

# MOTHER TONGUE

JULY  
2022

NEWS FROM GILLBT

ISSN 0855-1480



**TRANSFORMED  
LIVES**



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF  
EXCELLENCE IN MOTHER TONGUE  
LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION;  
BUILDING A BETTER NATION WITH  
TRANSFORMED LIVES



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# MESSAGE FROM THE **Director**

SYLVESTER KWAME NKRUMAH



## TRANSFORMED LIVES

The vision statement of GILLBT reads: “To transform lives through access to the Word of God in the mother tongue” Over the sixty years that GILLBT has been working in Ghana, we can confidently attest to the fact that this vision has, by and large, been achieved as we can identify several people and communities that have experienced visible spiritual and socio-cultural transformation in various areas of their lives.

The acquisition of basic literacy skills in the mother tongue by those people who have not had opportunity of formal education has enabled them to bridge into formal schools and to climb the academic ladder. Examples of such beneficiaries can be found in almost all the language groups. The availability of the Holy Scriptures in the mother tongue has greatly aided evangelism, church planting and spiritual growth in these minority language groups.

The development of the languages has preserved these hitherto forgotten, ignored or

abandoned languages with the speakers’ prestige and self-esteem restored. In his research work on the impact of GILLBT’s work, Rev. Dr. Sule Saa records that: “mother-tongue Scriptures has brought about a rippling effect in the Dagomba and Konkomba communities including, the increasing social significance of the church, and provision of social services for the betterment of the communities, the development of a sense of personhood and empowerment, the preservation of Konkomba and Dagomba cultures, the transformation of traditional institutions and ultimately the promotion and maintenance of peace, and the enhancement of Christian-Muslim discourse”.

He further recounts that: “before the translation, the Konkomba and Dagomba people rejected Christianity, seeing it as a faith of outsiders. Numerous attempts to evangelize them failed, but once the Bible was translated, many of the Konkombas and Dagombas put their trust in Christ. The translation according to him, broke down relationships of servitude, brought peace to tribal disputes, gave people a sense of identity, stopped betrothal marriages, and addressed situations within the context of the people”

My wife, Naana and I, were assigned to the Pasaal language group to complete the language development and translation work started by Mike and Vicki Toupin in 1992. In 2002, the New Testament in Pasaal was published and dedicated.

With the language written and Bible published, many churches dispatched missionaries to the area. Evangelism thrived, Christian population increased, and infrastructural development was rapid. Funsu opened up and became the district capital for the Wa East district in the Upper West region of Ghana. One of the converts, is now leading the translation of the Old Testament into Pasaal.

The people of Funsu and all other surrounding communities of Pasaal speakers in the Upper West Region of Ghana who never dreamt that the Almighty God would speak to them in their own language have now become a beacon of development.

A couple of human-interest stories can testify to the transformation of Lives:

- A twenty-eight-year-old blind man in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana (PCG) in New Longoro from the Deg language community in the Bono Region of Ghana after listening to the recorded New Testament in his mother tongue on cassette had this to say: “I was two times blind but now, thanks to Faith Comes By Hearing (FCBH) program, I can see partially. I can hear the Lord himself speaking to me in my own language”.

- After a Scripture Engagement and Leadership (SELT) training workshop for church leaders in Zebilla in the Upper East Region, almost all participants from the participating churches expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to acquire the training. For instance, the late Rev. Asumani the then resident minister of the Central Assemblies of God Church in Zebilla had this to say: “The workshop is marvelous; it has given me new ideas on how to make the mother tongue Scriptures more meaningful to my congregation.”

In a nutshell, we can confidently establish the fact that the major area that the work of GILLBT has touched and transformed lives is being at the forefront of developing Ghanaian languages, particularly the minority languages that have been either ignored, forgotten or abandoned. These languages do not only serve as the catalyst in various domains of literacy, improvement of learning outcomes in formal and informal schools, but also inspire development, preservation of languages, and transformation of worldviews and communities.

The success stories are endless, and the foregoing are just a tip of the iceberg. The transformation of lives and the commitment of those involved have been possible through the grace of God. To him alone we offer all praise and glory (2 Corinthians 9:8). Amen!





