

VISION 2025 - BIBLE TRANSLATION NEEDS IN INDONESIA AND WORLD-WIDE

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Vision 2025 – Why is Bible translation important and needed?

Vision 2025 is the goal to have Bible translation started in EVERY language in the world that needs it, by the year 2025. In this article, the first of four articles on Vision 2025, some of the reasons Bible translation is needed in the many different languages that people speak will be examined.

1) God wants to communicate to man

God has given people on this earth His Word, because He wants to communicate with them! He wants them to know who He is, what He has done, how much He loves them, and how they can have a personal relationship with Him. In John 17:3, the Scriptures say: “This is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.” God sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to reveal to people what He is like, and to die for their sins. But He has also provided His Word, so everyone can learn about why Christ came, why He died, how they can become God’s children, and how they can live to please God and have a happy and fulfilling life.

2) Spiritual concepts need to be in the language people understand best – their mother tongue!

Originally, everyone in the world spoke the same language. But at the tower of Babel, God sent judgment and caused the people to not understand each other, producing new languages. As people scattered, the number of languages multiplied, and there are now about 7,000 languages in the world, languages that are different enough that they need separate translations for the normal person to be able to read and write the language.

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Although some people learn other languages, they normally understand things best in their mother tongue, the language they grew up with.

Spiritual concepts are the most important concepts in life. People need to be able to understand them as well as possible. Knowing how to have a personal relationship with God, understanding principles of relationships with others, being aware of the way God wants people to live in every aspect of their lives – these things need to be understood properly, and most people will understand them best in their mother tongue. Having these only in the national language is NOT enough!

- 3) Their mother tongue is the ONLY language which many people understand well.

Although, as mentioned above, many people learn more than one language, often including a trade language in which they converse with others on more superficial matters, there are many, many people in the world that only understand important ideas and concepts in their own mother tongue!

In tribal areas, where people have no background of civilization as we know it in the world today, it is very difficult to teach them to read and write in a second language, which they have known nothing about. They need to have literacy in their mother tongue first, to learn how to express the individual sounds, and write the sounds, that they make as they use their language orally. Once they have learned to read and write in their mother tongue, they can much more effectively go on to learn to read and write the national language, or some other second language.

People in “primitive” language groups are not stupid. There are very intelligent people in these groups, just as there are in every people group in the world. Many of these intelligent people will go on to learn their national language, and many will even go on to learn other international languages such as English.

It is well documented that people have great appreciation for having their languages put into writing. Learning to read and write, and being able to have God’s Word in their own language to read and study brought GREAT joy to the Kimyal language group in Papua, as seen in this video on YouTube:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w9dpmp_-TY0

Article 2: Vision 2025 – The need in Indonesia

Vision 2025 - the goal to have Bible translation started in EVERY language in the world that needs it, by the year 2025. In the first of this series of four articles on Vision 2025, some of the reasons why Bible translation is needed in the many different languages that people speak were examined: 1) God wants to communicate to man; 2) spiritual concepts need to be available in the language people understand best; and 3) their mother tongue language is the ONLY language many people understand well. In this second article, the need for Bible translation in Indonesia is discussed.

1) The great number of languages in Indonesia.

There are nearly 7,000 different languages in the whole world! One-tenth of those, about 700 languages, are in one country – INDONESIA! For the purposes here, a different language is a language that is distinct enough from any other language that it needs a separate translation for a normal person in that language group to be able to use the translation. In many countries, including Indonesia, there are language families, where a number of languages are similar in grammar, and have a lot of common root words, but still different enough in pronunciation, idioms, etc., that separate translations are needed.

Of the 700 languages in Indonesia, 400 (!) are considered to have enough people who still use their mother tongue as their primary language, and that do not understand the national language well. These 400 languages all need to have at least part of the Bible translated into their languages.

2) The infrastructure is still lacking to take full advantage of educational opportunities in some areas.

In some parts of the country (for example: parts of Papua, Kalimantan, islands south of Singapore), there are areas that are difficult to access, where travel is very limited, and where government workers often do not stay and serve the people faithfully, even when the government has built schools and assigned teachers. In such areas, only some of the young people who leave their home areas and move to the cities obtain education in the national language.

In many cases, the greatest need for Bible translation in the mother tongue, is for the older people. Most of them will not travel to the cities to learn the national language, and many will not even take advantage of schooling available in their own areas.

3) Many people recognize their mother tongue as part of their culture, and want to preserve it.

In some cases, there are people who want to progress, who want to emphasize the national language as a means of doing so. They are not as concerned about retaining their mother tongue. But many more people now realize that language is part of their culture, and they want to retain their mother tongue, even if they do desire to learn the national language as well. This is particularly true of the older people in many language groups.

