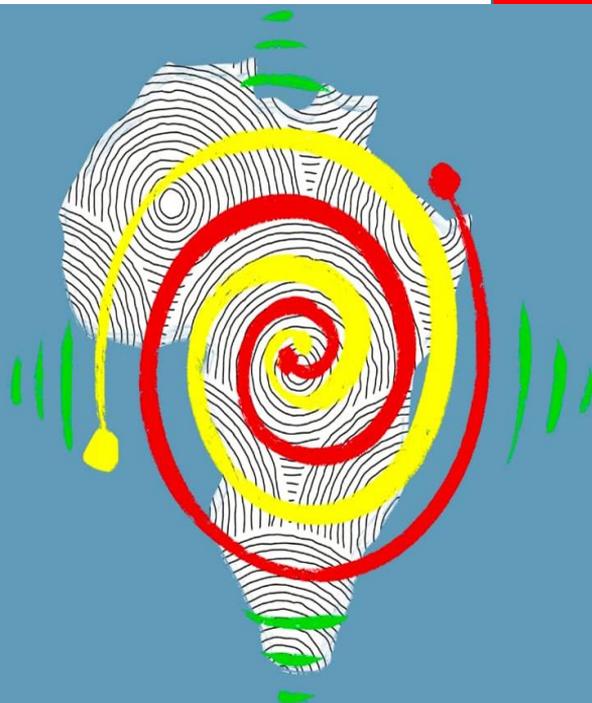
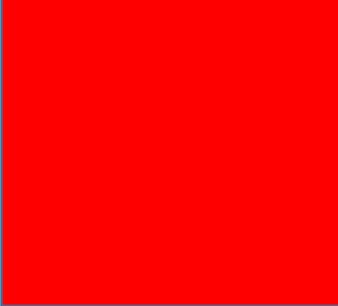


Regional Action Plan for Africa



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Our languages, our existence

For indigenous peoples in particular, their languages form, along with the land and territory, the fundamental base which conditions their existence and the matrix of their identity. They are born from their own geniuses. They are their original creation and the fruit of their care over the centuries. They lulled them, made them dream and taught them to live in harmony with the other natural components of their environment. For indigenous peoples in particular, language is not only a means of communication, it is also the vehicle necessary for the conservation and transmission of their knowledge, their know-how and their cosmogony. It allows them to see the world and understand it in a unique way adapted to their environment. It nourishes their soul and allows them to express and enjoy the social and cultural moments that these people have been able to invent to ensure and brighten their existence since the dawn of time. If a people loses its language, it is as if it lost its land, it would then lose a fundamental substance of its life and it is therefore doomed to disappear in the short term. And the loss of an indigenous people is much more than the loss of a plant or animal species, it is a dramatic impoverishment for humanity. Saving indigenous languages means saving indigenous peoples to preserve the diversity and richness of all humanity.

The decade of indigenous languages 2022-2032

Having become aware of the death that threatens thousands of indigenous languages and its disastrous consequences for humanity, the UN General Assembly decided to dedicate the year 2019 as the international year of indigenous languages in order to revive, protect and promote these languages. Noting that one year of efforts is largely insufficient to stop the decline of indigenous languages, the UN went further by adopting the decade of indigenous languages 2022-2032 and asked UNESCO, in partnership with States and indigenous peoples, to implement an ambitious action plan to safeguard and promote indigenous languages in all regions of the world.



Le Réseau des Peuples Autochtones Africains/African Indigenous Peoples Network

The Réseau des Peuples Autochtones Africains (RPAA)/African Indigenous Peoples Network (AIPN) was created in 2013 with the aim of bringing together indigenous organizations from all regions of Africa and the diaspora to join forces and bring together , both in Africa and on the global stage, the fundamental questions and challenges of African indigenous peoples. RPAA/AIPN works on all issues concerning the rights of indigenous peoples and carries out advocacy actions but also concrete project implementation in all areas of interest for indigenous peoples. RPAA/AIPN has been a committed partner in favor of indigenous languages as part of the 2019 international year dedicated to indigenous languages and remains very involved in the framework of the decade of indigenous languages 2022-2032.

