

## Cameroon Report 2009

A late Happy New Year to all!



### My mother Monica Sienkafu

1936-01/02/2009

She taught me that who ever puts the hands in the soil shall never be deceived in life. Nonetheless she farmed all her life but died in misery under the pressure of the life of small holder farmers turned into subsistent farmers.

Her fate is that of all small holders in Africa.

Since I started working the land with her, I am ready more than ever before for change through making small holder farming a vocation developing a network of like minded people to support positive African values, organic gardening and traditional biodiversity conservation.

At the beginning of this New Year, the whole world is in a financial crisis. The rich are becoming richer and for the poor the tunnel becomes narrower and narrower.

This is not new; however, only the pace of things has become more rapid. The rich will survive the crisis, but many poor will not. The crisis will pass but many Africans would have lost families and valuable top soil due to their inability to manage farming and food systems.

The whole world is in the midst of an ecological catastrophe. In Africa the sell out of nature by egoistic politicians, destruction of the rainforests and the displacement of its inhabitants is a point of no return in Cameroon. Not even the government is well protected against the destruction. ***What we need now are effective and lasting sustainable projects run in collaboration with those in the West who care about a better world.***

### Africa in Miniature

Cameroon is a rich country. Everything that one can imagine under the sun in an African country, here one still finds. Tropical rain forests and incomparable biodiversity. Two of the three African great apes, forest elephants and many other threatened animals and plants are still here in the Cameroon part of the Congo basin. The remaining rain forests are millions of years old and offer unique biodiversity.



The north of Cameroon is the native haven of elephants, rhinoceroses, giraffes, zebras, lions, leopards, cheetahs and antelopes. Fruits and vegetables grow naturally in the southern part of Cameroon in rich diversity and very good quality. Tropical wood, bananas, coffee, cocoa, tea, and rubber are export commodities. Nevertheless, tropical wood and bush meat are commodities that are fast running out. The sub soil abounds in resources like oil, aluminium, bauxite, iron and precious minerals.

If one compares Cameroon to a European country which lacks raw materials, one would think that, with diligent exploitation of the rich natural resources everyone in Cameroon would be wealthy. Unfortunately 40% of Cameroonians live below the poverty line.



### What is not right here?

Cameroonians are peace loving people; even though most people are poor. Life in the big towns is very expensive. Cars, refrigerators, pharmaceuticals, cooking oil and most basic necessities – things which are common place and absolutely normal for Westerners cost triple the price paid in Europe. Medicine is a luxury and the pharmaceutical companies eat fat on our poverty. Edible oil, canned food, cheese and many natural items of daily life in European super markets cost three times as much here. However, vegetables and fruits are available in varied choices, of high quality and are cheap. A Cameroonian pineapple is incomparable in taste to the ones sold in Europe and costs four times cheaper. If we compare the prices of commodities with incomes, Cameroon is an expensive country.

One of the main reasons is neo-colonialism and unfair trade, in addition to corruption practiced in high places which gives people few chances.

The Natural environment which is so important for subsistence has been robbed of its valuable aspects. The rain forests alone which if well managed is able to nourish millions of its inhabitants has disappeared to only a section and hunters shoot the still remaining wild animals to satisfy the bush meat market. Many species are in the final phase of extinction. Cameroon's coastal waters are over fished by the Chinese. The exploitation of the country's wealth in favour of multinationals and a few super rich in power is in its final phase. The far cry for all young people is that Cameroon is on sell and its natural beauty and riches are in danger in every sense as the youth are deprived of their right to development.



***Better World Cameroon is working in partnership with the ministries of Environment and Nature Protection and Agriculture and Rural Development to raise awareness on the relationship between nutrition and crime and learning to restore the links with the land and the people's culture.***

### HISTORY

Germany was the first colonial power to annex Cameroon on 5th July, 1884. In 1918, after the First World War, the French and British took over power. In 1960 the French part of Cameroon became independent and one section of the Southern Cameroon joined La

Republic du Cameroon through a plebiscite while the other section joined Nigeria. Behind the word Colonialism was severe exploitation and domination.

Today the remaining resources of the country are like in a self service supermarket.

In today's world the new concept is neocolonialism and it has global economic power and the power to exploit the planet even further without any conscience no regard for the future. The Cameroon government is corrupt and dependent on the economy of the West. Over 60% of the Cameroonians now believe in Jesus Christ and that does not make a lot of difference.

There is a lot to be done to save lives but nothing is being done to change the situation. In the western world economic problems are a public concern. In Cameroon the common man can not understand what went wrong or what is going on. Everything is shrouded in government secrecy and propaganda.

We live in a globalized world, so they say but , everything is exaggerated by the media and seen only from the stand point of the rich that no one seem to see the danger any more.

One would imagine that the herald of the disaster is ringing a bell in the worldwide climate change for every one to hear but time passes on!

Better World Cameroon has taken a home grown initiative called \*Ndanifor Community Garden Project which uses market based urban farming as a precursor of entrepreneurial organic gardening targeting "at risk" youth populations. The garden's underlying philosophy is: Respect Nature, Respect yourself and respect other. The project has initiated an ecological rehabilitation movement in Cameroon to change young people's lives. The project is reconnecting youths back to the land as a source of livelihood. The Ndanifor 5 acre piece of land is a portrayal of gardens as a democratic space and gardening as an activity that brings diverse groups together in mutual self interest. In the city of Yaounde, the garden offers an opportunity for poor families and youths in the community to help themselves cope with the present food crises. The purpose of the programme is to teach agriculture and gardening but most importantly the goal is to teach good work ethics that translates to many forms of employment. The tangible nature of gardening allows participants to see the rewards of one's labour, the benefits of team work and the importance of commitment and patience. The garden is also highly valued as a resource for the education, recreation and socialisation of children. It has given hope to those without hope. It has given food to those without food and brought knowledge of development to those without development.

This experiment has clearly demonstrated that many young people who are in destitute circumstances as a result of the hard times are ready, willing and anxious to work. We believe that this participatory experience that connects young people in the cities, especially children, to the soil and plant and animal life can be expanded to become a model for adaptation and mitigation of climate change world wide.

#### **What is needed?**

We need people who support us with voluntary work.

We need financial support.

We need help for marketing and fund raising.

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