



United Bible
Societies

A photograph of two men in traditional white robes and turbans. The man on the left is looking down at an open book, while the man on the right is smiling and looking towards the camera. They are both holding ornate silver staffs. The background is slightly blurred, showing a white vehicle and other people.

Global Scripture Access Report

2017 Annual Progress

CASE STUDY: ETHIOPIA

A young woman welcomes the *new version of the Ge'ez New Testament*, published in 2017. Scriptures in the Ge'ez language have been in use for 1,500 years, but in different portions and versions scattered in monasteries, museums and churches. This new edition brings together the different versions of the New Testament books, making them more accessible to a wider audience. The full Bible is due in 2018.

2017 – GATHERING MOMENTUM

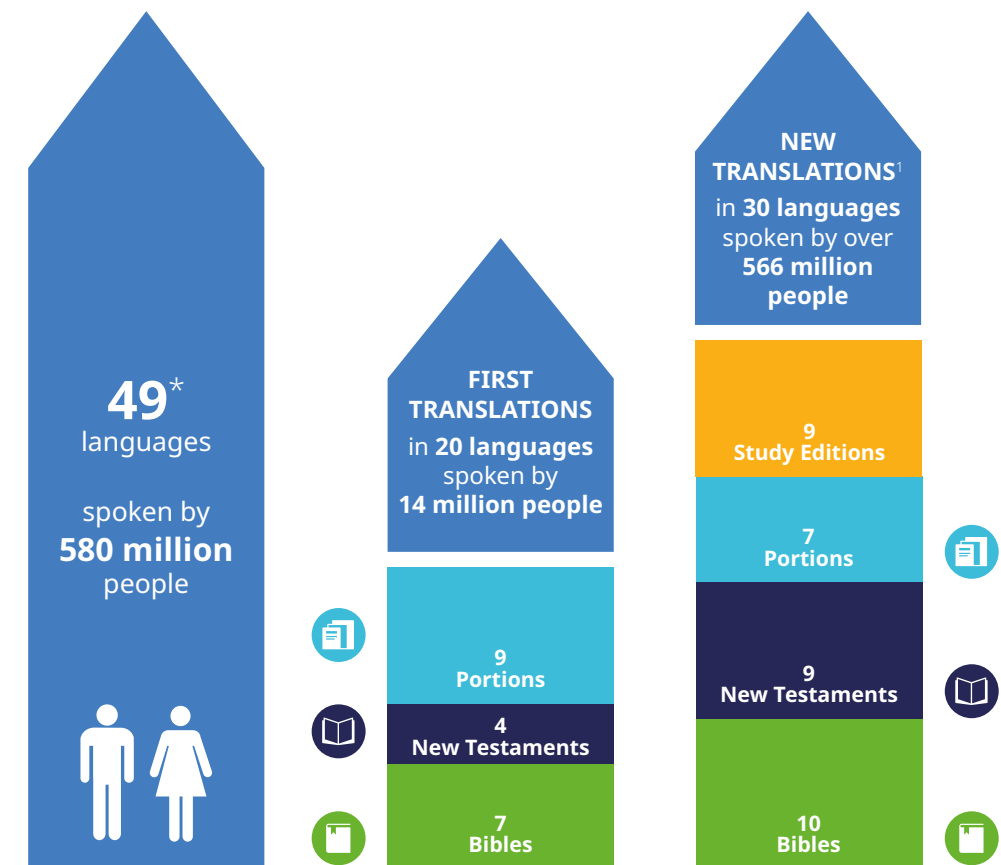
In 2017, Bible Societies assisted in the completion of Scripture translations in **49 languages*** spoken by more than **580 million people**.

Cover photo: Ethiopian Orthodox Church clergy members with the newly-launched Ge'ez New Testament. (Douglas Nottage, American Bible Society)

2017 was a **'first'** for **20 languages**, spoken by over **14 million people**. **7 communities** received the **very first full Bible** in their language, 4 received their first New Testament and 9 communities received their first, or additional, portions of Scripture.

Languages change and develop over time. That is why Bible Societies are also committed to revising existing translations or providing new¹ translations, when requested, giving new generations the chance to meaningfully engage with Scripture. In 2017, this resulted in **26 new translations and revisions**, plus **9 study editions**, with the potential to reach more than **566 million people**. For full details of the languages published in 2017, see the Appendix.

