



Access to health for the people of Bankim Bankim, Cameroon

Bankim is one of the poorest and most neglected districts in all of Cameroon. Against this backdrop, FAIRMED has been working since 2010 to establish a functioning health system that will ensure adequate access to health services for the people of the region. The focus thereby is on vulnerable groups such as mothers, children and people with disabilities.

Background

The countless branches of the Mapé River and the poor condition of the roads make the Bankim district in the northwest Adamawa region of Cameroon particularly difficult to access. During the rainy season, many villages in the district are not passable, while some can only be reached by water. For a great many people, this also hinders access to health facilities and services, which can be fatal, particularly in the case of emergencies. Moreover, the district health facilities are frequently in poor condition and are part of a broader health system that is not fully functioning. This is reflected in a high rate of maternal and child mortality as well as in the prevalence of neglected tropical diseases such as leprosy, Buruli ulcer and yaws. Delayed diagnosis or inadequate treatment of these diseases can result in disabilities or death.

The project

The aim of the project is to improve the health system in the Bankim district and to enable better access to health services for the people in the project area. Throughout, special attention is being paid to mothers, children and people suffering from a disability, as these are particularly dependent on health services. There is also a special focus on the early detection and treatment of neglected tropical diseases. While these are extremely common in Bankim, they can be cured with appropriate and prompt treatment.

FAIRMED has been active in Bankim since 2010 and the project is now in its third phase. To date, it has been possible to achieve encouraging changes in healthcare provision. This includes the establishment of emergency transportation for pregnant women, promoting healthcare facilities as the best places to give birth, an ongoing reduction in maternal and newborn mortality, detecting and treating new cases of neglected tropical diseases, and increasing awareness among the general public of the measures required to combat these diseases.

Objectives and activities

The overarching aim of the project is to improve the health system in the Bankim district and to enable better access to healthcare services for the people of the project area. To this end, the project is pursuing three specific aims that are being realised through the following activities, among others:

Support for local authorities in health system administration

- Nurturing the management capacities of the respective responsible persons in the district health authorities
- Financial and technical support on health issues for the local administration

Improvements in public access to health services

- FAIRMED ensures that neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) are treated appropriately at the various healthcare facilities
- FAIRMED ensures that the necessary medication is available for the timely treatment of NTDs
- Increasing the awareness of NTDs among the general public, enabling the prompt identification of diseases and ensuring that people are informed about treatment options
- Establishment and operation of an emergency transport system, e.g. through the provision of boats and ambulances
- Training of volunteer midwives
- Organisation of screening programs for children in schools. Here, health workers visit the schools and examine each child individually, facilitating the prompt and early identification of neglected tropical diseases

Reinforcing cooperation between local health stakeholders

- Involved stakeholders are encouraged to document all of their activities. This increases transparency and simplifies communication
- Ascertainment of training needs for involved stakeholders and organisation of corresponding training courses
- Establishment of regular consultation meetings and support in the development of joint strategies

Monitoring

Monitoring is carried out by the employees of the FAIRMED country office in Yaoundé, who oversee the project on the ground and work at all times in collaboration with the project team in Bern. There is an internal intermediate evaluation and an external final evaluation at the end of the project phase. FAIRMED works exclusively with local employees, involves the local population and works in close cooperation with the responsible government bodies to strengthen regional capacities. In this way, it is possible to promptly identify potential issues and implement lasting solutions in a timely manner.

Sustainability

In a climate of mutual learning and respect, FAIRMED works exclusively with local employees and the participation of local authorities, government bodies and partner organisations. This fosters broad acceptance and enables the respective local entities to assume responsibility for the continuation of activities once projects are completed.

Beneficiaries

Direct beneficiaries of the project are all those that make use of the health system, in particular pregnant women, newborns and people with neglected tropical diseases and disabilities. In addition, local authorities and health personnel, as well as the entire population of the district (around 11,000 people) are all able to benefit from an improved health system.

Budget

The total costs for the third phase of the project (2018 to 2021) amount to CHF 854,000.

