



# LIFE

## IN ABUNDANCE

*"I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" John 10:10*

## PAAJEDEC

Finding freedom, even behind bars

“When I met with the YMCA prison's group, they helped me understand that the prisoner may not feel abandoned as I thought”

## Christianity and Christmas

“The beginning of that story is the end and the end is the beginning because this is the story of ETERNITY”

Free Edition

CAMEROUN-YMCA  
YMCA-YWCA DANEMARK

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Dear all,

I am pleased to present the second edition of our quarterly newsletter “Life in Abundance”, published by Cameroun-YMCA. Unlike the others, this bulletin does not merely provide an overview of the programs and projects carried out by the national headquarters of the YMCA Cameroon, but also covers some of the activities carried out by the decentralized structures of the organization, the local unions and the branches. Finally, the bulletin also covers the many international activities of our organization, which impacts both the national and international scene.

The decentralized structures of Cameroun- YMCA are providing essential and valuable work for communities, ranging from the preparation of young people for marriage and the supervision of their families to the organization of cultural activities and the conduct of evaluation and governance activities.

The results of the project “Youth Stand for Fair and Transparent Elections in Cameroon”, made possible through the financial support of the USA Embassy in Cameroon, and sanctioned by the training and deployment of more than 250 youths organized in 6 Youth YMCA (Y) Citizen Clubs, have been very positive. 55 among them observed the elections of October 7, 2018 under the leadership of Cameroon-YMCA, and were accredited for the occasion.

The determination of our volunteers and paralegals in the assistance and socio-pedagogical and legal support of young detainees in the prisons of Mfou and Monatéle is very encouraging. The involvement of young refugees and guests in the development of the YMCA Power Space of Bertoua is a further indication of the interest of this target group in the actions and the vision of the YMCA. The united efforts of the YMCA-Cameroon and our local administrative partners as well as the UNHCR have yielded significant results, which encourages us to redouble our efforts.

Our international activities are also expanding and bearing fruit. We will mention just a few of them: our young people’s participation at the Youth Advocate for Change, the official launch of the Denmark-Cameroon-South Africa YMCA Triangular Partnership, the participation of our leaders in the General Assemblies of the YMCAs of Denmark and the Bavaria region in Germany. In addition, our National President participated in the World YMCA Stakeholders Consultation in Geneva as well as in the World Executive Committee.

Above all, we want to thank God. He is the creator of humanity, who provides for us and strengthens us. During Christmas and the New Year’s celebrations, the reflection on Christianity and the birth of Christ reminds us of the Christian roots of the YMCA whose openness to the world and to the problems of humanity justifies its existence.

On behalf of Cameroun-YMCA I extend the warmest greetings to all young people, subjects or citizens, detainees or not, refugees or not, and to all our readers and partners our best wishes of happiness, prosperity, health, longevity. Let us pray, without ceasing, for a better world where it is good to live together!

**Dr. Alain-Douglas WANDJI**

*National President of Cameroun-YMCA*



## Seminar at Nkomo Local Union

On the 9th and 10th of November 2018, the Nkomo Local Union organized a seminar about marriage preparation, under the theme “MY MARRIAGE: WORKING TO MAKE IT FLOURISH”. The objective of the seminar was to help participants to build a safe and secure marriage relationship including how to wisely choose a husband or wife, how to plan possible parenthood but also to educate young people that celibacy can be joyous and without the complexity. There were 63 young people, who wished and aspired to a future project of union and marriage, taking part in the seminar and we hope that the participants had a better understanding of the concept of marriage, including the dangers and obstacles leading up to this important phase of life.



## A cultural week full of activities in the Douala C branch

To blossom is to become radiant, to seek well-being, to know oneself. Fulfilment can therefore be assessed on the physical, moral, and spiritual aspects. Cameroon YMCA in general, and the YMCA branch of Douala C in particular, have adopted this multidimensional conception of development that suits the unionist.

By including in its programme of activities a cultural week with the theme POINT OF NO RETURN, COME AND SEE OUR VALUES, the YMCA Branch of Douala C has set itself the objective of ensuring, in general terms, the development of young people on all sides and of the unionists who constitute it in particular. This is what emerges from our meeting with Mr. Achille KINGUE, President of the Douala C Branch, during the activities from 11 to 19 August 2018. It all started with a walking tour and then a vast sanitation operation



that caught the attention of the neighbourhood chief of the city of palm trees. The latter did not fail to express his immense satisfaction while expressing his deep desire to see such activities repeated in the future.

