



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)



OSIWA

October 2006

Rural Women Day in the KONYE Municipality

Address Presented by Mrs. Titi Woloa Monono during the Celebration of the International Rural Women's Day, 15 October 2006

The Divisional Officer, Konye
Our Mami Mayor, Konye Council
Traditional Chiefs
Heads of Services
Gentlemen
Wo -man -eh!

It is for me a special gratitude to the women of Konye sub-division, for this wonderful opportunity given to me to present this address on this special day of the celebration of the international Rural Women's day 2006.

To refresh your memories, the institution of this day, eleven years ago was aimed at highlighting rural women's contribution which are not often recognized throughout the world and also to identify the obstacles and to carry out reflections aimed at taking actions to remove the obstacle hindering the development of rural Women.

As you must have heard, the world is celebrating this day today under the theme: Rural Women, Leaders of tomorrow." It means that, the International community has recognized that the question of leadership has been denied or not very much extended to our rural women that is, we the rural women.

Wo-man-eh!

The question, we should be asking ourselves today in order to fight this hindrance is, what are those factors that prevent us from becoming leaders? Some of the factors include:-

1. Our tradition and cultures, for a very long time now has made the woman to believe that once she is married, she can not execute top political jobs like being a Mayor, Parliamentarian, Minister or even the President of the Republic.

2. Many of our rural women have been made to believe that the work of tak-



Young Rural Woman facing the Challenge

ing care of the children and managing the house, taking care of the sick and elderly person are jobs reserved only to the women, and not the man. Such believes gives the women little time to devote herself to the pursuit of political post.

3. Many women are also not well educated because mothers still support fathers in believing that the education of the boy child is more important than that of the girl child. This at the end lives the women into the political direction of the men who most often reserve them the post of hand clappers, animators in political rallies to entertain the male audience.

4. It is observed that the few women who care to take leadership positions hardly succeed because they are poor or have depend on their husbands or male colleagues for financial who hardly prepared to assist.

5. The most disturbing reason for women's inability to be leader comes from women themselves. It has been realized that when a woman is in a position of leadership, the number one advocate for her to be removed or voted

out is another woman. Likewise, when a woman is in high position, she now adopts the *Mami Fowl's Syndrome* by which she wants to be the only woman amongst the men in high places. Consequently, she does not groom other to lace or even compete with her. Through her actions, she scares other women away.

**The Divisional Officer, Konye
The Mayor Konye Council,
Dear Women of Konye,**

I have attempted to identify some of the obstacles which hinder the women from becoming a leader of tomorrow. a day like this is to reflect on such obstacles. We should search ourselves and see what as individuals, as a community of people or as a Government; we can do to remove the above obstacles. It is only when they are removed then can we say with certainty that our rural women can be leaders of tomorrow.

**Long live Konye Sub-Division
Long live International Solidarity,
for Women,
Long live Cameroon and its illustrious
First Lady, Madam Chantal Biya**

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 organizations 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



George Soros extends support to Africa

negative consequences of globalization, OSI seeks to foster global open society by increasing collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, 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 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 foundation, governments and donors.

OSIWA further recognizes the



Abdul Tejan Cole
Chair of OSIWA's Board of Directors



Mrs. Nana Tanko
Executive Director, OSIWA

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, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, 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

Dear Reader,

The International Rural Woman's Day was celebrated on October 15 2006 around the South West Province. Our attention was focused on celebrations in the municipality of Konye where a memorable speech was delivered by Mrs Titi Woloo Monono.

According to the Cameroon Association for Rural and Community Radios (CARCOR), 65% of the female population of Cameroon live in the rural area. The woman in the rural area remains a slave to the husband, the children, the urban woman and the youth. She performs the menial jobs in the house and farm with little rewards. Her point of view is hardly ever taken into consideration. She has no opinion and the man is her LORD and MASTER. The urban woman takes advantage over the rural woman's ignorance, innocence and illiteracy to organize celebra-

tions using the rural woman's contributions. Strangely, the latter is never invited to the galas organized at the end of these celebrations organized in her honour.

While HELP OUT visited the Prison in Buea to identify opportunities for human rights education, the Global Network For Good Governance (GNGG) was visiting NGOs in Canada to lobby for more funding of human rights education, democracy and good governance programmes in Cameroon.

In this edition, the Partners for Productivity Foundation gives conclusions on the social cost of restructuring and recession in Cameroon. Finally, a reader resident in New Town Limbe advises you, Dear Reader, to divorce from ALCOHOL that is responsible for unhappiness. Will you?

George Mbella



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The Daily Life of a Typical Cameroonian Woman

Cameroon is often referred to as Africa in miniature, because of her great ethnic, geographic and ecological diversity. The country to the north-west and south is very beautiful, volcanic peaks covered by forest right up to over 2000m (6500ft) with waterfalls and villages scattered over the lower slopes. Cameroon's economic capital is 24km from the sea and dominated by Mount Cameroon, West Africa's highest mountain (4095m/14,435ft). The north offers opportunities for viewing antelope, monkey and warthog. The official languages include, French and English, together with over 216 mother tongues. She has a combination of varied geographic set ups and temperatures.

With a population of approximately 16.5 million inhabitants, 51% of this is composed of women and 49% men. From this figure, 65% of the female population lives in the rural area.

WHO IS A TYPICAL CAMEROONIAN WOMAN?

