



Cameroon

Situation: According to the Grameen Foundation, rural communities in Cameroon account for 45 percent of the total population and 87 percent of the people living in poverty. The half of the population living in rural areas is isolated and particularly vulnerable to poverty and health issues.

- Health issues include malaria and HIV/AIDS (5.1 percent of the population aged 15-49 is HIV positive).
- Thirty-three percent of Cameroon's population lives on less than US \$1.25 a day.
- The life expectancy is 50 years.

Tontines, a traditional form of microfinance, have existed in Cameroon for more than a century; however, a formal microfinance sector did not emerge there until 1963. In the past decade, there has been a sudden proliferation of financial institutions, especially in the microfinance industry, but they serve less than five percent of the Cameroon's poor population.

In Buea, Cameroon women with AIDS are often rejected from obtaining access to financial services. Because of cultural norms and ignorance they are rejected within their society and continue to suffer.

Action: The ESB Group, LLC has explored alternative courses of action with the [Association for the Promotion of Women and Children, APWAC](#) in Buea, Cameroon. APWAC is a Non-Governmental Organization based in Buea, South West Province, Cameroon. The Association was created in 1992 as a response to concerns about women and children's economic, social, moral, financial, and academic empowerment. The organization's mission is to create a society that is void of practices that discriminate economically, socially and culturally especially against the female gender.

Through a joint venture partnership with APWAC, The ESB Group seeks to offer support services through community, health education and workshop sessions focused on individual, AIDS prevention and social entrepreneurship. The question for institutions and leaders is no longer solely about how we find a cure for AIDS or engage in developments focused on economic growth at the base of the pyramid. The question is "As part of leadership, what are we doing to address underserved communities and social problems, such as AIDS, confronting minority groups at the base of the pyramid in developing economies?"

Social Impact/Result: By devising innovative solutions through micro-equity financing and by inviting women to the decision-making table, The ESB Group has been able to directly address social challenges facing underserved women entrepreneurs at the BoP in Buea, Cameroon. At the same time, this is a remarkable innovation within our industry because we created a more socially equitable platform for microfinance and consulting.

