



## **REPORT ON VISIT OF C3T MEDIA DIALOGUE TEAM TO BERTOUA**

*(Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> & Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2017)*

### **Introduction**

The East Region is a breathing ground for tobacco cultivation in Cameroon. Tobacco growing has become a tradition of the people of Bertoua, East Regional capital town, and pretty much other parts of the region. The transformation of this locally grown tobacco aids in making tobacco consumption very rampant in the entire country. In Cameroon, 2,700 people die yearly from tobacco related causes.

The 2013 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) Cameroon shows that approximately 1,100,000 adults are regular consumers of tobacco products in the country while the 2014 Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS) reveals that at least 300,000 students between the ages of 13 and 15 consume tobacco products. The bad news here is that at least half of all these people are sure to die as a result of their tobacco consumption.

A report jointly published by the National Cancer Institute (NCI) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in January 2017 shows that tobacco use costs countries over \$1 trillion annually, making the fight against tobacco a public health and economic priority.

These frightening statistics serve as a reminder that it is imperative to voice out the dangers of tobacco consumption, and more importantly, adopt regulations that will control the production and consumption of tobacco products in the country.

In Cameroon, the tobacco industry always tries to carry out activities that defy the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which Cameroon ratified in 2006. As a party to the convention, Cameroon ought to outline and implement policies that protect its citizens from tobacco control.

In a bid to sensitize Cameroonians on the dangers of tobacco cultivation and consumption, and existing but poorly implemented measures to protect citizens from the tobacco industry, the **Media Dialogue Team** of the Cameroon Coalition for Tobacco Control (C3T) visited the town of Bertoua on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> and Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

### **Objectives**

The Bertoua visit by C3T's Media Dialogue Team had three general objectives;

- I. To sensitise the press on the dangers of tobacco cultivation possible alternatives, as well as on tobacco control issues through a media Dialogue.
- II. To carry out advocacy visits to administrative and political authorities, and sensitization on tobacco control in an academic institution.

## THE MEDIA DIALOGUE

The Media Dialogue took place on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2017 at Hotel de Paris in Bertoua. It had the following specific objectives;

1. To equip journalists of the East Region with the right information so they could adequately report on tobacco issues.
2. To get the journalists interested in tobacco control issues by letting them know of the manoeuvres of the tobacco industry.
3. To “recruit” journalists who can serve as tobacco control focal points in the East Region.

The Bertoua media dialogue drilled journalists on tobacco and tobacco control policies that can improve the lives of Cameroonians.

The following issues were discussed during the press talk;

- Tobacco and its dangers on human health.
- The general tobacco situation in the world, in Africa and in Cameroon.
- Interference of tobacco control policies by the tobacco industry.
- Dealing with the tobacco problem by following the guidelines of the FCTC with the enforcement of a National Tobacco Control law.
- Components of a good tobacco control law.
  - ✓ A comprehensive ban on Tobacco Advertising Promotion and Sponsorship.
  - ✓ Graphic Health Warnings on Packs of Tobacco Products
  - ✓ Smoke-free environments
- The dangers and disadvantages of tobacco cultivation and great alternatives.
- The Tobacco Industry Accountability Project (TIA).
- The 2014 GYTS Cameroon.

Some major concerns were raised by the journalists: They wondered;

1. How possible it is that active and passive smokers suffer the same consequences of tobacco.
2. If locally made and consumed tobacco in its raw form has the same effects as transformed and industrialised cigarettes.
3. How some medical practitioners who should know all about the dangers of tobacco will continue to smoke.
4. If tobacco is as dangerous as other drugs.
5. How fast or how soon tobacco can damage the health of an individual

Adequate responses were provided to all preoccupations raised.

After the discussions, the journalists all agreed on a few aspects:

1. Tobacco leads to economic hardship no matter how it is looked at.
2. Tobacco is dangerous and disadvantageous in all its forms.
3. Tobacco cultivation can be replaced with tomatoes cultivation. This will yield much more benefits in several aspects.



