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## Summary

This report arises from research carried out in Iganga and Namutumba districts in late 2006/early 2007 by the Cultural Research Centre (CRC), based in Jinja. Our research focus was to gauge the impact of using Lusoga as a medium of instruction (since 2005 in 'pilot' lower primary classes) within and outside the classroom.

This initiative was in response to a new set of circumstances in the education sector in Uganda, especially the introduction by Government of teaching in local languages in lower primary countrywide from February 2007. This followed an experimental period, in selected pilot districts, including Iganga, where fifteen pilot schools had been chosen: all these became part of this study.

Teaching in the local language matches CRC's mission which centres on promoting the Kisoga cultural heritage. Our work has included local language teaching, teacher training, and writing a standard orthography, grammar and readers, in collaboration with partners such as the Lusoga Language Authority (LULA).

In Busoga, this introduction proved challenging because Lusoga had been historically marginalised through a double process of colonisation, with both English and Luganda imposed on the region. As a result, Luganda has been emphasised as the language of instruction, evangelisation, administration and business for many years, and its impact is still evident today.

We were therefore interested in finding out whether there were positive changes as a result of teaching in Lusoga in lower classes in primary schools, not only within, but also outside the classroom. We also examined challenges, as experienced by parents, teachers, pupils, leaders and policy implementers at the district level.

We interviewed 400 respondents, including teachers, parents, pupils, policy implementers

and political/community leaders. These were met in the 15 pilot schools and 10 non-pilot schools (for comparative purposes), as well as in the neighbouring communities and the relevant local Government offices.

Our results show that the introduction of Lusoga (and the 'thematic curriculum') has generally led to noticeable positive changes. Academic performance, as the international literature on this subject would lead us to expect, has improved. One reason for this, in the pupils' view, is the ability to apply the knowledge they have acquired to their daily life situations and immediate environment. The relationship between pupils and teachers was also reported to have improved, as well as pupils' behaviour.

Many of the parents we met said that children in the pilot schools, rather than being in their own world without a good grasp of their own language, have now been helped to know their mother tongue and value it. Parents also noticed that children were eager to learn to behave "properly", which they felt was linked to a better understanding of the local culture imparted at school. Children were observed to share knowledge acquired at school, thus introducing a beneficial "multiplier effect" in the homes and communities of pupils attending the pilot schools.

Further, in the communities near the pilot schools, the beginnings of an attitude shift were noticed: earlier feelings of negativity on Lusoga and Kisoga culture have been challenged by the programme, with Lusoga teaching becoming better accepted by local communities as an important aspect of education. This shift in attitude has resulted in two positive outcomes: one, the linkage between school and community is strengthening, partly because formal education is no longer seen as a foreign concept. Two, parents and pupils are becoming more supportive of the programme, thus surmounting their earlier fears of 'backward education'.

Fears and uncertainties about Lusoga as a medium of instruction however persist. These include the anxieties of many of the teachers we interviewed not being familiar with and therefore doubting the Government policy on the feasibility and sustainability of the programme. This was also reflected in the laissez-faire attitude exhibited by some

teachers and their limited involvement in the preparatory stages. Secondly, many youth remain biased against Lusoga as a medium of instruction, partly because of their ignorance about English being taught as a subject in primary school. They think that Lusoga will retard the academic achievements of their siblings and undermine the value of school certificates, both all-important for seeking rare jobs. This leads to apprehension and the tendency to “de-campaign” this initiative, as when it is described as “teaching for the poor”, while the sons and daughters of the better-off attend prestigious private schools and, in the process, acquire a ticket for well-paid jobs.

Third, some hesitations concern the interpretation of culture that accompanies local language teaching. At one level, such teaching can be relegated to women teachers as being of less importance than other areas of education in the primary school. With women the dominant teachers in lower primary in most of the schools we visited, Lusoga can become a “female affair” and “minor” aspect of education. At another level, there is a tendency of accepting all aspects of the local culture as being unquestionable and, by implication desirable, which is a threat to the programme.

Unless such fears and constraints are addressed, this programme is unlikely to progress as it should. We therefore conclude our report by suggesting some improvements: enhancing community sensitisation and information, making the District Language Boards operational, ensuring that both private and Government schools are provided with the necessary resources, especially in teacher training, and essential quality control measures through monitoring and evaluation. We also suggest that networking and collaboration amongst NGOs, CBOs and cultural institutions should be supported, as well as further research and monitoring whose results need to be disseminated to encourage all, including recalcitrant schools and those referring to Lusoga-teaching schools as “third world schools”, to review their attitudes.

Addressing these concerns demands a concerted effort by all stakeholders, especially the cultural institutions, NGOs, CBOs, the donor community, and well-wishers to join hands with Government, so that this very worthwhile initiative has every chance of sustained success.

## Acknowledgements

This document is the result of many people’s collaborative efforts. While we cannot mention all by name, we appreciate the team work exhibited by the staff at the Cultural Research Centre (CRC) and the Cross-Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) from inception to the last steps of publication of this document. CCFU is thanked in a special way for funding the research (via a grant from CORDAID, whose support is gratefully acknowledged), for its technical help, and for the production and publication of this document.

The District Education Office, Bishop Willis Core Primary Teachers’ College, Head teachers, teachers and other officers have all been important in providing information. Thank you. We would like to specially thank the Centre Coordinating Tutors for Local Language and Thematic Curriculum for their untiring guidance and the information provided throughout our documentation process. Much appreciation also goes to the parents, community leaders, and children/pupils contacted in Iganga and parts of Namutumba districts. These formed a resourceful team of respondents whose support and information have been highly appreciated.

This document is reinforced by a DVD film documentary. We are grateful to the video crew for their work and the various people who contributed to its contents.

Special thanks go to the Honourable Minister for Education and Sports, Geraldine Namirembe Bitamazire, for supporting this documentation by availing the necessary information, and to the Kyabazingaship of Busoga for blessing this project.

## Introduction

Using local languages as a medium of instruction in primary schools was initially proposed by Government in 2003. This was accompanied by the development of a “thematic curriculum” two years later, based on themes selected to suit the educational needs and environment of pupils in Uganda.

Instruction in local languages started as a pilot project in selected government-aided primary schools in 4 districts, including Iganga in Eastern Uganda. This pilot focused on three classes (Primary 1 to 3), and lasted two years (2005 -2006). In Iganga, 15 pilot primary schools were selected and, in preparation, the district education office trained on average three teachers from each of these schools.

From the beginning of this initiative, many questions have continued to emerge from parents, teachers, pupils and other stakeholders. Many for instance have wondered whether teaching in the local language is possible, let alone whether it would make a positive difference to learning. Mixed reactions have persisted: on the one hand, some older parents, village leaders and district policy implementers embraced this initiative as an opportunity to promote the local culture. On the other hand, there have been doubts, fears, and uncertainties, associated with a novel idea which, furthermore, was going against the grain of recent history and practice.

It is against this background that the Cultural Research Centre (CRC) decided to explore the impact of teaching in the local language on pupils both within and outside the classroom, and to identify the challenges arising from this experience. This was technically and financially supported by the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU), in its endeavour to document this example of using a culturally-informed approach to a development challenge.

This interest also stemmed from CRC’s wish to promote the local culture and, in particular, from our earlier initiative to produce Lusoga educational materials, to train teachers in Primary Teacher Colleges (PTCs) and to sensitise local communities on Lusoga, in collaboration with other organisations in the region.

Our study investigates various aspects of this pilot programme, including its impact outside the class environment. Within the class, we explored pupils’ reading and writing ability, other aspects of their academic performance, as well as any change in self-confidence and participation. Teachers’ and pupils’ attitudes towards the programme were also examined. Outside the classroom, some of the aspects explored include behavioural changes, parent involvement in pupils’ education, and the link between school, family and community.

We believe that our two-year experience of teaching in Lusoga in Iganga and its subsequent impact can help to draw lessons for fine-tuning this important departure in our country’s education system. We hope our findings will be of use in districts now embarking on this initiative, to policymakers and implementers, and to the general public. While there have been challenges, we describe how some have been tackled and the threats some pose if not dealt with. We also highlight the benefits this programme has brought to schools and communities and would like other stakeholders to appreciate that teaching in local language in primary schools is both possible and beneficial.

This document is divided into five chapters. The first outlines the context: the evolving perception of Lusoga in the region and the introduction of local language teaching by Government. It also summarises CRC’s role in local language development. The second chapter sets out the purpose, methods and scope of the research and highlights its limitations. Chapter Three examines the achievements stemming from teaching in Lusoga both within, and especially beyond the classroom. The fourth chapter looks at the challenges, fears and uncertainties associated with teaching in Lusoga, as a novel and sometimes ill-prepared initiative and how this has affected the programme.

