



SAARC CULTURAL CENTRE  
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

[www.saarcculture.org](http://www.saarcculture.org)

CONCEPT PAPER

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## Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region Exploring South Asian Heritage through the Art of Crafts

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### 1. Background

Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region was approved at the 13<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting held in Colombo, Sri Lanka on 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the Programming Committee Meeting held in Kathmandu, Nepal on 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

Exploring South Asian Heritage through the Art of Crafts is designed as an annual programme with each year featuring a craft to highlight the tangible and intangible heritage associated with the craft and craftsmanship. In 2024 SAARC Cultural Centre proposes to document and disseminate tangible and intangible heritage of South Asia through digital documentation. Therefore, Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices will focus on "*Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres*" and Natural Fibre used to create Arts, Crafts, Utensils, Furniture, etc., in the SAARC Region. Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres was chosen as this year's theme to emphasise the connection between traditional handicrafts and the sustainable livelihoods of communities engaged in the craft, showcasing their intertwined significance. As many art and craft forms in the South Asian Region are diminishing and are at the brink of extinction due to globalisation, modernisation and mass production of plastic replacement items etc., documenting such indigenous crafts especially using modern technology helps preserve these practices for future generations. This attempt also underscores the distinct cultural value of these crafts in their historical, cultural, and social spheres. Digital documentation also enables people from any part of the world of diverse backgrounds to access and learn about crafts as true expressions of traditional knowledge. It fosters understanding and also develop respect among people and practitioners of the craft for safeguarding intangible heritage. Therefore, digital archiving would serve as the point of reference and resource for students, scholars, researchers and educators.

### **1.1. Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres**

Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres as a craft has played a significant role in human civilization and their artistic expression since time immemorial. Historical records indicate that they were primarily used in the making of baskets, mats, and sandals in ancient Egypt. The ancient Greeks and Romans also employed Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres in various crafts, including chair seats and decorative weavings. The strength and resilience that come from such materials make those crafts sustainable. Despite the versatility of these materials, Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres is losing momentum in the current era. It is diminishing its significance at the face of many challenges of the modern world due to cheap alternatives and mass production. Exploration into its historical journey through digital media will be an eye opening initiative to unveil its richness and ingenuity.

### **1.2. Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region:**

#### **A Documentary Film on "*Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres*"**

SAARC Agenda for Culture Clause VII includes, 'Production of a joint documentary film on SAARC culture for promotional purposes. It further emphasises that 'these films should promote local cultures and traditions of the Member States while underpinning the spirit of an interrelated common SAARC Culture'. The proposed documentary would explore the journey from the beginning of the craft which is the plant and it will revolve around the story of how it became an end product as a household item and also as a commercial commodity. This documentary will uncover the artistry and dedication involved in the process of making the craft. It shall discover the transformation by traveling deeper into the intricate stages involved in the production process from natural plant fibers to an exquisite handmade craft.

## **2. Objectives**

The main objectives of the Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region are as follows:

- 2.1. To preserve the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of South Asia by capturing the elements of rituals, traditions, art forms and historical events on film. Documentaries can be powerful tool to exhibit the diverse facets of intangible culture and it will pave the way for the future generations to gain insights of their cultural legacy.

- 2.2. To engage the audience and offer an in-depth exploration of topics associated with the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of South Asia related to Arts and crafts of Natural Fibre. Documentaries have the capacity to inculcate understanding of the history, values, practices of diverse cultures of the Region. It would educate people but also stimulate dialogue and openness for discussion on issues and challenges.
- 2.3. To create a platform for engagement involving South Asian filmmakers, film experts, artists, and activists enabling them to share their perspectives and expertise. Documentaries through their lens can convey meaningful message that would resonate with the theme.

### 3. Outcomes

- 3.1. Documentary films have the potential to create a lasting impact on individuals, communities and society as a whole which could contribute to cultural and social changes over the course of time.
- 3.2. Digitally documenting the cultural practices, traditions, rituals, artefacts and stories will be instrumental in shedding light on pressing issues that speeds up the declining process.
- 3.3. Documentary films will inspire and motivate the future generation, emphasising the need to make positive difference through the rich cultural tapestry of the Region.
- 3.4. Documentary films work as an entertainment element that will engage the audiences through compelling visuals and narratives.
- 3.5. Digital Documentaries can contribute to cultural tourism and stimulates the economic development. Local economies in Member States could be steered up by tapping the potential in sustainable tourism initiatives.

