



VolkswagenStiftung

Linguistic approaches to the documentation of indigenous ecological knowledge: A mobile training workshop

The University of Dodoma
4–10 September 2023

Application deadline: 15 January 2023

Workshop description

The University of Dodoma, in collaboration with the University of Cologne, Germany, is hosting a training workshop on the theme “Linguistic approaches to the documentation of indigenous ecological knowledge”. The training workshop includes a two-day symposium, two days of training sessions, and two days of practical sessions, for which participants will relocate to Manyara Region.

The main goal of the workshop is to equip early career researchers with foundational knowledge and skills in ethnobiology and language documentation to allow them to develop their own projects at the intersection of these two fields. Ethnobiology, or what we refer to more broadly here as “Indigenous ecological knowledge” (IEK), encompasses knowledge of the formal, functional and behavioural properties of plant and animal species, cultural and spiritual beliefs pertaining to non-human beings, interpretation of weather patterns and climatic conditions, agricultural knowledge, and so on. Part of this knowledge is linguistic in nature, not only in terms of nomenclature, but also in its negotiation and transmission via everyday conversation, verbal art, and other speech genres. This workshop aims to provide training in the documentation of linguistic aspects of IEK.

Language-oriented documentation of IEK is valuable in its own right, but also has the potential to contribute to debates and activities relating to sustainability and conservation, as well as to help preserve knowledge that is in danger of rapid disappearance. In contemporary Africa, as elsewhere, indigenous ecological knowledge is not only losing its significance but in many cases is actively rejected. People’s interactions with the natural environment are changing rapidly, as are the environments themselves as a result of climate change. Socioeconomic transformation has also destabilized the ethnic community languages through which

IEK has traditionally been transmitted. In this rather urgent context, the workshop aims to plant seeds among junior researchers based in East Africa for future documentation projects of IEK. We envisage that the workshop will also promote short-, medium- and long-term research collaborations in the field of language documentation and IEK.

The language of the workshop is English.

Schedule

- Day 1: Opening symposium 'Interdisciplinary approaches to the study of ethnobiological knowledge', with talks from national and international experts.
- Day 2: Works-in-progress symposium, with presentations by junior researchers.
- Day 3: Expert-led seminars 'Introduction to ethnozoology' and 'Introduction to ethnobotany.'
- Day 4: Expert-led seminar 'Language documentation' and relocation to Manyara.
- Day 5: Practical documentation sessions with Iraqw speakers (Manyara Region).
- Day 6: Practical documentation sessions with Datooga speakers (Manyara Region).
- Day 7 (half day): Looking back and looking forward.

Funding availability

There are 15 places available for junior researchers. All travel and accommodation costs of successful applicants will be covered.

Eligibility requirements

- Applicants must be affiliated with an institution of higher education in Burundi, Djibouti, DRC, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, or Zambia.
- Applicants must have a working knowledge of English.
- Applicants must have a B.A. in language and linguistics.
- Applicants at the M.A. or Ph.D. level must be working or planning to work on a thesis topic directly related to language and ecological knowledge.
- Applicants at the postdoctoral level must have submitted their PhD no earlier than January 2020. They must be currently working or planning to work on a project relating to language and ecological knowledge. (The topic of the Ph.D. thesis does not have to be of direct relevance.)
- Women researchers are highly encouraged to apply.

Application procedure

The workshop organizers are pleased to invite junior (early-career) researchers based in eastern Africa and working in the fields of language and linguistics to submit applications to attend the workshop. Applications (in one PDF file) should include:

1. C.V.
2. Completed application form (see website)
3. Short description of current project (MA, PhD, or postdoctoral project; max. 1 page);
4. Provisional title and abstract (300 words) for the work-in-progress presentation (see above). The abstract should (i) provide brief background about the language(s) and community, (ii) indicate the objectives of the study, (iii) describe the methodological approach, (iv) summarise the main findings (or the expectations in case the research is still to be conducted);
5. One letter of recommendation.

The deadline for applications is 15.01.2023. Please submit your application to <iek.dodoma@gmail.com>.

Notification of decision

Applicants will be notified of the outcome of their application by 15.02.2023.

Organizers

The workshop is being organized by Dr. Chrispina Alphonse (chrisalphi333@gmail.com) and Dr. Alice Mitchell (alice.mitchell@uni-koeln.de) with the support of The University of Dodoma, the University of Cologne, and the Volkswagen Foundation.

Website

<https://iek-dodoma2023.weebly.com/>