# Introduction

**The Scripture Engagement Guide** (SE Guide for short) helps you and your community discuss important issues and prayerfully decide what strategies and resources will help overcome barriers and best meet the needs of your community.

The main part of the guide consists of short videos in 8 different sections which act as discussions starters. These videos are available on our website [**https://emdc.guide**](https://emdc.guide) and an app version released in May 2024). Each video comes with some questions included in this document which you may want to talk about. You do not have to answer all the questions, certainly not in one go, and you may have more of your own

When people don’t have the Bible in their language it may seem obvious that translation and publication will help. Lack of understanding is clearly a huge barrier, but translation and distribution alone are not enough. Experience over many years in translations in many hundreds of languages has shown that there is a lot to think about.

The videos and questions in this app provide a starting place for those involved in Bible Translation to explore many of the conditions that need to be in place for effective use of the Bible. Some will seem obvious and need little extra work, others will identify problems and possibilities that you will want to think about.

**Can it be less complicated?**

We have been asked if we can make the assessment process shorter and simpler, the answer is yes but with risks.

Bible translations themselves undergo many checks and long discussions about ensuring the translation is accurate, clear, natural, and acceptable. Scripture engagement includes additional questions before, during, and after translation to ensure the translation is useful and used.

A comparison might be which things would you want airline pilots or surgeons to simply assume are okay before starting?

Looking at all the topics and questions whether on the website, the app, or this document can seem overwhelming. Sample ‘important’ questions could be given in a short document accompanied by a final question in each section, “are there other things we need to think about?”

We are aware that in some places the current document still needs further work to ensure that ideas and questions are clear to the intended users.

Introduction updated May 2024,
a more complete revision of this document will be available in June 2024

# Before you start

## Think about (and discuss) when, why and how people use the Bible

Who currently uses the Bible in your community, when, where, and how?

What books or passages from the Old and New Testaments are most helpful for addressing the basic spiritual needs of your community and are useful for peoples’ spiritual growth?

What media and art forms are appropriate and available (print and/or non-print forms) to assist your community with accessing the Scriptures and using them for both personal and church growth?

The focus is often on access to the Bible but Scripture Engagement is so much more…

It has been suggested that to engage meaningfully with the Bible you need to:

* Have access to the Bible in a language and form you use
* Trust the Bible is the Word of God
* Believe the Bible is relevant
* Read/Listen/Watch the Bible
* Meditate and study the Bible
* Interpret and understand the Bible
* Apply the Bible’s teaching
* Discuss and share Biblical truths with others

Are there other things you would add to this list?



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# Background Information

The first step in developing a community profile is to look carefully at the local society, culture, political system, religions, education system, and language use. These are some of the questions outside funding agencies might want to ask but they may also help to highlight ways in which your community and context differs from some others and why materials produced for someone else might not always be what meets the needs of your community.

These general topics will provide the background needed to understand the various factors affecting Scripture engagement. Below are a number of topics with several questions under each topic. Some of the questions may not be relevant for your situation. Where that is the case, please simply go on to the next questions or the next section.

**Note**: If you have created a copy of this document it is your copy (in the google account you are signed in with) and only seen with the people that you choose to share it with.

##  Christianity and the Bible Translation Program

1. How and when did the Gospel first come to the area?
2. When did the various church denominations enter, and what is their focus?
3. What denominations and missions are currently working in the area?
4. How cooperative have those denominations and missions been in the Bible translation process?
5. List denominations, churches and other organizations that will be influential in using the Scriptures in the area. How many people are in each? How many churches?
6. List key people and relationships that are (or will be) necessary for ongoing Scripture engagement.
7. What is the approximate number of Christians 1) with vital faith and 2) with nominal practice?
8. Has there ever been a time in the area when over a relatively short period large numbers of people became followers of Jesus? Which groups were most involved? How has this event affected the use of the Scriptures?

##  Economic Factors

1. How do most people earn a living?
2. Do people earn enough to be able to afford a Bible?
3. What percentage of people own a smartphone? A computer or tablet?
4. Are people too tired from earning a living to go to church?
5. Is it necessary for people to work on Sunday?

##  Society and Culture

1. Are there specific aspects of the culture that 1) contribute to or 2) limit engagement with Scripture?
2. Do the teachings of Scripture agree with local values?
3. Are Christians respected or demeaned? Are they seen as good people?
4. How do the factors above affect Scripture engagement?

