TRANSLATION Matters

500

THANKSGIVING CELEBRATION FOR 500 YEARS OF PRIVILEGE

Dear Friends,

Everywhere I go people are talking about the 5th centenary of the Reformation. So, what makes this milestone anniversary so significant for us in this day and age of 2017?

It all comes down to the language of the heart, doesn't it? When German speakers back in 1517 were able to read the Bible themselves for the first time (instead of only through the church clergy who knew Latin), a wave of transformation was sparked that we still feel the effect of today.

Anniversaries help us to remember. The Reformation centenary helps us to remember the tremendous privilege we enjoy of having God's Word in our heart language. Knowing it's a privilege we've had for 500 years or more, surely must move us to an act of thanksgiving!

This is why Wycliffe is hosting a special thanksgiving concert in September, where we look forward to resonate with the multilingual voices of the Soweto Gospel Choir.

I am already saving up to bring my offering of thanksgiving on that day! Every cent of my entry ticket will go to Bible translation for communities still waiting for their very first verse of Scripture in their own language. So, the concert is an opportunity to give thanks for my privileged position, as well as to sow a seed for someone else to enjoy this same privilege in their heart language.

Please join me on the 2nd of September for a truly heart-warming and God-honouring thanksgiving celebration!

Karen Floor, CEO



SURVEY IS ABOUT SERVING

By Lindsey Trusler

Deep in the heart of Limpopo province, the isiNdebele and Khelovedu people groups have long since felt overlooked, as their languages have been thought to be the same as the neighbouring Sotho language. We were alerted to these Limpopo languages by the Bible Society of South Africa (BSSA). We conducted the language survey as a service to the BSSA and our report has enabled them to make a decision to partner with these Limpopo communities in Bible translation. Survey is about serving, not only BSSA, but also the people groups whose language and cultural identity are worthy in God's eyes.

In February 2017, Busie Khanyile and I had the opportunity to join survey expert Linda Jordan to find out more about these two language groups and the potential need for Bible translation. Meeting with church leaders, it was eye-opening to see how passionate the isiNdebele and Khelovedu people are about developing their language and culture.





Church leaders with the survey team in Mashashane



Church leaders in Mokopane with the survey team

This trip was a prime example of the importance of conducting a language survey prior to beginning translation. We found that the first language, isiNdebele, is largely shifting to Sotho and in many instances, the use of the heritage language is starting to decrease. However, in the Khelovedu area the language is thriving and is even an integral part of local arts and music!

There are some things we can do to help shift a language back to vitality, but at the same time, we also need to consider where the most urgent need is for Bible translation. Thanks to the survey, we can see beyond what is on paper to the actual needs and current realities of the community. This enables us to maximise our resources and to make informed decisions regarding which projects to undertake.

SEPHUTHI LANGUAGE NO LONGER OVERLOOKED

By Busie Khanyile

A team from Wycliffe South Africa travelled to Lesotho from 26-29 April 2017 to research the Sephuthi language for potential Bible translation. The team had four tasks to complete, which they shared between the multi-disciplinary team: 1) Language use in ministry and the church, by Busie Khanyile, 2) Dialect mapping, by Lindsey Trusler, 3) Compiling a word list, by Josh Dyer, and 4) Conducting a sociolinguistic questionnaire, also by Josh.

Photos by Lindsey Trusler



Our team with the Baphuthi people from the village



Busie working on determining language use in ministry

The language use tool assists church leaders in assessing which languages are used, to what degree, and in which domains for activities related to worship, nurturing and spiritual growth. They will also be able to ascertain whether the current situation is adequately meeting the needs of the Christians and non-Christians in the area.

Dialect mapping guides speakers of a specific dialect to discuss information they already know about their dialects and the levels of comprehension between different dialects. It encourages them to think about which varieties of their language could use a single set of written or oral materials.

Lindsey and Mpho doing a dialect mapping exercise





Josh conducting a sociolinguistic questionnaire

In order to generate a word list, the speakers of the target language provide words from their language, following a list prepared by the team. This assists in doing a linguistic study of the language. A sociolinguistic questionnaire helps speakers to evaluate how much they use their language in daily life. It also highlights the multilingual situation and their attitude towards other languages in the area.

SPOTLIGHT ON THE HAMBUKUSHU PROJECT

By Laura Dyer

In April 2017, the Hambukushu project received a significant donation to advance the work! We praise God for His provision and look forward to a good report. There are an estimated 60,000 Hambukushu living in northern Botswana and Namibia. The initial translation training, as well as administrative training, was successfully completed. Their oral translation workshops are projected to begin in September 2017.

The Challenge

The young Hambukushu pastor woke up startled. He had dozed off again while staying up late and reading by candlelight to try and make sense of the Setswana Bible passage he planned to preach on the next day. As he read over the verses again, he could overhear the loud conversation in the home next to his. "Even if I don't kill him, I'm going to curse him! He's taking all my business!" The pastor recognised the witch's voice, and realised that he was the one being spoken of. The Hambukushu pastor bowed his head to pray: first to God, but then also to his ancestors. Part of him wondered if it was wrong to pray like this, but the verses about prayer in the Setswana Bible had always confused him. Besides, it seemed much easier for the church people if they just added God's truth into what they had always believed in their traditional religions. Suddenly, the pastor remembered that he hadn't taken his HIV medicine that day. Although he is young, his doctor had told him that his condition was declining rapidly. The Hambukushu pastor wonders how much time he has left. He wonders if he will ever be able to understand God's Word and preach it with power to his people.

The Solution

In order for Hambukushu pastors to be effective teachers and leaders, they must first understand the Bible for themselves. Even though the Namibian Bible Society has already produced a New Testament in Thimbukushu (the name of the language of the Hambukushu people), few of the Botswana Hambukushu can read. The few who can read, only learned to read in Setswana. The need for an oral translation is vital, so that the people can properly understand the foundations of their faith, but also so that they can begin crafting new Bible-based songs in Thimbukushu. With a reported 9 out of 10 people in the area infected with HIV/AIDS, it is critical that the Hambukushu people do not have to wait long for the Good News in the language that they understand best.



HELP SAVE TREES

We are constantly updating our database, so if any of your details are going to change, please let us know. If you would prefer to receive this newsletter via email (and save some trees in the process), please send a request to wycliffe@wycliffe.org.za.

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BIBLE TRANSLATION

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