

Original Research Article

## Translating Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into Chichewa: A Quick Efficacy Assessment

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### ABSTRACT

This paper purposed to analyse the efficacy of the Chichewa version of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that the government of Malawi, through the Department of Information, recently produced. Language barrier remains one of the main reasons for the SDGs' unpopularity among the majority of Africans. This leaves most Africans unengaged in the goals' implementation process. Mindful of this, many African countries have embarked on projects to translate the SDGs into indigenous African languages. In Malawi, the SDGs were translated into the local languages in 2018. This study sought to conduct a quick review of the entire project to ascertain its effectiveness against the background that previous translations of various policy and other public documents are replete with substantial communicative flaws. How then was the project to translate the SDGs into Chichewa uniquely designed to ensure positive outcomes? What strategies did the translators use to ensure effective localisation of the SDG document given its international nature? To answer these and other key questions, the researchers collected data through Key Informant interviews and document analysis. The data was analysed within the framework of Farrahi Avval's taxonomy of communication strategies. The study found that both linguistic and non-linguistic communication strategies were used in the translation. Both of these strategies were marred by serious shortcomings that have the potential to prevent effective communication from taking place. The study, thus, concludes that the information in the Chichewa version of the United Nations' SDGs remains largely inaccessible to the illiterate and semiliterate Malawians.

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### Introduction

The purpose of this paper was to analyse the efficacy of the Chichewa translation of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Malawi. Since their establishment in 2015, the SDGs have been translated into many languages across the world. This is, particularly, important to ensure their awareness. In Malawi, an initiative to localise the SDGs into the local languages took off in 2018. The government of Malawi, through the Department of Information and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development in conjunction with the Malawi office of the United Nations (UN), embarked on a project to translate the SDGs and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) documents into three indigenous Malawian languages; Chichewa, Tumbuka and Yao. This, it was explained, was done to expand the documents' usability in the

rural communities (Zodiak Online, 2018). The Chichewa SDG document was specifically targeted in this study because Chichewa has a near-lingua franca status in the country. The study's results are, therefore, nationally beneficial.

In Malawi, translation or production of development related documents into Chichewa is not new. Many national, sub-national and institutional policy and strategic documents have been translated into Chichewa with varying degrees of communicative efficiency. For most of these documents, the efficacy or lack of it is usually down to a number of factors including, choice and composition of translation teams. With regard to the translation of the SDGs into Chichewa, this study sought to specifically assess how the overall design of the translation project might have had an influence on the quality of the output. This was done by establishing the composition of the team that translated the document then critically analyzing the actual Chichewa SDG document using Farrahi Avval's taxonomy of communication strategies.

The rest of the paper is sequentially structured as follows: presentation of literature review on SDGs, language at the United Nations, and the role of localisation in promoting inclusivity in the global development agenda. The second section presents a detailed analysis of the problem and methodology. This is followed by a section on results and discussion where both linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of the translation are discussed within the framework of Farrahi's taxonomy of communication strategies. The paper ends with a conclusion where a summary and list of recommendations are provided.

### **Literature Review**

In 2015, the United Nations launched 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a blueprint for international development. Also called global goals, these SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity (UNDP, 2019). SDGs provide clear guidelines and targets for countries to adopt taking into consideration both the global challenges and individual countries own priorities. The predecessor global development framework, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which run from 2000 to 2015, were faced with a number of challenges. Reddy (2016, p.5), for instance, points out that "a critical challenge encountered in the early implementation of the MDGs as opposed to the SDGs was the initial lack of grassroots consultation and support, and most importantly, community ownership." Yet, as the UN (2014b) argues, the achievement of the SDGs largely depends on the decisive local action and local buy-in and ownership. Effective local buy-in can only be attained if the SDGs are popularized sufficiently enough at the local level. This requires an effective communication system where language is a critical component.

