

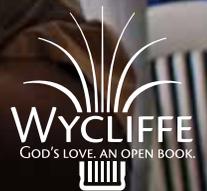
# WORD *Alive*

Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada

Spring 2012

## S T R I D E S in Mozambique

Scriptures come to the Koti people—and others across their African nation.



Word Count: Updated Translation Stats + DOOR Joins Wycliffe + Living Vicariously

Spring 2012 • Volume 30 • Number 1

*Word Alive*, which takes its name from Hebrews 4:12a, is the official publication of Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada. Its mission is to inform, inspire and involve the Christian public as partners in the worldwide Bible translation movement.

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Wycliffe serves minority language groups worldwide by fostering an understanding of God's Word through Bible translation, while nurturing literacy, education and stronger communities.

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**Cover:** Victor Alfane raises his hands in worship at a church leaders meeting in the village of Thamoole, Mozambique. Translation of God's Word is bringing life-changing impact to his Koti people, but Scripture can't come fast enough. Says Alfane: "I want [it] from Genesis to Revelation..." Photo by Søren Kjeldgaard



## In Others' Words

"There's nothing more radical, nothing more revolutionary, nothing more subversive against injustice and oppression, than the Bible."

—Desmond Tutu (1931-),

Anglican archbishop emeritus of Cape Town, South Africa; activist; Nobel Peace Prize winner.



## Unveiling a New Look

Dwayne Janke

**O**n the back cover of our previous issue of *Word Alive*, we told you to watch for a revitalized Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada. That time has come.

Wycliffe Canada has been getting a makeover of sorts during the past year. Like people, organizations occasionally need a new look, an updated message, a revitalization of their character. We are partly unveiling results of that makeover right here in this issue of our magazine. So look around.

Our "*Word Alive*" nameplate on the cover has been refreshed and so has our colour scheme. The typeface for article text has also been changed. If you look to the left of this column, you will see our new corporate logo and tagline: "God's Love. An Open Book."

These changes are being applied to all the media and communications we use to advance our message across Canada and beyond. Key among them is an exciting new interactive website we are soon to launch at <wycliffe.ca>. Our advertising (see back cover for an example) in Christian publications will also feature our new look. The stories and images you will see everywhere will present who Wycliffe Canada is today through the lens of God's enduring Word, revealing how you can be a champion for marginalized communities.

Wycliffe Canada's core passion remains the same. We just want to present that exciting challenge more fully, more consistently and more vibrantly.

In fact, our messaging statement (also featured to the left of this column) sums up who we are differently than in the past: "*Wycliffe serves minority language groups worldwide by fostering an understanding of God's Word through Bible translation, while nurturing literacy, education and stronger communities.*"

Wycliffe Canada's core passion remains the same: *translating God's Word to change lives and communities worldwide. We just want to present that exciting challenge more fully, more consistently and in more vibrant ways to increasingly more Canadians—especially newer generations and all concerned with seeing people trans-*

formed out of poverty and illiteracy through God's love.

And speaking of newer generations, you will notice a younger face in our new president, Roy Eyre. His initial "Last Word" column appears in this issue (pg. 31). (If you receive this magazine by mail, you will see a letter from Roy as well as our new corporate brochure. It features our new look and messaging prominently, so be sure to read it. After you do, please pass it along to someone you know who may be unfamiliar with Wycliffe Canada!)

As for the main content in this magazine, it takes you to a new place in the world where Bible translation is making important inroads: Mozambique. We have never featured that part of Africa in *Word Alive* before.

So we hope you will join us as we rejoice in our God of the "new." It seems He is always busy refreshing and revitalizing His advancing kingdom worldwide. I'm reminded of Isaiah 43:19a: "See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?" (NIV). 🌱

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[kɛnt hɛnts]

## JAARS Pilot Killed in Crash

A pilot with JAARS, Wycliffe's technical partner organization, was killed in late September when the plane he was flying crashed in Indonesia. Paul Westlund (pictured below), who had flown in Indonesia for nearly 25 years, died in the accident, along with two Indonesian passengers. Westlund is survived by his wife and two children.

The Pilatus PC-6, operated by JAARS' aviation partner YAJASI, was travelling in a remote, mountainous area at the time of the crash.

YAJASI serves dozens of Bible translation teams and Christian mission organizations, as well as local citizens and government officials in Indonesia. Pilots also perform emergency medical evacuations, assist in disaster relief and transport passengers and cargo throughout the region.



JAARS

## DOOR Joins Wycliffe Global Alliance

Deaf Opportunity OutReach International (DOOR) is the newest member of Wycliffe Global Alliance, the worldwide family of Wycliffe and partner organizations that includes Wycliffe Canada.

"This affiliation formalizes an ongoing partnership DOOR has had with a number of Wycliffe agencies," says Mike Buus, president of DOOR. "It gives us the opportunity to serve together more closely in training Deaf believers to translate the Bible into sign languages."

DOOR was formed in 1999 to give Deaf people opportunities to serve and receive training in how to start Deaf believers' fellowships. More recently, it has expanded its work to help the Deaf translate Scriptures into an increasing number of the estimated 400 sign languages used around the world (see *Word Alive*, Summer 2009).

"Our partnership with Wycliffe Bible Translators has been critical in equipping DOOR to learn how to train teams of Deaf people to translate parts of God's Word into their own heart language," says Buus.

Paul Njatha, who is deaf, serves as director of DOOR in Africa.



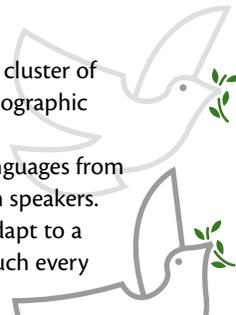
Alain Hood

## Working for a Cluster of Peace

A new Bible translation project has begun in India, for a cluster of languages that are linguistically related with similar geographic regions or cultural background.

Called the "Peace Cluster Initiative," the project involves languages from three Indian language families totalling more than one million speakers.

Current staff working in individual language projects will adapt to a more co-ordinated effort for the cluster project, aiming to touch every aspect of these communities with the peace of God.



## OneBook is New Name of Wycliffe Canada Partner

Global PartnerLink, a former department of Wycliffe Canada and separate organization since 2007, has changed its name to OneBook.

Wayne Johnson, OneBook's president and CEO, says the new name is strong, concise and clearly identifiable, and ties directly into the organization's purpose and mandate.

"We exist because multitudes of language groups do not have a written language, alphabet or *one book* in their own heart language," he explains. "We partner with nationals to create written languages and this starts with *one book*. We believe there is *one book*, the Bible, which is the foundation for truth, life, hope and wisdom."

OneBook's focus is to partner with Canadians to specifically fund Bible trans-

lation, literacy and community development projects. These efforts are now underway in 106 languages spoken in 13 countries (see <[www.oneook.ca](http://www.oneook.ca)>).

Like Wycliffe Canada, OneBook is a part of the Wycliffe Global Alliance.



## SIL Observes International Literacy Day

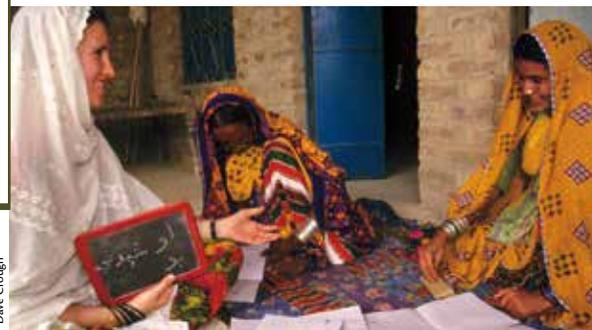
SIL, Wycliffe's key partner organization dedicated to training, language research, translation and

literacy joined in observing the UN's International Literacy Day this past September.

