

39 Translators Attend TTC

Thirty nine translators from 11 language groups got translation training from 28 April - 2 June this year at the Ukarumpa Training Centre near Kainantu, Eastern Highlands Province. All the participants are involved in translation programmes in their villages.

The Translators' Training Course (TTC) is a yearly five-week translation course that serves to train Papua New Guineans to do Bible translation work. It is offered at four different levels, to help with either Old Testament or New Testament translation. Topics include translation principles, language discovery, Bible background, and introductions to Hebrew and Greek. This is made possible through the partnership of SIL Papua New Guinea, Bible Translation Association, and Pioneer Bible Translators and other donors who provide the expertise, staff, and financial assistance.

The Principal of the course Victor Opungu says, "For me personally, this TTC went well because only one person left due to health reasons. We've had a situation concerning a training centre rule but we dealt with it in a Christian manner. For the first time we had a Chaplain and we also had several Papua New Guineans who joined the teaching staff, which was most encouraging."

Silem Vari from the Sinaugoro language shares, "I believe that translation work can only be done effectively through proper training, personal commitment, and sacrifice. Hence, I would like to see more of our translators trained to extend the work of translation and also speed up the progress as well as improve the overall quality of translation work."

In Our Words is the official BTA newsletter that is printed 2-3 times a year. Our goal is to inform our constituency, the church, and the public about what we do.

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IN OUR WORDS

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Miniafia Dedicates New Testament

February 26, 2010 was a special event for the Miniafia people in Oro Province: They received the New Testament in their own language. Three people who participated in the production of the book and witnessed the special occasion share their stories.

The people danced with vigour as if expressing their hunger and thirst for the Word of God. They held back nothing in giving glory to God. For years they have been hoping for this day and now it has come. They expressed their joy to the fullest.



Duncan Kasokason: A voice over the loud speaker broke the pre-dawn silence, "Arise! Arise! Get yourselves organised." Warriors got into six decorated war canoes and paddled into the ocean. When they sighted the dinghy coming from afar they paddled fast and surrounded it leading it to shore.

As soon as the boxes entered the village a seemingly endless shout of "Oro kaiwa! Oro kaiwa! Oro kaiwa! Welcome! Welcome! Welcome! Welcome!" erupted. The Miniafia people were welcoming the arrival of the New Testament written in their very own heart language.



After the dancing and procession, David Wakefield took a neatly folded mat from the decorated canoe that met the dinghy in the ocean and gave it to me. I searched for the copy of the New Testament inside the mat and handed it to Reverend Isaac Gadebo, a former Anglican Bishop from Miniafia. This

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From the Director's Desk

The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. Psalm 119:130

This scripture verse was so true for the Miniafia people of Oro Province in Papua New Guinea. On the 26 February they received the New Testament in their heart language. We celebrate with them the entrance of God's Word. It is such a special privilege and honour to be involved in giving something eternal to the people. Countless numbers of people partnered together using their resources to produce this New Testament. To God be glory, the praise and the honour for this great accomplishment. May we pray that God will pour out His Holy Spirit on the Miniafia people as they read and study the Word. That there may be transformation in the lives of these people and that the Church may be built up so that

the Miniafia people will in turn carry the Word to other neighbouring tribes.

Read about other tribes rising up all over PNG who are interested and committed to having God's Word in their own languages. God is doing some wonderful things in this land. We live in incredible times of great opportunities. Opportunities with great challenges. May God give us the courage and boldness to face the challenges as we partner together to see the remaining languages in PNG and around the world receive God's Word. Thank you for your support and partnership.



David P. Gela

David Gela - Executive Director

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L-R: Stanley Oyabua, Reverend Gadebo, Duncan Kasokason, Josiah Javeve

was a symbolic display of the SIL translators starting the translation work with the Miniafia people and later BTA helping them to complete it and subse-

quently the Miniafia people receiving it.

A total of 872 New Testaments were sold that day. More people came to buy the next day. Stanley and Josiah were concerned because there were only over a hundred copies left for other villages to come and buy. For sure a big number of the Miniafia people living in town and the cities will miss out on the New Testament.

