

BOOKLET TITLE:

**Promoting the socio- economic, ecological and cultural rights
and interest of rural women in the Kilum-Ijim forest area.**



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PROJECT TEAM

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INTRODUCTION OF CAMGEW

Cameroon Gender and Environment Watch (CAMGEW) is a not-for-profit organization created in October 2007 with authorization number N° 000998/RDA/JO6/BAPP to look for a solution to environmental and women’s issues in Cameroon. CAMGEW works locally and thinks globally, integrating gender in solving environmental problems in Cameroon. CAMGEW puts social and environmental issues at the centre of development. CAMGEW’s Vision is “A society free from poverty, gender inequality and unsustainable environmental practices”. CAMGEW’s Mission statement is “We do environmental protection by

strengthening the capacity of community members especially women and youths in eco-businesses & forest regeneration for livelihood improvement in the Kilum-Ijim forest area”.

CAMGEW’S OBJECTIVES:

- Local government actors supported and citizens’ engagement promoted to ensure effective management of the Kilum-Ijim Forest.
- Eco-business operators in Kilum-Ijim Forest area master the techniques of production to produce good quality and sufficient quantity for the market.
- Eco-business operators have adequate capacity and have increased revenue through the commercialisation of their products.
- Women in Kilum-Ijim are empowered & participate in forest management & community development.
- CAMGEW will have developed projects and seek funds to handle challenges in the Kilum-Ijim area and develop a good system to manage funds.
- CAMGEW will work with like-minded organisations and people to share knowledge, experiences on forest local governance issues and learn from them.

Area of Action: Kilum-Ijim Forest and environs.

Opportunities:

Consultancy on Bee farming trainings, Agroforestry and Forest regeneration. Using of honey bi-products for the production of other products like wax, candles, and soaps.

Target Groups: Forest users, Less privileged children and Peasant women.

What we offer: Agroforestry training, Bee farming training, Nursery development, Child development, Forest regeneration, Micro-credit schemes for women and Environmental education

CAMGEW - BRIEF HISTORY

CAMGEW from 2012 to 2020 planted 87.300 bee loving trees in the Kilum-Ijim forest and developed 3 tree nurseries with about 100.000 trees. Community members trained also own tree nurseries and plant trees individually to get different benefits. CAMGEW has trained more than 1.600 bee farmers in honey production, honey and its product quality control and bees wax extraction and donated above 1.500 beehives to trained bee farmers. Above 1200 bee farmers have been organized into 5 Oku White Honey cooperatives located around this forest with women and youths in decision making positions. CAMGEW created a CAMGEW-HONEYSHOP in Bamenda to convert bee farmers honey/honey products to money. The Honey shop sales

various honey, bees wax, candles, bee suits, bee smokers, honey wine, honey juice, bees wax soap and powder soap, body lotion, etc. The Honeyshop also serves as a demonstration and resource centre to the public with learning facilities. It is the opportunity cost for the bushfire forgone by bee farmers. 225 youths and women have been trained on entrepreneurship in honey value chain development. CAMGEW has succeeded to create 2 Forest multi-stakeholder platforms at various part of forest to exchange ideas on forest issues and assist in decision making. The 7 Forest Management Institutions (FMIs) in Kilum forest that manages community forest have been reorganized by CAMGEW and other stakeholders after more than 10 years that their terms of offices ended. 772 farmers have also been trained on agroforestry techniques and supported. As of December 2018, about 1580 women had been trained on business skills and 1325 women received financial assistance in form of loans about US\$ 5500 monthly as alternative sources of livelihood to the forest. This served as forest microfinance for women.

24 teenage boys and girls had been trained on dress making, shoe making and hair dressing. 20 teenage girls have also been trained on recycling plastics and clothing's with African fabric waste to produce jewels, hand bags, belts, etc. More than 2300 women and girls have received counseling to help them make decisions and get out of the social challenges. Where necessary they were supported financially through CAMGEW microfinance scheme to better integrate in the society. 400 women were also enlightened on the right to legalization of marriage and 250 women on the mitigation measures to physical, psychological and economic violence. 100 teenage mothers had their capacity improved on nutrition for mother and child from locally available food stuff and 104 teenage girls trained on safe sex to reduce sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancies.

