Project Background

About 15% of the world’s population live with disability. According to the World Health Organization, Cameroon, a nation of twenty million inhabitants has 10% of its population living with disabilities. Mobility impairment, blindness, epilepsy, deafness, and cerebral palsy are some of the common disabilities seen in Cameroon. Some of the main causes for disabilities include postnatal complication, genetics, polio, meningitis, and road accidents. People with disabilities are a marginalized group in Cameroon; therefore, children with disabilities often do not have the opportunity to attend school.

There are few organizations in Cameroon which support people with disabilities. L’Association Humanitaire Pour la Promotion des Personnes Socialement Vulnérables (AHP^2V) is a center located in the West Region of Cameroon in a village called Baham. This Center was founded in 2000 and began with four disabled children and the number has grown to thirty physically and mentally disabled children today. Families with disabled children depend on this Center as it is the only center of its kind in the area. The Center depends on donations from the local community as well as volunteers in order to care for and educate the children.

I visited this Center for the first time in 2018 and I was very shocked by its actual condition. They were cooking outside. There was only a single classroom which was small and not adequate for their respective handicaps, and they did not have modern bathrooms. I was inspired to help and had a discussion with the director about the Center’s needs. Together, we reviewed a list of needs, which included a new water tank, a new classroom, and new bathrooms, with the most important, being the construction of a new kitchen. Most of the cooking was done outdoors and posed health risks for the children. In 2019, I was able to obtain funding from a competition and used this funding to help in the construction of the kitchen. My family and I assisted during the construction. Today, the kitchen is still operational and the health conditions of the children and staff have improved. Through this project, I acquired experience and skills such as project management, financial management; how to work with elders; and how to manage stressful situations. The experience, skills, and relationships that I gained from this previous project will help me to implement the following project proposal.

The Project

The thirty children in this Center are taught in a single classroom which is small and is not adequate for all of the special needs represented at the Center. Some of the children are mentally disabled and need more space and attention in class than the others. The learning experience could be vastly enhanced with multiple rooms better suited to the students’ unique needs. I wish to continue my support for the Center with the construction of a new classroom.

The main objective of this project is to build a large classroom equipped with accessible desks, and chairs. There will be a balcony around the classroom that will permit the children in wheelchairs to be able to move easily. A wide entrance to the classroom will also allow easier access. A new classroom will help to separate the children based on their disabilities and will enable them to receive better attention.

Despite the fact that this area of Cameroon is free from the ongoing conflicts in the country, I want to help these children because they are a marginalized group and there is little or no effort to support them. Succeeding with this project will give hope to other children with disabilities, and let them know that they are not forgotten. The parents of the disabled children do not have the means to afford their education and many of them cannot read and write. Expanding the Center will give these parents hope because if their disabled children are better educated, they will be able to help their families. I envision the Center will need to expand as students’ success stories are shared and more parents will value and seek education for their disabled children.

1. [Disabled Demand Infrastructural Inclusion in Cameroon (globalpressjournal.com)]
Project Preparation and Implementation

In order to implement this project, I am currently working together with a local professional builder who is familiar with the Center and has provided his services to them in the past. We have been working together on estimating the budget for the construction project. He has established a construction plan and located a flat area attached to the Center where this room could be added. This builder and his team will be paid for their services as outlined in the budget on page 3. In this village, the community often volunteers to help with projects of this scale. This is a time of celebration in the community. My family and I will join these volunteers to help accelerate the construction. Together, with the construction crew and team of ten volunteers, we will be able to finish the project in nine weeks.

After arriving in Cameroon, I, along with my parents, the director of the Center, and the builder, will go to the market to buy all the materials needed for the construction.

Project Timeline/Plan of Action

This project will be carried out over the course of two months from May 24th to July 24th.
1. **Weeks 1 & 2**: Purchase all materials needed, dig the foundation, make the iron bars, make bricks, and allow them to dry.
2. **Weeks 3 & 4**: Build the foundation and elevate the walls.
3. **Week 5**: Continuation of the construction, installation of the doors and windows.
4. **Week 6**: Install electricity, plaster the walls and flooring.
5. **Week 7**: Roofing while the walls and floor are drying.
6. **Week 8**: Paint the walls, install classroom equipment, and make the final touches.
7. **Week 9**: Inauguration and activity week. In this village, we always celebrate as a community when a construction project of this kind is completed. During this week, I will engage in making jewelry with pearls with the children of the Center. This is one of their main activities at the Center as the final products are sold to visitors and the money is used to meet some of their needs.

Future Impact and Sustainability of Project

In summary, the aim of this project is to provide an adequate learning environment for disabled children at AHPV who have been outcasts in their communities. Succeeding in this project means helping disabled children in this village to get access to education easily, as it is the only center supporting these children in the area. The construction of a new classroom will help to provide adequate space for learning. One classroom will be made for children who are physically disabled and epileptic, and the other classroom will be made for children who are mentally disabled. The implementation of this project will also create a better studying environment as there will be more space for the children in each classroom and it will help them to feel better, and to learn better.

This project aligns with Projects for Peace because it will empower the community to serve the needs of children with disabilities who have largely been marginalized and forgotten. This project promotes a shared humanity among people with disabilities and their community. It brings people together to value and support the education of children with disabilities who can in turn help build their communities when properly educated. Through this project, I hope to foster transformations within the community, to serve the needs of children with disabilities, and, through their education, improve the lives of their parents. Through this project I am building a community, which will help to support its disadvantaged population. Building another classroom will make the children more comfortable. Instructors will have more resources for each student and the school curriculum will be taught at a pace suitable for the unique needs of the students. This project will also help to encourage and give hope to families who have children with disabilities. It will encourage them not to give up on their children and send them to school as they witness the success of the children in AHPV.