



Are all languages created equal?

The challenges of AI and language inclusivity within crisis settings

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My background



Stella Hodkin
Chief Language Services
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CLEAR Global

- MA (Hons) in European Languages from University of Edinburgh
- DipTrans IoLET Italian-English
- Project Manager and Vendor Manager within LSP providing telephone interpreting for public services in the UK
- Freelance and in-house translator
- Sales, Marketing and communication for Italian LSP
- Member of Executive Management Team of top 100 LSP
- Member of Leadership Team of Translators without Borders
- Chief Language Service Officer CLEAR Global/Translators without Borders
- Chapter Manager Women in Localization Italy



Helping people get vital
information, and be
heard, **whatever
language they speak**



**TRANSLATORS
WITHOUT BORDERS**



**CLEAR
Global**

TWB Community

The power of over 120,000 linguists dedicated to bridging the world's language gaps and helping those in need.

Language Technology

Innovative solutions to engage with more people in ways that work better for them.

Research and advocacy

New ways to listen to people and conduct research to make the case for language and technology in aid work.



Our Work

100M+

words translated

programs in

80+

countries supported

90

language maps created

46

multilingual language glossaries designed

5 multilingual chatbots

that answer people's questions about health, migration, financial inclusion, and climate change

The most exciting announcement in 100 years.

The hunt for a Malaria vaccine has been going on for almost a century.

Imagine the excitement of this mother in Burkina Faso when she read this banner, announcing a new way to protect her child from a disease that kills over 270,000 children a year.



The problem...

Only

15%

of people in Burkina Faso
speak French...

...So she just keeps on walking.



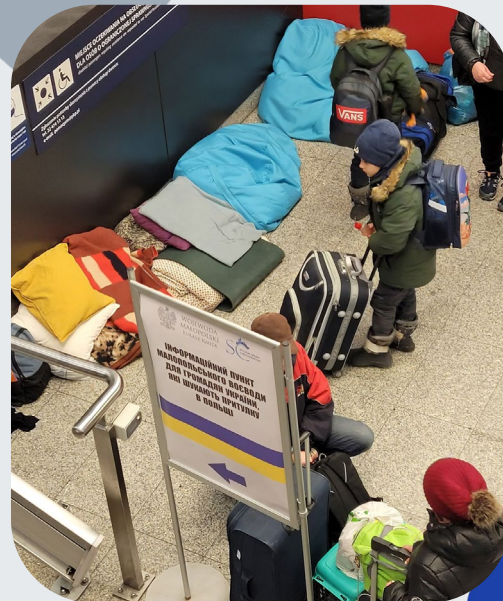
I've been forced to flee
my home - where can I
find safe place to stay?




I think my child is
getting sick - where is
the nearest doctor?



I don't know what my
rights are here, can
someone explain?



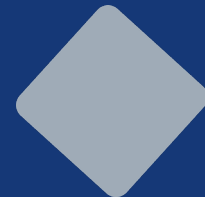


Behind every failure to help,
there's a failure to
listen and *understand* .





