Hearing is Believing

For forty-five years, Linda Weisenberger worked in the Maia language group of Papua New Guinea, investing her time, heart, and soul into the work of Bible translation.

During those years, Linda and her team experienced times of discouragement and trial, as well as joy and triumph. But working with the Maia people was drawing to a close as Linda prepared for retirement.

Before she left, the translation team arranged a Bible dedication to celebrate all the translated materials completed so far. Linda asked the team—to by that time consisting of two men—to spread the word and stir up excitement in the eighteen villages that were to be included in the ceremony.

But just one month before the scheduled ceremony, the two translators reported that they had received little feedback from any of the villages—only three were involved in the dedication planning so far.

Discouraged, Linda wondered if the dedication would actually happen. She felt defeated by the lack of excitement among the villagers.

Around this time Linda’s co-worker, Mavis Price, produced a Maia audio Bible. She gave her a few samples to spread among the villages, hoping that they would help encourage people to participate.

Interest in the dedication spread throughout the people and Linda’s team was overjoyed by the responses! Now all eighteen villages were onboard, excitedly preparing their gardens and building places to sleep for every one of the people to share in the Maia dedication.

The night following the dedication, Linda and her team heard the audio Bibles playing all around the villages, drifting through the air as the Maia people walked or sat in groups to listen. It was encouraging to see the people gather together and hear God's Word.

They were also using the audio Scripture to learn how to read and encourage other villagers to do the same. Suddenly people who thought they couldn't learn to read because they were too old found hope. Maybe they could learn to read by listening to the audio Bible while following along in the printed Scripture.

By the time Linda packed up her belongings to leave the Maia village, she was able to see the beginnings of the harvest that she had helped sow over the last forty-five years.

Even though the process of Bible translation was a difficult journey, Linda was faithful to God. Galatians 6:9 says, “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up” (NLT).

Linda noted that the turning point came with the introduction of the audio Bibles, when the Maia people were finally able to hear the Word in their own language. As they heard and understood God's Word clearly for the first time, they suddenly understood what they had been missing all along! For the Maia people, hearing is believing, and they are continuing to be changed by the power of the Gospel.
Dear Friends,

I’m reminded over and over again of how great an impact God’s Word has on people when they hear it in their heart language for the very first time. And very often that means literally hearing it, rather than reading it. The reaction of the Maia people in Papua New Guinea is a perfect example.

It was when they heard the Word of God on an audio recording that they truly understood what the Bible was saying for the first time. The results were life-changing.

In Revelation 3:20 Jesus says: “Look I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in and we will share a meal together as friends.” It’s that moment of realization—when someone finally understands that Jesus is seeking a relationship with them—that can change the direction of their life forever.

Linda worked with the Maia people for forty-five years before truly seeing the beginnings of the harvest for her faithful service. But those years were well spent, because now the Maia have God’s Word in the language and form they understand best, and they are beginning to engage with it.

Thank you for partnering with us in this work of bringing God’s Word to people in the language and form that impacts their hearts most deeply. Your investment with Wycliffe Bible Translators is making an eternal difference.

Warmly in Christ,

Bob Creson
President/CEO
Wycliffe Bible Translators USA

SIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATION—COLOMBIA

Wycliffe recently celebrated fifty years of Bible translation progress in Colombia, but one of the greatest remaining needs is for Deaf communities to receive the Bible in a language they can understand. Translators are now working on parts of the Bible in Colombian Sign Language and are in the process of checking the book of Acts. Many of the Deaf in Colombia cannot comprehend aspects of the spoken language, so translators create signed videos—a platform that works much better for them.

ENSURING QUALITY TRANSLATIONS—ETHIOPIA

SIL* recently held Bible translation workshops in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to help new and experienced teams of mother tongue translators produce quality Bibles. These teams will work to produce clear and accurate translations for as many as twenty language groups using translation software like Paratext. As more languages begin translation, the need for consultants to check the Bible translations and other materials—like audio stories, visuals, and Bible study books—continues to grow.

*SIL is one of Wycliffe’s primary strategic partners