



THE WORD FOR THE WORLD INTERNATIONAL  
**CEO REPORT**  
**2020**



TheWordForTheWorld  
BIBLE TRANSLATORS

# INTRODUCTION



This report contains updates on the progress and expansion that have taken place for the period ending December 2020. The hard work and dedication of everyone in TWFTW has led to the tremendous growth that we observe today. Therefore, the CEO's report is a celebration of what God has done in and through all of us.

Kobus van Aswegen  
CEO of TWFTW International

# NEW LEADERSHIP

It is with our highest respect and admiration that we honour Dr Véroni Krüger, the founder and leader of The Word for the World for the past 40 years. God has used Véroni's matchless vision and leadership to bring the organisation from its inception in South Africa in 1981 to currently being accepted by other major Bible translation agencies.

By God's grace, the vision that the Lord gave to Véroni from the beginning has been spread by TWFTW members to six continents, and our work has resulted in 165 language communities (47.6 million people) where the Scriptures are being translated, studied and discussed in their languages for the first time in history. We praise the Lord for Véroni's and his wife's [Martie] faithful service, and we thank God that they will continue to be actively involved in TWFTW.

As of July 1, 2020, I succeeded Véroni as the CEO of TWFTW International. I and the other leaders of the organisation are focused on God's vision and direction for TWFTW and the work to which God has called us.

# PUBLICATION AND DISTRIBUTION

Our connection with New Life Literature in Sri Lanka has been timely. They are printing most of our New Testaments and Bibles, and the quality of their work is outstanding. Additionally, through this relationship, major funding has been provided for the printing and shipping of many of these publications.

*\*\*Pseudonyms used where appropriate*



**FIRST-TIME  
NEW TESTAMENTS  
COMPLETED**

**x27**

**Asia:** (16 printed or in process):

Aoli, Ayapa, Dega, Hado, Hali, Hido, Hiran, Jado, Kavina, Nepo, Pakkhi, Raisa, Rimu, Roja, Sida, and Yak

**Southeast Asia:** (queued to go to press)  
Khatei

**Ethiopia:** (9 at press and queued for press)  
Halaba, Konta, Oyda, Yemsa, Melo (at press), Awngi, Baiso, Gayil, Sheko (queued for press)

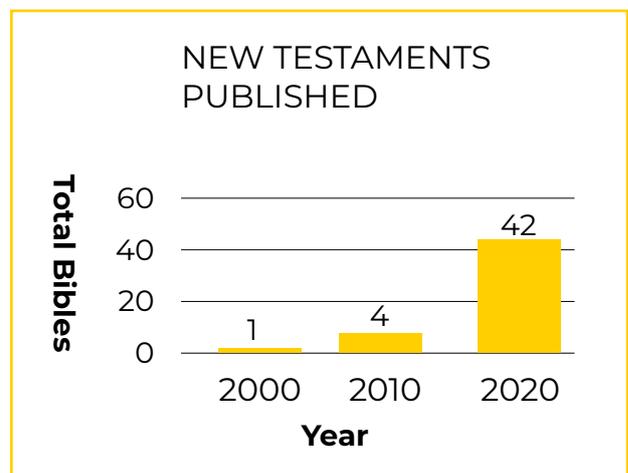
**Tanzania** (2 awaiting printing):  
Ngoni and Yao



**FIRST-TIME  
FULL BIBLES  
COMPLETED**

**x7**

**Ethiopia:** Gamo, Gofa, Dawro (at press), Aari, Bench, Guji and Gedeo (queued to go to press)



**READER'S GREEK NEW TESTAMENT:** the first-time with Finnish footnotes

**AUDIO PUBLICATION:** In Southeast Asia, the recording of the Purvachep New Testament was completed in partnership with Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH), with whom we are also working to develop TWFTW's capacity for oral Bible translation and audio recordings.

- The Purvachep (most of whom cannot read or write yet) will soon be able to listen to God's Word!
- Audio files are being made available through websites and apps (Bible.is, YouVersion and language-specific apps).
- Our own TWFTW teams will be trained by FCBH in the technical aspects of producing oral translations. This will speed up the process of giving Bibleless communities access to the Scriptures in the format most suitable to them.
- Our translations that are recorded will be made into LUMO Gospel films.

