Audio Topic 6 – Oral Or Written Translation?

J – Welcome back to Wycliffe Associates' Bible Translation Educator series! This is Topic number 6 – Oral Or Written Translation

T – Before beginning a Bible translation project, two primary formats of translation should be considered, oral translation or written. Deciding which format is best for a people group helps determine what tools and technology will be needed.

J - So who should make the decision on which format to use? And what should be considered in making that decision?

T - Firstly, the local church should make the decision—that is…those who are believers in the community…and are invested in getting Scripture for their heart language. These are the people best positioned to decide whether an oral or written translation will serve most effectively.

J - Sometimes the decision is easy and obvious—the language is a written language and has been for a long time. Most people are literate. They want a written translation. Or, the language has never been written and the people are proud of their oral culture. They are used to important truths and messages being passed to them orally. They will be best served with an oral translation.

T - In other instances, the answer might not be so obvious. Translators will need to think over a few questions. Does the language have an alphabet or script? How many people know how to read? Is that number growing or decreasing?

J – In the case of oral translations, will people in the community have a way to listen to a translation? Like an mp3 player or smart phone for example? Answers to these questions will help the translators decide what the best option is.

T – Sometimes, the best answer…is both. You may be working with a people group who has need for written and oral versions of their Scripture translation. If this is the case, it may be best to start with written translation, and record the oral version of that text as portions are completed.

J – Take a moment to consider what questions you would ask a local language group to help determine what format is right for them. It may help to take note of your ideas for future use. You can use the questions mentioned in this session as a guide for making this important decision.

T – In our next session of Wycliffe Associates' Bible Translation Educator series, Topic 7, we'll talk about the Technical Tools available for work with written translations. If you'd like to know more about the software designed for oral translations stay with us for session **two** of Topic 7.

J – Thank you again for considering these important topics with us. We pray that God will give you the wisdom and courage to help others along this path to owning their own Bible translation.