The problem



3.7 billion people are locked out of the global conversation



1.4bn people online in English

2.9bn online in 16 other
powerful languages



3bn offline in 7,000 languages

0.7bn online in 83 languages

Real-world consequences of language exclusion

Share of global GDP

English speakers:
42% of GDP

16 'tier 1'
languages: 45%

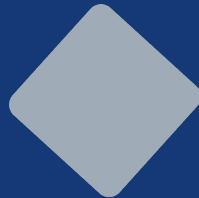


Online speakers of
other languages: 5%

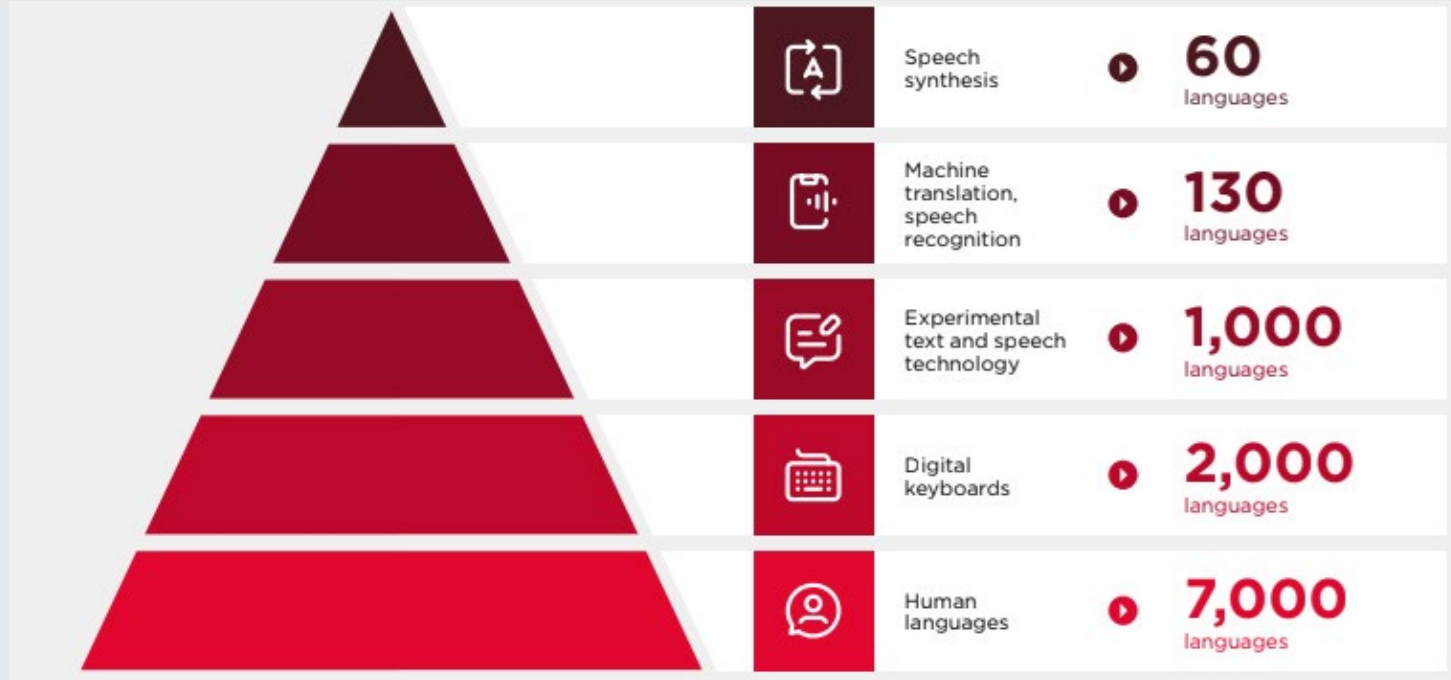
Offline population:
8%

“We talk about the digital divide. Now we’re seeing a **language divide** ...and that language divide is just **getting bigger and bigger** .”

Kalika Bali,
Microsoft Research India



Humanitarian uses of language technology are limited to a few dozen languages



In short

This gap

Power languages

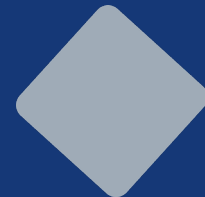



Low -resource
languages

is the world's greatest
opportunity to drive
change for good.




