Land: An Empowerment Asset for Africa

The Human Factor Perspective

Edited by
Claude G. Mararike

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Language, Indigenous Knowledge and Survival Strategies

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No nation has ever developed using a foreign language. The use of such a language has limitations. Similarly, dreams never come to a person other than in his or her mother tongue. It is in this light that this chapter seeks to foreground the nexus between language, indigenous knowledge and sustainable livelihoods. Besides being a communicative tool, language can be used to express ideas. It is also a means of carrying culture and passing it inter-generationally. Without language therefore there is no cultural continuity and the inverse is also true as regards culture and language. Part of the culture that language transmits is indigenous knowledge. Indigenous knowledge, as a cultural good, helps to preserve language. It is therefore common knowledge that to speak a language is· as well to live a certain type of language (Nyota and Mapara 2007: 12). Nyota and Mapara (2007) point out that practices linked to indigenous knowledge systems (IKSs) include language. These have ensured that people live in a sustainable manner in an environment that they have long realised has finite resources, resources that they believe were bequeathed to them by their ancestral spirits. They will, in turn, have to bequeath to future generations. This belief and acceptance that have led to the putting in place of taboos and other practices, are imparted through language use. The following discussion attempts to highlight the nexus that strings together language, IKSs and sustainable livelihoods.

Indigenous languages are interwoven with indigenous knowledge. While this chapter acknowledges that IKS is broader, its major focus is language, an aspect of soft IKS which, however, is very significant. It notes that language plays a pivotal role in IKS and sustainable livelihoods. Indigenous knowledge is thus expressed and imparted through indigenous languages and it is on these practices and languages that sustainable livelihoods hinge. But before debating the link between indigenous knowledge, language and modernisation as well as sustainability, it is essential tó explain what language is as well as what IKSs are.

Language, Modernisation and Development

The Hebrew state of Israel, as well as the then apartheid state of South Africa, had political and economic links that possibly came into existence because of the two countries' need for self-preservation. Both states came into existence in 1948. While the Hebrew state of Israel still exists, apartheid South Africa ceased to exist in 1994. It is also interesting to note that the two countries did not only engage in racist practices but also developed and technologised their languages. By the time of its demise in 1994, the apartheid state of South Africa had "successfully" developed Afrikaans into not only the language of communication and government, but also the language of science, technology and culture. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that it is language that makes a country to join the world nations in terms of technology development and innovation.

The thrust of this chapter is not to praise the policies and practices of the apartheid regime, but would like to reiterate that even from oppressive systems, people can learn something of value. This is the case with the apartheid state. The Afrikaans language was developed with the intention of entrenching Afrikaner nationalism. While the idea of separate development that the Nationalists in South Africa espoused is bad, a leaf can be taken from the commitment that the Afrikaners put into developing their language. The issue of Afrikaans was that it was identified as a powerful tool that could be harnessed to unite workers, the majority of who could not speak English. Giliomee (2003: 6-11) notes that although the British had crushed two Boer Republics between 1899 and 1902, thus imposing English as the official language contrary to what had been agreed on earlier, the Afrikaners realised that they remained outsiders in a union that in theory said they were one and that both Dutch/Afrikaans and English were equal. Giliomee further observes:

> But if language equality was the very foundation of the new white union, it also constituted the main fault line in the white community. To most English-speakers English was destined to prevail over both Dutch and Afrikaans, although English-speakers formed slightly less than half the white electorate (2003: 8).

As the struggle for political relevance continued, language became a hot potato for the Afrikaners. They began imagining a language that was on an equal footing with English in the public and official domains. In addition to the language issue, the Afrikaners started thinking of a cultural and economic revolution that would usher the Afrikaners onto the podium of political dominance (Giliomee, 2003: 9). In addition to all this, the

Afrikaners got a boost from the likes of Cornelis Jacobus Langenhoven who argued that Afrikaans was to be developed, and not gradually, but with a sense of urgency. He argued that if it was to be introduced gradually, it would remain behind English but had to be taught in schools, creating a situation where adult speakers who could not write it would be embarrassed (Giliomee, 2003: 10-11).

