UNICRI Framework on Multilingualism

UNICRI

Framework on Multilingualism

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1. FOREWORD

There are approximately 8,000 languages in existence today.[1] This rich breadth and scope of global linguistic diversity benefits us all, as individuals and societies. This is because multilingualism not only amplifies diverse voices and languages but also enhances the opportunities that this plurality offers. This includes fostering collaboration, facilitating the exchange of diverse ideas, and promoting the accessibility of knowledge and expertise.[2]

In an era of rapid change and global challenges, the United Nations (UN) recognises how important these benefits are to its work, people, and values of inclusion, dignity, and equity.

In an interconnected world, multilingualism contributes to building trust and making the United Nations more efficient, more representative and more transparent

António Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations[3]

The United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI) is also committed to multilingualism. Its Framework on Multilingualism reaffirms this commitment by integrating language considerations into the Institute's

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1   See www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-launches-world-atlas-languages-celebrate-and-protect-linguistic-diversity.

2   GA resolution 76/268 on multilingualism, and the important role it can play role the UN's work, activities and behaviours.

3   Extract from the United Nations Strategic Framework on Multilingual, 2024.

activities and programme work. This Framework underscores how multilingualism not only strengthens communication and programme advocacy but also ensures programme outcomes are inclusive, targeted, and responsive. Also, as the UN's only research and training institute focused on crime prevention and justice, multilingualism enables a more revitalised multilateralism[4] in the fields of security and crime. It does so by cultivating diverse collaborations, multilingual partnerships, and interconnected technical hubs. Importantly, for UNICRI's mission, multilingualism also contributes to ensuring justice is accessible to people by communicating important information in languages they can understand.

For this reason, UNICRI situates this framework in a broader understanding of how communication and language intersect with the realisation of other rights related to access to justice, culture, and social participation.[5] Its promotion of language diversity recognises the role of other attributes and human experiences[6] when facilitating people's right to be heard and speak of the world they see.[7] Accordingly, it also acknowledges the UN's work addressing racism and promoting dignity for all in the United Nations Secretariat, which supports the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms of all, without distinctions of race, language, colour, or national origin.

UNICRI is proud to participate in the ongoing dialogue on how multilingualism enhances its work and the imperatives of the UN, as well as contribute to racial diversity, equity, and inclusion. It also acknowledges the release of its Framework of Multilingualism as one of the first to follow the UN's recently issued Strategic Framework on Multilingualism. The Institute looks forward to exploring the practical, responsive, and targeted ways in which multilingualism can help guide and support its work tackling complex transnational criminal justice challenges and promoting programme impact in the field.

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4   See the Secretary-General statement on revitalised multilateralism at SG/SM/21632, 14 December 2022 titled Effective, Inclusive Multilateralism Key to Address Current Interconnected Threats, Secretary-General Tells Security Council, Highlighting New Agenda for Peace

5   See the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, issued in 1992, Article 2.2 Also, for more reading on language rights see Eerik Lagerspetz, Ethical Theory and Moral Practice Vol. 1, No. 2, Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Liberal Democracy Jun. 1998), pp. 181-199.

6   The Harvard Business Review Article titled Power of Words by Lucy Swedberg (2023) describes how understanding and meaning are assigned, and the effects of interpretation on conception thinking. Essentially, information is extracted and interpreted; it is not inherent.

7   The notion of voice here is recognised as cultural, political, and as an object of identity. In this way one may be considered to have no voice if their voice is discredited, their spoken language or views are not permitted politically, unrecognised officially or prevented because of prejudice. See Claire Kramsch. "Voice in L2 Acquisition: Speaking the Self Through the Language of the Other." In Handbook of Multilingualism and Multiculturalism (2010) edited by Geneviève Zarate and Danielle Lévy, University of California, Berkeley, USA.

UNICRI embraces linguistic diversity as an asset. Multilingualism gives us a greater chance of finding effective and targeted responses to important transnational crime and justice issues and formulating innovative questions of enquiry and research.

Leif Villadsen, Acting Director of UNICRI

We acknowledge the contribution of multilingualism to the United Nations pillars of peace and security, development and human rights. There is an important role UNICRI can play in supporting linguistic diversity, local knowledge, and the value of local cultures and customs.