The solution

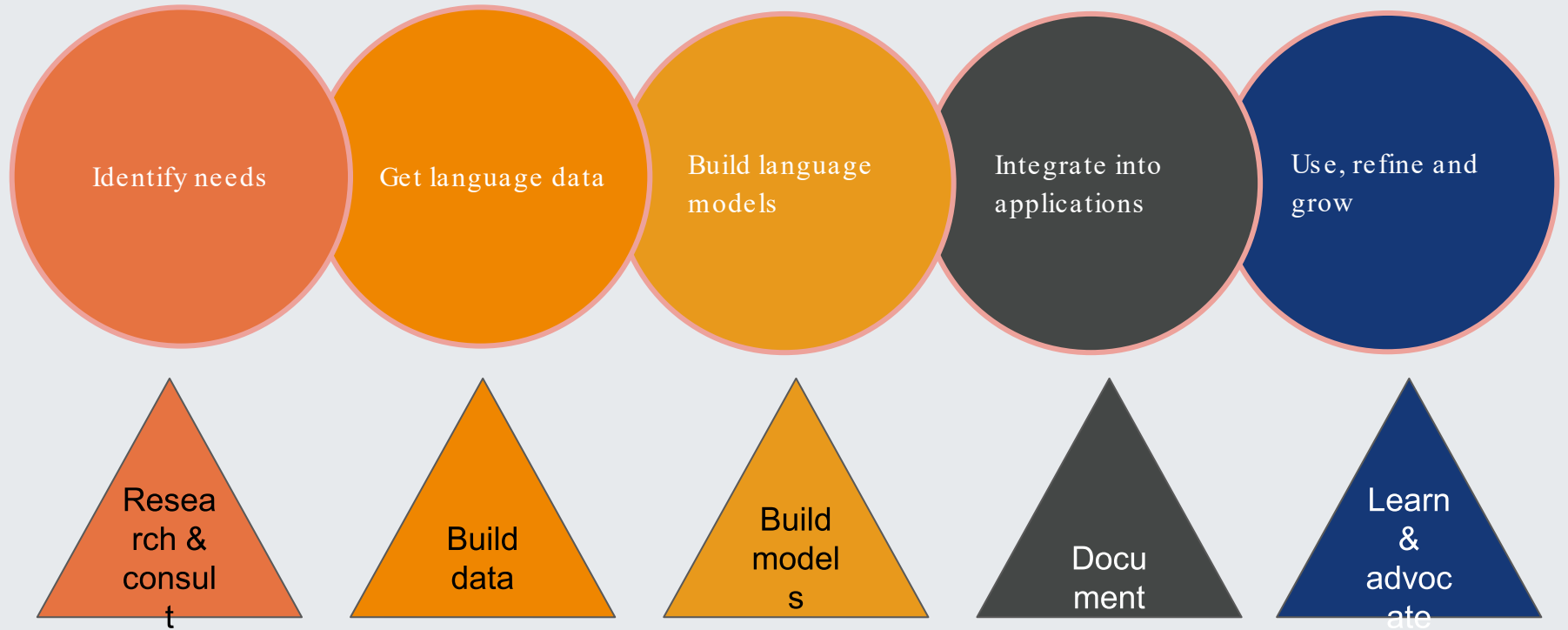




What do we mean by Language AI?

- **Automatic speech recognition** and **machine translation** for marginalized languages like Kurdish and Tigrinya that outperformed the models available at the time.
 - **Offline information kiosk** in Bihar, India that answered farmers' spoken questions on climate adaptation in their own language.
 - **Chatbots using conversational AI** to answer people's questions on Covid -19 in such neglected languages as Lingala, Congolese Swahili, Hausa and Kanuri.
- 

Shortage of language data
Social impact organizations are often unaware of the possibilities
of language technology





The movement



The Community

The Tech

The Partners



The TWB Community, the beating heart of CLEAR Global:

Our community of linguists donates over 20 million words per year . They translate information for organizations all over the world, working in more than 200 languages , from Amharic to Zulu.