##  Relationships and Political Factors

1. Do the government leaders support the translation project?
2. Is there opposition to the project from the government?
3. Are there government organizations that influence whether or not the Scriptures are used?
4. Does the local political structure differ from the national system? How does the local political system affect the use of Scriptures?

##  Linguistic and Sociolinguistic Factors

1. List the different languages spoken in the area and indicate which languages are used for which purposes or in which situations.
2. Do most people speak more than one language? If so, how many?
3. If you haven’t yet used the Multilingualism Assessment Tool, we recommend you take the assessment to give a clearer picture of multilingualism in your community.

##  Education, Literacy and Literature

1. What percentage of people are literate in the local language? In the national or regional language(s)?
2. How does the level of literacy differ between men and women? Between old people and youth?
3. How many teachers are interested in vernacular language?
4. Is the government supporting local language literacy?
5. Do the local people mainly use oral methods of communication? What are their preferred ways to communicate truth?
6. What is the role of dance, instruments, singing, carving, art? How could these be used to support engagement with Scripture? (If you have not yet created a Community Arts Profile, we recommend you do this to better understand the arts and culture in your community.)

##  Christianity and Other Religions

1. What are the major religious influences in society?
2. What are the major features of the traditional religion?
3. Describe points where the traditional religion conflicts with the Bible.
4. What traditional values does the Bible support?
5. Does the traditional religious system oppose Christianity?
6. Is there major persecution of those who choose Christ?
7. What language(s) is used for religious expression?
8. Which parts of the Christian worship service are conducted in which languages?

1. How do the factors above affect engagement with Scripture?

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# Factors Affecting Scripture Engagement

The next step in developing a community profile is to meet with members of the community and discuss the various Conditions below. Under each Condition there are several sub-topics with questions related to those topics. Some of the conditions or sub-topics will probably not seem relevant to the local context. It is OK to skip those topics and focus on those that seem relevant. At the end of each set of questions is a box where the participants will summarize the findings and results of the discussion of those questions. These summaries are an important part of the process as they will guide the selection of strategies and resources. For more information about how to facilitate a group discussion, click on this link.

# Language Condition: Using the Right Languages. ( Appropriate language, sociolinguistic factors, language vitality factors)

##

Most people in the world speak more than one language. Sometimes they know one really well and think of that as their main language. Sometimes they use several and use them in different ways with different people at different times. In addition to the videos and questions in emdc.guide the Multilingual Assessment Tool provides.a more in depth way of exploring multilingualism and the level of vitality for each language.

## A. Unity vs Understanding

1. Are pastors selected from inside or outside the language group or both?
2. Which language(s) do pastors speak?
3. In which language(s) do pastors receive their theological education?

*NOTE: The pastor’s use of the Bible strongly influences the people in his church. If he can’t speak the local language, it is hard for him to encourage his congregation to use the Bible in that language. If he can speak it but doesn’t use it for the Bible, that is also a hindrance but might be easier to change. If it is only a historical accident that pastors are from outside the language area, sometimes denominations can change that.*

1. How long are pastors assigned to an area (especially if they are from outside the language area)?

NOTE: How long a pastor works there often affects how much of the local language that pastor is comfortable with his congregation using for Christian teaching.

1. What language(s) are spoken by those who attend church services?
2. How well do church members understand the language(s) used in that church? (very weak, weak, middle, strong, or very strong)?
*NOTE When answering questions about comprehension, try to find out what they have actually been learning. Many leaders whose parishioners can chat casually in the LWC are thus fooled into thinking those people can understand difficult spiritual or moral concepts in that language.*
3. What language or mix of languages would best communicate the Scriptures in a church service?
4. Who makes the decisions about language use within the church – the pastor, local leaders, regional denominational leaders?
5. What languages are used for various church activities and resources: (announcements, (spoken) Bible readings, liturgy, sermon, prayer, songs, Bible studies, prayer meetings, youth meetings, Sunday School, listening groups, storying groups, personal devotions, artistic expressions, evangelism, song books, prayer books, written notices, testimonies)?

**Summary Questions**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, are there church activities (or parts of church activities) where people can hear or read the local language Bible translation? Are there activities in the church in which the local language Bible translation could be introduced? **Answer:** |

## B. Which Language for Church Planting

There may be more than one religion present in the community. Often in addition to one of the major world religions people both inside and outside that faith community are also influenced by local traditional beliefs.

