UNESCO meeting
“Identifying good practices in safeguarding endangered languages in Sub-Saharan Africa”
Addis Ababa, 9 and 10 February 2007

General report

I. Introduction

The meeting was organized by UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Section in cooperation with the UNESCO Addis Ababa Office in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) on 9 and 10 February 2007. It was the second of a series of two meetings organized in the framework of the UNESCO/Norway Fund-in-Trust project “Capacity-building for safeguarding languages and oral traditions and expressions in Sub-Saharan Africa”.

The meeting brought together about 40 participants from 22 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, representatives of university departments and national and regional research institutions specialized in African languages. The discussions focused on concrete experiences, good practices and lessons related to the projects carried out by African experts for the safeguarding of endangered languages.

Well before the meeting, a call for submissions was distributed among African university departments and national research institutions dealing with African languages asking for contributions in the following areas: (a) university curricula strengthening skills and methodologies for documenting and safeguarding endangered languages; (b) research partnerships for language description between endangered language communities and linguists/universities; (c) community and academic collaboration in preparing and publishing endangered language materials (orthographies, grammars, primers, etc.) and other revitalisation efforts; (d) formal and non-formal education using endangered languages; (e) safeguarding activities for oral traditions and expressions involving endangered languages; (f) the use of public media, and information and communication technologies in safeguarding endangered languages.

On the basis of the proposals received, 22 were chosen for presentation during the meeting. In addition, 13 experts representing institutions dealing with Ethiopian languages and based in Addis Ababa were invited. Based on the abstracts submitted, the following three sessions were put on the agenda:
1. Research partnerships for safeguarding endangered languages (language description and preparation of language materials);
2. University curricula strengthening skills and methodologies for documenting and safeguarding endangered languages;
3. **Formal and non-formal education methods using endangered languages.**

The meeting was opened by H.E. Mr. Mohamouda Ahmed Gass, State Minister of Culture and Tourism of Ethiopia who informed the participants about Ethiopia’s cultural policies which pay due attention to Ethiopian languages. The opening address was followed by words of welcome by Ms Fumiko Ohinata, representing the Director of UNESCO Addis Ababa Office, and introductory remarks by Ms Sabine Kube from UNESCO’s Intangible Heritage Section.

Each of the three sessions started with short presentations of 10 minutes each illustrating concrete projects and providing the input for further discussion at the end of each session. The afternoon of the second and last meeting day was an occasion to summarize the debates of the three sessions, to concentrate again on central questions raised, to come forward with recommendations for future cooperation and to strengthen new partnerships. The facilitator of the meeting was Mr Felix Ameka, a Ghanaian linguist working at the University of Leiden.

The following section of this report provides a summary of the presentations and debates, grouped under the three main discussion points mentioned above.

**II. Summary of presentations and debates**

**Theme 1: Research partnerships for safeguarding endangered languages (language description and preparation of language material)**

Two sessions of the meeting were devoted to this focal issue. They were chaired by Ms Hirut Woldemariam, Department of Linguistics at the University of Addis Ababa, and by Mr Girma Demeke, Ethiopian Languages Research Center, of the same University. The debates were introduced by twelve project presentations showing experiences in research partnerships established between universities and speaker communities to implement safeguarding measures for endangered languages (see summaries of the presentations in Annex 3).

Although the twelve project presentations showed a wide range of activities, they are usually composed of three main components: (a) preparatory work in form of sociolinguistic surveys defining the current situation of the language to be studied and determining the safeguarding measures to be adopted; (b) data collection to study the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language and (c) preparation of language materials (orthography guides, reading and writing manuals, teacher guides, word lists, small dictionaries, grammars).
The ensuing debate touched upon the aspects common to the projects presented and the main challenges that African linguists face in assisting speaker communities in safeguarding their languages.

The following points were subject of further discussion:

1. Developing guidelines for planning and implementing language documentation and revitalization activities

The presentations showed a great variety of approaches to language documentation. The exchange among the participants helped to better understand how projects might be designed to achieve the expected results. The experts expressed a need for better coordination in language documentation and agreed to work on guidelines for, for instance, orthography development, dictionary and teaching manual design and for effective and equitable cooperation between researchers and speaker communities. Such guidelines would help to streamline the work and to advise linguists wanting to engage in language documentation work. It was agreed upon that they should also address ethical implications for cooperation with communities. Prof. Mtenje from the University of Malawi and Prof. Sadembouo of the University of Yaounde, Cameroon, volunteered to propose draft guidelines for orthography development which would also address the issue of standardization. Draft guidelines will be shared among the participants of the two meetings and submitted to ACALAN (African Academy of Languages) for wider distribution.

Furthermore, the BASAL method developed and widely used in Cameroon to develop oral into written languages was appreciated by the experts as an efficient and not too costly way of organizing safeguarding activities in cooperation with communities. The project draws from a wide network of voluntary language workers including young linguists. Based on language description (phonology, morphology, syntax and collection of vocabulary lists), language material, such as mural alphabets, orthography guides, transition manuals and story books are prepared. The approximate duration for one project is two years. It was hoped that this method could be extended to other countries. The experts were informed that the BASAL method might be included in UNESCO’s future Register of Good Practices in Language Preservation. It was furthermore decided to continue collecting and disseminating approved project designs for carrying out community-based language documentation. The experts were invited to submit outlines of successful projects in this area for evaluation in the framework of the UNESCO Register mentioned above.

