



# PNG BTA PRAYER WATCH - DECEMBER 2016

## PAPUA NEW GUINEA BIBLE TRANSLATION ASSOCIATION

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There are many activities that go on in our kitchen. It is in the kitchen we prepare our meals. We cut meat, clean vegetables, and spill liquid all over the kitchen floor. You can imagine how messy it is. We have two bins; one for compost - mostly vegetable peelings, bones and of course food scraps. The other bin is for papers, plastic and other burnable wastes. Most times we clean them and empty the compost sooner, otherwise it stinks. However, for me the most worrisome, number one enemy, are ants.

These small creatures come in two colors, black and brown. When they come and invade our bins their presence is very noticeable. From a distance you can see what looks like a black or brown line of string originating from the crack of the walls. As you draw closer and look, it's not a piece of string but usually two lines of moving ants. One row going into the waste bins and the other line taking a load of food into their secret place. They are so organized, systematic and very efficient. What a scene!

*He makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love (Ephesians 4:16 - NLT).* Christ as head of the body uses individual parts and makes them fit together, and makes other parts to grow.

Over the past six months as the acting Executive Director, I was so encouraged to see the BTA administration working together. We experienced a very smooth operation within BTA administration with no complains, divisions or conflicts. We saw BTA administration working well with consultants in two very important tasks: evaluation of the MAST translation process and completion of our Organizational Development resulting in a very detailed strategic plan, the best we've ever had, for the next 3 years (2017-2019). The smooth, quiet and efficient actions of ants reminded me of our BTA administration working together over the last few months. I praise God for each one of our staff and ask God's blessings on each one. May He be glorified.

*Steven K. Thomas*

BTA Interim Director

**Week One: John 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him".**

✓ **Nobnob Language Project – Madang:**

Thank you so much for your prayers for the Nobnob consultant checking. Duncan Kasokason (*BTA Translation Consultant*) helped the Nobnob Team to finish consultant checking on 4 November. We praise God for the six Books (Psalms, Song of Songs, Habakkuk, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi) that were checked. The Nobnob Team completed the first drafts of some of the Old Testament Books in 2007. Later they continued on with the exegetical checking, village checking and worked on the back-translation. So far 62 percent of the Old Testament has been consultant checked (including the six Books mentioned above). Last month 32 percent of the OT Books were translated (all in first drafts) and will be checked in 2017. Duncan reports, "We really experienced God's hands helping us through the checking sessions. During the four weeks of checking, the Scriptures in the Nobnob language really spoke to the Nobnob team and others who came to help. Although they were there to answer questions, it seemed that every day we were having Bible Studies. We experienced and sensed the anointing of God inspiring us during the consultant checking". Please pray that the Nobnob Translation team will show real commitment and help their people to read God's Word faithfully and desire to allow God to transform their lives.

✓ **Tairuma Language Project – Gulf Province:**

Pastor Heisi Mako (*Tairuma Bible Translation Project Coordinator*) extends his sincere thanks for praying for the team. They were so encouraged and spiritually refreshed during the Central and Gulf Bible Translators Spiritual Retreat and Conference. The conference was an eye opener to the four new team members who attended and they praise God for the testimonies they heard from other Bible Translators, which helped them understand the sacrifices and the hard work of translating the Bible, yet at the same time the rewarding results when people have the Scriptures in their own language. They also had the opportunity to attend a workshop in Port Moresby after the Conference. The team asks for prayers for a consultant to check the Books of Jonah and Ruth. They worked hard to check and edit these Books, then did proof reading with some community members. Jonah and Ruth were translated in 2012 when Badi Vila (*former Tairuma Bible Translation Coordinator*) and the Jos family (*former SIL Advisors*) led the project. However, due to the many challenges they faced, it has taken this long to have them checked. They also completed the first draft of 1Timothy and have started working on the Book of Luke. Please pray that they will remain faithful and motivated to keep working despite the many challenges they face each day.

✓ **Urat Language Project – East Sepik Province:**

Three years before the Urat NT dedication Hilka Arminen (*SIL PNG – Advisor/Manager Urat Translation Project*) and her team had tried to get an adult literacy teacher training going. After three attempts to find a literacy trainer come and help run a literacy workshop, Mara Iyama (*BTA Highlands Language Project Coordinator*) came. Mara and Hilka went to Musungwik village to run an Adult Literacy Workshop. They had eleven participants who all graduated, but none is yet fluent in reading the Urat language. The NT dedication in July did boost interest in the language (used now in preaching, singing and prayer), but people say that reading Tok Pisin is faster, which is true. So more literacy training is badly needed. We expect the graduates will start classes in five different locations, one for fluency (about 30 minutes 1-2 times a week), and another class for illiterates. This should happen in February 2017 so please pray that these literacy initiatives will effectively help the people to read fluently in Urat.

