



CALL OF KENYA

Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A.) Newsletter: May - July 2012



THE LONG ROAD TO THE SABAOT BIBLE

"... And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Rom 10:14-15 New International Version

IT IS SO POWERFUL WHEN GOD SPEAKS OUR LANGUAGE

One Sunday in January 2005, an evangelist visited a church at a small market place called Chepkurkur in Mt. Elgon to preach. He was a recent graduate from a Bible School where everything was taught in the Kenyan national language, Kiswahili. He was therefore eager to impress the congregation with the powerful preaching methods he had learned, perhaps with a hope to win some of them to Christ. However, after preaching in Swahili for about an hour, he realized that he was not getting through to the people.

The congregation sat patiently for the whole hour before a church member arrived at the meeting place with a copy of the New Testament in the local Sabaot language. The evangelist asked him to read John 3:16-17 from his Sabaot New Testament. The man read the passage of Scripture loudly and clearly with the use of a microphone so that it could be heard all over the market place.

On hearing the word of God in their language, people started filling the church. The evangelist, excited about the response, asked this church member to act as an interpreter. 13 people gave their lives to Jesus that day.

After the meeting, the evangelist requested the interpreter to give him the Sabaot New Testament. The interpreter did not give the Evangelist the copy but instead directed him to where he could get his own. As the church members went home that day, they said to one another, "It is so powerful when God speaks to us in our mother tongue!"

By Iver Larsen (Translation Consultant) as told by Kiboki Kigai (Former Sabaot Project Leader)

TRAUMA HEALING –WHAT A TOOL!

The Trauma healing workshop held a few years ago remains a memorable experience in the hearts of many pastors and community leaders from the Sabaot community in Mt. Elgon. The workshop held at the International Christian Ministries (ICM) in Kitale was facilitated by John Ommani, the SIL Africa Area Scripture Use Coordinator.

Using a Trauma Healing manual, the participants engaged in issues that had remained a nightmare to them after going through a long period of ethnic strife. A period that left many orphaned and widowed, others were left homeless, women raped and had to live with the babies who were born as a result, while some had parts of their bodies chopped off! What a painful reminder that they have had to live with.

The first chapter of the Trauma Healing manual was such an eye opener as the participants struggled to answer the question, "If God loves us, why do we suffer?" This opened the minds of many to the biblical perspective of suffering, the sovereignty of God and His love for humanity. It was a timely reminder and assurance of the love of God to many. Nothing could sum it better than the Word of God,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39 (New International Version)

Having cleared the misconception held by many participants concerning their suffering being God sent, they were ready to share out their heartaches; the first step towards healing emotionally. It was very difficult for the participants to recount the bitter ordeal they went through in the hands of the militia group – the famous Sabaot Land Defence Force (SLDF). In one of the sessions, the facilitator encouraged the participants to draw symbolic pictures of their experiences and later, picked on some randomly to explain to the rest what they had drawn. A man who had drawn a picture of huge men in uniform and someone who seemed like a young boy lying prostrate on the ground explained, with great difficulty, who the men in uniform were, but when explaining who the boy lying on the ground was, he burst into bitter laughter and all he could manage to say with great pain was, "this was me" He had been robbed of his dignity as a man and therefore could not gather enough courage to talk about it!



The beautiful Mt. Elgon area



The most profound session was on “Taking Our Pain to the Cross”; all participants listed their pain on paper, later shared them out in small groups and prayed together. As a symbolic reminder of taking their pains to the cross of Christ, the participants walked forward and nailed their pains on to a wooden cross and later buried them.

At the close of the workshop, one of the participants exclaimed, “.....I came full of bitterness, hate and doubt of God’s love and goodness in my life but after going through the workshop I feel I’m healed of the bitterness and hate. I have no doubt of God’s love for me. I’m free!”

As a result of the workshop, many regained their self worth and let go of bitterness and anger because they were embracing God’s love. Those who committed atrocities were reaching out for forgiveness and also encouraging one another to keep hope alive. Having had the Sabaot New Testament dedicated a few years before the ethnic strife, there was more use of Scriptures. BTL staff with the help of the communities translated hymns from Swahili and English to the Sabaot language. Many church choirs received inspiration and started to record their music into CDs and audio tapes, most churches were inspired to continue using the translated Scriptures and the hymns during their services.

