

# Call Of **KENYA**



Bible Translation and Literacy (E.A.) Newsletter

January - April 2023

## The Light Has Come



**Let the Light Shine out of the Darkness**

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# AN ISLAND ONCE IN THE ‘DARK’

~ Daisy Kilel

Surrounded by the waters of Lake Victoria sits an Island, only accessible by canoes, a ferry, speed boats and a water bus. As you alight from either one of these means, you quickly experience vibrancy of life in this Island, at the shores of the Lake, women are cleaning their utensils, fish mongering, some doing laundry and majority, especially the men are packaging the fish caught in the night for sale.

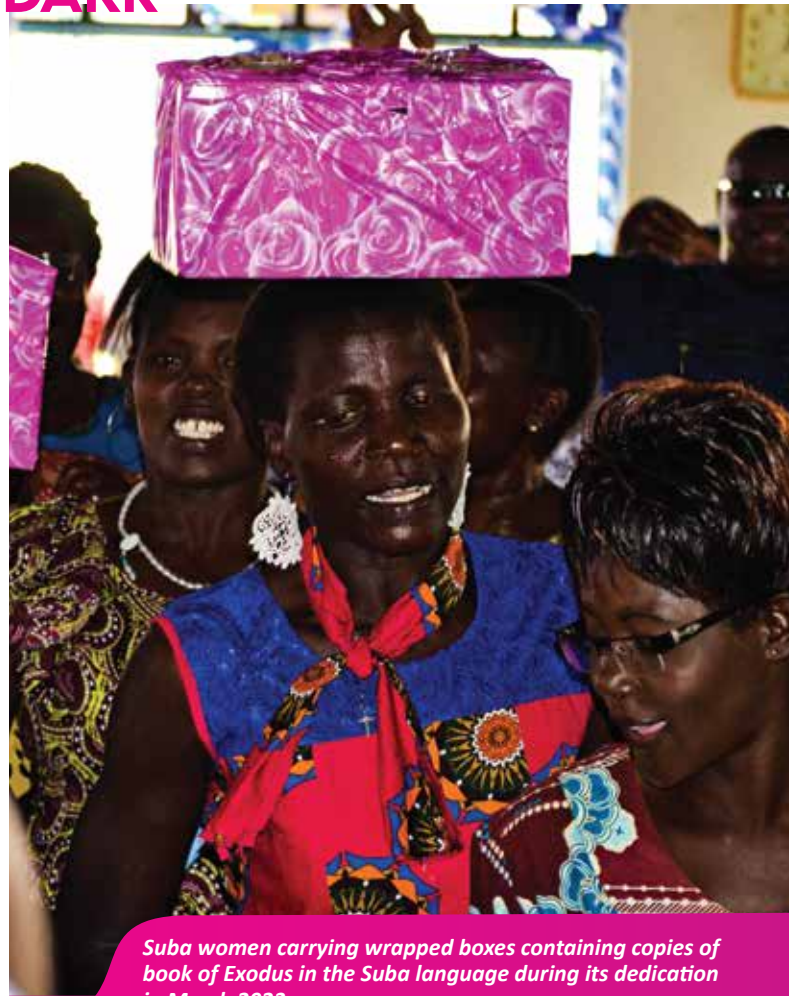
This is Mfangano Island in Homa Bay County, the home of the Suba people. The Suba people hold in high regard the light that Bible translation has brought to this Island, an aspect that began over 20 years ago. Recently the BTL team travelled to the Island in order to launch and dedicate the completed Old Testament book of Exodus. The event was held on March 17, 2023, at the PEFA Church, Mfangano. You could sense and feel the excitement of this community as they received this Scripture portion which was a build up to the New Testament which was launched in the community in 2011.

As speaker after speaker rose and spoke, they all talked about the light that was now shining brightly in what was once a ‘dark’ Island.

“In the year 1995, because of the word of God coming to our land, the Suba region, which includes; Mfangano Island, Rusinga Island, Gembe, Kaksingiri and Gwasssi was made a District.” One of the elders said.