The last chapter shares our conclusions from this study, suggests key learning points, and makes recommendations to the general public, the Ministry of Education and Sports, and to other relevant institutions and individuals for their consideration.

## 1. Teaching in Lusoga: the context

To understand current achievements, reactions and challenges, with regard to teaching in Lusoga in primary schools, we first need to step back into history. This Chapter outlines how Lusoga has been perceived as a language over time and how using local languages as media of instruction and the adoption of the Thematic Curriculum became Government policy. We also describe CRC’s role in promoting Lusoga and preparing the ground for its introduction as a language of instruction in local primary schools.

### a) A double colonisation

Government’s recent move to introduce local language teaching is especially relevant in Busoga because it gives the region an opportunity to rediscover its language, after long years of “language oppression”.

■ We are familiar with the history of the introduction of English in much of Uganda, through missionaries and colonial officials, with the eventual development of an educational system mostly based on English as medium of instruction and the emergence of English as the country's official and de facto national language.

In Busoga, however, an additional process of colonisation took place: early missionaries used Buganda as a base to evangelise other parts of the country. In the process, they learnt Luganda, used it across the Nile too, and enlisted the help of Baganda as aides. Because Lusoga has many similarities with Luganda, there was no need to learn the local medium and Luganda became the accepted language of evangelisation.

Missionaries established their first schools to serve the south, central and eastern parts of the country in Buganda. To train future leaders, the sons of Busoga chiefs would thus be taken to there for schooling, where the medium of instruction was Luganda. Upon return, they would pose as better educated than those who had remained home and they spoke Luganda to stress the point. Basoga chiefs would even address their subjects - fellow Basoga - in Luganda. Later, when schools were established in Busoga, Luganda remained the language of communication.

British colonial officials had also used Luganda and Baganda agents when establishing their administration in the region. The traces of Semei Kakungulu, a Muganda, are still visible in Busoga today and the administrative structures adopted the model of Buganda. Civic parishes thus became commonly named after those in Buganda, such as Mutuba, Mumyuka, Ssaabawaali, or Ssabagabo.

Speaking in Lusoga at a public or official event was consequently perceived as degrading, undermining the occasion, and even "uncivilized". Even social and cultural gatherings, including marriage introductions and funeral rites, were conducted in Luganda. Some obvious Kisoga names would be changed to suit the Kiganda accent since publicly confessing to be a Musoga outside Busoga was "demeaning". Speaking Lusoga even to a fellow Musoga outside Busoga would cause amazement.

Luganda was also adopted as the "correct" language for land agreements, religious records, and other written documents. Thus, one of the streets in Jinja Town, "Obodha", named after a prominent Basoga chief, was in time changed to "Oboja" a name with Kiganda intonation.

Many of the leaders we interviewed explained how this created low self-esteem among the Basoga and an inferiority complex when it came to speaking their own language in public, and particularly outside Busoga. Basoga even started to describe themselves as "Baganda" and shunned being called Basoga.

Today, Luganda is still widely used in both public and private business throughout Busoga. The Catholic Church only abandoned Luganda as the official language of evangelisation in 1995, and other churches have yet to do so. On the region's FM radio call-in shows, many presenters and callers prefer expressing themselves in Luganda. The mottos of Jinja Municipality (Kiira Bwe Buggaga), and Busoga College Mwiri (*Ku Iwa Katonda N'egwanga Lyaffe*) remain in Luganda.

## b) The Cultural Research Centre

It is in this context that the Cultural Research Centre (CRC) was established in Jinja in 1997 to contribute to the cultural self-liberation of the Basoga through research, publications and other information activities.

This followed the first Jinja Diocesan Synod held in 1995, which recommended that the culture of the people of Busoga be researched into, documented and integrated in the Church's mission of evangelisation, in a process of "inculturation". Language was included as a major aspect of this and informed CRC's mission: *"To research into, preserve and promote our God-given ancestral and life-giving cultural heritage; and to inculcate a deep sense of pride and belonging among the Basoga"*.

Charged with this responsibility, CRC has collected and written up folk stories, riddles, proverbs and information on ritual practices among the Basoga. CRC has also produced a Lusoga-English dictionary, a Lusoga grammar and an orthography. In 2000, it started collaborating with the Lusoga Language Authority (LULA), an umbrella organisation in the Busoga Kingdom charged with the development and conservation of Lusoga, and acted as its secretariat. All the LULA members have been networking to prepare the ground for the appreciation of Lusoga as a language that can be read, written and taught.

With time, CRC worked with LULA to advocate and promote the development and conservation of the Kisoga cultural heritage through Lusoga. The Ministry of Education and Sports was lobbied to ensure the recognition of Lusoga as independent from Luganda, especially after Government produced its White Paper on Education (1992), with a proposal to use local languages in lower primary education. The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) was also lobbied to give technical support and eventually to approve our Standard Lusoga Orthography. Within Busoga, we visited local leaders, both civic and political, to involve them in our activities, especially in the development of the local language.

According to a member of the Thematic Curriculum review panel, the choice of Iganga district as a pilot districts reflected these efforts, as well as the overwhelming presence of Lusoga speakers, and the success of a translated mother-tongue model syllabus into Lusoga, a prime reference text book for the programme.

In 2006, the Cross Cultural Foundation of Uganda (CCFU) encouraged us to write the story – and CRC’s role - in promoting the use of Lusoga as medium of instruction in primary schools. We were animated by a desire to show that the local language and the thematic curriculum were not only possible, but could also make a positive change in the life of the children and their surroundings. With CCFU financial and technical support, this booklet and an accompanying DVD film came into being.

### **c) Education policy and local language teaching**

One recommendation of the 1989 Kajubi Education Policy Review Commission was the development of local languages as media of instruction, for pedagogic and cultural reasons. In response, Government issued a White Paper (1992), stating its desire to regard the issue of language and educational instruction “in a much more dynamic, realistic and progressive manner” than when instruction is entirely conducted in English. A policy was eventually elaborated, adopting the mother tongue as medium of instruction in Primary 1 to 3 classes. In preparation, CRC translated into Lusoga the mother tongue model syllabus, the teacher’s guides and pupils’ work books prepared by the NCDC. The NCDC proof-read and later approved these materials.

It was at the time of publishing these materials that the Ministry of Education also turned to a new syllabus, the “Thematic Curriculum”. This focuses on the development of early childhood skills that are valued in the communities and are fundamental to continuing educational performance in numeracy, literacy and life skills. This was a major departure from the earlier education policy which emphasized the acquisition of facts in various subjects at primary schools, mostly focusing on recall. This was also to be taught in the local language and a new syllabus was therefore developed in 2003-4, designed to impart to learners the cultural dimensions inherent to language and to help them appreciate their cultural heritage, as well as increase their awareness and appreciation of other people’s cultures.

A pilot exercise was carried out in 2005-2006 in four districts to pre-test the implementation of the new curriculum in a variety of situations, to assess its effectiveness and help identify any remedial measures that might be needed to ensure a successful nationwide implementation, starting in 2007. The pilot also focused on the extent to which the Thematic Curriculum would be understood and accepted by both teachers and the community as a basis for their children’s education. It therefore included finding out people’s attitude on the use of local language and identifying potential bottlenecks. It also sought to establish the level of support and supervision needed for effective implementation of the new curriculum, the effectiveness of the learning materials provided and of those

locally made; and the levels of literacy and mathematics attained by children at the end of Primary 3.

Meanwhile, to prepare teachers in Busoga, Lusoga was introduced as a subject in 2002 in two PTCs, Kaliro and Iganga’s Bishop Willis. CRC, LULA and other partners steered this introduction and produced the necessary Lusoga materials. In 2003, during a national meeting of PTC Principals, each region was asked which language they would take on as a local language to implement the Government White Paper. The Principal of Bishop Willis College proposed that Lusoga would be used in the PTC: this was an eye-opener, a sign that the Busoga region was serious about this project. This was later confirmed when tutors responsible for local languages found that only Lusoga had a written standard orthography approved by the NCDC.

The Ministry of Education therefore chose Iganga district as one of the four districts to pilot local language teaching, and later the Thematic Curriculum in local language (the others being Kasese, Kabarole and Nakasongola).

## **2. Research purpose, methods and limitations**

### **a) Purpose and methods**

The purpose of our research was to trace the impact of teaching in Lusoga (as part of the “Thematic Curriculum”) on pupils in, and especially outside, the classroom (homes and communities) in Iganga and parts of Namutumba districts. We also wished to highlight the possible challenges arising from teaching in the local language, how some of these challenges have been tackled and, if not, how this may frustrate future implementation. We hope that this research will be of use to various stakeholders, especially policymakers and implementers in other parts of the country, as they grapple with this new Government policy.