**DISTRIBUTION:** The first batch of Parallel Romani-Slovak New Testaments were handed out in Roma settlements in Slovakia.

**PRODUCTION MANAGER TRAINING:** In partnership with SIL, we conducted a workshop for Production Managers.

- This workshop was the fourth in a series of training events to assist TWFTW in building their Scripture publishing capacity. Participants:
  - 7 advanced TWFTW typesetters
  - 3 typesetters from partner agencies

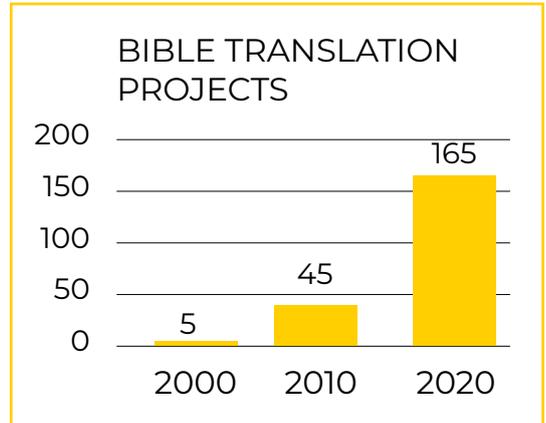
# BIBLE TRANSLATION PROJECTS

During this time of pandemic restrictions, many countries in which we are working have closed their borders to foreigners and are not renewing work visas. One of the key strategies that TWFTW engages in is the empowering of indigenous peoples to take responsibility for every aspect of Bible translation work in their own countries. The power and benefits of this have been clearly seen at this time as the indigenous people are running with the vision.

## SCRIPTURE TRANSLATION PROJECTS:

We are grateful to God that we now are able to help 165 people groups (population 47.6 million) in Africa, Asia and Europe to translate the Bible into their languages. Thirty-five of these projects were started in 2020.

*\*\*Pseudonyms used where appropriate*



### 1 Asia X4 Projects

- Chino
- Jia
- Lasho
- Liga

### 2 Ethiopia X2 Projects

- Bodi Me'een
- Nayi

### 3 Nigeria X9 Projects

- Bandawa
- Kaka-Builak
- Kambu
- Karimjo
- Kona
- Lamma
- Mashi
- Munga
- Wanu

### 4 Southeast Asia-R3 X12 Projects

- Anglah
- Aurok
- Chinsa
- Erhe
- Hej
- Heteng
- Macha
- Malnong
- Nailga
- Navru
- Rhabna
- Uchru

### 5 Southeast Asia-R1 X1 Project

- Murup

### 6 Africa-R1 X3 Projects

- Baraka
- Kocom
- Ruwaka

TWFTW has agreed to help an indigenous organization in Southeast Asia-R3 with the revision of the Bible in these 12 languages. The translators did not receive adequate training, due process was not followed and there was no consultant checking done, all of which resulted in very poor-quality translations. We are also using this as an opportunity to provide consultants-in-training with practical experience and to develop personnel in the region that can assist us with starting up new projects.

*See attached Summary Status of TWFTW BT Projects Report for details.*

## ORAL BIBLE TRANSLATION PROJECTS:

We plan to engage in oral translation of the Scriptures, particularly in countries where literacy is low and access is restricted. If the situation allows, we may follow this up with a written version of the Word of God. We are in the process of developing oral Bible translation training materials for translators, exegetes and consultants. We are partnering with others such as Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) to help us set up the infrastructure to handle oral Bible translation and audio recordings of the New Testament. The first of these projects are currently being researched in Southeast Asia, with 3 language communities in the region currently undergoing training.



## KNOCKING ON DOORS:

- We are knocking on doors in Eastern Europe and beyond. We think Armenia could be a place where we train people from the region. We are also knocking on doors in Serbia (3 languages) and Croatia (2 languages).
- We are knocking on doors in Kenya (10 languages) and Africa-R2 (2 cross-border languages).
- We are knocking on doors in Uganda (12 languages).
- We are knocking on doors in Mozambique and Angola.
- We are making progress with a strategy for Asia-R3 and neighbouring countries.
- We are knocking on doors in a further 3 restricted nations in Asia.

