



Literacy for the Hmong

Overview

Bible Society Australia is partnering with the Laos Bible Society (LBS) to develop and run a literacy project among the Hmong people, in response to the needs of churches, who wish to teach their non-literate members to read God's word.

The Need

In Laos, 20% of males and 40% of females over 15 can't read, with the most affected in remote rural areas and ethnic minority groups constituting 47% of the population. They lack education access due to geographical and subsistence farming needs. Non-literate believers in churches need to read God's word. The Hmong, Laos' second-largest ethnic minority, have a Hmong Bible published in 2022, but many can't read it. Even Hmong children who manage to attend school are taught in Lao, not their native language. A literacy program is vital for Hmong people to read their mother tongue Bible and grow spiritually, but church leaders lack suitable teaching materials. Local churches need systematic tools for clear Bible comprehension.



47%

of the population are remote ethnic minorities who don't have easy access to education

639,900

Hmong people group in Laos (2023, Joshua Project)

75,000

Hmong (almost 12%) from unofficial sources, are Christians

50%

of Hmong believers cannot read and write Hmong

"Blessed is the one who finds wisdom, and the one who gets understanding ... She is a tree of life to those who lay hold of her; those who hold her fast are called blessed."

Proverbs 3:13,18 ESV

Goals

This project aims to impart reading skills in the Hmong language to non-literate individuals in Laos. By doing so, it empowers them to read Scriptures in their mother tongue, fostering personal spiritual growth and contributing to community development.

In 2024, in collaboration with the Laos Evangelical Churches, LBS, guided by the UBS Literacy Advisor for the Asia Pacific, will develop literacy materials tailored for the Hmong ethnic group in Laos. These materials will be implemented between 2025 and 2027, in partnership with other churches who will organise the literacy classes.

The literacy program will roll out in phases:

- Emerging level in 2024
- Improving level in 2025
- Fluent level in 2026

Starting from 2025, the literacy program will consist of 20 classes for 200 learners at each level, significantly expanding access to literacy education in the Hmong language.

Impact

Being illiterate in their mother tongue poses challenges for Hmong believers, hindering their integration into the community and church life. This program offers reading skills and biblical engagement through LBS' materials. Local churches will conduct courses, inviting non-Christians to participate, and LBS will provide Bible storybooks to graduates for practice.

In 2024, research will take place from Jan-Mar, followed by the drafting of an Emerging level primer from Apr-Jun. In Jul-Sep, teaching materials, including Bible-based material will be drafted and local church teachers will be identified. In Oct-Dec, teachers will receive training on the Emerging level primer and teaching materials for Hmong Mother Tongue Literacy classes beginning in 2025. This period will also see the development of literacy monitoring and evaluation tools and assessments.

Testimonies

"As a church leader, I can see that Hmong believers who cannot read do not engage in Sunday services. They can only sit and listen to the leader and other members, but are hardly able to understand. It would be a blessing if those non-literate brothers and sisters in Christ were able to read the Bible, because then they could study the Bible by themselves and get to know God, and also get involved in the church's activities."

— Pastor Chapor, Hmong church

Prayer Needs

- Pray that churches will be motivated to partner with the Laos Bible Society (LBS) for the Hmong literacy programs, as part of their outreach to both believers and unbelievers.
- Pray for the preparation of the material package for the Hmong language in 2024, as well as the recruitment of the Literacy Working Group that will work with the Literacy Specialist and LBS Literacy Team.
- There can be restrictions on Christian activity in some areas of Laos where the Hmong take place, so pray for the wisdom of LBS and our Literacy Working Group to get cooperation from the local authorities.