

## LATEST NEWS # 490, March 13, 2008

### The following news concerns Sierra Leone.

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## Kuranko Bible brings in Scriptures in other formats

SIERRA LEONE — “Tide na di de” (“Today is the day”) sang the congregation. Prompted by Ruby Pearce, the Executive Secretary of the Bible Society in Sierra Leone, they were singing the Krio worship song at the service marking the dedication of the complete Bible in Kuranko.

“Today [January 12] is a wonderful day for the Kurankos!” Mrs Pearce told them. They hardly needed reminding, though: the Kuranko people at MCA (Missionary of Church of Africa) Church, in Kabala, about 200 miles north of Freetown, were jubilant as they sang and danced to the accompaniment of local instruments.

The dedication means that Kuranko-speakers – who number 150,000 living mainly in the north east of Sierra Leone – can put aside the English Bible used until now in

favour of one that uses the central Sengbe dialect which is readily understood by speakers of the other Kuranko dialects.

It was a day that the Kuranko had been awaiting for some time: missionaries began working on the translation of the New Testament in about 1972. The Rev Phil Logan began working on it in 1985 and became the Translation Coordinator. He and his wife Jan, serving with Lutheran Bible Translators, studied the language for 15 years and went through training with Wycliffe Bible Translators before start working on the Old Testament. They worked with Ballah Sama Marrah, the principal translator, and were helped for some years by the UBS Consultant Dr John Ellington.

Mrs Logan gave most of her time as an exegete to see the work progress. At January’s service Mr Logan described how setting themselves a target of 20 verses per day for six years had helped them to complete the 24,000-odd verses in the Old Testament. Mr Logan then went on to revise the New Testament, by which time the Rev Don Slager, also present at the dedication service, was the UBS Translation Consultant.



By February 2002 the checking was completed and in 2003 the introduction and glossary were written. When the complete Bible Kuranko Bible was tested the following year the feedback was very good. "We are important now," said one lady. "God is talking to us in our language!"

Although it was sent for publication in 2004, publication was delayed until 2007. It was last October when the Logans received a copy of the full Kuranko Bible, printed by the Bible Society in Sierra Leone.

In earlier times, said another speaker at the service, the Kuranko were a warlike people who did not know God. Now, she added, they had discarded their superstitions and God had entered into the Kuranko land, in the form of a Bible in their language.

The printed translation has already spawned Scripture products in other formats: a dramatised version of the New Testament is already available through the Proclaimer, a self-contained digital player, which is due to receive its own official launch – again in Kabala – in April. A great reception is expected for this audio version because literacy among the Kuranko is low – possibly below five per cent.

The *Jesus* film, too, is already available in Kuranko. The Rev Milton Marrah, when he spoke at the service, described an old lady who was weeping as she watched it. "Why is it only now that they allow Jesus to talk to us in our language?" she wailed. Mr Marrah said the new translation had put the Kurankos "on the language map of the world" – and they should be proud.

Mr Logan has also used the translation to produce some Scripture Comics. The first of two about David ('Dawuda') was launched at the same event as the complete Bible and the second has been sent for publication. He is now working on two more Comics that will tell the story of Moses.

Mrs Pearce, who travelled to Kabala with four other members of the Bible Society staff, said it was because the Society wanted people to have the Bible in their heart language that it was being made affordable. She said the Society would now encourage pastors to preach in Kuranko and she urged the women to read the Bible to their children instead of putting it under their pillows as protection.

*This report refers to project 85803.*

*Photos (Don Slager):*

*SIE08DJ-1: Members of the team who worked on the Kuranko Bible translation. The translators are (L-R): unknown man in checked shirt, Phil and Jan Logan, both serving with Lutheran Bible Translators, Samba Wallam, unknown man in red/orange top and glasses, Peter Lahai, unknown man in suit. The abbreviations on the banner stand for 'Bible Society in Sierra Leone' and 'The Institute of Sierra Leonean Languages', which is the national organization of LBT. The translation was launched on Saturday, January 12, 2008 in Kabala, Sierra Leone, along with a Bible Comic entitled Dawuda, which means 'David'.*

*SIE08DJ-13: Two elders from the Kuranko township wait patiently for the service to dedicate the Kuranko Bible. The service was held on Saturday, January 12, 2008 in Kabala, Sierra Leone.*



*SIE08DJ-4: Peter Lahai, a member of the translation team which produced the Kuranko Bible, reads from it at the launch ceremony, held on Saturday, January 12, 2008 in Kabala, Sierra Leone.*

*SIE08DJ-5: Phil Logan, who serves with Lutheran Bible Translators, reads from the Kuranko Bible at its official launch on Saturday, January 12, 2008 in Kabala, Sierra Leone. Mr Logan was a member of the translation team which produced the Bible.*

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