

# **FIRST ACTIVITY REPORT**

## **SNAILS DOMESTICATION AS AN ALTERNATIVE SOURCE OF INCOME FOR WOMEN IN COMMUNITIES WHICH PRACTICE FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN MANYU DIVISION-CAMEROON**



**Sample of snails in the Multiplication Farm at Mfuni**

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## INTRODUCTION

This is a report on the establishment one (1) snail multiplication facility in the Ejagham community and the training of representatives of 20 Anti-FGM groups in snail domestication as an alternative source of income to the practitioners of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

The Snails Domestication project is aimed at creating alternative income generating activities within the Ejagham and Akwaya communities that still practice FGM in Cameroon. These are communities made up of very poor people, most of them living below the poverty level. Their poverty makes them vulnerable to all sorts of abuses. There are practitioners who live on the act of female circumcision. They are paid to circumcise the girls. In most of the villages all the girl children are circumcised.

There is a need to create an alternative income for these practitioners. We strongly feel there should be an activity that addresses immediate needs of women in these communities for any civic education to be effective. Moreover, the sensitization projects consist of the creation of Anti-FGM Groups in all the regions to sustain the eradication process for 10 years. There is nothing that can keep poverty-stricken persons together and more committed to a course, than a sustained income generating activity.

The main goal of this project is to improve local incomes of women in these regions by creating a sustainable alternative income generating activity which will promote and sustain the sensitization process on the eradication of FGM .in these areas without endangering the environment.

The objectives of the project is to provide the women with new income generating activities that will empower them economically and socially thus permitting the women to regain their self-esteem and sit up so they can put an end to this discriminatory practice of FGM meant to marginalize and subordinate them under men.

The project will substantially increase the incomes of the women in the short, medium and longer terms. It is going to create self-employment, improve the living standards of the women and alleviate poverty amongst rural women in these localities.

Domesticating snails will not only provide income for the women; it will act as a regular and readily available source of proteins thus creating food security in these regions. Snail domestication will reduce poaching of wildlife as such the environment will be protected.

This project will,generate income, promote economic growth in the regions, provide food security for the communities thus improving the standards of living of families and reduce poaching in the regions thus protecting the wildlife and the environment.

The overall goal of the FGM Project is aimed at beginning a National Plan of Action on the eradication of this gross discriminatory abuse on the Human Rights of women. The *national plan of action comprises of Sensitisation and lobby for the adoption of an Anti-FGM Law*. The project is aimed at

empowering women socially economically and politically, thus increasing their self-esteem and promoting equality with men in the community. In this way, their practical and strategic gender needs will be met.

## **PROJECT ACTIVITIES**

This report is based on; the **Establishment** of one snail multiplication facility in the Ejagham community and **Training** of group representatives.

### **ESTABLISHMENT OF SNAILS MULTIPLICATION FARM**

One snail multiplication farm has been established to serve as a parent farm which will be providing snails to the female groups for breeding and marketing to the communities.

This phase of the project entailed the acquisition of land, building pens for breeding, fattening and hatching; preparation of land and laying out snails pens, and stocking.pens.

### **Acquisition and preparation of land**

Land of 30 x 20 m dimension was acquired at Mfuni, one of the villages of the Ejagham community for the construction of the snails' multiplication farm. CYJULERC decided to establish the snails multiplication form in Mfuni because it is centrally located for the Ejagham and Boki communities that still practice Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).



CYJULERC's National Coordinator supervises the acquisition of the land as the owner and the technicians take its dimensions.

The land was prepared for construction of the pens. A python and three of its young ones were killed during the preparation of the land. See photograph below.



### Construction of the various types of pens

There were two types of pens constructed in the farm. One type was constructed entirely with Indian bamboos which are found in abundance in the forest of the Manyu Division. The other type is constructed with wood and mosquitoes nets.

The **Indian Bamboo pen** is constructed entirely with local material got from the forest. The advantage of this pen is that the material is readily available to the community. They do not need money to build the pens. However the disadvantage of this type of pen is that, young snails cannot be stocked in it for they will escape through the space between the bamboos. They are used only for adult snails. Another disadvantage is the short lifespan of the pen. The Indian bamboos and the ropes easily give way as they are subjected to water and sun. It is also more difficult to construct. See Indian bamboo pen below:

Construction of Indian Bamboo pen





## LAYING OUT OF INDIAN BAMBOO PEN



Below is a sample of an Indian Bamboo pen



The **second type of pen** is constructed with wood and mosquitoes net. It is constructed with wood and mosquitoes net.

The pen is constructed with wood, nails and mosquitoes net. Though easier to construct, the community needs money to buy the material. It is the best pen for snails for it harbours snails of all ages. Its duration is very long for the wood can last for many years. The mosquitoes net can be replaced when necessary.

