

# MOTHER TONGUE

APR - JUN  
2019

NEWS FROM GILLBT



Sustainable  
Indigenous Funding



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**P 4**

Message from the Director

**P 7**

Major Donor Fundraising Events

**P 10**

GILLBT Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving

**P 10**

GILLBT Signs Covenant of Commitment

**P 12**

Capacity Building for Indigenous Translators

**P 13**

Bible Translation Begins in Anyii

**P 14**

Mary Steele: Celebrating the Life of an "Institution"

**P 16**

GILLBT Honours Three Advisory Council Members

**P 18**

GILLBT Dedicates 14th Complete Mother Tongue Bible

**P 20**

Training Indigenous Missionaries for the World

**ISSN 0855 1480**

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# MESSAGE FROM THE Director

Rev. Thomas Sayibu Imoro



Moses, God's servant, had an important task to accomplish—the construction of the Tabernacle and the Ark—and to be able to undertake this assignment, he needed to raise sufficient resources. Where else could he raise the much needed resources but from the very indigenous people of Israel who would be the beneficiaries and custodians of the project? So what did Moses do?

Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the Lord has commanded: From what you have, take an offering for the Lord. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver and bronze; blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breast piece . . . All who are skilled among you are to come and make everything the Lord has commanded" (Exodus 35:4-10).

God had provided all that was necessary for the construction of the Tabernacle and the Ark with all its contents—and the people possessed them. However, Moses had to inform the people of Israel about God's command and invite them to become active participants in the Lord's work. He had come

to the stark reality that without the gathering of the available human, material, and financial resources, the ministry of the Lord would be slowed down, suspended, or even stopped.

Over the last five years, GILLBT has approached and enlisted churches in Ghana to contribute resources and become active participants in the task of Bible translation. Ultimately, the churches are beneficiaries and custodians of God's Word translated into our various mother tongues.

Leaders of many churches have expressed interest in and goodwill towards the work of GILLBT in Bible translation. These church leaders have also expressed their willingness to deploy some of their ministers to undertake various projects for GILLBT. Thus, like the Israelites, the desire and the goodwill are well demonstrated. What remains to be done is for this goodwill and expressed desire to be translated into concrete actions and related results.

In addition to such human resource mobilisation, many churches have increased their financial and material donation to GILLBT, and we have registered how highly we value this partnership nurturing. We look forward to such continued collaborations between GILLBT and the churches towards consolidating the achievements in local fund-raising.



Despite these increases, however, core indigenous funding for sustainability will depend on our ability to mobilise many individual Christians from these churches to give regularly and consistently to GILLBT in order for us to accelerate the task in linguistics development, literacy growth, and Bible translation.

In addition to concerted financial giving, efforts are being made to raise volunteers who will commit quality time to promote Bible translation and related activities in their churches. By doing this, they become GILLBT Ambassadors or Bible Translation Ambassadors. Effort will not be spared to build this brigade of ambassadors and categorise them into various levels of volunteering to enable everyone find their contribution niche, including spreading the news of Bible translation and GILLBT.

Another approach that will be adopted is to decentralise our fundraising to local, regional and zonal levels and deploy volunteers at all these levels. Sustainable indigenous fundraising will thus ultimately rest on many individual Christians, contributing small amounts consistently and regularly. The objective will be to raise an army of small givers or donors.

Overall, we will work towards achieving a sustainable mix in our fundraising from churches, corporate, large, and small givers whose gifts go into achieving GILLBT's linguistics, literacy, and Bible translation targets.

Our heart's desire is to work hard to reach a point in fundraising like the Israelites who responded massively to Moses' appeal. Their hearts so prompted them that they did not hold back what they desired to give—as reported by the workmen

*“who left their task to meet with Moses and told him, ‘We have more than enough materials on hand now to complete the job.’ So Moses sent out a message throughout the camp announcing that no more donations were needed. Then at last, the people were restrained from bringing more!”*

# SUSTAINABLE INDIGENOUS FUNDING



# The Time is Now

**D**r. Ephraim Amu, the Ghanaian Christian musicologist and patriot, wrote emphatically in 1942, that the translation of the Bible into the indigenous Ghanaian and African languages, ably begun by “foreign missions,” must be completed by the Ghanaian Church.

