

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE SOCIO - ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE BAMENDA GRASSLAND; 1990 – 2009

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ABSTRACT : Entrepreneurship has been the main booster for economic growth as well as a driving force behind the rapid expansion of the social sector in most countries in the world. Women entrepreneurship in the Bamenda Grassland has been making a significant impact in the socio-economic sector of the Economy. The objective of this study was to investigate the domains of engagements of Women Social entrepreneurs and analyze the contributions they made towards the Socio – economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. A wide range of primary and secondary sources were exploited using qualitative and quantitative research methods. Primary data was collected on four different Women Social entrepreneurial Organizations. The secondary data was collected from library search, documentations from different organizations, and the internet. Their domains of interventions included; environmental protection and sustainable forest exploitation, health, agro-pastoral production, social services through sensitization campaigns, advocacy, trainings and women’s empowerment programs. The findings revealed that the engagements of these women social entrepreneurs made great strides contributing towards the socio - economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. They were instrumental in creating job opportunities, innovations, inducing economic growth, solving environmental problems, promoting women’s empowerment, providing forums for women suffering from social vices linked to Gender Based Violence to speak out.

KEYWORDS: *Bamenda Grassland, Entrepreneurship, Socio-Economic Development, Women.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurship is the dynamic process of creating incremental wealth. The wealth is created by individuals who assume the major risks in terms of equity, time and / or career commitment or provide value for some products or service. The product or service may not be new or unique, but value must somehow be infused by the entrepreneur by receiving and locating the necessary skills and resources^[1]. Burdus also opines that entrepreneurship can be regarded as a condition that creates new business in terms of risk taking and expected profit^[2]. It has traditionally been defined as the process of designing, launching and running a new business, which begins as a small business, or a startup company, offering a product, process or service for sale or hire. An entrepreneur is considered as a person who creates a new business taking risks to achieve the intended objectives to make profit and achieve growth by identifying and making use of important opportunities^[3]. Their entrepreneurial ventures and innovations often improve standards of living through job creation, provision of some basic needs and services, wealth and enhancing conditions for a prosperous society. They perceive new business ideas and opportunities which inherently generate wealth, boost sustainable economic development and add to national income^[4]. At this point, entrepreneurship cannot be considered a new field of research, but there are some emerging topics which should be explored more broadly like aspects of gender and entrepreneurial engagements.

¹ Robert Hisrich et al, “Entrepreneurship”, (New York: Mc Graw Hill Irwin, 2005) P. 11

² Eugen Burdus. “Fundamentals of Entrepreneurship”, *Review of International Comparative Management, Vol 11, No.01*, (2010). 36

³ Ibid, 34.

⁴ Eugenio Cosme Andrieu, “The Entrepreneur According to The Austrian School”, (M.A. Dissertation, University of South Africa, April 2010), .85

Background of the study

There is a huge gender imbalance in entrepreneurship where women face persistent obstacles in starting and running their own business ventures, which negatively affects their progress. Women in entrepreneurship have been largely neglected in societies of Developed and Developing countries alike. In the United States, Scholarly study of female entrepreneurship began in the late 1970s, when women joined professional workforce in higher numbers compared to previous years [5]. The World Bank pointed out that women comprise one of Africa's hidden growth reserves, providing most of the region's labour, but their productivity is hampered by widespread inequality in education as well as unequal access to land and productive inputs[6].

This research critically explores women entrepreneurship focusing on women social entrepreneurship and their contributions towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. Social entrepreneurship, defined as "entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose" [7] has grown in the last two decades. Research on social entrepreneurship in both Developed and Developing countries revealed that social entrepreneurship is one of the key contributing factors to the creation and diversification of entrepreneurial activities, economic growth and development, emancipation and empowerment of women[8]. However social entrepreneurship is still a niche phenomenon in terms of statistics. Worldwide on average, 2.8% of people[9] aged 18-64 are engaged in social entrepreneurial activity as a nascent entrepreneur[10], or manager-owner of a new business.

Amine et al say more research is needed to understand how women who engaged in social entrepreneurial activities contribute to local development[11], and that is what this study seeks to examine. The focus on development is significant because social entrepreneurship has been identified as a potential vehicle for women empowerment[12], increasing gender equality, with economic and social benefits, especially in male dominated societies[13]. Enterprises that pursue commercial approaches to achieving social and / or environmental aims expressed responsible social entrepreneurial attitude through contributing to poverty alleviation and environment protection[14].

In our research, we zoom in on women social entrepreneurs: who were they; what were their motivations? did they contribute to economic development? if yes, in what ways? Does the society recognized the role or impact they created in the society? It brings to bear original, rich and reliable new evidence on especially women social entrepreneurs who typically are not in the spotlight.

The Problem / Staking the Issues

Entrepreneurship is viewed as the backbone of the economic development of most economies all over the world. Social entrepreneurship has been identified as one of the key factor contributing to local economic development. Although the role of Women as social entrepreneurs is increasingly attracting attention in both Developed and Developing countries[15], there is dearth of research on women social entrepreneurship in Cameroon in general

⁵ Betty J. Parker, "A Conceptual framework for developing the female entrepreneurship literature", in *Journal of Research on Women and Gender*, Vol. 5, No. 47, (2010), 171.

⁶ World Bank Group, "Recognizing the Invisible Woman in Development: The World Bank's Experience" (*The Bank's World*, Vol. 4, No. 9, 1985), 11.

⁷ J. E Austin et al. "Social and commercial entrepreneurship: Same, different, or both?" *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 30, No. 1, (2006), p. 4

⁸ P. B. Datta et al. "Empowering Women through social entrepreneurship: Case study of a women's cooperative in India." *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (2012), 572

⁹ ibid

¹⁰ An individual who is thinking to start-up an entrepreneurial activity and begins to commit time and other resources to founding a new firm.

