



# God's *blessing* on *all* peoples!

WORDS FOR LIFE

WYCLIFFE BIBLE TRANSLATORS



# what a promise!

“All peoples will be *blessed* through you,” (Gen 12:3) God promised Abraham—that is, through Christ—and through us, as we deliver this message!

But how can 200 million people in 2,393 language groups still without the Scriptures enjoy God’s blessing?

God gave Wycliffe a vision in 1999: Bible translation started in every language by 2025. The good news is that 641 new projects have started since 1999, and this year work by all agencies is in progress in 1,998 languages with 1.2 billion speakers. In order to reach the rest, we are continually exploring ways to increase the speed, efficiency and quality of our work, including working in language clusters.

To support one of many cluster projects around the world, visit [www.vision2025.org/makeadifferencenow](http://www.vision2025.org/makeadifferencenow)

This means a team sharing responsibility for a whole group of languages. This issue of Words for Life introduces two clusters, one in Tanzania, one in Cameroon, which belong to the wider Bantu family. Fourteen million people in 17 countries between the Sahara and South Africa speak one of 250 Bantu languages that do not have the Scriptures. Several agencies are working together on strategies and resources that will facilitate work on all Bantu languages.

The Mara cluster in Tanzania—10 languages with 1.4 million speakers—is located in the northernmost part of Tanzania, between Lake Victoria and Serengeti National Park. This is the most densely populated part of Tanzania, yet has the fewest churches. Most people call themselves Christian, but without God’s word in their heart languages, traditional religion still claims their loyalty.

An alphabet has been developed for each of these languages and local translators have started work on Luke’s Gospel.

Lake Victoria

▶ Tanzania

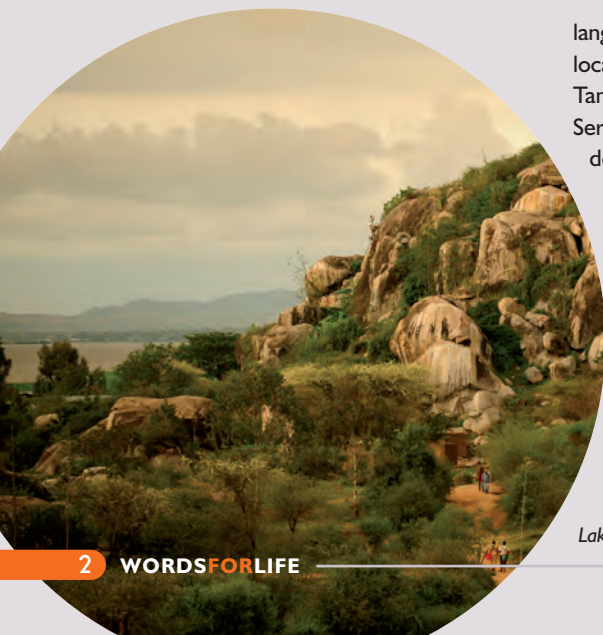
# what bles

Seven Zanaki believers were working on an alphabet for their language at a recent workshop. An elderly pastor was asked which language he used when praying alone. “Swahili, always Swahili,” he replied. “I have never prayed in my language in my whole life.”

He readily agreed that he could pray in Zanaki, and that God would understand, but since Swahili is the prestigious national language, and the language of the Bible Zanaki churches use, it simply never occurred to him to pray in his own language. So, when they turned to prayer, they were asked to do so in Zanaki. They were startled, but agreed to try.

In Tanzanian fashion, they all prayed aloud and together. Passionate prayers in Zanaki tumbled out as they asked God to bless the beginnings of their translation and literacy project. At one point one woman simply sat smiling and crying, listening to the others pray in her language. When their voices quietened down, one man closed with “In Jesus’ name, amen!” in Zanaki. They lifted their heads, tears running down their cheeks. Tanzanians don’t often cry in public but all seven were wiping their eyes. The elderly pastor who had just prayed, and heard others pray, in Zanaki for the very first time, could not stop smiling.

“Let’s do this again!” said a voice. “This is very good.”



# a sing!

Three weeks later, I visited an Ikizu village and was warmly greeted by the elders.

