



Collaborating to Reach Oral Learners

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Global mission agencies, churches and individuals participating in the Finishing the Task initiative share a vision to see churches planted among all unreached and unengaged people groups (UUPGs). The majority of these UUPGs are oral learners. Foundational to making disciples and bringing about transformation among them is access to Scripture in a format they can understand and in a language close to their hearts. The International Orality Network's Declaration on Making Disciples of the World's 5.7 billion¹ Oral Learners through Audio Scripture Engagement calls upon the body of Christ "to devote energies, strategies, and resources to provide access for all oral learners to engage the entire Word of God through audio-digital means, so that every tribe, every tongue, and every people group may hear, understand, and have the opportunity to respond."

With this vision as impetus, collaboration among Bible translation agencies, audio Scripture providers and mission organizations has reached unprecedented levels in the past several years. Scripture recordings exist in some 900 languages, recorded gospel messages are available in over 6,000 languages, and Scripture-based films of various types have been completed in over 1,500 languages.

Much of this audio and visual Scripture content is produced in the languages of small and medium sized people groups for whom little other media content is available, secular or otherwise, because of the limited commercial viability of such a venture. In many cases, an audio Bible or Scripture-based film may be the only media available in their heart language, making it that much more attractive whether the audience is Christian or not. When exposed to Christian media for the first time in the heart language, typical responses include: "I didn't know Jesus could speak Konkomba!" and "Now we can pray to God in Cakchiquel because he can understand us! We don't have to pray in Spanish anymore."

Samuel Buya has never read a book, but he leads a Bible study of more than 60 people in his East African rural village. A farmer by trade, Samuel received an audio Bible in his language, and now he gathers with his neighbors to hear God's Word almost every evening. Samuel himself has listened through the gospel accounts several times and he now understands his life is a gift from Jesus. The people of his village had a reputation for violence, but Samuel and his neighbors have seen a difference since they starting listening to Scriptures two years ago. They have learned to live in peace with their neighbors and family.

As mission personnel learn the value—indeed the necessity—of an oral approach, collaboration in Scripture delivery and engagement methods is also taking place. In support of local church planting and discipleship efforts audio/video playback providers supply cutting-edge technologies to meet the needs of the world's most remote peoples. Currently, there are an estimated 6 billion mobile phone subscribers worldwide. This is a potentially enormous missionary task force, one that can access and share biblical content through an array of available technologies, including Wifi, Internet, Micro SD cards and Bluetooth.

Yet so long as there are over 2,000 UUPGs without a single verse of scripture in their heart language, the challenge of reaching all oral people remains. 

¹ When the Declaration was first made the number quoted was 4.35 billion, see: <http://www.lausanneworldpulse.com/perspectives.php/1468/10-2011>. However, based on updated research the number is

actually revised upwards to 5.7 billion