THE PEOPLE

The people groups that make up the BATH Cluster are seminomadic and live in their traditional homeland in southwest Ethiopia. Also known as the South Omo Zone, this region is sparsely populated and very dry. Even in the so-called “rainy season” there is very little rain. Thus, the people must move from place to place to find grass and water for their cattle.

The Banna, Arbore, Tsamai, and Hamer people support themselves by farming and raising cattle. However, because of the arid climate in which they live, they frequently face famine. At times they live peacefully with one another, but during times of famine it is not unusual for violence to break out between the groups, particularly when cattle are stolen.

Men and older people are highly respected in these people groups; however, women and girls have virtually no status at all. For the most part, women and girls are viewed as an income source. Once a man has acquired a wife by paying a dowry of cows and oxen, he can treat her in whatever way he wishes. A husband can beat and even kill his wife if he so chooses.

The people of the BATH Cluster practice African traditional religion. They acknowledge the existence of a Supreme Being, but believe they cannot reach this God directly. Some of the people regard cows and oxen as their mediators, and others look to ancestral spirits. Missionaries introduced Christianity to these people groups about 30 years ago, but less than 5 percent of the people identify themselves as Christians.

THE PLAN

Oral communicators, the people of the BATH Cluster have no written Scriptures in their languages, although a Banna/Hamer New Testa-
ment will be printed soon. Thus, the first phase of this project will be Oral Bible Storytelling.

The Seed Company is partnering with the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, the Ethiopia Comprehensive Plan, and others to develop 30 to 40 stories, along with 16 storytelling guilds, over the life of this initial goal project. The goal will be to train storytellers who will start storytelling groups. Over time, the storytelling groups will grow into discipleship groups and, eventually, churches.

This project has much going for it. It enjoys strong support from all the partners involved. In addition, the Ethiopian Kale Heywet Church, which is the lead partner in the project, has a long history of Bible translation. However, although Ethiopia is a stable country, local ethnic violence could hinder the development of the project.

THE IMPACT

Of the people groups in the BATH Cluster, the Banna and Hamer will soon have a New Testament and the “JESUS” film. The Arbore and Tsamai people have no written Scriptures. As storytellers begin to work with these people groups, they hope to see changes in behavior in those who are part of the storytelling guilds because of their increased understanding of God’s Word. Likewise, they hope to see people coming to faith in Christ, along with an increase in newly planted churches. The partners in this project also hope to see an impact on the surrounding culture with a reduction in both polygamy and female circumcision.

This project is the initial phase of a multi-phased project. After the storytelling phase is complete, the partners would like to move forward by producing the “JESUS” film and, eventually, the entire New Testament. This project will also serve as a model for a second Oral Bible Storytelling cluster project in Ethiopia, scheduled to begin in 2014.

JOIN THE TEAM

The BATH Cluster translators cannot complete their goals without your financial investment and prayer. Your investment makes translation possible by providing training and equipping the translation team with adequate computer equipment, translation supplies and living expenses for their families.

Your prayer helps translators and their families face problems such as sickness, conflict and spiritual opposition that can threaten their work. As a prayer partner and/or investor, you are a vital member of the team.

Call The Seed Company toll free at 1-877-593-7333, or visit www.theseedcompany.org/projects, to commit to invest in and pray for the BATH Cluster translation team.