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Personal history

I was born of a peasant family of five in the North West Region of Cameroon, Central Africa where I attended the primary and secondary schools. My parents, being farmers, financed my education and other family needs from the income from the small coffee farm.

While in the fourth form of the secondary school I lost my father and had to work in a local coffee factory to pay for my education and cater for the needs of the family. I successfully completed the secondary school and passed the General Certificate of Education. Since going to the sixth form was too expensive for me to handle without help, I studied for the Advanced Level General certificate of Education at home and succeeded in passing the London University General Certificate of Education at the advanced level as a private candidate.

Having gone through hardship and mishaps at my early age, I perfectly understood what it meant to be poor and became more sensitive to their sufferings. After my Advanced levels, I pondered what I could study in order to be useful to the poor. In Cameroon and Africa at large, there is a significant number of disabled persons and this population of citizens are discriminated upon, abandoned and neglected. In fact this is the most unfortunate class of the poor in the country. For this reason, I decided to take up a profession that I could use to help this class of the poor. It is unfortunate that the first opportunity I had to go for further studies in Italy was to study social sciences, a discipline that I could not practically use to help disabled persons. After obtaining the diploma I return to Cameroon and was not satisfied with what I had studied. I had to study physiotherapy, a domain that would enable me to be of use to disabled persons. After graduating with a degree in physiotherapy, I worked with disabled persons in a public hospital for three years and met challenging cases of disabilities that necessitated further specialization to handle. That is why I went to the U.S.A. for further studies and specialized in such areas as special education, mental health, and rehabilitation counseling. After graduating with an advanced degree, I worked in different capacities in the United States. Despite this opportunity to make a career in the U.S.A., I still had this burning desire to go back to my country to assist disabled persons.

When I returned to Cameroon, I refrained from joining that public service and instead joined hands with a group of Cameroonians of good will to form a task force and put together a strategy to assist the ever increasing number of disabled children in the West Region to attain self-reliance and effective socio-economic integration.

The disabled in Cameroon and Africa at large, suffer from discrimination and marginalization from their families and the society and worst of all they are neglected by health planners. This neglect is evident in the absence of concrete efforts in furnishing such services as health care, rehabilitation, education, economic development, socio-cultural and political participation.

I dream of a rehabilitation trend based on making technology available to disabled persons. I believe in finding what is locally available in terms of technology, services and management services to develop a rehabilitation by looking for what is there, learning from the people to build a project that is community-based and sustainable. It is also my wish that the rehabilitation project in place will be extended to other regions of Cameroon and neighbouring African countries as it develops.

Interview with Mike Thomas on You tube: <http://youtu.be/qdC2wJXydm8>

Personal Data

Education and qualifications

1988-2000 Northeastern university, Boston Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Earned the doctorate in Rehabilitation counseling.

1986-1988 Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, U.S.A.

Earned a Master of Science in special education and mental retardation.

1978-1982 University Centre for Health Sciences, Yaounde, Cameroon.

Earned the Bachelor degree in Physiotherapy.

1974-1978 Istituto Mystici Corporis, Florence, Italy

Earned the Diploma in Social sciences.

Employment

2004-Present Global Rehabilitation Services (GLORES), Bafoussam, Cameroon.

Physiotherapy and project coordination.

1999-2004 St. Joseph Children and Adult Home (SAJOCAH), Bafut, Cameroon.

Physiotherapy and Coordination of community-based rehabilitation

Programme.

1998-1998 Courtland Health Centre, Stamford, Connecticut, U.S.A.

Physiotherapy and rehabilitation counseling.

1990-1998 Vinfen Corporation, Boston, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Programme management and mental health counseling.

1980-1986 Transitional services inc., Bloomington, Indiana, USA

Programme management and mental health counseling.

1982-1986 Regional Hospital, Bafoussam, Cameroon.

Physiotherapy and preparation of therapeutic programmes.

Skills

Fluent in Lamso, English, French and Italian languages. Computer literate, teaching, physiotherapy, project development and mental health counseling.

Objective

To use my rehabilitation specialization and vast experience to assist disabled children to regain mobility and effective socio-economic integration in collaboration with other local and international organizations working for the cause of poor and disadvantaged children.

Present organisational post:

Director and founder Global Rehabilitation Services (GLORES)