2. Working towards strong partnerships with communities

Better cooperation with communities was another central issue. Several examples showed how university departments successfully assist communities in their safeguarding efforts. It was made clear that without the approval, clear commitment
and active involvement of speaker communities, safeguarding efforts remain in the academic realm and do not have any impact on the vitality of the language in the community. Proposals for language documentation should ideally come from the communities. It was recommended that linguists cooperate with local language associations and the wide range of NGOs working in the field of safeguarding languages. In this regard, it was suggested that the Data base of African university departments and research institutions dealing with African languages, recently created by UNESCO and ACALAN, be extended to take stock of other initiatives and actors in the field of safeguarding endangered languages (community-based projects carried out by NGOs, local language associations, etc.).

Examples from Botswana, Burkina Faso, Nigeria and South Africa showed that the strong commitment of the speaker communities may also prevent requests for payment often highlighted in other contexts as an obstacle to cooperation with communities.

3. Address negative attitudes of speakers, decision makers and academics towards African languages

Negative attitudes of different groups of people e.g. the speakers of the languages, the intelligentsia (academics), university administrators and decision makers turned out to be a major problem. When promoting the use and safeguarding of African languages, linguists often face a low level of awareness about the value and importance of their languages among speakers and decision makers. Examples from Malawi and Burkina Faso show however that the speakers are the best advocates of their languages. The experts discussed possible ways of sensitizing the general public. Initiatives in Malawi, Burundi and the Central African Republic use local radio programmes for awareness raising campaigns. The Center for Language Studies at the University of Malawi organizes annual national language conferences bringing together different actors in language safeguarding including local language associations and representatives of speaker communities of minority languages. It was furthermore stressed that initial information sessions about the aims and advantages of language documentation should be an integral part of community-based language safeguarding projects implemented by universities. In addition, it was pointed out that linguists themselves may also need more awareness raising and attitudinal change. It was therefore suggested to integrate modules on the sociology of language into the university curriculum to help professional linguists and students to better understand their role and enable them to convince speakers about the importance of African languages in development.

The experts stressed that the negative attitudes of speakers towards their language are influenced by a complex set of factors which have to be addressed in parallel to achieve changes. Lack of opportunities to use the languages outside of homes and
their apparent economic irrelevance have been mentioned by the experts as two major points. Advocacy is therefore also needed in the private sector and especially at government level where appropriate language policies should be developed to assist the “intellectualization” of languages. In this connection, examples from Burkina Faso and Malawi showed that speakers who are convinced about the importance of their language are capable of forming an important pressure group which can bring about changes in language policies at the governmental level.

4. Financial constraints

The majority of the university projects presented during the two meeting days were made possible thanks to external funding (NUFU, Swiss cooperation, Volkswagen Stiftung, DAAD, etc.). It was noted that there exist quite a few funding opportunities and it was suggested to organise training workshops for linguists in writing grant applications. An inquiry about possible support for such a training programme will be made with the Hans-Rausing-Endangered Languages Programme (SOAS, London).

On the other hand, it is crucial that community-based language documentation projects be integrated in university research policies and that university administrations or local and/or central governments be convinced to take over and sustain projects after initial external funding.

Theme 2: University curricula strengthening skills and methodologies for documenting and safeguarding endangered languages

The presentations and discussions on theme 2 and theme 3 were chaired by Neville Alexander, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

As already highlighted above, African linguists have a crucial role to play in the “intellectualization” of African languages - the development of as many African languages as possible for a wide use in all domains, both private and public. The experts insisted on a need for a new agenda for university departments of linguistics. To be able to support the recent greater attention to African cultures and languages at the continental level, especially promoted by the African Union through ACALAN, a more pragmatic approach to language documentation is needed which also takes into account socio-cultural aspects of language. Both academic obligations and obligations towards the communities will have to be satisfied. To be able to take up this challenge, professional staff is needed which is trained in modern language documentation techniques, has a background in sociolinguistics and is prepared to assist speaker communities in safeguarding their languages.
The presentations and discussions in the second session of the meeting showed that this task needs a major change in the approach adhered to by departments of linguistics at African universities whose research policy has so far been mainly oriented towards theoretical and descriptive linguistics.

