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WHAT'S NEWS

THE ICOMOS-EPWG AFRICA MONTHLY NEWSLETTER



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EDITORIAL

Alyssa K. Barry

In 2014, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 15 July as the World Youth Skills Day to celebrate the importance of equipping young people with the skills they need for employment, decent work and entrepreneurship.

This day is an opportunity to recall the responsibility of our States to provide a favourable environment for young people to access the job market, but also to remind us of our own responsibility to continue to train and work with passion, patience and perseverance, to create our own structures and initiatives, and to dare to innovate in our approach to our continent's heritage.

This month, we travel from Guinea to Zambia, via Tanzania and Botswana, through the voices of professionals who have made heritage, in all its forms, their life's mission.

Whether we're talking about architectural, natural or museum heritage, this new edition is yet another reminder of the importance of breaking down the barriers between heritage and the continent in order to broaden our vision of culture and widen the field of possibilities for young Africans.

Enjoy your reading!

5 QUESTIONS TO ZUHURA MTENGUZI

by Jean-Paul C. Lawson

1. Member of many international organizations in the cultural heritage field, who is Zuhura Mtenguzi?

I'm a dedicated and knowledgeable Master's student in Heritage Studies at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. I have gained valuable experience through collaboration and interactions on fieldwork, research, workshops, and conferences. I have also showcased strong interpersonal and leadership skills, evident in my role as a course assistant at the university. I have been known for my creativity, diligence, determination, and professionalism. I am devoted to various national and international organizations dealing with cultural and natural heritage to extend my knowledge and establish an entire line of my career development. In my social life, I am an approachable and friendly person who values friendships and engages actively in every aspect of my community.

2. Why did you choose heritage as your field of study and profession?

Towards my undergraduate degree, I planned on studying something other than Heritage Management. However, some unforeseen circumstances have led me to enroll in the program (Bachelor's degree in Heritage Management). At first, I was disappointed and quite ambiguous about how and where to proceed with the discipline as a career. Nevertheless, as time passed and being broadly exposed to the field, I eventually became interested in cultural heritage and the unique expressions of the museums. Despite my initial reluctance, I enthusiastically pursued my studies and became an expert. I have worked on preserving historical artifacts and monuments, organizing cultural events in my community, and giving talks on the importance of safeguarding cultural heritage assets. Through my unexpected journey, I have realized that preserving heritage was not just about history but was also vital for the present and future generations. I found fulfillment in contributing to this critical course and proved that sometimes, the things we do not choose for ourselves could lead to meaningful and fulfilling lives.



3. You recently took part in the Youth Museum Forum alongside other young people. What did you learn from this experience in Benin?

Participating in the Youth Museum Forum was an exciting experience. Meeting youth who are passionate about redefining, preserving, and making African museums accessible to the whole population was inspiring. I have realized that museums are not just buildings containing artifacts but spaces for learning, exchanging ideas, creating networks and fostering creativity. Through sharing ideas and innovative approaches, we were able to envision the future of African museums, which will embrace inclusivity, innovation, and sustainability aspects. I was grateful and honored to represent Tanzanian youth in this meeting and participate in a dynamic discourse on a better definition of the New African Museum.

4. You are co-founder of Tanzania Heritage Management (TAHEMA). What can you tell us about this organization and your work on this initiative?

Tanzania Heritage Management (TAHEMA) is an organization dedicated to protecting, conserving, and promoting Tanzania's cultural and natural heritage. Through research, community engagement, and collaborative efforts, this organization plays a vital role in preserving and safeguarding the country's rich heritage, ensuring its sustainability. The organization also provides a room for upcoming professionals in Heritage and Archaeology, both local and international, to engage in practical/field training through volunteering and internship placements. In TAHEMA, I stand for roles related to innovating, standardizing and teaching practical, sustainable ways of conserving Tanzania's natural and cultural heritage resources.

5. Your message to young African heritage professionals!

Dear young African heritage professionals, as representatives of the next generation of leaders, we must utilize and improve skills and knowledge to impact our communities positively. Let us embrace our heritage and use it to inform our decisions, actions, and engagement with the world. When appreciated and clearly illustrated creatively through space and time, our culture can serve as a powerful tool for change and advocacy. We should not be afraid to leave our comfort zone and challenge existing paradigms. We should acknowledge that we are talented, resilient and have a unique perspective to offer through different expressions in our respective communities. The future is in our hands, and I am excited to see us thrive.