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# GILLBT 60TH ANNIVERSARY



**Theme**

**CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN MOTHER  
TONGUE LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION;  
BUILDING A BETTER NATION WITH TRANSFORMED LIVES**

## Anniversary Programme Lineup

- **August - November**  
Media house tour & Anniversary Lectures  
*Accra, Kumasi, Tamale*
- **September - November**  
GILLBT Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving  
*Accra, Tema, Ho, Hohoe, Sunyani,  
Koforidua, Kumasi, Tamale*
- **September 12- 23**  
Two-week-long Open Day & Exhibition  
*Accra*
- **November 17**  
Fundraising Dinner  
*Accra*
- **November 24**  
Fundraising Dinner  
*Kumasi*
- **December 5-9**  
A week-long Open Day & Exhibition  
*Tamale*
- **December 10**  
Grand Finale Anniversary Celebration  
*Tamale*
- **December 11**  
Anniversary Thanksgiving Service  
*Tamale, Accra*
- **December 9**  
49th Annual General Meeting  
*Tamale*

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## CELEBRATING 60 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE IN MOTHER TONGUE LITERACY AND BIBLE TRANSLATION

GILLBT was established in 1962 on the basis of a cooperative agreement between the University of Ghana and the Summer Institute of Linguistics International (SILI). The agreement was coordinated by the Institute of African Studies (IAS), and its objective was for GILLBT to complement the government's efforts at developing the languages of the country. The following institutes were involved: the IAS, Linguistics Department, Language Centre and the Institute of Adult Education.

After sixty years of existence, GILLBT, which has its headquarters in Tamale, has made significant contributions to Ghana in language development, literacy and Bible translation. In the sixty years of productive collaborative relations with the University of Ghana, GILLBT has contributed to the development of 40 of the hitherto undeveloped languages in the country, and has provided the University of Ghana with phonologies, grammars, dictionaries and other anthropological material in these 40 languages. Indeed, GILLBT, through its academic output to

the University of Ghana, is the largest contributor to the documentation and analyses of the minority languages of Ghana.

In addition to language development, GILLBT also facilitates self-managed literacy programmes. Each year we enrol up to 30,000 learners in our literacy programme and about 90 per cent of them successfully graduate. As part of our contribution towards government's efforts to educate the populace on their rights and responsibilities, GILLBT, in collaboration with the National Commission for Civic Education, Northern Region, translated the 1992 abridged Constitution of Ghana into 24 languages and also reviewed it in 6 other languages. We also translated the Rights of the Ghanaian Child and Ghanaian Woman into selected languages in conjunction with the Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA).

Additionally, we have included a micro-credit scheme in our literacy programme to augment the government's poverty reduction initiative which



has so far benefitted more than 1,000 women. GILLBT is also part of an alliance working together with other like-minded organisations to enhance quality basic education in northern Ghana.

In recognition of its contribution to language development in Africa in general and Ghana in particular, UNESCO awarded GILLBT with the coveted NESSIM HABIF PRIZE 1990-1991 award for our distinguished work in the promotion of literature in African languages.

Finally, GILLBT is at the forefront of mother tongue Bible translation project in the country. As a result of GILLBT's work, the New Testament has been translated and dedicated in 34 languages while 14 of those language groups—Konkomba, Tampilma, Bimoba, Farefare, Chumburung, Sisaala, Lelemi, Deg, Kasem, Kusaal, Nafaanra, Gonja, Buli and Vagla—now have the entire Bible translated and published. Four New Testament and 15 Old Testament translation projects are in progress. Indeed, through the work of GILLBT, Ghana occupies an enviable position in Africa as the country that has made the most contributions to the pool of translated Bibles worldwide.

In this issue of Mother Tongue we are sharing 12 impact stories to say “Thank You” first and foremost to God Almighty for working through GILLBT to bring transformation to many Ghanaian communities. Secondly, to thank and celebrate with our partners who have faithfully played various roles over these 60 years. These testimonies from GILLBT's work in language development, mother tongue literacy and Bible translation underscore the relevance of partnerships at various levels.

As you flip the pages of this magazine, remember this is God's work and He will ensure His Word comes to pass, “For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea,” (Habakkuk 2:14). To see many more lives transformed through the work of GILLBT, your prayer and financial support are required.







# **BIBLE TRANSLATION IMPACTS SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS**



# Reconciliation and restoration

On April 13, 2009, GILLBT dedicated its 25th New Testament for the Siwu language group. Siwu is spoken in the mountainous central part of the Volta Region of Ghana. It belongs to the geographic group of Ghana-Togo Mountain languages. There are two distinct Siwu-speaking groups—the Akpafu and Lolobi.

