

# MiDi BIBLE

Ministry for the Distribution of the Bible in Minority Languages

*Be strong and courageous...  
The LORD himself goes before you and will be with you;  
he will never leave nor forsake you. Deut. 31:7-8*

BULLETIN #6 - GONJA - July 2015

## A personal thought



*It is with these wonderful promises of God that Moses, aged 120, encouraged Joshua to take up, with strength and quietness of soul, the leading of His rebellious people!*

*As we in our lives must also face various trials (I Peter 1:6), the Lord gives us a defender, the Holy Spirit, who guides us and comforts us in our daily walk with Him.*

*God has given us his “living and enduring” Word (I Peter 1:22-23) as spiritual nourishment. It leads us and gives us assurance that we can trust Him in every circumstance (Phil 1:6). This is why we need to encourage each other to read his Word each day. They “examined the scriptures every day ...” Acts 17:11.*

*What a blessing to know that God the Father has preserved His Word for more than 3,000 years. For it to speak to our hearts, He has given it to us in a language that we can read and understand. We all need it, and I especially know that need when I feel sometimes overwhelmed by administrative tasks. But God encourages me by all the requests for publishing his Word that come to us for these people groups who do not yet have it in their mother tongue.*

*According to the United Bible Societies, the complete Bible is available in 542*

*languages and the New Testament in 1,342 languages out of about 6,500 languages currently spoken in the world. Much work remains to be done to bring the good news of Christ to all nations (Matt 24:14). Thank you for your prayers and faithful support. They are essential to permit us to continue this valuable ministry. Together, we can help numerous ethnic groups to grasp the love of God and His forgiveness, and to receive assurance of eternal life with the joy and peace that He gives.*

*Warmly,  
Paul-André Eicher, President*

*Here is a very recent request...*

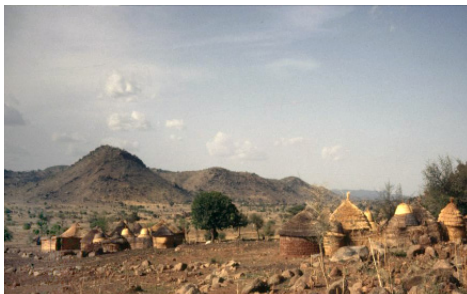
*“What a joy to have met you in Thailand at the International Gathering of the SIM. We are already into three publishing projects and we would love to have your support for four other editions in minority languages. We would be grateful for your help for these four language groups of Ghana: Nkonya, Birifor, Hanga, and Gonja. A great Thank You in advance!” J.A., SIM.*

## RECENT NEWS

Before this year, we never worked on so many publishing projects at the same time. While the Bible in **Baltic Romani**

has been in the hands of readers for several months, the 3,000 New Testaments in **Banna** are at the point of being delivered to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. And now 2,400 New Testaments in the **Tamajaq** language for the Tuareg of Niger are being printed and should be shipped in a month. Meanwhile, several other projects await our attention. After four months' delay, we received the page layout for the Bible in **Gonja** for Ghana. Another new project has just been added to our already full schedule. In January, Wycliffe Switzerland asked us to help them publish a New Testament in the **Daba** language of northern Cameroon. We were touched by the story and the people involved in this translation, and did not hesitate to accept the project.

Briefly, a translation of the New Testament in **Daba** was begun in the 1970s, and it was published in 1992. After a few years of use, the translators determined that a revision was needed. They began the work, but in



*Typical Daba village in a high isolated mountain area*

2010 the principal translator, Ruth Lienhard, left for retirement, which greatly slowed their progress. She was able to make several trips back to Cameroon to help the work along, but when



*The Daba NT team, March 2015, Yaoundé, Cameroon*

there were just three epistles remaining to revise, the Lord saw fit to take her home at the beginning of 2014.

At that time another retiree, Martha Gyger, who had also worked among the Dabas, returned to Cameroon to take up the torch of her friend. She was so energetic working along side the translators and consultant that the schedule was shortened! To the point that Wycliffe Switzerland, supporting the project, was caught unprepared. Wycliffe was glad to be able to count on the availability of Midi Bible to organize and co-finance this edition for a budget of about 21,000 Swiss Francs. The order has gone to the printer, and the 3,000 copies should be ready to deliver by the end of the year.

In addition to the four editions currently in progress, we have the joy of being able to help publish the Book of Proverbs and the Gospel of Matthew (3,000 copies each) in **Fulfulde** of Burkina Faso in Arabic script, and an edition of the Gospel of John in an **Arab dialect** for a country of North Africa.

## GONJA OF GHANA

EBƆRE BE KAWƆL means “Word of God” in the *Gonja* language. It is what will be printed on the cover of the 2,050 Bibles that will soon be published in the heart language of the Gonja people. What does it mean for them to have a printed copy of EBƆRE BE KAWƆL?