### **The UN, language and information dissemination**

As an institution, the UN is dedicated to the development of 'all' member countries by addressing systematic inequalities that retard peace, security and sustainable socioeconomic growth. It is an organisation that operates under an increasingly diverse environment. For information to circulate smoothly in such an environment, it is a requirement that language be used effectively. As Tonkin (2011) points out, the UN brings together sovereign states, and at its core, it is an organisation that values communication for the purpose of collective action. Information from the UN needs to flow to the lowest levels in 'all' member countries yet as an institution, the UN maintains only six official languages; Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. Official information is framed in these languages before it is translated into other languages for broader dissemination. Translation and interpretation services are, therefore, crucial in the work of the organisation for it to communicate issues of global concern as widely as possible. In recognition of the significance of language and the process of information dissemination, the UN established 63 regional information centres called United Nations Information Centres (UNICs). Sixteen of these UNICs are in Africa. The role of these centres is summarized as follows on UNIC website<sup>4</sup>:

The network of 63 United Nations Information Centres are key to the Organization's ability to reach the peoples of the world and to share the United Nations story with them in their own languages. These centres, working in coordination with the UN system, reach out to the media and educational institutions, engage in partnerships with governments, local civil society organizations and the private sector, and maintain libraries and electronic information resources.

In most regions of the globe, the UNICs have not fully solved the problem information flow. For example, for UNIC Lusaka, all the social media platforms are maintained in English. This is what McEntee-Atalianis (2017) also complains about when she laments that, despite Africa being the most linguistically diverse continent, an indigenous African language (Kiswahili) is supported by only two out of the sixteen African UNICs. This foregrounds the

<sup>4</sup> <https://unic.un.org/aroundworld/unics/en/whoWeAre/index.asp>

complexity of the problem of language in the UN system, and how it, in turn, disadvantages Africa and other developing countries. The alternative is for African countries to exercise vigilance by stepping in with locally bred language solutions to this problem because the UN, with its ever-increasing workload and decreasing budgets, has scaled down its use and provision of multilingual services (McEntee-Atalianis, 2017).

From the discussion above, it can be argued that the language problem at the UN is caused by the UN's not doing enough on the problem. For example, some scholars support this line of thought by highlighting that none of the 17 SDGs is dedicated to issues relating to language. However, language scholars also contribute to the problem. The UN provides a very fertile policy context for exploring different language questions, but as Fettes (2015) observes, there is not much about the UN in the language policy literature, yet, just like the UN's major focus is on the least developed countries, the field of language planning was originally also conceived as a means of addressing language problems in developing countries. The paucity of research data on language and the UN means that there is insufficient factual data that can inform language policy reforms at the UN for the benefit of developing regions.

### **The imperative for the localization of the SDGs**

One of the SDGs' key point of departure from the Millennium Development Goals is the emphasis on inclusion and equality. This is encapsulated by the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon who, during the 69th Session of the General Assembly in December 2014, spoke as follows: "all voices [had] demanded that we leave no one behind, ensuring equality, non-discrimination, equity and inclusion at all levels..." adding that "we must pay special attention to the people, groups and countries most in need, women, youth, minorities, indigenous peoples...[and] persons with disabilities" (United Nations, 2014c paragraphs 51 and 68). If the SDGs are going to be judged as successful, it will be because of the impact that these SDGs have made on the lives of the marginalized groups of people highlighted above. Therefore, the SDGs need to be relevant and accessible to the people who they are framed to serve. At a meeting of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the SDG agenda, Ki-Moon admitted that "...all development is ultimately local. As the world strives for a more sustainable path in the years ahead...local voices will be crucial elements in our midst..." (Reddy, 2016, p. 5). In a study on the place of SDGs in Malawi's development, Chirwa (2016), concluded that if growth can be inclusive, the likelihood of moving the population out of extreme poverty from low to mid- or high-income levels is possible.