CAMGEW shared her skills in the honey value chain development with other communities for example in Lake Ossa with African Marine Mammal Conservation Organization (AMMCO), in the CAMPO-MAN National park with Agriculture and Bio-conservation Organization for Youth Empowerment and Rural Development (ABOYERD), in the Dja Forest Reserve with Tropical Forest and Rural Development (TF-RD) and now in the Benoue National Park with CERAF – Nord and Noe

AWARDS

2020 MIDORI PRIZE AWARD FOR BIODIVERSITY	CAMGEW-HONEYSHOP or NOWEFAM Award by FOMBILLION August 2018.
Gender Just Climate Solutions Award 2019 Spain COP25	Pan African Prize Award for Cameroon 2012 AND 2013 by Teach A Man To Fish – UK
UNDP EQUATOR PRIZE AWARD 2019 NEW YORK-USA	Cameroon National Award for Kilum-Ijim Forest Conservation, Poverty Alleviation and Development in Oku, 20 MAY 2014.
UNIDO Prize Award May 2019 Rome-Italy on Agrofood and Biodiversity	World Bank Recognition 2012 for Work done on Kilum-Ijim Forest Governance
Guardian Post National Award 2019 Ebolowa-Cameroon	Pan African Prize Award for Cameroon 2012 AND 2013 by Teach A Man To Fish – UK
National Energy Globe Award for 2018 & 2019	

Rational for the Promotion of Socio-Economic, Ecological and Cultural Rights and Interest of Rural Women in the Kilum-Ijim Forest Area

Women have been planting bee-loving trees in the Kilum-Ijim forest to increase bee forage. These women practice bee farming in the forest and produce honey as a source of income, employment and protection of pollinators. Kilum-Ijim forest women process honey to pure honey and bees wax. They have also learned how to transform honey to honey juice and honey wine and also to transform bees wax to soap, powder soap, body lotion and candles. This is creating more jobs for the Kilum-Ijim forest women and making them see the importance of protecting the forest to keep getting more honey. Many women now do environmental education for community children to build nature lovers especially as they see more secured jobs and income in their forest. This is a win-win scenario between women improving their livelihoods and protecting the Kilum-Ijim forest. Bushfire has remained a big threat in the Kilum-Ijim forest for a long time but with the promotion of apiculture in the forest, bushfire reduced from 7 in 2012 to zero in 2018 and 2019. This is because women know that if bushfire consumes the forest it will also destroy their beehives and so they decided to engage in sensitization.

Women in Kilum-Ijim forest have learned to transfer the forest to their farms [agroforestry techniques]. This helps them benefit from environmental services [soil conservation through erosion control, shade, humidity, wind regulation, sunlight regulation, etc] and also get other forest products [medicine, vegetables, fruits, fodder, etc] from their farms. Women get fuel wood and these forest products from their farms now instead of moving long distance to the forest after farm work to get these products. This has greatly reduced deforestation and because of the use of agroforestry techniques in their farms they are now moving away from slash-and-burn that cause bushfire in the forest. Food production has increased around the slopes of Kilum-Ijim forest thanks to Agroforestry techniques promoted by CAMGEW and other partners that have helped to conserve the soil, increase fertility, increase variety of food and provide needed forest products from farms. CAMGEW has worked to see women represented in all forest institutions [Forest Management Institutions of various Kilum-Ijim community forest, Forest Honey cooperatives and created forest multi-stakeholder platforms] to enable them participate in decision making on forest conservation issues.

This document is aimed at presenting CAMGEW's experiences in empowering women and keeping forests standing for the present and future generations. The lessons learnt will be the bases for influencing or shaping policies and practices at local, regional and national levels in favour of women's forest rights and protection of forest integrity. This will demonstrate and encourage local and national actors to mainstream women's environmental rights in environmental related action plans. It will be a base for multi-stakeholder discussion involving civil society, media, forest institutions, government agencies, local government, traditional authorities, forest women and the private sector.

Our objective also is to showcase that women have been involved and should get more involved in forest conservation and management because they have

- The right to benefit from the forest
- The right to take part in protecting the forest
- The right to search for alternative sources of livelihood to protect the forest

- The right to preach environmental gospel
- The right to promote environmental solidarity
- The right to help others benefit from the forest
- The right to be part of forest decision making process
- The right to their customs, tradition and beliefs about the forest
- The right to keep and use their indigenous knowledge that protect the forest
- The right to a healthy environment

This document goes too to commemorate 20 years of existence of Resolution 1325 after UN Security Council Adoption. This is happening this December 2020. Resolution 1325 encourages women to be actively involved in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts.

The production of this document falls within the period [25 November – 10 December 2020] of ORANGE THE WORLD against GENDER BASED VIOLENCE. CAMGEW also joined in Oranging the World by working to protect Women Forest Rights.

