

## ENGLISH / SWAHILI ICT WIKI GLOSSARY

[http://www.isoc-ke.org/wiki/Main\\_Page](http://www.isoc-ke.org/wiki/Main_Page)

A project undertaken by  
Internet society Kenya chapter  
With the support of  
UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa

By

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## INTRODUCTION

The Internet Society (ISOC) is an international, non-profit organization founded in 1992 to provide leadership in Internet related standards, education, and policy. The Global Society has its headquarters in Geneva and Washington, and implements its mission and goals in other countries through local chapters. The Kenyan chapter was chartered in May 2012 and registered locally as a society on the 26<sup>th</sup> September 2012 by the Government of Kenya's registrar of Societies.

The Internet Society Kenya Chapter also abbreviated as ISOC-KE, received support from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), within the framework of support towards innovative Information and Communications Technology (ICTs) and gender sensitive open suite strategies and policies for education, science and culture, to develop and launch an ICT WIKI(a website which allows its users to add, modify, or delete its content) platform in Swahili for ICT terminologies as can be found in the glossary to ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (pages 90-92)

<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002134/213475e.pdf> and Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (pages 181-192).  
<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001929/192971e.pdf>

The total cost of the project amounted to USD 4700 commenced in October 2012 and ended in March 2013.

The Terms of Reference (ToR) for the activity included:

- Conceptualizing a WIKI platform with English and Swahili functionalities,
- Upload the original English text on the platform from both the glossary to the ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (pages 90-92) and Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (pages 181-192),
- Assure the maintenance and hosting of the WIKI platform for the period October 2012 to February 2012,

- Engage with Internet Society chapters in Eastern Africa and a wider Swahili speaking community and experts in populating the WIKI,
- Implement a strategy by engaging with a variety of stakeholders to assure the active participation of the ICT community,
- Assure peer review mechanisms by a wide variety of experts in assuring quality translation from English to Swahili on the WIKI,
- Make recommendations on sustaining the WIKI in Swahili and expanding it to include other languages spoken in Eastern Africa.

