THE END OF A WORKSHOP

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Categories: Bible Translation, Madagascar

I'm not sure why I'm feeling so tired - I felt like going to bed at about 7.30 tonight, but we had a staff meeting and then I needed to do some email. I think it must be that translation checking is very intensive and demands a huge amount of concentration moving back and forth from French, English, Greek, Betsimisaraka and Official Malagasy! Not that I have mastered all of these!! but working mainly through French I need to have a good understanding of how Malagasy languages work so that I can help the team to check if the translation is accurate and to try and suggest how the translators may be able to make the meaning clearer in Betsimisaraka.) One of my frustrations is that although I've made a lot of visits to Madagascar, the workshops are so intensive that there is never any time to spend on learning to speak Official Malagasy - though I am understanding more with each visit and speaking a little more too.

It's early Spring here, but everyone is saying that the weather is strange! It has been unusually cool, with the temperature varying sometimes about 15 deg C within the day, though it has been getting gradually warmer - glad I brought some warm clothes! The schedule is pretty packed during the week (including Saturday mornings) but some of us did enjoy a trip to a lemur park last weekend. It wasn't quite like seeing them in the wild, but it was interesting to see various species of lemur, as well as coming across a couple of chameleons and species of birds and plants that I hadn't seen before. There are many species which are endemic to Madagascar.

Tomorrow (Tuesday) is the last day of the workshop, and like today it will be hectic. Each translation team is trying to finalise a series of booklets: the Christmas Story, the Good Samaritan, Zaccheus and the Temptation of Jesus. They have been read aloud, checked and rechecked, yet spelling errors seem to slip through several readings. This is not surprising though, as for some of the dialects the orthography hasn't yet been finalised and we are still trying to work out the best way to write them. These Scripture portions have also been recorded, so hopefully back in their home towns and villages the translators will be able to use the tapes and booklets to get some feedback on the translation and open up discussion about which expressions to use for key biblical terms like priest, prophet, repentance, evil spirit etc

Tomorrow evening we will have a closing ceremony and a special meal together, then on Wednesday we will all head off in different directions, though the staff will be around for a debrief. The four of us who have come from abroad will get the Wednesday night flight to Paris.

I must admit, though it has been an enjoyable workshop and we've got lots done, I'm really ready to go home! Time for bed - hope I can manage to send this in the morning.