

Development Update

The Mile 19 Community Newsletter

September, 2007

Henceforth, Community Work Every Friday!

Fridays have been set aside for community work in Mile 19. The decision was made at a Community Council Meeting that held May 1, 2007. The council is elaborating a number of development projects to be undertaken in Mile 19 within the next three years. These include education initiatives for all, the building of school classrooms and toilets, a community hall and health centre, networks for mobile communication, television and the Internet, drainage of rain water runoff, the paving and lighting of streets/paths, and the piping of safe drinking water to every home in mile 19. Community work is an essential part of these plans.

Street/Path Pavement Work Starts



Implementation of the street/path pavement project effectively started Friday May 18, 2007. People turned out this day as is now normal, every Friday, for community work. They began opening up a 1.4 metre wide footpath that is to crisscross the village, laid with stones and sand to be concreted later. 40 metres of path was laid on this first day. Some passer-bys and onlookers wondered what was being done, as women and girls fetched sand from a seasonal nearby stream while men and boys collected stones and laid the track. At the end of the day, 40 metres of path had been laid, and a good impression made on all about the kind of work being initiated and undertaken by the village. The work is ongoing. More that 300 metres of path has so far been laid.

Development Fund Created

The General Community Meeting of April 17, 2007 created a Development Fund to cater for all the development Mile 19 is undertaking. Empowered to start functioning immediately, executives of the Fund include non-councillors. The Regent and Council Secretary are ex-officio members of its executive. **Page 2.**

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The Tornado of April 23, 2007.
The heat had soared and the temperature was becoming unbearable. The desire and need for rain was indeed real. But when it came with its wind, it destroyed much and left people feeling anxious about the future. **Page 3**

Impromptu visit of the Mayor, Tombel Rural Council
The Mayor of Tombel Rural Council paid an unannounced visit to the Mile 19 Community School, April 26, 2007. **Page 3**

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MILE 19 WOMEN: More zealous and strict in Community Work – Drag defaulting peers to Community Court



Women have indeed become the backbone of community work and related developments in Mile 19. Their enthusiasm for organised work and discipline is unmatched by others in the community. Naturally, not everyone is as keen at work. Some cunning people pretend to be sick or give some flimsy excuse for showing little zeal or not participating at all in the work. Mile 19 women tolerate none of that from the outset! Following the first Friday's community work, for example, they queried their peers who showed little interest or did not take part in their sand fetching duties and took out summons for some of the defaulters to appear before the community court.

The community council, sitting in court session 25/05/07, heard the cases of the alleged defaulters and ruled as follows: two women considered to be physically unfit for the said tasks were asked to compensate their absence at work with a jug of palm wine each. The second category were considered quite fit and ordered to pay 1,500 FCFA (about US\$3) each. Others were excused for having other duties (e.g. teaching at school) during the community work period, but were urged to contribute as much as they can during their free time.

The men in Mile 19 have been quick to follow the lead of their women, to increase discipline in the organisation of their work. They are alerting themselves and threatening community court action in the future for defaulters among their ranks. Indeed men now fear that if they fail to work properly as necessary, women may take the initiative and bring them before the community court. Either way, the court is happy as community work moves from strength to strength. The community council is also entrusting other community development fund raising efforts to the leadership of women.



Regent says praises are challenges – cleanliness should be without and within

He was speaking at the Mile 19 General Meeting of 17 April 2007 which evaluated progress following the 1st Mile 19 Community Leadership Retreat Follow-up Meeting that held March 13-16, 2007. The seminar was called a success because some of its results

are there for all to see. For example, clean drinking water that was stopped by CDC is flowing again! More Mectizan has been distributed. Other communities are praising Mile 19 as a clean and organised village.

The Regent stressed, however, that these praises are challenges. "We should not remain contented" he said. He went further to say this cleanliness should not only be outward but must also be within houses.

There was unanimous approval that the 2nd Leadership Retreat Follow-up Meeting should be hosted and greater in grandeur.

Executives of the newly created Mile 19 Development Fund

The General Meeting of 17 April 2007 created a Mile 19 Development Fund that would cater for all the development Mile 19 is undertaking, and appointed the following as members of its executive:

- 1) Mr. Ndobede Samuel
- 2) Mrs. Ediage Elizabeth
- 3) Mr. Nzalle Ernest
- 4) Ms. Ajeager Evelyne
- 5) Mr. Kuh David

Their responsibilities include raising the Fund and administering its use transparently with the assistance of both the Regent and the Community Council Secretary, who were also appointed ex-officio members of the Fund's executive.



