



ABEMO Activity Report for 2004

PROGRAMMES - 2004 Year

Civic Education on the Eradication of FGM, since 2001.

The community believes that FGM initiates the girls into womanhood, controls female sexuality, controls birth rate and conserves the monogamous status of the women. 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, build a general consensus in community on the eradication process and lobby with decision-makers on Legislation against FGM in Cameroon.

ABEMO held 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 2003. These conferences were done in Bamenda, Buea, Douala and Yaounde cities were

there is a high record of Ejagham elites and decision making population.

Anti – FGM National Action

With a network of two other groups in November 2003, ABEMO continued work 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.

Girls' Access to Basic Education

The aim of this programme is to increase girls' access to basic education, 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 and assist under privileged school pupils.



Over 300 pupils from 10 communities benefited in the programme; Illouani, Mudeka, Laduma, Mbakem, Eyumojock, Eshobi, Inonkon, Ndepya, Otu and Kembong. Activities include; sensitization and supply of basic school needs.

HIV / AIDS Education / Prevention for Ex Prostitutes

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; 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; and Train Sex Workers to serve as AIDS educators in HIV Prevention.

As sex workers, women were counselled 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 displaced and women were thought 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. Target Communities: Six communities in Cameroon: Ajayukndip, Afap, Ewelle, Kembong, Oghomoko and Mfuni. 151 sex workers, 141 single women as well as 06 village heads were involved in the programme.

Conflict Management workshops

To help female leaders to better identify and understand conflict, resolve conflicts and establish a climate of cooperation in the families, groups and communities, ABEMO

continued training for women's group leaders in the Southwest province. Workshop content included: Stages of Conflict Development; Early Warning signals of Conflicts; Sources of Conflict in the Community; Basic Ways for Handling Conflict in Life; Conflict Resolution Growth; Important Skills in Resolving Conflicts; Steps of mediation Session; Assertive Communication Skills; Active Listening Skill; Conflicts and Sustainable Development .

Micro Credit Scheme for women

Women in the rural communities face the greatest challenge in being unable to participate in economic life. This has rendered them low self-respect and social dignity. Since inception ABEMO has been trying to take appropriate measures to equip them to attain their rightful places in the development process. This programme enables women to 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. Activities involved:



Training on how to manage small-scale home businesses, keep financial records and save money. Women in six villages were trained on how to produce home made soap, snails farming, home made bread as well as other skills.

Micro Credit / Seed Money to start small business was provided for women to start small businesses, while others who are in business and need to expend were also be supported.

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. Women were assisted on procedure and preparation of registration papers for business.

16 women form six communities benefited from little grants.

Capacity Building / Institutional Strengthening

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. Members are provided with capacities in organizational dynamics, fundraising strategies and Information Technology.

International Conference

The National Coordinator attended the IFUW 28th Conference in Perth-Australia in August 2004. IFUW members and its affiliates such as Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund (VGIF) have been the financial supporters for the ABEMO Female Genital Mutilation education programme in Cameroon. The participation enabled the ABEMO representative to network with groups that work on similar activities, especially the area of women's rights, and this gives all of us more strength. Nigeria and Burkina Faso are some of the countries where FGM is still practiced, and with their presence at the conference, we were able to share field experiences, while working for a regional strategy.

On- Site Visits

Three members of the group made on-site visits to evaluation the progress, participation and results of the HIV / AIDS and Micro credit programs. ABEMO policy directs the organization to use its funds during the triennium to visit on-going programmes.