

MOTHER TONGUE

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NEWS FROM GILLBT



GHANA INSTITUTE OF
LINGUISTICS, LITERACY AND
BIBLE TRANSLATION (GILLBT)

Serving Ghana Through Language Development,
Literacy And Bible Translation

www.gillbt.org

The National Ownership Question

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MESSAGE FROM THE Director

Dr. Paul Opoku Mensah



How does an institution established by an international organisation, whose expertise has largely been expatriate, and whose funding is from the outside become a national organisation? Is such a transition possible? If so what are the mechanisms for making this possible? Concretely, how is GILLBT making this transition?

These questions are at the heart of some of the major changes we have made in GILLBT since 2010, including the transition from a member-based Executive committee to a majority external Board of Directors. These changes are all aimed at addressing what we have termed the “National” question, involving three analytically distinct but interrelated sets of issues: National Ownership, National Relevance, and National Cohesion. All these are aimed at ensuring that GILLBT becomes an organisation that is embedded in the national context; whose legitimacy is determined, first, by the quality of its relations to Ghanaians and their institutions; and whose relevance is linked to its ability to respond to the aspirations of Ghanaians and their institutions, in particular the Church. These, we believe, are three of the necessary conditions for making the transition.

The discussion on transitions such as what GILLBT has to make from a foreign established organisation to a national one is often focused on indigenisation, often framed in zero-sum terms with the call for national involvement including simultaneous calls for an end, or at least a reduction, in non-national involvement. The discussion tends to conflate “embeddedness” with “indigenization”. The two are different, and it is possible to clarify this through the use of a tree analogy. Specifically, to bring out the difference, GILLBT could be likened to a tree originally planted by foreign missionaries. In the discussions about involving nationals, the strategy has often been one of indigenisation involving the inclusion, or in some cases even the replacement, of some of the branches and leaves with Ghanaian/African faces. This need to involve “nationals” in the work has been part of our organisational strategy, at least the discussions.

The challenge of embeddedness, however, goes beyond adding national faces to the leaves and branches of the tree, even though this is important. Rather it means going beyond the leaves and branches to the trunk and roots of the tree. Embeddedness, therefore, involves a deeper form of national involvement. It is one in which accountability is, first, towards the national constituency. An embedded organisation is one whose vision responds to the aspirations of the national context, and in which strategies and strategic orientation are oriented inwards. Additionally, it means that the sustenance of the organisation has a critical national component, with the roots feeding on the 'national soil.' But as a tree, it is also part of a global ecosystem which is sustained by a common

source of energy: the sun. Such an understanding opens up, and legitimises, the participation of non-national workers. In sum, embeddedness speaks to the issues of national ownership, relevance, sustenance, and legitimacy of our mission. While it does involve national workers, it nonetheless shifts the emphasis away from them to the mission of the organisation. It is for this reason that we have consistently argued that while the legitimacy of our work should be derived, first, from the quality of our relations to national institutions, the workforce should nonetheless be multinational. This is a much more difficult task to accomplish than simple indigenisation. But ultimately this is what is needed to build a viable national organisation!

In this issue of Mother Tongue, we introduce and/or assess some of the measures, including partnerships, that we are developing to embed the work in the Ghanaian context. This ranges from local initiatives, to regional and national ones. The spirit within which we present these is that of “work in progress” to which we would appreciate your feedback.

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An experiment in local ownership

THE NYALOTA STORY

The Volta Region is one of the most linguistically diverse regions in Ghana hosting about 30% of Ghana's estimated 70 languages. A GILLBT language survey report in 2001 indicated that little academic work had been done on the Nyagbo, Logba and Tafi languages and proposed further research to document their linguistic patterns. The research findings sparked a desire in the three communities to develop their mother tongues into written form and they formally asked GILLBT's assistance to do this.

Since these (3) three languages are similar in various aspects and geographically close to each other, the communities proposed using a multi-translation or cluster model following its successful implementation on another project by GILLBT member, Dr Andy Ring. The cluster model which ensures that two or more language translations are done simultaneously, is superseding the traditional model of Bible translation projects where one expatriate missionary translator initiates and sustains one 'lifelong' project.

The essence of a cluster project includes close working relationship amongst language groups and communities which promotes mutual learning, unity and national cohesion. The idea of ensuring national and local ownership of translation projects was endorsed by the traditional authorities and so each language group nominated a translation team for training in language development and Bible translation. Recognising that mother tongue speakers are experts in their languages, the Nyagbo, Logba, Tafi (NYALOTA) cluster project is designed to train mother tongue translators to become experts in the whole process of language development and Bible translation.

Unlike the traditional GILLBT translation projects, a formal launch to commence work was held on 15th June 2014 for the NYALOTA project. As an innovation in commencing new GILLBT projects, a grand ceremony which brought together traditional authorities, the clergy, political leaders, youth groups, GILLBT leadership, and international partners has become the new template for future translation projects. This new approach is to ensure community ownership of the work. At the NYALOTA launch, the language communities and committees, staff, national and international stakeholders pledged their commitment to ensure the project's success.

Local mobilization to support the work, sustain it and also to build local capacity was given a significant boost by Hon Angelina Teye the District Chief Executive of the Afadjato South area who was present at the ceremony.

The NYALOTA Cluster project began in 2013 after consultation with traditional authorities and churches in the language areas. A two-week training in language development with language experts from GILLBT resulted in the production of preliminary reading and writing books for the three languages. So far, a booklet titled "Parables of Jesus" comprising 16 New Testament parables and the Gospel of Mark have been published.



Chiefs from Nyagbo, Logba and Tafi communities

Managing and resourcing the NYALOTA project

A management committee for each language project ensures community ownership and is primarily responsible for mobilising community members and local resources to support the work. Two full-time translators for each project and a team of Translation Reviewers for each language play critical roles to ensure that the project is well-rooted in the community and the translation schedules properly coordinated.

Uniquely assigned to this project is a National Bible Translation Consultant, Dr Fabian Dapila, former consultant from the Bible Society of Ghana and a member of the United Bible Societies. The Technical Advisor to the project is Rev Prof Gilbert Ansre, a veteran Bible translation consultant with broad national and international experience.

The project Manager, Michael Serchie, has over 10 years' field work training and wide experience managing Bible translation cluster projects.

Building a national movement on local foundations

It is projected that by 2018, the Nyagbo, Logba and Tafi communities will have the entire New Testament in their mother tongues. This will enable understanding of God's Word from within their worldview and promote spiritual growth. The cluster model not only provides a holistic field based approach to training and empowering communities, but also aims at building up a strong national movement of Bible translators with expertise in translation, consultant checking, leadership, translation project management, administration, financial management and fundraising. These open the way for serving other language groups in Ghana and beyond. Going forward, GILLBT envisages that the NYALOTA cluster project will ultimately become a platform for mobilising national and international partnerships to develop a permanent field training centre for the Volta Region – the hub for many language development projects in Ghana.



