

Global Conscience Monthly

Global Conscience Initiative

April 2013

Volume 2

Welcome

Welcome to Global Conscience Initiative's (GCI) new edition of Global Conscience Monthly. This month sees the introduction of our new feature: *Big Man of the Month*. Each month GCI will be talking to a new community leader or local persons of authority on a variety of topics.

GCI News

The Centres for Arbitration and Mediation Project (CAM's)

Over the past few weeks that CAM's project has been being implemented in Bombe Bakundu. Our period of research is almost coming to a close, with interviews being conducted with the Chief, members of the council, and other community members. The completion of this research will signal the beginning of the next stage of the project: workshops. Elsewhere the team has held a sensitisation workshop in Mofako Bekondo, focusing on responsibility in the community (*see picture below*). The upcoming weeks will see sensitisation workshops spread to further communities around Meme division in Southwest Cameroon.



International intern Lea Berbewhat conducting a sensitisation workshop

Human Rights Hour Mondays 6:30pm 91.8 FM

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In order to sensitise Kumba and the surrounding Meme Division on human rights issues, GCI holds a weekly radio show on Lake Site Radio called 'Human Rights Hour'. Last month's topics revolved around three issues. Friday 8th March was International Women's Day (see page 2) and as such two radio shows were devoted to the theme of women's rights; the first gave practical information and the second took a debate format, discussing the role of women in Cameroonian Society. Freedom of expression was next on the agenda, and its applicability in Cameroonian society. Finally the team had the first part of their election watch, giving practical information to the public and discussing the implications for Cameroon. Make sure you tune in to this month's programmes every Monday at 6:30pm, on Lake Site Radio 91.8 fm. If you are interested in joining the team on the radio in the future please get in contact with us (details below).

GCI Upcoming Events

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Monday 1st April

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Election watch: Part one

Wednesday 3rd April

-CAMS: Sensitisation workshop in Mofako Bekondo

Monday 8th April

- Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Election watch: Part two

Wednesday 10th April

- CAMS: Final period of research in Bombe Bakundu

Sunday 14th April

-Senatorial elections in Cameroon. GCI will be monitoring any tensions or violence

Monday 15th April

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Mediation Q & A

Monday 22nd April

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Corruption

Monday 29th April

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm-

Tuesday 30th April

-Deadline day for Global Giving

traditional meals were served. Unfortunately, heavy rain and a power cut disrupted some of the evening's festivities, and the GCI team returned to Kumba to partake in the larger celebrations that were going on.

GCI is very thankful for the invitation!

Fundraising

This month sees Global Conscience embark on a new scheme: internet fundraising. For some time our operations have been limited by lack of resources, especially financially. To combat this it is our ambition to claim a permanent spot on this website, in doing so opening up a sea of funds from potential donors worldwide. In order to claim a permanent spot we must reach a target of \$5000 from a combination of 40 different donors. This must be done in 30 days. With your help we feel confident that we can reach this target and secure our long-term future.

Culturewatch: Bombe Bakundu

March 8th was International Women's Day, an event that is always widely celebrated throughout Cameroon. GCI's female staff were invited to join the women of Bombe Bakundu where several events had been organized around this year's theme: "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against the woman and the girl child". Following a presentation about the different forms of violence women face and what can be done about it, presented by a women's group from Bombe, GCI gave a presentation about Women's Rights. The presentation highlighted the importance of political participation for women and invited the audience to take part in the workshops that the team will be conducting in the community throughout the coming year.

Following a more serious morning, the day became more light-hearted; full of songs, games, laughter and last but not least, beers. Celebrations continued in the Council Hall where



Women's groups celebrating International Women's Day in Bombe

Big Man of the Month: Chief Ekombe Thompson Itoe

This month's big man is Chief Ekombe Thompson Itoe of Mofako Bekondo. Mofako Bekondo was one of the first communities to receive the full CAM's project. The CAM's project has been active in Mofako since



Chief Thompson Itoe

2009, and since that time has conducted a full series of workshops, as well as several one-off sensitisation workshops. HRH Chief Thompson was talking to GCI about the impact of the project in Mofako.

Why has the CAM's project been important for your community?

I think that one of the biggest concerns of any Chief is the development of the community and this can be achieved only through the education of the masses. Only by teaching the whole community the importance of the basic principles of justice is it possible to move forward. This is what GCI has been doing in our community. For example, once the value of transparency was taught, the entire population felt the importance of keeping reports concerning the management of the community's resources.

What improvements have the community made since CAM's was implemented?

In my opinion, what has improved the most is the increase of women and youths' participation. There has always been a women's council, but only after the workshops held by GCI on gender equality, women took knowledge of their importance within the society. So their involvement within the community and especially within the Council has increased, in a quantitative way (from 0 up to 3 female-members) as well as in a qualitative one, due to their active participation and understanding of their role.

Do you think that the increased participation of women and youths has brought an improvement felt by the community as a whole?

Yes. The men of the community felt that the contribution of different groups lead to better decisions and the youths' involvement brought innovative ideas. This has affected the entire community, which now considers the decisions to be fairer. Furthermore, the understanding of human rights makes these decisions more effective.

Do you have any advice for GCI, or for the CAM's project?

Yes, I would like you to keep training the community and the Traditional Council after the end of the project. I think that further workshops are needed to deepen the understanding of human rights, especially for women and youths.

GCI would like to thank Chief Thompson Itoe for his time and kind words!

A Word of Advice

One of our capacities at GCI is consultation. Every month people come into our office to report various Human Rights abuses and to seek legal advice on what they can do and how they can receive compensation. We endeavour to report these, anonymously, back to our readers within Cameroon or internationally. We do this with to raise awareness and create sensitisation, making sure that others can benefit from the information we provide.

INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES: From May onwards we will be looking to recruit new national and international interns. If you are a hard-working and creative individual interested in Human Rights and local conflict resolution, get in touch through the contact details below!

This month we had a case from a small rural community near Kumba where an individual was summoned to his local council for convocation. Without being given a chance to defend himself, verbally or physically, the individual was assaulted by five attackers (including one council member), beaten, dragged around in the mud, tied, and then threatened with death if he repeated this incident to anyone.

What should you do in this situation?

If you find yourself or someone you know in a situation similar to this you should firstly report the incident to your nearest gendarmerie. Following this you should report it to Global Conscience or another active human rights organisation in your area, who will be able can monitor you case, and provide support. It is imperative in a case such as this that others learn from it. Raising awareness is the way to ensure that this does not happen again. Not only is such an act immoral, it is illegal under state law, and it can be prosecuted.

If you ever require legal advice on a human rights issue or violation, please feel free to stop by our offices. We provide support, consultation, training, and we also have an in-office library that is open to the public.

Global Conscience Initiative is a not-for-profit Human Rights organisation based in Kumba, Southwest Cameroon. For more information about what GCI does, if you wish to donate something, or anything else you can contact us through the following ways:

Send: Global Conscience Initiative, Opposite High Court,
Kumba, Southwest Cameroon, PO Box 163

Call: (+237) 33 75 56 27/ 70 69 08 37

Email: info@gci-cameroon.org

Surf: www.gci-cameroon.org

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