The presentations which opened the session tackled the challenges to be faced when organizing programmes which provide students with skills for engaging in language safeguarding at community level. Drawing from the example of the new Master Programme on Language Documentation of Local Languages established at the University of Uyo, Nigeria, Ms Ena-Abasi Urua highlighted the central elements of this type of programmes. A precondition for their establishment is a favourable research policy at the university. It appeared that many university departments concentrate their research work on major African languages only. The experts agreed to advocate giving priority to smaller languages and the urgency of documenting as many languages as possible. At the University of Uyo it was decided to devote the research work at the department of linguistics to successively documenting all languages spoken in the region covered by the university. Based on a thorough study of the situation of the languages in the area, one language is chosen every year for documentation. Students at the Masters’ level are actively involved and field studies are a central part of the curriculum. The studies programme is organized in an interdisciplinary way involving also staff from the Department of Computer Sciences to allow the use of modern technologies for research, archiving and presentation of the language and cultural data.

Ms Catherine Kitetu presented an initiative taken by linguists at the University of Egerton to widen the scope of the department of linguists and to work also on Kenyan languages other than Kiswahili. The example showed particularly well that advocacy is needed to make this major change happen.

The debate following the two above-mentioned presentations showed that there have been recently substantial developments in many universities. The participants were informed about a programme to be started at the University of Lomé, Togo, which will prepare students to get engaged in literacy initiatives and provide them with techniques to do language documentation, develop teaching material, train local language workers and organize literacy classes. The Department of Linguistics at the University of Botswana offers, among other things, specializations in field research methods and in sociolinguistics. The University of Yaounde, Cameroon, in close cooperation with ANACLAC, plans to introduce courses in “Teaching national languages” to accompany the new national policy allowing the use of national languages in education. The University of Kinshasa also offers classes providing students with methods for fieldwork and language description but plans to add modules on sociolinguistics and literacy activities. Ethiopia has a broad experience in language documentation. The various departments and institutions involved in this
field provide courses in applied language documentation both to students in linguistics but also to people working in other institutions working on language development. The same approach is followed at the University of Khartoum, Sudan, where training is also given to community members.

The experts were furthermore informed that one of the five core-projects developed by ACALAN envisages the launching of a pan-African Master and PhD programme in applied linguistics (PANMAPAL).

**Theme 3: Formal and non-formal education methods using endangered languages**

In addition to preparing African languages for wider use through language documentation and preparation of language materials, African linguists in African universities departments are also involved in projects for promoting the use of African languages in formal and non-formal education. The third session of the meeting was dedicated to this issue. Four contributions had been submitted for presentation, providing information about projects in Burkina Faso, Ghana, the Central African Republic and Benin.

Norbert Nikiema presented a pilot project carried out since several years at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. The project consists in using eight local languages in an educational programme for children who drop out of the regular school programme. The programme follows the “additive model” using local languages as medium of instruction in primary education and teaching French as a subject. The linguists of the department are part of language teams established for each language which develop teaching materials. The successful pilot phase at primary school level led to the extension of the programme to additional schools and additional languages. It is also envisaged to provide bilingual secondary education.

The Buli literacy project introduced by Paul Agbedor of the University of Ghana is part of a larger NUFU-funded language safeguarding project for several Ghanaian languages. The speaker presented the literacy component of this project as a good practice example showing step-by-step how to plan and prepare a literacy programme (see details in the summary in Annexe 3). To ensure that the project is relevant to the community, an initial needs assessment among the speakers determined what domains had to be covered by the literacy classes and the manuals.

The contributions from the Central African Republic and from Benin presented preparatory work providing the necessary documentation and materials for local languages which allow their extensive use in education. The Institute of Applied
Linguistics at the University of Bangui has been charged to develop terminologies in Sango for 21 school subjects which will be used to prepare the respective manuals. In the same way, Flavien Gbeto detailed how the Linguistics Department of the University of Abomey-Calavi contributes to developing terminologies for the use of languages of Benin both in primary and secondary education and at university level.

In the following discussions, the experts reaffirmed their commitment to the development and revitalization of African languages and their willingness to get involved actively in preparing, supporting and promoting the use of these languages at all levels of formal education and in non-formal education. The experts confirmed the need for a change in research policies to allow for a focus on applied linguistics. In this sense, it was recommended that African linguists take the initiative to advocate for school programmes using African languages as media of instruction. Governments and the relevant ministries should acknowledge that the capacities necessary to prepare and implement these programmes do exist at African universities. In addition, getting the full support of the communities for these projects was again highlighted as a crucial factor for success.

III. Conclusions and recommendations

The meeting provided African linguists from all sub-regions of Sub-Saharan Africa with an opportunity to share experiences concerning the safeguarding of endangered African languages, to exchange on good practices and to hold in-depth discussions on strategies for future cooperation and projects. During the meeting, the experts discussed (a) methods and approaches used in their respective institutions, (b) planning and implementing safeguarding measures, (c) ways of cooperation with speaker communities, (d) methods to involve and train young professionals and (e) problems and obstacles encountered.

It was highlighted that, thanks to the funding by the government of Norway, this initiative arrived at a decisive and propitious moment. The favourable context of *African renaissance* and of the African Union giving an important place to local cultures and languages in African development must be capitalized to take action for the promotion of African languages among decision makers.