### 4. Nomination and guidelines

- 4.1. All Member States are invited to nominate a **Documentary Film Producer(s)/ Director(s)**. The nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) should demonstrate proficiency in managing all aspects of film production within the allocated budget criteria. This includes but not limited to overseeing the selection and management of the production crew, procurement of necessary equipment, and ensuring adherence to budgetary constraints throughout the filming process.

- 4.2. As the aim of “*Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region Exploring South Asian Heritage through the Art of Crafts*” is to promote culture and embrace unity amidst the diversity of culture, that is shared among the SAARC Member States, the documentary should aim to promote culture, foster friendship and cultural harmony between Member States and not in any way be prejudicial to another Member State.
- 4.3. Nomination must be submitted through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs/External Affairs along with the **complete CV** of the official nominee Producer (s)/Director (s).
- 4.4. An agreement will be signed between the SAARC Cultural Centre, Colombo, Sri Lanka and the Nominated Film Producer(s)/Director(s) after approval of the detailed synopsis, estimated budget and appearing (Online mode) before the Review Committee appointed by the SAARC Cultural Centre. 1<sup>st</sup> Installment of the Honorarium (Refer to section 8.1) will be disbursed after signing of the agreement between both parties.

## **5. Pre-production, Production and Post-Production of the Documentary - Guidelines**

- 5.1. Detailed Synopsis:** Officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall develop and submit a detailed synopsis of the documentary to SAARC Cultural Centre in the pre-production stage. This synopsis shall comprehensively outline the storyline, theme (please refer to section 1.1), and narrative structure of the documentary.
- 5.2. Factual Accuracy:** Officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) acknowledges and agrees that all facts presented in the documentary must be thoroughly researched, verified, and fact-checked. The Nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall have the discretion to engage a resource person(s) or expert(s) in the relevant field to authenticate factual information depicted in the documentary.
- 5.3. Interviews and Footage Schedule:** Nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall be responsible for scheduling interviews and coordinating the filming of necessary footages for the documentary which includes but not limited to planning and arranging interview sessions, selecting locations, and securing necessary permissions.
- 5.4. Final editing and post-production:** Nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall be responsible for overseeing all aspects of post-production, including final editing and

voice over/narration. During post-production, nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall work closely with SAARC Cultural Centre to ensure that the documentary aligns with its objectives, theme, narrative etc. Final version of the documentary will be formatted into episodes suitable for social media viewership, with each episode expected to be between 10-20 minutes in length. The exact duration and segmentation into episodes will be determined by the SAARC Cultural Centre based on creative and strategic considerations in collaboration with the Producer(s)/Director(s).

- 5.5. Narration/Voiceover:** In the documentary, the primary language for voiceover/narration must be in **English**. However, segments featuring communities speaking their preferred language can use that language, with English subtitles provided for comprehension. This includes but not limited to translations, subtitles, and voiceover adaptations as required.
- 5.6. Legal and Compliance:** Officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall obtain consent from all individuals appearing in the documentary, including permissions for third-party materials not limited to images, music, interviews, narration, and archival footage. They must ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards by securing signed release forms and permissions to prevent copyright infringement. Restrict content that promotes violence, copyrighted material and avoid explicit language.
- 5.7. Rights and Ownership:** SAARC Cultural Centre retains all rights, title, and interest in and to the unedited and edited footages including all copyrights and intellectual property rights therein, SAARC Cultural Centre has the exclusive and irrevocable right to use, reproduce, modify, distribute, and display the footages for any purpose related to the production and distribution of the documentary.
- 5.8. Subtitles, Captions and Credit:** Subtitles and captions in the documentary should be in **English**, as all the episodes will be published in English. Nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall be responsible for ensuring the accuracy of these subtitles and captions to convey the content to audiences. Nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) shall work closely with the SAARC Cultural Centre for the finalization of the end credits, including roles and any specific attributions required.
- 5.9. Technical Reviews and Final Submission:** SAARC Cultural Centre will conduct rounds of reviews at key milestones to ensure the progress of the Documentary. Each

review will involve comprehensive assessments of the footage, storyline, visual aesthetics, and adherence to technical recommendations (refer to section 6). All reviews will be conducted online and meeting links will be communicated by the programme-assistant ([digitaldocumentation@saarcculture.org](mailto:digitaldocumentation@saarcculture.org)) to the nominated Producer(s)/Director(s).

- 5.10. Public Release:** Final version of the Documentary Film will be uploaded to social media platforms of the SAARC Cultural Centre and will be made available in the public domain. SAARC Cultural Centre retains all rights, title, and interest in and to the final edited version of the documentary, including all copyrights and intellectual property rights therein. SAARC Cultural Centre has the exclusive and irrevocable right to use, reproduce, modify, distribute, and display the final edited version of the documentary for any purpose related to its publication and distribution in the public domain.

