



RESEARCH

Toward a professional code of ethics in Bible Translation

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When professionals become members of a professional network, they are required to abide by a code of ethics or code of professional conduct. The aim of such a code of ethics is to see that members follow a common set of ethical principles in carrying out their professional duties. To determine whether Bible translators are conforming to similar ethical values and principles in the course of their practice, this paper looks at organizations belonging to FOBAI and ETEN networks to determine what ethical values most commonly guide their Bible translation work. These values are then compared with Chesterman's (2001) four models of translation ethics namely: ethics of representation (relation), ethics of accountability (loyalty), ethics of communication and ethics of service, and the Chesterman (2016) four fundamental related values: truth, trust, value, understanding.

1. Introduction

All human activities are subject to ethical evaluation and scrutiny. Professionals and professional networks are typically required to abide by a code of ethics or code of professional conduct. The code of ethics outlines principles, values, guidelines and standards for behavior within a specific profession and network. The aim is to ensure members follow a common set of ethical principles in relating with people and in carrying out their professional duties. Examples of professional codes of conduct include the code of medical ethics in Nigeria, The International Council of Nurses (ICN) code of ethics for nurses revised 2021, and the National Society of Professional Engineers code of ethics. Linguists, anthropologists, religious bodies, and organizations have morals and values that they follow.¹ Translation professionals, bodies, and associations such as the American Translators Association (ATA), International Federation of Translators (FIT), Institute of Translation and Interpreting (ITI), International Association of Professional Translators and Interpreters (IAPTI), among others, have codes of ethics and professional conduct which members are to adhere to. Bible translation is a professional activity, which requires networking and collaboration. It therefore needs an ethical framework or a professional code of ethics to guide the behavior of all stakeholders and members of

¹ For example, the American Anthropological Association (1998) or the Linguistic Society of America (2009).

the professional body to guarantee mutual understanding, integrity, accountability, trust and to provide a framework for decision making among practitioners. Here, ethics is defined as a system of morals and values that drive a community (Werner 2014, 15). It can also be seen as moral principles and values that guide behavior and practice. For our purposes, code of ethics is defined as a set of rules, principles, and guidelines that guide or govern professionals and organizations in making decisions about what is right and wrong, ensuring integrity, fairness, and accountability in their behavior and practice. A code of ethics functions as an ethical compass for professionals and organizations.

Bible translation and publishing are no exception from ethical scrutiny; they must be ethical. The translated text is provided to the public, and its producers are responsible for the process. The process must be guided by ethical values, the people must be respected, and producers must promote responsible and ethical use of the text by the target audience. Ethics in Bible translation must be guided by integrity, trust, accountability and honesty.

Jesus teaches two basic ethical principles and values in life, namely: (1) “Love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39; Mark 12:31; cf. Lev. 19:18, NIV), and (2) “Do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12, NIV). These two ethical principles and values taught by Jesus provide guidance in all human activities and endeavors and toward an ethics of Bible translation.

Bible translation is not only about the text; most importantly, it is about people, and it matters how we treat people, including the language community, end users, and translators.

2. Survey

This section discusses the survey conducted among leaders of organizations belonging to the FOBAI and ETEN alliances, specifically the method employed in the survey and the results of the survey. It was decided to begin research at this level, leaving room for future research closer to the grassroots of the Bible translation world. The main objective of the current research is to determine what ethical values guide the Bible translation work of organizations belonging to both FOBAI and ETEN² networks. To collect information about the opinion of these organizations, a survey was conducted among executive and field leaders of ten BT organizations, involving both open- and closed-ended questions. Additional survey details appear in the appendix.

² Forum of Bible Agencies International and Every Tribe Every Nation.

The results of the survey are as follows. Of the ten organizations surveyed, seven responded: SIL, Pioneer Bible Translators, Seed Company, American Bible Society, United Bible Societies, The Word for the World, and Lutheran Bible Translators. No responses were received from Biblica, Deaf Bible Society, or Wycliffe Bible Translators. Respondents held leadership roles in either executive or field programs.³ Their responses are presented in this section.

