

MiDi BIBLE

Ministry for the Distribution of the Bible in Minority Languages

“Be always prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.” 1 Peter 3:15

A personal thought



We live more and more in a time of insecurity and spiritual confusion. However, Jesus asks us who believe to be the salt and the light of the earth!

Matthew 5:13. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ... You are the light of the world... Our heavenly Father has called us all to exercise a positive influence and to reflect his light of peace and salvation which he placed in us.

Yes, we are all called to proclaim with gentleness and respect the assurance of eternal life which is in us! (1 Peter 3:15-16)

Are we ready to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ in a clear manner when we are in the presence of people who need it. God will place us in situations where we will be offering hope either through the printed Word in their maternal language or through a personal testimony? Can God count on us to share his message?

“Be ready for action.” In the weeks and months to come, we will have many opportunities to act.

As of now, I must make the decision to be ready to work and to respond to the need according to the means that God has given me.

BULLETIN #7 - BANNA - Dec 2015

Romans 10:14-15. How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?

Last year, MiDi Bible was able to publish 3000 New Testament in Nawdm, a Togolese language. After the celebration marking the arrival of these precious books we received a beautiful testimony. It encouraged us to continue the work of publishing the Bible and the literacy work in minority languages. We were told, “Many souls are won over to Christ because Jesus speaks Nawdm. They are now interested in the Word of God and want to read it.”

Dear friends, thank you for your precious support and your prayers which allow us to faithfully pursue this ministry which God has entrusted to us.

With all our best wishes for a 2016 New Year blessed in Christ,

Paul-André Eicher

RECENT NEWS

Late breaking news: The Bible in **Gonja** for Ghana and the two New Testaments in **Tamajaq Tawallammat** for Niger

have finally cleared customs and left the port where they were warehoused for many weeks.

- The two New Testaments in **Tama-jaq Tawallammat**, published both in Latin characters and in original Shifinagh characters, delight the translation leader. He writes, "They are very nice and represent a work of really good quality such as we hoped for. Thank you to MiDi Bible which contributed in so many ways."



- The Gonja committee confirmed the date of Saturday, February 6, 2016, for the dedication of their new Bible. It will take place in the north of the country. They are hoping that the president of Ghana will come in person for this unique occasion. President Mahama is a Christian of this ethnic group. The committee plans to offer him a beautiful Bible in **Gonja**. The cost of this event is rather high, so the committee has sought the support of the local churches. The translators and the Gonja Christians are waiting eagerly for this day of celebration during which they will be able to finally receive the Bible in their mother tongue.

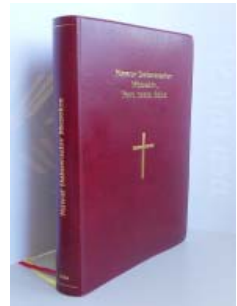
- One of our partners recently gave a copy of Proverbs to an Imam. It was a volume with Arab characters we published this summer in **Fulfulde of Burkina Faso**. Proudly and enthusiastically this man read an extract

in his language. Then one of his relatives revealed that the Imam was planning to read the entire book the same day. Our partner will need wisdom and tact to seize the opportune time to offer him the Gospel of Matthew so that he can discover the only way to God.



Regarding the publications in process, we are working on the **Daba** for the north of Cameroon and the **East-Niger Fulfulde** (Woodabe).

- The 2,000 copies of the revised New Testament in **Daba** have been shipped and are to arrive at the port of Douala in a few weeks. Martha Giger is a retired Swiss missionary who lived and worked for 20 years among the Daba. She testifies, "The first edition of the New Testament in **Daba** had a great impact on the people, especially among the women who are more or less monolingual. The Christians await with eagerness the revised new edition of their book."



- With regard to the 2,000 copies of the **East-Niger Fulfulde** New Testament, they were just printed and are in the bookbinding process. A translation consultant tells us that the local translators work in more and more difficult conditions with great

self-denial and often to the limits of their strength.

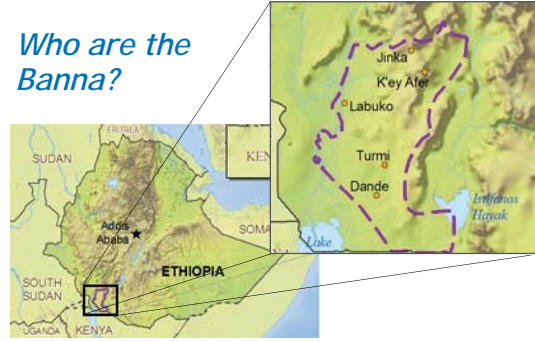
BANNA OF ETHIOPIA

His voice rich with emotion, Ayke thanked God for Getu's father, the first Banna believer. Ayke was speaking to the overflow crowd gathered to dedicate the Banna New Testament recently published by Midi Bible. Getu's father used to ask, "Who will carry on the work?" God's answer? Ayke, Getu and Dawit, sons of the first believers, would translate His Word into **Banna**, their heart language. Working with missionaries from SIM, they completed the translation of the New Testament, but not without difficulty and prayer.