- 4) Spiritual concepts need to be in the language people understand best.

As was mentioned in Article 1, spiritual concepts are the most important concepts in life. People need to be able to understand them well. They need to know how to have a personal relationship with God, to understand principles of relationships with others, and be aware of the way God wants mankind to live in every aspect of their lives. They will understand these concepts best in their mother tongue.

- 5) The need in Indonesia is great, but the potential for meeting that need is greater still!

As mentioned above, 20% of the languages of the Vision 2025 goal world-wide are in Indonesia, about 400 languages! But it is also a fact that resources are available to meet the translation need. There are now 36 million Christians in Indonesia. There are thousands of churches, thousands of young people studying in Bible schools and seminaries. There are sufficient finances available to churches and individual Christians to fund this task.

Missionaries, primarily from the West, have done the bulk of translation to this point. It is time for the Church in Indonesia - all the denominations, and all the believers - to realize their responsibility to get the Gospel, through Scripture translation, to the most needy and most difficult people to access throughout Indonesia. After realizing their responsibility, they then need to become involved! They CAN do it!

(For a demonstration of the needs of Bible translation world-wide, see this Skittles video in English on YouTube:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-rbLIUNdf-E>)

Article 3: Vision 2025 – The strategy of using national translators (MTT's – Mother Tongue Translators)

Vision 2025 - the goal to have Bible translation started in EVERY language in the world that needs it, by the year 2025.

In the first of this series of four articles on Vision 2025, some of the reasons why Bible translation is needed in the many different languages

that people speak were examined: 1) God wants to communicate to man; 2) spiritual concepts need to be available in the language people understand best; and 3) their mother tongue language is the ONLY language many people understand well.

In the second article, the Bible translation needs in Indonesia was discussed. Of the 2,000 languages that are priority for having Bible translation started world-wide (the Vision 2025 goal), 400 of them are in Indonesia! (Out of the 700 languages total in Indonesia.) Indonesia has many language groups in places difficult to access, and there are many language groups where many people still do not understand the national language.

Now, in this article, the strategy of using national translators will be discussed:

1) The traditional model for Bible translation

When the author of this article went to the Nalja (Nalca in Indonesian) tribal area in 1975, there were NO Nalja people who understood Indonesian. Therefore, to begin to translate the Bible into the Nalja language, the Dorlots had to learn the Nalja language themselves. After a year or so of studying the language, Bible translation was begun. Roger would obtain two or three Nalja nationals to assist him. Roger would do the first draft, then read it to his helpers, and ask for their input - whether it was understandable, and made sense. If they had questions, he would explain what he was trying to say, and then ask them, when they seemed to understand, and what the best way to say that would be.

Overall, Roger was the translator, and the nationals were helpers. This is the traditional model, the way much translation has been done by MANY missionaries all around the world.

2) The MTT model, using national translators as the primary translators

However, as education increased, there began to be Nalja young people who learned Indonesian, and they began to be able to understand the Indonesian Bible. When Roger found a few who could adequately understand Indonesian, he asked them to do the first draft into the Nalja language from the Indonesian Bible. Then he and several helpers would discuss that first draft. Often there would be words that Roger didn't know yet. (Since it was their mother tongue, when they understood concepts, they could use the "right" words, because they understood their own language well.) Again, Roger would explain what the original text said, and then the team would discuss whether what was said in the first draft was accurate, complete, and natural-sounding. Often they would come

up with an improvement in the translation, which would become the second draft.

Several additional steps were involved, including having other nationals from that language group listen to the translation, and answer questions, to see if the translation was understandable. There would also be the consultant check, when a consultant trained in linguistics, and in the original languages of the Bible, Hebrew and Greek, would discuss the translation with the national translators and Roger, and assure that key points were translated correctly, and that there were no words or concepts left out (or added).

- 3) Most of the languages on the Vision 2025 goal list can be done by MTT's

The main point above is that with the traditional model for Bible translation, the missionary was the primary translator, and he had nationals help him. In the MTT model, the nationals are the primary translators, and the missionary and the consultant are the helpers.

Now, as education increases all over the world, the MTT strategy will be used more and more, and most likely, the great majority of the languages of the Vision 2025 goal will have the translation done by national translators, Mother Tongue Translators.

- 4) Consultants are key – and national consultants are a major need

When Mother Tongue Translators do the translation, they usually do not have the educational and Biblical background that missionaries have. Because of that fact, their translation work needs to be checked even more closely. MTT's need to have initial checking done at early stages of the translation. When this is done, errors in understanding or applying basic translation principles that they studied can be noted and corrected at this early stage, before they have translated large amounts of material with the same errors recurring. As they progress, and translate more material, additional checks by consultants are conducted, until the project is completed.

