

LATEST NEWS # 346, April 19, 2006

The following news concerns Congo (Republic).

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‘God speaks Munukutuba’

CONGO (Republic) — Around 60 per cent of the population of Congo (Republic), some one million people, speak Munukutuba (Kituba). Despite being such a large group, they were until recently forced to read the Bible in either French or Kikongo, as it was not available in their own language. Thanks to a long-term collaborative venture, this is no longer the case.



The launch of the New Testament in Munukutuba in Pointe-Noire, the country’s economic heart, on February 4 was the culmination of a 20-year project bringing together SIL-Congo and the Bible Society in Congo. As well as being the first to be completed by the partners, this project also marks a significant milestone for Church life, as speakers of Munukutuba will now be able to understand God’s Word much more clearly.

Celebrations began with a parade to a large church in Pointe-Noire, where around 5,000 people attended a three-hour dedication service organised by several major denominations. Many came as a result of promotion on local radio, but some had travelled from as far away as Dolisie, 100 miles (150 kms) to the east. The service including singing, prayers of dedication and the presentation of certificates to the two main Congolese translators, Nicaise Bahouamio (the Bible Society’s Publishing Secretary) and André Mpandzou, and to Translation Consultant Jim Fultz. The celebrations continued the next day, when 10 choirs from local churches gave a concert.

All those who spoke at the dedication service and the concert emphasised the importance of reading the New Testament in Munukutuba, seeking to understand it and living out its teachings. “God speaks Munukutuba. Are we going to listen to him?” said Larry Robbins, Director of SIL-Congo.

The Munukutuba New Testament was the focus of attention again a month later, when United Bible Societies Translation Consultant Dr Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole visited Brazzaville to lead a conference entitled *The Importance of Bible Translation in African Languages*. Before the conference began, Mr Robbins presented the new publication. Mr Bahouamio then talked to the delegates about the history of the project, after which many purchased their own copy.

Taken partly from a report by Gabrielle Lambrick, SIL-Congo (362 words – CONGO.19.04.06)

Photo (Bible Society in Congo):

CON06DJ-1: Eager purchasers of the Munukutuba (Kituba) New Testament in Brazzaville in March 2006. This translation was a joint project of the Bible Society in Congo and SIL.

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