After a week Josiah reported that there

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Carole Spaeth: It had been about 15 years since I had last left PNG... My husband David and I were only a very small part in the accomplishments that are being celebrated. Even at my joy, I realised that David was not able to share in this, and for that I was sad. But for the moment, it was joy inexpressible.

After the special speeches, the distribution of the New Testaments began. At one point as David, Stanley and Josiah were marking the boxes for distribution, I saw Stanley sitting with his head bowed. I don't know his thoughts, but it appeared as if he was praying – or perhaps he was overwhelmed. At any rate, that simple gesture had emblazoned in my mind as the epitome of the humility the Lord has called us all to.

Each village received the number of New Testaments they had pre-ordered. When that village's name was called out, they each sang and danced as they made their way to the altar to receive their books, and as they carried them back to their station. Drums beating, conches trumpeting and dancers singing accompanied each

part of the distribution. I felt almost like I was observing David in the Old Testament when the Israelites



welcomed the Ark back into Israelite territory. I thought, "I can't sit here any longer. My legs were aching to get out with the group and dance." So I did! Then others joined in, and it was everyone together praising God for the blessing of this tremendous Love Letter in the Miniafia language that He had sent. Tears mixed with laughter just came rolling out all together.

A picture of Josiah shows him holding the New Testament reverently in his hands, poring over the precious words, almost as if he may have been thinking: "God's Word – in Miniafia!"



David and Carole Spaeth did literacy work in Miniafia from 1983 to 1993.

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were only 20 copies left and three villages who speak Miniafia were yet to come and buy them. Normally it takes some months to sell that number of books.

Duncan Kasokason is BTA's Language Program Coordinator for the East Papua Area. He helped consultant check the Miniafia New Testament, and being from the neighbouring language of Ubir he was instrumental in encouraging the Miniafia translators. He was BTA's official representative at the dedication.

David Wakefield: "God is a Miniafia Man," the loincloth-clad speaker exulted! "Before He was English, and American, and Australian. But today He has become Miniafia!"

Traditionally dressed dancers preceded and followed the bark cloth wrapped New Testament, their voices thundering praise: "Orokaiwa, Regah Keriso! O a merar ayiy! Greetings, Lord Christ! We



David and Fran Wakefield leading the procession.

greet You!"

We laughed with joy over the obviously enthusiastic reception of the Scriptures: 750 copies of the 1000 printed had been purchased before they had even arrived in the village. We cried in memory of our friends who had died without seeing the Book we were now celebrating.

Among them was Utukwaf village chief Gideon Yowen. Not long before he died he said, "My son, you have lived with us now for many years. I love the stories you have translated, but I am now an old man. Soon I will die. My heart is most sad about this: I will never hold the finished Book in my hands."

The Book that Gideon Yowen died longing for, his children and grandchildren now hold in their hands. It was a day we sometimes despaired of ever seeing. We had begun the project on December 7, 1973, but had to leave it barely half done in 1993. Thanks to the perseverance of Stanley Oyabua and Josiah Javeve, the translation was finally done and we were able to return to the project and help complete final editing and typesetting early last year.

The Wakefields first started the Miniafia New Testament translation.



Pacific Leadership Meeting

The first Pacific Island Leaders Fellowship convened on 12-16 April 2010 hosted by BTA in Port Moresby. Participants came from Guam, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, PNG, Elcho Island in the Northern Territories of Australia and West Timor.

The meeting aimed to: (1) Encourage Pacific Island leaders who are involved in Bible Translation to come together for fellowship, sharing of mutual concerns/topics; (2) Encourage local leaders to discuss ways to engage the local churches in the scriptures that are translated; (3) Provide opportunity for Pacific Islands leaders to share and voice their interests and concerns to the Wycliffe and SIL leaders in the Asia Pacific Region; (4) Encourage younger Pacific Island leaders to be involved in the Bible translation movement in their countries and the region.

