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Programme d'Appui à la Résilience Communautaire au Cameroun

Community Resilience Support Program in Cameroon (PARC-Cameroon)

Overview

This edition of PARC-Cameroon newsletter highlights our efforts to enhance community access to civil documentation in Mémé and surrounding areas, mitigate conflicts in the Far North Region, improve accountability and feedback collection, and strengthen communication and advocacy skills among partners. We also spotlight our strategic partner, Dynamique Mondiale des Jeunes (DMJ), for their contributions to social cohesion through community activities aimed at reconciliation and peacebuilding.

Activities

Enhancing Community Access to Civil Documentation through Capacity Building in Mémé and Surrounding Areas

Strengthening local communities by ensuring access to essential civil documentation and providing the necessary skills for community members to manage and sustain vital activities is one of PARC-Cameroon's objectives in its effort to foster community resilience in the Far North region. The program is funding a project led by the Association des Femmes Actives Battantes Evoluant à Mémé (AFABEM), a local community-based organization (CBO) to facilitate access to civil documentation in the localities of Mémé, Mora, Doulo, Double, Kourgui, Warba, Tchaklamari, and Djoundé. In December 2024, AFABEM organized two capacity strengthening sessions. During the first session, 89 mothers of students learned how to start and manage income-generating activities (IGAs) and local savings and credit groups. They also strengthened their understanding of simplified accounting, group dynamics, and how to increase community engagement in savings and credit groups.

The second session brought together 65 participants (38 women and 27 men) who are each, members of the eight birth declaration committees that PARC-Cameroon helped to establish in December 2024. Through this training, participants delved into the birth registration process and mechanisms so that they can accurately document births in their locality. This will ensure that every child's identity is legally recognized, granting them access to fundamental rights and services such as education. The ultimate goal is to foster an inclusive society where every individual can fully participate and contribute to national development.

Mapping and Mitigating Conflicts in the Far North Region

The Far North region of Cameroon faces recurring conflicts fueled by inter-community rivalries, competition for natural resources, and land disputes. These tensions, intensified by insecurity and socio-economic challenges, prompted PARC-Cameroon to map conflict types in target communities. This effort, implemented by the program's strategic partners and gender champions, helped identify conflicts, stakeholders, and mitigation measures. Common conflicts include farmer-herder disputes, land ownership issues, social conflicts over resource access, political conflicts, inter-religious intolerance, and intergenerational differences.



Community Consultation Meeting in Makary Centre. Photo credit: DJAM for FHI 360

In December 2024, PARC-Cameroon and its partners organized community consultation meetings to prioritize urgent conflicts and identify stakeholders. These meetings aimed to develop initiatives to enhance social cohesion and promote peace through people-to-people activities. Proposed activities include awareness-raising on coexistence, inter-community dialogues, educational discussions, conflict resolution training, peace caravans, mediation training, traditional festivals, Peace ball, and socio-recreational activities. These initiatives will be implemented by gender champions with the support of PARC-Cameroon's strategic partners.

Enhancing Accountability and Feedback Collection

To improve the accountability of PARC-Cameroon and facilitate the collection of feedback from the population, the program organized 12 community meetings in December 2024 to disseminate feedback collection tools with 152 community leaders (40 women and 112 men), in collaboration with civil society organization (CSO) partners. These tools were deployed in 12 localities across five target divisions of PARC-Cameroon: Louggueou, Meri, Dogba, Maga, Guirvidig, Pouss, Bourha, Blabline, Tolkomari, Arkis, Logone Birni Centre, and Kawadji.

The deployed tools included 12 suggestion boxes, 12 feedback collection committees, 24 FHI 360's Office of Compliance and Internal Audit (OCIA) posters (with OCIA's phone numbers and email addresses), and feedback collection forms. The feedback committees, composed of gender champions, members of the advisory committee, community leaders, CSO partners, and some local authorities, were trained to manage the collection and submission of feedback to FHI 360. Additionally, feedback collection forms were designed and provided to all CSO partners.

Posters with contact information for ethical and compliance questions were also disseminated within the communities. Community meetings and face-to-face interviews further allowed for direct feedback collection from beneficiaries. Finally, a database was developed to centralize and track the collected feedback, ensuring proper processing and follow-up of requests.



A suggestion box and an OCIA poster in Logone-Birni. Photo credit: Martial Audjeu/FHI 360

Strengthening Communication and Advocacy Skills



Group photo of the activity. Photo credit: Shakira Abakar for FHI 360

In December 2024, PARC-Cameroon and strategic partners (intermediary support organizations – ISO) organized two capacity building workshops on communication and advocacy. Held on December 10 and 11 in Maroua, 38 participants (22 men and 16 women) attended these workshops, including members of all program's phase 2 strategic partners and gender champions.

The communication workshop aimed to equip partners with knowledge and skills to ensure effective communication, focusing on communication strategy, planning, branding, and visibility. As a result, participants gained a deeper understanding of how to develop and implement comprehensive communication plans, significantly improving their ability to convey their organization's mission and activities to the public and stakeholders. This training is expected to enhance the overall public presence and outreach of the participating organizations, leading to better engagement and support from their respective communities.

The advocacy workshop provided participants with essential skills to develop and implement advocacy strategies. Through presentations on advocacy concepts, problem analysis, and planning, participants learned how to identify key issues, stakeholders, and effective methods of advocacy. The knowledge gained will enable these organizations to better advocate for their causes, influence policy changes, and mobilize community support. Participants expressed satisfaction with the training and showed enthusiasm for applying their new skills to develop and execute robust advocacy strategies, ultimately aiming to achieve significant positive changes in their communities.

