



Translation Glossary Project

The Translation Glossary Project is a follow-up research project to the [Listening Zones of NGOs](#). The research team behind *Listening Zones*, Professor Hilary Footitt and Drs Angela Crack and Wine Tesseur, produced the following policy recommendations for international NGOs and donors that want to promote linguistic inclusivity in their work.

Recommendations for international NGOs

Recognise the importance of languages within their own organisations

- Ensure that the multilingualism of the organisation is seen by staff to be institutionally valued, and integral to an understanding of cultural contexts. One way of achieving this is to actively encourage the acquisition of additional language skills within the organisation.
- Recognise the ‘burden of bilingualism’ carried by some staff in international NGOs (INGOs), i.e. the informal work of language mediation undertaken by bilingual/multilingual personnel in addition to their normal work and outside agreed job descriptions.
- Address some of the discomfort felt by staff working for the INGO about their level of English, especially the written language, and their perception that because of this the institutional playing field is not level.
- Ensure translators and translation coordinators in the organisation are given visibility on staff web pages to raise awareness of translation services.

When planning projects

- Think about language at the design phase of a project. Listen to the words that the community uses in the needs assessment stage.
- Provide language support during early discussions with communities, helping to facilitate a dialogue, and to create relationships of trust.
- Include a budget line for translation and interpreting.

When starting a project and during monitoring and evaluation

- Translate successful project applications into local languages so that partners and communities can have an in-depth understanding of what is planned. This will give them access to the information and knowledge needed to increase involvement and local ownership.

- Feedback regularly to the community to check that the project is meeting original expectations, and make necessary amendments.
- Work with local interpreters wherever possible and seek to establish a register of translators and interpreters who have worked in and have an understanding of development. This register, and good practice in interpreting, could be shared with partners and communities.
- Translate reports into local languages and feed back to partners in their first languages. To support Southern-based NGOs (SNGOs) and communities in developing local capacity.
- Work together with SNGOs to produce glossaries of key terms in languages of the communities that can be a common resource. Refer to the Translation Glossary Handbook for guidelines on how to do so!
- Share learning on the place of languages in communication strategies with other NGOs in pre-existing NGO networks.
- Consider providing skills training in a language that is accessible to SNGOs.
- Consider providing access to English language training.

Recommendations for donors

Donors should reflect on how to improve current practices in order to foster linguistic inclusivity and greater respect for local cultures.

When issuing a Call for Applications

- Ensure that the style of language used and the format of the application form is simple and straightforward.
- Let applicants apply in their first language or in a lingua franca in which they have capacity.
- Translate the Call for Applications and the accompanying instructions into local languages, and provide glossaries on key terminology.
- Reimburse translation costs of successful applicants.
- Explicitly state that applicants should indicate how they plan to ensure communication with local communities.
- Invite applicants to include interpreting and translation costs in their budget.
- Explicitly note inadequacies in communicating with communities and respecting them culturally in feedback on failed applications.

When selecting projects and during monitoring and evaluation (M&E)

- Ask organisations to demonstrate their 'language and cultural policies' and value those NGOs that can articulate these policies.
- Provide resources to pilot communication materials in advance, using the appropriate local language or dialect.

- Ensure that M&E frameworks encourage NGOs to reflect on how language issues affect project outcomes.
- Encourage INGOs to translate successful project proposals into local languages, so that SNGOs and communities can have an in-depth understanding of what is planned.
- Provide opportunities to implementing organisations to give feedback in their first language about whether projects are having the desired effect.

To support local capacity building and sustainability

- Make available resources for SNGOs without English language capacity to translate information on their organisation into English so that they can share their knowledge and work. This would support SNGOs in having a voice and having impact.
- Consider funding civil society support groups to set up English language courses for SNGOs.

For more information, please refer to:

Footitt, H.A., Crack, A. M. and Tesseur, W. (2018). *Respecting Communities in International Development: languages and cultural understanding*. Available at:

https://www.intrac.org/resources/respecting-communities-international-development-languages-cultural-understanding/listening_zones_report_-en/