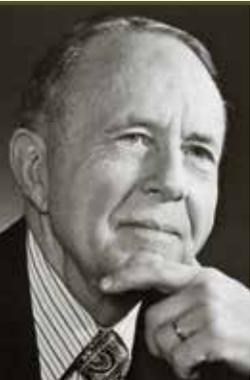
An estimated 793 million adults lack basic literacy globally. They are concentrated mostly in the developing world, where SIL personnel serve minority language groups.

Meanwhile, SIL has launched SIL LEAD (Language, Education and Development), a new organization focused on creating larger-scale education and development projects. It is seeking funding from governmental agencies in North America, Europe and Asia, such as the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), as well as institutions and private foundations.

SIL is hoping to make a larger impact as it helps minority language groups meet their needs, including mother tongue-based multilingual education.



Dave Crough



## Bible Translation Pioneer Dies

Eugene Nida, a giant of Bible translation in the 20th century, passed away this past August at age 96. The leader of the American Bible Society's translation program for 50 years, Nida was a student at one of the early summer linguistics courses offered in 1936 by SIL, Wycliffe's key partner organization. He served as an SIL instructor every summer until 1953.

One of Nida's most important contributions to Bible translation was his groundbreaking concept of *dynamic*

*equivalence* (which later developed into *functional equivalence*).

This theory advanced translation beyond a search for one-to-one, word-by-word equivalents. Rather, Nida taught that the most accurate translation of text is one that communicates the same ideas that the original audience had understood. This goal—to make translation clear and understandable, as well as accurate—has influenced Bible translation ever since.

Nida is survived by his second wife, Elena.

## First Time to Weep

A national television primetime showing of The *JESUS* Film translated into the Kabuverdianu language of the Republic of Cape Verde, Africa, touched many families.

"My family gathered in my home to watch The *JESUS* Film, in our language," one man said later. "My father does not speak the colonial language [Portuguese], and I saw tears run down his cheeks as he watched Jesus speak his language.

"This is the first time I have seen my father weep."

Kabuverdianu, a Portuguese-based Creole language, has 394,000 speakers in Cape Verde Islands, located nearly 600 km off the coast of northwest Africa. Since independence in 1975, the domains of spoken Portuguese have receded in favour of Kabuverdianu.

About 70 per cent of the language's speakers are uncomfortable or not functional conversing in Portuguese.

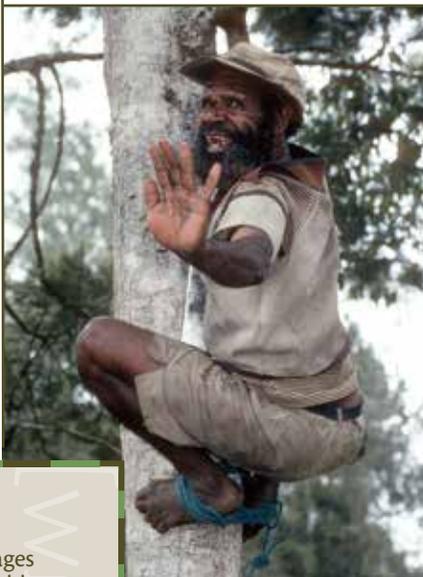
## "The One" Walks with Mambay Translators

Bible translators among the Mambay people in Africa were thrilled with the celebration of the first Gospel ever to be translated into their language.

About 600 speakers of the group, straddling northern Cameroon and western Chad, attended the event, including the most important Mambay chief. Two hundred copies of the Scriptures were sold.

"What joy and happiness to be part of an activity where the Lord is in front," reported the Mambay Bible translation co-ordinator. "We believe that the One who had walked with us will continue with us always, until the entire New Testament is completed."

Mambay is spoken by about 10,000 people, living mostly on a well-watered plain growing rice, millet and corn. The Christian community is small.



## Deaf in PNG Considered Crazy

A Wycliffe worker, surveying the sign language situation in Papua New Guinea (PNG), is seeing a disturbing trend—most hearing people consider the Deaf crazy (like this man, at left).

Nathalie Simonsson from Sweden, who is herself deaf, says that without any visual language, deaf children in PNG grow up into adults that are termed *longlong*. That is the word for crazy/insane in the nation's widely spoken trade language, *Tok Pisin*.

"Most people I've met here believe these language-less individuals are born *longlong*," says Simonsson, who is working with Papua New Guinean Foreting Yang to assess linguistic data for the Deaf. "They become bewildered and saddened when we make them aware that these deaf people become *longlong* because of the way the community treats them."

Simonsson is praying that parents and relatives of deaf children will be eager and have the opportunity to learn the basics of PNG sign language. In that way, their deaf children will develop normally. To give deaf children in remote areas access to sign language, Simonsson and Yang are considering creating a self-study sign language book that can be used among any of the country's 800-plus language groups. Many parents they visit are asking for this.

Among those Deaf who use sign language in PNG, Simonsson and Yang have so far discovered two versions, but there are more provinces to cover to get good representative data. Sign languages in PNG are among an estimated 400 used by the Deaf around the globe that need Bible translations (see *Word Alive*, Summer 2009).

## Word Count

6,837 Number of different languages currently spoken in the world.

2,696 Number of languages with some translated Scriptures.

2,040 Estimated number of languages still needing Bible translation to begin.

350,000,000 Number of people speaking those 2,040 languages needing translation.

Source: Wycliffe Global Alliance, Sept. 2011



**Prome**  
*Tradução*  
**BALA**

# L o n g J o u r n

*Scriptures come to the Meetto people after a century delay and the help of a Wycliffe Canada couple.*

STORIES BY CRAIG COMBS  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY SØREN KJELDGAARD

Benjamin Fernando Lina takes a break in front of the Meetto Bible Translation Centre in Balama, Mozambique. Sent to East Germany for training and work in the years following his country's independence, Benjamin now leverages his experience and linguistic ability (he speaks eight languages) to serve on the Meetto translation team.



Meetto  
Biblica  
MA

My Home

According to a legend of the Meetto people of Mozambique, Africa, their ancestors once lived at the crossroads of two major trade routes. There, local kings set up a station to collect taxes from passing traders taking slaves and ivory to the coast. And there weary travellers could rest their *myeetto*—their legs. At this leg-resting place, so the legend goes, the *Meetto* people got their name.

At this same crossroads, but in the early 20th century, the Roman Catholic Montfort Fathers of Holland crossed paths with the Meetto. They began to translate the Bible into *Imeetto*, the name of the language of one million-plus Meetto people.

These early efforts at translation included the Gospel of Mark. It was drafted but never distributed.

In 1993, John and Susan Iseminger, personnel with Wycliffe Canada, began to work with the Meetto community. Amazingly, their new life and relationships with the Meetto would intersect, in God's providence, with the work of the Roman Catholic fathers nearly a century earlier.



Initially, Wycliffe Canada's John Iseminger (above) and his wife Susan came to Mozambique and initiated the Meetto translation project. They achieved their goal to pass the work onto capable local Meetto translators. John is now director of work in all of the country by SIL, Wycliffe's key field partner organization. He works out of Nampula.

### **Imeetto Scriptures Come Home**

But how did the early Scripture translation a century ago rise from obscurity?

One of the Montfort Fathers, who was living out his final years in Holland, had the only copy of the book of Mark in Imeetto. When he was almost 90, he decided to take the book to the library for archiving. The alert librarian, realizing he was onto something important, delivered a copy to the Bible Society.