¹¹ L. S. Amine et al. "Women Entrepreneurs in Sub-Saharan Africa: An institutional theory analysis from a social marketing point of view". (*Entrepreneurship & Regional Development*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2009), 186

¹² H. M. Kwaramba et al. "Emotional confidence levels and success of tourism development for poverty reduction: The South African Kwam-Makana home-stay project". (*Tourism Management* Vol. 33, No.4, June 2012), 890

¹³ B. P. Acharya et al. "Homestays as an alternative tourism product for sustainable community development: A case study of women-managed tourism product in rural Nepal". *Tourism Planning & Development*, Vol. 10, No. 4, (2014), 371

¹⁴ J. V. Weppen et al. "Social enterprises in tourism: An exploratory study of operational models and success factors". *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, Vol. 20, No. 3, (2012), 501

¹⁵ Albert Nsom Kimbu, Michael Zisuh Ngoasong. "Women as Vectors of social entrepreneurship". (*Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol.60, no.2, 2016): p 64

and the Bamenda Grassland in particular, which highlights successful women social entrepreneurial activities and the contributions they made towards the socio - economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. Women social entrepreneurship has contributed to the emancipation and empowerment of women in the Bamenda Grassland, increasing gender equality, especially in male dominated communities, giving women a voice in their communities, job creation and poverty alleviation. But little attention is paid to the contributions made by the women social entrepreneurs towards the socio - economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. This study opines that women social entrepreneurs and their entrepreneurial engagements have promoted economic developments in the Bamenda Grassland, integrating social transformational and commercial goals in their business strategies in the face of local norms and traditions. Thus the research is set to investigate as main research question: What are the contributions of women social entrepreneurship towards the socio - economic development of the Bamenda Grassland?

Conceptual Framework

Drawing on the literature of entrepreneurship, this study develops a framework for analyzing the role of women as social entrepreneurs in promoting economic developments in the Bamenda Grassland. Social entrepreneurship involves seizing opportunity for the market-changing innovation of a social purpose^[16]. This social purpose can be achieved by creating and operating either a non-profit or a for-profit venture. To understand the role of women as social entrepreneurs, we focused on the notion of an individual woman social entrepreneur, and the survival of her social entrepreneurial venture, rather than on collective and community efforts to launch a social enterprise. In particular, we focused on the role of the woman as owner-manager of a social enterprise in the Bamenda Grassland and their nature of engagement, notwithstanding their limitations especially in a male dominated community.

Variously, entrepreneurship means; innovation, risk - taking, a market stabilizing force, starting, owning and managing a small business. From the above, an entrepreneur can be seen as a person who either creates new combinations of factors of production such as new methods of production, new products, new markets, finds new sources of supply and new organizational forms; or as a person who is willing to take risks; or a person who by exploiting market opportunities, eliminates disequilibrium between aggregate supply and aggregate demand, or as one who owns and operates a business ^[17]. A business opportunity can be defined as an unsatisfied need, with high profit making potentials. It can also be a potential to serve customers differently and better than they are being served at present ^[18]. A business opportunity could equally be an imprecisely defined market need or underemployed resources or capabilities. It could be situations where new goods, services, raw materials and organizing methods can be introduced and sold at a greater price than their cost of production ^[19].

There are different types of entrepreneurs depending on the circumstances in which they are looked upon and the prevailing conditions under which they operate. However, despite the differences among the type of entrepreneurs, they all have two things in common; identifying an opportunity and striving to exploit that opportunity. The different types of entrepreneurs include: innovation driven entrepreneurship, lifestyle entrepreneurs, high growth entrepreneurs, habitual entrepreneurs, serial entrepreneurs, nascent entrepreneurs and Social entrepreneurs ^[20].

Innovation driven entrepreneurship is the creation of innovation driven enterprises. These are entrepreneurs who are motivated by the need to bring to the customers new innovations that have clear competitive advantage. This is done by taking today's resources and doing something distinctive with them. Examples include Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Microsoft etc. Lifestyle entrepreneurs are those who engage in a business with the aim that it will provide them with a decent standard of living. They are not focus on growth and are considered to run their business haphazardly. To such entrepreneurs, their objective is to manage the business in such a way that it provides them with enough income so they could maintain a certain life style. Examples include most "buyamsellams", most petit traders, such as call box operators, road side vendors, carpenters ^[21] etc. Novice entrepreneur is one who has successfully launched his/her first business. They have move beyond attempting to actually operating their ventures as novice entrepreneurs. Serial entrepreneurs are entrepreneurs who continuously come up with new ideas and starts new businesses. As oppose to a normal entrepreneur who will often come up with an idea, start the company, and then see it through and play an

¹⁶ Albert and Michael, "Women as Vectors of social entrepreneurship", 64

¹⁷ Vukenkeng Andrew Wujung and Moti Wilson John. "An Introduction to Entrepreneurship", Bamenda; Peaceberg Printers, (2015), 2

¹⁸ Ibid, 72

¹⁹ ibid

²⁰ A. Morrison, "A contextualization of entrepreneurship", in *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*, Vol. 12, No. 4, 196

²¹ Vukenkeng and Moti, "An Introduction to Entrepreneurship", 34

important role in the day to day functioning of the company, a serial entrepreneur will often come up with the idea and get things started, but then give responsibility to someone else and move on to a new idea and a new venture [22]. A Nascent entrepreneur is one who is seriously considering undertaking entrepreneurial activity and begins to commit time and other resources to founding a new firm. It is someone who is trying to start an independent business [23]. Social entrepreneur is an individual who engages in an entrepreneurial activity with an embedded social purpose. Social entrepreneurship is considered an entrepreneurial engagement with an objective to create social value by providing solutions to social problems [24].

Nexus and Contextual Relevance of the study

Social entrepreneurship which is our area of interest in this study is a diverse and rich phenomenon which is still relatively new. The phenomenon started emerging in Cameroon as from the 1990s to 2000s, especially with the passage of national legislation in 1992 intended to facilitate the creation of co-operative societies and Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) [25]. Social entrepreneurship is recognized as a comprehensive set of activities, ranging from individuals who devote their time, money and energy into making a difference, to new types of nonprofit organizations that are revising their operations based on the lessons learned from the business world [26]. Social entrepreneurs are not just about making a profit and looking after their self-interest; they are about creating value for the community and fixing social problems.

Economic development is define as the process of growth characterized by improvement in the quality of all human lives and capabilities by raising their standard of living, self-esteem and freedom [27]. The standard of living of a nation is however determined by the productivity of the labour force and the quality of goods and services at the disposal of the labour force. Thus, the creativity and innovativeness of the entrepreneur is very crucial for the economic growth and development of a nation. Entrepreneurship is often associated with wealth creation. In the quest for wealth either directly or indirectly the entrepreneur contributes to the growth and development of the country. Entrepreneurship does not only create employment opportunities, but also ensures variety of goods and services for the population. Thus, women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland, through their innovative an productive entrepreneurial engagements are contributing largely to the Gross National product in the different sectors just like the men, in job creation, availability of goods and services, women empowerment and gender equality.

2. Women Social entrepreneurs and their domains of engagement in the Bamenda Grassland.

These women social entrepreneurial groups included; Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW) which focused on environmental protection, sustainable management of the Kilum-Ijim Forest and Women's issues, Village Women Organization for Sustainable Development - Cameroon. (VIWOSUD - CAM) which focused on Health and advocacy on women's rights and empowerment, Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM) that focused on rendering social services, trainings, advocacy and sensitization campaigns on Women's rights and the empowerment of women and youths, Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group – Akum, Mile 5, engaged in agriculture, specifically animal husbandry, all operating in the Bamenda Grassland. (See Fig 1 below).