## 6. Digital Documentation - Technical Recommendations

### 6.1. Equipment

- 6.1.1. **Video Capture Equipment:** Producer(s)/Director(s) can use DSLRs, mirrorless cameras, or cinema cameras, based on budget and the style of the documentary.
- 6.1.2. **Sound Equipment:** Utilise a combination of shotgun mics and lavalier mics/Clip-on Mics for directional audio capture and for face-to-face interviews with the artisans. (Making a documentary would require outdoor shooting which may capture unnecessary background noises and therefore please ensure minimisation of such noises.) Use headphones to monitor the audio capture.
- 6.1.3. **Stabilization Equipment:** Adjust settings on exposure, focus and motion for optimal stabilization of the footages and minimisation of shake/blurriness. Recommend the use of tripods for interviews shots, Gimbals/Steadicams for movement shots.
- 6.1.4. **Storage and Backup:** Recommends the use of Memory Cards or backup drives to handle larger files especially if shooting in 2K or 4K.

6.1.5. **Lighting Equipment:** Please make sure that the documentary is shot under best lighting conditions to achieve the desired outcome. Use a combination of both natural and artificial lighting as required. Employ the utilization of LED light panels for better shadow management.

## 6.2. Video Specifications:

6.2.1. **Resolution:** 1080p/2K/4K (Choose the feasible option to manage disk space and gear compatibility)

6.2.2. **Aspect Ratio:** 16:9 HD

6.2.3. **File Format:** MPEG-4 AVC, AVCHD

For slow motion scenes, use 60 fps whereas the steady scenes shall utilize 25fps

## 6.3. Audio Specifications:

6.3.1. **Audio Format:** WAV, AAC

(Audio Levels: Ensure clarity and consistency. Noise cancellation/reduction as required)

6.4. Paying attention to technical aspects will help ensure that the documentary is not only informative but also technically proficient. Focal point (Programme-Assistant) from SAARC Cultural Centre will coordinate with the officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) to address questions and encounter any issues during the pre-production, production and post-production stages of the film.

## 7. Dates for submission and Deadlines

7.1. Nomination must be submitted along with the **complete CV** of the Officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s).

7.2. Details of the Film Producer(s)/Director(s) (Refer to section 4.3) along with the **complete CV** of the official nominee (Producer(s)/Director(s)) (Refer to section 4.3) should be sent through the relevant ministry of the nominating Member State, via Foreign/External Affairs Ministries, for onward transmission to the SAARC Secretariat Kathmandu, to reach the SAARC Cultural Centre in Colombo, **no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> August 2024.**

- 7.3. Upon completion of filming, the officially nominated Director/Producer shall send the edited, unedited footages, audio files (Narration), any project files and the **Official Submission Form** (Refer to section 9) via a **downloadable secure link** to the following focal points at the SAARC Cultural centre

**Focal Person (s) at the SAARC Cultural Centre**

- 7.3.1. **Culture-Specialist (Programmes) | SAARC Cultural Centre**  
programme@saarcculture.org/digitaldocumentation@saarcculture.org
- 7.3.2. **Programme-Assistant | SAARC Cultural Centre (Technical Assistance)**  
programme-assistant@saarcculture.org/digitaldocumentation@saarcculture.org

## 8. Budget

Each officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) for filming the documentary on the theme "*Rushes, Reeds and Natural Fibres*" will receive an **honorarium of US \$2,000/- in total**. This honourarium will be paid in two instalments as follows:

- 8.1. 1<sup>st</sup> instalment of US \$1,000/- (or in equivalent local currency) will be disbursed to the nominee only after the approval of detailed synopsis, comprehensive list of estimated expenses (These expenses may include but are not limited to hiring equipment, travel costs, manpower and other relevant expenditures) that could be incurred during the filming process and appearing (Online mode) before the Review Committee appointed by the SAARC Cultural Centre to finalise the Agreement (Refer to section 4.4).
- 8.2. The second and the final instalment of US \$1,000/- will be paid upon submission of the completed documentary footage (Refer to section 7.3). Payment will be disbursed after the receipt and approval of the final version (Refer to section 7.3). Officially nominated Producer(s)/Director(s) is to maintain accurate records of all actual expenses incurred during the filming of the documentary including originals of bills, receipts, invoices etc.to facilitate timely release of the final instalment.



