



Wycliffe Today

AUTUMN 2023 / VOL. 11 / NO. 1 / ISSN 2202-9818

Loving our next-door neighbours

**AUTUMN
2023**

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To receive *Wycliffe Today* electronically, email info@wycliffe.org.au

WYCLIFFE TODAY

Autumn 2023, Vol. 11 / No. 1

Published by:

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia

70 Graham Road

Kangaroo Ground VIC 3097

ABN 22 004 705 953



www.wycliffe.org.au

www.facebook.com/wycliffeaustralia

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Design: Peter Bergmeier

Print: Classic Press

Cover photo: Gary McMaster

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Editorial from the CEO



In this edition of *Wycliffe Today* we are highlighting our relationship with our close neighbour, Indonesia. The Church is thriving in Indonesia and there are many people groups eager to have the Scriptures in a language they fully understand. There is also a growing Bible Translation Movement (BTM) in Indonesia, with local translation organisations being established to train local translators for this important work. However, training and facilitation, and resourcing and technical expertise are all desperately needed. This is where Wycliffe Australia can come alongside to help our Indonesian brothers and sisters.

I was invited to Indonesia last September to attend the Ambonese Malay New Testament dedication. Despite allowing what I thought was plenty of time to get to the island of Ambon, a series of flight delays, cancellations, and redirections meant that after 50 hours of travelling, I arrived at the main protestant church in Ambon with just three minutes to spare. It was a miracle. The churches all came together to celebrate this milestone and there were choirs, bands, dancers, singing and public reading of the new translation. The speeches even included one from the mayor, such was the importance of this occasion.

It is estimated that the Indonesian provinces of Maluku and North Maluku have 3.1 million speakers of Ambonese Malay. Now they can all hear the life-giving words of God in a language they can fully understand. Thank you, Lord!

Max Sahl



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Transformed by the Word Loving our next-door neighbours



by Lyn Wake

We love each other because he loved us first. 1 John 4:19 (NLT)

Jesus calls us to express our love for God by loving our neighbours, as we love ourselves (Mark 12:31). Yet, to be frank, loving the people God has placed in my neighbourhood is difficult and does not come naturally. My neighbours think differently from the way I do. Some speak a different language from me. Most of them hold different beliefs and values from me. All this difference makes it challenging to connect with them and share the love of Christ.

After the challenges of the past few years, I was exhausted. As I struggled to complete my end-of-year tasks, loving my next-door neighbours became a 'duty' that fell to the bottom of the list. By avoiding the call to 'love my neighbours', I was flooded with guilt. Then I went to Jesus. His caring response shifted my burden: 'Simply fill your life with my love, then love from the overflow'.

As I put this invitation into practice, God's love inspired me to extend a dinner invitation to one neighbour – an invitation that was accepted. It has opened the way to loving that neighbour well through an ongoing friendship. It was a small but easy step to take that sprang from the natural overflow of saturating myself in the love of Christ.

Here in the Asia-Pacific region, we share global next-door neighbours. Many of these neighbours think differently from the way we do. Most of them relate best by using different languages. They live differently, and may hold different beliefs and values from us. Cultural differences can make it challenging to build connections and share the love of Christ with others.

Yet, loving our neighbours is possible when we go to God in prayer and saturate our lives in his love. This frees us to build connections, not with a heavy sense of duty but with the ease of relationships that reflect the love of Christ.

Reflect: *As you saturate yourself in Christ's love, listen for the invitation he is calling you to extend to a neighbour today.*

Be transformed by the Word as you engage with: **Matthew 22:34-40 & 1 John 4:7-19.**

Prayer: *Lord, help me to live a life deeply saturated in your love. Make me a vessel of your love to bless the neighbours who live on my street, and on my global doorstep. Amen.*

Working hand in hand with the church

Bible translation is not something done in a vacuum. There are many different roles, people and groups involved in supporting the work. One of the most important partnerships in the process is with local churches. The Ambonese Malay New Testament is a perfect example of the blessing that comes when churches have a close working relationship with a Bible translation project.

