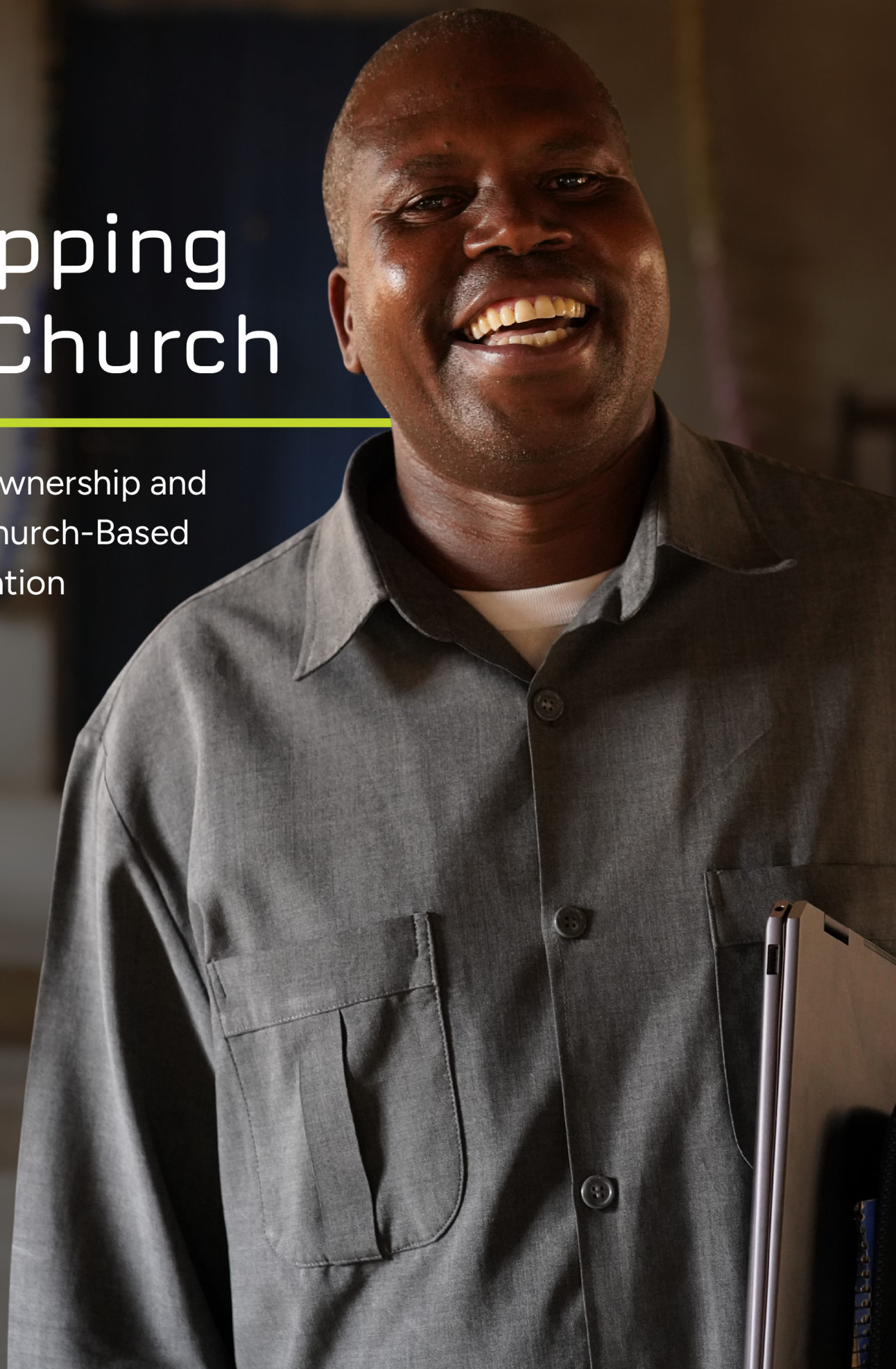


Equipping the Church

Stories of Ownership and
Impact in Church-Based
Bible Translation



CHURCH-BASED BIBLE TRANSLATION

Across the world, churches are growing in places where Bible translations are still needed. Many of these churches are eager to take local ownership and translate Scripture in the languages they understand best.

