

Global Conscience Monthly

Global Conscience Initiative

May 2013

Vol. 3

Welcome

Welcome to Global Conscience Initiative's (GCI) new edition of Global Conscience Monthly. This month on our feature page, we have the Meme Delegate in charge of Labour as the 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)

CAM's is a GCI project aimed at easing congestion within the state courts in Kumba by increasing the capacities of the traditional councils in the local small communities around Kumba to deal with low-level disputes. The month of May has been a month of mobilisation of the stakeholders to take part in the workshops which is the 3rd phase of the project in Bombe Bakundu. It is one of the most important phase of the whole project. Wednesday the 29th of May has been programmed to be the beginning of the workshops. Letters of invitation has been dispatched to participants. Read more details on CAMs page on our website.



GCI staff with Kosala III Council after CAMs sensitisation session this May 2013.

Religion and human rights: an insoluble conflict?

by [Giorgia Testoni](#)

GCI has recently started a new collaboration with the youth group of the Full Gospel Church, Fiango. The first meeting was held the last Wednesday, 8th March 2013. It took origin from the need felt by the youth group to tackle controversial issues concerning human rights and religion. Often human rights in Cameroon are considered evil by religious communities, because they are seen as being in contrast with fundamental religious dogmas.

A common belief in some denominations in Cameroon is that any Christian is bounded by what the bible provides – considering all the rest forbidden, irrespective of what the rest is. It doesn't matter if a new trend is established, if it was not provided within the Holy Scriptures, it means it was meant to be forbidden. This attitude is reflected in any aspect of their lives. Therefore, human rights is seen as an enemy. One of the most common examples is the condemnation of homosexuality, which runs against the freedom of sexual orientation. GCI's staff will start a series of meetings for discussing such issues and teaching basic notions about human rights.

The future workshops aim to approach such issues in a critical way, providing the chance to listen to different voices and make up our own ideas in a peaceful and well-informed environment. Sometimes religion seems in conflict with human rights and sometimes it is possible to find an adaptive reading which allows religion to fit in with the new situation of a changing world. This is possible only by approaching our personal beliefs critically.

GCI Events



Thursday 2nd May

-GCI will participate in a Symposium on Women's Right to Land in the University of Buea.

Monday 6th May

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Freedom of Press

Wednesday 8th May

-CAMs project in Bombe Bakundu takes the most crucial phase with preparations of the workshops with council executive.

-Workshop on Basic Human Rights sensitisation in with Youths in Full Gospel Church Fiango – Kumba.

Monday 13th May

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- Right to Education.

Wednesday 15th May

-GCI will drill Youths on Human Rights Education in an annual gathering of Cameroon Football Development Program (CFDP) in Kumba.

Monday 20th May

-National Day Celebration in Cameroon.

Wednesday 22nd May

-CAMs Bombe: Distribution of Invitations to Participants of the Workshops.

-2nd Workshop with Full Gospel Church Youths: Relationship between Religion and Human Rights.

Monday 27th May

-Human Rights Hour 6:30pm- The Right to play.

Wednesday 29th May

CAMs Bombe: Workshop series begins.

GLOBAL CONSCIENCE TAKES PART ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO LAND DISSEMINATION SYMPOSIUM IN THE UNIVERSITY OF BUEA.

The people of the South West Region have been urged to avoid gender bias practices and to facilitate women's access to land ownership. This was high point in a symposium organized for the disseminations of research results on the implications of customary practices on Women's Rights to land and access to natural resources in Anglophone Cameroon. Global Conscience Initiative was represented in this Symposium by the Executive Director, Ntebo Ebenezer Awungafac. This come together of stakeholders in this Region was organized by the International Development Research Centre-University of Buea women's Land Rights Project and sponsored by International Development Research Centre, IDRC Canada.

The symposium dubbed implications of customary practices on Women's rights to land and access to natural resources in Cameroon was held under the patronage of the University of Buea Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nalova Lyonga. While opening the symposium at the Amphitheatre 250 of the University on Thursday, May 02, Professor Nalova Lyonga welcomed participants who included the Divisional Officer for Buea, Registrar, Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Deans and Directors of UB; Regional and Divisional delegates; lawyers, and post – graduate students and civil society organizations. She told participants to remain focused as they were actors of change in the system relating to land legislations in favour of both men and women.

