

The WRIGHT Times



Helping to translate God's Word for the Bibleless peoples of Congo • DECEMBER 2025

By this my Father is glorified, that you should bear much fruit...

Most of you are aware that Beth and I are preparing to retire at the end of this year as full-time members of Wycliffe Bible Translators, after serving 38 years in the Bible translation movement in the Democratic Republic of Congo and beyond. We'd like to share with you the highlights of our journey so that you can rejoice with us in all that God has done through us together with you.

Our calling

It was July 1986. Sitting on a picnic table in a state park near Waxhaw, NC, Beth and I prayed a prayer we had never prayed before, "Lord, our lives belong to you. We'll go and serve you wherever you send us." We had both been believers for some time and our faith was important to us. But we had to admit that for the first nine years of our marriage, we had pretty much followed our own plan and asked God to bless it – me climbing the corporate ladder as a chemical engineer and manager with DuPont and Beth caring for our two kids. We had a taste of "the good life", living in a nice neighborhood on a golf course in Wilmington, NC, chasing the American dream.



1986 Dedicating ourselves to the Lord

But we had both begun to feel an emptiness, a restlessness in our hearts. Something was missing – a God-given purpose. Now for the first time in our lives, we sensed God calling us, and each time we responded in faith, the calling grew stronger. He began to give us a glimpse of his plan – that he would use us to help bring his Word to a Bibleless people group in their own language. And we were filled with excitement and anticipation for how he would fulfill that plan for his glory.

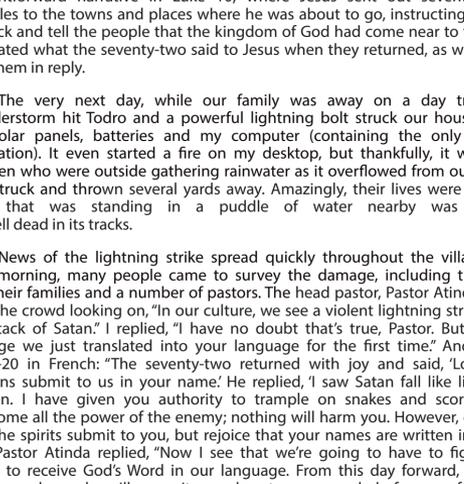
Over the next two years, God confirmed his calling in many ways. He provided a strong team of prayer and financial partners (including many of you). He enabled us to complete our initial training and be accepted as full members of Wycliffe Bible Translators. We were now in the process of being assigned to a host country. We had heard that many doors were opening for Bible translation in Africa, and we had our sights set on that continent. As we began to reflect on a potential country of assignment, we decided that we would like to serve in a stable, fairly developed, English-speaking country where we would only have to learn one language, and where we might not have to send our kids to boarding school. With this in mind, we thought that Uganda or Tanzania might be good matches for us.

However, when we met with three administrators from East Africa Group, they informed us that Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo) was the highest-priority country for assigning new translation teams. The single American among them then said how sad it was that young missionaries are often very zealous when they're first called, and then they begin to set conditions on where they're willing to serve. After Beth and I heard this, we went home and repented before the Lord for taking the decision into our own hands, and we submitted ourselves to his will. He showed us clearly that we should accept the assignment to Zaire, one of the most unstable and underdeveloped countries in all of Africa, where we would have to learn not one, but three languages, and where we would eventually have to send two of our three kids to boarding school. Little did we know then of the trials and hardships we would have to suffer, or of the great fruit that the Lord had already planned to bear through us, together with you and our colleagues, in that country.

The Logo translation project

In 1990, after completing our Africa orientation program and after much prayer, we accepted an assignment to work with the Logo people of north-eastern Zaire. Early the following year, as we were flying into Zaire for the first time, it was arranged that we would stop in the village of Todro to meet with the Logo church leaders. After a warm welcome, they led us up a hill and showed us an old, dilapidated house that had been built by missionaries long ago, and they said, "This is where you will live." Years later, the highest-ranking pastor among them, Pastor Lalima, told us that when he saw that we were undaunted that day when we saw that old house and knew we'd have to rebuild it, he knew without a doubt that we were the ones God had chosen to help them translate his Word into their own language.

