



Our Bible has arrived!

Organising a dedication event to celebrate the publication
of a New Testament, Bible or other translated books

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*“Lord, the moment we’ve been waiting for has arrived!
What we were longing for, our hands have touched!”*

(Pastor Timothée Coulibaly, Dedication of the Mamara New Testament, November 2006)

How do you celebrate the publication of a Bible book: a Bible, a New Testament or one of the Gospels? It is an opportunity to bring the community together to introduce the book to everyone, an opportunity to thank the Lord and dedicate the book to his service, an opportunity to celebrate the local language and culture, and an opportunity to start distributing the book and other materials in the language (the audio version, videos, literacy books, the smartphone app, etc.). It is also a good time to raise awareness and encourage people to commit to reading and listening regularly to God’s Word.



Here are some questions and tips to help you in your preparations.

1. Form an organising committee

The organisation of the dedication requires a group of very committed people from the local community. If there is a translation committee, its members will normally be involved in the organising committee. The translation team should also be heavily involved. There will be a lot to do!

Who will be the members of the organising committee? Choose people who will be available and who have the gift of organisation, for example, those who are used to being involved in organising church conferences, Bible camps, etc.

What will be the responsibility of each of the committee members? Here are some of the roles to be filled:

- Chairperson
- Treasurer
- Communications coordinator (invitations, announcements, posters, etc.)
- Venue set-up and logistics coordinator
- Catering coordinator
- Welcome team coordinator
- Ceremony programme coordinator
- Book sales coordinator

This does not mean that the organising committee must do everything: they can delegate certain roles and responsibilities to others outside the committee. For each domain to be organised, a small team of committed people will be required.

Ensure that each of the major church denominations in the local community is involved.

How many times will you meet before the big event? Normally, meetings and communication between the members of the committee increase during the few weeks before the ceremony.

2. Choose a good date

One of the first decisions to be made concerns the date of the event. It should be chosen well in advance to allow people who live far away (even abroad) to come, and to allow enough time to invite guests of honour (e.g. government ministers).

You should make sure that the books arrive well before the proposed date, because it would be sad to celebrate the arrival of a book if people can't buy it at the dedication. In some cases, it would be best to wait until the books arrive in the country before setting a date. If the books are printed abroad (for example in South Korea), it is possible to receive one or two boxes of books quickly by air, but most of them will arrive by boat. It can take a few months for the boxes of books to make their journey, and then they can wait a few days, or even a few weeks, in customs before being released.

What date? What day of the week? What time of year? What season? Some periods of the year are very busy, such as the seasons of planting and harvesting, and sometimes travel can be difficult during the rainy season. The church calendar should be checked to ensure that there are not any other big meetings or conferences planned for the same day.

3. Choose the venue

Where should the dedication take place? In which town and where? Outdoors, or in a building, such as a large church or cultural centre?

The following factors can play a role in the choice of venue:

- The number of people expected;
- The accessibility of the location for the people who will want to come;
- The availability and willingness of local churches to help with the organisation;
- The importance of the location in the culture and history of the people;
- The security situation in the country.

4. Work out a budget and look for funds

Prepare a budget of expenses, including the following:

- Invitations and advertising (invitation cards, banners, radio advertising);
- Rental of chairs, tents, or materials to build shelters;
- Fabric or T-shirt printing;
- Food and hospitality for guests;
- Transportation (most people will come at their own expense, but should we pay for the transportation of a few?);
- PA system, fuel for electric generators;
- Audio-visual coverage.
- Committee meetings, telephone communications.

Here are some ideas regarding possible sources of funds:

- Voluntary donations: cash, sacks of grain, goats, chickens, etc.
- Sale of printed fabric or T-shirts
- Contributions from churches
- Offerings taken in churches
- Contributions from partner organisations
- Donations from friends
- Government contributions

5. Send out invitations

Who will be invited? The organising committee should make a list of all the guests and check it carefully so as not to forget anyone.

Here are some suggestions as to who to invite:

- The members of the translation team and their families
- Translation committee and reviewers

- Translation consultants, who have been involved in checking the translation
- People involved in literacy programmes in the language
- Representatives of local and regional government: village chiefs, mayors, MPs, prefects, governor, etc.
- Government ministers, such as the Minister of Education, the Minister of Culture, the Minister of Religious Affairs, etc.
- Local church leaders (pastors, committees)
- Regional and national church leaders (presidents, bishops, etc.)
- Elders and important people in the community
- Speakers of the language who live outside the region (e.g. in large cities)
- Representatives of local community institutions (education, health, etc.)
- Representatives of local NGOs
- Directors of organisations involved in Bible translation (Bible Society, Wycliffe, SIL, etc.) and their staff
- Representatives of other Bible translation teams in the country
- Representatives of mission organisations
- Representatives of donors who supported the translation
- Professors and teachers in Bible schools and theological seminaries
- ...and all the people of the region!

