

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

## Request for Change to ISO 639-3 Language Code

Change Request Number: 2011-080 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2011-6-30

Primary Person submitting request: Joseph Lovestrand

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Postal address for primary contact person for this request (in general, email correspondence will be used):  
J. Lovestrand, SIL Cameroon, B.P. 1299, YAOUNDE, CAMEROON

PLEASE NOTE: This completed form will become part of the public record of this change request and the history of the ISO 639-3 code set and will be posted on the ISO 639-3 website.

### Types of change requests

This form is to be used in requesting changes (whether creation, modification, or deletion) to elements of the *ISO 639 Codes for the representation of names of languages — Part 3: Alpha-3 code for comprehensive coverage of languages*. The types of changes that are possible are to 1) modify the reference information for an existing code element, 2) propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group; 3) retire a code element from use, including merging its scope of denotation into that of another code element, 4) split an existing code element into two or more new language code elements, or 5) create a new code element for a previously unidentified language variety. Fill out section 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 below as appropriate, and the final section documenting the sources of your information. The process by which a change is received, reviewed and adopted is summarized on the final page of this form.

Type of change proposed (check one):

1.  Modify reference information for an existing language code element
2.  Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group
3.  Retire a language code element from use (duplicate or non-existent)
4.  Expand the denotation of a code element through the merging one or more language code elements into it (retiring the latter group of code elements)
5.  Split a language code element into two or more new code elements (include here a request for a new code element for a divergent dialect of a major language)
6.  Create a code element for a previously unidentified language.

For proposing a change to an existing code element, please identify:

Affected ISO 639-3 identifier: [baz]

Associated reference name: Tunen

## 1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language reference name; generally this is changed only if it is erroneous; if usage is shifting to a new preferred form, the new form may be added (next box)
- Language additional names
- Language type (living, extinct, historical, etc.)
- Language scope (individual language or macrolanguage)

(b) What new value(s) do you propose:

(c) Rationale for change:

## 2. Propose a new macrolanguage or modify a macrolanguage group

(a) For an existing Macrolanguage, what change to its individual language membership do you propose:

(b) Rationale for change:

For a new Macrolanguage proposal, please also complete the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”), which must also be submitted to fully document the intended meaning for the new macrolanguage.

## 3. Retire a language code element from use

(a) Reason for change:

- There is no evidence that the language exists.
- This is equivalent to another ISO 639-3 language.

(b) If equivalent with another code element, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) is it equivalent:

(c) Rationale for change:

## 4. Expand the denotation of a code element through merging of one or more code elements

(a) List the languages (identifier and name) to be merged into this code element and retired from use:

(b) Rationale for change

## 5. Split a language code element into two or more code elements

- (a) List the languages into which this code element should be split, or the major language and the divergent variety (or varieties) for which a new code element is being requested:  
Tunen and Nyokon (Ninyo'o). "Nyokon" is the French version of the local name and the name we recommend. The term is accepted by the speakers as the label used in French. It is also the official name of the town where the language is spoken.

By the language identification criteria set forth in ISO 639-3, the simple fact of distinct identities is not enough to assign separate identifiers. The criteria are defined in the standard as follows:

For this part of ISO 639, judgments regarding when two varieties are considered to be the same or different languages are based on a number of factors, including linguistic similarity, intelligibility, a common literature (traditional or written), a common writing system, the views of users concerning the relationship between language and identity, and other factors. The following basic criteria are followed:

