

Annual Progress Report TEAM project

2023-2024

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:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strong continuation of research exchange at interuniversity level, involving all 4 partners (including MoU between South-partners JU and UoN): crucial for acquiring new knowledge + leading to important South-South-North-North co-operation. - Successful people's capacity building, with the engagement of a postdoc coordinator and 2 Team PhD-candidates (Who have successfully carried out fieldwork). A further 4 PhD-candidates are Core Team members (with 3 of them under the project promoters' supervision, and the 4th having obtained his degree from Addis Abeba University), with another candidate joining next year. 2 further PhD-candidates as well as 2 MA-graduates writing their proposals (with one having secured a PhD position at Stellenbosch Uni) are participating in the OL4D-Hubs (at Jimma as well as Nairobi). - Regular OL4D-hub meetings as well as frequent exchange visits to Ghent University of all members. - Annual Meeting: highly fruitful platform for intensifying contact and exchange. - Outreach to schools and theatre/musical organisations involved in storytelling as well as involvement of BA-students in workshops (more than 10 activities, reaching out to high school students, BA-students, and the general public in Ghent, Jimma, Nekemte, Nairobi, Kwale). 	

2 Project strategy

What have you achieved? Explain how your project is on its way to reach the outcomes that were described in your proposal.

For final year reporting: Elaborate to what extent the outcomes have been achieved. Describe how the project has contributed to the LNOB (incl. gender equality), environmental sustainability, and interconnectedness principles.

*The aim of our project is to **relate oral narratives with crisis situations** at the personal or societal level. Our analyses 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 theatre plays, 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**. Last year we already took a modest start with performances/workshops: this year we have accelerated our efforts and realised 12 performances/workshops in Ghent, Jimma, Nekemte, Nairobi and Kwale. Some of these events lasted for an entire day (for a good example, see doc 9).*

***Oral Literature for Development (OL4D)** is a new approach. By various means – the website (<https://www.ol4d.ugent.be/>), social media (FB-page), media presence (see doc 10), the OL4D-Hub branches (see docs 1-3), the databases, etc. – we are establishing this new approach and give attention to it. Through our **web-publications** (now 7 entries + audio/video-materials, see: <https://www.ol4d.ugent.be/videos/>) we are creating the conditions for (co-)creating a sustainable **educational tool**: even if this will only be fully realised in year 3. Furthermore we have secured some extra funding for a photography/narrative edition.*

*We are offering **academic output** in our project based on the literary analysis we made. Some of these manuscripts are still in the writing process, but we have already published various articles, 1 more manuscript is accepted, and a further 2 are under review.*

*In our project we strongly engage in **interuniversity co-operation**. Through meetings of the OL4D-Hub branches and interuniversity exchange, all members vastly gain 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. Jimma University and the University of Nairobi have finalised the procedure of signing a **MOU**. This is of primordial importance of formalising research cooperation, staff visits, and student exchange.*

What have you done? Report on the progress you have made or setbacks you have encountered regarding the intermediate changes (and the anticipated results) set out in your proposal. Explain the key results of the past year, referring to the underlying deliverables.

For final year reporting: please include a retrospective on the entire project period.

- **Project equipment and office space:** *Despite some setbacks (1 laptop and 1 printer broke down; Materials are difficult to purchase in Ethiopia, see 7.6), we managed to purchase nearly all equipment necessary. Furthermore through HoWest both South-Teams received considerable material support in the form of functioning second-hand professional audiovisual materials (see doc 11). Also office space is being used by the PhDs, for meetings, and for the Postdoc coordinator.*
- **Postdoc tasks:** *The postdoc is taking up the various tasks, especially functioning in the Nairobi context. The postdoc completed a research stay at UGent for a month in March 2024 as planned.*
- **Start Kenyan PhD candidate.** *Even though a candidate dropped out, we managed to immediately secure a new candidate through a transparent recruitment procedure. As all applicants male (despite our encouragements for female candidates to apply), we had no choice but to select a male candidate. The new PhD is already well-integrated into the Team and makes good progress.*
- **PhD-projects:** *The PhD projects are continued, and the 4 JU PhD candidates visited UGent for 3 months between October 2023 and May 2024, one candidate benefitting from a Global Minds grant to extend his stay with another 3 months. The new Kenyan candidate wrote his proposal and has started in April 2024, visiting Ghent between June and August 2024. The contract for his joint degree is yet to be finalised. Both the Nairobi and the Jimma PhD-candidates have carried out fieldwork, now processing the data.*
- **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. Furthermore the PhD group meet on a monthly basis with the UGent-promotor for further exchange and guidance.*