1. What language (s) are used for the following domains:

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ high religion

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ traditional religion

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what is the most effective language for communicating the Gospel to unbelievers? **Answer:** |

## C. Don’t Forget the Women and Children

1. What language(s) are used by each of the following groups and what is each of their level of proficiency (very weak, weak, middle, strong, or very strong).
By men?

By women?

By children?

By the elderly?

*NOTE: Explanation:
In multilingual contexts, different groups often have different language vocabularies and ways of speaking. They might also be more or less proficient (have more or less ability to understand) each of their languages. For example, the elderly might be highly proficient in the local language but have only limited proficiency in the language of wider communication. Children from that the same language group, however, might have exactly the opposite levels of language ability, being highly proficient in the language of wider communication but having only limited or no proficiency in the local languages. Likewise, men and women might be more or less proficient in each of their languages. Different groups may also have varying levels of proficiency in other nearby languages.

Relevance for Scripture Engagement:
Knowing which groups are proficient in which languages helps the community develop Scripture products and strategies focused on language preferences and proficiencies of specific groups. In addition, high levels of proficiency in a nearby language(s) may create the possibility of using Scripture products from that language to supplement Scripture engagement efforts in the local language. Multilingualism does not hinder Scripture engagement. It provides more languages and resources people can use to connect with God’s Word.*

1. Does the language seem to be becoming more vigorous, staying at the same level of use, shifting gradually (another language is used in more and more situations), or shifting rapidly?

*NOTE: Explanation:
In order to fully understand peoples’ opinion about the stability of the language, it will be important to ask for the opinion of a number of different people in different contexts. It is very common, for example, for people living in highly multilingual urban contexts to have a very different perspective on the stability of their language than do people living in a rural context. In the same way, people from different rural villages may have varying perspectives depending on factors such as how far their villages are located from major transportation routes (roads, rivers, etc.).

Relevance for Scripture Engagement:
The information from this question is relevant to Scripture engagement in two ways. First, people’s willingness to invest in the development of Scripture resources in their local language may depend in part on how stable they think that their local language is. Second, where different groups have different opinions about the language stability, it may indicate the need to develop different Scripture engagement strategies for those different groups.*
2. What language(s) are used for the following domains:

government

media

education

trade

literature

home

rituals

arts

conversations with friends

*NOTE: The local language is almost always used in traditional religious practices. So, there is often religious vocabulary used in the traditional religion that better communicates than vocabulary in the LWC. John Beekman could not find many key terms until he listened to a description of ritual designed to connect a newborn child with the spirit world. In listening to this description, he learned these terms: Savior, Lord, guarantor, to buy us, their hearts might be washed, sins, faults, sacred, and sins being made white.*

*Language choice is also about identity. If Christianity is thought of as a foreign religion by the members of a community, then using a national language might reinforce this idea.*

*In the cases of some non-Christian sacred texts like the Vedas or the Qur’an, the language is elevated or sometimes incomprehensible. In both of these traditions, they have “explanations” that express key ideas of their belief systems: translations (called interpretations in Muslim contexts), sermons, dramas, or songs. Sometimes, Scripture is more impacting if it is expressed in a way that feels familiar, like in these sermons, dramas, songs, and interpretations.*

1. Is the local (home) language gaining domains, maintaining, or losing domains?

*NOTE: Explanation:
In multilingual contexts it is very common for different languages to be used in different domains. The local language, for example, might be used in the domains of family, friends, and neighbors while a language of wider communication is used in other domains. In the same way, the local language might be used with traditional religious practices while a language of wider communication is used for high religion. It is often the case that if two languages are used in a single domain, it is a sign that one of the languages is being replaced by the other. This can be an early indicator of ongoing language shift.*

*Relevance for Scripture Engagement:
These questions increase the understanding of the stability of the language and may help inform a Scripture engagement strategy. For example, in the Sunday church services, the language of wider communication may be used because it is a multilingual or multiethnic congregation. But if the local language is still used among family, friends, and neighbors, there may be a place for Scripture engagement using the local language in these contexts.* Likewise, if the local language is used in the traditional religious practices, it may be an indicator that religious practices and beliefs are best discussed in that language

1. How do people view their home language in relation to the national language or trade language (positively or negatively)?