The 22 short presentations and the discussions in the meeting showed a wide range of encouraging experiences. The interaction provided an opportunity for defining the main challenges to be faced and the steps to be taken to ensure the participation of African linguists in community-based projects and in language safeguarding. The three major obstacles singled out by the experts were (1) university research policies favouring and rewarding theoretical work focusing on majority languages, while not encouraging linguists to engage in community-based safeguarding measures for
endangered languages, (2) lack of appropriate studies programmes preparing students for applied research work and (3) lack of guidelines for planning and implementing safeguarding measures and assistance to communities wishing to safeguard their languages, which would allow to streamline activities and achieve sustainable results.

The following recommendations were brought forward during the meeting:

1. Prepare and disseminate guidelines or standards for carrying out main safeguarding measures such as orthography development, dictionary and teaching manual design and for effective and equitable research-community cooperation;

2. Continue collecting and disseminating approved models of university studies programmes and curricula preparing students for community-based language documentation;

3. Continue collecting and sharing good practices in safeguarding endangered languages, for instance through submission to the UNESCO Register of Good Practices in Language Preservation;

4. Extend the UNESCO/ACALAN Data base on university departments and national research institutions to take stock also of other initiatives and actors in the field of safeguarding endangered languages (community-based, carried out by NGOs, etc.);

5. Sustain the newly established network of African experts and institutions through setting up an email list for disseminating information, extending it to African universities other than those who took part in the meeting;

6. Continue advocacy initiatives among governments, universities and speaker communities to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding African languages. The experts agreed to send a resolution to universities in Africa (through the Association of African Universities) calling on them to adapt their research and teaching curricula to the new challenges, to engage actively in the documentation and safeguarding of African languages and to encourage students to choose African languages both as a subject of investigation and for writing academic papers. A recommendation is also to be sent to the African Union governments to provide the political and legal framework for the use of African languages in all domains and levels of life in the countries concerned;

7. Use summer schools as a means of providing extra training for students, professional linguists and community members in planning language safeguarding activities and in the techniques, principles and methods of language documentation.
Funds should be sought from various sources. An application to the HRLP is currently being prepared for a summer school in 2008 for the West African region in conjunction with the West African Languages Society and its Congress;

8. Link language safeguarding projects to the safeguarding of African cultures and traditional knowledge. The experts suggested that one way of safeguarding such knowledge would be through projects based in the communities and undertaken by the community members with the help of experts. UNESCO was invited to help seeking funds for continent-wide community-based lexicography and thesaurus work.

It was highlighted that an appropriate facilitator for these initiatives would be ACALAN, the African Academy of Languages. As this newly launched pan-African institution is still in the process of establishing its organisational structure and secretariat, UNESCO was asked to try to assist the network in the mean time in collecting and disseminating information.
Annex 1  Meeting agenda

UNESCO meeting “Identifying good practices for safeguarding African languages”
Addis Ababa, 9-10 February 2007

- Agenda -

(The working languages of the meeting were English and French. Translation was provided in both languages.)

Friday, 9 February 2007

9:00-9:45  Opening
H.E. Mr. Mohamouda Ahmed GASS, State Minister of Culture and Tourism of Ethiopia
Mr Nureldin SATTI, Director UNESCO Addis Ababa Office

9:45-10:30  Research partnerships for endangered languages (language description and preparation of language material)
Chair: Ms. Hirut WOLDEMARIAM (Ethiopia)
Notes: Mr Norbert NIKIEMA (FR); Mr Paul AGBEDOR (EN)

- Mr Zelalem LEYEW (University of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia)
  Research on endangered languages at the University of Addis Ababa
- Mr Etienne SADEMBOO (ANAACLAC, Cameroon)
  The BASAL programme in Cameroon

10:30-11:00  Coffee break

11:00-13:00  Research partnerships for endangered languages (language description and preparation of language material)
Chair: Ms Hirut WOLDEMARIAM (Ethiopia)
Notes: Mr Norbert NIKIEMA (FR); Mr Paul AGBEDOR (EN)

- Mr Mhlobo JADEZWENI (University of Stellenbosch, South Africa)
  The strengthening of the 9 official African languages in South Africa
- Mr Denis BUKURU (University of Bujumbura, Burundi)
  Safeguarding endangered languages in Burundi – the case of Kirundi
- Mr Josephat RUGEMALIRA (University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania)
  Identifying and Documenting the Endangered Languages of Tanzania
- Ms Honorine POIDI-GBLEM (University of Lomé, Togo)
  The development of the Igo language
- Mr André MOTINGEA MANGULU (University of Kinshasa, DRC)
  Research on minority languages at the Aequatoria Center of Mbandaka
- Mr Herman BATIBO (University of Botswana, Botswana)
Research partnerships for language description between universities and endangered language communities
- Ms Adjatou SALL (IFAN, Senegal)
  The Bedik language project (language documentation and literacy)

13:00-15:00 Lunch

15:00-16:00 Research partnerships for endangered language (language description and preparation of language material)
Chair: Mr Girma DEMEKE (Ethiopia)
Notes: Mr Robert BEYOM (FR); Ms Catherine KITETU (EN)