- Two related varieties are normally considered varieties of the same language if users of each variety have inherent understanding of the other variety (that is, can understand based on knowledge of their own variety without needing to learn the other variety) at a functional level.
  - Where intelligibility between varieties is marginal, the existence of a common literature or of a common ethnolinguistic identity with a central variety that both understand can be strong indicators that they should nevertheless be considered varieties of the same language.
  - Where there is enough intelligibility between varieties to enable communication, the existence of well-established distinct ethnolinguistic identities can be a strong indicator that they should nevertheless be considered to be different languages
- (b) Referring to the criteria given above, give the rationale for splitting the existing code element into two or more languages, or for requesting a separate identifier for the divergent variety:  
Early linguistic survey of the area highlighted many distinguishing features of the Nyokon language (Richardson 1957:28-31). Lexicostatistical studies have shown that the linguistic similarity between the two speech varieties (Tunen and Nyokon) is so low that there is no possibility of inherent understanding. Mous and Breedveld show that the percentage of similar lexical items between the two languages is as low as 36% (1986:184). A previous study by Schadeberg and Voorhoeve gave a figure of approximately 50% (1977:24). Both studies show that Tunen is more closely related to Nomaande (Mandi) ([lem]) than to Nyokon. Field notes from D. Barreteau reveal that the class system of Nyokon does not align with Tunen, each containing classes and gender pairs that do not occur in the other. This data confirms the early (and still accepted) classification of Nyokon as a separate language labeled A.45 in Guthrie's system (1971, Maho 2003:641). Nyokon (ninyo'ɔ) has also been given the language number code 514 in the Administrative Atlas of the National Languages of Cameroon (Breton and Fohung 1991: 39). Mous, in his studies of Tunen, specifically presents Nyokon as a related language and not a dialect (2003:283). Guthrie and Tucker (1956:29) write, "Although Nyɔ̃ɔ̃ is closely related to Banɛn there can be no question of intercomprehension."
- (c) Does the existing language code element represent a major language in which there already exists a significant body of literature and research? Are there contexts in which all the proposed separate

languages may still be considered the same language—as in having a common linguistic identity, a shared (or undistinguished) body of literature, a written form in common, etc.? Please comment. The early stages of literacy development in Tunen have had no impact on the Nyokon. All published (and unpublished) research has considered Tunen and Nyokon two distinct groups

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted for each new identifier that is to be created. That step can be deferred until this form has been processed by the ISO 639-3 registrar, provided that sufficient information on the rationale is given in (b) above.

In the case of a minority language that has been considered in some contexts to be a dialect of a major language, yet is divergent enough to be unintelligible to speakers of the standard variety of the major language, it may be more beneficial for the users of the ISO 639-3 and 639-2 code sets to create a new code element for the divergent language variety without splitting the existing code element of the major language. The ISO 639-3 Registration Authority may make this determination when considering a request involving a major language and a highly distinct “dialect.” If such a course is followed, the rationale for the decision will be published in a comment by the Registration Authority on approval of the requested addition for the divergent variety.

## 6. Create a new language code element

- (a) Name of missing language:
- (b) State the case that this language is not the same as or has not been included within any language that already has an identifier in ISO 639-3:

In order to complete the change request, the form “Request for New Language Code Element in ISO 639-3” (file name “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequest.doc” or “ISO639-3\_NewCodeRequestForm.rtf”) must also be submitted to more fully document the new language.

## Sources of information

Please use whichever of the points below are relevant in order to document the sources on which you have based the above proposal.

- (a) First-hand knowledge. Describe:  
In four weeks of research in the region, speakers from each group only communicated with each other in French.
- (b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:  
The possibility of developing a mother-tongue literacy project for the Nyokon was presented to the following authorities who all expressed their support: The divisional officer of Ndikinimeki subdivision (who oversees the Tunen territory), the private secretary to the divisional officer Samuel Enam (Nyokon-speaker), Isaac Ngoung, Chief of the Ambann village in Nyokon, Amos Jules Ngagni, Chief of Ahoung village in Nyokon, Jacques Renée Balahen, coordinator of the Tunen Bible translation project, Jacques Welaze, linguistic

consultant to Tunen language development team (CABTAL), Pastor of Baptist church (UEBC) in Nyokon (Tunen-speaker)

- (c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):  
Breton, Roland and Bikia Fohntung. 1991. Atlas administratif des langues nationales du Cameroun. Paris: Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique (ACCT); Yaounde: Centre Régional de Recherche et de Documentation sur les Traditions Orales et pour le Développement des Langues Africaines (CERDOTOLA); and Yaounde: Centre de Recherches et d'Études Anthropologiques (CREA).

Guthrie, Malcom and Tucker A.N. (eds.). 1956. Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland: Volume One. New York: Oxford University Press.

