

## **PROGRAMMES 2003 CALENDAR YEAR**

### **1. Civic Education on the Eradication of Female Genital Mutilation.**

The community believes that FGM initiates the girls into womanhood, controls female sexuality, controls birth rate and conserves the monogamous status of the women. It is used as a step to a “fattening” exercise for matured girls in preparation for marriage.

#### **Objectives of the project:**

The goal of the project is to engage the *Ejagham* community in Cameroon to abandon the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), in the area. The project objectives are:

- To sensitise the population in *Ejagham* region on the harmful effects of female circumcision.
  
- To build a general consensus in community on the eradication process.
  
- To lobby with decision-makers on Legislation against FGM in Cameroon.

ABEMO carried the following activities:

**National conferences** aimed at getting elite perspectives on the issue, educating *Ejagham* elite and other groups on the harmful effects of FGM and publicising to elite and the general public the resolutions of the village conferences of 2002. Education was done in Bamenda, Buea, Douala and Yaounde cities where there is a high record of *Ejagham* residences.

#### **Anti – FGM National Action**

With a network of two other groups, ABEMO worked on measures to moderate the existing laws in Cameroon Penal Code. Section 277 of the Cameroon Penal Code on Grievous Harm was moderated and lobbied with Minister of Women

Affairs and Members of Parliament to table a Bill at the National Assembly.

Proposed amendment to our '**Penal Code**' by **adding a sub-section which abolishes the practice of Female Genital Mutilation attached to Section 277** as follows:

- **Section 277 – Grievous Harm**

(1) (old) Whoever permanently deprives another of the use of the whole or any part of any member, organ or sense shall be punished with imprisonment for from ten to twenty years.

(2) (new) Whoever by any means carries out any Female Genital Mutilation by removing the clitoris, prepuce or labia minora of any girl or woman shall be punished as described in sub-section 1 above.

(3) (new) Whoever aids or facilitates the performance by another of any Female Genital Mutilation on any female, or directly or indirectly derives any profit therefrom shall be punished with imprisonment of from six months to one year and with a fine of from fifty thousand (50.000) Frs. to one hundred thousand (100.000)Frs.

(4) (new) The penalties under this section shall be doubled where:

a. The offender engages habitually in Female Genital Mutilation.

b. The victim of the offence is a minor.

c. The offender practices the profession of medicine or an allied profession unless the said Female Genital Mutilation was carried out for justified medical reasons.

d. The Female Genital Mutilation was carried out on the victim by force or with knowledge and consent of ascendants.

(5) (new) Prosecution is commence by a complaint from any person with knowledge of the commission of the act of Female Genital Mutilation.

## **2. Girls' Basic Education Programme.**

The aim of this programme is to increase girls' access to basic education on the *Ejagham* Community, with the following objectives:

- Promote children's rights to basic education
- Create awareness on issues, which have continual hindered girls' access to basic education in the area.
- Assist under privileged school pupils in area.

200 pupils from 06 communities benefited in the programme; *Mbakem, Eyumojock, Inonkon, Ndepya, Otu and Kembong.*

Activities include; sensitization and supply of basic school needs.

## **3. HIV / AIDS Prevention for sex workers**

Female Prostitution has for over two decades been the main source of income for most female-headed households in the *Ejagham* community of Cameroon. With the economic crisis and growing need for money, the number of young women

involved in prostitution is increasing, as it is the sole means of saving themselves and their children from starvation.

In the Ejagham community, these women are known as “free women”. With a long time practice of un-protective sex amongst sex workers and the prevalence of HIV / AIDS in these communities, many of them are being infected. While many are dying from HIV related diseases, the *free women* attribute these deaths to ‘slow poison’ or witchcraft.

This programme is aimed at reducing the HIV infection rate amongst sex workers in *Ejagham* communities and has the following as objectives;

**Objective I:** Mobilise 100 female sex workers in six communities on HIV prevention strategies.

**Objective II:** Provide sex workers with skills for alternative sources of income.

Target Communities: Six communities in *Ejagham* region of Cameroon: *Ajayukndip, Afap, Ewelle, Kembong, Oghomoko* and *Mfuni*

151 sex workers, 141 single women as well as 06 village heads were sensitised.

## **HIV / AIDS EDUCATION**

The objectives were to;

- Provide reliable information to female sex workers in relation to what is known about HIV infection and to

enable them deal with the uncertainty concerning what is not known.

- Offer opportunities for sex workers to explore their feelings, attitude and values in relation to the many different and emotive issues raised by HIV infections.
- Equip them with the skills they need to apply this information and the insight to their own lives and to the situations that would influence their lives.
- Train Sex Workers to serve as AIDS educators in

➤ **HIV Prevention**

The objective was to teach sex workers ways of practicing safe sex. The following points were highlighted;

- As sex workers, women were counseled and advised to carry out HIV testing as part of the prevention strategy. Many women were excited and interested to do testing and they were directed to the nearest testing centre.
- Another prevention strategy discussed for sex workers was the use of Male and Female condoms. Women, though familiar with the male condoms did not have access to them. None of them had ever heard of or used the female condom. Female condoms were displayed and women were taught how to use them. They showed much interest in the female condoms, which they found exciting because they think that they would have control over the usage, unlike the use of the male

condom that needs the man's consent. Unfortunately the female condom is very expensive and at the moment not available in the community.

- ABEMO created a “*condom-collection-point*” for female sex workers in the various villages. These points were nicknamed “**ccp**”, and were secret points allocated in the homes of VPs where women could pickup free condom at any time of the day. ABEMO made available a good quantity of male condoms and promised regular supply.
- Women were advised to abandon the practice and pickup small businesses for income as the only sure and safe way for self-independence and control.

#### **4. Micro Credit scheme for rural women**

Women in this community face the greatest challenge in being unable to participate in economic life. This has rendered them low self-respect and social dignity and ABEMO since inception has been trying to take appropriate measures to equip them to attain their rightful places in the development process.

This programme enables women come out of their homes, organise with other women, establish their non-formal sector work into viable economic ventures, obtain loans, earn incomes, support their families, become more independent and participate in a world broader than their homes.

It involved:

- a. Training; Women need education on how to manage small-scale home businesses, keep financial records, save money, help to train them in so that they do not leave home in search of work. Women in six villages were trained on how to produce home made soap, snails farming, home made bread as well as other skills.

- b. Micro Credit/ Seed Money; Cash to start small business is always a problem for many rural women who depend solely on their subsistence farm products. Some rural women with acquired skills were be provided with seed money to start small businesses, while others who are in business and need to expend would also be supported.
- c. Registration; Women were encouraged to open saving accounts in Credit Unions or other financial bodies. The demands from such registrations are very high and procedure very cumbersome in terms of paper work. This has been a dropback factor to many women who start micro businesses. Women are assisted on procedure and preparation of registration papers for business.

16 women form six communities benefited; Kembong, Mfuni, Ewelle, Ajayukndip, Afap and Oghomoko.

#### **4. Capacity Building and Institutional Strengthening Seminars / Workshops.**

Capacity building is intended to provide members with specific skills that they require to effectively implement their goals and become more visible in the community.

In the year 2003, members had capacity building in the following topics:

- Organisational Dynamics
- Conflict Resolution
- ICT
- Fund Raising