

**ACTION GROUP ON GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT**  
**GRUPE D'ACTION SUR LA GOVERNANCE ET GESTION DIENVIRONNEMENT**  
**(AGGEM) CAMEROON**

**2012-2017 STRATEGIC PLAN**



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## 1 BACKGROUND

The Action Group on Governance and Environmental Management (AGGEM) Cameroon is pleased to present its 2012 – 2017 Strategic Plan (Plan). Prior to articulating that vision, let's briefly highlight relevant aspects of the environment in which we operate.

### 1.1 *The Development Context*

The development context in Cameroon is very complex. Cameroon is working to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Cameroon's Governments long term strategy for development elaborated in *Vision 2035*, which articulates the country's efforts to become an emerging economy, democratic and united Country in diversity by 2035. The vision identifies four major challenges that must be overcome to reach the envisaged level of development including; economic growth which is stagnating, increased population growth, rapid urbanization and poor governance. The vision's objectives are in line with the objectives of the MDGs and are coined with emphasis on overcoming these obstacles including;

- Cameroon becomes a more democratic state entailing national integration, peace, justice, social cohesion, emergence of a strong and accountable civil society and participation of all Cameroonians in public affairs management.
- Economic growth and increase employability against a backdrop of an economy of over 50% depending on household and Sole Proprietor Businesses of mostly informal units notably agriculture and trade with no guarantee of sustainable growth due to their generally fluctuating performances.
- The Socio-demographic landscape which has witnessed an explosion of Cameroon's population with an increase in the number of dependent people (young and old). Vision emphasizes use of Cameroon's growing young and skilled manpower as driving force for its development through controlled growth and human capital formation.
- Governance defined in the vision as efficient and effective use of the Country's potential as well as human, material and financial resources for its development is a major area that the 2035 Vision seeks to address.

To achieve the MDGs and this development *Vision 2035*, efforts have to be made to create employment for the youths, increase agricultural production and productivity, improve communication, strengthen financial markets, and augment infrastructure and governance.

In the area of employment, an enabling environment is being created by government to facilitate the creation of jobs. The *Growth and Employment Strategy* paper is a policy document which outlines strategies to create

employment and stimulate growth. The government is training and carrying out direct recruitment of youths. Civil Society Organizations (CSO) and economic operators are also creating jobs for the youths. However, the level of under employment and unemployment remains very high and is a challenge to the government. AGGEM - Cameroon's efforts in this direction are focused on self-help, community driven interventions for job creation and youth entrepreneurship and taking advantage of the ongoing decentralization process.

Telecommunication in Cameroon is fast improving. Fiber Optic is being introduced and this will facilitate national and international communication, reduce the cost of communication, and increase access to information- all of which is vital for development. Road infrastructure remains a challenge in Cameroon. The road network is very poor, thereby limiting the transportation of goods and people. The farms-to-markets roads are particularly bad. Some of the roads are almost impassable during the rainy season. However, the roads linking the main cities are tarred and this facilitates inter-urban transport.

The economic development of Cameroon is still plagued by poor governance and corruption in particular. Despite the efforts made by the National Anticorruption Commission, the level of corruption in private and public institutions remains very high. Interventions to improve this situation will be laudable. AGGEM Cameroon work on the promotion of a Code of Ethics for Civil Society as a tool to promote accountability, transparency and participation within and between civil society organizations, towards the state their partners and constituencies is a step towards enhancing this governance process.

Economic liberalization and political decentralization are intricately linked, but are limited by poor governance/corruption and insufficient funds for implementation. In addition, justice and peace—which are foundations of development—remain difficult to fully achieve. The political will is increasingly growing to ensure these principles are strengthened and one laudable step by the Government has been the putting in place of the senate which is the Upper House of Parliament of Cameroon is a major step towards this democratization process.

Finally, the financial market in Cameroon is growing very fast. Many micro-finance institutions are being opened and this has greatly improved access to capital for small and medium sized businesses. The government recently instituted obligatory lending whereby economic operators and banks lend money to the government at a specific interest rate. This prevents the Government borrowing from international organizations, whereas the local banks have excess liquidity.

