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IN OTHER WORDS

INSIDE

Streams in the Desert

A Day in the Light | From Colleagues to Family | The Bible by Heart

God is at work everywhere, including in places marked by conflict and hardship. Many of the stories in this issue were gathered from these sensitive contexts. In these regions, Christians can face significant challenges, including persecution and violence. Yet even where hope seems impossible, God is bringing new life—making water gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert (Isaiah 35:6).

Journey alongside oral Bible storyteller Sarah as she shares the hope of the gospel in her Southwest Asian community. Hear from young women in the region who are discovering their true value in Christ for the first time. Visit Cameroon and meet faithful workers who share oral Bible stories amid ongoing regional conflict. Then travel to Southeast Asia, where Scripture-based workshops are helping internally displaced families grow together in faith.

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Front cover photo: Students at one of the Northern Warmi women's centres listen to an oral Bible story.

Design by Kari Miedema

A Day in the Light

JOIN AN ORAL BIBLE STORYTELLER AS SHE SHARES GOD'S WORD IN HER SOUTHWEST ASIAN COMMUNITY

All Southwest Asia stories and photos by Ruth Richert

Dawn

Morning comes early in the village. At 4am, two neighbourhood mosques broadcast overlapping calls to prayer. Soon, roosters crow, goats bleat, a baby cries and the sun peeks over the horizon. It's time for chai.

Sarah* is on her feet. The busy mother and grandmother bustles around efficiently. With her flashing eyes and quick wit, it's clear that not much escapes her notice. Her daughter-in-law, Meenu,* serves her breakfast that she has cooked over a fire fueled by cow dung—it burns slowly and evenly, and there's plenty of it. Their whitewashed compound is immaculate; no small feat considering it's home to at least 20 extended family members and assorted livestock.

Today is another opportunity for Sarah to share oral Bible stories in neighbouring villages. Ever since she became a Christian as a teenager, she's dreamt of a life of ministry—she loves serving God. Before the desert heat inevitably crescendos, she'll spend some time preparing her lessons.

But first, chai.

Morning

Sarah gathers her storyboards, a storybook Bible and her copy of the Ikimeg* New Testament. Her husband, Hiro,* helped translate it, and he'll be joining her today as she travels to two villages. The New Testament is a milestone for this community, but many people—women in particular—cannot read yet, so oral stories crafted from the translated Scripture are an essential resource.

The majority religion in this region is Islam, but the people that Sarah and Hiro will visit today are all from a Hindu background, as is Sarah herself. "Before knowing Jesus, my life was worshiping idols, but God gave us a new life, and we have eternal life through Him," she says.

As members of a scheduled caste—often referred to as "untouchable"—many Ikimeg families face discrimination, limited opportunities and a lifetime of hard, physical labour. When Sarah began sharing Bible stories with them six years ago, some mocked her, but others were curious: who was this God who humbled Himself, rather than demanding sacrifices? Today, many villagers are eager for her weekly visits.

Midday

Sarah and Hiro—along with several of their grandchildren—pile into their tiny Suzuki and drive to Hiro's sister Rachel's* village. Their family relationship provides Sarah with a natural entry point to the village, and Rachel's one-room home quickly fills with neighbours. The men sit on the right side of the room, the women on the left and children fill in the gaps.

The sun is high in the sky and a ceiling fan chugs with effort as Rachel's son offers chai to the adults. Outside, the temperature is over 40 degrees, but fortunately, it isn't the hot season

"Before knowing Jesus, my life was worshiping idols, but God gave us a new life, and we have eternal life through Him"

- Sarah, oral Bible storyteller

Above: **Dawn** *- Sarah's daughter-in-law, Meenu, prepares chai as her daughter watches.*

Left: **Morning** *- Sarah holds a copy of the Ikimeg* New Testament.*

***Midday** - Sarah shares the Bible story of Jesus healing the demon-possessed man with a group of villagers including her sister-in-law, Rachel (wearing blue flowered shawl).*

yet—that's when the mercury pushes 50 degrees.

As Sarah unpacks her materials, men and women alike turn to Hiro, expectantly. In this culture, men are the leaders and the authorities on spiritual matters. But Hiro sits quietly, one of his grandchildren perched on his lap, waiting for his wife to begin the story. When Sarah first expressed interest in becoming an oral Bible storyteller, he was uncertain—it wasn't a typical role for women. But watching her teach has changed his perspective.

