

Volker and JinHyeog Glissmann

Location: **Blantyre, MALAWI**

Mission: **Theological education**

February 2026



The Glissmanns are living in Malawi. Jinhyeog is involved in a local Primary School as a music teacher. Volker works off-campus as a programme developer for TEEC, the Theological Education by Extension College in Johannesburg, South Africa, and does grassroots theological training in Malawi.

TEEnet – The Story of God translation

In late November, two individuals, one in Mozambique and one in Egypt, asked whether the new course, *The Story of God*, is available in Portuguese or Arabic. At that, we decided to explore modern translation technologies to see whether we can translate the course faster using translation software. We were not sure where that specific journey would take us.

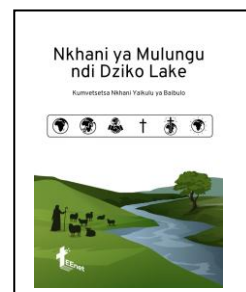
We asked around but found that few had explored machine learning for translation. We then tested numerous AI translation programmes, and this was where being a multilingual family helped with the evaluation of translations.

Overall, these programmes work quite well. No translation was perfect or immediately usable. All translations require comprehensive editing and proofreading to be both consistent in word use and theologically sound (as the AI lacks a theological background and the church uses specific words to describe theological ideas). It was always assumed that every translation (human or AI) has to go through the usual steps of course translation.

Yet computer translation significantly speeds up the translation process.

During our testing, we also explored AI translation into Chichewa (for Malawi), Shona (for Zimbabwe), and Swahili (for East Africa). The results were mixed. Swahili is possibly ok but the Chichewa and Shona AI translations were not good enough. The reason is that most likely these programmes were trained on a limited pool of written examples, and, for some languages, we are looking for a dynamic equivalent rather than a word-for-word translation.

The Chichewa translation has been finished by hand, and the course will now be tested here in Blantyre. We have commissioned Portuguese translations for Mozambique (and Angola) and French translations to make the course available in French-speaking Africa. We are still exploring other major translations into Arabic, Swahili, and Russian, as well as continuing to see how smaller African languages could be translated using AI.



Prayer Points

- Join us in praising God. We praise God for conversations that pushed us to consider new ways of doing translations. We are grateful for the Chichewa translation, which is finished, and for the French and Portuguese, which are nearly ready.
- Continue praying with us as we explore how we can use technology to achieve our objectives, as well as with the French and Portuguese proof-readers.
- Please continue to pray for the health and safety of the whole family.