



CALL OF KENYA



Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A.) Newsletter: Aug- Oct 2012

SWEETER THAN HONEY

Saturday 14th July 2012 will remain memorable to me for various reasons. That morning I woke up to the beautiful sound of birds in the green indigenous trees around Cheptebo Rural Development Centre, where we slept over, on our way to Tot in the Kerio Valley to launch the starting of the Marakwet Old Testament Translation. The air was equally refreshing, coming from a vast land of trees.

The drive through the valley to Tot was breathtaking. The beautiful rolling escarpment dotted with glittering waterfalls captured one's eyes all through. The valley floor was decorated with tall red earth anthills; not to mention the clear water rivers and many dry sand river beds which one had to navigate through without the benefit of a bridge! One thing however captured my attention as we drove; many cylindrical beehives patched on every tall mature tree as we passed by. I thought to myself, the Marakwet people must be very good bee keepers and therefore honey must be in plenty. I was therefore looking forward to our arrival so that I could sample their honey.

Our arrival was greeted by song and dance from the hundreds of people who had already assembled for the ceremony. Soon the ceremony got underway. Adorned in their traditional regalia, men and women sang gospel songs in their mother tongue and this made the well attended ceremony very lively as members of the community joined in praises to God Almighty. ►►



Marakwet men and women dancing



Marakwet old woman listening to the proceedings of the launch

WHAT'S INSIDE

| | |
|--|---|
| Sweeter than honey | 1 |
| Word from the G.S | 2 |
| Sabaot Bible Dedication | 3 |
| Adult & Continuing Education stakeholders (ACE) Forum | 4 |
| Upcoming events | 4 |



I was mesmerized by the way the Marakwet people captured the mood of the day. They left no doubt that they love honey but they had found something sweeter since the New Testament was dedicated and given to them in 2009. After prayers and speeches from invited guests, as we were just about to pronounce the project officially launched, community members came in dancing with half a beehive. They then put the Marakwet New Testament into the open half and summoned for the other half of the beehive to be brought in. They explained that the half beehive signified the New Testament that the community received 3 years ago, and the commencement of the Old Testament would now complete the beehive into a cylindrical container that would produce something sweeter than honey.



Rev. Peter Munguti, BTL General Secretary, Cyrus Murage, Language Programs Manager and Edwyn Kiptinness BTL Board Chairman holding half a beehive and a cylindrical beehive

Joining me in the celebrations, were the BTL Board Chairman, Mr. Edwyn Kiptinness, BTL Ruiru Conference Centre Board member Mr. Charles Maithulia, BTL General Secretary Rev. Peter Munguti, BTL staff members, local leaders, church leaders and members of the community.

After this very interesting symbolic act, we danced, sang and prayed and then promised to be back to deliver the other half of the beehive; the Word of God which is sweeter than honey. The Psalmist says ***"How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalms 119:103 (NIV)*** *Paul Machira BTL Partnership Development Officer*

WORD FROM THE G.S.

As a young boy, I still remember the many days I accompanied my father on honey harvesting expeditions to the forest. Those days are memorable to me not because I loved the night adrenalin -raising adventure in a forest where encounters with fierce wild animals would not be ruled out, but because of the sweet honey we came out with at the end of our mission! The risk was big but equally the product was worth

it! I loved honey and do still love it to this day but the Psalmist has proven to me that there is something sweeter than honey – the Word of God. The Psalmist tells us that, "The ordinances of the Lord... are sweeter than honey from the comb" Psalms 19: 10 (NIV). I believe that it is the desire to savour the sweetness in the Word of God that has resulted in numerous calls from several communities who do not have the Scriptures, for BTL to develop their language and give them the Word of God in their language. All the way from Chonyi to Taveta, from Tugen to Upper Pokomo, the cry has been the same; "We want the Scriptures in our language."

These calls have left in me a sense of urgency to start work sooner than later in all the remaining language groups in Kenya. Since we have already almost completed all language surveys and identified where the needs are, I do not see why we should not respond to all these calls in the next three to five years. We in BTL do recognise that the need and urgency to establish translation programmes in these communities is real. We do accept the challenge and are ready to summon all our strength, and with your support, mobilise resources to start these programmes soon. Otherwise we risk allowing a whole generation in these communities to slip into eternity without having had an opportunity to taste the only thing which is sweeter than honey – the Word of God in their language.