Three organizations (43%) responded that their organization has a documented code of ethics that guides their translation work, while three (43%) said they do not have one, and one (14%) was unsure. This shows a mixed approach to ethical issues or principles in Bible translation among the organizations surveyed. Notably, only one of these three organizations shared their document. However, the document focuses on basic ethical principles of field research rather than specific ethical guidelines for Bible translation. This suggests that while some organizations recognize the value of ethical frameworks or guidelines for Bible translation, there is a lack of standardized or specialized codes tailored to address the unique challenges of Bible translation. The absence of such documents at both networking and organizational levels may expose practitioners to ethical ambiguities, inconsistencies in practice, and potential reputational or moral risks. The findings highlight the need to develop comprehensive, relevant, context-specific ethical principles and guidelines at both networking and organizational levels to address translation-specific issues such as fidelity to source texts, cultural sensitivity, community engagement, and theological biases. Such ethical standards guidelines and principles could enhance accountability and professionalism, improve quality assurance and community engagement, and foster greater trust, respect, and collaboration among stakeholders in Bible translation.

Summary of responses on ethical codes or values your organization uses in practice to guide your translation work. Seven responded thus:

“We adhere to United Bible Societies’ values and recommend contacting them directly.”

“At the core of Bible translation ethics are thorough needs assessments, local ownership, translator group composition, translator working conditions, and quality assurance across people, processes, and products.”

³ The roles include Program Officer, President/CEO, Executive Director Bible Ministry, Chief Translation Quality Officer, Director International Translation Services, Chief Programs Officer, International Director: Translation and Consultant Development | Publications, and Language Program Advisor.

“Core values include honoring God, valuing people and relationships, effective partnership, fostering innovation, and ensuring quality results.”

“Many X staff receive linguistic training through X-validated training partners, where ethical research—mainly related to linguistics—is emphasized. For example, Y College, an X-validated provider, requires ethical approval for research as part of its MA program. While ethics is primarily framed around linguistic research rather than translation, X has well-developed ethical guidelines, including for AI use, which all staff are expected to follow.”

“We have an ethics code for employee treatment, strong organizational values guiding ethical conduct and honor the people and languages we work with, and we follow FOBAI standard practices.”

1. **“Whole Bible Focus:** Aim to translate the entire Bible for every language.
2. **Priority on First-Time Translations:** Focus on languages without any portion of the Bible, inspiring passion for God’s Word.
3. **Respect for All Cultures:** Value every people group equally, regardless of size or status, and work with openness.
4. **Servanthood:** Serve other ministries, promote indigenous ownership, foster partnerships, and commit to completing each project fully.
5. **Excellence in Service:** Pursue integrity, fairness, innovation, and responsible stewardship to honor God and the Bible translation work.
6. **Flexibility:** Seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance to adapt strategies and fulfill mission goals. maintaining transparency, honor and trust.”

“We have value statements that can be seen on our website, but no ‘ethical codes’ per se.”

When the intent of various stakeholders conflict during the translation process, most respondents reported that they prioritize the intent of the language community over that of the original writer and funding agency.

- (1) How the intent of the stakeholders is prioritized:

1. We prioritize the intent of the language community: 71%
2. We prioritize the intent of the original writer: 63%
3. We prioritize the intent of the funding agency: 31%

This preference highlights the importance of the language community in Bible translation decision-making, ownership, and contextual relevance. Prioritizing the community's intent ensures that the final product is acceptable based on the linguistic norms, relevant to their context and theological understandings. However, this may sometimes create tension with other stakeholders, such as funding agencies or the original author's intentions. Prioritizing community intent suggests an ethical orientation toward participatory translation practices, which can enhance acceptance and usage of the translation. Nevertheless, it also raises questions about how to balance competing priorities without compromising accuracy of the text (authorial intent) or donor requirements. These findings underscore the need for a clear ethical framework that respects the language community while maintaining good relationships with the funding agencies and preserving the scholarly and theological integrity of the text.

Some respondents noted the following:

“In terms of the content of the Scripture, we prioritize the intent of the original writer. However, when it comes to what gets translated when, we focus on the desires of the language community.”

