



## Papua New Guinea

Eastern half of New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, plus Bougainville in the Solomon Islands, also many smaller islands in the north and east which make up the nation of Papua New Guinea.

Area: 462,840 sq km – slightly larger than California

Population: 5,420,280 (July 2004 est.)

Capital: Port Moresby: 380,000

Ethnic groups: Melanesian, Papuan, Negrito, Micronesian, Polynesian

Religions: Roman Catholic 22%, Lutheran 16%, Presbyterian/Methodist/London Missionary Society 8%, Anglican 5%, Evangelical Alliance 4%, Seventh-Day Adventist 1%, other Protestant 10%, indigenous beliefs 34%. Freedom of religion.

Languages: official language is English (spoken by 1%-2% of the population). Tok Pisin (Melanesian Pidgin) serves as the common trade language, and Motu spoken in Papua region. Note: there are 715 indigenous languages – many unrelated.

Literacy: 64.6%



### ⇒Answers to Prayer⇐

- ☉ A national prayer movement for revival was born in 1997 in response to the serious problems of the young nation
- ☉ The cease-fire in Bougainville with serious talks initiated seeking a fair solution
- ☉ The 1998 elections resulted in many active Christians entering Parliament

### ⇒Challenges for Prayer⇐

- ☉ The government faces a daunting task of uniting such a variety of peoples into a single nation
- ☉ Economic development is a major challenge
- ☉ The PNG Church faces challenging problems: effective discipling; strong tribal ties, ancient animosities and diversity of languages; lack of Scriptures and illiteracy in many languages; denominational rivalry
- ☉ Leadership training is a priority
- ☉ There is increasing missionary vision in the country
- ☉ Missionaries both from the South Pacific and the West suffered disease and martyrdom at the hands of cannibals during the early days of church-planting just over 100 years ago

(Statistics are compiled from *Operation World* and *CIA – The World Factbook 2005*)

## Chambri breakthrough

"The eerie sound of beating drums echoed out of the spirit house as we approached. We entered in, walking between the men who were dressed in grass skirts, head dresses and painted faces. ...Then the men surprised me by sitting down. They solemnly inquired of us: 'Tell us about Saddam Hussein and the coming war.' Then they asked, 'Will this be the end of us all?'"

Can you imagine these questions coming from a so-called "primitive", isolated, tribal group? These are actual sentences taken from a missionary who works among the Chambri people group of Papua New Guinea. This missionary and his family have worked among them for about 14 years, seeing about 70 conversions to Christ. Recently, however, as the result of the missionary's preaching, a riot broke out where he and his fellow workers were "punched, spat on and kicked around a bit." Nevertheless, God changed the hearts of their persecutors, and opened them up to hear the gospel. They are the same ones who asked, "will this be the end of us all?" From that question, the missionary was able to explain what Jesus had to say about the end times in Matthew 24. (*Global Prayer Digest – October 31, 2003*)

## Tribe in Papua New Guinea to receive completed New Testament translation

With over 700 indigenous languages in Papua New Guinea, Bible translation is an ongoing task to reach people with the Gospel. New Tribes Mission has worked with the Aziana tribe in the highland region of Papua to complete translation of the New Testament and parts of the Old Testament. The tribe has had portions of the Bible in smaller books, but has not had the full New Testament in one book. The people are anticipating having the completed copy.

Mike Henderson is with New Tribes. He explains the importance of this tribe having the Scriptures, "These people need to have the New Testament, need to have the Bible in their language, in their mother tongue too. And even though there's only 1000 of these people, they mean a lot to God, and to themselves — I mean, if you were one of those, you'd want to know what God's message was to you, and you'd want to know it as clearly as possible."

The common trade language had previously been used to reach the Aziana people, but there were misunderstandings about who God is. With the Bible in their own language, it is a much better way of communicating. (*Mission News Network – December 16, 2004*)