

A YEAR IN CAMEROON

SUMMARY REPORT 2011

Plan is offering vocational and skills training to young people



About Cameroon

Despite producing oil, cocoa, coffee and cotton, Cameroon is recovering from a decade of recession and debt. Plan is working with families and communities in six areas of the country to help reverse this reality.

Problems affecting the children of Cameroon

- Schooling quality is poor. 70 percent of children do not continue to secondary school
- A lack of decent health services. A sixth of children die before the age of five
- Communities in the areas where Plan works are unaware that children have rights, putting them at risk of exploitation or abuse.



A child receives treatment in a nutrition rehabilitation centre

PLAN'S PRIORITIES IN CAMEROON

Child survival and early development

- Teaching families and communities about hygiene and giving them access to clean water and sanitation facilities
- Promoting healthcare and education for toddlers
- Increasing support for children orphaned by HIV and AIDS

Childhood development aged six to 12

- Improving schooling quality
- Helping children be involved in the management of their schools and community progress

Towards a productive adulthood

- Offering vocational and skills training to young people
- Educating young people about HIV and AIDS and its prevention

Sustainable rural livelihoods

- Training families on better farming methods to increase food supplies
- Enabling women to make use of financial services to fund small scale businesses

Baka rights and dignity

- Promoting the rights and culture of the indigenous Baka group (also known as pygmies)

By being a child sponsor, you have directly supported projects like the ones below. Your ongoing support sustains our long-term development work which impacts the lives of children, their families and communities for generations to come.

Together we are making an invaluable difference to the lives of people in Cameroon.

To learn more about Plan's work in Cameroon visit:

www.plan.org.au/ourwork/westafrica/cameroon



Helping children plant trees in schools.

CASE STUDY: SMALL MIRACLES FROM LOCAL FOOD

Therese is known as something of a miracle worker in her village in Bika, east Cameroon. In 12 days, she and her fellow volunteers in the district helped to restore 110 malnourished children back to health.

Therese's achievement is all the more remarkable given that Bika has the dubious distinction of having one of the highest rates of child malnutrition in the country. When community health workers examined a sample group of more than 500 children under the age of five recently, they found that 30 percent were underweight.

There is a widespread belief among communities in Bika that malnutrition is caused by witchcraft and has no remedy.

The real reasons for malnutrition are poor harvests and rocketing food prices which put regular, nutritious meals beyond the means of poor families.

Malnutrition is about more than not having enough to eat, however. The kinds of food available and how they are used are also vitally important in communities where supplies are scarce. Many families in the Bika district were unaware of how to use local produce to give their children a nourishing diet.

Sharing knowledge

Plan is reaching families with children who are particularly underweight by tapping into the expertise of mothers in the Bika region whose children are healthy and well-nourished.

It may be difficult to believe that in an area where poverty and malnutrition are so widespread there are mothers who manage to feed their children a balanced and nutritious diet, but this is often the case. By sharing what they do to keep their children properly fed and in good health, they can help other mothers to do the same.

With Plan's support, the mothers become role models in their communities, holding special sessions for the mothers of malnourished children to show them how they prepare meals using local foods. They also pass on feeding tips and advice on caring for young children. These gatherings are often held in their homes, and are known as a 'hearth'.

This approach is really effective, because instead of an outside expert coming in and suggesting a way forward, the project relies on communities themselves providing their own solutions. This builds community ownership and is far more sustainable in the long term.

Learning by doing

So Plan's role in this project was supportive. We trained the mothers to demonstrate how to make a range of meals with local ingredients. Then, the community identified 173 malnourished children and referred their mothers to the hearths. For 12 days, they watched and learned as their role model talked to them about the benefits of different foods and then cooked a healthy meal for their children.

The results have been very encouraging. Of the 173 children on the programme, 110 have gained weight.

Nutritional magic

Many villagers have been astounded to find that the effects of what they took to be witchcraft can be reversed so quickly. But Therese, whose hearths have made such a difference to the local children, knows it wasn't witchcraft, but lack of knowledge that left so many weak and underfed.

"In barely 12 days I performed what my fellow community members called a miracle," she says. "But all I used was locally available foodstuff."



The water management committee learn how to take care of water system

HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

- Provided families in Biteng, central Cameroon, with more than 12,500 bed nets treated with insecticide to prevent malaria in pregnant women and children under five
- Trained 192 "school governments" on issues like children's rights and reproductive health. School governments are discussion groups made up of children which ensure pupils have a role in the direction of their schools
- Worked with partners to increase membership of village savings and loans groups to more than 3,600 people

Some names have been changed for child protection and privacy reasons