²² Ibid, 35

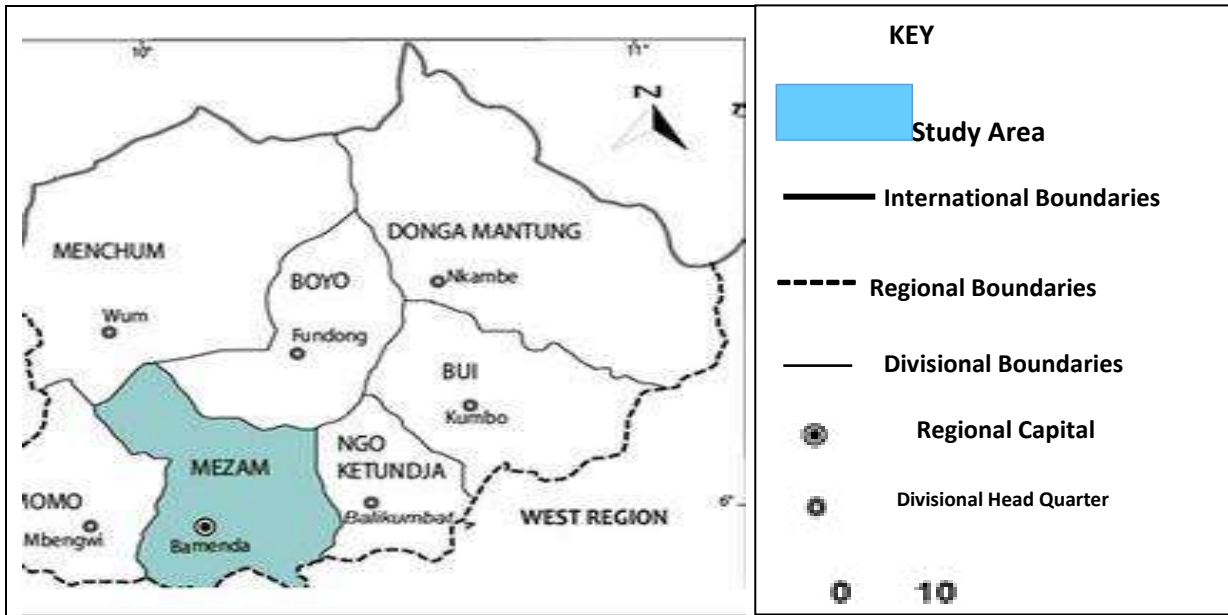
²³ Ibid, 36

²⁴ Sami Manner, "Motivations for Social Entrepreneurship in Finland", Master's Thesis, Department of International Business Management, University of Oulu, (November 2017),10

²⁵ National Legislation Law No. 92/006 of 14th August relating 1992 relating to the creation of Co-operative societies an Common Initiative Groups.

²⁶ S. Trevis Certo and Toyah. Miller. "Social entrepreneurship: Key issues and concepts", in *Business Horizons*, Vol. 51, No. 4, (2008), 269

²⁷ Vukenkeng and Moti, "An Introduction to Entrepreneurship", 14



Source: The New Administrative Map of Cameroon 1999 and Toposheet /1/200.000 of Nkambe, National Institute of Cartography, 1

Fig 1: Map of North West Region showing study area

These women social entrepreneurs carried out trainings, advocacy campaigns, lobbies, seminars, innovative support system, sensitization programs and activities in their different targeted groups of interest and areas of operations. Through these services the women social entrepreneurs were able to achieve their objectives of solving some pertinent economic and social problems in their communities, especially concerning women.

2.1. Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW)

The Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW) is a not-for-profit organization created in October 2007, with authorization No 000998/RDA/JO6/BAPP to work on environmental and women’s issues in Cameroon. The CAMGEW’s head office is at Oku, and Sevidzem Ernestine Leikeki is the Program Leader and founding member of the organization (See plate 1 below). The CAMGEW believed that the planet could be sustained by putting social and environmental justice at the centre of development [28]. Taking into consideration the numerous environmental and gender problems encountered in the world at large, and recognizing that solutions to these problems could only come through concerted actions from all concerned persons and organizations, CAMGEW was an initiative in this direction.

Plate 1: Picture of Sevidzem Ernestine, the Program Leader of CAMGEW, engaged in Forest conservation, environmental protection and Sustainable Development



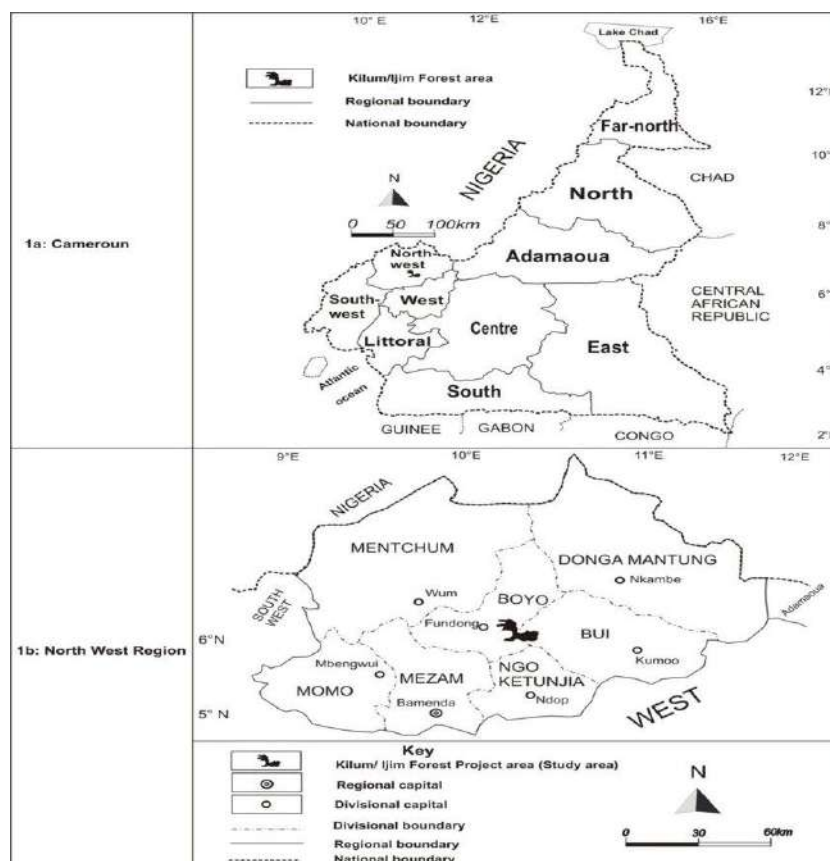
Source: Photo album of CAMGEW

²⁸ Interview with Ernestine Sevidzem Leikeki, 40 years, Program Leader of CAMGEW, Mile 2 Nkwen, 03/02/2020

