

IMPRESSIONS

Vol.6.1

When
SYNERGY
Changes
Lives

A publication of Synergie Francophone



**LIVING OUT
OUR NAME**



Synergie
FRANCOPHONE

Together... planting, watering, growing fruitfulness

What's in a Name?

In this issue, we explore how SF's ministries grow from who we are. Combining one French and one English/French word, our name "Synergie Francophone" truly captures our heart and God-given calling. We serve the global community by bringing the best of these worlds together. As I unfold our name, I hope you will feel the passion and energy flowing from it.

The French word *synergie* has the same meaning in English, just spelled a little differently. In Mark 16:20, we read, "And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them, and confirmed the word by the signs that followed," (NASB). The phrase "worked with," referring to the relationship between the Lord and the apostles, is the Greek word for "synergy." Synergy is best expressed when two come together for a common purpose, and the results exceed what two separate efforts could have achieved. In the passage, God joined with the apostles to confirm the work of the Gospel.

SF combines the print and financial resources of the developed world with the skills and experience of French-speaking ministry leaders to see lives changed with the Good News of Jesus's love. This partnership is not just a financial one; it truly requires both sides to bring expertise and energy to the task before us. All the French Bibles and printed materials in the world are useless if they are not in the hands of men and women qualified to use them to train others who will train others in turn.

"Francophone," the second word in our name, means "French-speaking." Each

mission organization has a special calling that emerges from God. If you've heard anything about SF's history, you will likely remember that our passion was born in French-speaking Africa (see *Impressions* 4.1 for more of the miraculous story). Over time, SF has grown to include the entire francophone world.

Comprising about 321 million people, French speakers represent the world's fifth largest language group. About 60% of those live in francophone Africa. Poverty drives the reality for much of the French-speaking world. From our founders Abe and Mary Kroeker, SF's vision has always been to provide Bibles and printed materials at a price accessible to those who need them most. We have learned the most effective way to do this is to work in partnership with local leaders who can equip others and distribute materials to those who will have the greatest impact. Our passion is to see the Gospel spread to the fourth and fifth generations of believers and beyond.

Putting these words together, Synergie Francophone results in supporting evangelism, multiplying disciples, and equipping the Church by providing biblical tools in French. As you read the following stories, we trust your heart will be warmed as you see how your partnership in prayer, giving, and, for some, going is making a difference in the francophone world. Whether high school chaplains, evangelists, or surgeons, our partners are highly equipped to bring the Good News to those who may never otherwise hear it.

Ray Sanford, President of the Board



Credit: Ray Sanford

Synergie
FRANCOPHONE

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Silent Tools of the Gospel

By: Elise Teegne

This past year, 439 high school students proclaimed their faith in Christ through baptism in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)'s Aru district. At one local church, 46 teachers and two students were among 57 baptized. Rather than isolated events, these baptisms are part of a larger trend. Since 57 newly trained chaplains began serving at high schools in the Aru and Adi districts in 2024, they've baptized over 660 students and 52 teachers.

These students and teachers hail from schools participating in our "Adopt a High School" project, which helps to equip school communities with chaplains and libraries for evangelism and discipleship. The recent surge of Gospel-sparked transformation in Aru is not the result of one organization, let alone one person, but a multifaceted synergy that ultimately roots in the grace of God.

This collaboration extends across continents, and even time. Reverend Dradeko Ariambi of Aru, a

supervising chaplain from the Africa Inland Church in Northeast Congo (CECA), looks back to 1912. At this time, missionaries from the Africa Inland Mission arrived in the DRC and built schools with chaplaincies. This strategic move inspired striking results. "Missions in Africa exploded partly because of the educational system," says David Langford, a partner in our "Adopt a High School" project. Over the years, CECA has founded 284 government-funded high schools averaging 500 students each, opening a door to touch the next generation with the Gospel. But chaplains have often been full-time pastors stretched too thin to offer more than part-time support. Students' spiritual lives have suffered.

In 2023, however, CECA began to reinvigorate an essential element in the synergistic efforts to effect change: the chaplaincy. The organization began offering potential chaplains (often devoted, longtime teachers of Christian maturity) an intense two-month formation. Topics include everything from systematic theology and Christian ethics to youth leadership and youth evangelism. With its focus on real-world problems, character formation, practical life skills, and community outreach, this training provides a fresh approach to serving students. Chaplains are taught to cultivate holistic spiritual transformation reflected not just at school but in work, travel, and the local church. After the training comes a one-month internship at a school, in addition to occasional ongoing seminars.

