

Wycliffe Global Alliance

Bible Translation Programs Philosophy (BTPP)

(24 April 2019 version)¹

I. Introduction

The purpose of this philosophy statement of Bible translation programs is to inspire and guide Wycliffe Global Alliance organizations. It is an expression of the shared values and fundamental beliefs regarding:

- The rationale for Bible translation programs as found within the mission of God (*missio Dei*);
- The transformational impact God desires for language communities which guides and shapes Bible translation programs
- The key principles that can guide how Alliance Organizations strategically respond to the widely varied polycentric contexts where Bible translation programs occur.

This philosophy statement affirms that the guidance of the Holy Spirit is critical in every Bible translation program since it is God who enables His mission to be fulfilled. The Alliance acknowledges, however, that others involved in Bible translation programs may have different philosophies or underlying assumptions guiding their involvement.

II. Rationale for Alliance Bible translation programs

This Philosophy Statement has as its foundation the core statements of the Alliance (the [Wycliffe Global Alliance Vision, Mission, Purpose, and Values](#)).

1. The ministry of Bible Translation is built on the mission of God (Ezek 36:22-23, John 1:14, Heb 1:1-3)

One central aspect of the mission of God is his self-revelation to the world. His Word is essentially translatable into any language and meaningful to all cultures. Therefore, Bible translation is one of the key ways God is revealing Himself in the world's cultures and language communities today.

2. God calls the Church to participate with Him in accomplishing His mission (Matt 28:18-20, Jn 20:21, Eph 1:22-23)

The Church² is called to participate with God in his mission of revelation, redemption, and restoration as he seeks to reconcile all things to himself. It participates in his mission through worship, communion, and service by the inspiration and guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Alliance understands itself to be part of the Church, serving communities with diverse cultures and languages.

3. Our triune God calls us to reflect His character as we participate in His mission (Jn 13:34-35, Eph 4:1-3, Gal 5:22-25)

¹ This version is a revision of the Bible Translation Programs Philosophy Statement first released in 2013. The original document is available at [BTPP 2013](#). The appendices included with the original statement are available at [BTPP Appendix 2019](#).

² We understand Church to be the community of individuals redeemed through faith in Jesus Christ by the grace of God. When Church appears with uppercase C, it refers to the universal Church, whereas church with lowercase c refers to the local church.

The divine interdependent relationship of the Trinity reveals God's character and his love. He calls the Church to reflect his character by living and working through interdependent relationships, while reaching out compassionately to the lost, broken, and disadvantaged. Such behavior demonstrates God's love for His creation. God's love is also revealed through the interrelationships in the body of Christ where each part is unique and essential, thriving only through the support of the other parts.

4. Following the example of Christ's obedience implies sacrificial vulnerability (Mark 10:28-31, Phil 2:5-8, 2 Tim 2:8-13)

Sacrificial vulnerability is at the heart of the Incarnation, as it is revealed in the birth, life and death of Christ on the cross. Vulnerability begins with following Christ's example of obedience, acknowledging the sovereignty of God in all matters and our total dependence on Him. The process of Bible translation, which brings the divine and eternal Word of God from one language into another, also calls on all involved to depend fully on God. As the Church participates in God's mission, suffering and hardship should be expected, but he promises to give strength to the Church as it endures and persists.

5. The mission of God is both holistic and integral. He desires transformative change (Luke 4:18-19, Jas 1:19-25)

Another dimension of the mission of God is creating and sustaining shalom³, the holistic well-being of all creation. To this end, both the proclamation *and* demonstration of the Gospel are essential. This emphasizes the need for strategic partnerships in order to integrate the diverse range of ministry activities that contribute to God's ongoing work of holistic transformation.

