

## REPORT ON TRIP TO CAMEROON November 2007

Glossary of key people and groups:

**CABTAL** : Cameroon Bible Translation and Literacy. Has 3 main areas of work, translation, literacy and church relations. Main centre is Chapman Centre : personell contributing 5% of their income to it, starting as fundraising effort before it was opened in 2006, but the practice has continued. Has a guest wing where we stayed and two women were detailed to cook for us.

**Michel Kenmiague** : General Director of Cabtal

**Emmanuel Fon**: is in project funding. Did law at university and joined Cabtal in 2005. He coordinated and led our group during the visit.

**Ernest** : our driver and 7<sup>th</sup> vital member of the group. He is also a mechanic, so could have mended the car if needed!! Just married (Dec ) to Ernestine.

**Martin Borrows, Aija and Ruth** were the other members of the group. Martin is a volunteer with Wycliffe and works in In Focus office. Aija works as housekeeper manager, Ruth's job at Wycliffe is to update the website.

**Elvira** is the language programme manger with 11 projects on the go, of which the Aghem is one. She checks all the finance with monthly amounts sent out and receipts checked. Our money from CBC goes to her to administer.

**Zebedee Chia** is in Bamenda and is the liaison officer for the 'central ring' languages, and is involved with the Aghem project.

**Kum Alfred** is the interim project leader, he also pastors a small Baptist church plant. A humble, godly man who shared that he is like Moses, aware of his weaknesses and totally reliant on God.( Elias, who is more academically able , was to be the leader , but wishes to do an MA if he gets funding, so declined the post.)

**Martha** : is the chair of Aghem Bible Translation Committee. Widowed 14 years ago she teaches at the local teacher training college and she seemed to know, or be related to , so many people we met! Indeed , she is Harry's aunt!

The trip started with the morning service and lovely time of open worship on Sunday evening at CBC: often afterwards we literally almost 'felt' we were being prayed for, and had received many assurances from people that this would be so.

The journey on **Thursday 15th** was uneventful, we were met at the airport, and after arriving at the Chapman Centre, Ernest prayed after he turned the engine off, giving thanks for our safe arrival, and committing our time in Cameroon to the Lord.

The following day ( **Friday** )after a cold shower and breakfast, we were taken to an 8am prayer meeting with other members of the Cabtal team whom we met. We had a tour of the Centre then coffee break with the staff.

We spent some time chatting to Elvire as she is so involved with our project.

*Her prayer requests :*

- Wisdom in staff selection;
- Training opportunities for the team;
- For all the churches involved with the project.

We then went to the training centre, which we were taken round by an American missionary, Michael , who explained how they develop courses for training in linguistics, phonetics, grammar, literacy and translation principles. Local people come for a few weeks , then go back to the field.

We saw lists of the 279 languages in Cameroon; he then explained how there are 'shell books' on health and farming which, when the new language is developed enough, it can be put into them so they can be printed and used to help the community.

*His prayer requests:* -Having enough people to do the work and identifying the right people to train up , not those who may wish to exploit the situation.

-Not to get burned out!

After lunch we met with Emmanuel for more briefing and explanation of how Cabtal works, and the process of developing a project. Cabtal partners with the Cameroonian government to promote

literacy in the country. NACALCO is the National Association Cameroonian Language Committees which have some Christians and some non Christians on them, running training classes in the churches or community.

**Saturday** we travelled to Wum, stopping in Bamenda for lunch. We left at 7.50, stopped from c. 1.45-2.30 and arrived c .7pm in the dark and rain. A group of people had waited for about 2 hours to greet us. We had a lovely welcome at the home of Harry's parents, then had supper at another home then went to the guest house where we were lodging. It was an enclosed compound, the rooms being a little Spartan consisting of a bed, 'ensuite' bathroom with a loo, tap, bucket, cold shower and non functioning light. There was one nail in the room on which to hang things. The bed had one sheet, one pillow and a rather grubby blanket. They kindly supplied another pillow on request! Nearby cockerels seemed to think it was morning at about 3am... We had been detailed to stay with Harry's parents , but Emmanuel wanted the team together so we compromised and went to stay with the Kuchas for the last night.

**Sunday** : having not slept particularly well it was an extraordinary moment when coming to, to hear the hymn played on the radio nearby ' holy, holy , holy, Lord God Almighty ' in and amongst the sounds of cockerels and women busying themselves around the compound. Reminded us why we were there!

