OPERATION CLEAN WATER IN NDOP

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Category: Observations

Operation Clean Water in Ndop

John Hamilton with the Ndop Cluster, NW Cameroon

The Ndop Team certainly do not live in linguistic ivory towers. How could they when Cameroonians elsewhere apparently sum up the Ndop Plain in the words "No development or progress"! Water has been scarce this dry season and pumps are producing less water from the Bamunka wells. A few days ago we had to limit how many water containers we filled at the nearby pump in Mesaw so that others culd have some water too.

Dan Grove told me the story of how a government minister appeared out of the blue at his house in Bambalang one day. "Uhuh, what have I done to deserve this?" he wondered. In fact the "big man" was visiting friends in the village and had come to thank Dan for providing a well on the roadside near his compound so that people returning from their fields could have a drink. His actions had been appreciated, so much so that the story had got to important ears.

Mick Toolin from the Blackwells' church in Dublin is here with us at the moment on his second trip, visiting all ten Ndop villages and researching how many people live in each quarter and what water provision exists. The picture is very varied: from SNEC piped water to standpipes and taps in Ndop town and elsewhere - which is great, but not totally reliable; to wells, some with pumps and some not; to muddy streams; to standing pools of quite disgusting looking water. But people need water to live and they get it where they can - whether they are aware of the dangers of dirty water or not.

A few days ago I took a trip with Mick to visit Bafanji to research the water situation there. En route we chatted with a blacksmith who makes guns for "cry dies" (traditional ceremonies which take place after someone dies and these guns are fired into the air). This man had a tap right beside his house. Further along we met three children emerging from the undergrowth with water containers. They had been down a steep bank to a muddy little stream to get their family supply for the day.

In a few days time, the Ndop team will have planning meetings here at Mbingo Rest House and on the agenda will be how to progress what Mick has found out. There is no way that good wells can be provided everywhere on the Ndop Plain - so which villages are strategic in terms of both local needs and the literacy and translation strategy? For example a Canadian family will soon

return to live in Bafanji where water provision is not great and they will have three children aged three and under. Mick is also proposing some water filtration trials to make dirty water supplies safer for people. And then the money to fund it all will need to be found...

It's like Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well. She needed physical water to survive, but Jesus also offered her the Living Water of a saving relationship with himself. And that's why the Ndop Team is seeking to provide both fresh water and spiritual water as they work towards Bible translation in all ten Ndop languages.

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