- Mr Gérard KEDREBEOGO (National Research Institute, Burkina Faso)
  How to safeguard endangered languages in Burkina Faso
- Mr Alfred D. MTENJE (University of Malawi, Malawi)
  On the Preservation of an Endangered Language: The Case of Malawian Chingoni
- Mr A.R.H. MUGADDAM (University of Khartoum, Sudan)
  Community involvement in language documentation: the case of the Tima language in Sudan

16:00-16:30 Coffee break

16:30-18:00 Research partnerships for endangered languages (language description and preparation of language material)
Chair: Mr Girma DEMEKE (Ethiopia)
Notes: Mr Robert BEYOM (FR); Ms Catherine KITETU (EN)

Open debate

Saturday, 10 February 2007

9:00-10:30 University curricula strengthening skills and methodologies for documenting and safeguarding endangered languages
Chair: Mr Neville ALEXANDER (South Africa)
Notes: Ms Honorine GBLEM-POIDI (FR); Mr Herman BATIBO (EN)

- Ms Eno Abasi URUA (University of Uyo, Nigeria)
  Developing a Master’s Programme on Language Documentation of Local Languages
- Ms Catherine Wawasi KITETU (University of Egerton, Kenya)
  A university department’s quest to safeguard indigenous languages

10:30-11:00 Coffee break

11:00-13:00 Formal and non-formal education using endangered languages
Chair: Mr Neville ALEXANDER (South Africa)
Notes: Ms Honorine GBLEM-POIDI (FR); Mr Herman BATIBO (EN)
- Mr Norbert NIKIEMA (University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso)
  Une expérience d’instrumentalisation et d’utilisation de langues en danger comme véhicules d’enseignement à l’école primaire au Burkina Faso
- Mr Flavien GBETO (University of Abomey-Calavi, Benin)
  L’enseignement des sciences exactes en langue fon : vers une approche d’emprunts et de dynamique terminologique
- Mr Paul AGBEDOR (University of Ghana, Ghana)
  Buli Literacy Project in Ghana: Problems & Prospects
- Mr Robert BEYOM (University of Bangui, Central African Republic)
  La problématique de l’insertion du sango dans le système éducatif centrafricain

13:00-15:00    Lunch

15:00-16:30    General debate
  Chair: Mr Felix AMEKA
  Notes: Mr André MOTINGEA MANGULU (FR); Mr Alfred D. MTENJE (EN)

16:30-17:00    Coffee break

17:00-18:00    Recommendations
  Chair: Mr Felix AMEKA
Annex 2  List of experts

"Identifying Good Practices in Safeguarding Endangered Languages in Africa"
Addis Ababa, 9 - 10 February 2007

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mr Flavien GBETO</td>
<td>Benin</td>
<td>Université d’Abomey-Calavi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Herman BATIBO</td>
<td>Botswana</td>
<td>University of Botswana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Gérard KEDREBEOGO</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Institut National de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques (INRST)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Norbert NIKIEMA</td>
<td>Burkina Faso</td>
<td>Université de Ouagadougou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Denis BUKURU</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Université de Bujumbura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Etienne SADEMBOUO</td>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>Université de Yaounde, ANACLAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Robert BEYOM</td>
<td>Centralafrican Republic</td>
<td>Université de Bangui</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr André MOTINGEA MANGULU</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of Congo</td>
<td>University of Kinshasa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Derib ADO</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Etagegnehu ASHES</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Authority for Research and Conservation of Cultural Heritage (ARCCH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Girma DEMEKE</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Ethiopian Languages Research Center (ELRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Alem ESHETU</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Ethiopian Languages and Literature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Abebe G/TSADIK</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Zelalem LEYEW</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Ato Shimeles MAZENGIA</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Abebayehu Messele MEKONEN</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Seyoum MULUGETA</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Ethiopian Languages Research Center (ELRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Wondwosen TESFAYE</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>Ethiopian Languages Research Center (ELRC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ms Hirut WOLDEMARIAM</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Endeshaw WOLDEMICHAEL</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa, Department of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr Moges YIGEZU</td>
<td>Ethiopia</td>
<td>University of Addis Ababa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No.</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mr Paul AGBEDOR</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mr Felix AMEKA</td>
<td>Ghana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mr Mamadou CAMARA</td>
<td>Guinea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Ms Catherine Kawasi KITETU</td>
<td>Kenya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mr Alfred. D. MTENJE</td>
<td>Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Ms Eno Abasi URUA</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Ms Adjatou SALL</td>
<td>Senegal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Mr Mhlobo JADEZWENI</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mr Neville ALEXANDER</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mr Abdel Rahim Hamid MUGADDAM</td>
<td>Sudan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mr Jospehat RUGEMALIRA</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Mr Daniel NDAGALA</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mr Rugaiganisa MUZALE</td>
<td>Tanzania</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Ms Massanvi Honorine GBLEM-POIDI</td>
<td>Togo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theme 1: Research partnerships for safeguarding endangered languages (language description and preparation of language material)

