

**LATEST NEWS # 348, May 4, 2006**

**The following news concerns Central African Republic.**

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## Gbaya New Testament the result of 25 years of partnership

**CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC** — At an unusual ceremony held in the Central African Republic (CAR), the Gbaya community formally accorded the New Testament in their language a solemn welcome like that traditionally given to a prize animal brought home by the hunters from the hunt.

In this case, however, it was 25 years of partnership and team effort that culminated in the dedication of the Gbaya New Testament in Berbérati, CAR, on January 15.

The project was begun in 1980 by the Christians of the Evangelical Baptist Church and missionaries of the Swedish Baptist Mission in western Central African Republic. The translation is in a dialect of the Gbaya language that is spoken widely throughout the western part of the Central African Republic.

In the late 1990s the original translation team, Bebet Emmanuel and Touka Robert, was supplemented with Kpata Lévy, Ngando Hénoc and Maka Fanny and an SIL exegete from Switzerland, Christoph Ruckstuhl. When the New Testament was complete, the local church asked the Bible Society in the Central African Republic to publish it. They have done so with support from the CAR Association for Bible Translation and Literacy (an SIL associate) and from United Bible Societies.

Representatives of all the agencies who had taken part in the work joined local Christians and government dignitaries to welcome the New Testament as it was literally carried in to the dedication. The opening prayer was offered in Gbaya by Dr Phil Noss, former Head of UBS Translation Services who has spoken the language since his childhood. The sermon, which the SIL Project Coordinator gave, was also in Gbaya and the government District Officer welcomed the new translation enthusiastically, urging the community to read, study and apply it to their lives.



Dr Noss explained afterwards that this was the first Scripture to be published in recent years in any language of CAR other than in the official Sango language.

“This way of placing the highest emphasis in the celebration on the local language was a very important gesture that set the tone for the day,” he said. (341 words – CAR 05.06)

Photos (Phil Noss):

*CAR06DJ-1: The ceremonial hunting expedition brings home the 'game' (the New Testament) at the launch of the Gbaya New Testament in Berbérati, Central African Republic, on January 15, 2006.*

*CAR06DJ-2: Women church leaders receiving copies of the Gbaya New Testament from Evangelical Baptist Church President Nambena at its launch in Berbérati, Central African Republic, on January 15, 2006.*

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For more information about the Gbaya family of languages, go to:  
<http://www.ethnologue.com/14/web.asp>

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