# BIBLE TRANSLATION CONSULTATION

Our consultants continue to provide the critical bridge between translating and publishing the Bible. TWFTW and guest consultants have done an outstanding job of ensuring that each translation is an accurate, natural and understandable rendering of the original languages. The most common modus operandi is group consultant checking, whereby numerous languages are checked simultaneously. This has even been possible via virtual platforms during 2020.



## CONSULTATIONS:

Group consultations: Completed numerous, mostly simultaneous, face-to-face consultations until mid' March and then moved to virtual, mostly group consultations.

- 1 consultant checked 8 languages with a total of 24 books for a partner organization in Asia.
- 5 consultants checked 19 languages with a total of 30 books in Asia.
- 2 consultants and 1 CIT were involved in the virtual checking of 6 languages with a total of 13 books in Southeast Asia.
- 5 consultants checked up to 9 languages simultaneously with a total of 27 books in Northern Africa.
- 6 consultants checked 18 languages (one cluster of 7 languages and 1 of 4) with a total of 11 books in Southern Africa.
- 3 consultants checked 7 books in Slovakia.
- Reduced cost and travel time for consultations

## CONSULTANTS:

- 31 Individuals are consultants-in-training.
- 23 of these individuals are indigenous to the language groups for which they are being developed to serve as consultants.
- Developed training material for a new oral Bible translation course for exegetes and consultants.

# BIBLE TRANSLATOR TRAINING

Due to the pandemic lockdown we had to reschedule many of our trainings, and we are moving toward offering more online learning. We have developed versions of the majority of our Diploma in Bible Translation courses which are now available online.

## DIPLOMA IN BIBLE TRANSLATION (DBT) PROGRAMME:

Statistics from when TWFTW began training nationals to be translators for their own people (1985-2020):

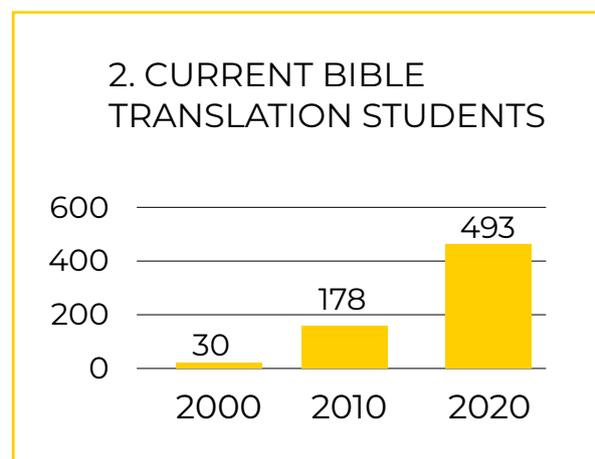
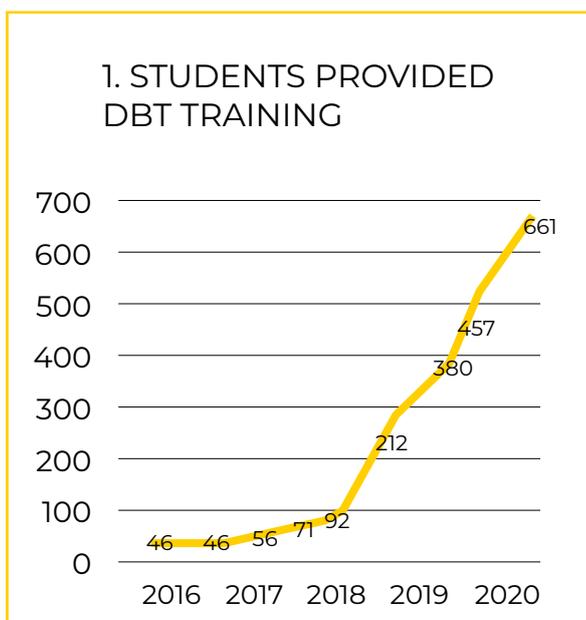
1,417 total DBT participants of which:

661 (47%) DBT students from 24 Bible translation organisations were provided training by TWFTW in 2020. *(See chart 1. below)*

257 students from 13 nations have graduated with a DBT and 9 additional students earned a Certificate in Bible Translation.

493 current students by the end of 2020 (386 enrolled; 107 attended a “taster event” where we haven’t offered another training event yet) - 78 new students in 2020. *(See chart 2. below)*

Languages represented by current students, “tasters” and graduates: 219 as at end of 2020 (all with a need for Bible translation).