Curious villagers wandered over to see why this young white woman was sitting under a tree with the elders. “We have been working out a way to write Ikizu, in order to translate the Bible,” I explained.

This provoked an animated discussion. Suddenly everyone was writing in the dust with their fingers. Ikizu words appeared under the tree as the elders taught the others how to read and write their language. As I watched, a blessing arrived!

...the wonderful privilege...  
special joy of telling the Gentiles  
about the endless treasures  
available to them in Christ.  
Eph 3:8,9 NLT

On the Sunday, we were asked to share about our work at the village church. “I have been praying for you for three years while preparing to come to Africa. It is a blessing to finally meet you!” I began. Two of the elders described our work on the writing system and our plans to translate the Bible, and asked them to pray for us. “Translating God’s word

will not be easy; the devil will fight this work.”

We invited questions, but people expressed their joy instead. “Many young people move away and forget our language and culture,” one man shared. “If it wasn’t for this project, what makes us Ikizu would die. But now our people will always know their language because it will be recorded in the Ikizu Scriptures. Thank you for helping us keep our language and culture alive!”

A woman stood up, close to tears. “I come from a group that already has the Bible. I read the Scriptures every day, and I understand. I did not know until today that anyone would translate the Bible into Ikizu. I am so happy for you! You are a small group and very poor. The poor are often the last to receive things, but you will have God’s word in your language, the most precious gift you could have. Praise God for this wonderful, wonderful blessing!”

My time with the Ikizu was filled with good experiences and warm hospitality. However, I was saddened to notice that, whenever they met, they always spoke Ikizu, whereas in church, family devotions and prayer, they switched to Swahili, the language of their Bibles. I hope that someday I will return to this village and hear them talking with God in the language they use to talk with their friends. Obviously, God is at work, and being a small part of it is a wonderful, wonderful blessing!

*Father of all, please empower and encourage the translators so that Zanaki and Ikizu people can have the joy of knowing you too.*



see **Call to Prayer** / March

*a translation workshop is hungry work*





## what a challenge!

Pastor Waynse, one of the Simbiti translators, was leading the morning devotions at a workshop recently. After reading from John 11, he continued, “When I heard about the extensive linguistic foundation that must be laid before Bible translation can really take off, I realised this is going to be a long process. I felt disappointed that my people would have a long wait before the Scriptures are fully translated and available. But then I remembered that God is never late.

“When I read the story of Lazarus, I see Mary and Martha’s sorrow over Jesus’ delay to heal Lazarus. But there’s more to the story. Jesus delayed his coming because of his love for them (v. 5 – 6). When he

*Translators using the Adapt-it computer program and the Christmas story from Luke in one language to produce a rough first draft in several other related languages. This increases the quality, efficiency and speed of their work.*

finally did come, a far greater glory resulted: he raised Lazarus from the dead!

“So it is with Bible translation. It might seem like God has delayed his coming, because the process is so long. But he is never late. When the Scriptures finally emerge in the Simbiti language, it will be God’s timing. The glory will be far greater!”

*Lord Jesus, please give the translators inspiration and stickability, so that your glory, grace and truth will shine through the Simbiti Scriptures.*



see **Call to Prayer** / March

# what a difference!

After two years in the Mara region, I realise that God wired me for literacy! What delights me most is working directly with the people. I love teaching linguistic principles and seeing the joy on their faces when they realise their languages are real languages, languages with beautiful structure and intricacy. I love answering their questions, seeing their excitement and hunger for God's word. I love visiting their homes and churches, learning all they have to teach me about life, faith and community.

Of all the tasks necessary to deliver Scripture to people in a form they can understand, literacy is the most people-oriented. It's where linguistics and people meet—the perfect fit for me, standing in this gap and training them to read and write their languages. This passion has led me into literacy, to help people encounter the great God who speaks their language!

I did not understand the great need for literacy until I saw it with my own eyes. One Sunday after church I sat in Daniel the evangelist's house, eating dried fish

and ugali (boiled maize). "I used to read the Kuria New Testament as if I was reading Swahili," he explained. "It was impossible! But now that I've been taught how to read the Kuria alphabet, I understand it completely!"

