



Project Report on:

Documentation of Darfur Indigenous Languages.

June – December, 2019.

Under the Patronage of UNESCO's 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages.

1. Project description

Language is a key to human communication before and after the invention of writing. It is an intellectual faculty and quality specific to human beings. It is estimated that there are 370 million indigenous peoples around the world, living across 90 different countries. They make up less than five per cent of the world's population but account for 15% of the poorest. They speak an overwhelming majority of the world's estimated 7,000 languages and represent 5,000 different cultures.

Indigenous peoples are inheritors and practitioners of unique cultures and ways relating to people and the environment. They have retained social, cultural, economic and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, indigenous peoples from around the world share common problems related to the protection of their rights as distinct peoples. Major milestones with respect to the cooperation and solidarity between indigenous peoples and the United Nations' Member States have been made in 1990, when the General Assembly proclaimed the International Year of the World's Indigenous Peoples (A/RES/45/164 ARES/47/75), later the GA established two international decades of the World's Indigenous Peoples: the first 1995-2004 (resolution 48/163) and the second 2005-2014 (resolution 59/174), with the goal of strengthening international cooperation for solving problems faced by indigenous peoples in areas such as human rights, the environment, development, education, health, economic and social development. By resolution 49/214 of 23 December 1994 the GA decided that the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples shall be observed on 9 August every year and on 13 September 2007 it adopted the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, in 2016 the GA declared the year 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages under the theme: *"Indigenous languages matter for sustainable development, peace building and reconciliation."*

However, the Center for Darfur Heritage at the University of Nyala in collaboration with the UNDP shall arrange for a workshop symposium both for celebrating the World Heritage Day 18 April 2019 and the 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages. The rationale is that in the post-conflict era academia should invest more

and more on conducting researches that might have great impact on stability and peaceful coexistence of diverse people as in Darfur. Accordingly, this project may enhance the role of the University of Nyala in revitalizing community service and capacity for building inclusive knowledge societies. Furthermore, documentation of indigenous languages for a later generation is meant to allow them to discover the value of unwritten languages, not merely for the treasures of orally-transmitted legend and folklore which they enshrine, but for the light which they throw on the workings of the human mind in different races and under varying historical conditions. The most barbarous language is, according to the Greeks, in its degree, an instrument of human thought, and as such, worthy of a careful and reverent scrutiny. Sanskrit is found to contain ancient forms which explained the history of grammatical inflexions in European languages, and showed them to be all akin to one another, in a way unsuspected before.

As Max Muller said long ago, "dialects which have never produced any literature at all, the jargons of savage tribes, the clicks of the Hottentots and the vocal modulations of the Indo-Chinese are as important, than the poetry of Homer or the prose of Cicero."

2. Current status

Historically, Darfur has been an independent kingdom from immemorial times to 1916. It has considerable number of indigenous people beyond sub-Saharan Africa. These indigenous people are responsible of more than 12 spoken indigenous languages having various dialects and accents though most of them are prone to extinction. These languages are classified within the Nilo-Saharan languages which sprang c. 3000 B.C., due to Neolithic climate change, from the Yellow Nile (Wadi Howar). Some languages of this phylum include, but not limited to, the Berti, Birgid, and Beigo who are already faded away from the scene of events since many decades ago. If no efforts are made to plan for preserving the Darfur indigenous languages they will be lost forever with great considerable imbued richness of cultural heritage and human memory of the past.

The Center for Darfur Heritage plans for an initiative in coincidence with IYIL2019 to set up a program for recording languages of the indigenous people of Darfur in order to promote research and development in academia and beyond. As Arabic is widely used as lingua franca in Darfur's education and government services, the indigenous languages are dying out and this has drastic effects on social and cultural integration in regard to future archaeological excavations of prehistoric civilizations of the country in general. This is because Nubian, Sennarian and Darfurian cultures are integral to each other and a loss of one element of them may directly create heavier and serious impacts on the future scientific discoveries of the other. As a result, the Declaration of 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages constitute a great opportunity to respond to its program more positively by raising awareness of the importance of indigenous languages for sustainable development. In the aftermath of Darfur humanitarian conflict, this project shall have better merit on the indigenous people of the country who feel that formal academic institutions care for them and their culture.

