

LUGHA YETU

“The general public is mostly focused on issues they see are relevant to their lives, therefore, it is challenging to communicate science to them if they do not understand the importance of the invention in their lives.”

As **Everlyn Chimoto** learned in her Master’s research project, there is a lack of machine translation models for African languages. This is because African languages are low-resource languages, that is, there is not enough digitised data for African languages. For her (Everlyn), there needs to be an increase in the use of vernacular languages on the internet to work on the root of the problem. Her project - **Lugha Yetu** - sought to increase the use of vernacular languages online.

Lugha Yetu was delivered through an online presentation to 12 young Africans aged 20-27 who speak different languages. The participants were also from different geographical areas. The session was delivered in English on the 6th of February 2022. During her presentation, Evelyn highlighted the importance of using vernacular languages online and how it creates data for researchers who can build translation systems and language technology for African languages. Before the session, the participants were asked to complete a pre-event survey in which most of them stated that they did not use their vernacular language online. By the end of the session, most of the participants had agreed to utilise their languages online or translate sentences that they say into English. The proclamation was to be seen on the participants’ social media platforms they engaged infrequently

Everlyn is currently a Masters’s Student in Data Science and AIMS South Africa. She indicated that the experience of planning and delivering scientific content has made her aware of science communication’s importance and different public target groups that one can engage. The experience has enforced several soft skills such as efficient and clear communication, time organisation and adaptability when things do not go well. She had initially planned to deliver her project to the Luhya people in Kenya. However, due to logistical challenges, she ended up having an online session with a different audience. As an African young researcher, she realised that Africa is far behind in terms of developing technologies for its people. Indeed, there was only one researcher who worked on language technology for the Luhya language. She commits to selecting projects that have positively impacted the general public and projects that have practical implications.



Izimili Zetu

Everlyn Asiko, Data Science Researcher

Problem

Utilising technology but not utilising our languages



Implications

Due to the lack of usage of indigenous language:

- Some languages are dying out.
- There are no scientific or mathematical advancement or knowledge sharing in this language

Power of Mathematics

Technological advancements

- This includes translation systems that will enable sharing of knowledge



Importance of using vernacular language

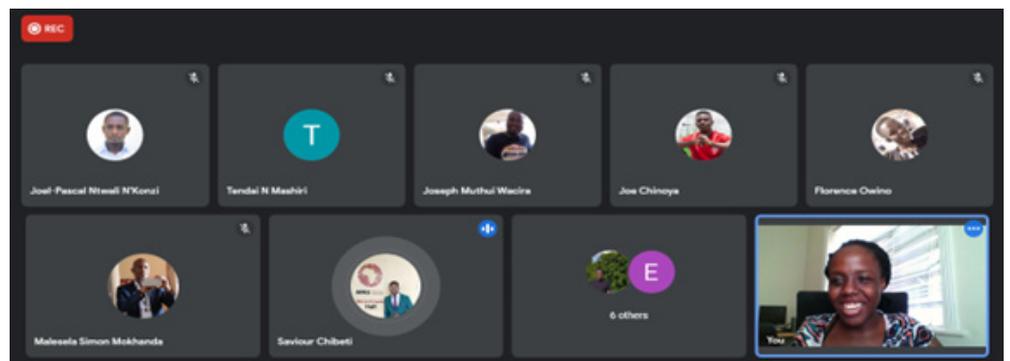
- Cultural preservation in the technological age



- Learning and language growth
- Help researchers get data on the indigenous languages



Call to action



Everlyn Chimoto delivering her science communication project.