He predicted that this Ghanaian and African Church, will emerge from the missionary foundations, and must assume the responsibility for Bible translation to produce the “African Wycliffes, Tyndales and Luthers to make perfect versions of the Bible”.

Seventy-seven years after Amu’s prediction, the Ghanaian church has emerged as a powerful force on Ghana’s institutional landscape.

The church in Ghana is ready to lead and to mobilise. Ghanaians are ready to own the responsibility for translating Scripture for all of our people. And we are ready to serve as a model for the maturing Church that will carry forth the work begun by missionaries and translate God’s Word for the African continent.

In Bible translation worldwide God is raising patrons - generous, kingdom-minded men and women who help fuel the movement with resources, partnership and strategy. God is raising patrons here in Africa. We believe those patrons will help accelerate Bible translation like never before. We believe that multitudes of people will come to Christ as a result.

Together we will explore the organisation and support of mother tongue Bible translation in Ghana and throughout the African continent.

We are responding to the urgent and critical need to embed the work of mother tongue Bible translation in the Ghanaian and African contexts - and we are doing so by locating the responsibility and ownership of this work in the African church.





# Major Donor Fundraising Events

**B**ible translation in Africa once represented the work of others. Non-Africans did most of the work; non-Africans funded the work. This is changing. After the launch of “Operation Cover the Land,” which is a race to translate the Bible into all the languages in Ghana where translation is needed, Rev. Dr. Kwabena Darko, CEO of Darko Farms and Hon. Ken Ofori-Atta, Ghana’s Finance Minister, accepted responsibility to establish a Financial Patrons platform to raise the needed funding to achieve this goal.

## Maiden Event

The maiden Financial Patrons Fundraising event came off on November 2, 2017 at the Labadi Beach Hotel, Accra. In attendance were some Ghanaian Christian businessmen and women from various

church denominations, heads of churches in Ghana, as well as heads of para-church organisations.

Mr. Ken Ofori-Atta, Co-Chair, Financial Patrons Platform, led by example by pledging financial support for Mother Tongue Bible Translation for the next three years. The challenge to practically raise patrons in Ghana for the work so that the vision of ownership does not become mere talk, received a major boost. Church leaders and Christian business people present also donated various amounts and made pledges which are being redeemed.

## Second Event

On October 19, 2018, the second Patrons Fundraising event came off in Kumasi. His Royal Majesty, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, Asantehene, as part of his support for language development and mother



tongue Bible translation in Ghana approved the commissioning of one Bible translation project. In a speech read on his behalf, he pledged, “I am, therefore, honoured to approve the commissioning of one GILLBT Bible translation project to mark the 20th Anniversary of my ascension to the Golden Stool, come 2019.”

Otumfuo Osei Tutu II further disclosed, “I am also considering the possibility of establishing an Otumfuo Bible Translation Fund that will establish a royals’ platform to mobilise support among our chiefs to ensure the completion of the language development and Bible translation task in Ghana.”







A cross section of partners at the fundraising event.

## 4 years

Time now required to complete a New Testament translation in Ghana; thanks to improved technology. This assumes we have adequate funding, qualified personnel and available consultants.

## 6 years

Approximated time required to complete an Old Testament translation after a New Testament translation.

**GH¢ 187,200**  
**(USD 39,000)**

Approximated yearly cost for one language project.

**GH¢ 748,800**  
**(USD 156,000)**

Approximated cost to complete a New Testament translation in 4 years for one language.

**GH¢ 1,123,200**  
**(USD 234,000)**

Approximated cost to complete an Old Testament translation in 6 years for one language.



# GILLBT Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving



In 2016, GILLBT launched the GILLBT Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving. The day is set aside to introduce the work of GILLBT to churches throughout Ghana and to bring to the knowledge of all Christians the importance of Bible translation.

Over 200 volunteers from various churches across Ghana, as well as GILLBT board members and staff members visited about 400 churches in the Greater Accra and Ashanti regions from October to November 2017, to mark the day.

At these churches, GILLBT representatives read a message explaining the essence of the day, showed a 7-minute documentary on the work of GILLBT, requested for prayer for GILLBT and with the permission of the church leadership, gave out partnership forms to members to join the drive to raise resources in Ghana to complete mother tongue Bible translation.

