

CALL FOR PAPERS

2026 ICH NGO Conference

**Traditional Medicinal Plant Knowledge and
Sustainable Community Livelihoods**

14-15 October 2026 / Daejeon, Republic of Korea

www.unesco-ichcap.org/ / <http://www.korean-ginseng.org/>

OVERVIEW

The International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP) and the Korea Ginseng Association will jointly host the 2026 ICH NGO Conference in Daejeon, Republic of Korea, from 14 to 15 October 2026. Under the theme, “Traditional Medicinal Plant Knowledge and Sustainable Community Livelihoods,” the conference is inviting paper proposals until 3 August 2026.

Since 2014, ICHCAP has organized the ICH NGO Conference every two years as a regular international forum to share the roles and practical experiences of NGOs in safeguarding and utilizing intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and to deepen discussions on contemporary issues related to ICH. Over the past decade, the conference has accumulated discussions on a wide range of themes, including the role of NGOs in safeguarding ICH, the relationship between ICH and sustainable development, and resilience in times of crisis. It has also served as an important platform for fostering cooperation and networking among ICH NGOs, communities, and experts across the Asia-Pacific region.

This year's conference aims to revisit community-based traditional knowledge related to medicinal plants from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage and to explore how such knowledge is being utilized and expanded in contemporary society. In particular, the conference seeks to highlight traditional medicinal plant knowledge as a form of ICH that has been shaped and transmitted through community ways of life, cultural identities, and accumulated knowledge and wisdom regarding the natural environment, while also examining its diverse potential contributions to sustainable development.

Traditional medicinal plant knowledge extends far beyond healing practices alone and is closely linked to community lifestyles, natural resource management, local economic revitalization, and value-creation activities. At the same time, it faces various challenges,

including the discontinuity of knowledge transmission, the weakening of transmission foundations resulting from institutional and social changes, and issues related to fairness and ethics. Against this backdrop, the conference will provide an international platform for discussing community- and NGO-led approaches to safeguarding and utilizing traditional medicinal plant knowledge and for strengthening the linkages between intangible cultural heritage and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Conference organizers welcome the submission of presentations from ICH NGOs based anywhere in the world, including those that are not necessarily accredited by UNESCO under the 2003 Convention. Submissions are also accepted from those who may not hold membership to any NGOs but have previously published terminal degree papers, case studies, research, or any other scholarly output involving ICH NGOs. Interested individuals and/or representatives of NGOs are invited to refer to the Conference topic outlined below.

CONFERENCE TOPICS

Session 1 Community Practices and Uses of Traditional Medicinal Plant Knowledge

This session aims to examine how traditional medicinal plant knowledge, accumulated and transmitted over time by communities, is utilized in everyday life. It will explore the social and cultural meanings of these practices within community contexts and highlight the value of medicinal plant knowledge as intangible cultural heritage closely embedded in community life.

Indicative Topics (including, but not limited to):

- Formation and use of traditional medicinal plant knowledge within communities
- Traditional practices related to the collection, cultivation, and storage of medicinal plants
- Uses of medicinal plants in daily life and community practices
- Intergenerational transmission of medicinal plant knowledge
- Environmentally embedded practices related to medicinal plant use

Session 2 Traditional and Contemporary Uses of Medicinal Plants and Community-based Economic Activities

This session focuses on how traditional medicinal plant knowledge is being reinterpreted and utilized in response to contemporary contexts and demands. It will examine cases where such knowledge has been extended into community-based economic activities and discuss the roles of communities, as well as the sustainability and feasibility of these approaches.

Indicative Topics (including, but not limited to):

- Community-based economic activities utilizing traditional medicinal plants
- Changes and continuities between traditional and contemporary uses
- Utilization models of medicinal plants reflecting local characteristics
- Community participation in the utilization of traditional knowledge
- Considerations of sustainability in medicinal plant utilization

Session 3 Stakeholders and Collaborative Frameworks around Traditional Medicinal Plants

The special session aims to examine relationships and collaborative frameworks among communities, NGOs, and other stakeholders involved in the safeguarding and utilization of traditional medicinal plant knowledge. It will explore cooperative approaches and challenges in ensuring community-led management and governance of knowledge and practices.

Indicative Topics (including, but not limited to):

- Key stakeholders and their roles in relation to traditional medicinal plants
- Collaborative frameworks across production, processing, and distribution stages
- Community-led management and decision-making structures
- Challenges in collaboration among stakeholders
- Collaboration models addressing fairness and ethical considerations
- Cooperation with UNESCO and safeguarding-related initiatives (e.g. sharing inscription experiences)

EXPECTATIONS FOR PAPER PROPOSALS

Paper proposals should clearly demonstrate how NGO-led initiative contribute to the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage while supporting the sustainable livelihoods and well-being of communities. Proposal may address policy, research, capacity-building, community engagement, education, or other forms of NGO practices, but should make explicit the relationship between NGO activities, the safeguarding of ICH, and sustainable community development.

HOW TO APPLY

- Deadline for Submissions (Application Form and Abstract): 3 August 2026, 18:00 KST
- Notification of Acceptance: 14 August 2026
- Deadline for Submission of Full papers: 13 September 2026 18:00 KST

- Please send the following documents to ichcap.networking@gmail.com
 - a) A completed Application Form (ANNEX 1)
 - b) A completed Abstract Form (ANNEX 2) that details your presentation plan, emphasizing how the presentation is related to any of the aforementioned conference topics
 - c) **(For accepted presenters only)** A full paper in English of 3,000–5,000 words (excluding references). The paper may include research findings, case studies, policy analyses, or examples of community practices and NGO activities relevant to the conference theme.

Note: Accepted papers may be edited for style and formatting and published in the conference proceedings of the 2026 ICH NGO Conference, subject to the authors' consent. Travel and accommodation support, including round-trip economy-class airfare and hotel accommodation during the conference period, will be provided to selected presenters by the organizers.

IMPORTANT DATES

Deadline for application submission	3 August 2026 18:00 KST
Notification on acceptance	14 August 2026
Submission of full papers	13 September 2026 18:00 KST
Submission of presentation materials	30 September 2026 18:00 KST

※ All applicants are requested to adhere strictly to the above deadlines.

CO-ORGANIZERS

- International Information and Networking Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (ICHCAP)
 - Korean Ginseng Association
- ※ If you have any queries about the Conference please email to:
ichcap.networking@gmail.com