When Wycliffe Bible Translators International restructured the regions in 2002, Asia and Pacific entities were lumped in together. In many WBT forums and discussions a number of entities involved in Bible translation in the Pacific felt left out. Nothing much is heard about Timor. Bringing the leaders together helps them know that they are important in the Bible translation

movement. By bringing them together, they are encouraged to realise that their efforts in the Bible translation task make a difference.

The program for the week-long meeting included reports from each island or area represented, translation principles and how to understand and engage the church leaders in Bible translation, as well as the differences in the versions of the Bible being used. They also went on outings to a resort island and around the City of Port Moresby.



First Pacific Island Leaders Meeting participants

In his concluding remarks, David Gela said, "We need to start the Pacific movement for Bible translation fuelled by our desire to work, fellowship and encourage each other." The participants unanimously agreed that this type of meeting should be encouraged and held every two years. They already felt a real sense of camaraderie and openness with one another.

In Focus: Wopa Eka, West Kewa

My name is Wopa Eka from West Kewa, Southern Highlands. Before I came to know Christ I went around stealing, going to discos and doing all sorts of things. I never went to church but in 1985 I went to a village meeting and a pastor appointed me as church musician. As a result I received Christ as my personal Saviour. Praise God He changed me to serve Him.

I have five children aged two and a half to sixteen years old. My whole family have become believers. They are happy for me to be a translator. When I do full time translation work I do not have time to look for my children's school fees but I thank God that He provides for all our needs. I'm afraid that many translators are leaving the work as Jonah did when he was sent to Nineveh and God chastised him. I do not want to be like Jonah leaving my translation work. In addition to my translation responsibilities I pastor a small church.

Dr. Karl Franklin and his wife Joice came in 1962 to work with us West Kewa people to help us do away with our idol worship by doing Bible translation. In 1973 the West Kewa New Testament was dedicated and 45,000 people received their copy of the New Testament in their own language. This was the first New Testament dedicated among the 856



Wopa Eka encoding corrections to Psalms at the BTA office in Ukarumpa.

language groups in Papua New Guinea. We revised the New Testament and dedicated it in 2003. Since then the people have become interested in translating the Old Testament.

We have a team of four translators working together and I'm the coordinator. There is also a Translation Committee represented by five denominations overseeing this project. In the morning we work in our gardens and in the afternoon we come back for translation work. We do not have a proper office with tables and chairs, much less access to computers. I travel to the BTA office in Ukarumpa to put our work in the computer.

In the same way that Christ became the slave of sinners in order to save and build the Church, we West Kewa translators are willing to become the slaves of our people to translate the Old Testament in our own language with the help of BTA and Dr. Karl Franklin.

We are preparing to publish in June this year the books of Ruth, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and portions of Genesis.

Bible Translation Weekend

The first ever Bible Translation Weekend (BTW), was held 19-21 March in Lae, the second largest city in PNG. The purpose of the BTW strategy is to saturate larger PNG cities, build relationships with denominational leaders and pastors, and encourage churches and individuals to support and get involved in the ministry of Bible translation. Most translations are done for people who live in villages and rural areas, so there is a huge need to envision those who live in the cities.

Earlier this year BTA and SIL established a joint Church Engagement Office. Presently there are five people in the team. However, it took more people to make the BTW happen. The BTW team consisted of 13 Papua New Guineans and 10 expatriates. That weekend, we shared



in 20 different venues, including seven different denominations, one mission organisation, and three

Tertiary Students Christian Fellowship groups.



Men looking at PNG map showing translation projects in the country.

As a result, Pastors encouraged and challenged their people, while individuals wanted to know how they could get involved in the work. One church expressed interest in supporting BTA on a regular basis, and other churches took up offerings. Seeing the passion of Papua New Guineans sharing about Bible translation was exhilarating. Many had never shared in public before and were nervous initially, but we saw them blossom as the Lord blessed their efforts.

Julie, a BTA team member says, "I interpreted for my team mate. At first I was scared but as I spoke words came easily. I was really blessed and enjoyed the trip. People commented, 'We did not know about BTA, we thought everything was under SIL'. We need to raise more awareness about BTA."