With an estimated population of 16.5 million inhabitants (2003), Cameroon's population is dominated by women. Occupying 51% of the population, the rural woman on the other side, makes up 65% of the female population. This therefore implies that the rural woman is the typical Cameroonian woman; she makes up a higher percentage of the population, experiences the typical African life, goes through the experiences that her great grand parents went through and faces the reality of African basic life. From this statistics, it could be said that a typical Cameroonian rural woman is a true representation of the African woman. The woman we are going to discuss about is therefore the RURAL WOMAN.

THE PEOPLE

The African man or woman is imbued with a lot of energy and intelli-



The old Rural Woman still harvests from her farm to feed her large family

gence. These abilities and qualities have to be put into proper use. As an ordinary human being, he or she has just the normal 24 hour day, a pair of legs, eyes and hands, together with one brain, stomach, head and so on. The woman is always considered in Africa as the weaker sex. If this assertion is however true, she should have a lesser workload each day. In the rural setting, life takes a very interesting twist; more man-hours are spent in the farms; forms of distraction include, consumption of alcoholic drinks (mostly by the men), narration of folktales, moonlight dances, communal gatherings and sex. Considering the fact that there are virtually no roads, no electricity, Internet, television, telephone and pipe-borne water, the people have conditioned their lives to suit their environment.

LIFESTYLE-WOMAN

The Cameroonian rural woman is very hardworking; she works from daybreak to day dawn. She is engaged in the cultivation of food crops for home consumption and the local market, childbearing and upkeep, house

keeping, etc. She is a very loving and caring wife and mother.

Sex plays a very primordial role (form of distraction) in the rural community; the activities of a couple at night are strictly hooked to sex. Considering the fact that it is also a very important form of relaxation, it is expected that the couple should actually be very exhausted by the time they get up from bed in the morning.

The woman gets up as early as 5 a.m. (while the man is in bed). Immediately, she begins with the preparation of food for the family. This involves the use of fuel wood, stones and a bush lamp. Shortly after, she has to take care of the basic needs of her family. This is to enable them be ready for school and work. When these assignments have been accomplished, she serves the food to the family and gets ready for the farm.

Usually, it takes a minimum of an hour of continuous trekking for someone to arrive the farm. The woman carries on her head, a basket full of seeds, food and other necessities for the baby, a hoe, food etc. In

Turn to Page 4

The Daily Life of a Typical Cameroonian Woman

Cont'd from Page 3

order to enable the woman to have a comfortable stay in the farm, she has to carry enough food, and clothing for the child, who is closely tied to her back. It is commonplace to have women trek to the farm in groups. This is a very important form of socialization.

In the farm, she places the baby in a loincloth or basket, begins her main assignments for the day. She cuts the grass with a cutlass, tills the soil with a hoe and harvests food for the day's consumption. She equally fetches fuel wood with the use of a cutlass, cuts the storms, and transports these things on her head, with the baby tied to her back. She then treks back home at about 4 p.m. for an hour or more with all the weight and stress. It should be noted here that the woman has so far had no minute activity from the time she goes to bed up to this moment; this is coupled with the disturbances from the child with her in the farm.

While in the house, she has to clean the compound, utensils and begins preparations for the afternoon meal. This includes the splitting of wood with an axe, cleaning of the food, thrashing, peeling and finally, cooking. After serving the food, she goes to the stream to fetch water, clean herself and clothes. This entails another one-hour trek to the stream. The woman however enjoys this particular activity very much because it is a unique occasion for her to communicate with other women and be able to empty her troubles and receive advice. She returns home on time in order to heat food for her family for the evening meal. After the meal, she spends time with the children, narrates and listens to folktales, participates in moonlight dances, stitches torn dresses and mentally preparing for her other assignments in the night and the next day. By 8 p.m. she returns to bed. It should be noted that after serving



Can Rural Women survive the Computer Age?

the husband with lunch, she is left on her own with the children. The children spend more of their time with their mother, assisting her in one form or the other.

THE MAN

The man goes to bed in a very relaxed and happy mode, ready to satisfy himself sexually. This is usually after a very good drinking spree in an off-license (beer parlour) with his friends, spends more time with the friends, listens to the Radio, and participates in various games. While in bed, he keeps himself emotionally and psychologically satisfied, has enough time to rest before daybreak. After his morning meal, he sharpens his cutlass and takes to the farm. He concentrates on the cleaning of his cash crop farms and returns home by 3 p.m. After his bath in the stream, returns home, sits down to eat to his fill. Sooner or later, he goes out to meet his friends and continue socializing.

ECONOMIC LIFESTYLE

Most rural communities rely on cash crops for survival; the man is the main person in charge of the farms. This does not imply that the woman and children are not involved. They assist the man in the cleaning, pruning and harvesting of these cash crops. The woman mostly takes care of the food crops. After the family must have had enough food crops, the re-

maining crops are sold in the local market. In areas where palm oil is produced in high quantities, the man climbs the trees, prunes and harvests them. The woman thrashes the nuts, boils and produces the oil. Later, she markets the oil palm and hands the money to the husband.

The man is the owner of all property, owns all the farms, crops, and wife (wives). At the end of the harvest season, (this comes up once in a year) the man sells all the cash crops and has total ownership over the money. He gives money to the wife, as he deems necessary. The woman on the other hand, carries out some petit business; the profit earned is what she uses in buying basic necessities for the family and herself. Sometimes, the man collects the little earnings from the wife and uses for himself. At the end of the cash crop season, he does not give an account of his earnings to anybody but himself.

