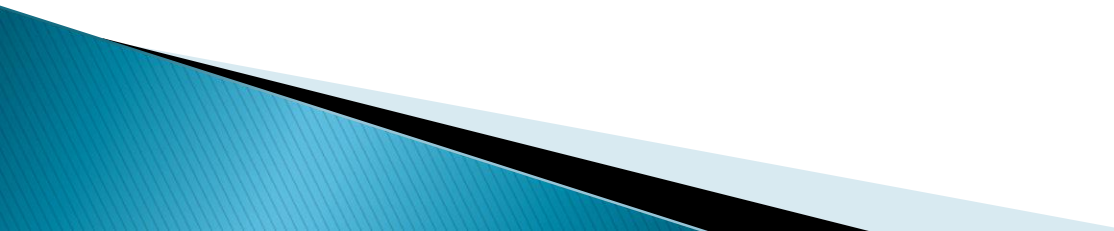
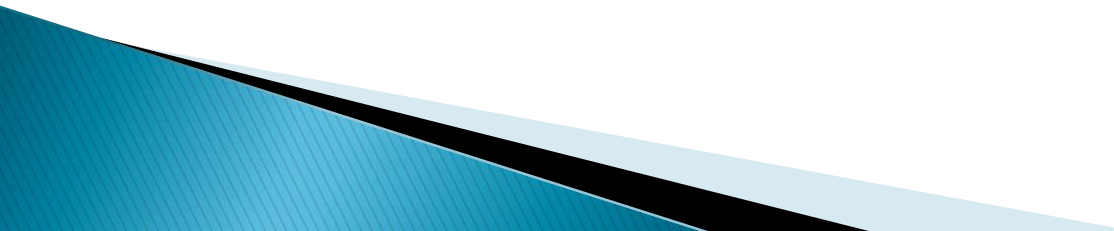


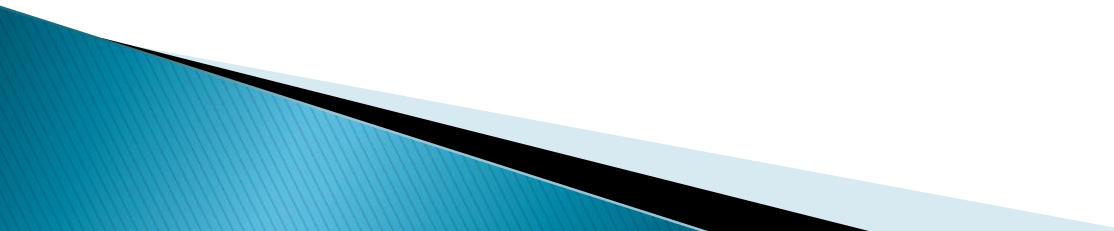
**Ecumenical Service
for Peace (SeP)
Experiences in Community
Mediation in Cameroon**

