

# MOTHER TONGUE

NEWS FROM GILLBT

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## Partnerships for Resource Mobilization



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# MESSAGE FROM THE **Director**

SYLVESTER KWAME NKRUMAH



In August 2019, the baton for the highest leadership role in GILLBT was passed on to me to serve this noble organization that has changed lives and drawn people to God. Since joining GILLBT in 1990 as a trainee translator and now serving as the Executive Director, I must say it has been a learning process. A learning process where I have witnessed the good times and the not so good times. It is now time for me, not only to contribute my quota, but also to lead a formidable team with the help of God to serve the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation and make it better than it was before.

After seven months in office, GILLBT and the world was hit by the devastating effects of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19). Among the many disruptions caused by Covid-19 was the sudden closure of our guesthouses in Accra and Tamale. This took a heavy toll on our financial projections for the year, as our guesthouses remain one of our major revenue streams. Our partners, however, have been supportive. With their help we have been able to fulfil our financial obligations and equip our staff to work from home. Undoubtedly,

Covid-19 has forced the rearrangements of our operations but ultimately, it has taught me to trust completely in God.

The history of GILLBT is one of institutional and individual partnerships. The relevance and future of GILLBT is tied to the quality of relationship we forge with our partners. There is therefore the need to strengthen our partnerships through a closer collaboration with our partners to advance our mutual interests.

Partnership is the ability to work together toward a common vision. The ability to direct individual accomplishments toward organized objectives. It is the fuel that allows common people to attain uncommon results... Simply put, it is less “me” and more “we”.

I am always fascinated by the outstanding collaboration of Moses, Aaron and Hur and I would like to use it as an illustration. Moses in the Bible understood the importance of partnership when Amalek fought with Israel in Rephidim as recorded in Exodus 17:9-13. “Moses said to Joshua, “Choose us some men and go out, fight with Amalek. Tomorrow I will stand on the

top of the hill with the rod of God in my hand.” So Joshua did as Moses said to him, and fought with Amalek. And Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And so it was, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed; and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses’ hands became heavy; so they took a stone and put it under him, and he sat on it. And Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. So Joshua defeated Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword”. The battle was not won by one person. It was a collaborative effort. In the ministry of Bible translation, we need this collaborative effort to win the battle.

Joshua partnered with Moses. Joshua was given the task of leading the counter attack against the Amalekites. It was crucial for Joshua to attack the threat with great physical effort. Moses took the task of a different nature. Moses went to the top of the hill with the staff of God. It was crucial for Moses to attack the threat with spiritual effort.

For us to strengthen our partnerships for effective resource mobilization, we must focus on forging partnerships built on trust and mutual accountability so as to attract adequate and more predictable voluntary contributions to deliver GILLBT’s strategic framework.

We have had series of meetings with leaders of many churches in Ghana to become partners and actively support the task of Bible translation. Some have expressed interest and some have gone a step further to pledge their willingness to contribute in whichever way possible – financial and non-financial – towards the achievement of

God’s Word translated into our various mother tongues.

In addition to getting these pledges and interest from the churches, we are seeking to implement the Young Professionals Campaign where we plan to partner with a significant number of young professionals who would pledge to donate a specific amount of money every year to advance the work of God through Bible Translation.

Another approach is to continue to have a closer working relationship with our international partners as we seek to have a paradigm shift in the area of resource mobilization.

Successful resource mobilization requires a lot of work and it takes a lot of time. As the Director and the Chief-fundraising officer, I will dedicate most of my time to having close contact with our international partners and just as Moses and Joshua collaborated to conquer the Amalekites, we can do same to let the Word of God cover the entire land of Ghana.

Our aim is to work so hard in the area of partnership to reach a point where our partners and potential partners will see our collaboration as a call to duty to spread the Word of God through Bible Translation.

In June this year we lost our immediate past Executive Director and Board Chairman, Rev Thomas Sayibu Imoro after a short illness. Many of you joined in person and others via Facebook to bid him farewell at his funeral service on June 27, in Tamale. On behalf of GILLBT and the family of Rev Sayibu Imoro, I wish to express our profound gratitude to all our partners for your prayers, words of comfort and resources.

