

# FRONTLINES

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## EXPLORING THE LAST LANGUAGES

Because of advances in technology, more people groups in need of translation projects have been identified over the last few years. And many of these are sign languages. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that sign languages are the final frontier of Bible translation. There's still much that linguists don't know about the sign languages of the world. In fact, in a way they're really just beginning to explore most of these languages. But one thing is clear — the need for Bible translation among the Deaf is much greater than anyone could have imagined even a few years ago.

Today linguists estimate there are more than 400 sign languages in use around the world. But so far only 138 of those languages have been cataloged.

No sign language, even well-known ones like American Sign Language or Spanish Sign Language, has a complete Bible yet. And American Sign Language is the only sign language with a complete New Testament.

### *The Future of Sign Language Translations*

If you ask Deaf translators who are currently involved in Scripture translation what their dreams are for the future, you'll discover a common thread — they're

hungry for the Word and they desperately want to share the Good News with their communities.

"My goal for the Scripture translation is to spread the Good News so that Deaf people don't have to rely on the written Word but can have it in their heart language," said Pastraporn Sarakong, leader of the Chronological Bible Translation team, which translates Bible stories in Thai Sign Language. "I want them to be able to understand ... that, although we have all sinned, God has provided a way for us to be forgiven and reconciled to him. I know that is God's desire, and he's put it on my heart to obey him so that the Deaf are not left in the dark but can come to understand the Good News and come to know God."

At the end of the day, that's what all Bible translation work is about — leading people to faith in Jesus through the Word of God in either written or visual form.

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*In this issue you'll find stories of how God is at work in Romanian (page 2) and Colombian (page 3) Sign Languages and a guide on how to pray for Sign Language translations (page 3).*

# SCRIPTURE IN ROMANIAN SIGN LANGUAGE IS TRANSFORMING THE DEAF COMMUNITY

More than 90,000 Deaf people living across Romania use Romanian Sign Language to communicate. Culturally, they view themselves as members of a vibrant community with its own unique language and identity.

However, the Deaf face challenges reading and understanding the written language used by the hearing society around them. That's why it's critically important that the Deaf gain access to God's Word in a language and form they clearly understand.

Some Deaf people have been members of Christian churches in Romania for many years, but due to the lack of communication and limited access to God's Word, they haven't been able to receive adequate discipleship. As translators continue to work on the Romanian Sign Language translation, praise God that stories of hope and transformation are already emerging as people engage with available Scripture portions.

A Romanian pastor had adopted a deaf boy into his family and wanted to teach him about the Bible. But after trying for a while, the hearing pastor could tell that his deaf son didn't understand the Scripture in spoken and written Romanian. The pastor wasn't sure what to do.

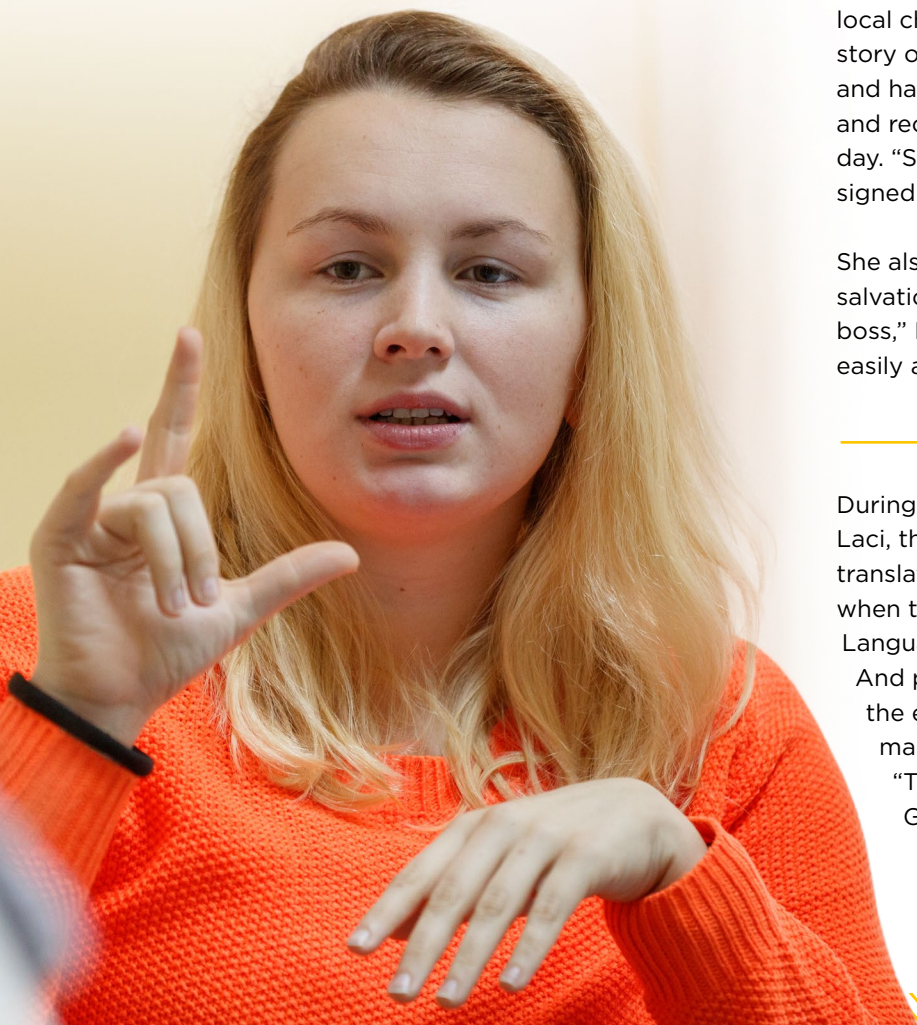
Then one day on Facebook, he saw a video of a New Testament passage. The story was of Jesus calming the storm — and it was in Romanian Sign Language. When the father showed the video to his son, the boy perked up and seemed to clearly understand the story's message. Excited, the pastor reached out to the Romanian Sign Language translation team who created the video.

