



OSIWA

THE BELL

WORKING FOR A JUST AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN THE SOUTH WEST PROVINCE OF CAMEROON
A Monthly Publication of FIDA, GNGG, HELP OUT and MUDEC
Sponsored by The Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)



April 2006

HIPC Completion Point, at last!

Expectations From The South West Province

To the ordinary Cameroonian back in the South West Province, Cameroon's recent attainment of the HIPC Completion Point is so alien that they can only link it to the reduction of the catalogue of problems that they face daily.

Put in the simplest language, Cameroon's attainment of the HIPC Completion Point means that funds that were hitherto used for debt servicing will henceforth be redirected to financing poverty reduction projects. It is also an indication that government's economic recovery strategies are on the right track and therefore an impetus for new investments.

So South Westerners have been asking the questions: Whither next, now that we have finally boarded the HIPC boat? Have we finally arrived the El Dorado? Will the HIPC funds quickly swing the economy upwards so as to bring immediate relief to the current financial stagnation and general suffering? Would the funds be judiciously used? Will the fight against corruption continue? Would the government summon enough political will and economic foresight to come to the rescue of this dear province which is the bread basket of the country?



Paul Wolfowitz
Director, World Bank



Paul Biya
President of Cameroon



Inoni Ephraim
Prime Minister, Cameroon



Rodrigo De Rato
Director, IMF

Answers to these questions are blowing in the wind. Perhaps as pundits put it, the most worrisome is not how soon we get out of the current quagmire but whether we would put in place enough measures and ensure their effective implementation. All these issues remain very important to the South West Province which has been contributing enormously to the national budget. The dilapidated road network has disenfranchised the people of this dear Province and paralysed economic activity. Come to think of the Mutengene-Kumba, Tombel-Bangem, Bakebe-Menji-Wabane, Kumba-Mamfe and Toko-Dikome Balue stretches of road. Peo-

ple travel from Lebialem through Littoral and West provinces while those in Akwaya travel through Nigeria. The Eyomojock-Nigeria bridge has followed the Ombe and Mungo bridges in their demise. Hospitals are without drugs, while schools are without teachers and benches. Public contracts are so poorly executed by adventurous contractors with the complicity of corrupt administrators. The absence of potable water accounts for water-borne diseases in Muyuka and Limbe. The sad story is long indeed!

By Aminateh Nkemgu
GNGG



South West Mayors Face The People!



Mayor Eshie Itoh
Ekondo Titi



Mayor Arrey
Mamfe



Mayor Eshie Ngho
Konye



Mayor Mbella Moki Charles
Buea



Mayor Mbiaoh
Menji



Mayor Alobwede
Bangem

A year to the end of their mandates, South West Mayors have decided to answer the call from MUDEC group to account to their population. Six mayors have accepted to face the people.

Combining eloquence, bravery, humility and openness, the Mayors have written a new page in the history of local politics in the South West Province. They have showed proof of mastery of the fundamental principles of

Good Local Governance by proving with facts, figures, events and structures that they have 'fought the just fight' to provide basic services such as roads, water, electricity, healthcare, education and employment to their respective populations. They eloquently defended their persons against rumour mongers, petition writers and sycophants that, given more resources, they could do better. Doing better, they say, will be possible with the loyal participation of

the population who elected them into office. With more development resources coming from the HIPC funds, the Mayors are promising to achieve the best for their municipalities. We wish them well!

By Emelda Abong
Local Governance
Department
GNGG



The Open Society Institute & The Soros Foundations Network

The Open Society Institute (OSI) is a private operating and grant-making foundation based in New York City that serves as the hub of the Soros Foundations Network, a group of autonomous foundations and organisations in more than 50 countries. OSI and the network implement a range of initiatives that aim to promote open societies by shaping government policy and supporting education, media, public health, and human and women's rights, as well as social, legal, and economic reform.

To diminish and prevent the negative consequences of globalisation, OSI seeks to



George Soros extends support to Africa

foster global open society by increasing collaboration with other nongovernmental organisations, governments, and international institutions.

OSI was founded in 1993 by investor and philanthropist George Soros to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established starting in 1984, to help former communist countries in their transition to democracy. The Soros Foundations network has expanded its geographic reach to include foundations and initiatives in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, Turkey, and the United States. OSI also supports selective projects in other parts of the world.

The Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is dedicated to supporting the creation of open societies in West Africa, marked by functioning democracy, good governance, the rule of law, basic freedoms, and widespread civic participation. OSIWA believes that it best serves by sustaining catalytic and innovative initiatives that add value to the efforts of West Africa's civil society. OSIWA seeks to collaborate with advocacy groups, like-minded foundations, governments and donors.



Abdul Tejan Cole
Chair of OSIWA's Board of Directors



Mrs. Nana Tanko
Executive Director, OSIWA

OSIWA further recognises the importance of incorporating global developments in building open societies and seeks a greater commitment to the region by rich nations.

OSIWA serves 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as Cameroon, Chad, and Mauritania. The ECOWAS members are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

OSIWA is based in Dakar, Senegal. The foundation also maintains an office in Abuja, Nigeria, which focuses on good governance and human rights programs in Nigeria.

EDITORIAL

Praise the Lord, Praise the Lord, Let the People Rejoice!

At last our beloved country has attained the much talked about Completion Point of the HIPC Initiative. My people understand this to mean that money that had to be used for the payment of our debts to rich countries and monetary institutions like the IMF and the World Bank, will instead be used to improve on the lives of a majority of Cameroonians who are still swimming in Poverty. Will this be a new beginning for the South West Province? Let's wait and see!

Dear Readers, verily verily I say unto you, our coalition is shaking the South West Province to its very foundations.

MUDEC Group has set panic amongst South West Mayors by organising Public Hearings. Six indomitable Mayors have so far stood the test of being 'fired at close range'. How many others will be courageous to follow?

MUDEC Group also wants to make sure that Media Practitioners produce more people-centred reports in their printed or electronic media so that pertinent development issues are raised.

HELP OUT has given a loud shout against the abuse of Prisoners' rights by Penitentiary officials through a series of workshops and the most learned resource persons.