We interviewed four main categories of respondents: pupils, teachers, parents and policy makers. For comparison, we met pupils, teachers and parents associated with both pilot and non-pilot schools. Semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions and impartiality during interviews were observed, after preparation of field trips to reduce any nervousness among our respondents. We focused on individual experiences and case studies, rather than on broad opinions. Five group discussion involving teachers and pupils were conducted in each of the three counties in Iganga district and two in Namutumba district. Discussions took place at both piloted and non-piloted schools. We also organized parish-level

meetings with parents and their children who attend both pilot and non-pilot schools, to solicit views on experiences of learning in Lusoga, achievements and challenges.

We engaged local leaders and policy implementers in both districts. Four interview sessions were conducted at the District Education Office of Iganga in which the secretary for education, the inspector for schools, and the education officer were met. We interviewed Centre Coordinating Tutors (CCTs) at selected Centres in both districts (Bunhiiro, Canon Ibula, Buseesa, Bukanga, Naigombwa, Itanda, Namutumba and Kibaale) in the three counties of Iganga. The views and experiences from officers at Bishop Wills Core PTC in Iganga were also sought. Some of the policy implementers included district officers of Iganga district and Namutumba, and Local Council chairpersons in Iganga. NGO personnel were also interviewed.

## b) Scope and limitations

This study was conducted in all three counties of Luuka, Kigulu and Busiki of Iganga district and in parts of Namutumba district. We visited all the 15 pilot schools that were part of the plot (Bukanga, Busalaamu, Canon Ibula, Bunhiiro, Namutumba, Namungaalwe, Buseesa, Kibaale, Nakabaale, Naabirye, Kasokoso, Buyanga, Bubinga, Makuutu and Bulyansime), as well as 10 non-piloted schools (Namukubembe, Kasuuleeta, Ibanda, Butende, Naibiri, Kinawanswa, Bulunguuli, Nabikoote, Kategere, and Bukanga). Most of these schools are located in the rural areas. We therefore also visited some urban schools (Iganga Boys, St. Patrick Kigulu Girls' School and Buckley High School).

Altogether, we interviewed 400 respondents: 150 pupils, 100 teachers, 20 public officers and 130 parents. Where anonymity demands it, we have masked their real names in this document. 100 of the interviewed pupils and 70 teachers were from pilot schools and 100 parents had their children in pilot schools. While, owing to time and other constraints, these constitute a limited sample, respondents were carefully selected and their views therefore deemed broadly representative of the population at large. For community respondents, our selection criteria included age bands, level of literacy, gender, rural and urban residence, and whether they had pupils attending pilot-school and non-piloted schools.

Questions on the impact of instruction in Lusoga on pupils outside the class proved challenging for our respondents, mostly the parents, possibly because they had not thought of closely monitoring the impact of this programme. Further, its recent inception (two years) makes tracing impact still tentative. The reader should therefore consider our conclusions in this light, as critical preliminary eye openers that may guide more research and investigation in this area, rather than as definitive statements.

## 3. Positive changes

If using Lusoga as medium of instruction evoked fears and even resistance among some parents, teachers, pupils and policy makers, it has led to some noticeable achievements in spite of its recent introduction. These could be found both in the school and beyond the classroom: this chapter outlines our respondents' views.

### a) Achievements in the classroom

#### i) Academic performance

Our respondents noticed a number of positive changes when pupils are taught in Lusoga under the thematic curriculum, especially in pupils' understanding, reading and writing, result orientation, and retention ability.

More than 50 of the pilot-school teachers we met for instance reported that their pupils had greatly improved with question interpretation, leading to high scores in assessments. Some teachers in Busalaamu primary school explained this by comparing the reading and writing abilities of two groups of children, one group attending pilot schools, the other not, in Bukyeega in Luuka. Those who attended pilot schools were found to have better skills, with orthographical, grammar and handwriting skills equally good. They easily connected the alphabet to the sound of the words.

We also found that most of the children we interacted with at the pilot schools have mastered essential elements of the Lusoga grammar, correctly employing syllables, like "gy", "dh", "gh". When, for instance, we wrote on one occasion the name "John" on the blackboard, a number of pupils pointed out that this was incorrect and should instead be "Gyoni", influenced by the Lusoga orthography.

We assessed twenty pupils on writing and reading skills in Bukanga and Namukubembe primary schools: seven out of ten in Bukanga, a pilot school were able to read and write their names properly, compared to only three out of ten in Namukubembe, a non-pilot school. Such assessment was repeated in two other villages in Namutumba district where 20 pupils from P1 to P.3 classes from two pilot and two non-pilot schools were assessed on pronunciation and spelling. Six out of ten from the pilot schools were able to pronounce and spell correctly, compared to only two out of ten from the non-pilot schools. In some cases, teachers reported that pupils had written letters to them explaining reasons for their inability to attend classes, something previously unseen. (Box 3).

Several of the teachers met also observed that instruction in Lusoga had eased learning, with improved numeracy and mathematics skills, compared to their counterparts in non-piloted schools. All the teachers met said that this achievement could be attributed to learning in a language pupils use to communicate at all time in daily life, rather than having to learn in a foreign language. Being taught in a language they already know and use, pupils have developed a keen interest and follow the teacher at every step, rather than get bored and “switch off”.



### **Box 1 Teaching in English in lower primary classes: the challenges**

*Namukubembe primary, in Luuka, Iganga is a Government-aided school with 700 pupils. The thematic curriculum is used but English was until recently the medium of instruction in the lower primary classes. Jane Nabwire, a teacher, shares her experience:*

*“I have taught in lower primary for many years and observed that English created a big gap between pupils and teacher. Usually this language barrier made them disinterested and panic, thus failing to answer even the simple questions they would have easily answered, if they were familiar with the language. As a teacher, I am supposed to say and do interesting things so that pupils pick interest in the lessons, but when these jokes and stories were said in English, they still did not get interested. I knew that some of my pupils were confident and talkative at home but they were shy and dull whenever they arrived in class. I attribute this to the language barrier.*

*“When it came to selecting who should answer a question in class – some of my pupils put their faces down to avoid me! I think this was not because they did not have anything to say but because they did not know how to say it in English! This sometimes forced some of them to absent themselves. We strove to make them understand what we taught, but I totally agree that learning in a language they are familiar with can increase understanding among pupils.”*

One reason for such improvements is therefore reflected in what many of the interviewed pupils in P.2 and P.3 who are attending the Lusoga-medium schools said: they are interested in learning in Lusoga. Most of the pupils at the group discussions carried out with pupils from schools which were piloted said they found learning easy and interesting (see Box 4).

This results in a changing reading culture. Observations by most of the parents we interviewed with children in pilot schools showed that children take time to read what

### **Box 2 Achievements: teachers’ voices in pilot schools**

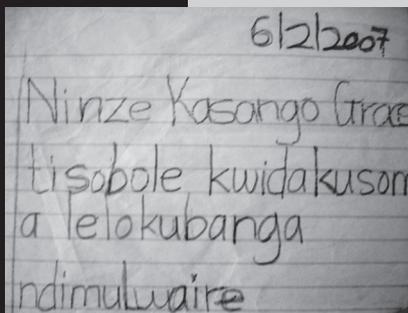
*“Nowadays many pupils can understand and explain what they learn. Teaching in Lusoga is a big relief to me because I no longer labour to explain too much in class before the pupils understand.” (Patrick Kankada, Bukanga Primary School)*

*“Here in Bukanga, the introduction of Lusoga has positively changed our school teaching and learning environment. To start with, teaching in Lusoga on the basis of themes has increased collaboration amongst teachers in lower primary and between teachers and the pupils. I learn more about my profession during lesson scheming with fellow teachers.” (Jane Nakasango, Bukanga Primary School)*

*“The lessons in Lusoga are livelier because they are packed with many interesting activities like story telling, saying riddles, and picking word cards for reading, singing songs and dances.” (Rose Nairuba, Namutumba Primary School)*

*“I am impressed by the way the curriculum was designed; it is packed with singing, saying riddles, games and drama. It puts a cultural perspective to learning. Our school was selected during the piloting period and since then, there are some noticeable changes, like pupils understanding what they are taught unlike the previous years when they only crammed things. Pupils who have gone through learning in Lusoga under the thematic curriculum and are now in P.4 and P.5 can properly interpret questions on their own during exams and no longer leave unanswered questions. For example, during this term’s examinations in science of P4, one pupil did not know the spelling of “minibus” but she wrote “minibaasi”, an indication that she got the idea and made an effort.” (Scholastica Katami, Namutumba Primary School)*

### Box 3 Functional writing skills in P.2 class



6/2/2007  
Ninze Kasongo Graae  
tisobole kwidakusom  
a lelोकubanga  
ndimulwaire

(Letter of a P.2 pupil at Bunhiiro Primary school, Iganga, explaining to a teacher her inability to attend class because of sickness.)

they come across, such as sign posts and writings on vehicles and buildings. One of the parents we met for instance noted that her young son had recently asked her for the meaning of “Bankofuganda”. His mother could not figure out what her son was referring to, until he had told her that he had read this on a banknote. Similarly, in most of the Christian schools visited in Luuka and Busiki counties, teachers said that pupils in lower classes are more willing and confident to take readings in Lusoga during prayer sessions, an occurrence rarely seen before teaching in Lusoga started. These examples show that pupils are eager to read, even difficult material. Improved performance in reading and writing at school gives the pupils a satisfaction which motivates them to start developing a reading culture.

