

Bhutan Local Language Policy



“ICT and Language matters for Social Transformation”



Background



Although small country, has many local languages (About 19 languages– However no scripts for other than Dzongkha and Nepali).



Languages

- Sharchopkha ---Spoken in East (138000)
- Bumthapkha --- In Central (30000)
- Nepalikha ----- In South (150000)
- Dzongkha ----- In North West (160000)
 - According to Dr. Van Driem.



Official Language

- Dzongkha is national language.
- English is also used as Official Language.
- English is still used as the medium of teaching while Dzongkha is being taught as subject.



Evolution of Dzongkha

- Dzongkha derived from Old Tibetan through many centuries of independent linguistic evolution on Bhutanese soil
- Dzongkha means “language” spoken in Dzong “fortress” a centre for both political and learning.
- Dzongkha is the native language of the western Bhutan and is known by term ngalong – meaning the first to rise to the teachings of Buddhism in Bhutan.



Literacy

- *The Literacy rate in Bhutan is 54%*
- *The Figure includes both English and Dzongkha.*
- *Separate figures not available.*



Infrastructure

Computer per 100 inhabitants	1.5
Fixed lines telephone per 100 inhabitants	4.7
Mobile per 100 inhabitants	12.19
Domain names registered(under country domain name)	247
Internet domestic bandwidth	2mbps
Internet International bandwidth	30mbps



Other ICT initiatives

- Rural Telecom Project (201 Blocks with minimum of 10 telephone lines)
- CICs Initiatives (300 CICs by end of 10th plan)
- Dzongkhag LAN
- Thimphu WAN
- Broad Band Master Plan



Local Language Policy

- To establish Dzongkha as an integral part or one of the most significant elements of Bhutan's national identity and culture.
- To Promote and preserve the ancient traditions of culture and values through Dzongkha Language.
- To build Dzongkha literary materials and develop Dzongkha tools.
- To Create a system for people to learn Dzongkha.
- The draft constitution enshrines right to information for every citizen and that can be done only in Dzongkha.



Local Language Computing Policy

- By 2008, Bhutan will use ICTs to preserve and promote its cultural heritage and boost the creation of local content. (BIPS document)
- Design, promote and implement projects for the use of Dzongkha (NLB) in all sections of ICT and media industry (GG+ document)



Relevant Agencies

- Dzongkha Development Authority (The focal Agency in the development and promotion of Dzongkha)
- Ministry of Education and Royal University of Bhutan (ILCS)
- Ministry Home and Cultural Affairs (National Library, department of Culture)
- Ministry of Information and Communications (DIT PAN Project)



Projects

- Dzongkha Computing in windows (2000-2004) under taken by DDA
- Dzongkha Localization under PAN in open source plat-form (DIT on going)
www.dzongkha.sourceforge.net(website),
<http://www.dit.gov.bt/admin/wiki>,
[irc.freenode.net;#dzongkha-linux](http://irc.freenode.net/#dzongkha-linux)(IRC channel).



Challenges

- Human resource (Both Technical and Linguists)
- Limited research on Dzongkha



Successful stories

- Dzongkha Computing support in Windows
- Dzongkha Linux with full Dzongkha Computing Support.
- Training on the use of Dzongkha Computing Software
- Successful collaboration amongst PAN countries established.
- Creation of Localization unit within DIT.



Future Plans

- Aggressive training through out the country on Dzongkha Computing Software.
- Research on natural language processing starting with OCR and text to speech.
- Research on FOSS application software inline with the new requirements.



Conclusion

- A great deal of momentum in the Localization.
- All these would and had happened because of PAN and we salute to PAN and IDRC for the support.

A large, dense crowd of people is shown from an elevated perspective, filling the entire frame. The crowd is diverse in age and appearance. A blue grid pattern, resembling a globe's latitude and longitude lines, is overlaid on the image. The text "Thank you" is centered horizontally across the middle of the image.

Thank you