Eventually, the translated Gospel made its way around the world until it came to Mozambique. A Bible Society consultant searched

*"We immediately recognized it as . . . the fabled*

for who was working in Imeetto and gave the draft to John.

"We immediately recognized it as the Gospel of Mark in Imeetto, and realized that this was the fabled translation the padres had done," said John.

The Mark draft became the foundation for a fresh effort in Meetto Bible translation. It was time for *all* of the Scriptures to get into Meetto hands.

### **The Isemingers' Journey**

Like the fabled Mark translation, the Isemingers came to Mozambique through a round-about way.

For John, the journey started when he was 15 and living in Stevensville, a village in rural Pennsylvania. One night, he found

himself in a struggle, one that kept him awake and wouldn't let him go. The teenager was reading *Tortured for Christ*, the autobiography by Richard Wurmbbrand. The Romanian pastor was imprisoned and tortured for his beliefs and daring to publicly say Communism and Christianity were not compatible.

"If that's what it means to be a Christian, count me out!" John said, throwing the book across the room and turning out the light. He still couldn't sleep. He lay still, thinking about what it meant to follow the Lord.

"I realized there is a cost to following Christ," recalls John. "I could see from Jesus' life, father's life and other people's lives that it was real. I got down on my knees and said to the Lord, 'I don't like this, but I know You're there. I know You are listening, and You want me to serve You. If it means giving my life like Richard Wurmbbrand, OK, I'll do that.'"

When Susan Foster was 15 years old, a missionary came to speak at her church in Toronto, Ont. The missionary challenged the youth to consider serving abroad, and Susan remembers that challenge as a key event in her life.

"The challenge from the visiting missionary affected my thoughts and plans for the future," Susan recalls. "As I made decisions for life choices, I remember always thinking, *How is this decision going to get me into missions?*"

John spent his summers in Canada with his parents, who volunteered at InterVarsity's Pioneer Camp in Ontario. After university, John decided to volunteer at Pioneer Camp just one more time before he began his enlistment in the U.S. Navy.

John's bus ride to camp was perhaps the most important one he'd ever take. When he climbed off at a gas station to catch the bus for the last leg of his journey, he ran into Susan Foster, also on her way to work at Pioneer Camp. This was the beginning of their relationship.

### **Yoked Together for Mission**

After that summer of work together, John went to join the navy in California while Susan stayed in Toronto. They wrote letters to each other for two years, and at the end of the second year, John asked Susan to be his wife.

Their mutual desire for cross-cultural work was established from the start.

"Literally on our honeymoon, we decided we were serious

*translation the padres had done."*

about missions," said John. Now it was a matter of discovering what their future service would look like.

God had already provided signposts along the way. At around 18 years old, John had committed himself to reading the entire Bible in one year. He continued to do the same thing each year that followed.

"By the time I was trying to decide on a mission, the Bible itself already had a huge role in my life," said John. He knew Wycliffe was one of the organizations he and Susan should consider.

The same week John's enlistment with the navy ended, the Isemingers went to the local Wycliffe office to "enlist" in the ministry of Bible translation.

Working on establishing their partnership base, the Isemingers



Photo courtesy of John & Susan Iseminger

**John and Susan Iseminger have raised four children during their time of service in Mozambique. During the couple's initial time living in a village, Susan's focus was on home schooling their children. Now she serves as personnel co-ordinator for the Mozambique branch of SIL, Wycliffe's key partner field organization.**

decided to move close to Susan's home church in Toronto, which had a strong missions focus. It soon became evident that this church would be that base.

"They were very supportive, saying, 'Please come here. Study here. We want to support you and encourage you,'" said John.

During a church mission conference, John and Susan were introduced to a visiting speaker. When he asked where they were going, the Isemingers said that they didn't know yet. The speaker encouraged them to go to Mozambique. John remembers thinking, *Mozambique? Where's that?* The speaker told them more about the country and urged them to pray about it.

"From the day he mentioned it, we were both at peace with . . . where God wanted us," John said.

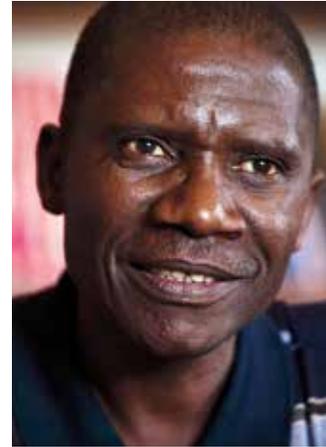
*"You are planting a coconut tree with John. It's going to be five to 10 years before he starts giving fruit. Just wait for the plant to grow."*

### Like a Coconut Tree

On their arrival in Mozambique in 1993, the Isemingers spent time in Maputo, the nation's capital. They were introduced to the Meetto, a group of over one million speakers, with no Scriptures in their own language. The Isemingers felt that the Meetto should become their focus.

A local church leader, responsible for the Isemingers' invitation to work in the Meetto area, introduced them to the Meetto churches in 1995. But it came with an important caution to the people.

He told them, "Now you are receiving John here. He is not a tomato planter. He is not going to produce immediately. You are



Serving on the Meetto Bible translation team, Jacob Celestino Rahisse (above) came by it naturally. His father helped with the fabled translation by Roman Catholic Montfort Fathers from Holland a century ago for his Meetto people, like these contemporaries (right) lit by a setting sun.



### Republic of Mozambique: At a Glance

**Name:** Democratic Republic of Mozambique.

**Area:** 799,380 sq. km (slightly larger than Alberta)

**Location:** Southeastern Africa, between South Africa and Tanzania.

**Population:** 22.95 million.

**Capital:** Maputo (pop. 1.6 million).

**People:** The vast majority are Bantu groups.

**Economy:** One of the world's poorest nations, resulting from centuries of colonial predation, Marxist economic theories and 30 years of guerrilla warfare. Fertile agricultural land and large mineral wealth are underutilized.

**Religion:** 46% Christian (including 11% evangelical); 32% traditional religions, 18% Muslim.

**Languages:** 43, including those spoken by groups that straddle borders of Mozambique and surrounding countries. (Portuguese is the official language, understood by over half the population as a second language.)

**Languages with Scriptures** (those spoken by groups primarily living in Mozambique): 9 have Bibles; 6 have New Testaments; 8 have Scripture portions; 5 have work in progress.

**Literacy:** 30-40% in Portuguese.

Sources: *Operation World*, 7<sup>th</sup> Edition; *World Factbook*; *Ethnologue*.





planting a coconut tree with John. It's going to be five to 10 years before he starts giving fruit. But when he starts producing, it will be in big amounts and there will be a big impact. Just wait for the plant to grow."

That wait to see the fruit of translation was punctuated by discouragements. John remembers a low point in those early years that illustrated how much of a difference there is between having Scripture and valuing it.

"The real wall we hit was at the time we were at a book of Jonah [translation] workshop in 1998," said John. "When it was all done, we printed up about 100 copies and presented them to the church. The next Sunday, there was no celebration of any kind."

One of the decorating habits in the Meetto churches is to take bits of old paper and make cut-out snowflakes from it, hanging them from the bamboo rafters.

"So we came back the next Sunday, and there was Jonah, cut up into pretty snowflakes hanging all over," recalls John. "Talk about a wake-up call!"

### Countercultural Breakthrough

The Isemingers had been living in the regional capital, where Portuguese was the preferred language, even in churches. Their

real breakthrough came when they decided to move to a village at the geographic centre of the Meetto language area.

