



Wycliffe Today

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Year of the Bible: God's Word for everybody

**SPRING
2020**

Stories:

- » Every word
- » Savouring the sweet fragrance of Christ
- » Bloom: opening up new opportunities for the blind and vision impaired
- » Unlocking hope through prison ministry
- » How AI is accelerating Bible translation
- » Chameleon: changing the future of Deaf Bible translation
- » Sharing Scripture through stories



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Editorial from the CEO



There is a deep-seated spiritual need in everyone.

Jesus reminded Satan of this when he told the

deceiver that *people do not live by bread alone but*

by every word that comes from the mouth of God

(Matthew 4:4, NLT). A person can have all their physical

needs and even their emotional needs met, and still not be

fully alive. While the world is rightly addressing issues around racism, protection

of the environment, sustainable forms of energy, equitable distribution of

resources, and individual freedoms, many seem to think that there is only the

physical realm.

Yet, we do not live in the physical world alone but in a spiritual realm that is

described by the Scriptures. **Every word** that comes from the mouth of God

is important for our wholeness and spiritual wellbeing. Wycliffe Australia

is committed to taking the Word of God to every person on the planet by

enabling them to hear **every word** that comes from the mouth of God in a

language they understand best. You won't see this worldwide movement in

the news but you are welcome to join us!

Max Sahl



Every

Jesus invites everyone into his kingdom.

The team at Wycliffe Bible Translators

Australia believes that everybody

should have the chance to hear the Good News of Jesus in a language

that they understand best. Watch Max share more about this vision

at wycliffe.org.au/every-video Video by Gary McMaster.

Global Year of the Bible



2020 is the global Year of the Bible.

Isolation does not have to be boring.

This could be an opportunity to grow

deeper in God's Word and inspire

others to do the same.

To discover more go to www.bibleyear2020.com

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Transformed by the Word

Savouring the sweet fragrance of Christ



by Lyn Wake

How hungry are we for God's Word?

As I sit at my desk to share with you today, a loaf of bread is baking in the oven. The delicious, yeasty aroma wafts through my office. I am hungry and can hardly wait to savour the flavour, and be satisfied.

One of the symptoms of COVID-19 is a loss of smell and taste. Beth, my friend and Wycliffe colleague, explains her experience with the virus this way:

Losing my senses affected my appetite and felt so unnatural. I could remember fragrances and flavours, but the memories were not satisfying. Eating felt sad. It is so enjoyable to again smell and taste the food I eat!

Physical pandemics bring many losses. But we face another pandemic—one that is much more insidious and widespread than COVID-19. Soul sickness dulls and steals our spiritual senses and none of us are immune.

In the midst of this pandemic, many of us need an awakening of our spiritual senses!

So how do we reinvigorate our spiritual smell and taste? The answer is always found in Jesus. In Ephesians 5:2, Paul describes Jesus' sacrifice with the word 'euodia' meaning a sweet, pleasing offering to God.

When we breathe in God's fragrant love in Christ, our soul hunger awakens. He fills us with his renewing Spirit and we become like Christ: the offering that is both pleasing to God and a sweet aroma to others (2 Corinthians 2:14-15).

Friends, through this soul-searching season, let us not lose our senses! If we are not alert to the sweet Christ fragrance, tasting God's goodness and satisfying our own aching hunger with Jesus, how can we possibly be the sweet offering everybody needs?

When was the last time you smelled the fragrance of Christ, savoured the taste of his Word and allowed him to satisfy your deepest hunger?

Prayer

Father, please heal our soul sickness. Awaken and deepen our spiritual senses so we can become a fragrant offering that whets the appetite of a dying world. We want to hunger afresh for your Word and offer a mouth-watering taste of you, the Bread of Life, to satisfy the hungry. Amen.

Be transformed by the Word as you engage with:
Psalms 119:97-112 & 2 Corinthians 2:14-17

Wycliffe World Day of Prayer

'SHALOM'

Join us in
Australia on
Tues 10 Nov
@ 11am

[https://wycliffe.org.au/
events/world-day-of-
prayer-2020](https://wycliffe.org.au/events/world-day-of-prayer-2020)

Bloom: opening up new opportunities for the blind and vision impaired

by Deb Fox

In the world today, there are at least 285 million people who are blind or vision impaired.

