



# Advancing African Digital Humanities Ideation Hub (AADHIH) - Reclaiming African Voices Hackathon

## 1. Overview

The Advancing African Digital Humanities Ideation Hub (AADHIH) Project Hackathon: Reclaiming African Voices brings together students, researchers, developers, and creatives to reimagine how African histories, languages, and lived experiences are preserved and shared in the digital age.

Over an intensive, collaborative sprint, participants will design innovative digital tools that recover marginalized narratives, transform archival practices, and amplify subaltern voices across the continent. From AI-powered language preservation to interactive maps of resistance and community-driven oral history platforms, the hackathon challenges participants to bridge technology and the humanities in meaningful, socially grounded ways.

Rooted in principles of decolonisation, accessibility, and community engagement, this event is more than a competition—it is a space to co-create the future of African knowledge systems. The most impactful solutions will not only demonstrate technical creativity, but also contribute to sustainable, inclusive digital heritage practices across Africa.

## 2. Vision

To cultivate a future-focused generation of learners and innovators who use AI responsibly and creatively to solve real educational challenges across Africa.

## 3. Objectives

The hackathon aims to:

- To design and prototype digital tools that recover, preserve, and amplify African histories, languages, and subaltern voices, with a focus on narratives and knowledge systems historically excluded from mainstream and colonial archives.
- To support the documentation and digitisation of oral histories through accessible, community-centred technologies.
- To enable African-led reinterpretation of historical records, challenging colonial bias and foregrounding alternative narratives.
- To advance language preservation and inclusion by developing NLP tools and datasets for under-resourced African languages and dialects.
- To visualise memory, resistance, and cultural heritage spatially, using digital mapping to connect place, history, and identity.
- To archive and analyse contemporary subaltern expression, particularly digital activism and social movements on social media platforms.

- Build capacity among participants to engage responsibly with digital knowledge production
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## 4. Event Timeline

- **Information Session:** 15 April | 17:30 on MS Teams (Please RSVP to get a reminder <https://bit.ly/47ScnXI> )
  - **Project Concept Submission Deadline:** 24 April | 16:00
  - **Finalists Announcement:** 25 April (Via email and SMS)
  - **Technical Orientation & Access to Red Horizon Metaverse:** 28 April
  - **Final Hackathon Showcase Event:** 29 April
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## 5. Participation Requirements

### Participants must:

- Be registered students or early-career researchers in 2026
- Participate individually or in small interdisciplinary teams
- Develop a digital humanities concept or prototype aligned with the theme *Reclaiming African Voices*
- Submit a functional prototype, working concept, or demonstrable digital intervention
- Any software, platform or technologies are welcome.

### Finals Requirements

- Laptop (mandatory)
  - Stable internet connection (mandatory) minimum speed 10Mbps.
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## 6. Core Challenge Briefs

Participants are challenged to design and prototype a digital humanities tool or platform that contributes meaningfully to the preservation, interpretation, or circulation of African knowledge and lived experience.

### **Projects may focus on (but are not limited to):**

- Digital preservation of African languages, oral traditions, and storytelling practices
- Community-driven oral history and memory platforms
- Interactive maps documenting histories of resistance, migration, or place-based knowledge
- Reimagined archival tools that challenge colonial classification and description systems
- Creative digital expressions of African histories, identities, or futures
- Platforms that centre accessibility, multilingualism, and community participation


### **Core Challenge:**

Participants build digital tools or prototypes that recover, preserve, and amplify African histories, languages, and subaltern voices especially those underrepresented in mainstream archives.