We had breakfast at Martha's and then divided to go to the different churches. Graham and I went to the Zion Baptist church at 9.0, then on to the Full Gospel Church after as it was still in full swing, the service finishing after 12.0. We spoke at both having been given a warm welcome.

**Godlove** is the pastor of the Zion Baptist Church, his wife is Jennet and they have 3 boys. Both are involved in discipling and she heads the choir and Sunday school.

We then visited the Parmount Fon's palace, were shown around and in the afternoon there was a welcome ceremony with many speeches, including ones by Martha and **Pastor David** , who is the chair of the Inter church Committee, and pastor of the Full Gospel Church. Emmanuel spoke , as did Nelson , Martin and Graham and I.

We had supper after at David and Lucy Ndisho's, hearing about some of the work of the Full Gospel Church. They have 100 villages in the area in total, David supervising 13 of them, and sometimes he may walk for a day or two to reach them to take a mission. They have 6 children

**Monday** After breakfast at the Ndisho's we went to meet the District Officer , the Secretary General and the Deputy Mayoress , who invited us to lunch at the Town Hall. In all these meetings we were given a warm welcome and there was enthusiasm for the project. We had a fascinating debate with the DO as to how God's word can transform communities so I was not surprised to see a prayer poster on the back of his door!

Then we met the **Inter Church Committee**, the meeting starting with a time of devotion. We were told that our job at CBC is to support the churches in Wum, just like Moses's hands were held up in prayer on the day of battle.

This committee was formed by the mobiliser who came into the community to see if there was potential to do a language translation project initially. If the churches can be seen to work together, then the ICC is given the tasks of prayer, fundraising, encouraging translations to be used in the churches, literacy classes, finance. They thanked us for the money for the trees, then there was discussion about the land which had been given to the project by the local fon. It was explained that a 'love token ' should be given to him in case another person came along with a use for the land , as it needed to be properly registered with a land certificate. We talked about their long term vision for this 10 hectares ( size of c . 25 football pitches ), and ideas of a new purpose built project office, printing facility, an eye clinic, dental clinic, guest or retreat house, schools were all raised and debated.

*Challenges discussed:*

getting the people to catch the vision;

unity of the churches as some are indifferent to the project;

churches can post their leaders anywhere at any time (leaders involved now are totally different to those Emmanuel, the mobiliser met and worked with when he first came to Wum ).

At the end of the meeting we prayed that God would give His vision for the land and take things forward in His way. Those ideas shared which were not of Him would just fade away.

We then went to meet the Language or Literacy Committee which has 32 members including 14 chiefs/fons and queen mothers. The chairman is Mr Kuchah (Harry's father), and the committee acts as a 'mother' to the translation committee. **Fung Angus** is the literacy supervisor having been a teacher for >30 years. There are 20 teachers, some have other jobs as the role is voluntary. We then visited 2 literacy classes where Emmanuel, Graham and I were asked to give words of encouragement.

**Tuesday** After breakfast at Martha's we went to visit the land which is a little way out of town. Cattle grazers are neighbours but a light fence has been erected to keep the cattle from trampling on the trees. The land is sloping at the top, bordered by a stream at the bottom, grassland then forest on one side with trees and the plantation on the other. Apples, avocados, pineapples, 'plum' (what we called tree tomatoes in Uganda) and guava plants are all growing. Water and electricity supplies could all be organised. We visited a lovely tourist spot adjacent to the site with lake (Lake Wum) and picnic area, then went to meet with the ICC again. It was decided that phase 1 would be to build a project office and guest house as Emmanuel said that it would be helpful to have guest facilities when Cabtal staff, or others, visit the project. Two bible passages were shared by Martin: Revelation 'I have set before you an open door' and Joshua 'I am going to give you the land little by little'.

We had lunch at the Morning Star Hotel and we checked the rooms out for the next possible visit. It was clean, the beds had 2 sheets (!) and it was felt preferable accommodation for future teams. We then met the translation team, **Nelson, Charles, Wilfred and Jessica**. This started with a time of devotion, then the team shared how they go about the work. There was a power cut while we met, and it was quite noisy from children outside so we could see why they would wish a purpose built office. The work started in 1999, Nelson has been interested in it for years and went to do an MA in linguistics at university purposely, being now both a translator and member of the language committee. They are also working on information on HIV in Aghem. The translation team also trained the literacy teachers. At the end they said 'thank you to CBC for helping God to speak Aghem. You have been blessing God by being here and for making the sacrifice to come'. The team very much appreciated the banner and gifts we took. We then went to visit 2 more literacy classes in the pouring rain (it was supposed to be the dry season!), one was held in a small room at the back of a church with 60 people crammed in avoiding the drips from a leaking roof!. There was a happy atmosphere, and it was intriguing to see older grandparents learning to read alongside small children in the same class!