Could there be a connection between the recent baptisms and the newly trained chaplains? Both David and Yanga Ondeni Reckem, a trained chaplain who received a library for his Bunia school, answer yes. "A chaplaincy which counsels kids just has a huge impact on the school," says David. For Mr. Reckem, chaplains are the students' spiritual directors, fathers, and friends who lead them to Christ. They make a difference with counseling, pastoral dialogue, and many spiritual activities, engaging in the slow transformation of students, teachers, and staff alike. Thanks to trained chaplains preaching the Word of God, "a good number of students receive Jesus Christ while passing through the school and are baptized before going to the universities," Mr. Reckem observes.



Reverend Dradeko Ariambi preparing to baptize students in Dhoya, DRC. Credit: Reverend Dradeko Ariambi

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Continued from page 3: **Silent Tools of the Gospel**

The key is building relationships. Rev. Dradeko writes that chaplains love their students, care for them as their own, and support them in becoming purposeful to their communities, to their families, and to their own selves. In David's words, chaplains are committed to helping students grow. Living in the shadow of chronic war, poverty, and addiction, many Congolese youth have suffered trauma. "One of the chaplains at Bunia...said that kids come to him all the time with their problems," David says. "They wouldn't go to their parents; they wouldn't go to the pastor; but they come to him." In one high school, "it's like a family."

The recent baptisms embody beautiful fruit from these almost familial relationships. Far beyond mere outward formalities, the choice to be baptised reflects genuine internal renovation. Rev. Dradeko writes, "Students and teachers want not only to be baptized but to be visible witnesses of Christ in their respective communities." Parents, school staff, and local pastors are noticing a big difference in the lives of difficult students in particular and others in general. Mr. Reckem adds, "Before my...training, each year we expelled many students from school due to misbehavior. But currently, the cases for indiscipline have greatly reduced."

Along with each of these trained chaplains, David, with the help of SF and other partners, hopes to supply a curated library of 100 biblically rich books in French. According to David, "most high schools [in the DRC] have no library." Libraries are a powerful resource that allows chaplains to respond to the spiritual needs of students. Quality literature from authors like C.S. Lewis, John Bunyan, Timothy Keller, and Charles Spurgeon equip chaplains to support the spiritual needs of students beyond the classroom or chapel service.

In addition to chaplains, churches, and libraries on Congolese soil, many collaborative partners serve an ocean away. Stateside SF staff share about the work and channel funds through our website to purchase libraries. We also created a brochure David sends out to partners. David himself advocates for the project in his newsletter and when speaking at churches. Many of the members of David's home church and his network of around 200 supporters have also contributed whole libraries.

SF, leaders in the DRC and France, and publishing house BLF Éditions helped refine the list of 100 books composing each library. The titles cover a balanced array



Yanga Onden Reckem (left) with David Langford (middle) and the director of Hope High School (right) in the school's library. Credit: David Langford

of topics from biography and fiction to theology and contemporary issues. BLF Éditions promotes the project on its platform, offers significant discounts, and even slipped an extra 30 books into each of the last 57 libraries. "We've had a few libraries donated because of their work," David says. Purchased books take three to six months to reach their destinations by cargo ship.

In the DRC, the collaboration continues to unfurl. A network of believers supports the chaplains' efforts. CECA's Youth Ministries Coordinator, David Makeo, who made the training sessions possible, discusses the new approach to chaplaincy with local church leaders. Jean-Pasteur Katavo and his wife Daphrose Kiyakimwa Muteho, who pioneered the approach, encourage new chaplains to adopt a retreat model to cultivate spiritual growth during school vacations. Some chaplains form teams to plan assemblies and retreats. One in particular, Joël Drabhe Ondia, has organized prayer meetings, a choir, Bible studies, interviews, catechism training, and a choral concert.

Thus far, 12 high schools in Bunia have enjoyed libraries for about a year and a half, and 57 libraries have arrived in the DRC for distribution. Twelve more libraries have been donated—including nine from generous SF supporters—toward the next shipment of 25 libraries for the 25 chaplains trained this past summer. There are still 203 libraries needed to nourish the students and teachers at CECA schools. "Four times, I've baptized students converted not by my teaching but after reading the books in the library," Mr. Reckem said. "The books are silent tools of the Gospel."

Learn more about our "Adopt a High School" project on our website www.synergiefrancophone.org/our-work.



Pallet of books at BLF Éditions ready to ship. Credit: David Langford

Synergie That Heals

By: Jordan Lockwood



PAACS residents. Credit: Dr. Debbie Eisenhut

"Synergie" (or *synergie* to the francophone world) is a great buzzword. It's easy to throw into a sentence without thinking about what it really means. Of course, Synergie Francophone doesn't use it as a buzzword. We embody the idea in our collaboration with other ministries, like the Pan-African Academy of Christian Surgeons (PAACS).