WOMEN ENGAGEMENT IN PROTECTING THEIR FOREST RIGHTS AND INTEREST

1. CAMGEW Rural Women's Economic Empowerment

CAMGEW actions on Womens Empowerment build women entrepreneurs. This help women work in solidarity. Women create jobs and generate income. CAMGEW has achieved the following

- 1580 women trained on business skills
- 1325 received financial assistance in the form of micro-loans (averagely \$5000USD monthly)
- 45 women's groups created (≅ 30 women per group) to build solidarity
- 45 women's groups receive business coaching
- 220 teenage girls receive personal development (self esteem, confidence, hygiene and sanitation, positive thinking and self-discovery) training
- 20 teenage girls trained on recycling plastics and putting value on waste African Fabric to produce jewelries, hand bags, belts, etc
- 19 girls trained on hairdressing and dress making



Young women learning various Trades



Women demonstrating their strength in meeting community needs



Women learning Fashion Designing



Women receive attestation on Economic Empowerment



Women sharing Skills on Micro-Business Development



Young women being Change-makers in Fashion from Recycling waste

2. CAMGEW Women's Social Empowerment

When women's social empowerment is guaranteed, gender based violence is minimized and women's confidence and participation in community development increases.

- 2300 women and girls received counseling
- 400 women empowered on right to legalization of marriages
- 250 women enlightened on mitigation measures to physical, psychological and economic violence
- 100 teenage mothers empowered on improved nutrition for mother and child from locally available and affordable foodstuffs
- 104 girls enlightened on safe sex to reduce sexually transmitted disease and unwanted pregnancies.



CAMGEW team leading a Training on Women Empowerment



Women share success story on working as a team



Indigenous Mbororo women gain social skills



Women gain skills on solidarity as a social insurance



Women learning how to be each others' keepers

3. CAMGEW Bridging Gender Inequality in Conservation

Women should participate in forest conservation or management for the good of the present and future generation.

- CAMGEW since 2011 has regenerated and Conserved the 20.000 hectare Kilum-Ijim forest with women.
- Above 35,000 women through forest education have been made nature lovers and positive change makers in forest conservation
- 250 women have participated in tree nursery development
- CAMGEW has 3 tree nurseries with about 100.000 forest trees. This helps in forest education and preparation of trees for planting
- Averagely, 100 women participate in tree planting annually
- 87000 trees have been planted by CAMGEW together with women and other community members as of 2020
- 410 women farmers empowered on agroforestry techniques for soil conservation, bushfire prevention and food production



Forest women transport trees for Planning in the forest



Women make things work in forest conservation



Women use farm baskets for forest regeneration baskets



Women demonstrate solidarity in forest regeneration

4. CAMGEW Mainstreaming Gender in Forest Management & Resource Benefit

➤ Women in apiculture

- Sensitized and lobbied to change the masculine perception of bee farming to a gender-base friendly activity
- 266 women trained on honey production
- Family farming encouraged to promote family solidarity and peaceful community
- Women supported with 2 beehives each after training to get started
- 87 women trained on beeswax extraction
- Women membership in 6 honey cooperatives increasing

➤ Women in honey and beeswax local transformation

- CAMGEW-Honeyshop created in Bamenda (urban) to convert farmers honey to money (honey = gender equality = income = conservation)
- 82 women trained on beeswax soap and powder soap production
- 79 women trained on beeswax candle production
- 59 women trained on honey juice and honey wine production
- 225 women received entrepreneurship training in honey value chain development to encourage creativity and innovation

➤ Women in Decision making

- 3 women form part of 6 executive members present in Forest management Institutions and honey cooperatives
- Executive members in women's social and forest groups empowered on leadership and management skills



Women learning Beehive construction



Women being trained on Honey Production



Women gain skills on transformation of Bees Wax to Soap and Candles



Women in entrepreneurship training in Honey value chain development at CAMGEW Honey Shop

5. CAMGEW Integrates Women in Forest Institutional Development

A gender balanced institution that changes ideas to actions and dreams to reality. This serves as an example for emulation by other forest institutions.

- CAMGEW's Board of Directors is made up of 5 females and 5 men
- CAMGEW team is made up of 7 permanent persons with 4 being women.
- CAMGEW tree nurseries are managed by 3 women.
- CAMGEW has engaged in capacity building for her female staff in project development, fund raising, project implementation and in project monitoring and evaluation.

CAMGEW female team members are part of her success story that is recognized in form of Awards and Prizes received locally, nationally and internationally.

CAMGEW recognizes specially Sevidzem Ernestine who has been committed in promoting gender climate just solutions. Her work in CAMGEW gained global recognition with the 2019 Gender Just Climate Solutions Award during the Climate Change Conference [COP25] in Madrid – Spain.

