

# Girls' Education



Before 2007, we indiscriminately sent orphans (boys and girls) of all ages to school in different countries hit by the epidemic (18 African countries), mostly through orphanages. Then we decided to focus on teenage girls who were most at risk of infection. Furthermore, our previous experience had taught us a major lesson: The importance of follow-up and monitoring. Reason why we also decided to limit our activities for the moment in Cameroon.

AAA was founded in 1991 to support children affected by AIDS in Sub-Saharan Africa through the creation of stronger and healthier local communities. **Our Strategic Objective** is to lead local populations to the appropriation of their own welfare by creating a positive environment that enables them to prevent diseases including HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Water borne diseases.

Our girl's education matches that strategy to ensure that, besides academic results that make us very proud, we gradually witness the realization of an important aspect of AAA Mission Statement: " ***...We succeed when the youth we serve become agents of their own change and use their knowledge to change their communities.***"

We therefore evaluate our accomplishments, not only in terms of OUTPUTS leading to girls being educated, but also in terms of OUTCOMES – how their being educated impacts and stimulates Sustainable Community Development.

We are grateful for the kind support of Friends and Partners, who have at one point or another, sustained this effort including **Batonga Foundation** (Africa/USA), **CPC** (USA), **CIFA** (Switzerland), **Soroptimist** (Vienna), **Association FEMMES d'EUROPE** (Bruxelles), **Fresh Bagel Farmers Market** (USA), **Individual members of AAA Board of Directors** and, last but not least, **Donors of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century** in Cameroon who give **10 francs CFA (2US cents) per day for 365 days**. This combined generosity has allowed us to steadily educate, each year, 26 vulnerable girls in Cameroon, with the commitment to see them through secondary school and University, as long as each girl remains a full-time student, demonstrates effort, commitment and maintains passing grades.

## OUTCOMES – Through Girls' Stories

### ❖ AÏSSATOU

AÏSSATOU was an AAA's scholar between 2007 –2017. She graduated as **State Nurse** and now working as a Nurse in the Community where she grew up: Briqueterie, Yaoundé.

The title of her research paper was: "**Malaria Prevention for children 0-5 years old at Ekoudou VI-Yaoundé.**" The main findings were:



a) Certain factors in the environment and lack of basic hygiene facilitate the breeding of mosquitoes and the spreading of Malaria;

b) When sick people visit health Centres, they are treated, but not systematically trained to understand the importance of prevention;

c) Mosquitoes treated bed nets are distributed but no organized effort to ensure their correct use.

This evidence based analysis helps Aïssatou, the nurse, to spend more time arming her patients with best behaviors that lead to the appropriation of their own welfare!



### ❖ AZANGE KAWO

Azange Kawo was an AAA scholar between 2007 - 2016. She presented 3 important studies during her University course that were comforting for AAA. These studies were related to: **Building** healthy homes with local affordable materials; **Paving** roads and maintaining them as link to rural development; Designing of Environment Friendly **Garbage** for health reasons.

In a presentation made at a youth group, she said: "*When I had my ordinary level, I wondered whether I will like to be science inclined or arts inclined. I could not come to a conclusion since I had all eleven papers, with an "A" grade in History (which is extremely arts inclined) and an 'A' grade in Chemistry (which is extremely science inclined).*

*With my dream of living in a sustainable home and producing my own energy, I realized the answer to my dream was in the science field. I therefore embarked on a science journey. I did advanced level in science where I had all five (5) papers and then got registered into a professional university. It was the Catholic University Institute of Buea (CUIB) which has as mission 'to prepare professional servant leaders with moral and spiritual values that will contribute to the sustainable development of their communities'.*

*People always asked 'what are you doing in a man's profession? You will soon get tired and leave. Can anything good come out of an engineering girl?' I replied 'wait and see'. I was adamant and knew where I was heading to and am now in my third year at the university. We are three girls in a class of twenty five so you already see that girls shy away from engineering when it's really no big deal.*

*After my first degree, I intend to do a Master's Degree in Structural Analysis, and then in Architecture.*



Azange Kawo now Civil Engineer during professional internship

*These days anyone can draw a house plan, but not just anybody can calculate the load a structure is supposed to carry, reason why most of our structures fail. In doing this, I will be propagating the philosophy of AAA: MA YEM MA BO 'I know and I do'*

*I want my dream house to be totally made of local material in order to reduce importation of synthetic material. I intend producing my own energy from biomass in a process called biomethanation (topic learnt in school) and also using the biogas which is one of the end products as cooking gas.*

***I WILL BE AN AGENT OF CHANGE IN TERMS OF LIVING CONDITIONS AND NOT JUST A DIPLOMA HOLDER!***

**AZANGE KAWO, Civil Engineer**

## ❖ ADE FON

Ade was an AAA scholar between 2007 – 2014 and graduated as State Registered Nurse. Her graduation Report was a compilation of data on “Most Common Diseases in Rural Areas.”, including water borne diseases and Malaria. This was an occasion for Ade to visit several villages in the Cameroon Nord – West region.

Based on her above mentioned report, AAA invited her to visit few CVECA villages in the Central region.

Her village experience encouraged her to co-write 2 important pieces:

First Ajo an Agent of Change about a village girl declared an heroine because she led her whole village to sleep under mosquitos treated bed nets.

Second, a letter to her younger self-reproduced below.

Dear Cynthia,

I hope you are celebrating your 16<sup>th</sup> year on earth. It is exactly a year since your dad passed away, and I want to believe that you are already adapting to your new home, lifestyle and environment. Situations might have a profound influence on your behavior, but after everything, you still need to thank God and strive to behave appropriately. All you long for right now is to try out new things as your scope of understanding widens and what you wish is for the world to see you and feel your presence. I know you still believe that you are not worth it and that others should come first while you follow. This is probably because you never have confidence in yourself and also because you act according to what people expect of you.

Cynthia, the reason why I am writing to you is to let you know how to build your confidence, maintain your uniqueness and remain yourself. In order to go about this, you have to start by taking chances in life that make you feel uncomfortable. Don't be afraid of feeling uneasy and silly in front of others. Also understand and accept that failing is a process of learning. Though it gives you a guilty feeling, it also gradually boosts your confidence. Whenever you are wrong, learn to be OK with it. All you need to do is, correct yourself and move on. Above all, to a certain extent, I, ignore what most people think of you. Leave people to their opinions because it is not your problem but theirs, especially when they are trying to change you to what they want you to be.

In order to maintain your uniqueness and remain yourself without trying to please others, I would want you to look back at your tender ages of two to five years and learn from yourself. Can you remember that you used to live in the moment, taking one step at a time? You believed in miracles as well, which you now refer to as having hope. Speaking out was not a problem to you and you would never suppress your emotions and pretend to like something when you didn't. You had an open mind, accepting others the way they were, never discriminating among tribes, races or religions. You usually spent more time doing what made you happy and comfortable. You tried out new things and was so daring that you even took changes in doing things that benefitted you in ways you didn't even understand. It is amazing how you used to be solely driven by your curiosity in exploring your interests.

Cynthia, I am 23 years old today and I want to believe that my life through high school and the training school for nurses gave me experiences that helped me to build my inner strength. Over the years, though I can't boast of having total confidence in myself, I am contented in the way I am capable of taking care of the sick. I am happy that I built some confidence in me and have stopped tolerating the attempt to live up to the expectations of others. I also learned a lot from myself when I was two to five years, and now I know I am just me and being myself puts something wonderful in the world that was not there before. As long as I live, I will not stop believing in myself because I know I am a mine full of gems of inestimable value from which others can tap.

