

Botswana, Estonia, Eswatini and Namibia ASPnet schools' project: Reflecting on the importance of places in living heritage

Living heritage includes knowledge, skills, and traditions that connect past and present, creating a sense of belonging. This project brings together ASPnet schools in Botswana, Estonia, Eswatini, and Namibia to explore meaningful places. Places can play a vital role in sustaining living heritage, as they provide the physical and cultural settings where traditions are practiced. Whether it is a village square, a sacred site, a workshop, or a festival ground, these cultural spaces bring people together to share their heritage. By documenting, reflecting, and sharing these places, students will build links within community and globally, learn from each other, and discover both the diversity and commonality of cultures. The project promotes respect for living heritage and encourages reflection on its role in sustainability and gender equality.

Project overview

Living heritage, or intangible cultural heritage, refers to knowledge, skills, customs, and traditions rooted in the past but valued and practiced today. It creates a sense of belonging and evolves as generations adapt it to their own needs and interests. What matters is not that it looks the same as in grandparents' times, but that it is meaningful to those who practice it. Everyone has living heritage – whether it is knowledge about nature, craft skills, celebrations, games, music, or stories that enrich daily life. This heritage stays alive through sharing and passing it on, and it often transcends national borders.

This project links living heritage with education, focusing on **meaningful places**. ASPnet students and teachers in Botswana, Estonia, Eswatini, and Namibia will implement a thematic lesson plan (see page 3 below), identify places that matter to them, capture them in photos or videos, reflect on their significance, and share with other ASPnet schools. By exchanging and comparing experiences, students will discover that cultures are diverse yet connected by similarities and humanness. The project promotes sustainability by embedding heritage activities into school curricula, building intergenerational connections, and strengthening ASPnet collaborations. The aim is to foster respect and appreciation for living heritage, while giving students the chance to share and learn from each other, discuss sustainability and gender issues. A meaningful place can be a courtyard, a hidden walkway between the bushes, a beach, grandmother's cooking place or a hilltop – anything important personally and/or in the local context. The project offers an opportunity to reflect on whether this place is connected to living heritage and how living heritage relates to sustainability and gender.

Period: October-November 2025

Age group: 10-15 y/o (depending upon school, other age groups are welcome to participate as well)

Objectives

- Students become more interested in their living heritage and more aware of its importance
- Students acquire knowledge and skills to appreciate cultural diversity, respecting one's own living heritage as well as that of others
- Students recognize the role of living heritage in their everyday life and intergenerational dialogue to explore living heritage

- Students understand culture's contribution to sustainable development and gender equality
- Students develop digital, storytelling and ICT skills
- Students are motivated to share their knowledge and experiences with their peers from other countries and become better aware that they belong to a common humanity

Impact

- Educational impact: Students gain knowledge of living heritage, gender issues and sustainability goals, acquire skills in storytelling, ICT, and intercultural dialogue.
- Community impact: Local communities benefit from increased awareness of heritage and sustainability.
- Institutional and global impact: ASPnet schools contribute to SDGs and strengthen their role as innovation labs for UNESCO GCED and ESD.

Monitoring and evaluation

- Number of schools, teachers, and students participating
- Number of class activity outputs produced (videos, photos, stories)
- Feedback from teachers at a follow-up online meeting

Keywords: living heritage, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, cultural diversity, gender equality; project contributes to SDG4, SDG5, SDG11, SDG13

The project is initiated by:



Lesson Plan: Living Heritage and Personal Places¹

Necessary materials and equipment: papers-pens for group work, board and chalk to collect key ideas, (one) smartphone for making photos and videos, (one) smartphone and internet for sharing the photos and videos with other schools, smartphone/computer/projector to show students some of the photos and videos shared by other schools

Class activity

Duration: 45 minutes

1. Warm-up and introduction (10 min)

Teacher asks the students in the classroom:

- *What places do you like / do not like? What are the places you visit for fun? Where do you feel good? What is a place that feels special or important to you in everyday life? (examples: a bench in the park, a football field, a forest, a village square, a path to school)*
- *Why do you think certain places become meaningful to us? How have these places changed?*

Teacher explains briefly that living heritage evolves with new generations – it is knowledge, skills, and traditions passed down and practiced today, but also about places connected to our memories, activities, and identity. Some of the places that are important to us are cultural spaces, i.e. the places where living heritage is practiced. Gender roles have often shaped how places were used. Question for students:

- *Do you think some of the places are seen as 'male' or 'female' spaces? Why?*

2. Group activity: my personal place (15 min)

In pairs or small groups each student thinks of a place that is personally meaningful, e.g.: a tree they used to climb, a courtyard where friends meet, a corner shop, a quiet study spot, a sports hall, a family living room.

The pairs/groups answer the guiding questions (write/draw on paper):

- *Why is this place meaningful for me?*
- *What do I usually do there? With whom?*
- *Is or has this place been meaningful for others as well (friends, family, community)?*
- *Why is this place important to the community as a whole and/or to you personally?*
- *Are there any differences in how boys, girls, women, or men use this place?*
- *How has this place changed over time because of changes in climate/society?*

3. Sharing and reflection (15 min)

Volunteers present their personal place to the class followed by a class discussion guided by teacher:

- *What similarities did we notice in our places?*
- *Which of these places are important for a group of people? Why?*
- *Does gender roles influence how people use or remember these places?*

¹ Schools are invited to carry out the following activities with the understanding that teachers are welcome to adjust the process to respond to their school context and needs.

- *Can this place help us learn more about gender equality? How?*
- *How do you think these places will change in the future? Why?*

With the whole class, choose up to 3 places to share with other schools.

4. Conclusion (5 min)

Teacher sums up that living heritage is alive in both traditions and the places we value. When we notice the role of genders and importance of sustainable development regarding the shared spaces and traditions, heritage becomes stronger and more inclusive.

Final reflection question: How can we make sure our special places remain safe, welcoming, and meaningful for future generations?

Sharing the outcomes with other schools

After the class activity the class shares the selected places with other schools participating in the project:

- Write a short description of the place in English: where/what is it, what do you do there, why is it special, is this a cultural space (i.e. a place where living heritage manifests itself)?
- Take a photo or a short video (max 10 sec) to share with the schools from other countries.
- Upload the short description and a photo/video to a Google Drive folder. Please name your school and country in the uploaded file's name. Google Drive link will be shared with the participating schools by the ASPnet National Coordinators to upload the videos and photos.
- Teachers show their students some videos and photos from other schools and countries and discuss the similarities and differences.

Follow-up activities

Based upon the materials shared by schools, a short video overview will be compiled by the Estonian National Commission for UNESCO and an experience sharing online meeting for schools will be organized by the National Commissions, featuring a living heritage expert.

Supplementary ideas for schools to continue heritage-related activities

- Conduct field visits to local heritage sites
- Develop a collaborative digital heritage map showcasing student contributions