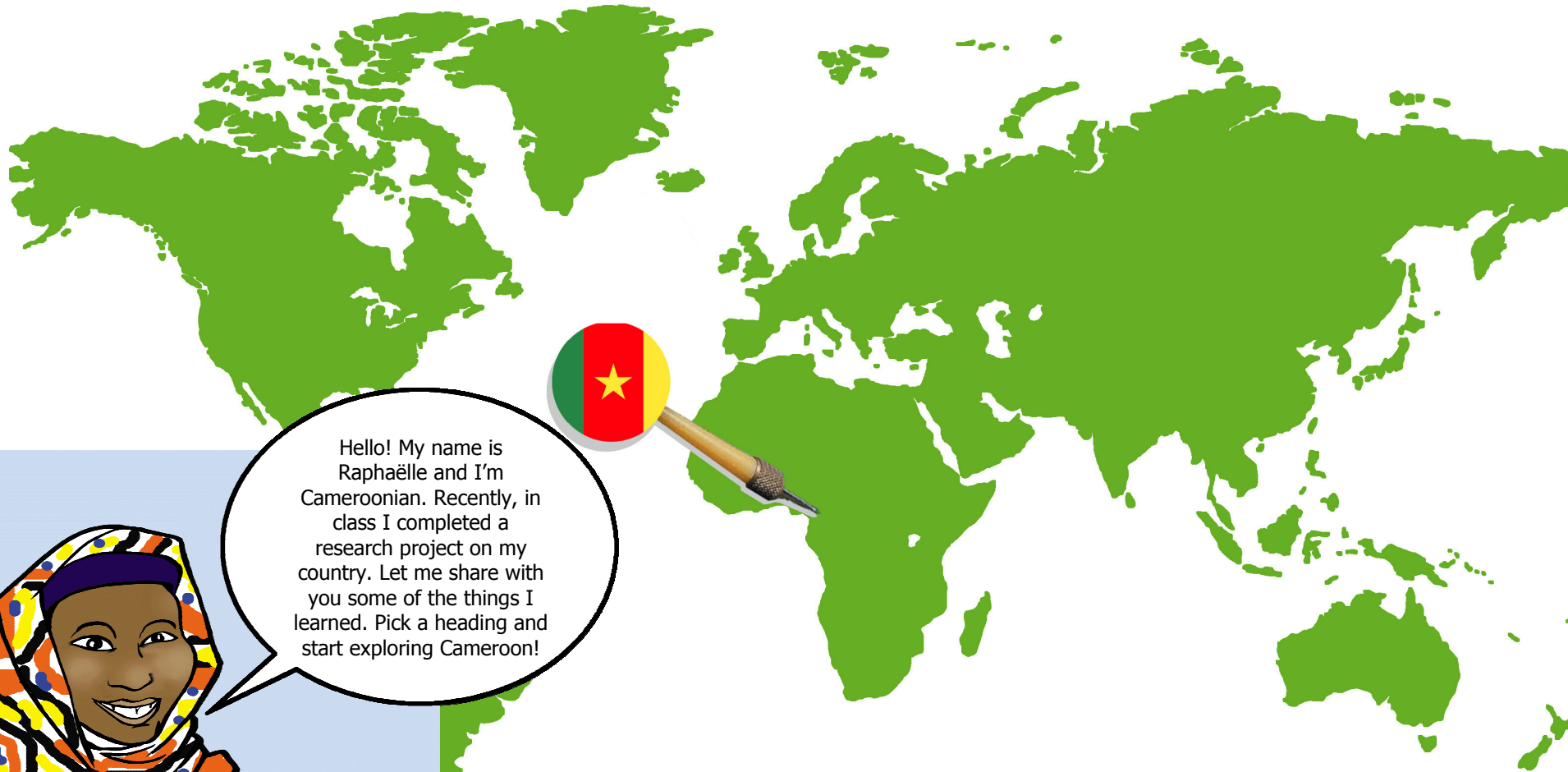


CAMEROON



Hello! My name is Raphaëlle and I'm Cameroonian. Recently, in class I completed a research project on my country. Let me share with you some of the things I learned. Pick a heading and start exploring Cameroon!



The **Country Fact Sheets** series is presented to you by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif and produced with the support of the government of Canada through the Canadian International Development Agency



Canadian International
Development Agency

Agence canadienne de
développement international



COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

My country is often characterized as a "mini-Africa" because of the great diversity of my country. There are many different geographical areas in my country, ranging from tropical forests in the south, to savana in the north, to mountains in the west. Similarly, this nickname applies to Cameroon's many people. There are 240 ethnic groups that can be divided into three major groups of people; the Bantus, Semi-Bantus, and Sudanese.

Look carefully at the map of Cameroon; there are 6 countries that border my country. To the west lies Nigeria, to the east you'll find Chad, and the Central African Republic. Lastly, to the south lie Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. My country is shaped like a triangle. Its surface area is 475,442 km².