In his presentation, principal investigator, Dr. Lotsmart Fonjong of the Faculty of Social and management sciences said customary laws and the land ordinances and administrative practices need to be reduced and clearly defined to facilitate Women's rights to own land. He said government officials, politicians and NGOs need to ensure that the rights of women are respected and the clause on age barrier to land ownership certificates revised.

In presenting the findings, Irene Sama-lang said before colonialism, there existed community land and that the colonialism has influenced individual and government ownership of land. This came as a result of the introduction of a monetary economy during imperialism. According to Miss. Sama Lang, women's rights to land are stipulated in the country's constitution and in the United Nations human rights and freedom, even though not implemented in Cameroon. As per customary laws, some traditions in the North and South West Regions of Cameroon prevent women from owning land, as in the case with Kejumkeku and Wum in the North West Region and some parts of the South West Regions. According to findings presented by Miss Sama lang, 59% people support land ownership by Women while 41% stand against the notion.

WORKING ENNOBLES THE MAN: BUT, WITH WHAT CONDITIONS?

Interview with Mr. Ndelle Peter, Division Delegate for Labor and Security for Meme Division

GCI's staff choose to interview Mr. Ndelle Peter, Division Delegate for Labor and Security for Meme Division, as the "Big Man" of the month, given the importance of the issues risen during the 1st of May celebration.

This year's topic for Labor Day was "***decent work and fight against corruption***". It is a central issue considering that corruption is one of the biggest problems affecting Cameroonian institutions. The topic was introduced by the government, which brainstormed with the social partners for ensuring that the message could be welcomed by all parties and be successfully received by the whole audience.

The prerequisite for fully understanding this main topic is a general overview of the relevant Cameroonian laws. A quick glance to social security rules is mandatory: the Cameroonian Labor Code provides that every worker should be registered and ensured for the protection against industrial accidents, diseases, disabilities and guarantees family and maternal allowances and pensions.

GCI: But what if this rules are infringed? What can a worker do?

Mr. Ndelle: He can address his complaint to the Division Office. The Office was created specifically for workers complaints in order to simplify and accelerate the procedure. The worker can simply lodge a complaint to this office, even without the assistance of a lawyer. The office will invite both parties for a friendly settlement, within 10 days. There are four different conclusions for this procedure; the parties can successfully achieve an agreement on all (total conciliation) or certain (partial conciliation) controversial issues. The unsolved issues will be brought before the Court. The case can also be brought to Court if the opponent doesn't show up after the second invitation made by the office - for not frustrating the action (non-conciliation by default) - as well as in case of impossibility to achieve a conciliation (non-conciliation by opposition).



GCI: Does this system work in practice? Workers sometimes are unwilling to bring their cases to the Labor Inspector, being scared by the consequences that could derive from it.

Mr. Ndelle: These fears derive from the ignorance of the employees. Most workers don't claim protection for their rights, because they don't even know they have such rights. In this situation, it's easy to profit of their ignorance, threatening them. Part of my job is going from one enterprise to another one, checking out the labor law implementation. In case of a discrepancy, the employer is advised about it and he has at the utmost 3 months for correcting it in compliance with the guidance given by me. Therefore, in case a worker came to report the violations of his rights, he could do it anonymously and I could start an inspection to the enterprise. But the workers are not aware of what they can obtain by coming here.

GCI: What does the government do for sensitizing the community about their rights?

Mr. Ndelle: The government started some sensitization campaigns, but the mentality is a big problem. People are stuck in the past and it is difficult for them to move to the future and change their habits and beliefs.

GCI: Do you think there's a high level of corruption within the divisional Office of Labor?

Mr. Ndelle: I think corruption is everywhere. I am the only one that works in this office (and my secretary). Every now and then, I think that the Minister of Labor Affairs does not want me to function well, because it doesn't fund me enough for working in a productive way. The divisional office should have been structured in a pyramidal way, basing on some executive personnel, but there has never been funds enough for implementing such structure. Moreover, the Minister also wants to cut my secretary. How could I face employees' problem alone and without any tool?

GCI: What do you think should be done for improving the workers' conditions?

Mr. Ndelle: I think one of the biggest problem is that the salaries are really low, the minimum salary provided by law is 28,246 CFA per month (an equivalent of 55.39 US Dollar) and is not enough for guaranteeing a dignified existence. This leads to several dysfunctions - firstly, corruption. Secondly, it has negative repercussions on workers' security. Many workers agree to be unregistered by their employees. This can give them a higher wage but means that they are not covered by the labor laws.



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.

If you ever require a 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:

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