**Week Two: John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my Word and believes Him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.**

✓ **Qaqet Language Project – East New Britain Province**

Joel & Mary Karekses (*Qaqet Language Project Coordinators*) extend their sincere thanks for all who are praying for them. They have had many challenging health issues. Currently Joel is in Kokopo (again) for his medical review. Not much information has been given about his situation except that he will have to return in January for his review. These prolonged medical delays are very frustrating so pray for God’s divine healing, inner peace and strength for Joel.

✓ **Amam Language Project – Morobe Province**

Awi Manga and his team finished the first drafts of 10 Books of the NT, and they are now ready for consultant checking. While waiting for a consultant to check these Books, they continue to work on three more (Mark, John and 1 & 2 Timothy). They also hope to do checking on the Back Translation. Please pray for a consultant to be made available to assist them. Pray also for God’s provision financially so they are able to meet the expenses for the consultant as well.

✓ **Health Issues**

Health Issues are always constant companions of our lives. Some minor and others major, and we are never exempted from it. BTA has experienced many health issues in 2016 which affected some of our key leaders and colleagues. God never promised us smooth voyages but He did promise us that **“He will never leave us nor forsake us”**. We thank the Lord for seeing us through these difficult times, and pray that the Lord will use these ailments in our bodies to bring glory to Him whilst we pray for healing. May God be glorified in our sicknesses and pain as we trust the Lord’s timing to bring total healing to those suffering and that He may be glorified. Some of our colleagues are battling with prolonged health issues so please pray that their faith will be strengthened and they will grow closer to God, knowing beyond a shadow of doubt that God knows what is happening. We testify of God’s faithfulness in hearing our prayers for healing - we know He is our healer. May God be glorified even in our sicknesses that we make no room for the devil to rejoice over our infirmities. By His stripes we are healed (*Isaiah 53:5*).

✓ **Morehead Culture Meet Scripture Workshop – Western Province**

Praise God for the 60 participants from nine different language groups who attended the Culture Meets Scripture Workshop in Morehead (Western Province) from 14-24 November. BTA member Ana Opungu was invited by SIL workers in the area to help teach in this workshop. The workshop teaches a process of aligning cultural practices with Scripture to make them God-honoring. Please pray for the participants who have gone back to their villages, for courage and wisdom to share what they have learned, and to apply it in their lives and communities.

Please pray for Victor and Ana Opungu with their two children who plan to go to the Philippines during the December holiday to visit Ana's father whose health is precarious due to advancing cancer. Please pray for provisions for their travel needs and for a deep time of fellowship with family that will honor God.

**Week Three: Acts 16:31 “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved – you and your house hold”.**

✓ **Nali Language Project – Manus Province**

Praise God for the fruitful time the Nali Bible Translation team had in Ukarumpa, working on checking portions of the NT in first drafts, getting them ready for consultant checking. Praise God for good health for the team and the amount of work accomplished while here in Ukarumpa. Pray for Martha Pohonum (*Nali Team Leader*) and also for Jerry & Sue Pfaff (*SIL Advisors*), that the team and the community will work closely with them. Praise God for the progress they are making and may the Lord bless their efforts to publish some portions of the NT, which they have been working on for some years now. We are grateful to God for Jerry and Sue who faithfully encourage the team and work closely with them.

✓ **Kunimaipa Language Project – Morobe Province**

Balai Gariai (*Kunimaipa Bible Translation Project Coordinator*) asks for prayers for their Bible Translation Awareness program. He is scheduled to visit 26 different villages in Wau and Bulolo Districts in the Morobe Province. Part of the reason for this awareness is to encourage the Christians, churches and the communities to support the work of BTA translation projects in Kunimaipa, Amam, Guhu-Samane, Angaataha and other Translation projects in Morobe Province, specifically close to Wau and Bulolo. Due to his wife's prolonged illness, they are residing in Bulolo so she has access to medical help. This has not stopped Balai from continuing his translation work from Bulolo. Balai is currently planning to host some Scripture In Use (SIU) workshops for the year 2017, where he envisions bringing all BTA language projects which are close to Wau and Bulolo to attend the SIU workshop. Please pray the Lord will bless all of Balai's efforts to bring glory to God and help strengthen the churches and communities residing in Wau and Bulolo to support the work Bible translation.