The CAMGEW offers training in Agro forestry, Bee farming, Nursery development, Forest regeneration, operate a Honey shop, Oku White Honey value chain development, Micro-credit schemes for women and Environmental education. It carried out consultancy on Bee farming, trainings, Agro forestry and Forest regeneration, using honey bi-products for the production of other products like wax, candles and soaps. The CAMGEW had as vision a society free from poverty, gender inequality and unsustainable environmental practices. Its Mission Statement was geared toward environmental protection by strengthening the capacity of community members especially women and young people in eco-businesses and forest regeneration for livelihood improvement in the Kilum-Ijim forest area [²⁹]. The CAMGEW's Global objective was an inclusive and sustainably managed Kilum-Ijim forest through forest regeneration and agro forestry for eco-business. Its specific objectives included:

- To support local government actors and citizens' engagement promoted to ensure effective management of the Kilum-Ijim Forest.
- To ensure Eco-business operators have adequate capacity and increased revenue through the commercialization of their products
- To ensure women in the Kilum-Ijim area were empowered and participated in forest management and community development.
- To develop projects and sought funding to handle challenges in the Kilum-Ijim Forest area and develop a good system to manage funds.
- To work with like-minded organizations and people to share knowledge, experiences on forest local governance issues and learn from them [³⁰].

Its area of action had been Kilum-Ijim Forest and environs, and its targeted groups include; Forest users, less privileged children and peasant women. (See Fig 2 below).



Source: Adapted from the administrative map of Cameroon.

Fig 2: Map of North West Region locating the Kilum-Ijim Forest

²⁹ Interview with Ernestine Sevidzem Leikeki, 40 years, Program Leader of CAMGEW, Mile 2 Nkwen, 03/02/2020

³⁰ Idem, 03/02/2020

2.1.1. CAMGEW engaged in Environmental Protection and Forest Conservation (Sustainable Production and trading activities)

The CAMGEW was a women social entrepreneurial engagement in environmental and forest conservation, aimed at ensuring sustainable production and conservation of the forest by communities living around the forest areas. This was achieved through the development of projects on trainings for young people in various domains; apiculture, forest governance and conservation.

The CAMGEW had been working in the Kilum-Ijim forest area since 2010 and fast discovered that forest conservation could not be achieved if communities living around the forest suffered from poverty, unemployment and gender inequalities. The Organization then started thinking of how to make conservation a success by addressing these challenges in an integrated and differentiated approach. As a way forward, CAMGEW developed projects on vocational training for young people in dress making, shoe making, and hair dressing. Twenty-four (24) youths were trained to be change makers within four years [31]. The organization increased women and youth participation in apiculture, forest governance and conservation. Bee farmers' capacity was developed in qualitative and quantitative production of honey. They were organized in co-operatives and their leaders trained on management and leadership skills [32]. The Organization helped in marketing the honey in Bamenda town through CAMGEW – Honey shop and bees wax through identified international and local partners. (See plate 2 below).

Plate 2: CAMGEW training sessions on Apiculture, Forest Conservation and Leadership Development Skills.



Source: Photo album of CAMGEW

The Organization continued to create jobs especially for the communities' vulnerable groups, increased income and promotes gender balance. These jobs created out of forest helped to reduced pressure on the forest. Jobs created in the forest through apiculture helped conserve the forest better as they helped fight the greatest forest threat which is bushfire. Between 2007 to December 2017, CAMGEW planted 63,000 trees in the forest, trained 774 bee farmers, donated 480 beehives and 590 persons trained on agro forestry to help them conserve the soil and increase bee forage. The Organization created a Honey shop in Bamenda known as CAMGEW HONEY SHOP to help in the sales of bee farmers' products, material and equipment for honey harvesting and transformation. It also operated a micro-credit scheme for peasant women [33].

2.2. Village Women Organization for Sustainable Development - Cameroon (VIWOSUD-CAM)

The Village Women Organization for Sustainable Development Cameroon (VIWOSUD-CAM) is a non- governmental, non- sectarian, non-profit oriented and apolitical organization created in 1997 with an authorization to operate as a Non Governmental Organization in 2002. It is headed by Tanda Mariana Fumsi (See plate 3 below), with head office at Bambui -Tubah Sub Division, North West Region of Cameroon. The VIWOSUD-CAM works with rural women with a unique ability to integrate gender equality and women's empowerment into poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery and environment and sustainable development [34]. Through its global network, VIWOSUD-CAM worked, from the judiciary to the civil service, as well as in the private sector and civil society. These women equally participate with men in public dialogue and decision-making; influence the decisions that will determine the future of their families, especially Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), prisoners, destitute grassroots women and teenage mothers, youth and indigenous minority groups like the Mbororos [35].

³¹ Sevidzem, 03/02/2020

³² Idem

³³ Idem

³⁴ Interview with Mariana Fumsi Tanda, 43 years, Founder/CEO of VIWOSUD – CAM, Ndamukong – Nkwen, 06/04/ 2020

³⁵ Idem, 06/04/2020

Plate 3: Photograph of Tanda Mariana Fumsi, Founder / CEO of VIWOSUD – CAM, a woman social entrepreneur engaged in health and social services



Source: VIWOSUD-CAM Photo album.

The VIWOSUD – CAM's Program of action included; Socio- economic empowerment of the rural woman, advocacy on Women's Rights, Gender and youth development, Trainings and Education and its area of action is the Bamenda Grassland. The Vision of VIWOSUD-CAM was to enhance gender equality and women's empowerment through human rights enforcement as a pathway to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development. As Goals, the VIWOSUD-CAM sought to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and to empower women to assume decision-making positions at all sectors with special attention to marginalized and less privileged women, particularly women in rural areas. The fight against rural poverty depends on increased efforts to redress gender imbalances and empower rural women. The global objective of VIWOSUD – CAM was aimed at promoting the improvement of the living conditions of rural women by all means [³⁶]. Its specific objectives were:

- Enhanced the socio-economic initiatives amongst women through education, training and community development programs.
- To develop the skills and competencies of women to be able to reach decision-making levels in all spheres
- To lobby, advocate and promote awareness of women's issues and their rights
- Build the assertiveness, leadership and communication skills of rural women.
- Equip young women and men with advocacy and community management skills in order to be able to play a leading role in the transformation of their communities and in the advocacy and awareness campaign.
- To improve the level of networking between grassroots women's groups and civil society's organizations in order to build increased support for women's issues.
- To promote social awareness of women's issues and their rights, and erasing common stereotypes of women and their role in society
- Enhance dissemination of information about women's rights and gender issues [³⁷].

