



Media release from Wycliffe Bible Translators

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Three New Testament translations completed, despite local conflict

Within one month, three New Testaments were dedicated in Papua New Guinea (PNG). However in the same period, tribal conflict broke out in the valley, where the main centre for Bible translation work in PNG, home to many Wycliffe members, is situated.

“It’s very sad to hear of the violence,” said Heather Patrick, who has spent almost 30 years living and working in PNG and is currently based in the UK, “sad, but not a surprise. With three New Testament dedications in the past month and progress in many other translation projects, we shouldn’t be surprised that the devil wants to make things difficult.”

The land surrounding the Bible translation centre of Ukarumpa, has been the scene of some fierce tribal disturbances in the past few weeks. A long lasting dispute over water access rights suddenly escalated, renewing ancient tribal conflicts and bringing violence, both inside and outside of the centre.

In one attack, over 70 homes in the neighbouring village were burned to the ground and 4 villagers killed at the hands of hired criminals.

The Provincial Police Commander’s Task Force, PNG’s equivalent of the riot police, soon arrived in the area and the fighting subsided. Whilst all is calm now with the presence of the task force, the underlying clan conflicts show no sign of abating, and the threat of more violence is still there.

The Ukarumpa Bible translation centre, home to an international family of linguists and support workers dedicated to Bible translation projects in PNG, was wonderfully protected during this time. The criminal gang broke into an employee’s home and also hijacked a vehicle, but nobody on the centre was injured.

Despite these conflicts, it is wonderful to know that, in the space of four weeks, elsewhere in PNG three New Testaments were dedicated for the Iyo, the Gapapaiwa and the Minaveha language groups. The work of Bible translation continues to move ahead, with another eleven dedications scheduled for next year - and God’s word continues to get into the hands of the people of PNG in their mother tongue, the language of their hearts.

Despite its relatively small size and sparse population, PNG has an incredibly large number of living languages, around 830. An island nation, to the north of Australia, PNG has an amazing landscape of rugged mountains and valleys, which has contributed to the separation of tribes and the multiplication of languages spoken. Currently, Wycliffe staff are working in 185 languages with 250-300 more languages still needing translation work to begin.

(End)

Photos can be downloaded from: www.wycliffe.org.uk/pressreleases

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