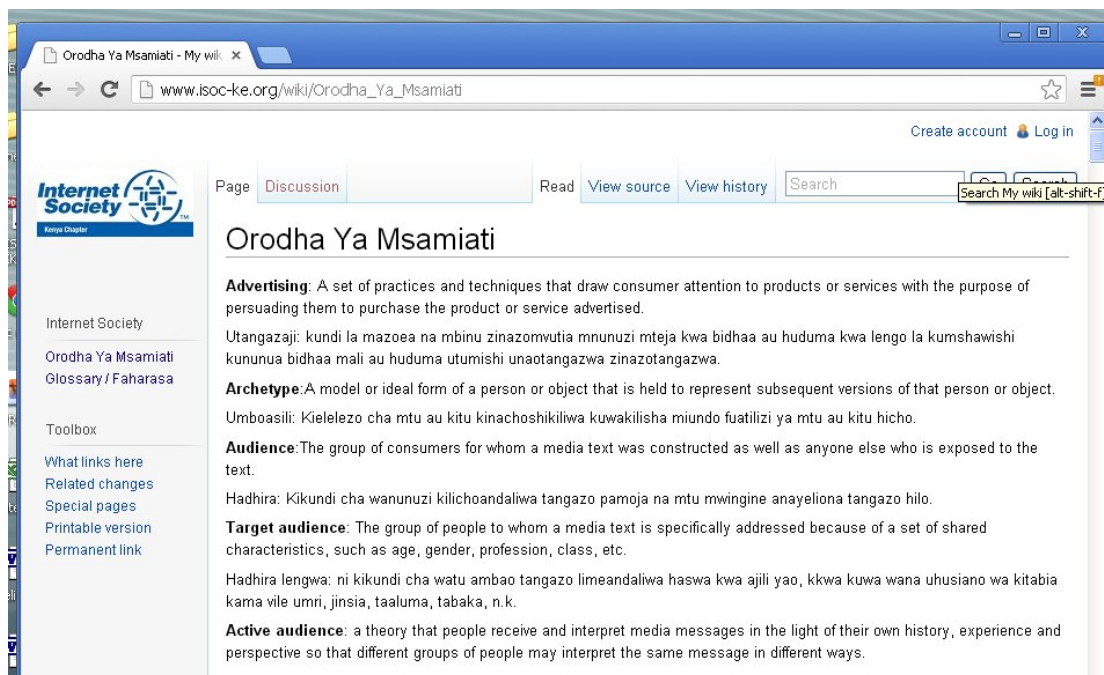
## **METHODOLOGY**

ISOC-KE is composed of membership who are professionals in diverse fields of ICT, who pool together their synergies to undertake specific activities geared towards achieving the society's missions and objectives in the local perspectives. The implementation approach taken in this activity were categorized as follows:

- a. The contract to undertake translation of the Glossary documents from English to Swahili was awarded to Addomart Investment Company on the basis of professionalism and similar works done.
- b. Developing and maintaining the WIKI platform containing the ICT glossaries was done by ISOC-KE membership.
- c. Editing of the draft translation, to compare to the original (source English) text, and the translated text (Swahili) as a whole. Specific terms of reference
  - ensured the translations accurately conveyed the actual / correct or intended meaning in Swahili of the source text,
  - correct word choice and clarity,
  - conciseness, consistency, jargon and
  - use appropriate Swahili terminology.

The activity was undertaken by Bondo University College.

- d. Peer reviewing was meant to ascertain concise translation and interpretation of the technical terms and meanings from English to Swahili, as well as subjecting the publication to thorough scrutiny for quality prior to publication. This was done by Lectures at University of Nairobi and other language experts and at review meeting that was held at Pete's Restaurant.
- e. Popularizing WIKI Glossary was done on various online mailing lists that have subscription of many experts and other professional locally, regionally and internationally, such as [kictanet@lists.kictanet.or.ke](mailto:kictanet@lists.kictanet.or.ke) , [isoc@orion.my.co.ke](mailto:isoc@orion.my.co.ke) , [web2fordev@dggroups.org](mailto:web2fordev@dggroups.org), [www.diplomacy.edu/ig](http://www.diplomacy.edu/ig), ISOC Chapters Space <http://www.facebook.com/groups/191013467670336/> among other socio media platforms. There was also an outreach mission to Tanzania, where the project was popularized. On receipt of the first draft translation from English to Swahili ICT Glossary, A WIKI was developed the platform is available at; [http://ictglossary.WIKIa.com/WIKI/FAHARASA\\_YA\\_ISTILAH#comm-2077](http://ictglossary.WIKIa.com/WIKI/FAHARASA_YA_ISTILAH#comm-2077) [http://ictglossary.WIKIa.com/WIKI/ICT\\_COMPETENCY\\_FRAMEWORK\\_FOR\\_TEACHERS\\_-\\_GLOSSARY](http://ictglossary.WIKIa.com/WIKI/ICT_COMPETENCY_FRAMEWORK_FOR_TEACHERS_-_GLOSSARY) . Comments, contributions and suggestions were received from various stakeholders and were later included in the final version which is available at [http://www.isoc-ke.org/WIKI/Main\\_Page](http://www.isoc-ke.org/WIKI/Main_Page)



A snapshot of the English / Swahili wiki, online

## WHY SWAHILI?

Swahili is the East and Central African region's foremost language. The language originated from the East African coast and later spread into the interior of the continent due to various factors. It is widely used in politics, creative writing, in media, newspapers and music. In Tanzania, with the emergence of the movement for political independence, the Swahili language became the symbol of national unity in the struggle for independence (*Uhuru*) and in Julius Nyerere's African socialist experiment (*Ujamaa*). It is a working language in many Panafrikan institutions such as the Organization of African Unity (OAU, African Union (AU) and its popularity as is taught as academic subject in many E. A. institutions of higher learning as well as in South African and West African universities (e.g. at the universities of Capetown, of Ghana and Ivory Coast. Swahili is listed among the so-called "critical languages" identified by the U.S. Department of Education "in the sense that knowledge of them would promote important scientific research or security interests of a national or economic kind" (D. Crystal, *Cambridge Encyclopedia of Language*, 1987:342).