Sarah tells the story of Jesus healing the demon-possessed man. The idea of evil spirits and demon-possession is familiar, and everyone in the room listens intently. One participant shares "I used to do idol worship, and there was a spirit in me. But now, I have faith [in Jesus] and I am baptized. Now I am free, just like the man in the story today."

Others echo this sentiment: Jesus has freed them. They're eager for Sarah to return next week to share more.

Afternoon

Sarah and Hiro drive back to their home, where she gives directions for the evening's meal to her daughters and daughter-in-law, and completes some housework. Endless sweeping is needed to keep the dust under control on the compound. At last, the sun begins to descend, and a light breeze picks up. On the rooftop, it's almost pleasant.

Hiro's office is here. On the wall there's a massive banner celebrating the dedication of the Ikimeg New Testament. Now, Hiro is working with the other members of his team to translate the Old Testament as part of the Jeewan Cluster project (see story on page 9). A soft-hearted father and grandfather, he's often surrounded by a pile of children when he's downstairs, but this quiet room on the roof is where he can focus on the detailed work of translation.

He used to preach and read Scripture in the national language. But that has changed now that people have access to Scripture in Ikimeg. "People are listening with interest, and they understand," he says. "It's different now, because when our own people share, they understand. And when they understand, their hearts are changed."

Evening

As dusk arrives, so do several neighbouring women, inviting Sarah to visit their home. She has been sharing oral Bible stories with them for years and many have put their faith in Jesus.

"We thank the Lord that Sarah comes," says one of the women. "We thank the Lord that we can be free from evil spirits, free from idol worship, and that our children are growing up in the light."

They cluster outside on a *charpai*, a simple bedframe strung with woven cords. Nearby, a swaddled newborn rocks in a makeshift swing. Babies represent hope and the future in these Hindu and fledgling Christian communities. Children—sons in particular—are desired above all things. Infertility is considered a tragedy, and in the Hindu religion, a curse.

Even when longed-for babies arrive, life in the village is fragile. Healthcare is limited, and the heat is intense. When women can't conceive and children get sick, Christians face tremendous social pressure to return to Hindu practices and offer sacrifices to the gods at the local shrine.

Sarah understands the struggle intimately. She and Hiro lost three children, all sons, at birth due to health complications. It broke their hearts, but they were determined to continue trusting God, even when their community pressured them to offer sacrifices.

They named their fourth son Samuel, and like Hannah in the Bible, dedicated him to the Lord. Today, he also ministers in their community, teaching his own children and others to love God.

Nightfall

That evening, Sarah and her family sleep on *charpais* cloaked in mosquito netting in their courtyard, the breeze a delicious escape from the heat that still lingers inside. The morning will bring an informal Sunday school class—complete with songs, Bible stories and candy—for their own children and those of their neighbours.

The village mosques once again echo the call to prayer, the cows and goats curl up on earth still warm from the heat of the day, and even the babies are quiet. Night falls on the village.

Tomorrow will bring another early morning—and another opportunity to share the Light.

*Left: **Midday** - Members of an extended family rest on charpais in the heat of the day after listening to Sarah share an oral Bible story.*

*Right: **Evening** - One of Sarah's neighbours holds her baby daughter. The henna she applied to the baby's scalp is used as a cooling agent in the heat.*

**Pseudonyms used.*

A God-Given Opportunity

THROUGH LITERACY, SEWING AND BIBLE STORIES, WOMEN IN THE NORTHERN WARMI COMMUNITY ARE DISCOVERING THEIR TRUE VALUE

"In our community, people say, 'Oh, you don't need to learn at this age,' but God gave us this opportunity—at this age—to come and learn all these things."

A woman seated on the floor of the small, dimly-lit classroom recalls her neighbours' reactions to adult education. The students in the room are all older than the typical first-time pupil—the majority are in their teens, with a handful in their twenties and even thirties. Almost all of them are married.

Each sits behind a hand-powered sewing machine. Along with reading and writing, they are learning how to sew clothing and household items, and at the end of the year-long program, each woman will get to keep her machine. With it, she'll be able to start a small home business.