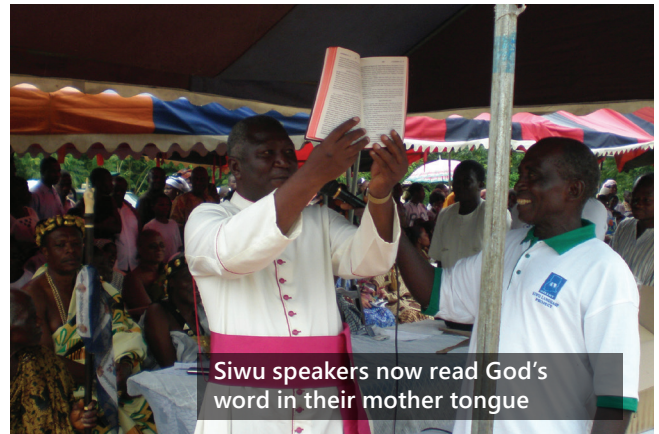
Prior to the beginning of translating the Bible into Siwu, the Akpafu and Lolobi communities had been separated for over 100 years and with no hint of ever restoring their relationship with each other in sight. No one seemed to have any concrete idea of how the separation between the Akpafu and Lolobi came about in the first place. Perhaps the chiefs had argued. Perhaps something had been done or said against each other. Whatever it was, they couldn't resolve the issue. So they distanced themselves from each other — one group settled to the east and the other to the west of a set of mountains.

It was only by God's grace that local organisers had the foresight to recognise that the Bible was for both communities, not just one. The committee chose a chair from Lolobi and a vice-chair from Akpafu. Working as a team, they translated Scripture together — navigating slight idiosyncrasies in their specific dialects and assisting each other — eventually completing the translation in 2009 and dedicating the New Testament.

One of the Siwu New Testament translators, Reverend Stephen Addai, recalled that day fondly, “We decided we were going to launch it in Lolobi,” he said. “We went around to our chiefs and told them that



Lolobi and Akpafu chiefs at the dedication of the New Testament in Siwu



Siwu speakers now read God's word in their mother tongue

this was a great celebration. That day, from the time the people began assembling, it started raining and rained the whole day. And though it was raining, they [the Siwu people] came in the rain and stood in the rain. In fact, it was a joyous sight. Both the old and the young came. It was very historic.”

Their mutual desire for the Word of God in their mother tongue gave them a common purpose. When it seemed impossible, the Siwu people showed up — together. The Lolobi and Akpafu communities are now bonded by the words of the gospel in their own language.

God is in the business of restoring relationships. For the Siwu language people, he used Bible translation work to reunite two communities that had been at odds for decades.

But Scripture's most important purpose is to restore our relationship with God himself. That is exactly what is happening among the Siwu people, young and old.



# Power to heal from the one true God

A visibly joyous sixty-eight year-old Moses Okese would not end any statement without expressing joy in his new-found faith in Christ. Growing up in Kecheibe, one of the Adele speaking communities where GILLBT is working on completing a full Bible, Moses knew only the gods his parents served. To him a god that did not speak or understand his language was not worth worshipping. "I knew and served two big gods," he said, pouring scorn on the daily slaughtering of sheep and chicken at the shrine.

Moses recounts seeing a gathering of Christians in his neighbourhood one afternoon on his way to the farm. As he walked past them, he heard one of them reading in Adele. Out of curiosity he stopped and asked questions. To his surprise they were reading words from the Bible, reassuring words in his own mother tongue! This first encounter with God's word in Adele led him to faith in Jesus Christ. It was the reading of the Bible in his local dialect by these Christians neighbours that drew him to God. After the New Testament was translated and published in Adele in 1996, majority of Christians got copies which they used during church service.

Today, Moses is an active member of a small church in his neighbourhood. All of his nine children are Christians. He testifies to God's glory about the gift of healing which he manifests during church service. "I can say to the glory of God that since I became born again, I pray for all who are sick in the name of Jesus and they are healed."



MOSES OKESE  
(Kecheibi - Oti Region)

*"I can say to the glory of God, that since I became born again, I pray for all who are sick in the name of Jesus and they are healed."*



Moses reads the New Testament in Adele



# Catalyst for development

Funsi, a town once described as “overseas”, very remote and with very little connection to central government and church organisations, having neither running water nor electricity, has become a beacon of development. Funsi and all other surrounding communities of Paasaal speakers in the Upper West region of Ghana never once dreamt that the Almighty God would speak to them in their own language.

With their language yet to be written and less than 5% of the total population being Christian, the people cannot wait and hoped for the advent of change. Traditional religion was deeply rooted in the people’s ethnic identity. The fear of traditional spirits was strong and the people depended on their ancestors’ spirits to protect them from harm.

In 1992, Sylvester Nkrumah, who had just left Bible college, and was serving as a trainee translator with GILLBT, together with his wife, Naana Nkrumah, agreed to relocate to Funsi to complete the language development and translation work started by Mike and Vicki Toupin. The determined couple arrived in Funsi inspired to serve and show the Pasaal people God’s love by translating the New Testament into their language.

In 2002, the New Testament in Pasaal was published and dedicated. With the language written and Bible published, many churches, including the Church of Pentecost, dispatched missionaries to Funsi. Evangelism thrived, Christian population increased and infrastructural



The GILLBT translation office in Funsi currently hosts the Ambulance service office and Fire station



An aerial shot of Funsi

development soared. One of the converts, Saaka Awuno, is now leading the translation of the Old Testament into Paasaal.