*NOTE: Relevance of their view of the language::
In some places, people see their own language as inferior to the LWC (trade or national or other language used to communicate with those who don’t speak the local language.) Some don’t think it is appropriate for speaking to God or for using for the words of God. In other places, they see it as okay but only good for oral usage. Describe the situation in this language before deciding whether this amounts to a positive or negative view.*

1. How do those outside the language group view the home language in comparison to the national or trade language(s)?

*NOTE: You can use the same questions to learn the views of important or influential people who are not first language speakers.*

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you think the future of your language looks like? **Answer:** |

## D. How Can You Use That Dialect

1. What are the dialect issues in this language group?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, is dialect a potential challenge to using the Bible translation? **Answer:** |

## E. Alphabet Problems (Orthography)

1. In your situation, are there disagreements about the script such as which alphabet to use, which letters to use, how to mark tone, etc.? If yes, please describe them.

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, are disagreements about the alphabet a potential challenge to using the Bible translation? **Answer:** |

## F. I Want to Use All of My Languages

1. Where do people use more than one language at the same time?

**DESCRIBE WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE.\_\_\_\_**

## G. Are We Losing Our Language?

1. Are all parents teaching the language to their children?

*NOTE: “Teaching the language” means more than just teaching a few phrases or words. The main point of the question is whether the children are being taught by their parents to a level of proficiency that allows them to use the language to communicate well. Normally, this instruction occurs informally in the home as parents use the language in their interactions with their children.*

*Relevance for Scripture Engagement:
One of the most important indicators of language stability is whether or not children are learning and using the language. When children are not learning and using the language, it may indicate that language use is shifting away from the local language towards a language of wider communication. Where this is happening, it may be necessary to ensure that Scripture resources are made available in both the local language and the language(s) of wider communication. Scripture engagement efforts in the local language may need to focus primarily on those groups of people who are still using that language.*

1. What is the youngest generation that can understand this language well??

*NOTE: This “youngest generation” question provides more details about the answer above. If the children are not learning the language, knowing the youngest age group that still has some proficient speakers helps reveal the extent of language shift that has occurred and how long it might be before the language use has shifted entirely to a language of wider communication. For example, if only the elderly speak the language well, in just a few years the language may not be used.*

*Relevance for Scripture Engagement:
This information can guide Scripture engagement decisions by helping us understand which groups are using which language(s) and how long we can expect the local language to still be in use. This allows for the development of Scripture materials for different age groups in the language(s) that those different groups prefer to use. It also helps the local community to make wise decisions in terms of how much of an investment of resources to make in developing Scripture products in the local language.*

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you think the future of your language looks like? **Answer:** |

# Book Condition: Ensuring that a translation can be trusted.

## A. Moral Reputation of the Translation Team

1. What are the moral, academic, and spiritual qualifications that the community expects of national translators? Of expatriate translators?

**Summary Questions**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, is the moral reputation of the team limiting the impact of the Bible translation? If yes, how can the reputation be restored? If the reputation is good, what can be done to keep the spiritual health of team members strong? **Answer:** |

## B. Which Bible is really the Bible?

1. What are the local denominational leaders' and local pastors' opinions of the translation project? What are the other expatriate missionaries’ opinions of the translation project?
2. What is the (Christian and/or non-Christian) community's opinion of the accuracy and doctrinal reliability of the translation?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about how people view the translation project? **Answer:** |

## C. What our people like or don’t like about the Bible translation in our language

1. What style do the various groups in your context believe is most appropriate for sacred texts (holy books)?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what style would have the greatest ministry impact? **Answer:** |

## D. Key terms agreement

1. Have there been controversies over key terms? Please describe them.

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about how satisfied people are with the key terms used in this translation? **Answer:** |

## E. Appropriate formatting for a holy book

1. For print materials, are the cover, pictures, and format acceptable and appealing for a sacred text?
2. For non-print media, what kind of formatting or presentation is necessary to appropriately get across to readers that the Scripture product is a sacred text?

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about the formatting of these Scriptures? **Answer:** |

# Form Condition: Available in a form we often use.

## A. Oral storying potential and strategies

1. Overall question: Is this primarily an oral or print-oriented society? Please describe.
2. How many people read for pleasure (most, many, some, a few, almost none)?
3. What are the literacy rates for each age group and gender?

