using the toolkit, please attribute us by stating that “This case study was authored by HIPAMS India and is licensed under a CC-BY license.” Re-use of photographs and images should be accompanied by the captions citing photographer and artist name.

27 Information about the HIPAMS project can be found at hipamsindia.org.
Balarampur, Arsha, Jhalda, Bundwan, Purulia-II, Baghmundi and Barabazar blocks. The 115 families who make masks used for Purulia Chau are found mainly in the Charida village in Baghmundi block.

A Pala (or play) performance of Chau tells stories from Hindu mythology, usually promoting moral and ethical values and portraying the triumph of good over evil. Purulia Chau dance is particularly associated with the Chait Parab that is celebrated in the festive spaces of local Shiva temples in Purulia around April or May every year. Here, the elaborate ritual of Gajan (or Charak), devoted to Lord Shiva, is observed. Chau serves as a form of entertainment for the devotees who stay up all night as part of the Chait Parab ritual.

The plays are performed in open areas or on stages according to specific choreographies. A narrator generally makes an initial introduction, and then during each part of the dance performance, Jhumur singers introduce the characters and storyline, and then leave the stage. Traditional instruments used to accompany the dances include the Dhamsa, Dhol, Bheri and Charchari (percussion instruments), Shehnai and Banshi (aerophone instruments), Manjira or Kartaal (cymbals) as well as Tikra and Nagra, Mahuri, Sanai and flute.

Purulia Chau dancers wear costumes and masks depicting their character by means of standardised features, colours and designs (Chatterjee, 2019: 228). The masks are made in the village of Charida, and fitted onto dancers after purchase. Masks are made by hand on a base of wood, covered by cloth, paper and glue, covered with clay. Early masks were made in wood and clay, which was painted, but about seventy years ago artists started adding glass beads, laces and wooden trinkets, and a decade later plastic straws and beads.

Making a livelihood in changing circumstances

Outside the ritual of Gajan, Chau dance is performed for entertainment to a wide variety of audiences in India and abroad. Traditional performances are still popular in rural and urban festivals. A new market, especially among rural audiences, has emerged for innovative Chau performances, influenced by Bollywood. Chau dance also featured in recent Bollywood or Tollywood movies such as Barfi! (2012), Lootera (2013) and Jagga Jasoos (2017). New kinds of performances have been created around historical and contemporary themes such as the Kargil War, the Santhal Rebellion or issues such as dowry, health and hygiene, some of which were commissioned by government agencies. Chau dances have been created based on Macbeth and Robin Hood.

Contemporary performances may be shorter, use spoken narration instead of singing during the performances, rely on pre-recorded music or modern musical instruments, adapt the dance grammar and change the traditional storylines (as in the case of ‘comedy’ Chau). Innovation in Chau performances has been driven partly by consumer demand, and partly by cost. Skilled singers have become more expensive to employ because specialised Jhumur performances now give them greater visibility and higher pay. For cost reasons and to make a more contemporary (and louder) sound for popular performances, pre-recorded music and contemporary instruments such as the Casio (keyboard synthesiser) have become more widely used. Use of the Casio enables musicians to rest, helping them to perform through the night. To attract new audiences, dancers are doing more acrobatic stunts and masks have become so large and ornate they sometimes hamper mobility.

Masks and costumes required to tell new stories may be significantly different from the ones which traditionally represent Gods and Goddesses, so these changes have also affected mask making. Aside from the market for dancers, Purulia Chau masks have become popular as home décor, as

28 The Hindi and Bengali film industries in India.
artworks, or as pandal\textsuperscript{29} decorations. The art of mask-making has gained a status of its own, with new masks such as kathakali masks\textsuperscript{30} becoming popular among collectors and art enthusiasts. These are solely for decoration in homes and are in high demand in the market. Charida mask makers also make idols for Durga Puja.

Chau is traditionally a male-only dance form, but young girls are joining the tradition today and recently two women's teams have been formed in Purulia. Mask making is still largely a male occupation, with women performing assistance roles.

These changes create new opportunities for dancers and the Chau mask making community, and maintain audience engagement and interest, but some of them may also pose risks to the meaning and value of Purulia Chau within the community, the safety of dancers and to the maintenance of the heritage skills repertoire.

**Strategies chosen by the community**

Thirteen Chau dancers (including 1 woman) and twelve Chau mask makers (including 2 women) worked with the HIPAMS project team to develop a number of strategies focused on four main areas. These areas were: maintaining heritage skills repertoire (the range of skills and knowledge identified as important by the community), community empowerment, reputation (of the community and their art), and heritage-sensitive innovation. The strategies proposed were then discussed with the broader community and implemented.

