

**Country: Nigeria**

**Organization: Federal Ministry of Information**

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**NIGERIA'S THIRD REPORT TO THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF UNESCO, ON MEASURES TAKEN TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATION CONCERNING THE PROMOTION AND USE OF MULTILINGUALISM AND UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO CYBERSPACE.**

The Federal Government of Nigeria, pursuant to the recommendations of UNESCO concerning the promotion and the use of multilingualism, adopted a National Information Policy which recognizes that Nigerian languages are increasingly used in popular entertainment and other forms of electronic communication, and are therefore evolving new forms and functions that project towards national development.

The policy objectives of the government is to promote new usage of Nigerian languages as vehicles of modern communication in the digital information age and also promote traditional communication forms as critical media of expression.

One of the implementation strategies is to ensure that the new technologies are available and accessible in Nigerian languages and also to ensure that the new technologies are vehicles for interaction among the various linguistic communities in Nigeria. Presently, various entertainment films are produced by Nollywood in major indigenous languages (Hausa, Ibo and Yoruba) which are accessible on satellite television, to project Nigeria's cultural heritage and values and socio-economic development. Instructional and educational programmes are also produced in indigenous languages based on the locality of the languages spoken, while the major languages are given prominence at the national level.

A number of newspapers are published in the three major Nigerian languages and can be accessed at the local, state and federal levels.

The National Information Policy also provides an enabling environment to enhance the quality, accessibility and viability of the print and electronic media inclusive of online communication. The government of Nigeria is evolving defined standards in the media and allied industry to effectively monitor and regulate an environment that encourages investment and the observance of best practices.

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) ensures that the national languages are utilized on Broadcast Stations. The Commission developed a template for census on

languages of broadcast in stations in Nigeria to ensure their survival and revitalization. Also, the Voice of Nigeria (VON), the external broadcast service of Nigeria, broadcasts in eight (8) languages that are local and international. They are; Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, French, Arabic, Ffulde, Kiswahili and English.

The station is in the process of introducing Portuguese service into its programming. Private broadcast stations also produce programmes in Nigerian local languages as well as foreign languages.

Nigeria also joined the rest of the world to mark International Language Day which is celebrated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February of every year. The day is designed to promote awareness of linguistics and cultural heritage and promote the preservation of all languages used by people of the world. This is to ensure that local languages are encouraged and spoken by parents, children, community members, opinion leaders and so on, to ensure that indigenous languages do not go extinct.

In Nigeria, data about the country can be accessed on the cyberspace in the three major indigenous languages of Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba inclusive of pidgin English.

The Print Media is already caught in the web of digitization as most newspapers and magazines can be accessed on the Internet by citizens and visitors to the websites of the Newspapers/Magazines.

The Broadcast industry is not left out in the process. The Federal Government through its information policy, is making efforts to ensure compliance with digitization. On 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2014, the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) launched the full digital switch over pilot scheme in Jos, Plateau State. There is a gradual transformation from analogue to digital form of broadcasting. The NBC has therefore embarked on sensitization programmes in the six geopolitical zones of the country to ensure the compliance by private and public state radio, especially television stations in the digital migration before the 2015 deadline set by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Indigenous Languages, basically the three major languages are being taught in Primary and Secondary Schools, and the children are encouraged to learn foreign languages in Public and Private Institutions. Foreign and indigenous languages are also offered as courses in institutions of higher learning. Nigeria has a number of language institutions where international languages are taught to overcome language barriers. Some of them are; the Nigerian French language village, Badagry, Alliance Francaise with centres in Abuja, Benin, Lagos and Port Harcourt.

## **Development of Public Domain Content**

Since the globalization of ICTs, the government of Nigeria is not left out in the adaptation of new information technologies. Through the Ministry of Information's website, [www.fmi.gov.ng](http://www.fmi.gov.ng), various publics are provided with timely, accurate, clear and complete information about policies, programs and initiatives.

The Internet search engines made it possible for visitors to access the Federal Ministry of Information website. The list of the search engines are: Google, Yahoo, Microsoft Bing, Yandev, My web search, Microsoft windows live, Ask, Spray, Net Ease, and so on.

## **Preservation of Nigeria's Archival Heritage.**

Under the provisions of the National Archives Act of 1992, the National Archives of Nigeria serves as an information bank and is mandated to locate, assemble and rationalize the documentary source material of the country and preserve them permanently for research and other purposes. It also restores and preserves historical records through conservation activities.

Efforts are ongoing to ensure the digitization of records in the repository to ensure security of the original materials and to make them accessible by all and thus create conducive learning environments to promote creativity and audience development.

## **Challenges**

A lot of funds are required to achieve the digitization of broadcast materials in the country. Government's financial support is required to achieve the digitization before the 2015 deadline.

Government needs to engage in the hiring and constant training and retraining of personnel in indigenous and foreign languages and ICT.

## **References**

1. Recommendation concerning the Promotion and Use of Multilingualism and Universal Access to Cyberspace.
2. Revised National Information Policy Document (2013)
3. Federal Ministry of Information Mid-Term Report (2011-2013)