

# ISO 639-3 Registration Authority

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

Change Request Number: 2008-074 (completed by Registration authority)

Date: 2007-12-29

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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.

### 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
4.  Split a language code element into two or more new code elements
5.  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: msn

Associated reference name: Mosina

### 1. Modify an existing language code element

(a) What are you proposing to change:

- Language reference name
- Language additional names

- Language type (living, extinct, historical, etc.)  
 Language scope (individual language or macrolanguage)

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

New reference name = Vurës

Alternate names = Vures, Vureas, Vuras, Vetumboso.

Dialect names = Mwesen (Mosina, Mosin).

(c) Rationale for change:

The language [msn] has two distinct varieties, which despite their distinct differences, may still be considered two dialects of the same language:

(1) a minor dialect spoken on the southeast side of Vanua Lava island, esp. in a village locally called "Mwesen". Incidentally, /Mosina/ is nothing but the spelling of that village name in the foreign language Mota (used as a reference by missionaries of the Melanesian Church).

(2) a major variety spoken on the southwest side of the same island, esp. in the large village of Vetumboso, in the area known locally as "Vurës" [βyɾœs] (appears as "Vureas Bay" on maps). This language variety is designated locally as "Vurës", and this is the name used in scientific works (by Alex François as well as by Catriona Hyslop).

Today, Mwesen (1) is fading out, being spoken by about 15 speakers only. Conversely, Vurës (2) has become dominant on Vanua Lava, with at least 1,000 speakers altogether.

This is the third major language (out of 17) spoken in the Torba province.

As a consequence, it is somehow weird to still designate a language which everybody knows as Vurës, by using a name "Mosina" which (a) is borrowed from another language, and not used locally; (b) would anyway only designate the dying variety "Mwesen" of the language, and would never be associated to the dominant language "Vurës". Hence I recommend that the language [msn] be renamed to Vurës (if possible with Umlaut), with "Vures, Vureas, Vuras, Vetumboso" as alternate names for that language; and secondly, that its dialect "Mwesen" be mentioned (with its 15 speakers), together with the mention of "Mosina" as a possible designation of the latter (and also "Mosin", used in Codrington 1885).

## 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.

- This is a variety that is fully intelligible with another ISO 639-3 language and should be merged with it.

- (b) If one of the latter two reasons, with which ISO 639-3 code element (identifier and name) should it be merged :
- (c) Rationale for change:

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

- (a) List the languages into which this code element should be split:

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:

- (c) Does the language code element to be split 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.? If so, please comment.

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.

## 5. 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:  
I've been doing fieldwork in the whole Banks & Torres area since 1997. I've collected firsthand data on both Vurës and Mwesen in 1998, 2003 and 2007.
- (b) Knowledge through personal communication. Describe:  
I'm sure Catriona Hyslop (University of the South Pacific), who's been studying the language Vurës, would agree with me.
- (c) Knowledge from published sources (please give complete bibliographical references):  
See also the following published articles, where the specificity of Mwesen as opposed to Vurës appears clearly:  
François, Alexandre. 2005. Unraveling the history of vowels in seventeen north Vanuatu languages. *Oceanic Linguistics* 44-2 (Dec 2005): 443-504. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.  
François, Alexandre. 2007. Noun articles in Torres and Banks languages: Conservation and innovation. In Jeff Siegel, John Lynch and Diana Eades (eds), *Language Description, History and Development: Linguistic indulgence in memory of Terry Crowley*. Creole Language Library 30. New York: John Benjamins. Pp.313-326.

## 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) amended and resubmitted for the next review cycle; or 4) withdrawn from consideration. 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>