We spent the rest of that first term laying the foundation for beginning translation work among the Logo people. We made our temporary base in the town of Aba, where Beth and I began to learn Bangala (a regional language that would be necessary for daily living). Beth began homeschooling Rachel, Daniel and Sarah, and I made regular trips to Todro, either by plane or by bicycle, to work with a crew of 20 Congolese workers to tear down the old house and rebuild another. (We pressed and fired our own bricks, ripped and planed mahogany planks that were sawn in the nearby rain forest, and rebuilt the house in six months without any power tools!) After moving our family to Todro, I began to study the Logo language in earnest and to train the three young men whom the church had selected to become translators. Together, we analyzed the sound system and basic grammar of their language and developed an alphabet and rules for writing the language (since up to then, Logo was only an oral language).



1991 Doug and crew building our house

In early 1996, after returning from furlough, we were finally ready to begin translation work! Following a consultant's advice, we began by translating the fairly straightforward narrative in Luke 10, where Jesus sent out seventy-two of his disciples to the towns and places where he was about to go, instructing them to heal the sick and tell the people that the kingdom of God had come near to them. We also translated what the seventy-two said to Jesus when they returned, as well as what he told them in reply.

The very next day, while our family was away on a day trip, a violent thunderstorm hit Todro and a powerful lightning bolt struck our house, destroying the solar panels, batteries and my computer (containing the only copy of the translation). It even started a fire on my desktop, but thankfully, it went out. Two children who were outside gathering rainwater as it overflowed from our drums were also struck and thrown several yards away. Amazingly, their lives were spared. But a goat that was standing in a puddle of water nearby was electrocuted and fell dead in its tracks.

News of the lightning strike spread quickly throughout the village. Early the next morning, many people came to survey the damage, including the translators and their families and a number of pastors. The head pastor, Pastor Atinda, said to me with the crowd looking on, "In our culture, we see a violent lightning strike like this as an attack of Satan." I replied, "I have no doubt that's true, Pastor. But listen to the passage we just translated into your language for the first time." And I read Luke 10:17-20 in French: "The seventy-two returned with joy and said, 'Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name.' He replied, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.'" To this, Pastor Atinda replied, "Now I see that we're going to have to fight a spiritual battle to receive God's Word in our language. From this day forward, we, the Logo pastors and people, will commit ourselves to pray regularly for your family and the translation team until we have God's Word in our own language." And that is how God started a prayer movement among the Logo people.

The following week, the translators and I retranslated that first passage of Scripture, and it was even more powerful than the first time! The week after that, a plane arrived in Todro with new solar panels, new batteries and a new computer, sent through the generous gifts of God's people. And the Lord gave us a season of fruitfulness, allowing us to translate the entire Gospel of Luke. But another thunderstorm was gathering on the horizon – a storm of war and separation.

In late 1996, the genocide in Rwanda sparked tribal conflict across the border in Congo, which grew into a rebellion that spread swiftly to the north. Beth, Sarah and I were at a conference in Kenya, but I was allowed to return to Congo to see Rachel and Daniel at their boarding school in Rethy, and then to help two teams in Todro plan for ways to keep the translation work going in the face of looming war and our extended separation. In a matter of days, with the rebellion approaching, the kids and I were evacuated separately by mission planes to Kenya. That was the beginning of almost a decade of civil war, insecurity and separation from our Congolese colleagues, who often had to flee with their families from looting rebels and militias, taking shelter in huts in their fields. During that time, the Logo translation work came to a near standstill, except for a few verses that one of the translators, Atake, translated with pen and paper while living with his family in their fields.

Eventually, the Lord opened the way for us and our colleagues to meet regularly with our Congolese colleagues in Arua, Uganda for translation training and checking workshops. In this way, we were able to restart and advance translation work in about 10 languages. However, that progress came at a great cost to the translators, who had to travel frequently on dangerous roads, sometimes through rebel-controlled territory. During that time, I continued to serve as part-time consultant for the Logo translation project. Eventually, I also served as translation coordinator and Beth served as literacy coordinator for Eastern Congo Group.

