

Songs for Saplings Translation and Recording Procedures

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Introduction

Songs for Saplings is a music ministry based in Portland, Oregon in the Northwest of the United States. We have been producing music since 2004, and have now recorded eight albums in English. These albums include the “Songs for Saplings” albums “ABC” and “123,” which put scripture verses to simple melodies for younger kids, and the “Questions with Answers” series, a six-volume set, putting timeless theology and supporting scripture to music.

In 2008 we translated the first volume of “Questions with Answers” in Chichewa, a language spoken in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique, and Botswana. We worked with college and grammar school students in Malawi, produced “Questions with Answers Volume 1: God and Creation” in Chichewa.

Since that time we have worked on similar projects in Spanish, Russian, French, Ukrainian and Polish. We have learned quite a bit through these projects and would like to share with you the process we use for producing albums for use in other languages.

Some of these steps require professionals with specialized skills, while others need only someone committed to seeing the project through.

We want to thank you for your interest in working with Songs for Saplings. We have been humbled to see how God has provided for, guided, and protected this ministry. Watching how He has brought just the right people and just the right resources to us time and time again is encouraging.

We look forward to hearing from you as to how we can create a translation in your language for God’s glory.

The Process

This process has been created and perfected over the last 8 years. We have found it to be a very reliable way to produce high-quality recordings and distribute them in the best way in different regions and cultures.

1. Identifying who we will work with

The first step in a successful project is to identify ministries or groups in the target location that will work with Songs for Saplings to create a new translation of the music. We suggest that, except in the case of countries where Christianity is prohibited or openly persecuted, these groups be established, long-standing ministries in the country.

The next step is to identify a project coordinator in your country who will be the primary contact in communicating with Songs for Saplings. This person will coordinate activities in your country before the recording, be available during the entire recording process, and continue to work with Songs for Saplings until the final product is delivered in your language.

2. Resources from Songs for Saplings

We have produced high-quality sheet music, instrumental tracks, Protools studio session files, chords and lyrics sheets, and album artwork for the projects.

- a. Sheet music is made available in PDF and .mus (Finale, Print Music) formats
- b. Instrumental tracks are made available in MP3 format.
- c. Studio session files are made available for use in Protools
- d. Chords and lyrics sheets are made available in PDF
- e. Album artwork is made available in PDF and .indd files (Adobe, InDesign)

3. Translating the Songs

We work with you to produce the best translation for use in the target language and culture. A faithful and artful translation of the materials is of primary importance to the integrity of the final product. Using the following principles will help ensure that:

- a. The person or team translating the lyrics should be fluent in both the target language and English and should have a solid, evangelical Christian background.
- b. At least one person on the translation team should have proven songwriting or arranging skills so that the translated work maintains its singability.

The “Questions with Answers” series is based on Scripture and the *Shorter Catechism of the Westminster Confession of Faith* (1647). The translators should translate the “Questions with Answers” series songs from English into the target language. The translators should have a faithful target-language translation of the Bible and *Westminster Shorter Catechism* (if available) open and use them both to make sure they are being faithful to the meaning of both the question and answer and the Bible verse truth.

The goal of the “Questions with Answers” songs is not to create a version of the exact or verbatim Bible verses or catechisms, but to communicate their truths in a faithful and singable way. If, however, the translation yields an exact, verbatim use of a Scripture verse, you must notify us immediately so we can work to obtain copyright permission from the copyright holder. If we are unable to obtain permission, the translation should be modified so as to paraphrase the verse.

After the songs have been translated, a theology check is made to validate the theological correctness of the translation. While we have a lot of confidence in the people we are working with, wisdom is found in many counselors. Songs for Saplings will find someone in the target-language to do this theological check.

It is time to discuss an important note about the products being created in this process. It is our goal to see as many people using this music as possible around the world. In order to do this, Songs for Saplings retains all rights to all materials created in this and all subsequent steps in the process. We do license our music and materials to others on a generous but limited basis. You can read more about this in “Attachment A: Use of Songs for Saplings Music and Materials”.

The final step of the translation process is for the translator (or someone working with the translator) to make a rough demo recording of each song, so that Songs for Saplings can check for singability. This all needs to be done prior to teaching the songs to the singers who will record the final version. We will use an approved version of this “scratch” recording later in the process.

4. Creating Additional Resources

We will work with you to create needed resources in the target language. If sheet music, lyric sheets, or other materials are needed for the project, localized versions can be created using the approved translation in conjunction with the English versions of the materials we provide.

5. Assembling Singers and Learning the Music

We record the vocals in the target language using local singers so we can have the most understandable and accessible music possible. We will work with you to assemble a team of talented and interested volunteers and singers to be part of the project. This will include sending an audition recording, in their own language, of each of the singers who will be singing some of the main vocals. These singers will need to be approved by Songs for Saplings.

The next step is for the in-country coordinator to use the approved scratch recordings from Section 3 to teach the songs (and harmony parts where needed) to the singers. During the project we will make use of the materials listed in Section 2, above, as well as the translated work from Section 3. Guidelines to be used are as follows:

- a. No fewer than three adult singers should be assigned the adult vocals on each album.
- b. Four to six children with very nice singing voices should be selected to learn the main children’s parts and solos.
- c. More children can be added (and are welcome) for larger group songs.