AGGEM's Strategic Plan has taken into consideration this complex development context.

## **1.2 THE WORLD FROM AGGEM - CAMEROON'S PERSPECTIVE**

AGGEM - Cameroon was founded on the philosophy that holistic approach that takes into consideration the three facets of sustainability – environment, social and economic was key growth for individuals, households, businesses and communities. AGGEM - Cameroon as a group of committed individuals has thus structured its service delivery through three technical components (Agriculture & Economic Development, Natural Resource Management, Social Development) and one administrative component (Management & Coordination); all of which reflect global development paradigms of participatory development, democratic principles, management transparency, and a decentralization philosophy. To maximize its impact on beneficiaries and clients, AGGEM - Cameroon has identified new areas of intervention as well as refocusing its efforts on core capacities. Examples include: working with our constituencies to improve their understanding on current and emerging governance and environmental issues including mitigating and coping (acceptable levels) with the adverse effects of climate change, promoting local ownership and dissemination of best practices, youth empowerment as a cornerstone for sustained development, improving productivity of farmers and farms' production, reducing food security inadequacies, and strengthening the internal capacity of AGGEM - Cameroon to deliver essential services. These areas of intervention reflect global concepts and principles and will be addressed by AGGEM - Cameroon to various degrees in the next five years of its Strategic Plan. AGGEM as an advocacy and lobby group will use every opportunity to work with the Local Councils, the duty bearers currently in charge of the decentralization process while operating within the framework of Cameroon's *2035 Vision*. An essential role shall be to link people, groups, and organizations to source for funds in fulfilling its mission and objectives for the next five years. Ultimately, AGGEM - Cameroon is seeking to be recognized as playing a frontline role in contributing to Cameroon's development.

## **1.3 AGGEM's Strategic Plan and Plot for the Future**

AGGEM's Strategic Plan has been designed to more clearly articulate specific objectives and areas of its intervention. This Plan will also be utilized as a springboard for immediate marketing and business development purposes. **The development and implementation of this Plan a major milestone in AGGEM - Cameroon's history.**

A clear Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system that ensures the Plan's provisions are being implemented will be a priority for AGGEM - Cameroon over the next five years.

## 2 AGGEM - CAMEROON: THE ORGANIZATION

AGGEM - Cameroon has evolved over the years in an effort to continuously improve its services and, ultimately, its impact on beneficiaries and clients. The strategic planning process allows us an opportunity to document various aspects of this transformation over time.

AGGEM - Cameroon's creation was therefore linked to the existing Law no. 99/014 of December 22, 1999 bearing on the creation of Associations, to have official recognition of the state of Cameroon given that all NGOs operating in Cameroon at the time had their origin from out of the country. Despite its modest start and the difficulties operating in an unfavorable environment, we have come a long way to record big successes, namely: establishing evidence of quality professional service delivery to the grassroots population, groups, and development organizations; supporting human development and environmental protection; and creating employment opportunities and wealth. AGGEM - Cameroon is a learning network of development organization whose work lays emphasis on rural development; responding to the fact that more than 80% of the active population of the North West Region is involved in agriculture. It is also estimated that close to 70% of the regional rural population lives below the poverty line, reasons for which AGGEM - Cameroon targets organized community based farmers and farming groups, rural and poor urban populations, family units, rural communities with local councils, governmental organizations, and other stakeholders with an interest in rural development. Throughout its history, AGGEM - Cameroon has approached development with a heavy emphasis on participation, fostering meaningful partnerships which prepare its clients to gain autonomy and achieve sustainable development within their environments.

**2.1 Organizational Services & Products** For the past 5 years AGGEM - Cameroon has been offering quality, customized services to its clients and beneficiaries in the following areas:

**Capacity building of agricultural organizations:** Our efforts in this area focused on improving farming techniques, group dynamics, resource mobilization, project design, and management.

**Management of natural resources:** Areas of intervention include environmental impact assessment, biodiversity conservation, catchment protection, designing and delivering environmental education curriculums in schools, and facilitating tree planting in schools and communities to mitigate climate change effects.

