Preserving the San culture and language

Recently, a team of researchers from the Faculty of Human Sciences visited San communities in the Otjozondjupa Region to launch the Protect, Preserve and Promote Indigenous Cultures and Languages (P3ICL) project. The aim of this N$3.9m project, funded by the European Union, is to enable researchers to gather data that will contribute to preserving indigenous cultures and languages.

The team consisted of Professors Sarala Krishnamurthy and Haileleul Woldemariam, as well as Jeanne Hunter and well-known local poet and author, Keamogetsi Jones. She is one of the compilers of the first picture dictionary of a San language. During the trip, with assistance from trained student data collectors, the researchers also visited the Omaheke region and interacted with !Kung families at homesteads located in Corridors 15, 17 and 18, in the Gobabis area. The aim was to collect data from community elders in the form of cultural expressions such as folktales and songs, dances, myths, proverbs, jokes, riddles and superstitions.

So far, under this project, similar research has been conducted among the Ovambadja people in Okalongo and the Ovadhimba in Ruacana, in order to revitalise these cultures and languages. The three-year research project is currently in its second year. Additionally, the team has begun digitising the collected cultural expressions and creating data for a repository. They will further co-design contemporary cultural products, raise cultural awareness, and advocate for the integration of the three indigenous cultures under study in national policy documents and development plans.

At the end of the project, a conference will be held to disseminate the outcomes, the lessons learnt and to map the way forward.

Networking internationally

One of NUST’s long-standing partners, Justus –Liebig University (JLU) Giessen in Germany, recently hosted an International Networking Week. The aim of the event was for JLU to engage its partners from around the world on matters pertaining to student and staff mobility, as well as to discuss topics within the field of internationalisation.

NUST and JLU have been partners for more than 10 years and a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) exists between the two universities. The MoU enables collaboration in areas that include research and teaching, common supervision of doctoral student projects and the exchange of scientific publications.

The Director of International Office at JLU, Julia Volz, said: “Internationalisation of Education should not simply be a nice to have activity, but rather a strategic enabling objective.” She added that: “In the 21st Century, excellent research and teaching are impossible without exchange.”

Participants of the Networking Week came from JLU partner universities in Australia, Belarus, China, Colombia, Czech Republic, France, Georgia, Namibia, Netherlands, Serbia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Uganda and Ukraine. NUST was represented by Theodora Nandjaa-Mweuta, Coordinator of Department of International Relations.

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