As a result, the team members soon connected the family to a local Deaf church. There the boy is able to form relationships with other Deaf believers while growing in his faith through Scripture — communicated in a language and form that impacts his heart.

Seated alongside other Romanian Deaf Christians in a local church, Emma watched the Scripture video of the story of Jesus' birth. Even though Emma was in the video and had gone through the work of translating, memorizing and recording it, she was still moved by the message that day. "Seeing it in church really touched my heart," Emma signed.

She also marveled at how Jesus came as a baby to bring salvation to the world. "On earth, Jesus didn't want to be a boss," Emma signed. "He chose to be human so we would easily accept him."

During a visit to a Deaf church in northeastern Romania, Laci, the team leader, gave a presentation about the translation project. "The congregation was very excited when they learned that Scripture in Romanian Sign Language was already available on YouTube," he signed. And people were even happier when they learned that the entire set of Scripture stories would eventually be made available on the Deaf Bible app and website. "This will make it a lot easier for the Deaf to access God's Word quickly and easily," Laci signed.







## HOW TO PRAY FOR SIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATIONS

**B**ible translation work has been started for just 5% of sign languages around the world. The Deaf, therefore, remain the largest unreached people group. And because they are a minority, the Deaf are often at a disadvantage when it comes to operating within a hearing culture.

Since sign language translation projects often face unique challenges, here are some important ways that you can pray for them.

### *Pray that:*

- » Accurate data and God's guidance will allow translators to make wise decisions about which Scripture portions or books of the Bible to translate first.
- » God will give translators of sign languages special insight so they can remain accurate in the translation while expressing terms in a way that speaks to the hearts of the Deaf.

» Translation workers will be able to meet each community's need for Scripture in a way that is meaningful to them.

» God will provide translation workers with the special ability to effectively communicate on a deep level with the Deaf. A Deaf person is generally welcomed into other Deaf communities. Conversely, hearing people have many more cultural barriers to overcome, even if they know a sign language well.

» Interpersonal relationships within local Deaf churches will be strengthened.

» Technology will continue to develop and be used to bring Scripture and Bible stories to the Deaf.

» More workers will be available to work in sign languages. Deaf communities often have a much smaller percentage of Christians than are found in other communities of the country in which they live.

## TRANSFORMED FAMILIES IN COLOMBIA

**F**or years the Colombian Deaf have had little access to God's Word in a language and form that impacts their hearts. Many Deaf Christians have struggled to understand their faith. Even those who regularly attend church are unclear about how Scripture addresses issues pertaining to marriage, friendship and parenting.

With portions of the Bible now becoming available in Colombian Sign Language, entire families are being transformed. William, a member of the translation team, is thrilled that the Scripture videos he helps produce are benefitting those who are hurting or confused.

"I'm excited about these positive changes and know there will be more to come," he signed.

Recently William interacted with a Deaf Christian who was tempted by worldly things. When William showed the young man Scripture in Colombian Sign Language, the man's path was illuminated.

"I'm often amazed at how issues were simply resolved by the Word of God," William signed. "It has transformed the Deaf community!"