In a bid to achieving its objectives, VIWOSUD - CAM adopted as an approach to carryout its activities through the process of dialogue, advocacy, trainings, seminars, symposia, reflection with a strong incorporation of field activities. The organization also involved all stakeholders and actors in all their interventions. Its targeted groups included; Rural and semi urban women, minority groups like the Mbororos, widows, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC), destitute women, teenage mothers and youths [³⁸].

2.2.1. VIWOSUD-CAM in its social entrepreneurial venture engaged in the domain of health, sensitization and advocacy campaigns

Tanda Mariana Fumsi, the founder/CEO of VIWOSUD-CAM engaged in innovating project proposals geared towards mitigating social problems faced by women such as behavioral change in shifting concepts of widowhood inheritance, improvement of socio-economic livelihoods of women, inclusion of minority indigenous Mbororos women into development platforms. The organization engaged in sensitization campaigns (See plate 4 below) on the importance of girl education which led to gradual ceasing of obnoxious belief of female inheritance, land rights and a voice in decision making forums within the Bamenda Grassland [³⁹].The

³⁶ Interview with Mariana Fumsi Tanda , 43 years, Founder/CEO - VIWOSUD – CAM, Ndamukong – Nkwen, 06/04/ 2020

³⁷ Idem

³⁸ Idem,

³⁹ Idem, 06/04/2020

Organization conducted advocacy campaigns for the abolition of early marriage practices most especially within the Mbororos nomads communities; 13-16 years girls getting married to men over 70years at times for exchange of property [40].

Plate 4: VIWOSUD trainings and sensitization with the Mbororos



Source: Photo album of VIWOSUD – CAM

She also carried out women leadership trainings towards encouraging women to take part in local politics and municipal elections. This led to an increase in women's participation in politics and the engagement of women councilors who now take lead in developments actions in their various constituencies. This was reflected by the increase of women councilors and parliamentarians in Cameroon municipal and parliamentary elections of 2012 [41].

2.3. Mother of Hope - Cameroon (MOHCAM)

Mother of Hope Cameroon (MOHCAM) is a Non-for-profit organization committed to work with marginalized women and youths. MOHCAM was established in 2005 as a Common Initiative Group (CIG) and officially registered as an Association in 2007 with Registration No: 00001047/ARDA/JO6/ALPAS/APPBA following Law No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 on the freedom of associations in Cameroon [42]. The activities of MOHCAM are coordinated by a team of women, with Adah Mbah being the CEO / founder of the organization (See plate 5 below).

Plate 5: Photograph of Adah Mbah, CEO / Founder of MOHCAM, women social entrepreneur engaged in health, advocacy campaigns and training.



Source: Photo album of Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM)

⁴⁰ Idem, 06/04/2020

⁴¹ Idem

⁴² Interview with Adah Mbah, 41 years, Teacher, CEO / Founder of MOHCAM, Foncha street – Nkwen, 19/04/2020

The MOHCAM promotes human rights, fosters peace, security and development in communities and schools, advocacy against all forms of abuses and Gender Based Violence (GBV). The organization educated, empowered underprivileged youths and women to take up leadership positions and attained their full potentials [43]. It worked with and for women and youths, and advocated for the rights of widows in her communities. It carried out advocacy campaigns strengthening Women's participation as mediators and peace actors in local governance. The organization equally encouraged the socio-economic empowerment of the women through trainings in different sustainable income generating activities. Its area of action is the Bamenda grassland, with head office at Commercial Avenue [44]. The vision of MOHCAM was to give Hope to the Hopeless and propagate a culture of justice and peace. As goals, the MOHCAM sought to advance gender equality and the fight against violence, to encourage the economic empowerment of women and the fight against poverty, empower youths through trainings in leadership and development skills, educate the youths on their sexual reproductive health rights. The Global objective of MOHCAM is aimed at promoting gender equality, advocate for the rights of women and youths, and sensitize against Gender Based Violence. Its Specific objectives include:

- To educate, empower and transform women and youths at risk.
- To Lobby and advocate for human rights and social justice.
- To fight against hunger and poverty.
- To provide psycho-social counseling and support.
- To establish peace and Human rights clubs in secondary and High schools in the Bamenda Grassland[45]
- To promote peace and sustainable development [46].

In order to attain its objectives, MOHCAM adopted an approach of working at the roots, taking the bottom – top approach; going to the communities and getting integrated with the people and their problems. The targeted groups of MOHCAM included women and young girls, victims of violence and less privileged youths[47].

2.3.1. MOHCAM in its entrepreneurial venture engaged in the domain of women empowerment, Advocacy, Health and Human Rights campaigns

Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM) made great strides in sensitizations and advocacy campaigns on vital issues which pertained to women and young girls. The organization carried out trainings, advocacy, health campaigns, seminars, livelihood and psychosocial support, sensitization and women empowerment programs and activities with different groups of women and young girls in the Bamenda Grassland. Through these services MOHCAM strengthened the women and youths about their mental and social wellbeing, health and protection, sexual and reproductive health rights, freedom of speech and equal participation in decision making forums [48]. The Organization organized a series of skilled development health campaigns which enhanced the sexual reproductive health education of the young girls in the Bamenda Grassland. An example was the health sensitization campaign organized at the Mispa Orphanage Mile 5 Bambui, through which MOHCAM educated vulnerable teenage girls about their bodies, menstrual cycle and HIV/AIDS. The campaigns were often accompanied by the distribution of menstruation kits / sanitary pads and free testing for HIV/AIDS. These campaigns were aimed at keeping the girls safe from infections and teenage pregnancies common with vulnerable and teenage girls [49]. (See plate 6 below).

Plate 6: Skilled development Health campaigns of young girls and women on menstrual hygiene and Sexual Reproductive Health organized by MOHCAM



Source: Photo album of Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM)

⁴³ Idem

⁴⁴ Idem.

⁴⁵ G.B.H.S. Bamenda, G.B.H.S. Bamendakwe, G.B.H.S. Atiela, G.B.H.S. Down Town,

⁴⁶ Adah Mbah, 19/04/2020.