THIS IS WHERE CHURCH-BASED BIBLE TRANSLATION COMES IN

WHAT IS CHURCH-BASED BIBLE TRANSLATION?

Church-Based Bible Translation (CBBT) equips local churches to lead the Bible translation process. It's not just a ministry to the church, it's a ministry of the church.

HERE'S WHAT MAKES IT A TRUSTWORTHY & EFFECTIVE METHOD



The local church is at the center of the decision-making, resourcing and quality assessment processes of Bible translation



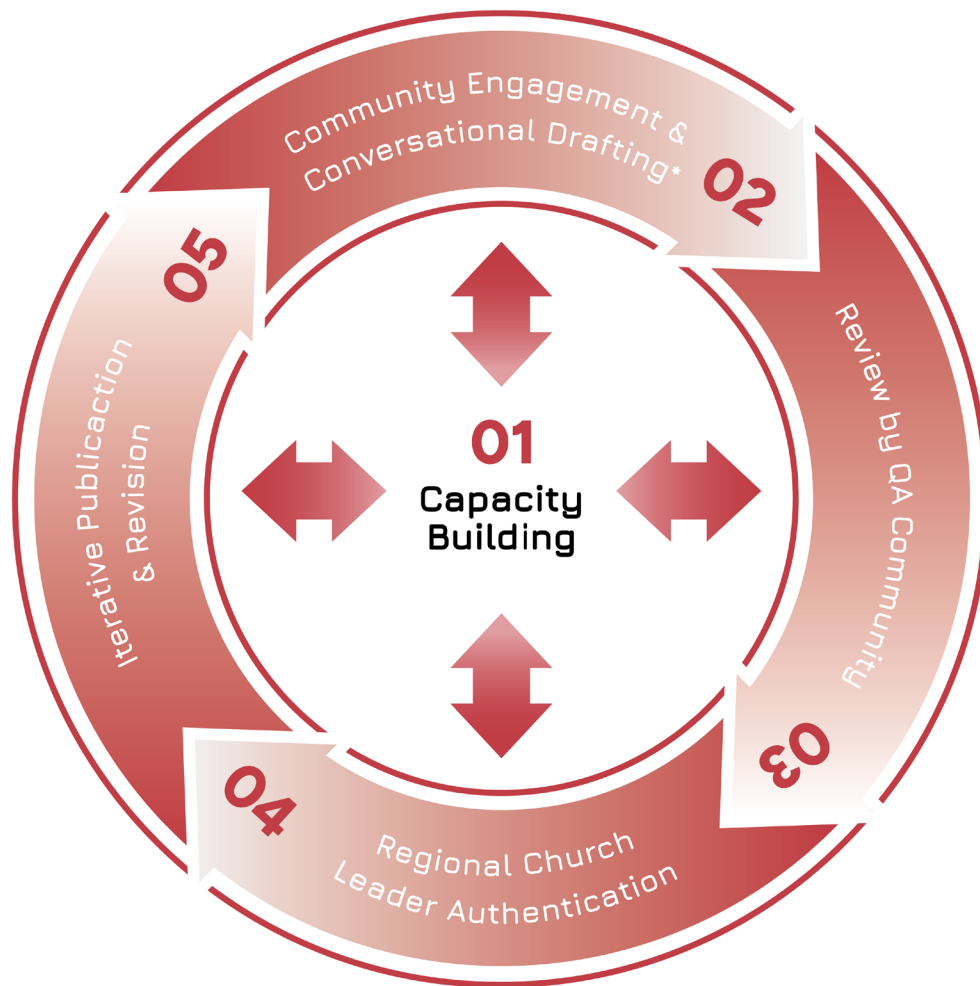
The local church is involved in every stage of translation, including authentication and training



The CBBT Cycle

CBBT is successful when the church is equipped for quality Bible translation through processes that are rooted in its experience and expertise. Equipping the church requires quality assurance processes that enable translation at a pace and scope that support its ministry goals.