It is used on both national and international broadcasts (e.g. Voice of America, BBC, Deutsche Welle) as well as visual and print media.

One major factor, which contributed significantly towards the spreading of Swahili was the long distance trade. Swahili was also used to spread religion, in particular Islam and Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Swahili language, is one of the Bantu group of African languages spoken by about 50 million people (*Nairobi Institute of Swahili & East African Culture*<sup>2</sup>). It is the official language of Tanzania while it is the second in Kenya. It has the largest number of speakers in the region compared to any other local language. Although grammatically a Bantu tongue, Swahili language has greatly been influenced by African, Middle Eastern, Arab, European and Asian cultures from which it has borrowed many words. Swahili language can therefore promote harmony; togetherness and can ultimately promote peace among the inhabitants.

Swahili language is spoken in most countries in Africa, specifically

1. Kenya
2. Tanzania / Zanzibar

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<sup>1</sup> Nairobi Institute of Swahili & East African Culture (NISEAC) <http://nairobiwahili.org/history.html>

<sup>2</sup> Nairobi Institute of Swahili & East African Culture

3. Comoros
4. Somalia
5. Uganda
6. Rwanda
7. Burundi
8. Zaire
9. Malawi
10. Mozambique
11. Zambia
12. South Africa

In Tanzania, Swahili is the official language followed by English, whereas in Kenya, it is the second official language after English. After independence (1961) the Tanzanian government put up a language policy that emphasized on Swahili as an authentic symbol of the Tanzanian nation. In this context, the socio-economic, political and ideological orientation formulated by Late President, Julius K. Nyerere who pursued his vision of an African socialism called “Ujamaa”, was a substantial stimulating element in support of implementing this language policy. Likewise the recent decision by the republic of Rwanda, that was previously a French speaking nation, to adopt English as the official language, will further expand usage as it is closely associated with Swahili, and increase interaction and relations with the neighboring countries. Likewise, since Swahili language contain many Bantu words, the phrases are easier to learn and understand as a majority of ethnic inhabitants in E.A. are Bantu thus making Swahili medium mode of communication amongst the different ethnic tribes.

In terms of education, Tanzania provides an interesting case as the medium of instructions in schools are in Swahili, Vernacular and English, at both primary and secondary levels. It is only at University that the mode of instructions is purely in English as tabulated below.

Before			and Secondary
Rank	Rural Areas	Urban Areas	

1	Vernacular	Swahili	
2	Swahili	Vernacular	
3	English	English	
Currently			
1	Swahili	Swahili	
2	Vernacular	English	
3	English	Vernacular	

It is noted that this form of education system allows students to learn school lessons using their native language, Swahili and English as well, thus providing opportunity for better understanding of the languages. In a way this system has helped increase the appreciation of local dialects and helped their preservation at the local and national levels.

In Uganda, Swahili did not develop much after it had been spread there traders from the East African coast. The main reasons political; because the Buganda kingdom whose main language was Luganda saw it as a threat to the kingdom. The reason was that the Christian missionaries associated it with Islam. They therefore encouraged use of English or local languages like Luganda as the lingua franca. Later after independence, there was no clear language policy in Uganda but following a debate in 1973, the national debate, eight districts out of twelve voted in favour of Luganda as a national language, Idi Amin, the former ruler of Uganda, declared Swahili as a national language although the decree was never enforced. The toppling of Idi Amin in 1979 by Tanzanian forces was a blessing in disguise for Swahili as Ugandan's made efforts to learn Swahili so that they can communicate with the occupation forces. The declaration of Swahili as a compulsory subject in Ugandan primary and secondary schools has not been enforced although various higher learning institutions in Uganda offer Swahili courses. The East African union, will therefore provide a bright future for Swahili as it is the only language that can spoken by all the other East African people.

