



At the Well

Tim and Lisa Beckendorf, LBT missionaries in Botswana



Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

John 4:13, 14 (NIV)

ICCT, it's where you want to be . . .

... At least that was the consensus of the participants of the Introductory Course on Communication and Translation held in D'Kar, Botswana, last December. The course included instructors from the U.S., Germany, Kenya, and Botswana, and participants were from Botswana, Namibia, and Mozambique. We learned all about wonderful translation stuff like cognitive benefits, relevance, meaning resemblance, and--most important of all--CONTEXT. The course was an intensive three weeks designed to give mother tongue translators the skills and tools to begin translating the Bible. We had planned on having four participants from the Khwe communities at the course, but in the end we just had Moses from Botswana, and Thienie and Vasco from Namibia attending.



Working through a text at ICCT.

Aside from learning communication and translation theories, we had a lot of hands-on work in our respective languages. For instance, we learned how to make rules for how our language will spell names from the Bible. Now this is something most people wouldn't think about, but given that there are over 1,000 names in the New Testament and over 6,000 in the Old Testament, it is important to have a consistent system for spelling. During the last week of the course, we got to practice what we learned and translated a couple of sections from the New Testament and the first seven verses of Jonah.

Speaking of Jonah . . .

Since the church communities and the translation team had already chosen to begin our project by translating sections of the Old Testament (including Jonah) and since we already had a start on Jonah, we decided to forge ahead and complete the book of Jonah. Moses drafted the book in about three weeks and then our Namibia team checked what Moses had drafted. Once changes were agreed upon and the translators were happy with what we had, we took it to a community in Namibia, read it to them, asked them comprehension questions, and received their feedback. This was a tremendous experience that gave us a lot of encouragement. We did the village checking over two days and had 12 people the first day. After the first day's reading the participants couldn't stop talking about Jonah and "forced" the guys to come home with them so that they could ask them more questions. Word got around about what was going on and we had 21 people the next day. Most of the people said that they had heard the story of Jonah before but only in Afrikaans (the language used by many people in Namibia) and never understood what it was about.

Can you tell me what this means?

Translation teams are required to have their work periodically checked by a certified translation



Dr. Visser, Moses, Vasco, Thienie, and Tim checking Jonah.

consultant, and in a new project like ours the work needs to be checked by a consultant after the first 100 verses so that no bad habits are perpetuated and become ingrained. Jonah is only 48 verses, but our consultant is leaving the first part of March for a six month furlough so he agreed to come and check our work thus far. We spent four very intense and long days going word by word, verse by verse through the text, making changes and additions and deletions along the way. He left us with homework, which we completed in two days and sent to him. We are awaiting his final word of approval before we can publish Jonah and get it out to the communities for use. The people have said they are very anxious for us now to begin work on Genesis.

The workshops continue . . .

In anticipation of beginning work in Genesis, Rev. Dr. Michael Megahan (also with LBT in Botswana) came up for a week long workshop on key Biblical concepts in Genesis. We held the workshop just over the border in Namibia where there are a number of enthusiastic church leaders. We spent a considerable amount of time determining what to use for the various names of God in the Old Testament. We also had long discussions on the words to use for the Hebrew concepts of "sin". The last day was spent with just Moses and Vasco (Thienie couldn't make it) working through Genesis 3. We made it through verse 15.



Moses and the first draft of Genesis 3:15

We hope to complete the rest of chapter 3, chapters 1 and 2 and portions of 4 and 5 by the end of the month. That will take us up to Noah. We will then take those portions back to the community for checking.

Please pray for . . .

- After feeling like we would never get started on translating God's Word into Khwedam, things are off to a very good start. Praise God!! Please pray for the momentum and the enthusiasm to continue and that our skills as translators will increase.

- Please also pray that God would grant us wisdom. The biggest translation challenge we are facing right now is personnel issues. The translation team is new, and the "team" feeling is not yet there--which is not helped by the fact the team is split by two different countries.

- Also, although the translators are all Christians, they are not mature Christians (and how could they be if they could never fully understand God's Word before?) Please pray for Moses, Thienie, and Vasco that they will grow in faith and maturity as Christians and become models of Christianity in their communities.

Your servants in Christ,

Tim, Lisa, Aaron and Andrew Beckendorf

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