Those who attend non-Lusoga teaching schools, according to some of the teachers met in Luuka, thus admire their friends who can read and write better than them, albeit in a local language, a sentiment shared by some of the pupils we met at non-pilot schools. Some pupils in the upper primary who were not instructed in Lusoga, in 9 of the 15 piloted schools, also expressed regret. In a group discussion in Bukyeega in Luuka with five children who do not go to schools where Lusoga is being used as medium of instruction, our informants summarised: “We feel we are missing out on certain things like telling stories, proverbs, and riddles, which our friends can do and yet we cannot, and answering in Lusoga during exams. There are times when you know the answer but cannot express yourself well in English. So you can write an answer in Lusoga and thus pass an exam.”

Another noticeable change is improved retention among the pupils. Many teachers interviewed in all the pilot schools said that children can recall what they have learnt longer than before they started learning in Lusoga. According to one of them, Samuel Ikoba, this is on account of the learning aids that teachers

### Box 5 Changing behaviour: voices of teachers

“Lusoga has reduced shyness among pupils. They can now speak to anybody freely. Before, some pupils thought that some teachers did not understand Lusoga, as they used to speak to each other in English only.” (John Muzira, Walugogo Primary School)

“Formerly, a pupil would know an answer but would keep quiet because of difficulty with English and fear of being laughed at. Some pupils then lost interest in studies. With the use of Lusoga, there is active pupil participation, and interest in learning and going to school have increased.” (Tageya Hasifa, Namungaalwe Primary school)

“Pupils easily understand the themes in this curriculum because they are about the things they go through in daily life and they are delivered in Lusoga, a language familiar to them. We use things like traditional stories, riddles and proverbs that match particular themes during the lessons. This has helped our pupils to learn many cultural values at the same time as academic knowledge.” (Prossy Bilyeeri, P2 teacher)

“Behaviour change is taught in this new curriculum. Pupils have learnt how to greet elders, parents and their fellow pupils. Pupils in pilot schools are much better behaved. They are respectful and polite.” (Praxida Katooko, Namungaalwe Primary school)

“At least some cultural values are being revitalized; I have noticed that whenever pupils enter my office, girls kneel when greeting, while the boys stand deferentially.” (James Kisaami, Canon Ibula Primary school)

“There is improved hygiene of pupils at school and at home. Even those in P.1 have learnt the proper use of latrines and wash their hands afterwards. With teaching in Lusoga, pupils now easily follow instructions. Before, in class or in the school compound during cleaning, and at assembly time, many pupils would not follow teachers’ instructions because they were in English.” (Scholastica Katami, Namutumba school)

“Absenteeism, late coming, dozing in class, quarrels among pupils have all reduced in my class. Before we started teaching in Lusoga pupils could avoid teachers in class, on the school compound, on the way home and some would even hide from their teachers if they reside in the same village. This has all changed. With Lusoga, pupils now initiate conversations with us at school and even outside. Recently I was surprised when two little girls volunteered to bring me banana fibre for making some of the instructional material we make here and helped me to make these materials. Learning in Lusoga has made us more parental than before and has helped our pupils to love school and feel as comfortable as they feel at home”. (Jane Nakasango, Bukanga Primary School)

use in class to accompany the delivery of the thematic curriculum. Teachers have been tasked to use these aids in most of their lessons and to leave them in class for pupils to exercise during their free time. According to Moses Wambi, a teacher and tutor, this gives the pupils an opportunity to revise what they have learnt and often times leads to incidental learning. Teachers also remarked that this contributes to a happier learning atmosphere in the class — singing, role playing, story telling, riddles and picking word-cards for reading.

## ii) Change in behaviour

The introduction of the thematic curriculum and its delivery in Lusoga also appears to have led to changes in pupil behaviour. The Centre Coordinating Tutors interviewed in Kigulu and Luuka counties for instance shared their experience: the thematic curriculum, designed to include themes on social life skills and general knowledge, including health and sanitation, morals, environment, culture and religion, has been successful because it is taught in Lusoga. Such thematic learning has helped the pupils to grasp ideas on their immediate environment, with a positive impact on their behaviour.

What changes have been noticed? First, improved confidence among pupils. This was for instance noted by most of the teachers met in Kigulu: when asked questions, the majority of pupils raise their hands in class. They express themselves in Lusoga without fear, are less timid and communicate freely amongst themselves and with their teachers. In an interview in Lukunhu primary school in Kigulu, we also noticed a P.1 pupil confidently entering the staff room to report a disturbing friend when the teacher was out of the classroom. Other teachers in the various schools visited around Iganga town also mentioned the free interactive atmosphere during class, as every pupil strives to raise his or her hand eager to answer questions.

Secondly, pupils have been found to be more creative, as observed by various head teachers, for instance, at St Patrick Kigulu Girls', Canon Ibula and Walugogo primary schools, which are all teaching in Lusoga. The production of teaching materials using local resources, such as banana fibre or sisal, has enhanced the creative skills of pupils since teachers involve them in the production of these materials. It has also given teachers an opportunity to spend more time with their pupils, thus contributing to continuous learning, as pupils more freely express themselves and ask questions to their teachers whenever they are together. The Secretary for Education in Iganga District also noted that teachers had taken the initiative to produce resource materials and teaching aids themselves, to make up for their scarcity.

Third, most of the teachers met reported “cultural change”: pupils have learnt values and been empowered with cultural knowledge, such as ‘proper’ ways of relating

## Box 4 Learning in Lusoga: pupils’ views

*“I like being taught in Lusoga. It is interesting because in class we sing, play, and tell stories and riddles. Lusoga is easy! I understand what the teacher says. When I go home I can tell my mother what the teacher said in class. I have learnt to write my name and that of my mother and father. I can also read words in the book.” (Salma Namugaya, P.2)*

*“I like learning in Lusoga because the teacher tell us to write words in Lusoga which is easy for me. When I go home I can write for my father all the words in my book. But I also like to learn English and know how to speak it.” (Susan Nangobi, P.3)*

*“I like being taught in Lusoga because I understand what I am taught. At home we use Lusoga, so I know most of the things that I am taught. In English, there are certain things you do not know.” (Samual Kasaadha, P.3)*

*“I could fear so much during time for the exams. The teacher would ask us to write answers in English yet I did not know English. When we learn in Lusoga I can read the questions and know the answers to write in the tests the teacher gives us.” (Suzan Namugaya, now in P. 4)*

*“We visit the home of our teacher and help her to make the things she uses to teacher us and even do some other work for her. We play a lot while learning in Lusoga.” (Two pupils in Bukanga)*

with fellow pupils at school and in class. Quarrelling and fighting have reduced. And many of the teachers interviewed in the piloted schools also said that pupils have learnt ‘proper’ ways of welcoming, greeting and bidding farewell. One of them, Praxida Katooko, said this is important because Kisoga culture stresses acceptable ways of being humble and greeting. She also noted that disciplinary cases had reduced in the classroom. Pupils had become more polite to each other and to their elders.

The class teachers in the different piloted school we visited also reported increased levels of initiative and voluntarism, especially as far as maintaining hygiene and sanitation at school are concerned. According to records availed by the same teachers, cases of untidiness among pupils had also reduced. They added that children participate freely and fully in the cleaning of the school compound and classrooms as well as making use of dustbins. The spirit of sharing has also increased: Moses Wambi, a tutor at Bishop Willis Core PTC, said that teachers trained for the thematic curriculum syllabus are taught to imbue in pupils a sense of sharing, as when, in one of the schools visited,

pupils were intentionally given few crayons by their teacher, to encourage sharing in a class assignment. Such improvements are attributed to the accent on life skills which pupils relate to their immediate environment, rather than a mere focus on academic excellence.

## b) Achievements beyond the classroom

Perhaps more unexpectedly, in the pupils' environment outside school, changes are also noticed, not only with the children, but also with their family and communities.