- Research on endangered languages in Ethiopia (Ethiopia)
  Prof. Zelalem Leyew of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Addis Ababa reported on efforts being made in Ethiopia to document and safeguard Ethiopian endangered languages. He pointed out that one major precondition for identifying good practices for safeguarding Africa’s endangered languages was to develop criteria for classification of the level of endangerment to better define the situation of each of the languages and determine appropriate safeguarding measures. Attempts have been made in Ethiopia to classify Ethiopian languages in order to determine which ones need urgent attention. The classification was based on the following six criteria or parameters, such as numerical strength, number of monolingual speakers, degree of bilingualism, functional status, level of transfer to younger generations. Prof. Leyew emphasized that the attitude of the speakers of the languages is one of the major factors to be considered in the documentation and description of these endangered languages as it is very difficult to revitalize languages if there is no support from the speakers for revitalizing their language. He reported furthermore that the University of Addis Ababa encourages graduate students to work on the documentation and description of endangered languages in Ethiopia.

- The BASAL language documentation project (Cameroon)
  Prof. Etienne Sadembou from the Center for Applied Linguistics of the Association of Cameroonian Language Committees (ANACLAC) in Yaounde, Cameroon, presented the BASAL project, a methodology for developing a writing and literate culture for oral languages developed by his center. In a two-year-programme, young volunteers trained in linguistics work, in close cooperation with the communities, on the phonology, morphology and syntax of the language concerned to prepare basic language material (orthography guides, reading and writing manuals, teacher guides, small dictionaries) allowing the use of the language in education and other domains. Community language workers are trained to assist in the documentation work and to become teachers in community literacy classes. The method yields tangible results in a very short time and is cost effective. It has so far been used for developing eight Cameroonian oral languages into written languages. Being able to read and write their own languages turned out to be crucial for the self-esteem of the speakers and their willingness to safeguard and transmit their language.

- The strengthening of the 9 official African languages in South Africa
  The report by Mhlobo Jadezweni of the University of Stellenbosch, South Africa, briefly presented the efforts being made in South Africa to reinforce the nine official
African languages of the country (IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, SiSwati, Ndebele, Southern Sotho, Northern Sotho, Tsonga, SeTswana, Venda). Coordinated by the Pan South African Language Board which was established to make sure all official languages in South Africa get the same treatment language boards were established for each of the languages. Representatives of the respective speaker communities are part of these language boards to ensure speakers are strongly involved in the initiatives promoting their languages. In close cooperation with the speakers, guidelines for spelling and orthography are developed for each language to help the standardization of the languages and prepare for their use in wider domains.

- **Safeguarding endangered languages in Burundi – the case of Kirundi**

Denis Bukuru of the University of Bujumbura, Burundi, described the difficult linguistic situation of Kirundi in Burundi. In spite of being one of the official languages of Burundi and the only African language spoken in the country shared by about 90% of the population, Kirundi is still dominated by French in all public domains of language use (education, media, administration, etc.). Very little is done to encourage a wider use of Kirundi beyond the every-day language use. Terminology development is needed to allow for the use of Kirundi in academic discourse and science. Master theses are allowed in Kirundi but difficult to obtain as all teaching is done in French. Besides the absence of language policy favouring the use of Kirundi, especially in media and education, negative attitudes among the speakers were again noted as one of the main challenges to be addressed. It was noted that intellectuals in particular, were favouring French over Kirundi.

- **Identifying and Documenting the Endangered Languages of Tanzania**

This research project presented by Josephat Rugemalira and H.R. Muzale of the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, aims at developing Tanzanian languages other than Kiswahili. Before starting the project, all research efforts at the University of Dar es Salaam focused on Kiswahili. Two main objectives were retained: (a) to produce a language atlas for Tanzania and (b) to establish vocabulary lists and dictionaries and grammars for each of the languages spoken in Tanzania. The project is organized in regional sub-areas and based on a thorough evaluation of the situation of the languages spoken in all areas. Students at the department are encouraged to devote MA and PhD dissertations to aspects of Tanzanian languages other than Kiswahili. The Tanzanian experts highlighted the fact that in order to be sustainable, the project needs to be accompanied by advocacy for providing for a wider use of these languages in media and education.

- **The development of the Igo language (Togo)**

The research policy at the Department of Linguistics at the University of Lomé concentrates on Kabiye and Ewe, the two major local languages spoken in Togo. There are however non-governmental organizations and individual research projects working on documenting and promoting minority languages. Ms Honorine Poidi-
Gblem of the University of Lomé presented a project on the Igo language, spoken by about 6000 people in Togo. The speaker community is surrounded by Ewe and there is already a high degree of language shift to the Ewe language. The Igo language safeguarding project developed by the community and carried out with the help of the linguist Ms Poidi-Gblem aims at documenting the language, producing language material and at providing literacy in Igo.

- **Research activities for minority languages at the Centre Aequatoria of Bamanya-Mbandaka (Democratic Republic of Congo)**
  
  André Motingea Mangulu provided a short overview of the research activities undertaken at the Centre Aequatoria of Bamanya-Mbandaka on minority languages in the Equator province of the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1937. The research work of the Centre is devoted to the documentation and valorization of local languages and cultures and provides a detailed study of the linguistic situation in the area. In cooperation with the Pedagogical University of Kinshasa, plans are afoot to get involved in language safeguarding projects based on this extensive documentation work; to develop language material for minority languages and prepare for literacy activities.