### Who are the Gonja people?

The Gonja ethnic group numbers around 288,000 people who live in the center-north of Ghana, in the grassy savannah watered by several branches of the Volta river.



Even though English is the official language of Ghana, the ethnic languages such as *Gonja* are very widely used. There are more than fifty languages, and twelve of them are taught at the university level.<sup>a</sup> Most of the Gonja understand their mother tongue much better than they do English.

The Gonja people have a system of government unusual for Ghana, that

harmoniously blends tribal tradition and the democracy of the state. As in the other tribes, their region is divided into districts that are governed by patriarchal lines of chiefs, who are under a king called the “YAGBONWURA.” The chiefs rule according to the traditional laws for local matters of property, justice, development, etc., while the Ghanaian government handles national affairs, education, infrastructure, justice, etc.

The Gonja people are religious, having a rich cultural history of which they are very proud. Many (58%) follow the Muslim religion introduced in the 14th and strengthened in the 19th century. Others (38%) practice traditional animist religion. They worship Edore, their supreme being, but only address him through ancestors and various spirits of nature.

Capitalism, Western education, and the Christian faith have had a strong impact in the urban regions of the Atlantic coast in the south of the country. In the rural north, where the Gonja people live, even if Islam and animism remain dominant, we see more and more people turning towards Christ. Generally speaking the coexistence of these different beliefs is fairly peaceful, but the Christians fear the



<sup>a</sup> Since our December 2014 newsletter, the Sisaa-la Tumulung has been added to the list, notably thanks to the literacy efforts related to the publishing of the Bible last year! Thank you, Lord!

infiltration of the Boko Haram militia operating in this area.

Since 1996, primary school has been obligatory and free. Still, many children stop attending very early due to additional expenses. And the poorer families keep their children at home to work the fields. As a result, the literacy rate of the Gonja people is the lowest of Ghana. Many of them live a poor life as subsistence farmers or traveling from village to village to find work.

### *The Bible for the Gonja people*

The New Testament in **Gonja** was translated by Jeanette Zwert, a World Evangelism for Christ missionary, aided by several young Gonja Christians. It was published in 1984. Since then, several thousand Gonja people have turned to Christ from reading this Good News, and thanks to the literacy work of Abdul-Rahim Adam, a Gonja chief who converted from Islam. Since 1983, an NGO has put in place a functional literacy program and development projects among the Gonja people. These programs have clearly improved the status of many women



*Chief A-R Adam and his wife, Felicia*

and permitted them to improve their economic situation. In addition, parents who have learned to read are more motivated to educate their children and

are better able to handle question of health, work, and agriculture.

Since the New Testament dedication in 1984, the Christians have awaited patiently for the day they will have the complete Bible in their language. They know that the writings of the Old Testament are a bridge to their Muslim countrymen, as numerous stories correspond to those of the Qur'an.

### **Translating the Old Testament**

In 2002, several church denominations came together to put in place a translation committee, supported by Wycliffe Hungary. An office was opened in Buipe with two full-time translators and two part-time translators, trained by GILLBT (Ghanaian Institute of Linguistics, Literacy, and Bible Translation).

The translators, Abdul-Rahim Adam and pastor Joseph Issah are former Muslims who came to Christ through reading



*Pastor Francis Mahama, his wife, and Claire Gray*

the New Testament. The two other translators are pastor Francis Mahama and John Kipo Mahama, among the very first Christians. These four men, working faithfully for eleven years, finished the translation in 2013. It then



*Pastor Issah, one of the full-time translators*

took nearly a year for proofreading and checking. During the entire process they worked with Ian Gray, translation consultant of Wycliffe, and his wife Claire. Through this Irish missionary couple, MiDi Bible was contacted in early 2013 for help to publish the Bible in **Gonja**. Thanks to the

generous support of donors, we took on the commitment to finance half of the publishing expense, which comes to about 26,000 Swiss Francs. We have checked the page layout of the Old and New Testaments done by GILLBT in Ghana, and we expect the printing to be done at the end of August. Hopefully, delivery can be made in November and a dedication celebrated before the months of the dry season.

Now, as with all the languages of the world, it is in the hands of God to make fruitful the EBORE BE KAWOL among the Gonja people. We can trust Him according to the promise of Isaiah 55:11, “So is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.”

