

WOCAL Committee on African Sign Languages Constitution

1. PREAMBLE

In view of the need to stimulate and enhance research and knowledge about African sign languages;

Recognizing the importance of African sign languages in African development, African unity, self-consciousness, self-determination, and their contribution to linguistic studies;

Conscious of the desire to bring together scholars working on African sign languages to exchange ideas and share their various research findings;

We hereby declare the formation of a committee, known as the World Congress of African Linguistics (WOCAL) Committee on African Sign Languages, hereafter referred to as **WOCAL CASLs**.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 To act as a forum where scholars in African sign language linguistics as well as Deaf people shall meet and exchange ideas and knowledge on African sign language linguistics and related disciplines.

2.2 To serve as a testing ground for research findings, analytical methods and theoretical perspectives and to promote African Deaf communities' development in relation with their linguistic rights.

2.3 To stimulate research and linguistic studies on African sign languages.

2.4 To contribute to capacity building of the young scholars in African sign language linguistics.

2.5 To be a springboard in the dissemination of linguistic findings from African sign languages to all the five continents.

2.6 To provide sign language linguistic information, through WOCAL publications, for use by decision-makers and language planners in the African continent.

2.7 To create awareness in academic circles as much as other publics for the need to recognize the African sign languages as indispensable resources for individual, social, cultural, political and economic development of Deaf people.

2.8 To serve as a venue for discussion as well as dissemination of ways and means of empowering African sign languages in order to allow them to fully meet the needs of their speakers.

3. STRUCTURE OF WOCAL CASLS

3.1 WOCAL CASLs shall be constituted at the General Meetings of World Congresses which shall be organized periodically.

3.2 The activities of WOCAL CASLs shall be planned and executed by a Committee that shall be known as the ***Standing Committee of WOCAL***, hereafter called the ***Committee***.

4. THE STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONS OF THE WOCAL CASLS

4.1 The full membership of the Committee shall consist of minimally five and maximally nine persons. However, the Committee may co-opt up to three other members as it may deem fit. The co-opted members shall serve for a maximum period of one term.

4.2 Each member of the Committee shall serve for a term of nine years.

4.3 In addition, there shall be a special category of ex-officio members, who will be known as "Elders". The main role of the Elders is to offer advice to the WOCAL SL committee, through their long experience in WOCAL affairs and accumulated wisdom.

4.4 The Elders shall consist of all the former presidents, all those who have been chairpersons of successful congresses and up to two outstanding and respected scholars in the study of African sign languages. Only those present at a particular WOCAL will be involved in the WOCAL proceedings.

4.5 The Committee shall elect a President from among its members whose term will be three years and may be re-elected once for another term. However, the Standing Committee, if unanimous, may nominate a President, who has completed two terms, to serve for another additional term.

4.6 The President shall be responsible for conducting consultations with the other members of the Committee on all decisions to be reached by the Committee, including the election of new members and his or her successor as President.

4.7 The President shall call and chair a meeting of the Committee members presents at each Congress and at such other opportune times as may occur between Congresses. Also the President shall chair the General Meetings that will be held at each Congress.

4.8 The President shall be assisted by a Secretary-General, whose duties shall include, but not be limited to, making correspondences, taking minutes and keeping records. The Secretary-General shall be elected in the same manner as the President.

4.9 Nomination to replace retiring members shall be made by members of the Committee. In the event that more candidates are proposed than the number of vacancies, a ballot will be held among the Committee members present at the meeting. Each Committee member may vote for as many nominees as there are vacancies. In order to ensure, only those present at a given Congress may be voted.

4.10 The Committee shall make efforts to ensure that its membership is representative of the different regions of Africa and of other areas of the world in which there is substantial interest in the study of African sign languages.

4.11 The Committee shall create and sustain a series of African Sign language programmes dealing with all aspects of African Linguistics. English and French will be the working languages for these Congresses. However, an African language may be used where feasible.

4.12 The Committee shall be responsible for determining the frequency with which Congresses will be held, and for selecting the site and local organizers for each Congress. The criteria for the choice of the site shall include leadership qualities of the organizing committee members, Congress facilities, accessibility to essential services and reasonability of travel costs.

4.13 The Committee shall act to promote interest in participation in the Congress in all parts of the world. Hence, in the interest of the organization, any members who shall miss two consecutive Congresses without prior notification of unavoidable circumstances or who shall not respond to correspondences through-out a term, shall be automatically taken to have lost interest and shall therefore cease to be members of the Committee.

4.14 The Committee shall play an advisory role to the Local Organizing Team as well as make an evaluation of the organizational and intellectual success of each Congress.

5. FUNCTIONS ON THE WOCAL COMMITTEE OF AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGES

5.1 The primary function of the WOCAL CASLs shall be to meet during the WOCAL which shall usually be held at a three-year interval.

5.2 The WOCAL CASLs shall strive to ensure a fair representation of Deaf linguists from Africa at WOCAL meetings.

5.3 WOCAL shall cooperate with other institutions and organizations concerned with the development and promotion of African sign languages.

5.4 The WOCAL CASLs shall have a website that will serve to provide information about its activities.

6. WOCAL COMMITTEE ON AFRICAN SIGN LANGUAGES GENERAL MEETING

6.1 A WOCAL CASLs General Meeting shall be held at each Congress, whose aim shall be to receive reports from the Committee and to discuss any matters pertaining to the study of African sign languages in the context of WOCAL.

6.2 The Meeting shall provide information and advice on how to strengthen the activities of the WOCAL CASLs.

7. MODIFICATION TO DOCUMENT

7.1 Modifications to this document may be made by a two-thirds majority of the Committee membership.

7.2 Where members of the WOCAL CASLs are asked to give their opinion on a matter or indicate if they approve a proposal, sufficient time will normally be given to members to air their views. Any silence shall be taken as consent.

7.3 The Constitution and all other relevant documents, including any useful information, shall be circulated to all interested members through the Website created for the WOCAL CASLs.