FIDA Cameroon has done it again, this time in the seaside city of Limbe where Betty Luma, Christie Fomenky and Co. educated women leaders from the entire province to participate actively in the democratic process of this country. The women left enriched with knowledge and strategies, promising to decide on the outcome of all upcoming elections (from Matrimonial to Presidential) irrespective of their political parties. There are signs that more female councillors, mayors, parliamentarians and senators will be elected next year. Party leaders, take note!

Through this Newsletter, GNGG is casting out hypocrisy, sycophancy, petition-writing, gossiping, backbiting, laziness from Southwesterners and anointing them with openness, team spirit and constructive critical thinking. Truly things will change.

While HIPC sails out of every lips, I must think of my father's Wovia village with its freshwater source that is covered at high tide by a polluted sea, and of course my mother's Ossing village that is no longer LONDON. Hope the HIPC funds get down to touch the misery of the people. Stay blessed!

By George Mbella



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Media Practitioners trained on People-Centred Reporting

Media practitioners in the South West province have benefited from a three day training workshop on "Civic education for development communicators and media practitioners" organized by the MUDEC Group, a Buea-based NGO, under the auspices of the South West Provincial Delegate for Communication, Mr. Nkong Makoge.

In the opening lecture, Mr. George Ngwane led the journalists to identify strategies whereby communication can flow between policy makers and the citizens. The learned speaker advised journalists to be dispassionate, impartial, and accurate in the treatment of information. To him, "political journalism should try as much as possible to be citizen-based or improve on the civic education of the people..." He added that information should make people more aware of their rights, political issues, options and help stimulate debate in society. Such reports, he went on, should draw attention to institutional malpractices such as corruption, inefficiency, nepotism etc. Furthermore, Political journalism should create pressure for improved government's performance, especially in the area of service delivery.

Responding to this thought-provoking talk, the trainees outlined the most pertinent problems that they face as journalists, and that account for their ineffectiveness. These problems included: government influence; lack of information; insecurity; lack of means of movement; etc. Together, the trainees and the trainer proposed solutions to these problems that included: developing a solidarity among journalists; visiting archives and the internet; legal protection; and government subventions and finance.

The second speaker, Dr. Molua Ernest, a Researcher at the University of Buea and a Publisher dwelled on Economic Governance. He stressed on the need for figures when reporting on economic issues. This, he continued, entails grasping the issues, investigating them and giving accurate figures. He lamented on the unavailability of statistics in French-speaking Africa, therefore journalists rely on self gotten data.

Still on Economic Governance, Mrs Awasum Susan gave a detailed definition of a budget and tax and showed how they were related to Governance. She expressed her opinion that journalists should report more on budgetary systems and investigate whether the budget is people-centred, transparent, effective and accountable.

On Governance and Gender, Mrs. Rebecca Ngeve, from the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at the University of Buea, explained to the Media Practitioners and Development Communicators, the relevance of reporting and communicating on issues with emphasis on Gender. She defined



Media Practitioners at the end of the Workshop

Gender as the economic, social, political and cultural attributes and opportunities associated with being male or female.

Mr. Tabot Tabot then mounted the rostrum to explain that to have a holistic picture of Good Governance, environmental governance must not be left out. He indicated that environmental governance entails polluted rivers, illegal logging, degradation of forests etc. Therefore in reporting, journalists should bring out the fact that there is a relationship between bad political governance and environmental degradation.

Stressing on the need to have people-centred reports, Mr. Charlie Mbonteh said that it is only through disclosures to the public and

pressure from the media on our government that our administrators can be effective, transparent and accountable.

At the end of the training workshop, journalists expressed their gratitude and satisfaction while they were awarded Certificates of Participation.

This training is part of activities to implement a Joint Project to create more open societies in the South West Province (PCMODS-SWP) funded by OSIWA in Dakar, Senegal.

By Ruth Samba
Correspondent,
THE BELL



MUDEC Distributes Civic Education Manuals

MUDEC GROUP has donated Civic Education manuals to school authorities in the South West Province, to educate students on their civic rights as Cameroonians and as future leaders. An early knowledge and mastery of these rights will enable students to respect and protect them while sensitising their friends and parents back home. The manuals were distributed to the various school libraries for students to use at their leisure.

MUDEC Group's team leader, Mr Charlie Mbonteh disclosed that the purpose of the manuals is not to prepare students for GCE Examinations but to prepare and equip them with the knowledge of their government and their basic rights and duties as Cameroonian citizens.

Manuals were distributed as follows:

- Baptist Education Authorities (40 copies);
- Provincial Delegation of Secondary Education (300 copies);
- Education Secretariat at the Synod Office (60 copies);
- Catholic Education Secretariat of the Buea Catholic

- Diocese (100 copies);
- GCE Board Library (20 copies);
- University of Buea Library (30 copies)

The recipients of the manuals all expressed their satisfaction with the work done and content of the manuals. The Provincial Delegate for Secondary Education, Mr Ngundu Francis, promised the donors to make sure that every school benefits from the kind gesture. He also promised to channel comments on the manual back to the MUDEC Group.

The production and distribution of these manuals is performed by MUDEC Group as an activity under the OSIWA-funded Project to create more open and democratic societies in the South West Province (PCMODS-SWP)

By Makouo Marquise
Correspondent,
THE BELL



Within the framework of the project to create more democratic societies in the South West Province (PCMODS-SWP) funded by OSIWA -Dakar, MUDEC Group distributed civic, education manual for civil society to administrative institution within the South West Province. These include the 27 councils, 6 Senior Divisional Offices, the office of the Governor, the office of the Prime Ministry, the National Assembly of the Republic of

Cameroon and international organisations operating in the South West

In the course of distribution questions were asked on why these manuals was targeting only the South West Province. A few recipients opted to buy!

By Ruth Eyakwe
MUDEC Group



FIDA Cameroon Trains South West Women on their Civic and Political Responsibilities

The desire to see more South West women participate fully in the political life of the nation by empowering them with knowledge on their political rights, was the main focus of a three-day workshop organised by the International Federation of Women Lawyers - FIDA Cameroon - at the Holiday Inn Resort Hotel Limbe from 21 to 23 April 2006. Participants from all parts of the South West Province arrived on Thursday, April 20 and took up accommodation at the prestigious Hotel.

