



**Wycliffe**  
Bible Translators

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**Good News  
in Anyone's  
Language**

# Associate Action

## Cyclone Pam Special

**A Long Night with Pam** by *Greg Carlson*

'Wow! That felt like a truck hit the building!' Our concrete office and residence in Port Vila was being battered as never before. The power went off around 8 pm in Port Vila as Tropical Cyclone Pam edged closer. Water was cut off a few hours later. Earlier in the day, our teams in Santo had reported that the winds were not very strong there. The team on Ambrym said things were whipping up but not terrible yet. Then the communications were cut off and we were not able to hear from any of them again for days.

Vanuatu is familiar with cyclones, and we have been through many of them in our 24 years here, but this one was different! After it was over, we would find out that Tropical Cyclone Pam was the strongest cyclone Vanuatu had ever experienced, with category five winds. For those of us in the three-storey concrete SIL building it was a long night of sweeping water and wondering if the sliding glass doors and the solid wood front doors would stay closed. A piece of 3 x 2 timber smashed one window, inviting in torrents of rain and wind and turning the stairs into a waterfall. At one point my wife said, 'Greg, I think the roof of the verandah is banging around'. I looked outside into the swirling blackness and replied, 'No, it's not that. We don't HAVE a verandah anymore!'

We slept very little that night. In the morning light, we looked out to see devastation as we have never seen before. Huge trees were knocked over, limbs snapped, leaves stripped. Corrugated roofing iron littered the capital like confetti. Communications were almost totally gone. No water, no power and 80% of the power lines down. Even at first light, we heard the sound of hammers and axes: people putting things back together, clearing roads, rebuilding.

A friend with a satellite phone was able to charter a plane to Ambrym Island to check on our team there. They were safe.

We joined the thousands who were slowly starting to clean up. A trip to the other SIL properties showed that almost an entire roof of one of our buildings had blown off in the night. By God's grace, no one was staying at *Hilltop* that night. Our other three buildings were safe and intact, as was our gardener/handyman Loui's house. A glass door had been smashed in just a few feet from him, but he was unharmed.

News from the islands was sparse, and it was weeks before we heard from all of our ni-Vanuatu translators. Finally over time, we made contact with each one and heard stories of how God had protected them in the storm.

For a few brief moments, people around the world were introduced to the tiny island country of Vanuatu. Aid from various governments and agencies began to flow in. Food, tarps, clean water and medical professionals. The Vanuatu government worked very hard to assess and fairly distribute the generous donations from all over the globe.

After a few weeks, we were able to visit Tanna Island, one of the hardest hit. Only a fraction of the bamboo and thatch houses had withstood the powerful lashing of Pam. Already people had started to tack together shelter with what scraps they found. The greatest disaster was the destruction of their food gardens, their very livelihoods. All over the island we kept hearing, 'Yes, we lost everything, but God was with us, and He is with us still.'

SIL was immediately able to help those we work closely with by sending fast-growing seeds for gardens, and nails and tools to rebuild. Later, we were able to provide roofing iron and other building supplies. Most importantly, we began to re-distribute copies of the printed New Testaments and the audio MegaVoice players with Scriptures in the local languages.

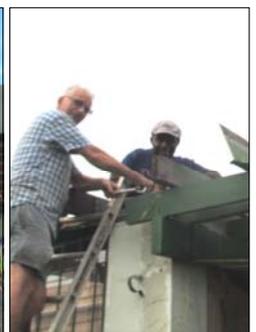
We are so grateful for the many *(continued back page)*



**Loui Makie working inside Hilltop with Peter Whitby**



**Peter Whitby and Peter Gillespie working on Hilltop**



**Bill Keenan and Edwin Frezer**



## Editorial

by Peter Gillespie

Although cyclone Pam was impressive in its ferocity and destructive force, ripping buildings, fixtures and trees apart, equally impressive was the way people pulled together to help each other with time, money and resources. God blessed us with funding and a great team to get the job done.

I thank God that so often, when we have a work team, he pulls together the right people, with the right skills, at the right time to get the job done.

BUT, being on a work team is not just about the work, but how God touches people's lives.

Experiencing God working through the local missionaries is always exciting and inspiring and helps us understand how God is building His kingdom in so many places.

Our Lord is Sovereign and can turn disaster into blessing.

*'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him.'* ROMANS 8:28

Our next team event is at the Wycliffe Australia National Centre in October. There will be opportunity to not only help with building and other tasks, but also to learn more of the wider work of Wycliffe.

## A Great Privilege by Harry Hordyk

What will it be like? Who will we stay with and where? Are we going to be allowed through immigration lugging a heavy bag of tools as if that is the usual thing to do when 'visiting' friends! How hot and humid will it be? Is it safe? These were just some of the thoughts running through my mind on a cool crisp morning in Perth as I set off to join a work team in Port Vila, Vanuatu.

Some of my children were amazed when I declared an interest to go and help in a 'third world' country—with comments like 'Dad, that's right out of your comfort zone! You sure you will be alright?' I must admit I looked up Vanuatu on Google Earth to find out where it was!



