
BETTER NEWS

Better World is a Non Governmental Organization with offices in Bamenda, Yaounde and Maroua



Greetings all!

Welcome to new readers and faithful friends. The office in Bamenda has moved to a more spacious facility, we held our annual summer camp, and took some time for reflection. The farm at Ndanifor Ecovillage continues to produce food, construction on the long awaited Learning Centre begins and Kokankoh Joshua reports on his exploits. Tireless administrator Mbah Sonita and farm manager Sirri Florence are helped by new volunteer Marieke Woensdregt and new staff Koh Crystel and Akoh Caleb along with returning volunteers Elke Cole and CM Justice who are all pitching in to help create, sustain and support this Better World.

We hope you'll join us however you can!

In this double issue:

- Volunteer introductions
- Directors messages
- Administrators message
- Farm Report
- Building Report
- Acknowledgement of Grants received
- Educational Report
- Student Nature Club
- and a new column on using Bafut language

Introducing our Volunteers

Koh Crystel

I am a former student of the University of Buea, Cameroon, where I studied Journalism and Mass Communication and am presently a new volunteer at Better World Cameroon.

What attracted me to apply to work with BWC as a volunteer is principally its desire to build a better world through sustainable development, and the help it gives to young graduates and youth by helping them build their capacity. I thought it would be great if I could contribute even just a little bit to making the world a better place for us all.

Working with BWC for me is an opportunity to gain experience in skills related to office duties and to improve my communication skills. It will also help me to learn about and experience sustainable farming. Along with gaining experience in permaculture, this is an opportunity for me to gain some working experience with an NGO. I've done a few internship programs while still in school but never have I worked with an NGO.

For me, it's a whole new opportunity; change of environment, working with new people and gaining new experiences. What is great about all this is that I love it.

Working with new people from different cultures widens my perception of life and gives me a new approach to it. It is a times difficult working with new people from a completely different set up (especially international volunteers), but at the same time it is equally great because I always have something to learn from every person I meet.



Marieke Woensdregt

On the 25th of September 2014 I joined the Better World team in Bamenda as a new volunteer, to be staying with them for three months. Although my background in terms of studies is not in agriculture or environmental science, I have always had a great interest in these topics, and in the positive change that permaculture can bring. I chose to be volunteering at the North-West regional office in Bamenda to be very closely involved in the further development of the permaculture demonstration site in Bafut; in turning that into a real learning centre and ecovillage. But of course that development does not only require practical work on the ground (planting, sowing, pruning, harvesting, the building of the eco lodge etc.), but also a lot of organizational management. BWC has a lot of great partnerships with many local, national and international organisations, but the structuring, planning and

following up on these collaborations cause a great workload for the BWC volunteers here. That is what I'll mostly be helping with in my remaining time.. Aside from taking up part of that day-to-day workload, I'll also be working with the other BWC volunteers to create good infrastructures for project writing, reporting, documentation and strategic planning, to help these processes run more smoothly and efficiently - not only during my presence, but also in the future. In exchange for this I receive a lot of hands-on experience with permaculture the African way, an amazing experience being submerged in the nature and culture of North-West Cameroon, and simply a great time working with the lovely BWC team!

For those who want to know a bit more about myself:

I'm from the Netherlands, 23 years old and have just finished a research master in Brain and Cognitive Sciences at the University of Amsterdam. In January 2015 I will go on to do a PhD on the topic of Language Evolution at the University of Edinburgh. However, I decided to first take three months to follow my other, neglected passion: that of working towards a sustainable planet and solutions for poverty through the principles of permaculture.

Although my studies have little (if anything) to do with this topic, I come from a family of very dedicated environmentalists and have many years of experience helping out with the harvest coordination at the organic blueberry farm of an uncle and aunt of mine in The Netherlands. Coming to Cameroon to volunteer with BWC for me constitutes a way of finally putting this passion into practice and to see for myself what is possible and what is needed to achieve that. Plus of course the unforgettable and eye-opening experience of living in a culture and nature so exotic to my own!



Akoh Caleb

I come from a family of four boys and was born in 1989. I enrolled into University in September 2009, read History and Anthropology, and graduated 2012 -2013. I advanced into Cameroon Community Development school in Yaounde where I studied Community Development, Customer Relationship Management and Leadership. After a two month internship with the Ministry of Agriculture at MINADER in Community Development I volunteered at BWC with the intention to receive more training in professionalism to improve my job skills for the future.

