



The
Integrated Development Foundation

Our History, Mission and Experiences in

Women's Empowerment

May 2011



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Integrated Development Foundation



The Integrated Development Foundation (IDF) is a development organization located in the North West region of Cameroon, dedicated to improving the lives of the marginalised in the North West Region.

IDF's main activities fall within the areas of:

- Local Economic Development
- Community Health
- Women Empowerment
- Child Rights
- Capacity Building with Grassroots Organizations

About Us

Visit us online at:

www.idfbamenda.wordpress.com

Contact Us

We are located on the 4th floor of the NWCA Building on Commercial Avenue in Bamenda, Cameroon.



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We look forward to hearing from you!



Our History

IDF was founded by a group of friends in January 1994 (it was also legalized in that year) in Bamenda. They realized that many funders focused solely on field work as a factor of development success and ignored the importance of organizational management and governance. Although, IDF started out with management training programs, IDF decided to participate more in project development and supervision based on its reputation for being well governed and managed.

Goal: To undertake and carry out actions throughout the world that will help to strengthen the less privileged urban and rural female and male populations of Cameroon through an integrated and sustainable development.

Vision: "To reduce inequality and marginalization among the male and female population of the North West Region by 10% between 2010 and 2015"

Mission: "To empower the male and female population of the North West Region to be able to take part actively and democratically in the development of their community, socially and economically with guiding principles of team work, quality, equity and social justice.

Objectives:

- Promotion of solidarity in the defence of the rights and in the economy of the marginalized male and female population.
- Contribute to the success of the strategies and policies put in place by Government to combat the spray of HIV/AIDS in the Region.
- Implementation of activities that can contribute to the amelioration of the sanitary, social, economic and environmental well being of the target populations.
- Promotion of the civil society organizations in the management of public policy.

Target population:

People living with HIV/AIDS, orphans and vulnerable children, youths especially single adolescent mothers, village and quarter development associations, groups and co-operatives.

Area of intervention: Primarily in the North West Region and focussing on the Mezam, Menchum and Bui Divisions. IDF's head office is located in Bamenda.

Integrated Development Foundation Women Empowerment



IDF Women Empowerment Projects

- Empowering women with HIV in entrepreneurship activities with the ILO
- Vocational Training Centre Isabelle de Boismenu for young adolescent mothers
- Training of adolescent mothers in Babessi
- International Women's Day



Promoter with her stand in the market



Women's group with IDF coordinator



ILO and IDF follow-up with Women's Groups

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Women's Empowerment in Cameroon

In many parts of the world including Cameroon, women are facing threats to their lives and health, given that they are overburdened **with house and farm work**. In Cameroon, women's abilities and knowledge are usually not recognized in the effort towards sustainable economic development. Many women in Cameroon, most of whom live in the rural areas, do not have the right to personal political and social opinions, their right to inherit property is, most of the time, checked through the use of customary laws and cultural practices. Violence against women, in Cameroon, is a common phenomenon; women are usually not allowed to form their own opinions when it comes to reproductive rights and health-related issues. They are simply required, by tradition, to abide by what their partners or spouses think about such important issues that, strangely, affect their lives directly.

What is IDF's history and experience in this domain?

IDF has been carrying out action research in the area of woman's empowerment for many years. In 2000, IDF undertook researching the profile of 322 sexually active female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 19 in Wum. The study revealed that many of these girls suffered from: unwanted and early pregnancies, an early age of sexual activeness, in some cases encouragement from parents to be promiscuous, and a low level of literacy and employment due to incomplete schooling. In order to help young adolescent mothers gain market and life skills to become contributing members of society and able to become financially self-sustaining, IDF started a vocational training course.

In addition to the vocational training course in Bamenda, IDF has also carried out training of young adolescent mothers in Babessi. This training was geared towards educating girls to gain life and market skills.

Women living with HIV and AIDS have also been supported through IDF's work. Not only does IDF offer health programs such as the home-based care program but IDF also offers a program in collaboration with the International Labor Organization to empower women living with HIV and AIDS. This program is the SIDA/COOP program which promotes entrepreneurship and mitigates poverty amongst women living with HIV/AIDS in Bamenda, Kumbo, Wum and Bali of the North West Region.