Joel Antonio Hernández García,
President of UNICRI Board of Trustees

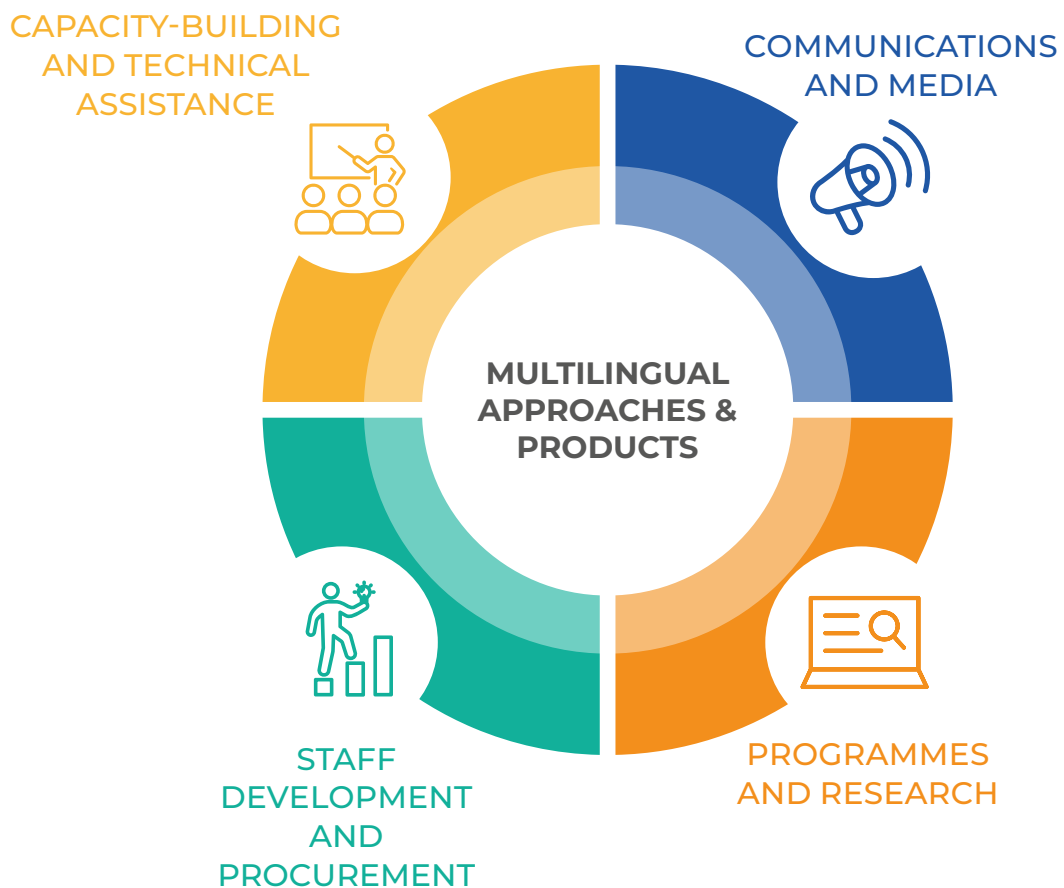# 2. WHAT IS THE UNICRI FRAMEWORK ON MULTILINGUALISM

As a specialised, knowledge, and research-based UN institute, UNICRI integrates language considerations into many aspects of its work, both at its headquarters in Turin, Italy, and at the 12 other locations where its staff operates.[8] These considerations inform how multilingualism is applied by UNICRI to serve its global community of beneficiaries, while taking into account its programme context, stakeholder needs, and available resources. This is true when applying the six official UN languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) and when using unofficial and local languages, as well as the national language of its duty station, Italian.

Accordingly, this Framework on Multilingualism articulates UNICRI's approach to integrating multilingualism and diverse languages into its activities, work, and operational needs. It provides a holistic and practical approach to strengthen the Institute's multilingual practice, communication, and programme advocacy. It has been developed to be relevant, adaptive, and responsive to the transnational crime and justice landscape, as well as its voluntary funded programmatic activities.

Like the concept of multilingualism, this Framework interacts in a cross-disciplinary and action orientated way with UNICRI's different approaches, audiences, and contexts. It recognises the ever-challenging environments that UNICRI operates in and seeks to reflect how multilingual principles and practice can complement UNICRI's activities and approaches for effective and targeted programming. It also sits firmly within the important strategic value UNICRI assigns to its trusted partnerships, alliances and networks - that meaningful engagement and reciprocal knowledge exchange come from shared understanding and connections forged in an international environment marked by plurality.

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8   These offices are in Abu Dhabi, Algiers, Brussels, Geneva, Manila, Nairobi, New York, Rabat, Rome, Tashkent, Tbilisi, and the Hague,

UNICRI's Framework on Multilingualism draws its framing and targeted actions from the <u>United Nations Strategic Framework on Multilingualism.</u>[9] It has also been designed to support the UN's broader vision to mainstream multilingualism across its entities and the organization, for more effective and accountable operations and outcomes. As such, the Framework on Multilingualism focuses on four key UNICRI activity areas:

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

COMMUNICATIONS AND MEDIA

MULTILINGUAL APPROACHES & PRODUCTS

STAFF DEVELOPMENT AND PROCUREMENT

PROGRAMMES AND RESEARCH

9   It has also been developed to support UNICRI's reporting on multilingualism-related mandates derived from the relevant General Assembly resolutions, most recently resolution 76/268.

