

SUMMARY

Illiteracy is dropping in Ethiopia although in some rural areas it remains high between 70-90 per cent. The easiest way to reach these communities with God's Word is to provide it in audio, and set up regular Bible listening groups. Bible Society of Ethiopia began doing this in 2001. Today, there are 5,947 groups and, as more people join the programme each year, the project has reached around 1.7m people with God's Word.

This year, Bible Society wants to set up another 2,000 listening groups in churches, orphanages, hospitals and prisons, as well as record the audio New Testament into new languages. This will reach 5,000 people initially with the Bible's message. To do this, £33,000 of funding is needed.

BACKGROUND AND TARGET AUDIENCE

Formal education did not become standard in Ethiopia until the 1970s, so anyone over the age of 40 is likely to be illiterate. In rural villages, where communities live through subsistence farming, the illiteracy rate is likely to be very high.



Men gather round the Proclaimer for their weekly listening group

Bible Society is committed to bringing God's Word to communities in a format they can use, so in 2001 a partnership was formed with US ministry, *Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH)*, part of Hosanna Ministries. This major charity holds the world's largest catalogue of audio Bibles and works with us to distribute audio Bibles to churches in Ethiopia and elsewhere. The audio Bible device is called a Proclaimer. It looks like a radio, but is loaded with the Bible in a local language. It's wind-up and solar-powered, and can be transported and used in any community, in any location.

Listening groups are often in rural parts of Ethiopia, so leaders need to be trained across the country and Proclaimers must be delivered there. There are high costs of importing the listening devices. In addition, recordings in new languages must be produced. Around 80 languages are spoken in Ethiopia but the Proclaimer is only available in a handful of them.

People take part in *FCBH* groups for half an hour each week, and listen together to a section of the New Testament. They then debate what they've heard; discuss it and dissect it - exactly as the Bible was meant to be read. For many, this brings a new and fresh understanding of God's Word.

In Ethiopia, listening groups contain anything from eight to 80 members, and the sessions are a focal point for the community or village life. In orphanages and prisons, many lives have been turned around as God's Word comes alive to people, sometimes for the first time.

Bible Society's vision is to reach every part of the country and every person who can't read with more than 100,000 *FCBH* listening groups in churches, prison cells, refugee camps, street children centres and schools.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- To give people the Word of God in a format they can use and in a language they can understand, and see lives changed as they encounter the Bible's message
- To record and produce audio Scripture in new languages
- To take God's Word to prisons, hospitals, orphanages and street children's centres – to those who need to hear Scripture's message of hope - as well as to church communities
- To deepen the relationship with partner, Hosanna Ministries

PROJECT PLAN

The project will include phases for development and training as well as implementation and evaluation, from January to December 2012:

- Recording of Scriptures into new languages
- Production of Proclaimers
- Importing the Proclaimers from the US
- Training new leaders of listening groups across the country
- Establishment of listening groups and distribution of Proclaimers
- Follow-up visits to listening groups
- Production of reports including pictures and testimonies



Brehanu Tadesse has stopped fighting since he began listening to the audio Bible

IMPACT

Since 2001, around 1.7m people in Ethiopia have heard the Bible in audio, according to Bible Society of Ethiopia. They have seen lives changed as people hear the Bible's message in a new way:

- Non readers will see their faith deepened through regular access to God's Word, and setting aside time each week to listen and discuss the message with neighbours and friends.
- Churches will be better equipped to reach out to sick or disabled people in their communities, as they can take the Proclaimer into their homes.
- Orphans and prisoners, who have faced difficulties and hardships in their lives, will be introduced to God's love and acceptance as they hear the Bible's message.
- People will come to faith as they join a listening group – often a focal meeting occasion in a village – and encounter God's Word for the first time. In the next year, Bible Society expects 10,000 people to come to faith through the *FCBH* programme.

A short-term evaluation will be conducted in the second calendar quarter of 2012. This will assess implementation, uptake and response. Longer-term impact will be assessed in the second phase of the project.

PARTNERS

Bible Society of Ethiopia will facilitate and manage the project, and has one member of staff assigned to this task full-time. The main partner in the project is Hosanna Ministries through their *Faith Comes By Hearing* programme. The Proclaimers are provided by Hosanna, and Bible Society is responsible for their import, distribution and use as part of a facilitated listening group.

THE PEOPLE

Siefu Lemma, 32, is the pastor of Maranta Church, near Ambo, Ethiopia. His church has been using the Proclaimer for two years, and 45 people have become Christians in that time, boosting his congregation to 170. 'We go with the Proclaimer house-to-house and we find people who cry because they believe that God has come to their house,' he said. 'It has really been helping us to expand the Gospel in this area.'

Endrias Kacharo, *FCBH* project coordinator for Bible Society of Ethiopia, added, 'It makes us very excited to see how people are rejoicing at having Proclaimers in their village. In the next year, we expect more than 10,000 converts because of *FCBH*.'



Siefu Lemma

BUDGET

May 2012 – April 2013	Budgeted
Scripture costs	96,660
Staff costs	5,470
Direct project support costs	5,430
Indirect project costs	4,410
Total	111,970



FUNDING NEEDS

The costs of delivering this project will be shared with Bible Societies in Scotland, Northern Ireland, Norway and the United States and their supporters.

Bible Society England and Wales aims to raise £33,000, of which 90 per cent will go directly to the project and 10 per cent will cover administrative and support costs.

COUNTRY PROFILE



Ethiopia is a fertile, mountain plateau surround by the drought-prone lowlands and deserts of the Red Sea coast, covering an area of 1,106,000 sq km (about eight times the size of England). It has a population of nearly 85 million and borders Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya and Sudan.

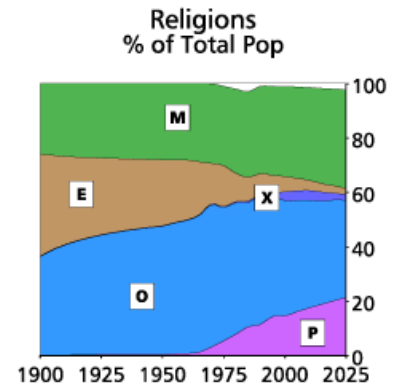
Ethiopia continues to face social, political and economic problems. Hostilities with neighbours Eritrea and Somalia have thwarted efforts to revive and modernise the country. The Eritrean war was costly in terms of money and

lives, for no real gain. Meanwhile, ethnic fragmentation remains a possibility as regionalisation

brings greater autonomy to the major ethnic groups. Some scenarios could see federal power break down and tribalism increase.

Corruption has increased with economic growth, and the country's resources are accumulating in the hands of a few. This is creating a widening gap between the poor and the rich elite, generating increasing resentment.

However, Ethiopia has seen a sustained and remarkable growth in the numbers of evangelical Christians since 1974. The Church has vision and is courageous in its evangelism. They need Scripture in audio to reach communities who have not yet heard the Bible's message, so that more lives will be touched by God's transforming Word.



- M - Muslim
- E - traditional ethnic
- X - Christian (other)
- O - Orthodox
- P - Protestant

Human Development rank: 171 of 182

Annual growth: 2.62 per cent

Urbanites: 17.6 per cent

Capital: Addis Ababa

Official language: Amharic – but there are a total of 88 languages spoken in Ethiopia

People groups: 116