

Broadcast 20 – Hosting a Translation Workshop

LUCAS:

Hello! I'm thankful that Pastor Fin has agreed to be with me again on today's show. He has an exciting opportunity he wants to talk about. And even though I am usually the host of the show, today, Pastor Fin is going to be asking me the questions! Welcome Pastor Fin. Thanks for being with us.

PASTOR FIN:

Hello and thanks for having me.

LUCAS:

I am excited to talk about your idea. Can you share a little bit about that right now?

PASTOR FIN:

Sure! We have been working on our translation for several months now and I recently talked to a pastor in a village about 40 kilometers away who wanted to know how we started a Bible translation in our mother-tongue language.

LUCAS:

That is amazing! I love that we get to spread the word. Are you thinking about how to help them get started?

PASTOR FIN:

Yes. We have talked about hosting a workshop for language groups in our area that would like to start their own project. I know there are many details for us to consider having a workshop at our church or in our area. Since you were at the workshop hosted by Wycliffe Associates that helped our team get started, I want to ask you for some thoughts on hosting one ourselves.

LUCAS:

I am excited to share what I have learned since then. Because you mentioned this to me last week after church, I started reaching out to some of the leaders from the workshop I attended. I have some great information to share with you.

PASTOR FIN:

Thanks. I am certainly glad to hear about and learn from the experience of others. First can you tell me some things we should be thinking about now, before we host?

LUCAS:

It is essential prior to a workshop to prepare and organize details so there will not be chaos during the workshop that will slow translation. That means making sure we have sufficient space prepared for working. We also must plan for meals and accommodations for participants. When we went to the workshop, it was in a town, so we all stayed at a Baptist retreat center. If we want to host something here, we might choose to ask some of our church families to host translators in their home.

PASTOR FIN:

It sounds like there are a lot of logistics and details. How do you see that working for us?

LUCAS:

Every event is going to be different. I think we may have to start small—invite one or two languages at most, not five or six. And we might want to make it for a week instead of two weeks. That will help cut down on cost too. One idea I had is to ask if anyone wants to help plan and put together a team of volunteers to take care of things like housing, food, and room space for the training.

You know pastor, we do not have to do this as an event. We could just invite your pastor friends to come and stay with us for a week and learn the process. I would be happy to help them decide which tools to use, and some of us who are used to it now, could teach them the MAST method. We can also help the translation teams think through how to start their project if they don't start it here in a workshop. The translation teams should leave developing a plan to finish the translation, complete further community assessment events, and hopefully help new language groups they meet to start their own translation.

One other suggestion I got from the leaders who hosted us was that selecting the members of the translation team to attend the MAST workshop is of critical importance. Contrary to what some people may think, they are not necessarily looking for the most highly educated or popular people. In fact, it is not necessary, or even preferable, to choose all educated, or popular Christians.

PASTOR FIN:

So, if I invite other language communities to our event, I'll need to give them some counsel on who to include on their translation teams? Or if we have the pastors come like you suggested, we should talk to them about how to build their translation team?

LUCAS: Yes. Here are a couple things to advise them of: They must be believers who want to help get God's Word in their mother tongue language. And they must speak the national language. They must be willing to take instruction from the leaders that are teaching and learn new procedures which may initially be uncomfortable to them. Some must learn basic computer skills if they plan to use one of the computer programs or want to use resources that can be downloaded online. It is a good idea to have a few people familiar with computers or tablets.

PASTOR FIN:

Those are all important things to think about in helping others to start on a translation. I think we also need to consider the time people would have to take off from tending their gardens or other work.

LUCAS:

Yes, that was a challenge for our team as we went to the workshop. Remember my wife Siara stayed home because she had too many responsibilities to be able to get away for two weeks. That is one reason why it might be better to offer a shorter time—like a week for the training.

But it would mean they will not get as much translating done. Because a lot of the first week is learning how to do the translation, things go more slowly than they do the second week.

PASTOR FIN:

Yes. And if we do a workshop, we should help leaders understand that not everyone who is going to participate in the translation must come. If a few come, they can learn the process, help set the plan and then go home to train others.

After your call with the church that hosted your event, you told me that the building for the event should have electricity, meeting rooms, tables, chairs, and computer connections to accommodate the translation team. Wi-Fi and mobile phone connectivity were also helpful if a church is hosting.