6. The mission of God is to bless communities⁴ (2 Cor 13:11; Col 3:10, Rev 7:9-12)

The mission of God belongs to him and he blesses the community of the Church as it participates in His mission and grows to maturity. Just as God invites the Church to participate in His mission so that it might grow to maturity, it is God's desire that all communities actively and confidently participate in his transformative mission. All communities will more fully experience and reflect God's love individually and corporately as they experience the holistic transformation that God desires for them. God blesses language communities through Bible translation programs as they acknowledge the disadvantaged and marginalized and encourage their inclusion in the life of the larger community. All those who work in community, regardless of their origin, will be blessed by transformed relationships.

III. The transformational impact God desires for language communities guides and shapes Bible translation programs (Col 3:9-17)

The preceding missiological insights shape our understanding of the design of Bible translation programs so that they lead to the transformational impact that God desires.

It is his desire to see transformed communities where relationships between people and Himself, with each other and with His creation are reconciled, so that they can experience the wholeness (shalom) He intended for them through Christ. God desires the transformation of all language communities through shared participation of all those involved in his mission. God uses the translated Word as a foundational

³ Shalom is not just the absence of hostility, but "peace with justice". It is a holistic peace that considers all our relationships at four levels: with God, with creation, with other people, and with ourselves. It means to delight in serving God, to delight in our physical surroundings, to delight in community, and to delight in what it means to be a child of God.

⁴ A community is a set of individuals who are conscious of an important link that binds them together, providing their sense of identity and allowing them to depend on each other.

means for holistic transformation. At their core, Bible translation programs facilitate the process of the “indwelling” of God’s Word in the lives of the speakers of a language community. Thus, Bible translation programs should be planned and implemented so that they contribute to a sustainable foundation for God’s ongoing work of transforming language communities.

IV. Key Principles for Alliance Bible translation programs

1. Because mission begins with God, a primary response should be to seek to conform our wills to His will through prayer and supplication as the Church engages in Bible translation programs.

As we listen to God and to each other, translation programs will be shaped in response to the inspiration of the Spirit and God’s desire to reveal himself to the world.

2. Since Bible translation is part of the mission of the Church, it is expected that the Church will give leadership to the planning and implementing of Bible translation programs.

Active church involvement in Bible translation programs will contribute to transformational impact in language communities. Therefore, churches play an important role in relationship building, decision-making, resourcing, and quality assessment processes of Bible translation programs in locally relevant ways.

3. Interdependent relationships and friendships in Bible translation programs reflect the character of God and contribute to holistic transformation. Growth and maturity are strengthened through humble interaction and mutual accountability in all relationships.

Alliance Organizations are called to be agents of reconciliation and restoration. Building and maintaining interdependent relationships and friendships reflects God’s character and contributes to holistic transformation.

4. Obedience and sacrificial vulnerability allow the Spirit to work as we acknowledge the sovereignty of God and engage in Bible translation programs.

Living and serving in community requires reliance on God as we seek to discern what He is doing. When Bible translation programs face challenges, we find strength in Him and in the community of believers. Sustainable progress will require networks of committed people, institutions and organizations cooperating with one another and recognizing their vulnerability through working interdependently rather than independently.

5. Holistic and integral transformation requires ongoing strategic partnerships

Both the proclamation and demonstration of the Word of God are vital components for holistic transformation. A comprehensive view of Bible translation programs encourages the development of sustainable processes in language communities through strategic partnerships. With specific reference to Bible translation, sustainable processes are also needed to develop greater capacities in language communities for training and consultancy.⁵

⁵ This is based on the November 2017 [decisions](#) by the Board of Wycliffe Global Alliance to encourage the Alliance Leadership Team to help Alliance organizations and partners work together to develop curricula for Bible translation training and to develop appropriate processes for accrediting Bible translation consultants within the Alliance, and to review the concept and role of translation consultants in the translation process.

6. Language communities are blessed as the Church grows to maturity and languages, cultures, and identities are affirmed.

God desires that his mission be accomplished with and for people who live in communities. Language, culture, and identity are gifts through which God reveals his Word, enabling the Church to grow to maturity and be a blessing to the community. All strategic partners need to have a commitment to working together to promote healthy relationships and a sense of shared responsibility, avoiding power dynamics which undermine sustainability.