Each of these five stages of the CBBT cycle support and reinforce one another, so the result is a cohesive and complete Bible translation process. However, each of these stages can also be implemented and tested individually, or selectively incorporated within established projects.



*For Sign Language Translation: Community Engagement & Visual Drafting

The following case studies will illustrate how CBBT is being incorporated into translation projects around the world right now. These examples are meant to provide ideas for how CBBT can be adapted to fit diverse contexts, reflecting the unique cultural and linguistic expressions of the local church.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - BATTLE

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GLOBAL PARTNERS

Language Overview



Region

Madang Province, Papua New Guinea



Communities

77 languages in PNG



Population

250,000-320,000
(geographically diverse)

HOW CAN WE ENSURE A TRANSLATION IS TRUSTWORTHY AND ACCESSIBLE TO A WIDE RANGE OF SPEAKERS IN A LANGUAGE COMMUNITY?

BATTLE is a Papua New Guinean organization that equips local churches and communities to experience and own the Bible translation process themselves. They have hosted trainings for pastors, young people and community leaders to utilize oral-first, church-based Bible translation methods, such as FIA (*Familiarize, Internalize, Articulate*). For example, a week-long event brought together 30 Scripture Review Board members, 25 Scripture Authentication Elders and translation teams, 12 community reviewers and 15-20 observers. This kind of training encourages key team players in different communities to participate from the beginning to the end of the translation process of every passage.

The CBBT approach, with an emphasis on capacity building and sustainability, allows Scripture to be translated, checked and authenticated by the church and community and raises the likelihood that the completed work will be accepted and used by language speakers for years to come.

"Before, we were interested, but we didn't really understand the process...Now that we have seen the whole process, and we understand how careful they are, how detailed, we have confidence that they are doing good work."

— A Scripture Review Board Member

CBBT Stages: Review by QA Community & Regional Church Leader Authentication



Who got involved?

- **Scripture Authentication Elders (SAE):** Local church leaders who internalize for understanding by passage and check theological and cultural accuracy.
- **Quality Assurance Community Members:** Volunteers and translators who work together to check drafts, ensuring the translation is trustworthy, understandable, appropriate and appealing.
- **Scripture Review Board (SRB):** Regional leaders identified by the church who formally review and affirm translations.
- **Visitors:** Other communities and organizations that observe to learn and replicate the model.

How did the process work?

- **Multimodal, oral-first:** Teams used the FIA method before drafting, ensuring the evaluation process was embodied and interactive, rather than a single end-stage check. Interaction with FIA resources first takes place in a language of wider communication, helping teams internalize the content and process before drafting in the minority language. In this approach, translation begins with Scripture engagement.
- **Community to SRB flow:** Translated Scripture was reviewed at multiple levels, including community, SAE, local church, and finally SRB approval, supported by churches providing venues and facilitators.
- **Ownership & sustainability:** Training emphasized church and community decision-making, resourcing and quality assurance.

"These passages are now Scripture."

– Community member reflecting the ownership and achievement felt after a blessing ceremony that approved 11 passages for publication.



What were the challenges?

- With many community members and both local and regional church leaders involved, it took time to listen to the needs and desires, bring everyone on board and understand the heart behind the process.
- The area is difficult to reach by travel, and reliable power and technology are not always available. This reaffirms that local leaders and regional facilitators play a key role.
- Formal education is limited, but communities show strong oral and multilingual skills in languages of wider communication, making multimodal methods a natural fit.

What was the impact?

- Churches and community members across denominations were trained and committed to working together, building trust and unity. They grew in competency and confidence as they were supported throughout all stages of the work.
- Local churches grew their own capacity for Bible translation, mobilizing congregations through iterative translation and regional oversight.
- Local churches gained an appreciation for the deep engagement with scripture they experienced through translation and are eager to continue applying the principles of FIA even beyond their work in translation.
- Community members and regional church leaders gained confidence in the translated Scripture.