## A MIRACLE FROM GOD

In the middle of his work, a Gbadi Bible translation team member stopped.

“I now know that I have been saved!” he declared to the project coordinator. For years this man had heard that God chose the Jews as his people. How could others be chosen as well?

Everything became clear as the team member worked on the draft of Romans in Gbadi. While preparing the text to be checked by a consultant, he began to understand what God was saying. “The story of the branch grafted to the tree [in Romans 11:17] convinced me that God has a plan to save both Jews and non-Jews like us,” he said.

The Kru cluster team in Cote d'Ivoire — consisting of the Gbadi, Godie, Guere and Guiberoua languages — prays that as they complete Scripture in their languages, God's Word will deeply impact people just like that team member.

When the Godie team relocated to a new city, they prayed that local religious leaders would approve of and participate in the translation project.

Soon they began to see God answer their prayers. A committee of pastors in the city came together to help with the project; they even sent two people to attend a weeklong translation training course.

“We, the Godie translation team, count this as a miracle from God,” a team member said. “The success of our mission rests in large part on the motivation and dedication of religious leaders.”

The committee of pastors is so excited about Bible translation that they want to help other local languages start translation work too!

Your prayers and gifts are helping fulfill the Great Commission by bringing God's Word to every corner of the earth.





# WORDSEARCH



## FINDING THE RIGHT WORD

The Ikoma translation team in Tanzania met with a group of reviewers who had been reading their draft translations of eight books. One challenge they faced together was translating the word “shepherd.”

Their search came up in relation to 1 Peter 5:2a which says: “Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care ...” The translators and reviewers found four possible words to use: the Ikoma words for “leaders,” “guards,” “supervisors” or “shepherds.”

“In the end, they chose [the word for] shepherds,” said Ikoma translator Mussa Thobias, “although it is not without challenges.” That’s because this Ikoma word can actually mean more than just a person who cares for sheep. It can also refer to a person who has not yet been circumcised, or to a person who has not yet received instruction and teaching on the customs and traditions of his people. “The group decided that in most Scripture verses the context will be clear enough to understand which sense is meant,” Thobias said.

## HOW TO PRAY THROUGH THE NEWS

The internet and social media provide 24-hour access to worldwide news — straight to your television, computer, tablet or phone. Being so connected to events around the world can feel emotionally exhausting.

Praying through the news allows you to surrender your worries to God while also lifting up communities that need to experience his healing and love in tangible ways. Here are some tips on how to pray through the news:

### *Pray for the victims.*

Whether you’re reading about a hurricane that has ravaged a town, a city that has suffered a mass shooting or a world that is filled with sickness, stop and pray for those immediately affected by the event.

### *Pray for the community.*

Pray that local churches, schools, businesses and more would rally together and support each other.

### *Pray for God to make us brave.*

Pray that local believers would be equipped to shine God’s light, helping to bring healing to their community by being Jesus’ hands and feet.

