



The Indigenous Music & Oral History Project



**A Research Project Funded by
the National Department of Arts and
Culture and Conducted by the University
of Venda.**

**BUSINESS PLAN
2006-2008**



1. PREFACE

With the institutionalization of racism and apartheid before the advent of the democratic South Africa of 1994, the dominant arts were those of the politically and economically dominant white race. The music of the indigenous black groups was seen as primitive, ungodly and devoid of artistic excellence. It was therefore not championed in public discourse (*politically and academically*). It was not perceived as a national asset and therefore could not be promoted through either education or formal training.

It is to this end that the University of Venda for Science and Technology was mandated to play a leading role in redressing the past imbalances in the arts and culture of the historically marginalised people of Limpopo through affirmation, promotion and development of their intangible cultural heritage. This heritage includes oral history, culture (*rituals, etc*) indigenous music skills and techniques and performances.

The University of Venda for Science and Technology is culturally the most privileged of the sites for the project because it serves four previously marginalised language groups of the province (*Xitsonga, Tshivenda, isiNdebele and Sesotho sa Leboa*) a fertile ground for research taking cognizance of the fact that each language group in itself has a plethora of indigenous ensemble groups with a variety of musical practices. It was also due to the Department's recognition of our particular expertise and interest in the Indigenous Knowledge Systems, including Ethnomusicology, Oral History, African Languages and African History.

It is incumbent upon this research project to trace the history, culture, customs and traditions of the people, so that we could best understand their music. It is therefore

crucial for this research project to trace the place of the music of the people of Limpopo within the context of their historical and cultural foundations.

It was mainly in recognition of this factor, and to this end, that a research team had to be established, hence, a number of academics from across the multi-disciplined spectrum are part of the team, and are participating in this valuable research about our intangible cultural heritage – the history, culture, language and the music of our people. It was also incumbent for this research team to be multi-disciplinary and inter-disciplinary in its personnel composition, hence we have oral historians, representatives from the departments of African Languages, musicians and anthropologists.

Whilst the main research team comprises academics and scholars of the University of Venda for Science and Technology, we have also recognized the indispensable or rather imperative inclusion and contribution of our real experts – the musicians themselves, as part of this research team. Undoubtedly, they will always play a major role in a project of this nature.

2. MANDATE

The University of Venda, in partnership with the Department of National Arts and Culture will collect, document, preserve and promote the Indigenous Cultural Heritage of the previously marginalised people of the Limpopo Province.

3. THE TEAM

Research Team:

1. **Dr Ndwamato G Mugovhani** : The Historical and Cultural
(*Department of Music*) Foundations of Indigenous Venda
Music: Tshikona and Mbila dza
Vhavenda (*Mbila Mutondo and Mbila
dza madeza*)
2. **Dr Mokgale A Makgopa** :
(*MER Mathivha Centre for African Language, Arts and Culture*)
Indigenous songs for Bapedi women
3. **Mr Madimabe G Mapaya:** Dipela tša Basotho ba Leboa.
(*Department of Music*) Capricorn and Sekhukhuni Districts
4. **Dr Tom Leeuw** :
(*Department of Developmental studies and the Centre for IKS*)
: Indigenous African marriage and conflict
resolution
5. **Mr Maurice T Babane** :
(*MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages, Arts and Culture*)
Indigenous Songs for Vatsonga women:
Kuthawuza and Mikhanyavezo.
6. **Mr Crous Hlungwani** :
(*MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages, Arts & Culture*)
Indigenous Songs for Vatsonga men:
Mchongolo and xincayicayi.
7. **Mrs Malehu Lamola** :
(*MER Mathivha Centre for African Languages. Arts & Culture*)
(*Our Indigenous Foods, Our Knowledge and
Our Heritage*)
8. **Mrs Elelwani Ramaite** :
(*Department of English and Centre for IKS*)
Our Indigenous Dress, *Our Pride.*
9. **Dr Rachidi R Molapo** : Historical and Cultural
(*Department of History*) Background to the Music of
Basotho ba Leboa
10. **Prof. Tholene Sodi** : Indigenous African Medical Practices.
(*Department of Psychology*)

4. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

As we rolled out the project we have become convinced that the project is too gigantic and thus requires a thorough break down of deliverables in dealing with it. The project is therefore conceptualized in three phases. Each step will have the major focus area where most of the resources including funding will be concentrated.

4.1. Phase One (2004-2005)

This is a phase where there has been mass participation by the communities around Limpopo. This has made it possible for researchers to gather data from a truly wide and representative sample. The numbers of people involved also give currency to the project's attempt to promote IKS amongst as many people as possible.

