

## REGIONS

North West

# GTZ/IDF Launch AIDS Prevention campaign In Furu-Awa

Bamenda ( Mezam )- A laudable campaign to sensitive the population of Furu-Awa subdivision on the perils of STDs/AIDS was launched last Monday by a Bamenda-based NGO (Integrated Development Foundation-IDF) with the logistical and financial support of the GTZ ( German Technical Cooperation ). A team of four took off from Bamenda aboard a chartered helicopter for the exercise that will last till September 2001. This is the first experience in Cameroon where a whole division ( Menchum ) will be sensitized, village after village and with HIV carriers giving testimonies. Lessons learnt from this programme will help to extend prevention campaigns to other remote areas of the country and also to decentralize the fight against AIDS to local communities.

**Why emphasis on Furu-Awa ?**  
It's an enclaved subdivision ( in Menchum division ) where there are no roads but foot-paths, and transportation is on foot. It takes just 35 minutes to fly by helicopter from Bamenda to Furu-Awa ! But it takes three days (for a serious trekker) to go from Wum to Furu-Awa. Because the area is seriously enclaved, the people of Furu-Awa lack the basic information on HIV/AIDS.

Cognizant of deplorable weather conditions currently in



Such a poster is imperative in Furu-Awa ( culled from AR )

the North West province, the campaign was almost called off because of the rainy season. According to Mrs. Oussematou Dameni ( coordinator IDF ), the NGO "almost stopped activities to wait for the dry season around November or December before going to Furu-Awa. But STDs/AIDS do not know bad roads...everyday Cameroonians are infected. Luckily, the GTZ has provided transport facility by helicopter to the team of IDF to sensitize the population of Furu-Awa."

Without mincing words, a study conducted by the IDF shows that Furu-Awa is a fertile subdivision for the propagation of AIDS. Prior to this initiative, little or nothing had been done to sensitize the people on what AIDS is all about. The subdivision is

at the border with Nigeria.. a lot of traders pass by, require places to sleep and this eventually leads to prostitution. There exist local risky practices like the " Njumba market " and " country sunday " : special days where people have the ' liberty ' to frolic from one sexual partner to the other.

Young people have several sexual partners and hardly protect themselves. Worse still, some underestimate or doubt that AIDS exist. Others believe it exists, but think it's transmitted by dogs, monkeys or mosquitoes. The current sensitization campaign is certainly a stitch in time that saves nine!

(CAMNEWS)