The draft action plan for indigenous African languages from RPAA/AIPN within the framework of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDLA)

The situation of indigenous languages in Africa is poorly understood due to a lack of sufficient studies on the subject. This therefore requires inventory and diagnostic work. It is necessary to distinguish and identify the indigenous languages in each country, to map them, to determine the state in which they are found, etc. Some of these languages are dead, others are spoken by only a few dozen people, and others are spoken by thousands or millions of speakers. Some of these languages are located in small territories and others shared by several countries, some are without any legal protection and others benefit from the status of “national” and/or “official” languages but without any real policy of promotion. All these languages are threatened with disappearance and therefore need an urgent and ambitious action plan to protect, revitalize, safeguard and promote them. This is why RPAA/AIPN decided to organize on November 28 and 29, 2022 in Rabat, Morocco, a consultation workshop for the Africa region on IDLA 2022-2032 with representatives of African Indigenous Peoples, States, representatives of United Nations agencies, funds and programs, representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations, academics and other partners. This workshop will make it possible to take stock of the situation and design an African action plan for the promotion, preservation and revitalization of these languages.

Primary objective:

Locate the IDLA 2022-2032 in the Africa region.

Operational objectives:

- diagnose the state of indigenous languages in Africa,
- design an African action plan for the promotion, preservation and revitalization of these languages.

Summary of results

I- Diagnosis

General context

The languages of the colonizers in Africa succeeded in establishing themselves in particular because the peoples, indigenous communities and their languages were numerous, diverse and dispersed. Nigeria, for example, has more than 500 indigenous languages, Cameroon and the DRC, more than 200 indigenous languages. As a result, the colonizer easily imposed his language as the so-called language of communication and mutual understanding for all. Furthermore, colonial policies marginalized indigenous languages and privileged the languages of the colonizers. Furthermore, in the majority of African contexts, the primary concern of indigenous peoples was survival. Language was a secondary concern.

After the independence of African countries, indigenous peoples began to demand recognition and respect for their rights and in particular the right to their languages and cultures. Alongside other indigenous peoples around the world, indigenous Africans have participated in the global indigenous movement and now rely on international and regional law to make their voices heard and defend their cause. Today, indigenous languages live in varied situations, some are very much alive, others have become extinct or are on the verge of extinction. And even in countries where indigenous languages benefit from legal protection, this is often formal because in practice, they benefit from too little interest and resources. Therefore, it can be said that regardless of their legal status, all indigenous languages are more or less endangered in Africa.

From this overall observation, we can distinguish three types of situations:

- 1- Situation of extinct or endangered languages.
- 2- Situation where indigenous languages are practiced by numerous communities of different sizes, without recognition or legal protection and which are threatened with disappearance
- 3- Situation where indigenous languages are widely practiced and recognized but with different levels of legal protection and promotion in each country.

These situations are examined from political, educational, communication and media perspectives, as well as resources and infrastructure.

Diagnosis (continued 1)

POLICY

Negation, obscuration or symbolic recognition of the existence of indigenous peoples and their rights as enshrined in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Even where indigenous languages are supposed to be legally protected, on the ground they are in decline. This reflects an absence of political will on the part of governments to respect the rights of indigenous peoples and to promote indigenous languages and cultures.

Most African governments attempt to dilute the indigenous issue by using other terminologies like “minorities” or “marginalized” groups.

Recommendations made by regional (ACHPR) or international bodies in favor of the rights of indigenous peoples are not implemented. Even in countries where indigenous languages benefit from legal status, these languages are not the subject of a real public language policy, with substantial budgetary resources.

Indigenous peoples continue to be the subject of assimilation policies, their languages and cultures are still victims of contempt and stereotypes. The policy of assimilation results in particular in the individual integration of indigenous “elites” into the dominant system, thus depriving indigenous communities of their defenders.