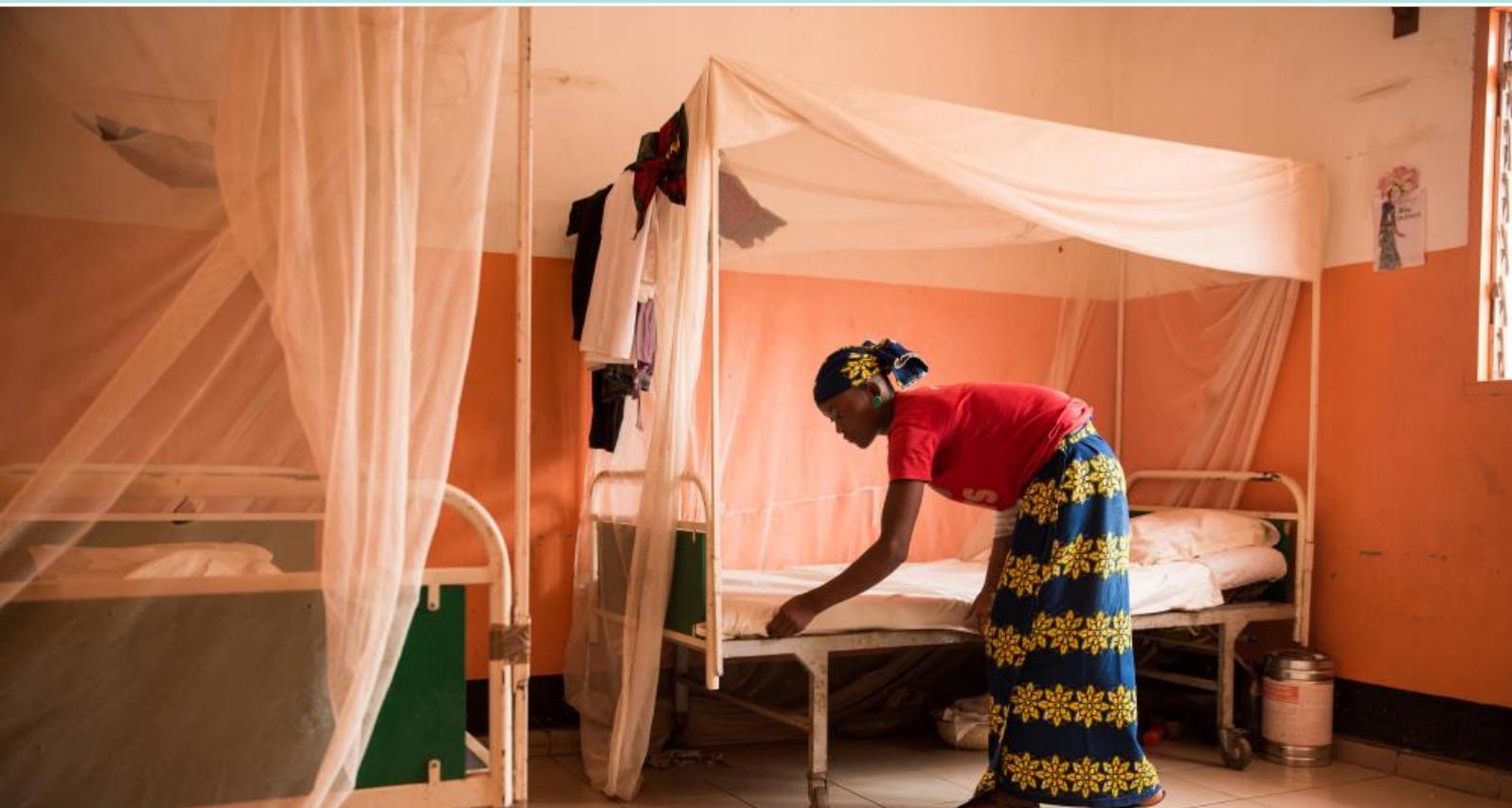


Marinette's Story

The painful struggle against Buruli ulcer

For six months, Marinette Satou has lain in hospital with an arm that is deformed by Buruli ulcer. Because her parents could not afford the long journey to the hospital, the serious illness was not recognised until it was far too late. This fate is shared by numerous other residents in Marinette's district. To combat this state of affairs, FAIRMED worked together with local taxi drivers to provide inexpensive patient transport, so that all of the residents of Bankim have access to health services. Thanks to this transport and the specialised treatment she received, which encompassed antibiotics, physiotherapy and a skin graft, Marinette is now well on her way to recovery.

«I can hardly wait to lead a normal life again – to finally see my brothers and sisters, and go to school!»



Our heartfelt thanks for your interest in our work. Since 1959, the Swiss development organisation FAIRMED has been committed to improving the health of people affected by poverty in Africa and Asia. Thanks to the support of our loyal donors, donations from foundations, as well as inheritances and bequests, FAIRMED is able to offer the very poorest a path to basic healthcare.

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