

REPORT



Visit to the Marange Community Museum Youth Arts Festival

[15 SEPTEMBER, 2017]

Compiled by Dr Robert McLaren [Robert
Mshengu Kavanagh]

THE MARANGE COMMUNITY MUSEUM YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL

A VISIT TO A YOUTH ARTS CULTURAL FESTIVAL AT THE MARANGE COMMUNITY MUSEUM [15 SEPTEMBER, 2017]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Marange District of Manicaland, Zimbabwe, has hit the world headlines owing to the recent opening up of diamond mines in the district – a district that is one of the poorest and most disadvantaged in Zimbabwe.

A local history museum has been established at the foot of the religious and cultural heartland of Marange, Mount Makomwe. In 2014 Dr Robert Malcolm McLaren [aka Robert Mshengu Kavanagh] was contracted by Jeweltree Foundation, an organisation that supports projects in the field of mining that are related to the welfare of local people, to visit the museum and provide a report – see <https://jeweltreefoundation.org/blog/marange-community-museum-report>. He reported that ‘the museum had the potential to play a seminal role in the establishment of other local history museums and museums that educate on and preserve the traditional culture and structures’.

Now over three years on, Dr McLaren was engaged again by the Jeweltree Foundation to attend one of the annual community events organised by the museum at the museum, a Youth Arts Cultural Festival, and report again, not only on the festival itself but also on the Museum, in the context of the findings of his earlier report.

The festival took place on 15th September, 2017. Dr McLaren was accompanied on his visit to the event by Tamuka Kanyika, who was tasked to conduct interviews with the young people attending the event in order to assess their views on the event and the museum itself. McLaren and Kanyanga toured the museum, which has experienced expansion, in the company of the owner and founder of the museum, Rodwell Marange, now, on the death of his father, the *ishe* of the district, and Dr Mupira, the Director of the Mutare Provincial Museum, and another official from the museum, Mr Makonye.

When the festival eventually got underway, Dr McLaren attended its activities and performances while Mr Kanyika conducted fourteen interviews with young men and women, boys and girls who attended the event.

The views of the children and young people proved to be very helpful – and they confirmed Dr McLaren’s own view that not a great deal has changed over the years owing to lack of support. There is an urgent need for the museum to receive financial support, material resources and technical assistance as well as to plan creatively for greater diversity and effectiveness.

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MAP OF THE EASTERN HALF OF ZIMBAWE: MARANGE AND MANICALAND



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INTRODUCTION

The Jeweltree Foundation

The Jeweltree Foundation is an organisation that ‘promotes an open and fair trade for artisanal miners and mining cooperatives’. It also promotes ‘transparency and international best practice standards within the industry’. The Foundation believes that ‘beneficiation and development however, mean more than securing a fair deal. The quality of life is not measured by wealth but by freedom. Freedom is the principal goal and purpose of development and at the basis of our philosophy’.

The Foundation also believes ‘that progress and development rise from the abolishment of restrictions. Freedom is not restricted to the rich and wealthy. Poverty is not just a lack of money but also a general lack in possibilities for people to live the life they want.’

It ‘aims to increase the potential for freedom by assisting communities and empower and equip people with self-identity, self-belief and life skills’ with a view to their engaging ‘in income-generating activities to complement the fund-raising efforts of our foundation’.

It specialises in ‘development activism, supply chain management, certification’.

Consultancy

The Marange Community Museum was founded by Rodwell Marange, the son of the then Ishe of Marange, Chief Nyakapeni. The Chief has subsequently passed away and Rodwell Marange is now the substantive chief. The Museum was founded in Marange’s own house and all developments made have been paid from his own resources.

In 2013 the Foundation communicated with Dr Robert McLaren, former Executive Director of the CHIPAWO Trust, that it was considering supporting the Marange Community Museum and expressed the wish to ‘be more thoroughly engaged in the process and to do this we have a need for an independent field assessment and critical mind to help contribute to the process’.