The involvement of PhD students has been considerable. We not only reached the 2 PhDs directly connected to the project; also already existing PhD projects and students envisaging a PhD trajectory exchanged on Oral Literature for Development benefit from the OL4D Hub meetings.
- **OL4D-Hub meetings at JU and UoN:** *The hub meetings (14 meetings for the 2 branches) offered a platform for discussing ongoing research (Staff, Postdoc, PhDs and new MA-students, one of them female). Furthermore there was the Annual Meeting at Jimma University; this proved to be an enormous platform for meeting, exchanging, and spreading the OL4D-approach. Postdoc James Wachira and Inge Brinkman arrived prior to the Annual Meeting in Jimma to help organising and offer additional public lectures (see docs 4, 5 & 6).*
- **Progress on databases on oral literatures:** *For Oromo, Gikuyu and Digo we have started to develop databases. As the literature on Swahili is vaster and receives more international scholarly attention, we have adjusted our plans and decided to focus for now on the other three languages. These three databases are taking shape: the one on Oromo oral literature has many titles already, but still needs streamlining; the Digo database is nearly up-to-date*

and only requires editing before being put online, while the Gikuyu database will be addressed for final editing next year.

- **Managing our website and other media:** 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/>. We have set up a Facebook-page and are in the process of creating an Instagram account. In due course we will consider other platforms. In Ethiopia, Jimma promotor Teshome Mossissa has been engaged in University radio and a large tv programme by Oromia Broadcasting Network.
- **Methods and training:** During their stay in Ghent, the PhD candidates and the Postdoc benefitted from a video-editing-training at HoWest. Prior and during the Annual Meeting trainings were held on Grant-writing; Workshop Tools; 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.
- The Postdoc and several of the Jimma PhDs (who are all lecturers at their university) are **integrating the OL4D-approach into their teaching**, focusing on ecological crisis, gender, and inclusion in oral literary genres in BA- as well as MA-courses.
- **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 February and Jimma in May 2024; The PhD-candidates visited UGent throughout the year; The Postdoc stayed at UGent in Feb/March; In June we met with representatives of HoWest; UoN promotor Peter Wasamba and Team member Kimingichi Wabende visited UGent in June and September respectively; and we all met in Jimma, Ethiopia for the Annual Meeting. At this stage, the area of partnership is really materialising into structural partnerships.
- **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 the Annual Meeting; Web-publication on Oromo oral narratives; Jimma Theatre play during Annual Meeting; PhD research Megersa Regassa and Tsehay Dinsa, etc;
 - 2) Othering and exclusion – Workshop at UGent; Rehearsal workshop during the Annual Meeting; Jimma Theatre play during Annual Meeting; 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: see web-publications on this; Upcoming PhD-research by Fedila Abazinab.
 - 4) Disease – Web-publication on Oromo oral narratives.
 - 5) Ecological crisis – This is a domain we actively engaged with: Postdoc and PhD research (Milkessa Edae); Publication and paper; Kwale Arts Troupe Performance during Annual Meeting, etc.
- Our initiatives in terms of **outreach** are in full swing. We organised storytelling **performances and workshops** involving of BA-students (and some MA-students) at UGent, Jimma and Nairobi, high schools in Jimma and Nekemte, market places and high schools in Kwame county. (more than 10 activities, see reports 7-9). The performances reach a wide audience through our web-publications.
- **Paper presentation and (web-)publications:**

*We are now fully **engaged to realise audiovisual web-publications that will form the backbone of our educational tool**: Megersa and Tsehay created a web-publication on 3 Oromo narratives (with video); a translation of the Swahili play by the Kwale Arts Troupe, based on a Digo narrative, was made and we held an interview with one of the actors. We will soon also embark on the translation of the Swahili play; the performance at JU during the Annual Meeting was uploaded and will soon be furnished with transcription/translation. Two of the PhDs co-authored an A-1 article; A second publication by the UGent promotor in a journal was accepted; Conference proceedings on More-than-human freedom were published with input from the Team members, etc.*

In terms of publications and paper presentations we are hence 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.