The media is also playing a very big role in enhancing the use and growth of Swahili. Nowadays there are more Radio and television programs in Swahili, on the daily mushrooming stations in E.A. These occurrences are creating a vacuum for content including need for Swahili language reference and development initiatives.

The uptake of ICT terminologies in Swahili by the general public, educationists and users is still low, and people still prefer using English terms like Internet and Browsing and yet there exists Swahili terms for the same. On a case study, most users including Internet Cyber café owners in Dar es Salaam and Nairobi, use English terminologies like **Internet**, **browsing** instead of their Swahili equivalent, because are not aware of the existence of Swahili terminologies. Furthermore, few platforms including online Swahili translation dictionaries do not have these Swahili ICT terms

The other issue is the lack of interest in learning Swahili as majority of citizens speak Swahili and claim to understand it well; they therefore prefer English to be the best especially when it comes to employment or communication in the international arena. "You appear "modern" when you communicate in English than Swahili", said one user. To some people, English language is equated with westernization or modernization. However, these foreign languages were just popularized by explorer and later colonialists. The uptake was tremendous as we adapted to the language in all sphere including education system as well as making the official language. As is evident "western" cultures that are threatening to erode our very African fabric and practices. In comparison, the Asian countries, namely China, Japan and Korea, are using their own languages and dialects in all spheres. At independence, some African countries like Kenya were at par economically with some Asian countries, which have now gained so much economic and technological development and have assumed the status of "first world". Most of the products from these Asian countries have their manual and instructions written in their local language. It is evident that this may have contributed to their vast economic growth as well as cultural preservation.

The Institute of Swahili Research based at the University of Dar es Salaam, has provided lead in this direction by developing the English Swahili dictionary (TUKI).



Swahili is an evolving language and more English technological terms still have to be coined into their Swahili equivalent.

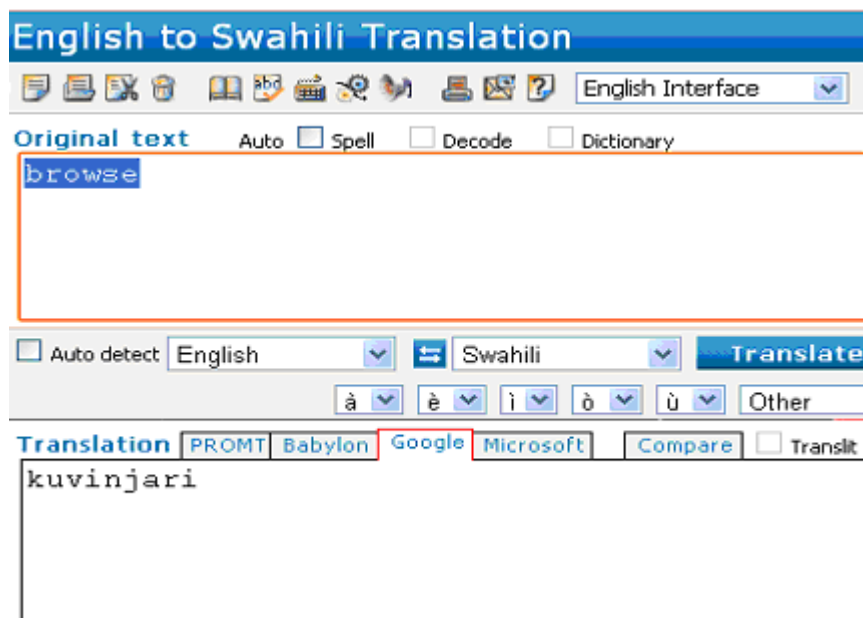
Although there are several efforts and platforms in the Internet that aims to provide Swahili language translations of English words, there are few translations of ICT terminologies.