Thirty (30) Indian Bamboo pens were constructed to harbour mature snails ready to be given out to groups. Twenty (20) large pens, each replacing three pens of the original size, were constructed to minimize the surface area used. See pens below.



See construction of the pen as demonstrated to the women during the training workshop below:

When the farm was constructed, we discovered that there was no security for the snails. Though there was no provision for a fence we thought it was necessary build a fence round the farm to provide security for the snails. See a front view of the farm below.



The front-view of the Snails Multiplication Farm





The side view of the Snails Multiplication Farm

## **TRAINING WORKSHOP ON SNAIL DOMESTICATION**

This phase of the project entailed training beneficiary groups in snail domestication, processing and packaging; as well as in marketing, and innumeracy (basic record-keeping). The women were also trained in group dynamics.

The workshop on snail domestication held on the 22-23 September, 2006 was separated into two parts; the theoretical and the practical parts.

### **Theoretical training workshop**

The theoretical training part of the workshop started with **registration** of identified groups and the registration of all the participants present.

Nineteen (19) women's group came from nineteen (19) villages with a total of one hundred and seventy-one (171) participants registered far above the target number of sixty (60). Many women came who were not invited and did not belong to groups. They said, they were very interested in snail domestication for it is a delicious but rare food item within the Manyu community, that is why they attended the workshop though they were not invited.

Thirty –five (35) members of the Mfuni village traditional Council, the village head inclusive, took part in the opening ceremony and Chief Takang of Mfuni inaugurated the farm. Sixty-five (65) men from Mfuni and four neighbouring villages participated in the workshop without haven been invited. They queried why only women were invited. They said snails are such an important foodstuff in Manyu Division that every person needs to be trained in its farming.

There were about three hundred (300) women and some one hundred (100) men who attended the seminar and present in the hall. Others stayed out for the hall for they could not accommodate all those who came.



The field extension worker for the Central Ejagham community came without an invitation. He said snails domestication is very important to the Manyu community for the Division has no constant source of protein. He said the community complained that the piggery project introduced in the area was very expensive and they had no money to keep pigs. He intimated snails farming should be done by every person for they do not need much money to rear snails.

He commended CYJULERC for the wonderful initiative and prayed that more training workshops be organized as soon as possible to enable more women start farming snails. He pleaded with CYJULERC not to train only women for men are equally in need of protein and income from the sales of snails.



Participants listening attentively to CYJULERC's National Coordinator

The opening ceremony was marked by the presence of the Mfuni traditional authorities. The village head in his speech, lauded the wonderful initiative of CYJULERC and The British High Commission in Cameroon. He cautioned the participants to take the training seriously for it will not only generate income, it will make an impact on the lives of the population, for it will provide a source of readily available protein in the community. The Mfuni village traditional council moved to the Snails Multiplication Farm for inauguration, ushered by the Tabong quarter women's dance group.



The Mfuni village head and a cross section of the traditional council at the workshop





The Tabong quarter women's dance group ushers the Mfuni village traditional council to the Snails Multiplication Farm

Chief Takang of Mfuni village pours palm wine at the entrance to the farm, to lend the entire village's blessing to it.



The Ejagham field extension worker and CYJULERC's National Coordinator presenting the snails in their various pens to the Mfuni village head and his Counselors



Chief Takang and his Counselors dance to express their joy after the inaugural ceremony.



Women expressing their joy after the Inauguration of the Snails Multiplication Farm



The theoretical part of the workshop continued with lectures on the following topics: Steps in setting up a snail farm, Food and feeding, Management and record keeping, Problems in snails farming, Importance of snails farming.

The workshop was interactive and participatory, considering the fact that the community is acquainted with snails. The innovation is the fact that snails can be domesticated. The snails consumed in the community are picked from the forest and they are almost extinct as the forest is almost non-existent. All the forest has been transform into farmland for food crops.

Participants shared their experiences and one man who came without invitation recounted his experiences in trying to keep 300 snails which snails all died.



Women listening attentively to the lectures during the snails training workshop



The field extension worker and Nat Coo

The expert in Snail farming giving lectures at the workshop





## TRAINING GROUP REPRESENTATIVES AND PARTICIPANTS

### Practical workshop

The women moved to the farm for the practical part of the workshop. They were many as such they were held along the fence of the farm for some minutes to permit every participant follow-up and see all the preliminary demonstrations made by the technician. See photographs below.



Participants constructed a wood/net pen; prepared and laid some pens; stocked them with snails and fed the snails.

### Construction of **wood/net pen**



Above are photographs of participants taking active part in the construction of a wood/net pen

Below; the **President of Ejagham Union of Anti-female Genital Mutilation Associations** fitting the mosquitoes net onto the wood with nails during the training workshop as other women watch.