# LITERACY

Last year we saw an eruption of predominantly oral societies seeing their language in writing for the first time as numerous New Testaments were published. Growth and engagement in literacy and orthography (writing system) development was accompanied by deep pride and a sense of immense self-worth among the people—many of whom felt that having their language in writing has finally placed them on the map.

In about half of our projects, it was necessary to develop an orthography at the outset of the project. Thus, we trained many mother tongue speakers in linguistic subjects and guided them through the process of developing an orthography for their people. It is exciting to see so many nationals taking ownership of the literacy work for their own communities.

## **PROGRAMMES:**

**Ethiopia:** 1 active programme (Maale)

Literate people so far: 36,094 Maale, and 5,560 Guji, Gofa and Dawro.

The Maale language will now be taught in local government schools.

2,323 men, women and children registered to attend Maale literacy classes last year, and 254 of them dedicated their life to following Jesus!

Over the years, through these literacy programmes, 8,484 people (8,122 Maale and 362 Guji) have accepted Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

**Nigeria:**

Literacy classes have been started for 5 Nigerian people groups (Arum, Buh, Eloyi, Gwandara and Numana).

In another 10 Nigerian languages, trial literacy materials have been prepared; but further work and the lifting of COVID and security restrictions are needed in order for the classes to start.

**Malawi:** We have 2 programmes (Sena and Lambya)

The Sena literacy programme had 864 students enrolled this year, and 26 people committed their lives to Christ!

We praise God for the planting of new churches, the opening of new Bible study centres, and the economic empowerment for women through the literacy programme.

**Asia:** Engaged in 12 relatively new programmes

253 students in 6 new projects (Aoli, Hiran, Kavina, Hido, Hali and Ayapa)

6 more language communities completed community orientation.

TWFTW-trained community literacy clubs helped adapt the government's COVID-19 pamphlets and posters into the mother tongues of 38 people groups. These literacy workers distributed the information, as well as a limited number of masks and sanitisers.

**Southeast Asia:** Engaged in literacy endeavours in 5 languages (Purvachep, Bunug, Ganit, Nagut and Khatei)

142 students in 2 literacy projects (Purvachep and Bunug)

Classes planned to start in 2021 in three other language groups.

# TESTIMONIES – THEIR STORY

**ASIA:** “My name is Shem. I was born and brought up in our traditional religion. My wife, Jomba, and I have a daughter, Sopi, and a son, Buren. We belong to one of the tribes in our country. Before converting to Christian life, we were following some bad habits in our home. We used tobacco, alcohol, wine, and also would fight each other. We used our money for all these things, so that we never had enough.

We collect things from the forest like wood, honey, and other useful things to sell in the city so that we can buy things for our needs. Our community people are farmers and daily wage workers. We are not very educated, so, we do not know how to read and write. According to our ancestral culture, we worship stones and trees, and sometimes we sacrifice animals like hen, goat, and buffalo.

When I was twenty years old, I suffered from blood cancer. My father took me to herbal medicine several times. Because of our financial problems, we could not continue treatments in the city hospitals; so, there was no hope for my life. One day a pastor came to my village to preach the Good News about Christ. He told my parents that God can only save me if we believe the Lord Jesus Christ. We thought that it was the right time to accept Lord Jesus Christ as our saviour. I decided that if I was cured by God's mercy, I will serve my life for Jesus. After a few months, I was completely cured of my illness! We all believed in Jesus Christ and accepted Him as our redeemer. Now, I am working with the pastor in the church and leading prayers. I am not educated, so that I know only my own language for speaking. After I joined God's ministry, I learned to speak and write a little of the national language.”

“When I went to the church for prayers, one translator came from our community and told me about the translation work for our language. I was very happy and surprised when he told me about this work. We were very interested to support them. He gave me a copy of the Gospel of Luke. I understand it very well and now I am very happy to learn my language through it. Hearing about Christ and his mercy in our own language has been very helpful to our community!”

# TESTIMONIES – THEIR STORY

**AFRICA:** In the small village of Likuya, Tanzania, the Ndendeule-speaking people now experience the Bible as real and alive, because they now have some books of the Bible in their heart language! In this beautiful village, the people can at last share their faith more freely within the church. They love family and community discussions about the Bible—which is promoting fellowship in the community.