A mini football championship was organised between the sports clubs of the Douala C branch, which ended with the victory of the YMCA Sports Club of Bépanda Omnisports. An athletics competition

was also held, with both male and female athletes in the 800m and 100m distances.

Afterwards, a question-and-answer session was held to test the participants' knowledge on various topics such as knowledge of the YMCA or the Holy Scriptures.

Friday, August 17, was marked by a major religious music concert featuring members of the YMCA Church Clubs of the Douala C Branch and the closing worship service of this busy week took place on Sunday, August 19 in the parish of the Cité de palmiers district.

## Executive Committee May-August 2018 of the Douala YMCA Branch B - Innovative perspectives to come.

On Saturday, August 25, 2018, the Executive Committee of the YMCA/UCJG Branch of Douala B in the Littoral was held at the Alfred Saker College gymnasium. The organization of this second session, which counts for the current year, was made possible thanks to the local union of Deido Valley, which was responsible for it.

25 participants from six local unions attended, namely Makepe Tonnerre, Makepe University, Deido Valley, Nkoulouloun, Ndogsimbi CCC and New-Deido. This meeting made it possible to make an overall assessment of the activities of the period from May to August 2018, and to discuss the various difficulties encountered in order to better analyse the areas of solution.

During the discussions, it was stressed the importance of the understanding of the club concept by all unionists as well as the effectiveness of their creation in the various local unions. In his intervention, the President of the YMCA/

UCJG Regional Union of the Littoral Mr. Joly MBODY who participated in this committee took the opportunity to call on them to seize all training opportunities in view of their future responsibilities.

This executive committee was also marked by the presence of Fallone Mouga, a member of the local union of Fougereole and one of Cameroon's representatives in the YAC (Young Advocates for Change) program. Her presentation on the purpose of his working mission to Kenya under the same program, helped to educate participants on many aspects of the YMCA's operation in other African countries and on the many benefits that Cameroon YMCA could derive from it in terms of optimizing its operation, from local unions to the top of the movement.







## YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR CHANGE 2018

JAMBO!

(HI, IN SHAWILLI)

**M**y name is Fallone Mouga and I am 25 years old. I have a Masters in Spanish. I am a Cameroonian YMCA volunteer, from the local union of Fougerol. In January of this year 2018, I had the wonderful opportunity to be part of the Africa Alliance Youth Exchange Program, called Young Advocates for Change, sponsored by the FK Norway. This was my first time going abroad and my first time flying by airplane. It was so exciting! Initially, all the 23 participants met in Uganda for the Youth Camp for 5 days and then travelled to Mombasa in Kenya to attend a preparatory course. Finishing the course in Kenya, the participants travelled to other African countries to start their exchange programs.

There were 4 different destinations: Madagascar, Zimbabwe, South Africa and Kenya. The African Alliance chose the des-

tinations for us. I was chosen to do the exchange program in Kenya. My experience was great, I discovered new countries, had contact with different cultures.

Kenya YMCA was totally different from the Cameroon YMCA. They have many institutions and did not only work with focus on young people. They run schools, restaurants, and hostels among other things... My objective in Kenya, during the 6 months that I lived there, was to develop YMCA activities and promote the YMCA Christian identity. YMCA is a worldwide youth movement and I wanted to contribute to the organization in Kenya becoming more vibrant and developed.

My first challenge was English since the only contact that I had with English before was in school, as I live in the French-speaking part of Cameroon. But after some months my interactions with people got better as my English improved. I made new friendships, experimented with Kenyan food and learned some Swahili, one of the official languages of Kenya.

Kenya seems to be more developed than Cameroon. Roads, buildings and infras-



tructure are better. People don't throw trash on the streets. And there were not so many posters on the walls, as in Cameroon. I had the impression that Kenya was cleaner. The food was a bit different, but I still prefer the Cameroonian cuisine!

I miss Kenya. I miss my friends. I hope that one day I will be back to this great country.

Asante sana, Kenya! (Thank you, Kenya. In Swahili)



**I** am Billy Romuald FEZEU. I am plumber by profession and vice-president of the local YMCA union in Messassi. I have had a privilege to be part of program young advocate for change (YAC) 2018, and to stay for 6 months in Madagascar. I am Cameroonian and before being Cameroonian I am African and proud of it.

