



*A Non-profit organization dedicated to
improving living and learning conditions of
students in Cameroon*

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NEWSLETTER

www.orrpcv.peak.org/educare_africa.html

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How did Educare-Africa come to be?

Educare-Africa was founded in September 2000 by Pavla-Zakova Laney, a native Czech who spent three years in the Peace Corps teaching biology in the village of Tatum in the Northwest Province of Cameroon, West Africa. She fell in love with the students there. After returning to the U.S., she began a campaign to raise funds and donations of school and related supplies for students in Cameroon. Together with Gilbert Vise, Cameroon-based director of Educare-Africa and five other board members, she continues to deliver donated funds and supplies to Cameroon each year.

Why do students there need help?

Most students at Government High School (G.H.S.) Tatum in Cameroon are from families of small farmers. Parents struggle to pay school fees and to provide school uniforms and supplies for their children. Many of the students' homes are so far away from the school that they have to rent unfurnished rooms or houses in which to stay during each school term (3 months). They often run out of money and basic necessities (such as food, kerosene for light etc.) during their stay. This, in addition to difficulty in paying school fees, causes many to drop out of school.

Educare-Africa is dedicated to bringing a compassionate awareness of conditions in Cameroon to people in our communities through its fundraising efforts for G.H.S. Tatum.

How has Educare-Africa helped?

In May 2000, Pavla paid her own way to Cameroon to deliver 18 packages of donated clothing and school supplies to the school in Tatum. She also took money to buy textbooks and to help the town repair their broken water pump. Undaunted by Airlines that refused to give her discounts on the cost of shipping (\$1,250), she used the last remaining bit of funds from her own credit cards to ensure that the packages of donated supplies would indeed accompany her to Cameroon. Pavla & Kenneth visited 150 students in 17 villages, encouraging them to continue their studies. Students have already written hundreds of letters to Educare-Africa, thanking them and all the generous people in America for helping them stay in school.

In May 2001, Pavla returned to Cameroon with 17 packages of donations mostly of school supplies and clothing. At this time the Airlines charged \$750 for shipping. 80 best students received prizes prepared from the

donations of school supplies, 117 students benefited from donations of clothing, 80 students received financial assistance for their immediate needs and additional 355 textbooks were purchased for the school. For the first time three Cameroonian teachers, now Educare-Africa board members, joined Gilbert and Pavla in visiting roughly 240 students in 18 villages, all by foot. At this time, many students individual homes were visited to see their living conditions. Teachers visits in students homes were greatly appreciated by entire villages.

Pavla's third journey to Cameroon from May 21 to July 9, 2002 was again successful and we were able to help many students. We purchased **basic school supplies** including some school bags **for 77 best students** in school (7 best in each class). **31 students benefited from donations of clothing and other donations.** We were able to **assist 117 students financially with some of their immediate needs** such as school fees (\$21-29), exam registration fees (\$21-38), school uniform (\$10), rent (\$30 for 10 months), food, and other essential needs. We **purchased 280 more textbooks** for the school. Of course, the school still needs more textbooks. We met with the local Rotary Club in Bamenda and the members are interested in supporting our activities in Cameroon.

We visited over 250 students, 410 parents and 27 traditional rulers in 14 villages, all by foot. We received many gifts mostly in the form of food (e.g. potatoes, plantains, beans, fowls, fruits, tea leaves and other gifts). There were some free days between the visits, during which we invited the parents to come with their children and their report cards to discuss their school needs. We attended to approximately 400 parents and reviewed their children's report cards. We chose about **50 very good students from primary schools** to be assisted by Educare-Africa with school fees and school uniforms to **continue in secondary school** in September 2002. In addition, if the means will be there, we want to assist about **120**

other very good needy **students** with some of their immediate needs such as the **school fees, school uniform, shoes, rent, G.C.E. exam registration fee, food** and other essential needs. Approximately **\$4000** by mid-September 2002 would take care of these **children's essential educational** needs.

In order to better document our activities in Cameroon we need a working **video camera** and one or two good **cameras** for taking photographs and slides. Donations of these would be greatly appreciated.

This was Pavla's third time going to Cameroon alone. She is looking for open-minded individuals, interested in going with her at least for a few weeks and/or assisting her here in the States. One person can make a big difference but two can do even more and share the joy.

About G.H.S. Tatum

Government Secondary School (G.S.S.) is a school in the village of Tatum. It is located 6,500 feet above sea level in the Northwest province of Cameroon, West Africa, and is surrounded by rugged hills, mountains, valleys with beautiful waterfalls, numerous small farms and patches of forests. In August of 2001 the school has been up graded to a High School but because there is no laboratory, science students have to go elsewhere to complete their high school education.

The school is nestled in the hills and it is surrounded by small farms. It is quite conducive environment for studies. The school has a school farm and soccer, handball and volleyball fields. There are 14 bare classrooms, 3 built by the government, 11 by the Parents Teachers Association and community. No dorm, even though two thirds of students come from various distant villages as far as 35 miles to school. Many rent rooms to stay during each term. There are not enough toilets and some of them are full. There is no electricity or water in school.

In 2001/2002 568 students were enrolled in school, majority girls age range: 11 - 18.

Grade range: (System differs from the U.S.)
Children in Cameroon have 7 years of primary school, G.H.S. (Government High School) : 5 years of secondary and 2 years of high school
Number of teachers about 25 but it changes.
Primary languages spoken are: English & French in school. The school needs at least 1200 textbooks for secondary school students, \$8,570 worth and 180 textbooks for High school students, \$5,657 worth. They can be purchased only in Cameroon.

From 1999 to 2002 Educare-Africa:

- Helped about 80 students stay in school,
- Purchased \$5600 worth of textbooks,
- Delivered 35 boxes of supplies to Cameroon,
- Raised \$800 to repair the community's broken water pump. However, the broken part is beyond repair after 24 years of service and a new one costs \$13,000. The village needs to upgrade its water supply system. \$40,000 is needed to do so.

There is still much work to be done!

How you can help

1) Donate money to support our activities. This money will be used to:

- buy textbooks in Cameroon
- purchase basic school supplies (in Cameroon)
- assist needy students in paying for rent, food, clothing, kerosene, health care, shoe repair, transport to their villages when school is over

^a assist advanced students in applying to American colleges.

2) Donate the following items along with funds for shipping:

- laboratory equipment (not easy to find in Cameroon)

- computers (small portable ones)
- backpacks, shoes, turtlenecks, sportswear (for children ages 11 to 18)

3) Support our fundraisers by purchasing candy bars, calendars or other items used. Ask about having these items available for sale in your place of business.

4) Sponsor an individual student(s) monthly or annually.

5) Deliver donations to Cameroon for us:

If you or someone you know is planning a trip to Cameroon, you can volunteer to deliver some of our ongoing donations with you and drop them at the Peace Corps office in Yaounde (near the Omnisport Stadium). Write "For Educare-Africa: Attn: Cyprian" on them, and they will be delivered to Educare-Africa Board members in Tatum.

6) Become a pen pal with a student in Cameroon. Just send a letter with your name, address, photograph and information about yourself (age, school, interests, family etc.) to us at the address below. We will find a match for you and soon you will begin corresponding regularly with a student from Cameroon.

You can also lower our expenses by donating office supplies.

We could document our activities in Cameroon better if we would have a good camera and video camera.

All donations are tax deductible.

**For more information, or to donate funds or supplies:
Educare-Africa**

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Photograph: Reception of donations in June 2001, Tatum, Cameroon