There are several ways to invite people, for example:

- Visits to present the invitation in person (normally required for senior officials)
- Invitation letters
- Invitation cards
- Messages by email
- Reminders by text message

6. Print a special cloth or T-shirts

Printing a special cloth (e. g. with Bible verses or phrases in the language) can be a good way to involve the community in the celebration and is a souvenir that lasts for years after the event. If you calculate the quantities correctly and do the promotion well, it is possible to obtain a profit that will help a lot in fundraising for the event.

Who will design the cloth? Or would T-shirts be better suited for the occasion? How will you organise the sale of the cloth? How much fabric will you need for the first print run? Make sure that you begin selling the cloth well in advance so that you have funds available to be able to pay for the other expenses on the day of the dedication.

7. Publicise the event

How will you publicise the event and motivate people to come in large numbers?

- Make announcements on local radio
- Make announcements in churches
- Share information with all the pastors in the region, for example in denominational meetings
- Distribute newsletters
- Print posters or banners
- Share news on social networks such as Facebook and WhatsApp.
- Text messages

8. Coordinate pre-sales of the books

Most translation teams take the decision not to begin distributing the Bibles or New Testaments before the day of the dedication ceremony. When the boxes of books arrive in the country, they are stored away and no one has the right to open them. The day of the dedication is a day of great celebration because the boxes are opened and people can obtain their own copy for the first time.

Even if people cannot get their own Bible or NT before the day of the ceremony, this does not mean that you cannot sell the Bibles or NTs before the day. You can sell tickets in advance that can be exchanged for a book when the distribution begins.

Here is some advice:

- Fix a promotional price for those who pay for their Bible or NT before the day of the dedication. Example: “The price of a Bible is 3,000 francs if you buy your ticket now, but from the day of the dedication the price will go up! So don't delay!”
- Print the tickets in such a way that they cannot easily be forged. For example, put the stamp of the local association or translation committee.
- Form a team of promoters to travel from church to church, speaking about the Bible or NT. Give a quantity of tickets to each team member.
- Lend copies of the new Bible or New Testament to the promoters so they have something to show people. We are often more motivated to pay for something we have seen with our own eyes. We see that it is not an imaginary book: it really exists!
- Put a unique number on each ticket. When someone buys a ticket, record their name, church and ticket number in a notebook.
- Monitor ticket sales, keep good accounts of money received and keep a list of those who have bought a ticket. It takes a very good organisation for people to trust your

system and agree to pay for a ticket instead of putting their hands on the Bible or New Testament right away.

- It can be useful to compile a list of tickets sold church by church, for example one page for each church in your sales notebook. This way, you will know which churches need to receive a visit from the promoters. On the day of the dedication, you can bundle together the books ordered, church by church.
- In your radio announcements, church conferences and promotional visits, you can tell people which church is in first place when it comes to pre-paying for Bibles. Example: “The members of the church in the neighbouring village have already paid for 45 New Testaments. But your church is bigger, and so far you've only paid for 19...!”

9. Setting up the venue

Chairs

How many chairs will you need? Where will they come from? At what rental price? How long will you need the chairs for? Is it necessary to book chairs well in advance of the event?

Should better, more comfortable chairs be provided for the special guests? Where could these be borrowed from? How will you transport them to the venue?

Tents and shelters

If the ceremony is held outdoors, it might be necessary to have tents, shelters or tarpaulins to protect people from the sun and rain.

If you need tents, how many? Where will they come from? At what rental price? How long will you need them for? Will it be necessary to book them well in advance of the event?

If you need shelters built from wood and straw, who will build them? Will you have to buy wood? How much will it cost? Where will you obtain the straw? What will you do with the wood after the event?

Venue layout

A plan of the venue should be made to indicate where to place the podium for the speakers, the chairs, where to seat the guests of honour, choirs, TV camera crew, the book sales tables, etc.

Important:

Since you will have choirs, sketches and a grand entrance of the Bible or the New Testament, you will need to allow enough space for everyone to see what is happening. Today there will be many people who will want to take pictures and videos with their

phones, so it is important to think about how to ensure good visibility for all and how to avoid traffic jams and walls of people who will block the view of others.

Posters and banners

For the day of the dedication, will you have posters or banners to announce the event? Who will make them?