The Kuria have had the New Testament for over ten years, but it has not been used very much because few know how to read it. Their writing system is brilliant, but they need trained teachers to help them unlock the Scriptures.

Richard, my colleague Tim's gardener, had a New Testament for years but couldn't read it. Recently, Tim sat down with him and explained how the Kuria writing system works, and a few minutes later Richard could understand the precious words that remained locked inside—just because he didn't have the key!

If these two men learned the basics of how to read Kuria in just a few moments, imagine what a full literacy programme for 400,000 Kuria speakers could do!

*Father, please raise up good communicators who will train people in all ten Mara communities to use the key of literacy and unlock the treasures in your word.*

For more stories: [www.thetask/net](http://www.thetask/net)



The fellowship of work at a multi-language workshop



see **Call to Prayer** | March

# together we can!

Ten languages are spoken on the Ndop Plain, a rice-growing area of Cameroon, home to 180,000 people. Animism is the dominant belief system, sometimes with Christian trappings.

“People can go to church on Sunday morning and sing, dance and pray, then in the afternoon sacrifice a chicken to an ancestral spirit,” says Dan Grove, leader of the Ndop cluster project. “Are they reached? For me, the answer is a resounding NO!”

Church and community leaders have come together to support Bible translation and literacy in all ten languages, and have developed an alphabet for each one.

Translation started on the first two languages in 2008.

“Our biggest prayer is that the Lord will identify godly and capable men and women in each community, so that we can help them to get started too,” Dan says.

“Chrambo people don’t know how to read and write, and this affects Christianity so much,” adds Pastor Novethan of the Chrambo language team. “It will help the people to be better Christians (when they can) read the Bible and reason things out for themselves. Also, someone lives better when he can read and write, even if he doesn’t have a white-collar job.”

Pastor Pius thanks Dan’s church from Canada for sending someone with a heart for God, teaching people practically, and living the life. “Dan will go into the mud. We like people like that to work with us.”

Dan believes that mentoring young people like Novethan and Pius is one of his top priorities. After all, translating a book is of little value if no-one has the skill or the vision to use it. But a group of knowledgeable, passionate people with God’s word in their hands? Well, they could change the world!

The word of the Lord spread through the whole region. Acts 13:49

*Daniel works on literacy part-time and also types for the Bamunka translators. (See page 7)*

# 10 of the best

Ten Ndop villages and ten languages, but ultimately it's all about people! Jon and Sandra Blackwell from Dublin introduce the Bamunka translation team, ten people engaged in a battle against spiritual forces.

**Edward's** conversion, and the stand he and his wife **Prisca** made against traditional sacrifices when their first child died, led to persecution, and then a spiritual breakthrough. Edward is leader of the local church and the senior translator. In 2007 his wife gave birth to twins, a sign of favour in Bamunka culture. It also demonstrates our God's power, because many expected that Prisca would be barren after defying the gods of the land on the death of their child. There may well be further spiritual attack, since Edward and Prisca refused to perform sacrifices for the twins.

The link between the physical and spiritual is more obvious in Africa. There are people in positions of influence and elsewhere, who may try using sorcery to destroy livestock, cause accidents, make children sick or die, or use any other means to destroy the work and witness of believers.

**David and Bridget** are farmers. David suffers from a heart condition, so Bridget, a hard-working, godly woman, does the heavy farming, while he rears pigs. They have four children. David, an elder of the Baptist church, has suffered persecution; an attempt was made to seize his property but he stood firm.

**Daniel** was a fisherman, but fish stocks have dwindled and a medical condition prevents him from working in water. We are helping him to develop a small chicken farm. As the best reader and writer of Bamunka, he works on literacy part-time and also types for the translators. He has inherited the post of Chief's Nurse from his father, which involves certain sacrificial functions. Being a Christian, he has refused to perform them, something unheard-of. He has received threats of sorcery against his property, his family and his life.

**Victorine and Margaret** are helping Daniel and David to produce the first Bamunka reading books, and to run the first literacy classes in their areas.



