

Intervention for Cowen Dziva, Heal Africa Trust, Zimbabwe

Thank you madam chair,

AGENDA ITEM 4: Practical use of the Declaration: Identification of good practises and positive measures

My name is Cowen Dziva, i am representing Heal Africa Trust an organisation working to promote the rights of ethnic and linguistic minority communities such as the Tonga, Nambya, Kalanga, Sotho, Venda, and Shangaan among others in Zimbabwe.

I wish to bring to the notice of this august forum, the good practices and positive measures implemented by the government of Zimbabwe to promote draft recommendations 20 and 33. Zimbabwean government has the primary responsibility for the implementation of the declaration for Minority language rights. According to UDM article 4.4 people belonging to minorities should be given the chance to learn their mother tongue or to have instruction in their mother tongue.

To this end, efforts by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education in launching the ALLEX (African Languages and Literature Lexicography) project at the University of Zimbabwe are worth noting. Among other activities, the project is developing dictionaries and creating literary and technical terminology in indigenous languages. It is also training teachers at Great Zimbabwe University, Midlands State University and teacher training colleges to teach native languages countrywide.

More so, efforts by the Zimbabwean Government to include the minority Tonga language* in the education curriculum should be commended. October 2011 saw Tonga GRADE 7 pupils in Binga district sitting for their first ever examination in the language of the Binga district. In the past, there has been an outcry since the Zimbabwean constitution recognises English, Ndebele and Shona languages as the country's official languages in the education curriculum despite the existence of almost another 15 minority languages in the country.¹ The introduction of the Tonga language in schools therefore helps restore the cultural rights, pride and dignity of Tonga as equal citizens in Zimbabwe.

We therefore argue this forum to adopt draft recommendation no. 33 which calls on the government of Zimbabwe to extend such facilities to all persons belonging to minority languages in the country which represent 10% of the total population.

Minorities and CSO in Zimbabwe should be provided with resources and be allowed to freely push for the adoption of a peoples' driven draft constitution in the 2013 referendum, since it recognises 15 local indigenous languages as official languages in Zimbabwe.

We also urge UN agencies like UNICEF and corporate world to continue availing funds for lexicography work, development of grammar, translation, teaching materials production, and bilingual teacher training of minority languages.

Thank you

¹ Government of Zimbabwe. (1987). *Zimbabwe Education Act*. Harare, Zimbabwe: Government Printer.