✓  **Lorengau - Manus Province**

Please continue to pray for perseverance for the participants from the different language groups in Manus who attended Translator's Training Course 1 in September 2016. Pray especially for those who are new in the area of translation that they will not give up but trust the Lord to help them finish their assignments. While there are many new language groups keen to start their Bible Translation projects, the challenges of keeping up is not that easy. Pray for Charles Kowak (*Language Project Coordinator & Principle of TTC Manus*) that he will faithfully follow up and encourage the teams to complete their assignments so they can be assessed and qualified to progress onto their next phase of their training.

✓ **Duncan Kasokason – BTA Translation Consultant**

Duncan has been very busy helping language teams by providing consultant checking. After doing consultant checking for the Nobnob team in October & November, Duncan traveled to Tufi, Oro Province to help Jim & Joan Farr (*SIL Advisors -Korafe Translation Program*) do checking for Psalms 130-149. Duncan has returned home to his village in Wanigela and is currently helping his local church share the Word of God during Advent Season. Pray that the Lord will grant him time to rest and spend time with his family. He also hopes to have time to prepare for his next consultant work. He will return to assist the Nobnob translation project 9 January - 3 February to check Job, Jeremiah and 1 Chronicles.

**Week Four: Matthew 1:21 “She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins”.**

✓ **Pray for all the PNG BTA Language Groups who already have God's Word in their Mother Tongue**

In John 17:6-26 we see the love of the Father through His Son Jesus, as Jesus prays earnestly for His disciples and for all believers. As this year comes to a close, let us reflect on God's faithfulness, His goodness, His mercy and His steadfast love. May every Papua New Guinean who already has God's Word in their mother tongue hear this prayer from the Book of John. The question is: *Do they already know that Jesus has revealed them to the Father if they are not reading God's Word made available to them? Do they know that everything that Jesus offers and has already given to them comes from the Father, if their Bibles are still lying untouched, collecting dust and cobwebs? Do they already know that the Father and the Son are One, if they are illiterate and cannot read for themselves every day? Do they know that Jesus wants to share His Father's glory with them, if they don't really understand what Jesus really means even if they read it?* The truth is this: that many wonderful Bible dedications have taken place already. But how many Papua New Guineans are really reading their Bibles in a language that is their very own, and enjoying their relationship with God on a daily basis? You may be asking, "How can we help?" Pray that God will give us a passion to go the extra mile to reach out more deeply, more passionately and more meaningfully to help our brothers and sisters embrace God and His Word, so they can share God's love in their communities, families and ethnic groups when they genuinely and faithfully read God's Word in their own mother tongue.

✓ **Pray for all PNG BTA Regional Centers – Southern Region, Northern Region, East Papua Region, Morobe Region and the Highlands Region**

All BTA Regional Offices will be closed from 22 December 2016 to 9 January 2017. Pray for all the staff who will be taking a break to be with their families and celebrate the festive Season of Christmas in a meaningful manner - celebrating the Birth of Christ. Pray for open doors to share God's faithfulness with those that the Lord brings our way. There will also be much traveling taking place, by air, road and sea, so pray that God will protect us in our going out and coming in. As our staff may not be able to watch over our houses, food gardens, etc., please pray with us for God's protection so that nothing happens to our properties during our absence.

Pray also for all our BTA field team members in their respective locations. Many of them will be involved in church, community and family activities during the Christmas season. There will be different ways in which the Christmas season is celebrated so pray that God will enable our BTA families to be God's light as they celebrate God's gift to the world through sharing God's love. Ask God to protect our young children from desiring any form of celebrating that does not bring glory to God. Pray that we will all take time to rest and spent quality time with our families and friends meaningfully.

Please pray for our Board Members too. We praise God for our faithful Board Members, who faithfully commit their time and effort to give direction and provide leadership where needed. We know that they carry so much of BTA's vision and dreams. They have great responsibility in overseeing that the ministry of Bible Translation excels in PNG. Pray that the Lord will grant them the discernment to empower PNG BTA to move forward in seeing many BTA language projects achieving their goals in the coming year. Pray for their families as well, that God will protect them and allow them to be part of what God is doing in PNG BTA.

Thank you so much for partnering with us in prayer. May you enjoy a special CHRISTmas season as you celebrate the greatest gift – JESUS!