

LATEST NEWS # 485, February 19, 2008

The following news concerns Gabon.

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'This has given me new courage to fight...'



GABON — Following the launch of the *Where is the Good Samaritan Today?* program in 2007, the Bible Society in Gabon has been actively involved in the battle against HIV/AIDS. It has received support for this work from two government ministries (see *Latest News #408*).

Around 40 people attended a recent showing of the film *Who is Responsible?* organised by the Bible Society at the Evangelical Church of Gabon in Libreville. The film was particularly useful in shedding light on the theme selected for this event: leadership.



"The aim of showing the film was to encourage those watching to realise that they are all responsible, each within their own context, that they must take action to ensure that more people are not infected and that they must show love and affection to those living with HIV/AIDS," said Bible Society General Secretary Thierry Mabiala.

Two workshops were held after the film had been shown. "This the first time that I have taken part in an HIV/AIDS program which focuses on the Bible and which recognises the worth of people who are infected or affected," said Karl, a

participant who is HIV-positive. "I am very impressed and I feel as if I have discovered something very important."

The high point of the day, however, was the testimony given by Jeanne. This HIV-positive young woman, who is very involved in the *Good Samaritan* project, told how, some years ago, she discovered that her son, then only 18 months old, was HIV-positive. This is how she discovered her own status. She then explained the medical treatment which was put in place and concluded by saying, "My son is now nine years old and is in good health." This fact, mundane in other contexts, gave the participants motivation and hope.

This testimony was particularly significant for another participant. "My granddaughter is HIV-positive and her mother died of AIDS," she said. "I didn't know what to do or where to turn. What Jeanne told us has given me new courage to fight, to be proactive in caring for her and to do everything possible to ensure that she can lead a long life. I have taken her to see a doctor and she is now having regular check-ups."

A few days later, the Bible Society held a two-day training session on the use of the *Take Charge* materials that form part of the *Good Samaritan* kit. This event was attended by 40 people from the 'Go and Make Disciples of all Nations' Church in Libreville, all of whom belong to Christian clubs at their school or university. The following are some of the comments they made:



Prince-Aristide Obiang Owono stated, "This initiative should be run on a national scale. I was blessed and my knowledge was increased. This is also an opening for proclaiming the Gospel. May God's work be done through this emerging movement!"

Rita Medza said that, in her opinion, "This is a generous initiative. HIV/AIDS is being tackled in a new way. It is a very good approach, but the training should run for longer. I was struck by the spirit of tolerance that prevailed here. It can only be beneficial!"

Armelle Betebe Obiang said, "I have found this initiative very helpful because it gives detailed, practical information about how to combat HIV/AIDS. I fully approve of this approach and would like the training to be available to all young people, whether Christian or not."

"We were particularly struck by the participants' attentiveness and enthusiasm," said Mr Mabiála. "They left satisfied with finally having a tool which will allow them to easily tackle questions related to HIV/AIDS arising in their various clubs."

For a previous article about the Where is the Good Samaritan Today? project in Gabon, see Latest News #408.

This report refers to project 76407.

Photos (Bible Society in Gabon/Thierry Mabiála):

GAB08DJ-1: A showing of the film Who is Responsible? organised by the Bible Society in Gabon at the Evangelical Church of Gabon in Libreville. The t-shirts say 'Stop AIDS, keep our promises' and 'Be a strong and committed leader'.

GAB08DJ-4: A workshop held after the showing of the film Who is Responsible? by the Bible Society of Gabon at the Evangelical Church of Gabon in Libreville. The t-shirts say 'Stop AIDS, keep our promises' and 'Be a strong and committed leader'.

GAB08DJ-6: Participants in an HIV/AIDS workshop organised by the Bible Society in Gabon on the use of the Take Charge materials that form part of the Where is the Good Samaritan Today? program. The 40 participants were from school and university Christian clubs.

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