

THE WORD AT WORK

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BIBLE SOCIETY
NGĀ RINGA HĀPAI | TE PAIPERA TAPU KI AOTEAROA



In August 2024, the Colombian Bible Society celebrated a historic milestone with the launch of the first complete Bible in Wayuunaiki, the heart language of the Wayuu people, at the San José Coliseum in Uribia, La Guajira. The event drew 2,000 people. Titled Nünüiki Maleiwa (Word of God), the translation took 13 years to complete and marks the first full Bible available to Colombia's largest Indigenous group. The project promotes Scripture access, strengthens literacy, and affirms the cultural and spiritual value of the Wayuunaiki language.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©COLOMBIAN BIBLE SOCIETY

BIBLE TRANSLATION MILESTONE REACHED

For the first time in history, over 6.1 billion people have access to the full Bible in their heart language. This remarkable achievement marks a milestone in the global Bible translation movement and United Bible Societies (UBS) mission to make Scripture available to all.

In 2024, Bible Societies worldwide completed Scripture translations in 105 languages, impacting more than 580 million people.

Key statistics from Bible translation work in 2024 include:

- 74 languages received their first-ever Scripture translations, including 13 sign languages, accessible to 100 million people.
- 32 language communities received new or revised translations and study editions, benefiting 480 million individuals.
- UBS's Digital Bible Library® now holds Scripture translations in 2,250 languages, strengthening the digital accessibility of God's Word.

Despite these milestones, significant challenges remain. Currently, 52 per cent of the world's languages have some portion of Scripture, but 48 per cent lack any access to biblical text. Many of these untranslated languages are spoken by small communities, making them vulnerable to extinction. Bible Societies are not only committed to translation but also play a crucial role in preserving and enriching linguistic heritage worldwide.

Dear Friends of Bible Mission,

As we journey through summer, we pause to reflect with gratitude on what God is doing through His Word around the world. This edition of Word at Work tells a story of faithfulness, faithfulness to God's calling, to communities waiting to hear Scripture in their own voice, and to a mission that continues to transform lives in quiet but powerful ways.

In 2024, a truly historic milestone was reached: for the first time, more than 6.1 billion people now have access to the whole Bible in their heart language. Behind that number are stories like the Wayuu people of Colombia, celebrating the launch of their first complete Bible after 13 years of dedication; the Bakgalagari people of Botswana hearing the New Testament in Shekgalagari for the very first time; and believers in Laos welcoming a Study Bible that equips them to understand and live out God's Word with confidence.

These moments remind us that Bible translation is never just about words on a page. It is about dignity restored, cultures affirmed, faith deepened, and hope renewed. It is about children reading Scripture for themselves, communities gathering around God's Word, and people discovering that God speaks their language, literally and personally.

Yet the work is not finished. Nearly half of the world's languages still have no Scripture at all. Many belong to small or vulnerable communities whose languages and stories are at risk of being lost. Our calling remains clear: to continue serving faithfully, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Thank you for being part of this mission. Your prayers, generosity, and commitment are helping to tell stories like these and see Jesus, the living word, reach hearts, transform lives, and bring hope this summer and for future generations.

In Christ



Neels Janse van Rensburg - CEO

A blue ink signature of Neels Janse van Rensburg.

**Laotian Christians
are celebrating
receiving the Lao
Study Bible.**

PHOTO CREDIT: ©VILAY JEUNGTAWA



NEW TESTAMENT LAUNCH IN BOTSWANA

In March 2024, a significant milestone was celebrated in Botswana with the launch of the new Shekgalagari New Testament. The Shekgalagari New Testament was completed by the Bible Society of Botswana in partnership with Lutheran Bible Translators, delivering the first-ever translation of the Scriptures in this language to the 78,000 Bakgalagari people living across Botswana.

Ofentse Collen Maruping, General Secretary and CEO of the Bible Society in Botswana, shared his hope for the impact of the new translation: "Our prayer is that this New Testament allows Shekgalagari speakers to connect with God's Word in a way that opens hearts and minds to the Gospel."

Previously, the Bakgalagari people relied on a Bible in Setswana, translated over a century ago in South Africa. While usable,

its outdated vocabulary and grammar differ significantly from how Setswana is spoken in Botswana today, creating barriers to understanding. "This new translation builds on what is familiar but presents Scripture clearly in their own language—and we are already seeing people understand passages in new ways," Maruping said.

The translation process was not without its challenges. Shekgalagari-speaking communities are spread across vast distances—1,400 kilometres apart—and many villages are remote and difficult to access. COVID-19 restrictions further slowed progress, limiting travel, workshops, and community engagement. Through partnerships with Faith Comes by Hearing, the project has also produced audio recordings and a smartphone app, helping ensure that God's Word is accessible to all—whether through print or sound—so that more people can truly hear God speaking to them in Shekgalagari.

BIBLE MONTH CELEBRATED IN UGANDA

The Bible Society of Uganda (BSU) recently celebrated Bible Month, celebrating the enduring power of Scripture and its transformative impact across the nation. In partnership with churches, schools, and faith-based organisations, BSU shared stories of hope, renewed discipleship, and the ongoing mission to bring God's Word closer to every Ugandan.

Bible Month provided an opportunity to demonstrate how Scripture continues to shape lives in diverse contexts — from urban centres to remote rural communities, and from classrooms to congregations with people living with disabilities. BSU reaffirmed



Members of the Bible Society team and one of the translators at the launch.

