



# INfocus

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## THE WORD UNDERSTOOD

By Melissa Paredes

Not one Deaf community in the world today has a full Bible in their own language. Some languages have small portions and some have books, but most have nothing.

In Japan, a team of translators is seeking to change that for the over 300,000 speakers of Japanese Sign Language. Although there are multiple translations of the Bible in Japanese, many Deaf only learn written Japanese as a school subject. And because they never hear it spoken, it remains foreign.

So far, the “JESUS” film is already available in Japanese Sign Language, but the Deaf community still needs more — they need access to the Scriptures in their own language, one that speaks directly to their hearts.

That’s why they’ve been working on a Japanese Sign Language Bible. Deaf signers are bringing the Scriptures to life on a video screen. They aren’t just translating the words from the Japanese Bible; they are creating an entirely new translation, and every draft is done through recorded video. The team then goes back — often multiple times — to ensure that the signed footage is presenting the Bible passage clearly, accurately and authentically.

Roughly 20 percent has already been completed, and while work on the JSL Bible is still ongoing, the team is beginning to see the results of their labor.

Mr. Ogata does IT work for the video Bible (ViBi) team. He’s a hard worker, putting in long hours to make all the equipment work, but he’s not easily excitable. On one particular day, though, he was elated.

“Last week I was alone at the office and we got a Skype call,” Mr. Ogata shared. “ViBi had had a visitor from another part of Japan who was so excited about the Japanese Sign Language Bible. He took three full DVD sets with him, and one went to a gentleman on the coast (where the tsunami and nuclear meltdown wreaked havoc).

“Well, it was that gentleman who called. He’s from (a church that doesn’t allow the ViBi translation), and he was so excited. ‘I’ve been a Christian more than forty years, and could never understand the Bible. I just had to try and do what the pastor said. I knew I should read the Bible, but I never ‘got it.’ This is totally different. It’s so clear! Now I can really know what the Bible is saying.”

That’s why Mr. Ogata and others on the ViBi team do what they do — for that moment of clarity when suddenly everything clicks into place and the truth of the Scriptures is finally made clear. And what a beautiful thing it is when God’s Word speaks directly to hearts in the way they understand best. It’s definitely something worth feeling ecstatic about!



## DEAR FRIENDS,

The Borana people say that long ago, they had a Book of God called the Boogi Waqa. When a cow ate the last copy, it broke their hearts. That night a Borana man had a vision that foreigners would come and bring them back their Boogi Waqa.

Many years later, Jim and Dorothea Lander sat talking with a group of Borana men. One of the men, who'd learned English in the Kenyan Air Force, picked up the Landers' picture Bible and began reading.

He turned to Jim and asked, "Is this ... could it be the Boogi Waqa?"

"Yes," said Jim. "This is the Boogi Waqa."

The men stared at Jim and Dorothea. Then they explored the book long into the night. Eventually they came to a picture of the Israelites sacrificing a lamb.

The men told Jim, "Our fathers taught us that the Boogi Waqa told how to sacrifice a lamb so that God would forgive our sins. We still sacrifice animals, but some of the missionaries say we should stop. Why is that?"

Jim read from Hebrews that Jesus died as the perfect sacrifice for all men. They no longer needed to sacrifice lambs for forgiveness, but simply needed to trust in Jesus, God's Son.

By preserving the Boogi Waqa story in the Borana oral history, God had prepared their hearts for the arrival of the Good News about Jesus in their heart language.

Warmly in Christ,

Bob Creson  
President, CEO  
Wycliffe Bible Translators USA

# WORLD *focus*

## A CHANGE OF HEART — EUROPE

Maral was working with someone who was not a member of the translation team, asking questions about the new translation of Romans to make sure it said what the team intended it to say. After reading the text out loud and answering questions on it, the person asked, "How can I become a follower of Isa [Jesus]?" Maral was happy to explain and the person became a follower of Jesus right then and there. Praise God for the life-changing power of hearing God's Word in the language of your heart!

## COVENANT — PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Earlier this year, mission organizations, churches and community leaders in Papua New Guinea (PNG) met and drafted The Bilum Covenant, a commitment to work together in language development and Bible translation. Their ultimate goal is to see a Bible in every bilum — a woven string bag. A bilum is a fitting symbol, because nearly everyone in PNG uses them to carry food, firewood, valuables and even babies. And in order to get a Bible translation program started in the remaining three hundred PNG languages, this partnership is key.

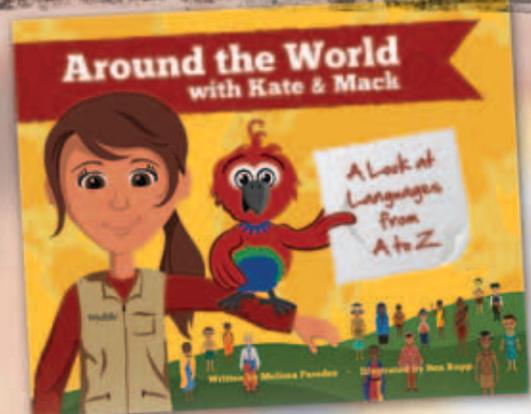


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