THE AFRICAN ACADEMY OF LANGUAGES (ACALAN)

2009- 2010 ACTIVITY REPORT

ACALAN

INTRODUCTION

This report covers the period from December 2009 to December 2010; the expected period of the end of the establishment of ACALAN's working structures at least. It consists of the following sections:

- The Introduction
- The Devolution
- The Current Activities
- The Programs and Projects
- The Perspectives
- The Conclusion

THE DEVOLUTION

1.1. The Host Agreement

specialized

The signing on June 17, 2009 of the Host Agreement between the Republic of Mali and the African union Commission marked the beginning of the devolution of the African Academy of Languages considered thereof as an institution of the African Union accredited to Mali.

1.2. Bamako Scientific and Technical Meeting

The *scientific and Technical Meeting was held which was chaired by the* organization of this meeting on December 10-11, 2009 with the presence of the Commissioner for Social Affairs Advocate Bience Gawanas, offered the opportunity to the key players in the process of the establishment of ACALAN to prepare technically the ground for a smooth handing over and plan the priority activities to be carried out for the next three years in the perspectives "of taking the debate to the level of action and implementation", as suggested by newly appointed Executive Secretary, Professor Sozinho Francisco Matsinhe, during the meeting and fast track the development of African languages.

The meeting also validated the status of the eight members of the Assembly of Academicians, electing Ayo BAMGBOSE, Emeritus Professor from the University of Ibadan-Niageria.

2. CURRENT ACTIVITIES

Establishing ACALAN's working structures and organs

After the organization of the five Regional Conferences (Western Africa in May 2006, Central Africa in October 2007, Southern Africa in March 2008, Eastern Africa in April 2008 and Northern Africa in October 2008) and the Synthesis Conference, which took place in February 2009 in Addis Ababa, 41 Vehicular Cross Border Languages, on which ACALAN will focus in the next years. A first group of 12 VCBL were selected for the establishment of the first Vehicular Cross-Border Language Commissions. Presently, the commissions for the Hausa, Fulfulde and Mandenkan in West Africa, the Chinyanja/Chichewa and Setswana in Southern Africa have been established and the respective Planning workshops organized for them to identify and prioritize the activities for their three-year mandate.

Considering that ACALAN's work on Vehicular Cross-Border Languages has to be undertaken in collaboration with the Regional Economic Communities and the Ministries responsible for languages matters, the planning workshops in West Africa have been organized in collaboration with ECOWAS whereas the ones in Southern Africa have been organized in collaboration with the relevant ministries; Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (Malawi) and the Department of Arts and Culture (South Africa). Efforts are underway to bring SADC on board..

- Abuja (Nigeria), 15-16 March 2010: the Hausa Vehicular Cross Border Language Commission;
- Dakar (Senegal), 12-13 March 2010: organization with the Senegalese Academy of Languages for the Fulfulde Vehicular Cross Border Language Commission;
- Bamako (Mali), 6-7 April 2010: for the Mandenkan Vehicular Cross Border Language Commission in partnership with ECOWAS and ILAB (The Abdoulay Barry Language Institute in Bamako, ACALAN's focal point)
- Blantyre (Malawi), 12-13 August 2010: Chinyanja/Chichewa Language
- Pretoria (S.Africa), 19-20 August 2010: Setswana Language

The remaining Vehicular Cross-Border Language Commissions, namely for Modern Standard Arabic and Berber in Northern Africa, Lingala and Beti Fang in Central Africa and Kiswahili, Somali and Malagasi in Eastern Africa will be established before December 2010.

In the VCBLC in West Africa the following priority areas were identified:

(1) The harmonisation of orthographies;
(2) The development and dissemination of terminology, with special reference to specific areas, such as civic education; the judiciary; and governance;
(3) The use of Fulfulde and Hausa as medium of instruction at all levels of education;
(4) The publishing of works in Fulfulde and Hausa languages;
(5) The production and publishing of children's literature in Fulfulde and in Hausa;
(6) The training of trainers for electronic and print media in Hausa; and
(7) The undertaking of research on Ajami – the used of Arabic characters to write African Languages, with special reference to Fulfulde, Hausa. This research will be conducted in collaboration with the Afro-Arab Cultural Institute based in Bamako.

In southern Africa, they were:

i. Language mapping (survey)
ii. Professional development for the languages practitioners
iii. Attitudes of the actors
iv. Harmonization of terminology.
v. Language description
vi. Materials development

ACALAN has developed strong working relations with ADEA, BREDA, the Ministries in charge of languages, and ECOWAS through the Operation, Planning and Harmonization workshops. ECOWAS (and UNESCO through BREDA and ADEA) came to the decision that all issues pertaining to languages should be dealt with by ACALAN.

