



The Integrated Development Foundation

Our mission, work, and experiences in

Child Rights

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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 Child Rights

IDF Child Rights Projects

- Birth Certificate Project (with PLAN Cameroon)
- Diagnosis of Child Labor and Trafficking Trends in the North West Region
- Research on very poor families vulnerable to child trafficking and child labor in Wum Council
- Withdrawing Children from Forced Labor



The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

“Recogniz[es] that the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding”

IDF’s help in getting children in the North West Region birth certificates was lauded by many including traditional leaders. The secretary general of the Bamunkumbit Traditional Council who is the Representative of the Fon said:

“We have no civil status registration centres in Bamunkumbit, that is why most of the children are without birth certificates. It was a good initiative. This programme has been of much help especially to the children without parents (orphans).”

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What is the state of children’s rights in Cameroon?

Although Cameroon has made some efforts to protect the welfare and rights of its children, such as ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1993, there are still many instances of rights abuses and injustices. The most common violations in Cameroon are child labor, child trafficking, and lack of birth certificates. These violations impact children in many ways, it affects their ability to go to and excel at school, and it also affects their health and their self esteem.

The law generally protects children from exploitation in the workplace and specifies penalties ranging from fines to imprisonment for infringement; however, child labor remained a problem. The law sets a minimum age of 14 for child employment, which is inconsistent with the age for completing educational requirements. Child labor exists chiefly in urban areas and in the informal sector such as street vending, agricultural work, and domestic service. Parents view child labor as both a tradition and a rite of passage. Relatives often employ rural youth, especially girls, as domestic helpers, and these jobs seldom allowed time for the children to attend school. In rural areas, many children begin work at an early age on family farms.

The law in Cameroon criminalizes child trafficking. However, a 2000 International Labor Organization study conducted in Yaounde, Douala, and Bamenda, reported that trafficking accounted for 84% of child laborers in those three cities. In four out of 10 cases, the child was a foreigner transported to the country for labor. Women and children traditionally have faced the greatest risk of trafficking and have been trafficked most often for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labor. Girls are typically internally trafficked from the Adamawa, North, Far North, and Northwest provinces to Douala and Yaounde to work as domestic servants, street vendors, or prostitutes.

In Cameroon, although everyone has the right to a birth certificate, many children do not possess one which impedes their ability to complete school since birth certificates are required for exam registration in both primary and secondary school.

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

With over 785,000 children in the north west region, many of **IDF’s beneficiaries are children.** IDF has been active in the fight for Children’s Rights for over a decade. IDF has carried out research and written reports on these issues to raise awareness and to develop projects which will have significant impacts. After carrying out research on the causes and impacts of children not having birth certificates in the region, IDF developed a project which helped obtain 750 late birth certificates to primary school children and 45 single adolescent mothers. IDF is also active in the fight against child trafficking and labor.

Integrated Development Foundation Child Rights



Raising Awareness about Child Rights and Birth Certificates with Plan in Cameroon

Description: IDF with the support of Plan Cameroon, oversaw the process of raising awareness about child rights in communities in addition to obtaining birth certificates in a number of villages and divisions in the North West region as well as the Centre region.

Project Context: Every child has rights according to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which was **ratified in 1993, however many children's** rights are not respected by parents, teachers or authority figures. IDF was integral in helping PLAN Cameroon raise awareness of child rights in Cameroon. One of the biggest challenges faced by children is



Children in the North West Region with their newly acquired birth certificates

the low rate of birth registration; overall only 70% of children in Cameroon have birth certificates according to UNICEF. The rate is even lower, 58%, when only children in rural areas are considered. A birth certificate is a document that establishes the identity of the child and offers him/her the right to education, health services, the family environment etc. Without a birth certificate children cannot register for official examinations and in consequence are limited in their possible schooling.

Activities: In her capacity of consultant, IDF not only ensured that birth certificates were obtained for 770 children but also carried out action research to find out the causes of non registration of children at birth and to seek an understanding of the phenomenon of age reduction which is at the origin of the high increase in false birth certificates. IDF also undertook:

- Village by village awareness campaigns in the Menchum Division through football games with local children and parents, recognition of parents who are exemplary in supporting their children and public readings of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Ensuring action plans for local AIDS control committees included the identification of children without birth certificates and the necessary interventions

Results and Impacts:

- 425 non-registered students were identified in 16 primary schools.
- 425 birth certificates were established with the help of local medical professionals and 254 were established by the mayor.
- We trained 48 traditional birth attendants on the importance of birth registration and their role in the process at the level of the villages
- 22 representatives of village development committees, 22 traditional chiefs and more than 60 teachers were informed about the importance about birth registrations
- Over 5000 children without birth certificates were identified for future campaigns
- A local mechanism was identified in 15 villages to automatically detect and register non-registered children by the village development union.