3. WHY IS MULTILINGUALISM IMPORTANT FOR UNICRI?

Multilingualism has played a key role in the UN and its work since the General Assembly's resolution 2(I) of 1946. It has informed the development, efforts, and practice of many key human rights resolutions and charters. This includes the seminal 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It has also been long recognised as an important part of the UN's process for improving access to information, building capacities of its staff and systems, and promoting knowledge sharing when working with stakeholders, as highlighted in the recently-issued United Nations Strategic Framework on Multilingualism:

> *"Providing a platform where the multilingual international community can come together to cooperate, collaborate and negotiate and responding to the needs of diverse local communities, while upholding the principles of equality and cost-effectiveness, are fundamental aspects of the work of the United Nations."[10]*

Multilingualism is also important to UNICRI's work in specialized and technical niches of transnational crime. Its fields of strategic focus - crime prevention, justice, rule of law, and security - are global in nature.[11] They call for meaningful engagement and diverse alliances which enable knowledge and expertise exchanges that deliver targeted and innovative interventions. Multilingualism helps create collaborative spaces of inclusive multilateralism and representative networks, ones that reflect diverse multicultural, multilingual, and geographical contexts. This enables better sustainable development and more impactful programming.

UNICRI's role in distributing and disseminating its innovative approaches, practices, and technical resources also provides it with a unique vantage point. As an action-orientated research Institute it carries a leading voice when sharing,

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10   Extract from the United Nations Strategic Framework on Multilingual, 2024

11   Information regarding UNICRI's mandate is available here.

learning, and doing work that is dynamic and agile. In this way, language acts as instrument of programme communication, knowledge access and exchange. UNICRI's significant multilingual engagement is evident in key areas of its work, including training on <u>Chemical, Biological, Radiological, and Nuclear (CBRN) risks</u>, designing <u>online resources to protect children in digital spaces</u>, and working with national stakeholders on the <u>prevention of violent extremism</u>.[12]

The strategic value of multilingualism to UNICRI also cannot be underestimated. As a UN entity funded by voluntary contributions, UNICRI faces resource constraints and challenges that limit the feasibility of procuring translation and interpretation services for its activities. While this makes it necessary to be selective and prioritize language selection, there is still considerable strategic and advocacy value and advantage in expanding UNICRI's reach to the UN's more diverse constituencies and engaging them in support of its strategic priorities and programme outcomes.

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12 See UNICRI's suite of publications at <u>Publications | UNICRI :: United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute</u>

4. MULTILINGUAL APPROACH

UNICRI's Framework on Multilingualism supports the inclusion and use of diverse languages across the Institute's activities, through the application of practical, implementable, and feasible actions. These actions can be applied and adapted to diverse UNICRI programme contexts, tools, and funding modalities. They are also easily incorporated into the Institute's programme cycle to enhance its work promoting crime prevention, justice, and security. It is an approach that encourages critical reflection on the translingual and transcultural characteristics of UNICRI's work and proposes ways to support the integration of multilingual practice.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

These multilingual activities are guided by six key considerations for using different languages at UNICRI and in its work. These considerations encourage a reflective lens to UNICRI's practice and policy to help promote deeper and more genuine engagement with existing stakeholders, communicate in a more effective and impactful way with our diverse audiences as well as expand UNICRI's outreach and advocacy opportunities.

- Language and linguicism[13] occur in an intersectional context of culture, and identity.[14] These characteristics, and other attributes can play a significant role in communication. It is important to be sensitive and aware of cultural differences and cultural appropriateness in communications, avoid linguistic assumptions,[15] and be respectful to the target audience, especially vulnerable and marginalised groups.[16]

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13   Linguicism describes discrimination akin to racism based on a person's language, perceived language ability, or variety of language. See this framework's section on key concepts for more information.

14   Bucholtz, Mary, & Hall, Kira. (2006). Gender, Sexuality, and Language. In Encyclopedia of Language & Linguistics (pp. 756-758).

15   In A Myriad of Tongues: How Languages Reveal Differences in How We Think, Caleb Everett discusses how different languages categorize ideas and objects in different ways to reflect diverse human experience. For this reason, many basic concepts are incorrectly assumed as universal and accordingly, speakers of different languages literally see and think about the world differently.

16   UN Women Justice for Women: High-level Group Report highlights some of the language barriers faced by marginalized and disadvantaged groups when accessing justice. These may be due to illiteracy or language barriers in the courts or access to justice.

● Multilingualism has a role to play in addressing discrimination, and support-ing racial diversity, equity, and inclusion in UNICRI's policies and practices, as per the UN's <u>Strategic Action Plan on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All.</u> Under these values of inclusion and diversity, multilingualism endears interactions with global and local communities, and communicates to the people we serve in their own languages.

● Multilingualism is an asset that supports and promotes wider outreach and efficacy of UNICRI's programmes, as well as the dissemination, and know-ledge sharing of UNICRI research and technical findings. In particular, the value of multilingual staff as experts in their programme fields and technical knowledge provides an invaluable resource for multilingualism. Through their deep understanding of the programme, as builders of stakeholder relations, and with a nuanced grasp of the target audience's cultural context they offer significant benefits..

