

PROJECT PROFILE

Dela

THE PEOPLE

The Dela people live in Indonesia, an island nation in Asia that has been troubled by political and religious unrest for the last several years. The Dela are one of several language groups that live together on the small island of Rote in well-defined areas established by historic kings. The Dela live at the western extremity of the complex dialect chain, which extends down the island.

One of the Dela people's basic foods is a sweet, milky drink, *nirah*, that comes from a special variety of lontar palm. The people tap the palm during the five months of dry season each year, drinking the *nirah* directly and also making it into sugar. The people also grow gardens during the wet season, catch fish, and raise pigs, goats, sheep and water buffalo. They use horses for transportation, and they have begun to grow and sell seaweed, used in food and cosmetic products.

THE NEED

Traders introduced the people of Rote to Christianity in the 1700s. Impressed by the Christian religion, three rulers went to the larger, more populated island of Java a few years later to investigate it further. There they became Christians, were baptized and attended three years of Bible school. When they returned to their island, they brought a precious copy of the Bible, written in the trade language. Setting up schools, they taught people to read, and soon Christianity spread throughout the island. The Dela people are proud of their faith and their churches but still do not have God's Word in their own language. Pastors use the Indonesian-language Bible in services, but without understandable Scriptures, professing Christians lack the foundational truths that lead to practical applications for Christian living.

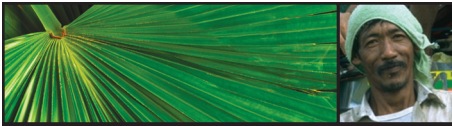
Many Dela people are well-educated in Indonesian but not in their own language. Previous translation attempts have been unsuccessful, hindered by difficulties with the complexities of the Dela writing system. Since the late 1800s, several scholars have attempted to describe the island languages. Currently, an anthropologist and a linguist have joined forces to study and compare the various languages of Rote.

THE BACKGROUND

In 2002, a retired pastor introduced the Dela people to the Scripture in Kupang Malay, a creole language used widely in the region. Inspired, the people drafted the Gospel of Mark on their own. After various quality reviews, it is almost ready to be checked by a translation consultant.



- **Location:** Timor, Indonesia
- **Number of Speakers:** 7,000



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As part of the Timor Initiative Program, The Seed Company has provided minimal funding for the last two years for the translators' basic training and travel. The team is ready to move ahead with a full translation project, and they are requesting financial and technical assistance. The local Dela community and church strongly support this project, as does the leadership of the primary denomination, which is headquartered in Kupang, Timor.

THE GOAL

The translation team will produce the Dela New Testament and Genesis by March 30, 2013. The translation should serve both the Dela and Dela-Oenale dialects. The translators will also develop a dictionary and a good writing system, and Dela believers will be trained to produce literature and hymns for worship in their own language. Literacy activities will enable the people who can already read Indonesian to use these translated materials effectively.

Scriptures in the Dela language will fulfill the desire of individual believers to grow in their faith, and the church will be strengthened as its members mature.

THE PERSONNEL

God has called Thresia Tamelan, a native Dela speaker, to serve as the project advisor. She shows a strong interest in Bible translation and possesses exceptional linguistic skills and a good facility in English. She serves on the education faculty at the Christian university in Kupang and will work part-time on translation.

Project plans include training and mentoring Thresia as a translation consultant. During 2006, she will hone her translation skills by working with the Dela team. Thresia will start her formal internship in December 2006 with a translation-training course at the Wycliffe headquarters in Melbourne, Australia. The following year, she will study for a master's degree in applied linguistics at the state university in Darwin, Australia. Drs. Charles and Barbara Grimes, who provide technical services for translation in the Timor region, will also mentor Thresia as she works on the translation and completes her studies.

We anticipate that Thresia will eventually begin checking Scripture in other languages of the region, first in a trainee role, and later as an independent translation consultant in this part of the world where the need for skilled consultants continues to grow.

- **Project Goal:** New Testament plus Old Testament portions
- **Year Project Began:** 2005
- **Expected Completion Date:** 2015



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JOINING THE TEAM

The translators on Rote Island cannot complete their goals alone. They need your help. Your financial gift will support national Bible translators by providing equipment, salaries, travel costs and quality linguistic training. Prayerfully consider how God might use your financial gift to bring His word to the Dela people.

The translators also need faithful prayer partners who will commit to praying regularly for every aspect of the project. Translators and their families will depend on your prayers as they sacrifice to see the Scriptures in their language. Commit today to pray for the translation work on Rote Island and the precious Dela speakers who are waiting to hear about the love of Christ. Call The Seed Company at 1-817-557-2121 to let us know of your commitment.

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