**Women Empowerment Project (WEP)**

**Implementing Organization:**

 **Integrated Rural Community Center for Agriculture**

**IRCCA Foundation Meluf-Kumbo**

**Partnership women groups: Kintam women group, Tansuika women group Bongsum women group and Kisoo (Hoe)**

IRCCA Foundation is found in Kumbo town the head quarters of Bui Division in the Northwest Region of the Republic of Cameroon, Africa. Kumbo town the seat of this organization has geographic coordinates of 60 12’ 0” North and 100 40’ 0” East. It is home to about one hundred and eighty thousand people and is one of the most naturally endowed regions in Cameroon with rich natural, cultural and human resources. The major economic activity here is Agriculture which takes different forms from crop production to animal rearing. About 85% of the population practice subsistent agriculture and 60% of these are people between the ages of 45 to 60. Per capita income is far too low compared to the UN standards of $1.2/person/day.

**Project Topic**

**income generating project in the meluf community**

**Project description**

Poverty and hunger affect almost 900 million people world wide. Women are most affected since they play an invaluable role in managing families as income generators, producers, and mothers.

Rural women are mostly affected since they do not have access to opportunities for investment in lucrative economic activities. They also lack equipment and inputs to improve agricultural production. Another serious issue is no access to education, social inequalities and religious taboos that tend to segregate women from the men folk. It must be emphasized that women constitute an invaluable proportion of farmers in the world accounting for 43 % of the world’s labor force and 50%in Africa.

**The Meluf Community**

Meluf Village, the seat of IRCCA headquarters is located at the outskirts of Kumbo town. It is home to about four thousand people ¾ of whom are women and young girls. It is typically an agricultural community with women contributing more than 70% of the work force. There is little commercial activity here and no institutions to keep people gainfully employed in the secondary or tertiary sectors. The burden of all household chores here lies heavily on the shoulders of these women who manage whole families single handedly with men contributing little or nothing at all. Many of these women are single mothers with some having as many as seven (7) children to take care of. It must be noted that, women are solely responsible for bringing up children up to say the age of say 3-5. These together with other domestic activities place them in a position that they are forced to endure the unendurable or bear the unbearable whilst still taking the pains every day to fetch firewood and water in order to prepare food for the entire family.

These women trek several kilometers every day to distant farms in search of fertile land. This is because the soils here are very poor and can no longer support agricultural activities. The most tragic thing is that these women trek these huge distances sometimes with children nestled on their backs. In most cases they carry heavy bags some weighing not less than 20kg. During the dry season they trek under the scorching heat of the sun or heavy down pours during the rainy season with temperatures plummeting below 15oc. It is not uncommon to see 50 year old women returning from distant farms with heavy bags on their heads. The high fertility rate amongst young girls add to the burden of these women who in addition to feeding their own children still have to fight harder to feed and educate grand children. This is a common thing in about 95% of the families here.

Because of these inconveniences, these women have a higher mortality rate than the men who have enough time to rest and do not indulge in the type of work or hardship women go through. These women after returning from farms so many kilometers away, sometimes under rain and mostly at night still have to prepare food for children. Health centers here are always filled with women and young girls because they are exposed to risks more than men.

**Project Overall objective:**

***To increase household income, farm yield, reduce malnutrition in children and improve living conditions of 100 women in the Meluf community, an impoverished rural agricultural community. In this community women do not have the opportunity to invest in lucrative economic activities since they do not have access to equipment, capital and agricultural inputs to increase farm yield their main income earner.***

**Specific objectives**

**(a)** Strengthening the evidence and knowledge base to address gender/women’s issues in agriculture. Empowering them to have control over their own produce and use this to confront the challenges awaiting them.

**(b)The** provision of vocational training in income generating activities like marketing, tailoring, market gardening and managerial and technical capacity building to enable them to run a business; Also help in activation of value chains in the transformation of primary less expensive products to more valuable products such as converting cassava to Garri which has high demand in the market.

**(c)** To provide women with basic equipment to start a job and support them to become organised in community-based working units to effectively manage and run their businesses;

**(d)** To establish women’s associations in tailoring and marketing/business units, to represent women’s interests, provide them with technical, administrative and logistical support and promote their products (including the manufacture of detergents like omo) in the formal market.

**e)** Promoting collective action and leadership of these women in order to take advantage of opportunities and address discrimination

**(f)**Promoting women’s ownership and access to productive resources

(g) Making women/gender aspects in agriculture more visible and recognized

**What we want to do**

Organize women into groups to benefit from communal ownership as well as support individual initiative to improve the quality of life. How we intend to promote this;

A) Acquire a multipurpose grinding mill for the women that will be able to

1. Transform cassava to a more valuable product called garri highly consumed within and without. This brings in a lot of revenue to the women and enable them to invest in other lucrative activities
2. Transform cassava to another product called meyonda with a high value as well
3. Also transform cassava to akra a more valuable product
4. They will also be able to grind maize for a token from people or grind theirs and sell flour. They will also carry out more transformation activities with maize to add value to it.
5. They will also be able to grind soya beans and package for the market.

**B) Other areas include:**

(i) The women will also be taught how to make detergents in this case omo which besides it domestic use they can also sell to get more money for other uses.

1. Other activities include sewing, knitting and designing all of which will enable them to raise enough income to meet their household challenges.
2. Supporting them start a business which should enable raise money to buy equipment and farm inputs to help improve farm yield.
3. Providing them with sprayers and other farm implements like spades, wheelbarrows, hoes, hybrid seeds to invest in market gardening a very lucrative farming practice.

 **Long term Impact of this Initiative**

Women have the capacity to build and develop and empowering them means ushering in long lasting improvements to whole communities. Any society without a woman cannot prosper and any household without a woman cannot function well. We need to give these women the right to make decisions that can bring change to the lives of everyone. They must be allowed to have a wider sphere of influence for it is only through this that their potentials can properly be evaluated and eventually developed. They must be at the heart of decision-making on allocation of resources and must be empowered through opportunity for growth and change.

* It will improve food production, reduce hunger and improve upon the quality of life.
* They will also be able to acquire financial independence and be able to make their own decision on issues that affect their lives since they do not have to rely on the men.
* Making fertilizer inputs available to them and on time means improving farm yields and eventually making it possible for them to sell excesses and raise enough for health needs and other domestic requirements.
* They will also have the ability to save for future use thus reducing dependence on the men who sometimes treat them as subordinates.
* Have enough to eat and feed families
* Sell and raise enough money to invest in other lucrative agricultural activities such as tailoring, knitting, marketing and including diversification as well as on non agricultural activities.
* Have enough money to buy the required equipment and tools

Observations have shown that women who have been given these opportunities have had their lives transformed in less than three months. If we embark on a massive campaign to involve a larger number of women then the effects will resonate over a wider sphere and many more lives will be transformed. This means improving the lives of 200 families a huge boost to the lives of all those involved.

**Project Message:**

My dear brothers and sisters, we spend all our lives on the farm, but we are unable to produce enough for our children, who at the same time are unable to go to school or feed well. The farms are old and unproductive. Please help us.

 ***“When a woman succeeds, the Entire community is blessed”***