3. The Activities

The purpose of the project is first of all to organize a workshop symposium in order to plan for establishing strategies for the protection of indigenous languages as vulnerable cultural heritage of Darfur's indigenous people. As a consequence, this Workshop struggles to stimulate intercultural debate around most of the uninvestigated indigenous African languages through exploring major cultural features and functions of the indigenous languages of the country in regard to embodiment of history, customs and traditions, memory, unique modes of thinking and meaning of expression in order to plan for constructing the future and achieving sustainable cultural development.

The main objectives of the symposium are to contribute to the peace-building, development and social reconciliation in the aftermath of Darfur conflict and humanitarian crisis.

The project aims to raise awareness of the importance of Darfur's indigenous languages through:

1. Develop and impart new knowledge out of the scientific symposium.
2. Provide an academic forum for intercultural debate on indigenous languages.
3. Act in coincidence with the GA's call for taking care of worldwide indigenous languages.
4. To promote and prioritize powerful means for saving the most endangered indigenous languages.
5. To investigate the thesis that without language there can be no identity.
6. To inform Darfur community that indigenous languages are increasingly more significant for the exploration, discovery and excavation of archeological prehistoric antiquities of the generations who made the civilization of the country.
7. Reinforce the dictum that key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.
8. Invoke the premise that indigenous languages are landmark tools for social change and social inclusion.
9. To share better sources of indigenous languages of Darfur within the wider knowledge societies for diversity and equity.
10. Utilize the information and telecommunication technologies, ICTs to revitalize the role of indigenous languages in education, media and government services.
11. Enhance intercultural dialogue and values of social peace, tolerance, intellectual competence and reconciliation.
12. Edify indigenous peoples that dealing equally with languages is a basic and essential element enshrined in the human rights principles.

4. Target community

The project is to target the following community of indigenous speakers:

1. Masalit.
2. Tama.
3. Daju.
4. Fur.
5. Beria (Zaghawa).
6. Midob.
7. Mima.
8. Bidyat.
9. Eringa.
10. Asongor.
11. Mileri;
12. Singar.

5. Distribution of activities

Phase I: Recording languages of the following groups:

1. Masalit.
2. Tama.
3. Daju.

Phase II: Recording languages of the following groups:

1. Fur.
2. Beria (Zaghawa).
3. Midob.

Phase III: Recording languages of the following groups:

1. Mima.
2. Bidyat.
3. Eringa.

Phase IV: Recording languages of the following groups:

1. Asongor.
2. Mileri.
3. Singar.

6.Sources of fund

It is expected to receive funding from the following organizations:

1. IYIL2019 Committee - UNESCO.
2. UNDP.
3. World Heritage Fund.
4. Endangered Languages Alliance.

7.Project impacts

Documentation of Darfur indigenous languages shall provide the following developmental outcomes:

1. Emphasize social integration.
2. Contribute to community development and inclusion.
3. Reinforcement of cultural diversity.
4. Ensure equality and co-existence.
5. Enhance greater participation in national development.
6. Promote peace-building and national development plans.
7. Mitigate senses of social marginalization.
8. Save endangered indigenous languages from extinction as national wealth for intercultural debates, education, and for research and development.
9. Indigenous languages are key factors to cultural economy, travel and tourism.
10. Indigenous languages might help in unlocking and deciphering secrets of excavations of prehistoric civilizations.
11. Taking care of indigenous languages maintains reconciliation, social integration and diversity.
12. Protection of indigenous languages is an act of response to national cultural initiatives as Sudan has ratified the 1972 UNESCO's Convention on Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage.

8. Cost distribution

Phases	Cost (in SDG)	Cost (in USD)
Phase I	500, 000	10,499.76
Phase II	500,000	10,499.76
Phase III	500, 000	10,499.76
Phase IV	500,000	10,499.76
Equipments/Tools/Transport	1,500,000	31,499.35
Sum	3,500,000	73,498.60

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