Monitoring and evaluation were undertaken during the project. Baseline surveys were done before the interventions. At the end of the project in early 2021, individual evaluations were done with some artist representatives (9 mask makers and 9 dancers). A broader group of artists was invited to give feedback at two final events. At the event in Charida (for Chau Mask makers), 41 artists attended, including 3 women and in Maldih (for Chau Dancers) there were 37 artists including 5 women.

**Maintaining heritage skills repertoire**

Chau Resource Centres providing practice space for Chau artists, assisting in the transmission of skills, have been constructed in Balarampur block in 2019, and previously at Bamnia in Jhalda-II block and at Chelyama in Raghunathpur block. Many modern Chau performances modify the narration, music and singing accompaniment to attract audiences, and reduce costs. The market for traditional performances at festivals of folk music remains strong, ensuring jobs for musicians playing traditional instruments, but further training is needed. At the end of the project, artists reported that the resource centre at Maldih offered classes every day with senior gurus coming in every week.

Festivals like the Chau Jhumur Festival, which has been organised in Bamnia since 2010, and at Maldi in 2019, help to keep the link between Jhumur singers and Chau dancers alive. Because of the expense of recruiting singers, and lower audience knowledge about the stories, some Chau groups now use narrators to recount the stories to the audiences during the dance instead, which may distract dancers and audiences. Under the HIPAMS project, online narratives in Bengali and English, accessible by QR code on Chau performance flyers and posters as well as mask packaging labels, were introduced to reduce the need for narrators. They can also help to educate new audiences who don’t understand the mythological stories.

\textsuperscript{29} In Hinduism, a pandal is a temporary structure set up to venerate a god or goddess, especially during festivals.

\textsuperscript{30} A classical dance form of Kerala, in the southernmost part of India that uses elaborate, painted face make-up.
There were some external concerns that the transformation of Purulia Chau into a staged show threatens the ritual associations of the dance for the community and its link to the harvest festival, but many of the artists and their audiences are in favour of staged performances as well. They create more employment opportunities, they are popular with rural audiences and, due to the shortened form, often the only chance that urban audiences have to see the dance. For example, at the Chau-Jhumur festival more than 30 Chau groups can perform over 5 days, whereas dance troupes perform all night at other festivals. Continued training of Chau dancers and choreographers can help keep the skills and knowledge of the traditional forms alive, even as the presentation of shows changes over time.

Community empowerment

There is no single organisation representing all dancers or mask makers. Dancers are currently represented by two associations, each representing well over 100 troupes, but they do not work closely together. The Chau mask makers of Charida village also have two organizations representing them. Cooperation between dancers and mask makers is not extensive, but has been encouraged through provision of common training opportunities by Banglanatak dot com.

The markets for dance performances and masks are inter-related, not only because dance troupes are clients of mask makers, but also because the cultural meanings of masks are related to dances. From a marketing perspective, Chau dance is a promotional vehicle for Chau masks – even for those that are not made to be worn by dancers. To promote both individual and collective marketing and heritage awareness raising, the HIPAMS project helped the communities of dancers and mask makers to create a common website explaining the traditions to old and new audiences, sharing information about performances and festivals, and showing the art and contact details of individual artists. An existing common Facebook platform ‘Folk art of Purulia’ was also promoted to encourage dancers and mask makers of Purulia Chau to engage with audiences in the same digital space. At the end of the project, the Chau mask makers and dancers said they wanted to do further promotion of their art and village using Facebook and more internal cooperation using WhatsApp. A common sales infrastructure is currently being put in place for mask makers: only a few of them are using online payment platforms such as PayTM. They are also discussing getting group discounts for clay and other supplies.

A key problem in communicating the meaning and value of Chau, especially in new settings, is that artists lack sufficient bargaining power to retain important aspects of the character of Chau performances. Use of synthesizers such as the Casio, which need to be close to electrical power, prevents musicians from moving around to accommodate dancers and disrupts the sensitive choreography, for example. When artists have weak bargaining power in negotiations with those commissioning performances this can also threaten dancer safety if costumes are too ornate or stage surfaces too hard. Sometimes dancers are contracted for a performance but not paid.

An additional problem is that artists lacked sufficient knowledge about their rights. In 2012, the film Barfi, set in Bengal, was released to critical acclaim. The starring actors won a number of awards. Several scenes featured actors wearing Chau masks and dancers performing Chau dances. However, neither the mask makers nor the dancers were acknowledged in the credits of the film. More recently, Moushumi Choudury, an award-winning Chau dancer and the leader of an all-female group from a village called Maldi in Purulia, was featured alongside her troupe in a film called Jobordokhol streamed to millions of users on Zee5, an Indian digital entertainment streaming service. Choudury danced in the starring role but another actress played the role of the lead Chau dancer when the

31 See https://www.puruliachau.com/
mask was removed. The names of Choudury and her troupe were not mentioned in the movie credits in spite of the fact that their story inspired the film and as performers, they have a right to be attributed. This is called performer’s rights. Lack of attribution makes it difficult for Chau dancers like Choudury and her troupe to establish and grow their reputations as performers.

