Annual Progress Report TEAM projects

1 General information

Project code:	Project title:
ET2022TEA513A103	Storytelling and Young People Coping with Crisis: Oral Narratives and Crisis Management in Kenya and Ethiopia

Summary of progress made:
- Strong progress of research exchange at interuniversity level, involving all 4 partners: crucial for acquiring new knowledge + leading to important South-South-North-North co-operation. *- Successful people's capacity building: we engaged a postdoc coordinator, 2 Team PhD-candidates. A further 4 PhD-candidates + 2 MA-graduates writing their proposals also joined the OL4D-Hub meetings, at Jimma as well as Nairobi.* *- Regular OL4D-hub meetings as well as joined meetings between the 2 branches.* *- Annual Meeting: highly fruitful platform for intensifying contact and exchange.* *- Already at this stage outreach to schools and theatre/musical organisations involved in storytelling.*

2 Project strategy

*The aim of our project is to **relate oral narratives with crisis situations** at the personal or societal level. Our analyses so far reveal the intersections between fiction and reality to be far more elaborate than anticipated. In other words, the potential of storytelling as a tool for reflection on crisis is even higher than anticipated.*

*Based on narrative analysis, workshops, and a theatre play, we identified all of the **5 domains** featuring in our project as well as the relations between the domains: 1) Gendered crisis situations; 2) Othering and exclusion; 3) Poverty; 4) Disease; 5) Ecological crisis. So far all participants in the workshops and theatre play evaluated the activities positively, **indicating the value of popular storytelling in preventing and dealing with current crisis situations**.*

***Oral Literature for Development** (OL4D) is a new approach. By various means – the website, the OL4D-Hub branches, the databases, etc. – we have managed to establish this new approach and give attention to it. Through our **web-publications** we are creating the conditions for (co-)creating a sustainable **educational tool:** even if this will only be fully realised in year 3.*

*In our project we strongly engage in i**nteruniversity co-operation**. Through meetings of the OL4D-Hub branches and interuniversity exchange, all members have gained vastly in terms of analytical, methodological and theoretical tools and concepts. The **North-North-South-South constellation** – involving Jimma University, the University of Nairobi, HoWest, and UGent – forms a lively platform and we are learning from each other.*

- ***Project equipment and office space***: *Despite some setbacks (materials are difficult to purchase in Ethiopia, see 7.6), we managed to purchase nearly all equipment necessary (see doc 16). Also office space has been reserved for meetings, and for the Postdoc coordinator.*
- ***Recruitment*** *of Postdoc and 2 PhD candidates.*
- ***Postdoc tasks***: *Terms of engagement were signed between the promotors and the postdoc, and all tasks of the postdoc were well-defined. The postdoc completed research stays at UGent for a month in Feb/March 2023 and for 3 months between July and September 2023.*