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Groups  | Male  | Female  |
| Children  |   |   |
| Young adults  |   |   |
| Middle-aged adults  |   |   |
| Older adults  |   |   |

1. If this is a literate society, do people prefer to hear spoken information (in person or on phones or over radio) more than to get information through reading?
2. What current oral approaches are being used in the program (i.e. storying, electronic oral methods, etc.)?
3. With which groups could the team partner to offer storytelling (live or electronic) to the translation project?
4. How understandable are any home language Scripture materials that are available now?

**Summary Questions**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, should your community use an oral/audio approach or a literacy approach or a mixture of both? What is the best approach for your language group? **Answer:** |

## B. Ethnic arts potential and strategies

1. What are some forms of artistic expression in the area (music, dance, visual)?
2. How are these used to communicate different kinds of information?
3. Is there a tradition of local proverbs that could be used to bridge to biblical proverbs?
4. What ethnic arts are already used in the church or Christian ministry?
5. Is there a system in place to ensure that artistic materials and performances are consultant checked before being made available to the public? If so, describe the system?
6. Is there a system in place to ensure that artistic materials and performances are community checked before being made available to the public? If so, describe the system?

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what artistic style and genres (types of music, types of other art forms) would have the most impact when used in communicating the Bible? **Answer:** |

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## C. I like both reading AND listening to the Bible; With different media I can have both.

1. What forms of media do the people in this group use?
2. What forms of media are used in the church?
3. What video forms exist in your area? (TV, DVD, internet, mobile phone, etc.)
4. Which media forms are most popular and which are less popular (mobile phones, TV, DVD, radio, internet, etc.)?
5. Which media forms do you think are likely to be in use in the next five years?
6. Which electronic media-based Scripture products exist in languages useful to your community?
7. If electronic media exists, what systems (such as listening groups) exist for facilitating use in groups?
8. Is there a system in place to ensure that Scripture media products are consultant checked before they are made available to the public? If so, describe the system?
9. Is there a system in place to ensure that Scripture media products are community checked prior to being made available? If so, describe the system?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering what media people are already using, what media would be the best way to share the Bible? **Answer:** |

## D. Literacy potential and strategies

1. What systems exist for teaching basic (children’s) literacy?
2. What systems exist for teaching adult literacy?
3. What systems exist for teaching transfer literacy?

(Transfer literacy: teaching people to read one language (such as their home language) when they already know how to read another language.)

1. Rate the community's desire for literacy (very weak, weak, middle, strong, or very strong).
2. What kinds of reading materials are available in the home language?
3. Based on the level of literacy and the level of desire for literacy, what percentage of resources (both human and financial) should be devoted to literacy strategies?
4. What percentage of resources (both human and financial) should be devoted to non-print media strategies?

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, if the people there want a program for teaching how to read their local language, which literacy approach is the best fit? **Answer:** |

## E. Social contexts for learning from the Bible

1. If there is an oral storying program, do storying fellowships exist?
2. If electronic media have been produced, do listening groups exist?
3. If a print Bible has been produced, do group Bible studies exist?

**Summary Questions**

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| --- |
| If you have a Bible product but no group for people to use it together, engagement is unlikely. What groups exist? What groups need to be started? **Answer:** |

# Knowledge Condition: We know enough Bible history and culture to understand.

## A. Home (local) language general Bible backgrounds materials

1. What home language resources (workshops, paratext, booklets, story sets, media products, etc.) exist for the church to teach the historical and cultural backgrounds of the Bible?
2. Which of these results of their current background knowledge best describe the situation?
	1. Severe problem – there is false teaching based on a misunderstanding of *certain specific* *parts of* historical or cultural background of the Bible.
	2. Significant benefit – there are *worldview bridges[[1]](#footnote-1)* to the Gospel that could be understood with *certain specific* historical or cultural background of the Bible Increased interest – Great interest: there is great interest among the audience for more general understanding about the historical and cultural background of the Bible.
	3. Some interest: there is some interest in general historical and background knowledge.
	4. Low interest: there is low interest in historical and background knowledge.
3. Do some Scripture products exist that are easily understandable for the average person? Do pastors have access to additional resources that provide historical and cultural background information on the Bible?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, how can the overview of the story of the Bible be communicated and what background information is needed? **Answer:** |

## B. Who is Moses?

1. What home language resources (workshops, Creation to Christ story sets, Bible panoramas, timelines, paratext[[2]](#footnote-2), media products, etc.) exist to effectively teach the metanarrative of Scripture and essential Old Testament narrative[[3]](#footnote-3)?

