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Editorial from the CEO

People are at the centre of Wycliffe’s service - people who are created and loved by God, people who suffer from the consequences of sin and evil in this world, people who are redeemed and invited to take their place in God’s kingdom.

Being involved in Bible translation means being involved with people. In this edition we take a look at how being embedded in the life of another community sometimes leads our members to serve in ways they might not have expected. Des and Jenny Oatridge’s story (page 3) highlights this beautifully.

It is this connection within a particular local community and a willingness to listen that shaped Greg Conwell’s views on how he could contribute his skills and resources in a practical way through the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation (pages 4-5). It is open eyes to the specific needs of the women in the Aiyura Valley that moved Dr Carl Luther to take action (page 6).

Wycliffe’s focus is Bible translation and making disciples of Jesus through the translated Scriptures. As disciples we are always open to the ways the Spirit might lead us to share God’s love wherever we are.

Barry Borneman
The road was rougher than I had ever experienced - wet, boggy and riddled with deep ruts. It took 40 men from a nearby village, pulling on a 50 metre rope attached to the front of the Land Rover, to get us out of a bog and up a steep mountain hill with the motor roaring. Des was a master driver in such circumstances.

We had come to see first-hand a Bible translation program in a remote Binumarien village in the Eastern Highlands. We discovered much more.

Des, a plumber by trade, was also the village dentist who extracted rotten teeth, the basic first aid man who stitched up limbs that had unfortunate encounters with machetes, and the teacher who introduced some to reading and writing for the first time. Jenny, a nurse by profession, dispensed pain relief and cough mixture for sick babies and dressed ugly boils.

Some people might ask why couldn’t the Oatridges have stuck to Bible translation and ignored all this ‘community service’?

This may be possible if Bible translation was done by an unfeeling robot, or if the words of the Bible being translated were somehow divorced from the life, work and humanity of Jesus. Bible translation is not simply a technical exercise.

It is primarily dependent on relationships and friendships, built up and sustained over a long period of time. It is cultivated by the sharing of lives; of joys and sufferings.

This is no less the case today. When local drought devastates crops and starvation is at the door, our Wycliffe teams are often the first to respond with rice to relieve the hunger. After the recent earthquakes in the Southern Highlands of PNG, MAF and SIL planes immediately rallied to support those displaced communities, with translation teams on the ground working tirelessly to meet basic needs like clean water.

Wycliffe is not a relief organisation but we are always ready to assist, as we are able, because we are there. These are our friends, our family - how can we do otherwise? The establishment of the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation is not a new idea, but based on the same motivation that saw the Oatridges share their lives, skills and resources with their Binumarien friends.
Tiny mouths and enormous ears

Greg, CEO of the Wycliffe Foundation, talks about the importance of listening and trust in community development.

by Deb Tan

We’ve all experienced it — advice or help given by well-meaning friends who haven’t really been listening to what we were saying. It is a greater tragedy when this is played out on a bigger scale — aid or development provided by well-meaning people who think they know what is best for another community.

Yet for those of us with resources to share, it may not seem that easy to know how best to help. Add power difference and cross-cultural communication to the mix, and the potential for making a mess of things increases a hundred-fold.

In this interview, Greg Conwell, CEO of the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation (WRDF)¹ shares how his personal journey has shaped his approach to community development, and how listening and relationship are integral to the ethos of the Foundation.

Thanks for your time, Greg.

Can you tell us briefly about yourself?

Sure. Well, I trained in finance but then worked for many years with multinational companies in marketing, business development, logistics and finance. A bit of everything really. I did quite a lot of overseas travel as part of my corporate roles, so I guess that’s where I developed a strong interest in other cultures in general and community development specifically. My wife and I joined Wycliffe in our late 40s and we have spent most of our Wycliffe career in the Solomon Islands working with local Bible translators and their national organisation. Now we are based in Melbourne, and I spend my time working with donors and those overseas that we can help in all sorts of practical ways.

I assume that your experiences in the Solomon Islands and in other community development projects has had some influence on the ethos of WRDF?

Well to start with, the ethos of WRDF is not just a result of my input. We have six board members who are passionate about helping others and I am part of a small staff who also love what we do. Under God’s tutelage, we are building this together.