The political capital of my country is called Yaoundé. More than 1.4 million people live there according to recent estimates. The biggest city is Douala which is considered my country's economic capital. The cities Bafoussam, Maroua, Bamenda, and Garoua are also important urban centres.

The Cameroonian economy is primarily agricultural. The principal commercial crops are cocoa, coffee, tobacco, cotton, and bananas.

Cameroon has seven National Parks that attract many tourists each year. Many iconic African animals live in these parks such as elephants, lions, giraffes, black rhinoceroses, panthers, buffalo, antelopes, hippopotami, hyenas, gorillas, topis and cheetahs, among others.



Did you know that?

The name **Cameroon** comes from the Portuguese *Rios dos Camaroes* meaning "River of Shrimp" because of the abundance of these crustaceans in one of the rivers in my country. The word *Camaroes* evolved into the Portuguese word *Camarones*, then *Kamerun* under German colonization, and finally into **Cameroon** in English, and **Cameroon** in French.



Surface Area

More than 475 000 Km². (*Canada : 9 984 670 km²*)

Climate

Tropical along the coast, more arid and warmer towards north. Rainy season is from April to November.

Temperature

From 16 to 40°C.

Relief

The highest point is mount Cameroon (Fako) at 4095 meters!

Natural Resources

Fruits (pineapples, bananas), fish, etc.

COUNTRY DESCRIPTION

Population

More than 16 million people live in my country, and the population is very young. More than 4 out of every 10 people are less than 15 years old! In comparison, I'm told that in Canada, less than 2 people out of every 10 are less than 15 years old. This is explained in part by the fact that here in Cameroon, women have 5 children each on average! In Canada, the average is less than 2 children per woman!

French and English are our official languages, that is to say, the languages that are taught in school, and used in government. They are spoken by 70% and 30% of the population, respectively. That being said, you may be surprised to learn that there are about 240 national languages spoken by different ethnic groups in Cameroon.

The two major ethnicities in my country are the Fangs who make up almost 20% of the population and the Bamilékés and the Bamouns who together make up 18.5 % of the population. I'm not a member of either of these two ethnicities. I'm a Tikar, and my ethnicity makes up about 7% of the population.

In my country, people often use proverbs to express themselves. Here are a few that you can teach your friends and family:

"Don't put your finger between the tree and its bark"
This means that you should not come between two people that have a close bond.

"Even the fish that lives in water is always thirsty"
This means that human beings are always unsatisfied with what they have.

"Men never see where they trip; they only see where they fall."
This means that we don't see our mistakes as we make them, but we only see the results of our mistakes.

Did you know that?

Polygamy is an established practice in Cameroon. Polygamy is when a man is married to more than one woman at the same time. In my country, Polygamy is legal and exists especially in the villages. This might shock you. I am told that in Canada, this is something that is illegal but here at home, a man's wives live in harmony for the most part and raise their children together while sharing the daily duties.



Facts at a Glance



Number of Inhabitants

16,3 million (2005)



Density (number of people per Km²)

34 people per square kilometre (2005)



Life Expectancy

46 years (2004)



Purchasing Power¹

US\$2 090 (2004)



People Without a job

48 % (2004)



People who can read and write

68% (2004)



Mortality rate under 5 years of age

149 per 1000 children (2004)



Human Development Index (HDI)²

148th out of 177 countries (2003)



Ecological Footprint³

0,9 (2001)

Population

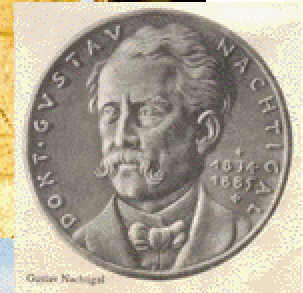
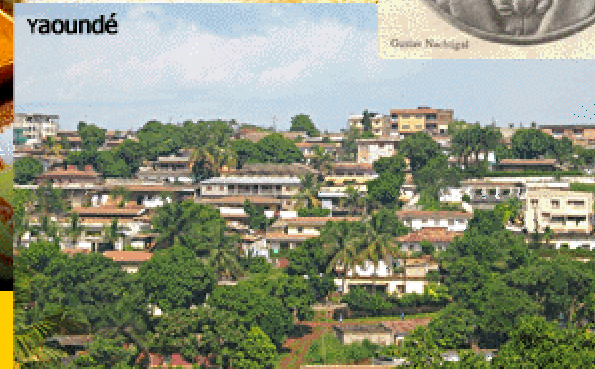
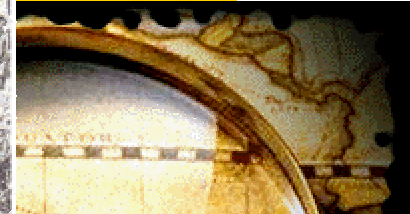
History

I'm very proud of my country and I would like to share our history with you. According to most accounts, people have lived in the territory that is now Cameroon for more than 3000 years.