It is clear that the SDGs need to be adapted to the needs of the local people for whom they are intentioned to benefit. This can be achieved through the process of localisation. Schäler (2007) defines localisation as a linguistic and cultural adaptation of digital content to the requirements of a foreign market. This includes the provision of services and technologies for the management of multilingualism across the digital global information flow. In the context of the SDGs, localization entails remolding the global dimensions and aspects of the goals by replacing them with dimensions that are indigenously relevant. This enables the local people to identify with the goals and locate them within their socio-cultural world. This process includes translation of the goals from the UN official languages into the people's languages. Commenting on the role of translation in development, Theodora (2017, p.383), states that "...translation practices are very vital for massive participation of the population in [the] development process." The success of the localization process of these SDGs is determined by the level of participation of the community at large that it induces (Reddy, 2016). Because participation cannot occur if citizens are uninformed, the UN listed access to knowledge as one of the key indices for human development (McEntee-Atalianis, 2017). It is difficult to attain this knowledge if the media and other sources of information are not within people's reach. Framing the SDGs in languages of the people is, therefore, a significant step towards making SDGs genuinely local.

The importance of localizing international development frameworks like the SDGs has been widely discussed. The UNDP (2014c) maintains that localization enables local communities and community based organisations to hold governments publicly accountable for the progress made in relation to the SDG national targets. This view is corroborated by Franklin, Naik, Pappa and Sacher (2017) who, writing in the context of the role of population and family planning in implementation of SDGs in Malawi, argue that successful implementation of population related policies that support SDGs in Malawi requires that they be made locally relevant and local officials should be held accountable for their implementation. Holding public office bearers accountable is one of the key facets of grass-root participation in a democratic development set up like Malawi's. It should be reiterated that citizens cannot hold public officers and officials accountable on an agenda the people themselves barely understand. Localization of the SDGs, therefore, boosts the citizens' ability participate in the SDGs implementation process by among other things, monitoring their country's performance on all indicators.

Realising the significance of localizing the SDGs, many countries in Africa have embarked on projects to translate the SDGs into indigenous African languages. For example, Ighobo (2016) reports on a project in Cameroun led by the youth activist, Ntiokam Divine, that has seen the SDGs get translated into three local languages; Ewondo, Shupamum, and Basaa. In Nigeria, the SDGs were translated into Igbo, Yoruba and Hausa, and there is also a Swahili version accessible to communities in Swahili-speaking countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Zanzibar, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Ighobor, 2016). Despite the SDGs being launched in 2015, it took over three years for Malawi to begin localizing them. This means that more vital years have already been lost because, to fully internalize the goals and begin to actively participate in their implementation process, people need enough preparatory time. What it means is that, for some SDGs indicators that have 2020 targets, the question of community participation in their achievement has been seriously compromised. Even those indicators that have 2030 targets have lost precious time that cannot be easily recouped. Ideally, the SDGs were supposed to be localised in 2015 before or just after their launch so that everybody takes part in the implementation process from the very start.

### **Problem Statement, Research Questions and Theoretical Framework**

The translation of internationally framed documents is inherently a demanding task. None of the UN official languages in which SDGs were initially framed is African. This makes the UN official communications culturally distant to Africa. As Cao and Zhao (2008) admit, translation of the United Nations documents is so challenging because it requires high level of consistency besides being technically so demanding. Without rigorous, systematic and effective measures to successfully localize such documents for the consumption of local audiences, information contained in the documents would remain inaccessible to most people. The SDGs translation wave that has reached Malawi should, in all honesty, be some news worth celebrating. However, we have seen national policy and strategic development documents being translated into Chichewa for the purpose of broadening their accessibility. In most cases, when wrong procedures and consultants have been engaged in the translation process, coupled with poor dissemination mechanisms, the impact of such works has largely been minimal. So, how differently was this particular SDGs Translation project designed and executed to ensure that it achieves its purported goals? What communicative strategies were employed during the translation process to ensure successful localization of this 'very global' document? Were the selected strategies successful or not? What lessons can be learnt from the project? These are the key questions at the heart of this paper.

