

# Ronnie Sebong's story

## Benefit of Literacy workshop

reported by Simon Savaiko



*This is a story told to Simon Savaiko by Ronnie Sebong*

"My name is Ronnie Sebong and I would like to share about the power of literacy with you. I am 40 years of age and I am the third born in a family of five children. I left school in grade 9 because of a problem with school fees. I thought that there was no way that I would be known by people in my language area because I am only a grade 9 school leaver. I am married and have three boys living with me.

"I speak the Male language in the Salamaoa Huon Gulf district Morobe province. My language area is many kilometres away from Lae, our main town. I was one of the boys who got involved in all kinds of rascal activities and got drunk and beat my wife many times. My family life was bad and all the time there was no happiness in our home. One time I was at the point of killing myself because of problems driving me. One time again I almost left my wife and was even to the point of killing her. I was the problem but most times I was blaming my wife and family.

"I have gone through all these heavies but the Lord through his mercy and grace called me out from my house just like he called the Prophet Samuel. He called me three times and I did not know who was calling me. But in the midst of all those troubles and sadness he called me at midnight right in my house in the settlement. I responded to his call just as I would a normal person in the house. That was on the 25th January 2005 when I started my new journey with Lord, he changed my life completely. God called me, I walked out from my house not in a church or crusade or meeting, but just from my normal house in the settlement in Port Moresby.

"One day I was in Morata settlement in Port Moresby and I heard about the literacy workshop hosted by PNG Bible Translation Association. I attended the first workshop in 2009 and the Lord opened my eyes to learn more about the importance of literacy. In that workshop I learnt about how to produce books in my own language. I also learnt about how to teach adults using the books that I produced in the workshop. The real work of literacy is to help people read and write in their own language. When they read and write they will read the Bible and understand the meaning of what God is saying to them in their own language. That really opened my eyes to see the need of my people in the village.

"I went home and did more awareness in my church settlement. I completed assignments and returned to attend the next second workshop in 2010. This is to help the people who have not been to formal schooling in the country. When I attended the workshop I straight away realised that it was the Lord's way of answering the prayer for my people. So after the workshop I took the information and travelled back to my own village in the Morobe province.

"I went to the village and met leaders in the circuit and did awareness within the the circuit. The leaders within the language area heard about the real work of literacy and were all interested, they really wanted to see literacy get started in the language area. So the community helped me with all the preparation. Then they selected people to meet at the central area for a two week workshop. Twenty six participants attended the first workshop and produced their own stories in their own language for their first time. They have not used their own Alphabet before. That was the exciting part of the workshop where many leaders came together to see us talk about what sound is the best to use for the certain things in the language area. That was amazing but at the end they we were able come to some final decisions.

"Now we have the Alphabet for the Male language and the participants had an exciting time together learning new ways of writing their own stories. They were happy to stay for the whole workshop and at the end produced over 25 big books. They took stories home for their first time and people were interested and wanted to see the Word of God be translated into their language too."

Ronnie went back to Port Moresby and is doing awareness in homes of people from the language group and sharing the need and the concern

for their people in the village. Ronnie is also planning to bring more young people to the STEP training to learn more about literacy and go back to their own people and do good preparation and prepare the people before the word of God can be translated into their own language.

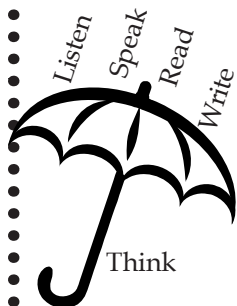
Ronnie said he also composed a song in the language about the power of literacy, that it can change people when they read God's word in their own language. The change can begin in the lives of people anywhere in any language. We aim for the country to change but it has to begin with us. Literacy can change people in smaller ways to see a big change.

Thank you Wycliffe and SIL for the helping in the area of literacy in this country. God changed me through literacy and I believe he can change anyone in remote villages to change PNG.

*Simon Savaiko comes from the Barai language in Oro Province, PNG. He served in translation and literacy work in his own language and while there he taught in STEP course at Ukarumpa. After the Barai NT dedication in 1995 he joined BTA. He moved with his family to serve in BTA administration. He is now a literacy Co-ordinator for PNGBTA and is Language Programme Co-ordinator (LPC) for the Central Gulf region. He lives in Port Moresby and serves in the BTA National Office.*

Reading must be seen as part of a child's general language development and not as a discrete skill isolated from listening, speaking and writing.

*(Becoming a Nation of Readers)*



And I might add, it cannot be isolated from thinking.