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Cameroon, Infectious Diseases

**Cameroon: Infectious Disease Lost Cause Or Preventable?**

Cameroon is a country in the central Africa region. Cameroon has a population of 30,135,732 people, as established in 2023. Of this population fifty-nine point three percent, 17,870,489 people, live in urban areas. The remaining forty point seven percent, 12,265,243 people live in rural areas. In Cameroon, there is a presidential republic. The Chief of State is President Paul BIYA, he was put into office on November 6th, 1982. The head of the government is Prime Minister Joseph Dion NGUTE, who was put into office on January 4th, 2019.

Cameroon does not have a high proportion of culpable land but they make the most of it and grow plenty of crops. Twenty point six percent of Cameroon’s land is used for agriculture. With thirteen point one percent of that being arable land. Another three point three percent being permanent crops. Then the last four point two percent make up permanent pastures. These cultivable lands are used for cassava, plantains, corn, oil palm fruit, taro, sugar cane, sorghum, tomatoes, bananas, and other basic vegetables. Alongside the plants they grow the country also has plentiful fields they use to mine for exports. Their exports include crude petroleum, natural gas, cocoa beans, lumber, gold, and bananas. Their unique land makes all of the growing possibilities possible.

Cameroon has a very diverse terrain which causes the climate to change throughout the country. That is why they only can have certain plants growing. In the southwestern parts of the country there are coastal plains. Dissected plateaus in the centermost parts of the country. Out in the west, mountains where you will find the highest point Fako, on Mont Cameroun. Then finally in the south there are the plains. In total Cameroon has five thousand eighteen kilometers sq of land. The country borders six other countries, Nigeria for one thousand seventy five kilometers, Central African Republic for nine hundred and one kilometers, Chad for one thousand one hundred sixteen kilometers, Republic of the Congo for four hundred ninety four kilometers, Gabon for three hundred forty nine kilometers, and finally Equatorial Guinea for one hundred eighty three kilometers. Cameroon also has four hundred and two kilometers of coastline. Where you will find the lowest elevation in the country at zero meters at sea level with the Atlantic Ocean.

Even though the land is very diverse and climate unique the people in Cameroon all share some of the same customs and traditions. The typical family in Cameroon is large. The men will traditionally and more often than not take more than one wife. Then have children with each wife. When the man does get married he moves out of his family's compound and builds one for him and his wives and children. This newly built house generally has four rooms. One for all of his wives. Another for his children. One room as the living and cooking area. Where they prepare all the meals and eat Cooked cereal or root staple accompanied by a sauce or stew. The staple food is generally cassava, cocoyams, plantains, maize, sorghum, millet, rice and pasta. Sauces usually have a base of palm oil and ground peanuts. Veggies and/or dried/fried fish are also common in the sauce. Uncooked fruits are considered snacks or desserts not a part of the meal. Then finally a room for him.

The men generally work on a farm of their own or one owned by a close family member or friend. They work in the mines and help gain the objectives of their exports. Or they work in the commerce sector. They buy and sell things trying to make a living. By doing this the people of Cameroon on average make one hundred thirty seven USD a month.

The people of Cameroon have access to education and most end up attending primary school, but then the numbers drop from 88% of kids showing up to 27% when those kids reach secondary school. They have access to health care but in a more traditional sense. They use methods that have been passed down for years. They also use the advice of neighbors and kin to help with their ailments. But in the bigger cities biomedical health care centers do exist.

The people of Cameroon have access to all basic needs and wants in life, but the statistics are still low especially in rural communities. Everyone has access to local markets and roads but other areas are lacking severely. Such as, ninety five point one percent of the urban population has access to clean water. Whereas only fifty six point two percent of the rural population has access to clean water. Another example of this is that eighty three point two percent of the urban population has access to clean and working sanitation facilities, but only twenty seven point seven of the rural population does. Thirdly, ninety four point six percent of the urban populations have access to electricity. But only twenty four point eight percent of the rural population does. In total that is seventy eight percent of people with access to clean water, fifty nine point seven percent with access to clean and working sanitation, and finally sixty five point four percent with electricity. As for basic wants, three out of one hundred people have a fixed cellular line. That is roughly nine hundred twenty nine thousand people. Then, for mobile cellular phones there are eighty three people with mobile phones out of one hundred. Which is roughly twenty two million four hundred forty two thousand four hundred fourteen people.