Just as SF seeks to serve the underserved, PAACS trains surgeons, anesthesiologists, and obstetrician/gynecologists to meet the massive medical need in Africa. Ninety-three percent of human beings on the continent lack access to basic surgical, anesthesia, and obstetric care that is safe, affordable, and timely.¹ According to PAACS statistics, "In some areas, there is only one surgeon for 250,000 people. In other places... one surgeon for 2.5 million people." Serving those who would otherwise go without aid is a worthy mission in its own right; but PAACS also disciples residents to share God's love with their patients, treating the whole

person by bringing the hope of the Gospel to those in pain and distress.

With 172 residents training at programs in 12 African countries, PAACS involves numerous people working together (in synergy!) towards these goals – so many that there's not nearly the space to name them all here. Indeed, the work PAACS surgeons do is often unrecognized, despite their sacrifices. Unsung heroes Dr. Jacques Ebhele and Dr. Samy Nigo serve in a mission hospital in Bunia, DRC, where they offer medical aid and spiritual guidance to their patients. Both give devotionals at the hospital's services and are active in their churches. They do all of this for very little compensation, relying on the Lord to provide when their salaries are not enough.²

While surgeons do their complicated, dearly needed work, we can support them from the sidelines with our own gifts. For SF, that means providing residents with book sets in French. These rich resources include the *Africa Study Bible*, *African Christian Ethics*, *How Could God Allow Suffering and Evil?*, *The Illustrated Guide to World Religions*, and an SD card of 130 curated books. For PAACS resident Dr. Alain Nishimwe, the resources SF supplies are not just books, but the building blocks for years of good work: "These books are very important and useful for us, the future leaders of Africa." Surgeons play important roles in their communities, and PAACS and SF are working together to make sure they are equipped to lead well spiritually.

Synergie doesn't stop with SF; you can help PAACS, too. Missionary surgeons are passionate, devoted workers but often lack the resources needed to do their work. Helping to provide them with biblical resource packs in French puts essential tools into their hands to enable their efforts. Prayers are also much needed; please keep missionary surgeons in yours as we work in synergy to bring healing to the sick of body and of heart.

Learn more about our "More Than Surgery" project on our website www.synergiefrancophone.org/our-work.

¹ Eisenhut, Debbie, "Synergie Francophone and PAACS" (SF Board Meeting, September 27th, 2025).

² Read more about Dr. Jacques Ebhele and Dr. Samy Nigo in the "More Than Surgery" brochure on our website: <https://synergiefrancophone.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/More-Than-Surgery-Final-.pdf>.

How Bibles Are Changing Lives

A translated and edited testimony from Pastor and Evangelist Israël Kibombi

Having received from God the mission to evangelize and make everyone his disciples (Matt. 28:19-20), we started to distribute Bibles, first with Congo Open Heart and now with SF. During the Bible distribution and proclamation of the Good News, we gathered several testimonies.

During the Bible distribution in **Mangungu**, 15 young people accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and were baptized. Two elementary school teachers made the decision to become servants of God. We recommended they pursue theological training. After Bible distribution, the high school committee decided to start a chaplaincy, and a prayer group was born. Pastors and faithful Christ-followers were very happy to receive the free gift of Bibles. They thanked God and will continue to pray for the donors.

After evangelizing and distributing Bibles in **Idiofa**, we baptized 10 young people. They made a commitment to serve God throughout the country and began a prayer group with 20 young people.

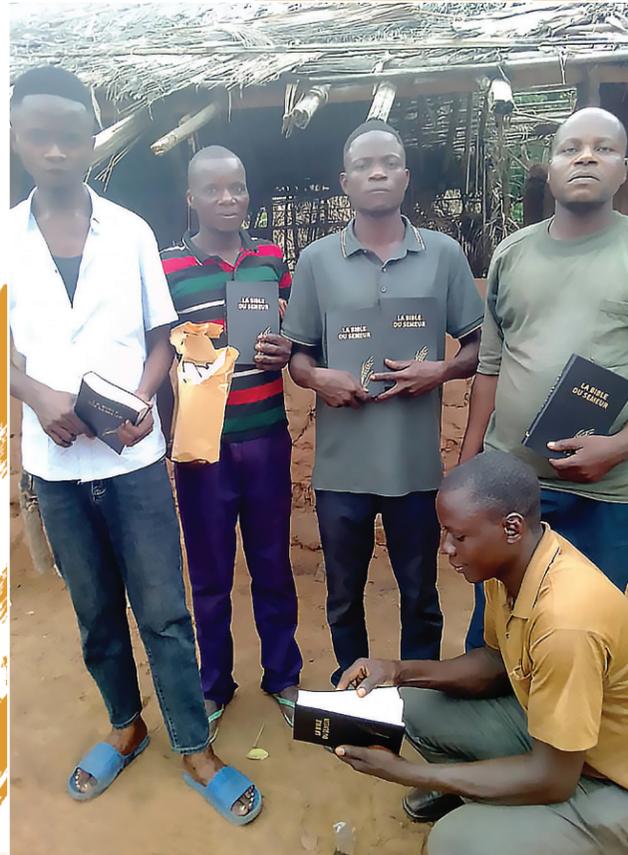
We helped three divorced couples in **Balaka** to reconcile and return to the marriage bed. The next day, they testified to the church, thanking God for sending his servant to distribute Bibles.

