

"My heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved..." | ROMANS 10



Wapendwa wa Kristo,
(Beloved in Christ,)

Our work with the Taturu is moving forward day-by-by. During my time in Tanzania my team and I have been carefully calculating what needs to be prioritized in this language program, and then figuring out the logistics to make that happen, all while keeping the Taturu speakers themselves in our circle of conversations so that we know what they want prioritized for their language program.

I've mentioned before that after talking to the communities of Taturu speakers and looking at the experience of other Bible translation teams around the world, we have determined that the best way to move forward right now is by doing Oral Bible Storytelling. This is a unique way of translating the Bible into another language. It is all done orally (no writing or typing), and it is short stories from the Bible, rather than an entire book or Testament. We believe that this will be a good way to "buy us more time" as we develop a training program for our future translation team, get to know the Taturu communities here in central Tanzania - their wants and needs, and equip our partners here for the work ahead. Oral Bible Storytelling (OBS) is easier to begin with than a full-on Bible translation is, so we are choosing this route with the intention of building a solid foundation of success for the Taturu translation program team.

There is a lot of community engagement and partnership development that should happen before we begin an official Bible translation, but that is taking a lot of time to do since the Taturu live in so many different areas of central Tanzania. We and our partners believe that doing OBS will give our team more time to visit all these different areas to speak about the language program and get input from the community. Plus, it will give us more time to select translators (some who we could very likely discover through OBS), train them, and sort out logistics for a sustainable translation program. However, OBS is a not a way of delaying the progress of the Taturu translation program at all. It is actually our hope that by translating these short stories into Taturu and sharing them with their communities that we will create excitement and awareness of a translation program, as well as find the most widely accepted and understood dialect of Taturu to use in the official Bible translation.

Visiting Taturu communities takes time for several reasons: First, the rainy season makes traveling to remote villages impossible if the roads are flooded. Second, the Taturu have elders who are the gatekeepers to their communities, so-to-speak. If they don't welcome you, the community will not welcome you.



STAY IN TOUCH

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If you would like to give to my ministry, please mail all checks to Lutheran Bible Translators' headquarters at the address below, or give online.



2024 Funding Goal:  36%



Vehicle Update

I'm so close to reaching my vehicle goal! Thank you for continuing to give and pray about this special project.

It will give me more flexibility traveling since I won't have to borrow another car, and it will enable us to travel to the harder-to-reach areas where many Taturu speakers live. Your support in this particular area is helping the project in too many ways to count!

I am only \$5,500 short of my goal. You can designate gifts to "Smith Vehicle Project" by check or online at the addresses on the bottom of this page. Thank you for your support!

Current Vehicle Funding:



Prayers and Praise

Philippians 4:6-7

Pray: For the upcoming visits to Taturu villages we will make this year: that they are enriching and that we are accepted by the communities.

Praise: For colleagues like Rev. Mdingi who are so faithful in this work and have a lot of enthusiasm and eagerness.

Pray: For my vehicle funding: that we would have one final push to get me to my goal so I can begin the process of purchasing the new car.

Praise: For my partners in the ELVD diocese and their translation projects. They are making great progress and are wonderful partners in this ministry!

Pray: For continuous health and safety.

The following is a real story from my colleague Pastor Frank Mdingi, our project coordinator, about his visit with Taturu elders last month.

I went to the village Magaleta with my colleague by motorcycle. When we arrived we met with the Lutheran pastor there, my point-of-contact. Together, the three of us went to meet with the Taturu elders, to tell them about the work we want to conduct here - linguistic survey and Bible translation.

The elders show up when they want to show up, and we were waiting for five hours after our scheduled meeting time for them to contact us. I was sure that I was going home without talking to these elders - what was this whole trip for?



(L) Gifting our SELVD partners with the LBT anniversary cloth (R) Rev. Frank Mdingi with the 'Talking stick' in front of the council of Taturu elders.

But God is good, and finally we got word that the elders were ready to meet with us. We met under a big tree outside the village, and there they were sitting in a half circle waiting for us. (Photo page 1)

You cannot speak unless you are given the stick, then you may stand up in front and say what you have come to say. I told the men what we as the Lutheran church were doing by request of Taturu Christians - translating the Bible into Taturu. I told them about making Bible stories into Taturu, and when I had finished, one of them said, "Now we know that God cares about the Taturu people, because his Word can be translated into our language!"

They gave me permission to conduct this work in their village. One of the elders, a man who is now Christian and goes by the name Paul, said that he would gladly be my host whenever I come back to this place, and he has land that he would like to give to the church, if they will use it to build a church there for the Taturu.

Pastor Frank's story about his visit with the Taturu in Magaleta is so encouraging! However, this is just one area of many that we need to visit and ask the elders for their blessing on our work so that we can work peacefully with the Taturu. We always want to ensure that we are not barging our way into a place and forcing our project on the people there. This Bible is for the Taturu, so we want them to know that we are not doing this translation for ourselves - we won't be able to read it after all! No, we are doing this work because we know that God loves the Taturu people, and he loves their language. Likewise, we as the church love the Taturu people and we appreciate their language and culture and want to help preserve it. We want them to know Jesus as their Savior and to teach their children the ways of the Lord.

It is my hope and prayer that someday the Taturu become a "City on a hill" and are an example to many people of God's love and compassion. Please continue to pray with me that this translation program is blessed and blesses the Taturu people over the next several years and beyond. Thank you for supporting me as an individual, as well my team here in Tanzania. We are grateful to you all. *Asante sana!*