Hon Angelina Teye - District Chief Executive, Afadjato South District



Display of some publications done so far



GILLBT Leadership and Dr Larry Jones - Sr. Vice President of Bible Translation, Seed Company



GILLBT Board and Director with the Seed Company Team in Ghana

A PARTNERSHIP FOR THE TIMES: THE GILLBT-SEED COMPANY RELATIONSHIP

As an organisation, GILLBT has been built, and thrived, on partnerships! Some of these, like Wycliffe UK and SIL, are foundational partners and have been with us since our establishment in 1962. Others, including the Wycliffe Global Alliance, Wycliffe Bible translators USA; Switzerland; Canada, Germany, Netherlands, Russia, One Book formerly Global Partner Link, The Stuart Hine Trust, the Oikonomos Foundation, etc became partners after our founding. But together these partners have all contributed to the making of GILLBT. At every phase of our development, we have had partners who have stood by us, and facilitated our work. At a time where the focus is on the transition to a viable national organisation, we have been blessed with a partnership agreement with the Seed Company that enables us to make the transition. A Memorandum of Understanding within which the relations between the Seed Company and GILLBT is structured was approved by the GILLBT Board in June, 2015, and ratified at the 2015 AGM. The basic assumption underlying the relationship is that the accomplishment of the vision of a viable national organisation will require a highly professional approach in all functional areas held in a culture that balances relationships between field partners and Ghanaian churches and individual Kingdom minded investors, and juxtaposes the sensibility of mission with that of business. Furthermore, it is recognized that foundational capacity will need to be built in key areas of GILLBT to accomplish this vision. In this relationship Seed Company serves as mentor, coach, partner and consultant walking alongside GILLBT to achieve this vision. Part of the attraction with the framework agreement is that it allows for an integrated approach encompassing functional areas critical to the implementation of our vision, and which were identified, partly, by the OD process:



Dr Ken Schmitt in a pose with Rev Dr Kwabena Darko, Mr Ken Ofori Atta and GILLBT Director at the Seed Company Illumination, Utah

- Strategic Leadership which includes, but not limited to, strategic planning, M&E systems, Operational Audit, Change Process Management, Board to Board mentoring, and Staff Development.
- Field Programs including but not limited to field partnership development and vision casting, project development, project conversion to Common Framework status, project management, project communications, technical training and consulting.
- Operations, including but not limited to People and Organizational Development/Human Resource, Finance, Accounting, and Administrative Services.
- Development, including but not limited to Communications, Marketing, Prayer, and Resource Mobilization.

Together this provides the opportunity for GILLBT to develop capacity in areas that, historically, we have been weak, including in resource mobilisation. Another attractive feature of this relationship is the opportunity for peer-to-peer interactions that allows different areas of GILLBT to interact and engage directly with their counterparts in Seed Company as a strategy for capacity development.

The implementation of the agreement has already started in earnest, with visible impact. For instance, through the granting of Catalytic funding, GILLBT has been able to address critical gaps in administrative and resource mobilisation capacity.

We are grateful to all who have played, and continue to play, roles to facilitate the relationship.



GILLBT Leadership, Seed Company Team with the Chief and Elders of the Anufo language project area

A (PERSONAL) REFLECTION ON THE SEED COMPANY – GILLBT RELATIONS

Prof Akosua Adomako Ampofo



The Vice Chairperson of the GILLBT Board, Prof Akosua Adomako Ampofo in October 2015 was at the Montage Deer Valley Park City, Utah at the invitation of the Seed Company to their fundraising event. She recounts her experiences, observations and lessons relevant to GILLBT.

My husband Kwame and I arrived at Salt Lake City airport on Friday October 2, 2015, Day 2 of the "event". I say "event" because it was a mix of workshop, Bible study, fellowship, inspirational talks and music, exhortations around the theme of supporting Bible translation, good food and entertainment. We were met at the airport by my brother-in-law who works and teaches as a physician at the University of Utah medical centre. It was sunny and relatively warm, just as the weather forecast on my iPhone had predicted. However, as he drove up the mountain to Montage Deer Valley we realized that we had miscalculated. And a lack of warm clothes was not all we had misread. The weekend's program was packed with social and dress up events and we had come prepared for completely casual. But more importantly we had come unprepared for a wonderfully professionally prepared program packed full with testimonies, deeply committed people, great food and wonderful entertainment. Yes, entertainment - we thought it was going to be the usual "spiritual" weekend of prayer, Bible study and sermons.

It would be impossible to offer highlights of everything that was such a blessing, however, I would like to highlight a few things that touched me the most, and also that would be easy for us to emulate for a similar program in Ghana.

The Seed Company brought together well-heeled people from across America for a weekend (Thursday to Sunday) to show them (us) the need that exists globally for mother-tongue Biblical work, or as we heard, hearing the Word in your heart language. The program spared no expense in making us feel comfortable even as the goal was to persuade us to give to support those working to meet this overwhelming need. So let me begin on the creature comforts end:

We were in the most amazing hotel - beautiful, really beautiful, in beautiful mountainous surroundings. The bedrooms were large, luxurious and comfortable. Each night the beds were turned down and you returned to find a beautiful gift representing one part of the world such as sweets from Eastern Europe one night, and handmade cards from Kenya on another. The buffet meals were plentiful and tasteful. On Saturday night we had live music from an artist whose name I forget, but he was a recent winner on American idol. At one point that evening had to get out of my seat and do a few dance moves.

The Program content and materials showed a level of professionalism and thoughtfulness I have not come across in a long time. The program brochure was colourful, information filled, and with beautiful pictures. We were also given a collection of materials to underscore both the reason why we were there, and to introduce us to the workers and their work. One foldable card from the Russian Far East, when opened had someone speak to us in their mother tongue. Another booklet gave simple statistics for example that 1 billion people are Bibleless, and 180 million still don't have even one verse in their heart language. We also learned the costs; or better said, the opportunity: \$11.4 million will provide Bible translations for 366 people groups in Africa. In the margins of each set of pages for different global region were prayer topics.

