



FreeCode International newsletter # 3, 2009.

In this issue you can read about the new FreeCode Community chat-room, the new shared calendar solution, the newly-released how-to's for our internal services, and a very interesting article for your inspiration and encouragement.

FREECODE COMMUNITY CHAT-ROOM

It is said that internet has turn the globe into a village, its true. The whole of FreeCode Network can now meet at one place, the FreeCode Community chat-room. It is a place where we all can meet and talk about everything. Let's meet there!

Direction to the FreeCode Community chat-room:

1. Start your Pidgin
2. Click **Buddies** → **Add Chat**
3. On the next screen enter the following details:
Account : select your FreeCode Account, if you have more than one
Room: **fcall**
Server: **conference.jabber.freecodeint.com**
Hander: **Firstname Lastname** (Your Firstname and Lastname)
Password: <leave blank>
Alias: **FreeCode Community**
Group: put it in a group that you want, for example Rooms
4. Check **Autojoin** to make sure are always in the room
5. Click **Add**

And there you will find us having some fun ☺.

SHARED CALENDAR

SOGO (Scalable Open Groupware) is an open-source software package that provides access to email and shared calendars. In addition to having a common web interface, a connector is provided for Mozilla Thunderbird, which provides access to email and calendars through already-familiar software. Here is a short how-to:

1. SOGO is available at <http://groupware.freecodeint.com/>
2. Your normal FreeCode password works there; and
3. An easily-navigable mail-and-calendar web interface is provided



INTERNAL SYSTEMS

For your easy access, the following how-to's on our internal systems are now made available to you:

- [Chat](#)
- [Email – Thunderbird](#)
- [Issue tracking system](#)
- [Origo](#)
- [Shared file area](#)
- [SugarCRM user guide](#)
- [Wiki](#)

You can find all of these on the FreeCode wiki, under the category Internal systems. Enjoy.

If you have any questions or requests for internal systems, please send an e-mail to help@freecodeint.com.

GETTING YOUR LANGUAGE INCLUDED IN THE INFORMATION AGE

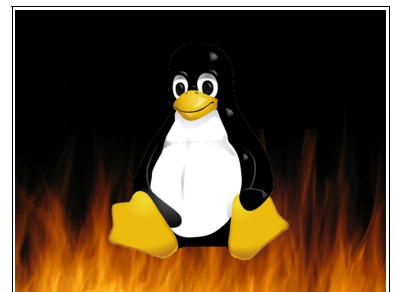
Written by Emanuel Feruzi

Have you ever wondered how it would be if all the content on the web was in Kinyarwanda, and all the software interfaces where in Lingala? Think about it!

You would google something and all the search results would come back in Kirundi. We might be late in making it happen, but we can still make it happen.

As a graduate from university, the first thing on one's mind is to get a job. But for me things were a little different. About three years prior to graduating I had learned about Linux, "*the beast*", from a friend of mine in Kenya. As an IT student, I was really amazed at what this *beast* could do. I spent sleepless night mastering the terminal and getting drivers for this device and getting it compiled and configured. It was not long before I made up my mind: to take Linux and Open Source seriously.

It was not fun to be the only person enjoying this *beast*, so I had to do something about it. I started sharing it with the people close to me. By the end of 2003, I started the Tanzania Linux Users Group. The humble beginnings, they say, but it was actually a discouraging beginning. Anyway, I went on like that until I graduated, by which



time I was already too deep into the *beast*. I had even made enough to cover my rent and food for a few months. But still I had not shared Linux with as many people as I wanted. So straight out of university, that was my first full time job: Teaching and disseminating the little knowledge I had about Linux.

“*Pole pole ndiyo mwendo*”, one by one people start joining the “*harambee*” and before I knew it I had a group of about 15 people who met daily and discussed issues ranging from programming to social life. So this was the official birth of the [Tanzania Linux Users Group \(tzLUG\)](#). I still did not have a paying job, but I had a job.

But as a group we wanted to do something for our country, something that would impact the whole nation. It was not long before this opportunity arose. A few years ago the [Kilinux](#) team had localized [Firefox](#) and [OpenOffice](#) into Swahili with the code name [Jambo](#). We then thought of supporting them and continuing from where they had left off. So by mid-December 2008 we got busy and started to learn the art of localization. With the help of the [IT+46](#) and [FreeCode](#), we managed to localize about 80% of the strings we needed.

And today we have the first release candidate 1 of the language pack ready for public testing. It has been 4 months of constant communication between all the team members. It has been 4 months of learning new Swahili words. And it has been 4 months of creating new friendships and reaffirming existing ones. 95% of the [tzLUG](#) team is made up of students, High school and university students.

A few weeks ago I attended the [ANLoc](#) Conference. It was a blessing for me to be connected to other people that wanted to see Africans and African Languages taking part in the Information Age. This conference also made me realize that we have a much bigger challenge, not only to have Swahili but also include an additional 2000 or so other African languages. I then learned that Swahili is easy as we do not even have to worry about what keyboards will be used. Some African languages require us to start from the development of fonts for those languages. The challenge is big, but we are bigger and stronger.

It is not as difficult as it may look. Most of our precious languages are quickly disappearing. But you and I can change that. Someone said that language was there before technology, and this is a fact. But today we have to learn a foreign language to be able to make use of the technology. We have reversed the order; it's the technology that has to adapt to the language and not the other way round. And our challenge is to reverse this order.



But, what can *you* do? Lots! Translate.org.za is a South African based organization working hard to provide Africans with easy-to-use tools for software localization. Tools such as [Virtaal](#) and [Translate Toolkit](#) make it very easy to localize and do quality assurance checks. Online dictionaries are being developed to cater to African Languages. The [KamusiProject](#) is developing a dictionary and learning resources for multiple African languages. Swahili is already part of it and Kinyarwanda is getting in now.

Make sure your language gets in, too. There is plenty of help available. [Arabize](#), an Arabic localization company, is ready to equip your localizer with all that is needed to manage a localization project.

As mentioned earlier, some African languages need to have fonts and keyboard layout for their languages, and [Kasahorow](#) has been doing this for a while; their help is available to you. Additionally, The University of Nairobi is working on developing a spell checker, so we can make use of that knowledge and experience in order to develop our own.

We do not have to work just as individuals, but can do so as a team. It is not the task of the software engineers or computer scientists to save our languages, but rather it is the responsibility of all of us. Everyone has a part to play. We are all here to assist.

For those that speak Swahili, please take a moment of your time and assist us in testing our language pack and kindly send us your comments and suggestions.

EDITORS NOTE

After writing this article, Feruzi received the following message from the Mozilla team:

Congratulations! Your nominated add-on, Kiswahili (SW) Language Pack, has been reviewed by a Mozilla Add-ons editor who approved your add-on to be public.

Your most recent version (3.5.1pre) has also been made public.

You can view your public add-on now at:
<http://addons.mozilla.org/addon/12788>

Hongera!