The HIPAMS rights training helped artists such as Choudury and Biren Kalindi, a Natua and Chau dancer from Purulia, to understand their negotiating power in the market. As Kalindi said:

The artists truly need to receive the recognition for their work. I worked in seven movies … where our art was recognised but our names were not given. The names of the cast and crew are given but our names are nowhere to be found. Now I have understood, so I will claim the recognition whenever a booking comes.

Chau dancers also started asking for contracts when approached by event organizers for shows including clauses requesting for example a proper stage or place to perform.

It can be difficult for artists to exercise their rights, however. Ethical codes are one way to promote better relationships with third parties such as film-makers, festival organizers or customers and distributors. After undergoing training in artists’ rights, Chau dancers and mask makers worked with the HIPAMS team to develop separate Chau Dance and Chau Mask Makers ethical codes representing their different concerns. These codes of ethics explain their rights and how they want their individual art and collective heritage to be treated by others. Referring to these codes as good practices can increase their negotiating power with event organizers, galleries, film-makers and so on. The art codes were shared with stakeholders online and printed copies of the codes were shared with the community in the final dissemination events.

Reputation

Purulia Chau dance is well known and appreciated locally; it also has a growing reputation beyond the rural community in which it originated. However, the HIPAMS market analysis found that most of the information about the art was generated by audiences or third parties rather than by mask makers or dancers and their troupes. This can lead to inaccurate representations of the heritage, and often promotes the interests of middlemen rather than those of artists.

Purulia Chau has a strong presence in the UNESCO nomination video, with over 156,968 views as of 18 March 2021, although Purulia Chau has lower visibility in the text of the UNESCO nomination file, compared to the other two styles of Chau dance. It is generally the most visible of the three Chau dance styles online, especially in regard to audio-visual footage on Instagram and YouTube, because of its vibrant masks and energetic dance moves. Charida village has limited visibility online, which restricts tourism opportunities. Online visibility of the genre is hampered by multiple spellings of chau (for example, the spelling ‘chhau’ is also used). At the beginning of the project, not many of the artists used social media for marketing. Some younger mask makers and dancers did use Facebook, Instagram and email; a few older members used Whatsapp and Facebook. A few troupes had YouTube channels.

As part of the HIPAMS project, training was provided to improve online visibility, content quality and range of stories told by artists. Online content, initially mainly depictions of performances and masks, with a few videos on the mask making process, was extended to include more stories about individual dancers, dance teams, preparation and experience of performances. Artist-made films

were shared on a Facebook daily show titled “Connecting to the Roots”, as well as on the HIPAMS project and community websites. Since the spellings of Chau differ widely, artists were encouraged to use standardised hashtags such as #PuruliaChau to collectively promote the heritage online. By the end of the project, more than half of the artists surveyed had YouTube channels, promoted through Facebook and WhatsApp. They engaged more actively on social media.

Notice for festival attendees

Attendees at Chau festivals and the visitors of Charida village were encouraged, via notice (see left), to share information and photos of the event using common hashtags. Notices asked that photos and videos should be shared under a creative commons CC-BY-NC license, and informed people that Chau dance was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

Mask makers tend not to market themselves as individual artists working within the Chau tradition, but as artists from Charida, so collective marketing is very important for them. They do not generally sign their masks.

A Chau Mask Mela was started in Charida village as part of the Rural Craft Hubs project in 2014, and it continued in 2019 with the support of the local administration. The Folk Art Centre in Charida village showcases different types of Chau masks, the making process and tells the story of the community who makes the masks. The HIPAMS project thus underlined the importance of promoting the village alongside the art.

A geographical indication (GI) was registered for ‘Chau mask of Purulia’ in 2018. However, the association managing the GI does not have a website or social media presence and had undertaken little collective marketing to promote it. The mask-makers do not have a lot of competition from others, apart from a few families from the village who have set up businesses elsewhere in Purulia. They say that the process is too difficult to copy. However, some masks made elsewhere were being wrongly marketed as Chau Masks of Purulia.

The registered Geographical Indication logo for ‘Chau mask of Purulia’

The GI can help artists to label their masks as originating in Charida. During the HIPAMS project, artists were thus trained in how to use the GI logo on their products and website, and 32 mask makers were assisted to register as users of the GI. The GI was also promoted on the collective website, on packaging tags (see below), on artists’ business (visiting) cards and through artist-driven promotion at fairs.

