



**CAMYOSFOP**

# The Voice of Peace

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P.O. BOX 3873, WARDA, YAOUNDE TEL: (+237) 677-329-361 EMAIL: camyosfop\_p@yahoo.com Website: www.camyosfop.org

## EDITORIAL

### Ending SGBV Amongst Vulnerable Groups Amid COVID 19

Gender-based violence (GBV) is a serious violation of human rights and should be punishable. The Cameroon Youth and Students Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP) in partnership with UN Women, Plan International amongst others in the past decades have been working effortlessly to change attitudes and behaviours in relation to EVAWG, HIV/AIDS stigmatization and drug abuse within vulnerable communities.

In line with her actions, CAMYOSFOP in partnership with UN Women implemented a project on the “fights against stigmatization of HIV/AIDS amid the COVID 19 within the Mbororo, Pygmy, Youth and Women Living with HIV/AIDS in the East, West and South West Regions of Cameroon” The talking points were, GBV, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and COVID 19 prevention and management.



Source: Punch Newspaper

The focus was on capacity building, economic empowerment, psychosocial support aim to build capacity of women and girls at risk of contracting HIV/AIDS, vulnerable to gender based violence, drug abuse amid COVID -19 given their economic situation that complicates the sustainability of their livelihood and treatment, as well as awareness raising for sustainable behavioral change.

Series of activities were carried including; Capacity building workshops, economic empowerment of women groups living with HIV/AIDS, awareness raising through community sensitization (Caravan) and media outreach programs in the East, West, Littoral and South West regions of Cameroon, training of Health personnel, provision of Psycho social services to the target communities and finally, provision of financial support for the micro projects.

#### Outcome

-100 women and youth sensitized on HIV/AIDS stigmatization and COVID-19 prevention and management in the Mbororo and pygmy communities.

-6 groups of women living with HIV/AIDS health and livelihood situations improved through the implementation of micro projects.

-A network of Young people living with HIV/AIDS set-up and linked to health facilities, hospitals and community-led services for HIV treatment and awareness raising  
Psychosocial services provided to about 100 Mbororo and pygmy Women Living with HIV/AIDS.

-35 Health practitioners trained on providing medical support for persons living with HIV/AIDS amid the COVID-19

-CAMYOSFOP's primary purpose is to safeguard the rights and well-being of women, girls and youth vulnerable to violence to ensure they are protected against GBV.

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## Speakout GBV: Society will Always be There

Society is watching, Society is watching. Yes society is watching and society will always watch if you die Society will still watch speak out and walk away from violence of any kind while you still can.



Picture Source: The Namibian

Violence against women is violation of human rights yet it is still widespread. If you are experiencing violence, reach out to your family, friends or neighbors, to seek support or shelter in case you need to leave the house immediately for safety. Gender-based violence can include sexual, physical, mental, threats of violence, coercion and manipulation and economic harm inflicted in public or in private to an individual or group of persons. This can take many forms such as intimate partner violence, sexual violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, rape among others.

The consequences of gender-based violence are devastating and can have life-long repercussions for survivors and lead to death.

This is the story of Susan (not her real name). Susan is a 32 year old woman, a mother of 3 and a school dropout forced into married at a tender age. Her dreams became shorten after her husband fail in meeting the promises he had made to further her education. Susan became a full time house wife and due to her demands for her upkeep and that of her children her husband became paranoid as he could not handle the demands. It later resulted to physical and verbal violence the moment Susan proposed to look for a job or business in order to support her family. One fateful night her husband physically abused her and raped her. Months after she found out she was pregnant again and in her condition things were not getting better. She tells her

parents she was tired and wanted to leave and she was reminded of her children and the fact that society too is watching and waiting to see her leave her home.

Susan now believes she has to stay because society is watching and it will be a disgraced to her family and decided to not report the violence but believe her abusive husband will change. Her husband returns home one evening drunk and as he tried to forced his way in to his pregnant wife Susan, who fought back and resisted. he beat her up to the point that she loses her pregnancy. Susan was bleeding and calling for help, her neighbours rushed her to the hospital and there she gave up the ghost. Who will take care of her two children now? She had stayed in violence because of her children and fear of society is watching and what society will say. Now society is still watching and blames her for not leaving when she was being violated by her husband.