This analytic study was carried out within the framework of Sahar Farrahi Avval's taxonomy of Communication Strategies (CSs). According to Avval (2012) CSs are those strategies that language users or translators use whenever they feel some deficiencies in vocabulary and grammar leading to partial or complete misunderstanding or interruption in communication. In Avval's framework, translation is taken as a form of communication where a message from a source language is transferred into a target language (Avval, 2013). In the course of translating, there are bound to be problems emanating from the different cultural backgrounds of the source text and the target text. Based on this, we expect translators to face many problems in rendering SDGs, a globally constructed English text, into Chichewa which is a technically underdeveloped Malawian language. A translator, is therefore, required to employ effective strategies to handle any problems that may arise in the course of translating. Farrahi's taxonomy, divides CSs into two; linguistic and non-linguistic strategies. Linguistic strategies are those which employ linguistic elements such as words and sentences for compensation during the communication process (Avval, 2012). Non-linguistic strategies, on the other hand, are those strategies which do not use words or any linguistic elements, but make use of sounds, movements, objects and others to deal with breakdowns during communication (Avval, 2012). Cognizant of the fact that the UN SDGs documents are rich in both linguistic and non-linguistic tools of communication, Farrahi's framework was deemed, particularly, suitable as an analytical tool for the study.

### **Methodology**

This study is based on the Chichewa brief of the UN SDGs, a booklet produced through a translation of SDGs Project implemented by the Malawi Government through the Department of Information and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development in conjunction with the UN Malawi office. The project's main objective was to translate the sustainable development goals and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) into three major local languages; Chichewa, Tumbuka and Yao. This is seen as a way of increasing understanding of the SDGs among Malawians. In this study, focus was on the Chichewa version because Chichewa is arguably Malawi's most widely spoken and understood local language. As such, much of the study's findings would be relevant to the widest audience.

The study used a qualitative data collection strategy where document analysis method was coupled with key informant (KI) interviews. The document was analysed to identify different communication strategies that the translators used. These strategies and various other aspects of the translation were critically analysed basing on Farrahi's taxonomy of translation

communication strategies. The researchers collapsed data collected from KIs under three themes, namely translation participants, organisation and execution of translation, and lessons learnt from the project.

## Results and Discussion

### The key informants

The study used two key informants to elicit data. One was an official from the Department of Information who coordinated the entire project. The other KI was one of the officers who participated in the actual translation process of the document into Chichewa.

### Structural design of the translation project

The project was basically collaborative in design. The department of information teamed up with the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development and the UN Malawi Office. The membership of each stakeholder in the project is justifiable. The Department of Information is charged with processing and disseminating information to Malawians. This project falls within their mandate of operations because an informed citizenry depends largely on the information that they receive from the department. The Ministry of Economic Planning and Development is at the centre of conceptualizing, implementing and assessing the success of development activities in Malawi. The ministry is, therefore, the focal point for the implementation of the SDGs in Malawi. The UN, on the other hand, is the originator of the SDGs. It is the duty of the UN to make sure that all countries meet the targets by providing all forms of support. Helping Malawi to translate the SDGs is one way of placing Malawi on the right track in achieving the SDG targets. As Anastasiou and Schäler (2010) claim, the 'cooperation' of those contributing to localization process is vital. Therefore, the multi-stakeholder approach in the project resonates well with the requirements of localisation processes.

In terms of the actual translation process, three teams were instituted. One team translated into Chichewa, the other one into Tumbuka and the last one into Yao. Members of each team were basically district information officers who are, by profession, trained journalists. Each one of them has a first degree.

### Linguistic assessment of the translation

In general, from a linguistic point of view, the translation showed both strengths and shortcomings of varying degrees. Two examples of instances where communication strategies were successfully employed from a localisation perspective are singled out.

#### *Use of explication strategy*

The strategy is an important communication strategy. As Avval (2012) explains, the strategy involves giving examples to aid understanding of a concept instead of just describing it. This happens when a translator thinks that a mere direct translation may not be conceptually transparent. During the SDGs translation into Chichewa, this strategy helped translators to overcome communication barriers of varying types. A good example is found in the translation of SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Target 3 of this goal makes reference to 'waterborne diseases.' Instead of translating the term 'waterborne diseases' into Chichewa, the translators just used specific examples of waterborne diseases (*likodzo, kamwazi and kutsegula mmimba*, i.e. bilharzia, dysentery, and diarrhea, respectively). By exemplifying it in this way, the information is made more relevant to the local people because everyone already knows that these diseases are waterborne.