2017 Scripture Launches



"The Bible for everyone. This is the mission that drives us forward in everything we do, and Bible translation plays a central role in that as we seek to serve churches of all denominations. What an encouragement to see the impact of this work in 2017 – not just the numbers of translations completed but how lives are being changed, too. We give thanks to God that more people are getting access to the Bible in their heart language each year, and we continue to pray for translation teams across the world working to bring Holy Scripture to their communities."

Michael Perreau,
United Bible Societies Director General

* There are 49 languages, not 50 (30 + 20) because 1 language (Pere) had both a first and new translation. Some languages had more than 1 translation so the total number of projects is 55.

¹ A 'new' translation is undertaken when an existing translation no longer meets the Scripture needs of the whole community.



CASE STUDY: ARMENIA

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In 2017 these enthusiastic young Deaf people in Armenia helped to make the very first Scripture available in Armenian Sign Language: a DVD of Old Testament stories. Work continues on the rest of the 365 Bible stories. *“For me the importance of this project is that the Bible unites two worlds: those who are able to hear and those who are not. We are becoming one!”* commented Lusine Holikian, 19. Lusine was Deaf but can now hear after an operation.

Sign Language Scriptures for Deaf Communities

70 million Deaf people use sign languages as their ‘first’ or heart language. But only 10% of the more than **400 unique sign languages** that exist have any Scripture, and those that do have very little. No sign language has the full Bible; American Sign Language comes closest, with the New Testament.

United Bible Societies is working closely with several international partners to help meet the significant Scripture needs of this major unreached people group. Bible Societies are currently involved in **26 active sign language projects, with more than 10 more in the planning and preparation stages**. This work has the potential to impact **12.9 million Deaf people**.

This work will continue to develop as Bible Societies and their partners invest in training and support for the growing number of Deaf translation teams. Technical developments, too, are helping to open the Bible to the Deaf Community, from software tools used by Deaf translators to apps that deliver new translations to the end user.

“For me the importance of this project is that the Bible unites two worlds: those who are able to hear and those who are not. We are becoming one!”

Reaching People with Visual Disabilities

An estimated **285 million people** are visually impaired, **40 million** of whom are blind. Only **44 languages** have the full Bible in Braille, with some Scripture available in a further **200+ languages**.

Transcribing and printing Braille Scriptures is a significant undertaking: a full Braille Bible consists of more than 40 bulky volumes and costs around US\$600 to print. But despite the development of audio and other accessible electronic formats, Braille continues to be the most popular and effective way for blind people to engage with the Bible.

In 2017, **Bible Societies in 32 countries** ran Braille projects to meet the Scripture needs of blind readers. **Two languages** received their **first ever portions of Braille Scripture**: Luganda (Uganda) and Khasi (India). A further **four languages** received **additional Braille Scriptures**: Oshikwanyama (Namibia), Kinyarwanda (Rwanda), Armenian (Armenia), and German (2017 Luther Bible). In Latin America, work was completed on the transcription of the Dios Habla Hoy version of the Spanish Bible, meaning that all 44 Braille volumes can now be printed on demand.

In the course of 2017, United Bible Societies developed new software to speed up the process of Braille transcription, whilst maintaining the same quality. This software will make it easier to share Braille files through our Digital Bible Library®.

CASE STUDY: ARMENIA

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“The Bible is the most important and interesting book for me, firstly because I believe in God, and secondly because it’s not like any other book: in this book everything is described and said very truly.” Gor, a 12-year-old blind boy in Armenia, who received the newly-published book of Genesis in Braille, which came in two large volumes.

