



Lutheran Bible
Translators

Constructive Word

The Esala Prayer Letter

Winter 2022

Dear friends,

God is doing incredible things in Papua New Guinea (PNG)! A year ago I was introduced to Steven Ttopoqogo, a 3rd generation Papua New Guinean Bible translator. He was referred to Lutheran Bible Translators (LBT) because of our reputation for approaching Bible translation projects from a church-centric perspective. He and others made a proposal for translation in six language communities. The story behind it is amazing.

In 2013 a prayer meeting was held at one of the Lutheran churches in the Waria River area. As they prayed, individuals were sensing that God was calling them to do translation so their community and neighboring communities could clearly hear the Good News. The Bible translation they had used for years in the church did not meet their needs for understanding. The impulse grew as they prayed, and finally someone spoke it aloud. Excitement erupted because they **all** sensed this same call and now as a group they confirmed it. They started reaching out to other denominations and the government. In 2015 they gathered representatives from several Bible translation organizations working in PNG for a 3-day conference.



PNG is gorgeous with its lush jungles and mountainous terrain. Many places can only be reached by plane, foot, or water. God is calling and equipping the Church in PNG for the work of Bible translation, and LBT gets to be a part of it!

People came! At the conference they asked if there were people who could help. Ten were present who had training under SIL (another Bible translation organization). No one alone had the capacity to carry out such an ambitious project, but together they thought they could do it.

Praise God...

- For the ways he has called and is equipping PNG Christians to translate the Bible.
- For Sarah's productive and encouraging trip to Tanzania in December.
- For the collaboration taking place in Tanzania to lay the foundation for 3 new language projects.
- That Nathan was able to do more virtual translation consulting with the Komba team in Ghana.

Pray for...

- Safety in travels for Duncan Kasokason and Steven Ttopoqogo as they visit villages to train, consult, and encourage the efforts of the Waria language communities in PNG.
- Wisdom and joy as the Waria management team figures out how to best support all 6 languages in the project.
- Sarah and the various teams & projects she works with in Tanzania, Botswana, PNG, and Southeast Asia.

...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
- Ephesians 4:12-13

Word spread to neighboring language communities about the project. Time, money, and resources were invested for the preliminary planning, but when the group didn't receive a grant to launch training (a significant up-front expense), they thought they needed to pause.

Meanwhile, God was giving a vision to leaders at the circuit and national levels of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of PNG—a call to step into a greater role in translating the Bible. A team of 14 people worked to raise money. An Australian mining engineer donated funds to support a 2-week introductory translation workshop. Four groups participated with 40 participants.

At night they worshiped together and experienced a move of the Spirit. According to Steven, "It was like a crusade." They delighted in the beauty of the words and grammar in their languages and were empowered by greater understanding of the Bible. By the end of the workshop, they had translated the book of *Jonah* and were touched by God's moving in the hearts of rulers in Jonah's day.

COVID-19 put a pause on some activities, but the vision burns bright. This year the Waria multi-language project received a grant from LBT to move forward again. I'm excited and grateful. Stay tuned!

With Joy! *Sarah for the Esala family*



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