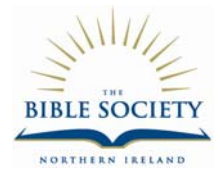


Bibles in 10 more languages, New Testaments in 27!



Bibles have become available in ten more languages and New Testaments in 27 more than this time last year. The latest *Scripture Language Report (SLR)*, the authoritative guide to the annual progress of worldwide Bible translation, published annually by United Bible Societies, measures the progress made by UBS and other Bible translation agencies in the past 12 months. The latest figures, covering 2010, show that the complete Bible has now been translated into 469 languages and the New Testament into 1,231.

There are estimated to be 6,600 spoken languages in the world and most people would assume that the Bible is available in the vast majority. The fact that fewer than 500 have a Bible shows how little of the real story of Bible translation the statistics alone tell.

In the columns in the many tables that give the *Scripture Language Report* its characteristic statistical depth, the names of many little known languages appear. One is Chuvash.

Twenty year project

Chuvashia is a republic in the Russian Federation, 400 miles east from Moscow, and encircled to the east and the north by the great Volga River. An estimated two million people speak the Chuvash language and the Chuvash translation project began 20 years ago, in 1991. The near-20 year journey of the project has produced published samples to whet the appetite along the way: in 1998 the Book of Prophets was published, a Chuvash Children's Bible came out in the same year, and the Pentateuch in 2001.



All have been very warmly received by Chuvash-speakers and very widely publicised by the republic's government and media alike. The disappointment duly felt by the translation team when they learned that no funds were available to publish the Wisdom books and Psalms had a happy – some would say miraculous – outcome.

Eva Lisina, a Chuvash writer and teacher, who has long been the driving force behind the Bible translation project, started praying that God would somehow provide the funds for those two publications. When she paid her next visit to Moscow, where she has a little flat, she found a pile of unopened post waiting for her. Among the items was a royalty cheque from a German radio station for the broadcast of one of her plays. It was for the exact amount needed to fund the awaited Chuvash publications! Without hesitation, she gave the money to be used for that purpose.

Raising the profile of the language

Christianity is widespread in Chuvashia, and Chuvash-speaking Christians have warmly embraced the now complete Chuvash Bible. It not only gives identity, status and dignity to the Chuvash as a distinct language group, but thanks in part to the translation, Chuvash is now raising its profile as the lingua franca in Chuvash churches where, a few years ago, only Russian was heard. The new Bible will be used extensively in churches, schools and homes and its impact will be particularly strong in rural areas, where Chuvash is most widely spoken and where church attendance is strongest.

Dr Simon Crisp, Director of UBS Translation Services, served as Translation Consultant to the Chuvash project for nearly 10 years, seeing it through the long process of checking and preparation for printing.

"The new translation will allow the Scriptures to speak with fresh clarity to the Chuvash people," says Dr Crisp, "and will also ensure that the Bible continues to play a central role in Chuvash Church life."

First New Testament in Kimyal

Another language bearing a name not widely known beyond West Papua, Indonesia, is Kimyal and an amazing story of a different kind is attached to the publication of the Kimyal New Testament.

Last year the Kimyal community of West Papua, gratefully received the first copies of the New Testament translated into their own language. The role of UBS in the Kimyal translation project was to give the two Kimyal translators in

the team training at UBS Translation Workshops and to ensure a high standard for their work through UBS Translation Consultant Dr Lourens de Vries. The finished translation was published by the Indonesian Bible Society.

On the momentous day in March 2010 the Kimyal were gathered in their hundreds around the grass airstrip as the small plane carrying the precious books touched down. They waved, jumped up and down, danced and blew whistles. The community elders then came forward and with great reverence took a large package of New Testaments from the pilot. Having ordered everyone to close their eyes, Pastor Siud then shouted out his praises to God.



“The plan which you had from the beginning regarding your Kimyals ... has come to pass today. ...O my Father, the promise that you gave Simeon, that he would see Jesus Christ and hold him in his arms before he died, I also have been waiting under that same promise. O God, today you have placed your Word into my hands, just like you promised... And for all this, O God, I give you praise.”

Filmed by Dianne Becker

The people around him were overjoyed; dancing, whooping and weeping for joy as they carried the New Testaments back to their village.

“We’ve received the Bible!” said a Kimyal member of the Dedication Committee. “We have it in our language. All of God’s words are in our language!”

Thankfully, all this – and more – was carefully recorded by freelance American film-maker Dianne Becker.

Last November, the other end of the year from the New Testament dedication itself, UBS became involved again, adding a wonderful coda to the story. A six-minute re-edit of Ms Becker’s filming was posted on The Bible Facebook page. Less than 36 hours later it had been viewed more than 15,500 times – and nearly a thousand people testified appreciatively to the effect it had on them.

And on the video-sharing website Vimeo, the [UBS edit of the film](#) has now been watched a further 35,000 times.

Moved to tears

As the short film unfolds, it is hard for anyone not to be moved by the sight of thanks to God for a translation of Scripture being expressed in such a heartfelt and emotional way by the humble Kimyal. Shown during many Sunday church services in the West, it has moved many, many people to tears. Comments about it posted by people who watching it on the internet commonly include descriptions like “Unbelievable”, “Awesome!” and “Beautiful.”

The Chuvash and the Kimyal translations are just two highlights among many translations in the Scripture Language Report that UBS has been or still is involved in. National Bible Societies in the UBS are currently involved in translation projects in more than 400 languages. This makes the fellowship the largest of the global players in Bible translation, one whose current translation projects, once complete, have the potential to reach an audience of more than four billion people! Expressed another way, this means that two out of every three people alive on the planet today may be touched by the work of the 146 national Bible Societies that together make up United Bible Societies.