



# Harley Street



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## *Update on Jos*

**WE ARE SO THANKFUL** that February and March have been relatively peaceful in Jos and life is almost back to normal, after a rather tense Christmas and New Year period. People are out and about, shops and businesses are open, and police and army checkpoints are much fewer in number. There is some anxiety, however, about the forthcoming national and regional elections, which take place on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of April. Just last Friday, a truck load of explosives was apprehended on its way into Jos, and people are fearing that there may be attempts to disrupt the election period and create further tensions between various groups. On the other hand, there are many people and organisations that are working for peace and reconciliation so lets pray that the next few weeks will proceed peacefully and that people will work together for a lasting solution to the huge problems facing Jos and Nigeria as a whole.

## *Boats, birds and the Bula- tura oasis*



**AFTER A 3000 MILE JOURNEY** across the Sahara, there's nothing quite as refreshing as a cool dip in a nice big lake. Especially, that is, if you're a bird, and you've just flown south for the winter. So for a new year break we drove up to the border with Niger to see some of the new arrivals. It was sooooo beautiful. Amazingly, most

of the area surrounding the wetlands is semi-desert; one day we're paddling little wooden canoes towards a watery horizon through a myriad of water lilies, and the next we're climbing 30ft sand dunes in the desert, feeling like Lawrence of Arabia. We had set out to visit the oasis village of Bultatura, a splash of life and colour in the wilderness. Finding the place proved quite a challenge; the 7-hour journey getting there only took us 2½ hours on the way back and our guide said afterwards it would have been much quicker on horseback!. Our arrival created more than the usual daily entertainment for the village children, who followed us out among sand dunes, forming a colourful procession like Moses and the Israelites. We loved meeting these beautiful desert people along with the camels, donkeys and dozens of breathtaking birds - we recorded about 100 different species throughout our 3 day trip. What a blessing to have the opportunity to explore such a different part of this incredible country!



*One vowel is quite enough, thank you.*

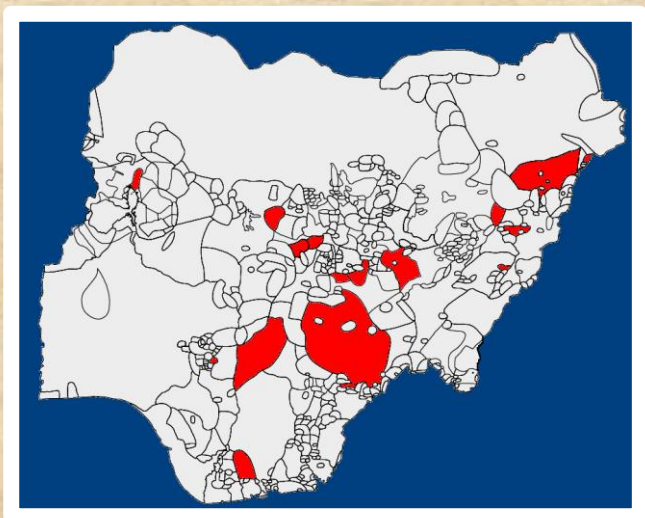
- Matthew



**MOST LANGUAGES IN NIGERIA** have between 5 and 10 basic vowel sounds. So it came as rather a surprise to discover that one of our student's languages appears to only have one. With only one vowel, consonants tend to pile up when words are strung together, especially since most word roots don't actually have any vowels at all. Hence the verb 'to run' is: 'mndr' and the word 'tttga' means 'he cooked it for himself and it's all gone!' The most I've encountered so far is eleven consonants in a row! It really is the most bizarre language I've ever come across, but fortunately, the student, Gulla Nghagyiya (pictured right) is rising to the challenge of figuring out the best way to write it down so that people will actually be able to read it! For those of you who are interested, the language is called Glavda, and is spoken by about 20,000 people on the border between Nigeria and Cameroon.

### *Student fieldwork.*

**THIS SEMESTER** 18 students are out doing fieldwork on 17 languages (marked in red on the map), and as usual it is my job to arrange supervision for them all. We visit as many of them as possible during the semester, as this is an enormous encouragement for them, and helps them overcome problems with their assignments. We spend some of the time just greeting local church and community leaders, helping them to understand the nature of the projects. During a visit to the Kantana area recently, we met with the local education secretary who is in charge of all the schools in the area. We were excited that he was so interested in language development and was open to the idea of promoting mother-tongue education in the schools. This would be a real breakthrough in helping people to become literate in their own language but it depends on Esther, our BA student, producing a trial alphabet booklet before the end of her studies. We hope to work with her towards this over the next year or so.