Check that the information on all the posters is correct. In what languages will the posters be displayed? Where will they be placed?

PA system

Who will manage the PA system: microphones, amplifiers and loudspeakers? Where will you obtain or rent this system? How many microphones will you need? Is there electricity, and is it reliable? If not, will you need an electric generator? Would it be good to have a stand-by generator available in case the main one breaks down?

You will need someone who is experienced in taking care of this and who can test the equipment before the start of the ceremony to ensure that everything is working and that the sound is clear.

10. Plan the meals

Who will be responsible for organising the food?

Will there be a big meal after the event? For how many people? Will there be a meal for every person who comes, or only for guests of honour and for those who have come from far away?

There are several possibilities depending on the culture and budget:

1. Everyone eats the same meal together.
2. Guests of honour go to a separate place to eat a special meal, and all the other people share a different meal together.
3. Guests of honour are invited to eat in a hotel. Members of local churches go home to eat.
4. There is no meal, but guests are given drinks.

Will you need to organize other meals for people who come from far away (breakfast, evening meal, etc.)?



What food are you going to serve? Estimate the quantities for the budget.

- Rice: how many sacks?
- Corn, millet: how many kilos?
- Onions, garlic, vegetables, tomatoes, salt: how many kilos?
- Oil: how many litres?
- Meat: buy a cow? sheep? How many kilos?

Where will you prepare the food? Will there be enough cooking pots and utensils? How many people will be needed in the cooking team?

When will you buy the food? Who will transport it? Do you need someone to butcher the animals?

Who will buy or supply the wood for the cooking fires? How much wood will you need?

Drinks: how many crates of bottles? Will you also offer tea or coffee? How many packets of sugar and milk will be needed?

11. Reserve the accommodation

Where will all the guests stay? In churches, schools, hotels, guest houses?

Will you need to book a lot of hotel rooms well in advance?

You will need a hospitality team to welcome and take care of all the guests.

12. Organise transport

Will each person be responsible for their own transportation? Or will the organising committee help some people? How?

If there are many people who would like to come from the capital, will it be possible to rent buses or minibuses to facilitate their travel?

13. Plan the ceremony programme

Who will be master of ceremonies?

Who will be the interpreters? For which languages?

Who will ensure that people are seated in the places reserved for them? Who will oversee protocol?

Will you print a programme of the ceremony? How many copies will you need to print?

Presentation of guests

How should guests be presented publicly in a way that shows them respect in the local culture? It is important not to miss anyone out (because that can be embarrassing), but at the same time you will want to ensure that this part of the ceremony does not go on forever as you work your way down a long list of guests.



Grand entrance of the Bible or New Testament

How will the books arrive on the scene? At what moment in the proceedings will this happen? How can it be done to show people in a culturally appropriate way that it is something of great value that is arriving? How can it be made a memorable occasion that people will talk about for years to come?

At some dedication ceremonies, this is done by having a joyful procession of people who make their way to the front of the crowd. They carry boxes of books and are accompanied by singers and musicians who sing a new song of celebration. The procession moves forward slowly and with great joy, often dressed in traditional clothing made specially for the occasion.

At other dedications, the books arrive in front of the crowd on a donkey, on the back of a camel or in special baskets. Be creative - you don't have to copy what others have done!

Who will open the boxes containing the books and present the book to everyone?

Prayers

Who will pray? In which languages?

Normally there are prayers of praise and thanksgiving to God for the arrival of the book and for all the work done over the years to make it possible. There should also be prayers for the distribution and use of the book for God's glory.

Speeches

Who will be asked to give a speech?

- Government representatives (the mayor, the prefect, a minister, an MP, etc.). According to protocol, who among them must give a speech and in what order? They may ask you to help them prepare their speeches.
- Church representatives
- Representatives of partner organisations
- A representative of the translation team
- A translation consultant to testify to the quality of the translation work.

The different speakers will give their speeches in which languages? Will everyone speak with an interpreter, or will some speeches be briefly summarised?

Since there will be several speakers, it is important to specify how many minutes each speaker will have to speak. This should be communicated to them well in advance when you invite them to come.

Sometimes government officials need to leave in the middle of the ceremony, instead of staying until the end. If this is the case, their speeches should be scheduled during the first part of the ceremony. Ensure that the arrival of the book on the scene takes place while they are still present.



Choirs

From which churches will the choirs come? How will you choose them? Will there be a choir competition, or a competition to choose a new song for the ceremony? Will you have a children's choir too?

In which language(s) will the choirs sing? It can be good to have songs in the local language.

What styles of music will they use? With which kind of instruments?