It is important to point out here that the issue of a language gaining ascendency to the level of being a language of modernisation, requires political will. Constitutional promulgations themselves not backed by political engagement and involvement, are meaningless and void. For Afrikaans, that break came in 1948 when the Nationalists won political power. They then embarked on promoting and entrenching Afrikaans as the language of the state. The problem with that approach was that all state resources were channelled towards the development of one language and that language became the language of racism and political exclusion for the majority of blacks. Ridge (2001: 26) asserts:

> Secondly, this nationalism focused the direct and indirect resources of the state on one language. Because Afrikaner nationalists controlled the state for more than 40 years, the status of Afrikaans was elevated in conscious ways and funding was channelled into fostering the use of the language and ensuring its rapid development.

These words are quite telling in that they sound an alarm for the benefit of African languages planners and governments that they have to go about planning the modernisation of African languages in a way that is equitable and inclusive. It is also significant to point out that even though the Afrikaner approach is bad, the other side is that the use of state assets and institutions for purposes of promoting indigenous languages is a good one. This, however, does not have to be done by focussing on one language at the expense of others.

In the Middle East, Israel has equally achieved a similar feat. In fact, what the people of Israel have done is nothing short of a miracle. In 1948, the Israelis revived a language that was dead for close to two millennia. In a short space of time, they had achieved what was never perceived as possible. Hebrew was in the area of languages and linguistics listed among those that were accepted as dead. The only good that came out of Hebrew then was to enable biblical researchers to decipher documents that would have been discovered and that it was also used as a language of religion. All that changed in 1948, largely due to the efforts of one man called Eliezer Ben-Yehuda who had come to Palestine from Lithuania via Paris. According to Fellman (http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary. org/jsource/

biography/ben_yehuda.html), Ben-Yehuda adopted a three-fold approach that played a significant role, one that is summarised as "Hebrew in the Home", "Hebrew in the School", and "Words, Words, Words". The Hebrews have since tapped into their culture and are inspired by the achievements of their progenitors such as David and Moses. They have marched forward inspired by their past achievements. They have not thrown away what was bequeathed to them.

The Japanese language developed out of the deliberate efforts that were implemented by the Japanese rulers at the turn of the 20th century (Twine, 1991: 1-5). Twine argues that there is a link between language modernisation and nationalism. Commenting on language modernisation, she opines:

> The term 'language modernization' implies that some aspect of a particular language requires modification before it can meet the requirements of the society that it serves. Where the society in question is undergoing that transformation of its social, political and economic institutions necessary before it can take its place on an equal footing with other nations in the modern world, its language must have the flexibility to accommodate and grow with the changes (1991:7).

These words are pertinent in that they do not make reference to the adoption of a foreign language as a means of attaining modernisation but the need for some language aspects to be modified. These naturally come through adoption and adaptation as well as coinages so that the targeted language keeps abreast with the natural evolution of language and in the process avoid ossification (Twine, 1991: 6). What Japan did is unfortunately what Zimbabwe and other African countries have not done. They hide behind the use of former colonial languages as "neutral" and yet with careful language planning, it is possible to use indigenous languages as languages of development and modernisation. The United Kingdom itself is a good example of a country that has modernised with a multilingual situation in its backdrop and yet Africa digs her own grave and opts for foreign languages.

The above discussion has attempted to highlight how some states managed to develop some languages to be languages of modernisation. Modernisation in this context should be taken to mean the employment and use of these languages in domains such as science, technology, culture and even religion and social discourse. Although the examples cited are good, one language referred to is on the wane because it is a language that has been associated with oppression for the greater part of its use,

and that language is Afrikaans. But despite Afrikaans' shortcomings, all the three languages are firmly entrenched in their communities and are all languages of industry. The issue should not be about whether they can be used in academia outside their countries or not, but that they be used to empower citizens. It is the issue of empowerment that gives people pride in themselves as nations and in their cultural heritage, most of which is embedded in IKSs. People can only embrace and harness their indigenous knowledge if their languages are placed on a higher footing. If the languages remain dominated by foreign ones, then they are doomed and may even cease to be subjects worth studying with the passage of time.