My country was discovered by Europeans in 1471. A Portuguese man named Fernando Póo explored it for the first time. Later, Europeans began coming to my country for ivory, rare wood, and slaves. Thankfully, the slave trade has been abolished for a number of decades now. I hope that you share my belief that we are all equal regardless of the colour of our skin, our religion, or where we come from.

In 1884, Germany began colonizing Cameroon. This means that Germany occupied Cameroon and imposed its laws on us. The local population tried to resist German authority but resistance was brutally put down by the Germans. In 1918, after the First World War, the Germans lost all of their colonies and France and England took 4/5^{ths} and 1/5th possession of the territories respectively.

Later, in 1960, French and British Cameroon separated and each became independent. The next year, British Cameroon divided into two again; one part decided to join Nigeria, a neighbouring country, and the other part decided to join French Cameroon. French Cameroon was renamed 'The Federal Republic of Cameroon'.



In 1972 the President of Cameroon removed many rights from the English-speaking minority in the country. He created a **centralized** republic out of the 8 French provinces and 2 English provinces. Once more, my country changed its name and became the United Republic of Cameroon.

Today, it is said that my country is democratic because many political parties exist. It can't be ignored that my country has become an important political and economic player in Africa.

History

Culture

In Cameroon, there are dozens of different ethnicities. Some people say there are even 250 ! Can you imagine?! Thus, we are blessed with a great diversity of music, styles of dress, and traditions from each ethnicity.

There is an instrument that is used across the country, it is called an Nkul. It's a type of tambourine that is made from a piece of tree trunk in which an opening is made. It is used to communicate messages or to accompany dances. Look closely at the picture of this instrument found on this page.

Most people in Cameroon are religious. My country is often used as an example of **peaceful religious cohabitation** between catholics (34 %), protestants (18 %), muslims (22 %) and traditional religions (26 %).

Have you heard of the Cameroonian football (soccer) team? The Cameroon Lions are recognized around the world as being a competitive team. Football, called soccer in your country is, without a doubt, our national sport.

As far as food goes here, most dishes are made with **plantain**, banana, red beans, **igname**, **manioc**, dried fish, and chicken. Like in most other African countries, rice is the base of most dishes.



Did you know that?

Did you know that a very popular dish is dried fish with peanut butter? If you have the chance to taste it one day, it might surprise you. Personally, I love it. It is one of my favorite dishes.

Finally, here are a few words in Bulu, a language spoken particularly in the south:

Nbolo : Hello

Ye one mvoé : How is it going?

Owé me ne voé : Yes I'm well

Wo so vé : Where are you from ?

If you want to hear Cameroon's national anthem, click on the following link :

www.david.national-anthems.net/cm.htm



Culture

Challenges

If you visit Cameroon one day, you will find that most people live below the poverty line, and that access to potable water is difficult for many people.

Cameroonian women, like elsewhere in Africa and in the world, have lots of work. In rural areas, they are responsible for performing household chores, educating children, working in the farm fields, helping in the harvest, getting water (by foot and often several kilometres away), and making sure that their families lack nothing. I would really like this situation to get better.

Rural-urban migration also affects my country. I believe this also happens in certain areas of Canada. Rural-urban migration occurs when peasants leave the countryside to live in cities. Difficult living conditions and a lack of employment in rural areas contribute to this phenomenon. By leaving for the city, people think that they will improve their lives, but this is not always the case. In Cameroon, many people have left their traditional lands to work in various industries in the city, such as textile companies, and wood processing plants.

Access to education is a concerning issue in Cameroon. You are so lucky to have the chance to go to school! You know, in my country education is a luxury because living conditions are so difficult. Even if children are able to attend school for the first few years, they often have to drop out of school to begin working. Furthermore, a child attending school is an additional expense for his or her family because they need school clothes, workbooks, and other necessary school supplies.

Sadly, girls are the least represented in school classrooms because, even at a young age, they have to help with their mothers' work. Unfortunately, this is the situation I find myself in at the moment. Furthermore, on average there aren't schools in every village, and the country is suffering from a lack of teachers.

Despite these difficulties my people are full of spirit, and are warm and welcoming. I hope you will visit us one day.

To learn more, check out the educational tool "Discover Africa" created by the Réseau In-Terre-Actif by visiting the following link: www.in-terre-actif.com/trousseafrique/index.html



Challenges

Solutions



There are many challenges that my country still has to overcome. Happily, we can count on international cooperation projects that help us to improve our quality of life. Let me tell you about a very interesting project that is being sponsored by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).

