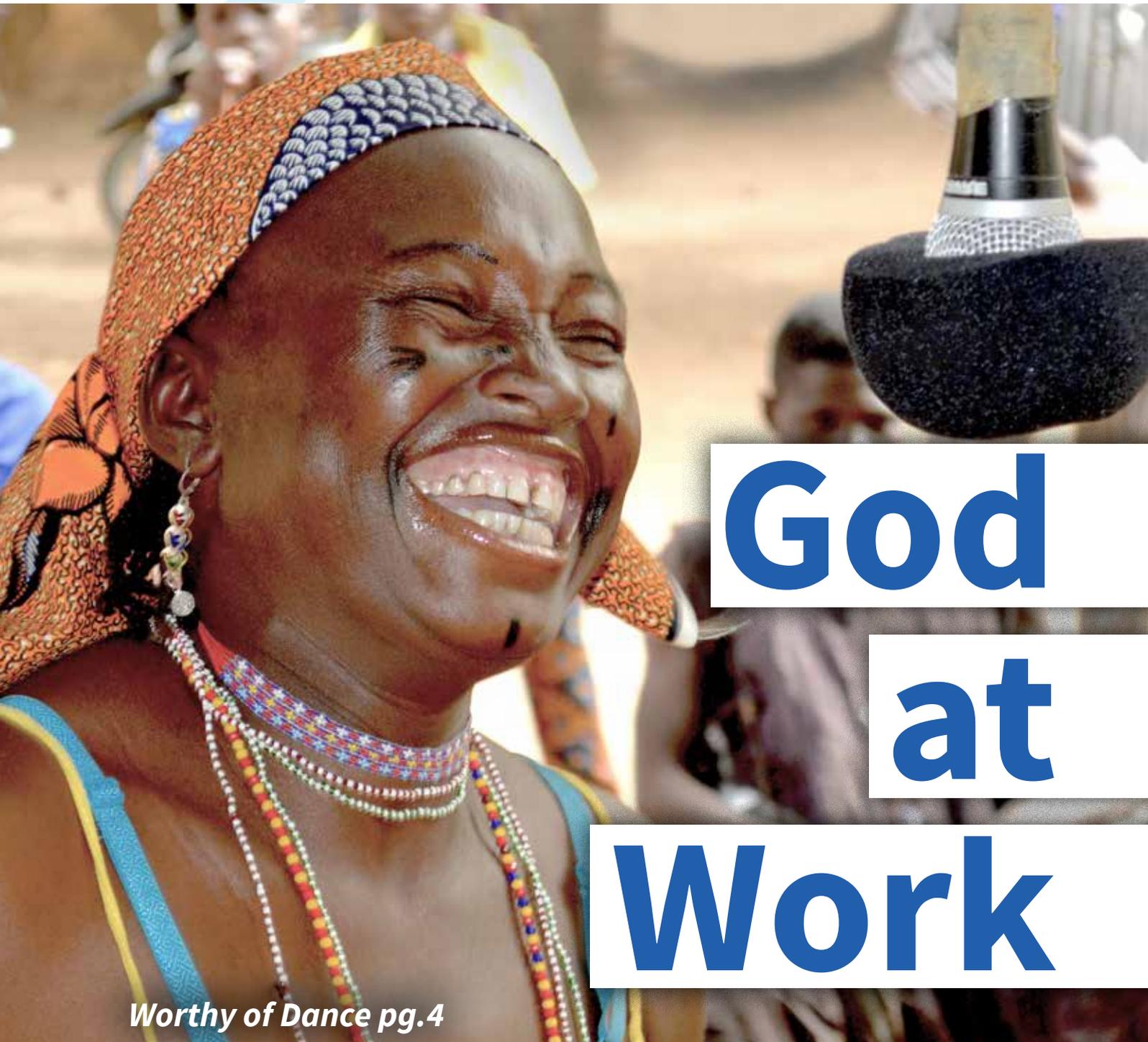




A Snapshot of the Work of SIL Nigeria



God

at

Work

Worthy of Dance pg.4

6th Edition

A Publication of SIL Nigeria

“People’s language is an expression of their inner self. When the Word of God is preached in their language you release them from inside. You get a different response. It goes in straight and the application goes almost immediately.”

