



The Word For The World

BIBLE TRANSLATORS

VISION:

*The glory of God
through transformed lives
by the power of his Word
in everyone's heart language.*

MISSION:

To enable persons, ministries and organizations from language communities that do not have the Bible in their own language yet to take responsibility for Bible translation and related activities and to ensure its availability and accessibility.

INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT'S REPORT¹ (Midyear 2018)

It is my joy to report on the highlights of God's work through *The Word for the World Bible Translators (TWFTW)* as we move toward the vision God planted in our hearts of completing 500 first-time Bible translations by 2050.²

PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION³

The Soli people of Zambia now have the New Testament in their language! The release of the Soli New Testament comes after years of hardship and tragedy: the death of two members of the translation committee killed in a terrible car accident, the death of one of the translators (a founding translation team member who lost his life after a lengthy battle with Hepatitis), another translator being poisoned while working with local churches, and the translation team having to work through extreme drought conditions. God alone was

¹ TWFTW's financial statements are available upon request.

² For details on TWFTW's work in various countries, please visit our website at twftw.org.

³ For details of our published translations, please see *TWFTW Publishing Report* (available upon request).

able to turn their tears of grief over these horrendous sufferings into tears of joy at receiving, for the first time in their history, the New Testament in their language. Seven thousand written copies were distributed, plus an additional 150 audio versions published by *Davar Partners International*.

Our New Testament translation for the Borna people of Ethiopia has been printed! *TWFTW Ethiopia* is eagerly awaiting 5,000 copies to arrive so that the launching ceremony and distribution can commence.

Additionally, a 4-week workshop for production specialists was successfully completed for 16 students from Ethiopia, India, Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Cameroon. We now have people within *TWFTW* who will be able to handle many of our typesetting needs. This training was a major step toward indigenous leaders taking responsibility for every aspect of Bible translation work in their nations. Glory to God!

BIBLE TRANSLATION PROJECTS⁴

Bible Translation

TWFTW continues to complete the first draft of a New Testament in 3 years (6.4 years including consultation) and a full Bible in 9 years (12.6 years including consultation).⁵ This pace is 21% faster and 26% less expensive than the global average.⁶

In January, five *TWFTW* translators began a Bible translation for the estimated 3 million speakers of Rakhine in Myanmar and Bangladesh. *TWFTW* is now involved in translating first-time Bibles for 109 people groups in Africa, Asia and Europe. All 330 of our Bible translators are indigenous to the people groups for whom they are translating. *TWFTW* also assisted other agencies to make progress on many other Scripture translations.

TWFTW has expanded our fledgling work in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Myanmar; begun Bible translation work in Nigeria, Nepal and Pakistan; and begun exploring the possibility of beginning work in Mozambique, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Finland. Our Regional Directors have already identified 125 potential new Bible translation projects which could begin in the next few years.

Bible Translation Consultation⁷

TWFTW now has 16 fulltime consultants (those qualified to check translations against the

⁴ For details on the progress of *TWFTW*'s Bible translations, please see our *Status of TWFTW Bible Translation Projects Report* (available at www.twftw.org/translation/).

⁵ Does not include projects that do not follow *TWFTW*'s core approach of using at least 3 indigenous translators, or those projects that are managed by other organizations.

⁶ Based on *Every Tribe Every Nation*'s meeting minutes that state the average time to translate a full Bible (with consultation) is 16 years, and the average cost per Bible is \$1,000,000.

⁷ For details on *TWFTW*'s Bible translation consultants, please see the *TWFTW Translation Consultant Database* (available upon request).

Greek and/or Hebrew) – 8 international consultants, 6 national level consultants and 2 local consultants. Almost all of our national and local level consultants are indigenous to the African and Asian nations in which they are consulting. Such indigenous consultants are essential in our helping the worldwide Bible translation community to reach the goal of seeing a Bible available in everyone's language by 2050!

This year, we have seen two group consultations completed in ten languages at once in India. These consultations and others have helped to complete the checking of five New Testament translations in India, which are now being prepared for publication – praise the Lord!

TRAINING

Bible Translators

In the first 6 months of this year, we completed 10 Bible translator training events (compared with 8 during this same period in 2017): 7 in India, 1 in Myanmar and 2 in Slovakia. One of the training events in Slovakia was *TWFTW's* first Diploma in Bible Translation (DBT) course taught entirely over the Internet. The 364 students now enrolled in our Bible translator training programme are from 14 countries. To date, we have 192 individuals from 11 countries that have graduated from our DBT training programme.

Bible Translation Consultants⁶

We currently have 20 consultants-in-training (CITs) – the vast majority of whom are indigenous to the nations for which they will be consulting. *TWFTW* members provide academic supervision for several CITs that are pursuing post-graduate degrees through *TWFTW's* Master's and Doctoral programmes operated via the *South African Theological Seminary*. All of our CITs have begun contributing to the work of Bible translation in various ways.

SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT

When crowds saw and heard the Jesus Film in Soli (produced by the Jesus Film Project), many were awestruck, saying, "Jesus speaks my language!" Indeed, Jesus speaks Soli and now the New Testament messages of love and truth are available for the Soli people to understand in their own language!

In Slovakia, a local mayor approved opening a room for children's clubs in the new Roma Community Centre. Many of the new children are pre-school age, and Roma youth are helping *TWFTW* members with activities to reinforce Bible stories (written in their language of Eastern Slovak Romani) with the children.

TESTIMONIES

India: Since Bahadur (not his real name), one of our translators, has been translating the Bible for his people (the first written material in their language), he has faced a tremendous amount of rejection from his relatives, friends and community members. The village elders decreed that he will either have to leave the Christian faith or leave the community.