To answer your question, I had done some studies in community development before joining Wycliffe (and more since), but it is true that the Solomons was a good training ground. We had a major earthquake and tsunami shortly after we arrived that was devastating to much of the country.

There has been a progression of floods and earthquakes ever since. We participated in disaster relief in a minor way, (and by the way, we would have loved to have WRDF alongside to help us facilitate). I have seen lots of examples of the good, the bad and the really ugly of how Westerners ‘do’ aid and development. And hopefully I’ve learned something along the way.

The most important message that I hope I have learned is to listen well and not impose ‘our’ solutions. Whenever I do a presentation about WRDF I include a cartoon face of a person with a tiny mouth and enormous ears. That is my ideal aid and development person. I hope we really act like that, but we are all still learning.
Some of Wycliffe’s supporters might be asking:
There are many other relief and community development agencies out there. Why is Wycliffe re-inventing the wheel?
Why not stick with Wycliffe’s core focus of translation and language development?

That’s a good question, but there are also good answers.

First, we don’t try to do what the large aid organisations of this world do. We don’t have a big staff and branches in all the places we work. We work with people and organisations on the ground that have been there for a long time and know what they are doing. We help them fulfil their vision and needs. We are not the delivery organisation. Hats off to those large aid organisations, they do what they do very well. But that’s not our space.

Second, we work with people we know, people that we have a relationship with, and where we can try to really understand what’s behind their prayers and dreams.

Third, a lot of the work we support is linguistically related anyway. More than half of our current projects are at least partly literacy projects. So that is helping the core of what Wycliffe Australia is all about.

Fourth, and maybe the most important of all, is the thought that ‘how can we not help if we have the capacity?’ We are generally involved in these communities in some way already. How can we stand idle and watch them suffer or not reach their full potential if we are able to mobilise resources to help? If someone from your church home fellowship group couldn’t get to a meeting because they were literally starving, would you email them a copy of the notes and wait for the funeral? Of course not. Our faith and ‘works’ need to be in balance according to my understanding of Scripture. That message is for us as individuals, and for Wycliffe as an organisation. It is something that I believe down to my core.

Finally, just to put some perspective on it, if our financial dreams for WRDF are fulfilled, we would still only be dealing with around 10% of the dollars that Wycliffe Australia currently receives for translation programs and member support. WRDF will always be the smaller brother and the main focus for Wycliffe overall will always be Bible translation and language development.
Dr Carl Luther is getting ready for another day at the SIL clinic in Ukarumpa, in the Eastern Highlands of Papua New Guinea. Carl and his wife Carol are from the US and have been serving in PNG for eight years.

The first patient who walks through the door is a SIL colleague. The clinic was originally set up over sixty years ago to provide medical care for SIL staff like him. With over 800 living languages in PNG, SIL PNG is one of the larger centres in the world, with work happening in 193 languages.

Without a well-run clinic with adequate facilities, minor infections can become major illnesses, and medical issues now treated at the clinic may otherwise require SIL staff and family to leave PNG to access further health care.

The next person arrives at the clinic. It is a local Papua New Guinean woman carrying her sick son. She has just walked from a nearby village in the Aiyura Valley. It is a privilege to be able to serve the local community through the provision of medical care.

Apart from the usual medical issues of high blood pressure, heart disease, joint aches and pains and so on, Dr Carl also sees a lot of tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid, respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases in the local children who come to the clinic.

The chances of children surviving to their fifth birthday are low and the staff are keen to help improve the situation. An additional service the clinic provides is a community health clinic, where staff travel to provide some basic medical care for women and children in the community.

Very soon, the next group to benefit from the clinic will be the women of the Aiyura Valley. Thanks to funds raised through the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation, Dr Carl’s latest initiative to reduce the incidence of cervical cancer is now made possible. Lack of screening and a high incidence of human papillomavirus contribute to the cancer’s prevalence, as do other risk factors such as HIV, low immunity, and poor socioeconomic status. The clinic is now a proud owner of two vital but simple pieces of equipment - a colposcope (for screening) and cryotherapy (to freeze the cells of the cervix and kill the pathology early on). These funds will also enable training and the purchase of supplies for ongoing surveillance.

These are just some of the ways the staff at the SIL Clinic are showing God’s love. To all the donors and the Wycliffe Relief and Development Foundation who supported this recent initiative to reduce cervical cancer, thank you!

