



# BREAKING GROUND

GRASS ROOTS • SUSTAINABILITY • COMMUNITY

## Annual Report 2020



*Children gather as the Kompina Water Project yields its first drops!*

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## **A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR**

Cameroon, a unique Central African country that has for decades remained relatively stable, is experiencing multiple complex crises impacting Breaking Ground's ongoing community development efforts. The Islamist sect Boko Haram has increased its armed attacks in the north and rebels from the Central African Republic are making violent incursions in the east. Since 2016, the Northwest and Southwest provinces have been plunged into an armed conflict resulting in more than 679,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), 60,000 people seeking refuge in Nigeria, children of all ages missing years of school, and young adults unable to find employment.

The consequences of these crises are widespread across the country. According to the last FAO 2020 Synthesis Report on Food and Nutrition, Cameroon is now among African countries with a significant threat of food insecurity. The arrival of COVID-19 in March 2020 has further complicated the situation in Cameroon. In light of these dramatic changes, Breaking Ground has conducted a self-study and context analysis to realign our mission with the needs of the communities and individuals we serve. We want to share with you what we are doing now, and why your support is so important at this moment.

### **Breaking Ground in a Time of Crisis in Cameroon**

Since 2006, Breaking Ground has been working in Cameroon to help communities achieve lasting solutions to their self-identified needs by investing in local knowledge, empowering women, and promoting economic development. This approach has resulted in highly successful sustainable development, education, and empowerment initiatives across Cameroon, and has produced an important network of trusting relationships with individuals, communities, civil society organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and ministries within the Cameroonian government.

In response to the violent social and political crisis in Cameroon's Southwest and Northwest provinces, Breaking Ground has maintained its mission and focus by adapting its operations to meet a new landscape of need by partnering with local and international NGOs and other humanitarian organizations, and has committed to promoting and engaging in an international grassroots peace-building initiative.

### **What This Means**

Breaking Ground needs your continued and sustained support to continue to play its critical role in all of these ongoing efforts. We can't predict when the violence will end, or when families can return to their homes and land, when children can go back to school in their own communities, or when people in Cameroon will receive a COVID-19 vaccination.

What we do know is that Breaking Ground's ability to do its work in this beautiful, war-torn country depends on you. Please consider making a generous end-of-year donation to help Breaking Ground continue what it's doing – saving lives and securing a future of peace in Cameroon. Thank you!

Jeff S. Walton, Ph.D.  
Board President

## ACTIVITIES

### Kompina Water Project

Breaking Ground is the implementing partner for a water project in the community of Kompina, a locality in the Fiko subdivision 40 km from Douala, Cameroon's economic capital. The project is funded in part by [ICA Canada](#) and [CIC Cameroon](#) with local community participation. The project aims to provide drinkable water to 20,000 people in this village. The project includes construction of a storage tank of 12 cubic meters, 4 kilometers of water pipe, and 5 water fountains. Much of this project is complete, and Breaking Ground is now preparing to receive the water pump, which is in the Port of Douala. Reflecting Breaking Ground's mission, this project is a community-driven initiative and we, along with our partners ICA and CIC, are working alongside community leaders to help complete this important addition of vital resources to the community.



*Community members gather as the Kompina Water Project fountains begin to flow.*

### Field Research in a Time of Violence and Political Crisis

Based in part on Breaking Ground's history of developing relationships with local communities, we have been partnering with [ICA Canada](#) and [Children Believe Canada](#) to conduct critical field research in the West and Littoral regions. This research is intended to determine the needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and to provide valuable data to inform a project proposal for educational and educational support in several communities receiving internally displaced persons. The data demonstrate that these communities require and will benefit from Breaking Ground's agricultural development and women's entrepreneurship expertise, in conjunction with ICA Canada's school building expertise.

### Peace-Building

Since 2019, Breaking Ground has been working actively with several partners to develop a peaceful solution to the socio-political crisis that primarily impacts Cameroon's two English speaking regions of the Northwest and Southwest. This includes initiatives in education, agriculture, entrepreneurship, conflict resolution, and basic community development. Our partners include researchers, journalists, activists, nongovernmental organizations, universities, and other civil society organizations from around the world.

We are currently working in the field with local NGOs (e.g., REDHAC) to ignite a peace initiative in some communities by organizing inter-community dialogue. Four dialogue meetings

were organized in 2020 in Bamenda, Dschang, Bafoussam, and Buea. We also submitted a collaborative peace-building proposal to [Global Affairs Canada](#) and we expect a decision in early 2021.

In addition, we joined a consortium of NGOs in a joint proposal to the United Nations to support IDPs and returning refugees once the current conflict ends. The consortium includes [ICA Canada](#), [Children Believe Canada](#), the [Dallaire Institute](#), South Africa's [Graca Machel Foundation](#), Germany's [Engineers Without Borders](#), and [CIC Cameroon](#). Negotiations with UN agencies is still ongoing, and the consortium plans to submit its proposal in 2021.