**M&E of development projects:** In this capacity, AGGEM - Cameroon has been involved in sustainable agriculture, health, conflict resolution and peace building, democracy, and women empowerment projects.

**Socio-economic surveys of projects:** We have designed and executed surveys that formed the basis for a wide range of development projects at the local, regional, and national levels.

**Democracy and human rights:** AGGEM - CAMEROON has created awareness on women's rights in the areas of equal health, education, and livelihood opportunities. We also have educated and empowered women to hold positions of responsibility throughout various community institutions.

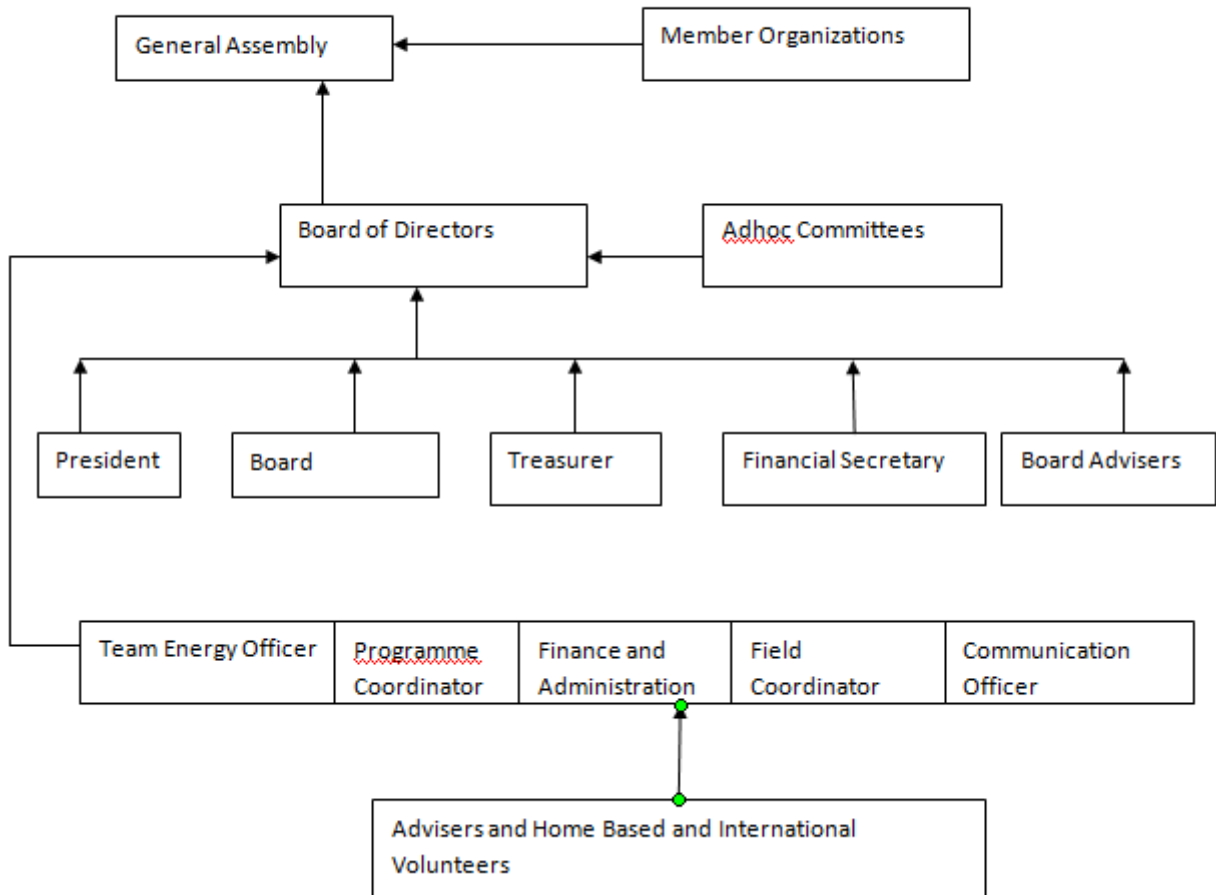
**Municipal development:** AGGEM - Cameroon has promoted good governance in the civil society and councils through building capacity of CSO leaders, councilors and council staff and facilitating Communal Development Plans (CDP).