# Supporting the response to Coronavirus (COVID-19)

We at GILLBT are committed to working with government, our communities and the health care services in Ghana to respond to the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Our civic mission strategy sets out the importance of our role to bring hope and simplified but credible preventive measures to all the people in the communities we work in their heart language.

In these times we are offering our support to meet these responsibilities using our resources and expertise in mother tongue literacy and Bible translation.

## Translating and Disseminating Covid-19 Preventive Messages

We have, since the outbreak of the pandemic, translated, audio-recorded and disseminated via multiple audio channels, WHO and MoH COVID-19 preventive messages.

In the Volta and Oti regions where we are currently working in about 14 language groups, our translators in the Nyagbo, Logba, Tafi, Sekpele, Selee Siwu and Tuwuli are working with their community leaders and so far have used the community centre public address systems to broadcast, daily, COVID-19 preventive messages. We are extending the reach of this broadcast via community radio in other language areas with community radio stations.

To ensure a better understanding of these preventive measures, we have also designed, printed and are distributing a poster with vivid graphical demonstration of the measures. All our project offices across Ghana have received this poster in their language and are posting them at vantage points in their communities.

Our goal is to reach each person in these communities with enough COVID-19 preventive message in his/her mother tongue.

## Messages of Hope

Being a Christian organization, we strongly believe in the healing and restoration power of God. We have, in partnership with other parachurch organizations under the umbrella of the Forum of Bible Agencies (FOBA) produced a series of short video clips titled “Spreading Hope”. These videos are shared via social media.

GILLBT Facebook page

<https://www.facebook.com/GILLBT.org/>





MRS. GRACE  
OTU BOATENG

## Limited Scriptures?

Grace Otu Boateng, a retired educationist, has partnered GILLBT for many years. The transformational impact of the work of GILLBT in Ghana drove her to not only pray and support financially, but also become an untiring advocate of GILLBT.

Growing up, she spoke her mother tongue – Guan with her grandparents. They did not read nor understand English. Her grandparents were both devout Christians but had only limited portions of God’s word because the Bible was not in their mother tongue. She recalls observing with discontent her grandmother memorizing and knowing only the few verses of scripture that was orally translated to her in church. This is not fair, she thought. “There are a lot of scriptures in the Bible so if one is limited to only what is orally translated in church by the pastor, then it’s not fair,” Grace said.

Encountering the work of GILLBT gave her hope that her people will someday hear God speak in their mother tongue. Grace who is a member of the Accra Ridge Church, has led in her own way, a campaign to tell her friends about the work of GILLBT. Although her mother tongue – Guan, is yet to have the full Bible translated into it, Grace has remained committed to her course of action, i.e. to see every language in Ghana have unlimited access to the scriptures in their heart language.

Grace is also passionate about youth development and is constantly praying for God’s guidance for the youth of Ghana. She currently runs a day-care centre, McHill Montessori, from her home at McCarthy Hill in the Greater Accra region of Ghana.

“There are a lot of scriptures in the Bible so if one is limited to only what is orally translated in church by the pastor, then it’s not fair,”



### Prayer needs

- Praise God for people like Grace whom He has empowered to advance His mission on earth through Bible translation.
- Pray for God’s protection for Grace, her family, her day-care centre and her friends who support GILLBT.

# Producing the complete Kusaal Bible

The New Testament in Kusaal was the first mother tongue Bible to be published and dedicated. The British missionary couple, David and Nancy Spratt, together with some Kusasis, including Rev. Panaad Azong and Rev. Anaba, by God's grace worked tirelessly to achieve this feat in January 1977.

In 1981, Michael Awimbilla, a Kusasi who was burdened with the low patronage of the published New Testament in Kusaal, took an initiative to empower his people to read and understand fluently their mother tongue. He started a Kusaal literacy class.