ALIS i RON CHURCH

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GLOBAL PARTNERS

Language Overview



Region

Plateau State, Nigeria



Language

Ron (Alis i Ron)



Population

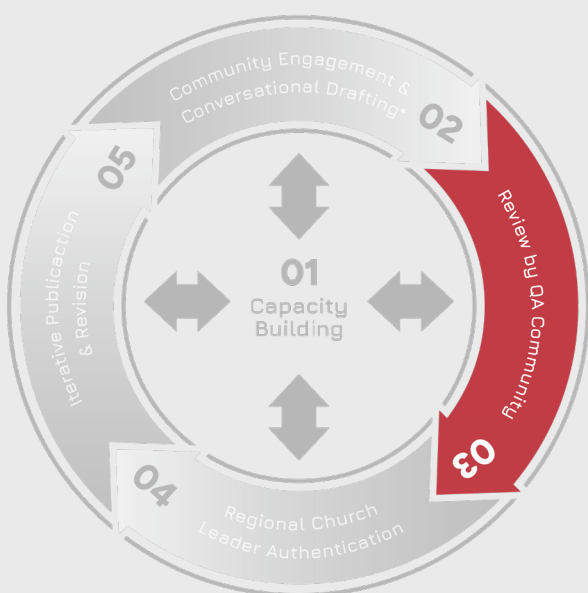
200,000



All Access Goal (AAG)

Full Bible goal

CBBT Stages: Review by QA Community



HOW DO WE SEE THE COMPLETE BIBLE TRANSLATED INTO OUR LANGUAGE WITHIN OUR LIFETIME?

This is what community leaders in Nigeria were asking when the Alis i Ron New Testament was completed in 2019, after nearly 30 years of established translation work. They called for an immediate launch of work on the Old Testament, expressing a strong desire to accelerate the pace.

With local churches committed to seeing the project through to completion, the Alis i Ron project integrated the CBBT stage *Review by the Quality Assurance (QA) Community* into their process. This stage has allowed 17 church denominations to take ownership of a verse-by-verse review of the translation.

What were the challenges?

- The Alis i Ron community serves in a region facing ongoing persecution and security threats, where personal safety cannot be guaranteed, even in their own homes.
- Economic hardship is a reality, as inflation and political corruption affect both ministry and daily life.
- The CBBT model represents a significant shift in philosophy and translation process, requiring intentional communication with partners unfamiliar with this approach. The team has responded to questions with grace and hospitality, regularly welcoming observers to experience the model firsthand.

Who got involved?

- **Mobilizer:** A local pastor invested heavily in traveling around various communities in the language area, helping a total of 17 denominations collaborate on the project.
- **Quality Assurance Community Members:** 25 head pastors, translators and other prominent church figures worked together to check drafts, ensuring clarity, accuracy and naturalness.
- **Quality Assurance Mentor:** Provided training, guidance and technical input.
- **Visitors:** 69 individuals representing 16 organizations with the potential to impact 176 languages from other communities and organizations who came to learn and potentially replicate the model.

"With the pastors checking, the Word will be accepted. It will be used. We are so impressed by the dedication, zeal and unity...."