The once obscure town is now a “city on a hill”. It is now the district capital for the Wa East district with a fire station and an ambulance service. At the dedication of the New Testament, one of the local chiefs said, “The church is our government”. Today all the surrounding villages have vibrant churches. Funsi has seen significant development and the people can’t wait to have the complete Bible in Pasaal.

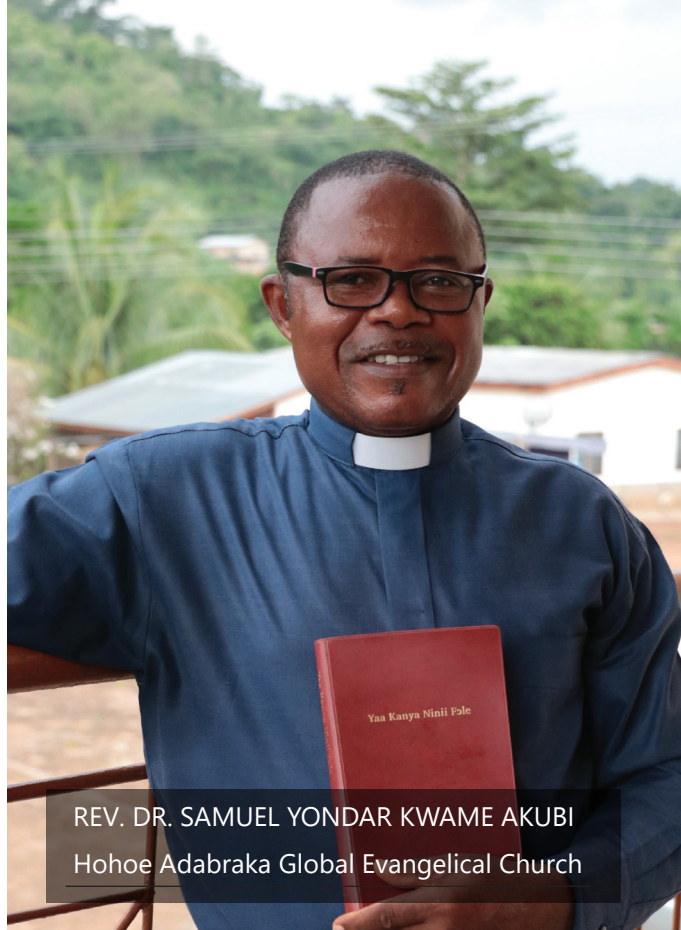
# Responsibility to proclaim the gospel

*"The people can hear and now understand fully God speaking to them directly."*

Rev. Dr Samuel Yondar Kwame Akubi of Hohoe Adabraka Global Evangelical Church talks about preaching in Selee speaking communities. Selee, the name of both people and language is spoken in the mountainous central part of the Oti region of Ghana. It belongs to the geographic group of Ghana-Togo Mountain languages (traditionally called the Togorestsprachen or Togo remnant languages of the Kwa branch of Niger-Congo).

Rev. Akubi has been preaching in some Selee speaking communities for years, even before the New Testament was translated into Selee by GILLBT in 2008. He read from the Ewe Bible (a major language in the Volta and Oti regions) for almost all his sermons. But he observed, with worry 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. In most of these communities where he preaches, the audio version of the Bible, popularly



REV. DR. SAMUEL YONDAR KWAME AKUBI  
Hohoe Adabraka Global Evangelical Church



Rev. Dr. Akubi and many Selee preachers now use the mother tongue Bible

known as the Proclaimer, is widely used. With great joy he said, "The people can hear and now understand fully God speaking to them directly."

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



# Knowing the right from wrong

*"If it is not yours and you haven't asked, don't take it,"*

As I sat with Abigail Koni, a senior high school graduate, on a rock behind the GILLBT translation office in Nyabosore, a village in the Volta region, she was all smiles narrating to me how she found the truth after reading the Bible in her mother tongue.

Growing up, Abigail only read the Bible in English and Ewe because the Bible was not yet translated into her mother tongue of Tutrugbu. After GILLBT published portions of the ongoing New Testament translation in her mother tongue, Abigail, who is fond of reading, got a copy and spent time reading the Gospel of Mark.

Abigail had a habit of taking money from her mother's purse without asking. In her opinion, once it belonged to her mother, it wasn't stealing. But reading about Jesus's teaching in her mother tongue has been epiphanic for her. She has come to understand that, taking anything that doesn't belong to you, from anyone, including one's parents, without asking, is stealing. And stealing is a sin in the eyes of God. With this understanding, she knows taking without asking is stealing.

