BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN NDOP CLUSTER

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Relationship Building in the Ndop Language Cluster

The Ndop Team is working with a cluster of 10 languages based on 10 large villages on the Ndop Plain in NW Cameroon. They are discovering that more progress is being made in the languages where team members are living in a village. However if there was to be a team member in every village, then they would be back to a one team one language concept rather than the cluster concept of a small team of SIL staff servicing a group of languages. This is the Ndop dilemma.

I took a trip with Dan Grove the Ndop team leader. Also with us were a young couple who may join the team. There are three villages where it is possible for them to locate and thus the Ndop Team will cover most of the Ndop languages without having one team one language.

We set out to visit these three villages on a day trip. However not long into the day, we encountered a truck which had experienced engine problems. While the driver was checking out his engine, the truck had rolled backwards and was lodged precariously at the top of a long drop. The soft dusty earth had helped to save it from disaster. Dan stopped and we took quite some time trying to help this man. Digging out underneath the truck; unloading some of the weighty zinc roofing and attempting to tow the truck back on to the road with Dan's vehicle. Several other vehicles drove by: a bush taxi, a pickup truck, a white couple in a nice car who waved and smiled - but none stopped.

Dan was unable to get the truck back on the road. His wheels spun on the loose dusty surface and could get no grip, but he had shown his faith in action. We continued in the knowledge that another truck was coming from Ndop to drag the stranded vehicle back on to the road.

The first intended stop was Baba and so from the Ring Road we set off up a steep and extremely rocky road to visit the Palace of the Fon of Baba, the local traditional king. His palace was impressive and he received us cordially, showing us round his new building project within the palace compound and offering soft drinks and fresh pineapple. Again Dan worked hard to develop good public relations between the Ndop Language Project and this man who has so much influence over his people. The Fon invited us to come back next Monday when he will celebrate the 20th anniversary of his Fonship.

Next stop was at the St Monica's Catholic Clinic where Dan wanted to drop in and greet the doctor. He had heard good reports of this clinic and we were impressed. The doctor and the sister that we met were pleased to meet some

other Christians working in their area and Dan will be able to recommend the clinic to friends who need treatment having seen it for himself. Once again another group of people were made aware of what the Ndop Language Project was all about - and the convent to the rear could be a future retreat venue for the team.

We were having to cut our plans to visit Bangolan because of the delay with the truck, but we made a shorter visit to Babessi. We met up with Matthias from the Babessi Language Committee who insisted that we should go to visit the Fon of Babessi who happened to be in residence after recently returning after 7 years studying in Russia! This palace was less palatial, but again the Fon received us graciously and Matthias and Dan were able to promote the language development work of the Ndop Language Project.

The final stage was a short cut along an extremely red and dusty road (impassable in the rainy season) to Ndop town where Dan took us to his favourite roadside fish restaurant - Ndop style.

In his devotional this morning at the Literacy Workshop, Jon said that his passion is that the Ndop languages receive the Bible in their mother tongues. That's my passion too - but I'm seeing afresh that so much more is involved before that stage is reached!