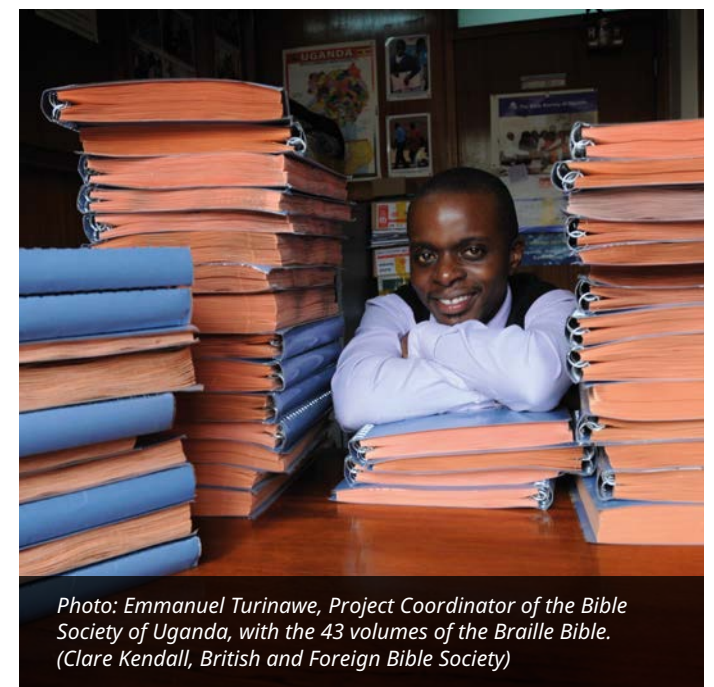


Photo: Emmanuel Turinawe, Project Coordinator of the Bible Society of Uganda, with the 43 volumes of the Braille Bible. (Clare Kendall, British and Foreign Bible Society)