● UNICRI recognises the <u>UN principles of equality of its official six languages</u> and that respect for all languages as equal is important. While UNICRI's framework for multilingualism supports the use of diverse languages across all the Insti-tute's activities, within available resources, it also acknowledges the important need to be adaptive, responsive, and flexible in its application when consider-ing situational context, desired outcomes, resources, and stakeholder needs when implementing multilingual approaches.

● Multilingualism as an **interdisciplinary approach** invites reflection and en-courages new ways of looking at programme environments marked by plurality.[17] In this way it complements the UNICRI communication strategy approach which is informed by questions of audience, medium, context, and impact.

● **Technology** including through the opportunities provided by digital media, tools and resources is available in certain contexts to help with multilingual communication. Translation software, speech-to-text technology, or online tools for example may facilitate communication with multilingual stakehold-ers where appropriate, available, and subject to quality control. Exploring cost-efficient technological options, such as podcasts and webcasts can promote a user-friendly presentation of diverse languages on the UNICRI website or social platforms.

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17 Multilingualism's complexity, characterized by the relationships between and within languages, cultures, and identities, is elucidated through an interdisciplinary conceptual framework. This framework helps structure and organize complex ideas by representing the key concepts and relationships that underpin the issue.

� **Disaggregated data and metrics** on the use of languages at the UN is critical for identifying available language resources, informing evidence-based decision-making, and monitoring whether and how language requirements promote multilingualism. Language-disaggregated data and metrics are needed across various areas; for example, data on websites and communication campaigns. For this reason, the UN is calling for the collection of data as a measure of progress in multilingualism in line with the Data Strategy of the Secretary-General for Action by Everyone, Everywhere.
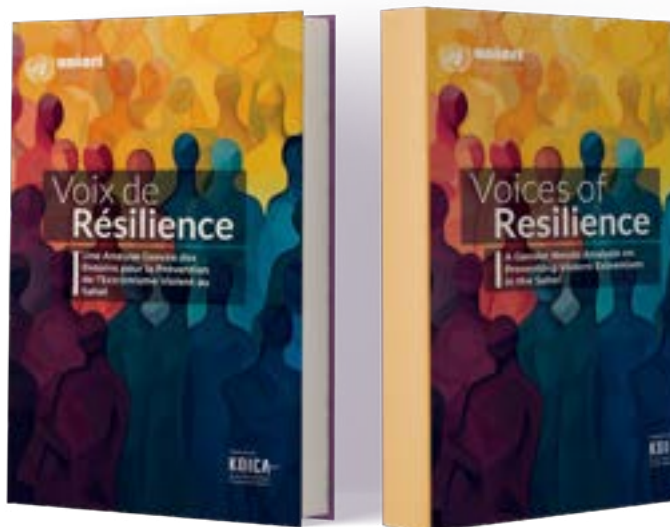
5. MULTILINGUAL APPROACH: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The key recommendations of this Framework on Multilingualism articulate actions designed to strengthen UNICRI's communication with its stakeholders and support its advocacy of programme work. It is designed to complement the <u>UNICRI Communication Strategy</u> and sustain the implementation of its <u>Strategic Programme Framework</u>. The Framework also acknowledges the Institute's important role in knowledge sharing and disseminating quality ideas amongst Member States, partners, researchers, academics, civil society, media, and the private sector – in ways that are balanced, sustainable and efficient. More so, it recognises the strengthening of multilingualism as a shared responsibility across UNICRI.

There are four activity areas identified as key spaces to optimise interactions with diverse languages and multilingual communications within UNICRI's work. They leverage UNICRI's relationship and engagement with strategic partners, its processes, approaches and ways of working at the global, regional, national, and local levels.
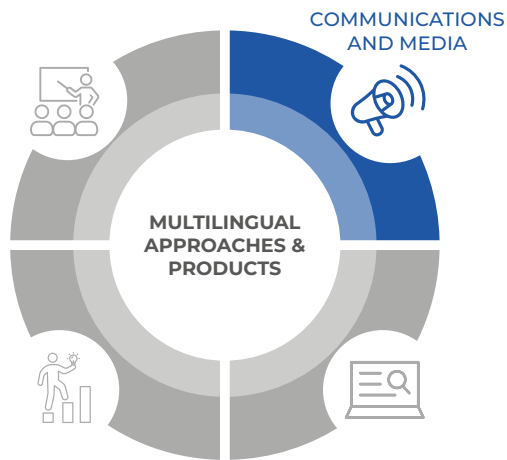
Communications and Media at UNICRI encompass external-facing tools, graphics, media, and modalities. These include both digital and traditional methods for promotion and advocacy, such as websites, digital and social media posts on platforms like X, Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, as well as podcasts and media campaigns. Visual elements beyond text, such as images and colour choices, are also integral components.[18]

AIMS

▶ Strengthen UNICRI's communications and media outreach to linguistically, geographically, and culturally diverse audiences, including potential audiences.