4.1.1. Conceptualisation.

4.1.2. Feasibility study

4.1.3. Scoping of the project

4.1.4. Data collection (mass participation of communities)

4.1.5. Promotion

4.2. Phase Two (2006 – 2007)

This is a phase where the main activity will be the processing of data that was collected in phases one. In some instances revisits to the field of research may be necessary. It is also in this phase where Magoši/mahosi and traditional palaces will be visited to ascertain the final testing of the context and historical foundations of IKS.

4.3. Phase Three (2007 – 2008)

This phase concentrates on the international dimension of our research. There are several libraries in colonial institutions and museums littered across the world that house South African archives (e.g. Colonial Office in London, BBC Archives,

missionary Research Library in New York, and others). Also in this categories are national institutions such as the International Library of African Music at Rhodes University and the Kirby collection at the University of Cape Town.

Main Activities

- 4.3.1. Documentation
- 4.3.2. Data collection (visits to royal residencies)
- 4.3.3. Preservation
- 4.3.4. Collection of Instruments
- 4.3.5. Instrument Making and Amplification
- 4.3.6. Promotion
- 4.3.7. Publishing

- 4.3.8. Identification of research locations of South African IKS
- 4.3.9. Symposia on South African IKS
- 4.3.10. Data collection
- 4.3.11. Research Reports
- 4.3.12. Recommendations

5. PROBLEMS AND OPPORTUNITIES

5.1. Problems:

- 5.1.1. Dwindling knowledge and practices of IKS.
- 5.1.2. Deficient sound production of Indigenous Instrument.
- 5.1.3. Depletion of Indigenous Trees used for Instrument making.
- 5.1.4. Alienation of younger generation from African origins.
- 5.1.5. Alienation of traditional master music expert and informants.
- 5.1.6. Inadequacy of IKS literature.
- 5.1.7. Limited knowledge of economic resource fullness of IKS instruments.

5.2. Opportunities

- 5.2.1. Economic and Educational empowerment of IKS professionals and communities
- 5.2.2. Preservation, promotion and development IKS instrument.
- 5.2.3. Nurturing younger generation in African Culture.
- 5.2.4. Inculcating knowledge of the African heritage.
- 5.2.5. Educating the youth in the arts.

6. BUSINESS CONCEPT

The following are concepts of the project:

- 6.1. Collect
- 6.2. Document
- 6.3. Preserve and
- 6.4. Promote
- 6.5. Indigenous Cultural heritage

7. GOALS & OBJECTIVES

In order to carry out its mandate fully, the University of Venda Indigenous Music and Oral History Research Project Team has been working towards achieving the following specific objectives:

- 7.1. To play a leading role in collecting, documenting, preserving and promoting all areas of indigenous music and instruments that are endemic (*prevalent*) in the communities around the Limpopo Province.

- 7.2. To compile a research document about the music and instruments with the ultimate aim of producing a publication (*book*) for both the national and the international audience.
- 7.3. To work towards producing a documentary on the history, culture and music of the people of Limpopo Province.
- 7.4. To facilitate in the education and training on indigenous musical performances and learning.
- 7.5. To preserve this intangible cultural heritage.
- 7.6. To empower students and the broader community in indigenous music knowledge and practice.
- 7.7. To create accessibility to this heritage for the broader communities, and
- 7.8. To encourage dialogue through oral history in order to generate continuous research.

It was upon this background that we undertook to achieve this set of goals in three phases, the third of which we have yet to accomplish.

8. RISKS & REWARDS

- Absence of written contracts with participating personnel.
- Delays in payments
- Change of leadership personnel at the University.
- Theft of equipment
- Interference with mandate and funding

- Obstacles to synchronization of time frames with personnel

- **Addressing the risks**

- Ensure that contracts are entered into and signed for.
- Devising appropriate procedures
- Long term agreements between the DAC and the university
- Comprehensive insurance.
- Strict adherence to the mandate.
- Flexibility in dead lines

9. KEY ISSUES

- **Near term**

- Revival of IKS
- Heightening the awareness of IKS.
- Student empowerment.
- Production of application.
- Documentation.
- Motivating communities to espouse IKS.
- Reeducating our communities and leadership about the importance of IKS.
- Reviving IKS Industries.

- **Long term**

- Affirmation, promotion and development of IKS
- Documentation
- Training of teachers in IKS.
- Reviving IKS industries.
- Fostering National Identity among the young generation in accordance with our heritage.
- Instilling a sense of self esteem consistent with the philosophy of African renaissance.

10. PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF ACTION

11.1. CULTURAL TOURISM

(a) Aim

- Collection and purchasing of Indigenous Instruments
- Collection and purchasing of other indigenous artifacts of cultural significance to the history of previously marginalized people of Limpopo.
- Special space in the University Art Gallery and Cultural Centre

(b) Activities

- Expert on curators of instruments and other artifacts-taking care and explaining (history meaning, context, function indigenous societies.
- Artists on instrument- making and playing employed.
- Modification and amplification of sound-Meropa (mirumba, nanga, dinaka, mbila (dipila)
- Collaboration linkages – national and international Kirby Collection, ILAM, BBC Archives.

(c) Comments on Cultural Tourism

- Satellites in communities go to the communities
- Balancing heritage with commercialization more defection of the people
- Promote heritage, not necessary commercialization.
- Centre not become Venda restricted.
- Short-term exhibitions
- Tourism industry- placement centre for who students are doing tourism
- Exhibitions at shows

Many communities will be able to market and sustain themselves through these formations.

11.2. INVOLVEMENT OF TRADITIONAL LEADERSHIP

Aim

From 2003, the University of Venda has been engaged in a partnership with the National Department of Arts and Culture about the indigenous music festivals. The municipal district offices were the centre of operation.

Whilst the coordination of the festivals was primarily district-oriented, a large number of the real custodians of the land, the people and the Indigenous African Cultural Heritage, Mahosi (*Kings, Queen, chiefs, chieftains and headman*) did not feature prominently.

We therefore propose to focus the mandate to this new dimension for the period 2005-2006.

The house of traditional leaders, whose leader was part of the historic launch in 2003, needs to be brought in.

Sensitivity is needed when dealing with the contested areas around 'kings' or 'paramount'

Activities

11.2.1. Identify particular Mahosi of Vhavenda, Vatsonga, Bapedi and Mandebele who we can enter into partnership with.

11.2.2. The Mahosi will be given certain amount of money so as to arrange a traditional function in which traditional music and oral poetry could be performed, and indigenous food displayed.

11.2.3. Project researchers will attend the function in order to observe and capture the proceedings, such as the performance of the music, type of instruments, type of food, attire of performers and chiefs, decorations, etc

11.2.4. Collection and Purchasing of Indigenous Instrument Documentation

11.3. COLLECTION AND PURCHASING OF INDIGENOUS MUSIC INSTRUMENTS 2006.

- ✓ Another part of the mandate that has not been fulfilled yet, is the collection and purchasing of intangible indigenous music instruments.

- ✓ An Art Gallery and Cultural Centre is presently under construction at the University of Venda for Science and Technology.
- ✓ Expects in instrument making already commissioned to make the instruments.
- ✓ Modification and amplification of sound considered for mirumba (*meropa*), nanga (*dinaka*) and mbila (*dipila*).

11.4. DOCUMENTATION

Many forms of documentation will be involved in this project. One of forms which is most accessible to a wide range of audiences is a television documentary, normally broadcast on Mondays at 22h00. One other option will be to feature in established programmes such as “Our Nation in Colour”. However, the first option will be ideal.

The IMOHP will approach the commissioning editor with a proposal to record a documentary that will take a mini-series format in narrating the indigenous music, its historical, cultural and social contexts. The mini-series will have a theatrical musical presentation of the music followed by an academic investigation at the royal residencies representing the music, the instruments, the people performing it and the historical perspective of the royal custodians of the clan.

The following need to be in place:

11.4.1. Proposal to SABC

11.4.2. Supporting documents from the Department of Arts and Culture

11.4.3.A proposal to a production house that will record performances, interviews and narrations

11.4.4. A well researched script for the narrator

11.4.5. A budget

11.4.6.We hope that once the SABC has commissioned the production, most of the funding will come from them.

This will be very good publicity for the project and its activities. This will also generate funds.

11.5. PUBLICATIONS 2006-2007

- ✓ This can take two forms: one, with pictorial representation, like “The Vanishing Cultures” by Magubane.
- ✓ Second focus: revalidation of previous research, which is more academic with an academic audience in mind. Publishers- Heritage history with socio-political focus.
- ✓ Data should not be wasted, it should be published.
- ✓ Data could be in the form of anthologies and monographs.
- ✓ By the end of 2006, the researchers will have produced a **publication(s)** on the data, covering the broad spectrum of indigenous music and oral history of the province.