As more and more translation projects are started, the demand for consultant checking will increase dramatically. The amount of consultants that exist at present will not be enough to meet the need. A major need is for more national consultants to be trained to assist in this work. Capable young people within the countries where Bible translation is being done need to be trained as consultants. Those with sufficient ability can study Greek and Hebrew, and linguistics in more depth. Then they can get some experience by becoming part of an existing translation project. Finally, they can be trained and mentored by existing consultants to become fully approved consultants themselves. There will need to

be many national consultants trained in Indonesia, so that translation in the 400 languages needing translation can be properly checked.

Article 4: Vision 2025 – The importance of Indonesia in world missions, particularly in Bible translation

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In the third article, the strategy of using national translators was discussed. The traditional model of Bible translation was mentioned, then the MTT (Mother Tongue Translator) model, which is using national translators as the primary translators. It was pointed out that most of the languages on the Vision 2025 goal list can be done by MTT's, but that having sufficient qualified consultants is key – with the need for national consultants being critical.

Now, in this fourth and last article of this series, the importance of Indonesia in world missions, particularly in Bible translation, will be discussed:

1) The Vision 2025 goal, combined with church planting/church development, is the greatest missions effort in history.

Properly reaching the 2,000 or so people groups with which the Vision 2025 goal is concerned, is a huge part of the Great Commission mandate (Matthew 28:18-20)!

This goal appeals to Christian young people in this generation, with its shorter term goal, with an observable end in sight. This is very important for recruiting and mobilization. It is also an opportunity for Christians, churches, denominations, and other Christian organizations to express the CHRISTIAN UNITY which

the Lord desires to see. Vision 2025 provides opportunity for long-established churches and Christian organizations to work strategically alongside first and second generation Christians and organizations, to carry out God's program for the end of this age. Most of those doing the actual Bible translation will be first and second generation Christians. But many of the facilitators, trainers, and consultants will be from long established churches and organizations.

- 2) Indonesia is vitally important in world missions, because of the great needs, both in Bible translation and in evangelism, in that country.

Indonesia has great needs in Bible translation, with around 400 languages that do not have Bible translation even started! In some of those languages, there may not be a need for translating the whole Bible, or even the whole New Testament, but some translation is needed. In addition to the translation needs, there are large people groups where evangelism is greatly needed, with few people in those groups understanding the Gospel.

- 3) The potential of Indonesian Christians to meet these needs in their own country is GREAT!

As mentioned in Article 2, the resources are available in Indonesia to meet these needs. According to Operation World, there are now 36 million Christians in Indonesia. There are thousands of churches, thousands of young people studying in Bible schools and seminaries. There are sufficient finances available to churches and individual Christians to fund this task.

Missionaries have done most of the Bible translation to this point. It is time for the Church in Indonesia - all the denominations, and all the believers - to realize their responsibility to get the Gospel, through Scripture translation where needed, to the most needy and most difficult people to access throughout Indonesia. And after realizing their responsibility, Indonesian Christians need to become more directly involved! Indonesian Christians CAN do it!

Ex-pat missionaries can still be of great value, primarily for teaching and training. But Indonesians can begin to do most of the work. Indonesian young people can learn linguistics, Greek, Hebrew - many are already doing it! They can be trained to be translators, to be literacy experts, to be facilitators of translation projects, to be translation consultants.

- 4) Indonesian Christians can be a great force in missions in other parts of the world as well

Interest in missions is growing in Indonesia! Mission organizations are being formed. Prayer chains, prayer networks,

praying for unreached people groups, and many other similar activities are expanding. Indonesians are becoming more of a force in prayer for world missions!

But also, Indonesians have the potential to reach into many other countries to share the Gospel and be involved in other ministries as missionaries. Particularly in Arab countries, they can often work more effectively, being less conspicuous than Western missionaries. Preparing to meet the great needs in Bible translation in Indonesia will prepare young people there for helping to reach the Vision 2025 goal in other parts of the world, as the Lord may call them. Their neighboring country on the east, Papua New Guinea, also has a great, great need for Bible translation, and does not have the resources that Indonesia has.

Indonesia can most definitely be a leading force for missions in the world, particularly in Bible translation!

This is the final article of these four articles on Vision 2025! May the Lord use this information to stimulate many to greater involvement in Bible translation – and other ministries. The needs are great; the opportunities are numerous; the workers are relatively few! Pray – and get involved!!! (John 4:35, 36; Matthew 9:37, 38)

So, please do pray regularly and fervently for the Vision 2025 goal, to have Scripture translation at least started, in EVERY language in the world that needs it, by the year 2025! ... Thank you!

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