# A ONE DAY VISIT TO OKU

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**Category:** Observations

John Hamilton in Ndop, NW Cameroon

A One day Visit to Oku

How long would you sit in packed taxis on very bumpy roads for the sake of a one hour twenty minute meeting with someone you haven't seen in six years? Answers on a postcard to kouya.net.

On Saturday past colleagues Dan and Jon had to drive to Ndu for a meeting at the Baptist seminary there. Their route passed through Banso from where, I was reliably informed, it was a mere one hour taxi ride to Oku. Six years ago I visited the Oku Bible Translation and Literacy project - a CABTAL project under the leadership of Pastor Peter Ngum. That's when I took a group of N. Irish ministers whose churches were supporting the Oku project. Last summer Wycliffe UK organised a joint summer team with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) to make a two week visit to Oku.

OK, I thought, this is too good an opportunity to miss. I'd just love to visit Oku again, catch up with Peter and talk to him about a second Wycliffe / PCI team this coming July. I'll invite Lance for company and Dan and Jon can drop us off at Banso and pick us up again on the way back. No problem!

A relatively smooth drive from Ndop brought us to Banso by 9.30am in one and a half hours. A pick-up truck taxi was waiting for a few more passengers and off we would go. Lance and I waited two and a half hours in the dry season dustbowl that is Kumbo Taxi Park. Eventually we were on our way: the driver, the man beside him whose legs straddled the gear stick, Lance and me - all in the front - plus a small boy jammed in between my legs. Behind in the double cab rear seat were two men, three women and a baby. Outside there were maybe six more passengers sharing the truck bed with an assortment of baggage and a load of roofing tin. Ah yes, the ever-slipping-from-it's-moorings roofing tin, which along with very rough and rocky dirt roads, meant a journey time not of one hour - but two hours and ten minutes.

Peter Ngum and a few of his team were patiently waiting to welcome us outside the Oku Project office in Elak village. We caught up on the news - and this is what made it worthwhile! We saw photos of the dedication last spring of the Gospel of Luke the first Bible book published in Oku. We saw photos on the wall from our 2003 visit. Daniel enthusiastically showed us the Oku literacy logbook. When I visited in 2003, around 400 people had completed literacy classes and earned examination certificates. The number

now stands at approximately 1100 - and the literacy supervisors are currently marking 300 more exam papers. The whole New Testament in Oku is in final draft and the team are community testing it for comprehension and readability. They are hopeful of completion in 2010 and maybe a dedication in 2011. Will that be my next trip to Oku? Peter was also very enthusiastic about the contribution the PCI Team had made last July and was looking forward to another team coming.

Peter had wisely suggested as soon as we arrived that someone should go off to the Elak taxi park and book us two seats on the next - and probably last - vehicle leaving that day for Banso. We were taking a walk through the village in the hope of a rather late lunch, when Daniel appeared in the taxi which was ready to leave at once. Peter bought us some bananas and peanuts and off we bumped in an equally well filled pick-up but with less comfortable rear seats and rather more adventurous young driver.

Was it worth it? Yes, definitely yes. OK, it was uncomfortable. OK, the time spent with Peter, Daniel, Nelson, Julius and Eunice was all too short. But I had renewed face to face contacts with brothers and sisters in Christ who share the same passion that I do for people to receive God's written Word in their mother tongue.

Reunited with Dan and Jon, we set off on the journey home. Dan's comment echoed my thoughts... I had just had first hand experience of what it's been like for the Oku team over the past ten years and more as they travelled on rough dirt roads to Bamenda for translation workshops. I wouldn't want to do it too often - but I can even say that I enjoyed it!

John Hamilton in NW Cameroon