“One Muslim man was 94 years old when he received the Word of God in his language. Blind and unable to read the Gospel of Mark that was given to him, he asked someone to read it to him. He and his family accepted Jesus as their Saviour!

*The testimony of his life and faith has spread among the other members in his community. The Bible in his heart language brought the change in his life and in the lives of others in his community!*”

**EUROPE:** Patrik is part of the Roma community in Slovakia, in Eastern Europe. He is also a new Christian, filled with passion and eagerness for his people to come to know Jesus.

In March of this year, Patrik helped distribute New Testaments. Within an hour, the first batch of them had been handed out! Patrik said, “People ran for them as if we were giving away bread”.

Eventually, they had to ration the number of Bibles being given away to only one per family because there were so many people who were desperate to receive one. The Roma people thanked them, saying that they sorely needed the hope contained in God’s Word now more than ever during these difficult times.

*Translation of the Old Testament into Eastern Slovak (Carpathian) Romani is continuing over the Internet.*

“People ran for them as if we were giving away bread.”



# TESTIMONIES – THEIR STORY

**SOUTHEAST ASIA:** In a world where change is inevitable, we can still celebrate the fact that the Bible, in the heart language of the people, changes lives. The hope that the Bible brings is evident in this testimony:

“

*When we received parts of the Bible in our language, the people read the Scriptures and understood them. We used to worship other gods; but when we read the Bible, we came to know the real, holy God! Every day I call the family elders, and we will sit together and pray. Some of the people coming to the meetings don't know the truth; but they are learning. We are teaching the Bible to our family members.*

*Some people are illiterate so we read and explain the Bible to them. In our village, nineteen families became Christians. If the whole Bible is translated into our language, the people will understand it when you read to them. I am always reading the Bible – in the morning and in the evening. I am very happy that I am receiving it in my own language!*”



**Families find salvation  
in a remote village in  
Asia because of Bible  
translation.**

# CHALLENGES

## **PANDEMIC:**

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, most of our Bible translation and literacy work has been delayed, and many new projects had to be put on hold.

Community-related work was especially affected. Our efforts to travel to the field to survey, test or gather for checking translations were hampered. In-person consultant and exegetical checking were successfully revamped, but limited to ParaText Lite and other online platforms; and in many instances, this proved ineffective for teams living in areas where the Internet is unstable.

During a Bible translator training event in Asia, the COVID-19 lockdown occurred suddenly and three Bible translation teams, whose homes were 1,000 km away, were unable to get home. These fourteen people were confined to their hotel rooms and their families came under tremendous financial and emotional stress during this time.

## **HOSTILE ENVIRONMENTS:**

**ASIA:** Our work cannot be identified as the efforts of any Christian organisation. This would be seen in a negative light by authorities. In these areas various strategies need to be employed to ensure the safety of translators and staff.

**SOUTHEAST ASIA-R2:** Translation teams and the management team have remained safe in the region where there has been violence and political turmoil. However, due to the situation in the country, they couldn't meet with people personally to do field surveys, team checking and field testing, and they had to put their online DBT training and new literacy projects on hold. Given the level of violence and chaos in the country, our National Coordinator reported that, "the towns seem like a battlefield". Please pray with us for strength and protection for the teams and their families and for faith to hold onto the promise that God will never leave them nor forsake them (Deut. 31.6, Heb 13.5).

**EXTREME VIOLENCE IN NORTHWEST NIGERIA:** The Basa, Akworomba, Ungwai and Ushama villages, where TWFTW is involved in translating the Bible, have been attacked by unidentified gangs. Twelve people were killed and many others displaced—including the Ungwai and Ushama translators and their families who had to live in bushes until their attackers moved on.

**POLITICAL INSTABILITY:** Hostilities in Ethiopia and civil unrest in DRC, Malawi and Zimbabwe slowed down our work. Additionally, many TWFTW members were unable to receive funds for a significant period of time.

**MALAWI:** Presidential results announced last year have resulted in political violence in some areas. Our Project Coordinator for the Lambya Bible translation project reported,

***"... [T]hings are not okay [here]. We are not in the office because the people are vandalizing shops and police are firing tear gas"***.