A 2019 report¹ found that developing nations in Africa and Asia have a higher incidence of eye conditions and vision impairment. The level of eye problems is even greater in rural areas, among ethnic minorities and indigenous populations.

The Philippines is a country with over half a million blind or vision impaired people. In early 2019, Liz Pfeifer was part of a pilot project with Resources for the Blind Philippines (RBI), using the Bloom Reader to create digital books for the blind and those with visual impairments.

Bloom was developed by SIL International as easy-to-use software for creating books and translating them into multiple languages. Australian member John Thomson is one of the Bloom developers and says that people with limited computer skills can easily create literacy materials for their own minority language groups. Bloom is open-source software, making it accessible for more people throughout the world. It also includes 'shell books'—templates that can be easily modified for specific needs. In addition to books that the general language community can access, Bloom enables groups which are often marginalised to access literature and Scripture.

Liz explains:

SIL LEAD was a major winner of a competition run by All Children Reading, a partnership of USAID, World Vision and the Australian Government. The prize money enabled SIL to enhance the Bloom software with features to allow users to create reading materials suitable for people with visual impairments. During the pilot project, forty books were created at schools in three major Filipino languages, published to tablets and tested with students who are blind or visually impaired.



To help implement the program, Liz served as an IT consultant providing Bloom training to RBI staff in Manila.

One thing the team needed to focus on was the appearance of illustrations to cater for different levels of visual impairment. This required adding descriptions to images—a necessary element, particularly for those with colour blindness. Various checkboxes can be marked in Bloom to simulate how the image will look to someone with red/green colour blindness, blue/yellow colour blindness or someone with cataracts. The books also needed to be recorded as 'talking books', including the image descriptions.

Liz says she is grateful to have been a part of this pilot project which will improve the quality of learning and accessibility for visually impaired students.

Many children who were previously unable to access reading materials can now read books and Bible stories and share them with their families. They may not have 20/20 vision but they do have a bright future ahead.

MORE

Bloom Reader: bloomlibrary.org

Resources for the Blind: blind.org.ph

Bloom Reader is also helping to 'Spread the Word, not the virus'. See how it is being used for translating and sharing important information about health and hygiene at next.bloomlibrary.org/covid19



Unlocking hope through prison ministry: **How the Plain English Version is opening doors for the gospel**

Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. - Hebrews 13:3 (NIV)



The Prisoner's Journey (TPJ) is an eight-week program run by Prison Fellowship Australia. It is based on the Christianity Explored series, using Mark's Gospel as a way for helping inmates connect with the person of Jesus when he is presented as someone who was also rejected and despised.

When Prison Fellowship General Manager Glen Fairweather met with chaplains at the Darwin Correctional Centre, one of the key messages that came through was that there needed to be a program that Indigenous inmates could connect with. He shares:

We felt an increasing conviction to do more for Aboriginal people who are incarcerated. We wondered how to tailor the TPJ program to the needs of Aboriginal men and women. Then we began reaching out to networks and trying to figure out how on earth we could make this happen. My first phone calls were to Wycliffe and SIL Australia.

Glen discovered the Plain English Version (PEV) translation that retired Wycliffe and AuSIL member David Glasgow helped to create for the Gospel of Mark. He approached Dave to see if it could be used in the TPJ program.

Glen shares:

Dave was happy for Prison Fellowship to use the PEV translation but he went above and beyond our expectations, even getting the questions in the course translated into a similar style as the translation itself to keep everything consistent.

Dave says he is similarly thrilled that his work with the PEV translation is being used in such a significant way in prisons:

The PEV allows Indigenous people to read God's Word in a format they can understand. We edited The Prisoner's Journey course book using the same principles as those used in the PEV, for example, replacing passive constructions with active verbs. Grammar constructions that are not used in Aboriginal languages but are common in English can be confusing to those for whom English is a second language.

These changes ensure that the message of the Gospels is clear to an Aboriginal audience. We would value prayer that when the PEV is available many Indigenous people will hear about it, find out how to get hold of it, accept it as God's Word to them, and live by it.