Heritage-sensitive marketing not only raises awareness about the heritage of Chau dance and masks among consumers, it can also encourage appreciation of its value within the artist community. Digital storytelling training, discussions about the heritage values relating to the masks and dances, and the importance of community-led marketing, has encouraged artists to appreciate the

33 The Geographical Indication for Chau Masks of Charida can be found online at http://ipindiaservices.gov.in/GirPublic/Application/Details/565
importance of including heritage information in their marketing messages by the end of the project. In the evaluation interviews, the Chau mask makers reported that they now more frequently explain to customers how masks are linked to the Chau dance, showing the materials used to make it and demonstrating the traditional process of making Chau masks. Most of the Chau dancers (80% of the artists surveyed) have also more frequently begun to explain to audiences about the story of their plays before or after their performances.

**Heritage-sensitive innovation**

As part of the HIPAMS project, Chau dance artists created two new dances in July 2020 that addressed new themes while reviving older songs and music. One of the dances dealt with the COVID-19 pandemic affecting their lives and livelihoods, and the other entitled “Mukosh Khola Mukh” or Faces behind the Masks dealt with the recognition of the artist behind the Chau mask. The latter story also focused on how women dancers faced criticism from the patriarchal society and nevertheless went on to pursue their dreams of dancing Chau. Jhumur songs were included in the Chau production, affirming the traditional link between dance and this form of singing even as new themes are explored.

One of the challenges for mask-makers is that the larger masks are much more expensive to make because of the decorations and the time taken to make it. Without factoring in the cost of labour, the gross profit margin is only 10% for large masks compared to 70% for the smaller masks. Larger masks are however becoming more popular both among dancers and for décor. The Chau mask makers are thus interested in making innovative products which sell for higher prices.

Dharmendra Sutradhar is one of the artists who began innovating more widely in his mask designs during the course of the project, inspired by information he said he had been able more easily to access on social media after the HIPAMS training. He made an Egyptian pyramid out of paper pulp, an African ‘primeval man’, a Durga, made out grains and cereals, and a helpless farmer and other characters from Jangalmahal. He says:

> We have our traditional list of masks, but I want to create something new. Our forefathers have made products integral to our heritage and I have no intention of disrupting it. Old is gold; we cannot detach ourselves from it. But I’d like the upcoming generation to know, and say that I have created something unique.

Before the project, mask makers like Sutradhar had already begun making masks without using plastic decorations, as had been the historical practice using eco-friendly materials like coconut husk. As the artists discussed their customer base within the project and learned more about consumer interest in eco-friendly products and packaging, they wanted to develop more products for eco-conscious customers. They started to look at photos of historical Chau dances and expressed increased interest in such ‘retro-innovations’, exploring the history of their art while adapting it to the present.

One of the concerns of the mask makers was developing better packaging to reduce breakages. Under the HIPAMS project, new environmentally-friendly cardboard packaging was designed for the masks. The boxes can be easily dismantled and assembled, and are light enough to be carried by the artists when they travel to fairs and festivals to sell their products. Use of the GI logo, labelling and other information on packaging can also better communicate the value of the masks. Labels for Craftmark and GI were thus designed for the packaging, with individual artist names if desired. QR codes used on the packaging link products to the information on the community website and social media about the traditions, the different mask designs, mask-making traditions and the stories of
the Chau dances. It can also link smaller decorative masks to the stories of the dance tradition, even though only the larger masks are used by dancers.

The packaging was much appreciated by the artists, who found that it not only protected the masks but also raised awareness about the meaning and value of their products. It helped to educate new consumers about the meaning and value of the traditions of Chau dance and mask making.

**Conclusion**

By the end of the project, all the Chau dancers surveyed said that their remuneration for each performance as well as the numbers of annual performances had increased. While they became more active promoting their work on social media, acrobatic Chau dances cannot be easily performed indoors so a shift to offering online performances during the pandemic was difficult. Chau mask makers were however able to do more online marketing and started selling products after developing new contacts online, increasing their monthly earnings. They were able to highlight the heritage value of both dances and masks through their collective website and social media platforms, as well as through their individual marketing efforts. More targeted internet use had also sparked innovations using ideas from foreign countries as well as historical inspiration in the Chau tradition.

Some of the outcomes of the HIPAMS strategies will be long term, and others will be visible in the short term. Further analysis will have to be done at a later stage. It is not easy to disentangle the effects of the HIPAMS project interventions from other actions, and the impacts of external events, including the COVID-19 pandemic. The hope for the future is that when the pandemic is over, the measures put in place will help to safeguard the heritage and improve livelihoods.

**More information**