“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you. See, darkness covers the earth and thick darkness is over the peoples, but the LORD rises upon you and his glory appears over you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn.”

*Isaiah 60:1-3*



*Suba women carrying wrapped boxes containing copies of book of Exodus in the Suba language during its dedication in March 2023.*



*A joyful Suba community during the procession of the Suba New Testament during its launch in 2011.*





*The Suba Project Officer, Mr. Boniface Msaswa, raises the book of Exodus during its launch.*



*Suba elderly men engrossed with the dedicated Scriptures*

"Last year, 2022, we were allocated a Sub County. BTL is like a light as the Bible says in Luke 8:16-NLT, 'No one lights a lamp and then covers it with a bowl or hides it under a bed. A lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.'" He added.

Bishop Tom Oguta excitedly shared the impact of the Scriptures in the Suba Church. "We hold three services in our church and the first service is conducted in our Suba language. Through the translation of the Scriptures into our language, we have seen the body of Christ come together, churches being planted, and our people coming to Salvation. God has visited our land, and we know that He is going to do more. The work of BTL has not been in vain."

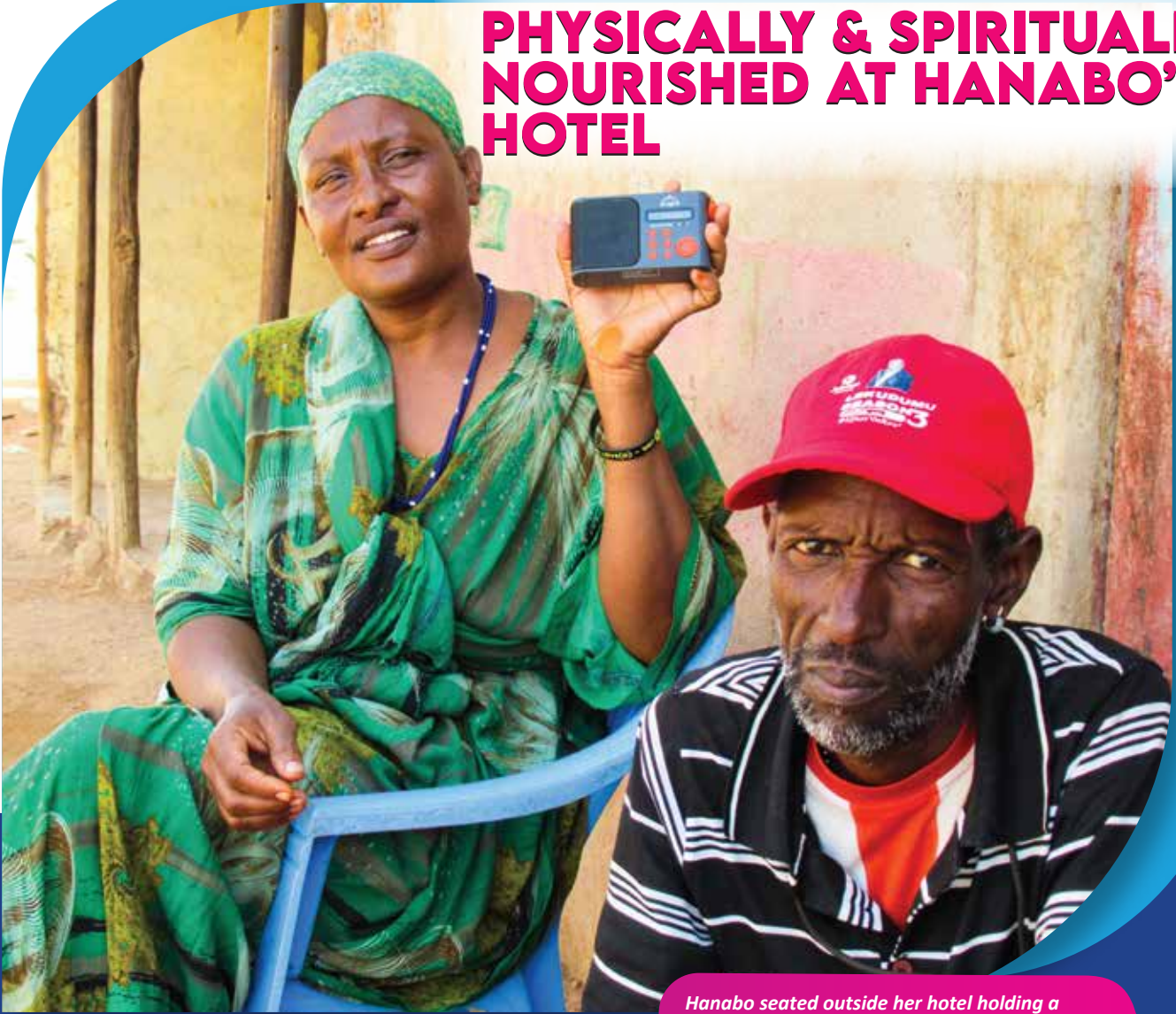
"The light through God's Word is shining brightest on the Island." Madam Nereah Mattah added. "There is light on the mountain tops, on the shores because the word of God has come to us. We celebrate the Bread of life, and we are 'eating' it as the Suba people, and we are being transformed.". One of the translators, Mr. Samwel Nyangweso, in an almost poetic way expressed the revolution in his community;