**DOCUMENTARY SUBMISSION FORM**

**Digital Documentation of Cultural Practices of the SAARC Region**  
Exploring South Asian Heritage through the Art of Crafts

**9. Official Submission Form (For reference only)**

To be filled by the Officially Nominated Film Producer(s)/ Director(s)

1. DETAILS OF THE DOCUMENTARY FILM:						
1.1. Name of the Documentary Film						
1.2. Country of Production						
1.3. Language(s) of the Documentary Film						
1.4. Duration of the Final Version	Hrs.		Mins.		Sec.	
2. DETAILS OF THE CREW:						
2.1. Details of the Crew (Name, Address and Contact Details)	Crew member					
	Crew member					
	Crew member					
	Crew member					
	Crew member					
3. OFFICIALLY NOMINATED DIRECTOR(S)/PRODUCER(S) DETAILS:						
3.1. Full Name:						

3.2. Affiliation		
3.3. Address	Address line 1	
	Address line 2	
	City	
	Zip/Postal code	
	Country	
3.4. Email Address:		
3.5. Contact Details:	Mobile Number	
	WhatsApp Number	
	Alternative number if any	
3.6. Biography of the Director		
3.7. Please attach a profile picture with this Form	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>4. CONFIDENTIALITY:</b>		
4.1. As the director of the documentary, I agree to protect sensitive information shared during the production of the documentary.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>5. CONTACT DETAILS FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:</b>		
5.1. Name of contact (s)		

5.2. Affiliation			
5.3. Address	Address line 1		
	Address line 2		
	City		
	Zip/Postal code		
	Country		
5.4. Email Address:			
5.5. Contact Details:	Mobile Number		
	WhatsApp Number		
	Alternative number if any		
<b>6. TECHNICAL DETAILS:</b>			
6.1. Shooting Format	Full HD (1920*1080) <input type="checkbox"/>	2K <input type="checkbox"/>	4K <input type="checkbox"/>
6.2. Audio Format	WAV <input type="checkbox"/>		AAC <input type="checkbox"/>
6.3. Aspect Ratio	<i>Recommended aspect ratio</i>		16:9 <input type="checkbox"/>
6.4. File Format	MPEG-4 AVC <input type="checkbox"/>		AVCHD <input type="checkbox"/>
6.5. Video Capture Device	DSLR <input type="checkbox"/>	Mirrorless cameras <input type="checkbox"/>	Cinema cameras <input type="checkbox"/>
	Others <input type="checkbox"/>		
If other, please specify			
6.6. Audio Capture Device	Shotgun mics <input type="checkbox"/>	lavalier mics/Clip-on Mics <input type="checkbox"/>	Others <input type="checkbox"/>
	If other, please specify		
6.7. Stabilization equipment	Tripods <input type="checkbox"/>	Gimbal/Steadicam <input type="checkbox"/>	Drone <input type="checkbox"/>
Others <input type="checkbox"/>			

	If other, please specify
<b>6.8. Lighting Equipment</b>	<b>Please specify the lighting equipment's used in the filming process</b>
<b>7. SYNOPSIS, CAPTIONS, AND SUBTITLES:</b>	
<b>7.1. Please attach the complete synopsis of the Documentary along with this submission form</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>7.2. I certify that the primary language for voiceover/narration, subtitles, translations are in English.</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>8. LEGAL AND COMPLIANCE:</b>	
I hereby confirm that I have obtained all necessary permissions for music, images, and other copyrighted material used in my film. I am aware of the fact that SAARC Cultural Centre retains the ownership of the intellectual property rights to the documentary, including but limited to any footages, interviews, and creative content produced during the project. I ensure that the documentary is factually accurate and truthful in its representation of events, individuals, and subject matter. I am aware of the fact that SAARC Cultural Centre retains the screening and distribution rights of the documentary including any limitations on where and how the Documentary can be exhibited or broadcasted.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>9. SUBMISSION OF THE FOOTAGES (PLEASE SEND THE RELEVANT FOOTAGES AND THE MATERIALS IN DOWNLOADABLE FORMAT TO):</b>	
<b>9.1. Culture-Specialist (Programmes)   SAARC Cultural Centre</b> programme@saarcculture.org/digitaldocumentation@saarcculture.org No. 224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Telephone: 0112584451	
<b>9.2. Programme-Assistant   SAARC Cultural Centre (Technical Assistance)</b> programme-assistant@saarcculture.org No. 224, Bauddhaloka Mawatha, Colombo, Sri Lanka. Telephone: 0112584451	
<b>10. DECLARATION:</b>	
<b>I confirm that the information provided in this submission form is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge.</b>	
Signature of the Officially Nominated Producer (s)/Director(s)	