The Tornado of April 23, 2007

- ❖ Improve community support
- ❖ Plan progressively
- ❖ Plant wind breaking and shade trees
- ❖ Build stronger houses and infrastructure

Akwe-Mesumbe Paul Hoffs Jr. writes:

The heat had soared and the temperature was becoming unbearable. The desire and need for rain was indeed real. But when it came with its wind, it destroyed much and left people feeling anxious about the future.

Sunday April 22, 2007 seemed to redress the helpless situation with some rain in the afternoon. The cool and uncommon atmosphere extended to the night and many were those, like me, who went to bed early! At midnight I woke up to a call of nature. The sky was starry with no vestige of cloud. Back in, I was almost falling asleep when an unusually cold wind swept into the house followed by heavy thunder and increasing wind speeds that rattled almost everything – the zinc, roof, doors, windows, etc. – with felt impacts right down on beds!

The loud noises woke up everybody. I consult my clock and find it was 1.20 am, a very memorable time for everyone living here! I then peeped from within my room to see what was happening outside. The sky had darkened. Tree leaves and branches appeared cut off and flying about. Some trees including coconuts and flowers were being uprooted by the violent wind that was swirling at what felt like 1000 km/h!

I could feel the fright in me, right down to my feet. The whole atmosphere was bumping and my heart was virtually in my mouth! It was very terrible. I prayed and called on help. I gathered later that others went on praying as well! Barely thirty minutes of rain had fallen and not in any considerable volume, but the effect it was having appeared an indescribable disaster. A blackout followed. Electric poles and cables had been pulled down, disconnecting power from the national grid.

The morn gave courage to go out and see the tornado's effects. The first shock was the community primary school. Classes six and seven had been destroyed. Their roof was carried some fifty metres into a nearby farm! Several other rooftops sustained damages. Indeed the wind path was very visible, every obstacle on its way was knocked off-shape or uprooted. In my farm, for example, a three generations old twin Obeche timber tree was blown down! Plantains and other crops were smashed, dashed and buried under brought down tree trunks and branches. It will surely be sometime before our local market in Mile 20 will supply Douala and kumba buyers without difficulty. Also, our income from crops will be hit and it will affect the reopening of the school year come September. But, thanks to God, there has not been a human casualty in the end.

Not surprising therefore some myth is surfacing about it all. The saying is that some people went to *Kupe*, the mountain of power and wealth! But, who are these people? Could a natural calamity like this be attributed to such people? Personally I believe this is just a cycle of events. Similar winds have ravaged and taken tolls at intervals of about ten years in the past. Perhaps we could call this one our *Katherina!* An endless *Katherina*; for every apparent rain now since this day and almost every Sunday breaking Monday has the force of a wind almost equal to that referred. It is thus a recipe for continuous fear.

However, both local and national authorities don't seem to bother that much! Especially locally, there should be solidarity and co-operation at such circumstances. We should be building stronger houses, planting trees, and planning progressively.

Impromptu visit of the Mayor, Tombel Rural Council

The Mayor of Tombel Rural Council paid an unannounced visit to the Mile 19 Community School, April 26, 2007. A hurriedly gathered population joined the pupils and staff at the school compound to welcome the mayor. Responding to the traditional welcome address, the mayor said he was glad to be visiting even though people were not aware of his coming. Information was sent, he continued, but perhaps it wasn't only delivered.

The visit, the mayor stated, was part of his tour of schools with poor infrastructure in his council area with the aim of helping. Mile 19 was the second lap of the tour which started in Muasundem. He said he was voted into office on the banner of social justice and to enhance development such as basic education.

He expressed regret that the Mile 19 community did not respond to his call for applications for joint sponsorship of priority projects in the area. He also frowned on the apparent reticence of people to pay taxes saying that he believes in sharing! He then handed an envelope of 100,000 FCFA (about US\$200) to the president of the school's parent teachers association (PTA). A cheering ovation welcomed the good gesture, especially as it came at a time of the school's greatest need, to repair damages sustained following the terrible wind of April 23, 2007.

The mayor also promised to invite the school headmaster, PTA president and Regent quarter head soon for some additional package. Reacting to the gift and promise, the PTA president, Mr. Ndobe Daniel, said "There has never been a nice day in Mile 19 like today and to have a people at heart, at this critical moment, is really wonderful!" Everyone wished the mayor well in the end.