From January to August of 2018, I took part in an international exchange program with all the YMCAs of Africa (YAC-2018). What I liked the most was the vast cultural diversity, the spirit of unity and the culture of personal development, which is indeed a feature of the work of YMCA through their dedicated work of education and empowerment of youth.

I am honoured to have had the privilege of being able to do my small part in contributing to the success and realization of the vision of this organization, which is to empower the youth for a the Renaissance of Africa. For me, the most important is in fact internal growth. It is the accumulation of wisdom, humility, perseverance, intelligence and integrity as time inexorably moves forward. With this comes the apprecia-

tion of beautiful things like great initiatives and good intentions. One has to know how to enjoy the good moments in life and be in the present. You know, what we are today is the result of all the decisions that we make in our daily lives. All these decisions are important but some of them will define who we are forever. And when you have found the balance between your ambitions and your personality, you know that decisions are very important and will define our destiny. So I want to encourage young people like myself to define a vision for their lives because what one sees, one can be, what one perceives one may have. The vision is the product of expectation, order and dedication. It stimulates and motivates you to ask the question, which is your destiny every day: What is your vision of life?





# PAAJEDEC

Finding freedom, even behind bars.

Monatele and Mfou prisons

*"I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."* **Matthew 25:36**

In developing countries, large segments of the ordinary population already face many challenges to get by so it can be of no surprise that prison life is extremely hard in the developing world. But despite this fact, we should not abandon the belief that upholding a basic human rights' standard is possible. However, basic things like access to clean water, food and clothing are sometimes not something we can take for granted, and access to education and training opportunities are even harder to come by. We must recognize that the current prison system in Cameroon is overpopulated and overburdened and this setting cannot be positive towards the rehabilitation of the prisoners, something both they and society at large would benefit greatly from.

The December edition of the "Life in Abundance" magazine focuses on some of the preliminary results of the PAAJEDEC project, which has

been developed in partnership with YMCA-YWCA Denmark. We want to share our new perspective after this first phase PAAJEDEC project in the prisons of Cameroon.

## What is PAAJEDEC?

The PAAJEDEC is a project created with the aim of improving the socioeconomic conditions of young detainees in the prisons of Cameroon as well as providing legal assistance to them. To reach this objective the YMCA Cameroon, in cooperation with YMCA-YWCA Denmark, have developed a program offering workshops in order for the inmates to learn useful skills to improve their financial situation and be able to start better lives after their release.

For this project, we have chosen two prisons in Monatele and Mfou. Every week, YMCA volunteer members visit the prisons and promote social activities followed by prayer sessions, bible readings, preaching and some gospel singing, which is a much-needed moment for the detainees to take a break from the harsh prison conditions. The program has approximately 80 partici-

pants registered in each prison.

As a Christian organization, the YMCA Cameroon cannot leave aside the essential message of the gospel. It is important to remind people living under harsh circumstances that God is present everywhere, also in dark and apparently hopeless places. It is important for each of us to never forget that to God, every single human being is of unique and absolute importance. The gospel's narrative is that God can free us from the prisons of the mind and give each of us a new life. It is important to understand that nothing is required, or can be done, to be worthy of God's love. God sets no condition for his love towards the human being. His life on Earth is a testimony to that.

During the meetings, the YMCA volunteers discuss different themes, like the building of a community, and the importance of responsibility, integrity, education and employment. We also encourage some drama sessions, theater, with the theme of the day, as part of social activities, which are created by the detainees themselves. Furthermore, the seminar also promotes a dee-



“Thank you also for giving me the opportunity to volunteer with the other prisoners after my release”.

“Without going into the details of my time in prison and my meeting with the YMCA, I would say that I judged the prisoner like everyone else, saying of them that they get only what they deserve. But today I understand that prison expresses the reality of our society, because ‘the prisoner expresses the evil of a society’.

When you find yourself in prison, you feel abandoned despite the visits you can receive. So you curse God and men because you feel lost.

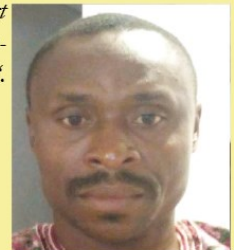
When I met with the YMCA prison's group, they helped me understand that the prisoner may not feel abandoned as I thought. Because the Bible studies offered there allowed me to put my trust in God. I joined this prisoner-frien-

dly group and my judgment on the prisoner has changed.