August 9, 2015 marked the dedication of the Banna New Testament. SIM missionary Donna Clawson served as **Banna** Translation Project Manager until her retirement in 2011. SIM missionary Carolyn Ford served as **Banna** Translation Consultant and also carried on as Project Manager after Donna's retirement. Reflecting on the event to Paul-André Eicher, Carolyn wrote, "God blessed the dedication of the Banna New Testament with His presence and great joy. Please praise Him with us."

She wrote those words while in Ethiopia, home of the Banna and 81 other language groups, many of which do not have Scripture in their mother tongue.

Who are the Banna?



The Banna and another ethnic group, the Hamer, speak the same language, often referred to as **Hamer-Banna**.

The number of people having access to Scripture through the Banna translation is about 70,000 to 100,000. The Banna and Hamer live in the remote, inaccessible, undeveloped lowlands of southwest Ethiopia, a rugged landlocked country of East Africa with a population of 74 million.



They live off their cattle and their meager harvests

Related Banna families live together in camps which they move to follow their grazing herds of cattle, sheep and goats during the dry season. At a camp site, women and children live in fami-



ly tents placed in a circle. The men and older boys sleep on cots near the cattle, which they bring into the center of the camp for protection at night. Many Banna plant fields of maize, sorghum, sesame and beans during the rainy season.

The Banna and neighboring language groups are animists. They believe that natural objects such as trees and rocks have spirits. They also believe in jinnis, spirits capable of assuming human or animal form. The Banna may attribute sickness, infertility and death to the resentment of a deceased relative. They appease the relative by the offering of a sacrifice.

How did they receive the Gospel?



A literacy class

Evangelists from the highlands of Ethiopia have been living among the Hamar and Banna since

the 70s. A church planted among the Banna grew but the people needed God’s Word in their own language. A few excellent church leaders have nurtured the believers, now about 1,000 strong. SIM built an elementary school

In front of one of their churches



Translators supervised by Carolyn Ford

for the Banna people at Alduba in the 1990s. Most of the students were children of believers but the literacy rate is still around 3%. SIM also built a clinic in 1988, which helped open people’s hearts to the Gospel. By the mid-90’s the need for Banna Scripture led to the creation of an SIM translation team with Carolyn Ford as translation consultant. Although she went to teach math and Bible at a SIM high school in Ethiopia in 1973, God quickly led her into Bible translation. She says, “I helped with the translation of about 45% of the Old Testament into **Aari** before handing the project over to another organization. The **Banna** language is somewhat related to **Aari**.” Because of this linguistic similarity, the team could use a computer program called CARLA (Computer Assisted Related Language Adaptation). It enabled them to develop a rough draft of the **Banna** Scriptures from the **Aari** Scriptures.

Starting with this rough draft, Ayke, Getu and Dawit revised it many times seeking a natural flow. They replaced computer language with common figures of speech.



The translated text is tested to ensure natural flow

SIM linguist Donna Clawson worked alongside the translators to train, advise and encourage them. When one or more books were ready, Carolyn Ford traveled to meet with them and check that their translations accurately interpreted the original text.

The team printed each New Testament book after it passed the consultant's check. They would use it for literacy and Bible study while awaiting publication of the full New Testament. The project also produced a variety of literacy materials and trained some Banna Christians as literacy tutors.

Efforts are rewarded



In the Ethiopian script

As the translation neared completion in 2010, another SIM worker, Tabitha Cox, contacted MiDi Bible to inquire

about printing the complete Banna New Testament. Early in 2012, a contract was signed.

Orthography delayed fulfillment of their agreement. In October of 2012, Carolyn wrote, "...just as we were thinking we could send the manu-

script for typesetting, we learned that the Ministry of Education here plans to produce textbooks in the **Hamer-Banna** language. Unfortunately, from a human perspective, they have not yet decided what script they will use." Printing had to await the government's decisions about certain characters in the Ethiopian script.

God answered prayer, although not on man's timetable. At long last, officials resolved the orthography issues. Type-setting took place. Printing proceeded. Shipment followed. Boxes containing 2,000 Latin script and 1,000 Ethiopian script Banna New Testaments sailed to Djibouti in mid-February. God an-



During the dedication of the NT

swered prayers for safe arrival and transport to the Banna in Ethiopia. About a hundred people bought their own copies of the Banna New Testa-



Women in praise & worship during that time

ment as they celebrated its dedication on August 9.