Ibu Din (Mrs Din) has been involved in getting churches on board with the Ambonese Malay Bible translation. This led her and her team to create an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for each church joining the project. Many churches expressed interest in joining the work and Ibu Din says it was 'overwhelming' how much support and help the translation team has received.

Ibu Din shares:

Reading the Bible in Ambonese Malay is important for the Ambonese Church because it is their mother tongue. Not everyone can understand the Bible in Indonesian. But around 80% of the people in Maluku speak the Ambonese Malay language. I hope that people really open their hearts and their minds to the Word of God and turn to follow Jesus.



PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

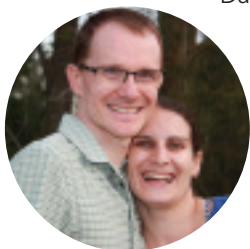
PRAY

- for unity among churches and church leaders involved in Bible translation projects in Indonesia
- that more churches will catch the vision to join the work.

Making a way for the Ambonese Malay New Testament

By David and Lilian Saxby – Ambon, Indonesia

Ambon city in eastern Indonesia is no stranger to grand openings and official launches.



During our time here as translation facilitators, we've seen pomp and ceremony for new bridges, hotels, shopping centres, supermarkets, restaurants, and more.

In September 2022, a different, more significant kind of launch occurred. A young boy sounded a conch shell, announcing to all that something special was about to happen.

A traditional band stopped traffic as they marched down a main street to the church. Joining the procession were the eight members of the Ambonese Malay New Testament translation team, each carrying a copy of a book that was twenty years in the making. The newly-published Ambonese Malay New Testament was handed over to the church and officially endorsed by Ambon's most influential Christian leader.



PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

The ceremony was culturally and strategically important. Ambonese people value the symbolism of an official event and the church's endorsement of the translation is crucial for its acceptance and ongoing use. We feel incredibly blessed to have been part of this once-in-a-lifetime event. It is significant for us because we have both had the pleasure of being part of the team working on this translation.

We have ridden the highs and lows and seen glimpses of the impact of the Scriptures translated into Ambonese along the way. But it is so much more significant for the people of Ambon who now have the New Testament in their own language.

Christianity came to Ambon and the surrounding Spice Islands in the 16th century and the church is well established in this region. Churches generally use the national language of Indonesian for the Bible and all aspects of ministry, which means that many Ambonese are left practising their faith in a second, third or even fourth language. As a result, language can be a significant obstacle to understanding the gospel.

Twenty-five years ago, before we joined the project, no one thought that an Ambonese Bible translation project would get off the ground. Yet God made a way for it to happen. Over the years, the project faced numerous obstacles and setbacks. We were rocked by an earthquake and flooded twice. Translation staff came and left. COVID pushed publication plans back by two years. Travel restrictions meant we didn't even know if we could attend the official launch. Yet again, God made a way.

We believe the goal of Bible translation is not just translating the Bible; it is people growing in their knowledge of God and allowing him to transform their lives. Most Ambonese Malay speakers have only ever heard God's Word in a language that is hard for them to understand. Now with the New Testament available in Ambonese, language need no longer be an obstacle to them knowing God. We hope and pray that this will be a new and fruitful season in the life of the Ambonese church. God will make a way!

We are returning to Ambon in February. Please pray for:

- David working on Genesis and Psalms
- Lilian who is becoming a homeschool teacher for the first time
- our boys, Joshua and Zack, to feel comfortable in our neighbourhood
- the Ambonese Scripture engagement workers helping people to know and apply God's Word
- a continued relationship, clear communication and shared vision with the denomination sponsoring Bible translation in the province
- recruitment of passionate Ambonese Christians for Old Testament translation.

FINALLY HERE

John Noya works with the Ambonese Malay Scripture Engagement team. He shares with Wycliffe Today about the importance of having Scripture available in a language that people can understand for themselves.

