

Bibles in the local language have led to a revival in Bao Bao'ai's village. Photos: UBS-CP

Eyewitness Report

Villagers abandon idols and embrace new Bible translation made possible by you.



By Arleen Luo

Manager of Asia and Chinese Mission

Remote Chinese community enjoys spiritual revival

 CHINA

Arleen Luo tells us about her recent visit to remote villages in the mountains of south-west China to see how the Wa ethnic minority community are engaging with their newly translated Bibles. Bao Bao'ai was one of many she met whose lives have been transformed.

Bao Bao'ai was born into a Christian family, but during China's Cultural Revolution, when Bibles were destroyed, he was left disconnected from his faith. And when his wife fell ill, he resorted to superstitious healing rituals.

'I offered prayers to idols, sacrificing chickens, pig's and bull's heads,' Bao'ai said. The rituals didn't work.

At that time there were few

Scriptures available in Bao'ai's village and those that were there were written in an old script that few people understood.

But in 2016 a translation of the full Bible arrived in the Wa language. This translation, made possible by the regular giving of Bible a Month subscribers, transformed the entire community.

Bao'ai was one of many Christians I met during my trip, the aim of which was to find out how the Wa people and other ethnic minorities were engaging with Scriptures provided to them by Bible Society, and then to gauge the next step in our support of these communities.

'When I didn't have a Bible, I lacked

a clear understanding of God's will and guidance. Relying solely on my own thoughts and ideas, I made decisions that were not pleasing to God,' said Bao'ai. 'After reading the Bible, I felt a surge of strength and empowerment. It was as if I had awakened from the darkness and gained clarity.'

'Reading the Bible, our hearts were filled with a profound sweetness.'

Now, small Bible Study groups are widespread in the villages. Bao took his son who was a drug addict to one of these groups. His son repented of his sins, and his wife returned to him. Witnessing the remarkable transformation in the son's life, she came to faith too. Now Bao'ai's whole family study Scripture together.

'We immersed ourselves in its pages, reading it day after day as a family, to the point where the Bible has become worn and weathered,' Bao'ai shared, holding up his well-thumbed

Bible. 'As we delved deeper into its teachings, our hearts were filled with a profound sweetness. Reading the Scripture has been immensely beneficial to me personally. Previously, I did not really know God and his will. Now I know him better. I have taken it upon myself to lead my son and daughter-in-law in this journey of studying and understanding God's word.'

Bao's testimony is similar to many in his village, which is now in the midst of a spiritual revival, showcasing the remarkable impact that a Bible can have in a community.

Your support made this possible. They now have the Bible in their heart language and are engaging with it on a much deeper level of understanding.

Translating a Bible is no easy task, especially in a remote area of China. First a Bible Society team visits a region to learn of the Scripture needs from our church partner. Where there is a need for Bible translation, we will then come in to support their local translation team. Then we need to support

that team over many years as they translate the entire Bible. This will include conducting Bible translation workshops and training, providing translation consultation, supporting the translators' living allowances. As you can imagine, your regular giving is crucial to planning such long-term projects.

During our follow-up visits we gauge the next step in the translation of Scriptures for the community, and this is often pastor training coupled with the translation of a Study Bible. Our goal at Bible Society is not to just translate the Bible into as many

Our goal is to see whole communities engage with the Scriptures.

languages as possible, but to see whole communities engage with the Scriptures.

'The Bible has transformed my entire family and turned our lives around. It is more valuable to me than silver or gold,' Bao'ai said.



Your support has also enabled us to translate Bibles for other ethnic minorities, including this East Lisu community in south-western China.



Bao'ai has been reading the Bible you provided him with so often that it is almost falling apart.



'The Wise King' story is dramatised at a school in Kenya. Photo credit: Bible Society in Kenya

Mission Update

'Open the Book makes it easy for children to remember Bible stories.'

Joy Children's Village was started 12 years ago by Nazareth Hospital, a Christian outreach just outside Nairobi. It cares for about 60 children with HIV/AIDS, providing a family-based environment for girls and boys who might be ill or orphaned or abandoned by their parents.

'Most of the children in the home ask questions about their situation,' said Anne, a leader in Bible Society's Open the Book Kenya. 'You notice a child seated alone in deep thought,

Making Bible stories memorable for children in Kenya



or they'll ask why they take the ARV drugs and when they will ever stop. Older ones who know their situation sometimes want to harm themselves. How did Open the Book encourage such children?

'We use the power of Bible stories to point them to Jesus, the God who sees them.'