Jon Blackwell visiting the village chief

When his father died in 2004, **Michael** refused to perform the traditional ceremonies and was excluded from the family compound. However, God has provided a house for him through the gifts of Christians in Ireland and the UK. Following his teaching degree, he is half way through a degree course in Bible translation at the Baptist seminary in Ndu, sponsored by Wycliffe. Michael's wife **Imelda** would like to gain a nursing qualification and provide some medical help for the village, but so far she has not passed the entrance exams to begin her training.

**Umaru** is a farmer. Originally from a Muslim background, he is now a follower of Jesus and secretary of a Baptist church. After receiving some on-the-job training with the Bamunka team, he too is studying theology and Bible translation in Ndu.

For the long-term sustainability of Bible translation, literacy and the use of the Scriptures in all ten Ndop languages, prayer for people like these is vital.

*In your name, Lord Jesus, we rebuke the devil and all his attempts to oppose your kingdom.*



see **Call to Prayer** 18 March

# how about getting engaged?



*Pastor Martin reads the Lost Son big book*

Bible translation is a long process, so what can be achieved in a month during the summer? You'd be surprised!

For the last few years, Engage teams have made a valuable contribution to language projects in Cameroon, Mali and Burkina Faso, while gaining enlightening and life-changing experiences. They helped in a range of activities including teaching literacy, producing literacy materials and song books, and training local people to do the same. They gave IT training, did language survey and taught English. They helped to promote literacy and the use of the Scriptures, and compiled

information for prayer partners in the UK.

Three teams have worked with the Ndop cluster project in Cameroon, running children's clubs, producing literacy materials and equipping local Christians with skills to do the same. They helped local translators produce the first book of worship songs and several "big books", large format illustrated books in various languages, so that groups of people, so that groups of people can listen, see and read. One person said that the paraphrase of the lost son story made Luke 15 so clear, even the old women understood!

In 2008, a team taught people how to produce their own big books, and as a result the story of Jesus birth—the first Scripture in two languages—was distributed to 30 churches before Christmas. "We are grateful for all they have achieved," say Jon and Sandra Blackwell. "Each team has been a milestone in our work, and now, five years after we arrived here, we have seen the first public readings of Bamunka Scripture!"

In 2009, teams have been invited to help the Ndop project again, and also projects in Burkina Faso and Cambodia. They engage with the local community and gain cross-cultural experience, as one Mali team member describes, "I'm much more flexible and adaptable than I thought I would be, and coped way better than I thought possible." And another adds, "This work makes my heart burn and weep." Working closely with people also increases the significance of the job done, the experiences gained, the relationships built, and the new perspectives formed about what God is doing.

Anyone 18 or over can apply. Deadline: 31 March. [www.wycliffe.org.uk/engage](http://www.wycliffe.org.uk/engage)

*Father, please call the right people to join these teams, so that their activities and experiences this summer will have an eternal impact on the host communities, and on their own lives.*

# what a privilege!

Jen Wright

The whole of November was exciting, with the start of literacy classes and the printing of the Christmas story, the first Scripture in Chrambo! People from several churches met to produce big book versions too. But the last two days have been just amazing!

We recorded one of our colleagues, Emmanuel, reading the Christmas story and yesterday I had the greatest privilege of my life so far: taking the first part of the gospel in Chrambo, the recording and the big book, to a neighbour's compound!

