

# Bridgers Association Cameroon

## 'Empowering for Development'

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## 2020 ANNUAL REPORT



**Our Mission:** To empower women/girls to create an environment in which both men and women enjoy equity, contribute and benefit as equal partners without any barriers.

**Our Vision:**

We have the vision for a level ground where all women/girls would have equal access to resources to enable them realize their full potential, their sex, age, colour/race, country and financial backgrounds notwithstanding.

**Our Values:**

We are change makers working within the ambit of guided principles that shape our integrity in all we do: Empathy - Humanity -Solidarity -Social Justice - Racial Justice - Equity and Accountability

Prepared by Management  
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## List of Abbreviations

- UN:** United Nations.  
**SRHR:** Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights.  
**WASH:** Water Sanitation and Hygiene.  
**HIV:** Human Immunodeficiency Virus.  
**AIDS:** Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome.  
**STI:** Sexually Transmissible Infection.  
**STD:** Sexually Transmissible Disease  
**COVID-19:** Coronavirus disease of 2019



## **Executive Summary**

This report is an insight to our activities for the year 2020. Bridgers Association Cameroon in accordance with our strategic plan for the years 2019 to 2023 approved by our board of directors, implemented projects that aligned with the UN Agenda 2030 and the African Union Agenda 2063.

To improve on the health situation of targeted beneficiaries, we enlightened school girls on the proper ways of menstrual hygiene management that involved the introduction/distribution of the menstrual cup as a novelty in Cameroon. This has curbed environmental hazards as each girl that benefitted from the cup reduces the tons of trash produced each day from one time use synthetic pads. Girls and young women benefitted from our educational workshops on proper birth control which has gone a long way to reduce unplanned pregnancies in schools and high birth rate that causes poverty and illiteracy within communities. HIV/AIDS prevention as well as COVID-19 barrier measures was mainstreamed in our health campaigns, though we implemented activities in the University of Yaoundé II, Soa that saw the distribution of preservatives such as male and female condoms. This has served as a wakeup call to these youth to foster the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and other STIs/STDs.

Over 2000 people within the community of Kake, Mbam and Kim Division, Center Region are now consuming clean drinking water for the first time ever. Thanks to our intervention through the construction of a protected spring well and the provision of stand taps flowing from the natural water source closer to the homes of the community dwellers. This has drastically reduced water borne diseases and consequential deaths. Over 300 Baka indigenous Pygmy women of the Kwouamb village, East Region who lacked knowledge on the cultivation of vegetables and fruit trees were trained on the cultivation of fruits and vegetables such as huckleberry; okra and lemon. Emphasis was on organic methods for both household consumption and commercial purposes. This has improved the nutritional eating habits of the beneficiary population and equally ensured financial stability. We also empowered over 500 internally displaced women from the crisis stricken North West Region of Cameroon. These beneficiary women received trauma healing; training on income generating activities as well as material resources and startup capital donations. Beneficiaries, as a result, have undergone to a greater extent trauma healing and relieved from financial hardship that had made them vulnerable to social ills such as prostitution, mental poverty, a gender based violence and pushing children to early and forced marriages. They are now capable of paying for their children's education and medical bills than it was the case before.

We equally provided tuition and didactic materials to over 200 vulnerable girls nationwide in order to promote school attendance. Prizes were awarded to girls who made outstanding strides in science subjects as a way of encouraging girls in STEM.

Beside our regular staff, we also retained some volunteers and assisted in improving their leadership skills at the work place as a way of promoting global workplace diversity and inclusion working skills for young graduates.

# 1. Promotion of Sexual Reproductive Health and Rights

## 1.1. Menstrual Cup as Alternative to Sanitary Napkins

In partnership with Iron Kids of the World Foundation Costa Rica the Menstrual Cup was introduced as a means to proper menstrual hygiene promotion. These cups were distributed to over 315 girls in 04 schools and 04 communities. This project aims at introducing and training young women/girls on the use of the menstrual cup and then distributing these cups as a sustainable alternative to menstrual hygiene management as a novelty. Before distribution, sensitization workshops were organized in the concerned schools during which messages focused on proper hygiene and nutrition during menstruation. Stigma related to menstrual flow was also handled during the sensitizations. Boys accepted and served as advocates to encourage their sisters and female friends to feel free during their menstrual flow period. The boys pledged their support to the girls at all times and promised to stand by them during those periods.