"We can sew not only our own clothes, but clothes for our relatives and neighbours…we can support our family financially," says another pupil.

Left: A young woman at one of the Northern Warmi women's centres prays aloud as her classmates silently join her.

The two Northern Warmi women's centres have run for three years, training 30 women each year across both locations.

At the end of the three-year cycle, the project will move to another language group within the Jeewan Cluster project (see page 9), where women facing similar barriers will receive practical training and hear about God's love for them.

But that's not all that the students are learning. In addition to practical skills, women are discovering through oral Bible stories that Jesus values them.

"In the story of Jesus feeding the 5000, we learned that when we ask God, He actually listens," shares a teenager, surprise written on her face.

It's a new concept for women who aren't used to being heard. The idea that God truly cares about them runs counter to the narrative that surrounds their lives from birth: they have no social status, no money and no power.

But the God they're encountering at the women's centres tells them that they are worth investing in. That truth is changing how they see themselves—and how they interact with others.

An older student describes taking her sick son to the hospital, where they were ignored by the medical staff. "Coming to the sewing centre gave me the confidence to speak to the doctor directly: 'Look at my child!'"

She adds, "And I didn't need to wait for someone to dial my phone number for me. I dialed the number myself, and told our family where we were."

The students are also bringing the lessons they've learned home to their families. After standing to pray in front of the class, one of the youngest students shares, "Not only am I learning to pray, but I am teaching my brothers and sisters that they can learn to pray, too."

"Not only am I learning to pray, but I am teaching my brothers and sisters that they can learn to pray, too."

- Sewing student

Azad* oversees the women's centres. He's a translation consultant with the Jeewan Cluster and part of the Northern Warmi language group. When he saw the struggles that women faced in his community, he wanted to give them an opportunity. He also sees a greater purpose for the centres:

"These are not just our students—these are our families. God gave us 15 families, 15 homes to reach, to share the gospel through them…so in this way, God is opening the door for us to serve better."

**Pseudonym used.*

I Am Free Now

A HINDU PRIEST ENCOUNTERS CHRIST

Mohit and his wife, Aaliyah, pause for a photo during a volunteer training session.

"I was a Hindu priest. If anybody had a problem, they came to me, and I'd tell them which sacrifices to bring."

It might be flocks going missing, or sick children—the gods didn't answer these requests for free, and Mohit* knew how to interpret their demands.

But then a Christian from a local ministry began visiting him. At first, Mohit was annoyed and tried to pick fights. But over time, something shifted. "I saw the love of Christ in him, and I was just listening to the Word of God…I heard about Jesus Christ, that He was crucified for me…In the Hindu religion, there is no one who gave his life for the people."

He became convinced that Christ was the way. "I left everything. I asked God for freedom from these evil spirits. And I realized that God was with me—He helped me, and I am free now."

Mohit and his wife, Aaliyah,* now serve their community by sharing oral Bible stories. They pray that their neighbours will leave their spiritual bondage and find the God who was willing to give His life for the people.

**Pseudonyms used.*

From Colleagues to Family

IN THE JEEWAN CLUSTER PROJECT, TEAM MEMBERS ARE BREAKING DOWN SOCIAL BARRIERS AS THEY TRANSLATE GOD'S WORD

A hit of caffeine and sugar, and some laughs with friends—chai time is a welcome break in a morning of intense concentration. The translators spill into the courtyard of the language centre, stretching their legs and filling cups from a large stainless steel urn.

It's the monthly group translation session for the nine language teams in the Jeewan Cluster project. Together, they work to translate Scripture into the national language—today, they're working from the book of Numbers. Each team then takes the group translation back to their homes, where they'll render it into their own languages.

The work has seen remarkable success: all nine language groups have already printed the New Testament. Two translators in the project have completed the intense training required to become certified consultants, allowing them to support the Cluster project as well as other translations in the region.

"It's totally unusual," says Sheldon, a translation consultant who has worked with the Cluster for 25 years, and helped mentor and equip many of the team members. In the Hindu hierarchy, these translators would never ordinarily have a conversation, let alone share meals or visit each other's villages. "Actually, we have some really deep friendships that have developed over the years," continues Sheldon.

Their shared love of God and His Word has transformed them from colleagues into family.

The steel urn runs dry. It's time to return to Numbers.

