

# Native Language Literacy



Project: 103519  
Tax-Deductible

## Guatemala

### Overview

Bible Society Australia is supporting the Bible Society of Guatemala to provide a literacy project which aims to improve reading and writing skills among children in rural Guatemala, in three native languages. By providing culturally relevant biblical materials and training teachers, the initiative fosters enhanced community development through education in their mother tongue, as well as spiritual growth, and ethical values.



### The Need

In rural Guatemala, children who speak Q'eqchi', K'iche' de Totonicapán and Western Kaqchikel continue to face limited access to quality education in their mother tongue. High illiteracy rates reflect long-standing inequalities, especially in Indigenous communities where poverty and linguistic barriers reduce educational outcomes. Many children still learn from Spanish-only materials, making comprehension difficult and widening the learning gap. As Bible translations in these languages near completion, mother-tongue literacy is crucial to ensure communities can fully engage with the Scriptures. This project strengthens cultural identity, supports spiritual formation, and creates new opportunities for children to thrive academically and personally.

- **55.36%** illiteracy among Q'eqchi' speakers
- **73.28%** illiteracy among K'iche' de Totonicapán speakers
- **24.20%** illiteracy among Western Kaqchikel speakers

### Goals

This literacy project strengthens reading and writing skills among children in rural Guatemala who speak Q'eqchi', K'iche' and Boca Costa K'iche'. By providing culturally relevant materials that include 60% Bible-based readings, it improves access to education, supports spiritual formation and contributes to wider community development.

In 2026, the project moves into full implementation across three literacy levels while completing and piloting Level 4. Around 15 schools and 5 churches will participate, reaching 3,600 children with mother-tongue instruction. Teachers and promoters will be trained and supported through monitoring, classroom visits and community engagement. Workshops, testing and final layout work will ensure strong materials, with Levels 2 and 3 delivered and evaluated, and Level 4 prepared for 2027.

## Impact

In 2025, the project made significant progress by completing the full development, review and validation of Level 1 literacy materials including pre-reading and reading books, and teacher guides in all three languages. Promoters underwent extensive training, gaining confidence and technical skills to support teachers and facilitate learning. Community testing including interviews with 13 children across the three regions ensured that illustrations, stories and activities were culturally appropriate and accessible for children.

Workshops, meetings and refinement processes strengthened collaboration between promoters, consultants and communities, preparing the project for full implementation in 2026. Although 2025 focused primarily on development rather than classroom delivery, it established a strong foundation for widespread literacy impact and improved access to biblical materials in 2026 and beyond.

## Impact in Numbers

# 13

children participated in illustration-testing interviews to help refine culturally relevant literacy materials

# 12

promoters received training

# 29

training and promotional sessions and 136 team meetings were conducted

# 9

pre-reading, reading, and teacher's guide booklets were printed in three languages for testing and review

## Testimony

"First, I thank God and the Bible Society of Guatemala for giving me the opportunity to be part of the team of promoters in the Q'eqchi' literacy project. I hope to further enrich my language with beautiful literature and to share it with children — and above all, to bring God's Word to more people. It was a wonderful experience. At first, I didn't think I could do it."

— Karla\*, Q'eqchi' promoter

\*Name changed to protect privacy.

## How Your Support Helps

# \$40

helps cover the cost of printing and distributing a set of early-grade literacy booklets.

# \$350

helps contribute to teacher or promoter training and follow-up support.

# \$2,000

helps support a specialised multi-week workshop for developing and refining new literacy levels.

"Buy the truth and do not sell it – wisdom, instruction and insight as well."  
— **Proverbs 23:23, NIV**