### **Testimony of Nuhu Bakari**

*I was a typical farmer staying in the village as my uncle’s servant. A young pastor moved into the village. I thought, “Does he think he can succeed in getting people to follow the religion he is bringing here?”*

*But he succeeded in getting me. First of all, he organized Literacy classes and started teaching Gonja. Many people became interested. I became Pastor Issah’s favorite among the readers.*

*He started telling stories about Christ and gave me a Gonja New Testament, which I have been reading*



*to him every day. He told me about Jesus and we read about the miracles of Jesus and the authority he has over demons. Then I started reading the New Testament in my own language for myself. I had a personal encounter with Jesus and gave my life to Him. Pastor Issah baptized me.*

*Some few years later, I went to formal school and found I could succeed because my experience in the Gonja Literacy class. I have completed Second cycle education now. I read both the Gonja and English Bibles but I love to read the Gonja one because that is the one I understand best.*

**FINANCIAL REPORT**

*Income and Expenses 2014 (in CHF)*

<b>INCOME</b>	
Designated gifts	28,293
Undesignated gifts	134,112
<b>Total</b>	<b>162,405</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>	
Publishing Bibles & NT	83,256
Admin. & General expense	62,182
Misc donations	800
<b>Total</b>	<b>146,238</b>
Provisions for future projects	16,167

*Budget for 2015 (in CHF)*

	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Actual 2015</b>
3,000 NT in Banna	27,000	13,000
2,400 NT in Tamajaq	25,000	23,000
2,050 Bibles in Gonja	26,000	25,000
3,000 NT in Daba	21,000	21,000
2,000 NT in Foulfouldé Est-Niger	15,000	10,000
6,000 Gosp. and Prov. in Foulfouldé du BF	5,000	2,000
10,000 Gosp. in Arab dialect N. Afr.	6,000	4,000
Admin. & General expense		57,000
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>155,000</b>

The accounts were audited and approved by MM. W. Früh and P.-A. Koellmann, 5 June 2015

**TESTIMONY OF OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Ed and Jane Bussard are using their retirement years to support Bible translation. Ed is a retired banker and Jane retired from an administrative position in social services.

Both had been widowed when God introduced them in 2007. They married after a joyous seven-month courtship, sure that God had a plan for the rest of their lives.

The newlyweds began life together as technical writers at the JAARS



facility in Waxhaw, North Carolina. While serving at JAARS, Jane and Ed, a native of Geneva, CH, gathered with some Swiss friends to welcome Paul André Eicher during one of his visits.

Watching his presentation about the work of MiDi Bible, Jane noticed a need and offered to assist Paul with his English language communications. Connecting by phone and email, she was soon reviewing MiDi letters, contracts and other documents to assure that Paul's English documents communicated as

he intended.

Three years ago, the Lord called Jane and Ed to return to Maryland to live with her son who has a progressive neuromuscular disability. Ed translates reports from francophone Africa for *the Seed Company*, another Bible translation organization. Jane writes and edits for *the Seed Company* and helps with brochures and business communications for MiDi Bible whenever needed. Jane and Ed feel very blessed that they can serve the Lord from home, supporting Bible translation as volunteers, while ministering to the needs of their family.

### READERS' COMMENTS

“What a joyful celebration there will be in heaven with all these people who have been touched in these minority ethnic groups... Are they not those who are along the byways that the Master calls to the grand banquet? This vision reminds us that His return is near. With all my affection in Him.”

*Murielle, Switzerland*

“Thank you for your newsletter, once again very encouraging. What wonderful work! May God give you the strength and joy to continue to serve Him in this way. Be encouraged, knowing that in heaven you will see the eternal fruit of your labor”.

*P. and E. Welson, Dubai*

### TESTIMONY FROM THE MISSION FIELD

“I feel very privileged to be working with you to see the completion of the **Gonja** Bible. You have no idea what a relief it is for my husband and me and for the translators to know you will help us.”



*Claire Gray, Wycliffe missionary in Ghana*

“The Lord bless you dear brothers. Perhaps we shall see you face to face on this earth but definitely in heaven with all those who will be blessed through the reading/hearing or watching of this Gospel. Hallelujah!”

*Victoria Knox, from Chicago, on the subject of the Gospel of John in her mother tongue, an Arabic dialect from North Africa*



*A literacy class by the Gonjas*

## SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

### General needs

- That many new readers of the Word of God in their mother tongue find salvation and pass from death to life
- That God lead us to the projects that He has prepared for us for 2016
- For wisdom in our reflections concerning the development of the mission

### Specific needs

- That the literacy programs among the Gonja people be able to continue despite inadequate finances

- That the translators of the Old Testament in **Gonja** be able to easily find other activity now that the main work is finished.
- For protection for the printing and especially the distribution of the Gospels of John in Arabic dialect for a country of North Africa

### Thanksgiving

- For the numerous editions that we are able to do this year thanks to the faithful support of donors
- For the prayers and words of encouragement of our readers



*By your support and your prayers, you bring to minority ethnic groups such as the Gonjas 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.

Association Midi Bible  
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UBS Bank – BIC UBSWCHZH80A  
US\$ – IBAN CH65 0024 3243 3350 2860 Z  
€ – IBAN CH96 0024 3243 3350 2840 M  
CHF – La Poste Suisse – Compte CCP – 12-858811-0