

Amazwi



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INFINITELY TRANSLATABLE

The other day I heard a devotional speaker say, “God’s heart is to leap across ethnic boundaries, so He makes His Word infinitely translatable”, (Ronnie Sim, Translation Consultant).

How true this is! It explains why Wycliffe is constantly in search of new ways to translate the life giving Message into every heart language of the world.

The other side of the search for creative translation strategies is the growing sense of urgency in the task of Bible translation. This is the essence of Wycliffe’s *Vision 2025* – to see an action plan in place for every one of the remaining languages by the year 2025.

The enormity of the task of doing this for over 2000 languages motivates us to find new ways of working. One such strategy, known as the cluster approach, is to translate for a whole family of languages rather than for one language at a time.

When we think of translation work, most of us probably think of the written product, but what does that mean for unwritten languages, and for people who are not functionally literate, or never will be?

Taking that a step further, what does it mean for people whose language is unspoken? I’m referring, of course, to the many sign languages of the world.

Contrary to wide belief, there is no universal sign language for the deaf. Even countries that have the same official language, like Spain and Mexico, use very different sign languages.

So how DO we translate God’s Word so that ALL may have access?

Karen Floor

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TALKING HANDS

How will the Deaf in South Africa hear?

The realisation of the need for a visual Bible in the heart language of the Deaf in South African Sign Language (SASL), came as a result of an awareness created at the Lausanne Conference in Cape Town, 2010. Those who minister to the Deaf have observed how they have difficulty in reading. Even the “Easier-to-read” Bible (in English) is not that easy for the Deaf to read for the following reasons:

- According to the Deaf Federation of South Africa’s statistics, 600 000 South Africans use sign language as their primary language.
- 75% of the Deaf community is functionally illiterate, with the average Deaf school leaver having a reading age of eight.
- We know that any person learns best in their heart language, and for most Deaf people living in South Africa this is South African Sign Language.

There is excitement about the “English

Bible for the Deaf” that is being developed over the next 3 years by the Bible Society of South Africa. This will be a great help to the Deaf community in South Africa and in Africa with a primary school level reading age. At the same time, there is a growing need for a complementary translation that will reach the majority who are illiterate. How can *they* best acquire a sound understanding of the Bible?

Three Deaf communities in Cape Town (Masimbonge Gospel Fellowship of the Deaf in Kayelitsha; The Deaf at St. James Church in Kenilworth; and the profoundly Deaf children at Mary Kihn School in Observatory) have responded most favourably to the idea of a Bible on DVD in South African Sign Language. We would like to see these people grow in their knowledge and understanding of God and know that this would be most effectively accomplished through their heart language.

A set of 110 Chronological Bible Stories (CBS) has been developed for the Deaf in

the sign languages of a few other countries, as a primary Bible for the Deaf. The stories are divided into three sections, all titles in sign language structure: “Know God How?”, “Follow God How?” and “Serve God How?” The CBS are chronologically selected stories from Genesis to Revelation, giving the Deaf a basic overview and understanding of the Bible in relation to “knowing God”, “following God” and “serving God”. The verses are not necessarily told in order as they appear in the Bible, due to the nature of sign language, but every verse and the order in which they appear in sign language is recorded at the end of each story. The consultants check that the stories are clear, accurate, natural and acceptable to the people of the target language.

Nowhere in the world has the full Bible been translated into any one sign language. After 28 years, for example, the full Bible has not yet been translated into American Sign Language. Chronological Bible Stories are therefore a good place to start with the translation of the Bible into sign language for the Deaf.

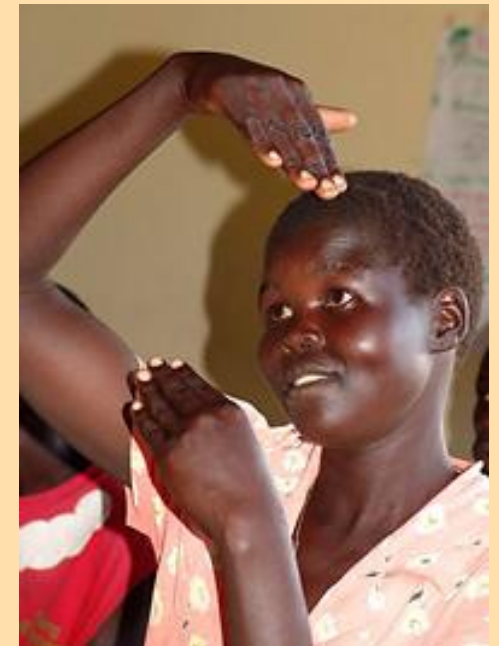
Based on the time frame it has taken teams in America, India, Kenya, and presently Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Ethiopia and Ghana, it will take approximately 5 years to develop the CBS into SASL. To complete one story can take 6-8 weeks. Translating the 110 Chronological Bible Stories over 5 years is an attainable goal, and we are eager to reach the 600 000 people in South Africa who have sign language as their heart language!