CM Justice

I am a former youthworker/teacher, a cook, weaver, photographer and writer. I am also a landscaper with some experience in Permaculture and farming. I kept bees for eighteen years, raised sheep, goats and poultry and maintained an orchard. I am the father to three boys and two girls all adults (no grandchildren yet!) I spent most of my life on Vancouver Island, in Canada where I was involved with a men's community; ManKind Project along with facilitating two evening groups for fathers. I was trained as a coach, co-facilitated a number of personal growth workshops and assisted in anger management



courses. And I have led and coordinated community inspired group campouts. Currently I am providing support for my wife, Elke, documenting the various activities on the ecovillage site and editing the newsletter and any other text being published by BWC.

It is good to be back. After spending nine months here from August to April and getting married in February, Elke and I return for another six months.



Elke Cole

Volunteering for BWC – no matter where we are.

When we left Cameroon in April, CM and I did not make any promises- our plans only covered a few months in Europe and we were not sure if we would be able to return soon.

We spent our summer in Berlin, capital and largest city of Germany. The neighbourhood of our shared apartment is a multicultural part of the city with many folks from all areas of the world. I was happy to discover many organizations that work with Africans, both in Germany and in Africa. They organize fundraising events, raise awareness and discuss how development support makes sense.

We introduced Better World Cameroon to different conversations and set up new relationships. I wrote funding proposals

and was successful at receiving two grants towards the construction of the Meeting Hall and training for ecological building that will take place as part of the construction work.

Of course receiving the news of funding made our decision to return to Cameroon easy. There's work to do and I'm up for it.

Most of my time this season will be spent on the building site and facilitating trainings. I'll also support organizational development and the Permaculture design process for Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage. You can learn more about me on my website. www.elkecole.com

Editor's Message

from CM Justice

As the rainy season comes to an end, out at the farm labour never ceases. A number of local women come on a regular basis to maintain the rows and swales, water and weed in the nursery and help with the ongoing harvest. Our team of volunteers have been clearing the aggressive elephant grass, achakasra, king grass and negerenge from around the two building sites, creating piles of mulching compost to maintain moisture around the plants in the demonstration beds constructed recently. These beds are already producing harvestable lettuce, heads of cabbage and the ever popular huckleberry.

During the last two weeks Elke has been negotiating with local builders and Quarter Head Asanjie George for materials and labour. These negotiations are critical for a successful outcome. Our limited budget and the goodwill of the governing bodies are dependent on co-operation and the complete understanding of all parties. Everyone seems quite enthusiastic about this project which will employ locals and provide the community with a centre for the sharing of permaculture and related information.

Meanwhile the Alegenwi women's group has reassembled and is eager to continue finishing the eco-hut. To start, after removing part of the wall in front of the sleeping area the floor was refinished and when dry will be rubbed with an ash mix to harden. While they made mix for the floor, a rather fragrant mix of plaster was created with chopped grass, clay and fermented water fofofo, which will sit for a week or so covered in plastic before being applied as a finish coat inside the eco hut.

This dedicated group of hardworking women will also be employed in the construction of the meeting hall and finishing the kitchen: stove and oven, sink and counters. All the crops grown on the land will then have somewhere to be prepared and shared in delicious home grown site prepared meals.

But first, before we get too hungry, their next task will be forming up 800 earth/clay blocks or bricks, while the stone masons begin laying the stone foundation into the already excavated trench.

Exciting times ahead as our building emerges quite literally from the earth onsite.

Be sure to visit the website www.betterworld-cameroon.com where you can support our work through donations via paypal. And watch the progress at our [Facebook](#) page where we post updates and pictures frequently.

Director's Message

from Konkankoh Joshua

First and foremost I take this opportunity to thank our national and international volunteers who have joined me as coordinators of BWC's Permaculture and Bafut village design advisory...

Better World Cameroon is improving its non-formal education with new experiential learning programs and rural agriculture through a growing world audience. Following a log frame workshop to bring focus to the continued efforts of BW development team members, Better News is now well placed to become a social innovation tool for reviewing and reporting the social change taking place in Cameroon.