“Yes, we have forgiven those who hurt us and prayed to God for the forgiveness of sins we have committed both as individuals and as a community and ready to spread this great message to the rest of the community to begin their healing process.” These were the sentiments of many who attended the workshop.

God be praised for the peace and stability that the Mt. Elgon area has enjoyed since 2008.

By Christine Wafula

MILESTONES IN THE SABAOT TRANSLATION PROCESS

The history of the Sabaot project began in the 1930s when Zakaria Ndiema Mbiti, made a first attempt to write something in the Sabaot language. Zakaria, a non-Sabaot and then a tax clerk of Chief Tendet, wrote a book in the language, using an orthography that was not suitable for the Sabaot language. It was this book that stirred the mind of the local native councillors and students, because they thought they were insulted.

Between 1948-1949, a group of students, including a member of the Local Native Council (LNC) Mr. Livingstone Naibei, (who later became Chief Livingstone) formed a committee to replace the first Sabaot book. They organised themselves into three small groups to work out how to write a proper Sabaot book. These groups included the following people: From Bong’om (Bungoma) dialect – Longino Nyara, from Book dialect – Jeremiah Mururee Meniin, from Koony dialect – Livingstone Naibei, Enok Chongwony and Henry Ngomat, other members in the group were Joseph Kimutai Borter and Jackson Pkitai.

These groups were all chaired by Livingstone Naibei, with Enok Kamoet as Secretary. Their main purpose was to do research on how the Sabaot language should be written.

Between 1950-1954, a language committee was formed with the following members: - Chief Livingstone Naibei – Chairman, Longino Nyara - Vice Chairman, Enoch Chongwony – Secretary, Joseph Kimutai Borter - Vice Secretary, Luka Maiyek – Treasurer and Jackson Pkitai - member.

After several meetings, it was decided that Henry Ngomat Tendet then a school teacher, Joseph Kimutai Borter then a teacher trainee, Wilberforce Ojambo Kisiero, then a high school student and Jeremiah Mururee Meniin a volunteer teacher were to do the actual writing using the Kony dialect as the standard.

They were to write a primer each and table it before the committee for approval. They set up an orthography that was based on the Kiswahili system established by Hon. Wilberforce Kisiero.

With the help of a Teaching Method tutor at college, Mr. Joseph Borter was able to produce the first book with 38 pages. This book was approved by the committee. The other writers were not able to finish their assignment.

In 1955 the manuscripts were used in teaching Standard One children at Kaptama by Joseph Borter and in 1956 Mr. Geoffrey C. Kipkut borrowed the materials for teaching children at Toroso primary school. However, lack of finances for printing the materials stalled the work and over time, the manuscripts were lost.



A young boy reads in Sabaot Mother Tongue.

In 1978-1979 a decision was reached to travel to Nairobi to find out if the Bible Society of Kenya could produce a Bible in the Sabaot language. The Bible Society of Kenya advised the Sabaot community to contact SIL (currently SIL International) for help because SIL International does language analysis, in order to produce an alphabet and develop a language into a written form. SIL International is also specialised in translating the Bible for the smaller language groups.

In 1980-1985 the Ministry of Education required that the medium of instruction for Standard One to three in Primary Schools be in the children’s mother tongue. Joseph Borter and Patrick Ndege were invited to attend a writing workshop at the Kenya Institute of Education in Nairobi to assist in producing Sabaot Supplementary materials for Standard One to Three.

SIL sent Mr. Iver Larsen to do the linguistic analysis of the language. He was very instrumental in the technical part of the language development, especially in the relationship between sound (word) and symbol (letter). The Sabaot language committee conducted more research and established an alphabet with letters and signs. After that the work of Bible translation started.

In December 1984 a Sabaot writing workshop was conducted with the purpose to stimulate the writing of any kind of literature in the Sabaot language. At that point the Sabaot language committee was divided into two committees, namely the Sabaot language and literacy committee and the Bible Translation and Literacy committee.