-Bro. Gbile Akanni, Living Seed



Dear Partners,

When you think back on 2021, what comes to your mind? Although this has been a year with many challenges, we can also see ways that God has been at work. In the midst of insecurity, we thank God that the important work he is doing through SIL Nigeria has not stopped. In the midst of crisis areas, God has opened doors for translation consulting and careful review of the structure of languages spoken. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, God opened doors for us to continue to meet, and has protected the staff and partners of SIL Nigeria. We have a lot to thank God for!

Thank you so much for being a part of what God is doing in Bible translation, language development and Scripture engagement in Nigeria. As you read about lives that have been touched by Scripture, and the perseverance God has given us, I pray you are encouraged.

Please continue to join us in prayer, thanking God for his work and interceding for people who do not yet have the Bible in their language. Continue to support the work of Bible translation financially, and with your time and gifts. Continue to encourage us with words of Scripture and faithful relationships.

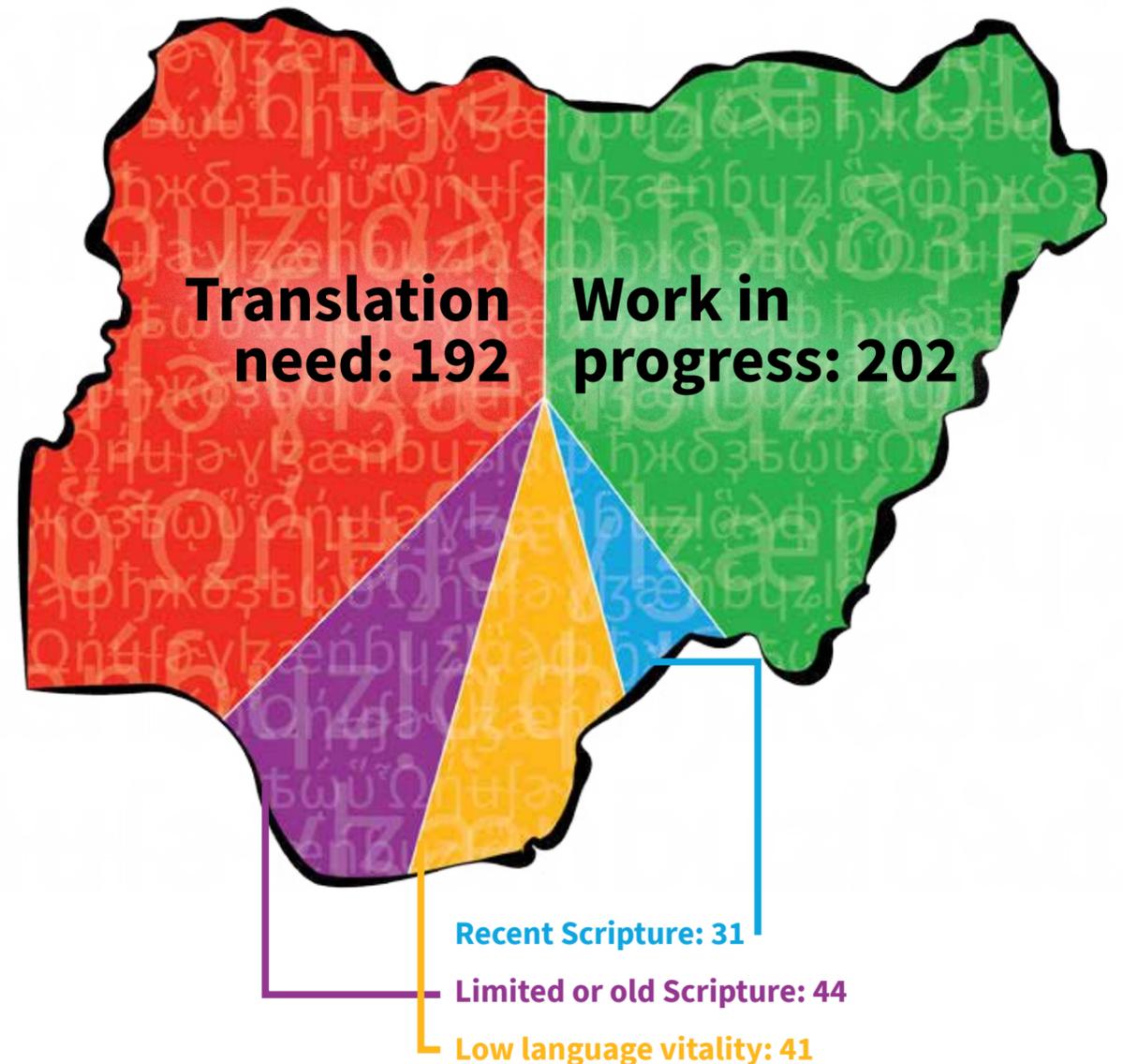
We need each part of the body. We need you!