What Language Is

Language, as regards human beings, and looked at as natural compared to artificial language that relates to machines such as computers, can be defined as verbal, physical, biologically innate and a basic form of communication. Language is important to human beings and is used to articulate inner feelings and emotions; make sense of complex and theoretical concepts as well as to become skilled at communicating with fellow human beings and also to fulfil our wants and needs, in addition to setting up rules that enable us to maintain our culture. Language includes gestures and body movements as well as the spoken word (Pierce and Eplin 1999). Language distinguishes human beings from other living beings, such as animals (Fromkin, Rodman and Hymas, 2011:284).

Language can be either first language or second language. One's first language is also known as the mother tongue in most instances. The first or home language defines a person and it has the role of functioning as the bridge that links that person's family, clan and ethnic group. It is as well one's first language that enables him or her to communicate effectively with others in the language group, and additionally enables one to understand the cultural nuances that are carried in the extra-linguistic area because one is empowered with the skills to encode and decode all these. Cultural heritage and other knowledge forms are passed down inter-generationally through language and related activities. In fact, knowledge as awareness as well as a comprehension of facts as true or not, and information gained through experience are all imparted through language.

It is also language that is integral in affirming and maintaining self-esteem and a strong sense of family and identity. Through language, people acquire a better and complex understanding of their culture and their connection

to their land as well as the universe. Indigenous languages keep people connected to their cultures and this strengthens feelings of pride and self-worth. This idea of the importance of language is further supported by Gethaiga (1998) who points at the case of Afrikaans, asserting that through it, the Afrikaners affirmed themselves as they used a language that was largely taken out of Dutch to create their identity and told their own stories, real or imagined, in that language. The fact that this language caught on is an indication of the power that language has in bringing people together. Earlier on, the author had stated, "Language serves as a symbolic representation".

Language belongs to certain geo-locations – so it is associated with certain practices, rituals as well as technologies. It is, in fact, part of the soft technologies of any community. The importance of language and styles of language is that it enables the breaking down of barriers and building bridges between human beings. It is also language that defines the good, the bad, the moral and the ethical. Because all people have it, language enables people to express what they consider to be of value and how to express and explain the different values (or issues of worth) placed on different knowledge forms that are found in their immediate environment. Language, in actual fact, when in action, can make or break communities and even empires. When put to good use, language is the most important asset that has ever been bequeathed to humanity.

Language can be used to promote or denigrate anything. So people are what they are, or are not what they are, because of language. It is the way a language is packed and manipulated that causes people to accept or reject certain types of knowledge as true or not.

Zimbabwe, as a country, is where she is, together with other African countries, because she has not developed her indigenous languages. It is really sad to note that 34 years after independence, Zimbabwe still does not have a language policy, but has an educational policy on language use in schools. This is despite the provisions that are in the new Constitution that was ushered in by Amendment 20, Chapter 1, Section 6 (4) that states:

> The state must advance and promote the use of all languages used in
> Zimbabwe, including sign language, and must create the conditions
> for the development of those languages.

The Constitution has paved the way for the development of "all languages used in Zimbabwe" but since its promulgation, nothing to date has been done. English remains the dominant language. This lack of a language policy has had a negative impact on the development of local languages

and IKS as well as on sustainable livelihoods because some people no longer take heed of taboos but perceive them as backward and tools of the ignorant. They have, for example, taken to cutting down trees and even building on wetlands because they are operating using languages, including their own, whose philosophies and cultural practices they do not completely understand. Children are being taught to ape and teachers are resorting to rote learning because they are taught a language and in a language whose worldview they are not conversant with.

Yet, according to mother-tongue proponents, teaching a child in his/her mother tongue promotes creativity and innovativeness in the child. This reality was observed as far back as 1953 when UNESCO declared:

> It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among the members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium.