"When we moved out there, it changed everything," John said. "It changed our outlook and everyone's outlook toward us. It shocked the church because their view of Christianity was that if you are living in a village and you come to Christ, you need to get out of the village and into town.

"We went counter to the whole thing. We, the educated expatriates, are going to live in the village and support that little congregation out there. Everybody was initially scandalized."

But in a short time the Isemingers were hearing Meetto believers saying: *You know, Jesus did that too! He left the comfortable land to go live on earth.* That was the big turning point for the church.

"They started to take notice and say, 'There really is something to this.' It was at that point we started to get some Scriptures out."

Recordings in Meetto of the "Look, Listen & Live" studies on Bible characters, produced by Good News Media, were made and distributed in 2001. A small run of the Gospel of Mark was distributed two years later. Many other easy-reading Bible stories in Meetto were also published at the same time.



### Gifts Prepared in Advance

God built relationships between John and Susan, and three committed men: Francisco, Benjamin and Jacob. They form the Meetto team, to whom John and Susan have handed over the translation project just as they planned.

“My goal from the beginning has been to make myself redundant, or as the Scripture says, to make disciples,” says John.

The story of the Meetto Bible passes through families and weaves its way down through generations. God has uniquely prepared each member of the team to hold His Word in high esteem and to serve with devoted skill.

Benjamin Fernando Lina was one of about 35,000 Mozambican men and women sent to East Germany for training and work in the years following Mozambique’s independence. This happened because Mozambique’s Marxist-oriented government aligned itself closely as a partner with the then Communist East Germany.

Through that experience, Benjamin developed in linguistic ability and cross-cultural understanding. He learned German fluently and came to appreciate the difficulty of adjusting to a new language and culture. Returning from East Germany to his homeland, Benjamin has deep empathy for foreign colleagues

like John, who struggled through his own adjustment after coming to Mozambique.

John calls Benjamin, who speaks eight languages, “a very powerful and insightful individual and linguistic databank.”

Jacob Celestino Rahisse’s journey to the Meetto translation team follows the Scriptures back to their beginnings in Imeetto, and in his story are echoes of the biblical account of Jacob blessing his sons.

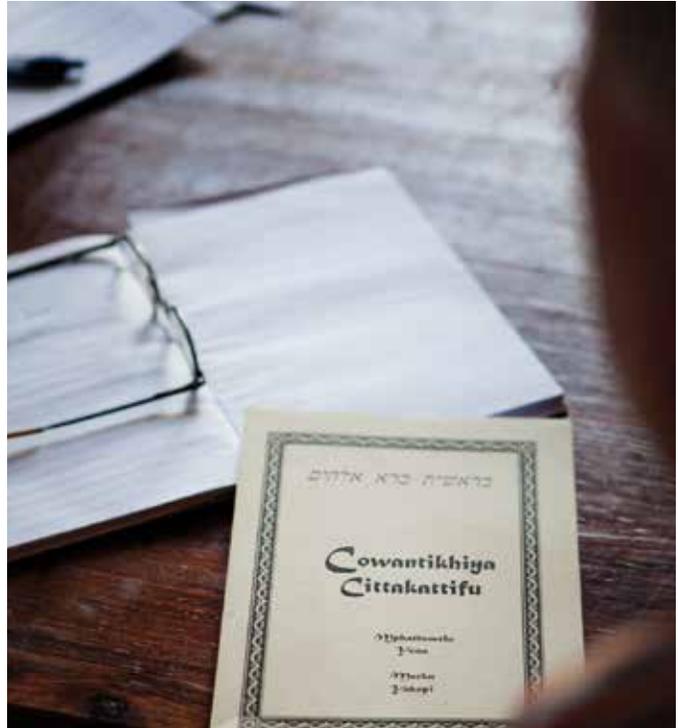
Before Jacob Rahisse was even born, his grandfather, a local religious leader, called his five sons together and told them he would not live much longer. He gave each of them a charge. One would become a great hunter. Another should master farming.

When he came to Jacob’s father, he said, “I want you to go down to the padres, to the Montfort Fathers, and learn from them all you can, and help us all.”

Jacob’s father went to help with the Montfort Fathers’ early Bible translation work. It is a work and a tradition that has been passed down to Jacob.

### New Things Typically Rejected

Creative community relations have also opened doors for the Imeetto Scriptures. But it has not always been easy.



(Left) In the shade of an under-the-tree classroom in Balama village, a group of Meetto people learn to read their own language, Imeetto. New literates have a growing Bible to read (above). Translations of Genesis, Jonah, Mark and James have been released so far. Audio recordings are also available, speaking powerfully to the oral culture of the one million-plus Meetto people.

Meetto tradition has typically rejected things considered new or different. Portuguese, the colonial language of Mozambique, was deemed sufficient for commerce and education. The Meetto have also been influenced by another major religion that places an emphasis on only using one language for its holy book. The people did not see use of the local language as a necessity.

*"By the end of the year we were getting pleas from the other districts: 'Why can't we have that?'"*

When the translation team made Imeetto literature available, minds began to change. In February of 2006, the translation team gave 23 church leaders copies of a lectionary with readings from Mark that could be used in Sunday services. Then the team distributed the translated Christmas story. They followed it with a one-day seminar showing people already literate in Portuguese how to read Imeetto.

"By the end of the year we were getting pleas from the other districts: 'Why can't we have that?'" John recalls.

Over the next few years, the team distributed hundreds of copies of these materials in other districts, and the translation project continued to grow.

### A Growing Bible

This growing Bible was released in 2009 and includes the translated books of Genesis, Jonah, Mark and James. About 800 churches received a copy. In January and February of 2010, the translation team dedicated itself to travelling around to all the districts, promoting the translated Scriptures.

The team has also produced audio recordings of Imetto Scripture. These speak powerfully in an oral culture.

“One community leader, who [follows another major religion] was given a copy of the translated Scripture and the recordings,” recalls Jacob. “After reading and listening, he invited the church to come and start working in his community.

“As a result of this, I went back home and was asked by that leader to inaugurate the church building constructed in that community. All of this resulted from this leader reading the Scripture and listening to the recordings.”

*“This is their project . . . I can't own it, I can't control it. . . . Let them run, let them think and be creative.”*

### Let Them Run

In 2008, John was chosen to serve as director of SIL, Wycliffe's main partner organization, in Mozambique. He now administers and co-ordinates language work throughout the country. Susan took on the job of branch personnel co-ordinator.

These roles have moved them away from daily involvement with the Meetto work, but the Meetto people are carrying it forward. John misses his close connection with the Meetto translation team, church leaders and community. But he sees ultimate benefit for that community in this change.

“This is their project . . . I can't own it, I can't control it,” he explains. “In terms of ownership, because I was forced to jump out and look at other projects, being forced to let go has been very healthy. We want people to be creative.

“They need to be taught the principles of exegesis and translation and understand the linguistic structure of the language, but when it comes to things like community or church relations, let them run, let them think and be creative.”

The journey of the Imetto Bible has brought it a long way from its beginnings. The Word has passed through many hands and transformed lives along the way. With God's help, His Word in Imetto will continue to be proclaimed and put down roots in many, many thousands of Meetto hearts.

As the wise Meetto church leader said, *Just wait for the plant to grow.* 🌱

Craig Combs is a writer with Wycliffe Global Alliance, of which Wycliffe Canada is a member agency. Søren Kjeldgaard is a photographer from Denmark.





Having given countless hours to the Bible translation for the Meetto people, Benjamin Fernando Lina (left) & Massuela Ali (who now works for another mission agency) eagerly anticipate the increasing fruit of their labour—life change in thousands of Meetto hearts.