#### *Use of avoidance strategy*

This strategy is also very useful in solving communication problems. In the avoidance strategy, the language user simply avoids some of the structures or words when translating (Avval, 2012). Avoidance is useful when the avoided sections are judged to be of little relevance to the target audience. A good example is in the translation of SDG 4 (Quality Education). In target (c) of this goal, the translators produced the following rendering: *...maiko okwerea kumene makamaka osaukitsitsa...* (developing countries especially the least developed countries). In the original English version, this target also made reference to 'small Island states' in addition to developing and least developed countries. The 'small Island states' has been eliminated in the translation. Malawi is actually a landlocked country, hence less connected to anything relating to island states. To most Malawians, island states are unknown such that making mention of them in the translation is of little use. The strategy was, therefore, effective in keeping the document focused on content that is important to Malawians.

Although the document used some strategies effectively to overcome communication problems, a number of ineffective translation decisions were also made. We highlight few of those translations below.

### *Inappropriate utilisation of topic avoidance strategy*

Topic avoidance strategy is basically deemed inappropriate when the translators use it to omit crucial information that the target audience need to know. A good example is seen when translating SDG 5 (Gender Equality). In target 6 of the goal, two conferences are mentioned; the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (PAICPD) and the Beijing Platform for Action. But in the translation, the acknowledgment of the two is not clear. The translators used *...ndondomeko za mgwirizano wamsonkhano wachitukuko ndi chiwerengero cha anthu womwe unachitikira mdziko la China* (which literally means programme of action on the agreement on development and population conference which took place in China). This rendering makes little reference to the Beijing Platform for Action. In addition to that, the translation suggests that the PAICPD, which was convened in Cairo, Egypt, took place in Beijing. Such omissions and misrepresentation of facts amount to information poisoning.

A similar omission was identified in SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). Target 8 of the goal mentions examples of workers whose rights need to be protected (i.e. migrant workers, women, and those in precarious employment). In the translation, this stretch was rendered as follows: *...anthu ochokera m'maiko ena makamaka amai* (migrants, more especially women). As can be seen, mention of people in precarious employment has been avoided. This is serious error because in Malawi, there is a large number of people who can be classified as being in precarious employment. They include those working in construction and mining sites, laboratories, and other high-risk jobs. Most often, the rights of such people are trampled upon. The omission, in this case, has chopped a very significant portion of information.

### *Lexical inconsistency*

Lexical consistency is one of the most critical aspects of translation of informative documents like the SDGs. In his study on lexical consistency, Guillou (2013, pp.16-17) concludes as follows: "on the whole, it seems reasonable to encourage the consistent translation of nouns, across all genres." The Chichewa document displays several shortcomings in this aspect. A very good example can be found in the translation of SDG 9 (Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure). In target 1, 'infrastructure' is translated using a generic term *zinthu* (things) while in target (c) of the same goal, the same 'infrastructure' is rendered as *zomangamanga*. Another example is found in SDG 1 (No Poverty). In target (a) of the goal, 'least developed countries' are rendered *maiko osauka* (poor countries) while elsewhere it is rendered as *maiko osaukitsitsa* (extremely poor countries). Such lexical inconsistencies can potentially create conceptual confusion among the target users of the text, hence defeating the overall purpose of the initiators of the translation project.

### *Sense narrowing*

There are several cases in the translation where the original sense of a concept has been inappropriately reduced by narrowing it down in the translation. A good example is in SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) where the English goal reads as follows: "reduce inequality within and among countries." In Chichewa, it was rendered as *kuchepetsa kusiyana pakachitidwe ka zinthu m'dziko ndi pakati pamaiko* (which literally back-translates as 'reducing inequalities when doing things within a country and among countries'). In this translation, emphasis is on inequality 'when doing things' while in real sense, equality is demanded even in all situations including those that cannot necessarily be classified as 'doing'. Another example is observed in SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions) where 'institutions' is translated as *mabungwe*. Although *mabungwe* loosely translates into 'organisations,' public institutions such as ministries, departments, the judiciary and the parliament are usually not called *mabungwe* in Chichewa, but rather *nthambi za boma* (government departments) or *maunduna* (ministries). Therefore, there is sense narrowing of the concept 'institution.' Extensive use of this strategy increases the risk of under-communicating crucial information to the target audience.