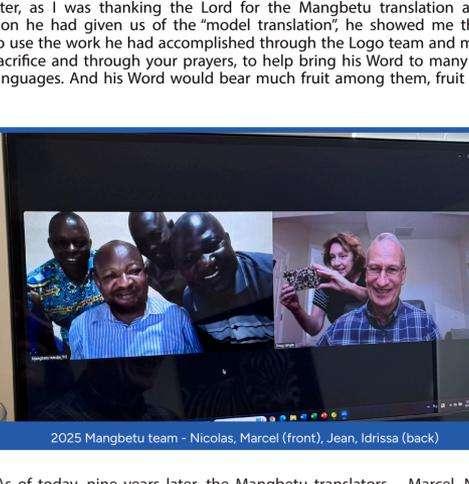
In the early 2000s, all of us who were associated with the Logo project suffered the most difficult losses yet – the successive deaths of three dear colleagues, translator Akudhi (of liver cancer), translator Atake (of cerebral meningitis), and young missionary intern Rhonda (in a traffic accident in the U.S.). The Logo people were greatly shaken, and so were we. Many despaired of ever having God's Word in their own language, some even saying that the remaining two translators should quit or else they too would die. In the face of such fear and spiritual opposition, one translator did quit, leaving Aguma as the sole remaining translator.



2014 Logo team - Doug, Adara, Pastor Lalima, Aguma, Madrakele

In 2008, while we were based in Kenya, Beth was diagnosed with a chronic auto-immune disease, and we had to return to the U.S. for better health care. I was assigned, once again, as full-time consultant for the Logo project, and we asked you, our partners, to pray with us that God would show us a way to revive the project. In answer to our prayers, God showed me how to play a more direct role in contributing to the translation, supporting Aguma and the two new translators, Adara and Madrakele. With the team's agreement, I began making the first draft in Logo, structuring the translation clearly and accurately, while the team refined the translation, ensuring that it was natural. Using this method, we translated the only remaining gospel, the Gospel of John. When the Logo church leaders saw it, they were thrilled with the quality of the translation, and they asked us to redo all of the previously translated books. So, by the Lord's grace, we retranslated the entire New Testament and prepared all the supplementary materials in just eight years, requiring me to make almost 20 trips to Congo to work face to face with the team.

Just as we were about to send off the final manuscript of the New Testament for publication, the unthinkable happened. On December 18, 2015, our precious daughter Sarah left us and went home to be with the Lord after a long struggle with severe mental illness.



2007 Beth and Sarah

All of our family members were shattered beyond what words can express. We were helplessly surrounded by compassionate fellow believers, family and friends who helped carry our sorrow. And the Lord himself comforted us and continues to bring healing to this day, so that we can treasure the memories of the good times we had with Sarah, of the blessing she was to everyone who knew her, and of her beautiful spirit.

In March of 2016, by God's grace, he enabled our entire family to participate in the Logo New Testament dedication at Todro. From the moment we disembarked from the plane, our Logo friends lavished us with embraces, tears and expressions of sympathy. The pastors, translators, our ex-houseworkers and close friends surrounded us with love, mourned with us the loss of our beloved Sarah, whom they also loved, and comforted us with God's Word, reminding us of his unfailing love for Sarah and our whole family. It was another step of healing for our souls. We also celebrated with the Logo people God's faithfulness in bringing them the New Testament in their own language for the first time!

The Mangbetu translation project and the French Model Translation

In 2016, following the dedication of the Logo New Testament, I was invited by the Mangbetu translation project to participate in a checking session of their translation of Acts. Beth and I had agreed that I should keep the commitment in spite of our family's still painful loss. By the second or third day of checking, I realized that the quality of the team's translation was so poor, it couldn't be revised. It would have to be redone. I felt sorry for the team and regretted having to tell them the bad news, especially since their project had a long history of dysfunction and low productivity. But at that very moment, the Lord showed me how I could help them. I could make a "model translation" in French, structuring the text clearly and accurately in a way that I thought would be natural in Mangbetu, since that language is closely related to Logo. Then the team could follow this model to make their translation in Mangbetu. We agreed to try this method, and in just six months, we translated and checked the entire Gospel of Mark. When the Mangbetu church leaders read it, they wholeheartedly approved of it.