“...the motivation is to serve local communities, and we would put this higher than any purposes of funding partners. The intent of the original author seems to be a different kind of thing—I'm not sure where to put that.”

“I can't really answer the previous question. Organization Z is highly decentralised, and these priorities are balanced at regional and national level, based on our core values and according to local context and needs.”

Regarding the priorities about communicating information among the different stakeholders, most respondents rank communication with translators highest, followed by communication with donors/funders, and then language communities, as seen in (2) below. The ranking suggests that Bible translators are considered the key actors in the Bible translation process.

This may result from their direct, ongoing involvement in the project; they are responsible for the linguistic and theological accuracy of the text. It could be also that organizations relate and interface with them most frequently among the stakeholders; they may be the main point of connection with the community. Prioritizing communication with translators may ensure clarity of expectations, consistency in methodology, and alignment with project goals. That communication with donors and funders ranks second in the responses reflects the practical reality of maintaining financial support and accountability, while the relatively lower ranking of language communities may point to a gap in participatory engagement. This pattern has important implications for Bible translation. Insufficient communication with language communities may undermine the important value, role, and contribution of the community as well as the acceptance of the translated text. Bible translation is not only a linguistic exercise but also a ministry, highly contextual theological endeavor that requires community involvement to ensure that the Bible is clearly understood and actively engaged. The finding underscores the importance of a balanced communication strategy that enhances interaction with the language communities, without compromising accuracy or relationships with donors and funders. This would strengthen trust and improve the impact and sustainability of Bible translation.

(2) How communication among stakeholders is prioritized.

1. We prioritize communication with translators: 86%
2. We prioritize communication with donors/funders: 66%
3. We prioritize communication with the language community: 46%

Some of the reasons given for this ranking includes:

“Because our work is primarily funding or supporting translation with technology, the translator is often our connection point to the language community.”

“This is an artificial choice to make as communication depends on the topics.”

“I don’t think we prioritized one of these over the others—equal value.”

“My guess is that communication with donors ranks more highly here because I think in the reality of most projects, if you do not communicate with funders the money will stop flowing and the project could be in danger. Although communication

with the community is a high value, my suspicion is that in reality this communication takes lower precedence **because the formal accountability is less.**”

“...is highly decentralised, and these priorities are balanced at regional and national level, based on our core values and according to local context and needs.”

“The language community communication is top priority because if they are not onboard the program won’t succeed...it isn’t so much that they are of higher value. (same with the translators). The funder is important because they will not accept no communication.”

Responses to the statement ‘translators have good working conditions’ were distributed as follows: 43% of the respondents strongly agree, another 43% agree (indicating 86% favorable responses) while 14% are neutral. No participants expressed disagreement. This indicates predominantly positive perceptions and strong consensus regarding translators’ working conditions. This suggests effective organizational policies, supportive and conducive work environments, or satisfactory remuneration structures, among other possibilities.

Responses to the statement ‘translators translate in a way that readers can use the text for certain objectives’ were: 57% strongly agree, 29% agree, and 14% neutral. These responses suggest that translators intentionally translate to meet the needs of the target community. This underscores the usability and relevance of the translated scriptures to serve the spiritual, liturgical, and educational purposes of the language community.

Responses to the statement ‘It would be valuable for translation agencies to share a common code of conduct/ethics’ were: 86% of the respondents agree, and only 14% of the respondents remained neutral, while no one expressed disagreement. This indicates overwhelming support for the idea that Bible translation agencies should have a common code of ethics. The strong consensus reveals a need for greater standardization, accountability, and ethical evaluation among the Bible translation actors. A shared set of ethical principles or a code of practice would help ensure consistency in addressing complex ethical issues such as fidelity to source texts, cultural sensitivity, theological accuracy, trust, and transparency in decision-making, while also promoting transparency. It would also provide a basis for resolving conflicts among stakeholders, serve as a benchmark for best practices, enhance accountability, and safeguard the integrity of translation processes. The absence of such a shared code could lead to ethical ambiguities, uneven practices across organizations, and potential mistrust among language communities and funding partners. These findings therefore underscore the urgency of collaborative efforts to develop and implement a sector-wide code

of ethics that reflects both universal principles and the unique challenges of Bible translation. Such a code would not only strengthen professional standards but also enhance credibility, reduce conflict, and build trust in the translated Bibles.