Creating awareness on and promoting the use of the menstrual cups is a sustainable way of managing menstrual hygiene. The cup is economically cheaper, safer for both man and the environment. Today, many young women and girls in Cameroon have accepted and are yearning to use the menstrual cup. Many girls now stay in school during the period of their flow than it was the case before. Equally there is a reduction of the dumping of used pads in the environment with the use of the menstrual cup.



*Pictures above: Show menstrual cups and reusable pads beneficiaries and project team in various training workshops in schools and communities*

## 1.2. Prevention of HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS is still a major issue here in Cameroon with girls and young women being the most vulnerable and most affected. During the year, we carried out the campaign against the spread of HIV in some secondary schools and reached out to over 4200 students in 04 schools (These schools

include New Century Secondary and High school, Success International Bilingual College, Christ the King College and Ayungha Bilingual secondary and high school as well as the Kake community of the Mbam and Kim Division and the Soa University community, all of the Center Region of Cameroon). Students/youth have become more aware of the negative effects of HIV and are thus using the various means as they choose in protecting themselves from contamination. Amongst the methods are chastity and use of condoms for persons of their age group. We also stress the importance to get tested and their own health-status as well as the health status and take measures to prevent or spread the disease as the case may be.

With technical and material support from the National AIDS Control Committee of Cameroon, ACMS and others, Bridgers Association Cameroon was able to carry out community outreach and awareness raising campaigns in 7 localities, distributing 23,000 male and female condoms as well as lubricating oil within the framework of fighting HIV/AIDS. Because of the intervention, the narratives are now changing when it comes to the female condom which many women used to be shy about its use. Today, many women show interest in being educated on its use and are using it as a means to protect themselves from contracting HIV.



*Pictures above shows HIV/AIDS community outreach by Bridgers team and distribution of condoms and flyers*

### **1.3. Promotion of birth control for Women**

In order to help young women to become capable of asserting their reproductive rights, we carried out a project to improve their knowledge on the various means of birth control they can adopt. We reached out to about 300 young women in Yaoundé. The sensitizations served as an eye opener for most of the women who are now more assertive to their rights on when to have a child. This project was carried out in partnership with Becker/Cordes Foundation Germany.



*Pictures above: Beneficiaries and project team posed for pictures as well as birth control pills exhibited*

#### **1.4. Mainstreaming Barrier Measures Against COVID-19**

The continuation of this project was interrupted by the outbreak of the Corona Virus pandemic plaguing the entire world, with the first cases diagnosed in Cameroon at the end of February 2020, schools were then suspended accompanied by a total lockdown of all activities only to resume at the end of May 2020. With such situation warranting an emergency response we could not remain indifferent. We therefore instead of continuing with education on sexual reproductive health rights, especially as we had surpassed our target beneficiary number in the project, we had to flexibly divert to sensitize students on how to prevent COVID-19 through the proper washing of hands and all other preventive or barrier measures accompanied by the donation of hand washing kits and alcoholic hand sanitizers to the two beneficiary schools in which we carried out the sensitization, thus exhausting the funds and completing this project.



*Pictures above: Donating COVID-19 prevention kits and demonstrating proper hand washing methods in schools and communities*

## **2. Ensuring Sustainable Agriculture and Economic Empowerment**

Through our climate smart agriculture projects we are ensuring food security and the improvement of livelihoods of beneficiaries in underserved communities in Cameroon. We trained indigenous Baka Pygmy women in the East Region of Cameroon on vegetable cultivation for both commercial and home consumption as practical solutions to reduce poverty and malnutrition in their communities. They also gained skills on effective land use and sustainable land management as well as the planting of fruit trees to mitigate the effects of climate change. Through our intervention, the

Baka Pygmy beneficiaries now use organic manure for the planting of crops and vegetables in their gardens which are inter-spaced with fruit trees for environmental purposes. This has gone a long way to prevent soil degradation, improved nutritional intake for beneficiaries and members of their households as well as improvement in their level of income through the selling of excess produce. Less labour is also used with a corresponding increase in quantity and quality of produce.



