

IRC-Cameroon's Women Community Paralegals
Why a women community paralegals program in Cameroon ?



A program justified by

NEEDS

- General lack of information and awareness around rights; particularly for women and HLP rights.
- Women and marginalized population have no means to seek access their rights

CONTEXT

- Lack of access, trust and understanding towards formal justice. Formal justice not very protective of women rights
- Major use of traditional and informal law, usually harmful for women

PROGRAM SET UP

- GBV & Prot team working in the same area for years
- No local legal partner identified in the hard to reach/remote areas and none able to be present daily for a long period of time

VALUES & VISION

- Develop a community-driven and – owned approach for legal programming
- Ensure a sustainable approach to legal aid in the community
- Support a transformative/social norm shifting agenda



How was the women community paralegal program built ?

1. Select legal thematic & the paralegal

ACCESS TO

DOCUMENTATION

- Less sensitive thematic in this context
- Huge needs
- Added value of a community-based approach to advance the rights in this field
- Showcase that women can speak up for everyone in the community, not only “women talking to and about women-related matters”

HLP FOR WOMEN

- Primary needs identified resulting in unequal access to rights for women increasing vulnerability
- Complicated thematic where traditional law and formal law share space
- Added value of community-based approach in a space largely dominated by tradition and social norms

GBV

- Primarily identified as most sensitive thematic but huge needs
- Cooperation with WPE team and needs expressed by WPE team
- Some issue (i.e: early marriage) would need a more informal & prevention approach

Developing paralegal manual and training

ToT format

The manual is build as a training manual but talk to IRC legal team who will mainly use it to provide the law training to paralegals

Skills and competencies

Key skills are essential for paralegals to make sure they are also briefed on techniques and methodologies. And to be viewed and trained as professional

Law training curriculum

Must be based on a preliminary in-depth legal analysis& legal research. it includes not only the law but also practices;jurisprudence Many times the laws are old, not used in reality, .

Phased approach

Like the approach the manual has been phasedwith different level of paralegals. Each module will then be transformed into 'easy to read' 2pager to build an accessible 'manual' /training material for paralegals

Result, success and challenges of the paralegal program



Legal awareness : 57,660

- On civil documentation
- On HLP
- On GBV

835 referral

65 GBV referral towards PAF program
810 person accessing civil documentation (H/F)
Acces a la terre

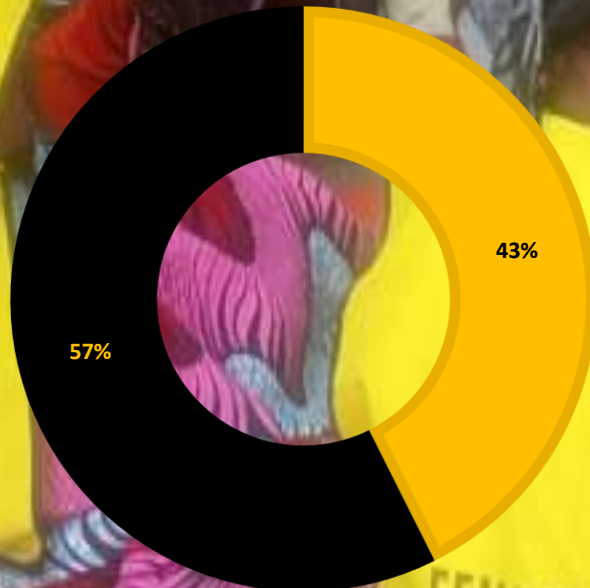
Legal assistance : 1415 cases
Legal counselling : 920 cases

Mediation et advocacy

- Identify needs for civil doc at administrative level
- Participation in local dispute resolution
- Contact with Wakil (traditional justice actor)-support mediation

% LEGAL ASSISTANCE PER SEX

■ Men ■ Women



Support Women voice & challenge patriarcal social norms

Challenges & Ambitions

New way towards localization & partnership

Challenges at community level

- Lack of equipment, material
- Behavioral change – Facing resistant particularly regarding women's rights

Challenges at technical level

- Want to expand their knowledge on other legal thematic (child protection; resources denial;..)
- Want to have more link and capacities to engage with formal justice

Challenges at the organizational/system level

- Fundraising : hybrid approach between conflict and development
- Facing/fighting 'assumptions' : « informal justice is harmful for GBV survivors so we should avoid it »

Ambitions & Vision : a new way towards localization & partnership

- Support the 50 women paralegal network in becoming an association
- Support /train at org & admin level (new competencies & staffing ?)



QUESTIONS?

COMMENTS?

MERCI