At the same time ACALAN is making a lot of efforts to raise funds with OIF, the Commonwealth for instance so that those priority areas identified be translated into implementable and sustainable projects.

2.1. Staffing

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In line with the establishment of ACALAN's working structures, ACALAN's staffing has continued with the recruitment of the four permanent local staff and the following four International personnel.

- Prof. Sozinho Francisco Matsinhe PhD, Executive Secretary
- Dr. Ojo Babadjide Johnson, Senior Programmes and Projects Officer
- Dr. Lang Fafa Dampha, Senior Research and Programmes Officer
- Mr Aimé Bambara, Documentalist

Six vacant positions need to be filled: the four Translators and Interpreters, a second Research and Projects Officer and an Administration and Finance Officer..

The following paragraph seems to be out of context if not meaningless [The formalization and finalization of the establishment of the working structures and organs (the Permanent Governing Board, the Assembly of the Academicians, the Technical and Scientific Committee, the National Language Structures and the Vehicular Cross Border Language Commissions) are high on the agenda. A meeting of the Ministers in charge of language issue is to be considered as planned in the roadmap from Interim Governing Board inaugural session].

2.2. Reviewing the jobs descriptions

The assessment of the Bamako meeting with the new perspectives drawn from that analysis brought the new team with the participation of the outgoing Executive Secretary to reconsider the job descriptions of the technical staff as stated in their contract. The work is still in progress.

2.3. Staff Development

From December 2009 up to now, the staff of ACALAN has benefited from a certain number of training opportunities:

- Prior to December, on September 7, 2009 in Bamako: 2009- 2012 AUC Strategic Plan popularization Workshop
- Internal Workshop on "Team Building" on June 3-4, to share on the Workshop attended by Dr Ojo B. Johnson in Addis on February 9-12, 2010 in Addis Ababa)
- Workshop on Policy Analysis in Addis attended by the Executive Secretary on February 19 – 20, 2010
- Budget Planning Workshop in Bamako 18 – 20 June 2010
- Induction workshop in Addis in April 2010

2.5. *The development and management of the Documentation Centre*

ACALAN's Documentation Centre has regained a new face with the recruitment of a professional documentalist, Mr. Aimé BAMBARA. After an inventory, all the documents are now properly organized and cataloged. A data base of bibliographic information called «ACALAN" has therefore been created and will be very soon on line. In addition, the documentation Centre is responsible for: a review of the press on African languages, documentary research on the web, the printing and binding of documents, the organization of periodicals (Newspapers and publications on series), the reception of visitors seeking information on African languages from Mali and elsewhere (mention the visit by the Ivorian student as a case in point), the technical and documentary assistance during workshops, the participation to activities related to ACALAN visibility , the policy of documents acquisition based on a partnership with institutions working on African languages, the contribution the management of the website and the numerization of documents, in view of making of the documentation Centre, the Centre par excellence at continental level for the promotion of African languages for a radian development of Africa.

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2.6. Contribution to MAAYA

The World Network for linguistic diversity **(MAAYA)** has received from ACALAN/UAC a contribution of $US 10,000 for the preparation of the World Summit of Multilingualism. •

3. PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

4.1. The following Major Projects/Programs were reviewed as a priority activity:

1. The Linguistic Atlas for Africa, •
2. Stories Across Africa (StAAf), based at the University of Cape-Town, South Africa
3. The Panafrican Program of Master and PhD in Applied Linguistics (PANMAPAL), based at the University of Yaoundé I, Cameroun
4. The Project of Terminology and Lexicography based at the Kiswahili Institute in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania
5. The Panafrican Centre for Interpretation and Translation, based at ACALAN's Headquarter in Bamako
6. The « African Languages and the Cyberspace » Project based at the University of Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia

Other programs/projects were also considered:

7. Revamping/Creating Regional Language Centers
8. Rebuilding the African Education Systems

Currently, only two projects are underway despite some challenges in their implementation. They are: StAAf (Stories across Africa) producing booklets for children once sponsored by the African Union and PANMAPAL being run in the Universities of Yaoundé, Addis Ababa and Cap Town.

Let's note that a workshop took place in Dar es Salaam on the production of a methodological framework in order to relaunch the Terminology – Lexicography Project

The Linguistic Atlas for Africa has a project document ready for marketing. The Panafrican Centre for Interpretation and Translation has a draft document project which needs to be finalized. All the rest of the core projects need to be considered from scratch.