**Harry Hordyk (left) and Dave Bentink discuss the re-wiring of Hilltop**

With much thankfulness to the Lord, we landed safely at midnight local time (9.00 pm WA time!). Immigration and customs were no problems, even for our bags of tools and box of electrical fittings.

It was quite a warm and humid night and no one had to remind us that we were in a different country. A country with its own unique culture and customs! After introductions, we were 'herded' outside towards a small truck with caged tray and long benches for sitting on - like an old time work gang! Our luggage was loaded into the truck and all twelve of us climbed into the van to drive to our abode - *The Pines*.

Our first day was Saturday and after breakfast our team leaders led us for a walk into town after first having a look at the damage and work required on the two properties, *Hilltop* (the cottage that lost its roof) and *Legacy* (the three storey building 15 minutes' walk away on the main road).

We visited the local markets where one could buy not only fruit and vegetables, but also handcrafts, clothes and souvenirs and where you could get your hair braided. The locals were all so friendly. The women wore colourful *Mother Hubbard* dresses and their little ones played or slept on mats on the floor in the stalls.

All along our travels, we could see a lot of damage by ruthless cyclone Pam. Many places

were still roofless! Erosion and piles of debris everywhere evidenced a huge storm. To get back to our base we caught a mini bus - an experience in itself! A bit like a taxi and everyone paid the same fare!

Saturday afternoon we went to Erakor Island by truck transport and ferry-boat. After we walked the historic part of the island we waded in the clear shallow water and saw huge amounts of large colourful starfish and coral. At the restaurant, where we had some delicious sweets, our friendly Ni-Van waitress told us she believed that God had allowed the cyclone because people were not faithful to Him and He punished them. Now, she said, many were going to church again. What an amazing witness.

That evening as we each shared our story it was evident that God had brought an amazing group of skills and dedication together, each person with their own story!

Sunday morning we boarded the now familiar truck to go to the International Christian Church and were invited to join the church for a lunch at Honeymoon Beach. We had a swim and snorkel among the colourful fish and coral. God's creation is indeed awesome. Bible study and tea rounded off what was an amazing weekend, and we hadn't even started work yet?

The advance work team had worked hard for two weeks before we arrived to get the roof on *Hilltop* and make it watertight. Dave Bentink and I were to rewire the building while Gerry de Vos and Peter Whitby worked on new ceilings. Peter Dunstan and David



**Marlene de Vos cleaning the Hilltop kitchen**

O'Dempsey continued rewiring of *Legacy*. Peter Gillespie, amongst many other things, would be our purchasing officer and deliveryman, handyman, and at the same time keep an eye on us all. It was wonderful to have Loui and Edwin, two Christian Ni-Van men, working with us. Another wonderful day punctuated with regular breaks for 'smoko', lunch and afternoon tea. The women on team looked after us very well with food and drink as well as all the other domestic tasks. Even



**L-R: David O'Dempsey, Edwin Frezer, Peter and Yvonne Gillespie, Dave and Kylie Bentink, Peter and Dianne Whitby; Gerry and Marlene de Vos, Peter Dunstan, Loui Makie, Harry Hordyk.**

our washing was done for us. I didn't have to bring that many changes of clothes after all! The humidity was bearable and thankfully, we could shower!

During the week we had various missionaries join us for the evening meal and explain the work they were doing. Each evening our amazement grew for the dedication and love they showed for the work of the Lord in the very difficult task of translating the Bible into the local vernacular - in a mostly oral culture! An immense task with lots of challenges of deciding on the correct wording to be understood in the varied cultures of Vanuatu's 82 islands and 111 languages! All the missionaries, from many different countries, are funded by their own church or individual supporters. They first had to learn Bislama, the national language, and the culture of the people they would be working and living amongst in villages on remote islands. What a privilege for us (the work team) to have a little glimpse of God's work of spreading the Gospel in this region of the world!

It was quite a week and by Friday, we were looking forward to Saturday off. Our West Oz contingent chose to go on an around the island cultural tour. It was great! We saw a lot

more of where and how the locals live and also the lay of the land and the damaged caused by Pam.

The repairs, renovations, rewiring work the team set out to do was completed by the following Thursday afternoon so we went out that night to celebrate and for a farewell dinner to Hideaway Island. A fully loaded 'cattle truck' of people and two wonky ferry trips in the dark saw us to the island! To get the little skiff ferry Peter had to signal with a torch so that they knew we were waiting to be picked up. Like the storybooks of the smugglers of old! We had an unforgettable meal on a sea shore of crushed coral with hermit crabs scurrying around our feet! We all said our goodbyes that night. Not easy as we had built up quite a relationship in the past two short weeks.

Friday morning we got up at 4:15 am and left for the airport half an hour later. This time we went to the airport in style in a mini-van! No more truck! After more goodbyes, we were off. God willing we may cross paths again.