SENIOR'S VOICE: CHILANGWA CHAIWA

by Florentine Okoni

1. From Architect to Conservation Officer within the National Heritage Conservation Commission in Zambia: what were the major milestones in your career?

First and foremost, I should point out that I knew very little about heritage conservation before I joined the National Heritage Conservation Commission. I was simply looking for 'greener pastures' at the time but when I started working, I was amazed at what was involved and grew to be passionate about heritage. The major milestones in my career were when I got to visit:

- the Castle Hotel and some historic houses in the eastern part of Zambia;
- the Pantheon in Rome;
- the Taj Mahal in Agra.

These are all architectural marvels worth preserving and ideal as case studies for students wanting to learn not only about heritage conservation but also about various building techniques.

2. What were the main challenges you faced as a professional? How did you overcome them?

One of the main challenges as a professional has been to get colleagues, especially those not falling under the conservation department, to understand exactly what is required to conserve buildings. This results in a lot of superficial work being done. Other challenges have involved being understaffed which translates into being overloaded with work and not getting adequate funding for the work. These challenges are still there, I have just had to do the best that I can to ensure our heritage is conserved no matter the obstacles faced.

3. What are the main opportunities and challenges Zambian heritage is facing today?

The main opportunity for Zambian heritage at the moment is the importance the government has attached to its conservation and promotion. Money is therefore being availed for various projects. The main challenge is the lack of recognition on the importance of heritage by so many people and with little monitoring and inspection of sites being done, a lot of damage and sometimes even loss of heritage is encountered.



4. As an official candidate for the position of Vice President for the Board of ICOMOS, could you explain to us why you run for this position and what challenges you intend to meet in this position?

Africa is not only endowed with so much rich heritage but also well qualified professionals. However we are usually underrepresented as a region and there is need for our voice to be heard at the international level. With the experience I have in heritage issues and my proven commitment to ICOMOS work, I would like to be fully involved in representing the region and ICOMOS at meetings and events to further our agenda. I also wish to work on developing and strengthening mechanisms to support National Committees in the Africa region.

5. What is your message to Africa's youth?

I wish to encourage the youth to be actively involved in the conservation of our heritage and to take interest in learning from the elderly especially on traditional management skills and indigenous knowledge which is not always documented in Africa.

DID YOU KNOW? KAMBADAGA WATERFALLS

by Aissatou Bah



The Kambadaga Waterfalls © Aissatou Bah. 2022

Fouta-Djalon is located in the north-west of Guinea. Spectacular forests, mountains and waterfalls have given this region its nickname of West Africa's water tower.

Located in the prefecture of Pita, and more specifically in the sub-prefecture of Bourouwal-Tappé, the Kambadaga Falls, which are up to 100 meters wide and over 60 meters long, are known as the most beautiful waterfalls in Fouta-Djalon. They are made up of four successive waterfalls: Kambadaga, Daimba-gninna, Soriba and Tènguacéni. The first two waterfalls are the most impressive, particularly in the winter months.

Between these four waterfalls is a bridge made of lianas, built by the villagers and linking two villages. From this bridge, you can enjoy a magnificent view of all four waterfalls and the surrounding greenery.

Water in abundance at any time of the year is what makes Fouta-Djalon so important. The region is West Africa's main freshwater reservoir. The waterfalls supply millions of Africans with drinking water. For tourists, it's impossible to resist a swim, because after the effort comes the comfort. You almost forget that the site is under threat.



I TOOK PART IN THE PHYSICAL MEETING OF THE YOUTH MUSEUM FORUM

Goabaone Gee Montsho

The 2023 Youth Museum Forum was characterized by buzz words ranging from decolonization, digitization to inclusion. Presentations made by emerging African museum professionals shed light on the African museum today and of the future. The exchange of ideas and discussions created space for dialogue and innovation. The Youth Museum Forum space inspired a sense of urgency for the African museum to be relevant to the socioeconomic needs of its African audiences. The forum was an opportunity for emerging African professionals to explore ways of making the African museum relevant to the young African population.