### *Construction of target language syntactic structures*

The researchers also analysed the degree of the translation's naturalness in line with the target language-oriented translation assessment procedure (Williams and Chesterman, 2002). When expressing concepts in a target language, Chichewa in this case, it is important that unambiguous sentences or phrases should be used. For example, overuse of complex sentences risks creating difficulties for the target audience to process information. Therefore, translators should try as much as possible to make use of simple sentences for effective communication. For example, in SDG 14 (Life Below Water), target (c), we have a stretch that reads *...malamulo okhudza maiko onse monga analembedwera ndi bungwe la dziko lonse okhudzana ndi zanyanja...* (laws governing all countries as written by the United Nations on the sea). The last phrase *...okhudzana ndi zanyanja* (on the sea/of the sea) should have come immediately after the first Noun Phrase to enable the readers to make an immediate connection that the laws are about the sea. The information about who helped to write the laws can come at the end. An improved translation would have been *...malamulo okhudza maiko onse okhudzana ndi zanyanja monga analembedwera ndi bungwe la dziko lonse* (laws governing all countries on the seas as written by the United Nations). To

write this effectively, the translators need to have a range of competences including information packaging and ability to play around with Chichewa syntactic structures for maximum communicative effect.

### **Assessment of the non-linguistic aspects of the translation**

Use of non-linguistic tools is a very common in technical communication. According to Avval (2012), these non-linguistic features are very helpful when there is breakdown of communications. The non-linguistic features provide important elaborations by filling communication gaps left by linguistic tools. In the SDG document, the non-linguistic communication tools used include a range of infographics, especially pictures and symbols. Anastasiou and Schäler (2010) state that most technical texts are often accompanied by pictures, animations, logos, diagrams and other visual effects. These too, require to be localised. Just as was the case with the linguistic aspects, the non-linguistic features have been used both adequately and inadequately in the document. On a positive note, two aspects have been isolated for discussion.

#### *Use of local pictures*

Throughout the Chichewa document, translators placed a local picture along each SDG as an aid to interpretation. Under goal 16 (Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions), for example, the picture used depicts the interior of the Malawi Parliament. This is to emphasize the Malawianness of the institutions that are being mentioned in the goal. Under SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), the picture that has been included shows a woman in the middle of a green maize field. This is very important given the significance of maize as a staple food crop in Malawi.

#### *Use of graphic symbols*

Each SDG has its own graphic symbol representing it. The graphic symbol for SDG 4, for example, which is on Quality Education, is an open book and a pen. These graphic symbols have been imported into the Chichewa document exclusively and it gives the Chichewa document a UN texture.

Although the infographics have been included to enhance understandability of the Chichewa document, there are several cases where their usage is communicatively vague. We highlight a few of them below.

#### *Absence of pictures for some goals*

The study established that some goals have not employed any infographics as enhancements to their understandability. This is the case with SDGs 1, 6, 7, 9, and 10. Given that the Chichewa SDGs are meant for a very local audience, sentential narratives without infographic attachments weaken the text's communicative thrust. Translators could have attached images associated with each goal.

#### *Use of inappropriate infographics*

Although infographics improve the communicability of a text, this can only be achieved if they relate to the overall message of the accompanying text. The study found that the connection of some pictures and respective SDGs was very weak. For example, under SDG 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), the picture shown below was attached.



As can be seen, the picture has very little to do with responsible production and consumption. The picture is more depictive of irrigation agriculture. This misalignment between the goal and the picture leads to communication confusion. A similar mismatch is depicted in SDG 1 (No Poverty). The graphic symbol for this goal depicts a group of men, women and children holding hands. From layman's lens, one may be compelled to suggest that the picture stands for collaboration or networking which is the concern of SDG 17. Poverty could best be depicted by a symbol more familiar than this.