Orphan girls gain vocational training as seamstresses

Integrated Development Foundation Women Empowerment



Project Information

Budget: Financed by ILO
 Dates and Duration: 2009 to present
 Location: Kumbo, Wum, Bali, Bamenda
 Partners: International Labor Organization (ILO)

Empowering Women with HIV in Entrepreneurship Activities with the ILO

Description: This a program funded by the International Labor Organization (ILO) that aims at promoting entrepreneurship and mitigates poverty amongst women living with HIV/AIDS in Bamenda, Kumbo, Wum and Bali of the North West Region. Services coordinated by IDF for the program include technical, management and financial support and training. The women participating in the program are called promoters.

Difficulties Faced

- Insufficient funds to meet the high demand for loans
- Insufficient means to support allowance of counselors



Promoter with poultry farm

Lessons Learned

- Program has had a positive impact on the lives of the promoters
- There will be an increased level of literacy in the promoters' families because children are going to school
- More women with HIV are feeling confident and less stigmatized
- Men are also interested in the program

Way Forward/Recommendations

- More counsellors are required to provide more substantial support to promoters

Feedback from the promoters has been positive:

"Before the coming of the program, none of my children was going to school. Thanks to the program, I am able to conveniently support 3 of my children in school."

"I am proud to stand here and say I now have a business capital of my own, because I was formerly living on borrowed capital"

"I have been living a healthy life since I joined the program because the stress I used to have is no more"

Project Context: To uphold the fight against HIV/AIDS pandemic in the world of work, ILO identified the potential of working with cooperatives. Cooperative institutions can reach workers in informal sectors who are mostly left out by many HIV/AIDS interventions which are targeting workers in the formal settings. Since 2008, cooperatives in Cameroon have been part of the fight against HIV and AIDS. 22 cooperative and social economy organizations have developed policies regarding HIV and AIDS based on the ILO directive. The results to date indicate that cooperatives can be important actors in the fight against HIV and AIDS even though to date they have not yet been fully involved in the national approach.

Activities and Methodology:

- Identification and training of two psychosocial and economic counselors per cooperative. These counselors are in charge of the monitoring and evaluation of the activities of promoters.
- Registration for information sessions which are carried out at identified financial institutions with the support of the counselors. Information sessions are held to enlighten the participants on the philosophy and methodology of the program.
- Initial diagnosis of interested promoters are carried out to gather baseline data and to determine the nature of assistance that the promoter needs.
- In order to qualify as a member of the program, the promoters must: be a woman; be infected with HIV/AIDS; own a business activity; be a member or be ready to join a Cooperative; be prepared to share her CD4 count result; and accept to respect procedures.
- Within the program, activities include disbursement of loans for business activities, follow up with the promoters who receive loans (repayment rate, business success, health), registration for Mutual Health, and training of promoters on how to keep financial records.



IDF Staff meeting with counsellor and promoter

Results and Impacts: As of October 2010, the project had providing financial support in the forms of loans to 128 promoters, of which 50% has been repaid to date. The promoters have reported positive impacts from the project including: being able to pay for their children's schooling, having the confidence to give public testimonies, less stigma in their communities and increase economic independence.



Promoter with pig farm

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Integrated Development Foundation Women Empowerment



Project Information

Budget: 4 394 710 (2004 expenditures)
Dates and Duration: 2001 to 2004
Location: Bamenda
Partners: GTZ, Presbyterian Church, MINAS, IDF

Vocational Training Centre Isabelle de Boismenu

Description: The Isabelle de Boismenu Vocational Training Centre was created in March 2002. The first two batches of women were trained in 2002 and 2003 with the financial support of GTZ and the Peace Corps. This centre has the mission of rehabilitating single adolescent mothers, renewing their self esteem and providing employability training.

Difficulties Faced

- Funding for new building and dormitory is needed.
- The course needs to be tailored to girls with low literacy levels due to the fact that most of them have dropped out of formal school.
- Many girls are interested in this program but do not have the means to cover their accommodation in town.
- Some employers are hesitant to hire the girls as they fear their salaries demanded will be higher due to the training.

Lessons Learned

- Many of the girls do not have birth certificates or ID cards which can make finding employment after the course difficult
- Psychosocial and medical support should be provided in the program for certain cases
- A legal advisor should be available to prevent abusive situations and to inform the girls of their rights as women and as workers

Way Forward/Recommendations

- Find funders to support scholarships for the program as well as the construction of a facility including dormitories.
- Raise awareness about the program and also about the benefits of having contracts for employees and employers.
- Explore linkages to other vocational training centres.

