

Creating Clean Environment for Healthy Communities: Municipal Councils Revamp the Practice

Introduction

According to the bureau of sanitation in Cameroon, councils have the duty of organizing hygiene, health and sanitation campaigns in their municipalities. They are also responsible for setting up committees for inspection of the hygiene and sanitation practices of the community members and to give advice where necessary; carryout legal regulatory inspections in matters of hygiene and sanitation, food control etc. Despite this role stipulated for councils, it is rather unfortunate that most councils in Cameroon still find it a challenge implementing the activity. There was no working document guiding the practice of hygiene and sanitation in municipal councils in Cameroon and South West Region in particular. Hence, it was a very timely intervention for the Local Capacity Initiative (LCI) Project to invite and train hygiene and sanitary agents from the five implementing councils.

Areas of Intervention by the LCI Project

In February 2017, the CBCHB through the LCI project organized a Mayors' Forum on some health challenges plaguing different communities according to findings and how the councils could support health activities in those communities. While deliberating on these issues, the mayors expressed concerns on hygiene and sanitation while alluding to the past when sanitary agents used to ensure proper hygiene and sanitation practices in communities. In view of this, the LCI Project intervened in the following areas.

- ❖ Collaborated with the South West Regional Delegation of Public Health (SWRDPH) and South West Regional Fund for Health Promotion (SWRFHP) developed a hygiene and sanitation manual with diverse topics to be used as a working tool on Hygiene and Sanitation in the five LCI districts.
- ❖ Selected and trained 49 Hygiene and Sanitary Agents on effective hygiene and sanitation in communities while also drilling them on how to



Group Work by Participants During Hygiene and Sanitation Training

develop and carefully monitor the implementation of their activities in the community.

- ❖ Continued site mentorship and remote supervision to ensure that action plans are fully implemented.
- ❖ Financial supports were given to councils in the implementation of some activities in hard to reach communities.

A few months after the training of hygiene and sanitary agents by the LCI, there is a gradual improvement in practice as community members are more informed. This is the case of the practice in Bangem Municipality.



Bangem Municipal Sanitary Agents Pose in front of a Newly Acquired Tricycle for Waste Disposal

Background to Hygiene and Sanitation in Bangem Municipality

Until mid-2017, Bangem Municipal Council experienced rampant refuse disposal. This is because the inhabitants of the municipality were consciously or unconsciously dumping refuse/garbage wherever they deemed fit without being questioned by anybody. To the community members, hygiene and sanitation only meant the monthly clean-up campaigns organized by the authorities. The town was also suffering from a limited number of toilets and urinary in public places for community consumption. Some households never had toilets and

many domestic animal owners didn't take any actions into confining them.

After training, the agents immediately went to work by implementing the various action plans. Various steps taken to ensure an effective implementation of the practice are as follows:

- ❖ The council has purchased a tricycle and some trashcans which will go a long way to assist the council in the disposal of refuse from the town.
- ❖ Sensitized and mobilized community members on waste management.
- ❖ Organized advocacy meetings with the chiefs, mayors and other stakeholders on the need to provide space for public toilets to be dug in communities especially around the markets.
- ❖ Ensured a proper restriction of stray animals.
- ❖ Positioning of trashcans in strategic places to ease waste disposal by community members.

Conclusion

Like Bangem, the fallouts of the LCI interventions have been experienced in all the municipal councils which attended the training. This pilot intervention has been extended to 22 municipal councils out of the LCI implementing health districts by the Regional Training Center of Excellence. Thanks to this initiative, community members are more conscious about community cleanliness. Hence, there is a facelift in these municipalities and the inhabitants are now enjoying cleaner and healthier environment.