SOCIO-POLITICAL LIFE

The man could own as many concubines or wives as possible in the same village, can drink as much alcohol as possible. The children have very little contact and comfort from their father. His main job is to put the woman in the right way (heavy with a child). The upbringing of the children is in the hands of the woman. Usually, upon return to the house late in the night, he is "dead drunk" and the woman gets out of bed in order to give him food and solace. Later, he goes to the woman, in order to satisfy himself sexually. Whatever the emotional problems of the woman, that is not his concern.

In the evening period, the woman spends more of her time with the children, supervising their studies, communicating with them, taking part in moonlight dances, stitching dresses and telling folktales.

As far as socialization in the community is concern, her life hovers

The Daily Life of a Typical Cameroonian Woman

Cont'd from Page 4

around the house with her children, with other women in the community and her husband mostly in the night. She enjoys telling folktales to her children and taking part in moonlight dances.

In terms of decision taking, the man is the person who decides on what has to be done and when it has to be done and how it has to be done. He decides who has to attend school, what family decision has to be taken, so far as the household is concerned. If the man wants to be very modern, he seeks the opinion of the woman though on very rare occasions.

The urban woman on the other side takes advantage of the fact that the rural woman is ignorant, innocent, not very educated. She organizes workshops and celebrations without consulting her. The rural woman is only called upon to contribute money and take part in the celebrations. At the end of the day, the money collected is used for the organization of a gala. Here, she is not invited; rather, the urban woman attends it with her urban husband. The same thing happens with the youth who have to be pampered by the woman. The young boys sometimes have extra-marital relations with women whose husbands have failed to perform their manly duties. They therefore come in to fill the gap.

CONCLUSION

From this description of life in the rural area, it could be seen that the woman carries-out very strenuous assignments from daybreak to day dawn. She is the main source of income to the family, food for the family, she is in charge of the moral and psychological health of the family, but she is not given the opportunity to spend the money, her male counterpart on the other hand, performs fewer tasks, takes decisions for the family, the woman is not authorized to have any extra marital links with a man. The situation of the rural woman in Camer-

oon is nothing different from that of other African and third world countries. A rural woman in Sumbe in Cameroon is in the same situation with one in Bobo Laso in Burkina Faso.

It could be concluded without any doubt that the woman in the rural area is a slave to the husband, the children, the urban woman and the youth. She conducts all the menial jobs in the house and farm but her reward is very demotivating. Her point of view is hardly or never taken into consideration- she has no opinion. The man is the LORD and MASTER

It could therefore be said without any iota of doubt that the situation of the rural woman in Cameroon and Africa is one that is very inhumane, violates many norms of human and people's rights, calls for much empathy, pathos and sympathy. The international community cannot sit and watch such dehumanizing activities continue, it is time for action to be taken.

RECOMMENDATIONS

A number of steps have to be taken to alleviate and empower the typical Cameroonian and third world woman:

- Education and sensitization programmes should be organized at different levels to properly enlighten the Men and Women, the Youth, Traditional and Government authorities on basic human and peoples right; the duties of each member of the community and the limitations of those rights.
- Non-Governmental Organizations such as CARCOR (Cameroon Association for Rural and Community Radio) could be incorporated to conduct such sensitization programmes through the media and seminars and conferences in the rural communities.
- Women's organizations working with rural communities should actively be involved in such programmes.
- The international community should

stand up with a single voice and talk against such practices.

- Measures should be taken to empower the women the rural and urban woman.
- The school community should take the responsibility and incorporate such activities in her curriculum.
- Human rights and gender-based organizations should campaign for necessary funds to alleviate the existing situation.

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HELP OUT Visits The Buea Central Prison



Prison Inmates Need Human Rights Sensitisation Campaigns

On Monday 2nd October, 2006, Clarkson Obasi, the Director of Help Out, and Lizzie Brown (Intern) visited the Buea Central Prison. They visited the section for young offenders and discussed with the boys the offences which each of them had committed. The boys were also asked if they had attended a trial in court and whether or not they had participated in school prior to their arrest. The responses were mixed. There were fourteen boys present in the young offenders com-