The Workshop started on Friday 21 April with a sumptuous breakfast followed by a welcome address from Betty Luma, FIDA Cameroon's Chairperson.

Betty Luma thanked the participants for coming and introduced her organisation before thanking OSIWA for making it possible for the project to be realised. She went further to say that FIDA had already organised Round Table Conferences in line with the theme of this year's International Women's Day celebrations: 'Women and Decision Making' after observing that the several problems that had been raised pointed to the fact that women shy away from active politics and decision making for several reasons. She therefore expressed the hope to see the necessary skills passed on



Participants at the Training Workshop

- woman's vote is in the country;
- to know how to curb political animosity;
- expect women to support each other and look for a way forward;
- how to moderate political conflicts in the family and in the society;
- know women's rights in politics;
- empowerment for decision-making;

Their fears were stated as follows:

- complex on the part of the woman to carry out what will be learned;
- inability to execute what will be learned;
- difficulties in changing old habits and financial constraints to implement what will be learnt;
- fear of enmity amongst other women.

The training proper then started with an outline of the workshop's objectives that included:

- equipping the participants with the necessary knowledge and skills on the electoral processes;
- increased participation of women in all stages of local and national electoral processes i.e. more women should participate in voting;
- participants shall be more aware of their rights and responsibilities in participating in the electoral processes.

The lectures that followed on Friday 21 April and Saturday 22 focused on the electoral process, politics and political rights, the history of women's political rights; voting as a civic duty; challenges to women's participation in politics; civic responsibilities and their consequences; eliminating barriers to the promotion of women. The lectures were delivered by articulate, fearless, eloquent and learned resource persons led charismatically by Christie Fomenky. They included Elisabeth Atemnkeng, Mariam Weledji, Irene Asanga, Ernestine Samba and Helen Fon Achu.

Sunday marked the end of the Workshop. It started with a breakfast and a brief church service. The participants then

presented a series of plays on political campaigns for various political posts, namely municipal councillors, mayors and parliamentarians.

As a way forward, the women promised to:

- meet women groups and try to educate them on their civic responsibilities;



FIDA's Resource persons thrilled the participants

to women by the resource persons to help them politically empower themselves. She went on to cite Condoleeza Rice (USA), Veronica Michelle Bachelet (Chile), Angela Merkel (Germany), Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia as examples for women to follow, stating that women must begin from their immediate local environment and then rise up to the national level.

In response, participants stated their expectations and fears from the workshop.

Their expectations from the workshop were:

- to learn strategies on how to bring women together to educate them to handle political issues;
- to know how to go about politics;
- to know how important and how significant a



Christie Fomenky, preparing to energize the Participants

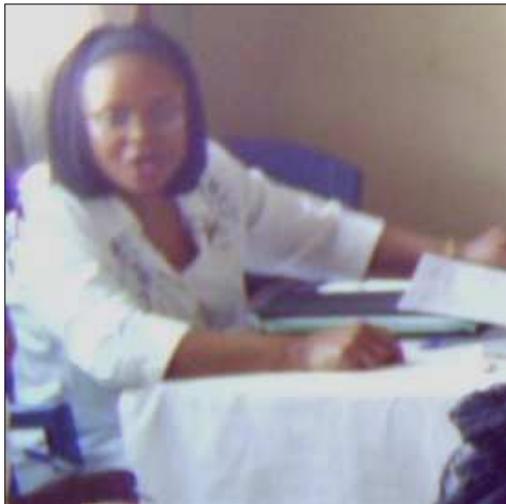
- organise seminars in order to disseminate knowledge gathered to others;
- have a positive attitude by believing that they can do and make it in politics;
- participate in media programmes which concern them and use these media to pass on knowledge to other women;

The Coordinator of the PCMODS-SWP (Project to Create More Open Democratic Societies in the South West Province), Mr. Charlie Mbonteh, presented Certificates of Participation to the various participants and thanked the women for the efforts they have been making to participate in politics and urged them to continue in that same spirit. Closing the seminar the chairperson of FIDA Cameroon urged the women not to shy away from politics.



By Elsie N. Fordam
Correspondent, THE BELL

Why Should Women participate in Politics & Decision-Making?



Betty Luma

Today, we are here again to foster the empowerment of the woman. This time it is for political empowerment so the Cameroonian woman can assert her political rights.

We wish to thank our partner OSIWA (Open Society Initiative for West Africa) for providing the necessary funds to make this project a reality. It is our aim that, come the 2007 municipal and parliamentary elections, women must have been equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to assert their political rights. Therefore we are

hoping to see more women as voters and many more women being voted into local councils and in parliament.

Dear participants, the theme of this year's International Women's Day Celebrations was "Women and Decision Making". UN secretary General, Kofi Annan in his Speech to mark this Year's International Women's Day celebrations said:

"it is right and indeed necessary that women should be engaged in decision making processes in all areas with equal strength and in equal numbers"

FIDA has already organized Round Table Conferences in line with this theme. Several problems have been raised pointing to the fact that women shy away from active politics and decision making for several reasons. We hope that by the end of the Programme the necessary skills will have been passed on to you all to enable you all empower yourselves. You have all been carefully chosen for having shown an interest in politics and the leadership traits you have portrayed in your environment. Women like you have access, presence and influence in decision-making forums.

If women are not seen as making a contribution to society of equivalent importance to men, they will not be seen as having equivalent rights to pronounce upon the way public monies are spent, the way laws are framed and the way standards of accountabil-

ity are set.

The tides are changing all over the world today.

Condoleeza Rice, Secretary of State in the United States of America, **Veronica Michelle Bachelet** of Chile, **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf** of Liberia, are our current role models. These are examples for us to follow. However we must begin from our immediate local environment and right up to national level.

The materials for the workshop have been conceived with the utmost dedication by FIDA members as well as other consultants. We hope that they will be of great help in the realization of our goals for this training.

We wish to thank you all dear participants for taking time off your busy schedule to spend 3 full days with us. We hope this will be time well spent and the beginning of a relationship with FIDA Cameroon. We sincerely hope that we shall with you and many other women of your caliber sit together at the table to take decisions that affect our kind.