▶ Align to UN minimum standards and best practices for websites and multilingual communications.

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18   Bias can be conveyed in different and varied ways in communications, including through image composition, colour choices etc.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

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Advocacy and Awareness	Awareness campaigns on language related celebrations and events to promote the important role language plays in the delivery of access to justice. This includes the six language days and international UN days such as International Mother Language Day, International Translation Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.[19]
Accessibility and Engagement	Social media platforms, channels, images, and web content to be in multiple languages and formats (written, graphic, audio) where feasible, to improve accessibility to diverse populations. This includes resource provisions (staff and budget) to ensure key UNICRI programme website pages are translated at regular quarterly intervals.[20]
Website	Identify and apply creative ways to increase the volume of high-quality multilingual content on UNICRI's website, for example through enhanced use of technology and utilising the institute's global networks and staff.
	Website design and development to incorporate Minimum standards of multilingualism for United Nations websites.
Measurement and Analysis	Media monitoring reports to include disaggregated data and analytics such as visits to UNICRI's website, publications downloads, and coverage across diverse geographic locations and languages. For example, analytics could detail 'likes', shares, reposts, and engagement in different languages, as well as the number of multilingual pages on the web about UNICRI's programme work and influence. These data insights will be used to inform continuous adjustments to digital communications and advocacy campaigns, enhancing engagement with diverse target audiences.

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19 The comprehensive list of UN International days and weeks is available here.

20 Provisions should be made to ensure immediate translation of occasional urgent information into all languages.

MULTILINGUAL
APPROACHES &
PRODUCTS

PROGRAMMES
AND RESEARCH
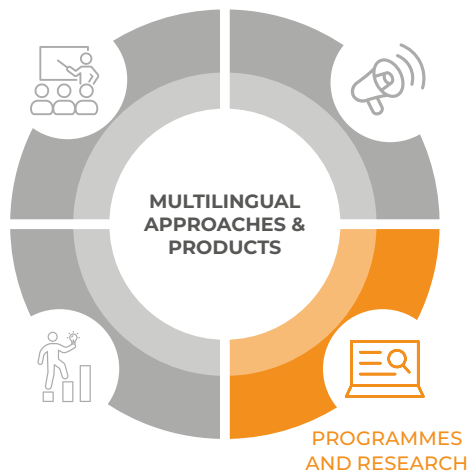
Publications and research include communications and technical resources, content and collateral published by UNICRI programmes to inform, advocate and/or disseminate research knowledge and programme information. For example, this includes reports, research, written resources and programme activity material.

AIMS

- Support inclusive, rights-based programming, which delivers targeted and sustainable interventions[21], and meaningful stakeholder participation.

- Showcase UNICRI programmes and research work, where feasible and practical, for better and more representative programming.

- Support UN resolutions for the equitable treatment of its official languages by mainstreaming multilingualism into UNICRI's information products and programmatic activities.

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21   More information is available at https://sdgs.un.org/goals

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Programme planning and Implementation	Advocate for and mobilize funding, as appropriate and feasible, to produce multilingual publications and to translate research and reports into UN official and/or unofficial languages.
Accessibility and Inclusivity	Test programme or project's multilingual activities and approaches with real user testers speaking different languages, from diverse cultures and audience groups. This includes using bilingual or multilingual survey questions and feedback channels.
Advocacy and Engagement	Work with communication and staff located in diverse geographic and linguistic regions to gather and publish stories and images that showcase UNICRI's global span of work and multilingualism.
Programme planning and Implementation	Explore ways to strengthen the mainstreaming of multilingualism through UNICRI programmes, for example by: ⊙ Considering how the languages used by target audience impact research, data collection, and sources. ⊙ Designing programmes and publications for optimal engagement with diverse language and cultural groups.[22] ⊙ Using professional translators for accurate and culturally relevant translations, where feasible and resources permit.[23] ⊙ Collecting data that helps identify and address barriers to communication with participants from diverse linguistic and geographic backgrounds.
Technology and Innovation	Where translation services are not feasible, leverage how technology can be used with with adequate human oversight and appropriate quality control to bridge language gaps, such as with translation software.[24]

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22 Universal design principles are guidelines that aim to make design accessible and usable for everyone, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or contexts. Some of these principles include simplicity, consistency, contrast, alignment, and hierarchy. By applying these principles to your design, you can improve the readability, usability, and aesthetics of your design for multilingual audiences.

23 For more information and hints, click here

24 For example, online translation tool such as Google Translate or Deepl.

CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

MULTILINGUAL APPROACHES & PRODUCTS

Capacity-building and technical assistance includes the creative, technical, and logistical activities delivered by UNICRI programmes to its stakeholders and partners. These activities may be presented in written, oral and digital formats, communications and resources. For example, conferences and events, training, meetings, specialised workshops, and technical courses.