Defenders and promoters of indigenous languages and cultures are subject to repression in a large number of African countries.

Indigenous peoples whose territories are crossed by state borders are victims of insecurity, and inter-community socio-cultural exchanges are dramatically prevented.

EDUCATION

Indigenous languages in Africa are not taught or poorly taught, which does not contribute to their conservation and progression. Absence or significant lack of teachers of indigenous languages and of research and university studies on the subject. As a result, there are no or very few teaching manuals.

Native people are still literate in languages other than their languages.

When indigenous languages are taught, they have an optional status, they benefit from very few teaching hours, which leads to the disinterest of students and teachers in these languages. Indigenous students and teachers are discriminated against.

Diagnosis (continued 1)

CULTURE, MEDIA AND COMMUNICATION

Very low presence of indigenous languages and cultures in the media, and when they are present, they are presented in a folkloric manner, which causes a feeling of inferiorization among indigenous people, which results in the rejection of indigenous languages by the indigenous people themselves. -themselves. Indigenous parents do not see the point in passing on their language to their children because they feel that their language does not allow access to employment and scientific knowledge.

Cultural productions in languages or on indigenous languages are very insufficient and little encouraged. Public media leave very little room for indigenous artistic expressions. Indigenous artists are paid much less and prestigious cultural venues are not accessible to them. Indigenous media, when they exist, suffer from structural inadequacies (staff training, low budget, obsolete equipment, etc.). Indigenous artistic creations are very insufficiently programmed in official distribution circuits financed by the government such as large performance halls, festivals, etc.

Great lack of documentation and supports in indigenous languages, which leads to a lack of knowledge and exclusion of these languages within public administrations and institutions. There is no translation service, nor digital platforms for automatic translation into indigenous languages. Demographic and cartographic statistical data concerning indigenous speakers are non-existent or insufficient or incomplete and unreliable.

Lack of a structure for documenting and archiving the knowledge and know-how and traditions of indigenous peoples.

FINANCIAL MEANS, INFRASTRUCTURES AND INSTITUTIONS

Large socio-economic disparities between urban areas heavily endowed with infrastructure of all kinds and the territories of indigenous peoples and communities (mountain territories, forests and deserts). This forces natives to migrate to cities where they lose their language. The dispossession of land and natural resources from indigenous people pushes them to seek the means of subsistence in the cities of the country and abroad.

Great insufficiency of financial and/or tax incentive measures to encourage private initiatives and NGOs in favor of the promotion of indigenous languages.

Public funding is not provided equitably to encourage civil society organizations to promote indigenous languages. Significant lack of capacity building measures for indigenous organizations and civil society organizations supporting indigenous peoples. Lack of financial means to encourage cultural productions using indigenous languages. Absence or great insufficiency of spaces dedicated to indigenous languages and cultures for creation, expression and dissemination.

II- Action plan

Considering the diagnosis of the situation of indigenous languages in Africa, the proposed action plan includes four main axes: Raising awareness of the indigenous question; legal protection of indigenous languages; the integration, use and generalization of indigenous languages; the budgetary, human and material resources necessary for the promotion of indigenous languages.

A- Awareness

- Raise awareness among indigenous and non-indigenous peoples about indigenous issues, the rule of law, human rights and combat negative and racist prejudices, through educational means, the media, civil society organizations, social networks, etc. .Include the teaching of human rights, equality, respect for others and diversity in school programs.
- Put an end to the falsification of indigenous history and toponymy.
- Put an end to the folklorization of indigenous cultures.
- Raise awareness and promote indigenous peoples and their languages and culturesMake known and promote indigenous knowledge and know-how.
- Organize international meetings of indigenous African peoples as well as indigenous African women and youth.
- Undertake demographic studies on indigenous peoples and communities in the countries concerned and publish their results.

