NEWS FROM SUE IN MADAGASCAR

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Category: Madagascar

It was strange being out of the country during the election and even stranger that there is still no clear outcome yet! Fortunately the political situation here in Madagascar remains fairly stable even though things are not resolved: talks between the ousted president and the current leaders didnâ€™t seem to come to anything. News about the local language situation however is more encouraging. Many of the translation teams reported that in the different language areas people were starting to use their own language more. The Betsimisaraka team told us how before people did not dare use their language to pray in church, (Official Malagasy being the only â€˜acceptableâ€™ language of church), but now, encouraged that some Scripture has been translated into the language, they are starting to pray in Betsimisaraka. This is a real breakthrough, and very freeing for them to be able to pray in their mother tongue.

There is also good news from the Bara area. The churches are making good use of the Jesus Film and the Scripture booklets in Bara that I was involved in producing a few years ago. Although there is a lot of resistance to the gospel in the area and the people tend to be suspicious of church workers, especially if they are from another region, more people are showing interest. After the Jesus Film was shown in one particular village, a local â€˜ombiasaâ€™ (traditional priest/shaman) was really struck by the section based on Luke 8 where Jesus casts demons out of a man and they go into a herd of pigs which plunge into the lake and drown. That night the â€˜ombiasaâ€™ couldnâ€™t sleep. Realising that Jesus had far more power than he did, he went to the pastor to find out more. Eventually he and all his family were baptised as believers! Another â€˜ombiasaâ€™ was also converted after being challenged by the Jesus Film and the Lord also healed his arm. Do pray for the Bara believers as they have very few pastors and workers to cover a very wide area with many isolated villages.

This workshop I am working with the Tandroy team, checking through the translation of Luke in preparation for publication. At times it is painstaking work, but when it comes to dealing with Godâ€™s word we canâ€™t take short cuts. We come across some interesting expressions in the language along the way, for example, the Tandroy term for â€˜hypocriteâ€™ translated literally is a â€˜cat hiding its clawsâ€™, and when you â€˜take something to heartâ€™ you let it â€™sleep on your heartâ€™.

It is also fun chatting over meals and hearing more about the different languages and cultures. Apparently Tandroy now has 2 Charlie Chaplin films: silent films with a commentary in Tandroy!Â It is also humbling to observe the real commitment to the work that many of the translators have. Several members of the team travelled 2 days and nights non-stop by bush taxi to get here to Toliara (SW) from different parts of the island! Most have left their work and other commitments on one side and left family at home to concentrate on translation during this workshop even though they are doing this work on a voluntary basis.

Finally let me give you an example of the kind of reactions weâ€™ve seen here when people hear

Scripture in their own language for the first time. When the Tandroy team were testing their translation in the area a few months ago, at the end a teacher came up to them and wanted to know more about what he had heard. â€˜Who wrote this?â€™ he asked. â€˜It sounds like something that really happened!â€™ The man was a history and geography teacher, and he had always thought that Jesus was like a god and we couldnâ€™t know where he lived. So he was amazed to hear the translators explain that Jesus had really lived on earth and to have them point out on a map of the world the physical place where Jesus actually lived. Hearing the message so clearly in his own language made him realise that God is closer to the Tandroy than he ever thought!