I will not attempt to list all the amazing speakers. Let me just highlight a few. Bob Goff was an instant hit with his easy style, good humour and winsome laugh. Author of the New York Times best-selling book Love Does (and we all got copies) he shared anecdote after anecdote about loving people, especially the so-called hard-to-love. Liza Guts, director of Wycliffe Russia spoke from the heart about her work among the unreached in the 'distant' parts of this vast country. Luis Chavez of Mexico unburdened his heart concerning work among indigenous people in his country. And our own Sylvester "Kwame" Nkrumah narrated his journey from a family of traditional worshippers to belief in Christ. It was a pleasure for the "Ghanaian team" to hang out together as well.

Matt Maher is a gifted songwriter and worship leader and the entire program was 'punctuated' and led by his music. Each morning before the formal sessions started there was opportunity to meet for prayer. There were moments to join others in the prayer room, and on Sunday morning we marched over and around and across a huge map of the world in the prayer room interceding for the work, the people groups, the workers.

All in all, this was a wonderful weekend and Kwame and I left touched and inspired. For me one of the most profound 'statements' was receiving a Bible that when opened, was completely blank—a profound illustration of the need of millions. We left feeling persuaded that a similar heart-toucher, eye-opener and fund-raiser event could be held in Ghana and we are committed to participating to make it happen.

INTERVIEW:

THE CHALLENGE OF LOCAL (KONKOMBA) OWNERSHIP

Honourable Moses Magbenga interacting with GILLBT News reporters



The presence of GILLBT in a community transcends language development and Bible translation work to impact different domains of the community. *But in what domain does the work have impact? And to what extent can the work be sustained through local support and ownership by the language community?* To answer these questions, we analyse the impact of work among the Konkombas through an interview with a Son of Konkomba land who has been a witness to the work of GILLBT since its beginning. This “Son” is the Honourable Moses Magbenga, currently Ghana’s Ambassador to Angola and previously the Northern Regional Minister.

MT: It is a great joy to have you share with us the impact of GILLBT’s activities in your community. Please tell us about the pre- GILLBT era in the Konkomba community?

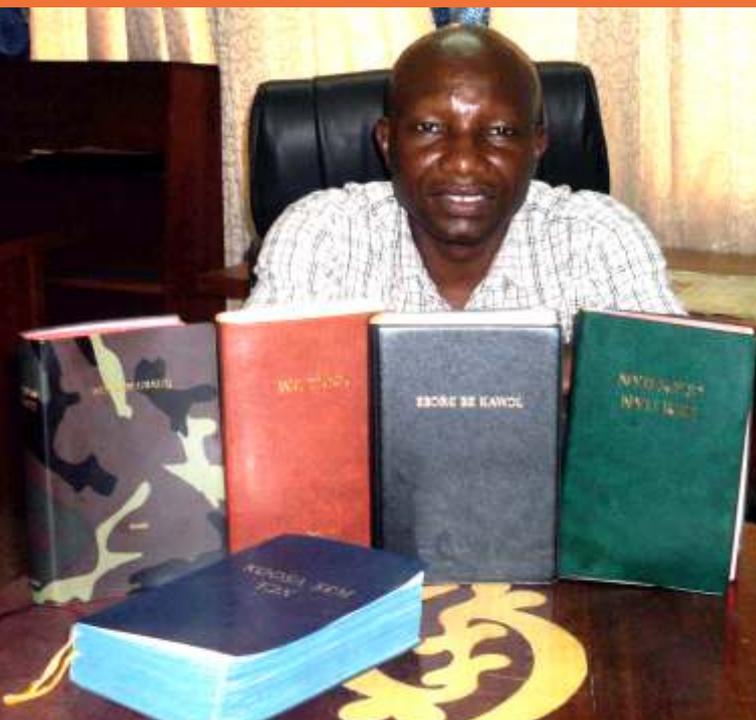
MOSES MAGBENGA: The Konkombas and the Bimobas are in a territory that was for several years owned by the British, later by the French, later by the Germans, and it continued and continued until 1957 when we became Ghana. Given this instability formal education was not part of our game. We were deprived and it was the Catholic church that brought education to the North but through

Burkina Faso and the Upper region. Later on Tamale joined but we were in the Far East and so we were a disadvantaged group. Speaking specifically for Saboba, we had only one primary school at the time. Mary Steele came when I was 5 years and I remember at the time she came we had only 2 Konkombas who had attained University education.

MT: You mentioned Mary Steele, would you say her arrival had an impact on your people? How significant was her presence and the work of GILLBT in your community?

MOSES MAGBENGA: Yes, the work of Mary Steele and GILLBT has had significant impact. Very much so! Importantly, the impact is three-way –psychological (social), intellectual and spiritual. The work of Mary Steele and her team brought about a social shift. The girl child had been used as a tool for marriage – their brothers exchanged them for wives from other families so education wasn’t part of the plan for them. However, in seeing Mary Steele the people were encouraged to see the importance of girl child education and how it could benefit the community.

The Konkomba community was privileged to gain access to education – one thing we had been deprived of for so many years. We were taught to read and write in our own language. Those who



GILLBT Typesetter John Sidsaaya displaying all 5 Bibles Typeset in Ghana

A TYPESETTING UNIT TAKES SHAPE AT GILLBT

One important stage in the publication of scriptures after translation is Typesetting. With the design phase completed, manuscripts and the design brief is sent to a typesetter, who will take the text and illustrative material, setting it out on the page ready for printing. There is a lot more to typesetting than you would think; Intensive examination of translated manuscripts goes on without the knowledge of many, as soon as the Bible is printed and dedicated, the joy of celebrating turns to be the focus. In this sector, every character, word, punctuation, pictures, etc. are looked at before continuing with the page layout. In short the typesetter is the master designer of the Bible layout and passes on for approval and printing. The need for such a service in Africa is overwhelming. We have less than 20 people serving in this capacity in our part of the world.



completed GILLBT's mother tongue literacy class were able to enrol in formal school even though they had not passed through the various stages. As we talk today the great work of Mary Steele and her team has transformed the area and I can tell you that we now have very qualified Konkombas and Bimobas in every sector of the Ghanaian economy. GILLBT's work has gone a long way to help provide access for many people. Spiritually, GILLBT introduced to us the "word of truth, the message of salvation" in our mother tongue. The population of Konkomba is about 85% Christian today.

MT: Mother tongue literacy is one of the work of GILLBT, how relevant has that been to the Konkomba people and is it still relevant?

MOSES MAGBENGA: Oh sure! It is still very relevant because literacy in the local language speeds up learning other languages and enlightens the language speaker.

I can testify about my brother who entered formal education after attending the GILLBT literacy class organised by Mary Steele and her team.

Reverend Nabitcha, a senior pastor of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, also went through the GILLBT class and now holds a Masters' degree that he was awarded in Britain.