The Deaf have been marginalised for too long. The Gospel, and therefore the Bible, is not just for those who have ears

to hear, but also for the Deaf who have eyes to “read” sign language. Yes, the Deaf are an unreached people group. Let us provide the means for the Deaf to “listen” with their eyes as God’s Word speaks to them in the language they understand best.

Lisa Craye, “Talking Hands” ministry to the Deaf

www.talkinghands.org.za



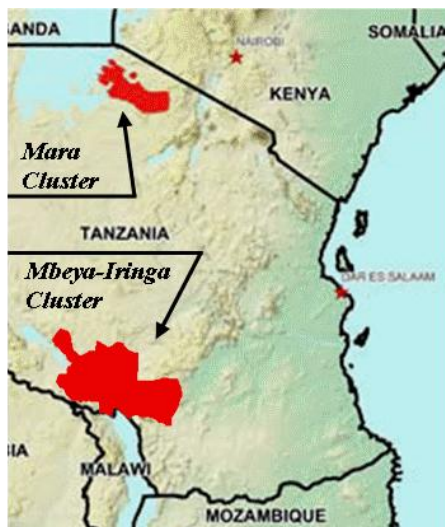
“Expect great things from God, attempt great things for God.”

William Carey

LET'S PICK A CLUSTER

A language family strategy

There are 500 languages in the Bantu family of languages, spoken by about 200 million Africans spread out from the equator to South Africa. Of these, approximately 14 million individuals speak one of 250 languages without the Scriptures. To help achieve Vision 2025 with greater speed, efficiency, and quality, Wycliffe has been exploring new strategies, including a language family strategy. This involves working in language clusters within the Bantu language family.



What is a Cluster?

A cluster can be defined as a language programme which has two or more language groups (often closely related) that work together with a shared language development strategy, sharing personnel and resources. Languages may be grouped together to form a cluster based on linguistic relatedness, social relationships, geographic proximity and the number of

churches or denominations working among the same languages.

The Cluster Team

A team approach is an essential element of the strategy. We are not referring to a team that addresses the needs of a particular language, but a bigger team that addresses the needs of a cluster. The team members share the responsibility for all of the languages in the cluster, working as part of the larger team. Initial orientation that includes team development is vital. This entails a sense of shared ownership, mutual appreciation of each other's gifts and skills, sharing decision-making and honouring one another.

Where is the Mbeya-Iringa Cluster?

Imagine about 3 million people without adequate access to the most important message for all mankind. That is the situation in southern Tanzania, but now all that is changing! In 2003, church communities in the region approached Wycliffe and said, "We need Bibles, and we need them to be translated into the heart languages of our people!" A project was born in the fall of 2003 to serve ten language communities simultaneously by training mother-tongue translators and literacy workers. Only God can be attributed with what has been accomplished to date because it has been no less than miraculous!

Where is the Mara Cluster?

The Mara Region lies in the northwest of Tanzania, and is the northernmost area of the country. Lake Victoria creates Mara's western edge, the Kenyan border is the northern boundary, and Serengeti National Park wraps around the southern and eastern sides. Around 1.4 million people live in the Mara Region, which makes it the most densely

populated area of Tanzania with the fewest churches. A wide variety of denominations comprise the churches which are present, and the majority of people call themselves Christians. But without the Word in the heart languages of these people, it is still traditional religion which claims people's loyalties.

The Cluster

Work on the Mara Cluster began in 2005 by developing partnership with local churches. The local church leaders responded very positively when they first heard of the plan to do language survey in order to better understand the situation in the region, with the intent of Scripture translation in the future. The survey, which was done from 2005-2006, found that there are at least 14