"If it is not yours and you haven't asked, don't take it," Abigail cautions.



ABIGAIL KONI  
(Nyabosore - Volta Region)



Abigail reads the Gospel of Mark in her mother tongue



# The outsider finds a second family

*"It wasn't easy. When they [my family] saw me in that mode, they were not all that happy with me,"*

In Nangruma, a village given life by illegal mining, in the Upper East region of Ghana, 36-year-old Emmanuel Dintigi, has also found purpose as a literacy and Bible translation coordinator for GILLBT.

Though born in Yipabongo, also in the Upper East, the most defining moments of Emmanuel's life took place in the remote community of Nangruma. It was there that God worked through Mr Konlan Kpeebe (who was working on the Koma literacy and Bible translation project), and the conviction of the Holy Spirit to ensure his conversion from Islam to Christianity. He had been helping Mr Konlan Kpeebe with chores around his home. Mr Kpeebe in turn offered him social and spiritual support by sharing the word of God from the Bible.

Emmanuel's final push to Christianity came in 2002 via a dream. "I had a dream that one black man with bushy hair standing by me was saying Jesus 'Christ is the only saviour'," he recalled, speaking to Mother Tongue magazine.

Being born again came with some domestic challenges for Emmanuel. His Muslim family did not take his conversion lightly. "It wasn't easy. When they [my family] saw me in that mode, they were not all that happy with me," said Emmanuel. He however held on to his faith



EMMANUEL DINTIGI

Bible Translator - Koma Project

and while he has regrets that his father died, he proclaims that, "Through me, my mom is also a Christian."

Emmanuel's challenges were not only brought on by his faith, as he faced a stumbling block in education. "I was having intentions of furthering my education, but it was unfortunate that the financial aspect was a big problem."

But he was still able to serve the community that adopted him by handling literacy classes in the Koma language. Emmanuel was a beneficiary of these classes when he was younger, and his time had come to also impart his knowledge.

He used to travel for 30 minutes from Yipabongo to Nangruma to teach Koma literacy, and he remains grateful that the community embraced him as one of their own. "They took me as a family member and also as a teacher," Emmanuel recalled.

By 2011, Emmanuel had started his tertiary education and he received a degree from the Winneba College of Education. He is currently working as a Bible translator on the Koma Old Testament translation project.



GILLBT  
WORKS IN

**40** LANGUAGES INCLUDING  
SIGN LANGUAGE TRANSLATION

**We believe that mother tongue literacy and the word of God in our mother tongue is the most effective way to build vibrant churches and transform our society.**

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# BIBLE TRANSLATION AND LITERACY



# 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 children 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, currently 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



DR AARON ASISBI ABUOSI  
Lecturer at the University of Ghana  
Business School

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 a 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 for a Master of Business Administration degree (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.



## Delayed but not denied

Born in Sandema Abiliyeri in the Upper East region of Ghana in 1970, now Very Rev. Francis Aboanchab Azognab, Superintendent Minister of the Yendi Circuit of the Methodist Church Ghana, waited at home for over 20 years before having a formal education.

Recounting with gratitude the contribution of GILLBT to his success, Very Rev. Francis enrolled in the Buli literacy programme in 1990 at Sandema. Mr. Kwame Akisikpak who was a member of his church was the programme coordinator.

His implacable hunger to succeed drove him to work harder. On March 23, 1991, he was awarded a certificate of completion by GILLBT and the Department of Community Development. Spurred by this recognition, Very Rev. Francis braved all odds to join the formal education stream. He enrolled at Afoko Junior High School in his community. Instead of starting at Primary one, he joined a second-year Junior High School class with only a year to prepare and sit for the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) in 1992. His ability to read and write in his mother tongue, Buli, came in handy. He took little time to understand anything he was taught or read in English. His grasp of mathematical concepts was excellent. Graduating with distinction crowned his resolve and patience. Very Rev. Francis then continued his education at Sandema Secondary Technical School (now Azantilow Senior High School) and completed in 1995.



REV. FRANCIS ABOANCHAB AZOGNAB  
Superintendent Minister of the Yendi  
Circuit of the Methodist Church, Ghana

After teaching in a private basic school in Kumasi for some time, he offered the Construction Technician's Course (CTC 1) at Kumasi Polytechnic (now Kumasi Technical University). Upon completion, the Ghana Education Service hired and offered him the role of a Senior Technical Instructor in the Bawku East District in 2001.

In 2003, Francis entered Christian Service College (now Christian Service University College) in preparation to respond to the call into the ordained ministry. He obtained a Diploma in Theology from the University of Ghana and a Bachelor of Theology from Trinity Theological Seminary. Very Rev. Francis currently holds a Master of Philosophy in Religious Studies from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi.

