In 2003, a Bible translator asked Misriani Balle to leave her promising career to help translate the Helong Bible — a job she knew almost nothing about.

Mis was born into the Helong language community on a small island called Semau in eastern Indonesia. When she was as young as five years old, Mis already had a passion for learning. When people would ask her what she wanted to do when she grew up, she'd say, “I want to study!” And that's exactly what she did.

When she finished middle school, Mis' parents were able to scrape together enough money to send her to high school on a larger island. There God provided unique opportunities for Mis.

At that time, the high school had just purchased its first computer. Out of 700 students, only Mis and one classmate were chosen to learn how to use it — a skill that would prove critical to God's plans for Mis.

With the right connections and a great education under her belt, Mis was able to land a government job with a good income and bright future after graduation. Everything seemed to be going well. But it wouldn't be long before Mis would be asked to make the most difficult decision of her life.

Although a Bible translation wasn't available in Helong when Mis was a child, the Indonesian Bible was an important part of her family's life. So when a Bible translator began work on a translation of the New Testament into Helong, Mis' parents were thrilled.

As the work progressed, Helong speakers in various churches on Semau Island helped check the translation drafts to make sure they communicated clearly and accurately. When Mis' parents' church hosted one of these community checks, they asked her to come home and help. Although reluctant to take time off work, she agreed.

Mis' role was to serve food to those working on the translation — not to participate in the community checks. But one day as she was listening to them work, they asked her opinion about a particular passage, and she responded with a good suggestion. Realizing that Mis had great potential, the translator later sat down with Mis and her parents and offered more schooling if she came to work on the project.

At first Mis responded with a firm no. How could she step away from her career to go work with someone she had just met doing a job she knew almost nothing about? But nearly everyone in her family and church told Mis she should take the opportunity.

When the translator's last morning on the island arrived, he approached Mis again and asked her to reconsider, saying, “Why don't you go and ask God what he says?”

Still skeptical, Mis retreated to her bedroom to pray. Questions and doubts swirled in her head but no clear answer came. Finally, Mis' sister poked her head into the bedroom and asked, “What did God say?” Mis replied, “God said … God didn't say anything!”

Stepping out of the bedroom with no more confidence than when she went in, Mis heard herself saying yes to the Bible translator's offer.

After getting Mis enrolled in the local university, the next step was to create a dictionary in Helong.

As the translator and she worked together, Mis' excitement kicked in. “I was like, 'Wow, that's my language! That's my language! That's my language!'” she recalls.

Over the next nine years, Mis helped complete the Helong New Testament and finished a college degree. Mis has more confidence and hopes to help with other Bible translation efforts in Indonesia or wherever God calls her.
Southeast Asia is composed of five countries, including Myanmar (Burma), Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam. Work is being done across the region, both in language-related projects (such as community development, literacy and language research) and Bible translation.

Less than 0.1 percent of Thai Deaf are Christians. And those who are Christians don’t have any access to God’s Word in the language that speaks directly to their heart. Without Scripture in Thai Sign Language, they’re unable to have a full understanding of who God is and the gift of salvation he offers them through Jesus Christ. As Bible stories are translated into sign language, the Deaf community will be able to better engage with God’s Word and know him in a personal way.

You can make a difference in countries around the world by joining our prayer team. Sign up at wycliffe.org/prayer to receive bi-monthly prayer emails and helpful resources to pray for what God is doing around the world through Bible translation.

Ways to Pray for the World

» In a region where Christianity has little presence, pray that people all across Southeast Asia would learn of God’s love for them in their own language.

» Pray that the Deaf would desire a translation into Thai Sign Language and partner with the team in their work.

» Pray for God to draw people to himself, finding spiritual freedom by accepting Jesus Christ’s gift of salvation and redemption.