

Country: CAMEROON, Central Africa

Name: Dungrila Pascal Mbimenyuy.

Date of Birth: 10/11/1992

Address: 317 Foncha Street, Bamenda, Northwest Region.

E-mail: iacbamenda@gmail.com

Tel: + (237) 682 985 196/652 130 115/672 837 405

Marital Status: Single.

I was born on the 10th November 1992 and completed primary education in 2004 in a peasant polygamous family in Mbuluf, Kumbo, Bui Division, North West Region of the Republic of Cameroon.

As I grew up in a subsistence family and in a rural community, I experienced a lot of difficulties including a lack of education, health and nutrition which made me understand and feel the pains and sufferings of people from the same and similar family I came from.

My father is a Sub-chief, herbalist and a farmer with three wives and eighteen children. There were four of us in our household as a woman and her children are always considered a household in any given polygamous family in Cameroon. When I was as young as eight years, still in primary school in Mbuluf, my father was a banana farmer and a palm wine tapper where most of his time was spent in his plantation in Kovndzen located some 15kms away from Mbuluf. I used to accompany him to our plantation in Kovndzen, followed him to his palm bushes in Mbuluf and to the mountain forests of Kovndzen where we collected herbs. This made me develop a love for agriculture, nature and the environment. At my younger age, between 10-16 years, he has taught me how to tap palm wine, how to sell different types of herbs including trees that are used in treating diseases such as stomach ache, diarrhoea, skin rashes, fever, cough and special plants that target witchcraft. This is usually bark of trees, leaves, stems, roots, flowers, plants and grass.

When I had learned how to sell, my father started sending me to the market with palm wine and banana, advising me to save money each time I sell so that during school reopening the money I raise will be used to purchase my school needs and pay for my school fees.

I was very much interested in rural activities and constructed and installed my first bee hive at the age of 11 and harvested it at the age of 13. While in primary school, I was taught about rural science which knowledge is still helping me today. The growing population and the rudimentary methods of farming have led to loss of livelihood and loss of soil fertility, affecting peasant families such that agriculture which is their core activity now demands advance methods of farming which do not meet their needs. During my first year in secondary school the pastoral semi-nomadic marginalized indigenous population allowed their cattle to destroy our plantation which automatically rendered our family under serious economic difficulties; education, health and nutrition were our basic needs and our plantation was a

source of income and our father could no longer meet our needs due to loss of livelihood. Fortunately, I was enrolled in a commercial secondary school just around my village where I was living in our house and schooling. When things became more difficult for our family, my father was not able to sponsor me in school anymore and due to my aspiration of becoming an entrepreneur, I had to sponsor myself from form one to form five to obtain General Certificate of Education Ordinary Levels (GCE "O" Levels Commercial). For five years in secondary school, I had to buy sugarcane and retail, and buy palm wine from the locals in the village and supply it in Shisong and Kumbo to take me through with my education for five years. In terms of academic performances, I was always among the first three students who scored the highest percentage passed in each academic year for five years. After completing my secondary education in 2009 I would have loved to proceed to High school, but I could not make it because the responsibilities became too heavy as a Commercial High School could only be found in Bamenda. Since I was responsible for all my school needs, the responsibilities in town became too heavy for me starting from house rents, feeding, transport, school fees and other school materials.

In 2011 while in the village, I learned motorcycle driving and became a commercial motorcycle rider for two years in Kumbo where I was striving to raise money to support my little brothers and sisters attend just the same secondary school level that I did. In 2013 I worked with Strategic Humanitarian Services (SHUMAS) as a labourer in their bio-farm in Kumbo for one year and the little pay I got from there supported my little ones in secondary school. While in SHUMAS, I learned a lot about agriculture and most especially organic agriculture and bio-gas production and utilization. This stimulated my zeal to transform the lives of peasant farmers by moving them toward a different agricultural dimension.

In 2014 I became a vegetable gardener in the village, cultivating assorted vegetables and supporting youths in the village with gardening skills as I believed that opportunities could be made anywhere and not only in towns and cities. I was producing tomatoes and cabbages and selling in Shisong and Kumbo, where many young people saw the lucrative nature of the business and gradually joined the activity in the village. In 2015 I worked with Integrated Development Foundation (I D F) Bamenda as an Office Assistant and Driver, responsible for office cleanliness, reception, documentation and a motorcycle field driver in remote communities.

In 2016, considering that agriculture was a source of income and food for our family, forest a source of livelihood and the struggle I went through due to loss of livelihood, I made a long lasting decision to create an Organization which aims to improve the agricultural system that involves livestock, forestry and environment and moving from subsistence to commercial farming while practicing natural farming and improving the livelihood of communities through sustainable interventions. Following the experiences from the family I come from, I understood the challenges faced by peasant families and other people from poor backgrounds which made me set a goal to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life by promoting and defending the rights and freedom of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups at the grassroots levels, empower the disadvantaged for poverty mitigation with knowledge, skills and resources for sustainable and secure livelihood. I am a member of Young African Leaders Initiative (YALI NETWORK). I am the founder and Executive Director of Integrated Agricultural Association (I.A.A). The organization aims to ensure Food security, Promote Disease prevention, Promote Social Justice, promote social, economic, and environmental well-being by (i) helping to create

sustainable economic development in rural communities in Cameroon, (ii) empower and train youths and women-owned producer cooperatives, and (iii) educate Cameroonians about the importance of organic farming and organic food.

I.A.A is a Youth led Organization with main focus on empowering farmers through organic food production and commerce. I.A.A also transforms subsistence farms into profitable businesses by helping smallholder farmers access good training, affordable capital, quality inputs and better crop prices. I.A.A is passionate about creating social change and food equity, and the organization provides farmers with essential knowledge as a strategy to ensuring food security and fighting poverty across Cameroon. I.A.A has over two years of experience in nonprofit leadership with a focus on smallholder farmer empowerment, defending indigenous minority rights, education, health care and community development. I.A.A believes that the future of our world depends on all our collective actions where we sustain the environment by putting social and environmental justice at the centre of development. I.A.A seeks to achieve her objectives through the participatory framework of all stakeholders and like-minded organizations worldwide. She has resolved to function according to her core values of; justice and equity, accountability, responsibility, democracy, competence and dedication in respect of her constitution. That is the origin of Integrated Agricultural Association (I.A.A).