As members of the Sabaot community waited for their language to be written, some read the Swahili translation of the Bible. One Christian was trying to explain a verse from the Swahili

translation and was encountering challenges passing the message across, “Oh, if only we had the Bible in Sabaot!” he exclaimed. “The Sabaot people have great thirst, but the water they have to drink has many impurities. They need clean water so that their thirst will be quenched. They have been getting God’s message through Swahili or English or other neighbouring languages. Therefore the message is not clear to them, and so their hearts are still thirsty. If the message were in the Sabaot language, the people would understand it and their thirst would be quenched.” He had no idea that God was already fulfilling this dream.

From that point on the development of the Sabaot language went fast. Several books were written. In 1997 the New Testament was dedicated in the Sabaot language. In 2012 the complete Sabaot Bible was published.



The Sabaot Bible

The members of staff, in collaboration with the Sabaot community, have been deeply involved in organising and running basic and transition literacy classes to help adults learn to read their own language. As a result of these initiatives, over 5,000 people in the community have attained fluency in reading and writing in Sabaot mother tongue. Today there are over a 100 titles of literacy and Scripture use materials available in the Sabaot language including Trauma Healing books

BTL, in collaboration with the Sabaot community, are grateful to funding partners who helped sponsor the translation of both the New Testament and Old Testament. The total cost of the translation is estimated at KShs. 56.2 million. Special thanks goes to OneBook Canada for underwriting most of the cost of the translation of the Bible.

Representatives from OneBook Canada will be present at a special ceremony to launch and dedicate the Sabaot Complete Bible which will be held on Sunday 10th June 2012 at Kibuk Girls Secondary School, Kapsokwony, Bungoma County from 10:00am.

The Sabaot Complete Bible dedication ceremony marks the completion of the translation work and a celebration of 32 years of hard work. During the dedication, the Bible will be formally presented to the community. It will also serve as yet another milestone in the work of Bible translation and literacy.

The journey of the Sabaot Bible has been turbulent but God has shown Himself strong.

God wants to communicate to His children in a language they can understand. In order for them to grow spiritually by feeding on the Word of God, they need to use a language that speaks to their hearts. God has a wonderful plan for the Sabaots people

and His plan cannot be stopped by anything, not even the ethnic strife that rocked Mt. Elgon area. God continues to work in this community and having the complete Bible in their language marks the beginning of yet another chapter in their lives.

BTL hopes that the living Word of God will bring peace, hope and salvation to the people of Mt. Elgon.

DEDICATION CEREMONY OF 8 THARAKA OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS

On a warm afternoon during a Scripture use workshop in the BTL Centre in Tharaka, a participant proudly declared “Translation of the New Testament in Kĩitharaka has rendered me literate!” He further went on to explain that before the translation of the Kĩitharaka New Testament he could not read or write or understand the Mother Tongues of the neighbouring tribes. With the New Testament available, he not only had the benefit of reading the Bible in a language he understood but he also was no longer illiterate. He could read and write Kĩitharaka fluently after attending a Scripture Use workshop in which participants were trained in fluency in Kĩitharaka. Members of the Tharaka community were presented with the New Testament in August 2001. There after translation of the Old Testament officially kicked off in 2005.

The community embraced the New Testament and were able to read, understand and use it and God has been at work transforming their lives. The Tharaka community have been eagerly waiting for the translation of the Old Testament thus 18th April 2012 was a very special day for them. Eight books of the Old Testament were launched in a colourful ceremony held at the BTL Tharaka Centre. The eight books that were dedicated were in three booklets: - Booklet 1 has Ecclesiastes, booklet 2 has Ruth and booklet 3 has 6 Minor Prophets- Jonah, Obadiah, Joel, Haggai, Zephaniah and Malachi.

With the back drop of the lush rolling green Kiyege and Ntugi Hills, the BTL Centre was filled by members of the community who came to receive the translated portions of the Old Testament. Among them were Christians of various denominations including their church leaders and political leaders.