At the hospital, the sick thanked God for our spiritual support. The doctor testified that he was receiving Bibles for free for the very first time.

It was the first time people in **Kintswa** and **Ntshene** had received Bibles. We were impressed to find them worshipping God after receiving this free gift of Bibles. They spent an hour praying for the donors.

Five young men who had abandoned the church decided to return to church after we gave them Bibles at home and shared the Good News with them.

During the Bible distribution in **Mukedi** we kindled the life of prayer among the young people who were spiritually asleep. All the churches in this rural village testified on community radio to having received the Bibles for free. Youth who had been disobedient and did not have a life of prayer returned to following the



Recipients from Pastor Kibombi's May 2025 trip. Credit: Israël Kibombi

teaching of the church. Young girls and boys became committed Christians in the church and joined the choir. They ask God to bless the donors who provided the means for Pastor Israël to come.

In **Kilembe** we gave the Bibles even to the state management offices for elementary and secondary education. These managers and their agents did not pray. After the Bible distribution, they became committed Christians who read the Bible every day and now pray before each meeting.

In **Ngudi Sector** and **Lake Matshi** we met a group of young people who had fled the village and found themselves in the forest for three months committing crimes. We went into the forest, preaching the love of God as explained in John 3:16. We exhorted them saying, "Despite your crimes, God loves you very much," and we gave them Bibles. We won them over, and they returned to the village saying, "God loves us. We are now useful. Jesus Christ redeemed us. We have the weapon of God. We will no longer return to our bad actions." They became fervent Christians, testified throughout the village, and regained their friends.

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Staff Highlight: Meet Eileen Martin

snapshot
shot!

By: Elise Tegegne

Bilingual Executive Assistant Eileen Martin relishes the opportunity to use her French in a Christian context. The Tacoma native fulfills a number of strategic roles to equip God's church. In placing orders for Bibles and biblical literature in French, Eileen ensures that much-needed resources reach the hands of key leaders overseas. To this end, she provides essential French communication with publishing houses and partners. In addition to assisting Executive Director Angela Brandle, she also proofreads and translates *News for Praise and Prayer*, proofreads *Impressions* magazine, and leads a team in translating *Impressions*, brochures, and other materials that share what God is doing in the French-speaking world.

SF Board President Ray Sanford notes that Eileen is "gifted in talking with people" both in personally thanking donors and engaging with people at SF's booth during missions conferences. She puts people



Credit: Eileen Martin

at ease while showing how SF is accomplishing its vision and expressing to donors their indispensable role in making SF's vision a reality. Director of Operations John Saucedo observes that she is a person of strong Christian character and a strong leader of a diverse team who brings wisdom and a quiet focus to any situation. Executive Director Angela Brandle deeply appreciates not only the attention to excellence Eileen brings to SF's ministry, but also the prayerful care she shows to every person with whom she relates. We are grateful for this talented team member who serves an essential part in supporting evangelism, multiplying disciples, and equipping the Church by providing biblical tools in French.

Learn more about our operations ministry "Ministry's Essential Ingredient" on our website www.synergiefrancophone.org/our-work.

Learn more about Eileen in "Perfectly Prepared" (*Impressions* 1.1).

Continued from page 6: **How Bibles Are Changing Lives**

In conclusion, we testify that during this Bible distribution, we won many lost souls, reconciled divorced couples, and encouraged youth in their calling to serve God. Many people decided to follow Jesus Christ; numerous people were baptized; thousands

upon thousands have today become readers of the Bible and committed Christians. We say thank you to God for SF giving us Bibles and donors.

Learn more about our "Bible Distribution" project on our website www.synergiefrancophone.org/our-work.



WAYS TO SERVE GOD WITH SYNERGIE FRANCOPHONE

Opportunities in France: **Graphic designer; Offset printing operator/apprentice; Printshop production worker/stock manager; French-speaking administrator/bookkeeper; computer-assisted publishing.** Some roles could be done remotely from the US or Canada.

Ambassadors in the US to advocate for those without God's Word. Full or part time. To explore these opportunities, contact Angela.Brandle@synergiefr.org.

MISSION STATEMENT

Impressions magazine exists to share stories of what God is doing through SF, to educate readers about the French-speaking world, to include a platform for French-speaking voices, and to inspire readers' engagement with the francophone community—all for the glory of God.



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