## Possible Tracks (Not limited to these tracks)

### 1. Oral Histories → Digital Archives

- Tools to record, transcribe, and archive oral histories
- AI-assisted transcription for African languages
- Community-owned digital archive platforms

 Example output: A mobile app that records elders' stories and auto-tags themes (land, migration, resistance)


### 2. Decolonising Archives

- Reinterpret colonial-era archives through African perspectives
- Annotation tools for “counter-reading” historical documents
- Visualisations showing bias or gaps in colonial records

 Example output: A web tool that overlays alternative narratives onto colonial texts

### 3. Language Preservation & NLP

- Chatbots, translation tools, or keyboards for African languages
- Datasets for under-resourced languages
- Voice-to-text tools for local dialects

 Example output: A WhatsApp bot that translates indigenous language stories into English (and back)

### 4. Digital Mapping of Memory

- Interactive maps of historical events, movements, or communities
- Geo-tagged storytelling (e.g., protests, heritage sites)

👉 Example output: A map of anti-colonial resistance movements across Southern Africa

## 5. Subaltern Voices & Social Media

- Tools that analyse or archive digital activism
- Dashboards tracking hashtags, movements, or narratives

👉 Example output: A visualization of student protests (#FeesMustFall-style) over time

## Key Principles

### All submissions should:

- Be grounded in African contexts and epistemologies
- Demonstrate ethical engagement with communities and source materials
- Prioritise accessibility and inclusivity
- Clearly articulate whose voices are being reclaimed and how
- Show clear social, cultural, or scholarly value
- Be explainable, reflective, and purpose-driven

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## 7. Deliverables

### **Participants must submit:**

- A functional prototype or clearly presented working concept
- A 2–3-minute demo or walkthrough video
- A written narrative explaining:
  - The problem or gap addressed
  - The communities or narratives centred
  - The project’s relevance to African digital humanities

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## 8. Selection Process

All submissions will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary panel.

The **top 50 submissions** will be selected to present their work at the final showcase event.

These finalists will receive an exclusive invitation to attend the Red Horizon Metaverse Finals Event, a live, facilitated simulation experience hosted in the Red Horizon digital environment.

### **The Finals Event will include:**

- Structured simulation scenarios
- Real-time participation and decision-making
- Performance tracking and scoring
- Facilitated reflection and evaluation

## **Additionally:**

All winners of the finals event will be invited to the Advancing African Digital Humanities Ideation Hub (AADHIH) Summit to present your hack.

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## **9. Judging Criteria (Reference Annexure A)**

### **1. Humanities Depth & Relevance (30%)**

- Depth of engagement with African histories, languages, cultures, or lived experiences
- Evidence of critical thinking, including historical, cultural, or ethical reflection
- Clear purpose that goes beyond technical novelty to meaningful interpretation or preservation

### **2. Community Impact (25%)**

- Relevance to real communities and lived realities
- Potential to amplify underrepresented or marginalised voices
- Evidence of community awareness, participation, or benefit (direct or indirect)

### **3. Accessibility & Inclusivity (20%)**

- Consideration of diverse users, languages, abilities, and access constraints
- Ease of use and clarity of interface or presentation
- Sensitivity to local contexts, digital divides, and representation

### **4. Creativity & Innovation (15%)**

- Originality of concept or approach
- Innovative use of digital tools, methods, or platforms
- Thoughtful integration of technology with humanities perspectives

## 5. Sustainability & Future Potential (10%)

- Potential for longevity, reuse, or scalability beyond the challenge
  - Ethical data practices and respect for community ownership
  - Feasibility of maintenance, growth, or adaptation over time
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## 10. Expected Outcomes

- Innovative digital humanities projects rooted in African contexts
  - Increased visibility of marginalized African histories and voices
  - Strengthened interdisciplinary collaboration across humanities and digital practice
  - Sustainable, inclusive models for African digital heritage
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## 11. Contact & Coordination

All official communication, submissions, and queries will take place through designated African Digital Humanities Project channels [chs-adh@unisa.ac.za](mailto:chs-adh@unisa.ac.za)

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## 12. Code of Conduct

### **All participants are expected to:**

- Act respectfully and ethically
- Engage critically and responsibly with cultural materials
- Acknowledge sources and communities appropriately

- Avoid extractive, exploitative, or insensitive representations
  - Uphold collaborative and inclusive working practices
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## 13. Conclusion

**The African Digital Humanities Project Hackathon: Reclaiming African Voices** offers a collaborative space to rethink how African knowledge is created, preserved, and shared in digital form. By centering decolonial values, accessibility, and lived experience, the hackathon supports participants in building tools and narratives that contribute to more inclusive, sustainable African knowledge futures.