“To address the problem, I decided to start a literacy class in my village church. My village pastor who also had no formal education was very supportive. The whole church was ready and excited to learn so I got hold of an old door which I blackened to serve as a blackboard and with a piece of chalk I started to teach the Kusaal vowels, then syllables, words and sentences. With high motivation and determination, a few were learning to read,” Michael explained.

By the close of 1987, all the New Testaments were bought and used in churches and at homes. This and other factors resulted in the rapid growth of the Church in Kusasi land. As many more became literate in their mother tongue, demand soared. A committee was set up to appoint translators to revise the New Testament for reprint. By 1996, about 20,000 copies of the revised New Testament in Kusaal had been printed for use.



In 1999, the Kusaal community invited Michael and his wife, Hanneke, and tasked them to start translating the Old Testament into Kusaal. “We thank GILLBT for helping us get the New Testament, but our spiritual development is incomplete without the Old Testament. We can no longer wait for outsiders to start this for us, we will start and appeal for help,” Rev Panaad who was part of the translation team said. With this, a unanimous decision was taken to start the translation of the Old Testament. The local churches agreed to contribute resources towards the project. Three pastors were selected and given training in translation principles by GILLBT. The Old Testament translation was completed, published and dedicated in February 2015. About 20,000 copies of the full Bible in Kusaal were printed and distributed across all Kusaal speaking communities.

Michael and his team are mobilizing resources to sustain and improve literacy work in Kusaal. Bible translation makes the scriptures available in the mother tongue and literacy opens it up for the users.

The Kusasi people are in the Bawku District. They speak a language called Kusaal and are part of the Gur people cluster. Many people are familiar with Hausa. About one to five percent of the people can read and write in Kusaal while about fifteen to twenty-five percent can read and write in another language too. An alternate name for this people group is Kusale.

The people predominantly practise indigenous religions. Only about 16% of the people are evangelical Christians. The New Testament has been translated into their language. The Jesus Film and other videos as well as Gospel recordings are also accessible in Kusaal.

A chief usually leads each village which may be composed of one huge extended family or several extended families. Men and women have sharply defined roles. Men will work at their chosen profession, which may include farming, and will also own the cattle. Women will not usually own cattle, but may raise other types of small livestock to supplement the family income. During the day, women stay inside the family home, while men stay outside. In the past, polygamy was common; but now many men only marry one wife. Educational opportunities do exist. Many children may attend primary school and even junior high or secondary school if they are not needed to help on the farms. Also, they may need assistance from friends or relatives to pay for books.

## Prayer needs

- Praise God for the rapid spiritual and numerical Christian growth of the Kusasis as they engage with scripture in their mother tongue.
- Pray that in these last days when there are so many false preachers and teachers, Christians will depend more on the word in their heart language for deeper understanding.
- Pray that Kusasis in and outside Ghana will give to support the development of teaching and learning materials for basic schools.



MICHEAL AND HANNEKE AWIMBILLA

# A TRIBUTE TO REV. THOMAS SAYIBU IMORO FROM GILLBT

“So teach us to number our days, that we  
may present a heart of wisdom”

Psalms 90:12 (Berean Study Bible).

It is with great sadness and heavy hearts that we all, at the Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation, mourn the loss of our former Board Chairman and immediate past Executive Director, Rev. Thomas Sayibu Imoro. His unflinching love and commitment to the work of God could not be matched. He served GILLBT to the best of his ability, and in several roles, with distinction.

Rev Sayibu was a true and faithful brother in Christ, who was both a friend, colleague, leader and mentor to us. We give thanks to God for the blessing he was and for how the Lord used his vision, leadership, guidance and counsel in furthering and developing the work of Bible Translation here in Ghana.

Rev. Sayibu's association with, and support of GILLBT spanned several decades from when he was first appointed and served as a member of the GILLBT Executive Committee. In 2007, when he was elected as Chairman of the Executive Committee during the 35th Annual General Meeting, he

began a tenure of 12 continuous years of service with GILLBT in various capacities. This period oversaw some pivotal changes to the leadership and management structure, including the creation of a Board of Directors in 2010 to replace the Executive Committee. Upon the installation of this new Board Rev. Sayibu was duly elected Chairman.

