

Home just one week after four months in hospital, AIDS patient Dinjamnyal Jonas, 42, is too frail to work. The welfare of his wife Rosalie (seated) and their three children weighs heavily on his mind as he languishes, day after day, in their hot, cramped apartment in N'Djaména, Chad. Rosalie has AIDS too, as does their five-year-old daughter. But they are not forgotten; the couple's faith in God is bolstered by Christian volunteers who visit them and attend to their needs as best they can.



BREAKING

THE

SILENCE

SIL and partner agencies combat AIDS among language groups, like the Kera in Chad, through mother tongue educational materials.



“Jackie, please take me to the doctor—I’m still feeling sick.”

Normally, Jackie Hainaut wouldn’t have hesitated to help the sickly Kera woman pleading for medical attention. But Jackie found herself in a quandary; she knew her friend had AIDS, but the woman’s doctor and family members had all urged Jackie to keep the news secret.

Such is the secrecy and shame that surrounds millions of Africans and their families affected by HIV/AIDS. Of the estimated 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS worldwide,

nearly 26 million live in Sub-Saharan Africa.

While statistics are difficult to verify, U.N. studies estimate that as many as 300,000 Chadians may currently be living with HIV/AIDS. But the veil of silence that has contributed to the pandemic’s spread is slowly beginning to lift.

Last March, in a small church in the village of Bomélé, more than 100 Kera men and women gathered for a lengthy Sunday service that included lively discussion about HIV/AIDS. Following a traditional church service, Kera pastor Kouri Benjamin led the discussion, using a 26-page booklet and pamphlet that he had translated from French publications and Jackie had checked for accuracy.



“I saw there was more and more AIDS happening here,” says Benjamin, “and that people in the church were very ignorant about it.

“We’ve seen it most among Kera people who have been living in larger towns.... They find out in town that they have AIDS and they come back...because it’s better if you’re buried in your own village.”

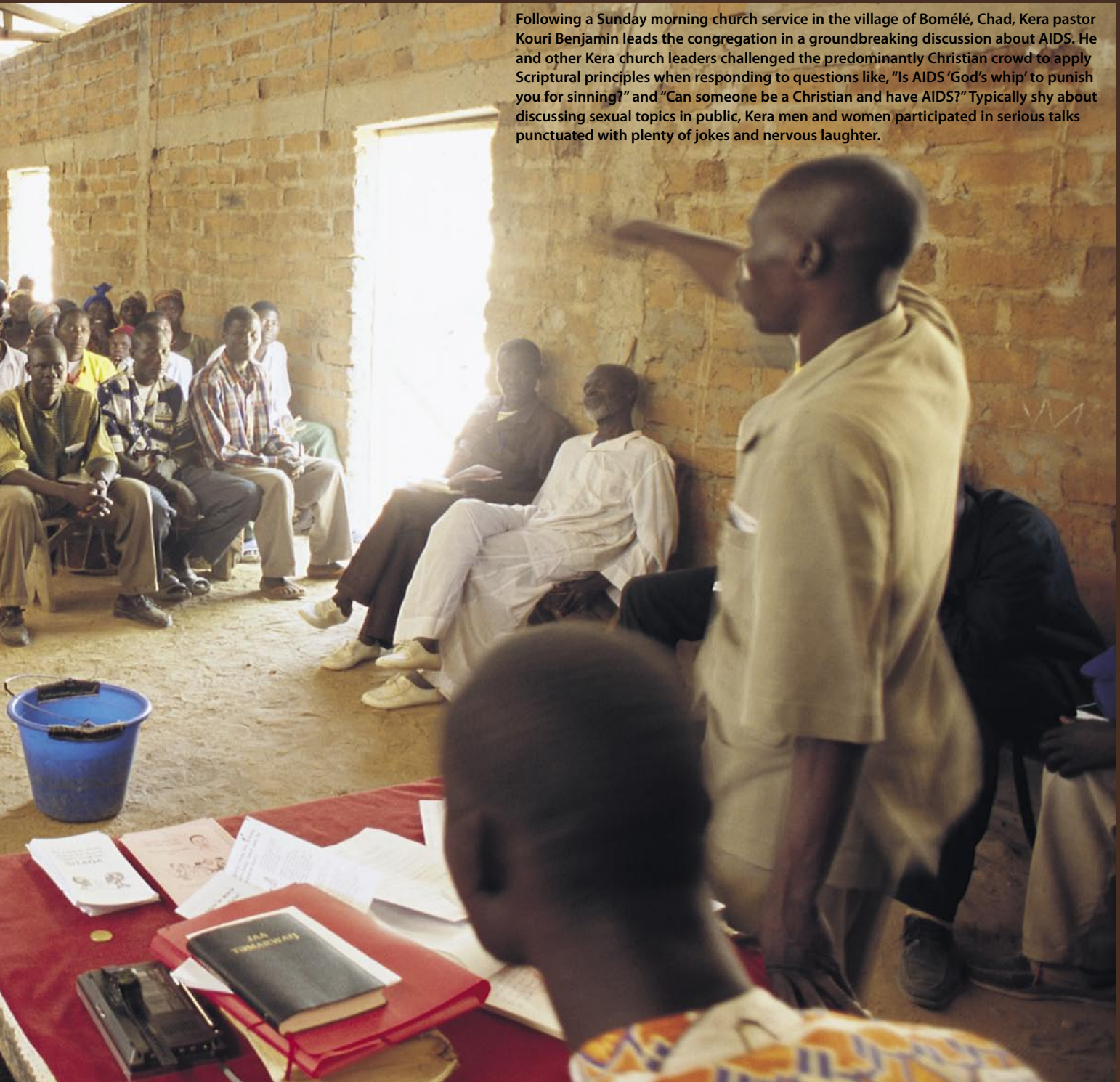
The booklet used that day includes verses from the recently dedicated Kera New Testament. The seminar exposed some of the local myths about HIV/AIDS, like the belief it can only be spread through sexual contact, or that drinking a donkey’s blood can cure it.