At the dedication and launch of the Ambonese Malay New Testament, I cried. Why did I cry? Because I felt such joy. As a Moluccan person, as an Ambonese person, I felt very grateful and proud. Now there is a Bible for my people. God has given it to me, personally, and to all the people of the Maluku Islands. The Bible we have been waiting so long for is finally here. We can hold it. We can read it. It can change all of our lives.

The Bible in Ambonese Malay is very important, even though we have the Bible in Indonesian. Why is it important? Because Ambonese Malay is closer to people's hearts than Indonesian. Ambonese Malay is very closely connected to the culture of Ambonese people. Starting with the language, with the words that are used.

There are many words in Ambonese Malay that are the same words used every day by the local community in everyday conversation and also in the traditional activities that happen in various places, particularly Ambon and the Lease Islands.



With the Scripture Engagement team, we teach people how to use the Ambonese Malay Bible. We run simple training programs about things such as how to form short prayers, how to create devotions and how to use the Word of God in everyday life.

My hope is that after the dedication and launch of the Ambonese Malay Scriptures, people in Ambon can use the Ambonese Malay Scriptures every day. I pray that they don't just read the words but that those words go deeply into the hearts of the Ambon people because it uses their own language. It can change their lives and they can then become a blessing for many people.

I am changing because the Word of God is changing me. Because of that, I can help other people's lives to be changed by the Word of God. Looking ahead, my hope is to see all the people of Maluku [province] truly opening their hearts to the Lord Jesus because they have the Bible in their own language.

A pastor's perspective

Pastor Telly Persunay leads a church in the Gereja Protestan Maluku (GPM) denomination in Ambon (the protestant church in the Maluku Islands).

Telly is one of the pastors who has been involved in checking the translation of the Ambonese Malay New Testament.

Telly says:

GPM is proud that Ambonese Malay has been translated so the people of Ambon can understand the Bible directly in their own language. The Ambonese Malay New Testament can help the church to communicate the Word of God closer to the language



of the people so that they don't just hear it but when they do hear, they immediately understand what God wants so that their lives can be changed.

We have GPM staff helping with the Ambonese Malay translation and a few other languages in the area so the church can continue encouraging the work of Bible translation.

I prefer to read the Bible in Ambonese Malay because it does not require me to make a lot of interpretations. When we prepare a devotion or lead a church meeting, we can understand directly because the Ambonese Malay language and words that are used are clearly understood.

Directly to our hearts:

how the Ambonese Malay translation team is partnering with local churches

Steve Sahuleka is a translator with the Ambonese Malay project in Indonesia.

He attended the dedication of the Ambonese Malay New Testament in September and is pleased with the reception it has already received from local churches and communities. He notes that the translation has garnered particular respect from churches 'because pastors have been involved in the process'. Steve says that the pandetas (pastors) help the translation team review the work, which increases the authority of the translated Scripture among their congregations.

The Ambonese Malay translation elevates the status of the language but Steve says that it also provides an opportunity to support the church – especially where spiritual issues are concerned. Many people, Christians included, still practise necromancy. They summon their ancestors' spirits to point out the problems in their lives. When the team went out to visit a village to test the translation, they read a passage that warns against the practice of ancestor worship and communicating with the dead, rather than trusting in Jesus (Luke 16: 19-31). When the congregation read that passage, there was a 'holy quiet' in the room as they started to really understand the passage in their mother tongue.

People understand Indonesian but they don't understand nuances in Scripture, especially when it comes to ancestral veneration. But the Bible has finally been presented in a way that speaks directly to their hearts. Every day, people talk in Ambon. People use it on almost every occasion. There is a lot of relationship between Ambonese Malay and our culture. We don't have the same depth of thinking or philosophy in Indonesian so what we want to say can be better expressed in our mother tongue.