Maho, Jouni. 2003. A classification of the Bantu languages: an update of Guthrie's referential system. in Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu Languages*. London : Routledge. pp 639-651.

Mous, Maarten. 2003. Nen (A.44). in Derek Nurse & Gérard Philippson (eds.), *The Bantu Languages*. London : Rutledge. pp. 283-306.

Mous, Maarten and Anneke Breedveld. 1986. A dialectometrical study of some Bantu languages (A.40-A.60) of Cameroon. in G. Guaisma and W. Möhlig (eds.), *La méthode dialectométrique appliquée aux langues africaines*. Berlin: Dietrich Reimer Verlag. 177-241.

Nga, Elaine. 2000. Esquisse phonologique du ninyo'o. Université de Yaoundé. MA thesis.

Richardson, Irvine. 1957. Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland, Volume 2 of Linguistic Survey of the Northern Bantu Borderland. Oxford University Press. 28-31

Schadeberg, T. and J. Voorhoeve. 1977. Note provisoire sur les résultats scientifiques de l'ATP Internationale du CNRS, 1976/79: bantouistique. in L. Bouquiaux (ed.). *Multilinguisme dans les domaines bantou du nord-ouest et tchadique, le point sur la question en 1977*. pp 23-27.

## The change proposal process

A request to change the code set goes through a six-step process:

1. A user of ISO 639-3 proposes a change and submits it to the ISO 639-3 Registration Authority (ISO 639-3/RA) using this form.
2. The ISO 639-3 registrar processes the change request to verify that the request is compatible with the criteria set forth in the standard and to ensure that the submitter has supplied all necessary information. This may involve rounds of interaction with the submitter.
3. When the change request proposal is complete in its documentation (including all associated New Code Requests), the change request is promoted to “Proposed Change” status and the ISO 639-3 registrar posts the request on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA. Also at this time, an announcement is sent to anyone requesting notification of new proposals matching their specified criteria (region and/or language family of interest). Periodically, a message maybe sent to the general LINGUIST discussion list on Linguist List (<http://linguistlist.org/issues/index.html>), and

other appropriate discussion lists, inviting individuals to review and comment on pending proposals. Anyone may request from the ISO 639-3 registrar to receive notification regarding proposals involving languages in a specific region of the world or specific language family.

4. Individuals may send comments to the ISO 639-3 registrar for compilation. The consensus of early reviews may result in promotion to “Candidate Status” (with or without amendment), or withdrawal of the change request, if the conclusion is that the request is not in keeping with the stated criteria of the ISO 639-3 standard.
5. Three months prior to the end of the annual cycle of review and update, a new notice is posted on the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA, and an announcement listing the Candidate Status Change Requests is posted to the LINGUIST discussion list and other discussion lists, as requested by their owners. All change requests are then open to further review and comment by any interested party for a period of three months. A Change Request received after the start of Candidacy phase must wait until the next annual cycle for consideration. The purpose of this phase is to ensure that a minimum of three months is allotted for the review of every proposal.
6. At the end of the formal review period, a given Change Request may be: 1) adopted as a whole; 2) adopted in part (specific changes implicit in the whole Change Request may be adopted separately); 3) rejected as a whole; or 4) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle. All change requests remain permanently archived at the official web site of the ISO 639-3/RA.

**Please return this form to:**

ISO 639-3 Registrar  
SIL International, Office of Language Information Systems  
7500 West Camp Wisdom Road  
Dallas, Texas 75236 USA  
ISO 639-3/RA web site: <http://www.sil.org/iso639-3/>  
E-mail: [iso639-3@sil.org](mailto:iso639-3@sil.org)

An email attachment of this completed form is preferred.

**Sources of documentation for ISO 639-3 identifiers:**

Gordon, Raymond G., Jr. (ed.), 2005. *Ethnologue: Languages of the World*, Fifteenth edition. Dallas, Tex.: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com/> .  
Linguist List. Ancient and Extinct Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfAncientLgs.html>  
Linguist List. Constructed Languages. <http://linguistlist.org/forms/langs/GetListOfConstructedLgs.html>