Another important aspect of the PEV of TPJ is the visual element of the teaching. The study guide and the Gospel of Mark have been completely overhauled and adapted to suit Aboriginal participants. AuSIL Director Alan Rogers put Glenn in touch with graphic designer Paul Davies. Paul grew up in an Indigenous community in Tennant Creek so he had connections with local Indigenous artists.

Coordinator for TPJ, Richard Boonstra, explains:

Each session has accompanying artwork which helps any participants who are non-literate reflect on it in their own time. Facilitators can also show images in large format so that inmates who aren't literate can still participate in the sessions.

The project has come together in record timing and Glen is grateful for the partnership of many organisations working together towards the one goal:

We're not the Bible translators, we're not the graphic artists but we have a vision to reach this people group and to reach Aboriginal inmates. To have so many other individuals and organisations from Prison Fellowship, Wycliffe Australia, SIL Australia, AuSIL, The Bible League and Christianity Explored all willing to support that vision is the biggest blessing.

Richard adds: 'Yes, this has happened so quickly!

We just think that God's had his hand on this. Together, we're unlocking hope.'

The pilot program for the PEV of TPJ is waiting to be rolled out at the Darwin Correctional Centre and Richard is hoping that facilitator training can start and the new booklets can be used once COVID-19 restrictions are eased.

MORE

For more information about TPJ go to prisonfellowship.org.au/programs/the-prisoners-journey/

bl.org.au/projects/aboriginal-plain-english-bible/

To discover more about the PEV of the Bible, head to aboriginalbibles.org.au/english-plain/

How AI is accelerating Bible translation

by John Tan

There is an area of computer software design called Artificial Intelligence (AI) where data is fed into a program and it 'thinks' for itself.

Most of us use AI in our everyday lives through Information and Communication Technology (ICT) without thinking too much about it.

We use AI for:

- running virtual assistants, including Siri, Hey Google, Cortana and Alexa
- search engines such as Google Search and Bing
- navigation and maps, like Google Maps, Bing Maps or Waze
- drawing patterns, trends and statistics from data and creating graphs in Microsoft Excel or Google Sheets
- automated translations through tools like Google Translate, Microsoft Translator, Facebook and IBM Watson
- chatbots (automated assistance programs) that help us with conversations, store purchases and technical support inquiries. This includes the predictive texts when we write messages in Microsoft Word, Google Docs, email and SMS messages.



Wycliffe's partners in SIL and the Deaf Bible Society employ AI in helping people everywhere engage with the translated Scriptures.

In addition to the everyday uses listed above, SIL and Deaf Bible Society use AI to:

- store audio recordings, words and patterns in grammar on computing devices. SIL's linguists use AI to learn languages more quickly and complete Bible translations at a faster pace
- teach people how to read and write using text-to-speech software. Some people learn their alphabet by looking at words and hearing what they sound like. Many people learn the Bible audibly
- create video-based sign languages. Translations are not limited to just speech and text; they are also in the realm of video
- engage in chatbot discussions with people who have questions about what the Bible says. People can ask questions like 'how can I find eternal life?' And the AI will either answer the questions or direct inquiries to real people.

The Bible is already indexed by books, chapters and verses¹. The complete Bible is available in 704 languages². This makes it an ideal resource of data for AI software programmers and linguists who are working for companies like Google, IBM, Microsoft and DuoLingo. Imagine being paid by one of these giants to read the Bible!

Many AI projects like these look for monetary profits but missional AI pushes beyond this boundary. SIL and the Deaf Bible Society want to see individuals and communities using the languages they value most to engage with God's Word.

Chameleon: changing the future of Deaf Bible translation

by Deb Fox

Saul and Rebecca Thurrowgood are Wycliffe members excitedly awaiting the birth of their fifth child. They are also excited about the arrival of a program Saul has spent many years perfecting: Chameleon. Rebecca explains that, just like the chameleon's ability to adapt and change in order to communicate, 'the goal of Chameleon is bringing the gospel to the Deaf in a new way that protects the people involved by changing their appearance.'