We then negotiated very wet paths to go to visit the Fon of Waindoo at his palace- he is the one who owns the land. What an amazing welcome despite the rain: perhaps 25 women lined up, dancing and singing in the rain (literally!). In the throne room, Aija, Ruth and I were the only women apart from the one who was serving the meal. Again there were speeches and presentation of gifts. The Fon told us in his speech that the rain was a sign of blessing, and that his ancestors had told him when he visited the project site that they were pleased it was going to be developed. Indeed, he offered us more land should we wish to build a house there, then we were welcome. That night we stayed at The Kuchah's house, and had a fascinating time chatting to Simon who was an MP for 10 years. He has 33 siblings as his father was polygamous. We wondered how he remembered all their names, let alone their birthdays! It was nice to sleep in a clean, sweet smelling bed.....

**Wednesday** We had 2 breakfasts, as there was a leaving meal at Martha's. Emmanuel gave up trying to get us on the road in time, but it was a very special time. David shared from Psalm 1 and led a time of prayer, Martha gave us some home made gifts, said how she was pleased to see women on the team (!) sharing her delight in seeing Aija and Ruth get a 'taste of Africa' while they were young so that one day, they too may return as I had done, years later. She suggested we might consider some of the team visiting CBC to encourage us too, saying in the West we may be rich in 'things', but can be very poor spiritually.

On the way home we met Claudia (Connie's mother) in Bamenda, arriving back in Yaounde at 8.15, having left Wum 9.25 am.

**Thursday** After a wonderful sleep we had coffee and snack with the Cabtal team then met for a debriefing session with the leadership team: Michel, Moise, Elvira and personnel and church liaison

staff. We shared points we thought may be helpful for future team visits (a bit more space in the programme, smaller 1:1 meetings with key people, nicer accommodation ). We also share out concern over how busy and stretched some of the project team were.

Michel shared his concern that the translators should not be burdened with the issue of the land ( they had been involved with planting trees, but weeding etc needed to be done...) but concentrate on the main focus of translation. Zebedee had commented , when we met him on the return trip in Bamenda, that the ICC should sort out the land issue, and the business of a 'love gift' to the fon. This had not been raised before and it was thought maybe the fon had heard we were visiting and had made his expectations known. The issue of the fruits will be apparent in 2 years time: who will harvest them, where will the money go, where will they be sold? Elvira responded to the list of 'wants' we had been given , saying some were personal and others would be met. Two motor bikes would be bought next year, and a new lap top was due to be delivered. We were impressed by the wisdom of the team, it was such a helpful time.

#### Prayer points arising and future plans

-the need for someone to do the exegesis, which is currently being done by Zebedee

-for the Aghem project which is so key to other languages in the area, and will speed up their progress.

-more translators to move the project forward faster.

-Michel felt that a future visit to build up the pastors , lay preachers and team members would be appreciated. ( He shared how in one area someone goes out annually lead a 'scripture use' seminars with meditation for elders, pastors and team members over 2-3 days)

-help with Sunday school teachers /young people's workers would be excellent too.

-we talked around the possibility of a team going in July 2008 from CBC. ( I have since emailed to suggest tentatively 17-25<sup>th</sup> but have yet to hear back from Cabtal ).

A final team prayer time was held before the final journey home.

#### Comments:

In our briefing session with Wycliffe, we had a session /study on spiritual warfare. We felt much supported by prayer and wish to thank all those who prayed. There is evidence of the African traditional beliefs which we witnessed e.g there was a fetish at the border of the land which the present user had put to keep the cows off. One gift we were given gave bad 'vibes' to a family member, and when put outside has led to better sleep/atmosphere in the home! It illustrates that we need as a church to work out how we are really going to get behind this project in prayer- the mission group will be discussing this at their next meeting on 11/2/08.

We need to pray how much as a church we want to be involved with this project as there is great scope, but the focus needs to be maintained on the translation work and encouraging those involved with that.

( I have 52 pages of A5 size notes for a full report but there hasn't been time to type it up yet ! Do ask if you want more clarification of above points ! )

Philippa Piper  
Jan 10<sup>th</sup> 2008