AIMS

- Promote UNICRI's work and programme visibility in ways that strengthen international support for its activities and the UN's goals.

- Strengthen UNICRI's collaboration, networks and partnerships with linguistically and culturally diverse audiences and stakeholders.

- Harness opportunities to broader support, influence, and impact of UNICRI's programme work through more effective, targeted, and engaging communication.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Technology and Innovation	Use technology, where appropriate and with adequate human oversight and quality control, to help with multilingual communication, such as speech-to-text technology, online chat translation tools and closed captions in presentations to facilitate communication with multilingual stakeholders in real-time.[25]
Interaction and Engagement	Develop content that considers the languages of the target audience and any sensitivity due to cultural differences. Where translations are not practical or feasible, provide participants with specialist resources such as a thesaurus or glossary of key terms used in training and presentations, translated into diverse languages.
Translating for events	Consider partners and inter-agency mechanisms as multilingual assets when planning conferences, and events. Collaborate with locals or partners to design events and develop relevant documentation that connects with the target audience and avoids biases and errors.
Analyse and Monitor performance	When assessing feedback and the success of an event, adapt to the linguistic and cultural contexts of the respondents. Different norms, values, and expectations may prevent participants from answering questions, and expressing feedback. For this reason, feedback surveys and questions should be multilingual.
Coordinate and Document	Consider ways to document and highlight UNICRI's role in promoting multilingualism and work with diverse stakeholders on the occasion of international language days.

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25 This may not be feasible in face-to-face contexts, where there are many diverse languages spoken in a room, or for online meetings with WIFI connectivity restrictions. Quality oversight is also an important consideration in contexts where technological tools are used.

Staff development and procurement include activities related to managing, procuring, or providing language services and associated arrangements at UNICRI. For example, high and low value procurement, UNDP outsourcing and professional contracts.

AIMS:

◉ Support the procurement of diverse language services by UNICRI staff through a coherent framework and process that is user friendly, accessible, and coordinated.

◉ Support the aims of inclusion and non-discrimination as articulated in the United Nations Values and Behaviours Framework, the Strategic Action Plan on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All in the United Nations Secretariat and the Anti racism and Dignity Strategic Action plan, as relevant to its language and communication activities.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Procurement	Document UNICRI's procurement and contracting protocols for hiring translators and interpreters to assist staff in navigating its language service options. As an addendum, include a database that provides information on programme interpreters and translators commonly contracted by UNICRI.
Accountability and Reporting	Support the UN's call for Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All and its Strategic Framework on Multilingualism by: ⊙ Developing a multilingual feedback mechanism for example on the UNICRI website to report experiences of discrimonation and racism.[26] ⊙ Tracking and compiling accurate disaggregated data by language as required by the General Assembly resolutions on Multilingualism.[27] ⊙ Supporting the multilingualism focal point in their role of whole-of-organisation monitoring and reporting on the implementation of UNICRI's Framework on Multilingualism
Finance and Budgeting	Template administrative and finance forms, such as travel requests, and expense forms are to be translated in English and French at a minimum.

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26 This action is aligned to the accountability measures included in the Strategic Action Plan on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All.

27 Most recently General Assembly resolution 76/268

Staff development and recruitment	◗ Promote ways for staff members to develop and enhance proficiency in more than one of the official UN languages.
	◗ Ensure UNICRI's induction programme includes modules on the promotion of diversity, equity, and inclusion.[28]
	◗ Mandate the use of clear guidelines and standards for language requirements in UNICRI job openings and interviews.[29]
	◗ Recognise linguistic diversity at UNICRI through the option of multilingual email signatures, business cards and profiles.[30]

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28 This action is aligned to the accountability measures in the <u>Strategic Action Plan on Addressing Racism and Promoting Dignity for All.</u>

29 See the UN Language Framework (see ST/SGB/2023/2) as per rules of the Secretariat.

30 I'M MULTILINGUAL: [Languages spoken].

6. METHODOLOGY

The UNICRI Framework on Multilingualism was developed using a combination of diverse qualitative and quantitative data collection, review, and analysis methods. It drew from various sources, information, perspectives, and insights to apply an integrative approach in how UNICRI incorporates diverse languages and multilingual practices into its criminal justice, security, and rule of law work.

The consultation and engagement process were critical to understanding and designing how multilingualism applies to UNICRI programmes, activities, promotion, and advocacy. UNICRI is grateful to the UNICRI Board of Trustees, staff, the multilingualism focal point of UNICRI as well as the Office of Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management and the UN Coordinator for Multilingualism for their participation and assistance in informing the development of the framework and advancing multilingual practices at UNICRI.

Like UNICRI, the Framework on Multilingualism was designed to operate in a fluid, complex and multi-dimensional landscape. It recognises the importance of applying an adaptive interdisciplinary approach and encourages the use of a reflective lens on practices and policies. It also calls for an understanding of how choices, decisions, and assumptions regarding language usage and power intersect with issues of language equality, human rights, and discrimination.[31] In this way it applies an inquiry-based approach, urging to stay vigilant about themes and issues that are often marginalized within multilingual processes, and those that remains invisible due to diverse gender, social and cultural experiences.