Currently, less than two per cent of the world's Deaf identify as followers of Jesus. Many do not have access to God's Word in a language they understand—their own sign language. There are over twenty-five sign languages with portions of Scripture available on video but there are significant barriers to videoing real people for the translation of the remaining sign languages.¹

For many regions around the world, persecution is a daily occurrence. Therefore, filming a real person recording sign movements in their local sign language may be a dangerous move. Another barrier which often presents itself in small Deaf communities is denominational differences among Christians. Unlike the anonymity of a printed Bible translation, the face of the signer may become attached to the signed translation. If their character, past life or community become an issue, they risk overriding the message of the gospel. The use of animated characters eliminates these risks and also enables the translation work to be accelerated.

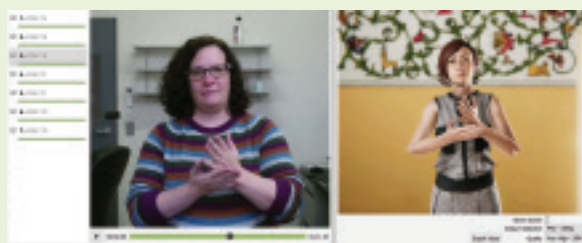
How does the technology work?

Chameleon is a form of motion capture technology which uses artificial intelligence which the team has trained to create neural networks² for an avatar³ (an animated character) to copy. In order to create the neural networks, they have had to source movements from as many places as possible, including videos already available from the Deaf Bible Society and filming live recordings in a studio.

Saul says:

We need the computer to track the person, regardless of their shape, size, ethnicity and gender. We need to train the computer to recognise the various parts of the body. We have trained the computer's neural networks to recognise different locations including the body, the hand and five different neural networks in the face. There are hundreds of thousands of images fed into the computer in order for it to recognise various shapes. Once it can remember specific movements, the avatar can be asked to perform a number of sign movements.

Rebecca explains: 'We're trying to get the computer to recognise the movements. Perfect copying means a better data output—the better that is, the better the outcome is.'



After many years of setbacks and trials, Chameleon 1.0 is almost ready for release. Saul says that the team was excited to discover that a team in South-East Asia had been using the pre-release version of the program and it worked better than expected.

Rebecca adds:

To know that this technology is being used for its intended purpose is a huge blessing. We are so grateful knowing that this product will be a way to get the gospel out to places where it otherwise may have been impossible to create a sign language translation safely.



¹ deafbiblesociety.com

² A set of algorithms, modelled loosely after the human brain, that are designed to recognise patterns.

³ An avatar is an electronic image that represents—and may be manipulated by—a computer user.

Sharing Scripture through stories

by Peter O'Loghlin



I got talking to a bored-looking security guard at a store. After chatting about the job of a guard I asked, 'Did you ever read the story about the guards who were executed because they let the man they were guarding escape?'

The man looked interested: 'No!' 'It's in the Bible! Let me tell you the story.' (You'll find it in Acts 12.) Another day, passing a cemetery, I said to my passenger, 'Did you hear about the man who used to live in a cemetery, in what is now called the Golan Heights?' (That one is in Mark 5.)

Day by day the Holy Spirit gives opportunities to share stories from God's Word with those who are prepared to take them. Rev. David Jones, then Moderator General of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, said, 'Bible storytelling is a brilliant way for all kinds of people in all kinds of situations to share the Word of God in an enjoyable and non-threatening way'. As OMF missionary Christine Dillon points out:

Many evangelistic methods, such as evangelistic sermons or courses that investigate Christianity, can only be done with people who already want to know more about the Bible or are at least comfortable enough to participate. Storying allows us to share the gospel with hearers who are anti-Christian or haven't yet considered that Jesus could be relevant to their lives.¹

Wycliffe Bible Translators Australia has been conducting workshops for some years now on how to craft and present a Bible story that is Simple, Accurate and Memorable—SAM, to use Wycliffe's acronym. As veteran Wycliffe member Keith Benn says:

A billion people around the world cannot read the Bible for the simple reason that it has not yet been translated into their language. They could 'hear the Scriptures' if someone told them a Bible story. But more than that, millions of people in Australia and elsewhere are unlikely to ever read the Bible until they are convinced that it is true. Bible storytelling is a way to expose them to the gospel long before they are ready to read it. Through Bible storytelling, I was able to share the gospel with more people in four years than I had done in the previous forty years before I learned the skill of storytelling.