Despite significant improvement, Kenya continues to experience an HIV epidemic. More than 100,000 Kenyan children have the virus, which can be transmitted from mother to child when a woman who is HIV positive becomes pregnant.

The youth wing of the Kenyan Bible mission team has embraced Open the Book as a dynamic way to sow the seeds of spiritual change, inspiring a Bible-reading culture among young people.

'Open the Book is so special to me,' said Anne. 'It stands out as a child-

friendly approach to Bible outreach.'

The children at Joy Village were introduced to stories of Tabitha being raised from death (from Acts 9) and of Jesus healing a man of blindness. And because Open the Book combines narration with dramatisation, the children were invited to join in performances of these stories.

'We use the power of Bible stories to point them to Jesus.'

Anne said, 'Open the Book makes it easy for children to remember Bible stories. This is the most unique and attractive children's programme we have, and it's something I missed when I was a child.'

Story by James Howard-Smith

Answer to prayer ...

Psalm 27 Garden lives on in a cemetery in Sheffield

The Psalm 27 Garden is now open to the public in its permanent home, Sheffield General Cemetery, where it's been described as 'an amazing miracle'.

The cemetery is a local nature reserve owned by Sheffield City Council. At the official opening, trustee Dave Hunt told a gathering that receiving the garden from Bible Society had been 'an amazing miracle'.

'It's instantly transformed this area of the cemetery,' he said. 'We are very grateful to Bible Society and garden designer Ollie Pike for their amazing generosity.'

The garden was officially opened to the public by Deputy Lord Mayor Jayne Dunn. She used Sheffield steel scissors to cut a green ribbon, to cheers from guests.

'It was really important to me that the garden lived on at Sheffield General Cemetery after the RHS Flower Show Tatton Park,' said Ollie.

Some 1,500 plants were transferred from Tatton Park, where Ollie won a silver medal for its creation, to Sheffield.

Bible Society's CEO Paul Williams said, 'Psalm 27 deals with issues of fear, loss and hope which are still so relevant to us today. So, we hope it's a reminder and an invitation to go back to something foundational, spiritual and beautiful in our lives.'

To watch a video (with subtitles) go to biblesociety.org.uk/psalm27



Ollie Pike (centre) at the opening of the garden in Sheffield. Photo credit: Bible Society

JANUARY PRAYERS

Thank the Lord that the Psalm 27 Garden attracted thousands of visitors at RHS Flower Show Tatton Park. Pray that those who visited it will continue to draw near to God.

Thank God for the beauty of his creation.

Pray that people will continue to find solace through Psalm 27 in the garden in Sheffield, and in other natural spaces.

Celebrate Christmas with Bible Society!

Brand new Christmas resources including two brilliant children's booklets for both primary and toddler ages are now available.

- **Festive Fred Finds the Greatest Gift** (primary age booklet) – journey with Fred as he snoozes off in his bedroom and wakes up in the middle of the very first Christmas! Complete with accompanying video and pop-up nativity.

Also available in Welsh, Ukrainian, Russian, Simplified Chinese and Traditional Chinese as great

missional gifts for your church and community.

- **It's Nearly Time! (A Christmas Rhyme)** (toddler age booklet) – perfect for your toddler group during the Advent season.
- **Christmas stickers and cards** featuring Bible verses and imagery.
- The **Family Advent Box** will make for a FAB Christmas season in your home. It's packed with ideas for interactive, memory-making, family fun.

To see all the resources visit biblesociety.org.uk/christmas or call 01793 418222.



China



Thanks to you, these people received a Bible translated into the Gan Yi minority language. Photo credit: Katri Saarela/UBS-CP

Right now, thanks to your support, five Bible translation projects in minority languages are underway in China. And we are also awaiting the approval of the authorities to publish a Bible translation that was completed in late 2021 for communities in the region of China called Inner Mongolia.

During the Cultural Revolution, Bibles were burned, but in 1987 with permission from the authorities we helped establish a Bible printing

press, Amity Press, in Nanjing city. Since then, more than 90 million Bibles have been printed there for distribution in China.

There are restrictions on religious activity in China but many local authorities trust us so when a church in China asks for help, we often get the green light to support them. This means Bible translation and literacy programmes, the provision of gospel outreach materials, and support for Bible students and training pastors all happens.

It takes a local translation team more than a decade to complete a full Bible and during that time they need to be supported, i.e. paid a modest salary. Your regular giving means we can plan far into the future and launch these long-term projects. Thank you!

