



Remote and Indigenous Ministry Support
Project Fact Sheet 2022

RIMS: Indigenous Bible Publication

Overview

Bible Society Australia (BSA) remains the key publisher of Indigenous Bibles in Australia. Working with churches, parachurch organisations as well as Indigenous leaders and translators, Bible Society coordinates the publication, design and typesetting of the Bibles.

Once published, BSA coordinates the distribution of the Bibles to individuals and communities (some of which are very remote), at whatever price they can afford.

The Need

Bible translations can take decades of work, as translators wrestle to convey biblical concepts and meaning using traditional language. They also need to ensure that the key terms they choose are natural and easily understood by the language community. As each translation project reaches its conclusion, the need for publication is evident. Bible Society Australia ensures these long-awaited Scriptures are published.

BSA also involves Indigenous translators, key community and church leaders in the design, typesetting and publication process, so that the resulting Bible belongs to the whole community.

Project Goals

In 1864, Bible Society published the Ngarrindjeri Scriptures. Since then, Bible Society's goal has been to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in translating - and publishing - the Scriptures into their heart languages. BSA ensures these translations are published and distributed in a culturally sensitive and respectful way.

In 2022 Bible Society will support the publication of several translation projects. A revised translation of portions of Mark's Gospel in Western

Arrarnta will be made available in printed form; this will be the first revised Scriptures in Western Arrarnta since the New Testament was completed in 1997.

There are also plans to publish the first Garrwa New Testament for the speakers living in the Robinson River region of the Northern Territory. This translation is based on audio recordings by Wycliffe Bible Translators from 1983 which have never been published in written form.

Impact

In 2021 Bible Society supported several translation projects: the Anmatyerr Mini Bible, the Gumati 'revised' New Testament, and the Murrinhpatha Mini Bible [i]. The Anmatyerr Mini Bible will reach approximately 1,000 speakers, with possibly a further 2,000 speakers using it as a second language. This will be the first Scripture published in this language. Having Scripture in their heart language helps Anmatyerr speakers engage with the story of Jesus in a way that connects it with their everyday lives.

[i] A Mini Bible is a Bible that contains portions of both the Old and New Testament but is not a complete Bible.

The Gumatj 'revised' New Testament will reach 500 speakers, who live in and around Yirrkala in north-east Arnhem Land, known collectively as Yolŋu. It will revise a 1985 translation of the New Testament, of which there are no longer any copies available. The Gumatj translators have been spurred on over many years by the continued demand from the church community for published Scripture in their language.

The Murrinhpatha Mini Bible will reach over 2,500 people, in the region of Wadeye (formerly Port Keats) in the Northern Territory. It will be the first Mini Bible published in the Murrinhpatha language. Murrinhpatha is one of Australia's fastest growing Aboriginal languages spoken by several other people groups whose languages are waning or considered extinct in the area.

Testimonies

"For Anmatyerr people, their language is more than a means of communication; it links them with their family, their country and their ancestral stories."
- Jenny Green, author of Anmatyerr to English Dictionary

Prayer Needs

- Pray for God's healing and restoration for Australia's first nations people, that as communities Open The Bible in their heart language they will be transformed and will know God's love for them.
- Pray that communities will have the strength and conviction to share God's love with others.