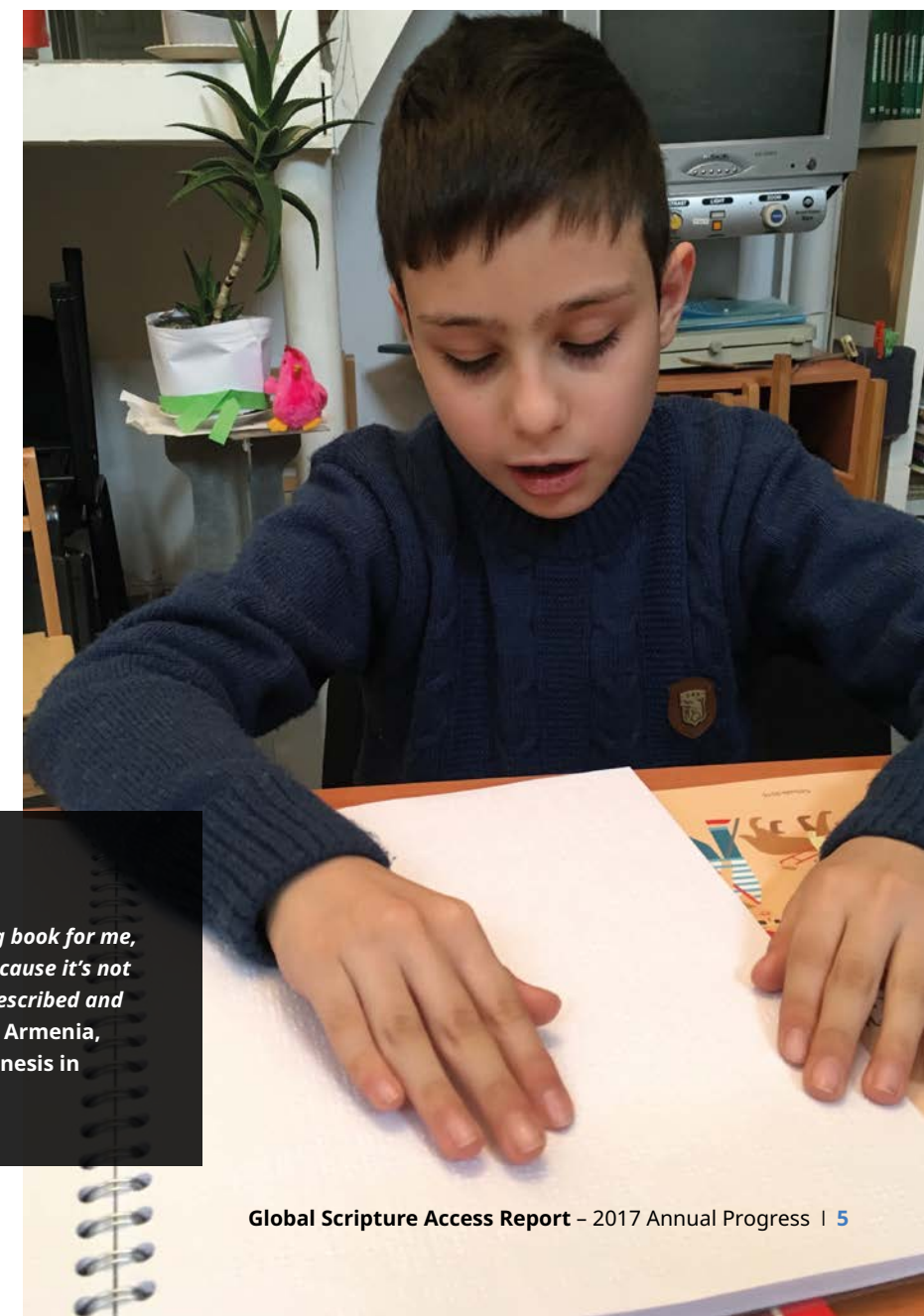




Photo: Douglas Nottage, American Bible Society

SCRIPTURE ACCESS TODAY

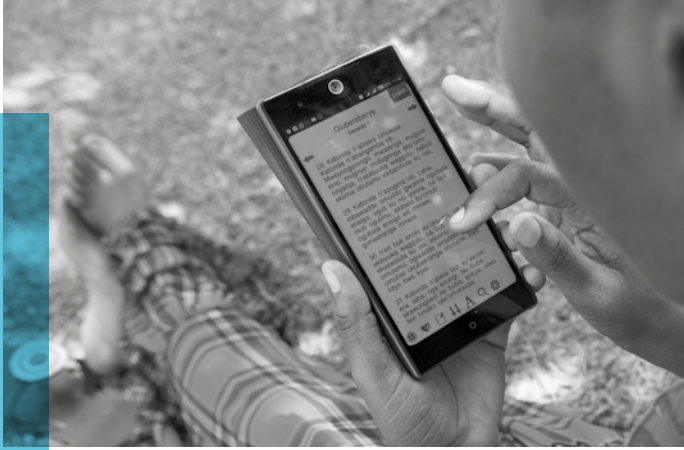


Photo: Douglas Nottage, American Bible Society

There are currently **7,097 languages** in the world spoken by over **7.6 billion people**.¹

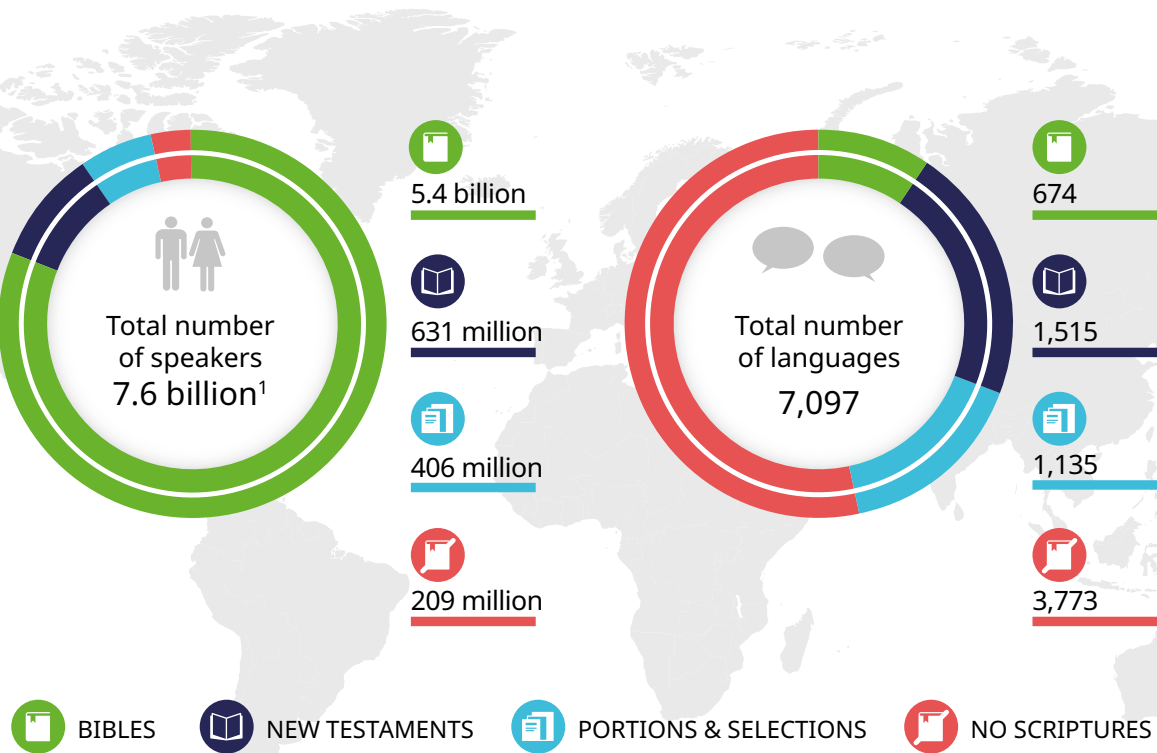
674 languages spoken by nearly **5.4 billion people** now have a complete Bible and a further **1,515 languages** spoken by **631 million people** have a New Testament.