Having served as a minister of the gospel for over 12 years in the Methodist Church Ghana, Very Rev. Azognab is the Evangelism and Mission Coordinator of the Tamale Diocese of the Methodist Church. Through his initiatives, two formal schools were established by the Methodist Church Ghana, one in Navrongo and the other in Yendi. Both schools are training godly leaders who would go on to pursue greater heights to the glory of God.

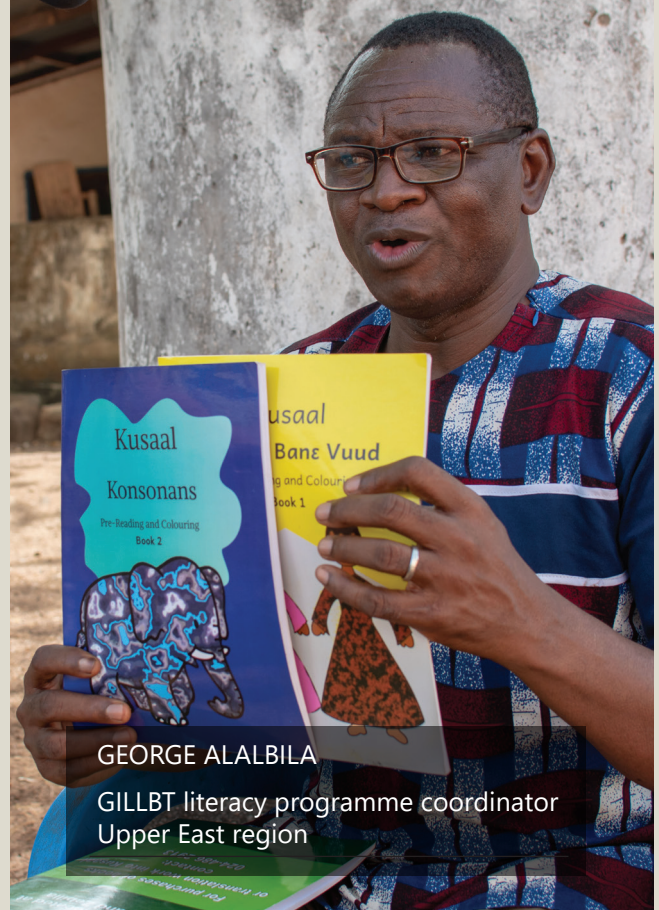


## Chosen to serve

*"When I grew and went to secondary school, I had access to the Bible and saw the truth in the Bible and decided to give my life to Christ."*

Born in Bugri, a farming community in the Upper East region of Ghana, to parents who were neither Christians nor Muslims, Amadu Alalbila (later George Alalbila) was raised as a Muslim. As part of Kusasi tribal pre-birth rituals, George's dad consulted a soothsayer to inquire if his yet-to-be-born son is from any of his father's tribal gods or an ancestor incarnate. To their surprise, the soothsayer found that he belonged to none. Rather, he directed that George should be allowed to join a religious group which directly worships the almighty God. The main religion in Bugri was Islam, therefore his parents sent him to live with his grandfather so he could practise Islam.

George spent the first 15 years of his life tending to cattle. His grandfather who had made enough money from trading cattle saw no need for formal education. He convinced George to dedicate his time to shepherding his flock out of which he could also create wealth. To him, though the formal education path led to wealth creation, it was not as effective as being a herdsman. Although his grandfather's argument made sense to him, George's admiration of the fancy uniform and the eloquence of his few school-going friends forced him to think again.



With his daytime hours fully dedicated to herding cattle, George's only option to learn how to read and write was to enrol in the mother tongue literacy programme organised at night in his community. In the night school, George learned to read and write in Kusaal and with that knowledge he attempted to read English. He was making progress, albeit rather slowly.

George's elder brother who was visiting from Kpandai heard George reading out loud from a beginner's English book. Pleasantly surprised, he asked George if he would like to go to school, to which he replied yes. His elder brother convinced their grandfather to allow George to relocate to Kpandai where he had bought cattle and needed George's services. His grandfather reluctantly agreed and permitted George to go live with his elder brother.

In Kpandai, George's elder brother enrolled him in a school. At age 16, George was too old for primary school but he was not bothered. He joined the Primary four class where he became an object of mockery. But his determination to learn was all that mattered to him. In no time he completed Primary school and Junior high.



Throughout his education journey he found learning easy because of the foundation he had built at the Kusaal night school.

His family eventually got to learn of his secret schooling when he went back to his grandfather. But by then it was too late for his grandfather to stop him. Next, George had secondary education at Navrongo Secondary School (Navasco) in 1984 and then went to St. John Bosco Training College in 1990.