A test search for the term **internet** in the Online Kamusi, <http://kamusi.org/> provided the following results; *Search results for internet in Swahili KamusiGOLD does not contain an entry for internet in Swahili. Please use the search box above to look up internet in another language, or help us improve Kamusi for everybody by clicking here to add internet in Swahili.* The portal request for the term to be added.

Another search on the IM Translator <http://imtranslator.net/translation/english/to-swahili/translation/> for the term **browse** gave a totally different meaning, **kujivinjari** which in Swahili literally mean to enjoy, or be entertained and therefore incorrect.

The same applied to the on-line dictionary for 24 languages. <http://en.bab.la/dictionary/>.

It is therefore evident that currently, the only credible source of correct ICT English / Swahili terminologies translation platform is institute of Swahili research-TUKI (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Swahili) <http://sescotz.com/eng-swa/3.html>



Above. A screenshot of English Swahili Translation

However since ICT is a new technology that is increasingly expanding in usage and education, new Swahili ICT term have to be coined and the Institute of Kiswahili Research, University of Dar es Salaam. <http://sescotz.com/eng-swa/3.html> has done plenty of translation of English Swahili ICT.

To authenticate the content of this initial platform, several experts and reputable institutions have contributed to its development. These are, University of Nairobi, Bondo University College, University of Dar es Salaam as well as language experts and local communities. We therefore look forward to contributions and discussions as we continue to populate this WIKI.

It has been predicted that those languages that will not have their own computer vocabulary this century will be left behind and eventually die off. Fortunately for Swahili, its vocabulary has been incorporated into the current technology. Swahili's computer language is a reality, and is offered in most search engines, except some ICT terminologies, such as Google and even social sites like facebook. What remains is to upscale this platform to include additional technological terms, which this project tends to address.

## **CHALLENGES**

Plenty of challenges have been experienced during the implementation of this project. It is noted that the ISOC-KE Chapter took up this challenge while still (young), therefore lacked the various structures that would adequately address the daily technical and administrative issues that arose. More so the membership is virtual (no physical office) and hold physical meetings, monthly and occasionally. Apart from the grant from UNESCO, the society also did not have other requisite resources like communication and other administrative necessities, and therefore the project was implemented voluntary effort by working group.

Being First" project for the chapter, somewhere along conceptualization of the idea, the budget to fully implement the activity was not adequately presented. Other important

and relevant components activities sufficed that had to be included – added in the formulated work-plan that had already been signed. An example is the outreach mission to Tanzania. This came up during a discussion at the implementation stage. Since Tanzania uses Swahili as their first Official language, an outreach mission offered more credibility to the project.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

The WIKI only contains ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (pages 90-92) <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002134/213475e.pdf> and Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (pages 181-192). <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0019/001929/192971e.pdf>. There have been suggestions from various stakeholders that other ICT terminologies be included on the WIKI in order to provide comprehensive online reference platform for Swahili ICT terminologies. This could not be undertaken since it was not within the scope of the contract, which was limited to only specific items, *ICT Competency Framework for Teachers (pages 90-92)* and *Media and Information Literacy Curriculum for Teachers (pages 181-192)*. Any additional work could have attracted financial implications for translation and other contractual commitments. This is a very valid proposition and we propose for its consideration by UNESCO to further upscale the project.

It would add value to users if ICT equipment manufactures could consider incorporating and adopting these terms in this Swahili WIKI while manufacturing future equipments in Swahili language

Translating the WIKI to include other traditional (tribal) languages spoken in Eastern Africa would be increasing its usage amongst the local dialects. This would definitely promote the usage of local languages and could very well promote preservation of cultural heritage.