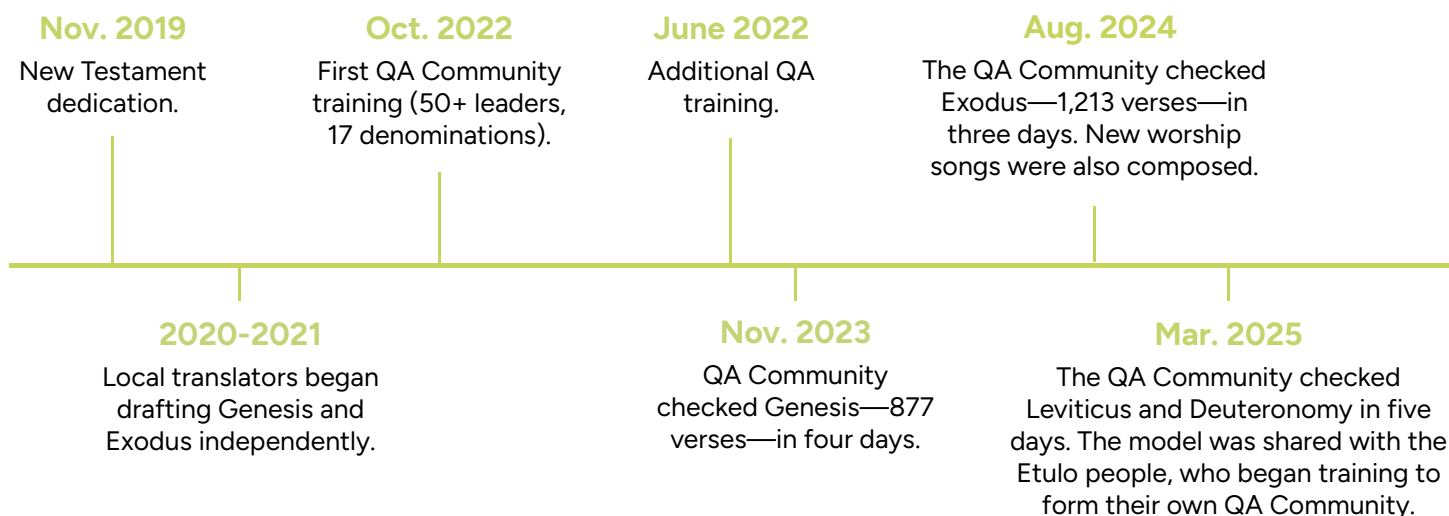
- Translation consultant from Ghana who observed the workshop

What was the impact?

- Genesis checked 12x faster than the established pace.
- Exodus checked 13x faster.
- 50+ leaders from 17 denominations trained.
- 69 people from other communities representing 16 organizations with potential to impact 176 languages have learned from the project.
- The Alis i Ron community is growing closer to having access to all of God's Word in their language sooner because of the CBBT process.
- Church leaders are deepening their understanding of Scripture and preaching with increased confidence.
- Leaders return home eager to share God's Word with their families, neighbors and congregations.
- New worship songs are being composed directly from the Scriptures, which are studied and shared across denominations.

How did the process work?

The church led workshops, dividing Scripture into sections that different groups checked simultaneously. Leaders used oral retelling, theological discussion and checklists to refine the text.



KENYA - OASIS COMMUNITY NETWORK

Language Overview



Region

Kenya



Communities

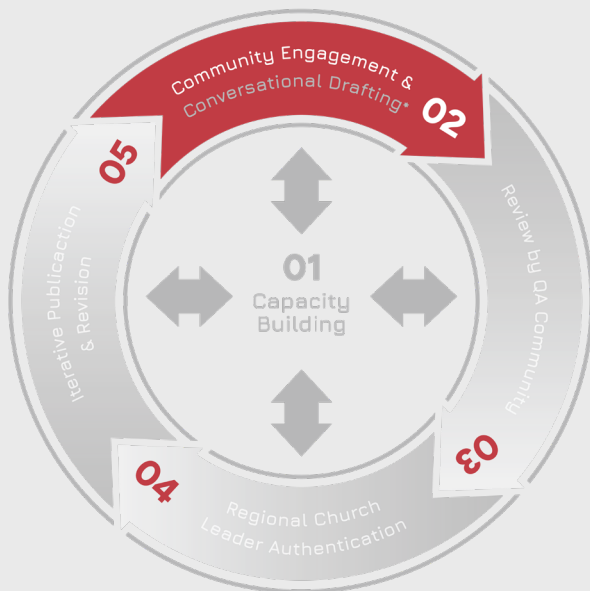
13 languages



Population

528,701

CBBT Stages: Community Engagement & Conversational Drafting



HOW DO WE EQUIP OUR TRANSLATORS WELL?

Oasis Community Network (OCN) is a church-planting ministry reaching unreached people groups, especially Muslim communities, with the gospel. Operating primarily in Kenya, OCN takes a holistic approach, proclaiming the gospel while meeting pressing community needs through development initiatives that serve as access avenues for ministry. One key pillar of OCN is Oral Bible Translation (OBT), which has helped make God's Word accessible in culturally relevant forms that bridge the gap of illiteracy. OCN's translation projects are not traditional CBBT projects, but rather holistic Bible translation projects headed by OCN and created in careful consultation with community leaders and members.