The following is how the respondents reacted to this question ‘In your organization, how would you describe the ideal relationship between you and the language communities?’

“Given our relationship through the organization Y, primarily we are best served when we know that the language community is receiving and being transformed by quality Bible translation and receiving stories of that transformation that we can share back with financial supporters.”

“No translation started without the explicitly expressed wish by/assessed need for a language community.”

“Open communications, shared vision (of God’s Word impacting lives among them)”

“...works with local communities around the world to develop language solutions that expand possibilities for a better life. Our organisational ‘philosophy of partnership’ includes elements like power-sharing, healthy relationships, grace, embracing complexity and interdependence, humbly putting others first.”

“We are there to serve the language communities. We have experience in BT and SE, but they know who they are and what they need the best. So, when we can work together to come up plans and solutions, that is the best. But we want them to be the drivers.”

“The language communities (and local churches and organisations) own their respective translation projects; we serve and enable them to take responsibility for Bible translation and related activities and to ensure its availability and accessibility.”

“Mutual listening and communication. Mutual respect for their domains of expertise.”

Responses to the statement ‘Additional information about how values or ethics guide your organization’s translation work.’

“One of the challenges I see in a universal code of ethics would be the extent to which that could be contextualized in various places. For example, I might have feelings about appropriate

working conditions, but translators and language communities might feel differently, and I want to respect their thoughts on this.”

“These are organization Z’s core values:

1. Transforming Word of God: We believe God works powerfully through His Word to change lives for the better in this life and for eternity.
2. God values all languages: God reveals Himself to people through all languages and cultures. We affirm the importance of local languages—among the other languages a community uses—for strengthening identity, communicating deeply, and sharing knowledge.
3. Scholarly and professional approach: We believe scholarship and professional standards are crucial to our work in relating to the languages and cultures of the world.
4. Strategic Partnership with Others: We believe that working together honors God, and so we seek to cooperate with others to achieve common goals.
5. Service to All: We believe we should serve others without discrimination.
6. Building vision and capacity: We believe that building vision and capacity is central in promoting sustainable language development and Bible translation programs.
7. Trusting God for the impossible: We believe God is able to accomplish results that are humanly impossible, and we depend on Him to do so.”

3. Proposal for an ethical code in Bible Translation

As the preceding section demonstrates, a majority of respondents agreed that it would be valuable for Bible translation agencies to share a common code of conduct/ethics. Although not codified, current shared values and recurring themes in the responses could form part of such a code. These include respect for God’s Word, respect for people, and service.

An ethical code for Bible translation needs to consider both macro and micro perspectives and issues. Chesterman (2016) makes a basic distinction between macro-ethical matters and micro-ethical ones.

Macro-ethical matters concern broad social questions such as, the role and rights of translators in society, conditions of work, financial rewards and the client's profit motive, the general aims of translation as intercultural action, power relations between translators and clients, the relation between translation and state politics: in short, the relation between the translator and the world. Micro-ethical matters, on the other hand, concern the translator's action during the translation process itself, questions dealing with specific textual matters, translation strategies and the like: in short, the relation between the translators and the words on the page. (168)

It is important to note that Chesterman does not explicitly mention the language community or the users of the translation. However, these could be understood as part of the macro-level. Macro issues influence micro-ones, affecting the translator's individual decisions, while micro-level decisions ultimately impact broader intercultural relations.

Chesterman develops four basic normative devices, which he calls the relation (representation) norm, the accountability norm, the communication norm, and the service norm. Van der Jagt (2010) explains them as follows:

The relation norm: "A translator should act in such a way that an appropriate relation of relevant similarity is established and maintained between the source text and the target text" (Van der Jagt 2010, 104). This raises critical questions: Who determines what is an appropriate relation between the texts in a given situation, and how is this achieved? Furthermore, how should we account for our different theological views and interpretations?