- **Research partnerships for language description between universities and endangered language communities (Botswana)**

  Herman Batibo of the University of Botswana presented a research partnership between his university and the University of Tromsø funded by NUFU and aiming at San (Basarwa) research and capacity building. The project activities concern research on linguistic, cultural and socio-economic aspects of 12 Khoesan languages in Botswana and training for Khoesan youth in language documentation techniques. The project’s interdisciplinary approach involves several departments at the University of Botswana and was conceived and is carried out in strong cooperation with the communities concerned and relevant NGOs to ensure their ownership of the development activities. Khoesan speakers are invited as resource persons to the university and consulted at all stages of the project. Throughout the project, the students at the department who are mainly Bantu speaking are encouraged to conduct research on endangered or least researched Khoesan languages and a more important place is given to these languages in the teaching at the university. Furthermore, the project initiated regional cooperation on cross-border languages.

- **Documentation of the Bedik language (Senegal)**

  Ms Adjaratou Sall presented a language safeguarding project developed at the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) in Dakar, Senegal. The project focuses on Bedik, a language spoken by a population of about 2300 in the eastern part of Senegal. Basic description of this tone language was already carried out and an alphabet of 29 letters (23 consonants and 6 vowels) developed. To be carried out in close cooperation with the community, the main activities of the project will be the
following: language documentation through video and audio recording of poems, songs, proverbs and rituals, production of a bilingual Bedik-French dictionary, preparation of material for formal and non-formal education, creation of literacy classes.

- **Safeguarding endangered languages in Burkina Faso**

  In his general presentation, Mr Gérard Kedrebeogo of the Institut National de Recherches Scientifiques et Techniques (INRST), Burkina Faso, discussed the main challenges for safeguarding endangered languages on the example of Burkina Faso. The country counts 59 local languages with French as the only official language. The provisions for language policies do not give a particular status to the local languages but do not prevent measures in favour of safeguarding them. Several research institutions and governmental bodies are working on the promotion and safeguarding of the languages of Burkina Faso. The speaker highlighted that in order to determine relevant safeguarding measures, the socio-cultural, economic and political context in which the languages are situated has to be taken into account. Action is needed at three levels: (a) communities have to strongly support all safeguarding measure and get actively involved, (b) linguists need to provide their expertise to document the local languages, to develop language material and to prepare for literacy activities and the use of the languages in the education system as well as in all other public domains and (c) at the policy level, appropriate language policies supporting the wider use of African languages need to be established.

- **On the Preservation of an Endangered Language: The Case of Chingoni (Malawi)**

  On the example of the comprehensive safeguarding project developed for the Chingoni language, Mr Alfred D. Mtenje from the Center for Language Studies at the University of Malawi provided information on the extensive engagement of the Center’s staff in various safeguarding activities. The Chingoni language is still spoken by about 200 people. The safeguarding project concentrates on research and documentation of linguistic and cultural aspects of the language. The department’s staff is also engaged in several awareness raising activities: sensitization meetings with speakers, chiefs and language associations are regularly organized and advocacy programmes giving information about language rights including those of minority groups presented on radio and TV. The staff gives furthermore technical and linguistic advice to local languages associations. The large network of language associations active in Malawi represents an important pressure group. Students at the department are encouraged to engage in research work on minority languages.

- **Community involvement in language documentation: the case of the Tima language in Sudan**

  The research project described by Mr Mugaddam of the University of Khartoum, Sudan, resulted from a request brought forward to the Department of Linguistics at
this University by the Tima speaker community who needed assistance in safeguarding their endangered language. Concerned about the growing language shift from Tima to Arabic and English which is taking place in the community, a few committed community members established a language committee to monitor safeguarding activities. A project was developed (in collaboration with partners from the University of Cologne, Germany) and funding secured through the Volkswagen Foundation for the following activities: (a) a sociolinguistic survey among Tima communities in Khartoum and the Nuba Mountains to assess the current situation of the language and factors influencing language shift, (b) a description of the phonological and syntactic structure of the language, (c) preparing a trilingual Tima-Arabic-English dictionary, (d) preparing textbooks for teaching Tima and (e) developing a multimedia-documentation of non-verbal communication.