Please continue to pray that the New

Testaments will be received and read with eagerness, and that God will work in Banna hearts.

Testimonies Getu Garsho and Ayke Bezabih

“Translation work is difficult and tedious. When I joined the translation team, I had a full head of hair; now half of it has disappeared. People would accuse us of sitting all day in an office, receiving a wage to do nothing.

“Sometimes I got discouraged. Once I told my wife I was going to quit, but she rebuked me. She said, ‘You must finish what you have started!’

“God brought us through all the trials and blessed our family. He gave me favor with people. God has met all our needs. Our wives have as much of

a part in the translation work as we do. If they had not been there to encourage us and care for our families we could not have done the work.” – Getu

“Because our parents made the effort to see that we were educated and taught the Scriptures, there are many people involved in ministry. I praise God for Garsho and the other early believers. I think Garsho contributed more to the translation of the Banna New Testament than any of us on the translation team.” – Ayke



Getu and Ayke the main translators

TRANSLATION GEMS

How to translate Col. 3:19 into Nawdm:

English: “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be embittered against them.”

Nawdm: “You, husbands, love your wives and don’t carry them in your mouths.”

The expression “carry someone in your mouth” uses the normal verb for “carry”, which usually is on the head, but which could also mean the result: to be loaded down. To carry someone in your mouth means to continually speak against them.

You can also carry your own mouth, and that signifies to pout, show your discontent. This is found, for example in Mat. 6:16

English: “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face...”

Nawdm: “When you bind your mouth, do not carry your mouths...”

READER’S COMMENTS

We have a great God who knows how to use the means that appear the craziest to men to communicate the most beautiful message: the Bible! Bravo to the entire team.

J.M.

I really appreciate the MiDi Bible News Bulletin in which I discover with interest on one hand the ethnic groups for whom you publish the Bible and on the other hand the important work of this translation and publication ministry.

C.D.N.

The bulletin no. 6 and your letter made me glad, for the Grays, Marti Giger and the Frempongs are my very good friends. We bless the Lord that these minority people in Ghana and in Cameroon have the Word of Life in their hands. We desire the rich benediction of the Lord upon you.

R.K. July 2015

TESTIMONIES FROM THE MISSION FIELD

After having learned to read and write **Nawdm**, I made an effort to put into practice all that I learned. This led me to become an interpreter in my church (to translate orally from French into **Nawdm** during church services). Next I became a translator with the project. It was through doing the translation work that I understood the Scriptures better, and it also helped me to improve my style for writing **Nawdm** more naturally. Now when doing the interpretation in my church, I am able to do so more accurately and can express things naturally in **Nawdm** without doubt or hesitation. Through this experience I learned that the **Nawdm** language has just as great a value as any other written language. Now I am able to read fluently



the translated Scriptures. As a result, during our church meetings, those who can't read are very interested to listen to the Word of God being read in their mother tongue. There are some elderly women who often invite me to come read the Word of God to them. This gives me much joy to see the Nawdm people interested in the Bible, to see that God speaks to them in their own language.

A Nawdba translator

The translators became my very good friends. I have a lot of respect for them. They work in more and more difficult conditions with much self-denial and often to the limits of their strength. I am giving this testimony because I believe the valor and the personal commitment of the translators is the best guarantee of the quality of the translation. All those who support this work by their gifts and their prayers are heartily thanked.

*R.V. translation consultant
for the East-Niger Fulfulde*



Banna children

PRAYER REQUESTS

Specific needs

- Pray for the routing of the New Testaments which have been printed. The customs clearance and land transport to the destination can be difficult with corrupt administrations and practically impassable access routes.
- Thank you for praying for us as a team. We are grateful for Florent Wenger, who is completing his training at the Bible Institute of Geneva. Florent will join us for a period of eight months as a first step. Please keep us in prayer about his integration into the team and a good distribution of responsibilities.

- While many translation projects are behind schedule, we are expecting new projects from the Lord in the coming months.
- Pray that the Christians of the Hamer and Banna tribes, including translators, fully realize the value of having God’s Word in their language.

General Needs

- Pray for the renewing of the translation teams who need strengthening at times to continue the translation of the Old Testament.
- Pray that all these seeds would find hearts disposed to preserve this precious Word of Life.



By your support and your prayers, you bring to minority ethnic groups such as the Banna access to the Word of God that transforms their lives and gives them a new hope when they feel forgotten, despised, and without a future!

MiDi BIBLE: who are we?

Our non-profit charity aims to publish the Bible in minority languages. Its goal is to offer to these people groups the Good News of Jesus Christ and to help them in their literacy efforts.

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