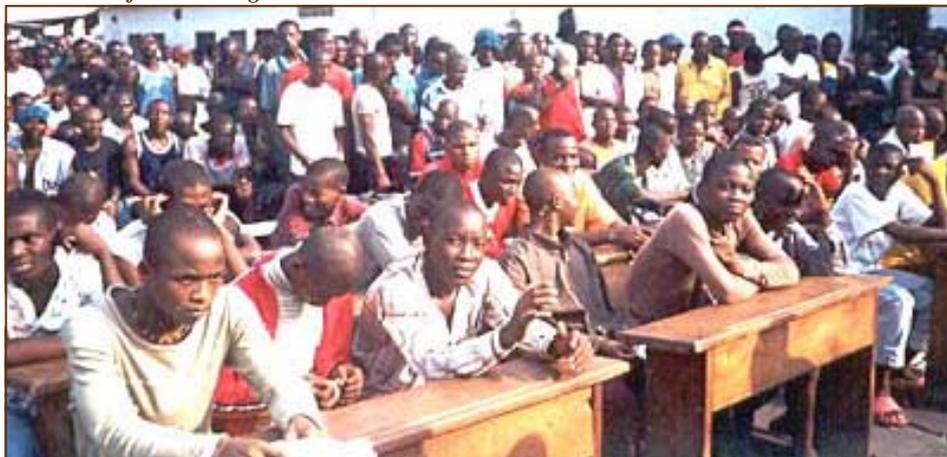


Members of Human Rights Clubs

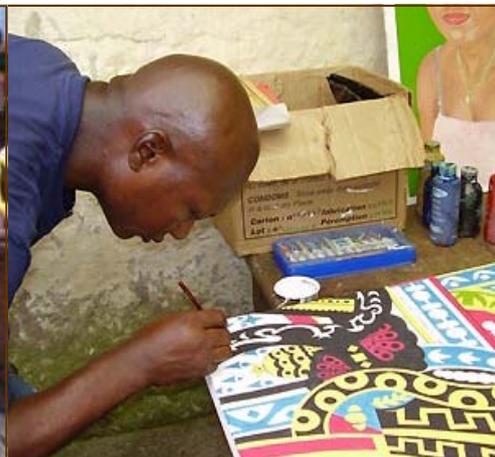
pound. The visit ended with the suggestion that the collaboration between Help Out and the Buea Central Prison should be intensified in order to promote Human Rights knowledge among the young offenders. This visit has to be seen in a larger context. In the nearer future, Help Out wants to stress the prison program in order to reinstall the lecture of English grammar, Bible studies and Human Rights. This initiative is organised in collaboration with the Human Rights Clubs of Baptist High School, Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Frankfils Comprehensive College, Bilingual Grammar School, Government

Secondary School, Bwiyuku - Tole, Inter Comprehensive High School and Borstal Institute. The exchange between the young offenders and the students should permit a better understanding between those living in liberty and those in prison. It is essential for the inmates to stay in contact with the world outside in order to facilitate their reintegration into the society once released. But it is also a part of the Human Rights Education for the secondary school students. In fact, every human being has his dignity that needs to be protected, no matter the circumstances.

By Ofé Valentine



HELP OUT targets young offenders for its campaigns



Prison Inmates should be allowed to perform Craftwork

GNGG Visits Canada

GNGG recently attended the 27th edition of the International Human Rights Training Programme hosted by the International Centre for Human Rights Education (formerly the Canadian Human Rights Foundation) in Montreal Canada.

More than three hundred delegates drawn from over fifty countries converged at Saint Anne de Bellevue, Montreal, to exchange experiences and best practices in the domain of human rights education.

GNGG was sponsored by a grant awarded by the Governance and Civil Society Fund of the Canadian Cooperation Support Office at the Canadian High Commission in Cameroon.

At the end of the one month course, GNGG's delegate Mukete Tahle Itoe, used the opportunity to open up contacts with some international organizations for support of GNGG's activities. Some of these organizations were the Canadian Executive Service Overseas (CESO), Grassroots International, the Minnesota Human Rights Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) amongst others.



GNGG's Mukete, Host Institute's Chris Bradley and Simon Awanchiri from Canadian Civil Society Fund

GNGG also met sister organizations operating in the domains of human rights education, good governance and anti-corruption in a bid to establish longlasting partnerships that will certainly strengthen global civil society activities, actions and performances. GNGG intends to put knowledge gathered from this visit towards enhancing its activities in Cameroon.



Delegate from Tarjiskistan and Mukete

By George Mbella



Participants exchange views after a workshop

The Social Cost of Restructuring and Recession in Cameroon

Stabilization and adjustment in Cameroon implied temporary hardship for many people, justified by the momentary need to correct the course of the economy and provide conditions for renewed growth. The peculiarity of this adjustment during the past two decades, however, has been that the economy has not promoted recovery in an attempt to deal with economic crisis through reversionary policy. Furthermore the radical free-market prescriptions of the 1980s encouraged a profound reorganization of the economy and society which of necessity have generated extremely high social costs. In 1987, the end of the oil boom and a series of natural and industrial disasters ushered in economic crisis and a massive devaluation of the CFA, Cameroon's currency. The 1990s brought political unrest in the form of strikes and protests against the increasingly corrupt and undemocratic regime (resulting in a crackdown on social and political freedoms), Unemployment in the formal sector has been much higher than at the outset of the debt crisis, although this problem had been resolved in part by generating many new jobs that are badly paid and insecure. Recent years have ushered in a host of new challenges, including a crumbling health system, growing rates of poverty and unemployment (48 percent of Cameroonians live below the poverty line, and 30 percent are unemployed). An overall prevalence of HIV/AIDS that reached an alarming 11 percent in 2003, with the majority of new HIV infections occurring among adolescents and 70 percent of reported cases were between the ages of 15 and 25. Maternal mortality ratio rose to 720 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

In this context, the case of stabilization and adjustment in the last decade has hardly been judged successful when viewed in social terms. Although the government is dealing effectively with the threat of economic instability, they remain mired in an intractable social crisis. The level of living of the majority of the Cameroonian population has declined markedly over the past decade. Per capita income during the early 1990s was lower than in 1980, and the average income of the poorest strata much lower. Minimum wages stood at half or less than half their former value.

Personnel cuts and declining wages in the early 1990s, and public services functioning erratically seriously affected the public sector. Attempts to ra-

tionalize general subsidies, so that they would represent less of a drain on the public budget, eliminated benefits in the fields of nutrition, transport, health and education which had been important in the livelihood strategies not only of the poorest, but also of the working and middle classes. The disappearance of subsidies, which supported production in certain vulnerable sectors of the economy, also created extended pockets of depression in Cameroon, given that her Labour Force is made up of 70% Agriculture, 13% industry and commerce, and 17% others.