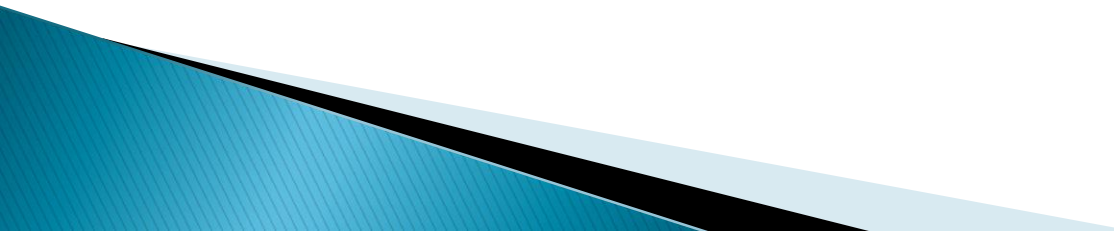


Training for Mediation

- ▶ Training is a key activity in the mediation process. Training helps to put in place structures for mediation and post conflict peacebuilding.
 - ▶ For example, In the Bagam/Bamenyam and Balikumbat/Bafanji and Balinyonga/Bawock conflict situations, a series of trainings for community leaders of the conflicting parties on conflict management were done.
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- ▶ Training is done at two levels. The first level trainings target community leaders (Traditional councils, Church leaders, dance group leaders, development association leaders, women groups, etc). First level training focuses on; concepts in conflict management, approaches to conflict, mediation.
 - ▶ The training method is participatory and elicits ideas from participants on what could be done to bring about peace. Added value is thus given to the ideas of participants.
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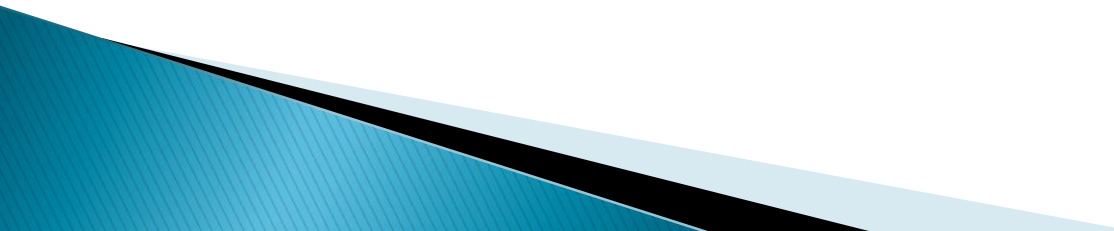
- ▶ At the end of the first level trainings, the participants form **Peace Committees** in their respective communities to address issues of conflict within their communities and share experiences.
 - ▶ The first level trainings also help to prepare the communities for a joint workshop to analyze and share perspectives on their differences and strategize on resolving there differences.
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- ▶ The committees are very instrumental in replicating the training in the community and play a key role in the conflict resolution process.
 - ▶ While the first level trainings focus on each community, the second level trainings brings together the members of the peace committees in each community.
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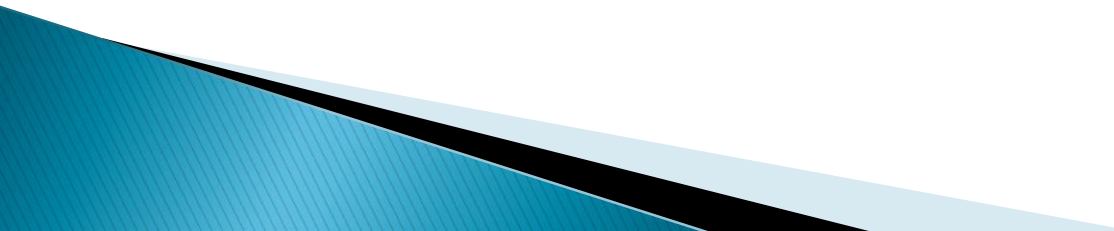
- ▶ Second level training focus on conflict analysis and mediation skills. The analysis bring the participants to the same level of understanding of the dynamics of conflict and the costs of the conflict on their community.
- ▶ At the end of the second level training, the participants form a **Peace Forum**. Peace Forum are made up of members of peace committees of the conflicting parties.
- ▶ The objective is to meet and share experiences and initiate actions that would bring the two communities together and strengthen their relationship


- ▶ The trainings are the first step to building communication ties with the parties in conflict. Trainings yoke People who saw themselves as enemies together to reflect on how to build peace between their communities.