### i) Children

So far as the pupils themselves are concerned, one change that was reported was increased self-confidence and pride in their language. Many of the children we met proudly showed us their knowledge and skills in story and riddle-telling. One group of children interviewed from different families in Kigulu, described how their newly-acquired knowledge of Lusoga riddles and proverbs had resulted in their enhanced status not only amongst their peer, but also in the eyes of their parents and their elders.

In our interactions with children in other rural communities in this county, we also noticed increased self-confidence to communicate with outsiders quite freely – a sight previously rarely seen. Some of the parents with pupils in piloted schools noticed that their children were no longer timid and hide from their teachers when they meet them on the way or in homes. Children were also observed to communicate freely by the parents we interacted with. While interviewing Moses Lwamusaayi, for instance, Goretti Nambi (his daughter and a P.2 pupil at Busulaamu School) sat next to her father listening attentively and bold enough to tell a story about disobedience among youngsters during the interview. Such attitude is quite new, as previously children were shy, more interested in playing, and would rarely sit close to their parents to share their experiences. Parents we met attributed such change to learning in Lusoga.

Secondly, the children we met in the various pilot schools were in many cases able to relate ideas learnt in class to their immediate environment, as was confirmed by the teachers we interviewed. One example given to us by Patrick Kankadha, a teacher, was the ability of children to direct visitors in their vicinity, referring to local landmarks, a practice hardly seen before learning in Lusoga. Children can now explain things to others better than before. Supplementing this, Moses Mundu, another parent in Busulaamu, told us that children now know the various directions and routes in their vicinities and are able to direct people at crossroads when asked. He added: *“they are quite self-propelling as far as learning is concerned”*.

This might explain the reported increased interest among children to follow local radio programmes in Lusoga,



### Box 6 Changing behaviour at home

*“While at home, my daughter usually rewrites what she learnt in class. I have been attracted to her and these days I sit beside her to help her practice in her books. I have observed an improvement as far as the spirit of sharing is concerned. Recently my daughter in P.2 surprised us at home; she came back from school with a piece of sugarcane, cut it into six pieces and distributed it to all of us. I have observed the spirit of sharing when children here in the neighbourhood are playing. They no longer quarrel and fight over play materials and in their role plays they mimic the proper ways of greeting, calling lineage names. Some of them act as “elders” and demand to be “respected” just as they have learnt that it is good to respect elders.”* (Kawudha Zainabu, a parent)

*“I have learnt the proper way of greeting in Lusoga and to respect elders. I have learnt cleanliness; I advise my fellow pupils to help their parents with domestic work after school and let them make baskets and mats.”* (Deborah Kagoya, now in P.4)

*“Our daughters are learning cleanliness. This is an important factor in our culture especially for the girls. I am happy that the schools are acting as aunties.”* (Monica Naigaga, parent)

especially the news, something previously unheard of, according to groups of women interviewed and other parents met in group discussions in the two districts. As one said: *“My two little sons have started asking me to allow them to use my radio. They make sure they do not miss the evening news in Lusoga”*.

With this has come increased awareness of cultural identity and practices. As parents in most of the families we contacted in Luuka said, children now know better their family roots and lineage: every male is no longer referred to an “uncle”, but as “baaba”, “dhada”, or “Mwami Ngobi” as appropriate. Children were also reported to have started to greet “properly” with the traditionally acceptable words and gestures, and girls kneel with both knees on the ground, before both men and women. Daudi Kitaamirike, an elderly man we met in Bukyega, decried the behaviour he had noticed in the children attending English-medium schools,

including their use of English swear words to abuse their colleagues, possibly out of ignorance of their actual meaning. This was also noted by older parents in Luuka and Bugweri counties who reported changes, with pupils attending Lusoga-medium schools now practicing income generating activities like rope making, weaving brooms to buy books and generally making themselves more useful in the home and community. Some children mentioned taking mats, ropes, and baskets for sale to the weekly nearby markets.

### ii) Other children, family and community

Here again, we notice several positive changes. So far as *other children* are concerned, it would appear that a “multiplier effect” is at work: when at home, children turn themselves into teachers for their siblings and their neighbours’ children. Many parents (with children in piloted schools) we met in Kiyunga town in Luuka for instance said that their children now spend much time practicing writing on the ground in their home compounds and go on to challenge each other on what they have learnt at school. Other parents, even from distant communities in Namutumba, also testified to this achievement.

So far as *parents* are concerned, those we interacted with in many rural areas said they support their children, where they can, with homework and provide them with scholastic materials in order to help them improve their performance and not to miss lessons. Many of the parents thus reported that their children remind them to buy soap to keep their school uniforms clean. Teachers also observed a more positive attitude on parents’ part towards their children’s education (Box 7).

Secondly, there is enhanced learning from the children themselves: several parents in Namungaalwe for instance stated that they had learnt riddles, stories, proverbs, forgotten vocabulary and improved orthography from their children. Thus, a parent reported that Sam, his son in P4, corrected his spelling of “Muggaga” (in Luganda) to “Mugaga”, the correct Lusoga form.

As they develop interest in their children’s education, parents not only emphasise sending their children to school, but also no longer view formal education as alien because of the English medium previously used, in spite of many being illiterate or semi-literate. Parents can now “connect” with their children’s education, whereas the English medium would set them apart from their own children, if they had not attended school themselves.

So far as the *community at large* is concerned, a positive change of attitude is also emerging. This is because, according to elders, children have been noticed to exhibit pride in their language and share knowledge acquired at school, as when they share riddles and proverbs with

their peers or when undertaking culturally-linked tasks (weaving, rope-making), to the benefit of the homes of pupils attending the pilot schools, something which impressed the older generation. As above, in Buseesa and surrounding villages, many old men and women said they listen to stories and riddles recounted by their grand children, a new development since instruction in



### Box 7 Changes in the community

*“Children in this area now compete in spelling each other’s names and counting numbers, which was rare before they started learning in Lusoga.”*  
(Damian Mulumba, parent)

*“There is free interaction among the pupils at home to try and teach each other what they know or have learnt at school.”* (Praxida Katooko, parent and teacher)

*“I am so happy that our children are learning in our indigenous language. I went to school up to P.6 and in the past have not been interested in the way my children do their homework. My two children in P.2 and P.3 now volunteer to tell me what they have been taught, and this has made me interested in revising with them.”* (Martin Kaigo, parent)

*“Earlier, some parents on this village had withdrawn their children from Lusoga schools, thinking that their children would not learn properly. Some parents then brought them back because of the striking changes they see in our children back at home. They read, they write properly, and the behaviours have changed.”* (Jessica Nangobi, teacher at Busalaamu Primary School)

*“Previously, one could send a child to school for two terms without a book, pencil or pen. These days, it is a different story, parents respond positively. Parents have developed a positive attitude towards their children’s learning. They provide requirements like books, pencils and other resource materials that are needed. The numbers of pupils without books and pencils have reduced.”* (Two teachers at Namutumba School)

*“Our grand children are fast becoming aware of our traditional values, which had for long been ignored among the youth.”* (Grand parents in Namungaalwe)

Lusoga was introduced. Increased knowledge of Kisoga cultural values and practices as displayed by pupils, according to the elders met during the study, is bridging the generation gap that has existed for decades between the young and the old.

### iii) First traces of impact

The positive changes described in this chapter appear to have started having “ripple effects”. Using Lusoga in primary schools is beginning to lead to an increased appreciation of Kisoga culture, with enhanced self-esteem and a sense of affirmation in the community. For the children themselves, for instance, there is evidence of increased use, and even appreciation of Lusoga, as when pupils in lower classes have started to challenge those in upper classes who speak Luganda by asking “Are you a Musoga? Why don’t you speak Lusoga?”

Improved self-esteem has in turn led to improved social relationships and information flows, as when a child is asked to write a letter passing on the news of the loss of a relative, or to inform teachers that she is unable to attend class. In daily usage, children’s enhanced familiarity with Lusoga terms – whether with names of months, of seasons or other – eases communication with parents and teachers. This has led to a changed community perception of education, with parents no longer looking at formal education as foreign, but rather as part of them. Parents then become more willing to send their children to

school, to support the use of Lusoga at school, and thus surmount their earlier fears.

It therefore appears that, in the communities near the pilot schools we visited, the beginnings of an attitude shift can be noticed: the earlier feelings of negativity on Lusoga and Kisoga culture have been challenged by the programme and Lusoga teaching is being increasingly accepted by the local communities as an important aspect of cultural identity. Amongst the older generation, especially, the school was seen as a foreign concept and the destination for troublesome children. Now, the links between the community and the school and between the younger and the older generation are closing. With an enhanced perception of education as not being anti-culture, but an instrument for increased pride in their culture, the old and young generations are laying a strong foundation that will lead to reclaiming their language through education.

