FROM TULEAR

Posted on October 21, 2008 by Sue

Category: Madagascar

Itâ€™s been a long time since I had to do so many things by candlelight. I can remember struggling to do my homework during power cuts due to strikes back in the 1970s, trying to read by the light of a paraffin lamp when we lived in Ivory Coast in the 1980â€™s and 1990s. Right now Iâ€™m in southern Madagascar at a translation workshop and unfortunately the power has been more off than on. Not only does this mean we canâ€™t use fans in the heat, boil a kettle etc it also makes translation work difficult, because although we work with books and papers, we also rely heavily on computers for handling the translated text and for using special programmes to display the biblical text in various languages at once on the computer screen. Having access to more than a dozen different versions of the Bible, including in the original languages, as well as commentaries and other resources on my laptop when I travel is very convenient â€“ far preferable to paying excess baggage on a suitcase full of Bibles!

Iâ€™ve been working with the Bara translators again this workshop, helping to finalise the translation of Lukeâ€™s gospel. A preliminary version was published a couple of years ago. Since then lots of people have given feedback and a committee of reviewers have been weighing the suggestions and improving the style. My job is to do a final check for accuracy against the Biblical text, working through French to make sure that the meaning of the translation is no more and no less than the original Greek. It is painstaking work and you really need an eye for detail, but along the way there are interesting expressions to be discovered as Malagasy languages are full of images. Tears (ranomaso) are literally â€˜eye-waterâ€™, the sun (masoandro) is â€˜the eye of the dayâ€™, the expression the Bara use to talk about the edge or bottom of a garment is literally â€˜the lip of the garment.â€™

Meanwhile itâ€™s good to know that the Bara people are eager to have Luke in their own language and are really happy to have the Jesus Film in Bara too. The film is being shown regularly in a number of villages and VCD copies are in demand and even selling out in various bookshops!