In this issue we have some highlights of Bafut Eco Village Administrator Sonita's and my adventures when in Europe where we met with some leading thinkers and practitioners of transition to resilience and sustainable development in Sieben Linden, Germany. My time in the UK was productive through networking extensively and attending The Transition To Resilience Learning Adventure for Change Makers at Findhorn Foundation, Scotland and time spent with members of the Ndanifor Gardens Uk Trust. Following this I attended a workshop at Tamera Eco Village Portugal gaining a number of insights and some relevant hands on experience.

Since the advent of BWC and God is Great cooperation in 2012 resulting in Better World North West Region Office, the rate of change has been accelerating exponentially, (and I believe this is especially important) increasing the rate of engagement and collaboration between national and international volunteers. The combined efforts of these change makers facilitated by VSO, Peace Corps and 'avant guard' GEN & GAIA Education are profoundly changing how people work at BWC. We continue to be inspired by the way this language in North South Dialogue interacts with the Bafut Community.

People have been talking of international solidarity for a long time, but here at BWC the practical day-to-day work is increasingly marked by repeated, efficient actions in participatory planning for our youth, agriculture programming and implementation of community development. This has put in place a "social nervous system" called 'The Spirit of Ndanifor' that is uniting inner souls with the more structured Better World. The transitioning of Bafut into an Eco Village by 2020 stands out as a crucial challenge to the ever rising graduate unemployment in Cameroon. For this BWC is inviting more change maker volunteers, especially WWOOFers (World Wide Volunteers), with specialised skills in Permaculture and IT to help develop transformational opportunities to the existing Green Culture in Bafut. That is where true value lies! The Better World Students Nature Cub, in association with the board, will be organizing the upcoming International Summer Camp in August 2015. We are encouraging international participants to come and create innovative programmes, collaborate among themselves, and use their new skills to support youth programmes in their own communities. Ndanifor Permaculture Demonstration Eco Village (NPE) stands out as a potential social and business hub for young people; to hang out, meet like minded people and work on projects together so that they might better respond to the new challenges and opportunities awaiting them in this digital 21st Century.

GEN and Gaia Education have connected NPE to open source social problem solving and networking digital hub in a [Solutions library](#). The [Community University Partnerships Programme \(Cupp\) of the University of Brighton](#) is providing BWC with resources to set up a help desk for Wwoofers. The intention is that this brilliant new cohort of social entrepreneurs will be recruited from the International Summer Camp 2015. They will, over the next three years, bring pattern change in the Bafut project through environmental conservation and formulating new ways of development education.

Those who would like to join us are invited to contact Better World Permaculture Eco Village BetterCOOP @ www.betterworld-cameroon.org

Lessons from Findhorn for Transitioning Bafut

The Transition to Resilience (T2R) Learning Adventure for Change Makers (module 4) which took place at Findhorn Foundation 8-14 March 2014 was a wonderful opportunity for me to build socially responsible fellowship with like minded social entrepreneurs from around the world. With them I developed new possibilities that will enable the transition movement to grow in Africa.

T2R was for me a magical journey of discovery and connection finding treasures within me I was unaware of before. Sharing sustainability best practices has empowered me to delve more deeply into African wisdom.

Our collective efforts at Better World Cameroon are making a better world for all. In T2R I was able to bring the voice of the voiceless from my community of Bafut Eco Village, to be heard in the international market place of ideas.

I bring home to Cameroon the basic tools of setting up eco villages, sustainable development and personal coaching for trainers of trainers in Permaculture for young social entrepreneurs in Africa.

I also bring home new knowledge of common cause economy and strategic partnerships for rural development through the production and marketing of high value organic products for fair trade.

I now have links to international teams of mentors for transforming our International Youth Workcamp into a holistic summer school through which Bafut Council wants to transition rural communities into eco villages by 2020.

In my new capacity as Global Eco Village Network GENAfrica Ambassador with strong connections in the T2R movement, I will be working with civil society organizations and international development organizations to ensure that Cameroon becomes a social business frontier for GEN and Fair Trade platforms.

Sponsored by GEN to become part of T2R, I am committed to work within GENAfrica in supporting the advancement of the objectives of T2R as a bridge from Africa.

Tamera Visit

International Summer University

I was invited as a youth activist along with many other activists, decision makers, journalists, musicians and researchers from all over the world to the Summer University in Tamera Eco Village Portugal.