As it became clear during the latter 1980s that there would not be a rapid recovery from recession and that the deteriorating social situation would engender serious political unrest, governments and international financial institutions began to experiment with new forms of targeted support for the most vulnerable groups in society. Emergency social funds, financed with the proceeds from privatizing state-owned industries and in others through foreign aid, were established to provide employment and support income-generating projects for those most in need.

Crises, Adjustment and Social Change in Cameroon

The fundamental socio-political problem faced by Cameroon is how to create a climate of stability and solidarity after decades of economic crisis. This is a far more complicated task than phrases like "restructuring" or "institutional reform" as suggested. Relations among people have been reordered in countless different ways by their experiences with crisis and adjustment, and the results are not always easy to explain.

Since relatively similar remedies have been applied, to a greater or lesser extent, in so many countries mired in recession and undergoing adjustment in the 1980s and early 1990s, the experiences of Cameroonians have in some sense been similar. Contraction of economic policy reduces opportunities for employment and access to income. At the same time, the central objective of the radical neo-liberal form of adjustment - to remove obstacles to market integration, both within and among countries - requires both deregulation and the systematic non protection of particular sectors of national economies and sections of local populations through policy shifts which also have relatively similar implications for many individuals.

This point can be illustrated by looking briefly at agriculture. Cameroon had traditionally controlled agriculture closely and heavily taxed export commodities, hence deregulation of markets has provided an incentive to agricultural production. But local farmers have not been able to gain from more direct participation in the market as a result of low capacity to obtain marketing and other services on more favourable conditions than those originally offered by the government.

The commercial agricultural sector of Cameroon has in fact been harshly affected by continuing economic recession and free-market reforms. While the developed countries notably France are talking about agricultural subsidies, the elimination of government subsidies to agriculture in Cameroon (manifested in support prices for marketing services and subsidized inputs) has meant that both large and small commercial farmers - producing for export or for the national market are confronted with rapidly rising costs. They have lost access to inputs and services essential for production. Rising costs have been offset in part by lowering wages paid to farm labourers. This has contributed to a depressing local market, in which both large and small traders find it harder to make a living. Declining remittances from family members in the cities further compounds recession in rural areas, which constitutes a significant element in the livelihood strategy of semi-subsistence and subsistence farmers.

An opening of Cameroon economy to foreign competition permits the government and private traders to supply net deficit and families with cheap imported food. The impact of these measures on farming is, however, devastating. It is obviously difficult for producers of basic foodstuffs in Cameroon to compete with imported products whose price in part reflects very large subsidies provided by Northern governments, the case of small livestock sector. Geographical remoteness or the breakdown of transport systems is still protecting local producers; but in general adjustment has expanded the boundaries of international markets in a way, which brings together farmers possessing highly unequal initial resources. Something similar occurs in industry. Radical neo-liberalism has used the tool of conditionality to weaken the protection of national industry and open local markets to international competition.

Cont'd From Page 8

To survive during this recession, and within the context of pressure from much more technologically advanced international competitors, businesses in adjustment have relied upon what is believed to be a competitive advantage: access to cheap labour. In this, they have been influenced by the tendency throughout the world economy to promote the flexible use of the workforce, renouncing when possible the obligation to provide formal employment benefits and avoiding collective bargaining. They have also been assisted by governments following specific adjustment-related guidelines to keep wages down.

The formal sector working class is therefore shrinking and working conditions within it are becoming more difficult. Under threat of unemployment and repression, many of the gains won in earlier periods by organized labour have been lost. Workers are now less likely than 10 or 20 years ago to have a say concerning the way production is structured within the factory or shop, and to be able to protect themselves from arbitrary changes in their status or remuneration.

Increasingly, the workforce includes women and young people pushed out of home and school by declining family income. The entry of new groups, often with little experience in the workplace, tends to push wages down and further weakens existing union organization. These less protected strata are particularly sought out by one of the few sectors of the economy which are currently growing, that is the labour-intensive assembly plants and agricultural processing establishments producing exports under contract to foreign buyers. A large number of people now attempting to make a living within the confines of Cameroon have turned to trade. Liberalization of trade creates extraordinary opportunities for exporters and importers, and especially for those who can operate on a large scale. At the same time, small-scale importation has gained central importance in the livelihood strategies of many middle class and poorer families, which respond to demand from their neighbours and friends for imported goods that are highly competitive with products produced at home. This can be seen in the number of hookers now found in our streets.

In the search for additional income, many households now count members within the informal sector, which has grown at a very rapid rate within the framework of adjustment. The process of diversification is occurring, as an established informal sector business feel pressure from new entrants. Members of the middle or working class families who turn to informal sec-

tor activities are often better educated and may dispose of more capital than traditional business men or women; and competition is forcing many already precarious enterprises to shut their doors or adopt harsher methods of exploiting unremunerated labour.

Developments within the public service sector are closely related to the rapid growth of informal or unregulated business activity. Reduction of government expenditure in Cameroon has been accomplished both through eliminating programmes and personnel lay off, and through keeping wages low. Sharply declining income has affected not only the livelihood strategy of civil servants but also the quality of their work. And cutbacks within such fields as public health and education have forced many people who formerly depended upon access to these services to look for alternatives within the private or informal sector. We have cases where these civil servants maintain their official jobs and do many private assignments in search of additional revenue to meet up with their standards of leaving resulting to inefficiency.

