



Far Trekkin'

News from Rob and Eshinee Veith

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12 Weeks in Namibia: the KKG recording sessions

by Rob

In 1993, I went overseas for the first time on a three month trip to Ecuador to work with HCJB (now called Reach Beyond) as a “working visitor.” This trip was a seminal influence on my life; it seemed to take up far more than three months time. Even now, I catch myself saying, “I used to *live* in Ecuador,” though I only stayed there three months.

In 2018, I traveled to Namibia for a three month project (September to November). In the months preceding the Namibia trip, I was wont to refer to it as “a short term project.” This is how I’ve changed in the last 20+ years: “I used to live in” becomes “I’m going for a short term project.”

In Namibia, I worked in partnership with the Bible Society of Namibia to begin recording an audio version of the Khoekhoegowab (KKG) Bible, which they expect to release in print mid-2019.

I first met the Khoekhoegowab team in 2006, when we developed



a series of Scripture songs and stories to be played on the radio. Two members from then remain involved. Josef retired in 2011, but has returned to work on the typesetting check and audio recordings. Valerie, the junior translator in 2006, is now project coordinator and head translator. Erwin, the newest translator, started in 2011. Valerie recruited four readers for the recordings: Daphne, Daniel, Kalla, and Marius.

Recording an audio Bible is a monumental task. I planned to record the New Testament in three months, with the Old Testament taking an additional six. As a substantial number of Khoekhoegowab speakers are Catholic, they also hoped to record the Deuterocanonical books. Because my work visa only allows me to be on-site in Namibia three months each year, we expected this

recording to take at least three years.

I haven’t done a project this long or this dense before. When I recorded the Dhimba New Testament a few years ago, I worked in three week trips. During those trips, we would record four or five hours each day, four or five days a week. Each hour of recording generated 2-3 hours of editing time. Practically speaking, that meant that I had 12-16 hours of work each day; I usually worked six days a week to keep on schedule. I’ve never attempted to sustain this level of work for three months straight.

A number of things became apparent as the project progressed. One: I should never attempt a project that requires 12-16 hour work days six days a week for three months. That’s a recipe for madness. We decided early on

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Above: the Khoekhoegowab Audio Bible team, from left to right: Valerie (project coordinator), Erwin (translator/reading coach), Daphne (reader), Daniel (reader), me, Kalla (reader/recording engineer), Marius (reader), and Josef (translator/reading coach)

Namibia

Continued

that subsequent trips would be limited to three weeks. Two: I'm holding this project back.

Let me talk more about Number Two. The Bible Society would like to publish the Khoekhoegowab Bible in 2019. At my current trajectory of three months in-country each year, the audio Bible would be completed in 2021. And there's more. The Bible Society has several equally large projects in their queue for me in the coming years, enough to keep me working in Namibia three months a year for at least the next twelve years.

This means I have become a bottle-neck for these recording projects. As long as they rely on me to be their in-country technician, these projects take exponentially longer than if someone locally could be found to take over.

One of the readers, Kalla, expressed an interest in learning to run the recording sessions. I taught her to use my recording device and take good notes for editing. After a few weeks, she was engineering 75% of the recordings (I only came in to engineer when she was reading). Very quickly, her skill hit a point where you couldn't tell whether she had recorded a track or I had. About midway through the project, Eshinee joined us for a few weeks. We taught the whole team how to record and edit the audio recordings. Meanwhile, the Bible Society directors ordered their own recording gear.

The new plan for 2019 is this: rather than me going there for three months to record the Old Testament, I will go for three weeks to help the team familiarize themselves with their new equipment and address any training issues. Then, I'll continue to mentor and address any issues from home while they do the recording and editing of the audio themselves. I will continue doing the mastering work, at least for the time being.

WHAT ELSE IS GOING ON?

- In November, Eshinee returned to Zambia to teach Bible translation in partnership with The Word For The World.
- In January, she traveled to the LBT head office in Missouri for meetings with the directors.
- Also in January, we hosted our second-ever American Scripture Song Writing Seminar.
- In February, Eshinee travels to Ethiopia.
- In March, Rob returns to Namibia to assist in Scripture Audio Recording.
- In April, he returns to Kosovo to assist in the development of children's songs in Albanian.



Top: Eshinee instructs Daniel, Marius, and Daphne in audio editing.

Middle: Kalla and Valerie edit a recording.

Bottom: Josef, Valerie, and Kalla discuss a revision to the text to make sure the audio version and the print version will be the same.