

The Know Your Rights!/Connais Tes Droits! Workshop.

From June 26 to June 27, 2007, a workshop entitled “**Know Your Rights!**” took place on the premises of the West African Research Center (WARC) in Dakar. The idea for the workshop grew out of a remark made by members of the ACHPR that African populations, who are mostly illiterate in the official languages of their governments, do not have access to the content of the human rights charters and treaties that their governments have signed. This lacuna was highlighted in the welcoming remarks, on the second day of the workshop, from Her Excellency Ambassador Salamata SAWADOGO, President of the ACHPR, represented by Chafi Bakari, Senior Legal Advisor at the Commission. The primary goal of Know Your Rights! is to make available the content of the five legal instruments of the African Commission in African languages which are as follows:

- The African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
- The Protocol to the African Charter on the Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights
- The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa
- The OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Rights in Africa.

Organized collaboratively by the African Commission, WARC, and Brandeis University (USA), the purpose of the workshop was to reflect on and reach *a consensus on the characteristics of a desirable model for the translation/adaptation, presentation and dissemination of human rights documents in African languages*. “**Know Your Rights!**” has been launched in Senegambia, in its pilot phase, while organizers prepare to expand the project to other West African countries. Senegal and Gambia were chosen because of the important expertise and experience found in both these countries in translation/adaptation into local languages of a variety of materials for the purposes of non-formal education. Senegal’s experience, in particular, has shown that while literal translations are important, they are not sufficient for all the non-formal education needs of the local population, and that several different pedagogically-oriented adaptation models for dissemination might be necessary, depending on the purposes of the exercise.

Participation in the workshop.

The workshop brought together experts from a variety of backgrounds, all of whom were experienced in translating and adapting diverse materials into Senegambian languages. The efforts of the organizers to bring together such a broad spectrum of stakeholders were congratulated by the participants – it was the first time they knew of that literacy specialists, legal and linguistic scholars, magistrates, NGOs, and media specialists were able to address the same issues in a group forum. It was clear, over the course of the two-day workshop, that all participants had much to learn from one another.

The participants heard about the history of the translation of human rights documents into Senegalese languages from Lamine KANE, of the National Association for Adult Literacy and Training (ANAFa). They benefited from the literacy experience and translation expertise of colleagues like Amadou Abdoul SY also of ANAFa, of Mamadou NDIAYE, African Society for Education and Training for Development (SAFEFOD) and the Center for Applied Linguistics of Dakar (CLAD), and of Matarr BALDEH of Education for All (EFA) in the Gambia. Participants were guided by the knowledge, and expertise of Université Cheikh Anta Diop professors Fary Silate KA, from the Department of Linguistics, and Fatou Kiné CAMARA, from the Faculty of Political and Legal Sciences, and blessed to have the wisdom and experience of Arame Diop FALL, Organisation Sénégalaise d’Appui au Développement (OSAD). The presence of partners

from the media like Henri Pierre KOUBAKA, West African Democracy Radio, and Seydou Nourou NDIAYE of the publishing house Papyrus Afrique proved invaluable.

Among the several stakeholders from the non-formal education sector and NGOs that have worked in translation/adaptation were Molly MELCHING of the NGO Tostan and Awa Dia KA from Associates in Research & Education for Development (ARED). Their presentations contributed significantly to the workshop's understanding of various translation/adaptation models.

The outcome of the workshop.

Given the importance of standardizing legal terminology in the translation/adaptation process, it was agreed that a database of legal and judicial terminology should be created and that it be housed initially at the headquarters of WARC. WARA will also serve as a repository for all existing human rights documents in Senegalese and Gambian languages that are collected. Using WIKI technology initially, the database will eventually be transferred to an appropriate database software program. Terminology entries will be gathered from existing human rights documents in all the languages of Senegal and the Gambia. New terms will also be solicited and evaluated. Resource people relevant to this effort will also be sought out, contacted, and encouraged to contribute. A representative Network Coordinating Committee, made up of workshop participants, will facilitate the interaction of the relevant stakeholders, develop and manage the database, and coordinate the translation/adaptation process for the documents of the ACHPR into the languages of Senegal and the Gambia. Given the universal agreement by workshop participants that every document needs a more or less literal translation into the target language, as a starting point for any subsequent adaptation, the committee will coordinate that effort as well for all of the five ACHPR documents.

Concerning the process of translation/adaptation, workshop participants agreed that the ideal approach is multidisciplinary, attempts should be made to work with bilingual, monolingual and multilingual people, and that any approach that involves oversimplification of the material should be avoided. The workshop recommended adopting a multi-faceted approach with a range of possible products, and adjusting the form and format of each product to its pedagogical purposes according to the needs of the population (information, training, awareness, reading, self-training, etc.) As necessary, relevant monolingual glossaries and lexicons, which explain the concepts and terms adopted in the translation/adaptation document, will also be developed.

The KYR workshop was heralded by all participants as a particularly unique and important forum, one that served as a dynamic beginning to what will be an ongoing process. Follow-up activities are being pursued by both organizers and the network coordinating committee. In addition to the lexicographic work described above, the team is preparing to develop proposals for future funding that will facilitate the continuation of this important effort.

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