



# ACWW Out and About

What ACWW Member Societies are up to around the world

## WEEN Empowers Women in Cameroon

Women's Empowerment Enterprise Network (WEEN) in Cameroon has been working to provide women with opportunities for income generation for many years. Below you'll find 3 stories from women trained by WEEN. As you read, bear in mind the Anglophone Crisis currently underway in Cameroon. This crisis is an undeclared and unpublicised post-colonial civil war which has produced 530,000 Internally Displaced Persons. This is the context in which WEEN is still working to empower women, whose skills will be vital when the time comes for recovery.

"I am Hamada Adamu. I was born in 1993 to a family of thirteen children. My father is a polygamist. I live in Santa Njong a little village in the North West Region of Cameroon.

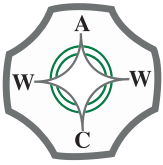
I met Mummy Irene through her late mother, Mama Martina who had a shop in the Santa market and we used to meet her there. My mother was a friend to Mama Martina and on Saturdays we always went to the market and we will go spend time helping in the shop. I was in secondary school in Santa and so Mama Martina introduced me to Mummy Irene. Coming from such a large family my father could not provide for all of us and so I got to know Mummy Irene who started taking care of me, providing some of my basic needs. When my father wanted me to leave school because he could no longer pay my fees, Mama Martina told Mummy Irene who said she will tell her Organisation to help me. That's when I came to know of the Organisation, the Women's Empowerment Enterprise Network (WEEN). They took over paying my fees until I left form five. I wanted to train in dressmaking and WEEN continued to pay for my training as an apprentice in Santa. I have gained the skill to sew various fashion designers' clothes, especially those used by the Bororo women.

Since my completion I have not been able to get started as WEEN promised to get me a machine. The machine was bought but has not been delivered as a result of the Crisis that has been going on for four

years. If I had a machine I would be able to get more income and improve my welfare. I am able to sew clothes for women in my community but this does not give me much income because I am still with my Madame who trained me but if I have a place of my own I will make the money for myself.

WEEN has helped me in all my training and if the crisis was not on they were going to set up a workshop for me. I hope they will still be able to do this when the crisis comes to an end. WEEN also told me that with all the training I would have to train one needy youth for free so that I can then help someone in the community gain the skill which she too will pass on. I am very grateful for this and happy because that is the only way I can say thank you for my education and training."





"I am Mrs Bouba Ruth Lum Asongwe. I am 52 years old. I am a holder of BSc in BioChemistry, HND in marketing and a Higher Diploma in project planning and management. WEEN is an association in my country Cameroon which works to empower women economically through training, skill development, improved nutrition, agriculture and mentoring. I came to know about this association through the founder Miss Irene Chinje. She is my mentor who has always encouraged me to expand on my cake business. I was through this encouraged to join the association WEEN which brings together women from all works of life especially women from the grassroots to build and help them to grow in their activities so as to be independent.

Through this structure, I have grown in my cake business which has helped me support my husband take care of the home, pay fees for the children and reach out to needy extended family members and the community. Due to the current crisis in the Anglophone regions of our country things have slowed down as I am unable to carry out my business normally.

I have benefited from workshops, seminars and trainings organised by WEEN, in starting up a business, the taxes required, the importance of legalising any business, and most importantly reinvesting profit.

My cake business has had a big impact on my community as many people now can readily get a cake for their different festivities and many young girls are attracted to learn cake decorating. It helps keep them occupied and avoid idleness. I would plead with ACWW members to help WEEN assist her members to boost their businesses. Most of us need expansion and we are lacking in packaging which limits our market."



"I am Lemberg Evodia Cheuchu from North West Region of Cameroon. I am a holder of an advanced level certificate. I am 30 years old and single. I met Miss Irene Chinje while I was working for her sister as a cook. Being a nutritionist she came always to help teach me different menus and how best to present them. She then introduced me to WEEN, where I came to meet many others learning to improve on their status and become independent.

Today I work as her personal secretary and I still have time to do my small business because she encourages me to set up something as an aside. I do plantain chips, chin chin, coated groundnuts just to name a few. Through WEEN, I come in contact with many women who buy my products and when they have festivities, I do in bulk and supply which gives me more income that I can use for expansion and to help my parents and younger siblings.

The business has been of great help to me because with the crisis in the anglophone regions of Cameroon I have been able to take two of my sisters to live with me in Yaoundé and continue their education. This would not have been possible without this small business. The business has a positive impact where I live because some women have approached me to learn one thing or the other and I try to pass on this skill to them to help them also to improve of their quality of life.

Through WEEN, I have participated at trainings, workshops and seminars organised by WEEN and also by their partners. I have represented WEEN at trade fairs to expose some of its products and also saw a lot to help me grow my business. My greatest challenge is packaging. This has made it difficult to get my products into supermarkets and elsewhere. I usually sell them only in small stores around and the turn over is not fast so makes the business slow. I will be grateful if ACWW can help WEEN assist many of us step up our activities by helping with packaging."