**Provide professional development opportunities for post-graduates:** AGGEM - CAMEROON provides a platform for young professionals to gain field experience and improve their marketability in the job market. Our intern program has yielded a diverse, successful pool of development professionals.

## **2.2 Organizational Structure**

One of AGGEM - Cameroon's core strengths throughout its history is a well defined organizational structure that provides a disciplined framework for carrying out its mission. This strategic planning process provided an opportunity to update its structure and develop a more streamlined hierarchy. AGGEM - Cameroon is led by a fully operational, five member Board of Directors who committed their enthusiasm and energy to growing AGGEM Cameroon. The Board's primary responsibilities include strategic planning, fundraising, partnership development, and adoption of important organizational policies. Some members of the board are equally involved in daily operations, business development, relationship building, financial management, and implementation of the strategic framework. As previously mentioned, our services are delivered through three technical components which reflect AGGEM - CAMEROON's commitment to addressing social, economic, and environmental facets of development. *Figure 1* (following page) illustrates AGGEM - CAMEROON's complete organizational chart.

# AGGEM ORGANISATIONAL CHART



## 3. THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

### AGGEM - CAMEROON Strategic Review and Planning

AGGEM - CAMEROON members spent two days on March 17 and 18 defining the Group's strategic directions for 2012-17, revising the mission and vision statements and creating working groups to ensure the plan is implemented.

The participatory approach required every person present to contribute their ideas which were then grouped and given a collective name at each stage.

The process is summarised in the table below.





	Practical things you want to see within a defined period	Underlying barriers or blockages preventing realisation of the vision	Broad approach to deal with the Contradictions in order to move towards the Vision	Specific actions to be done	Doing it!	Making sure it gets done
What						
When	17 March			18 Mar + Quarterly	2011-15	Every quarter for 2011-15
Who	All members present			All members	All members	Board Members

The focus of the first day was on developing the Strategic Directions and Areas of Actions falling within each Strategic Direction. There was agreement from those present that these Strategic Directions and associated Areas of Action would allow AGGEM - Cameroon to move forward in a focused manner during the next five years whilst also providing sufficient flexibility to take advantage of new opportunities as they arose. The Strategic Directions and Areas of Action were tied to AGGEM's objectives and strategies as listed below.

### Objectives 1:

To enhance the role of households, groups, business, institutions and communities in safeguarding the environments.

### Strategies

- 1.1. Work with Communities to improve their understanding on environmental good governance and build influence for self-reliant and sustained development.

- 1.2. Engage with our target in identifying and implementing local, cutting edge and replicable environmental management approaches.
- 1.3. Enhance access to resources for our targets to carryout local environmental and good governance initiatives.
- 1.4. Engage with targets to integrate sustainability thinking in meeting their livelihood needs, production and service delivery chains.
- 1.5. Document and disseminate best practices based on local experiences.

### **Objective 2:**

Strengthen respect for environmental policy and enhanced partnerships with other actors.

#### **Strategies**

- 2.1. To promote mainstreaming of environmental impact analysis into development planning.
- 2.2. To promote action research, learning on environmental issues and to propose local and innovative solutions to existing and emerging environmental challenges.
- 2.3. To lobby in collaboration with other civil society organizations for the incorporation of Strategic Environmental Assessments in higher level policy, planning, programming and review at different levels in Cameroon.
- 2.4. To network and build partnership at all levels to share learning and best practices on environmental management and governance issues.

### **Objective 3:**

Enhance youth leadership skills for environmental governance.

#### **Strategies**

- 3.1. To collaborate with institutes of learning and training to promote environmental consciousness with emphasis on contextual considerations.
- 3.2. Support the development and delivery of structured environmental training packages with consideration of the local context and facilitate their delivery.
- 3.3. To engage with out of school youths to develop environmental leadership and governance skills based on contextual realities.
- 3.4. Set up a Youth Environmental Leadership Award (YELA) for Institutes of Learning and training.