We wish you all the best through out this Programme and safe journey back to your various destinations.

Thank you for listening.

Betty Luma
Chairperson,
FIDA Cameroon

Resolutions!

We the participants of the FIDA workshop on Women Political Leadership resolve as follows:

To replicate/Disseminate workshop information to more grassroots women;

To facilitate the creation and functioning of a University Women Forum;

To use all women forum in the Province to disseminate information;

That women political leaders should use the media as much as possible (media friendly);

That the Divisional Delegation for Women Empowerment and the Family should facilitate the registration of



women for the vote 2007;

That women interested in tabling their candidature for Council and Parliament should start the ground work now in April 2006;

That the PCMODS SWP should encourage women networks for political office.

**Done in Limbe,
23 April 2006**

The Millennium Development Goals, The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper The July 2004 Law on Decentralisation & **THE PUBLIC HEARING**

The government of Cameroon is a signatory of most UN instruments linked to the objectives of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The government has gone further to prioritise the attainment of certain M.D.Gs through its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Since July 2004, the Law on Decentralisation as applied to councils, highlights the devolution of power and other resources to councils in order for them to coordinate development efforts within their municipality in the economic, cultural, social, sport, education and health domains.

Councils (the basic organs of government) are therefore charged with poverty alleviation within our municipalities. Only good local governance can assure equitable and sustainable development in our council areas.

The Mayor as the Chief executive of the municipality derives power from the electorate. This is **Legitimacy**.

The population has needs and usually they cry out loud seeking the delivery of quality services in the domains identified in the Law on Decentralization. How timely and to what extent the Council reacts to these needs is referred to as **Responsiveness**.



Participants at the Buea Public Hearing



The Lord Mayor of Buea

With the resources put at the disposal of the Council, the people need to know how these are utilized.

The population demands accounts from the councils and this is **Accountability**.

Mayors present annual Administrative Accounts to councillors who seldom give feedback to their constituencies. This reduces the population to rumours, gossips, mud slinging and backstabbing.

Through a Public Hearing, the Council Executive (elected) bypasses the councillors and opens direct communication with the population (electorate). This will allow for frank and

direct (Face to Face) talk with the ultimate objective to promote equitable development within the council area.

There are Mayors in the South West, North West, South and Eastern Province that are currently anxious to accept the Public hearing.

The Public Hearing should be incorporated in the development plan of the municipality. Councillors can, through a municipal order, institute the hearing annually. The population leave largely satisfied (through the mood barometer) that they have cleared the air on some burning issues within their municipality while

Public Hearing at the Buea Council, April 6 2006

Theme: Management From the Heart

Participation 124 Male / 55Female (total 179)

Stakeholder Analysis:

- 41 from the Council (staff / councillors)
- 22 CSOs (NGOs / CIGs / Church / Private Sector)
- 21 Government services
- 16 village structures

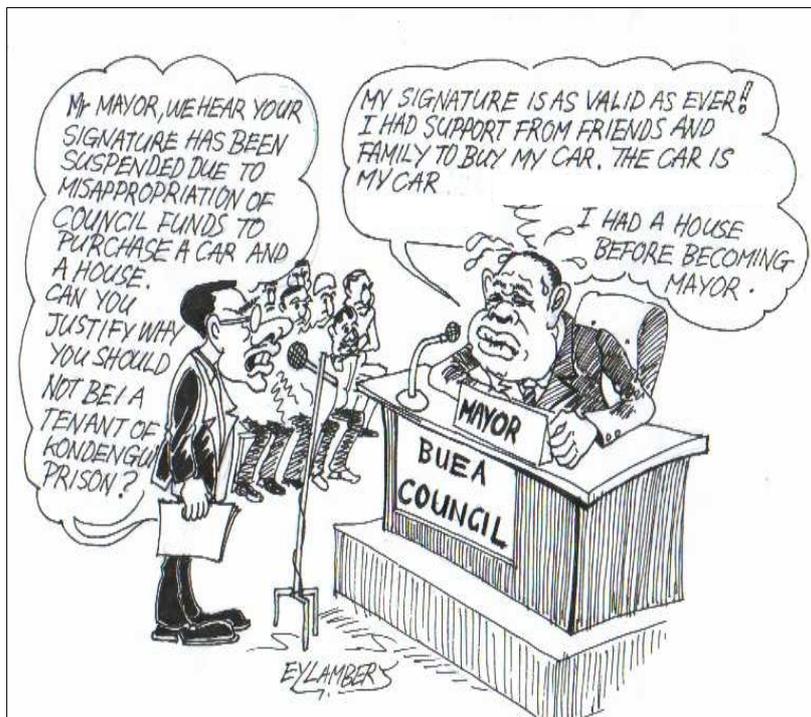
Contribution to discussion (26)

Questions related to impact areas:

- Education (2)
- Health (2)
- Water (2)
- Sanitation (3)
- Infrastructure [road, market, electricity, etc] (6)
- Spiritual (2)

Questions related to Governance:

- Accountability (5)
- Security (2)
- Participatory (1)
- Effectiveness (1)



Public Hearing at the Konye Council, 21 April 2006

Theme: Women & Decision Making; What Challenges to the Lady Mayor

- Participants: 102 Male/ 14 Female (total 116)
- Stakeholder Analysis: - Councils staff / elected (21)
 - Village structures (12)
 - CSOs [NGO, CIG Private sector others (74)
 - Government services (9)

Contribution to discussion: (13)

Questions related areas:

- Infrastructure (4)
- Health (2)
- Education (1)

Questions related to Governance issues: -

- Accountability (3)
- Participatory (1)

Key Question:

Why are Council agents using guns to control stray animals?



Public Hearing at the Mamfe Council, 28 April 2006

Theme: Networking in Mamfe Council Management



- Participation: 110 Male/ 36 Female (total 146)
- Stakeholders Analysis: - Village structures (10)
 - Council [Staff / elected] (14)
 - Government Services (8)
 - CSOs [NGOs and Private Sectors] (114)

Contribution to discussion: (25)

Questions related to impacted areas:

- Education (3)
- Infrastructure (6)
- Others (4)
- Economic (5)

Question related to Governance issues:

- Equity (2)
- Accountability (4)
- Participatory (1)

Key Question:

Where has the Mayor secured money to build such a magnificent structure in down town Mamfe?