Dr McLaren duly visited Marange and produced a comprehensive report. In August 2017 Dr McLaren was approached and asked to visit the museum once more on the occasion of a Youth Arts Cultural Festival to be hosted there on 15th September, 2017.

The purpose of the visit was two-fold:

- to attend the festival and evaluate it in terms of the museum’s programmes and objectives
- to determine what progress had been made at the museum since the last visit and identify what still needed to be done.

This report will have two parts, corresponding to the purpose above. Part One will focus on the festival and Part Two on what has happened at the museum since the last visit.

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PART ONE: THE FESTIVAL

NARRATIVE

Marange is approximately 350 kms from Harare if one travels via Mutare. As reported in the previous report, the direct route via Odzi is no longer possible for saloon cars. As a result the original plan was to travel to Mutare the day before, spend the night and then go on to Marange in the morning. After the festival the idea was to return to Mutare, spend the night again and then travel back to Harare the next day.

However, in order to reduce the Report Budget so as to free up more funds for the museum itself, it was decided to travel early in the morning to Marange and return the same day - a round trip in the region of 700 kms. Other cuts in the budget were made, principally travelling with only one young person to do the interviews with the youth rather than two, one being a female.

As it happened we made good time and arrived at the museum well before it was due to start. On arrival we met up with the museum owner and founder, Rodwell Marange, and he introduced us to the Director of the Mutare Museum, Dr Mupira, and his companion, also from the museum in Mutare, Mr Makonya.

We were served some *mabweni*, traditional non-alcoholic brew, before being taken on a tour of the museum. After that we waited for the Paramount Chief, the Mambo, to arrive. In the region of four or five hundred people attended, including children from local schools, Holy Ghost and Marange High Schools, Zedza and Makomwe Primary Schools, and student teachers from the Mutare Teachers' College.

Among the guests were a number of Ishes [sub-chiefs], Sadunhus [headmen of districts] and Sabhukus [village heads], the local DA [District Administrator], a local councilor, a minister of religion and other local dignitaries.

While waiting for the Mambo, the schoolchildren and the student teachers entertained the guests with dances such as Mbende [Jerusarema], Chinyambera and Mande. Mbende was done very weakly for the obvious reason that those performing it were primary school children. In CHIPAWO, the arts education organization which I co-founded and headed for twenty years, we never did this dance. It is blatantly sexual and to ask children to do it is inappropriate.

With the arrival of the Mambo and his entourage, everyone was required to leave their chairs and sit on the ground. Men were to remove their hats or caps and women were told to cover their hair. Then there was a demonstration of how to clap in honour of the Mambo in Marange and to *pururutsa* or 'ululate'.. Other parts of Zimbabwe have their own methods of clapping. Most of the children did not know how to clap properly and so this was a training exercise for them in an important aspect of traditional culture.

With the ceremonial greeting of the Mambo done, the programme proper could begin. Naturally it began with the National Anthem, sung by the choir of the Marange High School. I myself never understand why it has to be done by singers or a choir while the rest of those attending keep quiet. Surely this is one

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moment in which everyone should participate and sing the National Anthem. However, the Marange High School choir was professional, excellent and their rendition very impressive. They sang one Shona verse, one Ndebele verse and one English verse. This was refreshing for most times when the anthem is sung in the Shona-speaking provinces, the Ndebele verse is not sung, let alone the English.

It soon emerged that rather than being a Youth Arts Cultural Festival, it was really a rather serious form of edutainment. In other words, the entertainment was in reality the backdrop to a series of talks by adults on various topics but all of educational value to the children and young people present. An extraordinary example was a talk on the merits and benefits of circumcision. The HIV/AIDS discourse in Africa has had a revolutionary cultural effect. Whereas in most parts of Africa it was strictly taboo at one state to discuss openly the male and female sex organs and sexual intercourse, especially in gatherings where children, youth and older people are present together, the coming of the epidemic has broken down the barriers and restrictions. The effect therefore of this talk in the deeply traditional context of the Marange Mambo and in the presence of the traditional hierarchy with no-one batting an eyelid was extraordinary.