### Use of international graphic symbols

As already noted, each SDG has a representative graphic symbol. All these symbols were simply imported into the Chichewa document without any form of modification. This ignores the fact that the conventional symbols may only make sense only to a certain class of people involved in international development and diplomacy and not to a local person. SDG 15 (Life Under Water) uses a familiar symbol, which includes a fish. This cannot not be a problem for an ordinary Malawian to interpret that the goal relates to aquatic life. But when SDG 16 (Peace, Justice and strong institutions) uses a dove, SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) uses a symbol for a heart-beat as shown below, the local audience would not easily decipher their meanings. It is a general expectation that all visual aids should also change when they are translated into a target language (Anastasiou and Schäler, 2010). Unfortunately, this expectation has not been met in this case.



### Un-translated labelling of some pictures

The other problem with regard to the use of pictures attached to each SDG is the use of English labelling. The main purpose of using pictures is to provide supplementary information that will make it easy for an audience to grasp the meaning of a text. Such being the case, it is important that every aspect of the images be translated. This is reiterated by Anastasiou and Schäler (2010) who claim that localization goes beyond translation as it adapts the source content to the culture of the locale where the translated text is to be used. In this document, some pictures that have been included in the Chichewa text with English labeling are shown below.



As can be seen in the pictures above, SDG 8 and SDG 14 are still in English although the rest of the background and persons that are depicted are truly Malawian. What we have is partial localization.

### Other inadequacies

#### Handling of currency

This SDG document is an international asset. It is for this very reason that all currencies are quoted in United States Dollars, which is the 'dominant' currency in international trade (Boz, Gopinath & Plagborg-Moller, 2018). However, the local people who are targeted by this document are not involved in international trade. To them, the US dollar is an unfamiliar currency. To make sure that the local people understand the monetary values being quoted, the US dollar needed to be localised by quoting equivalent values in Malawi Kwacha. So, in SDG 13 target (a), instead of saying ...azisokhanitsa pamodzi ndalama yokwana **\$100 billion** chaka chilichonse (they will be pooling together \$100 billion every year), they should have quoted **75 trillion Malawi Kwacha**<sup>5</sup>. This would help local Malawians to grasp the values of the money under mention.

### Conclusion

From the discussion above, it is clear that the translators of the SDG document from English to Chichewa relied on both linguistic and non-linguistic strategies to deliver the project output. Among the several linguistic strategies that were employed successfully are exemplification and avoidance. However, some linguistic strategies were employed with negative consequences. These include inappropriate application of avoidance, lexical inconsistencies, sense narrowing and use of difficult-to-decipher Chichewa syntactic structures. Non-linguistic strategies were also used with both positive and negative effects. It can therefore, be concluded that the Chichewa SDG document is a case of incomplete localisation. Otherwise, the project is commendable as it signifies the new directions that the country is taking in terms of national development. There is

<sup>5</sup> Using an exchange rate of 1 US\$=750 MK.



now enhanced recognition of the value of local languages in the development agenda. For this reason, we make and justify the following recommendations:

- a) The structure of the project team should have been beefed up with significant representation of the target user group of the document. This could have helped in making sure that translators make communicatively adequate decisions throughout the process. This is in line with the participatory communication paradigm in which the target audience is engaged as co-producers of information instead of being treated as mere passive recipients.
- b) The actual translating team should have been beefed up with professional linguists. Some of the linguistic problems in the Chichewa document could have been avoided with the inclusion of language professionals, especially, those specializing in African languages. The team that did the translation are journalists. The University of Malawi's The Polytechnic, which offers journalism degrees in Malawi, does not have Translation modules in its curricula. In essence, this means that there were no professional translators in the project.
- c) Selection of infographics in the document should have been done after serious consideration for the target audience. When the visual and linguistic information complement each other, a document is likely to produce positive communication outcomes.

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