4 Stakeholder management and coherence

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

- 1) Like last year 2 **MA-students** were involved in the OL4D-Hub branches at JU and UoN (1 female, 1 male), who indicated having benefited greatly from the input. We aim to have 2 male and 2 female MA students per branch 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. This year the Annual Meeting was at Jimma University: this meant an upscale of staff involvement from this University.
 - **Wider university environment**: While initiatives are taken to move the exchange beyond the OL4D Hub (e.g. public lectures, paper presentation, conference attendance, etc) and lecturers are integrating the OL4D-approach in their teaching, it is still too early for uptake in the university programmes: will be addressed in the 3rd year. All the same, as indicated, Team members who are offering courses are **integrating the OL4D-approach into their teaching**, at BA- as well as MA-level.
- 4) **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 are online, while transcription/translation will be processed into a web-publication.

- 5) **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, although so far the active role has been limited.
- 6) **Teachers & trainers:** After the visits of Teshome Mossissa to Addis Ababa and Nekemte of last year, this resulted in a tv-interview and a day-long workshop at Nekemte High School (doc 9) as well as a day-programme at Gadaa High School in Jimma (doc 8). The contacts with Kwale Arts Troupe during the Annual Meeting were fruitful and were continued through performances and workshops (in total 6). Interaction with this stakeholder-group will be even increased next year.
- 7) **General audience:** This year, there were some activities that included members of the general public, especially the web-publications and the public performances of Kwale Arts Troupe on market squares.
- 8) **Adolescents:** BA-students and high school students benefitted from the programme and were enthusiastic. We will put a more systematic evaluation tool in place as of next year.
- 9) **Media:** Contacts with the media were established, Dr. Teshome had a tv presentation and Jimma University radio did a full programme during the Annual Meeting. Also our website has been set up and is constantly updated. An analytics tool has been installed so as to trace the number of visitors to the site. We have now also created a Facebook page. 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.

- 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. Some of the Team members presented their work during the BantUGent meetings.
- 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. With one of the PhD student 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 projects led by Vicky Van Bockhaven, **AfriSurge** (<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-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) continues until today as we are in touch with PhD-candidates from this university.
- 7) **Université Notre Dame de Tshumbe, Tshumbe, Sankuru Province, DR-Congo** : In September 2024, the UGent promotor presented a lecture with the title : 'L'actualité des contes: repenser les littératures orales comme histoire d'épistémologie' at UniTshu. This lecture was offered in the framework of a visit of Maud Devos (UGent, AfricaMuseum) and Sarah O'Neill (ULB & AfricaMuseum). Maud Devos has initiated a restitution project (Global Minds project: 'Tetela: Restitution of Intangible Cultural Heritage for Sustainable Education') on the collections of John Jacobs who carried out research in the region into linguistics, oral literatures and material culture in the 1950s, that clearly relates to our OD Team concerns.
- 8) Following the collaboration with Vicky Van Bockhaven mentioned under 5), we set up a Global Minds funded Short Training Programme, entitled: '**Narratives and Objects in a Museal Oral Ecolit-Lab: Ecological Sustainability in East-African Literary scholarship and UGent Curricula**'. So far Team members Peter Wasamba (June 2024) and Kimingichi Wabende (Sept 2024) have offered activities in this realm. The plan is to have more activities and to work towards an exhibition next year.

Please see Docs 1-11, our Facebookpage, and our website <https://www.ol4d.ugent.be/> . Under the video/web-publication- and the project activities-section you will find project materials.