

“In his teaching the islands will put their hope”

Bloom in the Aitape West Translation Project – Spring of 2016

Isaiah 42:4b came to our minds when we read the following report. Eberhard has been working as software developer with SIL, a Wycliffe partner organization, on the Bloom computer programme among other projects. The Bloom software is a tool for literacy work all over the planet. With Bloom, one can make books or entire libraries in any language (bloomlibrary.org).

In 1998, a tsunami killed nearly 3,000 people along the coast of Papua New Guinea, west of Aitape. In the aftermath, the team of Arop men who had been translating Scripture into their own language felt a sense of urgency to help other language groups in this area have access to God's word sooner rather than later. Not much later the *Aitape West Translation Project* was born. It is a cluster (multi-language) project working with currently 10 language groups. This spring (March/April 2016) the Aitape West Translation Project undertook a two week Bloom workshop.

Missy Smith, working in the Aitape West Translation Project, writes:

“Since we don't have any assigned literacy staff at the moment in our project we continue to look for ways to keep literacy activities going. We have approximately 24 local literacy workers which is roughly two per language group and a couple of extras in the Arop language group. We try to hold workshops 1-2 times each year for them to work on dictionary development (using WeSay) and language documentation (using SayMore). Literacy workers also help out with rea-

ding fluency with local church leaders who attend training as part of our Scripture Use/Engagement activities.

When Ben Pehrson (team leader) approached me about the idea of using Bloom and teaching our literacy workers I was at first a little hesitant, but after watching the Bloom training videos and seeing how much thought had gone into making the software program simple and easy to use I got really excited. So in February I spent some time with one of the Arop literacy workers who is also a local elementary teacher. We watched the videos together in the evenings and in just two evenings she had completed a shell book in her own language.

So we made a plan that she would help me as a trainer. We set a time to run a workshop and sent out letters to the other literacy workers from the other language groups. Representatives from all 10 languages groups participated in the Bloom workshop. We broke up into groups and watched the training videos and then would go back to our desks and work on a book. We started with Shell books and then moved into producing original stories.

Since this workshop was held concurrently with a translation workshop the translators were readily available to act as mother tongue consultants and checked the





books for accuracy and fluency in their individual languages. I created a check list to guide the literacy workers so they would know that if they followed the steps their book would be complete and ready for

print.

It was a very exciting workshop: I was encouraged at how quickly the literacy workers picked up on how to use the program and grew in confidence. As someone learnt a new feature they would lean over and teach it to their fellow workers. We produced a total of 91 books in two weeks which is approximately 8 per language group (4 shell books and 4 original basic books) with a few doing some extra.

I'm so grateful for the software development team that created the Bloom program. It is truly simple to use yet flexible enough to create original work. One hurdle we faced is that we were using old computers which could only support/run an old version of the software that occasionally produced errors/bugs. As we move forward I'm excited that we have been able to purchase some new computers so we will be able to run the latest version of the software at the next workshop.

So I'm looking forward to the next workshop in August. The literacy workers will return with feedback from their respective communities on the books they took home to test. We expect there to be some corrections required and hope that once books are finalized we can upload the



books to bloomlibrary.org. There is already the anticipation that some of the books from one language can become Shell books for others to use in our project. As more literature is produced in the local language (even these small booklets) we hope that it will spark a real desire for reading and help with reading fluency. As the people's ability to read improves this will directly impact their ability to read and engage with new Scripture portions as they are translated.

We give glory to God and ask His blessing on all those who have worked to develop the Bloom software and those who continue work to provide maintenance and development of the software.

Bloom has certainly given our literacy work a boost and yet I feel we have only just begun, there is still so much potential to use this program in our project, there are still many tools in Bloom that we haven't even begun to explore."

We express our gratitude to everyone supporting our ministry with Wycliffe/SIL, who thereby have been enabling and will enable the further development of the Bloom software and other computer programs/tools for Bible translation, linguistics and literacy for minority languages.



Photos: Melissa Smith

Cornelia & Eberhard Beilharz
Finkenweg 1 – 57299 Burbach
GERMANY
+49 2736 417 90 92
c.e.beilharz@wbt.org
www.beilharz-family.de



Wycliff e.V.
Siegenweg 32 – 57299 Burbach
GERMANY
+49 2736 297-0
info@wycliff.de
www.wycliff.de

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