Zach Yoder
Zachariah Yoder, Director, SIL Nigeria

PHOTO CREDIT: FRONT COVER, SCOTT RAY; ABOVE, AKU AGBAM; LEFT, PAUL TOMA

Nigeria by the Numbers

Living Nigerian Languages: 510



Scripture Already Published in Nigerian Languages:

- 38 Bibles
- 71 New Testament only
- Approx. 90 Scripture portions only

Ethnoarts

Worthy of Dance

by Rita Hassan & Scott Rayl, Ethnoarts

In February 2021, SIL held a Scripture Song-Writing Workshop in Niger State. Five language groups that have ongoing translation programs with SIL Nigeria sent participants. One of the participants shared, “I have mostly been praying and singing in Hausa, but now I have seen the importance of using my language to pray and sing.”

At a church conference among the Avadi people, the elderly men would just sit and nod their heads while songs were going on. On Sunday, one of the participants from the Scripture Song-Writing Workshop sang a Tsvadi song. The old men stood up and were dancing to the tune of their new Tsvadi Scripture songs!

Because of the joy the Tsvadi songs brought, the church organised their own local training in order for more people to be able to sing and write Tsvadi songs.



PHOTO CREDIT: ALL PHOTOS, SCOTT RAYL

Linguistics

The Eleventh Vowel

by Dr. Coleen Starwalt, Linguistics Consultant

Some people wonder, “What does linguistics have to do with Bible translation?” Languages are complex. Just figuring out how many sounds there are to write can take a linguist time and intense study. When the Dadiya community decided to have the New Testament translated, they sent participants to a workshop to figure out how to write their language. During this one month workshop, most of the sounds of Dadiya were found and written down. But not all of them.

Shortly after the translation began, it became clear that there were at least 10 vowels, and for those, they used 5 distinct symbols, underlining some to differentiate them. It is easy to mistype these symbols leading to confusion. At the recommendation of the linguistics team, the translators added new symbols to the alphabet such as “u” to address this problem.

Some oddities continued in writing the language, suggesting there was still a problem with the alphabet because some words were being spelt inconsistently.

“two different words that looked exactly alike had different pronunciations and meanings.”

It became clear there was a missing vowel when the team encountered Hebrews Chapter 10 verse 9b: “He sets aside the first covenant to establish the second covenant.” The word that translates ‘set aside’ in Dadiya is <kələm>. The problem is that <kələm> also means ‘to break’. So, which is it? Did Jesus break the first covenant, or did he set it aside? The men reported that the vowels in ‘set aside’ were different from the ones in ‘to break’.

The team found more words where the same written vowel had two different pronunciations. The linguistics team recorded and sorted all the words in the New Testament translation that had the vowel in question. The team found that about 10% of all words containing this vowel in the New Testament should actually have been written with an 11th vowel.

Then the translation team faced the decision of whether they would write the difference between these similar but distinct vowels. Choosing not to write this vowel would mean that two different words that looked exactly alike had different pronunciations and meanings.

Due to a linguistic study of Dadiya, the translation team chose to add this eleventh vowel to the alphabet to make the Dadiya Scripture more readable and understandable.



Literacy & Education

A Change of Mindset

by Marinne Simon, Literacy & Education Consultant

In February, a friend in Jos visited me. He told me about a new school he recently started in a Muslim neighbourhood to reach out to this Hausa-speaking community. The community leader and Imam supported him in creating the school.

The school owner soon noticed that the children didn't understand the teachers and could hardly respond in English. This worried him, because many of the children were already far behind. He came to ask if we in SIL could help him since we work with languages and education.

“The children are learning! They respond, and they interact!”

As we discussed the problem, I challenged him to a new way of looking at education. Frequently, when a child struggles to learn at school, it is because of not understanding English. This is why it is so important that children be taught through a language they are familiar with. I suggested they first teach the children in Hausa, their first language, and then gradually

introduce English. “We can give some ideas and training on how to go about it,” I offered, “but are you ready to do some things differently?”