- Once upon a time, the word of God wasn't available in the Suba people's heart language. Now the Suba New Testament and other Scripture use materials are being used in churches, homes and the community and lives are being transformed by the grace of God. We have shunned evil and embraced the light that is in the Word.
- Once, there was no road on the Island; people walked on narrow and bushy paths. Today, there is a ring road on Mfangano Island.
- Once, there was no electricity on the Island; now there is a Kenya Power and Lighting Company (KPLC) power substation on Mfangano Island.
- Once, people used engine boats to cross over to the mainland. Now we enjoy the luxury and comfort of the waterbus for water transport.
- Because of the word of God, churches in Suba land have embraced unity, tolerance, cordial relationships and partnership.

The work of Bible translation in Suba land has not been in vain. There is transformation that we all can hear and see. Praise God for His Word which is so powerful to transform. The Suba translation team is working on concluding the entire Bible in the next three years. Pray that the scheduled timelines will be met. Pray too for the community as they make use of the book of Exodus which is now in their hands.



## PHYSICALLY & SPIRITUALLY NOURISHED AT HANABO'S HOTEL



*Hanabo seated outside her hotel holding a solar lantern that has an SD card. Onlooking is one of her clients at the hotel.*

### ~ Laban Eysinkeelee, Rendille Project Officer

In October 2022, one of the churches in Korr distributed solar lanterns for 300 families whose children are enrolled in the church's sponsorship program. The aim was to provide light to the family and also enable the children to carry on with their studies at night.

One of the beneficiaries was Hanabo Eysimbaselle who dwells within Korr town. Hanabo operates a small local hotel where she interacts with different customers during the day. On receiving the gadget, she realized that it had an SD memory card slot.

She quickly made her way to the Rendille translation office and requested for the Rendille New Testament audio Bible which is stored in an SD card. Fortunately, there was only one card left at the office which the translators gave it to Hanabo.

A few weeks after Hanabo's visit to the office, the translators followed up with her to ascertain how she was fairing on with the audio Bible. "I am so grateful that I did not only receive a gadget that gives my family physical light but also Spiritual light. I can now listen to the Rendille New Testament with this gadget. Not only that, I also play the Scriptures for my customers to listen to the word of God in our language when they come for meals at the hotel; they edify both their bodies and souls." She said.

It is truly a blessing to have the Rendille New Testament recorded into audio form. It enables not just individuals but groups to listen to God's Word together even as they carry on with their other businesses.