Drawing strength from the Bible, Bahadur decided to leave the village to continue the translation work. Bahadur's courageous stance in the face of persecution influenced his parents, sister, brother-in-law and some friends to become believers. They saw Bahadur's life mirroring that of Jesus. Soon Bahadur started getting visits from others who kept their faith in Christ a secret. Inspired by Bahadur's faith, they all started putting their trust in Jesus Christ and making their faith public. They are now preparing to start a church in the village that once excommunicated Bahadur.

India: The believers of the Tagin people group are eagerly awaiting the New Testament in their language (currently being printed in Sri Lanka). Local church leaders have said that the Bible in English or Hindi was completely inadequate. However, as one church leader put it, "Through the Bible translation work, our Tagin tribe could write exactly as the way we speak; now we can accurately express the exact Tagin sound in our writing. Before the development of this alphabet it was very difficult to write the exact Tagin vowel sounds. As a result of this translation work we also got a privilege to learn the Word of God every day and also share the love of God to our fellow Tagin who are still nonbelievers." [sic]

India: Research was conducted to determine the impact of the recently published Sakachep New Testament. Over 200 people took part in survey questions and focus group discussions from May 30 – June 01, 2018. The following are testimonies highlighted from this research:

- When asked where and how the translation was being used, people responded that it was being used in the local church services when praying for the sick, during youth meetings, during women's meetings, in times of family and personal devotions, and in school for memory verses. Multiple people simply said, "Everywhere, on every occasion!"
- One young man said: "When I used to read the Bible in another language it never touched me. But when I read our New Testament it touches my heart. I am able to understand and feel confident to read now." [sic]
- A mother shared: "When we used another language Bible, my children could not understand it, even when I tried to explain it to them. But now my children read and understand the Bible all by themselves!" [sic]
- A man shared: "Before getting the New Testament I felt shy to say I am a Sakachep; but now I am proud to say I am Sakachep, and I can speak to God with my own mother tongue."
- Another man shared "When I first got the Bible I read so much. I never stopped. Even my wife got angry with me for reading so much!"
- "Thank you, God, for giving my language back."
- "I am very happy that we have received our Bible. God's love is still on us, such a small tribe." [sic]

- “I can't stop giving thanks to God after getting our Sakachep Bible.”
- “After long time, we get our language back, after getting our Sakachep Bible, I feel unstoppable joy.” [sic]
- A lady shared her favorite verse, Philippians 1:21 and said after reading it in her own language she realised “I am in this world only to live for Christ.” [sic]

Tanzania: Victor Muhando, a man from the Zigua-speaking village of Kwediboma, was saved from his alcohol and smoking addictions. When he first started reading the Scriptures in his own language in 2015, Victor's addictions were causing him to be ill with liver and skin diseases. However, he encountered God for the first time as he began reading the Bible in his primary language of Zigua. He found that a personal relationship with Jesus inspired him to change his life and become healthy again. Now, he is regularly attending church and reading the Word of God. He says that he likes to serve God by using his language to speak to his own people about the Lord. Praise God for freedom in Christ!

LITERACY

TWFTW continues to make advances in literacy work where the literacy rate is low and no other agency is involved with literacy work. In Ethiopia, we have ongoing work with the Dawro, Gofa and Guji people. Our largest literacy programme is also in Ethiopia in the Maale language community where we currently have 5,036 students learning to read and write at 76 literacy centres. We also have programmes in Malawi for the Lambya and Sena peoples. Our literacy programmes typically use primers compiled by TWFTW members and based on the Bible to teach people to read and write.

In India, during a 4-week literacy workshop, members from six language communities (Ahirani, Dhankawi, Holiya, Lodhi, Nahali and Palya-Bareli) pulled together to produce six books in each language for adults and children. No translated Scriptures are used as yet because our approach has to be secular and not what could be perceived as a “conversion programme” by authorities and strong religious groups in the region. However, once a literacy programme is operating, the Scriptures will be integrated into the programme. Bible translation work is also underway for these people groups, which did not have written languages until last year. We praise God for helping us face one of our greatest challenges in Bible translation work – teaching people to read and write so they can understand the Scriptures!

PARTNERSHIPS

We continue to enjoy working alongside many partners, especially numerous indigenous churches and ministries. Other key partners include: the *Forum of Bible Agencies International* and regional Forums of Bible Agencies, *New Life Computer Institute*, *North East Centre for Training And Research*, *Pioneer Bible Translators*, *Seed Company*, *SIL*, *Every Tribe Every Nation (ETEN)*, *Illuminations*, *American Bible Society*, *United Bible Societies* and various national Bible Societies, *Digital Bible Library*, *Faith Comes By*

Hearing, Davar Partners International, The Jesus Film Project and New Life Literature. We are also partnering with various universities in Ethiopia, India and South Africa.

In addition to Vision 2050 (our organizational goal of translating the Bible for 500 Scripture-less people groups by 2050), *TWFTW* has endorsed *ETEN's* Vision 2033 – the worldwide goal of translating and publishing over 95% of the Scriptures for the 1,600 largest Bible-less people groups by 2033.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGES

TWFTW is now registered in Nigeria! We will soon open an office in Abuja, centrally located to many people groups.

Pastor Pau Khan Sing has been appointed *TWFTW* Coordinator for Myanmar.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We believe *TWFTW* is well-positioned for Bible translation work in the 21st century. Our greatest opportunities continue to lie in the largely untapped resource of indigenous peoples. It is my great honour to work alongside pioneers of the faith to include hundreds of nationals, *TWFTW* members and ministry partners – all truly “servants of the Word” (Luke 1.2). We look forward to seeing how God might continue to work through *TWFTW* to accomplish His Kingdom work among people receiving the Word of God for the very first time.

Soli Deo Gloria!

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