MORE

Go to wycliffe.org.au/events for information about Bible Storytelling workshops planned for the coming months.

Over the years, Bible storytelling has given me more opportunities to personally share God's Word with people outside the family of faith than anything else I have encountered. As God himself tells us, *As the rain and snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish ... so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.* Isaiah 55:10-11 (NIV).

¹ Dillon, C. 2014. Telling the Gospel through Story. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 24.

Zoom Story the Bible workshops

What is it like attending an interactive storytelling workshop...online?

Seventeen people recently participated in Wycliffe's inaugural Zoom Story the Bible workshop. These are some of their experiences:

GARY: I thoroughly enjoyed Wycliffe's first ever online Story the Bible workshop. With participants from around Australia, and others joining in from Canada, one from the US and one from Korea, we learned the skill of crafting and telling stories from the Bible in clear, concise, memorable and engaging ways, all while being accurate to the text. Jesus always used stories to engage his listeners, and stories are a great way to engage those around us in hearing the truths of God's Word when they might not be willing to listen to a sermon.

IAN: Jesus told stories to share the gospel, and so can we! The Bible is a book of stories, waiting to be told! The online (Zoom) Story the Bible course gave excellent training in how to develop and present a three-minute Bible story that is simple, accurate and memorable.

Why do we have Bible stories? *"These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, you may have life in his name."* John 20:31 (NIV)

LARRY: I've got the bug. I want to continue preparing and telling Bible stories.

LUCY: Since the workshop, I've been challenged by Jesus' response to opposition after he healed the paralytic at the pool in John 5. Now I'm motivated to prepare that as a story to tell others.

Ministry Resourcing

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Wycliffe
Bible Translators



What is Wycliffe Ministry Resourcing?

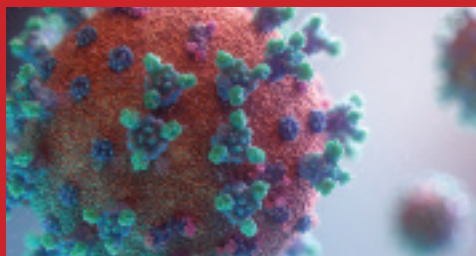
Wycliffe Australia's Ministry Resourcing department seeks to support the work of our members and organisational partners on the field. We are committed to building strong relationships, with an emphasis on mutual respect, trust, collaboration and prayer. Our three main objectives are to:

- 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

PHOTO BY RODNEY BALLARD

Sharing hope amid a pandemic

We are grateful for the ongoing efforts of our teams who are supporting vulnerable communities throughout the coronavirus pandemic. While many people throughout the world are suffering, we have been amazed by reports coming back of incredible partnership opportunities opening up among communities, which would previously not have been possible without the crisis.



COVID-19 Relief Project 8874 (WRDF)

WYCLIFFE
RELIEF AND
DEVELOPMENT
FOUNDATION
PROJECT



Many of the minority communities that WRDF supports through our aid projects are now in even more desperate need of help of a slightly different kind. At this time of pandemic, the challenge is often to simply keep people alive due to shortages of food or water, especially during lockdown.

Day labourer jobs have disappeared, physical movement has been restricted and food is scarce. People who were already vulnerable are now even more so, due to a lack of government social safety nets. Their needs are outside the scope of our existing projects.

In light of this, we have created the COVID-19 relief project that will address relief needs in multiple locations. Funds given to this project will be directed towards the communities served by our current projects and other groups with whom we have existing relationships. These organisations have people on the ground who are organised to deliver aid effectively and efficiently throughout this crisis.

Target: AU\$100,000

wycliffe.org.au/global/covid-19-relief/

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/

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 wycliffe.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/



A South Asian country responded immediately to the COVID-19 pandemic with a nationwide lockdown and a media awareness campaign for behavioural change. However, the situation has worsened in rural areas.

Local project partners took a quick survey of the plight of rural and isolated communities and decided to provide an emergency supply of grocery kits to the worst affected areas. Many wage earners lost their source of income due to the closure of many businesses, migrant labourers returning home, markets closing and roads being blocked. These isolated communities don't have access to appropriate medical treatment so taking precautions was the first line strategy.

