

New Testament Comes to the Kono People

Freedom and Hope through God's Word

by Jim and Susan Kaiser

Leaders danced in the street to the energetic beating of drums. A parade led by a banner and featuring a hammock marched through town. Were the Kono people welcoming a new chief? No, they were joyfully welcoming the arrival of the Kono New Testaments by carrying them in that hammock! At the ceremony, choirs sang enthusiastically, hours of speeches were given along with many, many thanks. And God was praised!

The long journey to bring God's Word to the Kono people is finally over!

In October of 1985, we traveled to Sierra Leone, beginning the journey to provide the Kono people with God's Word in their own language. The Kono people, who number around 190,000, live in the eastern hill country of Sierra Leone. They are mainly farmers, growing rice, cassava, and many other fruits and vegetables. Some mine diamonds, which are found in the central part of Kono District. The diamonds attract many

people from around the world who try to "strike it rich". The diamonds were also a major part of the long rebel war in Sierra Leone, as was shown in the movie *Blood Diamond*.

For so long, most Kono people lived in

fear: fear of illness, of death, of crop failure, of a curse from an unhappy ancestor, and fear about adequately providing for their families. Most Kono people are animists who believe in a God who created the world, but is now separated and far removed from them. They believe that they must go through their ancestral spirits to reach God. They also believe that there are many witches and evil spirits at work in their lives who must be appeased or guarded against.

To a Kono, everything has a spiritual cause. If your child is sick, it may be that a witch has attacked her. If your crops are not doing well, it may be because the spirit of your dead mother is not pleased with you, or that someone has cursed you. Their lives were controlled by fear...until now.



The Kono joyfully welcomed the arrival of the New Testament.

Working among the Konos for over twenty years, we've seen the charms parents have put around their young children's waists for protection from evil. We've seen sacrifices offered in the fields to protect the crops. We've seen charms hung in house doorways to prevent witches from entering. Yet all these things fail. So there is fear at every turn.

Now is the time for freedom. Now for the first time, Kono men, women and children can hold in their hands the Word of God — the Kono New Testament. Now God has begun to talk Kono. They can learn that Jesus has set them free from the power of the devil, and experience freedom from that fear.

Komba Ngekia, the Kono translator, recently wrote us and said: "I want the Kono New Testament to be like rice. No matter what other food a Kono man eats, if he does not eat rice, he has not had any food for that day. Is there anything that is food more than the Word of God? Let us hope and pray that this book will make more and more Kono people hunger for the Word of God day after day, until eternity."

Thank you, all of you, who were a part of making this happen through your faithful prayers, your generous gifts, and your words of encouragement. Your help has blessed the Kono people...and us. The Konos have a proverb. It speaks of many people working together to achieve a big result:

Konde fanka fanka an kanban dɔ kuit koo.

(The wings of many birds produce a loud noise).
Thanks for flapping along with us! 🐦



For the first time, the Kono people can hold the Word of God in their hands.