Pastor Peter Marokiki has been working on a Bible translation in his own Arop language for more than 25 years. In that time he’s encountered difficulties, including a devastating natural disaster that took the lives of many friends and family.

Some people would have given up by now, but not Pastor Peter. He did just the opposite — offering to take on more work by expanding the translation project to include neighboring languages.

Pastor Peter first learned about the work of Bible translation in 1985 when he met Wycliffe missionary Steve Whitacre who had come to Arop village to help start a translation project. Four years later, John Nystrom replaced Steve, and that’s when Pastor Peter and three other Arop men began working on the translation together.

They worked tirelessly for the next 10 years, making progress toward a translation of the New Testament in Arop.

On the evening of July 17, 1998, a large offshore earthquake triggered a massive tsunami with waves over 30 feet tall. The waves smothered Pastor Peter’s coastal neighborhood, which sat on a narrow spit of land between the ocean and a large lagoon. More than 840 people from his village were killed, and a total of more than 2,000 casualties were reported along the entire coastline, including people from nearby villages.

During the tsunami, one translation team member drowned. With so many casualties in the community, the future of the translation seemed uncertain. After the tsunami, Pastor Peter visited the medical care center where crowds of people were being treated for all sorts of wounds.

While he was there, Pastor Peter compared experiences with people from the other villages along the coast. Since they came from different language communities, they spoke in Tok Pisin — the trade language of Papua New Guinea — and this got Pastor Peter thinking.

Everyone there had the Bible in Tok Pisin, but few people understood it as well as their own language, especially if they hadn’t been able to go to school. Pastor Peter knew how much Arop needed its own Bible, but what about these other languages? Was there a way to somehow expand the project to include them too?

The people moved inland, and they slowly began to rebuild their lives and homes. As things settled down, Pastor Peter and the other remaining translation team members examined the situation and considered the question: Would it be possible to share their resources with other communities around them so that all of them could have a Bible translation in their own language? Tackling several languages at once would slow down their progress on the Arop translation. Were they willing to make that sacrifice?
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The translators decided that delaying their own translation was worth it if it meant they could help their neighbors get the Bible years — maybe even generations — sooner than if they had to wait on additional help from outside the country.

As a result, a total of 11 language communities are part of the Aitape West Translation Project, each benefitting from the experience of translators like Pastor Peter. Together they look forward to the day when people from each of their communities will be able to understand all of God’s Word in their languages.

Read more powerful stories like Pastor Peter’s at wycliffe.org/table.

"JUNGLE GEMS"

The transformational power of the gospel shines through the lives of the Palikur of Brazil. Sparkling in the light of Christ, they have become diamonds in God’s hands — they are his “jungle gems.”


A GLIMPSE INTO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea’s landscape is diverse, with mountainous terrain as well as coral reefs and numerous beaches. This island nation is home to more than 800 languages! That means that Papua New Guinea has an immense need for Bible translation work.

Though Papua New Guinea is considered Christian, syncretism has seeped into religious practices. Many people still fear spirits. But translation work is allowing people in Papua New Guinea to know and worship the one true God. Praise God that communities like Pastor Peter’s are finding hope and freedom in Scripture!

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

WAYS TO PRAY FOR THE WORLD

» Praise God for the work that’s already been done in Papua New Guinea and the impact it’s made on communities.

» Pray that God would use local translators and organizations to further the work of Bible translation in their country and around the world.

» Ask God to bring his freedom and hope to people in Papua New Guinea through his Word.