

## Language choice for development the case for swahili in Kenya

Development, aimed at a general improvement of the quality of life in society, should target the majority and not the minority at the exclusion of the majority. Attainment of such development, in turn, calls for involvement of people in making decisions as well as in the plans for their implementation. They will then feel that they own those efforts and participate more enthusiastically in efforts to achieve stated goals. This calls for an effective communication system to link the government and other development agencies on the one hand, and the public on the other, enabling an appropriate flow of information between the two. If well utilized, the media would play a very significant role in ensuring such a flow of information. This article examines the role played by the media in trying to achieve the stated development goals in Kenya. While it would have been more effective to reach people in their first languages, considering the multilingual nature of the Kenyan society, the challenges are many. Fortunately, there is Swahili, a language spoken and understood by many, not only in Kenya, but also in the rest of East and Central Africa. In spite of the potential it has to reach a wider audience, it is not adequately utilized in the media. Language practice in the media relies more on the use of English to communicate important information intended to reach all, irrespective of the first language spoken and knowledge of English. In order not to continue excluding the majority from public discourse on development and other national issues, the article calls for a change in the language policy in the media