Later, as I was thanking the Lord for the Mangbetu translation and for the inspiration he had given us of the "model translation", he showed me that he was going to use the work he had accomplished through the Logo team and me, through much sacrifice and through your prayers, to help bring his Word to many peoples in many languages. And his Word would bear much fruit among them, fruit that would last!



2025 Mangbetu team - Nicolas, Marcel (front), Jean, Idrissa (back)

As of today, nine years later, the Mangbetu translators – Marcel, Nicolas and Idrissa – have translated 22 of 27 books, or 85% of the New Testament, and together we've checked 20 of those books. Through God's grace and your prayers, the team is truly in the home stretch of finishing the New Testament. During our recent checking of Romans in Mangbetu, we were struck by how clear and powerful their translation is. God's Word in Mangbetu is already leading many to salvation, showing believers who they are in Christ, and transforming the entire people group!

As for the French Model Translation (as it's called today), three other consultants and I have developed 22 of 27 books in the model, or 85% of the New Testament, and we're currently working on four of the five remaining books. The Mangbetu team has served as the pilot test for all of those books in the model, and they've contributed many ideas for improving it. In the last four years since the French Model Translation has been made available in our common translation software, it has been downloaded over 1,000 times, mainly by translators and consultants. Based on this, we estimate that this resource is currently being used by as many as 100 translation teams throughout French-speaking Africa to help them translate God's Word into their own languages.

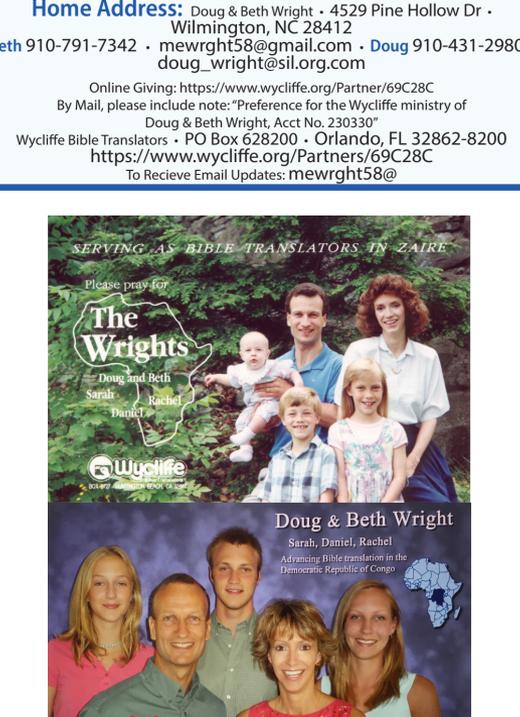
A personal message

Many times, I've asked the Lord, "Who are we that you would choose us, together with our partners and colleagues, to help bring your holy, life-changing Word to the Logo and Mangbetu peoples in their own languages, and to scores of other peoples through the French Model Translation?" And his answer is something like, "I've chosen you, in spite of your weaknesses, to be my humble instruments, that through you I might display my power and grace as I redeem a people for myself from all peoples, and as I accomplish that same work in you." In this, our final prayer letter, we want to express our deep, abiding gratitude to you, our faithful partners, who have supported us, prayed for us, encouraged us and stood in the gap for us, through trials and sorrows and times of great joy, as together we've served the Bibleless peoples and the Lord for his eternal glory! Let us rejoice in the Lord for all that he has done!

Your fellow servants,

Doug & Beth

P.S. Please pray for Beth's upcoming back surgery on December 11, and her recovery, that the Lord would bring her relief from her chronic pain. Pray also that, after a few months' rest, the Lord will make his will clear to us concerning the possibility of my returning as a part-time volunteer with Wycliffe.



Home Address: Doug & Beth Wright • 4529 Pine Hollow Dr •
Wilmington, NC 28412
Beth 910-791-7342 • **mewrgh58@gmail.com** • **Doug** 910-431-2980 •
doug_wright@sil.org.com

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Wycliffe Bible Translators • PO Box 628200 • Orlando, FL 32862-8200
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To Receive Email Updates: mewrgh58@sil.org