B- Legal protection of indigenous languages

- Recognize and legally protect indigenous peoples and their rights as mentioned in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, by including them in the Constitutions, laws and administrative measures of States.
- Create a mechanism for monitoring the implementation of legislative and administrative measures in favor of indigenous languages and cultures, composed of indigenous representatives and the government
- Include the equality of indigenous languages with dominant languages in state legislation
- Integrate international law into national legislation
- Criminalize racism, discrimination and the spread of negative prejudices against indigenous peoples
- Legally protect the intellectual property (traditional knowledge and know-how) of indigenous people.

C- the integration, use and generalization of indigenous languages

- Integrate and gradually generalize indigenous languages in public education systems and in all public administrations
- Promote indigenous media and the inclusion of indigenous programs in general public media
- Literacy and training for trades in indigenous languages
- Integrate indigenous languages into NICTs
- Encourage translations from and into indigenous languages
- Encourage cultural productions in indigenous languages, including dubbing of mainstream artistic works
- Enable and encourage the restoration and reactivation of traditional indigenous institutions.

D- Budgetary, human and material resources

- Have a budget adopted annually in the state finance law for the promotion of the rights of indigenous peoples as well as their languages and cultures.
- Train a sufficient number of teachers, administration staff and legal professionals (judges, lawyers, etc.) in the rights of indigenous peoples.
- Create a transnational language coordination and monitoring mechanism, composed of representatives of indigenous peoples and relevant governments.

NB1: Other work workshops must be scheduled during 2023 and subsequent years in order to specify and locally adapt the diagnosis, objectives and action plan by country and for each language, and determine the frames and the structures that will support them.

NB2: This action plan primarily involves States and all relevant public institutions (all State administrations, universities, research centers, etc.), indigenous peoples, civil society organizations and other stakeholders private. It may be enriched at any time by contributions from stakeholders.

African consultation workshop on the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-2032

Final declaration

The African consultation workshop on the international decade of indigenous languages took place as planned, in very good conditions, on November 28 and 29, 2022 in Rabat, Morocco. This workshop brought together around thirty indigenous language experts in person and around twenty by videoconference (academics, teachers of indigenous languages, defenders of the rights of indigenous peoples, writers, editors, journalists, producers of indigenous cultural goods, media specialists. ..).

During the two days, the workshop participants first debated contextual issues relating in particular to the rights of indigenous peoples as they are internationally recognized, the process which raised awareness of the danger of disappearance of indigenous languages and the reaction of the international community which proclaimed the year 2019 as the international year of indigenous languages, then the international decade of indigenous languages 2022-2032.

The participants then focused on the two main topics of the workshop's work: the diagnosis of the current state of indigenous languages in Africa and the development of an action plan for the coming decade. Concerning the diagnosis, the most diverse situations in different regions of Africa were presented, and their situation was analyzed from different angles: their degree of vitality, their use, their legal protection and its implementation, budgetary resources, human and material resources available to them. The specific case of transnational languages such as Swahili, Fulfulde and Tamazight was also examined.

Under the action plan, the same methodology was followed to suggest actions adapted to each situation, ranging from the legal recognition of indigenous languages in Africa, to their teaching, to literacy and professional training of indigenous peoples. in their languages and the allocation of public resources in order to revitalize and develop these languages.

More generally, the participants stressed that the safeguarding and promotion of indigenous languages is based above all on a general awareness of the richness of indigenous languages and cultures which convey knowledge, know-how and values that are necessary. preserve and transmit in the interest of all humanity. It is crucial to recognize and value difference and diversity.

The summary of the work of the African consultation workshop on the decade of indigenous languages will be presented during the high-level launch event of the decade of indigenous languages which will take place on December 13, 2022 at UNESCO headquarters in Paris . The African action plan for the decade of indigenous languages will then be integrated into the global action plan for indigenous languages.

The Réseau des Peuples Autochtones Africains/African Indigenous Peoples Network and the organizing committee warmly thank the workshop participants who were willing to share their expertise for the benefit of promoting African indigenous languages. They also thank all the organizations that contributed to the holding and success of this workshop and particularly UNESCO, UNFPA, MRG, IWGIA and the University of Michigan.

Rabat, 11/30/2022

The organizing committee