HELP OUT drills Penitentiary Personnel on the Reformation and Moralisation of Prison Inmates/Detainees

Education and training on the protection, respect and promotion of human rights keep advancing from day to day in the international, regional, national and local forums. It touches on various entities viz: minorities, women, religious groups, races, refugees, children, immigrants, detainees, juvenile offenders etc etc.

These entities are all regarded to be equally important and therefore must enjoy basic rights born with or apportioned them by the law.

It is with regards to this that HELP OUT - a Buea-based independent, non-profit, non-partisan and non-governmental organization headed by Mr. **Clarkson Obasi**, stretched forth its activities to the promotion and protection of the rights of prison inmates and detainees. For three days - April 18 to 20 2006 - HELP OUT gathered learned resource persons from diverse but related fields to drill the penitentiary personnel of the Buea Central, Upper Farms, Bavenga Prisons and some personnel of National School of Penitentiary Administration (ENAP), Buea on their role in the reformation and moralization of prison inmates. The session held at the school's premises and was funded by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA), Dakar, Senegal through its "Project to Create More Open Societies in the South West Province, Cameroon (PCMODS-SWP)".

Chaired by The Provincial Delegate of Penitentiary Administration, Mr. **Elangwe Bokwe**, the supreme goal of this workshop was to enable prison officers integrate human rights principles into their daily activities in conformity with existing legal provisions designed to protect prisoners' rights. With this goal came the accompanying objectives.

A series of very important and timely topics were carefully chosen by HELP OUT and meticulously handled by resource persons drawn from the Judiciary (the bench and the bar), medical profession, civil society etc. Worthy of note was the bilingual selection made by the organization which adequately reached out to the bilingual orientation of the penitentiary service.

Topics treated included amongst others:

- The International, Regional and National Legal Instruments on the treatment of prisoners;
- The Personnel Stress Management;
- The Protection of the Rights of Detainees under the African Charter on Human and People's Rights;
- The functioning of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms;
- The New Criminal Procedure Code and the defence of Human Rights;
- The Role of Civil Society Organisations in the Reformation and Moralisation of Prison Inmates.

As the first speaker, Barrister **Eta-Besong Junior**, a legal practitioner of renown in Buea, made a brilliant and careful incision and exposition of the **United Nations Stan-**



Penitentiary Personnel were called upon to respect prisoners' rights

dard Minimum Rules (SMR) for the Treatment of Prisoners adopted in August 30, 1955. In his paper, the learned Barrister expounded on various issues like: the situation of sentenced persons, insane and mentally abnormal persons, persons awaiting trial, the necessity for registers, non discrimination of its applicability, the Rules' subjection to local exigencies, inter alia. While the Rules elaborate on the rights and conditions of detainees, it balances with providing for necessary and reasonable discipline and punishment. He concluded with a note on the Rules' calling for Prison Administrators to have specialized and adequate training.

Mrs. **Mary Forju**, Superintendent of Buea Central Prison, presented an elaborate paper on **Stress Management**.

At the regional/continental level, the rights of detainees is also an issue under consideration, protection and promotion. In relation to this therefore the topic, **The Protection of the Rights of Detainees Under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights** (ACHPR) was rightfully allotted to Mr. **George Njukeng**, the learned State Counsel for the Limbe Legal Department. This honourable resource person carefully introduced the Charter with relevant provisions thereto.

He also considered the setbacks of the Charter - like the absence of social security and trade unions. The learned State Counsel necessarily alluded and extended to the domestic Law N° 92/052 of 1992 on the Penitentiary System in Cameroon, which enshrines inter-alia, the freedom of worship and expression, the right to security and safety, freedom of conscience. This law also makes provision for the safekeeping of prisoners' property, the right to recreational activities and others. The presentation did not terminate without hitting on and balancing on the Law's provision on the status (rights) of warders.

Coming all the way from Yaounde, the learned Barrister Mrs **Bertha Sume Eyoh**, who doubled as a member of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF). She presented a timely exposition of the functioning of the NCHRF and how this 16 years old

institution can intervene to facilitate redress in cases of violations of the rights of prisoners/detainees.

The Buea-based Barrister **Eno-Charles AGBOR** in a topic that he coined as "The New Criminal Procedure Code and the Defence of Human Rights" incised some portions of the Code to highlight reasonable, plausible novelties to enhance the rights of all, especially, especially those before the Lord. He noted this Code, that will go into force on August 1, 2006 has modifications from the hitherto Nigerian Criminal Procedure Ordinance and Cameroon Code d'Instruction Criminelle) on the areas of detention, Preliminary inquiry, examination of witnesses, bail, etc. A careful perusal of the provisions relevant thereto would reveal an enhancement of human rights in general. He however concluded by cautioning that the Code should not be considered by offenders as 'a Freedom Charter'.

Finally, the role of Civil Society Organisations in the education and rehabilitation of prisoners was handled by Mr. **Balinga Michael** of FOREP (Forest Resources and People), a Limbe-based prominent CSO. He described why prisoners need rehabilitation and suggested 'how' to do it and stressed on the ways in which CSOs can contribute to this worthwhile venture. As example, he cited sensitization (of the laws, crimes, job opportunities), lobbying, funding, training, advocacy, information and education. Other resource persons included Mr. **Banoho Mbime Lazare** (Deputy Director of ENAP) and Dr. **Ndi Norbert** (Medical Officer Buea Central Prison).

A Question and Answer session ended the workshop. The trainers took time to address particular issues raised by participants. Besides members of the penitentiary administration, the session also saw the participation of members of the public and other partner CSOs like the Global Network for Good Governance Limbe, AHURTOD etc.

Participants, especially top penitentiary personnel, wished such training could come up frequently. Closing remarks was followed by the issue of Certificates of Participation.

