

## North Waghi survey – August 2006

Hi folks. It's hard to believe that we've been in PNG for 2 months now. I was expecting to have gone on a tribal survey within a couple of weeks but things in PNG don't always go at the speed we would like. During the past few weeks we have been planning a "bush house" for us to live in when we eventually get to the tribe. I have been working on a couple of pieces of furniture and pricing up materials for constructing a house. We are planning to use solar panels and batteries for running lights, computer and some small appliances with a generator backup for cloudy days. It's going to be a challenge for us as a team to be involved in our house building project as none of us have any experience of house building. There are a couple of men here working with NTM who have said that they will help us out though, which is good news. We'll keep you posted when we begin building.

There were two tribes that we were interested in working amongst. One was in Gulf Province called Kamea and the other was Yuwe in North Waghi, Western Highlands Province. Since we have been back here in PNG we have met with our team members and the leadership team to discuss and pray about making a decision regarding which place we feel God is directing us to. We met with some Hamtai Christians who live fairly near Kamea and they told us that they do regular outreach into the area. Not only that, but they also speak the Kamea language and therefore have no problems communicating with the all the people from the young to the elderly. When the meeting was over we all felt that the work of reaching the Kamea people should be left in the hands of the Hamtai believers. NTM desires above everything else to leave the work in the hands of PNG people.



For this reason we started planning a trip into North Waghi to look at what was going on among the people who speak the Yuwe language. We did our homework about the area as best as we could before making the journey. We planned the places we wanted to look at by looking at maps. Then we wrote letters to some of the village leaders to prepare them for our arrival. After that we got our equipment ready and some questionnaires and word lists and then we were ready to go.

We left Goroka on Monday 21<sup>st</sup> August and headed along the highlands highway towards the

Western Highlands Province. The highway is a tarmac road but has huge holes and cracks in it for the most part. The journey to North Waghi took us 5 hours.

As soon as we arrived at one of the government stations we were surrounded by many people who wanted to know why we were there. We sat and explained that we were working with a mission that had been in PNG for over 50 years but had never come into their province. We were careful to explain that we were not interested in setting up church buildings or Schools, but that our focus was teaching God's word in tribal languages and translation of the Bible into tribal languages. We also mentioned that we are involved in literacy so that all can have the chance to read the Bible in their own language. When our little speech was finished, the people began to talk back and forth in Yuwe (their tribal language) and then a spokesman told us that we would be most welcome to come and work in their area. The people were very friendly and we literally shook hands with 100's of people that afternoon.

## Surrounded!



In the afternoon we drove around the area into some of the small villages surrounding the government station. Some of the people came with us and showed us around. One man had a fish business and showed us his land and houses. He was most eager for us to live near to him when we finally move into North Waghi. Another local man who was in authority wanted us to see his place. It was pretty amazing to see a big satellite dish on the roof of his house miles from any source of power.

During our stay we took lists of words in the Yuwe language. With over 800 languages in PNG, most of the languages border with others. Yuwe borders with Chimbu on the east and Melpa on the West. There

is some mixing of words at the borders with the other languages so it was important for us to find out where the Yuwe language is at its purest.

We also noticed that there were many churches in the North Waghi area. This is because any places in PNG near roads have churches along them. It seems that the more inaccessible places in PNG have fewer churches. Many churches don't always mean that people understand the Gospel. We also took some questionnaires along with us to ask people about their beliefs. We needed to do this to determine whether they really understand the Gospel or not. The people who we asked were not clear in their understanding of the truth of the Gospel. Many people are living by a code of conduct rather than trusting Christ as the sole source of their salvation and spiritual life. Not only this, but we also heard that every time a new denomination comes into their area, people tend to leave their church for the new one. There were even a couple of people who wanted to be baptized into our mission while we were there!

Sadly the Jehovah's witnesses, the Mormon Church and even a small number of Muslims are operating in the area. All this plus people mixing their bible beliefs with their tribal beliefs amounts to a real misunderstanding of truth.

Each evening we slept at a different place. It always amazes me how hospitable PNG people are! We took rice and some other food along with us and they did the cooking for us. The countryside is beautiful in the Waghi Valley. Ice cold streams, huge mountains, gorges and flowers growing everywhere really made us appreciate God's creation. I'm sure that it will be a great place to live!

## Waghi Valley



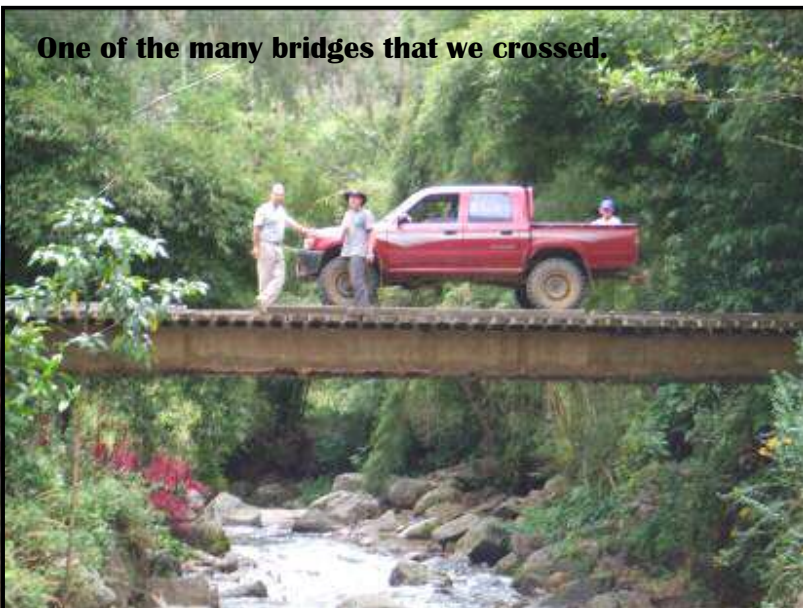
Most of the villages that we visited were similar in respect of churches, layout etc. Some had good roads leading to them whilst others had mud roads that were dangerous in wet weather. People told us to be careful out in Western Highlands as there were reports of criminal activity but we found the people to be very friendly and kind.