This leaves **406 million people** with only **some portions of Scripture**, and a further **209 million people** with **no Scripture** in their language.

United Bible Societies is working towards the day when everyone can access the full Bible in the language of their choice. Bible Societies are currently working on over **400 translation projects** around the world.

Scripture Access Today

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¹ Figures as of 31.12.2017. We thank Bible Societies and progress.Bible™ (1 Feb 2018) for their help in compiling these statistics. The number of languages has been standardised to match Ethnologue's language count. Figures for the number of first language speakers are based on the best available data, which in 2017 totalled 6.6 billion, less than the actual world population of over 7.6 billion.



Photo: Douglas Nottage, American Bible Society

SCRIPTURE ACCESS & ENGAGEMENT

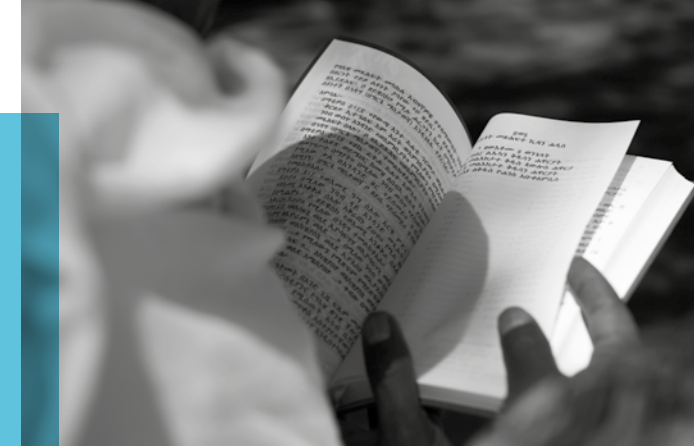


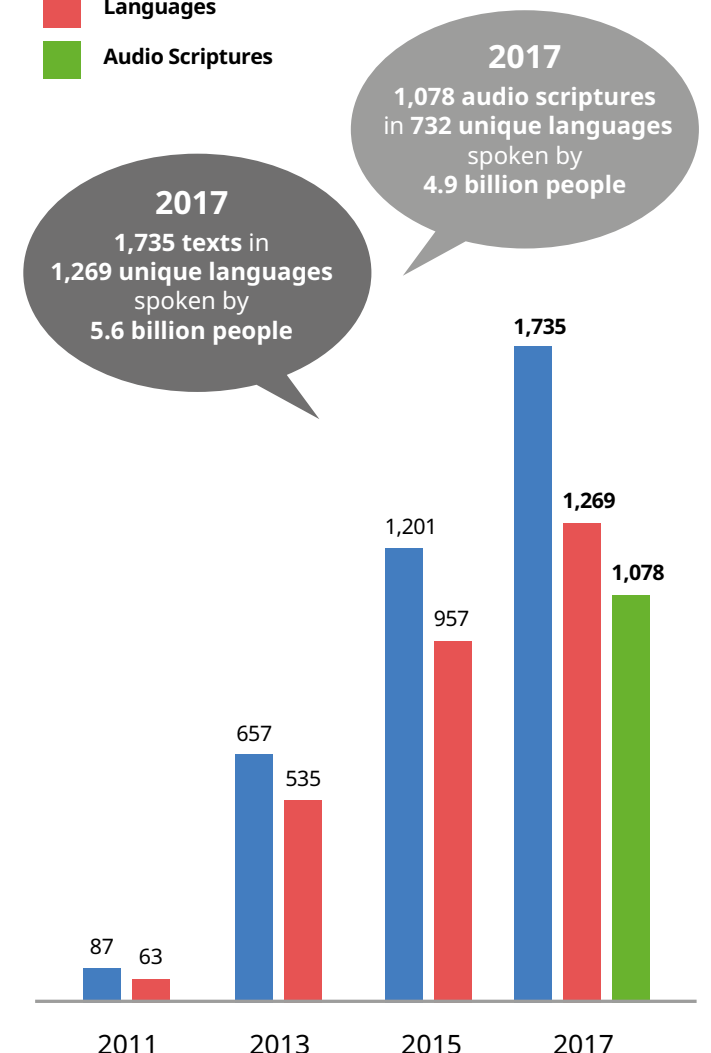
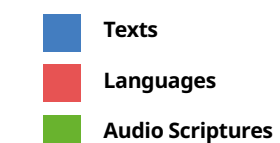
Photo: Douglas Nottage, American Bible Society

Developments in digital technology have provided unprecedented access to the Bible, and more people than ever before in history are engaging with Scripture – and sharing it, too.