**Lesson: Society is watching, Society is watching. Yes society is watching and society will always watch if you die Society will still watch speak out and walk away from violence of any kind while you still can. You don't deserve what is happening to you.**

***Even with your scars and experience you can still explore and be beautiful.***

### Management Team

**Publisher**

CAMYOSFOP

**Director of Publication:**

Mr. Ngalim Eugene NYUYDINE

**Editor-in-Chief**

Lukong Brenda Berriliy

**Desk Editors**

Serge Nguimba, Amaa Francisca, Suwun Rita, Christian Shofola

**Contact Information**

**CAMYOSFOP P.O. BOX 3873, Warda, Yaounde**

**TEL: (+237) 677-329-361**

**EMAIL: [camyosfop\\_p@yahoo.com](mailto:camyosfop_p@yahoo.com)**

**Website: [www.camyosfop.org](http://www.camyosfop.org)**

## CAMYOSFOP/UN Women Empowers 40 Community Health Worker



CAMYOSFOP and UN Women organized a capacity building workshop that empowered 40 Community Health workers for effective and efficient service delivery to Persons living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHIV) from the 8-10 December 2020 in Bafoussam. Participants were drawn from Yaounde, Tiko, Douala, Bertoua and Bafoussam. This activity falls within the implementation of the of the CAMYOSFOP /UN Women project on the fight against the stigmatization of HIV/AIDS amid the covid-19 within the Mbororo, Pygmy communities, Youth and Women Living with HIV/AIDS in the East, Littoral, West and South West Regions of Cameroon.

Participants were drilled to improve service delivery to PLWHIV after experience sharing and discussions on;(National Strategy for the fight against HIV/AIDS and COVI-19 by the Government of Cameroon, Introduction Human rights-based approach and HR, Main Stakeholders in HIV area in Cameroon and the social determinants, Notion/Nexus between GBV,

HR and HIV/AIDS,HR based approach to health care in the fight against the stigmatization, feminization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS with in PLWHIV, key populations and vulnerable groups, Leave no one behind in the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS and COVCID-19,Care based on the child's needs, Provision of psychosocial support to adolescent living with HIV/AIDS and gender based violence).

They expressed contentment to CAMYOSFOP and UN Women for strengthening their capacity to be role models in the implementation and fight against the stigmatization and Discrimination of HIV persons as well as end GBV.

According to MAKIA FRIDA; Nurse, CMA Dimako, "I am very satisfied with the work shop, as I have gained knowledge that will enable me to better sensitize on HIV/AIDS prevention and improve on service delivery to children living with HIV/AIDS.I have also gained basic knowledge on Human Right based approach to health care in the fight against the stigmatization, feminization and discrimination of HIV/AIDS within Persons living with HIV/AIDS"

## Mitigating Socio-Economic Impact of COVID 19 Pandemic on Vulnerable Women Groups in Cameroon



The outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic has led to devastating effects on the global economy and different development actors. Emerging evidence on the impact of COVID-19 suggests that women's economic and productive lives are affected disproportionately and differently from men. Across the globe, women earn less, save less, hold less secure jobs, are more likely to be employed in the informal sector. They have less access to social protections and are the majority of single-parent households. Their capacity to absorb economic shocks is therefore less than that of men.

The impact of the pandemic is aggravated for indigenous women and women living with HIV/AIDS as they have been living on the economic margins. (United Nations Policy Brief, 2020)

Practices within indigenous communities are deeply rooted in conservative traditional and cultural beliefs which are quite harmful and attract human rights violations, including Gender based violence and poverty. A baseline study carried out in these communities show that nearly 4 out of 10 women and girls (40%) have experienced violence in the hands of an intimate and non-intimate partner. Living in poverty increases the risk of women and girls experiencing violence. The COVID-19 pandemic increased challenges for

girls and women in indigenous communities including: domestic violence, access menstrual hygiene products, and loss of income. Even though the lockdown is lifted; many have lost their livelihood and are barely able to make ends meet.

On the other hand, the health challenge increased the vulnerability of persons living with HIV/AIDS such as lack of access to resources, services and good nutrition. In turn, HIV impoverishes women, as it reduces their ability to work and earn an income, while their expenditures increase due to medical care costs.

At macro level, HIV causes impoverishment through the loss of human capital. It also causes lost capacity to develop and utilize the human capabilities needed for social and economic development in a country. For instance, children in HIV-affected households face multiple

challenges in their access to schooling. In addition, people living with HIV tend to be most vulnerable to COVID-19 pandemic as they already have a weak immune system.

To alleviate the economic impact of the health pandemic on these groups of women, CAMYOSFOP in partnership with UN Women supported some selected group of women organization to set up income generating activities in their communities to sustain their livelihood. Over 165 women drawn from 4 associations of women living with HIV/AIDS and indigenous groups are benefiting from the project; including: Association des Femme Mbororo de Mandjou (ASFEM), Association des Jeunes Filles Baka Mayos , Unique Sisters of Tiko) and One Hope is Rising Association (HIRASSO) of Buea . Micro projects being implemented focus on the purchase and rentals of catering equipment and Community Provision Store. These projects have helped to foster cohesion in the target communities and improved on the livelihood of the beneficiaries. It has also helped to bring scarce services closer to community members.

We understand that poverty is a driver of GBV, thus interventions that increase economic security, particularly at this crucial time, may be a promising solution to reducing Gender Based Violence (GBV) at scale within vulnerable communities.



