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Safwa community tastes God's Word, wants more

Local engagement with translated Scripture keeps project team busy

November 2021, Safwa language area, Mbeya Region, Tanzania
by Kenny Grindall (Communications Team, SIL Tanzania)

From the days of their first small portions of translated Scripture, a language community can quickly learn to engage with God's Word. For the Safwa community of Tanzania (Mbeya Region) it's now years on from the beginning, and their completed New Testament is working its way through final checks before typesetting and printing. Especially now, teams of local Scripture Engagement (SE) workers can be very impactful and busy.

"Since our last report, so much has happened," John Nsolelo began. He is one of the Safwa team's two SE workers. He quickly listed meetings with local church leaders, presentations at area Bible colleges, visits with Sunday School teachers, and days spent distributing translated materials in the community.

"We also had several more training workshops," said Amani Mwandezi, John's SE colleague. "In the first week, I was in Itakasya village. There were 35 elders who gathered for a Listening Group workshop. I had audio recordings of translated Safwa Scriptures, loaded onto the MegaVoice players [a handheld solar audio device]. They were amazed."

"Surely it has been good for us," the elders said, "to hear the Word of God in our own language, even in our old age. God has decided to speak so that everyone can understand."

"After the workshop," recalled Mwandezi, "the group sang a Safwa song. In English, it means 'The world has come in the evening / Let us go back to our father these last days.' I thanked them so much again, then we prayed and said goodbye."

"Later that month, I went to Isebhelo," said Nsolelo. "That is a new area for us to work, so I did a one-day workshop. They enjoyed it, and said 'better if it was three days!' They bought many books, and asked me to send more. So I chose one of them to be our 'agent' and he agreed. I also left him a MegaVoice player so he could continue to share God's Word with others."

"Our last workshop was in the area of Mbonile," Nsolelo added. "As I continued with the workshop in the evening, we had opportunity to sit with the elders. I told them that our work of translating the Safwa New Testament is completed. They began to shout!"

"God is good!" they said, and "Bless you very much!" One man told the team, "These Bible studies and listening lessons have been very helpful to us, especially the ones who cannot attend church."

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Another added, “The lessons are ‘like honey’ because they are sweet. God bless you and all who supported the work—may God give them more and more knowledge.”

This reporting period was the last for John and Amani. As translation is completed for the Safwa New Testament, any work on the Old Testament will need to happen through a new project managed by local church and community partnerships. For now, the two SE workers are on to new employment as God guides them. Praise God for how much they were able to do.

“Those elders also asked everyone,” said Nsolelo, “to help the Safwa finish the Old Testament, because now they have only got a portion—they want to complete the whole Word. They said these words very sorrowfully.”

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Gathered for a celebration and farewell, John Nsolelo (one of the Safwa team's two Literacy and Scripture Engagement workers) stands with Safwa Translators Amon (left) and Lawi (right).

Photo: Richard Yalonde

[Link to original image file](#)

1000 x 750 JPG, 68 KB

Excerpt content for web, social media, email, etc.

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