The Digital Bible Library® (DBL) is central to our strategy to make the Bible as widely and easily accessible as possible. By the end of 2017, the DBL contained **1,735 Scripture texts** in **1,269 languages** spoken by **5.6 billion people**. Audio Scriptures in the DBL nearly tripled in 2017 to **1,078 audio Scriptures** in **732 unique languages** spoken by **4.9 billion people**.

The DBL is owned and maintained by United Bible Societies in partnership with other Bible agencies and with the support of the Every Tribe Every Nation alliance. It makes the Bible accessible by providing Scripture texts to the public through partners such as BibleSearch and YouVersion.

Digital Bible Library® Progress



CASE STUDY: FINLAND

"It's exciting to think that Mark's Gospel has been translated from the original languages into the digital environment," says Pastor Kaisa Yletyinen.

The new Finnish translation of Mark, 'DigiMarkus', launched by the Finnish Bible Society in 2017 as part of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation, is specifically aimed at mobile users of around 20 years old. People of all ages are enjoying it, however, and say that they particularly enjoy listening to the audio while on the go. The aim is to translate the whole New Testament by the end of 2020.

CASE STUDY: SOUTH SUDAN

Good news is in short supply in war-torn South Sudan, but here young and old celebrate the launch of the very first Mabaan Bible, published in 2017 – two years ahead of schedule! Most of the 90,000 speakers live close to the border of Sudan, under pressure from both conflict and Islam, but the churches are growing. 10,000 people attended the launch event, many coming from refugee camps in the area.



WHY BIBLE TRANSLATION MATTERS

When a community receives the Scriptures in their language, something profound happens. People feel that God is speaking directly to them, from among them. “God speaks my language!” is a common joyful reaction as they start to experience the hope and transformation in the Bible.

While great strides have been made in Bible translation, with the full Bible available in the languages of around **81% of the global population**, 209 million people across the world still do not have the chance to encounter any part of Scripture in their language. Much work lies ahead if at least some parts of the Bible are to be made available in these remaining 3,773 languages. Please pray for this vital area of mission and for the Bible Societies and partner agencies committed to meeting this need.

But how can they call to him for help if they have not believed? And how can they believe if they have not heard the message?

Romans 10:14



CASE STUDY: GUATEMALA

One of the translators of the first Poqomchi Bible with Deuterocanon celebrates with his wife at the dedication event in Guatemala. Some travelled for hours from their homes in the mountains to get copies. Poqomchi is spoken by around 92,000 people, more than half of whom are Catholic.

Appendix

In 2017 United Bible Societies assisted in the completion of translations in **49 languages spoken by over 580 million people.**

Country/ Territory	Languages	Scope	Type	Speakers
Mozambique	Elomwe	Bible	First	1,630,000
Mozambique	Txitxopi (Chopi)	Bible	First	962,000
Myanmar	Zotung Chin	Bible	First	40,000
South Sudan	Mabaan	Bible	First	90,000
Taiwan	Drekay	Bible	First	10,500
Turkmenistan	Turkmen ²	Bible	First	7,097,970
Vietnam	Jarai	Bible	First	262,800
Australia	Eastern & Central Arrernte	New Testament + Genesis, Ruth & Exodus (part)	First	2,380
India	Tarao	New Testament	First	870
Malawi	Lambya ^{1,2}	New Testament	First	101,500
Vietnam	Tay	New Testament	First	1,630,000
Australia	Alyawarr (Nothern dialect)	Old & New Testament portions	First	1,660
Nigeria	Ogbia	Portions – Colossians, Philemon, 1,2,3 John, Jude (pilots)	First	200,000
Nigeria	Epie	Portions – Philemon, James, 1,2,3 John, Jude (pilots)	First	12,000
Mauritius	Reunion Creole ²	Portion – Mark	First ³	450,000
Cameroon	Pere	Portion – Psalms	First ³	50,000
Colombia	Wayuunaiki	Portions – Ruth & Jonah	First ³	321,000
Colombia	Nasa Yuwe (Páez)	Portions – Ruth & Jonah	First ³	40,000
Guatemala	Poqomchi	Portions – Deuterocanon	First ³	92,200
Mauritius	Mauritian Creole ²	Portions – Ruth & Esther	First ³	1,135,000
Cameroon	Fulfulde Adamaoua en Ajamia	Bible	New	999,500
Malawi	Tumbuka	Bible	New	1,546,000
Angola	Umbundu	New Testament	New	6,000,000