The District Administrator talked about the importance of the museum and took the young people and everyone else present through the museum room by room explaining the significance of the exhibits in each room.

The Director of the Mutare Museum praised the Marange Community Museum by saying that it was the one and only museum that had been founded by and belonged to a black Zimbabwean. In private discussion he revealed to me that there is not as yet a registration requirement for museums as there is in the arts where arts organizations must register with the National Arts Council. But he assured me that laws are currently being enacted to this effect. The reason for registration not being in place is obviously that there has never been any non-governmental or private museums in the country before. This indicates the unique nature of the Marange Community Museum.

There was another talk by a Councillor in the Zimunya/Marange Ward who talked of the customs and practices that pertain in Marange and characterize the culture of the district.

The programme was continuing but as we needed to get back to Harare before nightfall if possible and as Tamuka Kanyanga had already completed fourteen interviews with boys and girls who were participating in the festival, we took our leave.

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ASSESSMENT

INTERVIEWS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDING THE FESTIVAL

The following was the Interview Format:

PHOTO

NAME:

AGE:

LOCALITY:

REASON FOR ATTENDANCE:

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL IS EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE?
2. WHY IS IT BEING HELD AT A COMMUNITY MUSEUM?
3. HAVE YOU VISITED THE MUSEUM? IF YES, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF IT?
4. DO YOU THINK A MUSEUM LIKE THIS IS AN ASSET TO THE COMMUNITY? IF YES, WHY?
5. HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THE FESTIVAL SO FAR?
6. WHY HAVE A FESTIVAL LIKE THIS?
7. IS THE FESTIVAL ACHIEVING ITS GOALS?
8. WOULD YOU COME AGAIN?
9. HOW COULD IT BE IMPROVED?
10. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE A MUSEUM AND FESTIVAL LIKE THIS IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY?
11. ANY OTHER IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE ABOUT THE MUSEUM, THE FESTIVAL AND THE MARANGE COMMUNITY?

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND NAMES OF THOSE INTERVIEWED

1. MARTIN CHIPOTO



2. TAPIWANASHE BONGA



3. TINASHE CHIROMBO



4. TINOTENDA MUKWANDO



5. SHARON MAVHERENGEDZA 6. BENHARD ZUNGIRA



7. ANESU HUNI



8. DONEL KANONGA



9. NYASHA MANYONGA



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10. TINOTENDA



11. TONDERAI MARANGE



12. CHIPO MUSINAKE



13. M. CHINOWAITA



14. JOEL MARANGE



AGES: The ages of the interviewees ranged from 14 – 27, except for two aged 36 and 38.

LOCALITY: Marange [7], Harare [2], Mutare [3], Chivi, Rusape

REASON FOR ATTENDANCE [not properly researched]:

To experience the culture day

Since I am quite grown up, I wanted to see if the way I grew up matches that of my elders in terms of custom and tradition.

1. WHAT DO YOU THINK THE YOUTH ARTS FESTIVAL IS EXPECTED TO ACHIEVE?

To remind us of our culture.

To help young people to go back to their tradition, which is being lost.

Learning is not only in class but in the community.

Helping the younger generation that is growing up in the urban areas and are now adopting Western ways to know their culture.

To revisit our culture and learn things we have not been taught.

Learn there is more to our culture than 'Zim dancehall' [an urban form of pop music]

To know our history

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Young generations will learn more and supplement the subject in the new curriculum [Heritage]

2. WHY IS IT BEING HELD AT A COMMUNITY MUSEUM?

Rural people could not go to the urban areas because of money so it is done here – it is wonderful.

Because it is here there are the relics of the past, where the Mambo lives and everything we might want to use.

For those in the surrounding areas to come and learn what was done and survives from long ago. Because it is the first museum in Marange.

This is a place dedicated to the preservation of culture and where items of culture are secured and stored so that people can learn.

It is cheaper than going to Mutare.

