

FOR SHARDS OF GLASS

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Female impoverishment is becoming an increasingly alarming phenomenon. At a clandestine rubbish tip located in Mvan, a neighborhood of the Cameroonian capital Yaounde, a group of women have a rendezvous with their destiny.

Neither the dog's endless frolics nor the children's cries of distress distract the women from their work. With each new working day they fetch the source of their livelihood: shards of broken bottles from the masses of rubbish.

They carry out their work meticulously despite the harsh working conditions. However, an entirely mechanized production line is needed to transform their labor into finished products.

For the past six months, their goods have been lying idle with no buyer in sight. To relieve their burden, the women implore the heavens for mercy. Having broken the silence that prevailed at the rubbish tip, the recycling team closes ranks and knocks at several doors. As these images were shot, a baby that we filmed on its mother's back died.

Exasperated, manipulated, and repeatedly exploited, the Mvan women have learnt the language of survival, as they have had to defend their interests. This time the fruit of their labor will be sold at a higher price.

They have resolved to avoid being swindled, and have done their best to secure a good deal. For once, they emerge victorious. However, a group of individuals arrives on the instructions of the big boss, to stop the goods from being loaded. An unexpected husband tries to restore order. The boss arrives, but is helpless. Voices are raised. The women and the husband rise up to denounce the unbearable working conditions.

As they look forward to the next sale or to concrete provisions from the authorities and NGOs, the mothers have no other option but to gather shards of broken bottles that will enable them to feed their children and keep their homes inches away from the specter of poverty and misery.

Screened

Panafricana (Pan African film Festival) 2003 Italy

Écrans Noirs 2002

Festival International du Film d'Amiens 2002 France

Festival Del Cinema Africano 2003 Italy

Duration: 26 min, **Medium:** Betacam SP, **Year:** 2001, **Production:** MALO PICTURES

Location: Cameroon

Keywords: Urban area, Dumpsite, Female recuperators, Commercial chain, Poverty