**Activities During Implementation of CAMYOSFOP and UN Women Project**



**CAMYOSFOP team in an online training on ethics and integrity, prevention of sexual Harassement at UN Women**



**The mbororo community to CAMYOSFOP, this is a significant gift hat we are one and will eat from one pot**



**The usual traditional house of pygmies. They still hold on to it though now building mud houses**



**CAMYOSFOP and ReCAJ+ train youth against stigmatization of HIV AIDS in Littoral Region**



**CAMYOSFOP and ReCAJ+ train youth against stigmatization**



**Caravan in Mayos with the Pygmy community against the stigmatization against HIV AIDS**



**Caravan in Mandjou with the Mbororo community against the stigmatization against HIV AIDS**



**Mbororo Traditional Dance Group, Mandjou**



**Pygmy Traditional Dance Group, Mayos**



**Q & A session on prevention of HIV/AIDS, GBV, COVID 19 and Drug Abused in Mandjou**



**Q & A session on prevention of HIV/AIDS, GBV, COVID 19 and Drug Abused in Mandjou**



**Psychosocial Support session in Mandjou**



**Mayos pygmies entertaining with their traditional dance**



**One of the winners of the question and answer session**



Family Picture: Capacity Building of health workers on Human Rights based approach, service delivery on HIV AIDS response in Bafoussam



Group picture of Buea community leaders in the South west Region, after the training on micro project and financial management



Group picture of Mbororo community leaders in the East Region, after the training on micro project



Group picture of Pygmy community leaders in the East Region, after the training on micro project

## Testimonies and Feedback from Project

**Djamilatou Manou, Mbororo Community** expressed gratitude to CAMYOSFOP and UN Women stating that they are making profits and progress hoping that the partnerships continues.

"We the young girls of Barka, Mayos are grateful to CAMYOSFOP and UN Women for this wonderful project and we hope this last forever so that we can continue to perform well and also send other girls to learn other skills and become great. Thank you CAMYOSFOP, thank you UN Women" **Mayos Girls, Pygmy community**

"This workshop taught me what a microproject is and how to develop one. I was really happy." **Zargaou Ousmanous, Mbororo Community**

"I was satisfied with this workshop. I learned valuable information on accounting." **Kouama Anastasie, Pygmy community**

"This workshop really helped me as I learned concepts that I didn't know. Thank you. The workshop was good." **Gbassolo Sidonie, Pygmy Community**

I am very happy that this type of project will be implemented in my community considering that people still see my community as backward. The project will be very beneficial to my community because there is still a lot of stigmatization regarding HIV/AIDS. I will start mobilizing my community members to actively participate in this upcoming project. **Angou Jean Marie, Baka Community**

"I have learned so many aspects at the workshop like to brainstorm on the project analysis and how to evaluate at all stages. My expectations were met as the

modules explained them very well. In general, the workshop was very interesting and was based on the needs of Mbororo communities." This is a very good project. We are excited to have this project in the Mbororo Community and I think the micro projects will go a long way to support Women and girls living with of HIV/AIDS amid the Covid 19 within my community. We will do everything possible to ensure that all activities are successfully implemented. **Djamilatou Manou, Mbororo Community**

Koup Diane that attended the Douala workshop said"

"I like the collaboration and the choice of the theme "stigmatization". I am happy to be part of this workshop and hope the organizers don't relent their efforts but rather organize more of such encouraging meetings."

"RECAJ + is an organization that I did not know existed before the end of this meeting. I learnt a lot and I hope to learn more. I appreciate the initiative of ReCAJ+, CAMYOSFOP, and UN Women to have involved young HIV patients in the fight concerning them. I would like to see you again soon for more commitments. May the Lord lead us in the accomplishment of our activities." **Tetdap Franklin, Bafoussam**

"The workshop was very impressing as it has helped me to know how I can manage a micro project. It has also enabled me to understand that certain rules are

to be followed when embarking on a micro project, for example, take records on daily/weekly/monthly bases (book keeping). I have learned budgeting which will enable me know the resources I have to do my planning (income / expenses). I very much appreciate the partners for the knowledge I have acquired from them. I am happy I will be contributing to the ideal growth of my group, the Humble Sister."

**Mrs ABON, Humble Sisters Tiko**

"The workshop was very educative. I now know how to manage my own business, income, my life and my family. As a farmer, I did not know how to budget my production and how to sell my goods. Now I know what it takes to do a budget to buy the chemicals that I use to apply on crops. I am very happy with the project as it will help me a lot in the future" **Njie Pepetua, Solidarity Friends Muea**

"I was able to learn about book keeping and budgeting. This will help me improve on the running of my personal business" **Akupah Susan, Unique Sisters Tiko**

"The workshop and its training modules was good. I suggest that in the future, more hours or days should be added to enable us to have practical sessions" **Mme Douala Seraphine, Humble Sisters Tiko**

*Happy Christmas*  
*and*  
*Happy New Year 2021*