## MY FAMILY FOUND REST & A HOME

~ David\*

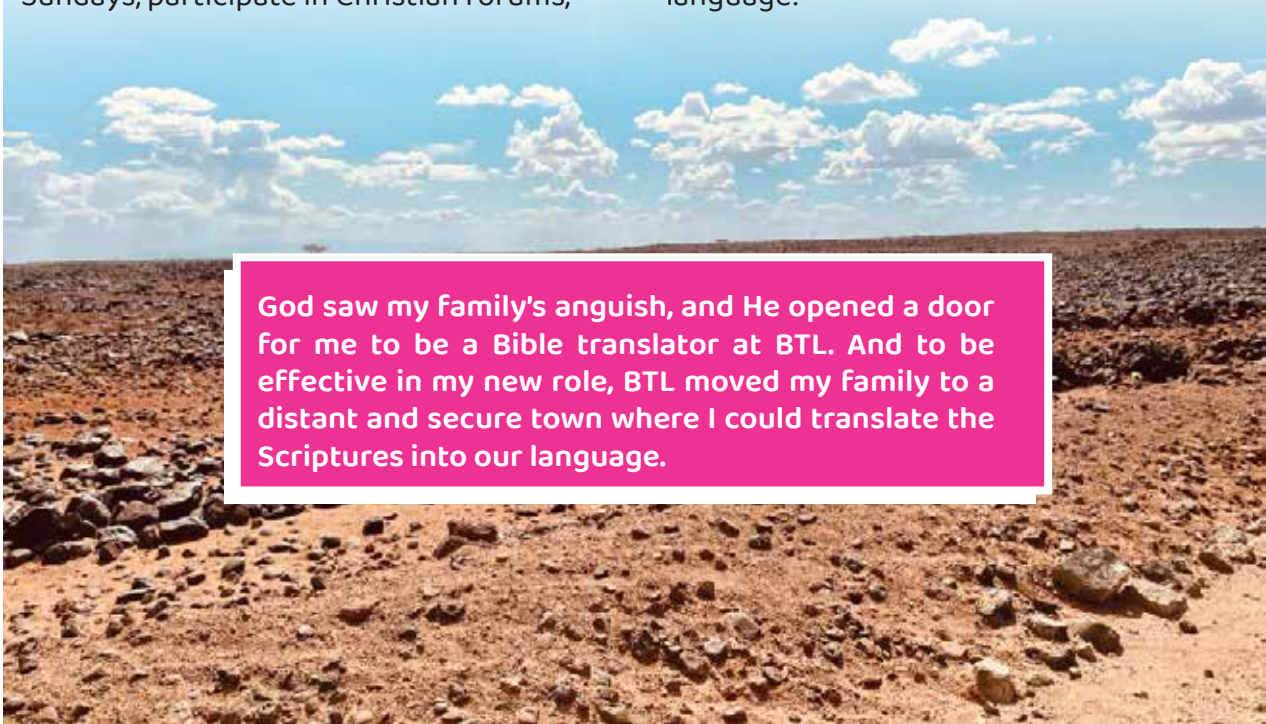
I joined BTL a few years ago as one of the Bible translators. Before then, I taught in one of the schools back home, and on Sundays, I would attend my local church with my family. It wasn't, however, easy for my family to be in a congregation of believers because of our faith. My children were persecuted and sometimes even beaten up by the neighbors' children, while my wife was often insulted by her family and the whole community for adhering to a different faith from their own.

God saw my family's anguish, and He opened a door for me to be a Bible translator at BTL. And to be effective in my new role, BTL moved my family to a distant and secure town where I could translate the Scriptures into our language. That was an answered prayer. My family was rescued from the insults, curses, and persecutions from our families, friends, and community leaders.

Since we relocated, we attend church on Sundays, participate in Christian forums,

and celebrate Christmas and the New Year with our fellow believers. My children have made new friends at school and also at the church. One of our neighbor's teaches my wife God's Word to help her grow spiritually. God settled my family, which gives me joy and peace. As a translator, I am happy to see God's purpose in my life and that of my community as I engage in Bible translation. I am God's vessel to take God's Word to my community.