The Community

Translators without Borders

Our Community



Over 100,000 volunteer linguists and translators working in 220 languages

For Programs

Supporting on-the-ground partners and programs in 80+ countries

For Technology

Actively generating NLP training data for low-resource languages



This is a collaborative initiative

Global Programs

International programs



Global Tech

Technology and AI4Good Initiatives



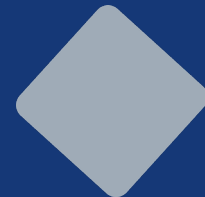
Local Skills and Needs

Some examples of our grass - roots partners

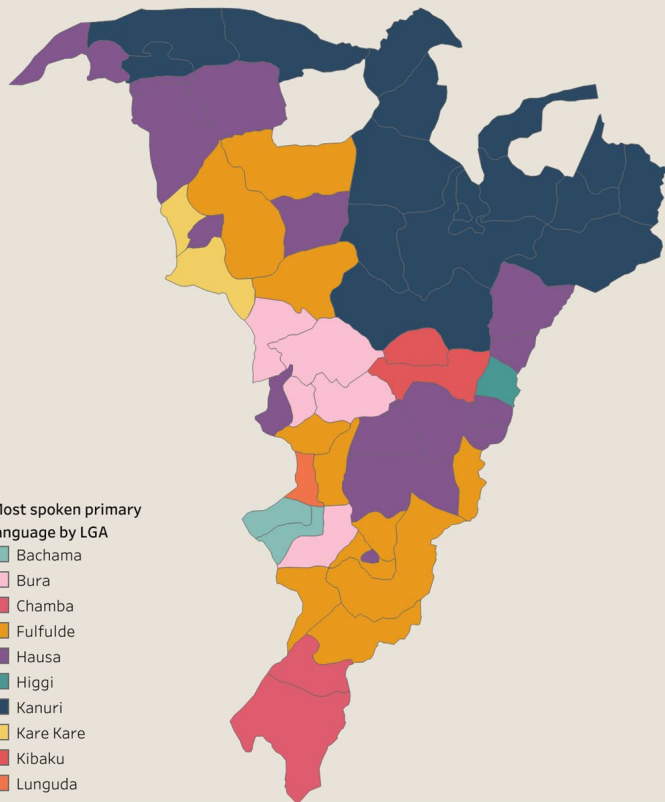




Solutions



Northeast Nigeria Language Map



Primary language

(% of households)

| | |
|--------------|-----|
| Hausa | 31% |
| Kanuri | 28% |
| Fulfulde | 11% |
| Other | 7% |
| Bura | 5% |
| Shuwa Arabic | 4% |
| Marghi | 2% |
| Kare Kare | 2% |
| Bachama | 2% |
| Mandara | 1% |
| Higgi | 1% |
| Kilba | 1% |
| Kibaku | 1% |
| English | 1% |
| Mafa | 1% |
| Glavda | 0% |
| Jukun | 0% |
| Waha | 0% |
| Gamargu | 0% |
| Tiv | 0% |



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Hide map legend

Show data source

The Context

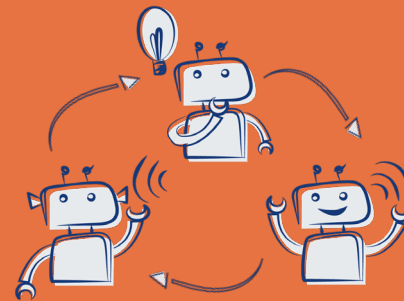
- Protracted crisis in North East Nigeria
- Over 2 million IDPs in camps
- Multilingual context