One of the most difficult things to analyse and decide on in designing a writing system for an unwritten Nigerian language is how to mark tone (i.e. the 'tune' of the word). Many languages have 4 or 5 possible tones for each syllable, so a word can mean more than one thing depending on the 'tune'. For example, in Eda, if high, mid and low tones were marked as á, ā and à, then the word 'ofuwo' could mean any of the following things:

òfùwò - saviour

ōfùwò - saviours

ōfúwó - blind person

ófúwó - blind people

òfūwō - rival

ōfūwō - rivals

Earlier this month, we held a 2-week tone workshop to address these and similar challenges.



# ARTS SPOT

What's happening with the arts?

- Rachel



**SO IT'S BACK TO TEACHING**, but not in school! Instead of 10yr olds, I have pastors and musicians, and instead of the water cycle, I'm explaining about the use of cultural arts in Bible Translation projects. I love it! I'm discovering new things all the time. When I asked one group to list their traditional art forms, along with all the usual ones, such as drama & dance, they said 'insults'!

"You know it's like when you are joking with your friends and you say to them, 'Your head is like a coconut and your mouth like a river'"

I hadn't thought of this kind of creativity as being an art form before but then I remembered a certain school trip to the Globe Theatre when I was teaching in London. One of the exercises that was given to the children was to hurl Shakespearean insults at each other across the room!



Rachel leading an arts session



Tying on leg shakers

**PETER NWUFO** is a musician I have been training and working with. We have started our first project together in an area close to Jos, with a language called 'Lis Ma Ron'. First we met with church leaders to discuss what the main challenges were in the church community. Then we searched the Scriptures to see what lessons we could learn about those topics. We concentrated on using the book of Luke since that is the only one that has been translated so far. This was a great session and they had many ideas. One example is that parents in that area tend to ask an unrealistically high bride price when a young man comes along wanting to marry their daughter. This often results in the couple

not getting married. We looked at what was written in Luke about greed and discovered that in chapter 3, John The Baptist challenges people to prove that they have turned to God by the way they live and then goes on to address the tax collectors & soldiers telling them not to extort money or collect more than was required. We also saw what happened to the rich man in chapter 16 who failed to help Lazarus! The next step was to meet with songwriters & storytellers and challenge them to write new material in their language that would speak directly into these situations. We are hoping to have songs and stories ready to perform in a few weeks when there will be a special celebration for the dedication of the gospel of Luke. We are also planning



The Ron musicians composing songs

to hold a two-week arts workshop in Jos at the beginning of May. An ethnomusicologist, Rob Baker, who I met at the arts conference in Singapore is going to fly in from Mali to lead this.



# Gyero Orphans

**IN OUR LAST UPDATE** I wrote about the stage performance that I directed together with my friend Karis. Matthew was at home watching us on the TV as were the rest of the orphans and many other friends in Jos. This was great publicity for the orphanage & school which is still in much need of financial support. Several people commented, 'We didn't know the orphans would be capable of such a thing!' Since then we have been running a weekly music & drama club in Gyero. We are not sure yet whether this will lead to some kind of performance but whatever happens it's really nice just to be able to give them some special attention.



## Sunday School



Helping teachers compose songs

**'JOINT PROJECT' IS A COOL MINISTRY** in Jos that has produced culturally relevant Sunday school materials for children of all ages. Another great thing about this is that the materials are not denomination specific but cross many boundaries and so they are being used all over Nigeria! They have been using the same materials now for a number of years and wanted ideas of how they could refresh the lessons without having to completely rewrite them all. I was able to share some interactive teaching techniques that could be used by anyone in any situation, no matter how limited the resources are - some groups meet outside under trees and may not even have access to a blackboard! I asked the teachers to think of existing songs, stories and proverbs in their culture that could help support the lesson themes. I also encouraged them to ask the children they teach to compose their own songs, stories and dramas. I then had to put my ideas into practice and teach a lesson myself in order to train trainers, demonstrating all the interactive ideas. This was challenging because it was to a church full of about 300 people!

## Prayer points

- for the Ron artists to be inspired as they write songs and stories.
- for Rachel and Rob as they plan the arts workshop (May 1-14).
- for Matthew as he attends a consultant skills seminar in Nairobi, Kenya (March 21-26).
- that the elections will proceed peacefully (2<sup>nd</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> April).
- for the upcoming Wycliffe spiritual retreat (March 23-28).
- for Matthew as he helps the students analyse and write up the results of their fieldwork.

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**SUPPORT:** If you would like to join our support team, either prayerfully or financially, then please contact us, and we will send you the information you need.

Thanks so much for all your encouragement, prayers and support. With our love,  
Matthew and Rachel xxx

  
wycliffe  
Bible translators