By Wung Raymond Wung
Correspondent THE BELL



Consultative Workshop for Women Human Rights Defenders

Baptist Center, Bamenda, 19-20 April 2006

Human Rights Defenders (HRD) are often the target of harassment because of their work defending other people's rights. There have been cases throughout Cameroon of violence against Human Rights Defenders by authorities, both state and non-state. Many Human Rights Defenders have had to overcome many obstacles to ensure the success of their work. But there is an added element of danger and attention for Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD). Who will protect the rights of those fighting for the rights of others, especially women? This was the topic of a three day consultative workshop in Bamenda where about 30 WHRD gathered to share experiences and constructively brainstorm methods of change. The workshop, held at the Baptist Center, was run by the **Global Education and Environment Development Foundation (GEED)**, and facilitated by Ms. Tilder Kum-ichii Ndichia.

Among the participants was Ms. Abong Judith Ngwey, the Provincial Delegate of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family in the NorthWest Province. The delegate opened the workshop by stating how happy she was that WHRD were able to come together to share experiences. She told the participants that the women's place was never solely the house, women have always worked on farms and sold at markets, yet we see little about women's welfare in the public sphere. She also warned that a culture of impunity exists for those who are violent against women. This adds extra trouble for WHRD.

Ms. Tilder explained the objectives of the workshop and introduced the participants to the International Women Human Rights Defenders' Campaign. The objectives of the consultative workshop were to introduce this campaign, discuss gender based violations of HRD, possible strategies to defend WHRD, and to present a way forward to prevent violence against WHRD in the future.

The International Campaign calls for the recognition and protection of WHRD and resistance to state violence. A key line of HRD builds on the framework of state accountability as provided for in International Human Rights Law. It also calls for non state actors to be held responsible for violations against women. For example, family members and the community need to be accountable for negative stereotypes, harmful cultural practices and domestic violence. Lastly, the campaign hopes to realize Human Rights for everyone.

Mr. Chongsi Joseph, President of the Union of HRD North West Province, presented some of the International Human Rights Conventions and Treaties already in place. Mr. Chongsi stressed the importance of the International Covenant on Civil and Political



Participants at the Consultative Workshop

and Economic, Cultural and Social Rights. He also outlined the Convention on The Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, stressing Resolution 13-25, of which Cameroon is a signatory, which states that women must be involved in decision-making activities.

Justice Mrs Awasum Florence, a Judge at the Court of First Instance Batibo, NW Province continued the workshop with a lively, dynamic discussion regarding WHRD. She began by reminding us that first and foremost Human Rights Defenders must be peaceful, they can never meet violence with violence. She then opened the floor for the participants to share stories about their experiences as WHRD and the violations they have been dealt. The stories were wide ranging and large in number. The perpetrators of these violations ranged from the police to religious and traditional authorities to women's own family members.

The first day of the workshop ended with Justice Awasum giving suggestions for change and leaving the participants energized to take what they have learned to spread the teaching outside of the workshop.

Day two began with an informational lecture given by Mr. Ndi Nelson, Regional Secretary National Human Rights Commission, who experienced severe brutality for his work as a HRD a few years ago. He informed the participants that there was an International Declaration to protect them specifically; this is the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. This docu-

ment not only protects HRD, but also gives them the duty to continue their work.

The day continued with group work, participants were asked to come up with suggestions to effectively enforce changes to prevent violations against WHRD. Some of the suggestions were as follows: be educated, when one knows their rights it is difficult for them to be broken; educate others, if stereotypes about women can be overcome, WHRD will be better protected and respected; communicate well with authorities, be sure they know what the intentions are; respect traditional authorities and customs, but ask for constructive change when the practices are harmful; use the media for sensitization, but work together so the message is not misconstrued. Most importantly change should come from the government through legislation. Women must be more protected under the law and that law must be obeyed.

The workshop ended with participants realizing the dire need for a network of WHRD. Change will only come if there is a dedicated group pushing for it. To this end, individual organizations were chosen to represent their areas of Cameroon and by July the GEED Foundation hopes to have established a working network. Three NGOs from the South West were represented at the workshop; Reach Out, Help Out, and Nkong Hill Top.

The workshop was closed, as it was opened, by the Provincial Delegate for Women's Empowerment and the Family. She showered the GEED Foundation with gratitude for organizing the workshop. She urged the participants to go out with this new knowledge and make a change, she asked that the discussion not there, but for it to continue into the participants' own NGOs and work environments. The workshop was closed at 5:30.



*By Saskia Lenaerts
HELP OUT Volunteer
From Wisconsin, USA*

The Project to Create More Open Democratic Societies in the South West Province

Impacting on Communities through the Media

NEWS BRIEFS

As direct fallout from the workshop for Media Practitioners and Development Communicators on citizen-centered reporting, Mr. Larry Esong (a participant) of Ocean City Radio (FM 84) Kumba has facilitated the creation and functioning of a 30 minutes weekly program on municipal development. The radio program is jointly coordinated by the Kumba Urban Council, Ocean City Radio and MUDEC Group.

Christian Broadcasting Service (CBS) Radio FM 98.5 Buea, recently aired programs on Civic Education anchored by George Mofor and Miss Oghai Abungwo. CBS Radio emphasises on governance issues as relating to the daily life of citizens. CBS Radio is the media arm of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

A few Mayors in the SWP, NWP, East and South Provinces have indicated their desire to organize Public Hearings. The Public Hearing that took place in Mbengwi Council, later in Belo Council and propagated in the South West Province (within the frame work of the PCMODS-SWP) has attracted interest and is impacting on several other Mayors in the South West, North West, East and South Provinces. Local governance issues are taking center stage.

STV broadcast images of Penitentiary Officials of 3 South West based Prisons discussing the rights of prisoners. A brief interview with Mrs. Eyoh (Member of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms) was given national attention. STV also gave national exposure to Development Communicators and Media Practitioners workshop on the raison d'être of people-centered reporting. STV is a privately-owned Television Station Mr. Teboh Shadrack is the anchor for the South West Province

The South West Provincial Station of the Cameroon Radio Television in Buea uses the Civic Education Manuals to sensitize listeners on the rights/obligations of citizens. According to Miss Clarisse Achu (CRTV journalist), the tips on civic education found in the manual is an eye opener for many Cameroonians.

Mount Cameroon FM 102, based at the foot of Mount Cameroon and reaching 8 out of 10 provinces in Cameroon reports on the activities of the PCMODS-SWP.