After learning about CBBT three years ago, OCN incorporated portions of CBBT training and oral drafting into their OBT process to equip translators with the tools they need to create strong first drafts. OCN's process demonstrates what CBBT can look like in translation projects that are not primarily church-led.

What were the challenges?

- Most OCN teams need a Swahili version of the CBBT course and materials to enhance their understanding.
- Some of the places OCN works in are remote and hard to access, and they face power and internet connectivity challenges which sometimes slow down OCN's teams.

Who got involved?

- **Project managers:** OCN staff members who help translators get technical, exegetical, HR and other support.
- **Translators:** Working closely with community leaders, OCN hires community members as translators.
- **Community reviewers:** After translators draft Scripture portions, they work with community reviewers who listen to the drafts to assess cultural relevance and naturalness of the language before it's handed over to the translation consultant. This ensures that the community is consistently involved in the translation process and owns the final product.
- **Translation Consultants:** After creating oral drafts of Scripture, project managers and translators work with translation consultants to check their translations.

How did the process work?

- OCN begins every project by building trust with communities and designing their holistic translation projects in collaboration with community leaders.
- For the past three years, OCN has combined portions of CBBT's oral drafting process and qualities of a good translation training with their own HR, OBT and tech training.
- After training, translation teams continue to use the FIA (*Familiarize, Internalize, Articulate*) exegetical resources suggested by CBBT and the oral drafting process. Every team has a dedicated OCN project officer who helps them access any tech, HR or exegetical support they need. After drafting a book of scripture, translators and their OCN project manager work with translation consultants to consultant check and ensure the quality of each translation.



What was the impact?

- The translation consultants OCN works with have praised the strength of the translators' first oral drafts. OCN credits this to CBBT's oral drafting process and its focus on equipping translators with exegetical information from the start of creating translation drafts.
- CBBT encourages local ownership by equipping translators and the community to draft and review their work, building their capacity. The FIA resources guide OCN's teams of translators in achieving quality first drafts.
- OCN also testifies to the fact that the CBBT drafting process prepares communities for Scripture engagement far ahead of time. From the knowledge translation teams have gained, they have championed the formation and support of storying groups in their communities effectively.
- OCN runs seven of its projects in primarily non-Christian communities. In these contexts, OCN presents Bible translation as a language-preservation project, begins by translating the Old Testament, and invests in the community through trauma healing and community development programs. The projects have allowed OCN to build trust within those communities, and have seen some community members involved in translation come to faith.

ALLENCU CBBT SIGN LANGUAGE CLUSTER

Language Overview



Region

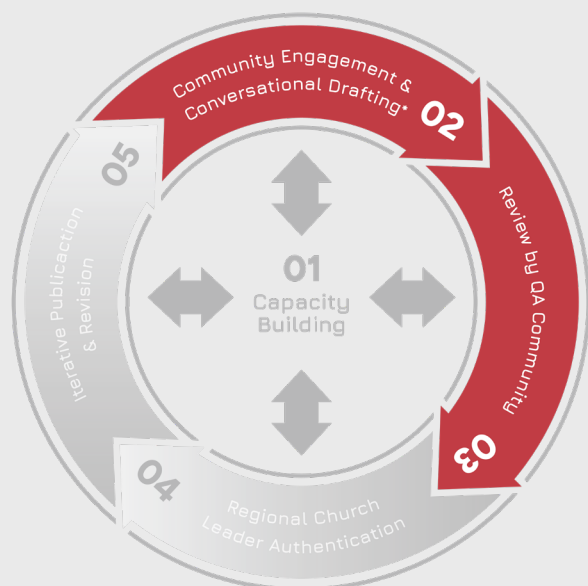
Eurasia



Communities

6 countries throughout Eurasia

CBBT Stages: Community Engagement & Conversational Drafting / Review by QA Community



*For Sign Language Translation: Community Engagement & Visual Drafting

HOW DO WE GET THE BIBLE TO OUR DEAF COMMUNITY?