The school owner was more than ready. We helped the teachers to see how it is almost impossible to learn new things in a language you don't understand! We gave some practical ideas such as using Hausa as the language of instruction for every subject and introducing spoken English just for half an hour a day. The teachers got excited! Not long after the training, the school owner called me. He was amazed at the transformation taking place in the school. “The children are learning!” he exclaimed, “They respond, and they interact!”

The community leaders were happy with what they saw. Several mothers of the school children approached the school owner and said, “We too want to learn to read and write!” Seeing their children learning to read has sparked a desire for them to learn as well.

PHOTO CREDIT: ABOVE, MARINNE SIMON; RIGHT, JOYCE EKPANG

Linguistics & Translation Degree Programmes

Multiplying Bible Translation Capacity in Nigeria

by Sonia Dettweiler

With more than 500 languages, Nigeria has one third of the remaining Bible translation needs in Africa. The Bible translation task in Nigeria is not going to be accomplished without the development of a growing, well-trained Nigerian workforce.

The Theological College of Northern Nigeria hosts a thriving Linguistics and Bible Translation Department. Established in 2005, the Department currently has 55 students in the four-year BA and two-year MA programmes. Of the 81 Nigerians who have graduated, at least 70% are involved directly in language development and Bible translation.

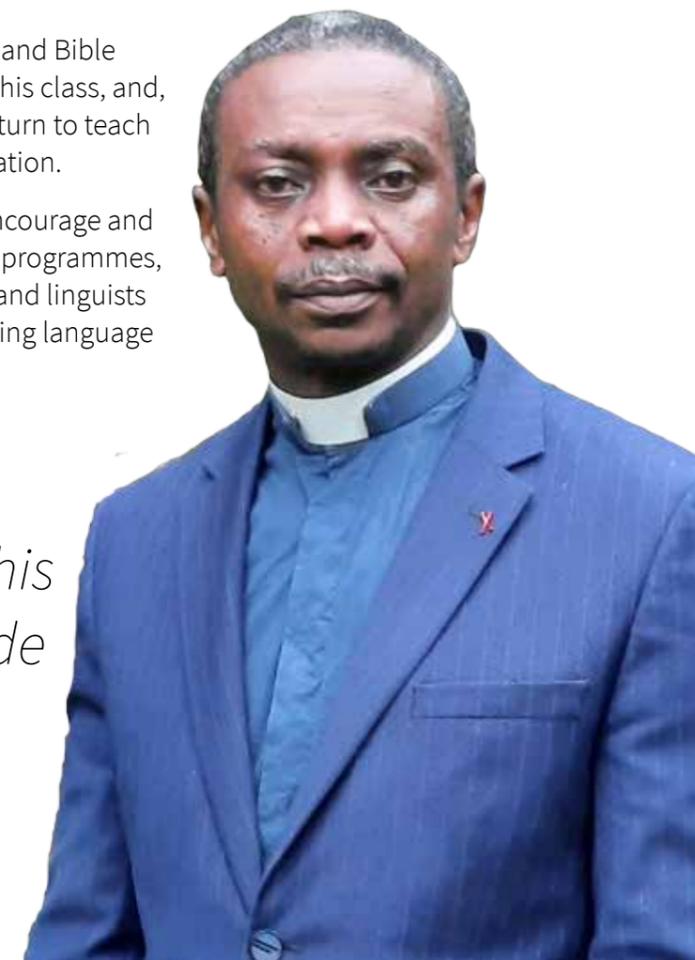
One of SIL's goals is to be able to maintain the Department's capacity to provide high quality teaching. Top graduates are encouraged to become lecturers in the programme. One example is Rev Kierien Ekpang Ayugha, who joined the Department in 2016.

Kierien grew up in the Bokyi language community. His father was deeply involved in translating the Bible for his people. Over and over Kierien saw the difference it made for the Bokyi people to understand the message of God's Word. The Lord gave him a vision of how his own life could count in translating this gospel into a multitude of languages.

In 2009, Kierien came as a student to the Linguistics and Bible Translation Department. He graduated at the top of his class, and, after obtaining his Master's Degree, was invited to return to teach in the Department. Kierien gladly accepted the invitation.