- **PhD-projects:** *The Ph.D. projects were set up, and both Ph.D. candidates visited UGent for 3 months between February and May 2023. For the Ethiopian candidate the joint degree agreement has been signed; for the Kenyan candidate this yet is to be finalised.*
- **Setting up of OL4D-Hub at JU and UoN + regular meetings**: *The hub meetings (10 meetings for the 2 branches) offered a platform for discussing ongoing research (Staff, Postdoc, PhDs and MAs). Furthermore there were 3 joint meetings online and the Annual Meeting in Diani/Kwale, Kenya. This resulted in direct research exchange (see 'Methods and training'; 'Research exchange'). For an overview, see Doc 0; in this document you are referred to minutes and reports 1-15.*
- **Starting databases on oral literatures**: *For Oromo, Gikuyu and Digo we have started to develop databases. As the literature on Swahili is vaster, we have not as yet embarked on it, but will do so next year. The other 3 databases are taking shape: the one on Oromo oral literature has many titles already, but needs streamlining, the other 2 need more titles, but are already organised to get them ready for use.*
- **Setting up a website**: *Soon after the project started, we set up a website and familiarised ourselves with maintaining it. By now this is a lively instrument to offer info on project aims, Team membership, project activities, video's, web-publications and other output: https://www.ol4d.ugent.be/ . Through Gerti Wouters, the HoWest representative in the Team, a project logo was designed.*
  We plan on extending to Facebook, Twitter and Instagram next year.
- **Methods and training**: *During their stay in Ghent, the Ph.D. candidates and the Postdoc benefitted from a video-, photography-training at HoWest as well as a heuristics training at the Faculty library. The UoN promotor presented online guidelines for grant writing in one of the joint hub-meetings. During the Annual Meeting trainings were held on Workshop Tools; Narratology; Fieldwork methods and ethics; and Video-recording and editing. Methods were discussed individually with each PhD of the Team by the promotors, South as well as North.*
- **Research supervision and exchange**: *The visits of the PhDs and the postdoc proved beneficial for their projects as they spent time on literature review, and discussion with the UGent promotor. Coaching continued at their home institute with the South promotors. The UGent promotor also started an annotated reading list that is available to all hub members. This includes readings on narratology, ecocriticism, heritage studies, and other methodological/theoretical approaches.*
  The involvement of PhD students has been considerable. We not only reached the 2 PhDs directly connected to the project (even if one is currently being replaced); also already existing PhD projects and students envisaging a PhD trajectory exchanged on Oral Literature for Development benefit from the OL4D Hub meetings.
- **Exchange between the partner institutes**: *Contact between the 4 participating HEI's was lively and fruitful. Apart from frequent online meetings, the UGent promotor visited Nairobi in September and Jimma in October 2023; The PhD-candidates visited UGent in the first semester of 2023; The Postdoc stayed at UGent in Feb/March and between July-Sept 2023; During this time we visited HoWest for a day; We all met in Diani/Kwale, Kenya for the Annual Meeting. Furthermore, on 2 occasions,* **online inter-university teaching exchange** *took place (Inge Brinkman in PhD track course of Nega Jibat 'Sociology of knowledge'; Peter Wasamba in MA course of Milkessa Edae 'Folklore and oral literatures').*
  At this stage, the area of partnership is key to the project. The South-South-North-North interaction has been intensive and most fruitful. Theoretical input from UGent; media training

from HoWest; fieldwork methodologies from University of Nairobi; interdisciplinary explorations between folklore and politics from Jimma University are just a few examples of the complementary character of the exchange through which all partners benefitted. The next step is obviously to further extend these networks to artists and schools.

- ***Activities in all 5 domains**: We have been active in all 5 domains:*
  - *1) Gendered crisis situations – This is a domain we actively engaged with: Rehearsal workshop during Annual Meeting; Web-publication 'Gikuyu narrative by Esther Njeri, 1'; Paper in Jimma by UGent promotor; PhD research Megersa Regassa and Tsehay Dinsa, etc;*
  - *2) Othering and exclusion – Workshop at Nairobi St. Mary's School; See Kwame Arts Troupe Performance; PhD research Megersa Regassa.*
  - *3) Poverty – Kwale Arts Troupe Performance during Annual Meeting that based a theatre play on an oral narrative on drought, hunger and poverty, also relating to the role of solidarity in situations of crisis;*
  - *4) Disease – Report by former UoN PhD-Team member;*
  - *5) Ecological crisis – This is a domain we actively engaged with: Postdoc and PhD research (Milkessa Edae); Publication and paper by UGent-promotor and Postdoc; MA in Jimma-Hub; Kwale Arts Troupe Performance during Annual Meeting, etc.*
- *Our initiatives in terms of **outreach** are thus far exceeding expectations. We already held incipient meetings, a workshop and also attended a performance, that will form the basis of a web-publication.*
- ***Paper presentation and (web-)publications:** The project team was represented during the 14th ISOLA conference at INALCO, Paris 5 – 8 July 2023. The UGent promotor and the Postdoc represented the project with a joint presentation. The Postdoc was invited to present a Keynote Address.*

  We are now fully engaged to realise audiovisual webpublications that will form the backbone of our educational tool: a first web-publication on a Gikuyu narrative (with audio) has been realised and publications on Oromo oral narratives are well underway. We will soon also embark on the transcriptions of the Swahili play by the Kwale Arts Troupe, based on a Digo narrative.

  A first publication in a journal was realised by the UGent promotor.

  In terms of publications and paper presentations we are ahead of schedule, and it is envisaged that research output will become a strong component of our project.

3 Organisation

In case of any changes in the project team, please report on these changes in the module 'learning and steering'. In the near future, VLIR-UOS will enable projects to update their team composition in the online project tool.

See 7.1.

4 Stakeholder management and coherence

Describe how you have engaged with key stakeholders during the past year. What was the result?

1) 2 **MA-students** were involved in the OL4D-Hub branches at JU and UoN. The challenge of engaging more MA-students, especially female students, will be addressed next year.