\*David, not his real name, serves as a Bible translator in one of BTL's projects considered to be a sensitive community. It is sensitive in the sense that David's community does not profess Jesus as Lord. Praise God for David's family, which proclaims Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Pray for him and his colleagues, for protection, grace and strength as they work to ensure that God uses them to bring light into their community through their work of translating the Scriptures into their language!



God saw my family's anguish, and He opened a door for me to be a Bible translator at BTL. And to be effective in my new role, BTL moved my family to a distant and secure town where I could translate the Scriptures into our language.



# WE WANT TO BE FRIENDS OF JESUS



*The Taveta church leaders joyfully receive the Jesus Film in the Taveta language during its dedication.*

## – Matayo Tariwoi – Taveta Project Officer

**Wambhona Yesu eteta Kitubheta**, loosely translated as, “have you seen Jesus speaking Taveta language?” Nabhotoi, a 13 year old girl, enthusiastically asked her friend as they walked back home after watching the Jesus film show at Python Hill village on the eve of the 2022 Christmas. Nabhotoi was among the sizeable congregants that had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior after watching the Jesus film in their Taveta language.

“Those people were so cruel, imagine how they mercilessly whipped our Jesus and nailed Him on the Cross. They will surely be punished by God, what do you think?” Nabhotoi asked her friend. Her friend affirmed her thoughts. They continued discussing what they saw in the film, and as they were parting ways, each going to her home, Nabhotoi made a declaration, “I want to be a friend of Jesus like the girl we saw in the film.”

The show also attracted the Taveta middle-aged and the older generation in the cosmopolitan Taveta Town. This is the category that speaks

fluent Kitubheta, the language of the natives. They were very happy to hear God’s message in their own language. Some of them attended the film shows to confirm whether it was true that Jesus could speak in native Kitubheta as the village head man had called out the day before the show, “Come and see Jesus speak in native Kitubheta!”

At one time, when Jesus was being nailed to the Cross, the crowd watching the film became very quiet, some carried by emotions and cried. “So it is true that what we are seeing actually happened,” a man in his late fifties, Othiniel Mramba, exclaimed! He continued, “If this Man died for our sins that God could accept us, then we need to be more serious with God. I’m going to church this Sunday.” He affirmed.

**“God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God.”**

**2 Corinthians 5:21, NIV.**



*The BTL Board Chairman, Canon Joseph Ogutu (left) and H.E Hon. Johnson Sakaja (right) Governor, Nairobi County, flag off the Nairobi 16 th edition of the Run for the Bibleless 2023.*

## ~ Daisy Kilel

The morning of March 4, 2023, turned out to be a pleasantly warm and vibrant day at the Carnivore Grounds in Nairobi. This was the day that the annual fundraising event, Run for the Bibleless, 2023 edition, was being held in Nairobi and concurrently in Nakuru and Eldoret. In Nairobi, the young and old alike arrived early at the venue, school children from primary and high schools and others accompanied by their parents were also punctual as usual and could be seen swaying slowly to the gospel tunes emanating from the massive and well raised speakers at the dais as they patiently, awaited the flagging off of the Run. Some came riding their bicycles, while others were on their roller skates. The various corporate sponsors of the event also settled at their designated spots waiting to offer their services to the Run participants. All were welcome to be a part of this great initiative to raise funds for the Bibleless communities.

Soon, the grounds were filled to capacity with over 10,000 participants, and with the arrival of the Chief Guest, H.E. Hon. Johnson Sakaja, the Governor of Nairobi County, the event was ready to start. In his

remarks Hon. Sakaja noted the value of the Scriptures, "many of us are where we are because of God's Word, how we were raised depended on it and it is unfair that many don't have that opportunity because of their unwritten languages. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the word of God and many people need to get that opportunity." He said. "I am greatly supportive of the BTL's initiative to translate the Bible to unreached communities." He added.

BTL's National Director, Rev. Peter Munguti, reminisced about the growth of the Nairobi Run since 2008, when it was first launched. "This is the 16th Chapter in Nairobi, the 2nd Chapter in Nakuru and the 3rd Chapter in Eldoret." He said. He also appreciated the participants for participating in the Run every year. "Thank you for attending the Run over the years.