Station Manager - Mr. Jomo Kevin is particularly keen about issues of governance and human rights

"the radio (MCFM) will collaborate with the project"

Jomo Kevin, Manager MCFM

Eden Radio/Newspaper sensitises the population on several activities executed within the framework of the PCMODS-SWP. Eden Radio is widely listened to in the seaside resort city of Limbe while Eden Newspaper covers the national territory.

Eden Executive Director, Mr. Zachee Nzoh-Ngandembou believes that the ideals of the PCMODS-SWP should be widely disseminated.

The Rural Radio in Mamfe (Voice of Manyu) has embarked on a campaign to educate the population in their rights and obligations. The radio station covers a wide area of the northern part of the South West Province. According to Mr. Ayuk Richard Agbor, the Chief of Programs (participant at the media workshop) the radio has an obligation to inform the population on government actions, government instruments and the activities of civil society organizations.

Konye Mayor uses CRTV radio program: *Women to Women* to make her case for a Public Hearing. On Thursday 20th April 2006 from 6-7 pm Mme Eshie Ngoh, Mayor of the Konye Municipality and Mme Bertha Ndoh, Special Adviser in the Prime Minister's office made news as they presented the Konye Public Hearing. The CRTV Radio program was anchored by Mrs. Becky Ndivé. This was the first time a Lady Mayor accepted to face the population. The Public Hearing was organized by MUDEC Group and sponsored by OSIWA -Dakar.

Lakeside Radio in Kumba turns on the light!!
Civic Education on Lakeside Radio.

Says Alene Menget, Station Manager

Letters to the Editor

Sir,
The Project to Create More Open and Democratic Societies in the South West Province is a welcome initiative. Many people residing in the rural areas have no copies of the Manual and of THE BELL. These are very educative documents distributed only to a selected few?

Mrs Iya Charlotte
Ekondo Titi

We are encouraged by your words of appreciation and share your worry for the short supply of The Manual and THE BELL. We will consider increasing the print run in the near future with the approval of our donors, OSIWA Dakar, Senegal.

Sir,
FIDA Cameroon has provoked our thinking on our political rights as women. We have received training manuals on women political rights and have developed strategies for our local realities. How will the Project support our action plans?

Mrs. Doris Ngalame
Deputy Mayor - Bangem

For now, our coalition can only provide technical advice on request, while searching for the resources to support some of your action plans, provided they fall in line with the goals of the Project. FIDA's formidable team of resource persons certainly appreciates your growing interest in women's political rights.

Sir,
THE BELL is rich, hot and well packaged. How can we receive copies regularly?

George Mpe Ango
Buea

Contact MUDEC Group Office, Campaign Street, Great Soppo Buea or send to us your e-mail address so that we can regularly forward soft editions of THE BELL.

Sir,
Why is it that only six (06) secondary schools in Fako Division benefit from your project to create Human Rights Clubs? Open Societies are needed in all the schools within the Province.

Concerned in Lebialem

This is just a beginning because we intend in future to extend this activity to schools throughout the Province as soon as we get the resources.

Sir,
From the Public Hearings, we learn that officials must render accounts. We want the Coordinator of the PCMODS to give an account of the Project's budget in the newspaper.

CC in Buea

At the end of the project a summary of the report will be sent to the donor — OSIWA.

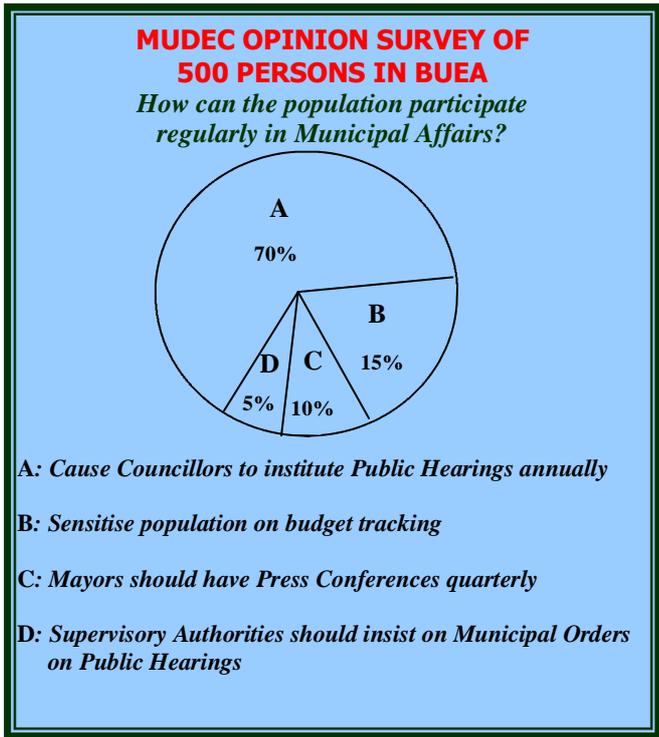
Sir,
My name is Mofa Godwin. I am a Superintendent of Prisons - Buea Central Prison.
Inmates want only one thing: their freedom/liberty. How will the respect of their rights help them?

The respect for prisoners' rights will enhance their moralisation and reformation process, so that once free they too will respect the rights of other fellow citizens and live respectable lives.

Sir,
In the Prison domain, I suggest that Help Out supports us in reinforcing discipline in Prisons while reinforcing the respect of human rights in Prisons.

Jean Pierre Eloundou
Buea Central Prison

This should be a collective responsibility - HELP OUT & Prison Personnel. Let's have a Roundtable.





THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE PROMOTION OF FOREST PRODUCTS

By Mrs. Gwendoline E. Burnley
Bimbia-Bonadikombo Forest Management Council
Limbe

In Cameroon, as in many other developing countries, people at the grassroots, especially women, are unaware of the majority of the debates on "the changing environment". It is postulated that there are direct links between poverty and environmental degradation. Recent field experiences show that alternate means of making a livelihood can save the environment from resource over-exploitation and degradation, especially when alternative income-generating activities are aimed primarily at women. This paper discusses some of the projects undertaken by women in Southwest (SW) Province, Cameroon, both on an individual basis and in groups aimed at protecting the environment and improving their socio-economic situation, as well as gaining time for leisure and increased training opportunities. Some preliminary results are presented, highlighting some of the successes and associated problems.