The organization Oxfam-Québec, in collaboration with groups of Cameroonian women, has set up small banking and credit cooperatives (small financial institutions) in certain areas of the country to extend micro-credit.



Micro-credit is small amounts of money which are loaned at low-interest rates to individuals, or small groups of people with meagre financial resources. These small loans are often used by individuals to support self-employment, or to start small businesses in order to generate a stable income for themselves. Small shops, arts and crafts centres, and agrarian products are some good examples of the types of businesses that are created through these loans.

This system makes credit available to people who would otherwise not be able to borrow money. Big banks don't loan money to just anyone! Banks set conditions and require guarantees for their loans that poor people often cannot give. Generally, women benefit most from these types of loan, and from the training courses that usually accompany the loans. These training courses help the women to deal with any challenges that they might encounter.

Micro-credit really helps fight poverty. This initiative benefits many people in my country. Similar initiatives exist in other countries. What a great idea!

Visit the following link to learn more and to see pictures of this international cooperation project:

www.oxfam.qc.ca/html/presse/phototheque/cameroun/5.html

Solutions

Glossary

Agrarian:

That which is related to the ownership and cultivation of land.

Centralize:

To concentrate by placing power and authority in a center or central organization

Peaceful religious cohabitation:

Respect for the existence of different religions that are practiced by the inhabitants of the same country.

Igname:

Tropical plant, perennial, a large edible rhizome.

Manioc :

A manioc (*Manihot esculenta*) is a perennial shrub from the Euphorbiaceae Family that originated in Brazil and Bolivia, in South America. Today, it is largely cultivated and harvested as an annual in tropical and subtropical regions. The starchy roots are consumed, while in Africa, Asia, and northern Brazil the leaves are eaten.

Plantain :

Variety of banana plant that grows in tropical regions, produces a fruit that is cooked like a vegetable and eaten.

Savanna :

Vast, tropical grassy plain where trees and flowers are rare, but where animals are abundant.

Purchasing Power¹:

Purchasing power is the capacity to buy goods and services with a given income.

Glossary



Don't forget that you can do something to improve our world. You and your friends in school can get involved. Become aware of the important issues around the world. All together, we can change things for the better!

To learn more about Cameroon, check out the following web sites:

- ✓ www.in-terre-actif.com/english
- ✓ www.ethiquette.ca
- ✓ www.equiterre.org/en
- ✓ www.amnesty.org
- ✓ www.acdi-cida.gc.ca/youthzone

Human Development Index ² :

The Human Development Report issued by the UN, which classifies 177 countries according to life-expectancy, education, literacy, and income.

Ecological Footprint³ :

It measures how much land and water area is necessary to provide one person's sustenance.

Awalé

Do you know this game of African origin?

"Sow to harvest" is the main principle of this strategy game based on ancient trade practices in Africa.

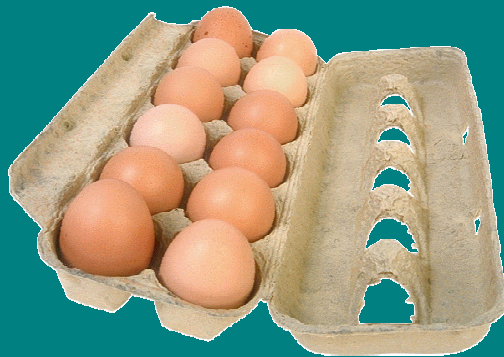
Material:

- An egg carton (without the eggs of course!)
- Some paint and a brush
- 48 dry bean seeds

The game board (for 2 players):

Paint the egg carton. This will be your game board. The board consists of 2 rows of 6 slots each. These slots are your sowing fields. Each player has 6 fields.

Before beginning, place 4 seeds in each slot. After a player has captured some seeds, he/she will put them aside as a reserve.



Game



Rules of the game:

The game board represents each player's sowing fields. Each player has 4 seeds in each of his 6 fields.

1. In turn, each player chooses one field to start from, and takes all the seeds from this field and sows them into the next fields, in a counter clockwise direction.
2. If you put your last remaining seed into a field that already contains 1 or 2 seeds (for a total of 2 or 3) and this field is on the other player's side, then you can collect all the seeds from his field. You will put them in your reserve.
3. If the field preceding the one where you dropped your last seed belongs to your opponent and now contains 2 or 3 seeds, then you can take those seeds as well and keep them for your reserve. It is now your opponent's turn. Both players can continue to capture seeds until no more moves are possible.
4. After your fields have all been emptied, your opponent must make a move that will give you seeds. If no such move is possible, your opponent will capture all seeds in his/her own territory, ending the game.
5. The winner is the person who captures the most seeds.

ATTENTION: If the field from which you choose to take your seeds contains more than 12 seeds, a full turn of the game will occur. When you reach the field where you first started, don't drop any seeds there; skip it, and continue to drop your seeds in the following fields.