

THE ^{Wendy}W.A.M^{and Mike plus} REPORT

Vol. 4 No. 1 Winter

Hey, what's the PLUS for?

The Adventures of Survey!

That PLUS in the newsletter title signifies that we will soon be 3 (or more)! That's right we are **parents-to-be**, anxiously awaiting the arrival of this gift from God sometime around the 1st of June.

Wendy is doing well and the Lord protected both Wendy and baby from high fever during her first case of malaria. **Thanks so much for your prayers!** We are planning on having the delivery at the Tandala mission hospital in Zaire. We hope to take an MAF plane to the hospital a month in advance as according to doctor's orders. During this waiting time we will be learning Lingala. After the delivery we move into our new residence in Brazzaville, Congo. That's two big adjustments at the same time and we covet your prayers as we settle into a new apartment with a new baby at the same time. Settling into this new apartment entails completely furnishing it too. Apartments here don't even come with a refrig. or stove already installed. This move isn't the best timing but then that's what happens when you have to move between countries and have a baby at the same time.

It has been 3 years since I, Michael, signed up to do language surveys. I have finally begun a six month internship with an already experienced 3 man team here in Central African Republic (CAR), the country just north of Congo. Wendy had been planning to do the surveys too but it was decided that long bumpy roads and a pregnancy do not mix well together. Instead she has been doing secretarial and French to English translation work for the Wycliffe director in Bangui, the capital city of CAR. In the past 3 months I have been on 3 survey trips, each lasting about 10 days. Unfortunately, that adds up to a lot of time Wendy and I are separated.

During a typical survey trip we visit several villages usually spending a few days in each one. We are usually offered one of their mud brick houses to use while we are there. One time I shared my room with a family of bats hanging above my bed.

You may be asking why the surveys take 10 days if we visit 2 villages and spend 2 days in each one. It's because driving from the capital to the general language area in question usually takes a full day and then there are officials to see when we arrive to get their approval for our studies. It is always encouraging to find them in their office so we don't have to wait hours to get the necessary letters of recommendation that the village chief will ask to see. Then there is the question of choosing the villages which meet certain size and composition criteria (a population of 100-300, where the majority of them speak the language we are surveying.)

Then there is the actual travel to the villages which is often on badly eroded roads. One village we visited was 48 miles from the main road and it took us 9 hours to drive that distance! Then there are the unexpected things that pop up like completely inaccessible roads, or washed out bridges. One road was too swampy, so we walked 11 miles to get to that village. On the last survey trip, our Toyota Landcruiser had 4 flat tires and we had one spare tire so we got to learn how to change and patch up innertubes, something I didn't think was possible without a garage! Our trips are always an adventure, a time to learn what it means to trust in God completely. We value your prayers for protection. But the best part of each survey trip is returning home to Wendy!

What takes place during a Sociolinguistic Survey?

There are several tests to choose from depending on the information needed. Here are 2 examples:

1) An informal group interview - We first contact the chief of the village to explain the reason we are there and then ask for his help in assembling people from the village for a group interview. It is vital that we follow the hierarchy of the village by going first to the chief, if this wasn't done the people would not accept to help answer the necessary questions. During this interview questions are asked like: What other villages speak your language? What other languages do you understand and speak well? Are there languages you consider related to yours?

2) Recorded Text Testing - This is done to measure just how well a group understands a neighboring related language. The person or group listens to a story that has been previously recorded in another language and then answers questions about its content. According to the answers given, a level of comprehension is determined. This test is usually used during the group interview. It is always a good sign to see the children laughing at the appropriate times in the story, if they understand, we can be pretty sure the comprehension is due to inherent similarity between the languages and is not learned bilingualism.

The CAR branch has 4 translation projects in progress and results of linguistic surveys show that at least 15 languages need their own alphabet and translation of the Bible. To help speed up the completion of these translations, the CAR branch wants to find & train Africans who are capable & motivated to do Bible translation. Already there is a team of national translators working among the Bayaka pygmies in the southern part of CAR. Michael recently did some language testing in a village several hundred kilometers away from the translators village and found that there were only slight differences between the 2 dialects. This was good news! It means that one translation can probably serve this other area also. In addition there is a related language in northern Congo across the border which Michael will survey to see if their language is also similar and could use the same translation of the Bible.

Our address until June 1, 1996
Mike & Wendy Buchanan
SIL
BP 1990
Bangui
Central African Republic
Internet: Michael_Buchanan@sil.org

WE PRAISE GOD FOR:

- you who bring us before the Lord regularly. We are forever grateful to you.

Answers to your prayers:

- safety on survey trips, repairing flat tires in the jungle and the provision of another tire FREE (in a small town!), front tire breaking through a bridge and being aided by the local people to get unstuck.

- good contacts during survey with government and village officials, school teachers and villagers.

- provision of an African colleague on the survey team who loves the Lord too.

PRAYER NEEDS:

- for faith and peace as we trust God in all the details of the baby's care and delivery.

- for God to touch the hearts of more African Christians to commit to translating God's word.

- continued safety for Michael's survey travels during our last months of the survey internship here in Central Africa.

The joy of the Lord will be my strength. He will uphold me all of my days. I am surrounded by mercy and grace.

*Your partners
in Bible Translation,
Michael & Wendy*



Wycliffe
Bible Translators

Po Box 2727
Huntington Beach CA 92710