*Pictures above: Organic grown vegetables by Baka Indigenous women from farm to preparation for sale*



*Pictures above: Planting of trees and sample farm tools with cross-section of beneficiaries*



*Pictures above: Linear planting of okra demonstrated and organic manure application by beneficiaries*



### 3. Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

With our WASH Program, we have been able to impact the lives of over 2,000 people directly and indirectly focusing on hygiene while providing access to clean water and reduction in water borne diseases. The project was implemented in Kake village in Ntui subdivision with the financial assistance of Japan Water Forum (JWF). We have rehabilitated the water reservoir, collection point, covered it and constructed a standing platform and stairs around the structure for its accessibility. 02 stand taps were also constructed at locations closer to the population. A water management committee was trained and commissioned to oversee the proper use of the facility and the entire water system. They are using knowledge gained to maintain the water supply system. Also, community members were trained on alternative and less expensive methods of water purification including boiling, sun bathing, etc. As a result, the community members have better access to potable water. Incidences of water borne diseases have reduced thus improving the health of the population. Women and children now have more time to do other activities and study respectively because the distance to fetch potable water has drastically reduced from more than 5km before to about 0.5km at the moment.



*Pictures above: Kake village community posed for picture with WASH project team and constructed water now flows in good quality*

### 4. Economic Empowerment of Women

Over 520 internally displaced women including single mothers and widows were supported to start income generating activities as a means of livelihoods. With financial support from Canada Fund for Local Initiatives (CFLI), these 520 vulnerable women and girls received both financial and psychosocial support. Having fled from the conflict-stricken North West and South West Regions, these women were suffering from trauma, hunger, poverty and homelessness. As a result, they suffered sexual violence from men in exchange of basic life needs.

The beneficiaries were trained on the baking and frying of fast foods using wheat flour and the transformation of cassava in to starch for dress stiffening. To improve their business startups, they were also trained on basic financial record keeping to ascertain success. Beneficiaries received

improved cook stoves that release very little carbon dioxide. This has helped to reduce air pollution, thereby promoting climate justice and mitigating effects of climate change. Beneficiaries are now making substantial financial contributions in their household management and can now sponsor their children in school. Women's financial autonomy and freedom, has improved and they are now more assertive in their home management as well as amongst their peers of the civil service class.



*Pictures above: Training sessions for income generating activities and financial/material start-up capital donation for beneficiary women in Bamenda*



*Pictures above: Economic empowered beneficiaries actively carrying on with their businesses*

## **5. Promotion of Education**

### **5.1. Quality Education For The Girl Child**

Each academic year, Bridgers Association Cameroon offers resources in the form of scholarships to vulnerable girls including tuition fees payment and the donation of didactic materials to enable learning with ease. It is an ongoing project of the Organization that had commenced since inception. The academic year 2019/2020 saw the school needs of over 150 students and pupils met. A similar gesture has continued for the academic year 2020/2021 with an additional 200 beneficiaries

nationwide benefitting full study kits just enough to ease their studies to the end of the academic year. This also promotes excellence by awarding merit based prizes at the end of each school term to outstanding students and pupils attending school in vulnerable communities. We award prizes to girls making strides in subjects such as Mathematics; Physics; Biology; Chemistry and Computer Sciences as our own means of promoting STEM.



*Picture above: Beneficiary pupils receiving prizes for quality performance*

## **5.2. Promoting Volunteerism and Leadership Development**

This project forms part of our strategy to combat youth unemployment and volunteering apathy as well as promotion of peace and civility among youth. We therefore offer free placements to youth (both nationals and foreigners) with proven interest in our work. Through such placements we drill youth on the importance of volunteering towards making a difference in their communities and at the same time adding value to their own lives by building strong leadership skills and gaining experience in the work environment. During the year we retained 04 international volunteers onsite (01 male and 03 female); with 20 others working online from 05 different continents of the world and 57 nationals serving within the different towns of Cameroon.



*Pictures above: Volunteers involved in different stages in various projects at Bridgers Association Cameroon*

## 6. Conclusion

So far, the year 2020 records a good number of achievements attained by Bridgers Association Cameroon ranging from reclaiming the SRHR of adolescents; minimizing unplanned pregnancies and keeping more girls in school; ridding women of their deplorable poverty situations and minimizing gender based violence against women; reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS and related diseases; getting more girls into school; giving students access to the computer and digital world and also fighting youth unemployment.

However, our work has not gone without some pitfalls which have to do with the prevalence of the Coronavirus pandemic, which has not only posed a threat to health but equally caused a drop in funding, thus, a slowdown in activities.

