

GOD'S LOVE LETTER

... to the Pokomo people



Pokomo community members reading literature translated in their language

My name is Pastor Shadrack Falama. I serve at Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A) (BTL) as the Project Officer for the Pokomo Language Development Project based in Tana River County, Northern Coast of Kenya. This month as the world celebrates love; I wish to focus on God's love, being reminded of how God long ago prepared me to serve His people as a Pastor, later as a Pokomo Project Reviewer and now as a Bible Translator.

I was born over fifty years ago as a third born child and first son to my parents. As much as we lived in Lamu, away from home, my father taught us how to read and write in the Kipfokomu language. I accepted the love of Christ when I was only twelve years old at a time when Salvation was still a foreign concept. Through this decision to follow Christ, I somehow felt drawn to serve God. Later on, through the sponsorship of Neukirchener Mission, I enrolled for a four-year pastoral course at the then Pwani Bible Institute, Mombasa.

Every Thursday at the College was the College Prayer Day and one of our lecturers would lead us to pray for the Borana, Daasanach and many other communities in Kenya, which I am now interacting with while at BTL. We would pray that God will send missionaries to reach them and avail God's Word in their languages. Not knowing I would one day be one of them.

In my second year of schooling, we were introduced to Translation. Unfortunately, I thought it was such an expensive venture which could never reach to the communities in my region. I didn't know that was what would mark a long-lasting sweet relationship of translation in my life. Fast forward, I graduated and was posted to the Africa Inland Church as a pastor.

I later heard about BTL through an open position for a Pokomo language Scripture Reviewer to which a friend of mine asked me to apply. I did apply, got the opportunity and in 1995, I made my way to BTL Christian International Conference Centre, Ruiru where I was introduced to the Introductory Course in Translation Principles so that I could effectively serve in this role.



Pastor Falama carrying out a Word List Check of the Pokomo Bible manuscript

After two years serving as a Reviewer, there was yet another open position in the project, a translator was needed. I took up the challenge and this transitioned me to fully serve as a Bible Translator in 2009.

This has since been the most fulfilling decision I ever made. I have in many instances heard my named called out in the streets, 'Pastor, now I understand the Word of God better in my language!' Such gives me joy which I cannot express in words. It's like someone telling me, 'Your labour has not been in vain!'

This journey has been a long one. I look back and realize that God loved, chose and prepared me for this work. But why me? I am not the best. These are some of the things that pop up whenever I ask myself this question. I see God's grace in my life. My father unknowingly taught me how to read and write in my language.

As a pastor, I always prepared the hearts of God's people to be changed for His glory. As a translator, my goal has been to enable God's people to hear God speak in their language and for them to become transformed as a result. I have experienced it, not once, not twice; uncountable times.

My desire is to see my community love their language. I have been involved in developing tongue twisters, written poems and stories in my language and used forums in churches and in villages to help people understand that their language is one of God's best gifts to them and they can use and enjoy it like any other language. God has written a love letter to the Pokomo people in a language they understand best. It was in a foreign language, we translated it into our language so that we can read and understand it better and accept God's calling.

I know you are about to ask how far the Pokomo Bible Translation process is at? I would proudly say we are now at 98.5% complete for both the Old and New Testament work. Translation work for the Pokomo Bible began in 1991 and on April 9th 2005, the Pokomo New Testament was completed and launched. In 2009, work on the Old Testament was began. I am happy to state that the work is now completed and the final typesetting process is going on in readiness for publication. We are currently raising about KShs.6 million for the publication and dedication expenses which we desire to happen in the course of the year. Would you like to share God's love by sending any amount to support this cause? The payment options are available below.



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"You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men; being manifested that you are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts."

2 Corinthians 3:2-3