The accountability norm: "A translator should act in such a way that the demands of loyalty are appropriately met with regard to the original writer, the commissioner of the translation, the translator himself or herself, the prospective readership, and other relevant parties" (Van der Jagt 2010, 104). Loyalty and accountability should not be considered the sole responsibility of the translator. Instead, they constitute a shared responsibility and obligation among all stakeholders involved in the translation action. Ensuring appropriate loyalty and accountability toward each stakeholder fosters mutual trust and strengthens collaborative integrity.

The communication norm: "A translator should act in such a way as to optimize communication, as required by the situation, between all the parties involved" (Van der Jagt 2010, 104). All parties are equally important in

the translation process and communication among them must be balanced and transparent, ensuring that no party is excluded or left uninformed or underinformed.

The service norm: “Translators should provide the service they have agreed to render to the commissioners of the project. That is, translation should be done based on the brief. The service norm is closely connected with the value of loyalty” (Van der Jagt 2010, 104). Responsibility for delivering agreed-upon services in the translation process does not rest solely with translators; all parties involved must fulfill the roles they have committed to, and these roles should align with their respective areas of competence. Stakeholders should actively encourage one another to perform their duties honestly and faithfully, without creating obstacles that hinder the progress or integrity of the work or prevent others from performing their roles.

Chesterman (2016, 173–184) also discusses four fundamental translational values namely clarity, truth, trust, and understanding, which are summarized as follows.

Clarity helps in processing. It is thus mainly a linguistic value. It applies to any use of language, and not just translation. “Linguistic clarity is defined in terms of the hearer’s perception of the speaker’s intention: a message has clarity to the extent that the receiver can, within an appropriate time, perceive the speaker’s intended meaning” (Chesterman 2016, 175). The value of clarity has two general kinds of effect on the translator’s action: it may prompt both preventive and productive action. Chesterman (2016, 173) argues that “in its preventive aspect” the goal is “the avoidance of obscurity, ambiguity, confusion and the like,” whereas the “productive aspect” aims for “optimum clarity.”

Truth primarily concerns the relation norm. There must, then, be a relation between the source text and the translated text, and it must be a true one. This true relation will depend on what the situational conditions suggest is relevant. Hence productive action creates a true relation, and preventive action avoids loss of truth (Chesterman 2016, 176).

Trust: According to Chesterman (2016, 178–180), trust is the value that governs the accountability or loyalty norm stated above. In terms of translational trust, the questions that arise are: Do I, as a translator, believe that I have the right to translate this? Will my readers believe that I have this right, and hence trust me? (Presumably, the commissioner does have this trust, *de facto*.) And then, if the answers are affirmative: How do I prevent this trust from being lost? These are questions that are not only relevant to translators but to other stakeholders as well. For example, each one should ask: Do I, as an X, have the right to do Y; do others trust me?

Understanding is the ultimate goal of communication, and the goal of translational action is to produce understanding; in other words, to produce a change of state from non-understanding to understanding. This may sound somewhat trivial when formulated thus as productive action, but the converse formulation is a kind of preventive action—preventing misunderstanding. The value of understanding, then, can be construed in two ways of relevance to the translator: (a) minimizing misunderstanding of the text among intended readers, and (b) minimizing the number of potential readers who are excluded from understanding (Chesterman 2016, 181–182).

Clarity and truth have to do with texts and relations between them (micro-level); trust and understanding have to do with relations between people (macro-level). Translators and other actors are agents who interfere with the state of the world. What ethical values do they appeal to?

Therefore, in the researcher's view and based on the preceding, an ethical code for Bible Translation should cover the following areas/issues:

- **Respect for Persons and Communities:** Engage communities as active participants, not passive recipients. Team members should have mutual respect for each other and each other's religious views. Language communities are respected in the way decisions are made, in the funding approach, and in the way other values are promoted (e.g., speed).
- **Community Ownership:** Promote local ownership and leadership in the translation process, support sustainability through capacity building and empowerment.
- **Collaboration and Partnership:** Work collaboratively with local and global partners, value mutual learning and shared responsibility.
- **Informed Consent and Transparency:** Ensure all stakeholders understand the goals, methods, and implications of the translation, avoid hidden agendas or manipulation.
- **Accountability:** Be accountable to both the language community and other stakeholders, maintain ethical standards in relationships, funding, and outcomes.
- **Honesty:** Promote honesty among all stakeholders.
- **Confidentiality and Data Ethics:** Respect privacy when handling personal or community information and data, adhere to ethical research practices where applicable.