The Allencu project began in 2023, when representatives from the six countries involved in the project agreed that they needed to take concrete action to eradicate Bible poverty among their countries' Deaf communities. By the fall of 2023, representatives from churches in each country gathered in a major city to participate in CBBT training.

Participants took what they learned back to their communities, and churches in each community created translation teams. Two years later, those churches gathered again to receive another CBBT training and strengthen their Quality Assurance practices to continue to ensure their translations are high-quality. As whole communities get involved in creating and checking these translations, they have begun to access God's Word in their own languages for the very first time.

Who got involved?

- **Translators:** Each translation team is made up of members of the six Allencu Deaf communities and churches.
- **Church leaders:** Help guide the translation process and ensure translations are accurate and high-quality.
- **Deaf communities:** After the translators create first drafts of Scripture, they ask their church community to give them feedback on the draft to ensure it uses clear language.
- **Translation advisors:** Work with translators to help them create strong translation drafts.

How did the process work?

- Representatives from each community attended CBBT trainings and duplicated the sessions with their respective translation teams and communities.
- The translation process varies from team to team, with each team adapting the CBBT process to fit their needs and setup. However, each team has a translation advisor who works with them to help them familiarize themselves with the passage using the CBBT exegetical method FIA (Familiarize, Internalize, Articulate).
- After a passage is translated, the church leaders present it to the Deaf community. These community review sessions are crucial for evaluating the clarity of the translation, but they are also an opportunity for the community to encounter Scripture in their own language for the first time and learn about Jesus.

What were the challenges?

- Translation teams live in areas where their translation work puts them in danger of persecution. Even in difficult circumstances, they are committed to seeing the Word of God spread and change lives.
- Translation teams face the unique challenge of recording, editing, and storing video files of themselves signing translation drafts, which requires specialized software. Additional equipment needs, such as video gear, also add to the cost. When corrections are needed, the process takes more time than other methods because the signer must match what was previously recorded.

What was the impact?

- By using CBBT processes, churches can decide which translation processes and outputs best meet their community's needs. For example, in one country, the community decided to have two translation teams work on two different translations in the same language. One team focused on creating a more literal translation for the more educated Deaf community living in the capital city, while the other team is working on an easy-to-understand translation for the Deaf community living in remote and rural areas.
- As local churches get involved in creating and checking translations in their sign languages, Deaf communities are accessing and sharing the Bible in their own languages for the first time — and lives are being changed. One church has seen nine people saved through the translation process. In another, a young couple on the verge of divorce forgave each other as they began to understand God's love for them.
- The Allencu translation teams resonate with the CBBT philosophy that translation should involve everyone in a community. By using CBBT processes, community members who do not know how to read or write but are esteemed sign language storytellers contribute just as much to the quality of the Allencu translations as someone who has a degree in Bible scholarship.



"We translate for the Deaf in the rural areas and send the material to the villages, and we see how this material has a positive effect on them. They receive new revelations, and this is observed throughout the country."

- Community reviewer

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO — TTSL PROJECT

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH GLOBAL PARTNERS AND SLAM!43

Language Overview



Region

Trinidad and Tobago



Communities

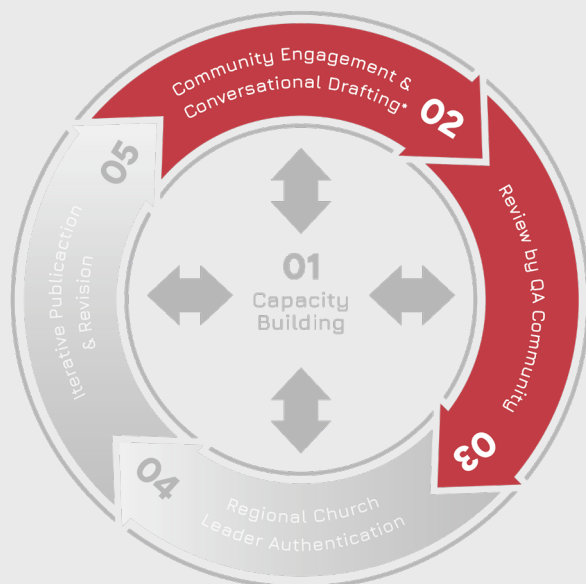
1 language across 4 regions



Population

1,000

CBBT Stages: Community Engagement & Conversational Drafting / Review by QA Community



*For Sign Language Translation: Community Engagement & Visual Drafting

HOW CAN THE WHOLE CHURCH BE INVOLVED IN TRANSLATION?