In 2017, a new challenge presented itself when the incumbent Executive Director, Dr Paul Opoku-Mensah, resigned to take up a national assignment. While GILLBT sought to put in place the processes to appoint a successor Rev. Sayibu agreed to become Acting Executive Director for a period of two years. This role involved working with, and visiting language projects around Ghana with the Field Programmes Administrator. Under his leadership, GILLBT launched Operation Cover the Land and the Asantehene commissioned the translation of the Bible into Ahanta. It was the first time that a monarch commissioned the translation of the Bible into a language other than his mother tongue.

Under his leadership GILLBT strengthened its engagement with Ghanaian Churches and local partners with the strategic goal of these partners taking ownership of the work of Bible translation in Ghana. He was instrumental in the formation of the Tamale Chapter of Church Engagement. All in all, his personal engagement with para church organizations effectively strengthened their relationship with GILLBT. He also represented GILLBT at Christian conferences, seminars and partnership meetings both in Ghana and outside the country.

In all his years with GILLBT Rev. Sayibu was known for his enduing love for the organization. He would call on Board members for their perspectives on diverse issues, and discuss these passionately. He was a fierce advocate for an African approach to the gospel, leadership and decision making within the organization, and never shied away from reminding partners about the importance of this. His sense of humour was a respite in tense moments.

On stepping aside from active service with GILLBT in July 2019, Rev. Sayibu continued to be a friend, supporter and partner, believing that mother tongue literacy and having access to the Word of God in our mother tongue is the most effective way to build vibrant churches and transform our society. It was a privilege for us to have known and worked with Rev. Sayibu over so many years and as he gave God all the glory in his own life for equipping him to serve GILLBT. We give God the glory for a life well lived and the lives of those he helped to transform through the work of Bible translation in Ghana.

May his soul rest in the bosom of our Lord until we meet again.

Naawuni timo vuhiri sunŋ (Dagbani)

Vu'usim su'vŋa (Kusaal)

Laate Suoto (Selee)

Ɔve te ɔsene ale oo (Nyagbo)

Da yie (Twi)



# GILLBT Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving 2019



The 2019 GILLBT Day of Prayer was held from September to November. In all, we visited 24 different churches in Accra and Tema. A total of 817 people signed up to partner with GILLBT in one way or the other.