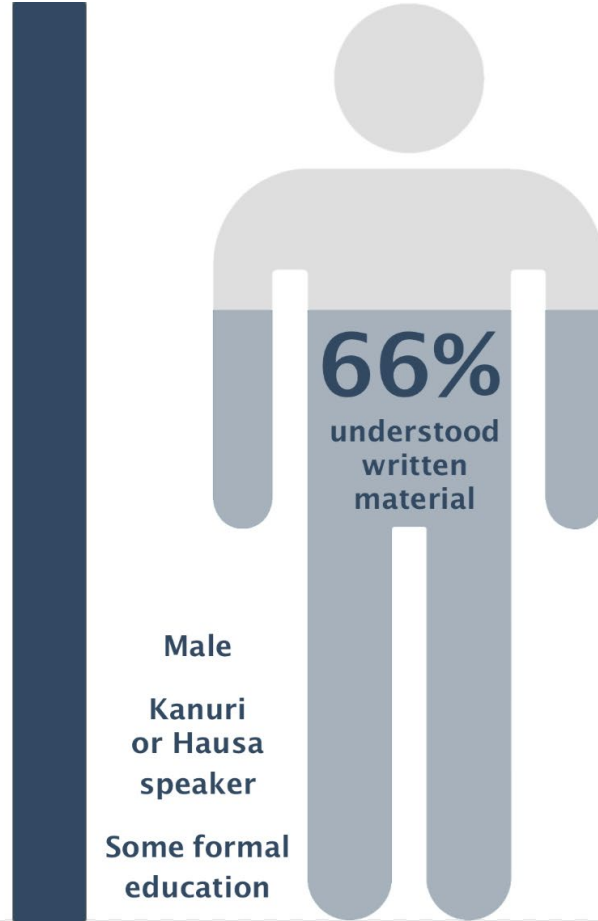
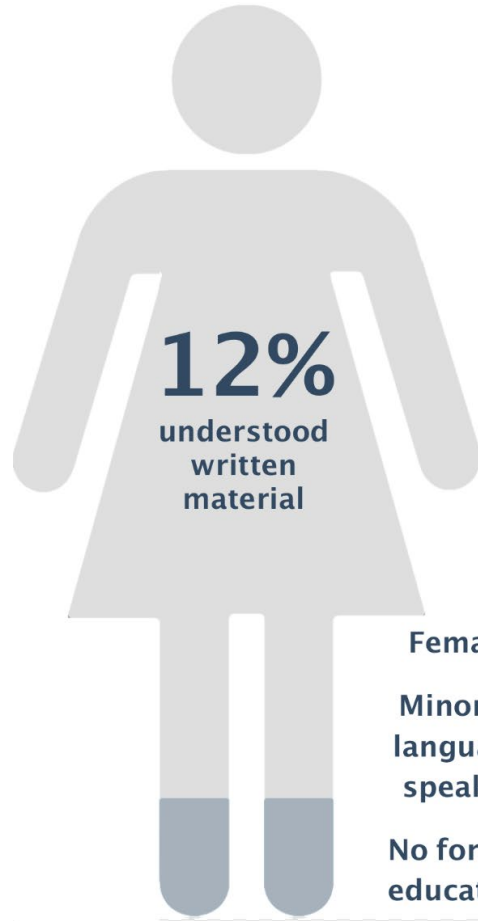
The case for chatbots in NE Nigeria camps

- IDPs in Northeast Nigeria need instantaneous, accurate, relevant information in their languages
- Community -level feedback and information access
- Inclusion of marginalized groups

Hajiya

- Conversational chatbot supporting community leaders within IDP camps with vital information
- Information related to the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
- Opportunity for humanitarian sector to capture information needs and concerns
- Switches seamlessly between Hausa, Kanuri and Shuwa (and English)





Hajiya 2.0

- Voice-enabled
- Interactive Voice Response (automated phone system)
- WhatsApp channel
- Broader content
- Complaint and feedback mechanism
- Integrated with existing hotline operated by a local partner



Challenges

- Literacy
- Access to phones
- Connectivity
- Battery charge

Voice Data Collection



Challenges

- Community engagement
 - Demographics and bias
 - Quality control
 - System integration
 - Privacy and consent
- 

TWB Voice



- A platform for **quality -controlled** voice data collection
- A growing repository of **open -source voice data**
- Access to the **100,000 -strong TWB Community** of linguists
- Voices accurately **classified by age group and gender** to aid appropriate use

Introducing **TWB Voice**

TWB's new voice data collection platform



TWB Voice

**Donate your voice,
make a difference**

Join a global community committed to language inclusion.

[Sign In with TWB account](#)

[Read the Translators without Borders Privacy Policy and Code of Conduct for Voice Data Contributors](#)



- Open data
- Privacy and consent
- Data ownership

ship

Language Data Collection and Ethics

- Nwulite Obodo Open Data License
- Fair, open framework for African data sharing
- Ethical and equitable access to resources
- Supports innovation while protecting local interests



**CLEAR
Global**



**Translators
without Borders**

Get involved

- **Subscribe**
- **Join the Community**
- **Fundraise**