Benjamin and other church leaders fielded questions and invited those present to voice their thoughts and opinions. Despite a history of shyness about sexual topics, many of the participants spoke freely in front of the larger group and during guided group discussions that followed.

Several visiting pastors who attended the Bomélé church service plan to use the HIV/AIDS materials in their own churches. A subject once considered taboo—especially in church—is now being talked about more freely.

SIL, Wycliffe’s key partner in language work, works with various partner organizations across Africa, as well as South America, Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, to produce

Following a Sunday morning church service in the village of Bomélé, Chad, Kera pastor Kouri Benjamin leads the congregation in a groundbreaking discussion about AIDS. He and other Kera church leaders challenged the predominantly Christian crowd to apply Scriptural principles when responding to questions like, "Is AIDS 'God's whip' to punish you for sinning?" and "Can someone be a Christian and have AIDS?" Typically shy about discussing sexual topics in public, Kera men and women participated in serious talks punctuated with plenty of jokes and nervous laughter.



mother tongue educational materials about HIV/AIDS and other health issues.

The *SIL International HIV/AIDS Policy* encourages linguists to help translate existing print and non-print materials when appropriate, or provide translation training for national colleagues who desire to produce educational materials.

To date, SIL personnel have assisted partner agencies to produce AIDS-related literature in 43 language groups, representing 15 countries around the world.

Many language groups that have already received God's Word in their heart language—like the Kera—are challenging their people to study and apply the translated Scriptures, as they

formulate a response to the growing AIDS crisis among them.

By God's grace, the fearful silence of the past will be replaced by acts of mercy and compassion that speak much louder than words. 🍁