Project Context: In 2001 while carrying out awareness campaigns on HIV and AIDS in Menchum, IDF realized that many young girls were not coming to training programmes on HIV/AIDS and skill development. IDF carried out action research to find out why. 350 girls were interviewed in Wum and 70% had at least 1 baby, (13-18 years old). Many girls had ambition to become house girls in Yaounde or Douala. But they were interested in doing a short training. IDF found out that there is a huge market for house girls but that the environment is not conducive, low pay, no respect, hard work. Many girls did not have the skills to even be good house girls – cleaning, cooking, washing, child care. The VTCIB is therefore conceived as a way to strengthen the like and market skills of these girls so they are empowered to negotiate for employment and for decent working conditions.

Activities: Single adolescent mothers were trained on healthy living, and on specific vocational skills for employment (secretarial, domestic and serving work). Topics covered in the course include:

- Health: STIs, HIV and AIDS, general health, hygiene, first aid, child and mother, elder and disabled care
- Basic nutrition
- Labor laws
- Early and unwanted pregnancy
- Gender issues
- Home economics: cooking, home and office décor, sewing, entertainment of guests, budgeting, marketing and home crafts

The course is six weeks in length and in order to practice their theoretical knowledge of life and market skills they were given placements in local establishments. Their placements were monitored and evaluated.



In the classroom



A student during her internship



Raising awareness

Results and Impacts: IDF has trained 47 women to date providing them with skills for healthy living along with vocation training. Many of the graduates have successfully found employment in their area of interest, and some graduates have decided to go back to school to further bolster their skills.

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Integrated Development Foundation Women Empowerment



Project Information

Budget: Financed by GTZ
Dates and Duration: April 2005
Location: Babessi, Bafut, Batibo and Njinikom
Partners: GTZ

Training of Adolescent Mothers in Babessi

Description: IDF was asked by GTZ to help them identify and train adolescents mothers in Babessi for their “aunties” programme. In addition, IDF assisted with the election of a Aunties’ Executives in Bafut, Batibo, and Njinikom.

Difficulties Faced

- The eligibility criteria was well defined but many girls tried to get exceptions.
- Local authorities demanded bribes in return for assisting mobilise the people of their quarters.
- Not every girl identified knew her age.
- Large groups are difficult to train especially with limited time.

Lessons Learned

- The electoral process is still relatively unfamiliar to the aunties associations, but the aunties are keen to understand it.
- Bringing awareness on health issues through communities to girls makes them more alert and responsible in participation.
- It is important to engage community leaders to give credibility to the program.
- Market days in villages must be taken into consideration as they can affect turn-out.

Way Forward/Recommendations

- Inform local authorities and get their support when carrying out community projects.
- Future information collected about adolescent mothers should include whether they have birth certificates.
- The plan of action is especially useful to guide newly created groups.

Project Context: A baseline study conducted in 2000 by the GTZ-supported health programme in Cameroon revealed that teenage pregnancies and risky sexual behaviour were widespread and needed an appropriate public health response. It became obvious that adolescents and especially girls did not have any experienced adults to ask for information or advice. The traditional role of the aunt - to provide moral and sexual education - was no longer being practised. Thus, the idea was developed to recruit teenage mothers and to train them as “little aunties,” able and willing to inform and counsel their peers in the neighbourhood and in the schools.

The programme trains young adolescent mothers to become “aunties” who offer support and advice to other teenage mothers. They also give talks to young people about their experiences in an effort to prevent teenage pregnancies. The project uses a self-help and a peer approach and aims to bridge the gap between parents and teenage girls by reconstructing the character of the traditional aunt to guide and mentor youth.



IDF Coordinator with adolescent mothers

Activities:

- IDF worked with the aunties associations in Bafut, Batibo and Njinikom to help them organize and carry out elections for their executive positions.
- Field visits to Babessi and scheduled meetings in various villages permitted the girls to be identified and to register for the training.
- Capacity building of single mothers in the prevention of unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS occurred on the 21st and 22nd of April 2005 in the Fon’s palace hall and the topics covered were: early pregnancies, hygiene and nutrition for mother and child, STIs, HIV/AIDS, behaviour change, communication, association or group creation, electoral code of Aunties Associations, plan of action and a final evaluation.

Results and Impacts:

- IDF assisted 3 Aunties Associations through the electoral process and was successful in electing an executive committee for each association.
- 124 adolescent mothers were identified in the Babessi area.
- 92 adolescent mothers were trained.
- An executive for the Babessi Aunties Association was elected.

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Integrated Development Foundation Women Empowerment



Project Information
Budget: 197 800frs CFA (2010)
Dates and Duration: March 8, annually
Location: Bamenda
Partners: VSO

International Women's Day

Description: **IDF has been participating in International Women's Day** which is held on March 8th annually since 1996. This is a major day of global celebration of women. The focus of the celebrations ranges from general celebration of respect, appreciation and love towards women to a celebration for women's economic, political and social achievements.