**AFRICA-R1:** TWFTW's Bible translation training programme continues despite continuous instability, demonstrations and uprisings.

## **REMOTENESS OF VILLAGES:**

The lack of electricity in numerous villages has hindered our communication with translators and prevented many online meetings.

By God's grace, we have been able to do some exegetical and consultant checking through the Internet. However, in some places the Internet connectivity is poor and sometimes not operating at all.

Our Bodi and Nayi translators must walk 9 hours or more to get input from their community members. We heard that one of our Nayi translators was attacked and robbed as he was on his way back to TWFTW offices for training.

# PARTNERSHIPS

Today we are seeing Bible translation agencies working in an integrated fashion with a common vision for completing Bible translation work for Scripture-less people. I am encouraged to see new methodologies and tools, new collaborations and partnerships, and new leaders and specialists. I feel truly blessed to live in this era when men and women, indigenous to the language groups for which they are translating, are beginning to lead the worldwide Bible translation movement, and take the Good News of Jesus Christ into the most difficult to reach areas of the world.

## MINISTRY PARTNERS:

It is a privilege to work alongside our many partners: Numerous indigenous churches and ministries, Every Tribe Every Nation, illumiNations, Seed Company, SIL, Wycliffe USA, Pioneer Bible Translators, United Bible Societies, various national Bible Societies, Faith Comes by Hearing, Davar, Digital Bible Library, 4.2.20 Foundation and Jesus Film Project.

- New Life Literature in Sri Lanka (mentioned above) has proven to be a faithful and productive partner.
- TWFTW, Wycliffe USA and National Episcopal Church Translation Department (Africa R1) entered into a partnership to address the translation needs of Bibleless language communities in Northern Africa.

## INDIVIDUALS, CHURCHES AND FOUNDATIONS:

The incredibly generous support of many has enabled us to continue with the work that God has given us to do. We are grateful to the obedience and sacrifice of many who are helping us to eliminate Bible poverty around the world.



# FINAL REMARKS

This has been the most unusual year in TWFTW's history, and I think in the history of this generation. We are living in challenging times with changing political landscapes on a global scale. We are in the middle of a pandemic that is causing havoc not only in lives but economically as well. It has far-reaching consequences for physical and mental health and is creating divisions between countries and between groups of people within countries. Then there are the issues of global warming, radicalism, persecution, and displaced peoples. The list goes on. The world is becoming more unstable and confused than ever. These are uncertain times, but we are serving the One that knows it all and who holds our futures in His hands. In these uncertain times we have a certain future in Christ, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

It is exciting to note that in the midst of the challenges that TWFTW is facing, we have grown by about 27% in terms of new projects in the last 6 months. We have expanded in every direction. One of the main reasons for this, is that for the last three decades we have focussed on empowering indigenous people to manage all aspects of Bible translation and literacy. They are now the ones sprinting with the vision as they have adopted the vision and made it theirs.

In order to continue thriving as an organisation we need to put people first. They are our most important and valuable asset – it is not projects, not the vision, but the people that carry the vision that matter most. If we don't do this, we will run dry, run out of steam and burn out as an organization. I believe that if this is what guides us, we will accomplish all that God has for us as individuals and for us as an organisation.

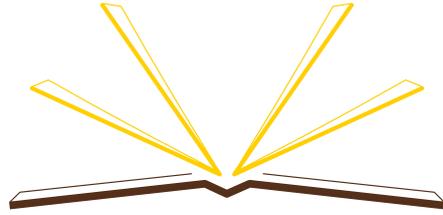
During an extremely difficult year, we can celebrate God's faithfulness. He is looking after us. He is protecting us, and He is providing for us. God is indeed taking care of us.

Finally, I would like to encourage you with

*“With all your heart you must trust the Lord and not your own judgement. Always let him lead you, and He will clear the road for you to follow.”*

*Proverbs 3: 5-6 (CEV)*

Kobus van Aswegen  
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# TheWordForTheWorld

BIBLE TRANSLATORS

## THE VISION

The Vision of The Word for the World is the glory of God through transformed lives by the power of his Word in everyone's heart language.

## THE MISSION

The mission of TWFTW is to enable persons, ministries and organizations from language communities that do not have the Bible in their own language yet to take responsibility for Bible translation and related activities and to ensure its availability and accessibility.