John Iseminger directs the work of SIL (Wycliffe's key partner field organization) in Mozambique. Serving in partnership with the Mozambican church and The Bible Society in the African nation, SIL is helping facilitate Bible translation and other language work in 25 languages. Though feeling under-resourced, personnel in Mozambique are fuelled by the truth of the Scripture verse written on the wall behind John: "The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of our God stands forever" (Isaiah 40:8 NIV).

SECA SE A ERVA E CAI A  
DE NOSSO DEUS PERMAN

MALASI ANAVUUMA NI TI  
NUULUMU NA BLURU LHO

THE GRASS WITHERS AND  
THE WORD OF OUR

MAJANI YAKAI  
MUNGU VETI

DAS GRAS  
DAS V

A P  
DE



Filling

A

Bathtub

With

An

Eyedropper

*Bible translation makes important strides in Mozambique, but much more work still remains undone.*



Steve Evans

Like this church, the face of Christianity in Mozambique is an old one. Beginning in 1498, the Catholic Church worked closely with the Portuguese colonial government. However, it served primarily the expatriate community. There was little organized mission presence, and Bible translation was given virtually no attention until the 1980s.

Walking down the main street of any Mozambican town in the early morning, you'll hear children singing the national anthem: *Mozambique our glorious land! Stone upon stone we are building a new day with the unified strength of millions of arms. . . .*

Building and construction is the theme of Mozambique, as it emerges from centuries of struggle into a new climate of growth and development. God is also powerfully at work here, building His Church through His translated Word, with help from SIL, Wycliffe's key partner organization.

### Slow Start for Christian Witness

Beginning in 1498, the Catholic Church worked hand-in-hand with the Portuguese colonial government, who treated Mozambique as only a supply depot for merchant fleets en route to the East Indies. Occupation and development of the interior did not occur for five more centuries.

Likewise, with a few exceptions, the Catholic Church served primarily the Portuguese community. As late as 1922, there were only four Catholic mission stations in the interior of Mozambique; there was no other organized mission presence. Translation of the Bible into the local languages was unheard of. Portuguese was deemed "good enough" for everyday commerce, for worship and for the limited education structures of the time.

A national independence movement led the country to win its freedom from Portugal in 1974. Within five years, the new Marxist government was embroiled in a civil war that lasted more



In the beach-side *Tarikhi ya haakhi* Church, worshipping believers gathering under a palm-covered roof are among the 11 per cent of evangelicals in Mozambique's population of 23 million.

than a decade. Only in 1992 was a lasting peace achieved. There was no remaining infrastructure to speak of, and Mozambique was among the least developed countries in the world.

### Relaxing the Grip

In the mid-1980s, as the Marxist government began to relax its grip on the country, the Catholic Church and the Bible Society of Mozambique resumed Bible translation work among several language communities. SIL Mozambique, a key partner organization of Wycliffe Bible Translators, began work in 1987. Today, serving in partnership with the Mozambican church, SIL is helping facilitate Bible translation and other language work, including education and literacy, in 25 languages.

To multiply their effectiveness, SIL Mozambique and The Bible Society share facilities and resources for consulting and training. In all, SIL oversees translation work in 10 languages.

### Mozambican Leadership

Mozambique's history has created a challenging environment for training mother tongue speakers in Bible translation and related work.

"If you find people who speak their language well enough to work in translation, they may not have enough schooling yet to move forward with the work," says John Iseminger, director of SIL Mozambique.

Over time, though, God has called the right men and women forward.

"Our philosophy throughout Mozambique has been to find good people, faithful people, and get them trained," Iseminger explains. "As the years go by, we're finding individuals rising to the top."

Today, four SIL projects are moving forward under local leadership, with no on-site management from SIL expatriate staff.

### A Call for Help

While SIL Mozambique is seriously engaged in discovering and training Mozambicans to take on more and more of the ministry of Bible translation, there is still a great need for expertise from all over the world.

"We could use lots and lots of people in language development work," says John Iseminger, who leads the work there by SIL. "And access is the big crying need we have—help in teaching and promoting Scripture use."

With a website now up and running to make local language materials available to a wide range of people and organizations, someone is also needed to fill the role of webmaster.

But the biggest need?

"I need a language programs manager to co-ordinate all of this!" says Iseminger. "We've got too many ideas and too much to do. You can start a translation program in a week. We can sustain it

financially. We can establish the ground rules and relationships. But who is going to consult and manage this thing once it gets going?"

Wycliffe Canada is sponsoring a funding project to support crucial administrative needs that only Mozambicans can fill for the work in Mozambique. To learn about the project and to donate to it, email <projects\_canada@wycliffe.ca>.

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Bonifácio Paulo (see “The Best Fit,” pg. 26) and his wife, Busi, are applying for membership with Wycliffe Africa as the first Mozambicans ever to join the organization. Bonifácio, also the first Mozambican to become a Bible translation consultant-in-training with SIL, knows how important Scriptures are in a person’s own language.

“If I cannot understand Portuguese very well, even though I read and speak it,” says Bonifácio, “how much more for those who are not educated? They use the Portuguese Bible and Portuguese songs, but how much do they understand? That’s what motivated me to get started in translation.”

### ‘Eyedropper’ Innovations

With many large language groups, and working under a government seeking large-scale literacy and mother tongue education programs, the workload in Mozambique is great. Iseminger likens SIL Mozambique’s capacity to handle the extensive language work to having “a bathtub to fill when we have an eyedropper to contribute.”

Still, SIL Mozambique has found innovative ways to make a deep impact, even with its “eyedropper” of resources.

In 2007, SIL Mozambique began a nationwide effort to create thematic dictionaries. These contain standardized lists of 1,700 words, including sets of words commonly used in education and medicine, providing a tool for professionals to better communicate with the people they serve. So far, 18 languages in central and northern Mozambique have received this useful resource, which also inspires a hunger for more reading material—including mother tongue Scriptures.

SIL linguists conduct *Discover Your Language* seminars around the country, producing a booklet summarizing the unique aspects of each language. These can be used as a teaching tool in the community, to foster peoples’ awareness of, and positive regard for, their own mother tongue. Through these courses, several gifted individuals have been identified for further training in Bible translation skills, including the Meetto team.

SIL Mozambique has also contributed downloadable, printable files of materials in Mozambican languages to an online storehouse hosted by Wycliffe South Africa. These include literacy primers, Scripture portions, linguistic papers and other publications (visit <LIDEMO.net>)

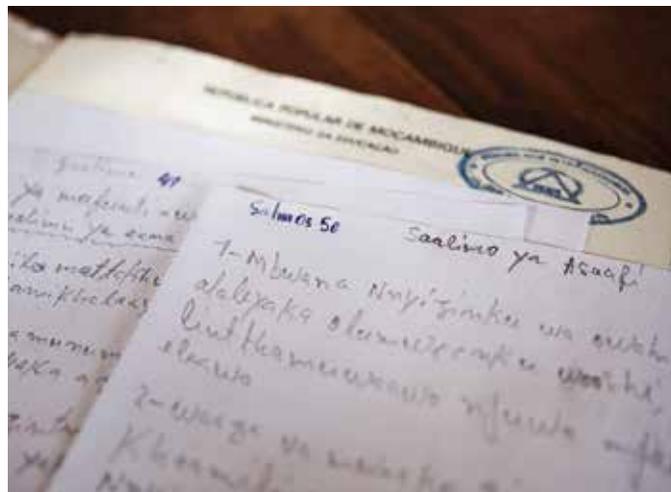
“We needed to figure out how to make materials available,” Iseminger says. “There are people in Maputo asking for Mwani materials, spoken 2,000 km away, and our distribution networks don’t go down there. But they can download a copy and print it!”

