Florence (Florrie) Hansen and Eunice Pike were the first team of single women to begin translation work with SIL.* They attended Camp Wycliffe, a linguistic training program, in the summer of 1936 — the third session of this new program.

After the women completed the training program, William Cameron Townsend, Wycliffe’s founder, was excited to learn that they wanted to work on a translation project in Mexico. But his friend and counterpart, L.L. Legters, was reluctant when Cam told him this.

“Think of the criticism we’d get for sending two young girls into an Indian tribe where not even male missionaries have ever gone,” Legters said. But Cam disagreed, pleading their case until Legters finally conceded. “Oh, all right. Go ahead, Townsend, and do what you think best. But I don’t like it.”

Legters wasn’t the only one who disagreed with sending two women into the field on their own. The decision was unprecedented for the time, and stretched people’s perceptions of what was acceptable for women — particularly single women — to do. Others also warned against sending the women, saying that the area was dangerous, or even that they were “too good looking to be [missionaries].”

But when Cam passed on the warning to the women, they both looked at him in surprise. “Why, don’t you believe God can take care of us?”

Confident that God would be with them, Florrie and Eunice moved to the mountainous Mazatec village in Oaxaca, Mexico. They were the first SIL team of single women to ever live and work in a village on their own. And while Florrie and Eunice had complete confidence that God would take care of them, many still struggled with the decision, as it stretched their perception of what was safe and appropriate for young Christian women to do. But Cam continued to encourage and support the women’s decision. “Those of us who have wondered just what place single lady missionaries might have in our project have learned from this lesson that God has heroines today,” he shared.

Florrie and Eunice excelled in their work in the Mazatec village. By 1941, Florrie and Eunice had completed the rough draft of the Mazatec New Testament — a first in the history of Mexico’s indigenous Indian languages, and just six years after they began work in the village.

God’s ability to work through people is not dependent on who they are or what they’re capable of; it’s about whose they are and what he’s capable of doing through them. It just takes a step of faith and a willingness to be used for God’s glory. And that’s exactly what Florrie and Eunice did.

Florrie and Eunice lived with purpose because they believed that God could and would use them for his glory. Explore other inspiring testimonies of people who have lived with purpose and significance as a result of trusting in God at wycliffe.org/significance.

*One of Wycliffe’s primary partner organizations
WOMEN IN BIBLE TRANSLATION

Because of Florrie and Eunice’s pioneering (see front page), Camp Wycliffe went from having separate men’s and women’s camps to one unified camp. And by 1940, there was no mention of gender in any publicity material. Instead, the brochures simply stated: “All persons are invited to apply who are going to pioneer fields where the language work is not yet finished.”

By the fall of 1940, there were five pairs of single women working in different language communities throughout Mexico. In early 1941, 22 out of 37 linguists working in Mexico were women. And half of those 22 were single women! By the fall of 1944, two-thirds of the 122 members were women, with one-third being single. Wycliffe was first started by a group of men, but women were quickly finding their role in Bible translation.

MEXICO

A Glimpse of Mexico

NUMBER OF PEOPLE: 118,395,000

MAIN LANGUAGE: SPANISH

MAIN RELIGION: CHRISTIANITY

TOTAL NUMBER OF LANGUAGES: 286

NUMBER OF LANGUAGES …

Without any of the Bible: 90
With part of the Bible: 51
With a New Testament: 124
With a whole Bible: 21

Mexico is a multi-ethnic country that has been invaded and conquered by various leaders and countries over the centuries. This has directly shaped its history, peoples and cultures. For nearly 500 years, the indigenous languages of Mexico have been considered second class, inferior to Spanish. But in 2003, the General Law of Linguistic Rights was passed. It states Spanish is no longer the official language, but rather just one of many languages spoken throughout Mexico.

This law has helped raise awareness among the people, allowing them to understand that Mexico’s culture will be incomplete unless they value and preserve each of its many languages — a job that goes hand in hand with translating the Bible into languages within the country that still desperately need it. And although Mexico was one of the frontier countries where Wycliffe began its work, there is still much to be done in reaching these communities with the Scriptures in a way that speaks directly to their heart.

You can make a difference in countries like Mexico by joining our prayer team. Sign up at wycliffe.org/prayer to receive weekly emails on different countries, people groups and more to help you pray for what God is doing around the world.

Ways to Pray for the World

» Pray for the ongoing translation projects in Mexico, that communities would be impacted by having God’s Word in their own language.

» Pray for the remaining languages that still likely need Bible translation to begin — under 1,700 worldwide!

» Ask God to show you ways that you can live a significant life — just like Florrie and Eunice did — for his glory.