Steve shares candidly about his initial hesitation about participating in the Ambonese Malay translation. He says that the more he studied Scripture, the more his own heart was changed and he began to realise the significance of bringing the Word of God to his community in the language they understand best:

I didn't originally want to work on the Ambonese project. A friend introduced me to the idea. Now I've been working with the team for 13 years and I've fallen in love with it. Through my work as a translator, I can really understand how God loves me. He loves me as a wretched man but still accepts me as his child. People who struggle with their identity as a Christian will be encouraged by this truth as well. My hope is that people in Ambon will not only tell themselves 'I am a Christian' but through a deep understanding of the words of God, their lives will be changed and the image of God will shine through their everyday way of life – in the way they talk, in the way they approach others and so on. For that reason, I am honoured to be working on this project.



PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

MORE

For more information about the Ambonese Malay translation, go to: wycliffe.org.au/projects/ambon-scripture-engagement-project/

PRAY

For Steve and the rest of the team as they seek opportunities to share the Ambonese Malay New Testament with their communities.

Better together

why working with locals works

PHOTO BY ASSO MYRON

By Soonbeom Hong

Soonbeom is a church relations coordinator from South Korea working with local translators on the Papuan Malay (PM) ministry team to engage with local churches, government and community groups. Soonbeom shares what he has learned about team collaboration and trust during this time.

I had always been taught that the role of a cross-cultural worker was to help the local people and equip them for ministry. I wholeheartedly agreed with that theory. In practice, though, it is much easier said than done.

For a long time, I worked largely by myself. I felt justified in this approach because, in 2019, when our team decided to start visiting local churches, we had barely managed to visit a handful in a year and struggled to make connections with them. I decided I needed to do something. But the more churches I tried to visit, the more alone I felt.

I was keenly aware that I had been doing ministry on my own. Ashamed and disappointed, I asked myself, 'Why can't I work together with the local people?' That day, I prayed and determined not to work alone anymore.

The following week, I called a meeting with three local colleagues. I shared my heart with them and told them I had no idea about how to grow our ministry. They were shocked at my admission because they had assumed everything had been going well. I think we all knew that had not been the case though.

I asked them if they had any ideas about ways to improve. One of them suggested, 'Why don't we make a schedule for visiting churches over the next three months?'

We prayed and committed the idea to God. Then an amazing thing happened. We ended up visiting a church almost every Sunday for those three months! The churches received us and our materials with such enthusiasm. As time went by, more and more churches had the chance to hear about our ministry. We heard many beautiful testimonies which encouraged us to keep going.

On some Sundays we were able to visit two, even three, churches. After one and a half years, amazingly, we only have one church left to visit out of the 50 churches in the major Christian denomination in our city: the Gereja Kristen Indonesia (GKI) or the Indonesian Evangelical Church. Praise the Lord!

Our ministry of visiting churches continues. In July, we received a generous invitation from the GKI church to join in their island-wide denominational conference. Three of our team members were able to represent the PM team among church leaders from all over Papua. Our Lord fulfils his purposes when we work together!

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.

Hebrews 10:24 (NIV)



IMAGE PROVIDED BY SOONBEOM HONG

PRAY

- for Soonbeom and his family to continue growing in their faith as they serve in Papua
- that the Papuan Malay team will be encouraged as they continue to share God's Word with their community.

Ninety people come to Christ through translated materials

Have you ever wondered what happens after a Bible translation project has finished?

Do the materials get used? Are they accepted by local communities? The flow-on effect of partnering with local neighbours is evident in the following story about the Papuan Malay (PM) Scripture Engagement team. During a local church visit, they met an evangelist who told them how instrumental the PM materials were in seeing 90 people in one village come to faith in Jesus and be baptised! This is what she shared:

We used to use the Indonesian Bible in our evangelism. But in 2016 we started using the books of Jonah and Ruth in PM, and praise God, they attracted the interest of the people! Many children who were far from God came and listened to these extraordinary stories. Older people were happy to hear the stories too because the language was simple enough to understand.

One night, we played the Jesus Film in PM. We had tried playing it in Indonesian for them before, but they had just blankly stared at the screen. When we played it in PM, however, many people were curious and came over to watch it. A big crowd gathered and everyone started telling us their problems and asking for help. We used the Bible to help them find answers to their problems.

