
Volume 1

Issue 2 *Report of the International Conference:
"IC/GLR: Progress, Challenges and
Opportunities"*

Article 31

October 2008

The Language Factor in Regional Integration in the Great Lakes Region

M. Mulokozi

Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar es Salaam

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/pcmr>

Recommended Citation

Mulokozi, M. (2008) "The Language Factor in Regional Integration in the Great Lakes Region," *Peace and Conflict Management Review*. Vol. 1 : Iss. 2 , Article 31.

Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/pcmr/vol1/iss2/31>

This Presentations and Discussions is brought to you for free and open access by the Open Access Journals at Scholar Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Peace and Conflict Management Review by an authorized editor of Scholar Commons. For more information, please contact scholarcommons@usf.edu.

Rwanda: Programme of integrated development
Honourable Protais MUSONI,
Minister of Local administration, Good Governance and Social affairs (Rwanda)

In its effort to reconstruct and develop the country, Rwanda opted for the program of integrated development as one of the key strategies for economic development. Improvement of the quality of citizens' life requires involvement of the State which should define policies and take decisions aimed at improving the welfare of the population. Thus, a tie exists between economic development and good governance. The programme of integrated development lies within the general process of decentralization. It maintains a close link with the global programme global aimed at reducing poverty (IDPRS), the 2020 Vision, the Green Revolution and the Vision 2020 Umurenge.

In Rwanda, the integrated development program involves several development actors. Thus, the local governments that implement it through various strategies such as ubudehe, the "Vision 2020 umurenge", etc. Monitoring and evaluation are carried out in collaboration among local authorities,

the civil society and the private sector through what is called the Joint Action Forum.

The program aims at reinforcing the capacities of the poor producers. It is aimed at using land rationally, creating jobs and the capital. The program constitutes one of the pillars of EDPRS and the Vision 2020. Its strategies include the specialization of cultures, land consolidation, post harvest processing (storage, transformation factories, leadership (itorero), the collaboration with other stakeholders such as the Joint Action Forum (JAF).

In order to fulfill its mission, the program faces some challenges such as the syndrome of dependence which is still prevailing among the population, the financial capacities and the human resources which are very limited. However, assets exist. A matter of fact, the allowance of the budget at the level of the local governments is based on a unique and transparent formula; other current programs such as ubudehe facilitate the fulfillment of the programme mission.

The language factor in regional integration in the great lakes region
M. Mulokozi, Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar es Salaam

The language as characteristic of cultural heritage, memory and identity is an important tool of communication. The language is very necessary in the processes of integration, peace and security and an imperative to the achievement of the dream of panafricanism.

The Great Lakes Region, comprises the following countries (with the number of local language spoken in each country indicated in brackets): Angola (42), Burundi (2), Central African Republic (70), Republic of the Congo (62), Democratic Republic of the Congo (242), Kenya (61), Rwanda (2), Sudan (142), Tanzania (125), Uganda (45) and Zambia (43). The peoples of this region are now just emerging from decades of civil wars, genocides, dictatorships and other upheavals. They are hopefully now moving towards peace, democracy, good governance, greater regional integration and eventually economic prosperity.

Yet this process demands understanding, tolerance and above all, dialogue. In order to work together for peace and development, the peoples of the region need to communicate. This calls for a common language [or common languages], cutting across ethnic and national divisions and rivalries, able to cater for the needs of all and sundry.

This is all the more necessary in view of the fact

that the region has more than 830 indigenous languages and almost the same number of ethnic nationalities. It also has four international languages inherited from history: viz., Arabic, English, French and Portuguese. The language factor, often ignored when discussing African developmental issues, is thus very crucial in realizing the goals of regional cooperation and integration in the Great Lakes Region.

Fortunately, this region has a language of wider communication that is spoken to varying degrees in almost all the countries of the region except two. That language is Kiswahili. Apart from being the declared or de facto national or co-official language of 6 of the member states of the region, Kiswahili, being Bantu, has close linguistic affinity with most of the languages spoken in the sub-region. This renders it easy to acquire and accept among the multi-ethnic nations of the region.

The purpose of the presentation was to examine the language dimension in our search for peace, democracy and greater economic and political integration. The author addressed the linguistic realities of the region, and point out the need for a common language, or common languages, that can facilitate the process of cooperation, economic interaction, integration and unity. He sees Kiswahili and Lingala as leading candidates for that function, which it is already performing anyway; hence we proposed the requisite policy measures needed to make Kiswahili and Lingala the regions' main official local languages of wider communication, for consideration by the regional authorities. These two languages are likely to be accepted as they present affinities with local languages.

