CHONYI 2 (CHOHN-yee)

THE PEOPLE
Names are very symbolic among the Chonyi people of Kenya.
For example Mbeyu, a name for a girl, means seeds for planting. Mokoli for a boy means a helpful person.

Although the practice is fading, it’s also tradition for a father’s first name to become the surname of his wife and children.

Most Chonyi farm and rear small herds of animals. Some people earn extra income by selling cash crops like coconuts, cashews and mangoes. Additionally, tourism has created various employment opportunities in the community.

About 80% of the population identify as Christian. However when difficulties arise, some Chonyi look to traditional religion for help, rather than God. A lack of Scripture in the Chonyi language has made it difficult for many people to clearly understand what it means to follow Jesus.

For believers to grow in their faith and reach out to others, they need more of God’s Word in their language.

THE PLAN
We’re working with a local team to finish translating the New Testament into the Chonyi language!

Previously, team members published three of the Gospels and 10 epistles. They also started translation work on several other books.

As this project begins, 14 books remain — John, Acts, Philippians, 1-2 Thessalonians, Philemon, Hebrews, 1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude and Revelation.

Completed Scripture will be printed and recorded in audio format. Translated text will also be made available on a smartphone app.

Team members plan to produce a book of Chonyi hymns, along with audio recordings of the songs. Staff will also create a Bible study for Ephesians and a Sunday school teaching aid based on Luke.

Additionally, the team will be involved in the development of “Walking With Jesus” in their language. This companion film to “JESUS” depicts everyday African situations, modeling the life of a committed Christian.

THE IMPACT
When Mr. Chiro heard the Gospel of Matthew had been published in Chonyi, he rushed to buy 20 copies.

“Since then he has been facilitating his local church in reading the Scripture whenever a sermon refers to the book,” a project adviser said.

Some pastors are already using the Gospels of Matthew and Luke in worship services and other gatherings, deepening understanding of the Bible. And it shows. “People become attentive, show emotion and nod as the Scripture is read,” the adviser said.

As the Chonyi grow more familiar with biblical truths, they will find encouragement and wisdom for their daily lives and relationships.

“Church leaders agree,” the adviser said. “The community’s needs can be addressed by spiritual enlightenment through the Word of God.”

Your prayers and gifts will help the Chonyi people gain access to more of God’s Word — in a language and form that speaks to their hearts!