

Translators without Borders ups humanitarian aid in Africa

Greater access to vital healthcare information, disaster relief and training provided as the non-profit expands its global programmes on the continent.

Translators without Borders (TwB) has increased the African component of several major programmes as part of its global mission to provide people with access to vital information in their own language.



Since its inception in 2010, TwB has completed pro bono translations of more than 14 million words for over 250 non-governmental organisations (NGOs). As others have joined its mission, TwB has significantly increased its humanitarian work around the world, growing its translation volumes ten-fold in the last three years.

Lori Thicke, president and founder of TwB, says that 2013 has been a year of extraordinary growth. "In the last 12 months, we've translated more than 7 million words, grown key projects and achieved greater financial stability, thanks to significant contributions from our volunteers, donors and other partners."

TwB honours supporters that exemplify its mission of translating for humanity in an annual Access to Knowledge Awards, with winners chosen by its boards of directors and advisors. As a Gold sponsor of TwB since the start, global language services provider Rubric has received The Donor Award.

Rubric and its fellow award recipients have enabled TwB to greatly expand its 100x100 Wikipedia Project on healthcare, create the largest simplified English medical terminology database, fund the piloting of its Words of Relief crisis network, and grow its training and translation centre in Nairobi, Kenya.

Healthcare Information For All

Healthcare in Africa remains a challenge with less than half of all countries on track to reach the United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015.

Africa's child mortality rates are still the world's highest. Accounting for one in nine deaths before age five, this is more than 16 times the average in developed regions (one in 152). Yet, only six countries are on track to reduce this by two-thirds by 2015. Knowledge and information, especially in resource-poor settings, can help improve the delivery of better quality healthcare and prevent more deaths.

To create a universal repository of medical knowledge, especially in languages where good health information is hard to get, TwB launched the Wikipedia 100x100 Project with Wikimedia Canada and WikiProject Medicine. Both TwB and Wikimedia Canada are supporters of Healthcare Information For All by 2015.

The 100x100 Project focuses on Wikipedia medical and health care articles considered fundamental because of their content and quality. The aim is to translate the 100 articles most viewed into simpler English and then into 100 other languages. To date, nearly three million words have been delivered, which includes several African languages - in particular Swahili, which has more than 65 million speakers as the lingua franca of East Africa.

Disaster relief communication

TwB in 2013 received funding from the Humanitarian Innovation Fund for its Words of Relief pilot project. In times of humanitarian emergencies like the Haiti earthquake of 2010, from which TwB was borne, the organisation works with aid response organisations to improve communication with local populations.

Its Word of Relief pilot will test the concept of a spider network of responders in regional and local languages as well as an interactive, collaborative and mobile translation system to engage expats quickly and in a meaningful way. The project will kick off in February in Kenya with Somali and Swahili.

Training of translators

TwB has also grown its Training and Translation Centre in Nairobi, Kenya to build language capacity in East Africa. The centre currently has 10 translators and editors who are nurtured by the TwB training director for a career in translation.



TwB gives translators the technology they need for success and train them in aspects like translation memories to match the professional skills of any European or North American translators. By professionalising translation in Kenya, TwB is also establishing translation as a viable profession for Africans.

Trainees focus on healthcare content in Swahili for the Health Education and Training project from The Open University. This project aims to train 250,000 frontline healthcare workers in sub-Saharan Africa by 2016 by translating health modules from European languages into the languages used by community health workers. To date, 500,000 words of training materials have already been completed.

Access to Knowledge

Françoise Henderson, CEO at Rubric, says the company shares TwB's founding belief that every person deserves information in his or her own language.

"It has been a pleasure to extend our corporate vision and closely partner with TwB to empower people with clear and concise translations. We look forward to continuing to work closely with the non-profit through our advisory board and technical committee roles and to drive our joint mission forward," says Henderson.

Resources

- [Translators without Borders](#)
- [Development Goals %28MDGs%29 Report 2013.pdf United Nations Millennium Development Goals by 2015](#)
- [Healthcare Information for All by 2015](#)

Links

- Rubric Website: <http://www.rubric.com/za>
- Rubric on Twitter: [@rubricinc](#)