These words are quite sobering. Attempting to teach one in a language that they do not understand is thus rightly called *submersion*. It is called submersion because it is instruction to students that is analogous to holding learners under water without teaching them how to swim (Benson 2005: 1). The students will not understand, so the use of any other language that is not mother-tongue does not promote productive learning. Mother-tongue is, therefore, the bedrock of innovativeness and creativity. It is, therefore, true that when a society innovates it does not perish – it sustains itself through adapting to a given situation. But if it apes, it becomes a consumer of foreign goods and cultures and as a people, it ceases to exist. In fact, the aping mentality that has gripped us has resulted in us upholding all things foreign and shunning all indigenous ones, yet, according to Shona wisdom found in proverbs such as *vakuru vaiti chabva kumwe bata nemishonga* (that which has come from afar has to be handled using protective medicines) one does not know whether it brings good or ill wind. It is, therefore, necessary to avoid these ill winds through the use of the mother tongue to tap into and create as well as innovate relying on IKSs.

Indigenous Knowledge

The question of what is indigenous knowledge appears a tired one at face value but the writers of this chapter feel that it is something that is still worth doing. In Shona, it is also said: *Dzokororo ine simba* (There is

emphasis in repetition). This is part of Zimbabwean indigenous wisdom which highlights the importance of repetition. One major agency of the United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), defines Indigenous Knowledge (IK) as the knowledge that an indigenous (local) community accumulates over generations of living in a particular environment. This definition is important in that it encompasses all forms of knowledge – technologies, know-how skills, practices and beliefs – that enable the community to achieve stable livelihoods in their environment. IK is also known as Traditional Knowledge (TK), Indigenous Technical Knowledge (ITK), Local Knowledge (LK) and Indigenous Knowledge System (IKS). The use of the word "systems" is of paramount importance because it has the effect of giving a holistic element to indigenous knowledge. This means that it is more than an ordinary science in that it encompasses, among other issues, matters relating to governance, spiritualism and environmental management. This means that IK is unique to every culture and society because it is also embedded in community practices, institutions, relationships and rituals. It is considered a part of the local knowledge because it is rooted in a particular community and situated within broader cultural traditions. It is a set of experiences generated by people living in those communities.

IK is based on, and is deeply embedded in, local experience and historic reality, and is therefore, unique to that specific culture. It also plays an important role in defining the identity of the community. It has developed over the centuries of experimentation on how to adapt to local conditions. It, therefore, represents all the skills and innovations of a people and embodies the collective wisdom and resourcefulness of the community.

Several definitions have also been given by the likes of Flavier *et al.* (1995: 479) and Warren (1991:1). Flavier *et al.* define IKS as the information base for a society, whose role is to facilitate communication and decision-making in a given community. They further point out that indigenous information systems are not static but dynamic, and thus are perpetually informed and influenced by internal creativity and experimentation as well as by contact with external systems. Warren (1991: 1) defines IK as knowledge that is inimitable to a given culture or society and is different from the international knowledge system that is generated by universities, research institutions as well as private firms. He further posits that this type of knowledge is the basis for local-level decision-making in areas such as agriculture, health care, food preparation, education and natural-resource management in rural communities. These definitions are quite revealing in that they point out that IKSs are community-generated and

they are meant to solve or to be utilised by local communities. They are, therefore, local area knowledge and they are not laboratory-generated but are generated from the laboratory of life, and are thus largely experiential.

IKSs are not only African in nature and origin, but are found in all corners of the world, especially in countries that were formerly colonised. Their value is also highlighted in the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity of 1992 that clearly states that traditional knowledge refers to that knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities found around the world. It is knowledge that is developed from experiences that people have gained over the centuries and adapted to the local culture and environment. This is best summed up by Ossai (2010: 2-3) who states:

> ... it can be summarized that indigenous knowledge refers to the knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities around the world. Developed from experience gained over the environment, indigenous knowledge is transmitted orally from generation to generation. It tends to be collectively owned and takes the form of stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language, and agricultural practices, including the development of plant species and animal breeds.

The above excerpt makes it clear that IKS are a reference to knowledge, innovations, practices and local area technologies that have been developed outside of the formal learning systems that are based on western knowledge systems (WKSs). It is that generated by people indigenous to a particular locale or geographical area that are spread across the face of the world.

