

CALL OF KENYA



It is a wave of Graduations

Suba: Reclaiming their Language

In a colorful ceremony in June on Lake Victoria's Mfangano Island, it was a graduation day. Invited guests and the members of the community gathered together to witness this unique occasion. The first one of its kind. Six hundred and twenty five literacy graduates; three hundred and twenty six male graduates and two hundred and ninety nine female proud graduates were all smiles. Each with a certificate in hand, their efforts of reading and writing in Suba were being rewarded.

All want to learn and write in Suba and reverse history. Since colonial times, the Suba community has not had much of their language. But this is changing. They are on the path of reclaiming their distinct identity. Over seven hundred new learners have enrolled for the next class.



Graduate Student: Rebecca Odira

What more! Endagano Empia Eya Awasaba

During the same time, a trial edition of the New Suba testament was launched for community review. During the community review, selected church leaders and individual community members go through the texts, word for word to confirm that it is truly a correct representation of their language. What



a time! When the community is eager to learn read and write, that the Word of God will soon be available in a language they can best understand-the language of their heart!

Ilwana: A bicycle reward is working

For two years, the Ilwana community in North Eastern Kenya never saw much progress in the twenty transition literacy classes that had began. It felt like pushing a truck up the hill. Then, thanks be to God, a rewarding system for the literacy teachers was designed. A bicycle! This would be a hardy traveling means in the yet to be developed area. Everyone in this area would want a bicycle.

One by one, the literacy classes came alive. The Bible translation project leader could hardly put up with the incoming calls. "Come examine our classes!" the literacy teachers quipped.

Today, there are over ninety graduates and over half of that number is women. What more, all the literacy books have been bought and are out of stock! Everyone is eager to know how to read and write in Ki-ilwana.

CALL OF KENYA

Issue: July - Sept 2009

General Secretary column.....	2
Tharaka Story	2
Run for the Bibleless 2009.....	3
Literacy in Action Against the Deadly Disease	4
It's Time to Sing	4

Words from the General Secretary

General Secretary's Column:

As each graduand took the podium to read a chapter from the book, Kande's Story, in Orma, I couldn't miss the confident pride with which they took their duty. My eyes would also scan the crowd. Both the new graduates and the crowd exuded pride and excitement. The Orma language was not only in written form but their own people could now read it. As the reading progressed, the whole crowd went dead silent as they attentively listened to the readers. Sometimes they would bust in laughter, sometimes they joined in and completed the Orma proverb together. It was clear they followed the sad story of Kande, an HIV/AIDS book. You would have seen the joy in their eyes as each of over one hundred new learners received certificates recognizing their achievement.

In the last three months, about one thousand new learners from Ilwana, Orma, Digo and Suba communities have learned to read in their language. Literacy has opened a whole new world for them. It has given them dignity and a sense of purpose. They now can write letters to their friends, count their money and make decisions regarding health matters.

BTL conducts three types of literacy programmes: **Basic literacy** is meant for adult learners and classes are designed to suit their situation. Close to thirty per cent of Kenyan adults still do not know how to read. How can the country develop when such a big part of its population cannot read? BTL also conducts **transitional literacy**. This programme is for people who already know how to read in another language but want to learn to read their language. Lastly, BTL, in cooperation with the ministry of education conducts **mother-tongue education** programmes through the school system. It has been proven that school children who first learn using their mother-tongue perform much better than those who first use other languages. Through literacy, BTL is serving Kenya and contributing to the development of this country. Through literacy, BTL serves marginalized communities and restores their dignity.

THARAKA Story: Reaching all in Kitharaka

What good does it do to have the Bible but not be able to read it? This is what BTL is seeking to change in its projects, get communities to read and write in a language that speaks to their hearts.

Started in 1989, the Tharaka project completed and dedicated the Kitharaka New Testament in 2002. However, for many of the 152,000 speakers of Kitharaka, reading and understanding the Bible is an uphill task.

But the story is changing. Literacy classes and mother tongue advocacy efforts are yielding results. Much results. For the young and the old, lives are getting transformed.

Pastor John Kyongo pastors one of the churches in Tharaka. He has this to say about the use of the New Testament. "The growth of the church I am pastoring has been realized. My church had only 40 members but now they are about 90. Also denominational differences have been solved. Formerly different denominations could not sit together and share spiritual matters as they do today."

In the same church one of the women said, "Before we got the Bible in our language, we were spiritually lame because we used a language we could not understand well. Now we can read and understand and by the time the whole Bible will be translated, we shall be many steps ahead spiritually."

Currently, translation of the Old Testament is underway.

Reaching the Tharaka's young generation

"There is a need to have something in place that will guarantee a younger generation can learn how to read and write in their own mother tongue," Susan Nyaga, mother tongue education consultant for BTL said. Whereas there is a lot of focus on schooling the adults, more emphasis is needed for the future generations".

Mother tongue education is an important factor in reducing truancy rates of school children. For those students who struggle in school, their frustration is often rooted in not understanding the language they are being taught in.

For the schools, which have switched to teaching their lower primary in mother tongue - Kitharaka, they have seen pupils understand better, learn at a faster rate and enjoy school.

Susan has been at the forefront advocating for and implementing mother tongue education programmes in her Tharaka community as provided for in the Kenya government policy. She is a firm believer in "understanding" being very critical to any effective education.