⁴⁷ Idem

⁴⁸ Idem

⁴⁹ Idem

2.4. Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group

Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group is a Community Based Organization created in 2006 and registered in 2009. It is headed by women with Head office in Akum – Mile 5 Mezam Sub Division, North West Region of Cameroon. The Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group works with rural women to promulgate women's empowerment, poverty alleviation through sustainable agricultural engagements, development, and integration of physically challenged persons in their communities [⁵⁰]. Margaret Akoh was the president and founding member of the Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group (See plate 7 below). The Group has been engaged in agricultural production, specifically animal husbandry; ranging from poultry farming, pig production, and rearing of rabbits. They have a poultry farm for both white birds (broilers) and layers for the production of eggs and broilers to markets in and around Bamenda town [⁵¹].

Plate 7: Photograph of Margaret Akoh, President of Devote Ladies CIG, Social entrepreneur engaged in agricultural production and trade



Source: Photo album of Devote Ladies CIG

The Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group's program of action included the Socio - economic empowerment of the rural woman to enhanced sustainable livelihood for women through agriculture. The global Objective of Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group was to promote and improve the living conditions of rural women through sustainable agriculture and improved health conditions of its targeted communities. Its Specific objectives included:

- To assist members engage in piggery and poultry farms as a means to encourage sustainable livelihoods of the women and youths in her community.
- To provide financial assistance to vulnerable and underprivileged children in their communities.
- To build the capacities of some physically challenged persons in their communities into agricultural activities, thereby keeping them busy.
- To provide assistance in the form of thrift and loans to members on a very low interest rate to help them carryout income generating activities and improve their standards of living [⁵²].

The targeted groups of Devoted Ladies Common Initiative include the vulnerable women, children and underprivileged youths in their communities [⁵³].

2.4.1. Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group engaged in Agricultural production and trade in its social entrepreneurial venture.

Another domain of intervention by women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda grassland was in agricultural production and trade activities. The basic economic activity in the Bamenda Grassland has traditionally been subsistence agriculture predominantly carried out by women [⁵⁴]. Women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland who engaged into

⁵⁰ Interview with Margaret Akoh, 49 years, Teacher / President – Devoted Ladies CIG, Akum Mile 5, 23/03/2020

⁵¹ Idem

⁵² Idem

⁵³ Idem.

⁵⁴ Ngong, "Indigenous entrepreneurs in Bamenda, 1939-1991: Emergence and Contributions", 20

agricultural production and sales of agricultural produce were not only able to raise income for themselves but equally created a social impact in their communities. They also encouraged other women to engage in sustainable agricultural practices which improved their living conditions [⁵⁵].

The Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group carried out production in different aspects of animal husbandry like poultry farming, pig production and rearing of rabbits. These women kept both white birds and layer birds for the production of eggs in large quantities. With the large scale production of eggs, she gained the market for the supply of eggs in and around Bamenda town [⁵⁶]. (See plates 8, 9 and 10 below).

Plate 8: Day old chicks at Brooding stage



Plate 9: Picture of White birds (broilers) at two months



Plate 10: Margaret Akoh picking eggs from the old layer farm



Source: Photo Album of Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group.

⁵⁵ Akoh, 23/03/2020

⁵⁶ Akoh, 23/03/2020

Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group, with grants received from PCP-ACEFA Mezam (Programme for the Consolidation and Sustainability of Agro pastoral Counseling) [57] together with an agropastoral counselor, constructed a modern piggery with the capacity of 20 pigs [58]. This group carried out pig breeding and fattening done in batches such that as each batch was sold, there was another batch for replacement from the breeding component. This was aimed at ensuring continuity all-round the year so that at any one point in time they had pigs for sale [59]. (See plate 11 below)

Plate 11: Pictures of a modern Piggery of the Devoted Ladies CIG



Source: Photo album of the Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group.

3. Contributions of Women Social Entrepreneurs towards the Socio-Economic Developments of the Bamenda Grassland

Women Social entrepreneurial engagements in the Bamenda Grassland made great strides towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. True to the spirit of entrepreneurship, they have been the initiators of several social changes. This goes in line with the postulation of Handwerker and Pratt that: “the changes that entrepreneurs initiate may expand an existing economic activity or introduce a qualitative, structural change in the economy or both” (W. Penn Handwerker and Marion Pratt, 1990: 5).

3.1. Economic Impact

Women social entrepreneurs through their various entrepreneurial ventures in the Bamenda Grassland left indelible trail in the domain of Women’s empowerment. In defining Women’s empowerment, it has five components: women’s sense of self-worth; their right to have access to opportunities and resources; their right to have the power to control their own lives both within and outside the home; and their ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just, social and economic order, nationally and internationally (Richardson Mark, 2017: 20). Through the activities of the various women social entrepreneurial engagements in the Bamenda Grassland, the women social enterprises were used as a tool for women’s empowerment. This was made possible by focusing on empowering women and girls through practical action, sensitization seminars and advocacy. The women’s social enterprises or organizations acted as a source of funding for women’s rights, a means to deliver training and a way to create economic empowerment through micro-entrepreneurship.

The CAMGEW was a women led social organization which set out not only to generate funds, but equally engaged in campaigns and ran projects geared towards empowering women directly. This empowerment programs were done by providing trainings and employment opportunities for women especially those around the Kilum-Ijim forest area in Oku, Kumbo and Jakiri Sub-divisions [60]. These were communities where unemployment, poverty, poor nutrition and poor health care facilities were critical issues that affected peasant women and their children. Some of these women were marginalized, less educated, suffered from domestic violence and their girls were victims to child trafficking and early marriages. Some of the women lacked access to finance, collateral security, and were not able to participate fully in decision making processes locally. However, poverty hit hard and women lacked farm inputs like tools, organic manure and improved seeds. Their crops easily got bad for lack of storage facilities. Paying school fees for children, hospital bills, food and

⁵⁷ Programme for the Consolidation and Sustainability of Agropastoral Counseling

⁵⁸ Akoh, 23/03/2020.

⁵⁹ Idem.

⁶⁰ Sevidzem, 03/02/2020

clothing for themselves and their children was a serious challenge. Most were forced to sell their crops at low cost to meet these needs because they lacked credit facilities and access to entrepreneurship opportunities. They were poorly organized and did not have basic skills in business planning and record keeping. These problems needed to be addressed in ways that were environmentally, socially and economically sustainable [61].

With the above challenges faced by the women of these communities, especially those around the Kilum-Ijim Forest area in Oku, Kumbo and Jakiri Sub-divisions, CAMGEW took on a practical action with them and together they developed new projects to solve the above mentioned problems. The Organization trained these women in micro business skills such as; retailing articles, traditional embroidery, hair dressing, homemade detergent dress making, to improve on their existing business activities and / or guide them start new ones. The trainings were facilitated by an experienced team of the organization and created a forum for experience sharing on various business ventures [62].