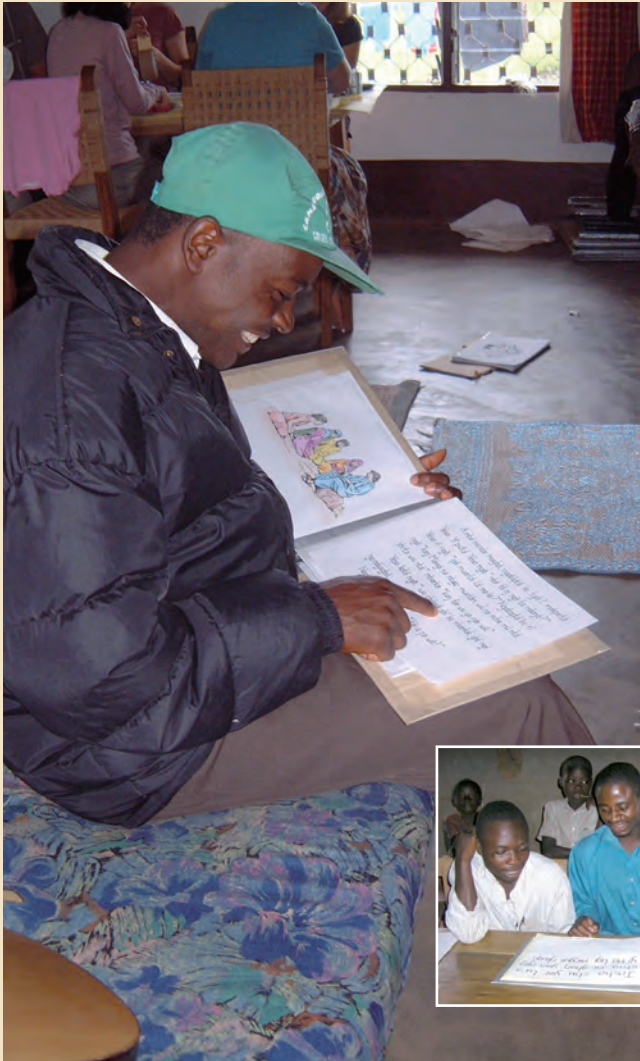
The first lady to listen just kept saying, "Thank you... thank you ... yes... yes... thank you!" all the way through, and the look on her face made me want to cry! Two other ladies were equally excited and pointed to things in the pictures as they listened. It was so moving.

This afternoon, I took it to another compound and seven people listened to it. They all had enthusiastic responses, but the most awesome was that of Ta'apa. About half way through, at the page showing the shepherds in the stable, she said in Pidgin "na true?" So I replied in Chrambo "oŋ a nnu shini" (yes, it's true). I didn't understand the next thing she said, but switching to Pidgin she continued, "If I go fo church I fit born? ...fo new?... I don get me" (...can I be born?... again?...it's touched me.)

I asked if she wanted to come to church and she said "Yes." That would be very difficult, because she lives in a Muslim compound, and she won't talk to anyone else about it. She came to our house to hear the story again and said several times in Chrambo, "Jesus is good."

I've been praying recently that, if I get the opportunity to share the gospel, God will somehow give me the right words. He did today—I had his word on a voice recorder in my hands, and the only words needed from my own lips were "oŋ a nnu shini." God made sure I knew them in advance; he reminded me of them two days ago when someone asked me if something quite trivial was true or not. Praise God that he can speak through his word without us saying anything!

This is a small part of what's happening now that God's word in Chrambo is out there. He is using it amazingly!



*We praise you, Jesus, Light of the world, that some people have heard something of the gospel. Please lighten their way out of the darkness of animism, ignorance and despair.*

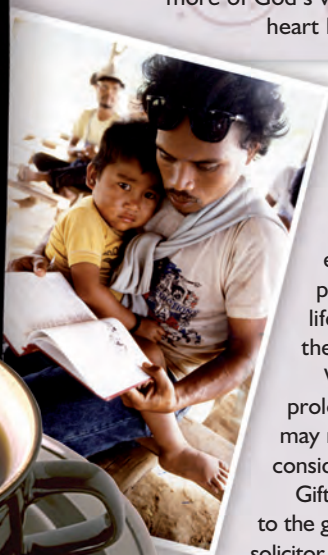
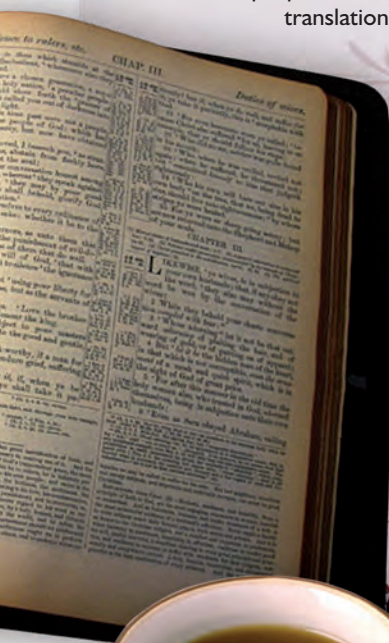


see **Call to Prayer** 18 March

## not finished yet

While one Wycliffe member was serving overseas, he received part of his regular support from his brother. That in itself isn't unusual. Donations for members and projects come from a variety of sources all the time: churches, individuals, friends and relatives. What is less common is that his brother's support for Bible translation didn't stop when he died.