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what needs to be done to teach the essentials of Bible history? **Answer:** |

# Accessibility Condition: Making sure everyone is able to get the products. (Accessible Forms)

## A. Where are the Bibles?

1. What book promotion, distribution, and sales mechanisms already exist?
2. Do people in the language group know about the Bible translation?
3. Could a person in the language group find and get Scripture materials without much difficulty?
4. What would be the process for a person to acquire the following: Print Bible?
Audio Bible (various formats)? What other Scripture products are available? (list all other Scripture based products and their various formats)?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, how available is the Bible in print form? **Answer:** |

## B. Phones and players

1. What kind of mobile phone coverage exists or is planned in the target language area?
2. What percentage of people only have talk/text phones (non-internet enabled)? What percentage have smartphones?
3. How do people use phones? Only as phones? Also as media players, and/or web surfing devices?
4. In what ways are people currently using micro-SD cards and transferring files with bluetooth to distribute media?
5. What efforts (if any) have been made to use these digital distribution channels?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what digital distribution strategy is needed here? **Answer:** |

## C. How are the diaspora people getting Bibles and other materials?

1. Where do significant diaspora communities live outside the home area?
2. Are they aware of and do they have access to mother tongue Scripture materials?
3. How can Scripture be promoted among diaspora communities?
4. Which ministries working in the areas where diaspora populations live could be partnered with to distribute Scripture products?

**Summary Question**

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| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what distribution strategy is needed for the diaspora people of this group? **Answer:** |

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## D. Sustainability of the distribution system

1. What elements make the current distribution system more or less sustainable?

**Summary Questions**

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| --- |
| How sustainable is this distribution system? What, if anything, is needed to make it sustainable? **Answer:** |

**
Needs Condition: Spiritual hunger**

## A. Personal and social problems in the community:Showing the Bible has answers to our most important questions.

1. What are the felt needs in the community?
2. What are the biggest problems that people face?
3. Describe any significant trauma that has occurred in this context.
4. Could some people benefit from a trauma healing workshop in your area? If so, who?
5. What other efforts (if any) have been made to bring healing to people's life issues through God's Word?
6. How big of a problem is drug abuse, alcoholism, or other addictions?
7. What ministries or resources focus on drug abuse, alcoholism, and addiction?

**Summary Question**

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| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what are the most important problems people are facing and what, if anything, is being done to help people address those problems? **Answer:** |

## B. Beliefs and practices related to the spiritual world

1. What do people fear?
2. What do they believe are the sources or causes of misfortune, sickness, or premature death? (This may have to do with displeasing ancestors or spirits or may be the result of witchcraft or sorcery.)
3. What spiritual means do people employ to maintain good health, to deal with sickness, to deal with misfortune, or to avoid premature death? (This may include taking revenge on a perceived witch or sorcerer.)
4. What are their views of life after death? Ancestors?
5. What is the local view of God and of mid-level deities like angels, demons, Satan, ancestors, animal spirits, or geographical spirits (spirits associated with particular mountains, rivers, trees, rocks, etc.)?
6. What Bible passages (if any) do people apply to their local deities?
7. What are the local life cycle rituals and annual agricultural cycle rituals?
8. What practices are involved?
9. What beliefs are involved?
10. What appear to be the functions of these rituals (what needs do they meet)? Why do they practice them?
11. How can God and Scripture fulfill these needs?
12. Which beliefs and practices disagree with Scripture?
13. Which agree with Scripture?
14. Which forms can be adapted and have biblical teaching brought into them?

**Summary Questions**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, how well do traditional beliefs and practices about the spirit world align with what the Bible teaches? Are there specific beliefs and practices that are keeping people from following the teachings of Scripture? If so, which ones? **Answer:** |

## C. Moral and Cultural Ideals

1. Give examples of good and bad behavior.
2. What are the characteristics of the most and least respected people in the community? What are the moral issues that members of the community are most concerned about?
3. What does the Bible have to say about these moral ideals and behaviors? Does it confirm that any of them are valid?
4. What brings good for the group?
5. What brings people honor?
6. What brings people guilt or shame?
7. Describe any revitalization movements in the area.
8. Describe any increased religious activity (Christian or non-Christian) in the area. What were the possible motivations or causes for these movements or increased religious activity?

