

PRESS RELEASE: MOTHER TONGUE BOOKS IN CONSTANT DEMAND

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Events are being hosted all over the world to celebrate International Mother Language Day, which was first introduced by UNESCO in 1952. The day commemorates the death of four Dhaka University students who gave up their lives to maintain the independence of using their mother language.

“Language is critical – it’s through language that we can communicate meaning and develop a sense of individual and communal identity,” project manager for Breadline Africa, Puleng Phooko said. “Mother tongue education is critical to improve learning, especially in one’s formative years.”

Breadline Africa, a Cape Town based NGO, in partnership with the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory, has provided just under 25 container libraries and books to schools in impoverished areas. As a result of the project, which is now in its third year, more than 18 000 children have been reached. A pilot monitoring and evaluation assessment is currently being led by Breadline Africa to assess the impact of the container libraries at the schools, of which most of them are located in very remote, impoverished areas.

“We have received tremendous support for the library container initiative, however mother tongue books are in very short supply,” Phooko said. “A child builds knowledge upon what is being taught to them at home or in their community, if they use their mother tongue in their initial years, it is a lot easier for them to learn.”

Out of over 6 000 languages, as much as 50% of these languages are dying, 40% are endangered and 90% of the world population speaks about 300 majority languages. Only 100 languages are used in education, according to a UNESCO report.

“To keep a language alive, we need to use that language in school systems, administration and in whatever ways possible; books are a simple accessible solution to this problem,” Phooko said.

For more information and to get involved in the library container initiative email programmes@breadlineafrica.org.za or call 021 418 0322