

# INfocus

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## HOPE THROUGH WRITTEN WORDS

By Melissa Paredes

Many of us in the Western world forget that literacy is a privilege — one that many people across the world don't experience. Learning to read and write is a skill that opens doors to countless education and career opportunities, as well as direct access to the Word of God. Yet many have never even had the opportunity to learn how to write their own name.

That's why literacy classes are so crucial, and are one way that Wycliffe desires to bring hope to communities. Without this foundation, written Scriptures won't be able to touch the hearts and lives of those receiving God's Word in their language for the first time.

In a community in Bangladesh, an adult literacy class is opening new opportunities as students learn to read and write in Bangla, the national language of the country.

Prior to attending the literacy course, many of the adults had never had the opportunity to hold a pencil or a book. Now they are not only holding pencils, but also learning to write! And they are learning how to read books so that they can continue to expand their knowledge.

Many had also never learned to write their name, so they had to use their fingerprint as their signature on legal documents. Now, they're able to sign documents with confidence.

Around 25 people, from the ages of 20 to 50, are participating in the literacy program, which lasts for eight months.

Everyone has a different reason for joining the group. For some it's the chance to finish their childhood education; for others it's the first classroom opportunity they've had in their life. One woman shared, "Now I can count out the amount, pay bills and take change from the shopkeeper."

Whatever their past educational background, this is a great opportunity for them to sit in a class and learn these valuable new skills.

As the adults learn how to read better, they're able to delve into deeper topics relevant to their community. The books they read also help them learn interesting stories to tell their children, and now parents are growing more confident in helping their children with reading and writing assignments from school.

As these adults learn valuable literacy skills, attitudes are changing. More and more people are seizing the opportunity to take literacy classes, and access to these classes is helping these adults take further steps in developing their communities, and even their country.

Literacy offers a chance to change a life, bring hope and open the door to a new world of opportunities. But most importantly, it gives people the opportunity to learn how to read the Scriptures — the greatest gift that anyone could ever receive. There is hope found through written words, and this community is experiencing that firsthand.



## DEAR FRIENDS,

Emmanuel, a taxi driver in Oklahoma City, is from Cameroon, West Africa. His first language is one of Cameroon's more than 280 minority languages. When he drove Lois Gourley, Wycliffe's curator for the Digital Bible Library (DBL), to her hotel, Lois told him about her work adding translated Scriptures to the DBL.

She also told him about the YouVersion mobile app that allows people to read Scripture on their smartphones. Emmanuel took a deep breath and said, "My heart's desire is to someday read God's Word in my language." Sadly, he didn't know that he could already listen to an audio recording of Scripture in his language — and watch the story of Jesus — all on his cell phone! Faith Comes By Hearing's mobile app, Bible.is, has the text and audio, and he can watch the "JESUS" film on YouTube. Someday he'll be able to order a hard copy from a print-on-demand ministry like Virtual Storehouse.

Emmanuel is not the only one unaware of the Bible's availability in his mother tongue — the stories are numerous. As we continue to focus on translating the Bible for every language needing it, let's pray that people for whom Scriptures have been translated will learn that they can already access these life-giving Words of Christ. Then pray they'll make the choice to engage with them!

Warmly in Christ,

*Bob Creson*

Bob Creson  
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# WORLD *focus*

## THE LANGUAGE BARRIER, SOLVED — AFRICA

A translator from an African country gave copies of the Bible to a number of his friends who were village leaders. The men were not Christians, so he was surprised that all of the men read portions of the Bible and a couple read it cover to cover, Genesis to Revelation. When he asked their thoughts, they highlighted two difficult areas: one had to do with the notable differences in religion, the other was how hard it was to understand the book since it wasn't in their mother tongue language.

He then gave each of them two copies of the trial edition in their own languages. Three days later, he visited them again and asked what they thought.

The first man asked why the book hadn't been available sooner. Another man said, "I do not need further translation. I have read it and the language is clear." Still another remarked, "You have made it easier for us; there is no longer a language problem. What remain are only the theological and ideological problems, such as the issue of the cross, forgiveness, the divinity of Christ and the Trinity. The language barrier is solved."

Pray for this people group as they receive the Bible in their language and wrestle with their beliefs.

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