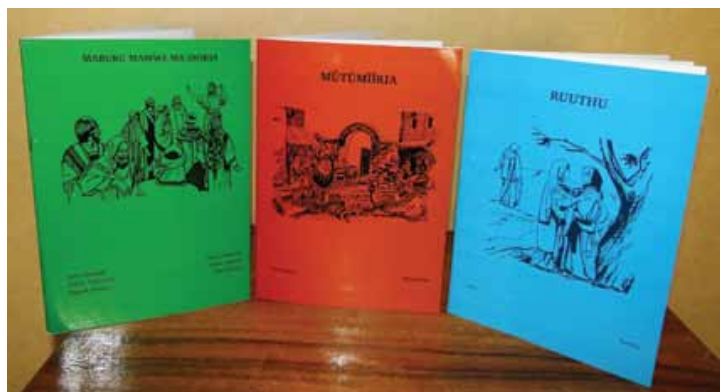
Mr. Edwyn Kiptinness and Rev. Peter Munguti presenting the translated Minor Prophet books to the Guest of Honour Rev. Dr. Stephen Kanyaru,

The auspicious occasion was graced by Rev. Dr. Stephen Kanyaru, Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church; he was the Guest of Honour. In his speech, he expressed his gratitude to BTL for the 23 years they have worked among the Tharaka people. He pointed out that BTL had greatly contributed to the development of the region. He continued to urge the community to read the word of God in Kiitharaka and to remember to use it regularly “When we stop using a language it dies, but we don’t want this to happen to Kiitharaka” he said.

Also gracing the occasion were Rev. Peter Munguti, BTL General Secretary, Mr. Edwyn Kiptinness, BTL Board Chairman and Mrs. Lucy Muriuki, the BTL Board Member attached to the Tharaka project. Speaking at the event, Rev. Munguti thanked the Project Advisory committee led by Rev. Jackson Mutugi. "Thank you for the great investment of time and resources which you have made in the work of Tharaka language development and Bible Translation." He reminded the community that there was still a long way to go to complete the Bible and called upon the community to continue supporting the project.

"Among the people of every race, tribe, nation and language that will be before the throne of God, the Tharaka people will be there!" Those were the words of the very jubilant BTL Board Chairman Mr. Kiptinness. He quoted Rom. 1:16 and urged the guests to be messengers of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation.

Since the beginning of the translation project in 1989 the following are some of the achievements of BTL in Tharaka in collaboration with the community:- Developing Tharaka orthography, Translating the New Testament, developing Primary school books in Kiitharaka, producing Tharaka Bible stories now recorded in mega voices, training of teachers on how to implement Mother Tongue Education Programmes, transitioning Tharaka church leaders and other community members to be fluent readers and writers of Kiitharaka among others.



The 8 Tharaka Old Testament books

This is the doing of the Lord and we can only say-
it is marvellous in our sight.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"When the pastors prayed for me, I felt a great relief, like a burden had been lifted off me. I now believe that the Jesus you preach really exists. I am committing my life to him. He speaks our language because he spoke to me. I will tell my fellow old men back in the village what happened to me when I was here. Can someone please come with me and read this book to the old men? I would like them to believe in Him too."

Chebon Chalang'a Old Sabaot Man after giving his life to Christ

"This is the first radio I have ever seen in my life that speaks the Sabaot language. Please bring it nearer to my ears because I want to hear everything on the radio. After that, tell me its price, I must buy one for myself"

74-year-old lady as she listened to a Radio program in the Sabaot language for the very first time.

"We should be proud of our own language! Why do I say so, the songs which have just been sang have really entered my heart. I am not ashamed to say, what I heard in my own mother tongue in the singing has really touched me. I was interested in the words, and the message was brought home when it was conveyed in the Sabaot hymns, especially the ones of "Māmii choorweet nyëë kerkeey Yëësu" (there is not a friend like Jesus) and Kōrröön (in the dawn). I tell you, these two songs, please take them to the community, then record the impact!"

A Sabaot leader after attending a music listening workshop

UPCOMING EVENTS

Dedication ceremony of The Sabaot Complete Bible
Date: Sunday 10th June 2012 Time: 10:00 am
Venue: Kibuk Girls Secondary School, Kapsakwony, Mt. Elgon.
Chief Guest - His Excellency Daniel Arap Moi, 2nd President of the Republic of Kenya
Leader of dedication - Rt. Rev. Augustine Salimo Bishop, Sebei Diocese of the Church of Uganda
Guest Speaker - Rev. Dr. Diphus Chosefu Chemorion, Senior Lecturer and Director of Post Graduate Studies, St. Paul's University Limuru

If you would like to attend kindly email us on
communication@btlkenya.org

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 vital ministry of getting God's Word to the smaller language groups of Kenya.



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