



ENGABU ZA TOORO

Tooro Youth Platform for Action

Accredited to offer advisory Services to **UNESCO** (ICH Convention)

7th Dec. 2017

Press Statement

UNESCO-Co-funds Safeguarding of Empaako Naming System in Uganda

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (**UNESCO**) has adopted a decision to provide US Dollars 292,120 (about 1,022,420,000 Uganda shillings) to co-fund a two-years' project of Safeguarding Empaako naming system among five cultural communities in western Uganda.

The decision has been adopted during the **12th Session of UNESCO's Inter-Governmental Committee for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage**, taking place at International Convention Centre, Jeju Island in the Republic of South Korea 4th to 9th December 2017. The resultant contract has been signed by Mr. Stephen Rwagweri Atwoki representing Engabu Za Tooro (Tooro Youth Platform for Action) as the implementing agency and the UNESCO's Secretary of the Convention for Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Mr. Tim Curtis.

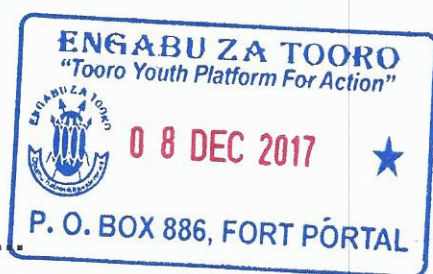
Empaako is a naming system whereby in addition to family and given names, a child is given a special name called Empaako, selected from a fixed and closed list of 12 of them, shared by the entire society and used as a declaration of respect, endearment or affection. The practice which has been shared and transmitted from generation to generation is a niche of the Bunyoro-Kitara heritage borne by the Communities that are found in western Uganda, Eastern DRC and Northern Tanzania. The practice is facing threats by loss of knowledge, meaning and observance of associated naming rituals, decline of its mother language (Runyoro – Rutooro) and attack from modern religious extremism.

In 2012, a Tooro based cultural NGO –Engabu Za Tooro which is accredited to provide expert support to UNESCO on culture, carried out research on Empaako Heritage and successfully petitioned UNESCO in 2013 to inscribe it on the World List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

According to Mr. Stephen Rwagweri Atwoki, the Director of Engabu Za Tooro and lead consultant on this programme, this particular project will focus on comprehensive documentation of cultural rituals and ceremonies on naming, initiation, marriage and family succession among five Empaako communities and it is a first phase of a multi-year Empaako Safeguarding programme that must additionally restore competitive development of the mother language of the practice and propel effective integration of its cultural values into modern life style before Empaako heritage can be declared threat free. The communities to participate in this first phase project will include; *Batooro, Banyoro, Batagwenda, Batuku* and *Banyabindi* in Western Uganda. As it is the principle and practice of UNESCO, this decision is informed by a written commitment to raise at least 20% self help contribution from the communities and the institutions of the submitting state party as guaranteed by the contracting agency.

The Permanent delegate of Uganda to UNESCO, His Excellence Mr. Richard Ndihuura, in the statement to the session after adopting the decision, appreciated the international contribution to the efforts of Empaako communities to safeguard their cherished Empaako heritage.

Signed by;



Stephen Alinaitwe

Information Officer,

Engabu Za Tooro.