With the YMCA I received physical, moral and especially spiritual help. I would like to thank all these people who have allowed me to know myself and to learn not to judge others. Thank you also for giving me the opportunity to volunteer with the other prisoners after my release. To support the voiceless, to contribute to the development of prisoners in my country”.

### Mbarga Vincent

Ex-détenué from Monatele Central Prison and YMCA volunteer in the PAAJEDEC



per understanding of the rights that they have under the justice system.

One important feature of the program is the legal advice given by the paralegals. The detainees have the opportunity to talk about their cases and learn about their rights. The YMCA paralegal members follow these inmates' cases going to the Court and updating the detainees about the last decisions. Some of the detainees cannot read or write, and many of them are also teenagers, some as young as only 15 years.

Even though the program has existed for a bit more than a year, the collaboration between the YMCA and the participants of the PAAJEDEC has seen some real results. We have in many cases managed to promote contact between the detainees and family members they had previously been cut off from. This has importance as some detainees have the legal possibility of posting bail to get released. However, this avenue is often close to them because of a lack of funds, which means they get stuck in prison, unnecessarily. Through the mediation of the YMCA Cameroon, which often allows the prisoners a renewed contact with their families and friends, new resources become available to them and, with it, the hope of an earlier release and a better life. At the time of writing the efforts of the YMCA

Cameroon has facilitated the release of 8 participants of the project.

After these preliminary results, the YMCA Cameroon starts to look forward and prepare the next steps of the project. The organization intends, for instance, to implement more activities directed towards women, since, for social reasons, it is not always seen as adequate for them to participate in the same activities as the men.

Another activity that the YMCA would like to promote is the idea of the prisoners taking place in farming projects, since many of the inmates were farmers at some point of their lives, prior to ending up in prison. This project would possibly allow detainees to spend more or their prison time outside the actual prison. This perhaps would allow them to nurture their hope to have a better life outside and connect them with their abilities used before they got in the prison. However, to promote this type of activities, a number of security issues would have to be addressed.

For much of history, a majority of societies have shared the idea that people in prison do not deserve any “soft” treatment, and that the purpose of the imprisonment not only was a privation of liberty for security reasons but actual punish-

ment and causing hardship. In this way, the criminals would learn their lesson and presumably –for fear of renewed punishment – never fall back in crime again. The YMCA works to change this mentality, and attempts to shed light on the Christian values of unconditional love for your neighbour. While this does certainly not mean that the crimes of the prisoners should be forgotten or ignored, we do think that Christ has shown the way in indicating that redemption is possible for every human being, and thus the emphasis for us, as a Christian organization, should be on rehabilitation. No person is unworthy of God's love and so we believe we also have no right to not give up on anyone.

The YMCA invites every member to reflect about our perceptions about prison and duties as a Christian. The PAAJEDEC project is far from perfect, we face many challenges in our work due the limitation of the prison system and limited resources, but we cannot deny that the project is already producing good fruits and because we can see there a seed growing, we believe that changes are possible. We believe that despite the hardship the inmates face in everyday life, there will be always ways to alleviate their suffering, we only need to work together and not forget our Christian duty.



# PROJECTS

## YMCA VOLUNTEERS

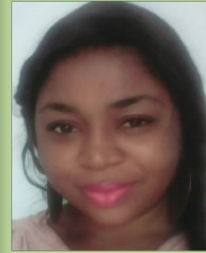
*“The project has its golden weight because it offers the prisoner a platform for listening”*

“Personally, the project has allowed me to better understand the realities of the Cameroonian prison environment and to face them. To break down the prejudices I had about the prisoner and his environment and to have an approach other than the one that popular imagery presented to us, namely a completely separate person; as a result, the frustrations I had with prisoners have vanished. This new experience has allowed me to understand that the detainee, unlike what is widespread, is not a person deprived of life but only of his or her freedom and that it is important to treat it with respect. I made friends among the detainees that I didn't think I would at first. They are friendly people who have regained their smiles when they meet us. They need to be listened to and this is precisely where the project has its golden weight because it offers the prisoner a platform for listening...”