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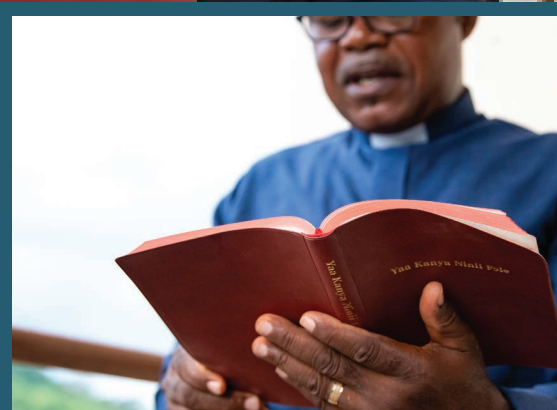
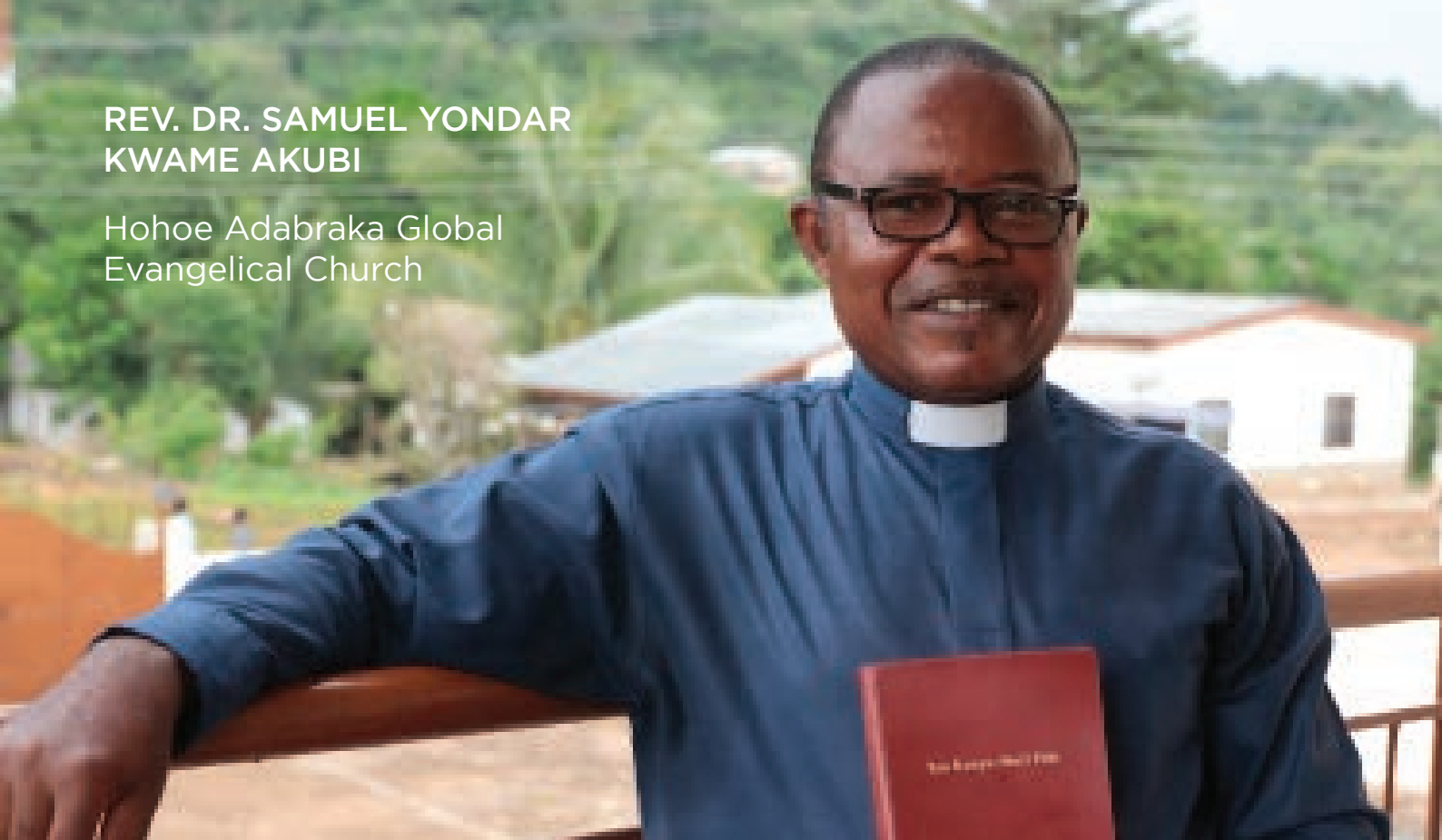
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## REV. DR. SAMUEL YONDAR KWAME AKUBI

Hohoe Adabraka Global  
Evangelical Church



Rev Dr Samuel Yondar Kwame Akubi of Hohoe Adabraka Global Evangelical Church talks about preaching in Selee speaking communities.

Observation: Rev Akubi has been preaching in some Selee speaking communities for years, before the New Testament was translated into Selee. He read from the Ewe (a major language in the region) Bible for almost all his sermons. He observed, worryingly, that, his congregation did not fully understand some of the words and expressions in Ewe.

After GILLBT translated and dedicated the New Testament in Selee in 2008, Rev Akubi and many other preachers breathed a great sigh of relief. “The people can hear and now understand fully God speaking to them directly” he said with

great joy. In most of these communities where he preaches, the audio version of the Bible, popularly known as the Proclaimer, is widely used.