11.6. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES 2007

- ✓ In addition to national conferences which shall be held from time to time to formalize the presentation of research findings amongst researchers, international conferences will also be organized, in order to acquaint international researchers in IKS with indigenous knowledge.
- ✓ While the national conferences will be held according to a fixed schedule which aims to stimulate research and to measure the growth and impact of the reaffirmation of indigenous knowledge, the international conference will be held to deliberate complex areas of indigenous knowledge whose fuller understanding and appreciation might require comparative study and deliberation of an international nature.
- ✓ Researchers at all level will benefit from international conferences. they will have the opportunity to make their contribution to the international community of scholars as much as they will advance the need to depict the uniqueness

of South African indigenous knowledge systems in areas of possible comparison with indigenous knowledge elsewhere in the world.

- ✓ Attempts will be made to include community participation in the international conferences, in order to broaden an understanding amongst peoples of the world and to discount monopolistic claims to knowledge in the global arena.
- ✓ This will authenticate the sources of indigenous knowledge systems data

11.7. EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- ✓ Identification and employment of traditional master musicians at schools.
- ✓ Organizing workshops at different centers in the province on instrument making and training.
- ✓ Designing learning materials for the schools in accordance with the national curriculum statement in the area of Arts and Culture.
- ✓ Developing educational/informative documents which will be put in Art gallery (i.e. brochures, pamphlets etc)
- ✓ Inputs in the Arts and Culture curriculum.
- ✓ Identification of centers and schools involved in the arts and culture activities and establishing partnerships with them (*e.g. Bochum Area Arts and Culture and Vhembe Cultural Ensemble*)
- ✓ Liaising with Department of Arts Culture, Education and Tourism.
- ✓ Inputs and introduction of arts and culture teaching methodologies for university students doing teaching diplomas.
- ✓ Establishment of a multi disciplinary with the Department of Education within the university, in order to formulate a module in the curriculum that address of arts and culture teachers.

11.8. HERITAGE WEEK ACTIVITIES (*September 2006*)

The task team comprising the Indigenous Music and Oral History Project of Univen and the Cultural Desk of the Vhembe District Municipality organized the event on the 16th September 2005, as mandated by the DAC.

The focus of 2006 Heritage Month will be decided by the DAC and communicated to the IMOP.

11.9. MAPUNGUBWE CULTURAL FESTIVAL(*DECEMBER 2006*)

The project will also participate in this auspicious event of national and cultural significance. There will be a day or two devoted primarily to indigenous heritage activities (*performances, exhibitions, dress, food and oral history*).

Since this will be our main promotional activity this year 2006, the IMOP plans to be the main actors in the marketing activities (banners, traditional attires, etc).

Members of the research team will be involved in Radio and TV interviews on these indigenous cultural heritage activities on channels such as SABC Africa and Morning Live. There will also be narrations and historical snippets.

11.10 Education and Training

- Employment of traditional Master Musicians as Resident Artists. This activity is already in place.
- Making inputs in the design of the Arts and Culture Curriculum for schools in the Province – Sesotho sa Leboa, Xitsonga and Tshivenda. Arts and Culture forms part of our school's curriculum.
- Organising workshops on indigenous instrument making and playing.

Conclusion:

The Indigenous Music Research Project Team recognises the vastness of Limpopo Province in terms of its cultural heritage- diverse language groups with diverse and interesting histories, cultures and music. It is also significant to note that down the years, and for reasons unknown to some of us, our people have only recognized the existence of only three so-called black language groups (Basotho ba Leboa, Vhavenda and Vatsonga). It was only through this laudable initiative (The DAC Indigenous Music Project) that we were made to recognize another significant component of the Limpopo Province populace- Amandebele. Do Amandebele resident in Limpopo have their own history and culture, and do they have different musical practices from the others? This is what makes research interesting and exciting - continuously unearthing new, valuable information.

This research project, therefore, cannot afford to be selective. It compels an all-inclusive sampling approach; all historically or previously disadvantaged and marginalised population groups in Limpopo should be covered in this mammoth venture. Undoubtedly, for this project to achieve its intended specific outcomes and realize its long-term objectives, it has to be allowed to unfold unhindered and unrushed. The end- product has to be authentic and devoid of glaring omissions. The University of Venda for Science and Technology Indigenous Music Project Research Team has accepted the mammoth challenge. We feel privileged and are all excited

and enthusiastic at the challenge of spearheading this milestone project which will undoubtedly assist to restore our pride.

Dr George Ndwamato Mugovhani

Project Manager: Indigenous Music Research Project

University of Venda

