

4 CORNERS

It's Done!

As a Hupla would say, 'We never dreamed that the complete Word of God could ever be translated into the Hupla language.' But God's ways are not our ways and to him be the glory.

There are many language families and dialects among the 270 languages reportedly spoken by the peoples in West Papua. Pioneering and

church-planting work in Papua have always included encountering languages that have never been analysed or written down, or languages related to another which has recently been written or is in the process of being learned. The Hupla people live on the edge of the Lower Grand Valley language family, bordering with the Yali people.



Following on from the gospel ministry of Petrus, a local missionary from Tangma, and the faithful labours of Stan Dale and Bruno De Leeuw, Graham and Elizabeth Cousens were sent to live and work in the Soba area in 1972. Their first task was to learn the language. They were helped by linguist Dr Myron Bromley who lived in Tangma and was working on the large Lower Grand Valley family of languages and its dialects. But the language material from Tangma ►

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► had limitations, with many differences in words and grammar. A leading young Christian at that time, Yan Kabak, attended the Bible school near to Tangma run by the Christian and Missionary Alliance, with whom the Cousens were working closely. It was clear that the locals could speak and communicate well with each other orally; the difficulty occurred when the language was written down.

Graham and Elizabeth initiated an analysis of the Hupla language which helped a lot. In 1980, Mike and Vi Webb came to Soba and got stuck into learning the Hupla language, Vi making literacy materials. This was a major step forward as now the Hupla language was in writing representing the Hupla sounds correctly. People learning to read were now able to read more fluently and immediately understand what they were reading.

In consultation with Dr Bromley it was agreed to translate Mark's Gospel from Tangma into Hupla. The Huplas, especially Yan Kabak, were so excited about this – people were now beginning to understand the Scriptures. So not only was Mark translated but all the NT books. Using computers, the translation was

done, the text printed onto stencils and whole books duplicated right there in Soba. Church leaders were soon seen heading off to church with a pile of books under their arms! Little by little the whole New Testament was approved, printed and dedicated for use in 1994. With the back-up of the literacy programme and the teaching of the Church leaders by Mike Webb, 1980-88 was an important time of Church growth and grounding in the Word of God among the Hupla people.

The Hupla New Testament was dedicated and made available to the Hupla people in 1994. It was received well, used widely and became part of Church life and worship, being read in services, memorised and used for study in the Bible School.

In 1995 work started on the OT again, using as a basis the Shorter Old Testament (selections of one third of OT used by The Bible Society). Matthias Sobolim and myself were now appointed along with Esan Sobolim and Pilipit Itlai by the Church as the translation team. The Church leadership asked us to translate the complete Old Testament. Matthias with his family and myself moved to Wamena on request of the Church in 1997 for various ministries, the ongoing translation being uppermost. Matthias was developing

skills in translation and we were having to lean less on the Tangma translation as a base as a large part (two thirds) had not yet been translated into Tangma. The completed Yali Bible became a great help for the initial drafts of each book (some Huplas also speak or understand Yali) and, with 2 Indonesian translations on hand too, Matthias, Esan and Pilimpit were able to make good progress. From 1997, the Indonesian Bible Society sent a consultant out twice a year to check the work. Each book went through a rough draft, a re-work with the Hupla team and was then checked by the consultant.

We experienced a number of setbacks, disappointments, computer problems and, not least, the death of one of Matthias' children over the years of working on this project in Wamena. But it has been an amazing growing experience for all of us and we could not have persevered to this stage without the prayer and financial support of many people. We're glad to report now that the last group of books, the Minor Prophets, are ready for checking and then for printing by the Indonesian Bible Society. How much there is to thank God for! ■

Sue Trenier



Church leaders with surrendered fetishes to be destroyed



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