

Fire in Cameroon Leaves Disabled People in Need

BLUF (Bottom Line Up Front):

The Community Creative Center (CCC), a disability-led community center filled a critical need in Bamenda, Cameroon. The Center touches the lives and transforms the futures of people with disabilities, victims of gender-based violence, and specifically multiply-marginalized women with disabilities. A recent fire decimated the Center and the community desperately needs a sponsoring partner to resume their important work.

The Community Creative Center:

CCC, founded by disability leader, Nogning Armelle Aimerique, has profoundly touched the lives of many disabled people in the area. The CCC provided women with disabilities training in income-generating skills such as Ankara crafting, bead production, bakery, and making cleaning products like soaps, detergents, and other artisanry, information and support for basic needs, and prosocial activities. Children of all ages were provided training, motivation and encouragement to look beyond their disability under the slogan “Disability Does Not Disable Your Dreams.”

For Armelle and many others, CCC is a beacon of hope for a stronger community!



The Fire:

CCC 's great community empowerment work came to a halt the morning of February 22, 2024. The CCC and the Bamenda main market was engulfed in a fire and the entire market was lost. The replacement value of the loss totaled 1.7 million Francs of the Financial Community of Africa (CFA) of materials, equipment, handling logistics and finances. Similar to other crises, compensation, and recovery efforts remain thwarted by inaction strategies, bureaucracies, and barriers with no change is in sight. These community members need to resume their livelihoods, feeding their families, and maintaining their safety. With this devastating loss comes the loss of jobs to trainers who are fully equipped to share their knowledge, leaving the community in despair, uncertain and lost. Armelle believes that education not only empowers disabled women but also provides intersectionality, inclusion, and accessibility of resources.

Armelle and the CCC have asked GADRA to help identify strategic partners to join in rebuilding this critical community resource.



About Armelle:

Many might wonder what drove Armelle to create CCC. She has navigated several atrocities in her own life, which became more evident during the ongoing Anglophone Crisis close to a decade ago, when she and other women, especially those who are disabled found themselves in great danger. She went on to provide response and relief assistance to marginalized women facing gender-based violence (GBV). GBV propagated sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), mothering children, and being the breadwinners for their families, all while facing classism, ableism, bigotry, and gender inequality. These women come to Armelle who strives to help them meet their daily challenges by making them an anchor, gaining a sense of equality in a matriarchal community under an authoritarian regime. Through this center and her unwavering

commitment and resilience, Armelle was able to connect the women with various community stakeholders and in her words, “The change we have brought to the community extends beyond mere recognition but it has earned us awards.”

As a survivor of GBV Armelle hopes no other woman or child should have to endure it.



The Ask:

Despite the difficulties and the devastation of the fire, Armelle has not lost hope and aims to have startup capital for income-generation activities like bringing in educational materials, vocational training tools, assistive devices like wheelchairs, and other resources tailored to the specific needs of the women served at the CCC.

To resume providing this essential service to the community, and recover from this disaster the CCC needs \$3,800 USD.

Looking forward, she hopes to establish a permanent location for the CCC, no longer renting space, provide advocacy for the respect of rights, provide scholarship programs, offer counseling services, provide assistive technology (AT), and continue to conduct skill development for income-generating activities, facilitate identification, and referrals for health interventions.

To build forward from this disaster and create a more resilient future for the community the CCC needs additional funding.