Though he grew up a Muslim, George found Christ in Secondary School. His love for music drew him to the activities of the Scripture Union (SU) at Navasco where he met Christian brothers who taught him more about Jesus Christ. He recalled, "When I grew and went to Secondary School, I had access to the Bible and saw the truth in the Bible and decided to give my life to Christ."

George has been working with GILLBT for over 22 years as a mother tongue literacy programme coordinator in the Upper East region. He is giving back to his community with so much joy. Currently, he is in charge of the Monitoring and Evaluation of the ongoing Kusaal Literacy pilot programme in 15 schools in the Kusaasi area.



Copies of the Kusaal Bible are available for use

The dedicated short code \*887\*2# which is active on MTN, Vodafone and AirtelTigo have been introduced to primarily create a convenient, quick and effective channel to give and support mother tongue Bible translation and literacy in Ghana.

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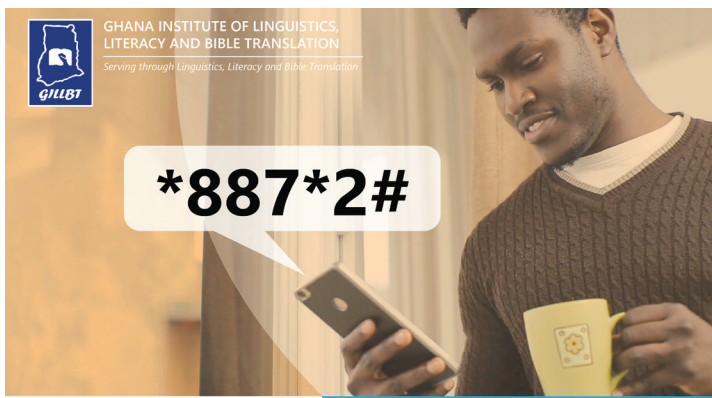
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# Future lecturer in charge of literacy training

*"The time I was a Sunday school student, our teachers always advised us that if you know how to read in Vagla, it will be easier for you to learn English,"*

Age is but a number when it comes to the way forward for mother-tongue literacy in Soma, a village in the Sawla Tuna Kalba district in the Savannah region of Ghana. Though this village has no electric power, one of its sons, 17-year-old Cornelius Gbolo Kpateawiizi, has grown to be a shining light.

He took over the teaching of the Vagla language in his community when he was 13-years old after the community's only literacy teacher was transferred. Cornelius did not hesitate to step into the shoes of his teacher despite his young age because he understood the value of mother-tongue literacy. He could not read when he was in early primary. However, he was urged to consider literacy classes in his native Vagla. "The time I was a Sunday school student, our teachers always advised us that if you know how to read in Vagla, it will be easier for you to learn English," he told Mother Tongue magazine.

In communities like his, GILLBT's Bible translation and literacy work provided the platform for Cornelius to showcase his potential as a Vagla literacy teacher. During worship period in his local Primary School, he shared the word of God from his Vagla Bible and this set him apart from his peers. Before he realised, his literacy in Vagla had not only helped him become literate in



CORNELIUS GBOLO KPATEAWIIZI  
Vagla literacy teacher

the English language, but it also uncovered a new passion. "Because I know how to read [Vagla], anytime an elder or church leader selects me to teach some people, I am always happy because I have an interest in teaching," said Cornelius.

Despite his grounding in the church, Cornelius has his eye set on academia. He wants to be a lecturer in the future. In the meantime, he has tried to make the most of the opportunity he has, teaching classes of toddlers and a few women.

For Cornelius the ultimate lesson in his teaching assignment is himself. "I always tell them to be serious in Vagla literacy because it helps a lot," he said. "I always use my life as an example. I narrate my life to them, telling them how I started and what I have become."



Cornelius leading a Bible listening group after literacy class



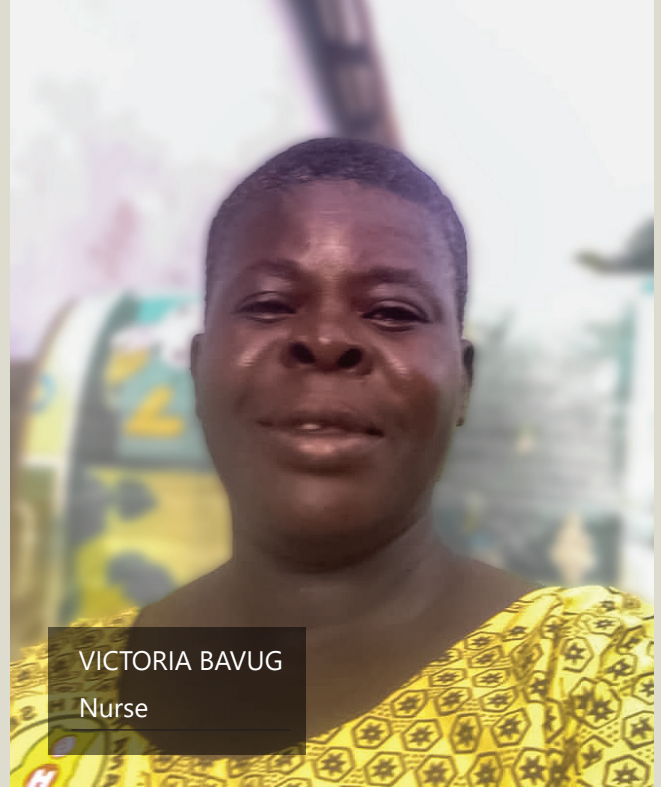
# Literacy programme produces a community nurse