It was not by accident that when GILLBT was launching their Golden jubilee, me a Konkomba was the Guest of Honour as Regional minister. Between 1985 and 1987, another Konkomba in the person of Ken Wujangi became director of GILLBT. These are some tangible impacts that we have had from the work of GILLBT. So with these examples, I still see Mother Tongue literacy as very important.

MT: How can the mother tongue be made relevant in urbanised communities such as Accra, considering the increasing middle class population who want to speak English with their children?

MOSES MAGBENGA: I think GILLBT's focus should still be on rural communities, for the future of GILLBT still rest there. More effort should be made in such areas as majority of the people still remain without formal education.

MT: The core aim of language development is identification and protection of our cultural heritage, are you then suggesting that prominence shouldn't be given to cultural heritage in our urban communities?

MOSES MAGBENGA: It is true that language identifies with culture and that's why cultural studies are included in the curriculum of the Ghanaian educational system. It is, however, unfortunate that these have become just drumming and dancing. The challenge is to ensure that we go beyond dancing and drumming to build our development on our culture including our language.

MT: After years of work supported by outsiders, how ready are the Konkombas to support the work?

MOSES MAGBENGA: I strongly believe the work of GILLBT should be supported and sustained by language owners themselves. This can come from the elites of the community where the language is being developed. Local people will be more than willing to contribute if there is a proper framework, supervision, credible systems for proper financial accountability and an efficient administrative setup to oversee the work. To the extent that this exist, I am confident that the Konkombas' including me would want to support the work.



Hon Moses Magbenga at the GILLBT 50th Anniversary, Tamale

Typesetting started in 1995 in Ghana. It is officially called Desk-Top Publishing. However, the Scripture typesetting goes beyond that with specialization skills, abilities and knowledge which are not studied in the University curriculum and that is the kind of job Darlene Weidman came and started in GILLBT in 1995. Darlene was able to typeset Pasaal New Testament. She became ill and had to leave the country for medical attention. Everybody wished her well and hoped to see her return to continue with the good work she started unfortunately she never came back. GILLBT had to outsource the typesetting of all its translated scriptures. This meant GILLBT couldn't accurately estimate the timeline for completion and delivery of translated mother tongue Bibles by external typesetters. It also had huge financial implications to the organisation, thus sending translators outside Ghana to typeset the completed draft.

GILLBT decided to train Ghanaians to take up the challenge of Bible typesetting in Ghana. In 2012 the GILLBT typesetting unit was revived in Tamale. The decision to train local typesetters, equip the unit with tools and build their capacity to meet international standards was an emphatic endorsement to the broader vision of building a viable national organisation. The existence of a local typesetting unit in GILLBT saw the expediting of hitherto translated scriptures backlog into complete Bibles. Seven (7) full mother tongue Bibles namely, Kasem, Gonja, Nafaanra, Kusaal, Deg, Tampulma and Buli have been completed. These works have been printed and dedicated. Projects close for typesetting are Avatime, Bimoba and Vagla.

GILLBT translators now use ParaText program and are conversant with pre-processing and publication matters which makes their work more meaningful.

The unit continues to support translation projects by training translators in the use of computer programs to improve the quality of translation before typesetting.

The next stage for the Typesetting unit is to position itself as a viable unit in GILLBT and to go beyond the borders of Ghana with its work to serve the many languages in demand for Bible typesetting in West Africa.



John Sidsaaya working with Divine Munumkum of the Avatime language project

Rethinking the GILLBT - Wycliffe UK Relationship

The history of GILLBT is one of institutional relations, of which the relationship with Wycliffe UK is the longest. Indeed, while the work of GILLBT began formally in 1962 on the basis of a cooperative agreement between the University of Ghana and SIL International, in reality this could be said to be an agreement between the University of Ghana and SIL UK/Wycliffe UK. The founding Director of GILLBT, the late Dr. John Bendor-Samuel who negotiated and signed the agreement with the University of Ghana, was a leading British linguist and translator and the founding Director of Wycliffe UK. Similarly, the first translators deployed by GILLBT in 1962, the Spratts, were Wycliffe UK members. The first generation experts deployed by GILLBT—Dr. John Callow, Dr. Ron Stanford, Edward Hall, etc. were all Wycliffe UK members. The 200th Bible completed by Wycliffe and SIL International worldwide was completed in Ghana by Geoffrey and Rosemary Hunt who are UK nationals.

There is currently a significant UK presence; Pat Herbert and Margaret Langdon (Dega); Geoffrey Hunt (Hanga language); Philip and Judith Hewer (Kasem language group); and Mary Steele, honored by the Ghana Government on December 11, 2015 and formally retired by GILLBT on May 15, 2016. In November 2015, the current Wycliffe UK Board Chairman Mr David Steinegger, visited GILLBT to acquaint himself with the work done so far by UK nationals and ongoing projects. His visit also set the stage to rethink and chart a new direction for the over 50 years' relationship between GILLBT and Wycliffe UK. Rev Thomas Sayibu Imoro, the chairman of the GILLBT Board hosted Mr Steinegger at



Rev Thomas Sayibu Imoro and Mr David Steinegger

the GILLBT Accra Guest house to discuss plans to structure the relations. The two chairpersons of the Wycliffe UK and GILLBT Boards agreed in principle to explore the basis for a rethinking of new directions for a relationship that has contributed so much to the development of GILLBT.

Initial in-house discussions at GILLBT has focused on the joint development of the John Bendor-Samuel Centre and Museum. As we have indicated, this project seeks to provide a place to document the work, as well as provide mobilizing infrastructure to sustain the impact of the work. To be located on our 2.5 acres' land at Adjiringanor, not far from the University of Ghana, it will serve the following purposes: i) a museum and documentation centre for our languages and cultures; ii) a museum for Bible translation into our languages and cultures; iii) a research library on our languages and cultures; and iii) a training centre and convening platform for language development and Bible translation. Through this centre, we hope to create the infrastructure for the preservation of our local languages, and their use in national development and in the life of the Church in Ghana, and beyond.