One young man visited from another village three hours away by boat. He fell off the bridge as he was getting out of the boat, but he still turned up in his wet clothes. He begged us to play the Jesus Film again because he really wanted to see it. We also gave him the PM 'Freedom in Christ' tract. After reading it he said, 'This story is about my own life'. He had a history of violence towards women.

Early the next morning, he came to me for prayer. 'God showed me what to do: Get some water from the well.' As the young man drank the water, I prayed, 'God, this water symbolises the ransom that you gave to restore this boy'. Once he drank the water, he fell over. And he began to scream, 'Lord Jesus help! I want to come back and follow you because of what you taught me through this little book!'

So the PM books and films have been a huge help for our ministry in this village - from 2016 until this day. Many people in this village have repented and believed in Jesus. They asked us to run a baptism service for them and 90 people were baptised!

MORE

For the full story, go to
[wycliffe.org.au/90-people](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/90-people)

PHOTO BY VIKI JORDANOV



Ministry Resourcing

AUTUMN 2023 / ISSN 2202-9818

Wycliffe
Bible Translators 



What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?

Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer. Our three main objectives are to:

- work closely with national Bible translation organisations under the Next Step Development initiative
- support strategic partnerships with SIL International
- support Australian members on the field with their project needs.

Supporting our neighbours

This edition, we are celebrating the partnerships with our overseas neighbours that are enabling translation projects to flourish. There is a new translation project in South Asia, workshops to support Ambonese Malay Scripture engagement and an update about the success of the Papuan Malay project. There is also an update on the recent National Trainee Consultant Study Tour. Be encouraged by the personal experiences of participants on the tour as they share about how it has transformed their approach to translation.

by **Greg Conwell**, Wycliffe Relief
and Development CEO

Ambon Scripture Engagement Project 8817



PHOTO BY GARY MCMASTER

The Ambonese Malay New Testament has been published and was officially launched in September 2022! But publication is not the end of this story. God has brought together an enthusiastic team of local Scripture engagement workers to promote the new translation and help people to use it and apply it in their lives.

The Ambonese Scripture Engagement team is passionate about seeing God's Word at work among the people of the Maluku Islands. The team is highly sought after for their training workshops that are designed to meet the needs of local churches. Topics include trauma healing, parenting, overcoming addiction, using local language in ministry and conflict resolution. At each workshop, the team teaches, prays and leads worship in Ambonese Malay, enabling participants to experience the impact of God's Word in their own language. An important part of their work during 2023 will be running a series of workshops to introduce the newly published Ambonese Malay New Testament to churches and showing how it can be used in teaching and discipleship.

Target: A\$16,000 per year

NB: Additional funds will go towards the following year's target.

MORE

[wycliffe.org.au/projects/ambon-scripture-engagement-project/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/ambon-scripture-engagement-project/)

Next Step Development Projects

The mission of Next Step Development is to hear and understand what God has put on the hearts of our national colleagues, and through prayer to come alongside and support their vision and strategies for Bible translation. Next Step is currently working in close relationship with Wycliffe Global Alliance partners from PNG, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Indonesia, Philippines and two countries in South Asia.

To see more Next Step projects,
go to [wycliffe.org.au/projects/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/)

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation Projects

Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is a separate company owned by Wycliffe Australia, which works through local partners to improve the practical aspects of life in marginalised communities. We aim to demonstrate Christian compassion and provide practical assistance in literacy and education, disaster relief, medical and basic health support. Donations to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

For WRDF projects, visit the WRDF
website [wycliffefoundation.org.au](https://www.wycliffefoundation.org.au)

Wycliffe Field Support Projects

Wycliffe Australia is committed to helping our field teams and the organisations they work with to thrive and serve effectively in their communities. Ministry Resourcing can help with providing funding for computers, village housing, travel costs, delivery of training, consultants and other services.

See more projects at
[wycliffe.org.au/projects/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/)

Old Testament Translation in South Asia Project 8328



Papuan Malay Scripture Printing Update Project 8525



The Si* language community is located in South Asia. Like many minority language groups and dialects in the region, they are located in a rural location that is difficult to access. This often makes translating the Bible difficult, as translation consultants need to travel large distances to meet with communities to work on translations. While much of the New Testament has been translated into the Si language, work on the Old Testament is about to begin.