### Can’t Come Fast Enough

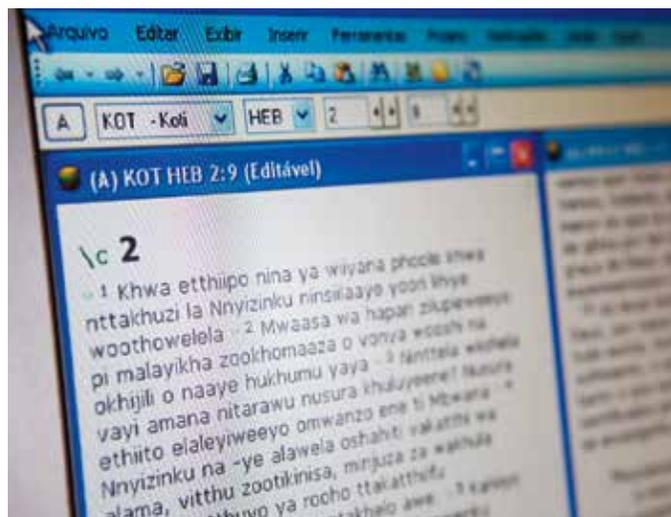
Along a stretch of sandy beach near the coastal town of Angoche is a fishing village called Thamoole [tay-MOW-lay]. Here, in a simple palm-covered structure, followers of Jesus among the Koti people meet regularly for worship and teaching.

Translation is underway in their local language, EKoti, and local believers are using the Scriptures as soon as they are published. So far, four books of the Bible have been printed, each translated in response to specific spiritual needs in the community.

(continued on pg. 24)



(Above) SIL’s Chris Lydon provides exegesis expertise on the original meaning of Scripture to the Koti Bible translation team, as they draft Scripture translation into their EKoti language on paper (above, top) or computers (below) to bring God’s Word to their people.



Mozambican Christians, like these at an evangelistic training session, will benefit from using Scriptures in the mother tongues of those who they hope to reach. Many are currently limited to using God's Word in the official Portuguese language, understood by over half of the country's population, but as a second language.