**IHONGUI OTOKO  
OKTO**

## WORKING IN PRISON



**NGA MENDOUMOU  
Irene Catherine**

*“Seeing that we bring them a smile is magic!”*

“The experience I have had so far with the PAAJEDEC project is quite rewarding. As a paralegal, my job is to carry out weekly visits in the prisons of Monatéle and Mfou. During these various visits I carried out, I met prisoners of various ages (young people and the elderly). The most beautiful moments are during the exchanges with the prisoners. Seeing that we bring them a smile is magic! Discussing with them on certain themes and seeing their enthusiasm is fascinating! The PAAJEDEC project is an initiative to be continued because it gives the most neglected people the feeling of belonging to a new family where they are not judged, but where their opinions are taken into account.”

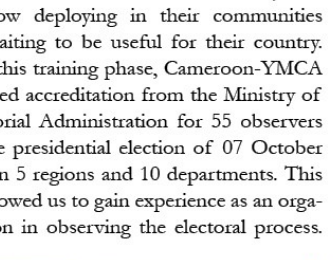
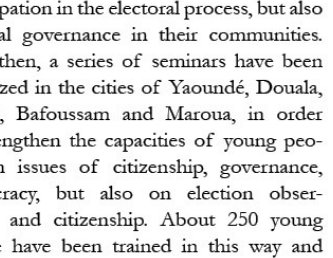
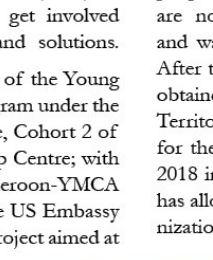
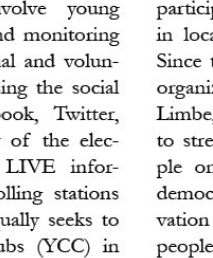
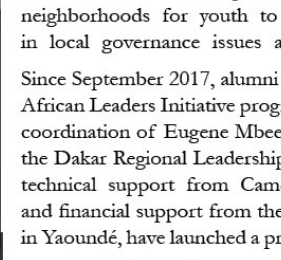
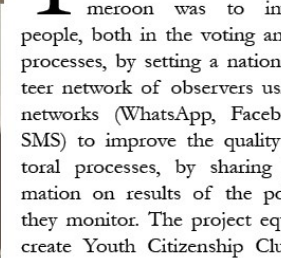
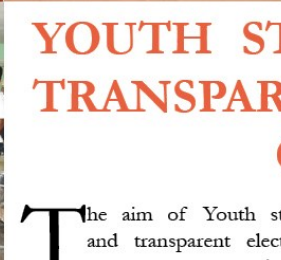


## YOUTH STAND FOR FAIR AND TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS IN CAMEROON

The aim of Youth stand for fair and transparent elections in Cameroon was to involve young people, both in the voting and monitoring processes, by setting a national and volunteer network of observers using the social networks (WhatsApp, Facebook, Twitter, SMS) to improve the quality of the electoral processes, by sharing LIVE information on results of the polling stations they monitor. The project equally seeks to create Youth Citizenship Clubs (YCC) in neighborhoods for youth to get involved in local governance issues and solutions.

Since September 2017, alumni of the Young African Leaders Initiative program under the coordination of Eugene Mbee, Cohort 2 of the Dakar Regional Leadership Centre; with technical support from Cameroon-YMCA and financial support from the US Embassy in Yaoundé, have launched a project aimed at

raising awareness among young people on the issue of elections in order to increase their participation in the electoral process, but also in local governance in their communities. Since then, a series of seminars have been organized in the cities of Yaoundé, Douala, Limbe, Bafoussam and Maroua, in order to strengthen the capacities of young people on issues of citizenship, governance, democracy, but also on election observation and citizenship. About 250 young people have been trained in this way and are now deploying in their communities and waiting to be useful for their country. After this training phase, Cameroon-YMCA obtained accreditation from the Ministry of Territorial Administration for 55 observers for the presidential election of 07 October 2018 in 5 regions and 10 departments. This has allowed us to gain experience as an organization in observing the electoral process.





# PAIJEREC

## OUR WAY TO SERVE YOUNG REFUGEES

Bertoua, the capital of the Eastern Cameroon region is home to more than 80.000 people among them approximately 20.000 refugees from the Central African Republic, according to the UNHCR. The town was selected to be the place for a pilot project developed by the YMCA due to the proximity with the borders of the Central African Republic as well as not being too far from the main offices of the YMCA in Yaoundé.

