UNITED NATIONS   **NATIONS UNIES**

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
Division for Social Policy and Development
Secretariat of the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues

**INTERNATIONAL EXPERT GROUP MEETING
ON INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

8-10 January 2008, New York

**Presentation to the UNPFII Expert Group Meeting
on Indigenous Languages**

UNESCO

International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages

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UNESCO

International Expert Group Meeting on Indigenous Languages

UNESCO is an intergouvernemental Organization;

It has a global leadership role;

UNESCO works for its Member States through their governments

UNESCO is developing its cooperation with NGOs and Civil Society Organizations.

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UNESCO'actions:

•Awareness-building activities and advocacy initiatives

•Technical assistance to Member States

•Production of promotional tools and materials

•Elaboration of standard-setting instruments

•Policy dialogue

•Research, studies and analysis

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Objectives

- Promotion of multilingual education including mother language
- Safeguarding endangered and indigenous languages
- Promotion of multilingualism and linguistic diversity in literate environment, media and cyberspace

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Some illustrations:

Since 2000, International Mother Language Day (IMLD) is celebrated

annually on 21 February; it aims at:

awareness building on linguistic diversity and multilingual education.
reinforces the values of languages as part of the intangible heritage of
humankind

The International Year of languages 2008 (IYL08) will be launched on

21 February

a) Working towards concrete actions and legislative development aimed at eliminating discrimination against the current use of indigenous languages;

The UNESCO Position Paper on languages and education "Education in a Multilingual World" (2003) aims at orienting national multilingual education policy. It was issued, in several linguistic versions, in Cambodia, East Timor, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand

Three main principles:
- **Mother tongue instruction,**
- **Bilingual and/or multilingual education at all levels,**
- **Promoting language as an essential part of intercultural education**

What are some examples of good practices?

The "Programme for the recovery of the Mayan Oral

tradition of the Yucatan"

Two bilingual Mayan/Spanish books illustrated by children

with 200 stories of the Mayan community were produced;

Festivals were organized;

A pedagogical guide for Mayan narrative books

for use in participating schools were produced.

More details on this project and others,

see " UNESCO's work on Indigenous education"

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The Reef & Rainforest: An Environmental Encyclopedia of Marovo Lagoon

- based on the indigenous knowledge of the people of Marovo Lagoon, Solomon Islands

- includes over 1200 terms in Marovo language, with indexes to the lesser vernaculars of Hoava and Vanunu

- explanatory texts in both Marovo and English provide a bridge between Marovo and scientific understandings of the natural environment and its management

- serves as a pedagogical tool for fostering the transmission of indigenous knowledge and the continued use of vernacular languages.

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Mayangna – Bosawas Biosphere Reserve, Nicaragua

With the indigenous Mayangna people of Nicaragua to compile a bilingual publication with the working title: 'Traditional knowledge of the Mayangna peoples about the co-habitation of people and nature'

Objectives:
- To understand the relationships between the Mayangna and their natural environment
- To enhance the transmission of indigenous knowledge from elders to youth, in the contexts of formal and non-formal education.

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UNESCO Bangkok **advocacy toolkit for promoting Multilingual education**

contains three main booklets to raise awareness among: **top level policy-makers; planners and implementers, teachers, educators and communities** on the importance of multilingual education.

Each booklet contains key arguments supported by concrete research findings, case studies and a list of glossary.

There are also supplementary booklets.

b) <u>Developing programmes aimed at promoting the empowerment of indigenous languages through all mediums, including radio and television;</u>

The UNESCO Community Multimedia Centre (CMC) combines local radio by local people in local languages with a public telecentre facility offering public access to information and communication in a wide range of social, economic and cultural areas.

For further information, CMC link:

https://connect.unesco.org/ci/en/,DanaInfo=.apptweqF1vn2n0M26w+ev.php-URL_ID=1263&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

CMC Brochure, a Programme offering digital opportunities to the underprivileged:

https://connect.unesco.org/ci/en/,DanaInfo=.apptweqF1vn2n0M26w+ev.php-URL_ID=13508&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html

c) Supporting and increasing the number of centres for the study of indigenous languages

The UNESCO Chairs network aims at developing inter-university cooperation, with the emphasis on the transfer of knowledge between universities and the promotion of academic solidarity across the world.

Some of these Chairs are dealing with issues of multicultural and intercultural education including indigenous peoples:

The UNESCO Chair on Indigenous peoples in Latin America established in 1999 at the University Andina Simón Bolívar (Ecuador)

The UNESCO Chair in multilingual education created at the "Institut pédagogique d'Etat" of North Ossetia (Russia) in 2005 promotes the development of multilingual education in the education system.

The UNESCO Chair in language and education established at the Institute of Catalan studies in 2002 supports activities in the field of linguistic diversity and multilingual education.

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In 2006 – 2007, the Culture Sector's available budget for Endangered Languages was primarily allocated to support indigenous language maintenance projects, such as:

-Amazigh in Niger

- Sillanka in Burkina Faso

- Maya in Mexico

- Yukagir in Russian Federation

- Khomani in Namibia

For more information on various projects and activities, see:

http://www.unesco.org/en/languages

Measuring Linguistic Diversity

• 2010-Target Indicator on the status and trends in numbers of speakers of indigenous languages and linguistic diversity

• data collation difficult : no standardized methodology that would allow to compare data accross languages, geographic areas and time

•UNESCO has developed a draft
data collection tool currently being
tested by the Ad Hoc Expert Group
on Endangered Languages

Url: http://www.unesco.org/culture/en/endangeredlanguages

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UNESCO Register of Good Practices in Language Preservation

This database, to be available on-line soon, will feature community-based projects in education, revitalization, awareness raising, capacity-building, documentation and use of new technology.
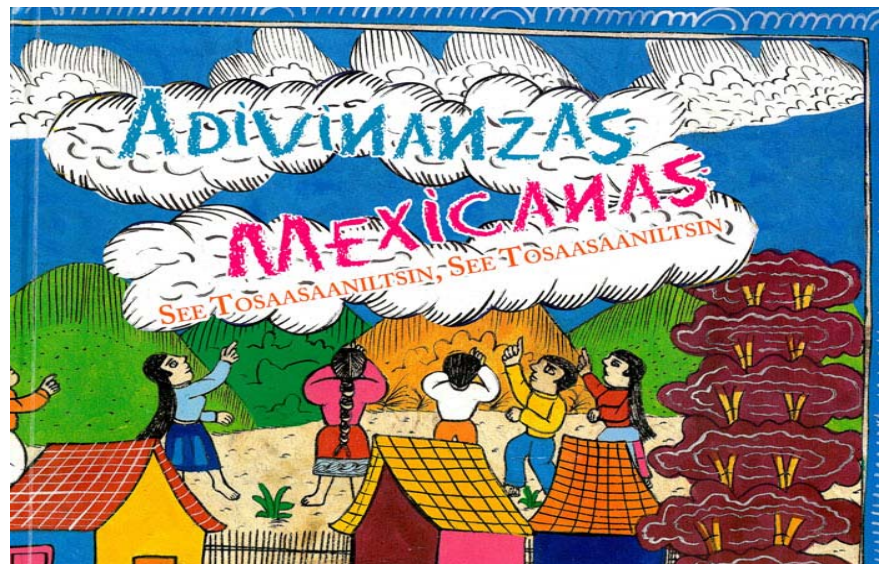
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