In summary we as a team are interested in 3 villages. All were centrally located in the language family and had a decent number of people living in each one. The total number of people living in North Waghi is approx 45,000. One of the villages that we are interested in has about 4000 people. The next step is for us to plan a last trip into these 3 villages and meet with the village leaders regarding where we can build houses. Living in this vicinity would mean that we will have to buy a team vehicle so that we can get supplies etc.

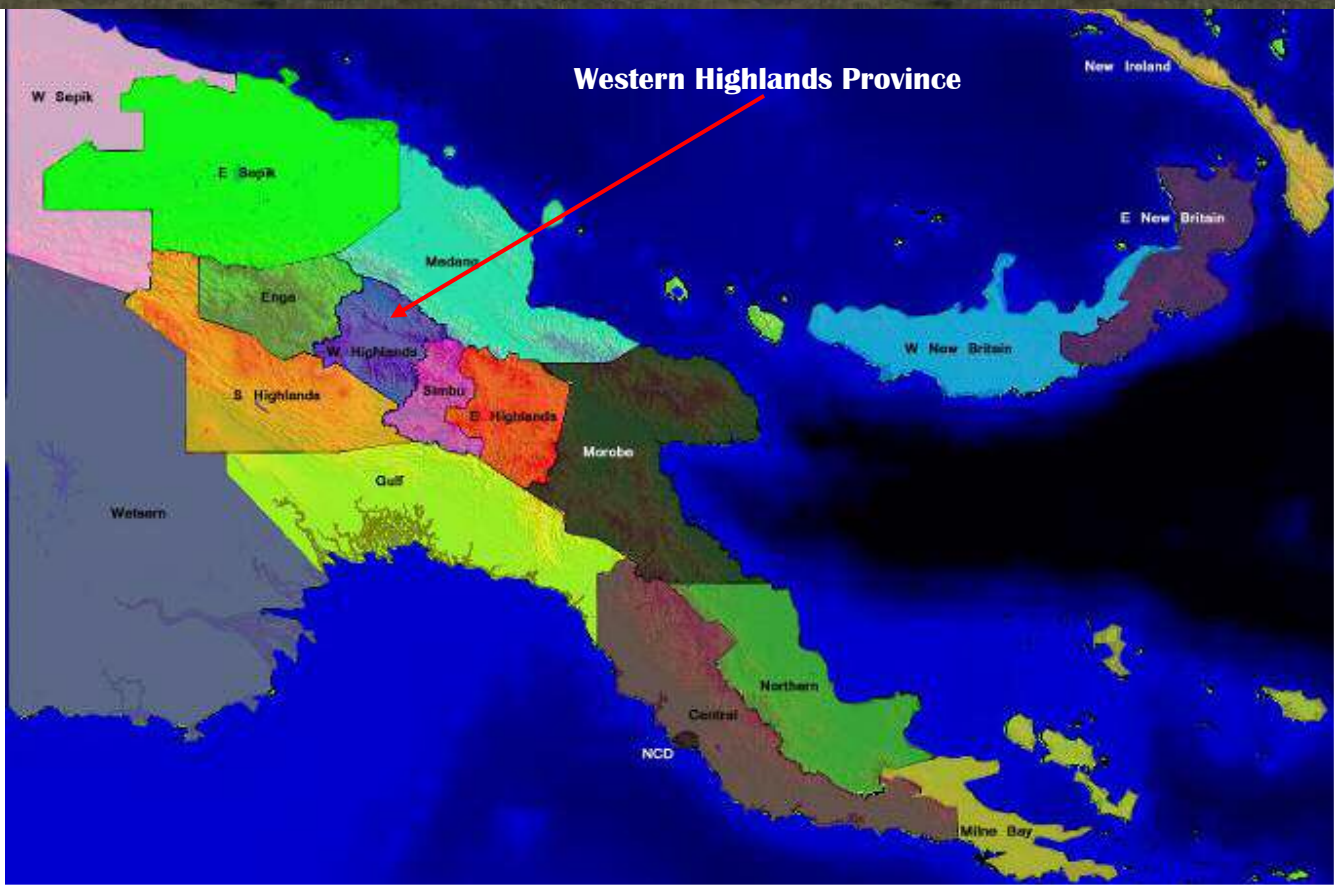
It all gets pretty exciting from here as we get closer to the start of seeing God glorified among the people of North Waghi. Please pray for us as we make the necessary preparations that our eyes will not be consumed with earthly things, but that Christ will fill our thoughts and passions.



Me with a village man



One of the many bridges that we crossed.



Western Highlands Province