The Framework on Multilingualism draws from key UNICRI strategic and program material including the <u>UNICRI Strategic Framework</u> and the <u>Gender Strategy</u>. It also complements the UNICRI <u>Communication Strategy</u> approach and practice, and is similarly informed by questions of audience, medium, and impact. Accordingly, and as a practice contingent on context and continuous development, multilingualism at UNICRI is - and will remain - subject to new understandings and applications as transnational justice, peace and security global contexts change.

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31   In this way this framework recognises the concepts of <u>epistemic justice</u> which considers the equality of all inquirers in access to information and knowledge.

7. KEY CONCEPTS

This glossary of key concepts provides definitions of key terms and concepts associated with multilingualism and its broader themes of culture, identity, power, and equality. This glossary is not meant to be exhaustive; language is continuously evolving, and words often hold different meanings for different people, depending on their lived experience. Its main goal is to provide a common understanding of the vocabulary frequently used in the dialogue and discourse surrounding multilingualism.

Bias is a preference or an inclination, especially one that inhibits impartial judgment.

Discrimination is "any unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction based on a person's race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, religion, nationality, ethnic origin, disability, age, language, social origin or other similar shared characteristic or trait." Discrimination is considered prohibited conduct and "may be an isolated event affecting one person or a group of persons similarly situated or may manifest itself through harassment or abuse of authority."[32] The following are key concepts used in the strategic action plan; their definitions are intended for use in this context only.

Epistemic justice refers to issues of equality regarding individuals' access to information and knowledge. This includes disputes over meaning and importance, among powerful and powerless social groups, focusing on what knowledge is considered true, valid, and important in decision-making. The term was developed by Miranda Fricker and occupies a rich space at the intersections of ethics, epistemology, and feminist philosophy. It is intricately related to wider issues in social and political philosophy and it is also referred to as hermeneutical injustice.

Equality is the state or quality of being equal. It is about equivalence in quantity, degree, value, rank, ability or opportunity, such as the promotion of equality of opportunity in the workplace. Equality in the workplace occurs when each individual or group of people is provided the same resources or opportunities.

Equity involves recognizing that persons or groups have different circumstances and allocates the specific resources and opportunities necessary to achieve an equitable outcome. It is about fairness and taking deliberate actions to remove

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[32] (ST/SGB/2019/8, entitled "Addressing Discrimination, Harassment, Including Sexual Harassment, and Abuse of Authority", sect. 1.2)

barriers and obstacles that hinder opportunities and have an impact on well-being. In institutions, equity is achieved through the identification and elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultures that create and reinforce unfair or unbalanced outcomes.

Hierarchies of languages are understood as a ranking of languages in which a certain small number of select languages are considered high status, desirable to learn and know, while a great number of languages are not seen as an asset and hold a very low value status. This results in language loss at an individual level and language death at a societal level. This type of phenomenon is commonly theorised through concepts of language and power. [33]

Implicit bias refers to a tacit, indirect or embedded preference or inclination, sometimes unconscious, that is developed through beliefs, values, culture, background, education, societal norms, stereotypes or personal experiences. This bias can prefer or distinguish individuals or groups because of their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin. Inclusion is a dynamic state of feeling, belonging and operating in which diversity is valued and managed to create a fair, results-based institution.

Inclusive workplace culture and environment foster equitable access to resources and opportunities for all personnel. It also enables staff and personnel to feel that diversity is not only valued but also effectively managed, creating a fair workplace where they feel safe, motivated and respected.

Institutional racism refers to policies, procedures and practices of institutions that produce patterns of inequitable outcomes for all personnel based on their race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Interpersonal racism occurs between individuals. It manifests when personal beliefs are expressed in interactions with others, including public expressions and acts of prejudice, exclusion and bias based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Linguistic human rights – as envisaged in the United Nations Charter on Human Rights and various UN conventions– [34] regularly feature in international human rights documents. These include the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities, issued in 1992, Article 2.2, which states that member states should, inter alia,

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33 Dina Mehmedbegovic (2017) Engaging with Linguistic Diversity in Global Cities: Arguing for 'Language Hierarchy Free' Policy and Practice in Education, Open Linguistics; 3: 540–553.

34 The UN Charter refers to protection against discrimination based on language in Articles 13(6), 55(c) and 76(c). In 1948. Additionally, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, established in 1948, guarantees the right to freedom from discrimination on the basis of language in Article 2. Similarly, Article 2(2) of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1966 provides the same guarantee.

... take measures to create favourable conditions to enable persons belonging to minorities to express their characteristics and to develop their culture, language, religion, traditions and customs, except where specific practices are in violation of national and contrary to international standards.