### **Objective 4**

Contribute to enhance Cameroon civil transparency, accountability, legitimacy and participation in national development.

### **Strategies**

- 4.1. Continue to promote the Code of Ethics for Cameroon Civil Society
- 4.2. Develop and promote a Quality Assurance Mechanism for Cameroon Civil Society.

### **Objectives 5:**

Strengthen AGGEM's organisational capacity.

### **Strategies**

- 5.1. Enhance the Governance capacity of AGGEM.
- 5.2. Promote active participation of AGGEM's members.
- 5.3. Improve communication and fundraising.
- 5.4. Enhance AGGEM's outreach locally, nationally and internationally.

While there was considerable work undertaken by participants during the workshop the real work begins when a plan is being implemented. Most people have had the experience of working hard to develop a plan only to see it sit unused in a drawer. To avoid this fate for the AGGEM's strategic plan a Working Group was created for each of the Strategic Directions on the second day. Working Groups, rather than committees, because they are about doing the tasks that are required to move AGGEM in these Strategic Directions. The groups were self-selecting with each representative signing up their organisation to the Strategic Directions they felt they had the most to contribute. The first task of these newly formed groups was to formulate their implementation plans, starting by defining major milestones (achievements) for 2012. The rationale behind quarterly detailed planning is to continuously apply what is learnt in one quarter into the activities of the next quarter.

The Working Groups were formed by the member organisations present at the workshop, however it is important for the strength of the network that all members contribute their skills and knowledge. All members who were unable to attend the workshop are invited to join a working group of their choosing in order to contribute to AGGEM's ongoing strength and relevance.

## **ORIENTATION 1: MAXIMISING NETWORK POWER**

**Result 1:** *Organizational learning through M&E enhanced*

Noted previously was a discussion of the OD Assessment and the four resulting priorities from that exercise. This result is a recognition by AGGEM that M&E should be reflected as a top priority during the strategic planning, implementation, and review phases.

**Result 2:** *Financial capacity and sustainability strengthened*

We recognize that the development sector is highly competitive and organizations largely rely on variable funding sources. AGGEM as a network striving to avoid competing with its members, is building a system that mitigates this barrier through creative income generation activities

**Result 3:** *Partnership and marketing efforts strengthened*

Another result derived from the Organisational Development Assessment Assessment prior to the workshop (improving marketing and outreach), AGGEM acknowledges previous limitations in this area and is seeking to build a much stronger and broader platform for sharing its rich experience and expertise.

**Result 4:** *Capacity of human resources reinforced and maximized*

We recognize that our members are our greatest asset, and therefore, should be the benefactors of greater training opportunities while more effectively leveraging their unique experiences and perspectives. This result also reflects a priority identified in the OD Assessment.

## **ORIENTATION 2: EXTENSIVE AND EFFECTIVE OUTREACH**

**Result 1:** *Education, economic empowerment and support to disadvantaged groups enhanced* Focusing on vulnerable populations has historically been a focus for this component. We intend to leverage that experience in order to create more dynamic services and to reach a wider group of that population. Moreover, linking education with livelihood training/activities and direct support ensures that a holistic approach is applied.

**Result 2:** *Service provisions to councils and other institutions increased*

This result derives from an understanding that social issues should also be addressed at the community level in order to increase our breadth of impact. Councils and other higher level institutions represent a far reaching, credible platform for assisting our beneficiaries and clients across the various socially related issues.

**Result 3:** *Gender and social relations improved* Clearly defining the role of gender within the AGGEM's framework has historically been lacking. This result provides the basis for developing a stronger platform for us to promote these principles.

**Result 4:** *Human rights based approach to development and advocacy promoted* We fully believe that respecting basic human rights is a

fundamental pillar to any development vision. This result not only captures advocating for human rights for external beneficiaries, but it also represents an internal control within AGGEM - CAMEROON to ensure that—across all of our programs—basic human rights are being adequately advocated.