*C3T Media Dialogue in Bertoua*

## **Attendance**

The Bafoussam media dialogue was attended by 30 journalists from 21 media organs. The media organs that attended the deliberations include;

### Television Stations

1. CRTV East
2. Equinox TV
3. STV
4. DBS
5. Afrique Media
6. Canal 2 International
7. LTM TV
8. Baobab TV

### Radio Stations

1. CRTV East
2. Radio Aurore
3. Radio Bonne Nouvelle
4. Dunamis FM

### Written Press

1. Cameroon Tribune
2. Le Temps Express
3. Emergence
4. Le Messenger

5. La Nouvelle Expression
6. Mutations
7. l'Actu
8. Soleil Plus
9. L'Info
10. Horizons Sante

#### Online Press

1. Bertoua.info

### **ADVOCACY AND SENSITISATION VISITS**

The specific objectives of the visits were;

- ✓ To sensitise students, local administrative and political authorities on tobacco and tobacco control policies.
- ✓ To galvanise support for the adoption of tobacco control policies.
- ✓ To create contacts that can facilitate the organisation of other activities C3T may subsequently plan in the East Region.

The C3T Media Dialogue team successfully organised one sensitisation visit and one advocacy visit. The sensitisation visit was to the Government Bilingual High School (GBHS Bertoua) while the advocacy visit was to the Mayor of the Bertoua 1 Council.

#### **1. Visit to GBHS Bertoua**

The C3T Media Dialogue Team visited GBHS Bertoua at about 10 am on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2017. The first sensitisation talk was held in open air with a group of about 100 students. Being an open air even and with the presence of C3T graphic imagery posters exhibited at the site, many more students were attracted to the discussion.





After the open air sensitisation, the media dialogue team visited Form 5 Arts students in their classroom. The over 60 English speaking students evidently happy to receive the C3T team judging from the anxiety they portrayed during the sensitisation exercise. The scenario was the same in yet another classroom visited by the team; about 70 students of 3eme.



In all these discussions, the students had similar concerns; ban the production and importation of tobacco and its products if it is as dangerous as portrayed. Students also noted what they considered as benefits of tobacco; it nourishes their hair and it is a source of income to their families. Their doubts were all cleared and they appreciated the team for the visit.

## 2. Visit to the Bertoua 1 Council

At 9:20 am on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February 2017, the C3T Media Dialogue Team visited the premise of the Bertoua 1 Council where they met with the Mayor, Mr. BEMBELL D'IPACK Cromwell Olivier

For about 20 minutes, the C3T team and the Mayor discussed possible tobacco control measures in the Bertoua 1 council area. Mayor Olivier was also enlightened on the disadvantages of tobacco cultivation and other alternatives he could encourage tobacco cultivators to consider.

Using Bamenda 1 Council as a reference, the Mayor and the C3T team discussed the importance and the possibilities of making Bertoua 1 a smoke free council area. An advocacy kit was handed to the Mayor who did not hide his joy receiving the C3T team.



*The C3T Media Dialogue Team discussing with Mayor BEMBELL D'IPACK Cromwell Olivier*

#### **Side Event: Visit to the Federation of Tobacco Planters in Cameroon**

The C3T Media Dialogue Team seized the opportunity of their presence in Bertoua to visit the premise of the Federation of Tobacco Planters in Cameroon (FPTC). This was on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> February, 2017. The team was met with a virtually empty building as Federation workers held a sit down strike, protesting the nonpayment of the salaries for a couple of months.

The Media Dialogue Team gathered that the government of Cameroon had recently issued a 42 million Francs CFA subvention to the Federation, but even that did not seem to heal their wounds as reports of the money being misused filtered in the air. All attempts by the team to reach even a worker of the Federation were fruitless.

After what could be termed a satisfying stay in Bertoua, the C3T Media Dialogue Team left for Yaoundé at exactly 2 pm on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2017.

#### **Word of Thanks**

Special thanks to Mr. Koumai Kisito, East Regional Correspondent of Canal 2 International for assisting locally in the organization of this event.

Special thanks also go to the Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK) for providing the funds to make this visit possible.