



Languages: Bena, Nyiha

Speakers: 920,000



Dates: 2019-2021

Project Goals: New Testament completion,
Old Testament portions

MBEYA BENA-NYIHA

(m-BAY-ah BAY-nah NYEE-hah)

AFRICA — TANZANIA

THE PEOPLE

The Bena and Nyiha people groups live in the southwestern part of Tanzania. They value education, hard work and strong families.

Most of the Bena make their home on a mountainous plateau where they cultivate potatoes, wheat and other cold weather crops.

Living on a dry flat savanna, the Nyiha have farms to provide for their families. Some also earn a living through weaving or ironwork.

These two groups take pride in their languages. Many years ago, because of the importance of farming in their culture, the Nyiha translated agricultural books into their language. And the Bena have some writings that date back over a hundred years.

Christianity is the dominant religion in the area, and local churches already have access to some Scripture. However older translations aren't widely available or clearly understood.

Local believers strongly desire God's Word in their own languages so they can grow in their faith and reach out to others.

THE PLAN

We're working with local teams to complete the New Testament in the Bena and Nyiha languages!

As this three-year project begins, a total of eight books are left to be translated. The Bena team will finish the Gospel of John, Romans, Hebrews and 2 Corinthians, and the Nyiha team will work on 1-2 Corinthians and 1-2 Peter.

Staff members will also translate and publish Genesis and Psalms 1-100 in both languages. Completed Scripture will be made available in print, audio and digital formats.

Each year of the project, the two teams will translate 36 Bible stories and create posters highlighting God's Word. To help engage youth and adults, the "Jesus Messiah" picture book will be published in Bena and Nyiha. Annual calendars featuring select Scripture verses will also be produced.

Audio recordings of popular Bena worship songs will be made and a songbook published. Also, the Nyiha team will produce a dictionary.

THE IMPACT

Recently local pastors started using available portions of translated Scripture in worship services.

One Bena pastor now holds two services each Sunday — the first in Swahili and the second in Bena. Attendance at the latter time has been steadily increasing.

At other Christian gatherings, Bena and Nyiha believers are learning more about God through music. "The Nyiha youth are singing Scripture songs in their language and are enthusiastic about composing more songs and hymns," a project adviser said.

Team members are noticing that the translated materials convey a much deeper meaning to local speakers — one that cuts to the heart.

"There has been a decrease in people fearing traditional religion and witchcraft," the adviser said. "They're beginning to rely on God, trusting his power."

Your prayers and gifts will help Bena and Nyiha people gain access to more Scripture in languages that speak to their hearts!