From the foregoing discussion, what comes out clearly is that IK is local knowledge, traditional knowledge or ethnoscience. It is not knowledge that has a global reach but one that is local to the people or society concerned. It is embedded in a given culture and sustains each community and its culture. This knowledge is very useful because it is used to maintain resources for the survival of the present generation and for posterity. It is important to point out here that IK is not static but adaptive, for instance, the use of the eucalyptus and guava leaves by Zimbabweans to cure colds.

An appraisal of the above highlights, among others, the fact that IKS is linguistic because it is transmitted through a particular language. What that language transmits is varied but it includes issues that are ecological, for example, conservation agriculture, organic agriculture; nature and

conservation. IKS is also pharmacological as realised in the harvest, preservation, conservation and use of medicinal plants. The environmental importance of IKS is as well realised through the use of conservation through taboos and other practices, such as observing animal and avian behaviour as a weather forecasting mechanism.

IKSs are also an imperative for Africa's development as one person who perceives traditional institutions as necessary and, therefore, as pillars that should be found at the epicentre of Africa's development, Mararike (1998) has observed. Even though he does not use the term "indigenous knowledge", his words as regard the theories that the West has advanced as necessary for the "development" and "modernization" of Africa bring this to the fore. He notes:

> The assumpition of the modernization theories is that all other societies which were referred to as traditional, should develop in more or less the same way as the societies in Western Europe. The proponents of modernization theories have argued that, it is necessary to first remove traditional institutions and organizations in developing countries and then create a new favourable social environment before development can occur (1998:88).

The above words are quite pertinent. They highlight the fact that traditional institutions that are the bedrock of all other IK forms are anathema to the West, yet a close analysis and even comparison with some eastern countries like China and Japan, shows that they are the fountain of wisdom, that they have tapped into their advancement and economic growth. It is, therefore, clear that the West realises that if Africa is to harness her IK she will develop and prosper and they will lose markets.

Embedded in IKS are also cultural activities that relate to games and sports such as children's games, rites of passage and matters that relate to living in harmony with kith and kin, as well as nature, where nature is not seen as divorced from everyday life but is part and parcel of everyday living. In most cases of IKS practices, there is also the spiritual side that is realised through rituals such as rain ceremonies. It is, therefore, apparent that IKS is holistic.

Language and IKS: The Nexus

Language is significant because it symbolises the diverse social realities that exist within a society and the world at large. It is language that has been used in the past to impart IKS that involved, among other things, an apprenticeship type of education as well as norms and values that could sustain one in the social order. It is through language that elders had a

way of imparting societal norms and values, such as social etiquette. If you deviated from the norm, there were usually consequences or correctional efforts. For example, a child who would not behave properly and who would talk to an elder while standing, was penalised by being asked to go to another adult with the words, or something to that effect, *"Enda unokumbira musipiti"* (Go and ask for the *musipiti*). There was really no *musipiti*, but it was a way of teaching a child to behave properly. Therefore one got wiser and everyone participated in his/her upbringing.

There is a correlation between language, IKS and Sustainable Livelihoods (SL). Any people's culture is stored and accessed through that people's (indigenous) language and not that of foreigners. Language is thus the primary means by which a people's culture and IK are transmitted inter- and intra-generationally (Ngugi 1986: 13). On the inverse, language itself is embedded in IKS. If we fail to maintain our languages and pass on the values and norms carried therein, then sustainability and, subsequently, society, are threatened. It has to be borne in mind and noted that without language, we lose our cultural bearings and the essence of who we really are. This comes about because when a language is lost, another window through which a people look at and understand the world would have been lost since all that is contained in a language will be lost. Any serious and informed discussion of IKSs has to take cognisance of the language factor because both language and IKSs are cultural. It is language that is a carrier of a people's culture, beliefs, ideology and worldview. Traditional ways of knowing do not only play a part in conservation (dietary laws, forest management) meant to sustain livelihoods, but also in the promotion and preservation of the language that carries that culture and related practices and beliefs. For example, people of a particular totem venerate the animal and it is excluded from their diet, such as *mhofu* (eland), *nyati* (buffalo), *mvuu* (hippo) and *hove* (fish).