Will the lyrics of the songs be checked by someone?

Who will pay for the transport of the choirs?

Songs

Will you have some songs that everyone will be invited to sing? Who will lead them?

Bible readings

How many people will do a public reading of the Scriptures? Who will be chosen to do this?

Which texts will be the most appropriate? If it is a ceremony to celebrate the publication of an entire Bible, it is good to read texts from the Old Testament as well as the New Testament.

Who will help the readers prepare their reading well before the event so that they can read fluently without stumbling, with conviction and expression?

It is important to choose different kinds of people: a woman as well as a man, those who have learned to read in a literacy class at home, young and old, etc. With three people you can have a good variety.

Sketch

To encourage people to use the New Testament or Bible, it can be interesting for a drama group to present a short sketch. If the sketch is well done, it will remain in people's minds for a long time after the ceremony.

Who can write a good sketch? Who will play the roles in this sketch? Who will watch the rehearsals in advance to check its content and duration? The actors should be given a maximum number of minutes that they should not exceed.

Bible teaching

Will there be a sermon?

Who should we choose to do it? In which language will the preacher preach?

Who will choose the theme of the message? The preacher should be informed of the kinds of people who will be present in order to prepare an appropriate message.

It is best if the preacher uses the new book translated into the local language in his message. For example, if it is a New Testament, it is better if the text for the message comes from the New Testament instead of the Old.

How many minutes will you give the preacher for his message? After three hours of the ceremony, people will probably not have the concentration to listen to a very long message.

Thanks to translators, reviewers and consultants

How will you thank the people who worked on the translation, i.e. translators, revisers and translation consultants?

- a copy of the Bible or New Testament,
- a certificate,
- a gift?

Will the families of the translators be included in the thanks?

Offering

Will there be an offering? For what purpose?

Who will organize it? Who will manage the funds? Ensure you have enough containers (buckets, bags, baskets).

14. Book sales

Who will organise the sale of the books after the ceremony? What about the distribution of the books that have been prepaid?

What other materials will be available to buy? For example:

- Literacy books
- Memory cards with audio recordings and smartphone apps
- DVDs of the JESUS film
- Songs and song books

If there will be a lot of people, it is better to place several sales tables in different parts of the venue. The people who manage the sales should be at their posts just before the end of the ceremony so that the sales can begin as soon as the ceremony ends. We don't want people to go home without seeing what is available or get caught in long queues.

Prepare enough small change for each cashbox. For example, if a New Testament sells for 900 francs each, you should expect to receive many 1,000 franc banknotes and you should be ready with a lot of 100 franc coins.

15. Audio-visual coverage

Photos: Who will take pictures? Will you have an official photographer? Don't leave this to chance, but ensure that someone has the task of taking photos of all the key guests and groups represented. The committee might need to advise the photographer on this. After the ceremony, you will need a system to distribute the photos, such as via a website or social media.

Television: Can the national television be invited to cover the event?

Radio: Is there an FM radio station that can broadcast the ceremony live in the area?

Video: Who will take an official video of the event? Is there a Christian organization in the country that can help you? Is it possible to make a DVD of the ceremony or videos to share on phones? Who will do the video editing and post-production?

16. And beyond the dedication?

There are translation committees and translation teams that see the day of the dedication as marking the end of their work. But this is not a recommended strategy. Experience has shown that a new Bible or New Testament will have more of an impact if there is an ongoing emphasis on promotion and training for some time after the dedication. The following kinds of activities can be very helpful in facilitating Scripture engagement:

- Launch **Bible listening groups** in churches and family groups, where people listen to a portion of the new translation and discuss it together. Participants in such groups often like to read along as they listen.

- Design a **Bible-based literacy course**, where participants can improve their fluency in reading and their ability to study the Bible themselves.
- Establish an effective system for **distribution and sales**, so that people can easily buy a copy of the New Testament or Bible, and that the funds and stock will be well managed.
- Launch a **social media campaign**, where people are encouraged to read, listen to, download and discuss what they are learning in God’s Word.
- Produce a series of **radio programmes** to be broadcast on local radio stations, where the new translation is read and explained.
- Organise **workshops for pastors**, where they can think through how they will encourage the members of their churches to use and engage with the new translation – in church services, in small groups and in outreach.

Before the dedication, it can be helpful to get local church leaders together to discuss: “What is our goal beyond the dedication?”, “How would we like to see people using the Bible, New Testament or newly published portions in the weeks, months and years to come?”, and “What kinds of things can we do practically to help people engage well with God’s Word in their language?”

May the Lord give you wisdom in all your planning!