NOVEMBER PRAYERS

Praise God for the spiritual revival taking place in Bao'ai's village and in other communities in south-western China as a result of them receiving the full Bible in their own language. Pray that revival will sweep through the entire region.

Thank the Lord for the more than 20,000 people whose regular giving through Bible a Month enables Bible Society to plan ahead and support long-term translation projects.

Pray for strength and wisdom for the translation teams working on the five current translation projects.

Kenya



Children at a school in Nairobi perform a drama on the subject of HIV/AIDS. Photo credit: Martin Johnson/Bible Society

Kenya's extraordinary natural beauty inspired the animated landscapes of *The Lion King*. This is a place where Christianity has been growing rapidly since the arrival of missionaries in the mid-19th century. The first Kenyans were ordained in 1885, and more than 85 per cent of today's Kenyans identify as Christians. Kenya also has about a third of the world's 350,000 Quakers.

Bible Society has been working in Kenya since 1869 and Elizabeth Muriuki has been leading the team here for the last 17 years. During Elizabeth's time Scripture has been brought to another seven of the country's dozens of language communities.

They're also translating the Bible into sign language, and expanding their Bible-based Trauma Healing workshops. Your support enables Elizabeth and her team to mentor young leaders, building their futures on a biblical foundation.

You're also bringing the Bible to children by providing for the creation of an Open the Book outreach in Kenya. This new team have begun sharing Bible stories with children aged between 3 and 14, including more than 350 children at a single event in Nairobi.

DECEMBER PRAYERS

Give thanks for the amazing start Open the Book Kenya has made. Pray that many more enthusiastic storytelling volunteers will join the programme to enable it to spread further in the country.

Pray for a receptive environment for Open the Book in schools. Pray that school leadership will be favourable towards the storytelling teams.

Ask God to bless and inspire children as they experience Bible stories in a new way.

China

FACTFILE



AREA

3.7 million square miles, 40 times bigger than the UK



POPULATION

1,411 million



LANGUAGES

Simplified Chinese (written format) and Mandarin (spoken format), local dialects and minority languages



LITERACY RATE

96.8%



‘You will seek me, and you will find me because you will seek me with all your heart.’

JEREMIAH 29.13 (GNB)

Kenya

FACTFILE



AREA

224,081 million square miles, 2.4 times bigger than the UK



POPULATION

57 million



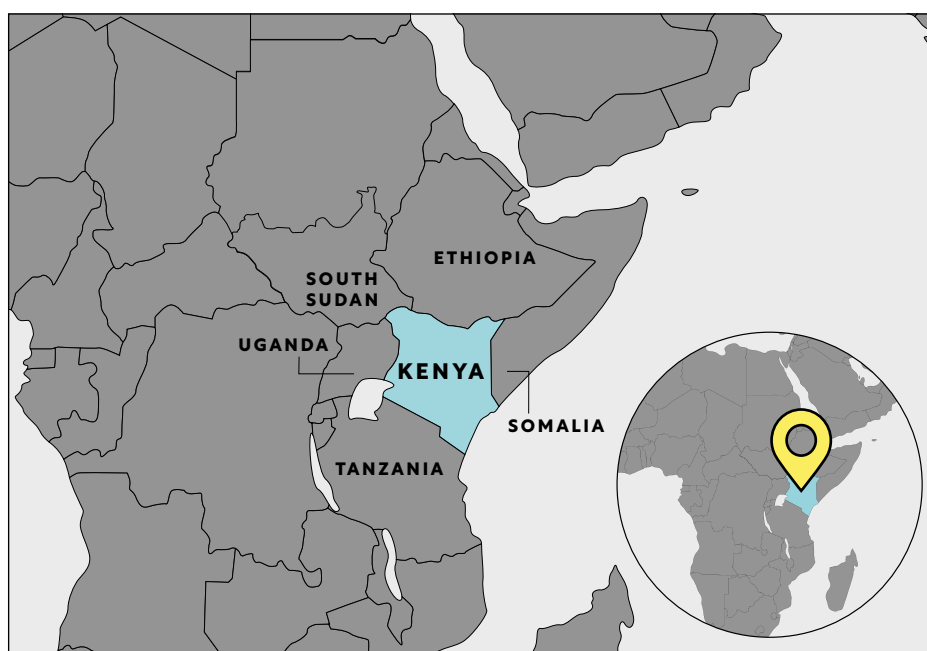
LANGUAGES

English (official), Kiswahili, many local languages



LITERACY RATE

82.6%



‘Let the children come to me and do not stop them, because the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these.’

LUKE 18.16 (GNB)