The Central Assemblies of God Church in Tamale hosted the 2018 edition.

## GILLBT signs Covenant of Commitment

The Wycliffe Global Alliance (WGA) has gone through a series of changes in the last seven years. The main goal is to change the relations in the Bible Translation movement, at least in the Wycliffe group of organisations, to make it less hierarchical, less exclusive and more “community-like”. The ultimate decision in these changes has been to develop a covenant to be signed by all members of the Alliance.

Ghana being the first country in which the work of Wycliffe and Summer Institute of Linguistics started in Africa, and GILLBT being the first Wycliffe organisation in Africa, the expectation was that GILLBT was a “founding member” of the Alliance, and so would be one of the first countries to sign the Wycliffe Africa Area Covenant of



We partner with others to complete the pressing task of translating the Word of God for all people.

Commitment. However, the leadership of GILLBT after reviewing the Covenant of Commitment document raised some concerns relating to the benefit for GILLBT for membership in the Alliance and opened discussions on rethinking the terms of the covenant.





After months of discussions, WGA Executive Director, and the WGA Africa Area Director met the GILLBT board and management on October 26, 2017 to conclude discussions and sign the Covenant of Commitment. The signing ceremony came off at the GILLBT Guesthouse, East Cantonments, Accra. Through this Covenant of Commitment, GILLBT is officially recognised as part of the Wycliffe Global Alliance (the WGA is a community of organisations.) Our common goal is to nurture an environment in which like-minded organisations can fully participate and serve together in God's mission through Bible translation movements and related ministries. The Wycliffe Global Alliance serves with, and is a part of the global church.

GILLBT commits to engage and grow in deeper relationship within the Wycliffe Global Alliance community. In the covenant document the following benefits are provided:

- Invitation to area and global consultations on topics of interest
- Invitation to Alliance area meetings
- Invitation to the Alliance's quadrennial Wycliffe Global Gathering

- Opportunity for input and confirmation of changes or modifications to the Alliance's by-laws (the Alliance's highest form of governing policies)
- Opportunity for input and confirmation regarding the Alliance's Board of Directors (according to the Alliance's Board nominating process, invitation to provide input and discussion on the Alliance's Area and Global strategy and budget)
- Access to expertise, mentoring and advice from members of the Global Leadership Team, Area Directors and Area Staff
- Representation of the Alliance organisation on the Alliance's website, including the organisation's prayer information, articles and resources that can be accessed by a global audience,
- Formal and informal networking with other Alliance organisations

Overall the Wycliffe system has been the dominant framework in which GILLBT has operated as an organisation. The ideas, frameworks, strategies, expertise and funding, have all come from within this system.



# Capacity Building for Indigenous Translators

Out of the 31 Ghanaian languages that GILLBT has translated and published the word of God into, 17 are awaiting the Old Testament to have a complete Bible.

A major outcome of an international consultation dubbed “Accelerating Old Testament Translation” held in Accra on January 24-25, 2017 was the immediate need to train GILLBT translators and translation consultants in Biblical and Modern Hebrew.

This need, if met, according to the experts who assembled during the consultation, would contribute to closing the yawning gap between the number of mother tongue New Testament (31) and complete Bibles (14) translated by GILLBT over the last 55 years.

Since June 2017, GILLBT, in partnership with Seed Company and 4.2.20 Foundation, has enrolled a total of 12 translators and translation consultants in Biblical and Modern Hebrew programmes in Israel. The first batch of five; Naana Nkrumah, Konlan Kpeebe, Bernard Asewie, Jonah Kwotuah and John Adinyah; spent eight months in training— from June 2017 to February 2018 at the University of the Holy Land, Jerusalem.

Lambert Larrey, Rose Ntemenaso and Nyakou Koffi, after successfully completing a five-week Introduction to Hebrew course in Accra, joined Jerusalem Centre for Bible Translators which is affiliated to the Hebrew University of Jerusalem for a five-month intensive Biblical Hebrew programme from January-June, 2019.

Currently, four translators, Rev. Abubakari Haruna, Foster Ofori-Aboagye, Francis Bernasko-Dadzie and Felix Harrison Kwame Soglo are at the Institute of Biblical Language Translation (IBLT) in Israel. Their programme began in October 2018.

