



PROJECT PROFILE

Mbandja

THE PEOPLE

The Mbandja people live in the northwestern corner of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly known as Zaire. In the rural villages where Mbandja people live, most of the homes are built of local materials—poles, palm branch spines, vines and thatch, with packed adobe walls. They rely on their small farms to provide for their families but also grow some limited cash crops including peanuts, coffee, corn and manioc. Chickens are raised for special meals, and selling goats and pigs sometimes also generates income.

Clans are a dominant cohesive force. For Christians, cultural values among the clan sometimes clash as they live out their faith.

THE BACKGROUND

Catholic missionaries first introduced the gospel to the Mbandja people during the last century, and Protestant missionaries arrived in the 1920s. This work gave birth to two evangelical church communities as well as a strong Roman Catholic Church. A large percentage of the Mbandja adhere to the African traditional religion while perhaps 30 percent of the population practices Christianity.

SIL linguists began working in the Mbandja language in 1986 and completed the New Testament in 1996. In the process they trained local Christians in translation. The SIL team had to leave DRC because of the civil war. They continue to consult with the Mbandja church leaders.

Church leaders and members have responded enthusiastically to the Mbandja New Testament. The Catholic bishop is eager for the entire Bible to be in the hands of the people and has endorsed its use in church. A literacy program to ensure use of the New Testament was initiated in the mid-1990s, and 20 Scripture-In-Use seminars have been held with an attendance of about 1,000 Mbandja speakers. Those who attended have organized reading classes in many villages.

THE NEED

Because the Mbandja way of life corresponds very closely to that of the Old Testament, church leaders feel that the stories will minister to the people in a unique way to clarify their understanding of God. Both the Catholic bishop and leaders of the Mbandja Protestant churches have urged the translation team to continue working on the Old Testament.



- **Location:** Democratic Republic of Congo
- **Number of Speakers:** 362,000
- **Project Goal:** Old Testament
- **Year Project Began:** 1998
- **Expected Completion Date:** 2011



Mbandja

THE PLAN

The New Testament translators worked well together and produced a high quality translation. In preparation for work on the Old Testament, several of these men have upgraded their skills with university and master's level study programs.

SIL will provide consultants to support quality control standards for the translation and will maintain financial accountability through regular reports and an annual audit. The United Bible Society also plans to cooperate in some aspects of the work.

POSSIBLE PROBLEMS

Civil unrest and war have taken their toll on the country. The education system, roads and health care are all in poor condition and the people have many needs. These problems have challenged but not stopped the translation team.

JOINING THE TEAM

The Mbandja translators cannot complete their goals without your financial investment and prayer. Your financial investment makes translation possible, providing training, adequate computer equipment, translation supplies and living expenses for the translators' families. Your prayer helps translators and their families face problems like sickness, conflict and spiritual opposition that can threaten their work.

Call The Seed Company toll-free at 1-877-593-7333 or visit www.theseedcompany.org/projects to commit to invest and pray for the Mbandja team.