We conclude that Lusoga under the thematic curriculum has started to lead to noticeable changes in spite of its recent introduction as medium of instruction in primary schools. In particular, it has fostered an essential link between school, family and community. We found that all these partners have risen to the challenge of an innovation pregnant with uncertainties and, in many instances, have played their role and supported each other to make it a success, in spite of the challenges, limitations and fears, to which we now turn.

#### Box 8 Revitalising Lusoga: A parent’s view

*“I was happy when I first heard that Lusoga was to be taught in schools because, when the Baganda colonised Busoga, they exerted their influence and language on us and we were falsely made to believe that the Baganda were superior. In nearly all our social places like churches, markets, institutions and places of work, Luganda has been the language used, even when both communicator and listeners are Basoga. It is unfortunate to abandon our language, which was also dying away because of comments that some Luganda speakers have made, for example that Lusoga is dilute Luganda, that Luganda and Lusoga are similar, that there are no books in Lusoga, and worse of all that Lusoga is Luganda, but only spoken with a poor accent.*

*But with the teaching of Lusoga in schools, that mentality will change. I am sure that a number of books will be written in Lusoga and the Baganda will know that Lusoga is a distinct language from Luganda. With the availability of books in Lusoga and used in education, we shall be able to develop our language. I have started seeing signs of the revival of Lusoga, pupils speak Lusoga correctly and I attribute this to learning in Lusoga. (Moses Lyagoba, parent, Namungaalwe.)*

## 4. Challenges, fears and uncertainties

The news of the introduction of Lusoga - and later of the thematic curriculum - was received with mixed reactions in Iganga district. If some people were excited, many were worried, especially since Lusoga had for long not been a written language. We have seen that the business community, public offices, places of worship and the media had been dominated by Luganda: many Basoga were sceptical about Lusoga being used as a medium of instruction in schools. This chapter explores the reactions of parents, teachers and pupils to this novel introduction, both in terms of the school environment and outside it.

### a) Uncertainties at school

#### i) Inadequate preparation

For many of the teachers in the schools we visited, the entry of Lusoga in education was akin to using a new language and they wondered about their ability to teach in a medium they had had no formal training in. For many of the youth, the expectation was that education

in Lusoga was bound to fail and was not a road toward development and “modernisation”.

Such sentiments to a great extent reflect the rather hasty manner in which the local language and later the thematic curriculum were introduced. The process of developing the curriculum, training teachers, availing resource materials and ensuring that the available infrastructure would suit the programme were not based on sufficient research and detailed planning, nor were the major stakeholders sufficiently involved in the preparations, as we found out from teachers’ complaints when CRC trained them on Lusoga teaching. This view was also shared by many of the teachers interviewed in Kigulu County who said that, despite being experienced teachers, they were not invited to the preparatory conferences and the necessary time for consultations with community stakeholders was not availed. Time was a critical constraint: the two-week teacher training was insufficient, as were the two months given for bidding for instructional material. Teachers in all the schools we visited also stated that they were insufficiently reassured by the Ministry of Education about Government’s continued commitment to the programme.

Although functional District Language Boards (DLBs) are necessary to manage local languages as media of

instruction, no prior arrangements had been made in Iganga to facilitate the DLB and make it operational, a situation replicated, according to records at the DEOs office in Iganga, in other districts in Busoga, where they had failed to function since their establishment in 2003, for lack of adequate funding. The absence of a well established and functional DLB in Iganga, according to the DEO, has made lobbying for funds, vetting, and quality control of instruction materials slow and difficult.

Prior collaboration and networking between the Ministry of Education and organisations involved in related work was also deficient. The secretary for education in Iganga district for instance did not know of possible organisational partners for the use of Lusoga in schools in the district. Other officers interviewed also remarked that the Kyabazingaship (Busoga monarchy) was not involved in the preparations, including the Minister in charge of education. Similarly, CRC and LULA, according to its Chairman, were not consulted during crucial preparatory stages of the programme.

The change to local languages as medium of instruction under the thematic curriculum demanded new, translated materials and a dictionary. Very little time was imparted by the Ministry of Education for doing this (August to October 2006), an unrealistic timeframe for Lusoga, a previously poorly documented language, and with a literature in its infancy. Redesigning books by the various producers from English and from the old curriculum to match the requirement of the thematic curriculum in Lusoga created uncertainty and delays in the production process, even for the nationwide introduction of the programme in February 2007.

## ii) Teacher training and motivation

Teacher training in preparation for the pilot was insufficient, a problem also experienced during the nationwide phase-in. The induction workshops for teachers were short (only seven days) and not intensive enough. In Iganga, teachers expressed low morale and a negative attitude toward the thematic curriculum, which some referred as “strange to us”. Some teachers interviewed said they had been “hi-jacked” because they found themselves asked to implement an already packaged programme and had not been involved in the initial preparations of the curriculum. When training time came, only three teachers were selected from each Government-aided school, and one from each private school, which turned out to be inadequate to effectively implement the programme. These challenges have persisted. Thus, according to a teacher we met, “we were supposed to have Professional Development Course at the Coordinating Centres but our head teachers said they did not have money to sponsor us”. The District Education Officer, Iganga, explained that this was due to limited finance, in spite of the high pupil-teacher ratio (on average, 1:70 in the schools we visited). Such inadequate manpower has



### Box 9 Uncertainties among teachers

*“When I first heard of teaching in Lusoga, I became anxious because, though we are Basoga teachers, we have never been taught Lusoga. How could we teach in a language we have not had formal training in; where would we obtain the reference materials, since we had not seen any?” (Tageya Hasifa)*

*“As teachers we were scared when we first heard of using local languages in schools. The reasons were many but the main one was that for many years we have been used to teaching English and we did not know how to read and write Lusoga properly, even though we are Basoga. Some Lusoga words have difficult syllables and long sentences which make it difficult to read and write. We needed training. The area comprises of many ethnic groups which to some degree may make the use of local language difficult.” (Charles Kigonere)*

greatly affected learning. Private schools, in particular, expressed their inability to implement the new policy: “Unless Government comes in to support private schools, we might find it difficult to implement this programme”, a head teacher told us.

In addition some non-Basoga teachers found the language not only difficult but also foreign: they needed more training time. Other teachers whose native local languages are not part of the eleven local languages being used in this programme countrywide believe that their languages have been sidelined. They expressed low morale and negative sentiments. “I cannot support such a program when my own language was left out” one such teacher

#### **Box 10 Insufficient resources: a teacher’s voice**

*“Teacher training was poorly organized. Only a few teachers were trained and even for these, the training was inadequate to effectively handle this programme. Three teachers were trained from selected government-aided schools and only one from each private school. This was insufficient, as was the seven-day induction workshop, given the contents of the thematic curriculum coupled with a new language. Currently, we are supposed to have continuous training twice a month at the different zones but this is not happening. We are told there are no funds as yet.*

*The materials available are also insufficient and besides, some publishers are making Lusoga materials that are not relevant to us. Some materials are still in English and poorly translated into Lusoga by the teachers. We have not been involved in the vetting of learning materials. I have almost failed to translate the scheming and lesson planning from English to Lusoga. This, and other challenges, have led some of my fellow teachers to develop a negative attitude towards the programme and some have even refused to use Lusoga in lower primary.” (Faridah Namusobya, Namungalwe School)*

commented. Centre Coordinating Tutors informed us that some teachers returned to the old curriculum and had even abandoned the thematic curriculum.

Teachers handling this curriculum also expected ‘special’ rewards, to accompany what they considered a ‘special’ programme, since the Ministry of Education introduced allowances for other ‘special subjects’. Some also observed that whenever there is excellent performance in national primary examinations, only the P.7 teachers are rewarded, yet this is the result of a combined effort by all teachers, and especially of the foundation made by those of lower primary.

With ignorance, teachers have also been stereotyped in some schools. Teachers who are handling the pro-

gramme have been branded “vernacular teachers” thus fostering low self-esteem. Further, since female teachers work in lower primary in many schools, this is seen by some narrow-minded male colleagues as a feminine issue.

#### **iii) Availability and quality of materials**

To tackle the challenge of the lack of instructional material, teachers started improvising by making readers and charts in their respective schools. This was a positive initiative but it resulted in diverse resource materials, as teachers used their own translations of certain concepts. For instance, the word “weather” was interpreted differently by different teachers as “Mbeera”, “Obwiire”, or “Embeera Y’obwiire”. This left pupils confused in situations where more than one teacher handles the same class and arises because both the thematic curriculum and the teacher’s guide are still in English.