Language, Sustainable Livelihoods, Biodiversity and Taboos

Some sections of the world tend to talk about sustainable livelihoods in a very narrow sense. They see sustainability as linked only to resources and this idea is entrenched in the Brundtland Report that stated: "Sustainable development seeks to meet the needs and aspirations of the present without compromising the ability to meet those of the future" (*Our Common Future*, 1987). What needs to be emphasised is that sustainability goes beyond sustaining resources and should include ensuring sustaining humanity as well. For example, the use of taboos (*zviera*) in the Shona culture, was a way of sustaining the environment

and, in turn, sustaining livelihoods. In Shona culture, sustainability also means looking after one's kith and kin. One is his brother's keeper, hence sustainability means that there is need for communality where everyone has the duty of taking care of the disadvantaged, who include widows and orphans.

One other area that is linked to sustainability and is raised to prominence through indigenous environmental practices and is passed down through language, is biodiversity. According to the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) (1992:3):

> "Biological diversity" means the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.

Even though this Convention does not mention human beings, it is safe to assume that these are covered by the word "terrestrial". The indigenous Shona had ways of protecting their livestock. They would always say in areas where buffalo were ubiquitous *Kana nzvimbo ikapfuura nyati pisai uswa hwenzira yadzinenge dzapfuura nayo* (If buffalo passed through a given place, there is need to burn the grass along the way they would have passed through). This was put in place to control and minimise the spread of foot and mouth disease, thus sustaining their herds by controlling the disease.

Settlement was and still is in some cases, not haphazard. There were places set aside for settlement and others for cultivation as well as for pastures. Anyone who violated this arrangement was penalised. In addition, some wetlands, especially those that had water on them, were not to be cultivated. Such were said to be the abode of mermaids and mermen (*njuzu*). The setting aside of places for different activities and no activities at all, was meant to protect biodiversity. These wetlands became sanctuaries of different flora and fauna, some of which had medicinal values.

Some of the taboos that were put in place relate to the preservation of medicinal herbs. The very conditions of taboos are carried in a language. *Ipso facto*, it was believed that, "*Imwe miti inocherwa wakashama*" (Some herbal plants are harvested while one is naked). There was a reason for this taboo. It was because if one is naked, she/he would do things quickly. This was an important strategy that was instituted to protect trees. In some instances, it was taboo to harvest such trees without asking for

permission from the ancestral spirits of the land. Cunningham confirms this when he notes:

> In Zimbabwe, clearance has to be obtained from ancestral spirits before entering certain forests where Warburgia salutaris occurs. In each of the above cases (excepting *Agapanthus umbellatus*), the species concerned are popular, scarce and effective (1993:7).

It is also significant to bear in mind that the whole issue of *zviera* is centred on nature; and the taboo element comes out when nature fights back. This is what the Shona refer to as *kuera* (the state of being sacred). Some of these taboos evolve around fruit trees. For instance, it is said, "*Ukatema muzhanje unorohwa nemheni*" (If you cut down a wild loquat tree, you will be struck by lightning). The *muzhanje* tree provides food for humans and wild animals. So if one cuts down a wild loquat tree, he/she would have deprived humanity and animals of food. If baboons fail to find wild loquats, they may target people's fields. When such raids take place, it is an indication of the sacredness of the *muzhanje* tree.

There are some trees that have bark that is used for construction and also as fibre for making bags (*nhava*) and *magupo/magudza* (blankets). Such trees are considered as important and, consequently should not die. In an effort to ensure their continued survival, some taboos such as the following: "*Muti hausvuurwi gavi mativi ose, asi divi rimwe chete*" (Do not remove the bark of a tree on all sides but on one side only). The trees that do not have to have all the bark removed are *mupfuti* (Brachystegia boehmii) and *musasa* (Brachystegia spiciformis) all part of the *miombo* (Brachystegia) woodlands that are common in Central and Southern Africa. *Musasa* is host to *madora* (edible caterpillars) when they are in season. If the tree dies, people would have been denied of an important source of protein. All the meanings and philosophies embedded in such taboos are lost when the language gets lost. They are an indication that IKS is about communality, not individualism.

