



translate.org.za
opensource software translation project

OpenOffice.org Launch

Minister, honoured guests, ladies and gentleman.

Today is an exciting day for myself, the Translate.org.za teams, our sponsors and our nation.

Great men once said:

All people shall have equal right to use their own language, and to develop their own folk culture and customs.

They also said that:

All the cultural treasures of mankind shall be open to all, by free exchange of books, ideas and contact with other lands.¹

We feel that today, in some way, we have made those hopes and dreams a reality.

It is thus with great pleasure that we announce the official release of the OpenOffice.org office suite in 4 of South Africa's 11 official languages: IsiZulu, Sesotho sa Leboa, Afrikaans and English.

This is definitely a South African first and we believe most probably an African first. This is Africans helping Africans, true empowerment. The African renaissance is here, we merely need to reach out and grab it.

¹ The Freedom Charter

People often ask me why should we even bother translating software, why don't people just learn English.

To which I reply,

Izixhobo kufuneka zisebenzele abantu, hayi abantu izixhobo. Isoftware sisixhobo ngoko ke kumele zisebenzele abantu ngolwimi lwabo lwasemzini!²

You have to be ignorant not to understand the implications of what I have just said.

One thing not to forget is that this is Free and Open Source software.

Which means that these translations now belong to the community. The community of users which includes: children, mothers, fathers, grannies students, teachers and business people. These translations belong to them and these translations belong to us.

This is the culmination of a long process.

It began in 2001 with the formation of the Translate.org.za project. A project whose aim is simple ... to provide Free Software in South Africa's 11 official languages.

We began translating OpenOffice in early 2003 with an initial test release in the same year. This year has seen us update and improve the translations based on feedback from our testers.

Some of our other successes include:

- A webbrowser in 7 languages
- Translation of the KDE and Gnome Linux desktops
- Spell Checkers in Afrikaans and IsiZulu
- And translation of the Google search engine into IsiXhosa and IsiZulu.

² This is not the translation. The text is in IsiXhosa a language of South Africa. No translation is provided so that you can experience the frustration. Use google if you must, maybe it will help, maybe it won't.

In translating the webbrowser we soon realised that the world that you look upon through your browser is an English world. We cannot change that but South Africans can.

- Users can demand content in their language
 - They can create or translate existing content into their language
 - And businesses can translate their websites.
-
- All these things will help.

In the twilight of women's month we must not forget that almost all of these translations were in fact done by women.

Of course none of this work would have been possible without our sponsors.

We would like to thank:

- The Shuttleworth Foundation
- Hewlett Packard
- Obsidian Systems
- UniForum, and
- St James Software

And what about the languages not yet covered?

We are excited that the Department of Communications has agreed to join with us and to fund the translation of the remaining OpenOffice languages and to support this project for the next two years.

In the words of Antjie Krog:

And I wonder: God. Does he hear us?

Does he know what our hearts are yearning for?

That we all just want to be human beings ... some with more colour, some with less, but all with air and sun.

And I wade into song ... in a language that is not mine, in a tongue I do not know. It is fragrant inside the song, and among the keynotes of sorrow and suffering there are soft silences where we who belong to this landscape, all of us, can come to rest.

Sometimes the times we live in overflow with light.³

Thank you ladies and gentleman.

Don't forget this is free software use it, give it away and copy it

Celebrate your freedom.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.0/> or send a letter to Creative Commons, 559 Nathan Abbott Way, Stanford, California 94305, USA.

³ Antjie Krog, Country of my Skull p217