The Bible by Heart

ORAL BIBLE STORYING IN THE NDOP CLUSTER

By Kari Miedema

In Mbouda, Cameroon, participants from the Babungo, Bamali and Babessi language groups of the Ndop Plain gathered to learn and practice 26 oral Bible stories in their own languages. After committing the stories to memory, they returned home to share them with their families, churches, children's ministries and beyond. Despite regional conflict affecting Bible translation on the Ndop Plain, the stories continue to spread and bear fruit throughout these communities.

Background: The office in Mbouda, Cameroon where workshops and Bible translation work happen.

"When you are narrating in your own language, people will listen and have the interest and know what happened in the Bible, and see their own selves."
– Dazi, participant

Left: The group gathers to begin the day's activities, joined by Scripture engagement coordinator, Daphne Natyna. This space is where the majority of the work will unfold.

Above: A participant then shares a story from Scripture by memory in her "country talk," or local language.

Above: Participants worship together and share their reflections from the morning's Scripture story.

The Ndop Cluster project works with ten related languages of Cameroon's Ndop Plain, supporting Bible translation, Scripture engagement, literacy, linguistics and capacity building.

Participants take turns leading different parts of the oral Bible storying workshop each day. This participant is opening the day by leading worship.

Upper: Groups gather to internalize the Scripture story, defining characters, theme, sequence, setting and discussing spiritual insights and reflections.

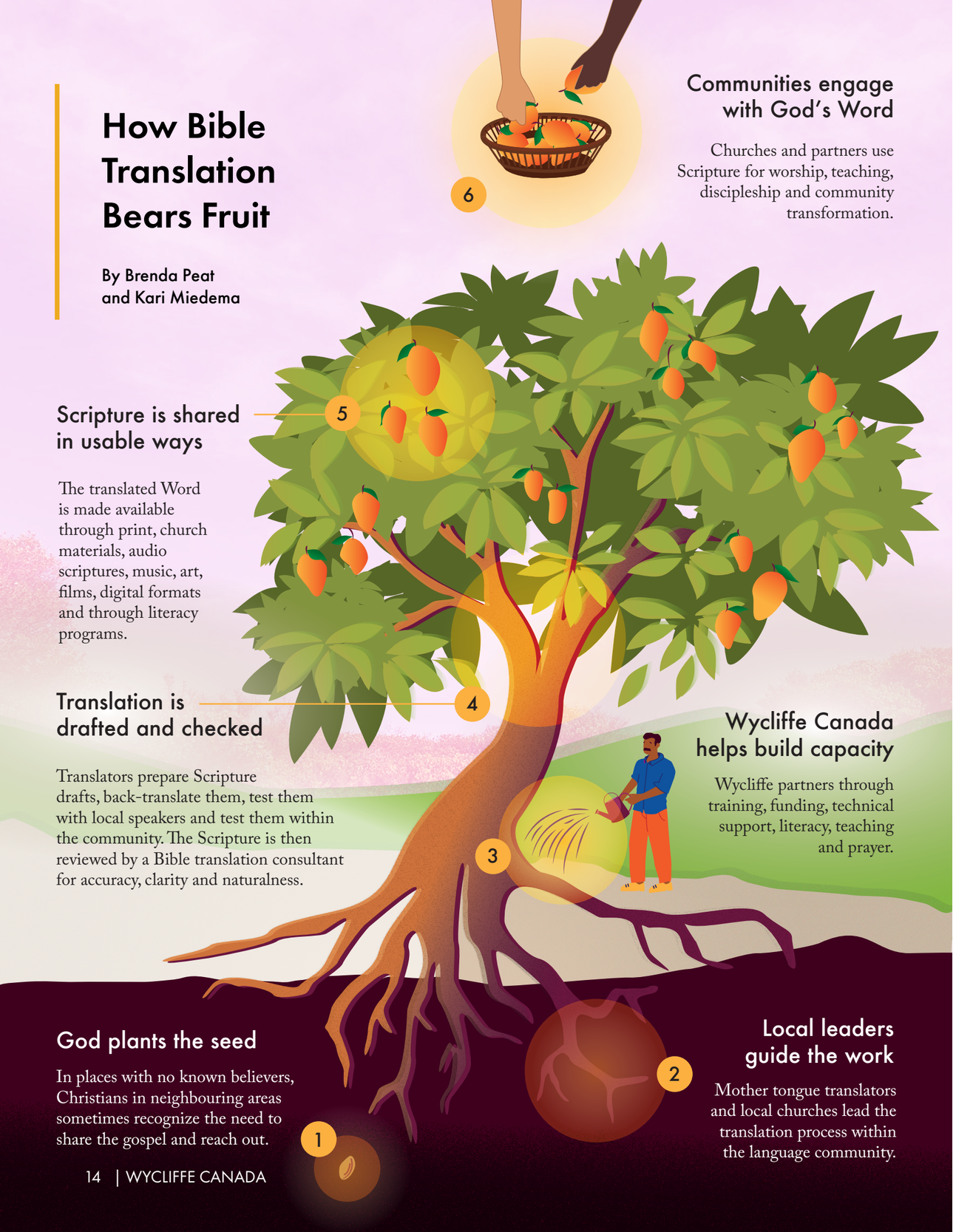
Lower: After participants record the stories in their local languages, Rev. Edward Woghombong (right) works with teams to edit, check and transcribe the stories, and discuss key terms.