The sanctity of human life which is part and parcel of IKS practices that are linked to sustainable livelihoods, is the belief in *ngozi* (avenging spirit). According to the belief, anyone who wilfully takes a human life is inviting to himself and his relatives on the paternal side, potential death that comes from the spirit of the murdered person. Linked to the belief of *ngozi* is the taboo of *kutanda botso* whereby anyone who beats up his/her mother or any maternal relative who in most cases is one's mother's sisters or her brothers' daughters, will suffer the consequences of misfortune that include, among others, failed marriage and general poverty. The idea of *botso* is still to sustain life. It, is, however not clear why *botso* is associated

only with the maternal side although this may have to do with the issue of pregnancy and labour. It is also a pointer to the fact that society is sustained through harmonious living.

IKS survives on the cooperative principle that is summed up in some proverbs and practices that are the distillation of the wisdom of Shona philosophy. All these come out lucidly through the use of language. The proverbs *Chara chimwe hachitswanyi inda* (One finger cannot crush a louse/lice) and *Rume rimwe harikombi churu* (One man cannot surround an anthill) highlight that one cannot do and achieve results by working alone. There is need for cooperation for there to be success because people will advise one another. This emphasizes the idea of *humwe* (oneness). This thinking of the cooperative code is also captured in practices such as *chabadza* (handling the hoe), whereby a passerby was expected to not only pass by when he saw people working on their field, but to also take a turn and participate for a short time on the task at hand. A related idea is that of *chishava pavarume* (the red thing among men) which refers to the principle that if a man passes people skinning an animal, he will also be given a piece of meat. The idea is to share what people have and to show hospitality.

The concept of togetherness is further buttressed by the proverb *Mweni haapedzi dura* (A visitor or passerby does not empty your granary). The belief behind the proverb was to sustain human life. It did not pay then to deny visitors or passersby food. The proverb also shows that society sustained one another through other means. Hence it was permitted that if one passed through a field with water melons or cane, she or he could eat but not carry them away. The practice sustains the life of the passerby and, at the same time, sustaining the owner of the field and other passersby.

Although the proverb *Chawawana idya nehama mutorwa ane hanganwa* (What you have got, share with relatives; outsiders easily forget) is meant to encourage the closeness of relatives and the importance of their helping one another, that does not diminish the importance of the proverb *Mweni haapedzi dura*. What it only does is emphasize the importance of relatives coming to another's assistance in times of need. While helping a fellow human being in need and also helping a relative was considered important because it helped sustain lives, one also had to take care to preserve his or her life. The following proverb is significant in this area. It warns, "*Mukadzi weumwe ndiambuya*" (Another man's wife is your mother-in-law). Although it is possible that this proverb came about as a result of warning men to avoid having illicit liaisons with other people's wives, its import

goes beyond the issue husbands and wives. It also cautions against other unsavoury behaviour like thieving. Thieves like adulterers and philanderers could find themselves in potentially life threatening situations if caught. To ensure that one did not fall into such an act was ensuring self-sustainability.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown that language, IK, culture and sustainable development are interrelated. It has pointed out that it is not possible to discuss language without reference to the culture and local knowledge of the people who speak that language. The chapter has pointed out that IK is expressed in a particular local language and it is a mirror of a people's cultural norms and values and that without language, it is impossible to speak of local knowledge and sustainable livelihoods. It goes on to assert that IK has to be embraced because it is the basis of the management of resources and livelihoods in local communities. This is mainly so because issues of sustaining livelihoods and the environment are imparted through a local language because each language contains a repertoire of norms, values, ideology, worldview and beliefs that are upheld by a particular community. The chapter, therefore, recommends that policy planners as well as environmentalists need to include indigenous knowledge in their policies and curricula. On matters such as language, science and technology people need to learn that both forms of knowledge, the western that is produced in research institutions and universities and indigenous knowledge that is the product of the innovativeness of a people, are complementary and not necessarily mutually exclusive.

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