This expensive but strategic move taken by GILLBT and our partners is our proof of concept. For Seed Company, it is proof of their emphasis on and priority of the Old Testament; for 4.2.20 and School for Biblical Hebrew, it is their proof of concept that a focused training in Hebrew can indeed help accelerate Old Testament translation globally; and to GILLBT and our Ghanaian partners, a proof of concept that if we invest in the training of Ghanaian translators and consultants in Biblical and Modern Hebrew, it will support our vision to complete the Old Testament translation work in Ghana and support the work outside Ghana.





# Bible Translation Begins in Anyii

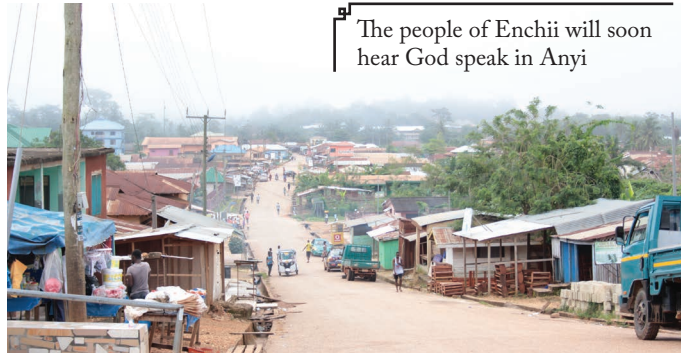
The Enchii community, in the Western Region of Ghana, together with GILLBT celebrated the launch of the Anyii Bible translation project on October 27, 2018. The ceremony, which took place at the Calvary Methodist Church, Enchii Society, brought together members of the clergy, dignitaries from the community and students from the Church of Christ School Complex and Bretum Senior High School.

Bishop Dr. Joseph Quainoo, the project coordinator for the Anyii Bible translation led a tour of the yet-to-be-completed office donated by his family. He stated that preliminary work on the language had started and the complete functional project office will be opened in November 2018. “We are beginning work as soon as possible. I’m working from my home office now, but we are moving here next month [November]” he said.

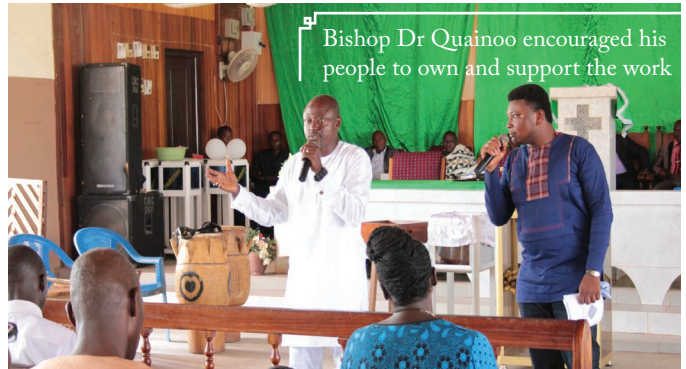
Giving a historical background of the language, he emphasised that the pronunciation of the language is Anyii and not the wrongly pronounced Awonwii, (which was the white man’s attempt to pronounce Anyii.) Hence, the right name is Anyii Ebosa or Anyii Bobolosa.

He expressed his dissatisfaction about how the language is only used at home by the people but not at social and religious gatherings or even in school. This practice he called disgraceful and so he would work to correct it.

He acknowledged the support of GILLBT and encouraged the people of Enchii to be part of this worthy cause.



The people of Enchii will soon hear God speak in Anyi



Bishop Dr Quainoo encouraged his people to own and support the work



A section of the congregation willing and ready to support the work



Indigenous translators are ready to start work



A tour of the project office in Enchii





# Mary Steele:

## Celebrating the Life of an “Institution”

*When a great man dies, for years the light he leaves behind him lies on the paths of men.*

— Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

GILLBT’s longest serving member, Mary Steele, passed on in the early hours of Wednesday December 20, 2017. Mary Steele—an institution in her own right—was in Ghana for 52 consecutive years. She was widely loved and greatly respected both in the UK and in Ghana.