Vision and Mission of the Organization



WSR workshop in Kousseri, organized by DMJ. Photo credit: DMJ for FHI 360

Dynamique Mondiale des Jeunes (DMJ), established in May 2007, aims to prepare young people for public responsibilities through civic governance. It envisions empowered youth capable of integrating their potential into decision-making processes. As a non-profit movement, DMJ mobilizes youth to realize their potential, promoting socio-political leadership, facilitating volunteering, and encouraging youth leadership in development projects.

Partnership with PARC-Cameroon

DMJ was selected in July 2024, by PARC-Cameroon, as a Community Capacity for Resilience (CC4R) partner to lead activities aimed at strengthening community resilience within the program's Community 3 (Kawadji and Arkis) in the Far North region.

DMJ's Contribution to Social Cohesion through PARC-Cameroon

The Logone-et-Chari division has recently witnessed an intercommunity conflict affecting the villages of Arkis and Kawadji. This conflict has intensified the already strained relations between these localities. In response to this fragile situation, DMJ, through PARC-Cameroon, is implementing a comprehensive approach aimed at fostering reconciliation and promoting peace in these villages.

Since July 2024, DMJ initiated various activities to address community needs and enhance social cohesion. Key initiatives include the community youth mapping, which trained 30 young individuals to assess youth requirements; the women's asset appraisal led by women themselves; and the whole-system-in-the-room workshop, focusing on promoting youth and women's leadership. From these efforts, two initiatives have emerged: strengthening social cohesion between Arkis and Kawadji through community engagement and promoting income-generating activities for youth and women. PARC-Cameroon is committed to a strategy grounded in principles of impartiality and community consultation, which has already yielded positive sentiments of forgiveness and collaboration among participants.

Profile

Bassa Digue: Champion of Inclusive and Gender-Centered Development

Bassa Digue is a 56-year-old sociologist from the Mayo Tsanaga division in Cameroon's Far North region. He is also a passionate advocate for gender equality and community development. Over the past 22 years, Bassa has witnessed the harsh realities faced by women and girls in his community, especially the pervasive threats of gender-based violence (GBV). Discontent to merely bear witness, Bassa has put himself at risk numerous times to aid women and girls. Once, he intervened to save a 15-year-old girl from being stoned to death after she was wrongfully accused of being complicit with a violent extremist organization. He also fought against community threats toward a woman who had escaped the same group, ensuring her safety from punishment. These experiences deeply fueled his determination to champion women's rights and combat the injustices he saw around him.



Photo of Bassa Digue during the final PhotoVoice exhibit organized by OPADER-CAM. Photo credit: OPADER-CAM for FHI 360

In December 2022, Bassa's community recognized his efforts to protect women and girls from violence and nominated him as the community's gender champion to support the USAID-funded PARC-Cameroon. The program aims to promote gender equality and amplify women and youth voices and strengthen local civil society organizations' capacities to help their communities reach development goals. The only man among ten dedicated gender champions, Bassa embraced his role without hesitation, understanding that true change requires the involvement and leadership of all genders.

"You have to integrate women in the same way as men in all community activities, and consider them the same way, whether you're a man or a woman." - Bassa Digue

In addition to his work with PARC-Cameroon, Bassa is the president of the Organisation Paysanne pour le Développement Rural du Cameroun (OPADER-CAM), a local organization which has significantly improved education and community welfare in Mayo Tsanaga. Since its founding in 2002, OPADER-CAM has partnered with UNICEF and the Ministry of Social Affairs to provide schooling for 150 orphans and issued 575 birth certificates for girls; addressed GBV through support services and awareness initiatives; and collaborated with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and the International Red Cross on malaria prevention and hygiene resources for pregnant and breastfeeding women.

As a PARC-Cameroon gender champion, Bassa played a key role training more than 30 young people to identify community needs and encouraging them to take ownership of local development initiatives in partnership with another local CSO, Cercle de Réflexion d'Appui aux Actions de Développement (CRAAD). Under CRAAD's guidance and Bassa's leadership, community members of Maxi, Mabass, Ldamang, Ldubam and Wandaï selected three community-based organizations (CBOs) to implement projects funded through PARC-Cameroon focused on socio-professional integration and improved access to education. In total, the three CBOs distributed 50 income-generating kits, 15 motorbike repair toolkits, 35 sewing kits, 150 school benches, 100 birth certificates, 130 education kits and five grinding mills to support the creation of local livelihoods in Mayo-Tsanaga.

In addition to these concrete results, Bassa also served as mentor for a PhotoVoice activity and exhibition. PhotoVoice is a set of participatory activities that aims to “level the playing field” by providing marginalized groups (often under-educated and stigmatized) with tools to visually capture and share their perspectives with others in the community.



*Distribution of five grinding mills and attestations of legalization of women CBOs in Ldamang.
Photo credit: OPADER-CAM for FHI 360*

Coupled with short personal captions, the images are displayed at local exhibitions and can have a profound impact on those who see them - often individuals in positions of power and decision-making. For Bassa and OPADER-CAM, PhotoVoice was a success in the community as it helped them realize the positive impact of PARC-Cameroon’s initiatives in their development efforts.

Bassa firmly believes that addressing gender issues requires a collective effort. He advocates for involving men in discussions about gender equality, emphasizing that it is not solely a women's issue, but a responsibility shared by all members of the community. For him, true gender champions leverage their experiences and expertise to help their community achieve balance, understanding, and trust amongst all genders. Through his dedication and vision, Bassa is a true champion -- transforming lives and reshaping the future of his community where every voice matters and every individual can contribute to the collective good.

Questions?

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