Microaggression is a conscious or unconscious, verbal or non-verbal interaction that expresses a prejudiced attitude towards an individual or group, for example, based on race, colour, descent, religion, or national or ethnic origin. It can be interpreted as nonphysical aggression.

Personal racism encompasses an individual's beliefs, preferences and biases about race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Racial discrimination is defined as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life."[35] It is prohibited under international law and concerns not only the intent or purpose of different acts, but also their effects. Racial discrimination can be direct or indirect.

Racism includes attitudes, practices and beliefs rooted in ideas or theories of superiority, as a complex of factors, which produce discrimination and exclusion. Racism can take many forms, including stereotyping, harassment, negative comments or hate crimes. It can also be deeply rooted in culture, education, values and beliefs.

Stereotype refers to a generalised view or preconception about groups that results from the ascription of attributes, characteristics or roles based on one or more grounds.

Structural racism is about racial bias among institutions and across society. This involves the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of societal factors, including the history, culture, ideology and interactions of institutions and policies that systematically privilege a dominant group and disadvantage individuals of a marginalized group, for example, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin.

Theory of change is a well evidenced methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation used to map long-term strategic actions and pathways of change for transforming complex social problems.

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35   International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, art. 1 (1).

Training, research and data collection in multilingual contexts warrants special attention to the principles of impartiality, inclusion, and equity. Examples of ways this can be done include:

⊙ Data collection in multilingual contexts can be prone to **biases and errors** that can affect the quality and accuracy of data. Sampling bias, for instance, occurs when the sample is not representative of the population, and does not reflect the diversity and variation of languages and cultures. To counteract this, for example, it is essential to ensure that the sample size is large enough and balanced enough to capture the relevant differences and similarities among respondents. Measurement bias may also occur when questions, scales, or indicators are not equivalent or comparable across languages and cultures.

⊙ It is recommended to consider producing information, technical assistance, and training materials, whenever possible, **in the local languages** of the beneficiary countries. Where feasible and appropriate, engaging local researchers or translators, who are fluent in the relevant languages and understand the cultural nuances, is crucial. Hiring individuals who will enhance the accessibility of services and avoid any perception of discrimination- considering language, ethnicity, gender, disability and age - is essential.

⊙ Design your questions to be clear, neutral, and avoid language-specific elements where possible. **Use professional translators**, where possible, particularly in data collection in multilingual contexts to ensure that your questions, instructions, and materials are translated accurately and consistently.

⊙ **Analyse and interpret with caution and care**. Data is not homogeneous or comparable across languages and cultures. Avoid generalizing or extrapolating findings to other languages and cultures without considering the context and limitations of data - is essential.

⊙ Acknowledge and discuss the **challenges and limitations** of data collection and research process, including the implications and recommendations for the research. It is important to note that most published research to date has been focused on monolingual populations.[36]

⊙ **Monitor and evaluate communications**: Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of multilingual communications by gathering data and feedback from the target audience. Use this information to enhance the communication framework and encourage more meaningful and representative engagement, with stakeholders, partners and beneficiaries.

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36 You can read more about this issue in the Harvard Business Review article by Lucy Swedberg (2023) The Power of Words.

Resources and Tools

Below is a list of resources, resolutions, and tools, that support the implementation of the actions and approaches recommended by this Framework on Multilingualism.

RESOURCES

- United Nations Strategic Framework on Multilingualism.

- Global Search - UN Library Geneva (exlibrisgroup.com) which allows search by language of the UN Geneva Library and Archives.

- Library Research Guide on Multilingualism at the UN compiles resources about multilingualism at the UN and links to UN websites and databases with multilingual information on its work which serves as a coordinator of questions relating to

- Coordination of multilingualism. A section offering multiple multilingualism-related resources and available on the website of the United Nations Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, whose head also serves as the UN Coordinator for Multilingualism.

- Multilingualism at the United Nations | iSeek is the internal portal used by the UN to host resources and information on Multilingualism.

- Multilingualism Toolkit | iSeek (un.org) a communal resource of guidance, resources, and answers to frequently asked questions about how to promote multilingualism.

- United Nations Language Framework defines the UN levels of language competence in its six official languages.

RESOLUTIONS AND REPORTS

- Most recent General Assembly resolution on multilingualism: A/RES/76/268 (2022)

- Multilingualism at the United Nations, Published by the United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library, 2023

- Multilingualism in the United Nations System: report of the Joint Inspection Unit, JIU/REP/2020/6 which provides a review on multilingualism in the UN System.

➡ <u>Multilingualism: report of the Secretary-General, A/78/790, (2024)</u> which provides a summary of the actions taken from January 2021 to December 2022 to integrate multilingualism into the activities of the Secretariat.

➡ The UN's Digital Library listing of <u>General Assembly Resolutions on Multi-lingualism.</u>

Information about UN Language Programmes, courses and UN Language Proficiency exams is also available at the <u>United Nations HR Portal.</u>