Kierien and the other lecturers in the Department encourage and equip dozens of students every year. Through these programmes, we are sustainably developing qualified translators and linguists to make the Word of God accessible in every remaining language group in Nigeria.

...his own life could count in translating this Gospel into a multitude of languages.



Faith & Farming, Scripture Engagement

Farming: Curse or Blessing?

by Ali Robinson

Recently, our Faith and Farming team visited the Duya language area in Niger State. Using sentence by sentence translation into Duya, they shared with 40 farmers what they have learnt about the connections between farming and their faith in God.

They started with a session on Farming and Farmers in the Bible, exploring the farmers' attitudes to farming. As with most farmers in Nigeria, the Duya farmers usually consider farming a cursed profession resulting from the Fall. But when they explained in the Duya language and showed that God told Adam to farm in the garden of Eden before sin, before the Fall, hope began to rise! Farming is not a curse. It's a blessing! Participants' faces were full of smiles as their eyes were opened by hearing in Duya about their life and livelihood in Scripture. They realised that both the farming work and the farmer are valuable to God.

The Duya farmers wanted to know how to improve their soil quality. Because of reduced yields, the farmers did not have enough produce to make it worthwhile to store the harvest in the traditional rat-free granaries. They began keeping their smaller harvests in sacks in the house, thereby attracting rats. Improving the quality of the soil means better harvests which also means being able to store it better, in the outside granaries.

Some of the suggestions the team shared to improve the soil quality were new to the farmers, but many were familiar, local knowledge that they had just forgotten about or stopped doing. Participants spoke of being blinded before, but that their eyes were now open due to the clear teaching in their language. Knowing that God loves them as farmers gives them hope that their lives are not cursed, but they can know God's blessing as they work on their farms.

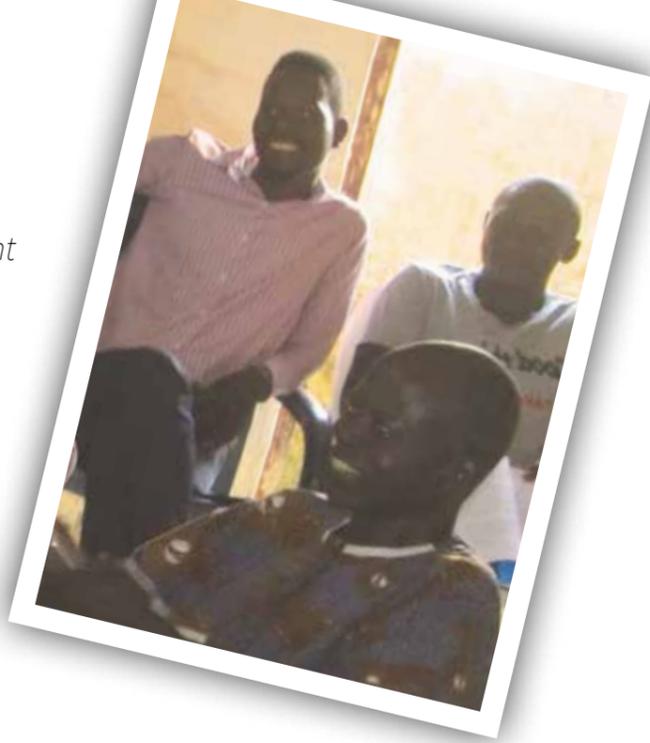


PHOTO CREDIT: LEFT, KATHARINE NORTON; RIGHT, MICHAEL AJAYI



Translation

First of Its Kind

by Nuhu Maigemu, Translator and Gareth Mort, Language Program Facilitator

My name is Nuhu Maigemu. I am a translator in my language, the Kamuku language, in Niger State. We have already translated several books of the New Testament, and literacy work is ongoing to help people read the language. SIL Nigeria is a partner in our language project.

In early 2021 I was married in Nasara Baptist Church Mariga, one of the largest Baptist churches in our area. This church has many Kamuku speakers and has been supporting the translation work for some years.

I wanted my wedding to be in our language. The Reverend in our church is a Plateau man (not a Kamuku indigene), but he agreed to allow our SIL facilitator to conduct the joining ceremony in Kamuku. We translators worked on translating the Baptist marriage liturgy into Kamuku.