2) 2 **PhD students** are financially supported by the project; Intellectual exchange and support extends to a total of 5 PhD students and 2 MA-graduates working on their proposal for a PhD. We regard this as successful, especially as the PhD-candidates indicate benefitting enormously from the input, feedback, exchange, and networking.

3) **University staff**: In the 2 OL4D-Hub branches, staff is exchanging on the subject of Oral Literature for Development. This concerns core Team members, but also other staff. Through the joint meetings and the Annual Meeting, the staff also exchanges at a interuniversity level.

4) **Wider university environment**: While initiatives are taken to move the exchange beyond the OL4D Hub (e.g. public lectures,, paper presentation, conference attendance, etc), it is still too early for uptake in the university programmes: will be addressed in the 3rd year.

5) **Artists**: Not only did we discuss the plans with groups of artists, we also already attended a performance during our Annual Meeting. This was a major occasion and the recordings will be processed into a web-publication.

6) **NGOs**: Various NGOs were contacted both in Ethiopia and Kenya to discuss co-operation for the 2nd year. There was general agreement on the co-operation.

7) **Teachers & trainers**: Between 22-31 March 2023, Teshome Mossissa visited Addis Ababa, and held incipient meetings with 3 cultural institutions. Between 18-23 April 2023, he visited Nekemte, meeting with representatives of a cultural institute and a school, with positive results (see doc 15). The contacts with Kwale Arts Troupe during the Annual Meeting were fruitful and will also be continued. Contacts in schools were established, and we even already carried out a workshop in 1 school. Interaction with this stakeholder-group will further materialise as of next year.

8) **General audience**: Still too early: will be addressed as of next year.

9) **Adolescents**: Still too early: will be addressed as of next year (although MA-students in the OL4D-Hubs fall within the age-category, and we did a workshop in 1 class in Nairobi)

10) **Media**: Contacts with the media were established; when the performances/workshops kick off next year all is in place to have media coverage. Also our website has been set up and is taking shape. We are installing an analytics tool so as to trace the number of visitors to the site. The link with the Department of Journalism at HoWest is imperative in this respect.

Explain how you have collaborated with other organisations? What was the result? Describe active linkages with other (Belgian) development actors, and other VLIR-UOS funded activities.

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1) **BantUGent** (https://www.bantugent.ugent.be/): Most Team members have been engaged in various activities from the BantUGent research platform of the African Studies section at Ghent University. Many are (associate) members and have attended activities of this group as well as exchanging on transcription of data, linguistic aspects of our research and more theoretical issues such as language hierarchies and conceptual history.

2) **Narmesh** (https://narmesh.ugent.be/): The Narmesh group at Ghent University focuses on narrative and ecology, hence directly relating to one of the domains in our project. The Team promotor at UGent presented a lecture in the Narmesh groups and contacts are frequent.

3) **GAP** (https://www.africaplatform.ugent.be/): interaction with the UGent Africa-platform is frequent and fruitful.

4) VLIR-UOS **Nascere**: The synergy with the Nascere-funded PhD candidates is clear: both Megersa Regassa and Milkessa Edae are working on their Nascere-funded PhD projects while at the same time being active members of the OL4D-Team project.

5) The research project **AfriSurge** ([https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/projects/afrisurge-trans-formative-heritage-politics-peacebuilding-and-digital-restitution-cultural](https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/projects/afrisurge-transformative-heritage-politics-peacebuilding-and-digital-restitution-cultural)) and **CongoLines** ([https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/projects/congolines-inscribing-lines-weaving-threads-con-golese-colonial-paintings-images-and-objects](https://research.flw.ugent.be/en/projects/congolines-inscribing-lines-weaving-threads-congolese-colonial-paintings-images-and-objects)) at the African Studies section at Ghent University both deal with art history from the perspective of (re-)connection. The exchange on the intersections between tangible and intangible heritage is lively and all involved benefit from the co-operation between the members of these projects.

6) **Université de l'Uélé**, Isiro, DR-Congo: The cooperation mentioned under 5) was especially clear during a visit to the Université de l'Uélé, Isiro in September 2022. With students, lecturers, teachers and trainers we exchanged on the restitution processes of both tangible and intangible heritage. The UGent promotor presented a lecture with the title : 'L'actualité des contes: repenser les littératures orales comme histoire d'épistémologie'.

5 Planning and budgeting

Budget needs to be reported on in the annual financial report (AFR). In case of major reorientations of the project (planning or budget), please explain them in the module 'learning and steering'.