Even with Cameroon having all of their basic needs met they still struggle with so many barriers. Such as a corrupt form of government. The government abuses their powers and abuses the people. They take what will benefit them despite what the people need. They also struggle with women’s rights movements. The men are seen as superior to the women with the women only being able to be housewives or other basic jobs as the men have the right and freedom to any of them. With this country having older ideologies that have passed down through generations, they also struggle to understand and accept sexual orientation and gender identities. But the biggest challenge the people of Cameroon face is the struggle with infectious diseases.

In Cameroon the degree of infection from diseases is increasing even at its already high infectious rates. The major diseases that run rampant across the country are malaria, HIV/AIDs, tuberculosis, diarrheal diseases, lower respiratory infections, neonatal disorders, strokes, and ischemic heart disease. The ways that the people in Cameroon catch these diseases are varied. Some examples are, water contaminants, vector borne diseases, or diseases carried by bugs, improper preparation of food, eating animal products after the animal had been sick, improper disposal of animal feces, air borne diseases, sexually transmitted diseases, finally coming into contact with the bodily secretions of a sick individual.

These diseases affect the communities of Cameroon differently depending on where they live and who they live with. In rural communities where the people are much closer to each other, in terms of the communal bonds they share. The family and friends of the rural people in Cameroon are very close to each other, whereas the urban communities are close in distance but they don’t share daily lives. These diseases also affect different men, women, children, and elderly differently. Since the men in this country take on many wives, if the husband gets it from someone he will pass it on to all of his wives and then when his wives have children the diseases can be passed along to the children. Out of all of these diseases the elderly are more likely to catch food related diseases and airborne diseases or respiratory diseases. But everyone in the country is likely to catch the vectorborne diseases.

These diseases also have an effect on the environment because with these diseases the population is slowly dropping causing the animal population to slowly rise due to how many people are ill. One would think that if the animal population is rising you would have more food and money if you sold the animal but since so many people and animals are sick they can’t use the meat, and they can't even harvest it. Because of this the people struggle with gaining food and food cleanliness.

The Cameroonian government has spent the past years working with the CDC to help stop the spread and worsening trends of the diseases that are affecting the country's population. But Cameroon is not the only country that is affected by these diseases.

In Nigeria, a country that borders Cameroon, they have the highest percentage of their population suffering from HIV/AIDS, a sexually transmitted infection. They have partnered with The National Agency for the Control of AIDS (NACA) to help stop this epidemic. They are also “working in collaboration with other agencies, such as the Federal Ministry of Health, U.S. President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Global Fund, and UNAIDS” all of these agencies are working to prevent the spread in Nigeria because of how bad the rates are (PubMed Central). Using these agencies and getting help Nigeria has made significant progress in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS, “with a decline in new HIV infections and an increase in the number of people receiving antiretroviral therapy” (PubMed Central).

There are many possible solutions to these issues but here are three that could possibly help. Similar to what Nigeria is doing, partner with multiple agencies to work together to stop the spread of HIV/AIDs. If you slow the spread of HIV/AIDS in Cameroon the people will become healthier because that is one less disease they have to fight. It would make it so the people have a fighting chance because their white blood cells wouldn’t be fighting against AIDS. It can focus on keeping them healthy and fighting against other diseases. And also if a pregnant woman gets the vaccination and gets the proper help she needs, her child has a chance of being born without the disease.

Another possible solution could be to release, control, and stabilize a dragonfly population into cameroon. This would not only help Cameroon, it would help the whole continent. Dragonflies eat bugs, and since most of the illnesses in Cameroon are vector borne diseases, the dragonflies could help stop the spread of the diseases by eating the mosquitoes.

The final solution won’t stop all of the diseases but it will help prevent the spread of HIV/AIDs. Instead of just supplying medications and vaccinations, supply the country with proper contraceptives, and properly educate the public on safe sex and ways to prevent the diseases.

So while these solutions won’t solve all of the issues they are a start to the process. Everyone has to work together to heal the problems that these diseases bring. We can’t judge people, we have to be accepting and understand that they are doing what is best for them, we all just need to help. So no, these solutions are not the healing point for everything and everyone but it’s a start and that’s all that is needed. Everyone can fundraise and sponsor each other. We have to respect the process and trust that as it happens, if we work together we can stop the severe epidemics that run throughout, not just Cameroon, but the whole world.

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