Internalizing Bible stories goes beyond discussion. Participants also bring them to life by acting them out. Here, they reenact the defeat of the prophets of Baal.

When the workshop concludes, participants return home equipped to share the Bible stories that they have learned by heart, planting seeds of Scripture wherever they go.

How Bible Translation Bears Fruit

By Brenda Peat
and Kari Miedema



God's Word Strengthens Families

HOW SCRIPTURE ENGAGEMENT WORKSHOPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA ARE HEALING FAMILIES

By Jessica Debanné Thiessen

"I grew up in fear of my father," reflects Thant.* "Now I am over 40, but I have never heard 'I love you' from my father and I have never felt love for him.

"I wanted to be a good father to my children, but did not know how to do it."

Thant's story is far from unique. Like many other participants in the Strengthening Christian Families workshop, he arrived bearing scars that stretch back generations.

Years of conflict, displacement and uncertainty have left deep wounds across the Kinsha* region in Southeast Asia. Families have been separated, communities uprooted, and many parents have never known the stability needed to raise their children with confidence.

Through the Strengthening Christian Families workshop, Thant encountered practical guidance for parenting, and the love of his heavenly Father. As he learned about God's design for family life, he discovered how to show that love to his own children.

Today, he shares, "I really thank you for helping me learn how to be a good parent in this workshop."

The Strengthening Christian Families program includes 18 interactive, Scripture-based lessons. These help participants explore parenting, communication, trust, emotions, discipline, boundaries and service.

As participants encounter biblical wisdom, homes are changing. Parents are learning to lead with love instead of fear, and children are discovering their God-given worth. Families are finding new ways to forgive and communicate.

Aung,* another father attending the program, explains: "From now on, I have decided to change my life with God, show love to my children and support them both physically and spiritually."

In 2025 alone, more than 30 workshops were held across churches, schools, refugee camps, orphanages, rehabilitation centers and community groups throughout the Kinsha region. These reached more than 1,400 parents, teachers and children.

Yet the impact is spreading far beyond Kinsha. Already, Strengthening Christian Families training has been requested in 66 countries worldwide!

Bible translation is about more than placing translated Scriptures into people's hands—it's about helping people experience God's truth in ways that transform their everyday lives. As families are strengthened by God's Word, hope takes root, even in some of the world's most difficult places.

A family in the Kinsha region takes a break together. The white paste on the mother's and baby's faces is commonly used for beauty and sun protection.

**Pseudonyms used. Photo by Marc Ewell, Wycliffe Global Alliance.*

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TRANSFORMING LIVES.

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Pray with Us

Pray that God would continue creating paths for the gospel in challenging places. **Praise Him** that His Word will not return void (Isaiah 55:11).

Thank God for strengthening and equipping faithful workers to share the hope of Jesus in difficult circumstances around the world.

Pray for protection and courage for those who are following Jesus in the midst of conflict, persecution and struggle.

Lord, thank You that You see and love people in every place and circumstance. May Your love transform hearts, families and communities throughout the world. Thank You for Your promise that streams of living water will flow from within all those who believe in You. (John 7:38)

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