

## **Language Documentation as a means to achieve the MDGs**

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It is an established fact that language and language-related issues cannot be undermined in the fight against poverty and the quest for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Language Documentation, in the sense proposed by Himmelmann (1998, 2001 and 2006), is not only a way of preserving a language in a more or less comprehensive way (i.e. language description + “comprehensive record of the linguistic practices characteristic of a given speech community”,) but also a means of giving back or (re-establishing) pride, dignity and identity to forgotten or marginalized minorities.

My five-year experience in LD of endangered Bantu languages in Cameroon permits me to make some significant generalizations on the impact of LD in the achievement of the MGDs. Firstly, LD contributes to pave the way for the design of pedagogic materials for primary education and adult literacy (MDG 2) in a more context-sensitive way. Secondly, the documentation of terminology on health-related areas, and folk use and phytonomy of medicinal plants (e.g., HIV/AIDS, [MDG 4, 5, 6]) is an effective way of coining terminology to appropriate new knowledge (MDG 2). Thirdly, the recording and archiving of specialized vocabulary (e.g., fishing, weaving, dining, farming), as well as the linguistic practice of the speech community help to preserve cultural heritage and traditional knowledge on biodiversity (1, 7). In short, with the collaborative-base approach (between the researchers and the language consultants/community) strongly advocated by LD, this sub-discipline has taken a critical position in the paradigm of developing communities with their consent and involvement.