*"They use the*

*Portuguese Bible and*

*Portuguese songs,*

*but how much do*

*they understand?*

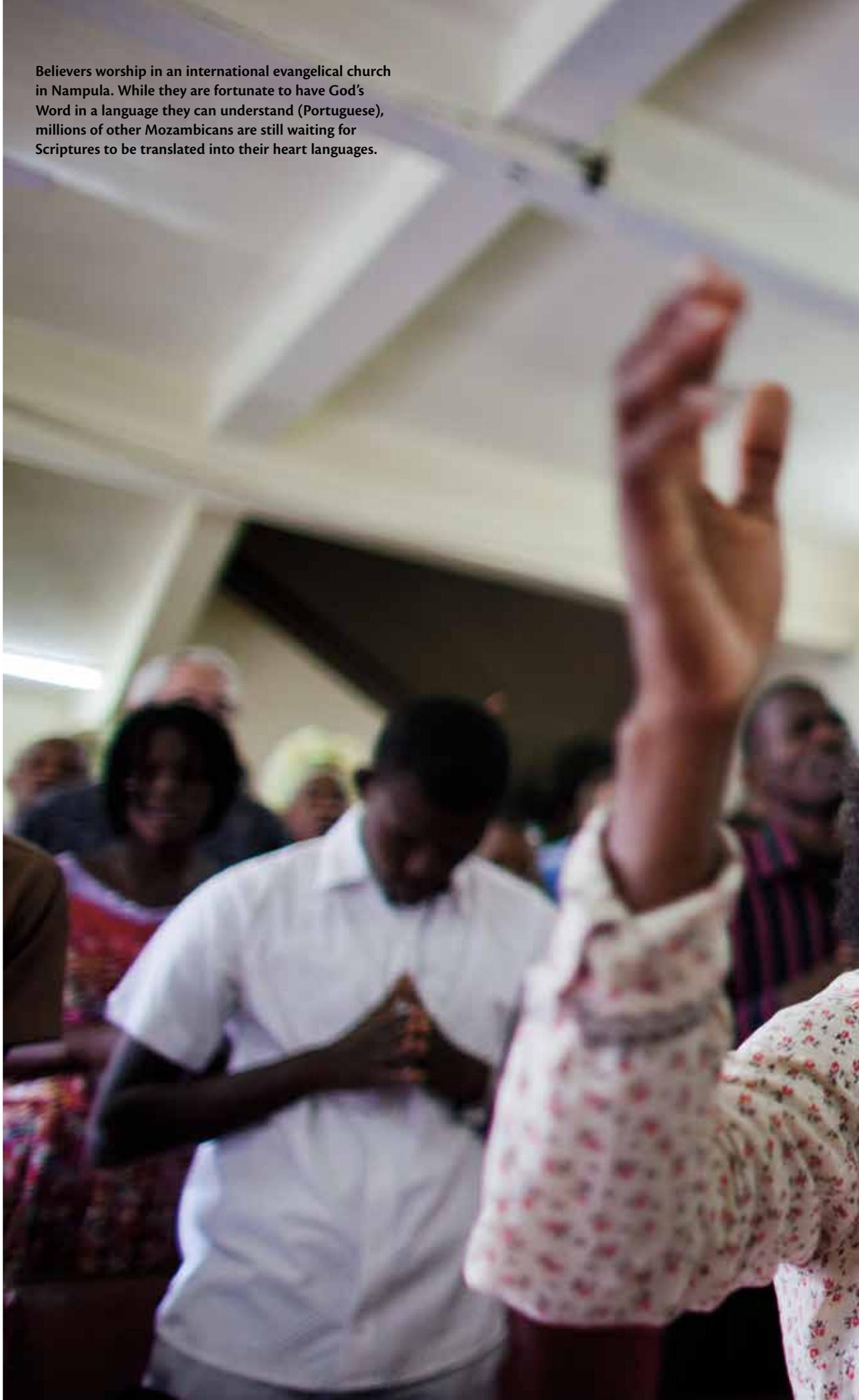
*That's what*

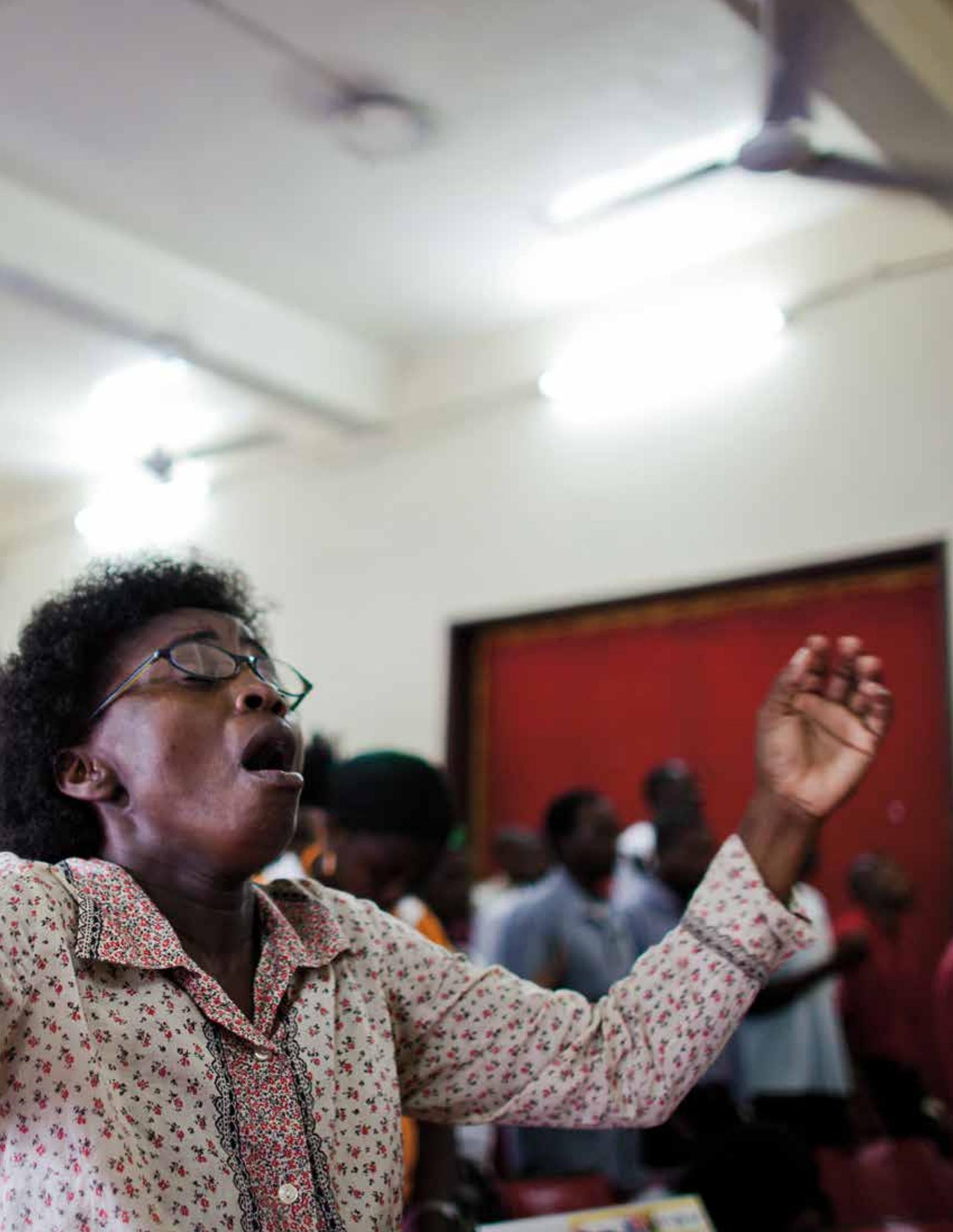
*motivated me*

*to get started*

*in translation."*

Believers worship in an international evangelical church in Nampula. While they are fortunate to have God's Word in a language they can understand (Portuguese), millions of other Mozambicans are still waiting for Scriptures to be translated into their heart languages.







Craig Combs

(Above) Koti Bible translator, José de Jesus, translates God’s Word on his computer. Koti Pastor Julho Momade (at right) and fellow church leader, Victor Alfane, shown with his wife (below), are eager to have more of the translation, which has already profoundly transformed their people’s view of marriage.

One of the saddest aspects of Koti culture is its pattern of serial broken marriages, widespread neglect and abuse.

“The culture here is this way:” explains José de Jesus, a member of the Koti Bible translation team, “If I get married and if I get tired of her, I can divorce her. And everybody does it.

“But the idea of ‘today married, tomorrow divorced’ is finished [among those following Jesus] . . . because of the Word of God in EKoti. It has transformed even our marriages.”



Craig Combs

Julho Momade, pastor of the Thamoole community, is seeing firsthand how translated Scripture is already impacting the way people treat marriage.

“In times past here, the idea of marriage was a complete joke. One would get married for two or three days and then separate and find somebody else,” explains Momade. “They understand now in the church community that [marriage] is a commandment of God and a thing for life.

“So now most of the members . . . want to get married before God. Last year we had 66 weddings. We teach that marriage is for life, that there is no such thing as divorce. Many want to obey this.

“The way we lived [in the past] is not the way we are living now.”

A simple message believed. Unreserved acceptance and application of Scripture to a broken culture. Responsiveness to community needs. Faithfulness. Such are the elements of

transformation beginning to take root and grow among the Koti.

As far as local leaders are concerned, the Scriptures cannot come fast enough.

“I want [it] from Genesis to Revelation in EKoti,” says Victor Alfane, a church leader in Thamoole.

As Bible translation makes consistent strides in Mozambique, such sentiments are music to the ears of the growing Church—and, of course, those working so hard to make mother tongue Scriptures available for the first time to their own people. 🌱



John Iseminger concludes a visit with the Meetto translation team by praying for God’s blessing on their crucial work. Prayer is one resource that is not in short supply.



*“The Word*

*of God . . .*

*has*

*transformed*

*even our*

*marriages.”*

**A Koti believer reads Scriptures in his language. So far, translated books of Genesis, Jonah, Mark and James have been published for the Koti people.**

A photograph of a smiling man with a beard, wearing a light green shirt, leaning against a large, thick tree trunk. The background shows a rural village with a building and more trees under a bright sky.

# The Best FIT

*From life in a  
rural village  
to becoming*

*a Bible translation consultant-in-training,  
Bonifácio Paulo has followed the call of  
his Lord on a God-directed journey.*



**A**s Scripture is translated for Mozambique's language groups in the years ahead, Bonifácio Paulo (left) will be there to help check its accuracy with translation teams of his countrymen. His God-directed journey has taken him from his small village to become a Bible translation consultant-in-training with Wycliffe Africa. It is a remarkable journey when you take into account that Bonifácio grew up in an environment steeped in African traditional religion.

"My family was neither Muslim nor Christian," he says. "In the rural area where I come from, people just follow what is there."

Bonifácio Paulo is one of six children of Makuwa-speaking parents from a small rural community in the Nampula Province of Mozambique. When he was about five or six years old, Bonifácio's mother died of a heart seizure. He was adopted by his oldest sister, who was the only family member professing any form of Christian faith; she was a nominal Catholic.

Bonifácio's faith journey was gradual. While he was still in school in the early 1980s, his aunt told him about a Catholic priest looking for young people in the area who would be willing to attend seminary as a step toward ordination. Bonifácio resisted, but the relative persisted.

### What Is Salvation?

Eventually, Bonifácio began the training. He started to understand more about Christianity, but he still didn't know what salvation meant. Around the same time, two of his cousins, who were Christians, began to ask him difficult questions about some Catholic teaching. He discovered he didn't have the answers to these questions and began to investigate.

"That was when my mind started to change," said Bonifácio. "After two years in the seminary, I decided to not go back in the third year."

He started attending a Church of the Nazarene fellowship. Bonifácio's new pastor talked to him about salvation by faith in Jesus Christ, and sensed that God's plan for Bonifácio might include deeper studies. The pastor encouraged him to attend the Nazarene seminary in Maputo.

"It was in Maputo that the process of my salvation took direction," recalls Bonifácio. "Honestly, I don't remember a day that I can point to and say, 'This is the day I gave my life to Jesus.'"

"What I do know is that my salvation is a miracle."

### It Goes Deep

The shape of Bonifácio's calling to serve God began to appear during a special course on the principles of Bible translation at the seminary. It was taught by John Iseminger, a Wycliffe Canada member serving with partner agency SIL International in Mozambique (see "Long Journey Home," pg. 6).

During the class, Bonifácio told Iseminger he believed Bible translation was his calling.

The foundation of this growing commitment was built on Bonifácio's realization of how differently he read and understood Scriptures in the languages he knew.

