

ConnectUS →

## ***We Have Never Heard This Story Before***

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May 2010

Dear Colleagues,

At a Good Friday service in 1980, Leonard Bolioki stepped to the front of the church he attended in Cameroon and began to read the story of Jesus' crucifixion. Always before, this passage from John's Gospel had been read in French, but this time the priest had asked Leonard to read it in the local language, Yambetta.

As he read, he became aware of a growing stillness; then some of the older women began to weep. At the end of the service they rushed up to Leonard and asked, "Where did you find this story? We have never heard anything like it before! We didn't know there was someone who loved us so much that he was willing to suffer and die like that... to be crucified on a cross to save us!"



Leonard pulled out his French New Testament and showed them that the story was in the Bible. "We listen to this Passion Story every year during Holy Week," he told them, but they insisted that they'd never heard it before. That, says Leonard, is what motivated him to translate the Scriptures into the only language his people could really understand—Yambetta!

Leonard had to work full-time to support his family, and for most of the next 28 years, he could only translate when he found free moments. That made for a very long project; by 2008 Leonard and other Yambettas had drafted just 35% of the New Testament. The church was using the Yambetta Gospel of Mark and some lectionary materials, but those whose lives had been changed by the Word were still very much a minority.

Hope began to glimmer when an SIL Cameroon fund made it possible for Leonard to translate half-time for several years. And then in 2008, the glimmer of hope burst into bright light! The Seed Company picked up the project and began providing funds for training, equipment, and living expenses for Leonard and his team of translators and literacy teachers. In addition, SIL assigned Patricia Wilkendorf to work alongside them as consultant.

Leonard says, "I took it upon myself to translate for my people this Word of God that gives life. From 1980 on, this goal remained uncertain. But now, thanks to The Seed Company, I can see the realization of this dream, and I can only be happy—VERY happy! May this Word of Life that has saved many people from other language groups also save the Yambetta people!"

In the last 18 months, the 35% in rough draft has become 75%, and it could reach 100% within 2 ½ years! Taking into account drafting, checking, testing, and reviewing, The Seed Company calculates that the New Testament is almost 50% done with ALL the steps of translation! A literacy program is also underway, preparing readers for the Scriptures.

This rapid progress gives Dallas and me deep joy because Leonard and his wife Marie have been our personal friends since our days in Cameroon. We're thrilled that at last the Yambetta will have the Scripture resources they need to find salvation in Christ and freedom from the old ways.

I am also tremendously encouraged by this example of how God has worked through The Seed Company, and through Vision 2025, to help us recognize and remove barriers to progress in Scripture translation. Many Yambetta are open to the Gospel, Leonard and his team are anxious to give it to them in a form they can understand, and Patricia is there to consult and train. The final piece of the puzzle was adequate funding, and by the grace of God, The Seed Company has provided that!

I know there are hundreds of other translation projects around the world still waiting for the same burst of hope and energy that comes from adequate funding. That's why I'm so committed to the Last Languages campaign, and so willing to do what it takes to engage and involve the Christian community on behalf of the Bibleless peoples. Will you join me in prayer that God will abundantly provide funds to remove barriers and speed His Word to all the language communities still needing it?

If you would like to comment or share your own experiences, please write to me at [connectus\\_orlando@wycliffe.org](mailto:connectus_orlando@wycliffe.org) . I have a digital photo of Leonard that I would be glad to send to you if you want to share his story with your partners.

Warmly,

Bob Creson  
President  
Wycliffe USA