### Dedication and Diligence

Mary Steele trained as a nurse - midwife but at the age of 34 she changed her career to become a linguist, research worker, and translator. She was in Ghana at the start of the work of GILLBT in 1962. She was responsible for the development of the Konkomba and Bimoba languages into written form. Mary Steele promoted literacy, and translated the complete Bible into these two languages. She also supervised the revision of the Konkomba and Bimoba Bibles, making them the first GILLBT-sponsored language groups to have revised versions of the complete Bible. Her faith in God and contribution to Bible translation were outstanding.

### Honours

For her work in Ghana, Mary Steele was highly appreciated and honoured. Her contribution

to language development and the spiritual transformation of language groups of Ghana was recognised by Queen Elizabeth II of Great Britain at the Buckingham Palace in London in May 2006. The citation for the award read: “THE MOST EXCELLENT ORDER OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE, MEMBER, Miss Mary Steele; For Services to Bible Translation, Literacy and Community Development in Ghana.”

The President of Ghana, on December 11, 2015 conferred a national award—Member of the Order of the Volta (MV) on Mary Steele.





Mary Steele served Ghana with all her heart, mind and resources



In May 2018 in Saboba, the Konkomba people, in collaboration with Rural Integrated Literacy & Development Programme (RILADEP), unveiled a statue of Mary Steele at a service of thanksgiving for her life and legacy.

The bust of Mary holding a complete Konkomba Bible was built to celebrate, remember her good works and acknowledge the great legacy she left for the Konkomba people. Mary was called the “mother of Likpakpaaln” for her efforts in developing their language from which many have benefited.

We are confident that her heavenly reward will be much greater than all these awards, for her works do follow her.

### Funeral

Her funeral service was held at Killymurriss Presbyterian Church, 175 Dunminning Road Glarryford BT44 9PW (near Ballymena, in Northern Ireland), at 1pm on Friday 22nd December 2017. Rest in peace, Mary!







## GILLBT Honours Three Advisory Council Members

The impressive mobilisation work done so far by the GILLBT Kumasi Chapter can be partly attributed to the phenomenal role played by the advisory council members. Three GILLBT Kumasi Chapter Advisory Council members were each presented with a citation on Friday, October 19, 2018 at the Operation Cover the Land fundraising event in Kumasi, in recognition of their invaluable services and fervent desire to see the work of God done efficiently and effectively. Their enthusiasm and selfless commitment to duty and leading by example in spite of their busy schedules, were also acknowledged.

The three-Dr. Mrs. Dorothy Danso, National President of Aglow International, Apostle Ekow Badu Wood, Asokwa Area Head of the Church of Pentecost and Rev. Dr. Kofi Amfo-Akonnor, Asante Presbytery Chairperson of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, were instrumental in establishing and sustaining the GILLBT Kumasi chapter. They played key roles in organising and hosting the maiden Operation Cover the Land fundraising event at the Golden Tulip Hotel, Kumasi in 2016.



DR. MRS DOROTHY  
DANSO



APOSTLE EKOW  
BADU WOOD



REV. DR. KOFI  
AMFO-AKONNOR





# Paul Opoku-Mensah

## Appointed Overseer of National Cathedral

**D**r. Paul Opoku-Mensah former Executive Director of GILLBT (2009-2017), has been appointed the Overseer of the national cathedral which the government of Ghana intends to build. He assumed his new office on October 1, 2017. The cathedral is expected to be used for Christian interdenominational worship in Accra.





The dedication of a complete Bible, marks the end of one of the several phases of the work.

## GILLBT Dedicates 14th Complete Mother Tongue Bible

**O**n Saturday, April 21, 2018 at Tuna in the Northern region of Ghana, the people led by the Tuna Vaglikoori and his elders could not hide their joy as they received the complete Bible in Vagla, their mother tongue.

### Dedication

Under the theme, “The Living Word of God Among the Vaglas”, the ceremony had in attendance chiefs from nearby villages, the clergy, the District Chief Executive of Sawla-Tuna-Kalba, GILLBT Ag. Executive Director, a team from Christ Church, UK, (one of the major donors of the Vagla translation project), and a team from Wycliffe Togo as well as staff of GILLBT.