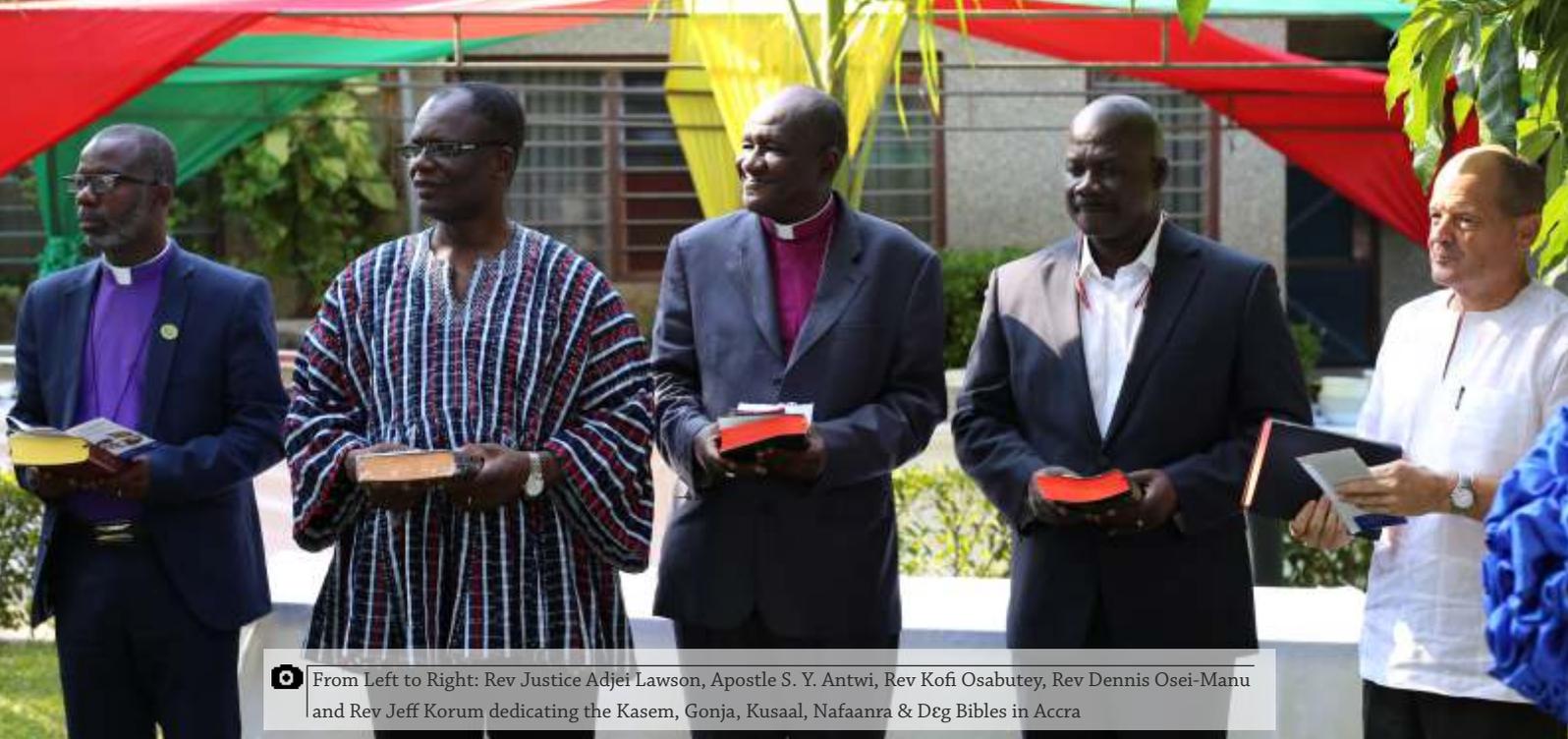
A concept paper that outlines a potential framework for joint collaboration on the development of the centre will soon be developed and presented to Wycliffe UK as the basis to begin discussions on new directions for the relations.



- Accommodation
- Catering Services
- Meetings/Workshop
- Social Functions

GILLBT Hospitality, Accra

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From Left to Right: Rev Justice Adjei Lawson, Apostle S. Y. Antwi, Rev Kofi Osabutey, Rev Dennis Osei-Manu and Rev Jeff Korum dedicating the Kasem, Gonja, Kusaal, Nafaanra & Dɛg Bibles in Accra

Dedication Of The Kasem, Gonja, Kusaal, Nafaanra, Dɛg Bibles

At separate events in Accra and Kumasi on June 26th and June 27th respectively, we dedicated and launched Complete Bibles in Kasem, Gonja, Kusaal, Nafaanra, and Deg. As is our tradition, we had earlier dedicated these Bibles in the respective language communities: Kasem (Nov 8, 13 and 14 2015 in Kumasi, Chiana and Navrongo, respectively); Gonja (February 6 in Buiepe); Kusaal (February 20 in Bawku); Nafaanra (March 5 in Banda Ahenkro); and, Deg (March 18 in New Longoro).

Historically, this is the first time that as an organisation, we have dedicated so many Full Bibles within the short time frame of November 2015 and March 2016. Indeed, never before in the fifty – four (54) year history of GILLBT, and in the history of Ghana, have so many Bibles been launched in so short a period. This brings to the total 14 Full (Old Testament + New Testament) Bibles, and 29 New Testaments completed by GILLBT in Ghanaian languages. As an organization established to develop the languages of Ghana, promote literacy in these languages, and translate the Bible into these Ghanaian languages, we are grateful to God for this enablement.

In his welcome address at the Accra event, the chairman of the GILLBT Board, Rev Thomas Sayibu Imoro indicated that the decision to also launch these Bibles in Accra and Kumasi, a first time for GILLBT, reflects the vision to deepen our relations with Ghanaians and their national institutions. Consequently, this would be made a routine organizational practice. In explaining the importance of the celebration, the Executive Director of GILLBT, Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah, stressed that the celebration of the completion of the Full Bible in these five languages, is simultaneously a celebration of the formal development of these languages. 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 these five languages. In effect, the completion of the Full Bible in these five languages does not only contribute to the spiritual development of these five communities. In addition, it is a major contribution in helping the state to fulfil its constitutional mandate to “... foster the development of Ghanaian languages and pride in Ghanaian culture.” (Article 39(3) of the 1992 Constitution).

In Accra, the Minister of Education – Prof Jane Naana Opoku-

Agyemang, who launched the Bibles on behalf of the President of Ghana, commended GILLBT for its critical role in the development of the Ghanaian languages. The Paramount Chief of the Asante Mampong Traditional Area, Daasebre Osei Bonsu II, who launched the event in Kumasi on behalf of the Asantehene, Otumfuo Osei Tutu II, challenged GILLBT to go beyond the deployment of the Bibles in the life of the church. Rather he hoped GILLBT would build a collation that would work to ensure that the years of hard work to develop these languages does not go waste, but results in the use of these languages in different domains of national life.