BTL also recognises that for these communities to enjoy the sweetness in God's Word, they should be able to read and understand that Word. With the very high levels of illiteracy, the challenge is immense. It is for this reason that BTL, together with the Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education, are seeking to work with other literacy stakeholders to meet the remaining literacy needs in this country. We are grateful to God that through language development, literacy and Bible translation, BTL is not only serving and restoring the dignity of the small language groups, but we are also bringing a long lasting transformation to these communities.

As you read through this issue of the Call of Kenya, reflecting on the journey covered thus far, remember that we still have another journey ahead; to give the Word of God, which is sweeter than honey, to the remaining language groups who do not have the Bible in their language.

*Rev. Peter Munguti
BTL General Secretary.*



SABAOT BIBLE DEDICATION

The long awaited day was finally here; June 10th 2012. The day began with loud music, a marching band, women adorned with beautiful regalia, old men, young boys and girls all headed for Kibuk Girls High School on Mt. Elgon. It was exciting to see thousands of Sabaot people; majority of them being young people; turning up to welcome the Bible in their language; the Sabaot complete Bible.



Beautifully dressed ladies from the Sebei community in Uganda preparing to celebrate in song and dance

It took 32 years to complete this Bible. Therefore this was not just a celebration; it was a long awaited beginning of a whole new chapter in the lives of the Sabaot community. This being the first complete Bible by BTL, it was a time to celebrate Gods faithfulness.

Over 7,000 people made it to witness this historical event. The guests included Government Ministers, Members of Parliament, church leaders, Bible Translation and literacy (BTL) board members and staff, SIL & Wycliffe Global Alliance staff members and partners.



The speech of the former president of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Daniel Toroitich arap Moi, who was the Chief Guest, was read by Retired Lieutenant General Lazarus Sumbeiywo. In his speech, Honorable Moi highly commended BTL for its efforts to translate the Bible into the small languages of Kenya. He went further to challenge BTL to go on and find all the remaining marginalized communities in Kenya and develop their language in an effort to open them up to civilization through language development, literacy and translation of the Scriptures.



Mr. Peter Mdogo, the BTL Sabaot Project Leader holding up the Sabaot complete Bible

Honorable Moi also recognized the importance of mother tongue education; "It's been a very long road to reach this destination and today there is something for which we can say praise be to the lord...we encourage learning of vernacular languages at the start of a child's education so as to lay a foundation for literacy". During the dedication ceremony a young girl not older than 10 years old read a portion of the Bible very fluently and this earned her a free copy of the Sabaot Bible.

Mr. Iver Larsen, a Senior Translation Consultant from Denmark, came to Kenya in 1977 to live and work among the Sabaot People with the goal of developing their Language and translating the Bible. With great joy and jubilation, Mr. Iver called upon the community to buy copies of the Bible because it was theirs. They would benefit from it and if they lived by it, they would live long lives. His statement drew loud claps and cheers from the guests because he said it in fluent Sabaot dialect; over 650 copies of the Bible were sold during the dedication. We pray that this message of hope in Christ Jesus will spread throughout the Sabaot community in Mt. Elgon. Praise be to God.

ADULT AND CONTINUING EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS (ACE) FORUM

BTL has been concerned about the state of adult literacy in Kenya and has been interested in identifying and partnering with other literacy service providers in the country. BTL therefore sought support from the Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE). DACE helped BTL identify the literacy stakeholders in Kenya, where they operate and what they do in order to take stock of the work and impact being achieved. This is very critical for the fulfillment of Millennium Development Goals because literacy is the foundation for development in any society.

A technical working group of the Adult and Continuing Education (ACE) and Non-Formal Education (NFE), in which BTL was a key facilitator, held a Forum on 24th May 2012 at the Kenya Educational Management Institute in Nairobi. The objective of the meeting was to take stock of the status of ACE in Kenya and share best practices. The outcome of the meeting provided the necessary



Participants listening keenly to the forum proceedings

roadmap for the various stakeholders in the improvement of ACE. Stakeholders were drawn from various institutions including PURSE, UNHCR, Nation Media Group, BTL, United Bible Society of Kenya, Directorate of Adult and Continuing Education (DACE), Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), Langata Prisons, International Rescue Committee among others. Over 60 participants attended the ACE forum.



BTL General Secretary Rev. Peter Munguti welcoming guests to the forum

UPCOMING EVENTS

Run for the Bibleless, 2013, we will keep you posted on when and where to register.

CALL OF KENYA is a quarterly publication of Bible Translation and Literacy (E.A.). It seeks to encourage the involvement of the christian public in the vital ministry of getting God's Word to the smaller language groups of Kenya.



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