Launched: Website (www.m19.eitdr.org) for the coming leadership Retreat Follow-up Meeting and blog of the Mile 19 school



The 2nd Mile 19 Community Leadership Retreat Follow-up Meeting website was launched June 12, 2007. Scheduled to hold in Mile 19, Tombel-Kumba Road, from Tuesday March 25 to Friday March 28, 2008, the Meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss some of the most pressing issues facing Mile 19 and the world today, to observe the community's

continuing engagement with its leadership, and contribute to freeing society from corruption in democratic governance and economic development.

The website contains useful information about the Meeting, including its programme, invitation, travel and accommodation options, special events, poster displays and exhibits, accessibility and answers to frequently asked questions. The website address is: www.m19.eitdr.org. If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to call the attention of the Meeting's Organizing Committee at (237) 7766-2395 or email mile19@eitdr.org. The community is looking forward to seeing everyone at the Meeting!

Another point of information is the Mile 19 Community School blog which was launched June 8, 2007. In it, pupils and staff of the school write about themselves, their school and community. The blog address is: www.blog-mile19gs.e-citizens.net.

HACU CIG gets farm equipment and forestry officers visit

The Happy Cutlass Common Initiative Group (HACU CIG) obtained a consignment of equipment on the 22nd of March 2007. This was during the launching of the cocoa and coffee season by the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development in Limbe for the South West and Littoral provinces. The donation comprised 5 wheel barrows, boots, axes, cutlasses, sprayers (Matabi) and rakes!

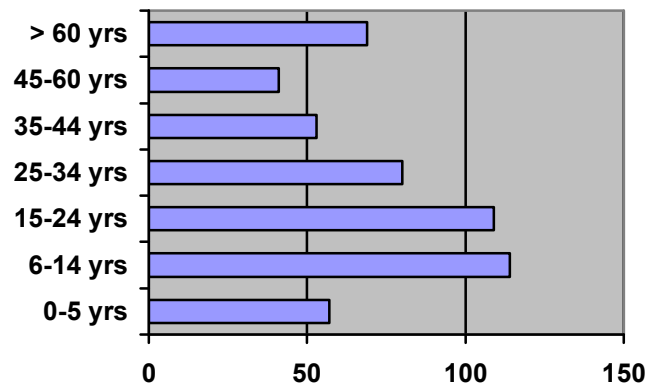
Forestry officers, Misters Nkafur and Ekumba, also paid HACU CIG a visit on the 8th of May 2007. This was to introduce to the farmers a sector of the Ministry of Forestry that deals with trees and the benefits of the sector to farmers and the environment as a whole. The agency is called ANAFOR (National Forestry Development Agency). A nursery has been planted to this effect with tree seedlings such as Iroko and Mahogany.

Census Results – Analyses are telling

A detailed census commissioned by the Mile 19 Community Council was carried out in December 2006 by EITD Research. Results of the census are forthcoming and their analyses are telling! 72 households now make up Mile 19 with a total population of 586 that is just about 49.7% male and 50.3% female. The histogram below shows the Mile 19 population distribution by age group, which is far from resembling histograms of a typical third world society. Birth and death rates are very low in Mile 19. Only six live births and four deaths (all ages included) were recorded in the last twelve months. HIV/AIDS awareness is at 100%. Everybody in the village aged 12 and above said they had heard about HIV/AIDS and could cite at least one method (sex, sharing of blades, blood transfusion/mixing, etc.) by which the virus infection is or can be transmitted.

However, 13 people reported disabilities such as poor sight and hearing, limping and mental problems. Only 33 people in the village had not been to school. 209 people (about 37% of the population) have their first school leaving certificate. 10% went to or are in secondary education. 5% have the GCE O/L or equivalent. 16 people in the village had been to university or are currently pursuing education at that level. 81% of the households are proprietors of their homes. The other households are renting. Economic activities and income sources are pretty diverse and vary with professions/occupations. The leading profession/occupation is agriculture, with cocoyams, plantains, bananas, pepper, maize, plumbs, cocoa, coffee and palm oil being the main sources of income.

Mile 19 Community Population Distribution by age group



Development Update is a quarterly newsletter published by the **Mile 19 Community Council Secretariat** and disseminated broadly. The current edition was compiled under the leadership of **Akwe Mesumbe Paul-Hoffs Jr.** with editorial assistance from **Mbwoge Daniel Mbong** and the support of **EITD Research** (Research for Enterprise, Industries, Technology and Development) P.O. Box 168 Kumba, South West Province, Cameroon. Tel/fax: (237) 3335-4623 E-mail: info@eitdr.org Website: www.eitdr.org