



# Institute for Bible Translation Russia/CIS

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## Newsletter Summer 2009

### **"The Dargins should at last also have this book in their language."**

The Dargins (510,000) are one of the largest people groups in Dagestan, northern Caucasus – an area where more than 30 languages are spoken. But while Bible translation is progressing well in languages such as Avar, Lezgin, Kumyk and Tabasaran, only two Gospels have so far been translated into Dargin – Mark's Gospel, which was published in 2002 and reprinted in 2007, and Luke's Gospel, which will soon be ready for printing. The main reason for this slow progress is that for a long time there was no exegetical advisor for the project. Now an experienced advisor is ready to take on the Dargin translation – but then a few weeks ago the translator suddenly died in an accident. Besides the sad bereavement of an excellent translator and scholar, we were left bewildered – why are there so many problems with the Dargin translation?

Therefore it was a special joy to welcome the Dargin team to a consultant checking session in Moscow in May. Two new people have joined the team – both with a solid knowledge of the Dargin language, having worked before as translators, journalists and editors in Dargin press and radio. Ahmed\* will be trained as a translator, Raisa\* has already done some comprehension testing on the Gospel of Luke. *\*not their real names*



"I really enjoyed this work," Raisa said. "I met people from different social strata, among them a librarian at the National library. I asked her to read ten pages, but she took the book home because she wanted to read the whole Gospel. She even saw some mistakes which needed to be corrected. People were in general very interested, they liked the text. They compared our own life and traditions with the stories in the Gospel. When they read about the prodigal son who went off with the inherited money, several people said: 'Yes, it is true - as parents we give more love and care to children who are difficult.' So the readers really felt how the heart of the father was aching."

"I am not a Christian, but I feel drawn to learn more about this faith," she continued. "I have previously translated for a Christian broadcasting organisation, and the people were very friendly, honest and sincere. It struck me that although I came to them as a Muslim they still welcomed me, prayed for me and expressed such love and care. Later back home I told the Muslim leaders that Christians have set us an example. While I am working on the Bible I feel that I get nearer to God, and I am changing, I have become more patient and calm. The work enriches my life, and I am convinced that the Bible is needed in my language."

We asked Ahmed what it is like to translate the Bible for someone who is used to translating other texts. "It is much more difficult," he answered. "With other texts you can delete what you don't like – here you have to translate everything and you have to do it so that the text will be meaningful and understood. The terms are also difficult, not all biblical terms exist in Dargin, so we have to search for them and find solutions. The Bible is a cultural monument which will be very important to the Dargins. There is a great strength in the Bible, people have known it for almost 2000 years and the Dargins should at last also have this book in their language."

**Will you help support the Dargin Bible translation? So far there is no regular financial support for this project. Please contact [ibt\\_inform@ibt.org.ru](mailto:ibt_inform@ibt.org.ru) or check [www.ibtrussia.org](http://www.ibtrussia.org) for further information.**