I was also invited as a representative of the World Wide Terra Nova School (the Better World Students Nature Club had started a Terra Nova Lectures Club in BWC) to meet and connect with other representatives to deepen our understanding as well as strengthen ourselves.

<http://terranovavoice.tamera.org/2014/03/we-are-not-allowed-to-lose-our-youth-to-the-western-dream/1622/comment-page-1#comment-583>

Education in Building Water Retention Landscapes

In the Education In Building Water Retention Landscapes, I learned new ways to manage water as a sustaining way for humans to live in cooperation with nature. During the two week professional education around this issue, I participated in hands on building of water retention in Tamera. I learned the basic principles of building artificial lakes and swales. My understanding of the theory of water retention landscapes was clarified and deepened through practical group work, partly employing heavy machinery. I am now qualified for designing new decentralized life models in Cameroon.

Global Eco Village Summit in Dakar Senegal

December 10-14

In my capacity as Ambassador of Global Eco Village (GEN)Africa, I have a mandate to set up GEN Cameroon. Mayor Langsi of Bafut and I have been invited to Senegal where I will be giving an update on the registration process of GEN Cameroon and presenting our Cameroon project Ndanifor Permaculture

Eco Village (NPE) in Bafut. NPE has been identified by GEN as one of the projects in Africa with a youth strategy actively working for change in agriculture and environmental protection. GEN will be looking for ways to support an ecological literacy resource centre. NPE is expected to start delivering the Ecovillage Design Education (EDE) using GEN strategy and certified international Permaculture certification in 2015 to unemployed graduates to form a corps of trainers of trainers. Our vision is to use Permaculture and eco living principles to restore the broken communities of Bafut into an example that can be applied anywhere.

Administrator's Report- From Mbah Sonita

IT'S ALL ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS!

Yes! Germans can be strict, rude, time arrested, law driven, historical, I heard even worse. But nothing is more interesting than getting soaked into culture shock and seeing for yourself.

I was in Germany for a one month training course in April 2014 on Eco village Design Education (EDE) and Permaculture Design Certificate (PDC), plus a one day field trip, one day tour in Berlin and five extra days in Berlin. It was an extra five days of accepting that I do not speak German and finding my way was not time effective in this system!

I was part of an amazing EDE family of 32 participants from 18 countries, and more than 10 languages in Sieben Linden (7L) Eco village. Living with the rest of the community and eating in the same community space made my experience of Germany one of security in a completely strange environment. Time, weather, Moon, food and people care became an important part of my experience.

And now smiling through my journey of self-discovery, silent walks into the forest, circles and forums, dance therapy, storytelling and designing Permaculture systems, has built my resilience and capacity to make a difference in my community. The intercultural platforms like MINI EDE 2014/2015, our yearly Summer Camp, EDE 2016 and Introduction to Permaculture provided by BWC on my return will give me an opportunity to share this knowledge with the wider community of volunteers.

And we can all benefit from these new world changing movements of Eco villages, Permaculture and Transition. Join us at Ndanifor Permaculture Eco village (NPE) in Bafut. Like other ecovillage movements, NPE is working toward an understanding of our tendency to experience our own way of looking at things as the best. That feeling threatened by other ways is part of what we bring to life in a team. I have learned what we need, is to transform together.

I also learned that it takes more than one culture to get us to accept other cultures as part of the globe. So come, be a participant of our yearly summer camp and get to share your knowledge and experience!

Much thanks to friends of EDE 7L 2014, Sieben Linden facilitators, Global Ecovillage Network and Gaia Education for providing the platform and curriculum and giving me the opportunity to reconnect with friends and make new friends. It was hard to say goodbye to my new "family" friends!

Farm Update

Hands In The Soil

by Koh Crystel

During the past month, it has been all about putting our hands into the soil and enriching ourselves (doing permaculture the African way). We have been taking from, and at the same time giving back to the soil. Our main activities during the past month have included; planting beans, planting of plantain trees, planting of decorative trees and plants. We also did some vegetable (lettuce, tomatoes, cabbage) planting, plant maintenance (weeding), manuring corn plants with the use of chicken droppings, erosion control by

planting acacia trees where erosion takes place, planting of Moringa and Inga trees, practicing bare-root, bare-stem planting of Acacia trees as a life fence and for demarcation, staking the bean crop and clearing the surroundings of the building area to ease the building process.