A parent being recognized by her child

Project Information

Budget: 22 000 000 francs CFA
Dates and Duration: January 2005
Location: Momo, Boyo and Ngoketunja
Partners: PLAN Cameroon, UNICEF, Ministry of Social Affairs



Public readings about child rights

Testimonies

Children from the Catholic School Bamunkumbit who received birth certificates expressed their gratitude with the following words of thanks -

"I thank Plan. The birth certificate will permit me to write the First School Leaving Certificate and the Common Entrance exams. It will help me to continue my studies."

"I am feeling fine with my birth certificate. It will help me to write the First School Leaving Certificate exam. I will advice those who do not have to convince their parents to do so."

Patrick Fon a parent said, *"You have given the national and international certificate to these children. You have given them the key of life. Continue your education."*



Community games to raise awareness about child rights

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Diagnosis of Child Labor and Trafficking Trends

Description: In 2008, IDF undertook a project with the support of the ILO to diagnose the trends of child trafficking and child labor in three Councils of the North West region (Kumbo, Wum and Bali).

Project Context: The North West appears to be a common supply zone for the recruitment of children due to the fact that domestic care is highly present in households compared to the South which is a reception zone. Thus the TC-RAM project has targeted the North West as an intervention zone due to its dynamics in auto development which is part of the traditional habits and mostly because it is directly or indirectly marked by the persistence of certain forms of vulnerability such as child trade, marginalization of indigenous people and tribes, HIV/AIDS, inequalities and problems of gender. The project targeted 3 councils of the North West; Wum, Kumbo, Bali and encompassed three themes: the fight against child labor; local economic development; and the development of Mbororo communities.

Activities: IDF carried out action research to better understand the phenomenon of child labor and trafficking in the target areas. Through interviews, observations and data collection, IDF was able to develop a comprehensive report as well as a profile of the most vulnerable child.



A child working in the North West Region

Results and Impacts:

The study showed that it is difficult to differentiate between child labor and children working to help their families. There are traditional expectations within the Cameroonian culture which place a high value on grooming children for their future, which entails working and even perhaps being placed in servitude positions. Although official statistics are difficult to obtain, in the study zone the number of children exposed to child labor and trafficking was estimated to be 30,000. Due to the cultural and legal discrepancies, in order to address the issue further examination and capacity building with relevant stakeholders such as state technical services, local authorities/councils, traditional authorities, NGOs/Associations, community leaders, parents and children be carried out.



A child mechanic

Project Information

Budget: Financed by ILO
Dates and Duration: 2008
Location: Kumbo, Wum and Bali
Partners: TC RAM (ILO)

Difficulties Faced

- Ignorance at all level is one of the main cause of Child Trafficking (CT) and Child Labor (CL) in the project zone.
- No functional mechanism exist to fight CT

Lessons Learned

- A better understanding of the project zone is needed related to supply issues, transit routes and user zones
- Perception of CT/CL in the project zone contradict the perception of the international community
- CT chain exist in all the councils, facilitate by intermediaries ; most of the parents and guardians are intermediaries
- Poverty and economic situation of parents are major causes of CT/CL

Way Forward/Recommendations

- Council development plan need to integrate activities preventing CT
- More awareness campaigns and training should be carried out in especially vulnerable areas
- Advocacy for better enforcement of laws and preventative actions for CT/CL is necessary



Child working as a stone breaker

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Survey on very vulnerable families in Wum

Description: In 2009, IDF undertook a survey on vulnerable families in Wum Council: Kesu, Zongekwo, Zongefu, Bangwe and Bu villages. This project was carried out over 3 months and targeted 423 households. The purpose of this project was to determine whether very poor families are more vulnerable to subjecting their children to child trafficking and child labor.