- **Cultural Sensitivity and Relevance:** Honor cultural values, norms, and worldview in both content and process, avoid imposing external cultural assumptions.
- **Justice, Fairness, and Equity:** Prioritize marginalized or underserved language groups, ensure fair treatment regardless of social, political, cultural, national, or religious status.
- **Intellectual Property and Copyright:** There should be an intellectual property agreement, rights to parties involved, rights of the language community, and so on.
- **Accuracy and Integrity:** Faithful or accurate representation of source text.
- **Professionalism, Competence, and Training:** Ensure that translators are well trained and have the required skills and competence in relevant areas, such as pair of languages, linguistics, Biblical languages, Anthropology, and Communication.
- **Quality and excellence:** Commit to high standards in linguistic, cultural, translation, communication, technical quality, and incorporate community validation.

These values align with broader human research ethics frameworks such as the Belmont Report (respect, beneficence, justice) and UNESCO's Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights.

4. Conclusion

In view of the above, an oath or commitment similar to the one proposed by Chesterman (below) which covers most of the relevant themes, could be signed by the players in the Bible translation ministry.

A proposal for a universal Hieronymic Oath⁴

1. I swear to keep this Oath to the best of my ability and judgment.
2. I swear to be a loyal member of the translators' profession, respecting its history. I am willing to share my expertise with colleagues and to pass it on to trainee translators. I will not work for unreasonable fees. I will always translate to the best of my ability.

⁴ Cf. Chesterman 2001, 153; 2016, 192–193.

3. I will use my expertise to maximize communication and minimize misunderstanding across language barriers.
4. I swear that my translations will not represent their source texts in unfair ways.
5. I will respect my readers by trying to make my translations as accessible as possible, according to the conditions of each translation task.
6. I undertake to respect the professional secrets of my clients and not to exploit clients' information for personal gain. I promise to respect deadlines and to follow clients' instructions.
7. I will be honest about my own qualifications and limitations; I will not accept work that is outside my competence.
8. I will inform clients of unresolved problems and agree to arbitration in cases of dispute.
9. I will do all I can to maintain and improve my competence, including all relevant linguistic, technical, and other knowledge and skills.

Each of the statements in the oath emphasizes an ethical theme: (1) commitment, (2) loyalty to the profession and fair practice, (3) maximizing communication, while minimizing misunderstanding, (4) faithful representation of source text, (5) accessibility for readers, (6) confidentiality and professional conduct, (7) honesty about competence, (8) transparency and justice, and (9) continuous improvement.

Collectively, these principles and themes underscore that Bible translation is not merely a technical exercise but a profession requiring integrity, accountability, excellence, and a deep awareness of the spiritual and cultural significance of Scripture. Translators must avoid shortcuts, uphold fairness in collaboration and compensation, and work toward sustainability. They are called to bridge linguistic and cultural gaps without distorting meaning, and to ensure clarity through approaches like functional equivalence and contextualization. Faithfulness to the source text is paramount, avoiding bias or theological manipulation, supported by peer review and consultant checks. Translations should remain accessible and understandable for the target audience while protecting sensitive information and honoring deadlines. Furthermore, translators must recognize their limitations, fostering teamwork with linguistic, exegetical, and cultural expertise. Transparency in unresolved issues and ethical dispute resolution strengthens trust and unity.

Finally, continuous learning in linguistics, technology, and cultural studies is essential to maintain accuracy and relevance in every translation effort. An oath of this sort and a code of ethics for Bible translation would establish Bible translation as a professional and ethical endeavor, not merely a technical task. It would emphasize integrity, responsibility, collaboration, continuous learning, and competence.

