



CALL OF KENYA



Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A.) Newsletter: Apr-June 2013

BREAKING INTO NEW GROUNDS

In Matthew 28:19-20, you and I have been commanded to make disciples of all nations and to teach them to obey everything that the Lord has commanded us to do. Yet, in Kenya there are communities who are not disciples as they do not have the Scriptures in a language they understand. With this in mind, BTL is breaking into new grounds and is beginning foundational work for language development, literacy and Bible translation among the Chonyi, Upper Pokomo and Tugen people. These three communities do not have the Scriptures and literacy materials in their language, because their language is not yet in a written form.



Chonyi church leaders listening keenly

The Chonyi are one of the language groups in the Mijikenda family who are predominantly found in Kilifi County. They number approximately 180,000 people. Their main economic activity is agriculture and the coconut palm is their most important cash crop. Clans and age-sets are significant aspects in the Chonyi culture. When it comes to religion, the Chonyi are majorly Christian and the rest are animists. There is a good Church in the community. A survey conducted by BTL determined a need for Bible translation which could be an adaptation from the Giriama Scriptures.



Upper Pokomo leaders

Still along the Coastal stretch, we find the Upper Pokomo community of the Tana River County. They are approximately 40,000 people and they mainly practice agriculture and fishing. The Pokomo people are divided into two distinct groups: Upper Pokomo, which is predominantly non-Christian and Lower Pokomo, which is majorly Christian. While BTL has been able to complete the New Testament and literacy materials for the Lower Pokomo, the Upper Pokomo are not able to use these because of the semantic shift of words. BTL however plans to do an adaptation from the Lower Pokomo Scriptures and texts.



The BTL General Secretary addressing the Tugen leaders

WORD FROM THE G.S.



“The Bible will bring unity among the Tugen believers as they will no longer look at themselves as Catholics, Protestants or even Pentecostals. They will read and know that when one is in Christ Jesus, there is no difference between a Jew and a Gentile - the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved!”

These words from Rev. Zacharia Cheruiyot at a recent Tugen leaders’ meeting reminded me of the profound transformation that the Word of God brings to a community when translated in the language of the people. Besides being the tool that facilitates church planting, discipleship and worship, it brings unity among believers as they read and understand Christ’s love which has no partiality.

It is for this reason that I am excited about the Tugen, Chonyi and Upper Pokomo communities that we have just added on our list of projects. I see our impact in these communities going beyond just making the Scriptures available: soon a people who were so divided along ethnic and/or political lines will begin to see one another as brothers and sisters, they will hear God speak to them in their language, they will know that God has not forgotten them; as some in Upper Pokomo would want to believe! They will know that God loves them just as he loves the other major languages of this country. What a joy to be part of a team which is committed to bringing this transformation to communities in Kenya.

It is also very fulfilling for me to hear Marakwet pastors testify and say that, “we are now at home with the Bible, we do not need a lot of exegesis because we understand all what we are reading since the New Testament is now available in our language”. I wish all the pastors in every language group in Kenya could say that. Unfortunately that is not so for over 10 language groups which are still waiting to get their very first portion of Scripture. That is why BTL is doing everything possible to start work in the remaining language groups where there is need. We trust that with your prayers and partnership, we will not only start work in Tugen, Chonyi and Upper Pokomo, but soon also we will enter into Taveta and Chuka; bringing the number of our new projects to five.

Faced with significantly reduced financial resources because of the current world economic situation, I realise that this is purely a journey of faith. I am therefore inviting you to pray with BTL that new doors will open for resources to become available so that the transforming Word of God can become available to the remaining languages here in Kenya. Pray also that those who have the Scriptures in their language will put them into use and that they will hear God speak to them about peace, love and unity especially as we seek to unite the country after our just concluded national elections.

Rev. Peter Munguti BTL General Secretary



The Tugen who are part of the Kalenjin community are found in Baringo County. Their population is about 140,489 people and are further subdivided into Arror, Samors, Lembus and Endorois. They are cattle keepers and the cow occupies a central part in their culture which is used as food (meat and milk), currency and dowry. A social linguistic survey undertaken in 2010 revealed that although the Lembus dialect can comfortably use the Kalenjin Bible, the Samor and Arror dialects cannot use it. It is interesting to see how languages can have similar words with totally different meanings. For example, in the Kalenjin Bible the word used for ‘honey’ means ‘alcohol’ in the Tugen language. This brings about confusion among the Tugen people. Hence there is a great need for people to have Scripture that ministers to them in a special and clear way.

BTL joins the rest of Bible translators in the world in achieving Vision 2025; to see a Bible translation program in progress in every language still needing one by the year 2025. We thank God for the opportunity He has given us to add three more communities to our ministry. Join us in prayer and partnership as we endeavour to achieve this Vision.

THE CALL

Vision sharing is a very key element in the ministry of BTL. Our vision is to see lives being transformed by the grace of God when people use God’s Word in the language they understand best. We cannot do this on our own thus the “call” for everybody to get involved in God’s work; both you and me. Such a “call” was made on 5th October 2012 at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Upper Hill, when BTL brought together Christian professionals to look into ways of partnering with the ministry.

