"I KNOW THAT IF I DIE TODAY, I HAVE THIS BOOK.

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Category: Observations

"I know that if I die today, I have this book. My language is written down - it is a legacy!"

John Hamilton with the Ndop Cluster, NW Cameroon

It was the final day of the eight day Pre-Reader Literacy Primer Workshop for eight of the ten Ndop languages in NW Cameroon. Using the template for the Pre Reading Primer, SIL staff Melody, Jon and Sandra, had led the 18 participants through the process of learning how to teach pre-readers to recognise letters as shapes. A lot of the time, the participants were writing their own stories to go with the key word in each lesson and, from time to time, everyone was getting practice in teaching a lesson to the other members of their language group while the staff sat in and assessed their progress.

It was hard going for staff and participants alike with the day starting at 8am and going through to 4 pm. Some had to travel some distance each day, while others stayed over with friends or relatives in Ndop town. It is also dry season and the classroom got rather hot and potentially sleepy in the after lunch session. But the workshop is designed to be inter-active and the staff gave the participants lots of involvement opportunities and lots of encouragement.

By the end of the workshop each language had a draft Pre-Reader Primer which, after some checking, will become available for these newly trained teachers to start classes for people who have never learned to read or write in any language.

That's where the title quote comes in. Donatus, a teacher, had come each day with his wife Priscillia and helped produce the book in his language.

"I know that if I die today, I have this book. My language is written down - it is a legacy! We love money too much. I believe that if you do something voluntarily, God will reward you. I have come out of my own pocket, me and my wife, no-one has given me money. Someone has said that if you keep too much money in your pocket, God will burst your pocket and you will have nothing!"

For Donatus and Priscillia and the participants from many of the languages, this is the first step to enable their people to become literate and achieve the empowerment that comes with it.

John Hamilton with the Ndop Cluster, NW Cameroon