With regard to the above Core Projects, ACALAN in collaboration with the African Union Commission, is working hard to:

- Carry out a general review of the existing projects and a situational analysis and institutional diagnosis of the existing language centers in view of building their institutional and organizational capacity
- Develop for each of them a Strategic Plan accompanied by an Action Plan, a Logical Framework and an Implementation Plan
- Appoint Coordinators and Managers •

Besides these major projects, ACALAN is running other activities related to:

- The restructuring and development of the its website (www.acalan.org), as well as a portal for « writers and Publishers for the promotion of multilingual literate environments» to be incorporated into the website;
- A Linguist directory is also available and will be soon on line.
- The publication of the third information Bulletins in early 2010). •

3.1. Increasing ACALAN's visibility, creating partnerships and synergies

From 2009 to June 2010, the Interim and current Executive Secretariats have embarked on activities which have offered the opportunity to build not only strong partnerships, but also to present important papers on issues related to cultural and linguistic diversity and African Renaissance, thus increasing ACALAN's visibility. Presently, contacts are being taken with the Diplomatic representations and some Non Government Organizations such as Save The Children US, World Education, etc. Among other activities:

- Participation to the Launch of the African Renaissance Campaign in Accra in May 2010
- Participations to other meetings in Djibouti, Yaoundé, Kinshasha and Nigeria respectively December 2009, February and July 2010.
- Participation to ECOWAS 's Experts of Culture Meeting in Bamako in June 2010
- ACALAN – BREDA's Workshop on Harmonization in Bamako in July 2010
- Participation to IDLO4 in Accra, May 2010
- Press releases were regularly posted to the Division of Communication, and they have appeared in the website of the African Union Commission.

3.2. Contribution to the African Renaissance Campaign

ACALAN, as its contribution to the African Renaissance Campaign, has submitted the following five projects to the Department of Social Affairs:

ACALAN's exhibition in Ghana during the launch of the African Renaissance Campaign before the submission of the projects.

- Writing of a Pan African Song: in collaboration with the RECs in the 5 regions of Africa ACALAN is enlisting the support of some prominent musicians such as Oumou Sangaré, Toumani Diabaté and Salif Keïta in West Africa to compile and produce a song in the vehicular cross border languages of the region.
- Price of Excellence in Fulfulde, Hausa and Mandenkan: a suggestion made by ACALAN to ECOWAS to award prizes for works in the 3 VCBL.
- Writing and Publishing Proverbs in African Languages: in collaboration with ECOWAS and the language structures, ACALAN through the VCBL Commissions would collect and publish proverbs in their respective languages to serve not only the purposes of the African Cultural Renaissance but also to meet the requirements oàf the Khartoum Decision..
- Conference on African Renaissance: in collaboration with the Institute for African Studies and other institutions of higher learning, ACALAN intends to organize a conference to reflect on African Cultural Renaissance.
- Advocacy for Kiswahili as a Language of Wider Communication: ACALAN and BREDA are circulating a concept paper calling for the adoption of Kiswahili as a language of wider communication.

In the context of the **celebration of 2010 as the Year of Peace**, ACALAN intends to organize an event and has therefore contacted Salif Keita, the UN Ambassador for Peace and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Mali as well as the diplomatic corps.

4. CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

4.1. Establishment of ACALAN's working Structures

- The finalization of the recruitment process of the international staff (Technical and Professional)
- The finalization of the establishment of the permanent working structures (Operational, Planning and Capacity Building Workshops of the Vehicular Cross Border Languages) and organs (the Governing Board, the Assembly of the Academicians and the Scientific and Technical Committee)
- The establishment and- or reinforcement of the National Language Structures and linguistics departments in Universities in Africa.

4.2. Restructuring/Creating Regional Language Centres

4.3. Rebuilding African Education Systems

4.4. Taking control of ACALAN's Major Projects/ Programs

4.5. Reviewing ACALAN's Strategic Plan

4.6. Building ACALAN's Headquarter

4.7. Improving the communication strategies in order to give ACALAN more visibility throughout the continent and elsewhere

4.8. Developing a dynamic partnership with all the organisations and institutions involved in the promotion and valorisation of African languages (RECs, RLCs and the Universities, Civil Society Organizations, etc) in the perspective of the African Renaissance.

5.9. Language training for ACALAN's Staff

5.   CONCLUSION

The period of December 2009 to December 2010 has mostly been for the new team a period of observation, understanding and also of action and implementation as announced by the incoming Executive Secretary in his first speech: in eight months five Planning and one Harmonization workshops, an active participation to ECOWAS Meeting and about ten missions outside the country. The Executive Secretariat of ACALAN hopes that our expectations for the rest of the activities in this fiscal year will be fulfilled at the satisfaction of all the parties involved.

(see www.acalan.org for more information)