PHOTO CREDIT: BIBLE SOCIETY IN BOTSWANA

its commitment to ensuring that every person in Uganda can access the Bible in a language they understand and in a format they can use.

A range of activities was held nationwide to deepen Scripture engagement. A key highlight was the Bible Exhibition, which allowed visitors to trace the journey of the Bible from early translations to modern digital formats. The exhibition showcased children's Bibles, study editions, local language Scriptures, and accessible formats including Braille, large-print, and audio Bibles. Through interactive displays and conversations with BSU staff, visitors gained a deeper appreciation of Bible translation work and its ongoing relevance in Uganda.

Alongside in-person events, BSU's communications team led a vibrant online campaign that reached thousands each day. Scripture reflections, testimonies, historical insights, and impact stories extended Bible Month to digital audiences, particularly

young people, creating new spaces for discipleship and Scripture sharing.

Across the country, churches marked Bible Month through special services, Bible readings, and devotional gatherings. Schools and youth ministries also participated, encouraging children and young people to develop consistent habits of engaging with God's Word.

Accessibility remained a central focus throughout the month. Through the Providing Scriptures for People with Visual Disability (PVD) project and partnerships such as Faith Comes By Hearing, BSU distributed Braille Bibles, large-print Scriptures, and audio Bibles free of charge, ensuring that disability or financial hardship did not prevent access to Scripture.

Bible Month also strengthened ongoing programmes including Christian Leadership Training and Trauma Healing, equipping leaders, restoring lives, and nurturing



Children reading Braille Scriptures provided by the Bible Society of Uganda.

PHOTO CREDIT: ©J. WOLLO FORKAY

communities rooted in biblical values. While needs remain great — particularly in remote areas and among people requiring specific formats — BSU remains committed to seeing the Bible continue to transform hearts and communities across Uganda.

LAO STUDY BIBLE WELCOMED

The Laos Bible Society (LBS) has marked a significant milestone with the official launch and dedication of the Lao Study Bible—a long-awaited resource designed to help believers, pastors, and church leaders engage more deeply with God’s Word.

In January 2025, more than 120 church representatives gathered in the capital, Vientiane, for the Academic Training and Dedication Service of the Lao Study Bible. Participants came from congregations across the country, including the Lao Evangelical Church and the Seventh-Day Adventist Church, reflecting a shared desire for Scripture that can be clearly understood and faithfully applied.

During the dedication, an LBS representative described the launch as a landmark moment for the Church in Laos. With the Study Bible now available in the Lao heart language, believers are better equipped to explore the depth and richness of Scripture for themselves.

The Lao Study Bible project began in 2016, adapting material from the Good News Study Bible produced by the American Bible Society into the Revised Lao Version (RLV 2015). Following training from a UBS Translation Consultant, the team completed the New Testament in 2020, which was published in 2021. Work on the Old Testament continued and was completed in 2024. In early 2025, 3,000 Lao Study Bibles were distributed nationwide.

For young believer Sawith, the Study Bible has already made a difference. He describes it as a guide that explains Scripture clearly and helps him apply God’s Word to real-life decisions—an encouragement he hopes many others will soon experience.

The Lao Study Bible represents a new chapter of Scripture engagement in Laos, offering believers a powerful tool to read, understand, and live out God’s Word with confidence.



Guests at the dedication of the Lao Study Bible proudly hold their new Bibles.

PHOTO CREDIT: @VILAY JEUNGTAWA



WRITE YOUR WILL FOR FREE, IN JUST 10 MINUTES

By leaving a gift in your Will, you are sowing seeds of faith that will grow far beyond your lifetime. Your legacy can help children like Nancy in rural Kenya.

Nancy, 12, walks five kilometres to school each day. She loves counting, science, and reading the Bible. Until recently, she had to borrow a Bible, but now she has her very own. She reads it at school and home, sharing God's Word with her family. For Nancy, her Bible teaches honesty, forgiveness, and hope for the future.

Through gifts in Wills, the Bible Society can provide thousands of Bibles to disadvantaged children, giving them the same opportunity to grow in faith and wisdom.

We've partnered with Gathered Here, a trusted, free online Will-writing service. It's simple, secure, and legally valid, and you can create your Will in as little as 10 minutes, at no cost to you.

Scan the QR code or visit
biblesociety.org.nz/onlinewill
to start your FREE online Will today, at no cost.



GET INVOLVED, BE PART OF THE STORY!

There are so many ways you can help share God's Word and bring hope to others



Pray with us – join in prayer for lives to be changed through Scripture.



Volunteer with us – use your time and talents to make a difference.



Donate – help place Bibles in the hands of those who need them most.



Work with us – become part of a mission that transforms lives.

Visit our website at
biblesociety.org.nz/be-involved/
or scan the QR code to learn more – we'd love you to join us on this journey.



IN MEMORIAM

Bible Society has learned of the passing of the following friends. Gifts towards the work of Bible Society's mission have been made in their memory. Their work of love goes on.

R M Wilson of Hamilton	Welanong
Aliya Love-Rose Recto Curray	Naushad Ponrajah
Mr Graeme Frethey of Marton	Phoebe Turner
Mrs B David of Hamilton	Pearl Crowther

CLOSING WITH GOD'S WORD

I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways. I delight in your decrees; I will not neglect your word. Psalm 119:15-16 NIV



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