We are running so that the Pokomo, Daasanach, Rendille, Samburu and other small language groups can receive the Bible for the very first time so that their lives are transformed." He concluded. After an intensive warm up session, the Chief Guest





*BTL National Director briefing the participants of the Nairobi Run For The Bibleless before flag off*

was able to flag off the Run. Mr. Ngetich was one of the participants of the Run. He hardly fails to attend the event. This year he came with his entire family including an infant. "For me the Run is a great time to bond with my family as we walk together in support of a worthwhile cause. Thank you BTL for giving us this platform".

The funds raised from this event will help to meet the costs of completions in 5 New Testaments and 2 full Bibles that are at the final stages of translation in the 2023 calendar year.

The Mombasa edition of the Run for the Bibleless 2023 will take place on Saturday, July 8. This Run

would have taken place on March 4 alongside the Nairobi, Eldoret, and Nakuru runs; however, due to the high temperatures in Mombasa in the early part of the year and with the request from the Mombasa planning committee, it was scheduled for the month of July, when the temperatures are somewhat cooler.

We encourage our partners in Mombasa to register and be part of the 2nd edition of the Mombasa Run for the Bibleless. All other details are in the advert below.



*Best foot forward: Flagging off the Eldoret Run For the Bibleless*



*Walking for the Bibleless: A section of the participants in the Nakuru Walk For The Bibleless*

# RUN

for the

# BIBLELESS

## 2023

Mombasa Edition

Venue:

Treasury Square, along  
Nkrumah Rd, Mombasa

8th July 2023 | 7.30am

Registration:

Adults 1,500/-  
Children 1,000/-

Pay Bill No.: 898301 A/C: RUN

For More information: Tel: 0722 206 909 | info@btlkenya.org | www.btlkenya.org



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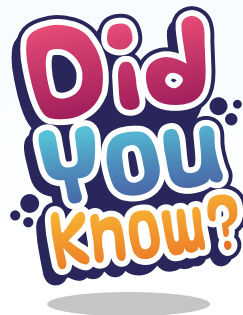
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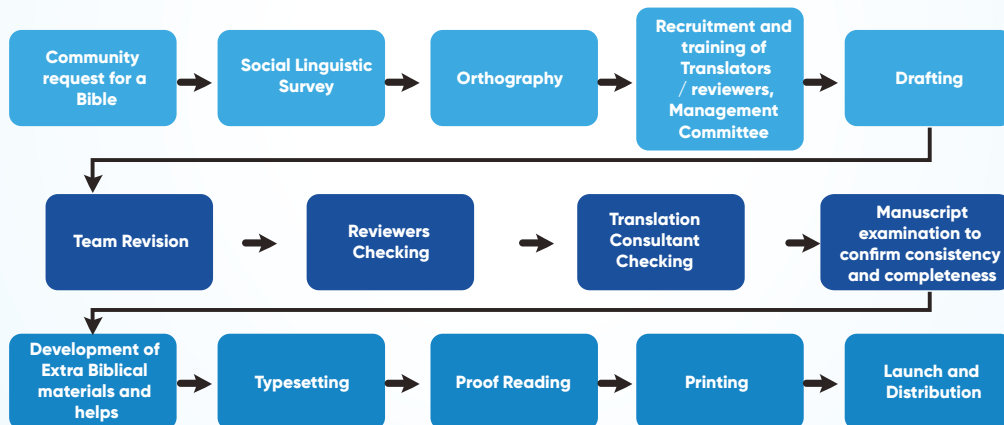
# 2023 Translation Focus

## 2023 TRANSLATION FOCUS

- Pokomo complete Bible (arrival into the country for dedication)
- Marakwet complete Bible (final checks)
- Chonyi New Testament (typesetting & Printing)
- Tugen New Testament (final checks)
- Upper Pokomo New Testament (final checks)
- Chuka New Testament (final checks)
- Waata New Testament (typesetting and printing)



### TRANSLATION PROCESS SIMPLIFIED



### DISTRIBUTION

Once the Scriptures have been published in the form of a book, audio player, or DVD, they'll get placed on board a ship, plane, vehicle, or some other form of transportation headed in the direction of the language group. If necessary, a local agent will be responsible for getting the Bibles through customs and transported to their final destination. Digital Scripture versions can either be placed on a website for people to download or be transferred via cell phone or other storage devices. The community often plans an event to publicize, celebrate, and distribute the new Scripture.



