



translate.org.za

opensource software translation project

INTERNATIONAL PRESS RELEASE:

SOUTH AFRICAN LANGUAGE INNOVATORS WIN TOP AFRICAN ICT AWARD FOR BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE.

Translate.org.za has won the prestigious African ICT Achiever 2006 Award for bridging the digital divide in Africa by breaking down the language barrier!

An ecstatic Dwayne Bailey, Founder of Translate.org.za said, "Finally, after years of hard work promoting the importance of mother tongue languages in ICTs it is fitting that language has been recognised as a critical part of the digital divide in the same year the African Union celebrates the year of African languages."

Bailey added, "We hope this will lead to more localisation within South Africa and across the continent as we look forward to helping others to make similar achievements in their countries."

Translate.org.za's work has included the translation of computer software into the 11 official languages of South Africa using locally based translators; and more recently the creation of the first all-South African language keyboard – a world first!

"This is the first African's-helping-Africans, no strings attached Free Software. It has always been my dream that one day fellow South Africans would be using computers in their mother tongues," said Bailey.

The NGO intervenes whenever technology becomes a barrier to language. For example, Venda, one of the official languages of South Africa, cannot be accurately typed on a computer. The result being that Venda speakers are unable to type their own names correctly.

Therefore, one can only wonder how their names have been typed on their birth certificates. Using Translate.org.za's keyboard means Venda can for the first time be typed accurately along with all the other official languages including Afrikaans and to a lesser extent Northern Sotho and Tswana.

Translate has also made spell checkers from Afrikaans all the way to Zulu! This means people in South Africa no longer have to suffer the indignity of their language being underlined in red by an ignorant teacher.

Abe Mathibela, Business Development Manager at Translate.org.za, and a mother tongue Sesotho speaker said, "This recognition makes me very, very happy. It's a breakthrough, as now the common myths and fallacies that we cannot have computers in our languages have been bridged. There are a whole lot of things that can now happen across Africa to challenge the exclusion of African languages."

On the African continent as well as world-wide, Translate.org.za has provided help and support to other passionate people wanting to start similar initiatives for their mother tongue. Now through the WordForge Foundation, of which Translate.org.za is a founding partner, they continue to help other both in Africa and the rest of the world.

Supporters of Translate.org.za include Obsidian Systems, The Shuttleworth Foundation, St James Software, Hewlett-Packard South Africa, the Department of Communication and the CSIR.

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Photographs of Dwayne Bailey, his team of translators & programmers and the African ICT Achievers Award are available on request or visit <http://translate.org.za/content/view/1729/>

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Zuza Software Foundation 2002/005943/08 t/a Translate.org.za
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