In order to provide an easier, long-term solution for the remaining Scripture to be translated, a Wycliffe Australia member is providing Bible translation training for mother-tongue translators. He is serving as the coordinator and Bible translation advisor for the project, teaching, training and checking the translation work of the mother-tongue translators. The training that local speakers are receiving is already improving their competence in translating. The training is also providing them with a sense of pride and ownership in the translation, helping to ensure longevity of the project.

Along with partner organisations in South Asia, Wycliffe Australia is providing funding for this important work. In addition to the translation training, the project aims to also provide literacy training and gospel materials in the Si language to promote the work of the gospel and build healthy local church communities.

The budget for the first year of this project includes set-up costs (including office and computer supplies), salaries and travel expenses for training two mother-tongue translators. The initial Old Testament passages to be translated include Genesis 1-50, Ruth 1-4 and Jonah 1-4.

2023 Target: A\$12,054

*Names changed for security reasons



PHOTO MYASSO MYRON

Papuan Malay is the language of wider communication spoken by 2 million people in the Indonesian province of Papua. The Papuan Malay Bible translation team has a goal of distributing 1 million Scripture forms (books, social media hits, Jesus Film views on YouTube, Scripture app downloads, etc.) before completing the New Testament by the year 2028.

We are excited to share that the Papuan Malay translation team is now being led by a local Papuan. The training, experience and encouragement the team has received over the years has given them a sense of pride and ownership as they share translated materials with their fellow Papuan Malay speakers.

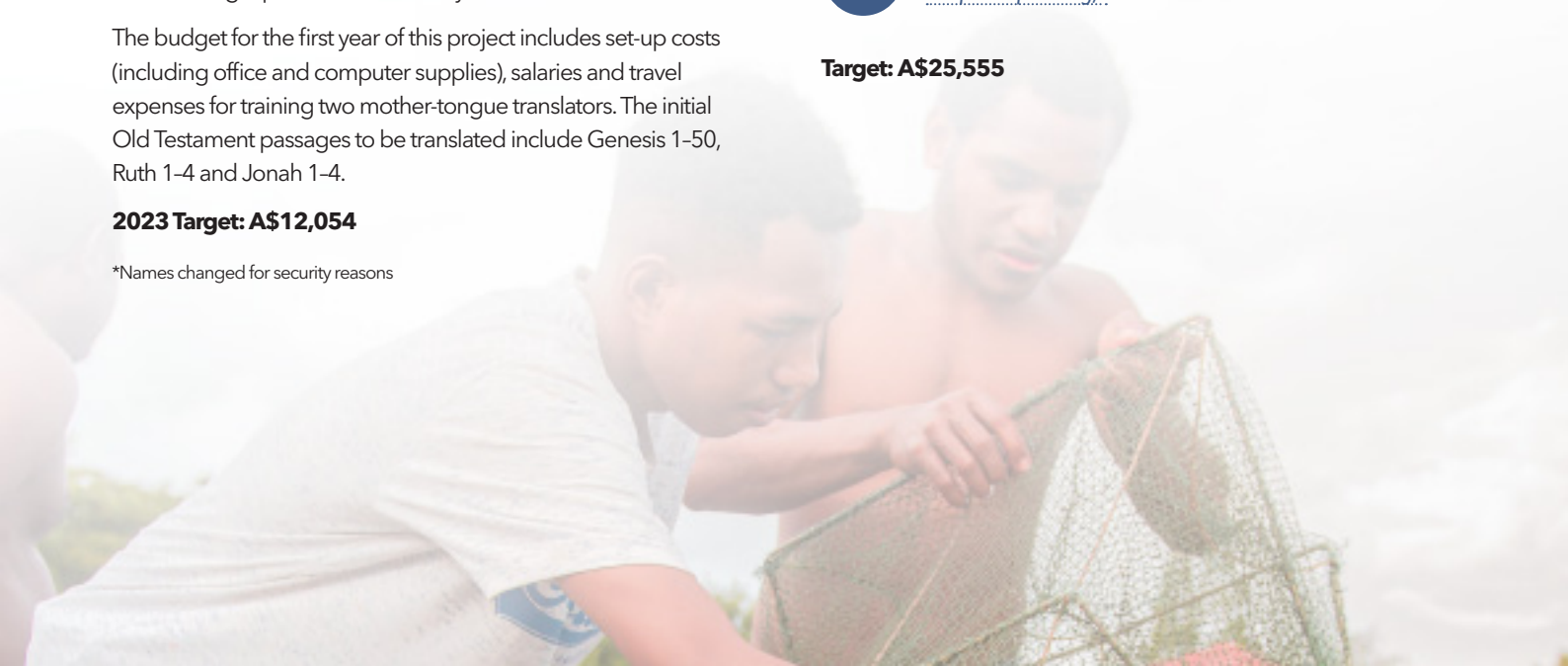
The Scripture Engagement team is excited to be sharing a book containing 26 foundational Bible stories covering the creation of the world in Genesis to the promises of a new heaven and a new earth in Revelation.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this project to enable the printing of copies of this book as well as Secure Digital (SD) cards with the oral stories to accompany the books. Funds raised this year will go towards more copies being printed and recorded for distribution.