Impressions of Ndanifor Ecovillage

by Akoh Caleb

As a new volunteer for BWC I was positively impressed by the various activities carried out at the Eco site. I saw examples based on Permaculture ways of doing Agriculture in the 21st century. From the nursery to the planting zone it looks beautiful from level to level.



Seeing the various species of cash crops, food trees, medicinal plants and flowers made me feel that agriculture as practiced through permaculture is the best farming method. For example the various techniques to control soil erosion, wind, increased soil depth are being demonstrated at the site and to the local communities. I was overwhelmed when I saw that all activities were done with the organic methods of farming, using natural compost and manure. I invite everyone who might be interested in learning about agriculture to join me at BWC farm site in Bafut just a few kilometres outside Bamenda . There we can work together to improve our communities by educating grass root societies in permaculture principles.

Some Reflections on Permaculture the African Way

by Marieke Woensdregt

Before coming here I found it hard to imagine that Cameroonian farmers would take any interest in permaculture. How can someone who goes through a hard enough struggle every day just to feed their families and send their kids to school, feel the need to go against the tendencies of all regular commercial farming (large-scale monoculture, fertilizers, pesticides etc.)?

Now that I'm here however I see that these expectations were based on a very one-sided (and westernized) view. In fact the principles of permaculture tie in very well with the traditional way of farming here in the North-West region of Cameroon, and I think farmers here are actually *more* accepting of it than Western farmers who base their views on centuries of aiming at large-scale monoculture.

One of the aims of Better World is to reconnect the youth with their land and traditions before it's too late, and help them see the value of what they already have. The value of living in harmony with nature and leaving nature to live in harmony with itself, that all Western countries are now struggling to regain with Millennium Development Goals, the Kyoto Protocol etc.

Combining the traditional knowledge and practices with modern insights on natural fertilizers, natural erosion control, mixed cropping and high-value agricultural products, provides a way to take what is already there and make it revolutionary. The way forward for sustainability is thus also the way back, back to the roots.

Building Report

LUSH Canada makes Meeting Hall project reality!

November 1st marked the beginning of the construction of a Meeting Hall with kitchen at Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage.

Everyone at BWC is excited to see this building come to reality and we wish to thank and acknowledge LUSH Charity Pot for funding this project.

The building will be built with ecological building principles of local materials and climate responsive design. The kitchen will feature an improved cook stove and bread oven.

We draw on the skills of local builders and craftsmen and women in building a dry stone foundation, earthen walls and details with raffia bamboo.

Volunteer builder and architect Elke Cole is on site to oversee the construction which is scheduled to be completed in April 2015.

You can follow our building progress on Facebook: <http://facebook.com/betterworldcameroon>

Educational Support

Schoeck Familien Stiftung and SONED in Berlin Germany support ecological building training

What is ecological building and why does it matter? How can we build sustainable houses for Bafut?

As we build the Meeting Hall at Ndanifor Permaculture Ecovillage (NPE) we are engaging the local community in workdays, during which we will introduce ecological building concepts.

Elke Cole, the facilitator for the learning program, is also reaching out to students at local technical schools with lectures and slide presentations. Students will be invited to participate in a hands-on work day at the building site as follow-up to the presentation.

Through the development of the learning center NPE will establish itself as leader in Bafut for sustainable construction that honors local traditions.

Our gratitude goes out to Schoeck Familien Stiftung from Germany for their funding of the training programs and SONED e.V. for supporting this process.



Student Nature Club Receives Support

The Nature club has received a shipment of texts, dvd's and posters from PACE (Pan African Conservation Education). This is a wonderful resource book for teaching environmental awareness. It contains comprehensive coverage of seven topics for elementary and secondary aged students: Living with Wildlife, Water, Soil, Forests, Energy Living by the Ocean and Urban Living. Illustrations on every page enhance the text with many great examples of change happening through "Somebody, somewhere finding a solution." The accompanying dvd has these real life examples well portrayed in easy to follow documentary films. This is an excellent, attractive and understandable text book that could/will also be used with the community at large to inform members and begin dialogue for possibilities of transformation to encouraging examination of choices and outcomes.