The most impactful projects will not only demonstrate creative digital practice but will also leave lasting contributions to the evolving landscape of African digital humanities.

## Annexure A

### Reclaiming African Voices – Judging Rubric

Total: 100 points

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#### 1. Humanities Depth & Relevance (30%)

Performance Level	Descriptor
<b>Excellent (26–30 pts)</b>	Demonstrates rich, nuanced engagement with African histories, languages, cultures, or lived experiences. Shows strong critical thinking, with clear historical, cultural, and/or ethical reflection. Purpose is well articulated and clearly prioritises meaning, interpretation, or preservation over technical novelty.
<b>Good (20–25 pts)</b>	Shows solid engagement with relevant African contexts and some critical reflection. Purpose is clear, though interpretation or preservation aspects may not be fully developed. Technology is generally well connected to humanities concerns.
<b>Adequate (14–19 pts)</b>	Engagement with African contexts is present but limited or surface-level. Critical reflection is minimal or implicit. Project leans more toward technical execution than humanities insight.
<b>Limited (0–13 pts)</b>	Little to no meaningful engagement with African humanities content. Lacks critical reflection. Purpose is unclear or driven primarily by

	technical novelty.
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## 2. Community Impact (25%)

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Excellent (21–25 pts)</b>	<p>Project is strongly grounded in real community needs or lived realities.</p> <p>Clearly amplifies underrepresented or marginalised voices.</p> <p>Demonstrates strong awareness of community context, with evident or well-reasoned community benefit.</p>
<b>Good (16–20 pts)</b>	<p>Project is relevant to communities and has clear potential impact.</p> <p>Addresses marginalised voices, though community engagement or benefit may be indirect or conceptual.</p>
<b>Adequate (11–15 pts)</b>	<p>Community relevance is stated but not convincingly demonstrated.</p> <p>Impact is generalized or abstract, with limited attention to specific voices or beneficiaries.</p>
<b>Limited (0–10 pts)</b>	<p>Little consideration of community relevance or impact. Does not meaningfully engage with or benefit marginalised voices.</p>

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### 3. Accessibility & Inclusivity (20%)

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Excellent (17–20 pts)</b>	Demonstrates strong inclusive design: considers language diversity, accessibility, connectivity constraints, and varying user abilities. Interface or presentation is clear, intuitive, and context-sensitive.
<b>Good (13–16 pts)</b>	Shows clear consideration of accessibility and inclusion, with minor gaps. Interface or presentation is mostly clear and usable across contexts.
<b>Adequate (9–12 pts)</b>	Some acknowledgment of inclusivity or accessibility, but application is limited or inconsistent. Usability may be uneven.
<b>Limited (0–8 pts)</b>	Accessibility and inclusivity are largely unaddressed. Interface or presentation may exclude users or ignore contextual constraints.

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### 4. Creativity & Innovation (15%)

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Excellent (13–15 pts)</b>	Highly original concept or approach. Uses digital tools in imaginative and effective ways. Technology and humanities perspectives are well

	integrated and mutually reinforcing.
<b>Good (10–12 pts)</b>	Shows creativity and some innovation. Digital methods are thoughtfully applied, though not entirely original or deeply integrated.
<b>Adequate (6–9 pts)</b>	Concept shows limited originality. Uses familiar tools or approaches with minimal adaptation or creative extension.
<b>Limited (0–5 pts)</b>	Lacks originality or innovation. Relies on conventional or undeveloped use of tools.

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## 5. Sustainability & Future Potential (10%)

<b>Performance Level</b>	<b>Descriptor</b>
<b>Excellent (9–10 pts)</b>	Strong potential for longevity, reuse, or scaling. Demonstrates ethical data practices and respect for community ownership. Maintenance and future growth are clearly feasible.
<b>Good (7–8 pts)</b>	Some consideration of sustainability and ethics. Project could continue beyond the challenge with moderate effort.
<b>Adequate (4–6 pts)</b>	Sustainability is briefly acknowledged but underdeveloped. Long-term viability or maintenance is unclear.
<b>Limited (0–3)</b>	No meaningful consideration of sustainability, ethics, or future use.