In a speech read on his behalf, the Tuna Vaglikoori commended GILLBT and our donors for bringing the word of God to all language groups

in Ghana, especially to the Vagla people. He added that, translation serves as a means through which God communicates directly with his children. He acknowledged the numerous benefits the translation of the Bible into their mother tongue shall bring to his community and for which he was grateful. For his people, this is not only a religious act but one that has a cultural, social, economic, political and spiritual implication.

GILLBT Ag. Executive Director, Rev. Thomas Sayibu Imoro, speaking at the ceremony expressed the joy GILLBT shares with the Vaglas as they join the elite group of 620 languages to have the complete Bible in their mother tongue out of 6,913 languages across the world. He acknowledged the work and sacrifice of various translators spanning years, to complete the work. He stated however that, the completion of the Vagla Bible translation

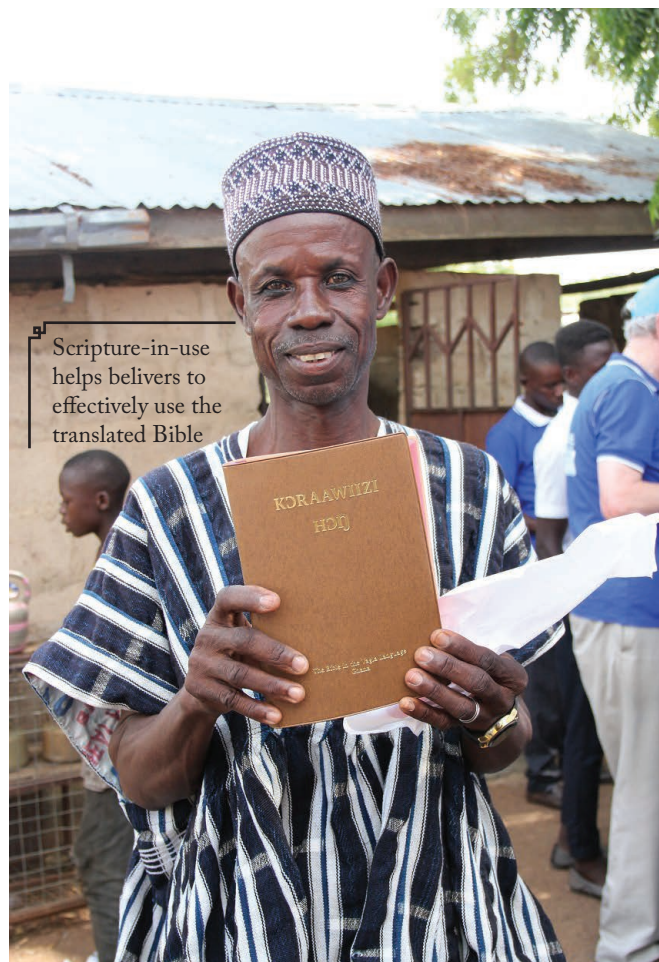


is not the end of the project, but the beginning of our effort to fulfilling the Great Commission. He thus challenged the community and the clergy to collaborate and promote the effective use of the Bibles for the transformation of lives in the community.

Rt. Rev. Bishop Peter Paul Ankyere, Bishop of Damongo Diocese, performed the dedication rites and declared the Vagla Bible ready for use. “This is the gift of God. With this translation, the Vaglas can hear the word of God, listen to God speaking, understand and live in the principles of God for this is what will help them become disciples of God,” proclaimed the Bishop.

### Language Development

The dedication is a simultaneous celebration of completing the translation of the entire Bible in a mother tongue and the formal development of the language. This is because the translation of the scriptures was preceded by years of painstaking linguistic analysis resulting in the development of orthographies, phonologies, grammars, dictionaries, primers and other literature in the language. In effect, the completion of translating a full Bible in a language does not only contribute to the spiritual development of the community, but is a major contribution in helping the state to fulfill its constitutional mandate to “... foster the development of Ghanaian languages and pride in Ghanaian culture.” (Article 39(3) of the 1992 Constitution of Ghana)




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VAGLA is a Gur language of the Grusi (west) sub-group, most closely related to Isaaling, Chakali, Tampulma, and Dɛg.

Dialects are Bugee (spoken by a minority in Jentilpe) and Bole.