Some of the Lusoga charts, readers, and other literature in circulation also contain grammatical and orthographical errors. Teachers are then misled and pass on inaccurate information to pupils. One of the CCTs regretted these poorly produced materials, which have discouraged teachers from using them, as they did not follow standard Lusoga orthography. This problem, according to the DEO of Iganga, can be traced to an inactive DLB, as it is supposed to vet and regulate the production of materials at the district level. Moses Wambi, a tutor at Bishop Willis in Iganga also expressed surprise that the Ministry for Education did not consult institutions like CRC when looking for sources of instructional materials, adding that “the CRC has been in the field of Lusoga development for a long time and the Ministry should have given them the instruction materials for proof reading”.

In Bukanga, Luuka County, there were also complaints that publishers made pupils’ readers expensive for parents and schools, especially where they contained a single story.

## **b) Outside the school**

### **i) Stakeholders’ anxieties**

We have noted that Luganda and English usage amongst the Basoga adversely affected their local perception, appreciation and self-esteem. Luganda was - and still is to some extent - considered a language of progress, business, development and worship. The learned were therefore associated with Luganda.

Given this background, communities, parents and teachers have been sceptical about the relevance of Lusoga in education and other spheres of development, and of the existence of local capacity to train in Lusoga. Some individuals and communities are therefore still reluctant to embrace Lusoga. The youth in particular have

showed little interest, considering it “a primitive and difficult language”. In many of the villages and communities visited, we also heard fears that learning in Lusoga would not expose children to the competitive global world of technology and professional jobs. Much of this is related

### **Box 11 Challenges in the school system: the DEO, Iganga**

*“With a few exceptions, all primary schools in Iganga are today using Lusoga under the thematic curriculum. While there are many achievements, we also face challenges.*

*“We trained teachers from most of the schools to handle this programme, but lack sufficient funds and other facilitation. Nevertheless, after the initial induction workshop, we have continued inviting teachers handling P.1 and P.2 to the coordinating centres for on-going training every 3 weeks. In a situation where a school had no teacher who attended the initial training, we have made the necessary transfers. Private schools are greatly challenged because they have to foot the financial requirements and Government needs to consider these schools. Even Government schools need more help, as we cannot divert UPE funds to meet local language programme needs and, even if this were allowed, UPE funds are insufficient and come late! The teacher – pupil ratio also challenges us. Officially, it should be 1:55 but there are cases where it is 1:80. The Government ban on teacher recruitment has not helped me to tackle this problem.*

*“As the DEO, I have no authority over head teachers’ spending on books. However I try to guide them on books that are relevant to this programme. Since we still lack standardised instruction material in Lusoga, when I do so, some of the suppliers think I exercise favouritism. But some firms have turned this programme into a pure business venture which can compromise quality. We planned to set up bodies to handle authenticity and translation of materials in local language at different zones in the district which would also take care of exams. This initiative has failed because of lack of funds. Similarly, many of the teaching aids are supposed to be displayed but this is difficult to implement when most schools have few classroom blocks, with rough walls and no shutters; which also poses a security threat.*

*“Most of these challenges stem from the absence of a DLB in Iganga, which is supposed to oversee the implementation of policies about local language, and to lobby. The Board does not exist because there are no funds for it. Lobbying for funds and other support is difficult now, as it is supposed to go through the Board. I urge Government to look into these issues so that this programme of learning in the local language does not die.” (Menha Muzamiru, DEO, Iganga)*

to a fear that Lusoga will not give children a competence required for employment.

Some “middle-class” parents and local leaders also send their children to non-Lusoga teaching schools, yet encourage others to enrol their children in schools that are using Lusoga to implement the thematic curriculum. This sets a poor example, with non-Lusoga teaching schools acquiring the aura of being “best” – especially for educated and rich families. With some so-called “high-class” or “first-world” schools, such as Iganga Boys, Kigulu Girls, Buckley High school not using Lusoga to implement the thematic curriculum, this has been interpreted as Lusoga being meant for poor rural schools. In a prominent school in Iganga, Luganda is taught as a language, rather than Lusoga.

Some parents and teachers were also sceptical about the sustainability of this programme. Scholastica Katami, Centre Coordinating Tutor at Namutumba for instance shared: *“I hope that this programme does not end up like some earlier ones, for example the Performing Arts and Physical Education, Kiswahili and Introduction to Production Skills.”* These were initiated by the Ministry of Education but were reported to have collapsed, in part because of inadequate funding and publicity. Contrary to the view held by many older parents that learning in Lusoga has revived certain values and practices, others questioned the relevance of Lusoga in education. For them, learning good English is most important in education. One parent thus commented: *“I cannot take my child to school and pay school fees for him to learn Lusoga. When a child speaks good English after school I feel proud and I consider that as the value of the school fees I paid”. And another said: “My son knows Lusoga – what is the point of teaching him what he knows already?”*

#### **ii) Inadequate sensitisation**

Moses Wambi, a tutor, believes that parents have a negative attitude toward learning in Lusoga because they were not sufficiently sensitised about the programme. For them, he says, learning in Lusoga appears as an imposition by the Government. He adds that *“knowing to speak Lusoga is one thing and learning to write and read it is another. Most of our people know how to speak Lusoga but can hardly write it. We need them to attain good writing and reading skills.”*

This statement reflects the absence of a well designed community sensitisation programme on the thematic curriculum and the use of Lusoga in lower primary classes. In our interaction with communities, we found that most of the parents, pupils and teachers we met had heard about teaching in Lusoga in the form of rumours from friends and neighbours. The Education Office disseminated information through heads and other teachers in the various schools, through Parent/teacher associations, parents and pupils. This was however not

always clear, as shown by the continued confusion as to whether the programme involved learning in Lusoga or learning Lusoga as a language.

Little or no information leads to speculation and misunderstandings, sometimes taken to extremes, as in the case of a resident interviewed in Walugogo village, Iganga, who thought that by introducing Lusoga in primary schools, the Government plans to dwarf the intellect of



### **Box 12 Children's conflicting opinions in Bukyega village**

*Bukyega village in Luuka has pilot and non-pilot schools. We were told that pupils have engaged in heated debates as to which are preferable and met a group of 30 children, aged 7-12.*

*Although hardly any of them could respond correctly to a greeting in English, most appreciated learning English. Many looked up to English speakers because, as they said: "People can admire you when you speak it – you can be unique."*

*Nevertheless, those who went to Lusoga schools said they liked learning in Lusoga because it is easy: before, they did not understand what the teacher used to teach, with the risk of the teacher getting annoyed and beating them.*

*However, one pupil, despite his love for Lusoga, expressed his difficulty: "I am a Musoga, I love Lusoga but it is difficult to pronounce and spell certain words". Some of the children said that their love for Lusoga came from their parents' influence but, if given the opportunity, they would have chosen English as well.*

*While they acknowledged that it is difficult to understand what the teacher says in English, many said they preferred being taught in English because they wanted to learn to speak it. They explained that they already knew Lusoga so did not admire learning it. The majority we met said they had no regrets for not being instructed in Lusoga. One boy said: "We come to school to learn English.... how can you learn English in Lusoga?" Another added: "I know Lusoga so I want to know English also." And a P.5 pupil added: "But Lusoga...it is only good for speaking...can you write a love letter to your girlfriend?...she can just laugh at you."*

its citizens! More importantly, there is confusion among parents who think that by using Lusoga, English has been completely removed from the curriculum, ignorant of the fact that English is taught as a subject under the thematic curriculum.

Local leaders in most of the communities visited also proved divided on the issue of learning in Lusoga. The opponents are "de-campaigning" the programme as a Government "ploy to kill the education system in the country", as one of them said in Kiyunga trading centre. Such assertions are misleading some sections of the public and raising anxieties especially among rural people who do not have access to accurate information.

### **Box 13 Confusion in the community**

*"This programme is good but it is constrained by the effects of poor preparation. It started in an uncertain situation: I am a village leader and teacher but I was not involved in any community preparation. Parents learnt about it through rumour and often asked me about it, but I was equally uninformed. There was some limited sensitisation, not in the communities, but in schools during parents and teachers' meetings, although such meetings are not attended by many people. Up to now, many people are ignorant about learning in the local language. In my village, confusion persists between teaching Lusoga and teaching in Lusoga. Many think that this programme is about teaching Lusoga; they therefore see no reason to be excited about learning Lusoga which they speak, even if they cannot read it." (Faridah Namusoby, Namungalwe)*

Finally, although monitoring and evaluation was planned, funds for this are hard to come by, according to the District Education Office. In the absence of continuous monitoring and evaluation, the information gap between policy implementers and recipients at the grassroots is allowed to persist. Mr. Nabikamba, the secretary for education in Iganga District, for instance said that his office has been handicapped from contributing meaningfully to this programme: "Despite being the secretary for education, I do not know what is happening in schools and communities as far as learning in Lusoga is concerned. I do not have adequate facilitation to visit primary schools in my district. The kind of facilitation I have is insufficient to even tour one county".