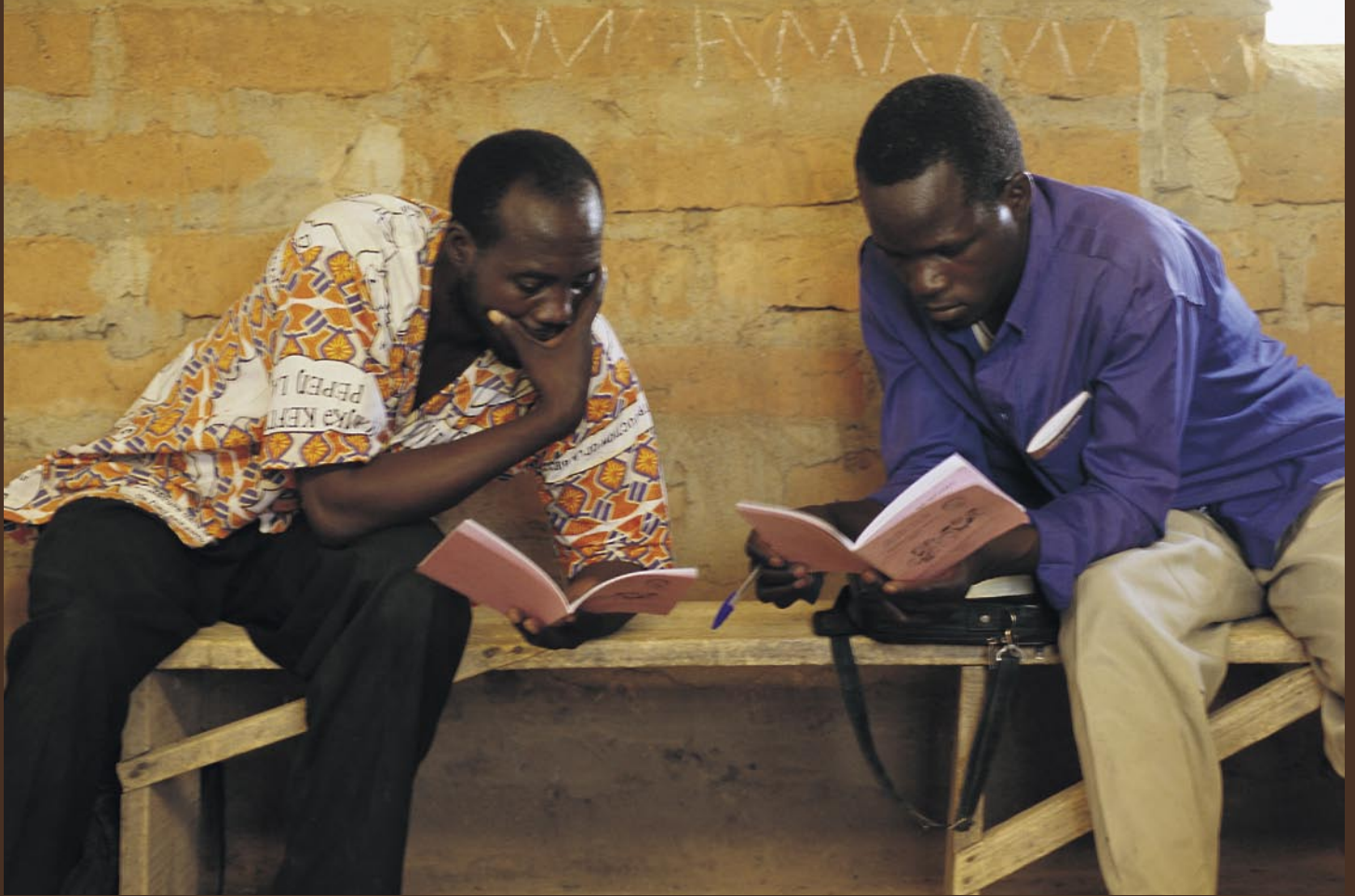
Statistical sources: UNAIDS, 2006 *Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic*; SIL International

More on the Web ▶ SIL's partnership with Shellbook Publishing Systems provides people in many language groups with simple, adaptable templates so they can easily publish their own materials. To learn how Shellbooks are being used in the fight against AIDS, follow the links to *Kande's Story* at <www.shellbook.com>.



Now that they've received the New Testament in their heart language, Kera believers (above) can read for themselves what God's Word has to say about sexual issues. (Below) A Kera woman finds courage to stand and share her thoughts in front of the men—a step Jackie Hainaut views as significant for the usually reticent Kera women.





Pastor Larin (above, on the right), a Mundang man who serves as a spiritual shepherd to the Kera, studies the illustrated booklet, *Let's All Fight AIDS Together*, with Bible teacher Djibsadu Justin. The Kera Translation and Literacy Committee published 1,000 copies of the booklet, which was translated by Pastor Kouri Benjamin from existing AIDS materials

in French. The booklet also fueled the women's discussion about AIDS (below), led by Jackie Hainaut. It's a chance to challenge some common myths among the Kera, like the beliefs that AIDS can only be contracted through sexual contact or that all people who have AIDS deliberately try to spread it.