Theme 2: University curricula strengthening skills and methodologies for documenting and safeguarding endangered languages

- **Developing a Master’s Programme on Language Documentation of Local Languages**
  Ms Eno URUA of the University of Uyo, Nigeria, presented the MA program for documenting local languages developed by the Department of Linguistics and Nigerian languages in support of the research policy of the department to document and describe step by step the languages in the area covered by the university. 
  The Master’s programme is part of a cooperation project involving also the University of Bielefeld (Germany) and the University of Cocody, Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire). The aim of the programme is to train students in language documentation techniques incorporating modern computational tools and using a comprehensive approach to language documentation including also cultural data important to the speaker community. The programme comprises the following components: teaching, seminar presentations, fieldwork, student’s final projects and evaluation. Each year, professors and students concentrate on one new language spoken in the area. Involving the community concerned takes a very important place in the organization of the field work and data collection. The communities are very interested in the project and supportive in providing necessary information but also accommodation. As a result of the project work on each language, a documentation of cultural and linguistic data, including an electronic dictionary, is made available online. The project results are also shared with the communities. Since its start in 2005, the MA programme has been very popular among students. The existing mainly theoretical curriculum was revised to become more relevant and applied according to the urgent need of qualified staff for safeguarding minority languages.

- **A university department’s quest to safeguard indigenous languages (Kenya)**
  In her contribution, Ms Catherine Kitetu from the University of Egerton, shared the experience of the staff of the Department of Linguistics at the University of Egerton
who tried to effect changes in the department’s curriculum and research policy with the aim of focusing research work also on Kenyan languages other than Kiswahili. So far, due to the official research policy which mandated the department to teach and research English, Kiswahili, Japanese, and Chinese, no attention was given to Kenyan languages other than Kiswahili. Even though the teaching of Kenyan languages was provided for in the governmental language policy, it was not put into practice so far due to a lack of didactic material and teachers. Because of this, the staff of the department engaged in developing a programme preparing for the teaching of Kenyan indigenous languages. Even though this idea was not welcomed by the university administration, the faculty started a research group “Kiswahili and other African languages” which prepares translations of texts into these languages. It is furthermore planned to organize cultural nights featuring various ethnic groups and their languages and to get in contact with language associations to support the safeguarding efforts of language communities.

Theme 3: Formal and non-formal education methods using endangered languages

- **A pilot project using local languages in primary education in Burkina Faso**
  
The Department of Linguistics at the University of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, represented by Norbert Nikiema, has participated for several years in a pilot project using eight local languages in an educational programme for children who dropped out of the regular school system. The programme started in 1994 with three languages in experimental schools for 55 children. The project follows the “additive model” using local languages as media of instruction in primary education and teaching French as a subject. Thanks to the very successful pilot phase, the Ministry of Basic Education accepted to extend the experimentation to public primary schools including teacher training and awareness-raising campaigns for the general public. It is also expected that bilingual secondary education will be provided in the same way. 8 local languages, both minority and majority languages, are currently covered by the project. The linguists of the department are part of language teams established for each language. The language teams monitor the implementation of the project and the elaboration of terminologies and necessary teaching materials.

- **On terminology development for teaching natural sciences in Fon (Benin)**
  
Flavien Gbeto from the University of Benin informed the meeting about safeguarding activities for the languages of Benin implemented by the university. He described Benin as having a population of 7 million people with at least 22 languages. The majority of languages belong to the Gbe group (Fon, Ewe, Aja, Gen). Despite a linguistic policy favouring French as the only official language of the country, the Department of Linguistics has been since its creation committed to working on the about 22 local languages of Benin. Since 1990, the constitution has recognized the national languages and allows for their use in education. The research work for
preparing the languages of Benin for a wider use is carried out by the Department of Linguistics at the University of Benin. Activities currently carried out include the introduction of literature courses for African languages, the introduction of courses on phonetics and phonology, the harmonization of orthographies and the dissemination of information on terminologies. The Swiss government assisted in training linguists, in funding documentation studies and in compiling a catalogue of all past research work.

- **Buli Literacy Project: Problems & Prospects (Ghana)**
The Buli Literacy Project, presented by Paul Agbedor of the University of Ghana, is part of a larger NUFU-funded project implemented by the university to develop several Ghanaian languages. Based on a thorough needs assessment in the community to determine what literacy needs the speakers had, the following domains were covered by the literacy material and the classes prepared by the researchers at the university: culture, demographic data, civic awareness, health and sanitation, money and banking, economic activity, gender and development. All activities were planned in consultation with other institutions involved in literacy work in the respective communities in order to optimize the use of available resources. The cooperation also allowed for harmonizing the alphabets used in the transcription and for preparing the teaching materials. The project being very successful, the district government showed interest in using the material to introduce Buli classes in public primary schools.

- **The challenges for using Sango in the education system in the Central African Republic**
Mr Robert Beyom of the Institute of Applied Linguistics (ILA) at the University of Bangui in the Central African Republic presented efforts of the Institute to prepare Sango, the country’s majority language spoken by about 90% of the population, to be used in the education system. Sango has had the status of an official language (together with French) since 1991. A lot of linguistic research has been carried out on Sango. The language received a standardized alphabet in 1984 and is extensively used in literacy programmes. After a first attempt to introduce Sango into the education system dating from 1975-1979, the ILA has been asked to develop a new Sango school programme. In a first phase, teaching materials are being developed for 16 subjects based on detailed terminologies that have been completed for five subjects so far. The speaker highlighted that, in order to be successful, the new bilingual school programme will be accompanied by awareness-raising campaigns providing information about the advantages of a wider use of Sango.