1. INTRODUCTION

In Cameroon, poverty and hardship, following changes in foreign trade balances deepened in the early 1990s with the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994 bringing further economic difficulties. This "economic crisis" caused mass redundancy in the public and private sectors, dismissals, salary cuts, early retirement and freezing of assets, arrears and debts owed to people, particularly civil servants. Many people turned to farming to sustain their families and consequently there has been significant urban to rural migration. As forests have been cleared for subsistence agriculture, the availability of products from the original forest such as firewood, forest fruits, vegetables, leaves for wrapping, nuts, seeds, spices, medicines, stimulants or craft materials has been reduced. In addition, organised, yet illegal, fuelwood merchants have destroyed private farms and forest reserves in public lands often felling trees, including fruit and coffee trees to supply the market for fuelwood which sold at increasing prices because of the high demand. Large trucks with firewood towering high in tottering vehicles have become a common feature of our towns and cities.

To halt this fast-deteriorating situation, a new Forestry Law was passed in Cameroon in 1994 to define measures to be taken to ensure the wise management of forestry resources. The new measures call for the equitable sharing of benefits, the sustainable and viable use of resources, the enhancement of effective popular participation and the need for more effective partnerships to surmount environmental difficulties. In particular, the new legislation has targeted women as playing an important role in forest conservation and rural development initiatives.

2. ORGANISATION

Women's groups began timidly in colonial days and, although becoming stagnant in the 1970s and 1980s, have gained more grounds in terms of numbers, intensity of activities and political importance in recent years. Growing interest in women's active role in development in the last few years culminated in a massive participation and contribution of Cameroon women at Dakar, 1994, and at the Beijing Conference in 1995.

There are many international NGOs with a strong presence in Cameroon, such as the Associated Country Women of the World, International Council of Women, the International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Soroptimist International, the Association for Creative Teaching which was succeeded by Business Enterprise Development (ACT/BEDO). There is also a plethora of local community-based organisations, common initiative groups and co-operatives. Many of these groups are involved in environmental activities linking the desire for forest conservation with the need to support the family unit from forest-based activities.

3. WOMEN AND THE CULTIVATION OF FOREST PRODUCTS

The cultivation of fuelwood trees and other forest products by women seemed to be a practical way to help solve one aspect of the environmental destruction by reducing the pressure on the harvesting of wild stocks whilst providing substantial benefits to the family or group concerned. Involving women in large numbers in the cultivation and distribution of a wide variety of forest products seemed to make sense because women constituted the vast majority of both farmers and end-users of many of the products concerned.

3.1 FUELWOOD

Fish, especially dried fish, a local staple in many parts of Cameroon, has become very expensive because firewood and charcoal are becoming rather scarce and difficult to obtain. Women often have to travel far into the hills to collect twigs or wait for the firewood dealers, illegal timber merchants, to bring the overloaded vehicles with their merchandise. Many women's groups identified the need and desire to cultivate fast-growing fuelwood species on their farms. To address this need, a joint Limbe Botanic Garden and Women in Development/Business Environment Development initiative began in 1994 with funding from Africa 2000 and, more recently, the Rainforest Alliance.

The project began with the selection and construction of a permanent nursery. Once this was established, suitable species were selected, seed material for propagation was obtained and many thousands of seedlings were raised. Technical training for extension workers and other interest groups as well as advice on planting and care preceded the distribution of the seedlings to a wide range of women's groups, often in demonstration workshops. The extent of planting and preliminary results are discussed below. In addition to the distribution of seedlings, improved wood stoves have also been introduced to ensure fuel wood economy by both domestic and commercial users.

3.2. MEDICINAL PLANTS, STIMULANTS AND SPICES

Many forest products which were once cheaply obtained in the market are becoming increasingly scarce and prohibitively expensive. It has long been proposed that many of these products can easily be cultivated in home gardens for both subsistence use and possible sale. In a series of workshops, a wide range of forest products were introduced to many women's groups during excursions to the Botanic Gardens, where they could see for themselves the possibility of cultivating many of the plants that they knew well from the forest. This was especially the case with medicinal plants, notably those species of a "general" nature, stimulants such as kolanuts and a number of forest spices, many of which are integral to Cameroonian cuisine. This has led to a visible increase in the expanding of many kitchen gardens and compound

farms, both in terms of size and diversity. Many of the women involved in this activity state that the benefits include a drop in health care expenditure as more traditional home remedies are available. In addition, the high value of many medicinal plants, local spices and kolanuts mean that a surplus beyond immediate home consumption provides a significant income to the household and many of these products are prepared, packaged and sold in local shops or market stalls.

A number of medicinal and spice tree crops, including *Prunus Africana*, have also been successfully introduced into capital extensive cultivation systems managed by women's groups. This is an indication that many of the co-operatives are concerned with the long-term benefits of cultivation as well as immediate profits.

3.3 FRUIT TREES

A number of high-value and high-yielding fruit trees have been propagated as part of this programme and distributed to many women's groups and individuals. Species such as bush mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*) and bush plum (*Dacryodes edulis*) are extremely popular and provide potential for income generation through the sale of surplus fruits after harvesting.

3.4 ERU (GNETUM AFRICANUM)

Fufu and eru is popular throughout Cameroon and is an important component of the national cuisine. Demand for eru has reached the point that it is now being exported to neighbouring countries like Nigeria and, from there, further afield to Europe and north America. The leaves of eru fetch very high prices and the high demand has increased pressure on this non timber forest product which is fast becoming locally extinct in many areas. Cultivation trials have proved very successful. Eru as a fast growing climber using the planted trees as support, provides another valuable component to the tree-planting programme.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In many villages, women have difficulty owning land. The planting of trees on farmland is a traditional claim to ownership for many cultural groups and this programme, through encouraging women in planting trees, has also allowed them to own land for the first time.

In addition to problems of tenure, to improve the programme we need to:

- encourage backyard/kitchen gardens and small tree plantations of NWFP;
- encourage cultivation of marshes, riverbanks and fringes of villages;
- Use easily managed multipurpose tree-seedlings known to villages for fuel and other uses rather than exotic species, beginning with fast growing species for quick financial returns.