



ACALAN

Communiqué

Planning workshop for the Linguistic Atlas of Africa for ECOWAS and SADC Regions

On 17 and 18 October 2017, the African Academy of Languages (ACALAN) organised a planning workshop for the linguistic atlas of Africa (ECOWAS and SADC regions). The



objective of the workshop, which was held in Bamako, Mali, at the headquarters of ACALAN, were to :

- i. Discuss methodological and technical aspects related to the production of the linguistic atlas ;
- ii. Discuss and establish international networks to focus on the production of the linguistic maps ;
- ii. Discuss the strategy to ensure the dissemination of information on African languages and language maps ;
- v. Identify and/or set up scientific committees or working groups for the ECOWAS and SADC regions ;
- v. Identify and adapt existing linguistic atlases in the regions concerned.

The workshop brought together resource persons, staff of ACALAN's Executive Secretariat, members of the Assembly of Academicians, National Structures (Focal points) from Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sénégal, Mali, Nigeria, South Africa, Zimbabwe, as well as representatives of ECOWAS and UNESCO. The Commissioner for

Social Affairs, H.E. Amira El Fadil, and the Head of the Culture Division of the Department of Social Affairs, African Union Commission also took part in the workshop.

Participants were divided into two working groups to make suggestions on the following aspects :

- i. Standardised data on linguistic resources;
- ii. Communication and awareness of the Linguistic Atlas of Africa Project;
- iii. Marketing the linguistic atlas project in Africa;
- iv. Capacity building and support for the Linguistic Atlas Project;

- v. Support for the project by the regional groupings;
- vi. Mobilisation of financial resources;
- vii. Creation of network amongst different actors;
- viii. The state of implementation of the Linguistic Atlas Project;

The two groups (ECOWAS and SADC) made the following recommendations :

1) On communication and awareness of the project, ACALAN should :

- i. Send letters to the Ministries concerned (Culture, Basic and Higher Education, etc..) about the importance of the Linguistic Atlas of Africa, as a component of the



AU Agenda 2063 adopted by the Heads of State and Government of the Member States in 2015 ;

- ii. Develop strategies of sensitisation such as caravans, fairs and workshops in collaboration with the media, and the use of brochures;

- ii. Continue to formally request Member States to create or

establish national structures as focal points of ACALAN, with elaborated documents as guidelines ;

- iv. Adopt communication strategies that will include all the stakeholders (professional associations, agencies, university departments, colleges and NGOs) working in the field of languages.

2) On marketing the linguistic atlas of Africa project, ACALAN should :

- i. Lead in mobilising financial resources for the atlas and the promotion of African languages, and urge Member States and RECs to give African languages their rightful status ;
- ii. Make the language industry attractive by beneficial actions for policy-makers ;
- iii. Embark on strong advocacy and lobbying with all stakeholders (policy-makers, NGOs, civil society, private sector...), specifying all the benefits they can draw from this project (in the areas of education, agriculture, health, cultural identity, social cohesion and national cultural heritage).

3) On capacity building ACALAN should :

- i. Strengthen human capital in the domain of language training and educational research;
- ii. Inventory qualified people for the production of the linguistic atlas ;
- iii. Encourage young people to have interest in linguistic courses in universities;
- iv. Develop training manuals and identify experts in field investigation;
- v. Provide standardised textbooks for the work of the linguistic atlas ;
- vi. Learn from the experience of the countries which have advanced in language map production (Cameroon, Tanzania, Malawi and South Africa) ;
- vii. Formalise training and harmonise the different approaches ;

- viii. Create partnership between linguists and other actors in the sector at country level for the production of the linguistic atlas ;
- ix. Set up a multidisciplinary team including linguists, cartographers, anthropologists, statisticians, geographers, sociologists, historians, etc., with their capacities built to work with one another to produce the linguistic atlas of Africa.

4) On advocacy and mobilisation of financial resources, ACALAN should :

- i. Present an advocacy campaign document to the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) during their statutory meetings;
- ii. Encourage Member States and the RECs to make the promotion of national languages a regional cause by integrating it into their development policies and programme (budget);
- iii. Identify other donors such as UNICEF, NGOs and the private sector;
- iv. Advocate so that the AU and the RECs set up funds to support the production of the linguistic atlas in their respective regions.

5) On the network of actors and experts, ACALAN should :

- i. Create a digital platform and database at national and regional levels that will identify all the actors and experts in the development of a linguistic atlas ;
- ii. Formalise partnerships in the form of an MoU with UNESCO and the RECs;
- iii. Exhort Member States to create or identify national structures (focal points) to coordinate the linguistic atlas and other language development activities, in collaboration with the other working structure of ACALAN (VCLC) ;
- iv. Set up a mechanism to strengthen the capacity of members of regional technical committees, researchers and linguists on the strategies of developing the linguistic atlas of Africa ;
- v. Identify regional coordinators in order to facilitate the exchange of information on resources in the various zones ;
- vi. Exhort Member States to make financial contributions for researches on language resources and capacity building;
- vii. Provide national structures (coordinators) with necessary documents of information about the different activities.

6) On the support from RECs to the atlas project, RECs should :

- i. Make the development of the linguistic atlas of Africa one of their priority areas;
- ii. Encourage their Member States to increase the funding of language promotion activities by integrating them into their development programmes.

7) Other Recommendations ;

- i. The available canvas should be adopted and translated it into French, to adapt it to the specificities of different countries.
- ii. There should be synergy of actions between national coordinators and other ACALAN structures in order to update the data on the linguistic resources of the Member States ;
- iii. There should be greater collaboration and complementarity with institutions such as CELHTO, CERDOTOLA and CICIBA;

8) Outcomes:

- i. Updated plan and clear Terms of Reference for the project, formulated;
- ii. Strategic partners for the creation of synergies and a roadmap, identified.
- iii. Strategy for dissemination of information and marketing related to African languages and linguistic maps, identified;

- iv. Scientific and Technical Committees under the Chairmanship of Professor Alfred Mtenje (Academician of ACALAN), identified;
- v. Existing linguistic atlases on African languages in the region, identified for adaptation;
- vi. The methodological and technical aspects related to the production of a linguistic atlas, identified;
- vii. An international network focusing on linguistic map production, discussed and established;
- viii. Existing atlases to be the basis of the linguistic atlas of Africa, identified;

**African Academy of Languages (ACALAN),
Bamako - Mali, 19 October 2017**