Since 2003, the Central African Republic is embroiled in conflict compromising several armed groups, who are inflicting violence on many people and leading to the displacement of many more. The refugees from the Central African Republic came to Cameroon in two large waves. The first occurred in 2003, when a large number of people fled rural violence

following a political coup and the second wave was in 2013 when violence reached urban centers displacing thousands more people to Cameroon, and resulting in another coup and widespread violence.

The people who fled to Cameroon faced a horrifying journey, which lasted weeks or even months, through the countryside of the Central African Republic to the border of Cameroon. The people who survived the journey were mostly young people who arrived in Cameroon suffering from severe malnutrition and many other illnesses, and many had lost relatives during the ordeal.

And even after surviving this difficult journey, the refugees faced much further insecurity. Cameroon was not prepared for these waves of

new people and, as in other places in the world, integration of refugees with the local communities has proven difficult and not without tension at times.

However, despite the difficulties that refugees face in Cameroon to survive and feed their families, Cameroon does have a flexible legal framework in regards to refugees. The refugees can work, move freely and reside wherever they want within national borders. However, Cameroon is still a developing country and life conditions are difficult for the vast majority of the population. Thus, although the refugees find themselves in an environment free of violent conflict, they arrive in the eastern Cameroon, i.e. one of the least developed regions of the country.



Being aware of all these challenges faced by especially young people, the Cameroon-YMCA could not close its eyes to these hardships, and felt action would have to be taken. We all know that young people who become marginalized are vulnerable to become victims in many different ways. We, the YMCA, do not accept this state of things and want to change these conditions. That is why we wanted to implement a project in Bertoua to empower both the young refugees and the young hosts.

The PAIJEREC is a pilot project developed to support the integration of young refugees in Cameroonian society, promoted by the Cameroon-YMCA and the YMCA World Alliance. The program has a duration of one year, and aims to empower those young refugees to be able to develop their environment and their community, and make the integration in the host community smoother and more inclusive.

### How does it work?

Since May 2018, the YMCA is promoting

this project with the participation of the local Power Space in Bertoua. Very quickly 70 people joined the pilot project and, during 4 to 5 days a week, divided in 2 groups, these young people meet and give continuity to the Power Space project.

### What is the Power Space project?

The Power Space model is a set of actions directed at young people, which aim to empower them through social activities in order to create self-awareness and inspire them to have goals and aspirations in life. The Power Space model also aims at developing learning skills and link these skills with opportunities.

In the meetings, the participants discuss themes, such as "leadership", "peace", "citizenship", and participate in activities, such as serigraphy and volunteer work. Moreover, discussions also focus on the importance of reducing violence against women on the tools to achieve that. The need of physical and mental health of young people is also a priority.

The first phase of this project pilot has been fruitful and an important step to the YMCA Cameroon to learn and acquire experience about refugees and its issues. We are looking forward for the {grand finale} with the cultural night produced by them which will occur in December. Many young people were very interested and we could feel the need for these types of activities in the region.

We, from the Cameroon-YMCA, are looking forward to see the next steps and development of the YMCA projects in Bertoua, and to observe first hand the empowerment of these young people, so they can be agents of changes in their locality. For sure a lot of interest, motivation and joy was very visible in the PAIJEREC meetings. It is incredible and rewarding to see how project and actions can change lives and offer new perspectives to young people, even though the volunteers involved in the project had to work with limited resources and challenging conditions.



## PAST EVENTS

### Partnership with MultiMath and the donation of material for schools in Cameroon – Multi Math Game.

In October of this year, the Cameroun-YMCA which is partnering with the MultiMath (Danemark) offered 40 kits of a game of math' skills. The game facilitates the learning of math in a way, which is both enjoyable and educational. The kits were, to begin with, distributed to schools close to our local YMCA unions. So far, four representatives of the schools have participated in trainings and kits of the game were distributed. The directors and teachers of the primary schools were very

enthusiastic about the new pedagogical approach of the Danish math game. In this manner, the YMCA Cameroon hopes to strengthen the partnership with the Danish sister organization and thus help bring about a better education system in Cameroon. Who says that math should always be boring and difficult?