*"I had admission to Damongo Senior High School and completed my studies,"*

Victoria Bavug, a native of Lingbinsi in the North Gonja District of the Savannah Region enrolled as a student of the Tampulma literacy programme when she was a child. After she graduated from the programme her parents sent her to a formal school. With the foundation she had built from the mother tongue literacy class, Victoria seamlessly completed Primary and Junior High Schools and passed her entrance exams to enter a Senior High School. "I had admission to Damongo Senior High School and completed my studies," she said, grinning from ear to ear.

Ian and Claire Gray, a British couple assigned to work in Tampulma by GILLBT, identified the need for a medical facility to serve the people. They thought it wise to train a native to man this facility and picked Victoria to head this brilliant initiative. She was sent to study first aid treatment under a medical superintendent at the Daboya Polyclinic. "After my studies, they [Ian & Claire Gray] employed me to head the clinic started by the Tampulma literacy project," she said.

In 2009-2010 the government of Ghana took over the day-to-day running of the clinic. As a result of that, Victoria was given the opportunity to go to a community health nursing training college where she studied community nursing. She was employed fulltime by the government as a community nurse at the Lingbinsi Community Clinic.



VICTORIA BAVUG  
Nurse

Victoria reflects with joy and gratitude to God for ordering her steps through mother tongue literacy class to become a professional nurse serving her people. Her story is not complete without acknowledging the immense contribution of the people God sent her way. "I give God the glory for such achievement. I also thank Rev. Samuel Asare as well as Mr John M. Tika, Ian & Claire for producing all the primers and some story materials in Tampulma for us to learn. My sincere thanks also go to Brothers Isaac Mbatia, and Noah Wusah my literacy teachers who taught me how to read and write in Tampulma. May the Lord bless them".



Victoria provides public health services and education to her community

# Mother tongue literacy opens doors

*"A few weeks after I started learning the alphabet, I was able to read and write in Safaliba."*

Emmanuel Jewu Wari, from Mandari, pastors the Nasunua branch of the Assemblies of God Church in the Savannah region of Ghana. His community was privileged to have a mother tongue literacy class in Safaliba. However, it took Jewu, who is now an advocate for mother tongue literacy, many years to enrol because he initially doubted its usefulness.

"Since the inception of Safaliba literacy, I never took it seriously until when I saw that people who had no formal education could read short and simple sentences and even write their own names in Safaliba," Jewu recounted.

Inspired by his father, who had no formal education but who after a few months of attending the literacy class could now read and write in Safaliba, Jewu started attending the class. Poised to learn, Jewu also wanted to "put the literacy class to the test". Surprisingly, within weeks of enrolment, he was able to read and write in Safaliba. Sharing his learning strategy, Jewu said, "A few weeks after I started learning the alphabet, I was able to read and write in Safaliba."

He also noticed a significant improvement in his reading skills during his basic school days. He was able to pass his Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and gain admission to his preferred Senior High School. There he continued to reap the benefits of the literacy class he took in Safaliba. "During my Senior High School period, Gonja was the only Ghanaian language that was taught in the school, and because of the



EMMANUEL JEWU WARI

Pastor, Assemblies of God Church - Nasunua

background knowledge in Safaliba literacy, I did not encounter much difficulty in learning Gonja," he shared with joy.

Jewu's love for mother tongue literacy grew stronger by the day. With the support and encouragement of the Safaliba literacy project manager, he joined the Assemblies of God Theological Seminary, Northern campus, where he was trained as a pastor.

To show his commitment to mother tongue literacy and education in general, Jewu, with support from other natives, has established a school in one of the Safaliba communities called Tangayiri where there was no formal school. There he volunteers as a mother tongue instructor and a subject teacher. "I teach the children to read and write in Safaliba as well as formal education subjects as a volunteer teacher," Jewu said.



Emmanuel's school is opened to all irrespective of one's faith



# GILLBT

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Sisaala Bible



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