wycliffe.org.au/projects/papuan-malay-scripture-printing/

Target: A\$25,555



National Trainee Consultant Study Tour

Project 8395

WYCLIFFE
FIELD SUPPORT
PROJECT



PHOTO BY MARC EWELL

The Wycliffe Australia Israel Study Tour gives an opportunity for Bible translation consultants and consultants-in-training to visit many sites in Israel where Old Testament and New Testament events occurred, and to meet other mother-tongue translators studying Hebrew in Jerusalem in preparation to translate the Old Testament into their own languages.

I joined the 2023 K2K Study Tour with a group of international translation consultant trainees. We had two participants from Kenya, four from Tanzania, and three from India on this tour, consisting of eight men and one woman. During our daily sharing and final impact statements, each participant testified to how helpful the visit had been. The most common comment was that previously they translated from their imagination but now they had a much better understanding of the geography and cultural practices to give them a much clearer picture of events that they are translating. In addition, some took the opportunity to produce a number of teaching videos in their own language that they believe will be a great help to their colleagues and churches. For each one, the trip was a 'dream come true'. Here is what some of the participants had to share about their experiences:

My coming for this tour was not only for myself. I was also representing a large 'least reached' people group who need the truth of the Word and more of its clarity. Every day in Israel has been a day of gaining new insight, a day of revelation, affirmation and confirmation of the Bible. I am inspired to treasure the Bible more than before and be committed to its reading. I don't have words to express my deep-felt gratitude to those who made this study tour possible for us through their sponsorship and prayer.

- Wario

I'm very thankful to God for this opportunity of visiting the Holy Land. Also I want to extend my thanks to Wycliffe Australia for moral, spiritual, and financial support that made this trip possible to me. Being here as a Bible translator (trainee consultant) will have a great impact on my translation work. Visiting the sites and having more detailed information about the Bible land has completely changed my attitude towards Bible study. Before coming here, everything about the Bible and Holy Land was only theory and imagination, but now everything has become real. It will help me to translate more accurately.

- William

I am a translation consultant in training, helping mother-tongue Bible translators. But most times, I have been reading and translating Bible passages by only imagination, since I have never been in a place where the events happened. But now that I have seen the areas and know the geographical, topographical and cultural setting, I will translate and help the translators to have a better and clearer translation of the Bible!

- Peter

There are already plans underway to send more consultants on the study tour next year.

Target: A\$42,200



[wycliffe.org.au/projects/nat-train-cons-tr-study-tour/](https://www.wycliffe.org.au/projects/nat-train-cons-tr-study-tour/)

By Barry Borneman



If you would like to discuss any of the Ministry Resourcing projects, please contact:

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