“Everybody has a specific ability at their disposal to use in God’s work and in BTL’s work.” These were words spoken by the patron of BTL, Rev. Prof. Watson Omulokoli during the colourful event.

The dinner was successful with 139 people in attendance; the food was scrumptious against the backdrop of soothing gospel music. BTL was honoured to have Mr. Eric Kimani,

founder and chairman of Palm House Foundation, grace the occasion as the guest of honour. Other people present were board members of both BTL and the Conference Centre in Ruiru, guests from different corporate organisations, business men and women, guests from the Seed Company, current BTL supporters, friends and staff members of BTL, Wycliffe and SIL; who are our very close partners.



Partnership dinner photo

A key highlight during the dinner was to hear how Scripture changed James Korie, the Daasanach project leader. He got saved at the young age of 10; thanks to a missionary who introduced him to the Word of God. He then committed his life to help his community get Scriptures in their own language. He urged the participants not to wait for help to come from outside; everyone has a responsibility to help their neighbour. At the same time, Muthoni Gachanja, one of BTL's partners who was recognized for her consistent support to the ministry for a number of years, recounted that as a young girl she grew up having Scripture. As she got older she learnt that there were communities that did not have the Bible in a language that they understood best. This ignited a desire in her to support the work of BTL.

The Bible dedications that she has attended have encouraged her to know that she has played a role in translating a verse or a chapter for that community. The Guest Speaker, Mr. Eric Kimani, a devoted supporter of BTL spoke on the importance of giving and he used his own life experiences to demonstrate the benefits. He said that giving did not have to be in cash but even giving of one's time was important. He was quick to add that for those who were blessed with financial resources, giving was a moral obligation. By the end of the dinner, 90 per cent of the invited guests showed how challenged they were by rising to the occasion and completing commitment forms of

their support for BTL. Some committed to support the ministry monthly, others quarterly and others annually. BTL remains grateful to God for the doors He opened on that evening.



A BTL partner gives a testimony

GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY

Situated among the gently rolling coffee plantations near Ruiru town, the Bible Translation & Literacy Christian International Conference Centre (BTL CICC – RUIRU) offers you a serene escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. Only 25 Kilometres from Nairobi, this beautiful jewel is the ideal venue for training workshops, conferences, weddings, swimming, picnics and honeymoons.

BTL CICC was opened in 1994 with a guest accommodation capacity of 44 people. Over the years the facility has expanded. It now boasts of:

- 34 single/ double rooms, each room equipped with a private bathroom and essential furniture
- 2 fully equipped conference rooms that can sit 100 people each
- a dining hall that sits 200 people
- a modern kitchen
- half Olympic swimming pool.

The Centre has refreshing Christian hospitality but unfortunately some people are turned away when the centre is in full capacity. This has led to the next phase of development to increase to 20 more rooms; these will include 14 standard rooms, a guest lobby, a conference hall, washrooms and 6 executive rooms. After the Centre is completed, it will be able to host between 118-158 guests in the rooms depending on the number of people sharing a room. The new conference hall will accommodate 25 people

and together with the old conference halls, 265 people can be hosted comfortably.



Rev. Canon Mical Amukobole first BTL General Secretary breaks the ground as Mr. Mundara and Rev. Mung'uti, 2nd and 3rd BTL General Secretaries respectively, look on.

The ground breaking ceremony to commence the construction took place on Friday 23rd November 2012. It was attended by BTL Board members, the BTL CICC board members together with Wycliffe, SIL and BTL management and staff members. The BTL CICC staff members graced the occasion too and in angelic voices reminded the guests of their vision and mission.



Ruiru staff singing

Rev. Canon Balongo, the chairman of the BTL CICC board, thanked the Lord for His faithfulness in the past and reminded all that even this time round, the Lord would provide. The project will take 8 months to complete and absolute dependence on God for funds. We thank God for His faithfulness.

Updates:

Completion of the Daasanach New Testament

Pray for good speed in the final processes and for God to prepare the hearts of the Daasanach people to receive His word in their language!

Tafsiri na soo campaign (100 Jesus campaign)

We are looking forward to mobilize 300,000 individuals to each give KShs. 100 towards achieving the KShs. 30 Million needed to complete ONE language group's New Testament translation. Be one among the 300,000 people who will help us achieve this target by sending your contribution of KShs. 100 to:

MPESA PAYBILL NO: 898301 ACCOUNT: TAFSIRI

Upcoming Events:

Run for the Bibleless

Run for the Bibleless will be held on 29th June 2013 at Nairobi Primary School from 8.00 am. We welcome you to participate in the run as we endeavour to translate Scripture and promote literacy among the unreached people groups in Kenya.

Journey programme

BTL is planning to hold a journey programme later in the year, kindly [contact info@btlkenya.org](mailto:info@btlkenya.org) for more information.