

## **INTERNATIONAL STUDENT VISITING AGGEM, ENCOURAGES THOSE WHO HOLD A MYTH ABOUT AFRICA AND ITS YOUTH TO VISIT.**

Michele Mertens, a German student at the masters level, reading Anthropology in social Sciences, recently came to Bamenda on the 4<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, purposely to visit AGGEM. Previously not satisfied with the negative picture painted by the foreign media about Africa, she decided to do some research online about Africa and African youths which led her to the profile of Eric , the Coordinator of Action Group on Governance and Environmental management(AGGEM). Amazed by his profile and work in community development, she decided to visit AGGEM. Michele has an interest in working with African youths and a passion for social entrepreneurship. Given the fact that AGGEM is a social Enterprise , that engages heavily in agriculture and ploughs back the benefits for worthy social causes via its Giving back initiative caught Michele's attention.

At the Mukwebuh quarter where the AGGEM team had worked to clean the water catchment that was buried in deep mud, she met with Pa Akombo John who had voluntarily given his land for the construction of the water catchment, which serves over 1000 households in that area. AGGEM had already identified other communities with similar problems , or with natural springs that needs to be harnessed into portable drinking water.

During this time, she saw the AGGEM pig and poultry farms and a fish pond which was still under construction at the Alakuma neighborhood in Bamenda. She Equally took a trip to the AGGEM Pineapple farm located at Nkwat-Nkan towards Bali. The farm was about two hectares with lots of pineapples in it which the team do harvest from time to time and sell in the market and use the proceeds for social causes. AGGEM'S coordinator Eric explained that their greatest concern was transforming the organically grown pineapples into juice and other content, since the fruit was cultivated on a large scale. AGGEM is looking at reducing the cycle of poverty via agriculture and making communities to be sustainable and self reliant .

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of April 2016, Michele and the AGGEM team headed down to Bafut to visit one of the groups with which they work with. The Optimist Friends in Bafut is a Common Initiative Group and a mimi social enterprise that has been using the proceeds of their farm products to help the needy in the Bafut community. At the plantain farm in Beringie, Michele got the chance to explore the plantation owned by optimist Friends which was quite productive and doing pretty well. They also Own other farms cultivating Ginger, Cassava , tomatoes as well as a poultry farm. The Optimist Friends expressed their desire to expand and operate these farms in mechanized manner in order to produce better yields , transform some of the products and distribute them across Africa, to help the less privilege. As social entrepreneur savy, Michele was quite impressed by the zeal, passion and desire to extend a hand to the hearts of those in need in their community. “ Never fall, be optimistic , stand on your feet and don't depend much on foreign assistance for your sustenance” were the words of Michele as she bid fare well to the Optimist friends and the look on her face said, well I have seen these African youths doing well for themselves and with such a delightful zeal to help others with my own eyes.....” I am challenging all foreign nationals to visit Africa and see what African youths are capable of doing.



Some photos of working session at AGGEM Head office and visit to some of AGGEM's project sites and a partner group.