

Laos



Literacy for the Hmong

Project: 103207
Tax Deductible



45%

of the Laos population compose of ethnic minority groups.

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

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 in their mother tongue, Hmong.

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 45% 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.

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 literacy skills in the Hmong language to non-literate individuals in Laos. By doing so, it empowers them to contribute to the development of themselves and their community as well as to read Scriptures in their mother tongue, fostering personal spiritual growth.

In 2024, a Literacy Working Group has been formed, which includes several pastors from Laos Evangelical Churches along with a Literacy Specialist and the LBS literacy team, to develop literacy primers, exercise books and story books designed for the Hmong literacy learners.

These materials will be implemented between 2025 and 2027, in partnership with local churches who will organise and run the literacy classes. Evaluation and supervision of the program is under the guidance of the United Bible Society's Literacy Advisor for the Asia Pacific.

Impact

Equipping the Hmong ethnic group with reading skills will enable them to read the Scriptures in their mother tongue, fostering their spiritual growth and benefiting their communities.

Being non-literate in their mother tongue creates obstacles for Hmong believers and means they can't fully get involved in their community or in church life. This literacy program will have an impact as it equips believers with reading skills and the chance to engage with the Bible, through the literacy materials developed and prepared by the Laos Bible Society and its partners. Classes will be held by local churches, with graduates receiving Bible storybooks from the Laos Bible Society to promote reading practice.

Testimony

"After graduating from a seminary in Thailand, I have volunteered to be the minister at a church in my hometown ... I have noticed that many church members cannot read and write ... Besides some adults, there are some children ... who had to leave school halfway because of the economic conditions. I have the passion to facilitate the Literacy class for them ... that they will be able to read the Bible by themselves." — a Literacy Project Facilitator

Prayer Points

- 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, so pray for the wisdom of LBS and our Literacy Working Group to get cooperation from the local authorities.