The outreach mission and popularization that were done were not adequate due to budgetary constraints. In the end, not many stakeholders targeted were reached. It would provide more visibility if further outreach can be considered to include the media, authors, government education ministries, institutions of higher learning, students, non governmental agencies as well as local communities in the Swahili speaking countries.

We strongly recommend collaborative efforts with the following institutions that are seriously involve in Swahili teaching and research;

- [University of Zurich](#), Switzerland and
- [Institute of Swahili research-TUKI](#) (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Swahili) University of Dar es Salaam.

## **CONCLUSION**

As the EA regional states strives to increase ICT infrastructure and usage, this platform will provide the requisite content and reference point for users and promote use of Swahili in the region as well as help in preservation of the rich culture and heritage. It is envisaged that this effort will increase the use of Swahili language in the regional and thus help in its preservation in this technological era. It is also envisaged that it will help empower and improve the peoples of these region, help improve education standards especial and generally enhance cooperation and brotherliness in EA Region. Most importantly people will begin to appreciate the use of ICT equipments because of the provisions of a language that they relate to and understand.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We wish to thank The Internet Society (ISOC) global office for providing this Chapter with recognition thus enabling this activity to happen.. The ISOC-KE Membership who

participated and maybe not mentioned. Ms. Vulimu, Swahili Expert and Teacher offered technical critic to content as well as Mr. John Ngugi, a Certified Public Accountant who helped with the financial records. I wish to thank all those who contributed on the mailing lists, institutions that offered services, Bond, Nairobi and Dar es Salaam. A notable player in this work was Addomart Company, the firm that help in translation of the glossary.

Last but not least, our gratitude go to **Jaco DU TOIT**, Adviser for Communication & Information, UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, Shibata Masakazu, whose support, guidance and advised led to fulfillment of the idea.

Without the active participation of all the above, this project outcome would not have been realized.

## **MEANING OF ACRONYMS**

### **ICT**

Information and Communications Technology

### **WIKI**

A website which allows its users to add, modify, or delete its content via a web browser usually using a simplified markup language or a rich-text editor

### **SWAHILI**

One of the Bantu group of African languages spoken by about 30 million people, chiefly in Tanzania, Kenya, Congo (Kinshasa), Burundi, and Uganda, and serves as a lingua franca for additional millions in East Africa

### **UNESCO**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is

### **ISOC-KE**

Internet society Kenya chapter

## REFERENCES

UNESCO's Clearing House for Literary Translation

[http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1523&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

[URL\\_ID=1523&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/culture/en/ev.php-URL_ID=1523&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html)

WIKIhow <http://www.WIKIhow.com/Category:World-Languages>

Category:World Languages <http://www.WIKIhow.com/Category:World-Languages>

<http://www.WIKIhow.com/Category:Education-and-Communications>

WIKIpedia [http://en.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Swahili\\_language](http://en.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Swahili_language)

Nairobi Institute of Swahili & East African Culture (NISEAC)

<http://nairobiwahili.org/history.html>

Swahili Culture [http://en.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Swahili\\_culture](http://en.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Swahili_culture)

WIKIpedia Ya Kiswahili [http://sw.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/WIKIpedia\\_ya\\_Kiswahili](http://sw.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/WIKIpedia_ya_Kiswahili)

Kamusi Elezo [http://sw.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Kamusi\\_elezo](http://sw.WIKIpedia.org/WIKI/Kamusi_elezo)

History, Origin, Current status, Phonology, Vowels – Pronunciation, Consonants, Orthography, Semantic, and other Dialects of Swahili.

<http://www.ictdev.org/pulse/20120912/community/weekly-events-velobstacles-translate-swahili-bosnian>

institute of Swahili research-TUKI (Taasisi ya Uchunguzi wa Swahili)

Chama Cha Kiswahili cha Taifa <http://www.chakita.org/>