

Heifer Cameroon Hosts Elanco Study Tour



Representatives of Elanco, a U.S.-based livestock pharmaceutical corporation and Heifer International supporter, participated in a study tour to Cameroon from May 21-31, 2011. The participants, which included veterinarians and animal scientists, shared their expertise in swine production and learned how Heifer-supported farmers use integrated livestock-crop production projects to improve their livelihoods. During visits to private homes and Common Initiative Groups in Bafut,

Bamendakwe and Santa subdivisions in the Northwest region of the country, they praised smallholder farm families for making a positive difference in their lives and communities.

Farm families shared how assistance from Heifer International has enabled them to generate income from the sale of animals and surplus food crops and demonstrated how compost from animal waste has improved soil fertility and, thus, the quality of their farms' yields. The Elanco team also learned about the challenges rural small farmers face in managing, feeding and marketing livestock. The farmers, who are now able to educate their children, improve their homes and purchase basic appliances, shared testimonies that illustrated how their lives have been transformed since joining the project.

Olivia Befuh, a widow and member of the Mbei Struggling Widows Common Initiative Group, explained how assistance empowers members to educate their children and feed their families, as well as endure the loss of their husbands. A farm family in Bamendakwe community was full of pride as they upheld Heifer's tradition by passing on the gift of a dairy heifer to another family.

Sitting in on Common Initiative Group working sessions, the study tour team listened to farmers share their challenges and plans for the future. Together, the team and farmers brainstormed solutions, which were celebrated by a satisfied response of singing and dancing. Group leaders eagerly included others in their communities who had not received assistance from Heifer.

Grady Bishop, leader of the Elanco team, encouraged the farmers to stay focused and to continuously provide hope for each other. "We are separated by distance, but the benefits and feeling for animals is the same," he said. "We have been given a great gift. That's what Heifer International has done in your lives, and we will tell your powerful stories back in the United States."

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