5. Further Research

This paper has summarized some preliminary research intended to encourage ethical collaboration in the Bible translation world. The current research has been limited to a few organizations belonging to the FOBAI and ETEN networks. It may be beneficial for future research to be conducted on the level of regional or national Bible translation organizations and, perhaps most importantly, on the level of individual language and Bible translation projects. It is hoped that such research would bring ethical concerns to the forefront so that more people can have access to high-quality Scriptures which have been produced in an ethical manner.

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Appendix: Details of the Survey

The survey mentioned in Section 2 of this paper was conducted among executive or field leaders of the following BT organizations: American Bible Society (ABS), Biblica, Deaf Bible Society, Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT), Pioneer Bible Translators (PBT), Seed Company (SC), Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), The Word For The World (TWFTW), Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), and United Bible Societies (UBS). These ten organizations are members of both the FOBAI and ETEN alliances. Seven of these organizations responded to the survey.

FOBAI: Forum of Bible Agencies International is considered a professional body. FOBAI has three categories of members namely:

- **Full members** which include Door International, LBT, PBT, Institute for Bible Translation, OneHope, Faith Comes By Hearing, Scripture Union International, BibleLeague Canada, BibleLeague International, SC, Deaf Bible Society, Deaf Missions, SIL, Story Runners (a Cru ministry), LifeWord, Jesus Film Project, DAVAR, TWFTW, ABS, Wycliffe Global Alliance, Biblica, and Voice of the Martyrs.
- **Associate members** include Whole Word Institute, Bibles of China, Crossway, Community Bible Study, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Jerusalem Seminary, Megavoice, Talking Bibles, JCBT, Spoken Worldwide, MC mundocrisao, SIM by Prayer, Bible Translation Fellowship, Digital Bible Society, Virtual Storehouse, Scripture Engagement, and Wycliffe Bible Translators.
- **Collaborating Agency**, currently only UBS.¹

ETEN: ETEN members are American Bible Society (ABS), Biblica, Deaf Bible Society, Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT), Pioneer Bible Translators (PBT), Seed Company (SC), SIL, TWFTW, Unfolding Word, Wycliffe Bible Translators (WBT), and United Bible Societies (UBS). ETEN is considered as a principal implementing partner.

Before sending out the survey to the executive and field leaders of the ten organizations, the researcher visited the websites of FOBAI and ETEN and the organizations belonging to the alliances to determine whether they have any ethical code and values guiding their Bible translation work, but no such documents were found on the websites. However, some websites contained general core values or value statements but nothing specific to

¹ This information is from the FOBAI website.

Bible translation ethics. The survey questions were developed using Microsoft Forms and the link to the form was sent to the leaders of the organizations by email. The email contained introductory remarks and instructions. The survey was sent out June 8, 2025, and responses were collected from the end of July through August 2025 and analyzed.

The survey questions were framed around Chesterman's four normative devices or values namely: relation norm, accountability norm, communication norm, and service norm. These values are discussed in Section 3. The main questions that were sent out in the survey are:

Does your organization have a documented code or ethics that guides your translation work? If you are comfortable, please attach your organization's ethics documents in an email to linus.otronyi@lbt.org

Explain below what, if any, ethical codes or values your organization uses in practice to guide your translation work.

Sometimes the intent of various stakeholders come into conflict during the translation process. Rank the following options regarding how your organization intends to prioritize the following interests. *Rearrange the items into order of priority: make the top item the highest priority.*

We prioritize the intent of the original writer

We prioritize the intent of the funding agency

We prioritize the intent of the language community.

Provide any additional explanation to your answer regarding intent.

Sometimes communication of information to various stakeholders needs to be prioritized during the translation process. Rank the following options regarding how your organization intends to prioritize communicating to the following groups. *Rearrange the items into order of priority: make the top item the highest priority.*

We prioritize communication with the language community

We prioritize communication with translators

We prioritize communication with donors/funders.

Provide any additional explanation to your answer regarding communication.

How high of a priority are the following?

Translators have good working conditions.

Translators translate in a way that readers can use the text for certain objectives

It would be valuable for translation agencies to share a common code of conduct/ethics.

In your organization, how would you describe the ideal relationship between you and the language communities?

What else would you like to share about how values or ethics guide your organization's translation work?