Issues and Options that might follow the adoption of a European union constitution, Cameroon and most Africa countries will be further indebted than they were 20 years ago with the increase in unemployment within member countries. A larger proportion of the population will be in poverty. The institutional framework for providing social support will, on the whole, be weaker. And the capacity of the government to ensure a stable environment for dialogue will be less.

Clearly, the particular form of adjustment in fashion for the past 15 years has not permitted the Cameroonian community to deal effectively with problems of indebtedness and recession. A radical free-market programme, rigidly linking balance-of-payments assistance to unprotection of national markets and reduction of the public sector, has not created the necessary conditions for most people in adjusting to have a better future. One reason for this lack of success may well be the failure to address the broader structural problems within the country's economy, which play a role in prolonging the crisis. Changes in the policy of the industrialized nations would be required to make adjustment in the Cameroon more successful. A new mechanism of debt relief can be found and how the system of international finance and trade be restructured to facilitate renewed development is particularly relevant to take a systemic view in the 1990s, as global economic integration advances rapidly.

In the attempt to develop new approaches to the problems of Cameroon, it is also important to

stereotypes. The most simplistic, and least useful, debate on economic reform involves contrasting public and private sectors, in a highly ideological fashion. This obscures the real problems of specific social and economic systems and interferes with the design of pragmatic solutions. Adjustment is not primarily a technical exercise. Technical expertise is an important element in designing policy reform and adjustment poses dilemmas, which can only be resolved politically. There are many ways to deal with any problem of imbalance in the economy, and each way implies a varying distribution of benefits and losses for people within the society in question.

In consequence, measures worked out through adequate consultation with affected populations are likely to be more effective than those that are imposed. Although this point would be judged when considering the design of economic reform in the industrialized North, it is sometimes forgotten in the Cameroonian context.

Since conditionality is the principal mechanism through which the will of the international financial and donor community can be imposed on Cameroon, it should be used with caution. Withholding international assistance unless certain conditions are met is necessary in many cases. But conditionality can cut off dialogue and impose policies which are both technically inadequate, as a result of local conditions and unfeasible politically condition. Creating effective mechanisms of response to economic crisis requires a degree of familiarity with real local situations that cannot be expected of foreign advisers. Therefore there should be a strong argument for reconsidering the role of international experts in designing adjustment policy, particularly when the role confers extraordinary powers.

In our analysis, improving the reform process is central to improving the likelihood that different groups of people, at various levels of the society, will find useful ways to put the crisis behind them. If there is one overriding lesson to be learned from the experience of the past two decades, surely it is that there is no single prescription that can be relied upon to solve the complex problems of development in Cameroon.

By Nzene Sylvester Enongene, PFPF

Partners For Productivity Foundation (PFPF)

Partners for Productivity Foundation (PFPF) is a local NGO operating within the Muanenguba massif of the Bakossi landscape, Cameroon. Created in 1997 with headquarters in Bangem (Kupe-Muanenguba Division), PFPF was officially registered in 1998 and went operational in 2001. With a staff capacity of 5 (3 semi permanent and 2 support staff), PFPF is the result of the fight against rural poverty (support to conservation-related livelihood initiatives) using a participatory approach. PFPF is working in partnership with the Ministry of Livestock, Agriculture and Rural Development, livestock, fishery and animal husbandry, Forest and wild life, Environment and Nature Protection, and WWF-Coastal Forests Programme (WWF-CFP).

PFPF's vision is 'Sustainable life for all', with the mission of realising a sustainable, healthy, and just society through poverty alleviation by championing innovations to rediscover the status and role of humans as creatures. Its goal is to sensitise and work with the rural communities in their self help activities by taking into consideration relevant social and ecological aspects to guarantee a sustainable development. By practically assisting the rural poor to improve on their livelihoods as a strategy to reduce poverty amongst the poor, and support the effective management of the natural resources, with focus on Mt. Muanenguba proposed integral ecological reserve and the Bakossi national Park. We promote lasting change for improvement by strengthening capacity for self-help, assisting to improve economic opportunity of the less privileged and influencing policy decisions at grassroots.

Efforts towards conserving the Bakossi Landscape

PFPF generally promotes local community engagement in various IGAs, through organized institutions, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), and committed individuals with natural resource management inclination. This approach is aimed at assisting communities around the Mt. Muanenguba forest to organize themselves into relevant institutions, which are then empowered through relevant technical and institutional capacity building, in order to profitably execute IGAs.

PFPF has therefore been supporting and promoting conservation agriculture, apiculture, livestock, organic and fish farming in the area, which are reflected on the ground through the promotion and development of oil palm farms that harbour palm



Nzene Sylvester Enongene, PFPF

oil mill, bee farms, fish ponds, livestock farms, Non Timber Forest Product domestication.

PFPF Achievements and successes

Gradually, PFPF's approach of promoting and strengthening 'group philosophy' is gaining grounds in the Mt. Muanenguba area; they have initiated and strengthened over 20 CBOs (12 that existed and 8 they initiated - Muanenguba Bee Farmers CIG and Mengoh Farmers CIG) involved in diverse initiatives; bee-keeping, organic farming, fish farming (a new development in the Bakossi landscape), livestock farming, and a palm oil processing mill. PFPF is developing a demonstration farm (which is becoming a veritable capacity building centre) where subscribed individual farmers and groups visit to learn better methods of farming in order to boost their production and improve on livelihood. Over 40 individual farmers, 20 CBOs, 30 households and 1000 people are affected directly and indirectly by the activities supported by PFPF. Today, more groups and individuals are involved in diverse projects contributing to an encouraging amount of locally produced fresh tomatoes, palm oil, honey, vegetables, plantain, are supplied and sold on a permanent basis especially in the Bangem central open market and a good number of households.