Rev Akubi recounts an encounter with a member of his congregation after preaching a sermon on Romans 10:14 from the Selee New Testament. For the first time, according to this female congregant, after listening to the audio Bible in Selee, she understood her responsibility as a Christian to share with others the word of God. Just like the function of her proclaimer, she must also proclaim Jesus to her community and to all the people she interacts with daily.

Translation of the Old Testament into Selee is on-going.



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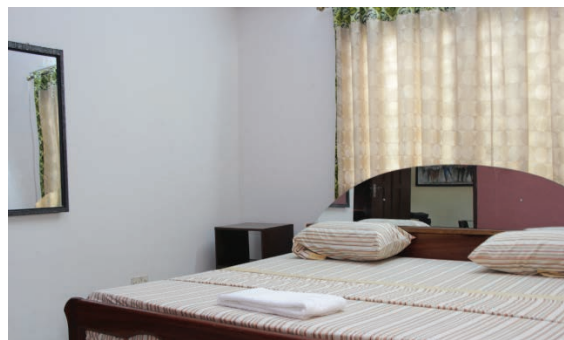
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Suitable for meetings, workshops or seminars for up to 30 people with tables or 45 theatre style seating. Wi-fi internet.

## Social Functions

Gardens or indoor venue for events, special occasions, weddings.





# From Farmhand to University Lecturer

Gagbiri, a Kusaal speaking village in the Bawku East district of the Upper West region in Ghana, hosted one of GILLBT's adult literacy classes also known as "the night school". The evening school is designed to teach older folks who are not in the formal school system to read and write in their mother tongue. A few of these folks then joined the formal school system after successfully completing this programme.

Dr Aaron Asisbi Abuosi, a lecturer at the University of Ghana Business School and author of many academic publications on health-related issues in Ghana, is one of the beneficiaries of the night school.

In 1975, at age 13, while assisting his grandfather as a farmhand by day, Aaron enrolled at the night school to enable him read and write in his mother tongue. Aaron was among the best in his batch. In less than a year after enrolling, he was selected and trained to become an instructor and lay preacher. Aaron's brilliance and commitment to work won the admiration of a Presbyterian missionary, Rev Van who paid for Aaron's tuition to join the formal school system.

Aaron's phenomenal academic performance in the formal school system, which was a result of his fluency in reading and writing in Kusaal, got him a number of promotions. He spent three years out of six in primary school.

In middle school form one, Aaron wrote and passed the Common Entrance Exams and went to the Nalerigu Secondary School for the GCE Ordinary 'O' level certificate and later to the Navrongo Secondary School for the Sixth Form, completing in 1987 with an Advanced Level certificate.

In 1989, Aaron enrolled at the Presbyterian Nurses Training College, after which he worked as a State Registered Nurse with the same hospital. In 1996 he studied at the University of Ghana for the Bachelor's Degree in Nursing and Psychology and graduated with a first class degree. From 2002 to 2004 he went back to the University of Ghana to study Master of Business Administration (MBA) in Health Service Administration.

In October 2008, Aaron became the General Manager of the Kwahu Presbytery Health Services. In August 2010, he was appointed a lecturer in Health Services Management at the University of Ghana.

Aaron says he is forever indebted to the GILLBT-sponsored Kusaal Literacy and Development Project for helping to inculcate in him the desire to learn, which has enabled him to unearth his potential and come this far.



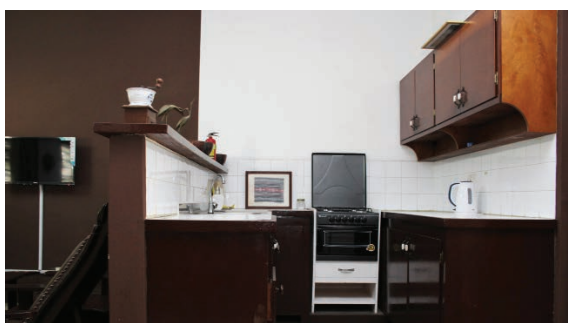
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## Your Response

### 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**

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- ☐ I wish to receive news from GILLBT
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# GILLBT

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