Get a glimpse of the SIL Clinic in Ukarumpa and hear from some of its staff. Dr Carl also says a heartfelt thank you to donors for the cervical cancer project. https://youtu.be/de-eeNlj7hs

Ukarumpa Health Centre is looking for a nurse to join their team. Find out more at wycliffe.org.au/positions/nurse-pacific/
Serving with Wycliffe

Vacancies in Australia

Check out some opportunities here
wycliffe.org.au/positions

Motel Managers - Tree Tops Lodge
LONG-TERM | MANAGEMENT | AUSTRALIA
Support the work of Wycliffe and MAF through the provision of accommodation for missionaries and others. Located in Cairns.
More: wycliffe.org.au/positions/motel-managers/

CEO Office Manager
LONG-TERM | MANAGEMENT | AUSTRALIA
Assist the CEO’s team with your administrative and logistic skills. Enhance communication and information. Assist in event management.
More: wycliffe.org.au/positions/ceo-office-manager/

Administrative Assistant - SILA*
LONG-TERM | ADMINISTRATION | AUSTRALIA
First point of contact in the SILA office. Provide administration services. Assist in organising special events. Assist with data entry.
More: wycliffe.org.au/positions/administrative-assistant/

Communications & Marketing Officer - SILA*
LONG-TERM | IT/COMMUNICATIONS | AUSTRALIA
Develop SILA’s communication strategy. Responsible for website and social media presence. Write and edit content.
More: wycliffe.org.au/positions/communications-marketing-officer/

Meet our newest members

Ian Hutchinson
Ian served in PNG as a Wycliffe member from 1979 to 1983 and supported several projects in literacy. Then he returned to Australia, married and settled in country NSW whilst maintaining his interest in the work of Bible translation throughout those years. With the recent passing of his wife and a revival of his desire to engage again with Wycliffe, he has re-joined the organisation and will return to PNG to serve in the audio recording of translated languages.

Jessica Hyett
Jess is thrilled to be spending the majority of 2018 serving as an intern with SIL in Papua New Guinea. Her nine months based in Ukarumpa (SIL’s centre in the Highlands) will be a time to explore God's call, a first step in a long-term journey. She will serve in a number of departments such as Scripture engagement, kids’ ministry and member care. When her internship is finished, Jess will continue her studies in social work at university while considering God’s long-term plan.

Robert and Loralie Handasyde
The Handasyde family is currently preparing to live in Ukarumpa, Papua New Guinea, in order to use their skills to support the work of Bible translation. Robert and Loralie are passionate about the task of seeing the Good News of Jesus Christ made available to all people in a way they can understand. Robert is a helicopter pilot who will be involved in flying language teams and other staff, equipment, supplies, and medical aid. Loralie is an optometrist and hopes to use these skills within the community, as well as looking after their daughter Emily.

Opportunities to serve with Wycliffe and SILA are unsalaried. But don’t let that stop you! Countless numbers of Wycliffe members can testify to God’s provision and the joy of partnering with a team of prayer and financial supporters.

*SILA is Wycliffe Australia’s linguistic training partner and offers training for cross-cultural workers in the areas of language learning, linguistics, translation, literacy and other language development activities.
It was the third hour when they crucified him.
Mark 15:25 NIV

 Isa an ti’ yi’ tiike ekk’undumu a peedo t’ize k’aadumu mesuwe.
(Jesus they nailed him on cross at hour for eating rope).
Mark 15:25 Gergiko

Here the NIV is a literal translation of the Greek, indicating that Jesus was crucified at the third hour after sunrise, or about 9 am. Many English translations make the time clearer for the reader by using ‘nine o’clock in the morning’ rather than ‘the third hour’. In the Gergiko language of Chad it was decided to do the same thing by using the local expression for that time of day rather than ‘the third hour’.

Traditionally Gergiko speakers don’t use numbers for indicating time, but rather expressions indicating the position of the sun. The expression used here is ‘peedo t’ize k’aadumu mesuwe’ – literally ‘sun she makes for eating rope’. Here ‘peedo’ = ‘sun’ is equivalent to hour/time.

As for ‘eating the rope’, in the village people tie up livestock with a length of rope woven from palm leaves. If the animal has not been fed first thing in the morning, it will take responsibility for the situation itself, by eating through the rope, and going to look for its own breakfast!