Mediation Proper

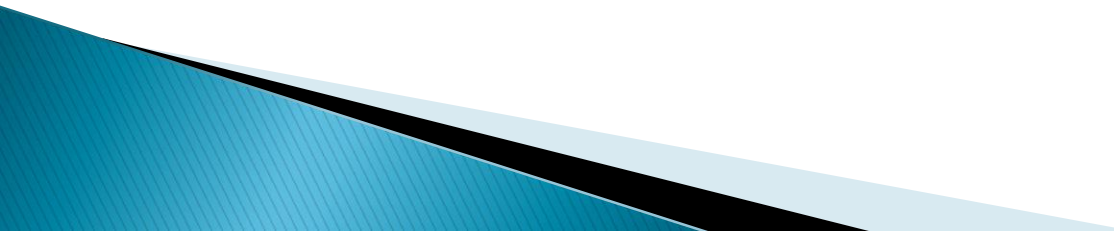
- ▶ Mediation is carried out by community members that are identified and accepted by both parties.
 - ▶ These mediators are trained on the mediation process
 - ▶ Backup is provided by Ecumenical Service for Peace
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- ▶ In the case of Bagam/Bamenyam conflict, SeP initiated a series of mediation sessions with the Fon of Bati which culminated into the formation of a forum of the four traditional rulers of Galim sub division.
 - ▶ The Divisional officer was associated to give the forum legitimacy not as a key player. Through this method, the actors were able to meet monthly and share perspectives on the conflicts in the sub division.
 - ▶ Three mediation meetings were held and were chaired by the traditional ruler of Bati in the presence of the Divisional Officer on Galim sub division. They were all attended by the conflicting parties.
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- ▶ During the first meeting, tensions were very high but room was allowed for the parties to vent out. In the process, issues that needed redress were clearly identified.
 - ▶ At the center of the conflict was the demarcations made by government which tended to favour Bagam to a point where the traditional shrine of Bamenyam was now found on Bagam soil.
 - ▶ This made it impossible for the Traditional ruler of Bamenyam to perform certain traditional rites at the shrines.
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- ▶ Negotiations were then centered on seeing how the traditional rulers of Bagam and Bamenyam could agree that legally, the shrine was Bagam land but legitimately Bamenyam.
 - ▶ If this could be obtained, then Bamenyam would have access to the shrine and the traditional ruler will be able to perform his rites.
 - ▶ At this level, we decided to extend the circle to friends of the Traditional ruler of Bagam who had to make the concession.
 - ▶ At the end of the process, the traditional ruler of Bagam accepted that the Traditional ruler of Bamenyam should notify him whenever he wanted to perform rites on the site. This agreement was celebrated by all the parties.
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Exchange Visits

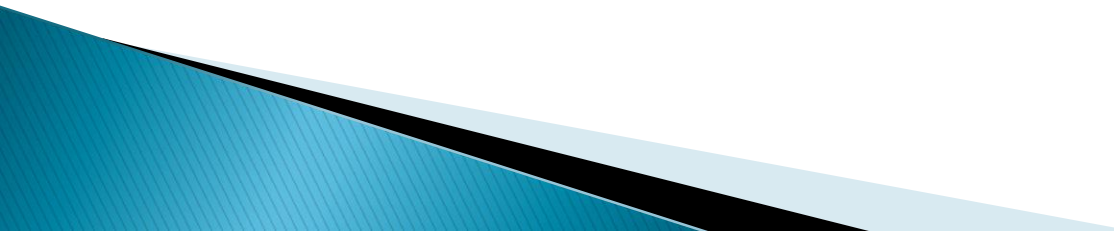
- ▶ One of the strategies which SeP uses to build broken relations between the conflicting parties is exchange visits between conflicting parties. The objective is to share experiences on what the peace committees are doing in their respective communities, mobilize those who are skeptical of the process and provide a veritable forum where people could make public commitments to the peace process.
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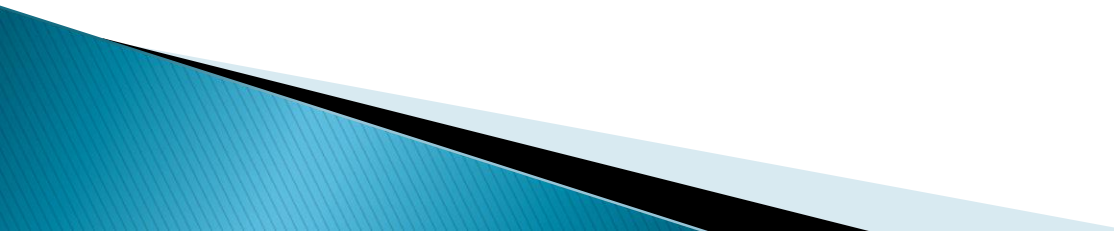
- ▶ Exchange visits play a key role in the peacebuilding process. For instance, when Bamenyam was preparing to host Bagam, the Bamenyam peace committee mobilized the whole village to contribute materially and financially towards the hosting. Committees were formed and letters were written to the elite to contribute towards the event.
 - ▶ When it came to the turn of Bagam to host, the preparations were equally serious. Elites came in on the invitation of the chief to be part of the exchange visits. Exchange visits were veritable peace feasts as there was much to discuss, eat, drink and dance.
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- ▶ The exchange visits help to give value to the work of the peace committees in the communities as they present reports on their actions towards building peace, chat possible way forward and challenge other actors to action (Elite, Church).
 - ▶ The exchange visits also provide space to renew relationships, express remorse, and see the vanity in sustaining a conflict. In the Bagam/Bamenyam situation, the traditional ruler of Bagam was able to visit Bamenyam after ten years only during the exchange visit. As the traditional head of the Bagam community, his declarations during the exchange visit attended by over 500 community members of both sides of the conflict facilitated the peace process and gave it legitimacy.
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- ▶ According to him, “*only inanimate objects do not change, man can be changed and I have changed*”. The traditional leader of Bamenyam also made similar declarations before the community members. To him, “*when you are carrying a basket of corn on your head and you fall, no matter how much you try, you cannot collect all the grains*” These were statements of the key stakeholders in the conflict and considering the respect given to traditional rulers within the community, their communities were identified with the statements.