RUN FOR THE BIBLELESS, June 6th, 2009

Braving the chilly June morning, hundreds of people gathered at Nairobi Primary school-sports grounds. Nothing could stop them, not even the early morning drizzle. Toddlers and school children accompanied by their parents; teachers, Pastors, young and old, they all

RUN for the Bibleless 2009

*"How beautiful are the feet of those
who bring good news!" Rom 10:15*



came. The field was crowded with white, blue and grey T-shirts, with a signature message: Run for the Bibleless. The agenda was set. It was not too late to join the cause; some were making a last minute registration effort.

The Noble Cause

Archbishop Benjamin Nzimbi of the Anglican Church of Kenya took time to congratulate the crowd for their selfless gesture-to come and run for the cause of the Bibleless communities in Kenya. Not only were they expressing solidarity with these communities who are yet to get God's Word in their languages but they were also helping in raising funds for the work Bible Translation. He also committed the day to God in prayer, asking for safety and protection of these selfless individuals as they sought to participate in the great commission of Lord Jesus Christ.

The great Need

In a speech read by Prof. Wilson Arap Langat, Secretary in the Ministry Youth Affairs and Sports on behalf of the Minister, Prof. Hellen Sambili, he highlighted the great need:

Although Kenya has over thirty million people speaking over fifty languages, only eighteen had complete Bibles. Others have portions while most marginalized communities are yet to get God's Word in a language that speaks to their hearts.

The Run

For the second year running, the Run was envisioned as a way of raising awareness among the publics of the great need of the Bibleless communities and raise funds to cover the cost of the great task of Bible translation. So high are the costs that since inception of Bible Translation and Literacy in 1981, only seven New Testaments have been completed and dedicated. The latest being the Marakwet New Testament in February this year. The first ever complete Bible by BTL is in the pipeline but more communities are yet to have even portions of the scriptures.

This year's event

Drawing at least two thousand participants, we thank God that this year's event was a great success. Close to realizing our target figure of five million, we are excited about this annual event. It is a great contribution to the efforts of Bible Translation.

**BTL sincerely thanks its friends, partners
and supporters for their
selfless gesture to the marginalized
communities in Kenya.**

Thank you.



DIGO Story:

LITERACY IN ACTION AGAINST THE DEADLY DISEASE

'N'CHANZE STORY

In June, for a week, all the participants heard off was 'N'Chanze, the Digo name for Kande, a young girl who together with her siblings are orphans. At an early age, the arm of the deadly disease, HIV/AIDS snatches the children's parents. They have to face the world by themselves.

Using this sad story, in their mother language, the workshop participants actively engaged on the problem of HIV/AIDS problem in Kwale District which has increasingly become alarming. One of the facilitators, a leading doctor at Kwale Hospital said, "Statistics show that the prevalence rate in the district was as high as 8.1%". It is at this point that he urged the twenty two leaders to encourage the community members to go for testing and know their status.

Speaking during this meeting, Henry Koroso, an assistant literacy trainer, noted that some of the factors that attributed to the speedy spread of the virus were poverty and illiteracy. But hope is not lost; the 'N'Chanze Workshop is one of the many literacy efforts that seeks to bring light in a seemingly dark situation.

Using culturally relevant language, the impact is enormous. Those who attended the workshop were able to craft a song and a skit depicting HIV/AIDS was not a result of bewitchment but a viral disease-which can be prevented as well as treated. Even the ways of handling the sick and taking care of the patients living with HIV were acted. What an impact! To crown it all, there were devotions all week long from Chilagane Chipya, the Digo New Testament; God's Word in their language.

Two ladies from a community based organization read the New Testament fluently despite it not being their faith.

'N'Chanze story has scriptures drawn from the Old Testament which have been translated into Kiswahili. Thank God, the Digo OT translation is currently ongoing as Bible Translation and literacy is helping to transform lives in the coastal district of Kenya through literacy and fighting the HIV/Aids pandemic.

SABAOT Story: It time to sing

It is a new day for the Sabaot community on Mount Elgon. A time to sing hymns. A time to worship God in their heart language.

The Sabaot translation team has been busy to get the community sing in their mother language. So busy, they have one hundred and four songs translated. Of which thirty six have been recorded. The worship sessions are different and the recorded songs are selling fast.

In a recent public meeting at Marambach in Kitale Scheme, it was hard to get the crowd seated. Both the young and the old sang and danced to the translated tunes. At the end of it, many gave their lives to the Lord.

Previously, these hymns were available in the national language in hymn books such as Nyimbo za injili, Tenzi za rohani and Nyimbo za Kristo.

Plans are underway to have the music in audio CDs and tapes as well as hymn books.

Pray with us as we believe God for transformation through songs.

CALL OF KENYA, a quarterly publication of Bible Translation and Literacy, East Africa. 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

The General Secretary,
Bible Translation & Literacy
P.O Box 44456 - 00100,
GPO - Nairobi, Kenya
Phone: (254-020)2714942, 2710920
E-mail: info@btkenya.org
Website: www.btkenya.org

Would you like to receive
CALL OF KENYA
on E-mail?
callofkenya@btkenya.org
or Text?
Text: 0727823877

AIRMAIL

TO:



PRINTED MATTER