Daasebere Osei Bonsu II Paramount Chief of the Asante Mampong Traditional Area who represented the Asantehene to launch the 5 Bibles in Kumasi

The two events were attended by the Heads of Churches, Bible Agencies, representatives of the five Language Communities, the political and traditional leadership, representatives of the language development and Bible translation community, Theological Institutions, and the international leadership of the Bible Translation Movement including Wycliffe Global Alliance, SIL, Seed Company, Wycliffe Caribbean, Wycliffe Togo, Wycliffe Benin, Wycliffe South Africa, Nigeria Bible Translation Trust (NBTT) who were in the country to attend an international conference on “Patrons of Bible Translation in Africa” held on June 27-29, 2016.

Kasem Bible Dedication

The Kasem Bible has been the work of many people over many years. The beginning can be traced back to work done by the Catholic fathers as far back as 1933. Dr John Kathleen Callow (Ada and Kada) started to learn Kasem in 1962, followed by Philip and Judy Hewer (Adoa & Kadoa) in 1972. Work on the Old Testament started in 1999, led by Rev. Jonah Kwotua. There were input from leaders of various churches as well as advice of academics such as Prof A. K Awedoba (Institute of African Studies, Legon) especially with regards to spelling and writing of Kasem.



Gonja Bible Dedication

WEC missionaries entered Ghana in 1940 and assumed responsibility for the Gonja area of the Northern Region. Mission stations and churches were established at Tuna, Damongo, Kpandai, Oti River, and the surrounding areas. Response to the gospel first came from other tribal groups who settled on Gonja land, and who were less influenced by Islam than the Gonjas'. In 1969 Jeanette Zwart a WEC missionary in response to the challenge of reaching Gonjas for Christ commenced Bible Translation in Gonja, assisted by John Kipo Mahamah, one of the first Gonja Christians. The New Testament was completed and dedicated in 1983.

After this WEC pulled out of Gonja. Several years later the need of having the Old Testament also translated into Gonja became inevitable. The challenge was thrown to Gonja Christians. This led to a meeting of some Gonja Christians in 2005 at the Evangelical Church of Ghana's Training center, Nyankpala where a committee and a team of translators were put together to work on translating the Old Testament.

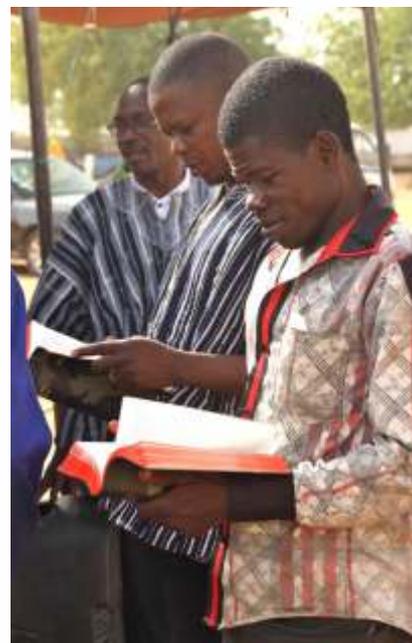
The committee immediately approached the Ghana Institute of Linguistic Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) for support and was promised technical support but not funding. In 1997 GILLBT assumed responsibility for Gonja Literacy programme and with the help of donor partners sponsored the programme



Kusaal Bible Dedication

Kusaal was among the first 6 language groups that the then Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) now Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILLBT) started work in 1962. A British missionary couple, David and Nancy Spratt were assigned to the Kusasi area to carry out linguistic research and subsequently translate the New Testament (NT) in Kusaal. After 14 years of hard work and commitment, the Spratts, Rev. Panaad Azong, Rev. Adam Anaba and others completed the New Testament. It was thus the first NT to be completed and dedicated by the then SIL in 1976. Primers were also developed, teachers and supervisors trained and project management transferred to the Kusasi people. The literacy classes were organized under the management of Samuel Akon until 1982. Another expatriate couple, Lesley and Wil Reiziger was assigned to the project to promote literacy activities. In 1987 the literacy program was handed over to Michael Awimbilla and a team of volunteer mother tongue literacy supervisors.

In 1998, church leaders from all over the Kusaal area came together and established a committee with the mandate to oversee the translation of the Old Testament. The committee appointed pastors who were given training by GILLBT to start translation on part time bases but work slowed down due to their fulltime church commitment. In 2005, Rev. Joshua Soforo and Mr. Moses Atiiga were appointed fulltime translators with sponsorship from Wycliffe Netherlands.



Nafaanra Bible Dedication



In 1972 a young family was sent by GILLBT to live in Banda to study the Nafaanra language, and to teach the Nafana to read and write their own language. The family met the paramount Chief Tolee Kofi Dwuru who believed this was a good thing, and gave them permission. But others around the Chief thought this was only a guise of the foreigners to do something far more sinister. Time proved the Chief's wisdom. By 1975 they had developed alphabets, and even the Gospel of Mark printed in Nafaanra and Twi.

At the height of the translation process, five dedicated young men worked tirelessly to complete the Nafaanra New Testament. From the first day that Dean and Carol Jordan, with daughter Lisa, arrived in Banada, Attah Kwasi was enjoined to teach them his language soon James Anane, and then Samuel Tsito (with his wife Amma Twumwaah) came. Later, George Ababio and Emmanuel Dwirah of Dompofie completed the team of 5 men. In 1985 the Nafaanra New Testament was dedicated.

Though the Jordans moved back to America, the Translation Team continued to work on the Old Testament. The Nafana wanted the whole Bible. The Jordans re-joined the team in the early 2000's to see the project to completion.

Dɛg Bible Dedication

In 1981 the late N Naa Kwaku Dimpor II, Omanhene of the Mo traditional area graciously gave permission for the late Marjorie Crouch and Pat Hebert to live in New Longoro to start work on the Dɛg language. By 1983, the language was analyzed and literacy and translation of the of the new testament began. By 1991, the New Testament was completed and dedicated. Work on the Old Testament started in 1993. Through challenging circumstances, the translators and some indigenes ensured the work was successfully completed.



Dedication Of The Kasem, Gonja, Kusaal, Nafaanra, Dɛg Bibles



Prof Mrs Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang with some Church leaders at the dedication and thanksgiving luncheon in Accra



Rev Dr Joyce Aryee - Executive Director of Salt and Light Ministries giving word of exhortation at the dedication and thanksgiving luncheon in Accra



Prof Jane Naana Opoku Agyeman (Minister for Education) launching the 5 Bibles on behalf of the President of Ghana



Fraternal greetings by Mrs Efua Ghartey - Chairperson, Bible Society of Ghana



Daasebere Osei Bonsu II and some dignitaries at the Bible dedication in Kumasi



A display of Mother Tongue Bibles and other publications by GILLBT

GILLBT LAUNCHES A NATIONAL MOTHER TONGUE ADVOCACY PLATFORM

In April 2012, as part of the activities marking our 50th anniversary, the University of Ghana and GILLBT jointly organized a conference, hosted by the Institute of African Studies, titled "Fifty Years of Language Development in Ghana." An outcome of the conference was the need to establish a national platform to advocate for the development and deployment of our languages in different domains of national life. On February 1, 2015 this desire was given practical expression through the launch of an advocacy platform at the GILLBT Accra Guest House dubbed "Mother Tongue Café Dialogues". Launched by the Minister of Education, Prof Jane Naana Opoku Agyemang, the purpose of this platform is to create a "safe place" for discussions on the appropriate use of our languages.