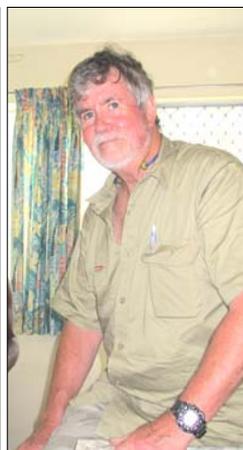
It was a great privilege to be part of such a wonderful work team experience! Thanks a lot to all and especially to our heavenly Father.



**Gerry de Vos installing a new ceiling in Hilltop**



**Kylie Bentink putting the ceiling gap in Hilltop**



**David O'Dempsey helping re-wire Legacy**



**Dianne Whitby cleaning up from the cyclone**

## God's Timing

*By Peter Gillespie*

We planned to take a second work team to Port Vila to complete the electrical rewiring of the buildings commenced in February. In God's providence, it was delayed because volunteer electricians were not available until May. At that stage, we had no idea a cyclone was coming. As it turned out it was perfect timing, as any earlier would have been either during the cyclone or immediately after when there was utter chaos and impossible to buy materials and supplies.

Thanks to *Pam*, the scope of work required got a whole lot bigger than just rewiring. More volunteers were needed, but accommodation was limited, especially as *Hilltop* was no longer available.

Peter and Dianne Whitby, who were planning to lead a team to the Northern Territory, were re-assigned to Vanuatu and they were joined by Bill Keenan, all experienced work team participants.

A team of five from Western Australia including two electricians and a builder put their hands up, the perfect combination of skills for the work to be accomplished. They were joined by two more from Melbourne to make up the second stage team. The SIL site could not take any more people. Every bed was occupied even a temporary double bed in the children's education room.

Praise God that now, five months after the cyclone, all the structural, safety and electrical repairs are completed.

(Continued from page 1)

donations for cyclone relief for Vanuatu. Our dear friends from Wycliffe Associates Australia have spent months rebuilding our damaged buildings.

And now, five months later, trees have put out new leaves, gardens have started to grow again, and bit by bit, the people of Vanuatu are putting their lives back together again. Many are discouraged and wondering why this happened to them. Pray with us for hearts to be open to the answer to their greatest need, a Saviour, Christ the Lord.

### DONATIONS TO CYCLONE RELIEF

If you would like to contribute to the relief effort, donations can still be made through the Wycliffe Australia website:

[wycliffe.org.au/donate/payments](http://wycliffe.org.au/donate/payments)

- Choose One-off Credit Card donation
- Tick General donation
- Fill-in Vanuatu Cyclone Bible Relief and details below
- Click-on Proceed to Payment

## Unseen damage

One of the consequences of cyclone Pam that may not be obvious to the casual observer has been the loss of resources in the schools. Vital reading resources in the local languages that had been developed by translators over many years were destroyed during the cyclone. The printing machines at SIL Port Vila have been working overtime to re-produce some of these readers. Work team members were able to help in this work.



Valerie Dunstan, reproofing and collating school readers.

## Final Work Team for 2015

**Kangaroo Ground:**  
19 October- 6 November 2015  
Building and grounds maintenance

**Northern Territory**  
The plans to work in Darwin, Katherine and Alice Springs this year were put on hold to direct resources to cyclone recovery work in Vanuatu. But individuals can still help at any of these locations - if interested let us know.

### Change of email address

Please note that there has been a change to our email address from [peter-yvonne\\_gillespie@wbt.org](mailto:peter-yvonne_gillespie@wbt.org) to [peter-yvonne\\_gillespie@wycliffe.org.au](mailto:peter-yvonne_gillespie@wycliffe.org.au)

## Big and Small – all a great help by Lyndal Webb

'What would we have done without them?' That's what we members of SIL Vanuatu are asking as we consider what was (a roofless house for one) and what is now! Our Port Vila property is an essential part of our translation work on the other islands of Vanuatu. Efficient administration and comfortable living keep our world going round! Cyclone Pam challenged all that, making us so thankful for the huge amount of work accomplished by the recent team who gave up their time, their money, their energy – amazing! Meanwhile, translation work didn't skip a beat as the workers freed us up to stick to our tasks.

Yes, the big work is a big help, but the small things too, that visiting volunteer teams do, often turn out to be not so small. A few years ago Peter Gillespie made some visual resources for us – a seemingly small job. The pieces of the 'heart' which he carefully cut to shape tell out the story of our aim in Bible translation.



Reading the Bible in a language that you don't understand is like trying to get into a house – ah, but the door is locked! The translation itself 'opens the door' to the reader. But the reader must 'go inside' and really look around – what we call Scripture Engagement work where we help people to read the Bible in a way that reveals the intended meaning. That reading and understanding is what God uses – the third piece of the puzzle – to grow a love for His Word and so for Him, giving new Life.

So there I was, sitting in a little church on Epi Island, watching Serah, the secretary of Vanuatu Bible Translation use Peter's handiwork for the umpteenth time in the umpteenth place, conveying the message of the importance of understanding God's Word. I was thinking thankful thoughts for the 'small' jobs too that Peter and his crew have done to assist Bible translation in Vanuatu.

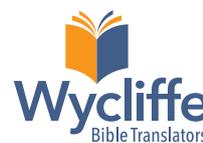
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