**Summary Questions**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, how would a good person and good culture be defined? How well do those definitions line up with Biblical teaching? **Answer:** |

## D. Serving the needs of specific groups

### Youth and Children: (Think of children and youth as separate audiences with a separate score.)

1. What are the current issues among youth?
2. How different is youth culture from adult culture?
3. What strategies or ministries exist that focus on youth or children?
4. Unreached: In your area, what are culturally appropriate ways to explain the Gospel that people easily understand and some respond to (if they are present)?
5. Christians: What are good discipleship resources available to the local community?

**Summary Questions**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, do adequate resources exist to meet the needs of these different groups? If not, what resources need to be developed? **Answer:** |

##

## E. Overall Evaluation

1. Do an adequate number and variety of Scripture products exist (story sets, booklets, dramas, songs, videos, radio programs, etc.) that speak directly to the various felt needs of the community described above? Please list these products (if any) and the felt needs they address.
2. Is spiritual hunger so unusually high within the community that they are already instinctively turning to the Word of God for the answers to their life challenges?

**Summary Questions**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, Considering these things, what Bible products or activities are directly answering the spiritual hunger of this community? What additional Bible products or activities could be used to address spiritual hunger in this community? **Answer:** |

# Freedom Condition: Resistant contexts

## A. Non-Christian religious identity

1. To what degree do local people associate a non-Christian religion with their identity?
2. How would following Christ affect family unity?
3. What laws exist that restrict Christianity or conversion?
4. How consistently does the government enforce these laws?
5. How serious do the people consider these laws? Do people see these laws as moral, immoral, other?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about the religious identity of this community? **Answer:** |

##

## B. Contextualization efforts

1. Describe efforts by believers or missionaries to offer alternative ways of explaining how to follow Christ and still feel like and be thought of as part of the community?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| Has the gospel been contextualized here in a way that it is easily understandable to unbelievers? **Answer:** |

## C. Spiritual Hindrances to religious change

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| What bad things do unbelievers think would happen if they abandoned their current religion (e.g., one language group in Latin America believed that if they stopped practicing their rituals, the world would end)? **Answer:** |

##

##

## D. Nominal Christian opposition to serious Christian commitment

1. Is the current form of Christianity nominal? Does it discourage serious commitment to Christ?

**Summary Questions**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what are the most important factors hindering people from making religious change? How might those factors be addressed? **Answer:** |

# Partnerships Condition

## A. Non-Christian Contexts (Non-Christian local leadership)

1. Who are the local leaders that the Bible translation team can partner with?
2. How is the Bible translation program viewed by local leadership?
3. How are local leaders involved in the translation program? As members of the board? As reviewers? As promoters?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about non-Christians and their relationship to your Scripture translation and distribution? **Answer:** |

##

## B. Ownership and approval of the Bible translation program

1. How is the Bible translation program viewed by local church and community leadership?
2. Which churches and mission organizations are working in the language area?
3. What are the language policies (stated or unstated) of these churches and ministries at a) the national level; b) the regional level; c) local level?
4. How long are missionaries or pastors assigned to the language area?
5. How much home language speaking ability do missionaries, pastors, and church officials have?
6. To what degree do local pastors and leaders view the translation as their Bible translation program or as only the work of an outside agency?
7. How are local pastors and leaders involved in the translation program? As members of the board? As reviewers? As promoters?
8. What is the level of partnership between the Bible translation team and the Christian churches here? Which churches feel ownership of the translation and which do not?
9. How can the Bible translation program, all the mission agencies, and all the churches work together in an integrated way toward some common goals encouraging Scripture engagement?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, what do you conclude about the sense of ownership of the Bible translation and Scripture engagement process here? How well do church leaders and missionaries seem to like the Bible translation you are promoting? **Answer:** |

## C. Servanthood ethos and culturally appropriate leadership

1. Do others think the Bible translation program serves the local church or is the local church perceived as serving the Bible translation program?
2. Do they view it as a vital part of their own ministry?
3. Do they see it as a program that is diverting resources away from their own work?
4. What efforts have been made to discover and appreciate indigenous leadership styles, decision-making processes, and planning approaches?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| Considering these things ***for this language area***, how well has the work of the translation and engagement team become a part of the life of the local church? Are there issues that need to be addressed in order for that to happen? **Answer:** |

##

## D. Partnership with other missions

1. Which other missions are working in the language area? How do they view the translation? How can the Bible translation program serve the needs of these missions?
2. What are the language policies (stated or unstated) of these ministries at a) the national level; b) the regional level; c) local level?