Finally, some fears and hesitations concern the interpretation of culture. Teaching in Lusoga has been branded an activity for women teachers. This perception was observed amongst groups of male teachers in most of the schools visited in Kigulu County which makes up most of the urban areas of Iganga district. From a Kisoga cultural point of view, women can be considered less competent than men, especially in "the professions". The tendency of accepting all aspects of the local culture

as being unquestionable and, by implication, desirable is high: for instance, emphasising a subordinate role for girls in the home, legitimised because that is “what our culture says”, according to many of the male respondents we interacted with.

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

The introduction of Lusoga and of the thematic curriculum in lower primary over the past two years has led to noticeable positive changes. It has in particular fostered the essential link between school, family and community. Parents, teachers and community leaders in many villages have risen to the dawn of education in Lusoga, although this was an innovation pregnant with uncertainties. This chapter summarises our key findings and learning points, as well as recommendations to policy-makers and implementers for consideration as a way to further improve the use of local languages as a teaching medium in our primary schools.

### a) Learning points

Although Lusoga is the local language widely used in daily life in Iganga, its introduction as a medium of instruction in lower primary classes was seen as a novel idea which many people found difficulty coming to terms with. This reflects a history of suppression and marginalisation of Lusoga by foreigners and, in some instances, by the Basoga themselves.

#### *i) Positive changes in the pilot schools*

In the first instance, our research shows that teaching in Lusoga has improved academic performance, as the international literature on this subject would lead us to expect. Most of the concerned pupils we met in Iganga and Namutumba districts reported more interest in learning than was previously the case. Many also displayed increased retention levels, especially in academic and life skills, a development attributed to learning in Lusoga. There is also a demonstrable enhanced reading and writing ability compared to before the introduction of Lusoga. Secondly, the relationship between pupils and teachers has improved. This, as evidenced in the responses from parents and teachers, is attributed to teaching in Lusoga where pupils express themselves freely thanks to their familiarity with the language. Thirdly, children’s behaviour in most of the pilot schools improved, a conclusion based on testimonies given by teachers in schools and communities.

#### *ii) Positive changes outside the classroom*

Many of the parents we met reported that today’s children, rather than being in their own world without knowledge of their language, have now been helped to know their mother tongue and value it. Parents also noticed that children were more eager to perform daily errands at home, and to behave “properly”, which they said was linked to a better understanding of the local culture imparted at school. Outside school, children have also been noticed to exhibit pride in their language and share knowledge acquired at school, as when they tell riddles and proverbs to their peers or when undertaking culturally-linked tasks (weaving, rope-making), thus introducing a beneficial “multiplier effect” in the homes of pupils attending the pilot schools. This particular observation came out vividly in the two rural counties of Luuka and Busiki, as opposed to the more urban parts of Iganga district - mainly in Kigulu County. The ability to relate and apply the knowledge pupils have acquired to daily life situations is another positive change attributed to learning in Lusoga. This is thought to be the case, because before the introduction of Lusoga, as many teachers and parents in the communities visited stated, children/pupils were unable to relate classroom knowledge to their immediate environment.

#### *iii) Linking language and culture at school and in the community*

It appears that, in the communities near the pilot schools we visited, the beginnings of an attitude shift can be noticed: the earlier feelings of negativity on Lusoga and Kisoga culture have been challenged by the programme. Lusoga teaching is being increasingly accepted by the local communities as an important traditional aspect of society. We gave examples of this, including parents’ pride in their children’s ability to differentiate between their different relatives, using accurate Lusoga terms. This shift in attitude has resulted in two positive outcomes: one is that the linkage between school and community is strengthening, partly because formal education is no longer seen as a foreign concept. Second, parents and pupils are becoming more supportive of the programme and schooling in general, thus surmounting their earlier hesitations.

#### *iv) Fears and uncertainties persist*

Despite these achievements, fears and uncertainties about Lusoga as a medium of instruction, and the thematic curriculum generally, persist.

First, there is concern about the feasibility and sustainability of the programme. Both parents and teachers in the communities and schools we visited wondered about the

long-term commitment of Government to this initiative, given the history of other programmes that proved short-lived, and the limited extra funding that is being made available. This also reflects itself in the laissez-faire attitude exhibited by some teachers about the programme.

Second, the youth are biased against local languages as medium of instruction in lower primary, partly as a result of ignorance as to the continued teaching of English, as they argue that this will retard their academic achievements and undermine the value of school certificates, both all-important for seeking rare jobs. We see this as a threat because the youth are said to be influential on opinions in community matters.

Third, the above point reflects the limited information about teaching in Lusoga and the thematic curriculum available to parents, pupils and community leaders. Such ignorance has resulted into hesitation and the tendency to “de-campaign” this initiative in some circles. This has also taken the form of labelling teaching in the local language as “teaching for the poor”, while the sons and daughters of the better-off attend prestigious private schools and, in the process, acquire a ticket for well-paid jobs. Ignorance about teaching in Lusoga and the use of the thematic curriculum is a serious threat to the program.

The absence of a functional District Language Board (DLB) in Busoga has been an important contributory factor for some of these challenges. It is through the DLB that lobbying, implementation and evaluation of the use of local languages in education is meant to be channelled. The absence of a functional Board undermines these aspects of the programme.

Finally, some fears and hesitations concern the interpretations of culture as far as teaching in Lusoga is concerned. At one level, teaching in Lusoga has been branded an activity for women teachers because, from the Kisoga cultural point of view, women can be considered less technically competent than men. There is also a tendency of accepting all aspects of the local culture as being unquestionable and, by implication, desirable: for instance, emphasising a subordinate role for girls in the home, legitimised because that is “what our culture says”.

## **b) Recommendations and policy implications**

Unless shortcomings, fears and uncertainties are addressed, this programme is unlikely to progress as it should. We suggest that the following be looked into:

### *i) Enhance community sensitisation and information*

Government should better inform the public on the objec-

tives and expected benefits of the programme, to allay people’s fears and uncertainties. The position of English in the new curriculum, in particular, needs to be explained, as well as any notion that Lusoga will delay the acquisition of good English skills. Radio stations, if used, could be of great impact in this respect.

### *ii) Ensure adequate resourcing for schools*

The viability of the programme will ultimately rely on its quality: sufficient numbers of teachers need to be trained, good quality materials need to be developed and availed, and efforts to improve the school infrastructure continued (including the decentralised production and procurement of learning materials). To some extent, this intervention should be extended to private schools as well.

### *iii) Support a functional District Language Board*

The Education White Paper emphasises the establishment of DLBs, as an essential quality controller in the provision of local language instruction. To date, these are not fully functional: we recommend that these be strengthened as soon as possible to avoid, for instance, discrepancies in orthography and grammar that can undermine confidence in the programme. The Board’s activities require adequate funding and monitoring of its activities by the Ministry of Education.

### *iv) Support networking and collaboration*

The District Education Office, and in particular the Inspectorate, need to collaborate more with other institutions, community-based organisations and others, such as CRC, that are closely in touch with local communities. This might help the DEO’s office to reach the “grass-roots” to appreciate the real challenges they face as far as learning in Lusoga is concerned. CRC, LULA, and the Lusoga language Development Association also may be instrumental in training teachers and in advocacy issues.

The Ministry of Education also needs to cooperate with the Ministries for Education and Culture in the Kyabazingaship of Busoga and help them initiate activities that will boost the Government’s effort to develop Lusoga through education. This could include the introduction of a programme on the local FM stations about the cultural benefit of education in Lusoga, encouragement to the development of Lusoga reading and writing materials.

### *v) Further Research*

Research needs to be undertaken, in collaboration with all concerned, on two main fronts: one, to determine the sustainability of the programme and what it will take to keep in going. Two, to learn from similar experiences in other districts that are implementing the programme. ■

## vi) *Monitoring and evaluation*

District education officials need to be encouraged and facilitated to monitor the programme on a regular and consistent basis, as is the case with other education initiatives. Results need to be disseminated to encourage all, including recalcitrant schools and those referring to Lusoga-teaching schools as “third world schools”, to review their attitudes.

Addressing these issues demands a concerted effort by all stakeholders especially the cultural institutions, NGOs, the donor community and other well-wishers, to join hands with Government, so that that this very worthwhile initiative is given every chance of sustained success.

In all these, CRC will keep playing a role in the years to come. In particular, it plans to continue to support the development of Lusoga teaching materials, to continue and train teachers, and to develop a community sensitisation campaign

The introduction of local language as medium of instruction is a special gift for Lusoga-speaking people. In spite of mixed reactions and other challenges, the considerable achievements - especially with pupils both within and outside the classroom - provide a strong foundation on the road to reclaiming our local language.

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