Country/ Territory	Languages	Scope	Type	Speakers
Belarus	Belarusian (Today's Belarusian)	New Testament	New	2,560,170
Belarus	Belarusian (Majority Text translation)	New Testament	New	2,560,170
Ethiopia	Oromo, Arsi Bale dialect	New Testament	New	6,000,000
Ethiopia	Ge`ez	New Testament	New	500,000
Faroe Islands	Faroese	New Testament	New	69,000
Namibia	Khoekhoegowab	New Testament & Psalms (selection)	New	202,200
Scotland	Scottish Gaelic	New Testament	New	61,170
Finland	Finnish	Portion – Mark (pilot)	New	5,413,380
Algeria	Kabyle	Portion – Proverbs	New	5,586,000
Philippines	Filipino	Portion – Psalms & Proverbs	New	45,000,000
Turkey	Kurdish Kurmanji	Portions – Genesis, Daniel & Ecclesiastes	New	15,103,230
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz	Portions – Joshua & Judges	New	4,908,350
Mongolia	Mongolian	Portions – Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Jonah (trial editions)	New	2,626,590
Denmark	Danish	Portions – Psalms & Job	New	5,532,120
Armenia	Armenian (Etchmiadzin Version)	Bible	Revision	5,169,640
Brazil	Portuguese (Almeida)	Bible	Revision	218,765,470
Kenya	Kalenjin	Bible	Revision	3,000,000
Nigeria	Tiv	Bible	Revision	4,123,393
Paraguay	Nivaclé Bible	Bible	Revision	13,920
Slovenia	Slovenian (Chráska Version)	Bible	Revision	2,104,630
Tanzania	Swahili (Union Version)	Bible with Deuterocanon	Revision	15,992,010
Uganda	Luganda	Bible	Revision	5,563,450
Cameroon	Pere	New Testament	Revision	50,000

Appendix *Continued*

Country/ Territory	Languages	Scope	Type	Speakers
Study Editions				
Brazil	Portuguese – 3 Study Bibles	Bible – 3 Editions	Study Edition	218,765,470
Netherlands	Dutch (Bijbel Dichtbij)	Bible	Study Edition	22,163,020
Russian Federation	Russian (Contemporary Russian Version)	Bible	Study Edition	153,612,510
Malawi	Chichewa	New Testament	Study Edition	9,689,700
Myanmar	Jinghpaw	New Testament	Study Edition	940,000
Taiwan	Chinese (Union Version Shen Edition)	Portions – 2 Peter & Jude	Study Edition	23,000,000
Armenia	Armenian	Portion – Luke	Study Edition	5,169,640

Braille Editions				
India	Khasi	Psalms, Matthew	First	
Uganda	Luganda	Psalms, Mark	First	
Armenia	Armenian	Portions – Genesis	First ³	
Namibia	Oshikwanyama	John	First ³	
Rwanda	Kinyarwanda	Psalms, Proverbs, NT (not Gospels)	First ³	
Latin America	Spanish – Dios Habla Hoy	Old Testament	New	
Germany	German – Luther Bible 2017 revision	Gospels, Acts, Romans, 1&2 Corinthians	New	

¹ Published in 2016 but not included in the 2016 report
² UBS support to a partnership project
³ First publication of these portions – other books of the Bible have been published in this languages.
Number of speakers – the primary source for this data is progress.Bible™ (1 Feb 2018).



CASE STUDY: VIETNAM
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A woman reading the first ever Tay New Testament, launched in 2017.

One of the translators said, “This book is so precious to us! I used Vietnamese Scripture to share the Gospel but Tay people couldn’t understand, saying, ‘This is the God of the foreigner...not for our people.’ Please pray as we continue to translate the Old Testament”. Tay is spoken by 1.6 million people.



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The Bible for everyone

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