**Language use** Nearly all villages in the area are a mixture of Vagla, Birifor, and Gonja, and many Vagla and others speak two or more languages. Jentilpe, Tuna, and Sooma churches have the largest proportion of Vagla speakers. There are also many Dagaaba, and Dagaare is widely used in Catholic churches.

The trade language is Walii. Gonja and Dagaare are taught in schools in the Vagla area; Vagla is taught in two Nakwabi schools by the GILLBT SIU worker. Vagla is used in ECG churches in most villages, though Tuna and Sawla churches also use Birifor and Walii, and there is a Safaliba community in Tuna. Many Vagla in Bole speak Gonja, but still see themselves as Vagla.





# Training Indigenous Missionaries for the World

One of the innovative initiatives introduced by GILLBT to whip up young people's interest in Bible translation and missionary work is Discovery.

Discovery is a short-term mission recruitment programme designed to give young people a realistic taste of mission work. The programme, which receives both Ghanaians and non-Ghanaians, gives participants a well-rounded view of what cross-cultural ministry and Bible translation is all about. It is meant for Christian youth who are usually students or young people who have just completed their courses of study at the tertiary level.

Participants are paired up (Ghanaian and non-Ghanaian) to live and learn through working in some selected GILLBT translation project areas. Participants serve in various roles including translation, literacy work, administrative support, IT support, proposal writing, research and data collection as well as learn some relevant cultural practices of the language group.

In 2011, Naaza Badu joined Discovery. He served in Saboba, a town in the Northern Region of Ghana. While in Saboba, Naaza's willingness to serve other people by translating God's word into their mother tongue and his interest for missions







Naaza (3rd from right) actively participates in the activities of the Cicipu language group.

**Pray and support financially the ministry of Naaza and Hannah.**  
**Reach them via**  
**email:** badunaaza@gmail.com  
**Call:** Nigeria +2349033411147  
 Ghana: +233244779370

Fidelity Bank, Tamale Branch  
 Account Number: 2030310541556  
 Account Name: Naaza Badu

(Dollar Account)  
 Ecobank Nigeria, Zuru Branch  
 Account Number: 4373075570  
 Account Name: Naaza Badu

grew. He prayed expectantly for God's direction for his next assignment. Five years later, God led him to Nigeria with a mission to take His life-giving message to the Acipawa people group in Kebbi State. Naaza joined the Calvary Ministries (CAPRO), a mission group focused on outreach to the Muslim/unreached world across the globe. (<http://www.capromissions.org>)

Amidst Boko Haram insurgency in Northern Nigeria, and with no reliable source of income, Naaza and his newly wedded wife – Hannah, a trained teacher, left Ghana for Nigeria in response to God's call to service, relying only on God for survival. They travelled by road from Accra, for about 48 hours, to Acipawa. Naaza now serves with the Cicipu language translation project helping translate the Bible for the Acipawa people of Nigeria. Upon completion, 35,000 people shall have God's word in their heart language. Hannah runs a free-to-attend informal literacy classes in their village and children from nearby villages have also enrolled for the classes.

Naaza and Hannah were at the GILLBT Accra Business office in January 2019 to share with the staff how God is working through them in Nigeria.







Social Functions  
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Meetings/Workshop



# GILLBT Guesthouse, Accra

+233 20 855 5221 / 24 501 5017

accra\_gh\_gillbt@gillbt.org

## Your Response

### THE VISION

GILLBT is committed to finishing the Mother Tongue Bible Translation task in Ghana and proposes to do so through a campaign dubbed

#### ‘Operation Cover the Land’

Specifically this campaign seeks to ensure that by 2020, translation work would start in all language groups in Ghana where there are no scriptures.

**You can help  
make it Happen**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Tel./Mobile: \_\_\_\_\_

Church/Branch: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ I want to pray for GILLBT
- ☐ I wish to receive news about GILLBT
- ☐ I want to be a volunteer (Please specify \_\_\_\_\_)

☐ I want to advocate for GILLBT

☐ I wish to donate:

in kind \_\_\_\_\_

in Cash \_\_\_\_\_

Kindly send your response to the addresses or call:  
advancement\_director@gillbt.org or +233 (0) 501 568 672





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(03720) 99 038 / 98 405

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