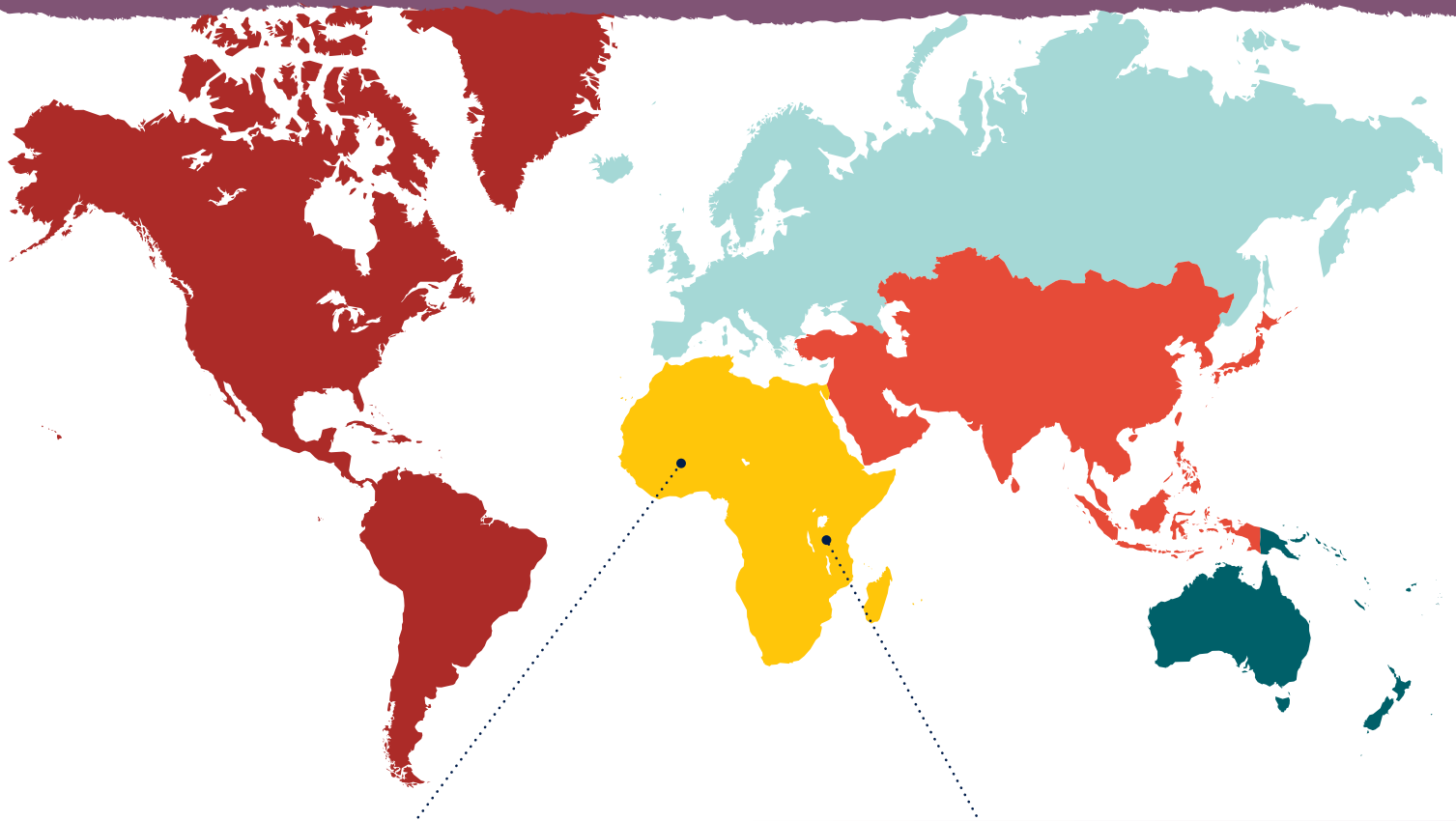
### *Pray for God to be glorified.*

Pray that God would redeem the situation and ultimately glorify himself; pray that people would be sensitive to his hand at work. Praying through the news can turn a negative input into a positive outcome, both for you and the people you lift up. Start praying through the news today!

## You’re in Our Prayers!

We’re so grateful for your partnership and are praying for you and your family during this time of uncertainty. We would love to pray specifically for you! Please reach out to us by phone at **(800) 992-5433** or by email at [donor\\_relations\\_orlando@wycliffe.org](mailto:donor_relations_orlando@wycliffe.org).

# NEWS+NOTES *FROM THE FIELD*



## TOUCHED BY SCRIPTURE

“If you read God’s Word in another language, you have the impression that God is far away,” said Julius, president of the Dyan Bible translation committee in Burkina Faso. “To have the Word of God in your language is to have God with you.” Julius regularly travels around to local churches, encouraging people with these words.

Scripture in Dyan is already impacting the Christian community in the region. Jeanne, a Dyan Christian, was so busy making and selling dolo, a local beverage, that she had stopped being involved in church activities. One day she was asked to participate in a session to read through the translated draft of Galatians. She was deeply touched by the Scripture and asked the pastors to pray for her as she thought about local customs.

Jeanne now enjoys singing in the church choir. She took literacy classes so she could read God’s Word for herself. She said: “I pray that the translation will soon be completed so that we can have the entire New Testament!”

## TANZANIANS RESPOND TO TRANSLATED SCRIPTURE

In several communities in Tanzania, Bible translation teams are feeling freshly inspired about their work.

Kwaya translators met recently with a group of trained reviewers, including Pastor Magwire, who thanked them for Scripture portions that have already been published in the Kwaya language. “Many people in the community are reading these books,” he said, “and they enjoy them very much.”

Paulinus Kitende, an assistant translation coordinator with the Mara Cluster Project, spoke with Pastor Magwire about the impact of audio Scriptures. “He plays them in his church. He says this leads the congregation into lively discussions about the meaning of what they hear,” said Kitende.

Pastor Meshack, also of the Kwaya reviewers group, reports a similar response to the “JESUS” film: “It draws a curious crowd. Often several people commit their lives to Christ.”