



Literacy by Listening

Overview

Bible Society Australia is supporting the Laos Bible Society in providing literacy skills to ethnic minority groups and underprivileged people, fostering individual and community development, including spiritual growth through reading the Scriptures.



The Need

Approximately 87% of the 7.5 million people in Laos are considered literate, yet while the Lao people group (55% of the population) have good access to education, the other 45% is composed of ethnic minorities who often live in remote mountain areas, which hinders access to education, resulting in a very low literacy rate for minorities. As well as poor access to schools, children in remote areas are needed to help families with subsistence farming, and don't learn to read and write in Lao. Schools in remote areas are typically under-resourced. There is a need for accessible, well-resourced literacy education for adults and children.

While officially 1.5% of the population are Christian, Christian growth in Laos since 1990 has been phenomenal, growing from near zero to about 300,000 all up, 4% of the population.

7.5m

people in Laos

47%

of the Laos population are ethnic minorities

300,000

(unofficially) Christians in Laos

"Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path!"

Psalm 119:105, NIV

Goals

The goal of this project is to provide a simple literacy program for rural Lao and minority groups to become proficient in reading and writing Lao. This will allow them to contribute to the development of their communities, as well as grow personally and spiritually as they have the opportunity to read the Scriptures.

The program uses the Bible and a textbook to teach literacy skills, while local church volunteers conduct the classes, with the help of an audio device that dictates the lessons.

Each year the goal is to start 150-200 classes with 1,500-2,500 students, in the national language, Lao. There is currently a long waiting list in local churches for members who want to be part of the program, so the need for more classes is clear.

In 2024, the goal is to open 20 classes with 200 students, 10 teachers. Of these, it is expected that 160 will graduate. All graduates will receive an illustrated 'Stories of Jesus' book, along with other books of Bible stories.

Impact

In recent years, Bible Society has achieved an annual distribution of over 1,500 New Testaments, 6,000 new reader Bible portions and 6,000 children's Bible portions to those who participate in the classes, and other members of the community who may be impacted by this project in their area.

Significant impact is seen as people from ethnic minorities gain literacy skills. Literate adults are able to read the Bible and become better equipped to contribute to their communities and to church life.

Testimonies

"I have taken the literacy books to show the younger ladies that I can read the Bible now even though I am 50 years old and asked them to study. Knowing God's word is the most important thing in life. Many just want to go to church when they are sick and have no life in God, but I want them to thrive." — Vila*, Graduate

Prayer Needs

- Pray that churches will be motivated to run the literacy program as part of their outreach to both believers and unbelievers.
- Pray that more people from the churches will commit to being program teachers and facilitators.
- Pray that local authorities will allow classes to take place in rural areas in which there can be restrictions on Christian activity.

*Name changed for security reasons.