Project Context: One of the focuses of the International Labor Organization (ILO) is child trafficking for labor exploitation. Given the special status of children in development strategies, the ILO seeks to help families which are exposed to various forms of vulnerabilities to avoid having them succumb to child trafficking and labor. **The ILO's approach supports the development process** by highlighting the promotion of social justice through access to decent and productive work under conditions of freedom, equity, security and dignity. The objective of the project was to promote decent jobs as a means of fighting against poverty within communities vulnerable to child trafficking in Cameroon. Very poor families were targeted to be strengthened and empowered with entrepreneurial skills so that they can in turn take care of the practical need of their children.



A family in Wum who participated in the survey

Activities: IDF undertook the following activities in its role of consultant -

- Training of surveyors and facilitators and the preparation of data collection
- Collecting data through administering questionnaires and interviews with inhabitants of the targeted communities
- Data cleaning and inputting
- Analyzing the data and preparing a final report

Results and Impacts: The results from the research indicated that inhabitants are aware of the danger of the phenomenon and are ready to join the fight. Parents are aware of the importance of the education and are ready to send their children to school if they have the means. It was evident that traffickers are stigmatised in the communities. The population felt that the Government by supporting them, cares about their well being. As a result of the project, from 2007 to 2009 IDF with the help of the government supported the education needs of 1290 children.



Interviewing families in Wum

Project Information

Budget: 1 401 500 CFA (TC-RAM)

Dates and Duration: 2009

Location: Wum

Partners: TC-RAM (ILO)

Difficulties Faced

- Survey timing coincided with harvest which resulted in low participation
- Questionnaires were long and parents did not always have answers
- There was little interest from household heads in filling out the survey

Lessons Learned

- Some people believe that children should work
- Children are seen as an important part of the labor force in subsistence farming communities
- Family size is large because of uncontrolled birth, polygamy and death.
- Birth registration is not seen as a right but as a means to attend official exams.

Way Forward/Recommendations

- The parents need to be educated on the rights of the child and birth control
- Potential for micro credit in this area to increase economic potential
- Educational support is needed for the most desperate cases
- The families should be educated on the importance of birth registration



A child in Wum

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Withdrawal of Children from Forced Labor

Description: IDF carried out a project in Wum where it helped withdraw children from situations of forced labor and reinserted them into school. As part of the research undertaken by IDF, a total of 62 children were identified and were removed from their working place and sent back to school or to learn a trade. These children were primarily orphans or had very poor parents which resulted in their having to live under difficult conditions.

Spotlight Story: Patience (13 years, class 6) is the oldest of six children from a single mother with no educational background. Queenivette (11 years class 5) is a double orphan due to HIV/AIDS living with her grandmother who does not like her much due to her being “headstrong”. These two children were withdrawn from school and brought to Bamenda by their Aunt, a business woman in Bamenda. Patience was sent to be a babysitter, while Queenivette was forced to help the Aunt in her business place - washing plates and serving customers as well as doing house work at the Aunt’s house.



Patience, Queenivette, Patience’s mother and the IDF Coordinator

The IDF Coordinator was alerted to the situation by the headmaster of the school that Patience attended before being withdrawn. **Patience had been an orphan in IDF’s orphans and vulnerable children program** follow since 2003. While IDF was following up about Patience’s case, it was discovered that Queenivette was also in the same situation. Due to her lack of a birth certificate Queenivette had been forced to drop out of school at the end of class 5 despite her brilliant scholastic performance.

After investigation, the two children were brought back to their home and put back into school. Patience succeeded in receiving her first school living certificate and Queenivette graduated to class 6.



Patience and Queenivette

The International Labor Organization’s TCRAM project supported these two girls in their academics for the following year—Patience at the vocational training centre and Queenivette at the government school .

Project Information

Budget: Financed by TCRAM
Dates and Duration: 2009
Location: Wum
Partners: TC-RAM (ILO)

What is Child labor?

Article 3 of ILO Convention of 1999 stipulates that the ‘worst forms of child labor, comprise:

- all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labor including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances;
- the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in relevant international treaties;
- work which by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children;

NB: This convention applies to children under the age of 18 involved in extremely hazardous and exploitative work.

What is child trafficking?

According to ILO/IPEC/LUTRENA project documents, it is

“the conclusion of a transaction – a practice in which a person below 18 years is handed over by either or both parents, or by a guardian to a third person, whether for a fee or not, with the intention of exploiting the person or his/her work.”

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