This Organization equally improved on the agricultural practices of the women in these communities. Women cultivated food crops such as Irish potatoes, vegetables, beans, groundnuts, bananas and plantains, poultry farming, rearing of goats, sheep and pigs. Some of these women transformed food crops into corn beer, gari, and equally engaged in restaurant businesses. Others also engaged in marketing of fish, meat, fruits, palm oil, organic manure and various crop seedlings [63]. All these went a long way to empower the women of the Kilum forest area economically thereby contributing to the economic development of the Bamenda Grassland.

In addition, MOHCAM also empowered the women, young girls and teenage mothers in the community through which they were able to generate income to cater for themselves and their children. It sponsored some under privileged and vulnerable women, youths and teenage mothers in learning trades which improved their living conditions and livelihoods. These trades included the making of bead slippers and sandals, jewelries, locally designed dairies, hand fans, bags, traditional embroidery and hair dressing (See plate 12 below). This provided psychosocial support to these vulnerable and less privilege women, youths and teenage mothers and equally provided a means of economic sustenance to their families [64]. Through these trades the women and teenage mothers were able to generate income to cater for their families [65].

Plate 12: Pictures of articles locally produced and designed by women trained by MOHCAM



Source: Photo album of Mother of Hope (MOHCAM)

Another contribution of women social entrepreneurs towards the economic development of the Bamenda Grassland was the creation of employment opportunities which had a direct positive effect on the economic development of the women. The Devoted Ladies Common Initiative Group started up just with family members working in the poultry farms [66]. But with the growth of the entrepreneurial engagement, diversification and expansion of her activities, there was need for employment of both permanent and temporal workers engaged in the various farms. The group had 20 temporal workers and 4 permanent workers, making a total of 24 in the different farms. Some of the workers were permanently working in the animal farms, while others were engaged in the sales of the products from the farms [67].

⁶¹ Idem

⁶² Idem

⁶³ Idem

⁶⁴ Idem

⁶⁵ Idem

⁶⁶ Akoh, 23/03/2020

⁶⁷ Idem

The VIWOSUD-CAM in carrying out sensitization campaigns and counseling sessions equally had permanent and temporal workers to assist in executing her activities. The permanent workers included secretaries, drivers, psycho-therapists and counselors. The temporal workers were often recruited when the need arose to execute project activities [68].

Furthermore, another economic impact of the Women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland was the availability of a micro credit scheme which provided loans to peasant women at low interest to help them engage in small businesses. The CAMGEW micro credit scheme built women's skills to become entrepreneurs and have access to finances to start businesses. They could support their children with school needs or in learning a trade [69]. Since the women were economically empowered, they now built assets or heritage that could guarantee their health, nutrition, accommodation, social life and the welfare of their families. They depended less on their husbands financially and materially [70].

In another perspective, the women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland, contributed to economic development through the encouragement given to women to obtain valid national identification documents (National Identity Cards). This was the experience of CAMGEW working within the rural communities. Reaching out to the women through its micro-credit scheme, women were enlightened on the importance of possessing the national identification documents. Presentation of valid national identification papers both for the woman and her guarantor was a pre-condition to receive a loan from their scheme. This pushed many families to have their identification papers [71]. The police national identification officer in Oku confirmed that the number of women who made identification papers greatly increased thanks to the CAMGEW women empowerment program through micro credit scheme [72].

3.2. Social Impact

A fundamental social impact of Women Social entrepreneurship in the Bamenda Grassland was the rise in the social status of some women and young girls in their communities. Women social enterprise was an effective tool in enabling women to speak and be heard within their communities. It was most effective using some form of cooperative model, which brought together groups of women who collectively were able to speak out and took actions on issues that concerned them. A striking example was Mother of Hope - Cameroon (MOHCAM) which catalyzed social change. It was an advocate of women's right and campaigned vigorously against Gender Based Violence (GBV) which many women in their communities had been victims of and supported such acts in silence. Through its sensitization campaigns, it created a forum and gave opportunities to women to speak out [73].

Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM) advocated for women's rights, equality and empowerment. It was able to give counseling support and directives to victims of domestic violence. There were some victims of GBV who were able to have financial support from the Ministry of Women's Empowerment through the association [74]. The MOHCAM believed in education of women and girls; promoting a safe space, cooperation, friendship, peace and respect for human rights for all. The Organization enabled women and girls to acquire knowledge and skills in leadership [75]. (See plate 13).

Plate 13: Sensitization Seminars and workshops on Human Rights and Leadership by MOHCAM



Source: Photo album of Mother of Hope - Cameroon (MOHCAM)

⁶⁸ Tanda, 06/04/2020

⁶⁹ Sevidzem, 03/02/2020

⁷⁰ Idem

⁷¹ Idem

⁷² Interview with Ferdinand Kenchop Tsopmene , 46 years, Police Officer, Oku, 19/02/2020

⁷³ Adah, 19/04/2020

⁷⁴ Idem

⁷⁵ Idem

In another perspective, women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland created great impact through the provision of medical facilities and equipments to some communities in dire need of these equipments and facilities. These helped improve the quality of health care service delivery. Inadequate health facilities and poor health care service delivery is one of the biggest challenges faced in the health care sector in the Bamenda Grassland in particular and Cameroon as a whole. These women social entrepreneurs identified the need for affordable health care facilities in a community and carried out a series of initiatives to benefit the community. Tanda Mariana Fumsi of VIWOSUD-CAM in 2013, with funding from the U.S. Embassy Yaounde Cameroon Health Challenges and Development Pilot Program (HCDPP), executed a project in the Ngyen-Mbo Integrated Health Centre in Mbengwi, Momo Division of the North West Region. This project consisted of equipping the Ngyen-Mbo Integrated Health Centre as a strategy to improve on the quality of health service delivery in the Ngyen-Mbo Community. Alongside equipping this Integrated Health Centre, there was the sensitization of the Ngyen-Mbo community on HIV/AIDS related topics. Through this, she engaged in the capacity building of peer educators for sensitization on poor health practices in the Ngyen-Mbo community [76]. The projects' main goal was to contribute to the reduction of maternal mortality and the prevalence of HIV/AIDS and other disease, through increased access to quality health services and information related to HIV/AIDS and other related illnesses in the Ngyen-Mbo Community [77]. More specifically the project entailed:

- Equipping the Ngyen-Mbo Integrated Health Centre with basic equipment and laboratory machines.
- Identifying and training peer educators
- Facilitating HIV/AIDS related anti-stigma/discrimination campaign,
- Advocating the promotion of Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARVT), and Christianity as the main pillars of positive living under the theme “positive living with HIV/AIDS for you and for me”.
- Anti-Retroviral Treatment (ARVT) and Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) management, literacy and adherence capacity building [78].