### International day of the Girl Child - 28 October 2018

On the 11th of October 2018, the YMCA celebrated the International Day of the girl child (IDG). The YMCA Cameroon brought together women from different YMCA's local unions in Yaoundé. The purpose was to debate a number of topics, including gender inequalities, education, rights, health, discrimination, gender-violence and forced marriage. The overall topic of the IDG of 2018 was "Encouragement of instruction and professional qualification of young women" and, in line with this idea, a workshop about how to make jewellery was given. Also,

the event was attended by a representative of the MINPROOF, (Ministère de la promotion de la femme et de la famille). Unfortunately, millions of young girls are still living under harsh



conditions and are prevented from going to school. We hope to focus the attention of the international community on the problems faced by millions of women around the globe, especially on the African continent. The YMCA

Cameroon wants to invite and involve other youth institutions to participate in this important debate in the future.



### African Youth Day - 01 November 2018

On the 1st of November 2018, the YMCA celebrated African Youth Day (AYD), visiting several schools. The AYD seeks to promote the recognition of young people as key actors of social change, economic growth, and sustainable development on the African continent. This year the theme chosen was "raising youth voices against corruption in Africa". YMCA Cameroon celebrated the occasion over two days: on the first day by going to schools and giving lectures about the theme and on the second day by hosting a public discussion among members of the YMCA, the executive director of Transparency International Cameroon and with several members of youth associations concerning corruption.

#### Launching of the Triangular Partnership.



From the 9th till the 14th of November 2018, a delegation of Cameroun-YMCA and South Africa YMCA meet in Denmark with the YMCA-YWCA of Denmark for the launching of the Official partnership between the three countries under the name of the Y-GLOCAL. With the moto "Global challenges, Local actions" this partnership aims to "empower youth and children in order to take action as responsible glocal citizens through an increasing influence of YMCA in civil society." To change the mindsets of youth and children in order to take action as responsible glocal citizens through an increasing influence of YMCA in civil society".

With and active International Project Group, common activities and projects will come up to give more young people opportunity the bring positive changes in their communities. This is the work of the YMCA as we say, that they all may be one for the transformation of our world.



#### Cameroun-YMCA in Germany 04th - 11th November 2018

In June 2018, during the YMCA World Council in Chiang Mai, an unexpected meeting happened between friends who started a good relationship on the behalf of the Cameroun-YMCA and the German CVJM (YMCA). This led to a subsequent visit of the President of the National Council Dr. Alain-Douglas Wandji and the Program Director Eugene Mbee from Cameroon to the YMCA Germany, in the region of Bavaria, from the 6th to the 11th of November. The members of the YMCA had the opportunity to visit the German YMCA headquarters and also to participate in their General Assembly in the Castle of Burg-Wernfels. The members of the YMCA Cameroon greatly appreciated seeing the German organisation and operation, and are looking forward to the beginning of a closer relation between both national organizations in the spirit of the unconditional love of God.





## Christianity and Christmas

By Angélica Alves

Christianity is the belief that the maker of the universe and the creator of the human being has given us an existential message through his life on Earth. In this respect, Christianity is different from all other religions. Christianity is not a doctrine or a set of rules on how to live life. Rather, Christianity is the idea that the truth is expressed in the life of Jesus-Christ. His life is the divine example of what a true human life is.

This truth takes the form of a tale. The tale of God's life on earth is the story of a man who lived in innocence, who died, and then rose from the dead. And when we look into our own lives with sobriety and seriousness we can see that it is in fact the story of each of us, which is being told. We have all been innocent children once but none of us will escape the spiritual death, which comes with sin. And we should understand this word "sin" correctly. To sin is not to break some conventional, narrow-minded man-made rule about how a "decent" person behaves. To sin, properly understood, can only have one absolute meaning. It is to forget that we have an absolute obligation in love towards our fellow human being.

when we forget that, deceived by the business of earthly life, what is it that we lose, maybe even sometimes without noticing it ourselves? We lose the most important thing a human being can lose. We lose the possibility of living a life, which is truly meaningful. And so, spiritually speaking, we die. But then, if we once again remember the absolute commandment of love, we

can be resurrected to life. What is it then that Christianity offers us? It offers us the possibility of replacing our own, lost story, with the story that God has revealed to us: The story of innocence, fall and resurrection.

And when we contemplate God's story, we realize that it is not only the story of each individual human being, which is being told. It is also the story of the human species in its totality. How at the beginning, God created the human being out of love, how the human being became separated from God and thrown from the Garden of Eden, and how God in the end send his son into the world to redeem all. The beginning of that story is the end and the end is the beginning because this is the story of ETERNITY. What is revealed through Jesus' life is that everything will come to pass, everything will wither, everything will become dust, everything... except the power of love.