# **RUN** *for the* **BIBLELESS** **2023**



Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A.)

## Mombasa Edition

### DATE

Sat 8th July, 2023  
Time: 7.30 a.m

### VENUE

Treasury Square, along  
Nkrumah Rd, Mombasa



**Registration** ▶

**Adults: 1500**  
**Children: 1000**

You can also give a donation to the  
cause or sponsor others to the Run ▶

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# WORD FROM

## THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Many well-meaning interventions are poured out into communities by development partners in an effort to bring community transformation but most of them have failed to achieve that purpose. I can trace the main problem in the lack of holistic approach to addressing community felt needs in many of these interventions. Not so for Bible translation! Visiting some of the communities that we are currently working with a few weeks ago left me totally convinced that Bible translation remains one of the best, most appropriate and justifiable method of Christian mission and community transformation.

Starting from language development, Bible translation involves working with people at some of the very basic, human-worth levels of interaction, namely language and culture, incorporating a strong holistic focus on addressing human life issues in that community. It also lends itself to close cooperation with a wide range of local community institutions; from national governments to local churches and from universities to community health centres!

No wonder language development, literacy and Bible translation among the Suba people of Mfangano Island has not only brought light to the community, as you will see in some of the stories in this issue, but it has also brought in a holistic transformation to them. As a result of Bible translation, the Island where death and devastation once loomed high because of HIV & Aids is now full of life and joy as spiritual and moral transformation has changed people at a personal level. Literacy rates have also significantly increased as people who may not have had access to education before are now able to read and write in their own language, thereby changing their worldview completely. There is visible social and economic development on this Island as many churches have been planted and school enrolment has gone up. The Suba people are now more equipped to take on leadership roles in their community and advocate for their rights, creating a positive holistic change.

This story can be said of the many other communities that we are working with and especially those who have already received either the New Testament or the complete Bible in their language. It is the story that we now want to take to communities beyond Kenya as we respond to the vision that God gave us way back in 1981 when we were registered as Bible Translation and Literacy (EA). Like the four lepers who went to the Aramean camp and found food during a time of great famine in 2 Kings 7, it would not be right for us to keep this good news to ourselves. We would like the communities in the East African region who have not yet experienced holistic transformation have an opportunity like the Suba people to do so. Pray with us for the engagement that has already started with 6 communities in Tanzania 4 in South Sudan. We would like to go to as far as the Nuba Mountains take this transforming light of the Gospel to the communities there. harvest ahead of us is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.



**Rev. Peter Munguti, National Director, BTL(E.A.)**





Bible Translation & Literacy (E.A.)



Daasanach

SERVING  
28  
COMMUNITIES

Rendille

Samburu

Marakwet

Sabaot

Kabarasi

Tachoni

Suba

Ogiek

Ilchamus

Tugen

Tharaka

Chuka

Upper Pokomo

Pokomo

Chonyi

Giryama

Taveta

Duruma

Digo

Gitemi

Who we are

BTL's mission since 1981,  
is to facilitate Bible  
Translation and  
sustainable literacy  
among small  
language groups in  
Kenya and beyond.

Accomplishments

- ✦ 6 Complete Bibles
- ✦ 8 New Testaments
- ✦ 14 Projects work ongoing

To Get Involved:

- ✦ Become a prayer partner
- ✦ Subscribe to our social media handles
- ✦ Support BTL financially (Translation cost per verse Kshs. 4,000 )
- ✦ Participate in our Annual BTL Run for the Bibleless

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