So that youths, especially girls, know their culture and girls get into marriage with culture and fully-equipped to make wonderful wives.

Every community has its ways of doing things.

The museum is open to anyone in the area of the chiefs.

3. HAVE YOU VISITED THE MUSEUM? IF YES, WHAT DID YOU THINK OF IT?

There was only one respondent who had not visited it. Almost all said it was a nice and useful place. Here are some of the responses:

Beautiful but some things need to be fixed and upgraded especially the infrastructure and security I go there often. It shows there are sub-cultures not just Shona. Exhibits on the First and Second Chimurenga are things a museum has to have.

The road to the museum needs to be cleared and upgraded.

There is need for a borehole.

Needs upgrading. Other elderly people can contribute other things and prevent them being lost for all time.

The founders must mix with the people. It must not be their own personal thing.

4. DO YOU THINK A MUSEUM LIKE THIS IS AN ASSET TO THE COMMUNITY? IF YES, WHY?

All were enthusiastic and believed it was an asset and a very good thing, something important for knowledge, culture, tradition, history and a sense of community. There were some caveats though:

It's a good idea because people here can afford to come to it.

Needs lots of work. It should have everything a museum needs to have, for instance, the clothing worn by our ancestors.

The festival and rituals like rain-making are done here.

Everything is in Harare so this is good for those in the rural areas.

Helps us with food during droughts.

Storing history for the unborn.

Helps us develop the community through the example of starting something [a business] in your own home.

5. HOW HAVE YOU FOUND THE FESTIVAL SO FAR?

Everyone was enthusiastic and happy. Some commented as follows:

Enjoyed the dances and the dancers enjoyed as well.

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Lots of talent and they might get sponsors here.

The festival makes everybody happy - it is a day for rejoicing.

They did a dance from Matebeleland called 'Inqquzu' and that was good [actually it was 'isitshikitsha' but the point was that the cultural items were diverse]

I never knew that way back they had such a lovely way of entertaining themselves compared with the modern world.

It is good to have visitors

6. WHY HAVE A FESTIVAL LIKE THIS?

Many did not answer this question. Some did - as follows:

There are a lot of things like television which make us get carried away with other cultures forgetting ours.

A festival like this reminds us of who we are.

Good to have the youth and the elderly. If we had come as youth only we would not have benefitted.

If we had something like this two or three times a year it would be very beneficial.

It is good for us to grow up and know our history from one generation to the next – our ancestors, our fathers and then us.

A reminder to the nation not to lose its values.

7. IS THE FESTIVAL ACHIEVING ITS GOALS?

Behaviour change – people are reminded of their customs and moral value – people are behaving better, especially the youth.

More people are coming to visit this place – they may get a little something to develop it.

They gained some money as most of the people paid entrance fees.

There are still challenges.

Happiness is an achievement, being here is an achievement and the museum is benefitting the community

It is motivating people.

8. WOULD YOU COME AGAIN?

Almost all said: "I would love to come again." But there were some provisos – namely about the water situation and the tent.

9. HOW COULD IT BE IMPROVED?

Shelter [tenting], electricity, the PA System and water supply were the main challenges cited:

Improve infrastructure and equipment. These events take place in September when it is hot.

Need a bigger tent so everyone is comfortable

Need a water source.

Looking at a museum like this, they need to have electricity. The PA system needs a lot of improvement.

Invite more people, from other communities so there is cultural diversity

The feeder road needs attention and a much bigger and better signpost at the turn-off. What about animals to make it more interesting for tourists?

Grounds would not be big enough if more schools came.

Invite more people from the churches, not just cultural. We are Christians.

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10. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE A MUSEUM AND FESTIVAL LIKE THIS IN YOUR OWN COMMUNITY?

Those in Marange expressed their happiness that they had something like this. There was a big yes from the others. One noted that there are cultural festivals in other parts of Zimbabwe but not a museum like this.

11. ANY OTHER IDEAS YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTRIBUTE ABOUT THE MUSEUM, THE FESTIVAL AND THE MARANGE COMMUNITY?