From God we shall learn what love is. Often in the world, you realize that we humans are confused about the matter however. For example, you will hear a young man who is in love talk of how "perfect" his love is and then go on to describe all the qualities of his beloved. Well, to us this seems like confused talk because isn't he describing the object of his love, rather than love itself? Indeed the perfection of love is that it doesn't require its object to be perfect, in fact true love sets no conditions at all, just as God sets no condition at all for his absolute love of each and every one of us.

So Christmas is an occasion of joy for every Christian in the world. Because to be a Christian is to believe that heaven touched the Earth. And we remember that Christmas brings a message of true consolation for all those who suffer in this world. Maybe you walk through life lonely, without family or friends. Maybe the one you loved the most died or maybe he betrayed you and left you with a broken heart. Or maybe you suffer ill health or poverty and you do not know to whom to turn. But do never forget, whomever you are, that no matter the harshness you suffer: God has given each of us the one thing that a human being needs the most. He has given each of us the possibility to live a meaningful life by sharing it with each other with a love that sets no condition.

When we realize that, we realize what Christianity is: the total victory of the heart. The understanding that love in the end will overcome all, conquer all, achieve all. We realize that through faith we can acquire the one and only thing that matters: a pure heart.

A poet once wrote that it is only with the heart that one can see clearly. And it really is so because it is only a pure heart, which shall see God, which shall understand what true love is.

And yes, the commandment is that you shall love, but when you know life and yourself, you realize that there is nothing else worth living for.

Merry Christmas!

### World YMCA Stakeholders Consultation Meeting 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018

The World YMCA has organised a global strategic meeting with 80 leaders coming from YMCAs around the world. This meeting aimed to look into the future of the YMCA and adopt the strategic plan 2019-2023. The YMCAs leaders was looking on the best way to realize our common mission. Dr. Alain-Douglas Wandji, the President of the Cameroun-YMCA was invited. He also took part at the meeting of the World YMCA Executive Committee from the 24th to the 25th October.



### CAMEROON NATIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018

*"The point of no return: let's mobilize, let's express ourselves"*

From the 08th to the 09th the Cameroon-YMCA will have his National General Assembly at the Hotel du stade at Foubot in the West region. It is about 50 delegates and participants that are expected to attend this annual evaluation meeting.

This year, the General Assembly will elect 2 members to complete the Youth representatives at the NEC and the delegate will also elect an External Auditor to the National Council.

Elisavet Kalivatsi Executive Secretary of refugees at the World Alliance will represent the World YMCA at this National General Assembly.

### YOUTH ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE 2019 January - August 2019

After our first participation to this great programme in 2018, here is come again the time for young people across Africa and Norway to learn again how to bring the change in their communities. Cameroon-YMCA will be present with two young people this time also. Charelle from Douala B Branche and Micheal from Yaounde B Branche will represent us and hopefully will learn relevant skills for their lives and also for their YMCA.

### YMCA INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR from the 20<sup>th</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2019

The YMCA Cameroon, YMCA-YWCA Denmark and YMCA South Africa are working in cooperation to strengthen the relationship among international partners and to empower some of the young leaders of YMCA to become "Change Agents". The purpose of the training is to help young participants to impact their local communities and promote changes in their home countries. 10 young participants will be selected from each country and travel to Cameroon. The first edition of the IPG will happen in Yaoundé, Cameroon, from January 20-26<sup>th</sup>, 2019.



# CAMEROON ELECTIONS 2019

YOUTH STAND FOR FAIR AND TRANSPARENT ELECTIONS IN CAMEROON

## #ProudOfMyVote

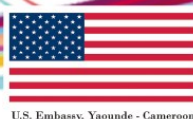
The registration  
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behind, **GO** and  
register and make  
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www.ymcacameroun.org



### CELEBRATE OUR HISTORY VOLUNTEER 175

To celebrate YMCA's **175th anniversary** in 2019, World YMCA challenges you to volunteer **175 minutes** of your time to better your community. Together we aim to achieve 1.75 million minutes!



Want to join us?  
Contact the team.

## SAVE THE DATE 8 JUNE 2019

#YMCAChallenge #YMCA175

## GET INVOLVE !

## Celebrate YMCA birthday

A global youth event

# YMCA 175

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