Through an organised effort by our partners, 303 families, comprising 1212 individuals (children and parents) received emergency assistance. A woman from the V community said with tears of gratitude: **'You people are the first to visit us in all these days of the lockdown! Thank you so much for coming and bringing these life-saving goods for us.'**

The team found the experience an ideal way to build rapport and continue the ongoing development work among these communities. It has opened up opportunities for better collaboration for future livelihood development initiatives. Local leadership, civic bodies and government officials have been of great support and cooperated well as they allowed our teams to distribute emergency kits. They too were influenced positively.

wycliffefoundation.org.au/global/covid-19-relief/



JK Community: Learning Centre

When roads were blocked and parents lost their incomes due to the pandemic, many children were unable to attend school. The COVID-19 Relief project has enabled children to continue receiving an education throughout this time through local programs. State coordinators share:

We hereby would like to thank WRDF and Language Research and Education Foundation for sponsoring funds for carrying out the COVID-19 Relief project work. A total of 95 children benefit through our ongoing Learning Centre activities regularly.

S Community: Agricultural assistance

About 90% of the working population in the S community relies on farming. They depend on agriculture, directly connected to land and water resources. Scarcity of clean water for irrigation throughout most of the area, improper drainage, difficulty in digging wells due to rocky soil, undeveloped means of communication and transportation issues have restricted the extension of cultivated land. Therefore, many of those trying to earn a living are struggling to survive and the land is not yielding any crops to feed their families.

A State Coordinator for the S project shares:

I wholeheartedly appreciate this initiative by the organisation. Before we started distribution, I had a great opportunity to talk with my community. I employed all my efforts to create awareness about COVID-19 and gave useful health and hygiene tips to the beneficiaries. Now they have all the tools they need to get through this time safely.



By Narelle Barnsley, Papua New Guinea

I work with the Kanja language group in PNG. This is a small language group in Western province. It is the most south-western language group in PNG. According to Ethnologue, it has a population of about 400 people.¹ This year has been full of unexpected turns, with COVID-19 disrupting a lot of my plans. However, this does not mean that work on the language project has halted for this year. It still continues, just in different ways. I am currently in the initial language and culture learning phase of the language project. This is important as the better I learn the language and culture, the more help I can be to the future local translators as they translate the Bible into the Kanja language.



Normally, most of my language learning would happen in situ in the village, however with COVID-19 I have been unable to go to the village. Despite this, I have still been able to continue with language learning by using recordings of people telling stories in language and other language data I have collected.

I have also been able to continue with some of the nitty-gritty language work that is necessary for a good translation. I have been working on a paper on the sounds of the Kanja language—this will enable me to better help the community in making decisions about their alphabet. I am also working on analysing the grammar of Kanja which has a complex verb system.

¹Eberhard, David M., Gary F. Simons, and Charles D. Fennig (eds.). 2020. Ethnologue: Languages of the World. Twenty-third edition. Dallas, Texas: SIL International. Online version: <http://www.ethnologue.com>.

Understanding this well will enable me to better help the future local translators with the translation by helping them to understand the differences between how their language works grammatically compared with the language from which they are translating.

The interruption caused by COVID-19 has also enabled me to help out in ways that would not have happened otherwise. In June, I helped with a pilot project for potential new project management software for language programs. This required internet connection that I do not have in the village. If I had gone to the village as planned, I would not have been able to help with this. I have also had opportunities to help out at our store for a couple of months, disinfecting baskets and trolleys. While doing so, I have been able to make new connections with the community. I have also been helping at the market to seat the vendors so that they are socially distanced and to hand out literature about COVID-19.

Wycliffe Field Support Project 8517

When Narelle is able to return to the village to continue working directly with the Kanja people, she hopes to move into a purpose-built home. The house will enable her to store materials and provide space to work with people on translation. It will also provide a permanent dwelling for her, avoiding the need for the people to rebuild a new bush house every few years.

MORE

For more information go to wycliffe.org.au/projects/kanja-png-house-n-barnsley/