*Inter-community dialogue in Bamenda*

## CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Because of the ongoing conflicts and the impacts of the pandemic, many families in Cameroon are experiencing financial strain that results in their inability to afford the costs related to their children's education, including both paying school fees and purchasing necessities like school supplies and uniforms. Under typical circumstances, educational costs represent 9 to 10 percent of a family's household total expenses. For internally displaced persons (IDP) and Cameroon's rural poor, these costs are beyond their reach. While at the national level, education is supposed to represent 20 percent of the budget (DSSEF 212), this ratio is not respected. In 2018, education funding represented just 14.6 percent of Cameroon's national budget.

Cameroon's political crisis has imposed new challenges on education. Children among the IDP have increased the number of students in the already overcrowded classrooms in the host communities. While the standard in Cameroon is 40 students per classroom, recent studies revealed that there are 176 students per teacher in many school classes. Furthermore, in rural areas, only one third of teachers are paid by the state, where the other two thirds of teachers are hired and paid by the local parent-teacher association (PTA) rather than by local. Most of these teachers are not trained and are poorly prepared to handle the influx of IDP students.



*Classroom overcrowded with 150+ children*

In the conflict-affected zones of the Northwest and Southwest Regions, most schools have been shuttered since 2017. As a result, many students have aged out of the system without having the opportunity to complete their studies. Innumerable others, especially those over the age of 14, have dropped out of school to assist with income-generating activities to help their families meet their basic needs ([OCHA, 2020](#)). There is a critical need to develop an alternative to formal education that can support and meet the learning needs of these unenrolled children. At the same time, it is long overdue that the current education system be reformed to provide young graduates with better prospects for employment. Even prior to the current crises, graduates from high school in Cameroon faced tremendous challenges in finding work, with a 14 percent unemployment rate and 37 percent under employment among youth. While the Cameroonian government aims to increase the professionalization of its teaching force and focus on skills-based education, many teachers believe that more needs to be done to "improve the content of the lessons by integrating the practical aspects, having laboratories, well-equipped workshops and other tools to develop practical knowledge."

Beyond education, the current crises and pandemic have increased the vulnerability of women and youth in Cameroon, contributed to an increase in gender-based violence, and produced severe needs in the areas of health, water sanitation, and food security ([OCHA, 2019](#); [WASH](#)).

In the coming years, Breaking Ground will work alongside other development actors in Cameroon to support individuals and communities as they improve their livelihoods, secure access to capital, restore their infrastructure, and build their peace process. Women's empowerment remains at core of our intervention. With our expanding network and new partnerships, including with organizations working with IDPs in Cameroon's Far North Region, we take pride in our improved operational field capacities and look forward to serving the Cameroonian communities who inspire our mission.

**Thank you for your ongoing support!**



*IDPs (left to right): Receiving seeds; Housing crisis with ten living in a single room; rooms without beds or furnishings.*



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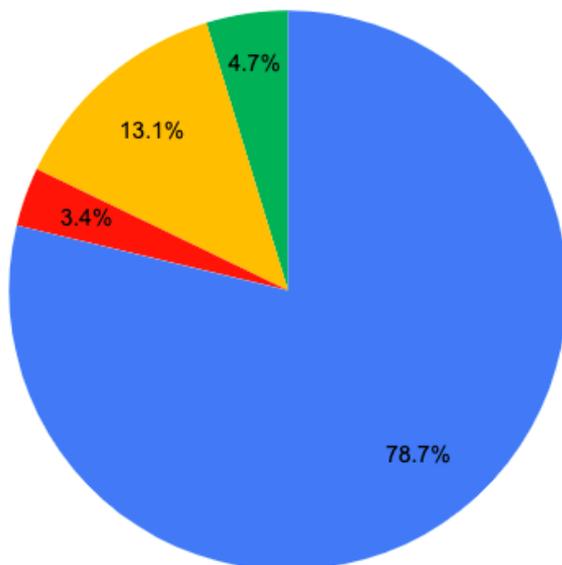
## 2020 Financial Overview

### Revenue

	USD		XAF
Breaking Ground USA Revenue	\$5,586.45		3 286 147 f CFA*
Breaking Ground Cameroon Revenue	\$23,120.00*		13 600 000 f CFA
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$28,706.45</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>16 886 147 f CFA</b>

### Expenses

	USD		XAF
Kompina Water Project	\$21,930.00*		12 900 000 f CFA
Program Development	\$952.00*		560 000 f CFA
Executive Director Salary	\$3,655.00*		2 150 000 f CFA
Administration	\$1,319.20*		776 000 f CFA
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$27,856.20</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>16 386 000 f CFA</b>



● Kompina Water Project    ● Program Development  
● Executive Director Salary    ● Administration

\*All expenses incurred in f CFA.  
 Conversions calculated at 2020 average  
 exchange rate of 0.0017 USD per f  
 CFA (Source: [exchangerates.org.uk](http://exchangerates.org.uk))