In addition to the issues already raised – namely water, boreholes, shelter, tent, electricity, road, notice board at the turn-off, PA System, space etc, there were the following suggestions:

Diversify the arts eg. add poetry

Improve the grounds

Very useful – there was a time when Form 1's came for orientation on the Kings of Marange.

Need tour or museum guides.

More such meetings.

SUMMARY

The children and young people who gave of their time to respond to the questions above, have stated very clearly the potential of the events hosted by the Museum. In addition to the emphasis on facilities and their need for upgrading, two other points need to be highlighted:

- *Diversity* – perhaps an arts education consultant is needed to make suggestions as to how a better, more educational and more entertaining festival of arts could be organized. The need for diversity or variety was brought up by the children. There was a suggestion concerning the inclusion of poetry. In terms of the educational objectives of the event, drama was a strange omission. Other ideas crop up – a parade of traditional dress or fashions based on traditional dress, is one such idea. Putting the traditional dances in their social context by including them in a dramatic framework would make them a lot more meaningful. For example, *mhande* in the context of rain-making, *mbakumba* the harvest, *chinyambera* the hunt etc.

Springing from these comments is the sense that space in the museum could be devoted to cultural items of an artistic kind – musical instruments, leg rattles [*magavhu*], shakers [*bosbo*], different kinds of *ngoma* [drums] and *mbira* [thumb piano]. What about *chigufe* and other obsolescent instruments and costumes worn in performances?

- *Sound System* – the sound system did indeed sound hideous. One felt very sorry for the talented young guitarist who had his playing almost totally wrecked by it. But I am not convinced the sound system was at fault. An experienced sound technician might have been able to make it work by reducing volume appropriately, finding the optimum balance between bass and treble and mixing the sounds correctly.

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PART TWO: THE MUSEUM

PROGRESS

In order to assess what has happened, the report will refer to the museum's objectives and to the recommendations as listed in the 2013 Report.

MUSEUM WISH LIST

1. To extend the museum, more exhibition space – *an extension has been completed*
2. Finish the latrines – *not actioned*
3. Guest accommodation – *not actioned*
4. Water – manual boreholes – *not actioned*
5. Power – *not actioned*
6. Transport – *not actioned*
7. Security – *two security guards hired at owner's expense.*
8. Administration capital – *not forthcoming*

Existing infrastructure and resources in 2013 and now

- There is no governance structure. The present organogram consists of the owner and his employees, who have different tasks which he apportions. There is no board or governing body to guide on policy and fiduciary issues – *no progress*
- The museum has virtually no income and no capital but relies entirely on the generosity of the owner – *as before*
- The building in which the museum is housed is Marange's private house. It is still untransformed – *an extension, one long room, has been built*
- Because of the shortage of space and the volume of exhibits, the museum resembles rather the dwelling of a collector than a museum. Exhibits are not displayed. They are put anywhere where there is space – *as before*
- There is a feeling of the uneven quality of the displays. Some exhibits very much deserve their place in the museum. Others are questionable – *as before*
- There is no section on mineral discoveries and workings in the past and present – *as before.*
- There is no space or sufficient exhibits to highlight museum activities either already held or projected. This may include general notices the museum wishes to highlight or inform on – *as before*
- In addition to being cluttered, there is very little light – *no electric light available.*
- There is almost total lack of explanatory labels, captions or notes to guide a viewer in the absence of the owner – *a serious concern.*
- Most other structures are in a state of incompleteness. The existing store-room has no roof – *completed*
- The museum's legal status is not been secured and the legal protection of its materials is still to be secured – *no progress*
- The office is in the same building and it is totally unequipped to serve its function – *no progress.*
- There is no access to the internet, no telephone and no computer equipment – *no progress.*

