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In August and September of 2023, I used the IRIS funding to support a six-week pilot study in Kenya. The study aims to achieve two key objectives: (i) to probe some of the issues discovered in my preliminary review and (ii) to collect data that will help me narrow down potential questions for my dissertation. My research centers around digital accessibility and the role of language localization on platforms in Kenya. I was able to interview key players in the language industry to gain relevant local insight and experiences of language localization in Kenya. I chose Kenya because it is one of the African countries that provide local languages apart from English [Swahili] on their digital platforms.

I spent six weeks in Nairobi. While in Nairobi, I spent most of my time meeting with old and new contacts. This involved face-to-face meetings with my interviewees. The interviewees were translators and localization experts who were/will be critical to my research inquiries. This research trip was essential as it helped me understand the perspective of regional professionals. In addition, I could attend local technology events, which gave me insight into technological innovations and the role of language in those innovations in Kenya.

The opportunity to conduct this type of applied pilot study is a step further to evaluate the state of language localization in developing economies, which is an effort to raise localization awareness of low-resourced languages (i.e., African languages). Along with gathering relevant documents for my preliminary exams and dissertation, this experience helped me think through some of my research questions. For instance, I focused on the technical standards during my initial review. However, after talking to professionals, I realized that technical localization standards are

not a pressing issue; instead, there is a need to implement ethical localization standards/guidelines that will guide language technologists while conducting their work. These standards will be specific to professionals who work within the African language space to ensure ethical and reliable transparency.

The IRIS funding made this trip possible, and I am grateful for the IRIS awards. The funds supported my travels and accommodation. With the knowledge gained from this trip, I plan to pursue further inquiry into potential solutions to some of the issues with language localization.