In case of final report - and if applicable - include an inventory of investment goods and transfer to beneficiary agreement (optional template available on VLIR-UOS website).

*See below under 2: with a large and lively team and active networking, the financial needs ever increase, but **inflation rates** render the budget ever tighter. This contradiction poses many problems and we have difficulties even in creatively make do.*

6 Monitoring and evaluation

We did make progress in all areas of change that we envisaged.

RPM   *Research programmes and methods*

EPM   *Educational programmes and methods*

PEO   *People*

OPS   *Outreach and policy support*

NP   *Networks and partnerships*

SPI   *Systems, policies and infrastructure*

We did make progress in all areas of change that we envisaged.
***RPM**: In terms of publications and paper presentations we are ahead of schedule, and it is envisaged that research output will become a strong component of our project.*
***EPM**: We are still in a too early phase of the project to actively engage with educational take-up in the programmes of both universities. Only in the third year we will engage in this.*
***PEO**: The involvement of PhD students has been considerable. We reached the 2 PhDs directly connected to the project (even if one is currently being replaced), and also already existing PhD projects and students envisaging a PhD trajectory exchanged on Oral Literature for Development benefit from the OL4D Hub meetings. This involvement also resulted in finding a sound solution to the problem with the UoN PhD within a very short time (see 7.1). However, the amount of Master students involved is still relatively limited, and we need to look into that.*
***OPS**: This is going very well so far. We already held a workshop and also attended a performance, that will form the basis of a web-publication.*
***NP**: At this stage, this area is key to the project. The South-South-North-North interaction has been intensive and most fruitful. Theoretical input from UGent; media training from HoWest; fieldwork methodologies from University of Nairobi; interdisciplinary explorations between folklore and politics from Jimma University are just a few examples of the complementary character of the exchange through which all partners benefitted. The next step is obviously to further extend these networks to artists and schools.*
***SPI**: n/a*

Please see the video/web-publication section to find project materials.

7 Learning and steering

Learning - Share the lessons learned that you have acquired in the past year. What advice would you give to researchers who propose a similar project?

- *1) A major change was the **replacement** of the joint UoN-UGent PhD candidate. Progress was insufficient and it was difficult for this PhD to accept feedback, resulting in a crisis of trust between her and the promotors. The in-depth networking in our project helped to immediately find replacement. We received 6 applications to the vacancy (all of male candidates) of which we invited 2 for an interview. Mark Obure, one of the Hub-members, was selected on the basis of his qualifications: he will start in October 2023. Advice: **People management is not easy**, as it depends on a multitude of micro-factors: applicants may reflect on potential set-backs of this nature.*
- *2) A major challenge is formed by current worldwide **inflation rates** and fluctuations in currency exchange. These could not have been foreseen and in our view, VLIR-UOS may develop mechanisms to save projects from such risks. For us it has resulted in an extremely **tight budget**, and we have to be enormously creative in still realising all goals (fortunately we are). Advice: Budgets require ample space for unforeseen costs and inflation.*
- *3) **Financial compensation for the Kenya-based postdoc** coordinator was foreseen on a non-taxed basis in the budget. Unfortunately, government regulations changed in the starting year, and the amount has been taxed. Moreover, due to administrative problems, there were delays in the payment. This had led to an exceedingly difficult financial situation for the family of the postdoc. The budget does not allow for an increase of the compensation. The matter also took considerable time of the Nairobi-promotor who is until now trying to change the status of the postdoc, so as to ensure a decent income.*
- *4) The **workload of the South-promotors** has increased, but there is little financial compensation for that. Of course they gain in terms of networking, intellectual exchange, international experience, etc. and the support of the Postdoc coordinator is invaluable, but the financial compensation is too minimal. Given that we are facing a tight budget already, there is no room to address this.*
- *5) Our project aims at a wide network spread over 4 universities in 3 countries, plus stakeholder groups in schools, NGO's, artists, media, etc. This is of immense value and at the heart of our aim, but at the same time also makes it **complex to manage all interests and expectations**, contents-wise and financially.*
- *6) In Ethiopia it proves **difficult to purchase project equipment**. Some of the equipment was hence obtained through UGent, but export regulations are complex and so far VAT has not been returned by the companies involved.*
- *7) **Gender balance** is a challenge. We are trying to do our best and recruit both female and male Team members and OL4D-Hub members, but it is not easy. Telling is of course that for the replacement of the UoN PhD all 6 applicants were male.*