

September 2004, *Equipping*

A Moment for Celebration

We invite you to share the following story with your congregation. It takes no more than two minutes to read aloud. Perhaps your church has a tradition in which your mission or outreach committee shares a story on a monthly basis, or perhaps you'd like to start one in which these impact stories can be shared. You might also wish to include the story in your church newsletter.

Kathy Fast, Executive Assistant
Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS
witness@mennonitechurch.ca

Learning a language of love



“Let me see the elephant/house paper,” Sali said, pressing her nose against the screen door of Lillian Haas’ office. Lillian shut down her computer and took out the two pages of pictures which made up the alphabet card. All of the twenty-eight letters in the Siamou language were represented with a key word and a picture drawn by a local artist. They sat together and the nine-year-old started identifying each picture.

How does one start to read? Where does one start to teach reading in a society that doesn’t have books or signs or paper; where the people even have to work to identify someone they know in a photo? This is the challenge Lillian Haas faces in her task of literacy and Bible translation in Burkina Faso.

Creating a language primer is a painstaking, tedious job. Mamina, who works with Lillian, wrote eight texts in the Siamou language, made a list of all the verbs and nouns in each text, charted the frequency of each syllable or the combination of letters and recorded all the consonants and vowels in descending order of frequency. All this was done to prepare for writing the primer!

Mennonite Church Canada Witness is committed to working at literacy and Bible translation in Burkina Faso. Lillian’s patience and long-term commitment to this work is a testimony to the people of her village of the love she, and her God, has for them.

Lillian Haas is a Mennonite Church Canada mission partnership worker in Burkina Faso.

– A moment for celebration by Mennonite Church Canada WITNESS