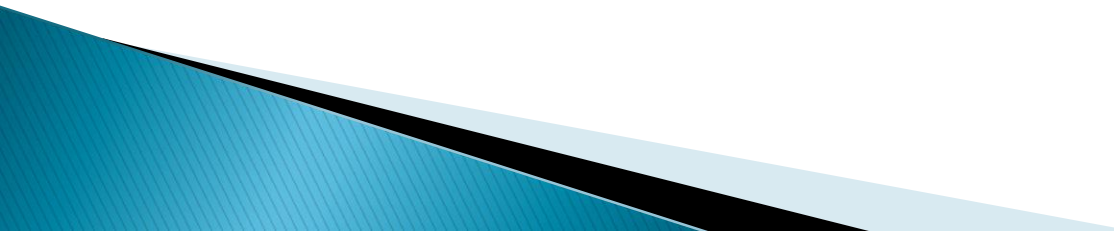
Post conflict initiatives

- ▶ Peace can only be sustainable if after the intervention, people have what to eat.
 - ▶ Contacts are made with some NGOs directly involved in agricultural promotion to develop programs for the communities.
 - ▶ In the case of Bagam/Bamenyam these NGOs were brought together in a strategic meeting with SeP. At the end of the meeting, they committed themselves to work with the communities.
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- ▶ Today, Galim sub division is the bread basket of the West Region of Cameroon.
 - ▶ Energies that were used in fighting each other have now been invested into economic development of self and community.
 - ▶ Issues that can degenerate into conflicts are easily identified and resolved by the Peace committees and Peace Forum
 - ▶ SeP visits and backstops initiatives by Peace Committees and Peace Forum
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Lessons to Learn

- ▶ Civil society organizations with capacities to work with conflict are emerging in most countries and introducing more democratic approaches to conflict resolution. Their approaches are based on participation and empowerment of conflicting parties. The civil society approach is therefore more community based and tends to enjoy more community support.
- ▶ The government needs to support and involve civil society organization in conflict resolution efforts. This will give added value and legitimacy to the efforts of civil society in conflict management. For African conflicts to be resolved, the two parties need to work together.

- ▶ Training in conflict management methods is crucial to successful conflict management. The greatest expert in conflict management would find it difficult to mediate between conflicting parties which have different levels of understanding of the issues of conflict. .
 - ▶ Community stakeholder (Church leaders, traditional leaders, leaders of village groups, women, and youths) should all be part of the process so that their concerns are identified and addressed in the process.
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- ▶ Exchange visits could provide a vital forum for sharing of experiences, taking of commitments and legitimizing the conflict management process within the community. It is the best strategy to break barriers and stereotypes and rebuild relations between conflicting parties.
- ▶ Conflict resolution and peacebuilding must be seen as a long-term process. The peacebuilding process in Bagam/Bamenyam took Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP) five years to provide requisite strategic oversight through reflective practice.

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