***Improving AGGEM's Marketing and Outreach*** Despite our rich experience and expertise, NWADO has historically lacked adequate systems to promote our projects and overall development message. We acknowledge the need to immediately increase our marketing and communications efforts in order to achieve the ambitious mission set forth in this Plan. Towards this end, the strategic planning process focused on developing a consensus-based set of principles and capacities that captures the very essence of AGGEM. These principles and capacities represent our organizational brand—the manner in which we seek to be perceived. Moreover, we sought to identify how AGGEM could distinguish itself from the many other local NGOs; also referred to as developing our niche. ***Our Brand- values and principles we live by...***

***Credible.*** Experience alone is not enough; we have a well documented history of delivering our services with impartialness, integrity, and effectiveness.

***Accountable.*** Our credibility is linked directly to our ability to take responsibility for our actions; we are committed to continually implementing mechanisms to ensure our accountability standards are of the highest quality.

***Quality Services.*** Our long-term viability is inexorably linked to our capacity to deliver services and advice that meet the specific needs of our beneficiaries and clients and that add value to their mission.

***Capacity Building.*** Facilitating a learning environment and experience base for our beneficiaries, clients, and partners is a pillar of delivering quality services.

***Competent.*** Our members are our greatest asset and we seek only the finest, most engaged development professionals.

***Multi-disciplinary.*** The nature of development work requires a diverse approach and the skill sets to address a wide number of social, economic, and environmental issues.

***Collaborative.*** Collaboration is at the core of our approach to development; we recognize our ability to positively influence beneficiaries, clients, and partners is contingent on their active participation as part of the solution.

**Proactive.** We work in a dynamic sector with ever-changing trends; our ability to recognize needs actively and flexibly has been a cornerstone to our long-term sustainability.

**Innovative.** Difficult problems often require creative solutions; we are continually assessing how new and practical approaches can add value for our beneficiaries and clients.

**Sustainable.** We have a well documented capacity to succeed in the midst of turbulent economic, political, and social times; we are relentlessly seeking to build a more autonomous service delivery model. These values and principles will serve as the foundation for a marketing strategy which will provide a more concrete direction for promoting AGGEM - Cameroon. Developing a marketing strategy was identified by the Management & Coordination Component

### **ORIENTATION 3: SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Objective:** *To ensure sustainable management of natural resources while improving livelihoods of related beneficiaries* (Natural Resource Management Component) While always an implicit principle in its previous work, the component explicitly incorporated sustainability within its objective. There is little doubt that our environmental actions directly impact us at the individual and societal levels. This planning period represents a refocus of the component in protecting our natural resources today, for tomorrow's population. Moreover, the component will focus efforts on improving quality of life standards through improving income generating opportunities

**Result 1:** *Local initiatives for mitigation of climate change promoted*

Climate change has emerged as a very serious issue that directly affects quality of life. While we have been implicitly mitigating the effects of climate change since our inception, we recognize it now as a distinct component direction. Climate change is a global issue; we seek to provide local, grass-roots solutions that will contribute to national and international mitigation efforts.

**Result 2:** *Biodiversity conservation*

The focus on biodiversity reflects a largely new area for AGGEM - CAMEROON membership, but it arises out of years of field-level observation. We recognize the incredible value of Cameroon's ecological systems and their role in maintaining a sustainable, balanced environment.

**Result 3:** *To enhance social development and community actions* (Social Development Component) Social issues represent an essential element to

increasing quality of life in the development context. Our objective is to continue increasing the relevancy of social issues as economic and environmental initiatives progress. Towards this end, the component is focused on social issues at the community level, where a greater impact can be realized.

***Achieving the Objectives: A Result-Based Approach*** Our approach to strategic planning emphasizes results as the link between specific activities and broad objectives. These results provide the backbone for AGGEM's future M&E system and operational planning process.

#### ***Objective 4: To improve on the efficiency and effectiveness of AGGEM - Cameroon***

**Result 1:** *Organizational learning through M&E enhanced* Noted previously was a discussion of the OD Assessment and the four resulting priorities from that exercise. This result is a recognition by AGGEM - Cameroon that M&E should be reflected as a top priority during the strategic planning, implementation, and review phases.