Apart from contributing to livelihood improvement, PFPF has helped in sensitizing 30 local communities around Mt. Muanenguba on the national wildlife laws in order to acquaint local people on the different wildlife species and aspects, enshrined in the law. They have also carried out the economic empowerment of women through project cycle management in the area and have been contributing hugely towards the domestication of non timber forest products (NTFPs), which have become rare in the area owing to deforestation, a result of rudimentary farming techniques (shifting cultivation and bush fires).

Strategic partnership and alliances

WWF-CFP has been working in partnership with PFPF since late 2002 towards promoting conservation and development initiatives in communities found within and around the Mt. Muanenguba forest. The significant contribution PFPF has been carrying out in the areas of poverty alleviation and conservation within the Muanenguba Massif constitute some of the causative factors that earned them recognition from WWF-CFP, Cameroon; hence partnership. Consequently, WWF-CFP contracted them to help sensitize over 20 local communities around the Mt. Muanenguba forest during the gazettement process of the Muanenguba forest in 2004. The success of the process is partly their enormous contribution. The Muanenguba Protected Area gazettement file has been forwarded to the Government of Cameroon for endorsement. Mt. Muanenguba has been proposed for an Integral Ecological Reserve; should this become real, the Government of Cameroon in no form would allow encroachment except on approval and hence drastically limiting the local people's livelihood avenues in the area.

PFPF is strengthening its involvement at grass-root level and maximizes its experience sharing and information dissemination through networks (SWECSO, NES, WICOF, etc.).

Hence in the long term allows it to build organizational capacity in areas where it currently has little expertise (e.g. SNV, ARI Japan and Ileap USA), avoid duplication and enhance financial efficiency and cost-effectiveness, and promote a genuine synergy between organisation with which we share a common vision, values, and purpose.

Perspectives

PFPF is therefore exploring better avenues to improve on its performance on the field through the establishment of a breeding unit for carp fish; a replacement of tilapia that is not thriving in the area. They equally intend to set up a processing unit for bee farming products at the head office in Bangem; also they wish to initiate the breeding of cane rats, which is gaining grounds in the Kupe site. Promoting the conservation of 5 sacred groves that are currently being degraded is another aspect of interest to PFPF.

Finally they hope to initiate farmers self help credit scheme and an ecotourism information centre in the Muanenguba area.

By Nzene Sylvester Enongene

ALCOHOL

A Wife or Husband we need to divorce!

Whenever you hear the word divorce you know it is a matrimonial separation between couples. Marriage has or constitutes emotional attachment (Love, inspiration and care not leaving out devotion) I know you will be exasperated to find out that the marriage I am about to mention is not that of a man and a woman. Divorce is the last solution when couples cannot bear each other. When either the husband or wife becomes a detrimental factor for peace and development in the marriage it is bound to scatter. The husband or wife we are to divorce today is ALCOHOL.

Thousands of Cameroonians, if not millions are married to alcohol. They love and cherish alcohol to the extent that without it, there is no pleasure and happiness. Cameroonians have emotional attachment towards alcohol. The problem here is the amount of money spent on alcohol and the trouble that follows the consumption of this intoxicating product. Alcohol has made many of our young resourceful Cameroonians to live in penury. Some are not productive and others are jobless. I was absolutely astonished when a young Cameroonian of about 22 years told me that for him to drink a bottle of Castel beer is to "scratch his throat". Does this country actually have a future? Cameroonians believe that you can intermingle only when you are a fervent consumer of alcohol. Our society is that of alcoholics. With such a society there are so many defects. This husband and wife that we are consciously or unconsciously married to, will eventually lead us to an early grave. Alcohol has caused and is still going to cause many to die. Persons who drink alcohol regularly must drink progressively larger amounts to produce a desired state of intoxication.

The Social Damage

Being an alcoholic causes you to lose your social status. People regard you as a less serious being. You become a sad home by means of effective fighting between mum's and dads, car accidents and occupational accidents (drink during



work). Alcohol has caused quarrels and enmities in our society. It has caused marriages to end prematurely. It has caused the spread of sexually transmitted diseases in a faster rate, since it prompts boys or men to approach girls or women to request for sex. Our Cameroon society has become so foolish that you are respected as far as you can buy several rounds of beer in a bar. Alcohol is now a parameter to measure how "cashious" you are; it is a unique cause of moral decadence. Dads and Mums shy away from their responsibilities because they spend foolishly on alcohol. Their children can't pay taxi fare to school or eat during break while at school in poor clothing and exposure to diseases or illnesses. In Cameroon, no alcohol no social gathering.

The Economic Damage

Cameroonians can not get married without the demand of alcohol, without which bride price can not be settled. The quantity and quality of alcohol goes with the bride's price. Cameroonians live in penury because of alcohol. The amount of money spent to buy alcohol is quite alarming. About 32.7% of Cameroonians who are indebted is as a result of alcohol. They either borrow money to buy alcohol or borrow alcohol from bars. Some Cameroonians will prefer to owe house rents or bills but prefer to buy alcohol. Cameroonians have been dismissed from good jobs as a result of alcohol. Alcoholics do not have mental or physical energy thus they are not economically productive. This has now tempered with the supply of labour. Alcoholics are inefficient.