“[When I]  
read it [the  
Bible] in  
Makhuwa,  
it’s like  
I’m naked  
before God.”

“Most of the time I can read and understand the Portuguese Bible, the English Bible and even a little of the Greek Bible,” says Bonifácio. “But the way I understand it is somehow only on a superficial level. I can take a passage and read it, and I find no change [in me]. The terms don’t get deep into my heart because they can’t.”

Fortunately for Bonifácio and three million others, the Bible was translated and published into their Makhuwa mother tongue by the Catholic Church in 1988 (when SIL was just beginning work in Mozambique). Bonifácio says reading those Scriptures is profoundly different.

“When I read it in Makhuwa, it’s like I’m naked before God,” explains Bonifácio. “That’s what God says to me.

“That’s the impact the Makhuwa Bible made in my life. I am where I am, spiritually, because of the Makhuwa Bible. It goes deep.”

### Work With Us?

Bonifácio was awarded a scholarship for advanced theological studies in Swaziland after completing his program at the Nazarene seminary. Before leaving Mozambique, he sought out John Iseminger, then living in the town of Pemba. He boarded a bus in Nampula and went to Pemba, having no idea where to start looking for John.

“I was walking down the street, and there was Bonifácio coming



Bonifácio Paulo and his wife Busi, shown here with their four children, are applying for Wycliffe membership with Wycliffe Africa. They are the first Mozambicans ever to join the organization.

toward me,” remembers Iseminger. “I said, ‘What are you doing here?’ He said, ‘I’m looking for you.’ He just started walking up the street and found me.”

Bonifácio wanted to be sure Iseminger knew of his continued sense of calling to Bible translation.

Then several years passed with little contact between the two men. Bonifácio completed his degree, married his wife Busi, who is from Swaziland, and started a family. He served his church for several years as the co-ordinator for literature production.

In 2007, Bonifácio signed a contract to work as a teacher under Mozambique’s education department. That’s when Iseminger came looking for him.

“John came to me and said, ‘I know what you are doing. I know what you are interested in and what you want to achieve. Would you like to work with us?’” recalls Bonifácio. “I said, ‘Oh yes!’”

Bonifácio cancelled his teaching contract at the end of the 2007 academic year and started work with SIL Mozambique.

### Motivated for Translation

Currently, Bonifácio serves as the SIL Mozambique training and workshop co-ordinator. He is working closely with SIL mentors and developing his skills to become a translation consultant. His heart for this role has been influenced by seeing other people who have the Scriptures in their own language.

“I see Bible translation as something very important for African people who only have the Scripture in a foreign language,” said Bonifácio. “I have quite a lot of experience with other people, those who have the Scripture in their own language, the language of their heart. Their level of spiritual growth is higher than it is for those who depend on foreign languages.”

He also understands that the motivation for Bible translation has to come from within language communities. He cannot do the work for them.

“If the Bible is produced by them, it will have relevance in their lives,” explains Bonifácio. “They will say, ‘We produced this because we needed it; we wanted it [rather than] we received it because someone brought it.’”

### At Home

Bonifácio does not see his work as a job, but a calling. He and his wife Busi, who has a degree in linguistics and a post-graduate degree in education, are currently applying for Wycliffe membership through Wycliffe Africa. They are the first Mozambicans ever to join the organization.

“I feel 100 per cent comfortable to work in Bible translation, says Bonifácio. “I want to join . . . to work with them and give as much as I can, knowing that I am at home.”

“It is the best fit for my calling.” 🌱

Those who have the Scripture in . . . the language of their heart. Their level of spiritual growth is higher than it is for those who depend on foreign languages.”

*Backlit Kickers*



Soren Kjeldgaard Photo

As the fading light of dusk backlights the village of Balama, two boys play their beloved game of soccer, making due with a ball of tightly tied plastic bags. Their country of Mozambique is one of the world's poorest nations, resulting from centuries of predation, Marxist economic theories and 30 years of guerrilla warfare. But God's Word, translated into local languages, is bringing hope to the people groups of this recovering African nation.

**Living Vicariously**

By Roy Eyre



**D**uring much of the past five years, I've been building into young leaders. When I'm asked by young people whether they should move into management roles, the first question I have for them is whether they have the ability to live vicariously: *Can you find joy and satisfaction in the success of others?* It's a critical competency for leadership, but I've found it useful throughout all arenas of life. Underneath this issue are fundamental questions of identity, pride and acceptance.

For starters, I work in a Bible translation organization, but I am not a Bible translator. If I didn't have the ability to take joy in the achievements of others, I'd struggle with my role. Since it's my goal to work in the areas I'm gifted in so that others can work in

the areas they're gifted in, I feel a lot of satisfaction in administration. I can celebrate as part of the team whenever a translation is completed.

As the new president of Wycliffe Canada, I have a personal goal this year. I want to attend a ceremony that launches a New Testament, completed with help by a Canadian translator. Often, those of us who don't work on the front

lines don't get to see the fruit of our work firsthand.

When I was a graphic designer with Wycliffe Canada from 1998-2002, I had to be OK working with images from far-off locations I was unlikely to see myself. I immersed myself in the worlds we depicted in this magazine. As I look back at *Word Alive* magazines I designed, I feel a connection to language surveyors in central Asia, leaders in Singapore and translators in Cameroon, even though my personal experience was limited to the images on my Mac.

Later, in leadership development with Wycliffe U.S.A., I had to confront the question of whether I was OK with advancing someone else's career beyond my own. Once I had resolved my own issues of pride and competitiveness, I was then able to celebrate the appointment of a 32-year-old female vice-president and a 41-year-old board member who benefited from my work on their behalf.

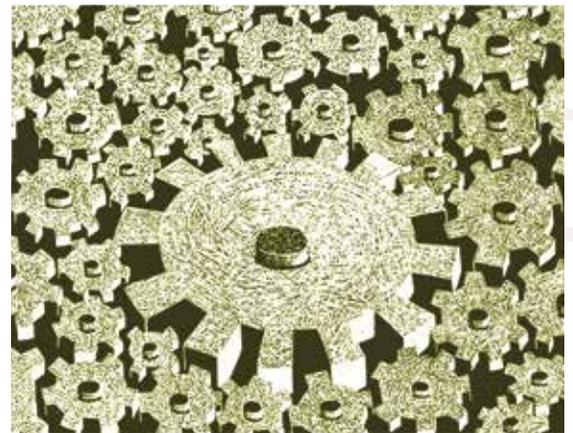
Now I have the opportunity to take joy in the

work of almost 600 staff working in or sent out from Canada. You'll likely never hear of most of these team members. They work quietly behind the scenes to assure the success of our translation and literacy work overseas. Over the next few years, I will rejoice with the successes and mourn with the struggles of software developers, linguists, Scripture use consultants, photographers and finance personnel. As my job description says, the performance of the organization is synonymous with the performance of the president. We're all connected. We're a body. And we're all part of the Bible translation team.

**More on the Web:**

For information about Roy Eyre's induction as Wycliffe Canada president, visit [news.wycliffe.ca](http://news.wycliffe.ca).

**We're all connected. We're a body. And we're all part of the Bible translation team.**



Dave Harder

That's also our hope for you, our partners in this global task. We trust that through your financial support, your prayers and your encouragement, you feel like you're playing a role in the work, whether it's from your home, your office or your church.

As you read the stories in this and future issues of *Word Alive* know that you are part of the Bible translation team. May you take deep joy in the vicarious role God has given you.

I certainly will! 🌱

Roy Eyre is the president of Wycliffe Bible Translators of Canada.

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