Chapter 9

Music as a Catalyst for Improved Livelihood:
The Case of Culture Spears, a Traditional Music Dance Group in Botswana

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ABSTRACT

This chapter showcases how a traditional music group, Culture Spears, employs ICTs to promote, preserve, and sell musical culture. Their songs have messages of love affairs, adultery, diseases, and marriage. They use the World Wide Web, websites, and others gadgets such as digital camera, CD, DVD, and video to sell their products worldwide. Culture Spears' existential goal is mainly that of entertainment and education. Being a group from rural and humble poor background, they did not have instruments when they started. They used traditional utensils to produce sound and balls to beat drums. They could not get a loan from any bank as banks discriminate in terms of economic standing, and it was difficult for them to get sponsorship to record their pieces. Their first cassette was self-recorded using a borrowed radio. The group experienced harsh teething problems but the media, especially television advertised them well and now their sales are very impressive. They have a recording studio. Current challenges include piracy, copying, and reproducing their music from computers to sell, and there seems to be no stringent copyright laws in Botswana. This negatively affects their sales. Another problem is the issue of royalties. Promoters cheat them in many respects.

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of ICTs has meant improvement in a number of sectors. Traditional music has had its share. Over the past few years, Culture Spears, a traditional music group in Botswana, used technology (DVD and CD) to preserve and disseminate their music. Change always threatens, but the anxiety that came with their success in their first try acted as a motivation. They experienced the benefits of using technology not only for the wellbeing of the group but also as a stepping ladder for impacting the communities at large. It is also important to underscore the fact that this group works hand-in-hand with the communities. The chapter thus examines some partnership projects of this group with the community. It will further highlight some of the opportunities and challenges the group encounters and how the problems are resolved or minimized. Recommendations point to ways in which the ICTs discussed in this chapter can benefit the development of the rural communities.

Music is an integral part of our cultures. Culture is dynamic and a source of pride and identity for its members. Communities produce music for various reasons such as for entertainment, educational, sensitization and economic empowerment. Culture Spears' existential goal is mainly that of entertainment and education. Significant changes have occurred with their experience as a group that does not only entertain locally but internationally. They have witnessed the world using technology to change lives for the better and have jumped the bandwagon by preserving and selling their music packaged in technological gadgets such as DVDs, videos, cassettes and CDs. ICTs have helped this group to develop, revive, store, preserve and popularize Botswana cultures. Thus, ICTs are viewed in this chapter as artifacts that make it possible for communities and groups like Culture Spears to "share information among themselves and with other communities for development purposes" (Lekoko and Morolong,

2007:.2). Throughout history, technology has not only strengthened economic development, but has become a powerful tool for human development. It is demonstrated in this chapter that ICTs can be used to improve people's economic and social development. It is also within the context of this chapter, that I argue that culture is an open system that develops alongside new innovations. But exactly what this means shall be seen through the experiences of Culture Spears. Such experiences indicate that, in this digital era, the development of the indigenous cultures can be aligned to advances in ICTs. ICTs can be used to share and globalize these cultures. Actually, ICTs exist to ensure that these cultures are shared and appreciated globally. ICT is the most accessible mode of transmission. ICT artifacts like the internet, website, cell phone and television, DVD and CDs can be and are used by the traditional cultural group presented in this chapter. Through songs, the group makes the world know about their existence, that of their communities and country; while at the same time helping maintain their everyday life needs/economic goals.

Indeed opportunities for development and popularization of cultures have opened up due to the use ICTs. The need to preserve these cultures in this digital age cannot be achieved without considering the giant information communication technologies (ICTs) **(**Lekoko, 2010**).** Like already mentioned, ICT is defined as a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, store and manage information.

Challenges are inevitable whenever something new is tried. Being a group comprised of people from rural and humble poor background, it has been difficult for the group to secure money that would enable them to take advantage of technology. They could not get a loan from any bank as banks too discriminate in terms of economic standing. The poor who have 'no material property or finance' are excluded. Corresponding to this financial constraint has been the difficulty for them to get sponsorship to record their pieces, package

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