In providing the rationale for the platform, the Director of GILLBT, Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah, argued that the main assumption underlying the dialogues is that questions about the relevance of our mother tongues cannot be answered by scholars alone, but by all Ghanaians. Consequently, what the Dialogues seek to do is to contribute to a national conversation on our indigenous languages, and to do so within a "safe" meeting place. As he argued:

Given the often petty, partisan, polarized and politicized atmosphere within which our national discussions take place, we need safe places for these conversations. And this is what this



Prof Mrs Jane Naana Opoku-Agyemang (Minister of Education)

Advocacy platform--- the Mother Tongue Café Dialogues---seeks to do.

Explaining further, Dr Opoku-Mensah argued that the *Dialogues* are conceived within, and inspired by, the notion of the *public sphere*, defined as "society engaged in critical public debate." The *Dialogues* therefore aim to provide an all-inclusive space for critical debate on the role of our national languages. Given that historically the public sphere developed from discussions in coffee houses, particularly the London coffee houses, the *Dialogues* will be linked to the Mother Tongue Café at the GILLBT Accra Guest House. Concluding, Dr Opoku-Mensah indicated that:

We plan to link the discussions here, to issues ranging from the role of Ghanaian languages in Education, and Education policy; to politics and governance in general; to the spiritual life of the country, and to the vibrancy of the church; and to the mobilization of the country, around issues of national identity, unity and cohesion. Ultimately the aim of these discussions is to critically debate, reflect, and in fact deconstruct some of the prevailing myths and assumptions regarding the role of our indigenous languages.

In launching the platform, the Minister of Education, Prof Jane Naana

GILLBT AND WORLD VISION GHANA SIGN PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Since 2010, we have argued that GILLBT's transition from a foreign missionary-founded organisation to a fully-embedded national organisation will be partly determined by the quality of our relations to Ghanaian institutions. Concretely, we have argued that, as part of the transition, GILLBT's legitimacy would have to be based on the quality and depth of our relations to Ghanaians and their institutions. Thus a critical part of our activities over the past years have been the strengthening of our relations and partnerships with institutions and organisations in the country.

In furtherance of this vision, GILLBT and World Vision, Ghana (WVG) have signed a partnership agreement within which the two organisations will strengthen their field collaboration. The partnership was formalised by the signing of a Memorandum of



Staff of GILLBT and WVG at the signing of the MoU

Understanding (MOU) at the World Vision Ghana Office on 21st December 2015.

The overall objective of the MoU is for GILLBT and WVG to collaborate and promote the creation of solutions to effectively deliver mother tongue literacy programmes in 19 deprived districts in Ghana. The specific activities to be undertaken in this agreement shall be; to assist WVG to develop level appropriate children stories and review and translate stories into Ghanaian languages. The project which shall improve access to and quality of education for children

Opoku Agyemang made a powerful case for Ghanaian languages:

"Nobody has to apologize to anyone for speaking their own language because it is only natural to do so. It is the circumstances of our history that has left a residue of the unnatural. And therefore, today we put in a lot of money, time, strategy just to make something so unnatural appear natural-which is speaking a language that is not ours. Some have gone so far as to posit that English is our language too. Of course it is not. If it were, the results would be different. And we all know that at times when we really need to communicate as a nation on very important issues including recently Ebola and not so long ago AIDS, even when we needed to shift from driving on the left to the right, we used our language. It was short. It was effective. We communicated."

The irony of providing a "safe" environment to discuss our languages was not lost on the Minister of Education: *I heard the GILLBT Director talk about a non-threatening environment. Shame on all of us that we should submit everything to unnecessary polarization. I hope we can rise above it this time because this is too important.*

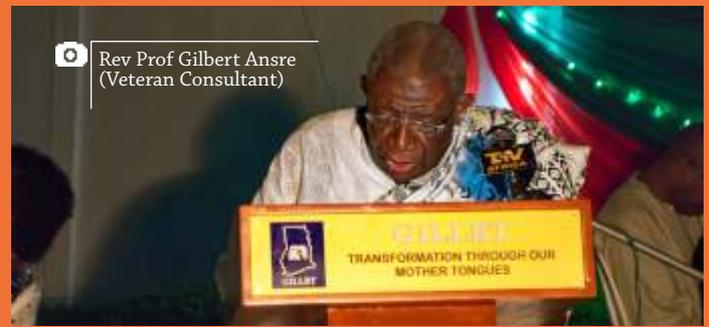
The doyen of Mother Tongue ministry in Ghana, retired Professor of Linguistics and pioneer Bible Translation Consultant, Rev Prof Gilbert Ansre gave the inaugural lecture that officially marked the commencement of the Dialogues. Rev Prof Ansre—who was honoured at the event for being the first recipient of the Osagyefo Kwame Nkrumah African Genius award for African Languages—outlined 18 issues that should frame the Mother Tongue Café Dialogues. Notable among the set of issues is the fact that the numbers of speakers of most of the indigenous languages are on the increase and the vast majority of our mother-tongues are not about to disappear or "die", and so need to be factored into any realistic national planning. As he stressed:

A person's ability to use language efficiently, especially the mother-tongue, is one of the essential and fundamental human resources (assets, tools) for initialling, promoting, entrenching and

including the most vulnerable in particular and their families will be rolled out in some selected districts in all 10 regions of Ghana. Districts to benefit from this initiative includes Asante Akim North, Ashanti Ejura and Sekyere East all in the Ashanti Region. Afram Plains and Fanteakwa in the Eastern Region, Ga West in the Greater Accra Region and Diaso in the Central region. Kadjebi, Krachi West, Krachi East and Nkwanta in the Volta region. The rest are Mpohor Wassa in the Western region, Anyinam Mansie, Atebubu District and Kintampo South district in the Brong Ahafo District. In the Northern region Savelugu, West Gonja and Tolon Kumbungu districts. West Mamprusi and Kasena West in the Upper East region and finally Jirrapa in the Upper West region.