LUCAS:

Correct, all the requirements of any type of conference are also necessary at a MAST workshop.

PASTOR FIN:

So even if people are not being paid to translate, and we do have the help of our community, there is a lot of expense that goes into hosting the event. We will have to plan for the extra electricity, cooking and other expenses. If God wants us to host an event, he will show us how to cover the cost. Was there anything else?

LUCAS:

Yes, at the beginning of the MAST workshop, all involved with the translation activities are evaluated to determine their computer knowledge, their knowledge of the source and mother-tongue languages, their Bible knowledge, and their literacy skills. This “assessment” might sound intimidating, but it is only so people can be put on teams based on their strengths and weaknesses.

PASTOR FIN:

This is a lot to prepare for. It might be easier to teach just a few to begin with. I like both of your ideas—having just the pastors come for a week and learn, or having a workshop with only one or two languages.

LUCAS:

Yes, prayer coverage, devotions, and songs are important parts of the workshop, so it should be determined ahead of time who will be able to do these. There are other things the organizers of a translation workshop need to keep in mind, so as we build a team, you and I can talk about those.

PASTOR FIN:

Great. What else do we need to prepare for?

LUCAS:

If a language group wants to use tablets or computers, they will learn the hardware and software which will be used. There are a few options for translating. A language group can use

no technology and use pen and paper. If they do this, they may want to have a few people that can learn to use BTTWriter so the translation can be typed and then they can upload, format and print the translation.

PASTOR FIN:

Could you tell me more about BTTWriter?

LUCAS:

It is software designed to run on computers, tablets and even mobile phones. It brings together many capabilities to help the process of Bible translation. For example, it provides a lot of information on key words. It allows the translator to type in many different languages and fonts. It contains collaboration tools so translators can work together, on-line or off-line, to draft and revise their work to create clear, natural, and accurate text.

PASTOR FIN:

Thank you, for explaining BTTWriter to us. I know Jade helped everyone at your workshop learn how to use the resources and how to type the translation into the program. Perhaps we will need to find someone like that to help at our event.

LUCAS:

Yes. That would be very helpful. Remember, that even with pen and paper a group can get started. It is great if they can get it typed up though, because at the end of the workshop each translation group can generate a document of their completed work. It is an encouragement to the translators and to their pastors and congregations back home to see a portion of Scripture in print in their mother-tongue language.

PASTOR FIN:

Having a printed copy of the translated Scripture to take home is a great motivator! Not only to those attending the workshop, but to the local church and its members at home seeing and reading it in their mother-tongue language. It meant so much to our church!

LUCAS:

By the end of the workshop the leaders of each language group are asked to develop a plan for completing their translation. That can be for the New Testament or for the entire Bible, depending on how far the translators got with their translation.

This plan must include a timeline, so the translators and leaders can measure progress toward completion. Translators leave the workshop full of enthusiasm and motivation to continue their translation work. However, when they get back home to their families and to their work or studies, they can forget about the translation and make it a low priority. Having a timeline helps to motivate the translation team to continue with their project.

And, at many workshops, the translators are guided through the process of creating their own quality assurance guide.

PASTOR FIN:

Lucas, you covered a lot about what goes on during the MAST workshop. There may be more, but in the short time remaining can we cover what is necessary after the workshop concludes?

LUCAS:

Sure. After the MAST workshop is over, the translated portions can be shared with the community. This is an important step.

PASTOR FIN:

And the community assessment event takes place after the MAST workshop is over? Can you tell our listeners more about where and how that takes place?

LUCAS:

After the portion of Scripture has been translated, it is printed and sent to several other congregations and denominations in the language group. Then they read the passage as a whole and ask questions. Both the new reader and someone from the translation team check to see if the portion is clear, natural, and accurate. The translation team goes over all the feedback, making necessary changes.

I want to add, having many talented people involved in the translation and checking process does not guarantee a perfect product. It does not guarantee it will be accepted and loved by all the speakers of that language. There is a process of continuous quality improvement which should take place to refine the text. There is no greater gift we can give to anyone than the Word of God. We must do our utmost to present to Him our best work.

PASTOR FIN:

Thank you, Lucas, for your input. We learned a lot. Listeners, we pray you all will keep working, may God bless you all. *If you have questions about your current project or want to start a project in your own mother-tongue language, please call or text (local country partner info) or send an email to reachingalldialects@gmail.com or radio@wycliffeassociates.org.*