The Equipment supplied by VIWOSUD-CAM to the Ngyen-Mbo integrated health centre within the framework of the HCDPP - funded by the U.S. Embassy in Yaounde included; solar panel and the power supply system, centrifuge, sterilizer, lab stools, microscope, drip stands, steps for delivery room, foetoscope, delivery kit, manual aspirator [79]. (See plates 14 and 15 below)

Plate 14: Installation of solar panels and the power supply system at the Ngyen-Mbo integrated Health Centre supervised by the Fon of Ngyen-Mbo.



Source: Photo album of VIWOSUD – CAM.

⁷⁶ Tanda, 06/04/2020

⁷⁷ Idem

⁷⁸ Idem

⁷⁹ Idem

Plate 15: Equipments supplied to the Ngyen-Mbo Integrated Health Centre

LAB EQUIPMENTS



STERILIZER



MICROSCOPE

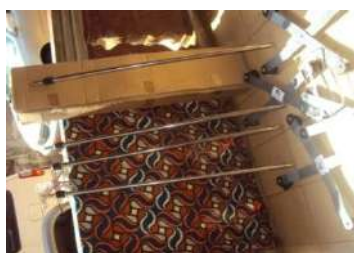


LAB STOOLS



CENTRIFUGE

MATERNITY EQUIPMENTS



DRIP STANDS



STEPS FOR DELIVERY ROOM



FOETOSCOPE



DELIVERY KIT



MANUAL ASPIRATOR

Source: Photo Album of VIWOSUD-CAM

With the installation of the solar panel and equipping the Ngyen-Mbo Integrated Health Centre, there has been an increase in the number of women who visit the health unit for antenatal consultations. This was not the case before because at the time of carrying out the base line survey the unit had recorded just 4 births since its creation. Just two weeks after equipping it a total of eight (8) deliveries were recorded [⁸⁰].

One of the greatest impacts was the increase in the number of health personnel from two to five as a result of the implementation of the project. The Health Centre now has a Laboratory Technician who takes charge of all laboratory analysis [⁸¹]. The acquisition of a solar refrigerator facilitated the conservation of vaccines which initially were stored at the District hospital. Before the execution of this project, the number of children to be vaccinated for a day was censored and a bike hired to cover a distance of about 15 kilometers to get to District Hospital to collect the vaccines. But today as a result of equipping the health unit the vaccines are stored on the spot [⁸²].

⁸⁰ Tanda, 06/04/2020

⁸¹ Idem

⁸² Idem

Most of the children for antenatal consultation were catered for on the spot as vaccines could be stored in the fridge provided. This greatly encouraged the women to visit the unit for post natal care. The equipping of this Health Centre encouraged the medical doctors to effect routine consultations and this encouraged the community members to make regular use of the health unit [83].

Another impact created by the women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland was in the assistance given to less privileged women, Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC). These women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland besides engaging in training these under privileged women, destitute grassroots women and teenage mothers, to be able to fully engage in profitable income generating activities which could help sustained their livelihoods, they gave the women and OVCs assistance in cash and kind (rice and vegetable oil), cubes of soap, dresses, shoes, school fees and other school needs, etc) to help meet their immediate needs. A glaring example was VIWOSUD-CAM of Tanda Mariana Fumsi which had as one of its main objective to promote and improve the living conditions of rural women by all means, and to provide care and support to OVCs. Through this, VIWOSUD-CAM provided some basic needs (foodstuff, tablets of soap, dresses,) to some orphans, less privileged and vulnerable children.

In another dimension, Mother of Hope – Cameroon (MOHCAM) made great contributions in this direction. The organization in a bid to improve on the living conditions of the rural women, less privileged and other vulnerable children, did not only sponsor the training of some of these women and teenage mothers in productive income generating activities, but also helped and supported some of the women by providing them with some basic household commodities which they could not easily afford. These items provided included; rice, tomatoes, salt and soap. These provisions went a long way to help improve on their living conditions, thereby promoting economic development [84]. (See plate 16 below)

Plate 16: Photographs of MOHCAM giving food items to some less privilege Women in Ndop.



Source: Photo album of MOHCAM.

In addition, CAMGEW through their micro credit scheme promoted solidarity amongst the women and cooperation in their respective families. During disbursement of loans, the women were organized to form solidarity groups [85]. In these groups, members were each other's keepers. They learned from each other's experience and shared in their moments of joy and sorrow. The issue of inferiority and superiority complex was reduced because the women were of the same status. The CAMGEW's trainings and creation of solidarity groups resulted in a positive change of behaviour by most of the women [86]. Many men attested that the CAMGEW's project has made their homes / families stronger with greater cooperation between husband and wife. This was evident as many of the men came to guarantee their wives get the CAMGEW's loans [87]. The public security agent in Oku attested that there was a reduction of domestic violence cases at the police stations thanks to CAMGEW counseling and the women economic programme [88]. Through CAMGEW counseling services women learned to focus on possibilities and took responsibility over happenings around them.

⁸³ Munang, 20/06/2020

⁸⁴ Mbah, 19/04/2020

⁸⁵ Sevidzem, 03/02/2020

⁸⁶ Sevidzem, 03/02/2020

⁸⁷ Idem

⁸⁸ Interview with Ferdinand Kenchop Tsopmene, 46 years, Police Officer, Up station, 19/02/2020

4. CONCLUSION

The study set out to investigate women social entrepreneurial activities and their contributions towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland; 1990 – 2009. In light of this, we examined the different case studies of women social entrepreneurs and discussed their activities analyzing their various domains of intervention; evaluated the contributions made by these women social entrepreneurs towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland.

The findings revealed that the activities of the women social entrepreneurs were anchored on sectors that provided fruitful solutions to some societal and environmental problems which enhanced the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. Their domains of interventions included; agro-pastoral production and trading activities, health, environmental protection and sustainable forest exploitation, and rendering of social services in areas of sensitization campaigns, advocacy, trainings, women and youth empowerment programs, and education. The engagements and activities of the women social entrepreneurs in the Bamenda Grassland made great pace contributing towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland. They were instrumental in creating employment opportunities, introducing innovations, inducing economic growth, identifying and solving environmental problems, enhancing cooperation in families, promoting women's empowerment, providing forums for women and youths suffering from some social vices linked to Gender Based Violence to speak out. Their consistency of purpose, sincere devotion, and whole hearted commitment to their various social entrepreneurial ventures let them to attain huge entrepreneurial heights, and made great strides in contributing towards the socio-economic development of the Bamenda Grassland.

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