**Summary Question**

|  |
| --- |
| What do you conclude about the level of partnership with other missions? **Answer:** |

# What Next?

## Decide on strategies and resources.

When you have worked through the various factors, you will know enough about your situation to begin thinking about what you want to do. Below are a number of steps designed to help you decide how to begin fostering a greater level of Scripture engagement in your community.

1 – Evaluate hindrances to Scripture engagement in your context.

You were probably able to identify several issues or problems that need to be addressed to improve Scripture engagement in the community. Begin by listing all of those issues or problems.

Once you have listed them look at how important each one is and how easy it might be to tackle it.

2 – Identify the assets that are available to you for addressing those hindrances.

Think about the resources you have readily available to you. These can include people who can help, funds that can be used, people who have special expertise you can draw on (local or outside), and how much time you have available to work on Scripture engagement.

3 – Decide which issues you want to focus on first.

Look at the list you developed in Step 1 in light of the assets you identified in Step 2.

Which items on the list do you have the capacity to address with your existing assets? Which ones will require finding additional assets, either from within or outside the community? Which ones will be easier to deal with? Which ones will take time, but will need to be addressed sometime.

Based on your evaluation, decide which issue(s) from Step 1 that you want to focus on first. There may be several quick and easy things you can do that will make a difference. Bigger projects will take much longer and require more resources, but could still be worth it.

Identify what can or should be done now, and what can be done over time.

Remember to keep a list of your discussions and decisions, including those issues you want to tackle later.

4 – Identify your plan for addressing the issues.

Make a plan based on the issues you want to address in the next year or two and the ideas you have for these.

Consider

- What you want to do,

- how you will create new materials or activities

- who should be involved,

- how long it might take,

- where you will try the new ideas and when.

Also, think about how you will assess whether your chosen solutions are acceptable and whether they are achieving the aims you have for them.

5 - Identify additional resources to help you

There are people and organisations available who can help with a variety of resources and skills you may need as you implement your plan.

As well as the local churches and other mission agencies working in the community, Scripture Engagement Consultants can help as you think about your situation and the many possible activities and Scripture-based resources you might want to develop or adapt, and those already available for use.

To find a Scripture Engagement Consultant please email: emdc.guide@gmail.com

## Examples of different Scripture Engagement Activities

● Preaching and Teaching

● Small group Bible Studies

● Audio listening groups

● Audio dramas

● Public reading of Scripture

● Community video screenings

● Oral storying and oral Bible studies

● Meditation and Memorisation

● Liturgy

● Singing, dancing, drama, visual arts

● Testimonies

● Conversations

● Teaching Podcasts where Scripture is explained

● Teaching why and how to study the Bible (good exegesis)

● Creation of background materials that help to make sense of Scripture

● Application of Scripture to local social and spiritual needs e.g. Trauma Healing, Culture meets Scripture, Faith and Farming, Kande’s story, Good News Encounters, Weavers

● Pastors Workshops e.g. key terms, the translation process, interpreting well, Biblical timelines,

● Bible-based literacy

● Children and youth Sunday school

● Family devotions

● Copying out Scriptures

● Social media campaigns, Messaging, Media to Movements

● Distribution strategies

● Working with seminaries to promote and teach about vernacular Scripture use/benefits, exegesis, worldview beliefs and values, leading group Bible studies

## Examples of different Scripture Products

● Printed passages, books, testaments, lectionaries

● Oral translation passages, books, testaments

● Audio passages, books, Testaments

● Scripture Apps e.g. Scripture App Builder, Story Producer App

● Videos of stories, books e.g. Jesus Film, Genesis Video, Lumo Gospels

● Diglots (printed and in Apps such as Scripture App Builder)

● Panoramas, Creation to Christ Scripture selections e.g. God’s Story, Bible Ramp

● Storying sets

● Scripture in Songs

● Children’s Bible stories e.g. Bloom books and App, Reading App Builder

● Radio dramas, visual dramas

● Scripture shared through Messaging Apps e.g. WhatsApp

● Social Media e.g. TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Telegram

● Psalms, Poems and Proverbs

For more ideas and resources please see [emdc.tools](https://emdc.tools/)

1. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)