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- There is no-one with any training to keep the books or record income and expenditure – *no progress*
- There is no inventory of items held by the museum – *items have now been numbered and labelled*
- Records are not being adequately kept – neither of properties nor of activities. The museum has no camera - either still or video. It has no computer in which to develop a data base nor anyone with the capacity to do so – *as before*.
- The museum has no library or seating accommodation where visitors could read relevant materials or publications held by the museum – *there is one table where this could be done*
- The museum has no transport of any kind either local – say a scotch cart – or for longer travel or conveyance of goods, exhibits or people – *as before*
- There is no facility for overnight accommodation of visitors or for cooking – *as before*
- Existing toilets, though based on a recognized rural format, are too small and rocky for any but the most hardy and resourceful. The other toilets planned have not yet been built – *situation needs attention*
- Water from the well is of poor quality and the nearby borehole is not connected to the water supply at the museum – *water situation dire*
- Security is minimal and non-existent when it comes to the conservancy – *guards provided*
- The traditional village needs a make-over. It is important that it project the very best the traditional culture was capable of not the deprived state that existed under colonialism – *as before*
- There are at present no guarantees or plans put in place for continuity. If the present owner for one reason or another is no longer able to manage and direct the museum, it is not known whether it would and how the museum would survive. The potential internees sound too senior to serve – *no provisions made as yet*
- There is a problem relating to gender. There is one capable woman who does the cleaning but seems also to have the capacity for very much more. Apart from her, everyone involved with the museum is male – *needs attention*

2013 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Laptop/iPad and internet access** – as before
- **Website** – provided by Jeweltree
- **Mutare Museum** – they are now aware and in fact attend events. They have indicated their willingness to help.
- **Transport** – as before
- **Generator and electrical wiring** – needed desperately
- **Security** – improved
- **Administration funds** – as before
- **Exhibition rooms** – see below.
- **Start operations** – not yet ready
- **A Trust should be formed and registered** – needed

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- **A Board of Trustees** - needed
- **Museum guide or prospectus of exhibits** - needed
- **Reception, sale of tickets and other explanatory materials** – needed
- **Museum guide** - needed
- **Active rondavels where purchases can be made** - needed
- **A kiosk providing refreshments** - needed
- **Visitors toilets** - needed
- **Active art and crafts, traditional medicine and instruments of mediation rondavels** - needed
- **Active and upgraded traditional village** - needed
- **Mining exhibit** – very important
- **Involvement of women** - needed

SUMMARY

The owner/founder of the museum has achieved a great deal with his own resources. The needs both at the museum and in its events programme have been clearly and repeatedly spelt out in this report. What is required is clear – namely financial resources and expertise and technical assistance and advice.

The museum, like its arts festival, needs to start looking at its mandate with greater originality and diversity. The present almost exclusive emphasis on the traditional and political leadership, worthy though it may be, is surely only a fraction of what makes up the Marange community. I have mentioned the arts. The students mentioned costume. What about a display dedicated to women's role in society? The mining element is strangely absent. Again one of the students spoke of religion, not only traditional but also Christianity. Marange was the birthplace of African Independent churches in Zimbabwe and indeed in the region. Surely this is also part of Marange's history. A lot more could be done on food and tools. Perhaps a workshop could be organised to look at the components of a community's culture with a view to including more in the museum's displays.

Clearly a critical shortcoming in the displays is explanatory material. Young people may gawp at the pictures and try and guess who they are but even then not learn a great deal of their importance and the events of their day. A catalogue with explanatory notes, charts in the rooms themselves, would transform their experience. A visit to the Museum at the Heroes' Acre would demonstrate what is needed.

Exhibits do not have to be stuck on walls alone. There should be space in the middle of the room for free-standing or cabinetted exhibits. This breaks down the monotony of pictures stuck on the walls.

In the four years between reports very little support has been available. The present writer finds this baffling and disappointing. If ever there was a project that deserves support, it is this one. As a result the situation has not exactly stagnated. A lot has been done. The museum is very active and has clearly attained an important status in the community – however is it not to a large extent repeating the same things at the same level? Only with funding and technical assistance will the museum become more diverse, dynamic and professional. Why is this not forthcoming? I strongly urge it should be.