After the wedding, my wife and I greeted the Reverend. When he saw us, he was happy with how the wedding took place with a Kamuku liturgy and said the wedding was the first of its kind to his knowledge. He had seen how happy the attendees felt because the wedding was conducted in the Kamuku language. The wedding touched the lives of the Kamuku people - a great crowd came to witness the wedding, and were joyful about what they saw and heard.

People were excited and many of the young people declared that when they get married they want their weddings to also be held in the Kamuku language. One pastor from another village who had attended the wedding contacted me and said the wedding was a challenge to all of the pastors in Kamuku land to learn and apply the same method in all the services in their churches. As people hear the message preached in their own Kamuku language, there will be transformation in the land of the Kamuku.



Language Assessment

Strengthening Communities

by Luther Hon

Training people to lead language planning discussions leads to community engagement! Recently, the SIL Nigeria Survey team led a workshop on basic principles of community-based language planning. After such training, language communities are equipped to discuss how they identify themselves and use the languages they speak in their communities, and to plan relevant activities to help them meet their Bible translation and language development goals. Training such as this is a first step to strengthening a local language community.

When the survey team visited the Deko-Dusanga communities in Cross River State, they found community leaders ready to engage. The discussion with community leaders increased their understanding of language use in their homes and other places within and around their area. After this, one of their chiefs said, “I believe that God has sent you to help us through the work you are doing”. The chief also pledged to strengthen the community’s resolve to always speak the native language, wherever and whenever the native speakers meet. This leads to discussions on Bible translation starting in their language.

Vernacular Media Services

Deeper Understanding

by Luka Iliya, VMS Team Leader

Despite many challenges in the area, the VMS team successfully completed the dubbing of the Acts video in three Niger State languages as well as the recording of the New Testament in three other languages (Mbula, Alis I Ron and Nya-Huba).

During the closing ceremony of the recordings, we heard many testimonies from young people who were engaged in the recording.

One young man said “I thought I know the Bible, not until I participate in the audio recording in my language I got a deeper understanding of the Scripture, may God continue to use you to open other eyes to the deeper understanding of the Scriptures in their own language”

NMS Programme

Called to Serve

by Aku Sabo Agbam, NMS Programme Coordinator

As a child, I enjoyed learning things like my genealogy and the stories of my ancestors. This early informal education was the part of life I enjoyed the most until the *wahala* (trouble/difficulty) of western education began. I couldn’t understand why even simple things (like water) had to be complicated (like H₂O). These ideas were made even more complicated by being wrapped up in a foreign language. I loved to learn about our culture but hated school because of learning and writing in a foreign tongue. Many children worldwide give up their dreams and potential because education is in a “strong” language they do not understand.

Over the last 90 years, SIL has made strides working with local communities to develop language solutions that create a better life, balance language in a global environment, and ensure that people’s language is developed and endures. When communities can access quality information in the local language, lives are transformed.

Overseas staff with SIL Nigeria cannot sustainably develop local languages alone; they need Nigerian colleagues. The long-term goal is to develop more sustainable support for national staff to serve as career staff. Christians and local churches empower Nigerians to serve where God calls them in SIL. Right now, there are eighteen such members of our NMS programme, including myself. Churches and individuals share in providing for the spiritual and physical needs of all the NMS, enabling us to serve in a variety of roles within the Bible translation movement.

Besides individuals and churches being able to support individual NMS members, SIL established a fund so that individuals, churches and organisations in Nigeria and beyond can advocate for and donate to this programme. In the months my colleagues and I aren’t fully funded, the donations provide for our families while we continue serving. We are taking a bold step of faith to trust God to provide another 10-12 workers in 2022 to help meet the needs of the people who speak the over 200 Nigerian languages that still have no Scripture. You can help meet this need! Please reach out to learn more about how you or your church can partner with our NMS who are doing God’s good work.

PHOTO CREDIT: RIGHT, PAUL TOMA; BACK COVER, PAUL TOMA





Join Us:

- Pray that individuals and communities will be transformed as they encounter God's Word in their languages
- Pray for our spiritual vitality and reliance on God for all of our needs
- Pray that new partnerships with the Nigerian church will result in increased use of Scripture in local languages

If you wish to support our NMS staff:



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Please specify either the corporate fund (all NMS) or mention the name of the individual NMS Member.

Thank you for partnering with SIL Nigeria!

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