A detailed list called the singer assignments list detailing how many singers and which types of voices are recommended for each song will be provided.

It is vitally important that the singers learn the songs prior to the actual recording dates. The singers should be practicing with the instrumental tracks provided (not piano, guitar or other live music). We also ask that all lead vocalists provide an audio recording of themselves singing their song with the instrumental track, prior to the recording. This is a final check to ensure the singers are prepared before the recording days.

6. Recording Process

After all the above preparations are complete, Songs for Saplings will come to capture these gifted singers performing the translated work. The recording process will take place in a suitable facility provided by the in-country coordinators on an agreed upon date.

At a minimum the recording space should be quiet, safe, and have adequate power and heating or cooling to keep the performers comfortable and allow for safe operation of the equipment. While very useful, a professional studio is not required.. We are able to capture beautiful performances using a combination of portable recording equipment and software and a quiet space.

The recording process is taxing, physical work. Safe, comfortable space should be provided away from the recording area with refreshments for the singers. This space will also be used for rehearsing singers as they prepare for recording.

Songs for Saplings will provide a recording engineer to record the singers' performances. The recording engineer will be a trained professional.

The process the recording engineers use is as follows:

1. Record all the main adult vocals.
2. After the main adult vocals are recorded, they will be used as guides to record the added children's parts and harmonies.

For Volume 1, a 22 song album, it typically takes 3 days to record the lead vocalists and 2-3 days to record the children and harmonies.

7. Editing and Mixing

After the performances are recorded and the recording engineers are confident that the performances are usable for the final product, the session files are given to a production engineer who will tune, edit and mix the recording into a final mix. This process takes 2 – 4 hours per song for a professional mixing engineer.

8. Mastering

After the final mix is created, the mixed songs are given to a mastering engineer who will then create a mastered (final) version of the album, which will be used in the reproduction process. This process takes 30 minutes to 1 hour per song for a professional mastering engineer.

9. Replication and Distribution of the Album

After all the hard work is done creating the translation, coordinating the project, capturing the performances, and getting them ready to be used, two final steps remain—replication and distribution.

Depending on how the music will be used, replication and distribution could vary considerably. Songs for Saplings is flexible, and will work with you to pick the right model. Here are two examples of replication and distribution that we have used in our work so far:

Free Distribution

For Malawi, the mastered album was sent to a replicator in Portland, Oregon. A few thousand CDs were produced and packaged in tough, simple sleeves. We shipped these CDs to Songs for Saplings partners in Malawi. As many people in Malawi do not have access to CD players, Songs for Saplings partners travel to schools, Sunday schools, orphanages, and feeding centers to teach children in groups. Additionally, we have given several radio stations royalty-free licenses to broadcast the music. Finally, we are attempting to train staff members from other ministries in Malawi to teach the music, thus multiplying the effect the music can have there. We do not attempt to sell the music in Malawi.

Other Distribution

In other countries, physical CDs are given away at conferences and ministry events or sold at a nominal or retail price depending on the economics of the country. In all cases, Songs for Saplings will provide and manage all digital distribution. This will include, but is not limited to downloads, streaming, sampling and all other forms of digital distribution.

Some of the organizations we work with also want to use Songs for Saplings music and materials in their own ministry. We are happy to allow this, and have a standard licensing agreement that permits those organizations to do this. This allows them to print their own version of the physical CDs while still

respecting all international copyright law. You can refer to “Attachment A: Use of Songs for Saplings Music and Materials” to get an idea of how we manage “rights” to the materials and music.

10. Packaging

Songs for Saplings will provide all the artwork, graphics, and design needed for the printing of the CD covers, inserts, and disk.

Summary

Thank you so much for your interest in working with Songs for Saplings. Our vision is to see people around the world equipped with God’s truth to bring Him glory. It is our prayer that in the process we will also be a blessing to you and your ministry in your country.

We look forward to working with you to spread God’s truths to the children and families with whom you work. To get started, or for more information, please contact info@songsforsaplings.com

Attachment A: Use of Songs for Saplings Music and Materials

It is our goal to see as many people using this music as possible around the world. In order to do this, Songs for Saplings retains all rights to all materials created, translated, or derived from our materials.

We also license our music and materials to others on a generous but limited basis. In the chart below you can get an idea of how we do this.

Item	Licensee Usage	Songs for Saplings Usage
Physical CDs	Licensee may reproduce, sell, and give away the physical CDs Licensee prints.	Unlimited*
Printed Lyrics	Licensee may give away copies of the printed lyrics Licensee prints	Unlimited
Downloadable lyric files	Usage of SfS-provided downloadable files permitted on Licensee website	Unlimited
Preview/Sample streaming music site	Use of SfS-supplied feature, code, or app permitted on Licensee website	Unlimited
All other printed material created by Songs for Saplings	No use other than purchase from Songs for Saplings for resale	Unlimited
Broadcast radio or other broadcast	No Use	Unlimited
Digital Downloads, internet streaming, or other digital music delivery systems	No Use	Unlimited

*Unlimited rights includes the rights to license to any other party, world-wide, in any format at any time.