STOP SIDA



Tous ensemble
avec **PRUDENCE**

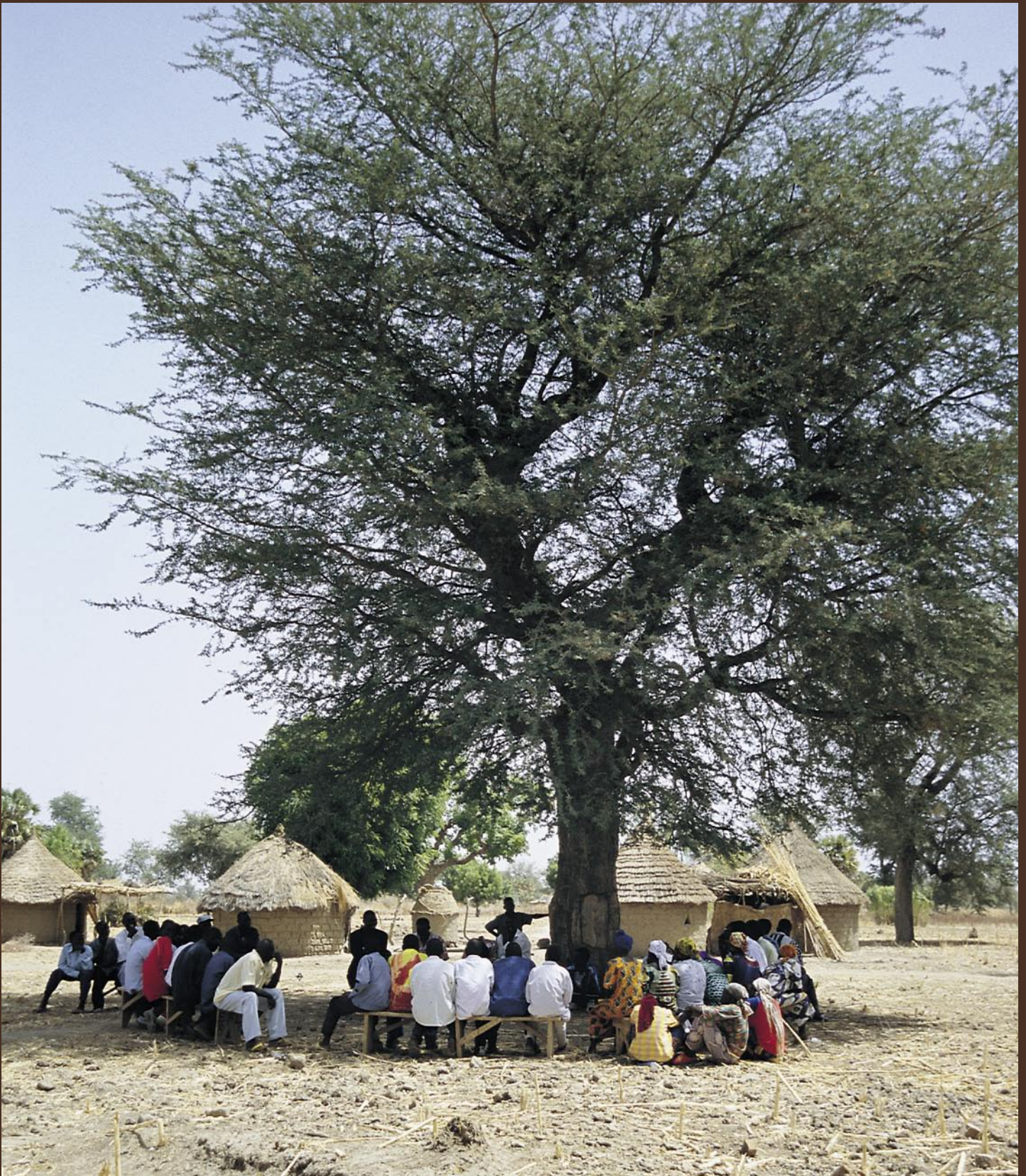


Un message de AMASOT

Signs like this one (right) erected in the town of Fianga urge Chadians to exercise caution and good judgment in their fight against AIDS (written "SIDA" in French).

(Below) Medical staff at a N'Djaména hospital check on a man suffering from AIDS, as his wife and daughter look on. With limited resources, doctors do what they can to provide medication, food and counseling—but the key is prevention. Dr. Mangdah Bartoussia, a past director of Chad's national AIDS program, says many Chadians with AIDS think they've been poisoned or that they have malaria or typhoid, and they try to treat it without going to the hospital. "The biggest challenge is the ignorance of the population," he says, "which is because of illiteracy. Mother tongue AIDS materials would help a lot." SIL, Wycliffe's partner organization, facilitates translation of AIDS-related publications for many minority languages. For Chad's Kera people, such materials are helping break down societal taboos that hinder public discussion about AIDS.





“While I was helping translate the AIDS booklet, I realized the importance of having the church people understand what AIDS really is and how to help people who have it. I thought, ‘It’s not enough to just give them a booklet; we’d better teach them.’”

—Pastor Kouri Benjamin