Difficulties Faced

- IDF always has difficulty in obtaining funds for this event which results in a shortage of materials such as handouts and t-shirts.
- Late approval from our partners sometimes results in some activities being cancelled.
- Having events in both Wum and Bamenda requires a private vehicle and additional volunteers in order to transport some of the large signboards to Wum.

Lessons Learned

- T-shirts provide the best incentive for people to attend the parade.
- IDF's participation in International Women's Day in Wum further enhanced IDF's image in that community.

Way Forward/Recommendations

- IDF should include International Women's Day as an annual activity in its action plan



IDF team on women's day 2011 in Bamenda

Project Context: Given that **one of IDF's area of intervention is women's empowerment**, participating in International Women's Day is integral to spreading awareness about women's rights. In this respect, IDF is always very active in this celebratory day. In Cameroon, **International Women's Day is a day when women do not have to work and can celebrate themselves through parades and public engagements. Special commemorative fabric is designed each year by the president's wife and is worn by women all across Cameroon.**



IDF participating in march in Wum

Activities: **IDF has participated in International Women's Day activities in both Wum and Bamenda. In order to empower women and educate the general population about women's issues and rights, IDF has carried out the following activities:**



Handing out HIV/AIDS Materials on Women's Day

- Participation in parades
- Information booths and distribution of pamphlets and materials related to women's issues including HIV and AIDS
- Presentation of songs and dances
- Condom demonstrations
- T-Shirt distribution for IDF participants

Results and Impacts: **As a result of IDF's participation in International Women's day the populations in Bamenda and in Wum have been able to become more aware of women's rights and issues relating to women including HIV and AIDS. Women's day also offers women in Bamenda and Wum an opportunity to find out about the services and programs offered to them by IDF and other civil society organizations.**



Women's Day Parade in 2004

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Integrated Development Foundation Women's Empowerment Partnership



Marielle, a CESO volunteer helping develop the curriculum for the Isabelle de Boismenu Vocational School

Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO)

Canadian Executive Service Organization (CESO) is a Canadian organization working towards strengthening social and economic well-being in Canada and abroad through engagement of skilled and experienced Canadian volunteers working cooperatively with our partners to effectively service client needs. IDF and CESO started working together in the late 2000s.



A CESO volunteer helps carry out a workshop with IDF

IDF Impresses a Visiting CESO Volunteer

In May 2011, Louise Montague, a CESO volunteer placed with the Bamenda City Council came to visit IDF on the recommendation of a previous CESO volunteer and the CESO Cameroon Office.

The CESO volunteer was presented with the IDF presentation which introduces the organization, its mission, activities and future direction. She expressed that she was overwhelmingly impressed to see the improvement and progress reached by IDF. She commended the IDF coordinator for her leadership and the use of different approaches. It is hoped that this interest in IDF marks the beginning of a strong relationship between CESO and IDF.



Louise Montague, a visiting, CESO volunteer, is impressed with IDF's work and approaches

CESO volunteers have predominantly worked in the area of **strategic planning and women's empowerment**. CESO volunteers have been instrumental in developing training modules for the Vocational Training Centre for single adolescent mothers.

Empowering Young Single Mothers

In April 2010, Marielle Bastien, a volunteer came to work with IDF on developing a training manual to be used at the Isabelle de Boismenu Vocational Training Centre.

"It was a pleasure for me to work with CESO for IDF and during the short placement I was able to learn a bit about the life of Cameroonian women in Bamenda and its surrounding. IN that short time I was also able to see and evaluate the quantity of



Marielle Bastien, CESO volunteer in April 2010

development work done by IDF despite limited finances and limited human resources. During my placement, I created a training manual for young single mothers [for the seminars to be carried out at the Isabelle de Boismenu vocational training centre]. This manual contains seminars with exercises on self esteem, human and women's rights, sexuality and reproduction, anatomy and physiology, family planning, and health topics such as principles of sexually transmitted infections (including HIV and AIDS) and first aid. This manual is designed not only to give young women a chance to explore their potential and to gain financial auton-

omy but it also gives them a global vision of their possibilities and an opportunity to interest them in a second training session that will focus on vocation skills such as tailoring or cooking.

This training manual was a big undertaking and now the next step is to train trainers on delivering the training so that they will be able to engage and educate the young women who will attend the classes and to give them the courage and raised self esteem to realize change and take control of their lives."

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