Psychological Damages

Alcohol brings about psychic defects. People who consume alcohol in excessive rate have poor memory. Their memory cannot retain nor recall. With alcohol they become unnecessarily serious and get easily irritated. Depression and emotional immaturity are also included. Alcohol causes your will power to decline.

Physiological damages,

Physicians generally consider alcoholism as an addiction. Alcohol causes nervous tension, palpitation, heart disorders and decline in bodily strength. In the later stages alcohol causes a disease in the nervous system called delirium tremens.

The compulsive habitual excessive use of alcoholic drinks termed alcoholics differs from drunkenness. Drunkenness maybe habitual but not compulsive Cameroonians are alcoholics. Alcoholism is what our government and ourselves should admonish and abolish. Spend wisely for a thing which has reward and renounce alcohol from your life. It damages an individual, economy and prevents us from development.

By a Resident of New Town, Limbe

Money Can Open All Doors

The Consequences of Corruption

“Backdoor”, “pushing of files”, “oiling of palms”, “soya”, “beer” are some of the expressions used to describe the act of corruption. While it is true, that corruption exists in countries in the world over, what generally differs from country to country is its dimensions, its intensity and most important, the way the government and the society at large deal with the problem so as to reduce or eliminate it. In fact, the practice of corruption has become a widespread phenomenon in Cameroon.

Corruption can be found at all sectors of economic and social life of Cameroon, particularly in the areas of government contracts, insurance, customs, the police and armed forces, justice and the election process. Recently, there has been a case of reported corruption at the University of Buea. After the written examination for the new medical faculty at the University of Buea had taken place, some twenty-six new names were added by Yaoundé to participate in the oral examinations. During the following students strike, two students were shot dead by the forces of law and order and other students were heavily injured.

In this article, we want to show the causes of corruption, its consequences and finally, ways and means to fight corruption.

The Causes of Corruption

Within this country, each and all are dissatisfied with their economic conditions. This dissatisfaction should normally - as it is the case in developed countries - have pushed them to turn to the political authorities whose role is to provide the conditions for a decent life for each and every citizen. Cameroonians have not yet acquired the habit of rallying together to claim their rights from those whose duty is to guarantee them - the political authorities. It is because their political and democratic culture is still in an embryonic stage that Cameroonians get lost in corruption. In fact, the Cameroonian type of democracy is a constant quest by the political authorities to preserve the assets of one party rule, meaning the absence of alternance in power. To succeed in this, the political authority does everything it can, draws

up legal instruments in its favour, grants benefits to the institutions in charge of conducting and validating elections, and to the military and forces of law and order, in order to forestall any popular dissent and uprising. In so doing, the political authority acquires its legitimacy not from the people, but from a minority of individuals it appoints and maintains. Consequently, it loses its roots and becomes weak. As a result, it falls short of ways to impose its will on its accomplices and spur new behaviours in the face of social disorder. Impunity therefore comes from the failure of the democratic process. Corruption has a political cause.

Consequences of Corruption

Corruption weighs heavily on the working of justice and the economy, and is a serious handicap to the harmonious functioning of society.

Because of corruption, justice becomes diluted, partial and unjust. Judgment rendered is no longer equal for equal causes. In the absence of confidence in justice, people resort to other means to obtain satisfaction. It is because of this that certain practices such as mob justice have developed: summary executions through lynching of robbers, direct settling of scores between individuals in conflict, etc.

Corruption also affects the economy. In fact, the state loses a lot because of this corruption. Contracts awarded, either to nationals or expatriates, always come about as a result of envelopes left in the various contract award, payment and control channels. All what is thus paid into the pockets of officials have repercussions on the global cost of the contract. Thus a project that should have cost one billion is billed at two billion or two and a half billion.

What is more, corruption has a “sociocidal” effect because it prevents the building of a solid society founded on the valorisation of the individual. In fact, it makes a mockery of the social principle of equal opportunities; it also makes a mockery of the role assigned to the training structure. Corruption opens to anyone, the door to any position, with the faint hope that the necessary skills will be acquired “on the job”. Unfortunately, the miraculous acquisition of

these skills never occurs.

Ways and means to fight corruption

Corruption is a “pathological” phenomenon. It should not be confused with those considered as “normal”. An officer on the road entrusted with the implementation of the principles governing public transport who, instead of booking all drivers who break the law and leaving the others to move about freely, allows everybody to go through a check-point after exacting a “toll” for himself from the lawbreakers, is not doing his duty. Before we can fight corruption, everyone has to be aware of the fact, that corruption is threat for the normal functioning of a society. Once this knowledge acquired, we can start with fighting the phenomenon.

There are several ways and means to fight corruption. For example: drawing up of appropriate laws and ensuring their effective implementation, taking of dissuasive and punitive measures against offenders, more determined and sincere involvement of the highest authorities of the State in the fight against corruption, organisation of the journalism profession and creation of a real press enterprise, improvement of workers` conditions, simplification of customs procedures, education of the citizens on their rights and obligations.

In conclusion, corruption is a social reality. We are confronted with it every day: on the road, in the classroom, when dealing with authorities, in justice and during the election process. If we want to stop corruption, we have to recognize that it is not a “normal” behaviour, but a “pathological” one. Corruption presumes that money is more important than social justice. We think: It is more important what you are, than what you have.

By Julian Burkhalter,
Volunteer 'Help Out'

