

Project Imbizo: Preserving Zimbabwean Cultures

Country: Zimbabwe

Sponsoring Institutional Partner: Ithaca College

Project Requestor and Leader: Khangelani Mhlanga, Undergraduate BS Biology Student, Class of 2022

Team Members: Trust Mutekwa and Tinashe Muchuri

Date range: June-August 2022

Introduction

21st century Zimbabwe is suffering from poor integration of indigenous languages in industries, curriculums etc. Before gaining independence, colonial language policies made English the official language (Kadenge & Mugari, 2015). Even when schools taught some indigenous languages they did so in English. Even today, several schools require students to only speak in English at school. Expanding one's knowledge in indigenous languages is optional and largely unavailable beyond Shona and Ndebele. Maintaining English as an official language is actually doing more harm than good to the population. In 2015, the Tshawo Language, which is spoken in Tsholotsho, Matebeleland North Province only had 12 recorded fluent native speakers, all elderly (Kadenge & Mugari, 2015). This is not only happening with languages, but also with traditional dance, music, literature and more. When I came to the US for my undergraduate experience it became very clear to me how difficult it is to access documents in minority languages, videos of dances, descriptions of rituals or artwork from my home Zimbabwe. This was the case not just for the diaspora, but also local residents. Mr. Mutekwa, who happens to coach me on traditional instruments, was the one who inspired the formation of this dream project.

Project Description

This is a proposal to research and collect data in order to eventually create an open access digital archive of zimbabwean traditional arts, literature and oral histories, and more, thus preserving intangible culture for future generations. The main focus for this initial research will be minority languages and traditional dances. The on-site researchers Trust Mutekwa and Tinashe Muchuri will maintain close communication with me while travelling to different regions of Zimbabwe to collect the following data:

- Record videos of traditional dances
- Record interviews with local people in various minority languages
- With my help, create transcripts of the conversations in other languages to make the material accessible
- Record stories, nursery rhymes, and other unique uses of language

I will be responsible for all the report writing, consent forms for all participants, consolidating the data remotely, and uploading it online on a platform that Mr. Mutekwa and

Mr. Muchuri will have access to. I will also be editing the videos to add subtitles, descriptions etc.

We will be collaborating with elders and chiefs in different communities. We anticipate that we'll need to give a small compensation to runners (enumerators) who we might temporarily recruit for on site communication assistance. On site researchers will spend about 4-7 days at each location, where they will be provided with free accommodation, but bring with them a small token of appreciation (a food package) for being welcomed into the community. The locations we intend to visit and the people we expect to find include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Matebeleland North Province - The Nambya have Miliya and Malila dances
2. Matebeleland North Province (Binga) - The Tonga have Chilimba and Malimbwina dances
3. Plumtree - The Kalanga have the Amabhiza/Ihossana dance
4. Matebeleland South (areas around Bubi, Zezani & Beight Bridge) - The Venda have Tshigombela dance
5. Masvingo Province (areas around Mwenezi and Chiredzi) - The Shangani have the Xinyambela dance
6. Manicaland Province (areas around Buhera and Chipinge) - The Ndau have the Muchongowoyo dance
7. In mine & farmlands around Mashonaland Central - The Chewa have Nyau and Beni Arinoti dances originally from Malawi by Federation Immigrants.

Expected Outcomes & Prospects for Future Impact.

By the end of the summer we would have interviewed people from more than 8 indigeneous languages and recorded more than 10 different types for dances from all over the country. All while creating lasting relationships with community partners and giving minority ethnic groups the chance to be seen and appreciated the way they should be. We hope that this will serve as the foundation for the digital access platform that we intend to launch within the next 5 years. We are hopeful that we can help preserve these cultures and protect their future through digital archiving and creating a platform for them to create and share content with all of Zimbabwe and the rest of the world.

References

- Kadenge, M., & Mugari, V. (2015). The current politics of African languages in Zimbabwe. *Per Linguam*, 31(2), 21–34. <https://doi.org/10.5785/31-2-658>

Item	Description	Unit	No. Of Units	Rate	Total
On Site Researcher Stipend	Monthly Stipend	Per Month	3.00	550.00	1,650.00
On Site Researcher Stipend	Monthly Stipend	Per Month	3.00	550.00	1,650.00
Remote Researcher Stipend	Monthly Stipend	Per Month	3.00	700.00	2,100.00
Enumerators	Monthly Stipend	Per Month	10.00	15.00	150.00
Training of Enumerators	Transport Reimbursements	per participant	10.00	5.00	50.00
Printing and Stationery	Training materials and questionnaires, notepads, pens and flipcharts	lumpsum	3.00	10.00	30.00
Communication	Airtime and mobile data bundles	lumpsum	6.00	200.00	1,200.00
Food and Accomodation	Monthly Stipend	Per Trip	12.00	40.00	480.00
Travel	Monthly travel allowance for research	lumpsum	6.00	200.00	1,200.00
Video camera	Canon - EOS Rebel T7 DSLR Video Camera with 18-55mm Lens - Black, Model:2727C002, SKU:6323758		2.00	479.99	959.98
SD Card	SanDisk - Extreme PRO 64GB SDXC UHS-I Memory Card		4.00	34.99	139.96
Shipping	Camera and Miscellaneous		2.00	240.00	480.00
Total					10,089.94