**Result 2:** *Financial capacity and sustainability strengthened* We recognize that the development sector is highly competitive and organizations largely rely on variable funding sources. AGGEM - Cameroon is building a system that mitigates this barrier through creative income generation activities and project procurement methods.

**Result 3:** *Partnership and marketing efforts strengthened* Another result derived from the OD Assessment (improving marketing and outreach), AGGEM - Cameroon acknowledges previous limitations in this area and is seeking to build a much stronger and broader platform for sharing its rich experience and expertise.

**Result 4:** *Capacity of human resources reinforced and maximized* We recognize that our staff is our greatest asset, and therefore, should be the benefactors of greater training opportunities while more effectively leveraging their unique experiences and perspectives. This result also reflects a priority identified in the OD Assessment.

#### **4. Conclusion**

AGGEM - Cameroon has been successful in defining a **consensus-based vision** for the next five years as well a **strong foundation** for operational planning, reforming its M&E system, and developing a marketing strategy.



We must, however, recognize that the adoption of a Strategic Plan, alone, does not guarantee any level of success. We are always at risk of the proverbial plan that sits on the shelf collecting dust. To mitigate this pitfall, we have attempted to develop an integrated system by which strategic planning directly informs operational planning, implementation, M&E, and strategic/operational plan review. The success of this approach can truly only be measured over the next several years.

Moreover, to fully expect 100% realization of all Results identified within this Plan is ambitious. Strategic planning requires us to make decisions based on imperfect information, where unforeseeable factors invariably alter our vision and means of realizing that vision. Again, this inherent barrier can be partially mitigated over time through a perceptive and proactive planning review process that informs our operations in modifying various elements of our original vision. Our immediate emphasis on creating a new M&E system will provide a strong foundation for such a review process.

Ultimately, the success of the 2012 – 2017 Strategic Plan and by extension, AGGEM - Cameroon as an organization, relies on the individual and collective commitment of our board members, management, staff, and partners. Personal and organizational accountability related to achieving Objectives and Results will be the driving force behind the newly developed M&E system. In summarizing the strategic planning process, we are guided by five fundamental questions:

### ***5.1 Where are we now?***

The strategic planning process has placed us in a prime position to address fundamental weaknesses and augment our services to beneficiaries and clients. The 2012 Operational Plan and Budget reflect the most immediate interpretation of the Strategic Plan and set AGGEM's agenda for the next year. Additionally, we have a strong foundation to reform our current M&E system as well as a core brand to shape a marketing and communications strategy. While the next several months will be used to introduce new operational mechanisms, each component has a clear, consensus based understanding of how they are contributing to achieving AGGEM's mission.

### ***5.2 Where do we want to go?***

This Plan has attempted to clearly articulate our vision and the key concentration areas to achieve that vision.

From an organization-wide standpoint, M&E and marketing/communications is an immediate priority. However, it should be highlighted that within the strategic framework, the Management & Coordination Component is committed to addressing other internal issues such as **augmenting**



**member' staff training opportunities** and **reforming various policies**. Also an emphasis will be to aggressively continue **building a more financially autonomous** organization. From a component perspective, each component has identified a balanced mix of new, realistic areas of intervention while maintaining a focus on core capacities. Fully acknowledging our inability to foresee the future, we are confident that our Result statements represent a viable, realistic approach for realizing AGGEM's vision.

**5.4 How do we get there?** This is perhaps the most challenging question to address relative to the strategic planning process. In fact, the answer can only be answered over time, as the Plan's provisions are tested, reviewed, and modified. Despite this uncertainty, we can feel confident that we have designed a comprehensive approach which explicitly links strategic planning with operational and review processes. More important than the process itself, is our utmost confidence in our people to carry out and modify activities appropriately. We remain committed to recruiting the finest talent and fostering a learning environment that pushes in a healthy manner the capacity of our staff.

**5.5 How do we know we are there?** Amidst increasingly limited resources and funders' emphasis on result-oriented service providers, there is a much greater need to evaluate our progress, promote its positive effect, and adjust our strategic.