

PROMOTING INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN CULTURAL HERITAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN SOUTH ASIA.

1. Nature of the Programme

Promotion innovation and sustainability in cultural heritage entrepreneurship in South Asia programme, as approved by 15th Governing Board Meeting held on 19–20 August 2025 and was tentatively approved at the 61st Session of the Programming Committee on 26 November 2025. Based on the proposal by the Esteemed Governing Board Member from the Republic of Maldives, the Governing Board agreed to hold the programme in Maldives.

Cultural heritage entrepreneurship is an important pathway for sustaining livelihoods, fostering innovation, and safeguarding South Asia's diverse heritage resources. UNESCO defines cultural heritage as the legacy of tangible and intangible expressions of human creativity and identity, including monuments, heritage buildings, heritage sites, traditional knowledge, and living arts. These embody historic, artistic, and social values that shape collective memory and connect communities across generations.

Applied to heritage, entrepreneurship transforms these resources into active drivers of development. It is the practice of turning monuments, heritage buildings, heritage sites, cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and arts into sustainable ventures that generate cultural, social, and economic value while ensuring their preservation and transmission to future generations.

This two-day seminar and workshop address the needs by bringing together knowledge bearers, entrepreneurs, and cultural practitioners from across South Asia. It will showcase case studies, provide training on community-level organizing, and promote small-scale strategies such as forming cooperatives, repurposing old houses, marketing agricultural and culinary products, and creating business models for performing arts.

2. Organizers

- Organized by SAARC Cultural Centre, Sri Lanka
- In collaboration with National Centre for Cultural Heritage (NCCH), Maldives

3. Objectives

- 3.1. To share successful case studies in cultural entrepreneurship within the South Asian cultural heritage sector.
- 3.2. To share effective policies that improve market accessibility and institutional support for cultural industries.
- 3.3. To promote innovation and economic sustainability within the heritage sectors of South Asia.
- 3.4. To strengthen entrepreneurial capacity through practical training in business design, digital tools, branding, financial sustainability, and climate-smart practices.
- 3.5. To encourage the participation and leadership of youth and women in cultural entrepreneurship.

4. Nominations Process

4.1. All nominations should include:

- i. Full Name, Address and affiliation (if any) of the Person with a detailed CV
- ii. ID Card copy
- iii. Case Study Abstract (c. 350 words)

4.2. Application Channel.

- i. Application must be sent through the respective Ministry of Foreign Affairs / External Affairs to the SAARC Secretariat Kathmandu., then to SCC.

4.3. Selection Criteria (Used by SCC)

- i. Relevance of Abstract to the Programme Themes.
- ii. Quality of the proposed paper (clarity, originality, regional relevance)
- iii. Professional background and experience of the applicant
- iv. Balance of representation across Member States and disciplines

5. Accommodation and Travel details

5.1. Nominated Participants

- i. The airfare of the Nominees is to be borne by the respective nominees.
- ii. The SAARC Cultural Centre in collaboration with NCCH would provide working lunch.
- iii. Nominees may be provided with accommodation, depending on the venue location and the availability of the budget.

6. Additional Information for the Participants

- 6.1. The working language is in English.
- 6.2. The case study paper maximum word should be 1500 (+-15%), outlining the enterprise background, heritage connection, innovations, challenges, outcomes, and future plans.
- 6.3. Each nominee will prepare a 15-20-minute presentation supported by visuals (PowerPoint, photos, videos, or product samples). All accepted case studies and presentations will be published in the seminar proceedings.

7. Focal Person at NCCH

Ms. Zaha Ahmed, Director, Culture and Heritage, NCCH

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09th August 2026