The Youth Museum Forum was a space to generate solutions for sustainably laying a foundation for the new African museum. Museums in Africa share a common history of heritage impacted by colonial practices. Lectures and speeches given at the conference emphasized the fact that the African museum has to reinvent itself to become relevant to its audiences. The forum identified present and future challenges of the African museum. This paved a way for young heritage professionals to map out a sustainable path towards realizing the new African museum.

Exchange of ideas between experts and practicing young professionals created a rich dialogue on how to effectively conceptualize the African museum. The conference was a liberating experience for young Africans as it presented an opportunity for them to develop their own vision of the decolonized African museum. I believe that the Youth Museum Forum by itself is symbolic of decolonizing African heritage. Participation of young African museum professionals and heritage experts created an atmosphere of discussion infused with knowledge and fresh ideas. The forum was a space for young African heritage professionals to demonstrate their skills in critical thinking, public speaking and team work. The conference highlighted innovation as one of the ways to make the African museum relevant to its audiences.

Social inclusion was one of the highlights of the conference. As a totally blind participant, the atmosphere of the 2023 Youth Museum Forum was inclusive for me. I fully participated in all conference activities. This gesture symbolically shows that the emerging African professionals are capable of creating a disability friendly environment in African museums. The forum was receptive to the ideas of accessibility and inclusion. During the forum I pitched a project focusing on accessibility and inclusion. A discussion on inclusion indicated that the forum upholds inclusion and accessibility as an integral component of the new African museum. The Youth Museum Forum is building up a good foundation for inclusion through having a person with a lived experience inspire ideas on how to make the African museum accessible and inclusive for all.

The forum excursion to heritage sites in Benin was an exposure on how heritage is vital in preserving national identity and contribute towards economic development. At the Amazon monument, participants could not help but keep on taking pictures at the site. This activity was a practical experience of the forum discussions on how to bring young people to museums in the digital era. The new African museum should offer an experience for young people appealing enough to have them spontaneously take pictures and post on social media platforms. At the Ouidah Museum of History, I had an experience of travelling in my mind through Benin's history. My feelings of nostalgia evoked by collections showcasing the resilience of the Beninese at the Ouidah Museum of History, left me thinking about ways in which African museums could creatively handle difficult history.

The 2023 Youth Museum Forum left an impression on me to critically think about decolonization as I execute all my curatorial activities at Botswana National Museum. I was inspired to examine how I engage local communities in shaping their narrative. Museums in Africa are better off as community facilitators in shaping narratives of cultural identities. The new African museum should reinvent its collecting and exhibition practices to match the needs of its current audiences.

IMAGES FEEDBACK AT THE YOUTH FORUM MUSEUMS

photos by Laurent Kossouho



DIARY OF THE MONTH

To mark 15 July, World Youth Skills Day, UNESCO is organizing a virtual conference on the theme: "Empowering young people for a sustainable future: building the skills of tomorrow". It will take place on 14 July 2023, from 10am to 12pm (New York time). To register and take part: <https://tinyurl.com/5abfwyaj>.



Monthly meeting of the ICOMOS Working Group of the "Our Common Dignity" Initiative - Rights-Based Approaches, 31 July 2023. For more information: <https://tinyurl.com/ycxxbtc8>.



LATESTS OPPORTUNITIES

- The African World Heritage Fund is looking for a Programme Specialist. To apply: <https://dbsa.erecruit.co/candidateapp/Jobs/View/DBS230703-1>. Deadline: **21 July 2023**.
- ICCROM is currently accepting applications for the 21st International Course on Wood Conservation Technology - ICWCT 2024. To find out more and apply: <https://tinyurl.com/4ndye2su>. Deadline: **24 July 2023**
- UNESCO is actively seeking an Associate Project Officer, Culture Sector. To find out more and apply: <https://tinyurl.com/j6db6y2y>. Deadline: **24 July 2023**.
- The African World Heritage Fund invites applications for the Moses Mapesa Education and Research Fellowships. For more information and to apply: https://portal.awhf.net/forms/moses-mapesa-education-and-research-grant?fbclid=IwAR3PN5Qku8G83oXNuXFjtiX1Y0dNv84eMPDR7VGt4mvy-fzD5nKSn6p9d_c. Deadline: **4 August 2023**.
- The African World Heritage Fund invites applications for African States Parties Conservation Grants. For more information and to apply: <https://portal.awhf.net/forms/conservation-grant-landing>. Deadline: **11 August 2023**.

MASTHEAD

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