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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
REGARDING ENGAGING A TRANSLATION SERVICE PARTNER (TSP)

SRG is considering use of a Translation Service Partner to aid with Bible translation for the 31 UPG languages in the UPG Initiative. The following questions and answers pertain to that approach to Bible translation.

1. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE TSP?

It **provides an initial draft** of the Bible text for experts and the community to review and revise. A TSP does not have the Bible translation project "handed over" to them to do from beginning to end.

2. HOW WOULD SRG WORK WITH THE TSP?

Each translation project is priced and contracted, with defined deliverables, budget, and schedule. The TSP creates a draft, provides it for review, and finishes with its own quality assurance review. In the case of Bible translation, SRG is providing **supportive tools** designed for Bible Translation and inserting a **theological review** for accuracy. In a project as large as the Bible, the content is divided into batches for earlier review and quicker usable deliverables.

3. WHAT EXPERIENCE DOES THE TSP HAVE WITH TRANSLATING SCRIPTURE?

They **do not have experience translating Scripture**, but have translated a wide variety of other texts: business, legal, government, academic, medical, entertainment, etc. A TSP's professionally-trained translators can create a good working draft of Scripture in difficult UPG languages.

4. THE BIBLE IS A COMPILATION OF DIVERSE TYPES OF LITERATURE. CAN THE COMPANY TRANSLATE DIFFERING LITERARY FORMS?

Old Testament history, prophetic literature, poetry, gospel narratives, pastoral letters, and apocalyptic are significantly different literary styles that each require understanding and expertise. The company is aware of this reality and will use **multiple translators** enabling those with **different skills** to focus on different portions of the Bible. Also, reviewers of the initial draft will seek to ensure that translation is appropriate for the literary form.

5. DOES THE TSP HAVE QUALITY CONTROL CHECKS IN PLACE DUE TO WORKING WITH NON-BELIEVING TRANSLATORS?

Translators work on texts of all kinds, ones they understand, technical ones that are complex (e.g., medical), ones they like and agree with, and ones with which they disagree. As paid professionals, they **faithfully translate the text** they are given—if not, the engagement with the company is terminated. Substantial deviations from the original meaning of Scripture should not occur in the drafting process, and the TSP's **quality control process** ensures this.

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6. CAN A NON-BELIEVER UNDERSTAND THE BIBLE & TRANSLATE IT CORRECTLY?

To understand the Bible—in the sense of interpreting and applying it to one's life—requires the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not expected that **a non-believing translator would necessarily understand or interpret the text** (though the Holy Spirit could enable this). He/she will translate what they encounter in the text as plainly as they can, and passages that require theological understanding or deeper insight will be refined in the review process.

7. SHOULD A NON-CHRISTIAN DO BIBLE TRANSLATION?

The thought behind this question seems to be whether a non-believer can do a good translation, whether they are able to properly translate the Bible. The short answer is no, they cannot. **Non-believers cannot complete a full Bible translation unaided** by devout, mature believers.

Translators engaged by a TSP would be responsible for an initial draft. Their work, divided into batches, would be supervised by qualified believers. Upon completion of all batches, the Bible would be given to believers and consultants for **correction and refinement**, including theological and linguistic edits to ensure that the text is **clear, accurate, natural, and acceptable**. Thus, non-believers simply perform a step within a larger process that is designed and managed by godly believers.

8. IS IT "BEST PRACTICE" TO DO A DRAFT & REVISE IT?

Yes, it appears that every Bible translation since Luther has been revised, some numerous times—sometimes by the original translator(s), sometimes by the church/community, sometimes by a panel of experts or academics. It happens various ways, and today **all Bible translation starts with a draft** that is carefully reviewed and revised.

9. ARE THERE ADVANTAGES TO USING A NON-BELIEVING TRANSLATOR?

Some persons within Bible translation agencies have pointed out that the lack of theological bias or familiarity with Christian "jargon" can help create a **better translation that is more widely accepted**.

10. WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF USING A TSP?

There appear to be some:
   a. The project is done **faster**
   b. It is **less costly**
   c. The Word is **shared in the unbelieving community**
   d. The drafting portion of the project is **professionally managed** & reported on

11. COULD THE CHURCH DO A BETTER DRAFT?

Not necessarily. The church's record of Bible translation is not perfect. For hundreds of years the Bible was kept from the people and not translated into the vernacular at all. When it was, arguments arose regarding translation of various passages. Today, "bad" translations have made it all the way to publication and distribution, some resulting in canceled distribution It is well known that translations done

by "the church" have **sat on shelves or in warehouses** and not been distributed. If the church does not reliably get a translation right, it is not sound to assume that it will reliably produce a better draft than a TSP.

12. WHAT SAFEGUARDS ENSURE AN ACCURATE FINAL TRANSLATION?

These are still being worked out. There would be guidelines and oversight throughout the process—before, during, after. For the drafting process, this will include providing:

- A **glossary** of key words, phrases, and passages, and advice on how they should be translated
- Various kinds of **check lists**
- **Training manuals** based on those of national Bible societies
- Paratext or other **software designed specifically for Bible translation**

Importantly, the drafting process is done in **batches** and then enters a review process. Batches use natural grouping by literary style and theme. So, checks are done "along the way" so there can be early detection of any problems.

The most significant safeguard is that the work of the TSP would be subject to **multiple reviews** by a variety of persons—in the local community and by Bible translation experts—**to ensure clarity and absolute fidelity** to the meaning of the original texts.

13. WILL THE LOCAL CHURCH BE INVOLVED IN THE OVERALL PROJECT?

This is a very case-by-case situation. Even those Bible translation models that work with "the local church" tend to work with *a* local church or *a small collection* of churches within the broader UPG. Working with "the church" within the UPG presumes the existence of the church, access to the church, and cooperation from representation of a large proportion of the church. SRG targets UPGs, some of which have no church with which to work. Some have a very small church, and some an inaccessible church.

If there is an accessible church, there is no guarantee that its members are interested in, available for, and capable of doing Bible translation. SRG recognizes the limitations of seeking to do so, however, working with ministry partners, it will **use all means possible to engage the local church** to advance each Bible translation project.

14. WILL A BIBLE PRODUCED IN THIS MANNER BE ACCEPTED?

There are many examples of translated Bible products not being accepted by a denomination or group. This is especially so where there is an established church and the translation is carried out independently of traditional church structures. SRG-selected UPGs vary from those with no church to those with a reasonably well-established (albeit, small) church. In each case, SRG will ensure that partners **design a strategy to maximize acceptance**. This starts with indigenous-led projects, a hallmark of SRG investments.