6. Challenges

- Women's social groups not legalized
- Lack of women in forest and apiculture technologies such as
 - production of honey harvesting equipment like bee suits, bee smokers, beehive production,
 - technique to maintain honey in a liquid state (uncrystallised state)
 - materials and techniques for packaging and labeling of farmers products
 - multiplication of the Queen bee
- Lack of strategies on how to engage men from the socio-cultural, psychological and economic perspective to end gender inequality
- Need methods to change mindset of society on gender equality in relation to forest rights
- Fighting bushfires
- Need Strategies to engage women in land rights debates to reduce pressure on the forest.
- Lack of project development and fund raising skills to win donors support for planned activities
- The socio-political situation in the Anglophone part of Cameroon

7. Way Forward

- Need policies and implementation strategies to address unsustainable economic challenges of rural women
- Support the development of local technologies that promote the participation of women in community development and bridge gender gaps socially, culturally and economically
- More advocacy to promote women's right to forest resources
- More women need to be heard at international level on forest issues
- Support professional development of women leaders to enable them lead in gender and environmental actions
- Promote practical and innovative approaches that make women feel belonging in forest issues
- Replicate CAMGEW's projects in other areas to promote women socio-economic and environmental empowerment
- Expanding and replicating solidarity platforms that promote learning and sharing of success stories and challenges

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ABOUT KILUM-IJIM FOREST

Kilum-Ijim forest is in North West Region of Cameroon and it is part of Bamenda Highland Montane Forest. The forest produces Oku White Honey- certified as Geographic Indication Product which is cherished nationally and internationally. The forest covers 20.000 hectares with its peak at 3011m and a Crater lake called Lake Oku at 2500 m altitude. Kilum or Oku Mountain is the second highest mountain in Central and West Africa. It has a rich ecosystem with non-timber forest products like Oku White honey, stingless bee honey, mushrooms, medicinal plants, spices, etc. Oku White Honey is produced by trees like *Nuxia congesta*, *Prunus africana*, *Schefflera abyssinica*, *Schefflera manni*. Only 2 of these products are certified in Cameroon with the other being the Penja White pepper. Much bees wax is extracted from honey locally and sold without transformation. Kilum-Ijim forest area has a rich culture and is a touristic destination. Carving is highly practiced there.

The Kilum-Ijim forest hosts the first community forests in Cameroon. There are 18 community forests in Kilum-Ijim forest and a Plant Life Sanctuary around the Lake surrounding. The forest is the largest remaining habitat for Bannermans turacco-a red feathered bird that is only found in the Bamenda Highland Region and

is classified by IUCN Redlist as endangered. The major threat to the forest is bushfire which destroy forest biodiversity and beehives which is a source of community livelihood.

Despite the availability of this rich forest with a huge potential to be unblock to benefit its people, the forest people still suffers from unemployment, high poverty, gender inequality and lack of basic facilities. There is lack of inclusiveness in the management and benefits from the forest. Many forest resources exploitation is more masculine.

However, the area around Kilum-Ijim forest is one of the most densely populated in Cameroon: 300,000 people live within less than one walking day from the forests. There is indiscriminate harvesting of forest resources like *Prunus africana* (flagship species) and this has dramatically reduced important tree species populations reducing community income sources. The forest is vulnerable to many threats such as the encroachment, farmer-grazer conflict, deforestation and bushfires that endanger the ecological balance.

The engagement of the community forest management institutions (FMIs) and population in biodiversity protection needs to be guaranteed through conservation actions and livelihood improvement opportunities. The development of beekeeping can reverse the trend by creating new sources of livelihoods for local communities. CAMGEW has been using apiculture as a tool to fight bushfire. She builds capacity building on beekeeping. When community members become bee farmers and own beehives in the forest they prevent bushfire and if bushfire occurs they directly put it off to protect their beehives. CAMGEW supports the bee farmers to improve the quality of their products and organize them into cooperatives to ensure a better sale and thus increase their revenue. CAMGEW also assist them look for a market in urban areas and internationally.

There are 18 community forests in Kilum-Ijim forest with 44 villages.

Community forests in Kilum Forest: Bihkov, Nchiiy, Mbai, Emfvemii, Kedjem mawes, Ijim and Upper shinga

Community forests in Ijim Forest: Juambum, Laikom, Ajung, Yatimuvco, Mbese, Muteff, Abuh, Mbi, Anyafoma 5, Akeh 1 and Afua/djichami