In December 2024, after considering several options, church leaders in Trinidad and Tobago decided to try CBBT. They had attempted to start translation projects for Trinidad and Tobago Sign Language (TTSL) before, but had yet to find a sustainable solution. After attending an initial CBBT training, the church leaders felt that CBBT might meet their needs.

Soon, the entire community got involved. Deaf translators learned the CBBT visual drafting process, began to use the FIA (*Familiarize, Internalize, Articulate*) exegetical resources, and set up practices of peer and community review. Deaf churches, church leaders, hearing churches with Deaf ministries, interpreters, family members of Deaf translators, and the wider Deaf community all give the project their expertise, time, and feedback to ensure the Deaf community can access the Bible in their own language. The team is especially focused on ensuring that the whole church and community are meaningfully involved in reviewing the translations and prioritizing their feedback.



What were the challenges?

- Currently, the teams' biggest challenge is to find spaces to meet and a studio to record in. Teams often have to rent space or are only able to use space for a few hours. They also struggle to find a good place to set up a studio with the lights and cameras needed to record translators signing their drafts.
- Other resources, such as time and finances, are also limited. Without funding to work on the project full time translators aren't able to dedicate as much time to their work as they would like. Many translators work full time jobs, and some teams find themselves only able to work for a few hours over the weekend.

How did the process work?

- Initially, translators worried they would not be able to effectively work together because they are spread over the entirety of Trinidad and Tobago. Their solution was to divide themselves into four teams, each based in a different region, so they could work in person with team members in their same region. These four teams divide the passages they intend to translate between themselves. After they've finished a passage, each team sends their initial draft to another team, who peer reviews the draft and then passes it along to the next team. Teams find that this constant rotation creates a strong initial draft.
- Next, church leaders present the draft to their church communities, often during a sermon or Bible study. They ask comprehension questions and for general feedback from their congregations.
- After checking the draft with the church community, teams invite the wider community of TTSL signers to give feedback and help ensure the translation uses understandable and appealing language.

Who got involved?

- **Translators:** 20 Deaf community members, divided into four regional teams, serve as translators.
- **Churches:** A variety of denominations support and ensure the quality of the TTSL translation. The effort is interdenominational and includes Catholic, Pentecostal, Baptist and non-denominational house churches.
- **Deaf community:** Translators involve the wider community of TTSL signers into their quality assurance process, inviting the community to give feedback on translation drafts.

"They're planning on having all of these people involved. It's really beautiful—it's like the whole Kingdom of Heaven is going to be included!"

What was the impact?

- Many in the Deaf community in Trinidad and Tobago didn't believe they had anything to offer a Bible translation project, citing their lack of Bible knowledge or academic degrees. But they have found that the CBBT process and materials give them the tools they need to bring their expert knowledge of their heart language to the translation process.
- As the whole community gets involved in the TTSL translation, God's Word has begun transforming and encouraging people involved in the project. One team member noticed that as his sister helped out with the technical side of the project, being immersed in God's Word brought joy back into her life. In another team, a Deaf linguist invited to help review drafts began to renew his focus on prayer and serving Jesus. And one Deaf leader in the project, recently diagnosed with cancer, has miraculously been able to continue to attend training and study God's Word. Despite her health challenges, she is determined to see this project through to completion.

A photograph of a church with a corrugated metal roof and a man sitting on the steps. The church has a textured, light-colored facade and a large cross on the wall. The background is a steep, rocky hillside. The image is darkened to make the text stand out.

**Equipping churches to translate
Scripture with quality and impact.**