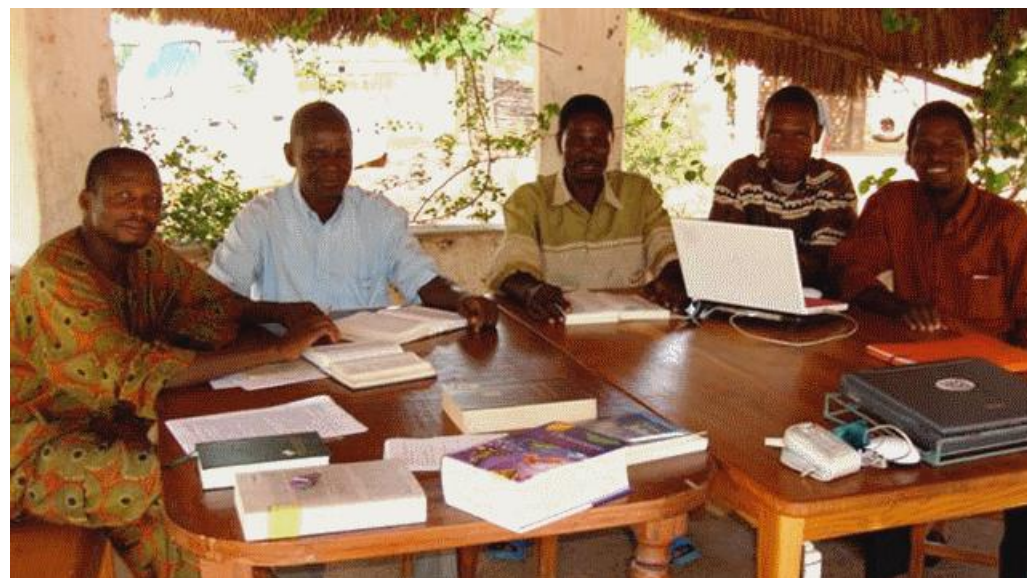
languages in the Mara Region. Twelve of these languages are of the Bantu language family, and similar to one another. Both of the two non-Bantu languages already have the New Testament translated.

The Project

Linguistic work began in earnest in 2006. The Mara Cluster team worked with Tanzanians from eight languages to develop alphabets and writing systems for their languages. An already-existing translation project for the Zinza language joined the Mara Cluster in 2009, and later that year all nine translation teams began translating the Gospel of Luke for Ikizu, Ikoma, Kabwa, Kwaya, Jita, Ngoreme, Simbiti, Zanaki and Zinza.

"The Word of the Lord spread through the whole region."

Acts 13:49



SINGING HELPS THE VEGETABLES COOK

The small aircraft comes to a complete stop on the Papua highland landing strip and the propeller takes its last turn, ending the loud rumble of the engine. Before the door is open several Papua students surround the plane to welcome us. Even before our luggage is unloaded, I hear some guitars and a ukulele accompanying a song in a style that reminds me of the Melanesian cultures. A small group of students huddles just outside the old hangar singing stories about God, and expressing their deep love and faith in Him.

Our time at the Papua leadership training school is filled with the sound of students singing, from the time they begin watching the vegetables cook for lunch until the electricity is turned off late in the evening. At first I think that all the singing is due to a music workshop they are attending, where they compose, record and dramatise their own songs. Later I realise that many of the songs I hear are not even recorded. I begin to realise that telling stories in song is an integral part of relating to God and each other. Songs, music, chanting and drama are all key parts of how they normally communicate! This is because the Papuans are traditional oral learners.

Oral learners, like the Papuans, communicate truth differently from literate cultures. What then are the right tools to use to reach them? What is the right kind of translation?

Translating God's Word for Oral Cultures

Traditionally our approach has been to analyse the language in a literate fashion to translate

the Bible into a written script for local use. If people normally don't use their language in a written form, then they learn this through literacy classes. This is where the challenge lies, because even though literacy has great value, it has often proved to have limited success in terms of real understanding of the message of the Bible. Consequently, we need to look for other ways for people to have access to real understanding - hence the term "*Creative Access*." This means giving people access in a relevant way, not just doing something creative for the sake of being creative.

What does this mean for Oral cultures?

It means analysing the language of the community from an oral point of view. Each culture has its own oral traditions with its preferred ways for communicating spiritual truth. These could include songs, poetry, chants, proverbs, drama, narratives, sermons, dance, rhetorical questions, and pictures. Interestingly enough, the Bible includes many of these art forms to tell its stories, so in a real sense God has gone before us in being creative!

Creative Access

The concept of "*Creative Access*" gives priority to the relevance of Bible stories in the eyes of those we serve. People need to be able to connect with the story and its meaning. Only then can we introduce them story by story to the God of creation and the new life He provides through Jesus, so we look for things that will open the door of understanding to the message of God's Story.



Door openers

Door openers are readily available in every culture, often through redemptive analogies, like stories, practices, and principles that demonstrate a Biblical value already present in the culture. Sometimes it means connecting to their creation stories, their history or their cultural practices. Often it's as simple as using stories that relate to who the people are in terms of occupation and lifestyle. We see this when women readily engage with stories about women, farmers about farming, and fishermen about fishing. Using this method gives people a way to "get into" the message of the Bible in a way that works for them and enables real understanding. It provides access to God's

Word in a creative and highly relevant way – one that impacts lives, because it relates to everyday life!

Durk Meijer, Scripture Engagement Specialist

"One of the fundamental reasons why Wycliffe Bible Translators exists is to make Scripture functionally accessible to the people we serve. It all started with the realisation that we need to use the right language – the language of the heart. This is foundational."



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