He left a proportion of his estate to Wycliffe: half towards Bible translation in general, and half in support of Bible translators in Asia. This man's forethought helped to ensure that Asian colleagues could continue working in a number of projects in their home country and elsewhere in Asia. Thanks to his parting gift, Bible translation continued in many Asian communities, and people received more of God's word in their heart language...



## the end in view

Bible translation has accelerated dramatically since 1999 when God gave us a mind-blowing vision: Bible translation to be started in every language by 2025. This has galvanised our energies and focused our minds, leading to improved partnership with other agencies, greater involvement of local people overseas, and increased application of new knowledge, technologies and strategies.

More Bible translation is going on now than at any time in history, but a huge unfinished task still remains. A legacy from you would help to make this vision a reality. Leon, one of the army of mother-tongue translators overseas, knows the value of a legacy. "This is my greatest treasure: God's word in my language! When I die, I'll not have riches to give to my children, but to my eldest son I shall bequeath this precious book."...

## where there's a will

Only one person in three makes a will. It is not difficult, nor is it very expensive, but it is very important. It gives added security to those you love, particularly family. It can also benefit causes you have supported during your lifetime. It gives you the comfort of knowing that, when you no longer need them, your assets will be used in the way you would wish.

Without a will, the state dictates where your assets will go. It can often prolong an already difficult time for those left behind. Your money and property may not necessarily pass to people you wish to benefit. Some helpful considerations concerning wills and legacies can be found at [www.will-power.org.uk](http://www.will-power.org.uk)

Gifts to charity are free from inheritance tax, so instead of some of your estate going to the government, you can set up a legacy. To make a will, we recommend hiring a solicitor. It is quite usual to ask for an estimate of charges before going ahead. You can leave a legacy to Wycliffe UK either as a percentage of your remaining estate after assets are passed on to relatives, or as a specific amount. We will ensure that it is used wisely, so that your gift will help deliver God's word to those who still do not have it.

# the UK needs the



Wycliffe UK's Executive Director Eddie Arthur has spent most of his 22-year Wycliffe career working in various parts of Africa. *Words for Life* caught up with him recently, to ask for his reflections at the end of his first year working in the UK.

**EA:** Wherever we are, whatever we do, the basis of our work has to be the Bible. It really is a most amazing book and it is easy to forget just how extraordinary it is. Essentially, the Bible is a story—a love story—told by God of his desire to draw people to himself from all peoples on the planet. But, though the Bible is complete, the story isn't finished yet. As people read and understand what God is saying, they are drawn into the story themselves, and into a loving relationship with their Creator, just as the Bible characters were.

## Bible too!

**WfL:** This is why we are so keen to see the Bible translated worldwide!

**EA:** Yes. If God has given us this story, then we have a responsibility to ensure that people around the world can understand it for themselves, and be drawn into it. But you know, it's not just people in faraway parts of the world who need to hear the story. Here in the UK and Ireland, we have had the Bible for hundreds of years, and yet the number of Christians who read it is falling year on year. This is why we are partnering with the Saltmine Theatre Company to produce a drama called 'From Eden to Eternity' which we will be taking out on the road to churches during March.

**WfL:** What do you hope this tour will achieve?

**EA:** You know, one of the amazing privileges of working with Wycliffe is to see the excitement and passion in the faces of people when they get to understand God's word in their own language for the first time. We want to help churches in the UK and Ireland to recapture that excitement and passion for the Bible. We want to see God's message of love translated, not just into languages, but into people's lives!



### touring the UK during March

Welcome to the story of everything—the Bible—in an hour, brought to life on stage by Saltmine Theatre Company and Wycliffe Bible Translators. Journey with us through tragedy and tears, music and mirth, serpents and salvation!

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