Call for Bamenda Student Nature Club Volunteers

Are you thinking of becoming a change maker? Maybe you want to eat from your own garden? Or it is your passion to instil a new thinking in the younger generation? What about environmental protection? Or you are interested in keeping clean streets, streams, homes? Then you are reading the right article and acquiring the right information and the right platform to make this happen!

I have been part of so many groups: church choirs, student associations, village 'Njangie', all which have given me the base to socialise, make financial contributions and see new places. But, none like Better World Students' Nature Club (BSNC) has enabled me to successfully combine studies, celebration, civic responsibilities and professionalism. More information about BSNC activities and history [here](#) Being part of this club in Yaoundé since 2009, I am continually inspired by the interest of students when we bring environmental education, information about water sanitation and hygiene campaigns into the schools and communities.

By sharing knowledge we change lives, engaging youth from different cultural backgrounds and liaising with government institutions to make our voices heard. As a young adult with an understanding of the state of our planet, I feel gratitude when I stand on the earth, walk through our villages and speak to the people bringing hope and sharing information with others.

In Yaoundé we worked with more than 25 schools and impacted the lives of more than 500 young people. We received support from WWF, Yaoundé III Council and other linking partnerships like PACE and Terra Nova School. Now BSNC has been brought to your Bamenda door steps. Although a lot has been achieved, much remains to be done.

Be part of this movement!

Join us at our BWC Regional office in Bamenda, Che Street and become a member!

Let's walk our talk in sustainability!

And ensure a better life for the coming generations!

New Volunteer Marieke: How I experience the spirit of Ndanifor

That Better World was not like any odd organization became clear right away on the evening I arrived in Bamenda. After two exhausting days of travelling – one on a plane and one on a bumpy bus – I finally arrived at my destination: the BWC guesthouse where I'd be staying for the coming three months. There I was warmly welcomed by my new housemates, who kindly showed me to my room and invited me to take a shower to refresh myself. When I came out of the shower, I found a room full of people; not only my housemates, but all volunteers and board members had come to welcome me. And of course such a

welcome did not go without a spiritfull welcome song, delicious food and celebratory drinks. I felt embraced (literally and figuratively) by all of the organization even before I had started doing any work.

That feeling has continued and become stronger over the month-and-a-half I've spent here now. The mission that this organization has taken upon itself goes together with many challenges and as the 'organizational development officer' I regularly feel overwhelmed by everything that we have to keep track of. However, I never feel like I stand alone. In Better World people stand by each other as a family. When decisive criticism has to be faced, we face it together. When a ditch needs to be dug, we dig it together. And when, at the end of the day, things have turned out well and it's time for mimbo (palmwine), we drink it together.

The exceptionality of this organization is echoed when I talk to the young Cameroonian volunteers that we work with. What they expect when they start in an organization is strict rules, clear hierarchy, and a boss that says 'do as I say, not as I do'. Doing things differently – with values like authenticity, creative responsibility and appreciative awareness - is challenging (and perhaps outright laughable) in a culture that revolves around big money and appearance. But at the very least we present an alternative that makes people think.

The word *ndanifor*, as I've understood it, is Bafut for something similar to the concept of *emergent property*. It is based on an understanding of bats that; although individual animals, they hang and fly together in flocks that operate as one whole. When the spirit of *ndanifor* is present, minds are in tune, and the whole is worth more than the sum of its parts.

Speaking Bafut

by Suh Joseph

A short introductory lesson in Bafut language

Meet and greet someone from Bafut

Human relationship starts with a greeting- a word or phrase that expresses a wish of well being, a concern or endearment. Just meet a Bafut man or woman and find out what feelings or emotions are embedded in the greetings!

It is a bright morning and Ngwa meets a woman going to fetch water from a nearby brook.

Ngwa: "Abayfuumeuh ndeh" (may the day break on your mother)

Woman: "O buunemeuh ta'a. Abeula" (are you awake my father. How are you?)

Ngwa: "Meu bonneuh" (I am well)

This what one says when meeting a person during the day (after noon) or evening-

Ngwa: "Osiimeuh ta'a/ndeh" (Good day father/mother)

Man/woman: "Enghe ta'a/ndeh" (Yes father/mother) "O sakheu" (what is new/how are you?)

Ngwa: "Meu bonneuh" (I'm well)