Within the arrangement GILLBT is responsible for i) the review of local language materials and translation of titles into Ghanaian languages; ii) the provision of personnel for planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of agreed project activities; and iii) the training of facilitators for mother tongue literacy and mother tongue learning.

In his remarks, the National Director of World Vision Ghana, Mr Hubert Charles, stressed that ultimately the value of the relationship would be determined by the extent to which the objectives specified in the MOU are met. He therefore charged both organisations to put delivery at the heart of the relationship. In his response, the Executive Director of GILLBT, Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah, indicated that the



Rev Prof Gilbert Ansre (Veteran Consultant)

perpetuating personal and social development of any kind, and certainly so for National Development. The greater the number of people who can effectively use the indigenous languages of the Nation-State, rather than a foreign language, the greater their capacity to participate in Nation building and development.

He concluded the inaugural Dialogue thus:

May the Discussion thrive long and may many practical actions emerge from them for the effective and realistic use of our language for National Development!



Dr. Paul Opoku Mensah (Executive director - GILLBT)

signing of the MOU was the fulfilment of a long term vision and desire by successive generations of both World Vision and GILLBT leaders for closer collaboration between the two organisations who, incidentally, had common forbears. For instance, at the same time that he was the Trustee Chairman of GILLBT, William Ofori Atta (Paa Willie) was also the Board Chairman of World Vision. Thus, while the MOU focuses on specific issues relevant to our times, it nonetheless reflects continuity in the relationship between the two faith-based organisations.



Mr Hubert Charles VWG National Director and GILLBT Director at the signing of the MoU

42nd Annual General Meeting 2015

Building a Viable National Organisation

The 42nd GILLBT Annual General Meeting came off on the 25th of July 2015 at the John Agamah Conference Hall in Tamale.

In attendance were Gbanlana Yakubu Dramani - Chief of Kanvili and his entourage, the directors of ANTBA, NBTT, Wycliffe Togo and Wycliffe Benin.





H.E John Dramani Mahama with all 35 awardees

HONOURING MARY STEELE, AND THE MISSIONARY CONTRIBUTIONS TO GHANA



Georgina Theodora Wood (Chief Justice) presenting Mary Steele's award

After years of advocacy and lobbying for the State to formally recognise the immense GILLBT-missionary contributions to the development of Ghana, the state finally recognised such contributions on December 11, 2015. Specifically, and as part of the National Honours, the Republic of Ghana conferred on GILLBT-veteran Missionary, Miss MARY STEELE, the State Honour of Member of the Order of the Volta (MV) in recognition of her 53 years of “outstanding dedication and contribution to Literacy and Community Development in Ghana.”

In a citation signed by the President of Ghana, John Mahama, and presented to her by the Chief Justice of Ghana, Georgina Theodora Wood, at a colourful ceremony attended by the President and the top-tier leadership of the country, the rationale for the award was given as:

“...You moved to Ghana in 1962 and devoted your life to linguistic and community development, working with the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation (GILBT). For over a period of fifty years, you contributed significantly to the intellectual, material and spiritual wellbeing of Ghanaians mostly in the Northern part of the

country. Ghana became your adopted home and you manifested this by strenuous travels on unmotorable roads with attendant deprivations in remote villages, in a bid to develop unwritten languages alongside literary, spiritual and community development activities, particularly among the Bimoba and Konkomba communities of Northern Ghana...”

While Mary Steele is deserving of this honour, and more, it is critical to stress that her contribution is not unique. She is representative of generations of expatriates, beginning with our founding Director, Dr John Bendor Samuel, who gave the best of their years to the service of Ghana through their work with GILLBT. So while congratulating Mary Steele on this deserving award, we do so in acknowledgment of the numerous expatriates, who like Mary Steele have, through their work with GILLBT, made significant contributions to Ghana in language development, literacy, community development and scripture translation.



HONOURING THE MEMORY OF UNCLE JOHN AGAMAH

In our official historiography, the work of GILLBT began when a Ghanaian student, studying in the UK, literally gate-crashed the meeting of the Board of SIL and Wycliffe UK in 1959, asking them to come to Ghana to help develop the languages of the country and translate the scriptures into these languages. Although the response at the time was that there were no plans to extend the work into Ghana, or Africa, that request nonetheless became the “Macedonian call” that ultimately saw the extension of SIL and Wycliffe work into Africa, beginning in Ghana in 1962.

This young precocious student, Assistant Commissioner of Police John Komla Agamah, became the pillar around which the work was introduced into Ghana. He fully supported the work, becoming the first African representative of Wycliffe Bible Translators on the African continent, and nurturing the development of GILLBT from 1962 until his death in 2005. Affectionately called “Uncle John,” generations of GILLBT members—both expatriate and Ghanaian—passed through the nurturing hands and home of Uncle John and his gracious wife, Aunt Jeanie. A consummate advocate for GILLBT, Uncle John was also the first “Church Relations Officer”, mobilizing the churches and passionately advocating for Ghanaian support and “ownership” of GILLBT’s mission.

On January 10, 2016 a GILLBT-delegation led by GILLBT Board member Prof EVO Dankwa, and including the Executive Director Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah, joined the family and friends of Uncle John at a remembrance and thanksgiving service at the Ghana Police Church in Accra to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the death of Uncle John. The service which was attended by the wife of the Ex-Assistant Commissioner of Police (ACP), his children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and other family members eulogised Uncle John and his contributions as a Christian statesman.

In a tribute, Prof EVO Dankwa, who presented a cash donation to the family on behalf of GILLBT, recalled the inspiration Uncle John provided in his own decision to support the work of GILLBT, and Bible translation in general. In his tribute, the Executive Director, Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah indicated that GILLBT has, partly, honoured the memory of Uncle by naming the main conference Hall—the John Agamah Conference Hall—in Tamale after him. He recalled the admonitions of Uncle John to him to “come back to Ghana to support the work of GILLBT”, during the years he was an academic in Europe. He stressed that what was remarkable about Uncle John’s request to SIL and Wycliffe in 1959 was the fact that his own language—Ewe—had the Bible. In doing so, he was thus taking symbolic responsibility and ownership for the work in the country, and not only for his ethnic group.

Concluding, Dr Opoku-Mensah argued that the greatest tribute we can pay the memory of Uncle John was to ensure that Ghanaians and their institutions “own” and fully support the work—the vision that animated the life and work of Uncle John.



 The Late John Komla Agamah



 GILLBT Board member Prof EVO Dankwa presenting a cash donation to Dan Agamah, the son of Uncle John



 Family, Friends and some staff of GILLBT at the 10th Anniversary thanksgiving service and lunch for the late Mr John Komla Agamah



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