

PROJECT PROFILE

Kuku Language

[KOO'-KOO]

PROJECT NAME

Nile Cluster



QUICK FACTS

Start Year: 2022

End Year: 2027

Population: 242,500

Location: Uganda

Summary of Goals: Translate the full New Testament, beginning with the Gospel of Luke to facilitate production of the “JESUS” film. Publish the New Testament in print and audio formats.

KEY TERM

Animism is the belief that natural objects, natural phenomena, and the universe possess souls; the belief in spiritual beings or agencies.



FIRST SCRIPTURE



PROJECT SUMMARY

Church leaders from multiple denominations in northwest Uganda are asking for first-ever Scriptures for the Kuku people. Prior to this project’s launch in mid-2022, Bible verses and Scripture-based materials in Kuku simply didn’t exist. Thankfully, that is now changing!

Kuku is one of four groups in the Nile Cluster project aiming to complete the New Testament within five years and produce the “JESUS” film in their language. Translation teams are creating Scripture-engagement groups in churches, where people can read and listen to Scripture portions in Kuku. Translated Scripture portions will be made available for churches and Bible study groups so that community feedback can be gathered quickly.

Teams have agreed to an ambitious schedule of translating 30 verses per day to meet their five-year goals. They started with the Gospel of Luke to enable production of the “JESUS” film as soon as possible. Other high-priority books include Mark and Acts, which will help believers learn how the early church grew and expanded, as well as 1 Corinthians, which will address issues related to the family.

Church leaders are confident that Scriptures in Kuku will help people overcome their fears and animistic worldviews, reduce stealing, lying, drunkenness, and the spread of HIV/AIDS, and help address family issues.

KEY TERM

In **comprehension testing**, community members listen as translators read drafted material and then answer questions that help the team determine whether the translation communicates clearly and naturally.

BACKGROUND

The Kuku people left their homeland on the eastern side of the Nile River in Egypt in the mid-600s. They made their way to southwestern Ethiopia where they lived for nearly 1,000 years before migrating to their current home on the Uganda-South Sudan border.

Life is difficult for most Kuku, who try to make ends meet through small-scale farming. Even those with non-farming jobs maintain gardens to provide food for their families. Some Kuku become artisans like blacksmiths or potters, making spears, knives, baskets, drums, flutes, and guitars.

During dry season, the men take bows and arrows and hunt in groups for wild animals. They sometimes chase their prey into large nets, which are used to trap the animals and to hold them until they are subdued. Successful hunts are celebrated with songs and dancing.

Poverty is rampant, with most living on less than the equivalent of one US dollar per day. Illiteracy rates are high, and malaria is a problem, as the Nile is a breeding zone for mosquitoes.

Christianity was introduced to the region more than 100 years ago by Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries and propelled by Ugandan believers. Even so, tribal traditions continue to hold great sway over the people. Community leaders cite the breakdown of family and friend relationships as their top concern, along with stealing, lying, and alcoholism. Translated Scripture will draw many spiritually needy souls to Jesus.

STRATEGY AND PARTNERS

The Nile Cluster project is led by The Word For The World (TWFTW), an established and effective Bible translation organization operating around the globe. The organization is known for ensuring that finances are managed with accuracy, efficiency, and transparency. The staff member overseeing the project is an experienced manager and consultant.

Life Ministries Uganda (which will take the lead in producing the “JESUS” film) and the Bible Society of Uganda are providing technical assistance, while local churches are offering modest financial assistance along with in-kind assistance, which includes office space for Kuku translators, furniture, and unpaid volunteers to help with comprehension testing. Local congregations are also involved in Scripture distribution and various Scripture-engagement activities.

While traditional in some respects, this project is experimental in its length. Partners have signed a five-year memorandum of understanding with a maximum one-year extension to complete the entire New Testament. (Most translation projects divide a New Testament into multiple two- or three-year phases that allow partners to closely monitor the teams’ progress and project outcomes.)

Given the translation experience and dedication of the lead partner to this project’s success, Seed Company agreed to the longer-term project. If successful, the new project design could become a model for other projects, accelerating Scripture access not only for Kuku speakers but also for other language groups.

PROJECT GOALS

Translation Plan:

- New Testament

Distribution Plan:

- New Testament in print and audio
- The “JESUS” film

2022-2027

PROJECT YEARS

7,957

VERSES IN PROJECT

BOOK	VERSES IN BOOK	VERSES IN THIS PROJECT
New Testament	7,957	7,957

BOOK	EXEGESIS & FIRST DRAFT	TEAM CHECK	COMPREHENSION TEST	BACK TRANSLATION	CONSULTANT CHECK	PUBLISH
New Testament	x	x	x	x	x	x

RISKS AND STRENGTHS

Bible translation is a highly technical process that often takes place in some of the world's most difficult environments. Therefore, Seed Company strives to mitigate risks while maximizing the strengths of our partners so that clear, accurate translations are completed on time.

The risks and strengths of the Nile Cluster project are as follows:

Risks

- New to both Bible translation and computers, inexperienced translators could fall behind quickly, jeopardizing the project's ambitious five-year schedule.
- Though The Word For The World (TWFTW) has vast experience in Africa, this is its first Bible translation project in Uganda.

Strengths

- TWFTW is confident the Nile Cluster teams will complete the New Testament before the end of the project. Trial printings will allow for Scripture testing and early impact.
- TWFTW is an established, effective partner organization. The officer overseeing the project is an experienced manager and consultant.
- Month-long training sessions during the first three years will build key skills for inexperienced translators and exegetes. Two month-long consultant checks each year will provide additional training and ensure quality.