

# UNDEF, Change Communication Engrave Democratic Debates in Schools

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**By Chris Mbunwe**

Change Communications, CC, a local civil society Organisations in Cameroon, in collaboration with the United Nations Democracy Fund, UNDEF, have rooted Democratic Debates in schools in Cameroon.

For one year, UNDEF CC have succeeded in establishing Democratic Debate clubs in high schools in most Regions of Cameroon, aimed at promoting a culture of democratic practices among young people.

Speaking at the end of the project in Ndop, Ngoketunjia Division, on April 26, during a public debate by students of GBHS Ndop, the event monitoring official from UNDP Office in Cameroon, Narcissa Chimi, praised the efforts of Change Communications for using Community Radios in Cameroon in promoting democratic debate clubs in schools. He observed that it has helped in transforming community radios to effective instruments for the population of democratic values and practices across Cameroon.

“I am highly impressed with the democratic debate by these students, who mastered all the facts and presentation was just wonderful on the topic; “Should girls and boys study in the same school?”. From this debate, I can see great democratic leaders emerging and we shall continue to support such initiatives.” Chimi stated.

Talking about attainment and project sustainability, the Coordinator of Change Communications CC, Shifu Ngalla, said the creation of democratic debate clubs in schools is thanks to local Community Radio Stations that have collaborated and permanently put it on their programmes.

“In this respect, I would like to salute the collaboration of the Managers of Stone FM Community Radio Ndop, Zacs Anabi, who is playing host to us and has allowed his airwaves to us and students”.

The coordinator of CC assured the funding body, UNDEF that his organisation will go beyond the numerous achievements to ensure the project continues in developing democratic culture in

rural communities using radio in Cameroon. He said CC is one out of about 60 selected in 2012 from among over 2,000 proposals received at the UNDEF office in New York from more than 100 countries across the world. The project has succeeded in strengthening Community Radio Journalism in Cameroon as a medium to promote democratic values and practices in the rural communities by “Building the professional aptitudes and managerial capacities of 200 journalists, animators and station managers.

According to Shifu, training of the Community Radio Journalists constituted a tree-trunk activity of the project. CC carried out this central activity organising a series of six training seminars in the months of June and July 2013 in Bamenda, Bafoussam, Ngaoundere, Maroua, Bertoua and Mbalmayo. The contents of the training were basically on how to design more democracy-friendly editorial policies, techniques of producing and broadcasting programmes that promote democracy. It also elaborated modules on the core values of democracy.

“We have succeeded in setting up a Regional Association of Rural Radio Broadcasters for the promotion of grassroots democracy in Cameroon, we have trained 231 journalists; including 83 female journalists - nine of them from minority (Mbororo and Pigmies), and nine Democracy Debate clubs created in High Schools in Cameroon,” Shifu disclosed.

The Divisional Officer for Ndop, Francis Alex Poss; the Deputy Mayor, Ndop, Sylvanus Vafonso; together with the Fon of Bamunka, expressed gratitude to the UNDEF and CC requesting that such debate clubs should be created in all high schools of the Division.

The host Principal of GBHS Ndop, Simon Mitti Ghogomu, said the academic and social impact on the students because of the existence of democratic debate clubs has been great; “In class, these students are more participative. Out of class, we have observed them address issues which affect the life of the school and during their media outings, their maturity, commitment and open attitude is one which leaves me with the impression that the sky is the only limit for this project,” Ghogomu intimated.