#### **PREPARATION AND LAYING OUT OF PENS**

Women were taught how to prepare pens for snails. Each identified group was assigned to prepare a pen. The other women and men who did not belong to any group were distributed into groups as per villages and quarters and assigned to prepare pens. See photographs below.



**Above:** a women's group from **Besongabang village** preparing their pen.



Below: **Mbakem Anti-FGM Association's** representative preparing their pen.



Below: **Ntenako group, made up of 11 CIGs** preparing their pen.

The man filling the pen has once kept 300 snails but they all died because he did not know how to keep them. He told his story during the theoretical part of the workshop. He said when he heard that the training was for women only he made up his mind to come though he was not invited because of the importance of snails to their community.



Below: Representatives of the **Boki Union of Anti-FGM Associations** preparing their pen.







**Above: Tabong's women's group of Mfuni, preparing their pen.**

**STOCKING OF PENS WITH SNAILS AND FEEDING**

After preparing the pens, the women stocked their various pens with snails and fed them with pawpaw and vegetables. See photograph below.



The photographs above show snails in the pens

The participants saw the various species and the various sizes of snails. They also saw snails of different ages. Eggs management was equally demonstrated. See photographs below.

Demonstration of egg management as exhibited to the right.



Below is the demonstration of snail reproductive age and eggs.



Demonstration of care for young snails. See ten (10) days old snails on the resource person's palm.



**Below:** Three months old snails at the beginning of reproductive age.



Above are mature snails ready for the market

Day two of the workshop was a relatively short day. There was a recap of the activities of day one. Participants were trained in processing and packaging; as well as in marketing, and innumeracy (basic record-keeping). They also received lectures on the general management of a snail farm.

The workshop was evaluated by group representatives and some invited participants. This gave the participants the opportunity to access the workshop and shared their experiences.

Participants expressed their impressions and made recommendations. The general impressions were very good. They said it was a laudable initiative to the Ejagham and Boki community and the Manyu Division in general.

The president of the Eyumojock Union of Anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) express her joy as this project was going to provide an immediate income generating activity to the practitioners who still earn some income from FGM. She said snail farming is the best income generating activity for the practitioner, for it is easy and possible with little efforts. She promised to start the Eyumojock snail farm in the month of October.

The president of the Boki Union of Anti-FGM also expressed her joy for having the training. She said the training was very easy and such an income



generating activity will certainly be easy for the FGM practitioners to manage. She also promised to start their farm as soon as she gets back to Kajifu.

The field extension worker for the Central Ejagham community expressed his joy to have such project in his sector of work. He said there is a protein problem in the Manyu community in general for they do not rear cattle. He said women complained the piggery was expensive but the snail project is very easy for women. He promised to lend his expertise to women whenever necessary. He said the project was one of utmost importance to the community for it will uplift the level of protein intake of the population, increase protein in the market and generate income. He extended his gratitude to CYJULERC and The British High Commission in Cameroon.

One Pa Tabot, inhabitant of Ossing village thanked CYJULERC and The British High Commission in Cameroon for organizing such a very important training program for the Manyu community. He intimated, it was the first time they had a workshop in which practical training is done. They had lectures and applied the theory on the farm, a rare opportunity in Cameroon. He however regretted the fact that women from Ossing, the closest neighbours to Mfuni were not invited. He got information on the eve of the workshop, and he had no time to inform women and they would have storm the workshop for snails is a delicacy and it will be every woman's dream to keep a snail farm.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The women recommended that financial support to the groups to assist in the setting up of their farms.
- They said they needed the assistance immediately so that they can build their farms during the rains considering that, the snails need rain for maximum results.
- The Chief recommended that more of such training workshops organized so that all the villages in the Ejagham community and Manyu Division grow snails, for snail is a delicacy to the inhabitants of the region.
- The field extension worker recommended that the training should not be limited to the communities practicing FGM or to women. He urged CYJULERC to extend the training to all the women and men in the region.

## **OBSERVATIONS**

We observed that Snails Domestication was of great importance to the population of Manyu for the crowd that participated at the workshop was not expected. There were about 600 women and men who attended the workshop. The hall could not contain them as such most of them took lectures through the windows.

Every woman who heard about the training was interested and nobody wanted to learn from representatives. We could not stop them from attending. Most said they were interested to keep personal snail farms. Many said they had attempted to keep snails but they all died so they had to come and learn

how to domesticate them.

Sixty-five (65) men also participated without invitation. They said, they too enjoy eating snails so they are also interested in keeping them. They did not understand why the training was limited to women. Some had unsuccessfully kept snails so they could not miss an opportunity to learn.

In conclusion, we observed that it is impossible to limit the project to the communities that still practice FGM only.



**Above:** A man from Ntenako, a neighbouring village, once kept 300 snails and they all died so he came to learn how to keep them.



A cross section of the farm with women at the workshop in MFUNI village, Manyu Division, Cameroon