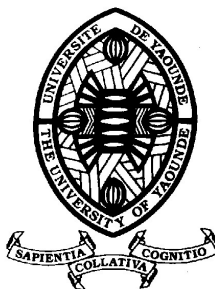


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**POST GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR
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**DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY



UNIVERSITÉ DE YAOUNDÉ I

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FORMATION DOCTORALE EN
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**UNITÉ DE RECHERCHE ET DE
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN
SCIENCES HUMAINES ET SOCIALES**

DÉPARTEMENT D'HISTOIRE

**THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR
WOMEN (UNIFEM) IN EMPOWERMENT STRATEGIES IN
CAMEROON 1976 - 2015**

**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Award of a Doctorate/PhD Degree in History
(Speciality: History of International Relations)**

By

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TO
MY MOTHER,
ENDALI GLADYS

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ABSTRACT

This research work focuses on UNIFEM's mechanisms to foster women's empowerment and gender equality in Cameroon. In other words, it analyses the various activities of UNIFEM and the way it formulates and implements laws and policies to promote women's status and gender related issues within the national territory. Although Cameroon has ratified various Sub-regional, Regional and International instruments aiming at promoting women empowerment, women's representation in elective and decision-making positions remains very weak. Old age cultural practices, customs and traditions continue to exist and constitute a hindrance to the efforts of government and civil society organizations to improve the status of women in all areas. The aim of this thesis is to assess UNIFEM's strategies in empowering women in Cameroon; to examine the extent to which this UN organization tailors its activities in view of promoting women's empowerment and enabling them to participate more in all areas of development. This aim is met within the framework of a number of objectives. It traces the status of Cameroonian women in pre-colonial and colonial times, explains why UNIFEM was created, how it has evolved, the scope of its assistance to women, and then explores in greater detail the impact of its activities throughout Cameroon. The proposed theoretical model includes sustainable public-private-partnerships, and to this end, the research takes into account academic literature, studies and reports from the public and private sectors. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of research were used. The findings from the research revealed that, although UNIFEM's actions still face some hindrances, women's status has evolved in various domains. The majority acknowledged that their lives have known positive impact. Immediate benefits include skill training, adult education and enterprise development resulting from UNIFEM's actions. Ultimately, the data derived from the various sources appeared vital to our topic and enabled us to note that within the context of an expanding civil society, the need of women's empowerment to the efforts to alleviate poverty and foster community development becomes crucial.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce travail de recherche porte sur les mécanismes mis en place par l'UNIFEM pour favoriser l'autonomisation des femmes et l'égalité des sexes au Cameroun. En d'autres termes, il analyse les différentes activités de l'UNIFEM et la manière dont celle-ci formule et met en œuvre les lois et politiques visant à promouvoir la condition féminine et les questions liées au genre sur le territoire national. Bien que le Cameroun ait ratifié divers instruments sous-régionaux, régionaux et internationaux visant à promouvoir l'autonomisation des femmes, la représentation de celles-ci aux postes électifs et décisionnels reste très faible. Les pratiques culturelles, les coutumes et les traditions ancestrales continuent d'exister et constituent une entrave aux efforts du gouvernement et des organisations de la société civile pour améliorer le statut des femmes dans tous les domaines. La présente thèse vise à évaluer les stratégies de l'UNIFEM en matière d'autonomisation des femmes au Cameroun ; à examiner dans quelle mesure cette organisation des Nations Unies adapte ses activités en vue de promouvoir l'autonomisation des femmes et de leur permettre de participer davantage à tous les domaines du développement. Cette étude s'inscrit dans le cadre d'un certain nombre d'objectifs. Elle retrace le statut de la femme camerounaise à l'époque précoloniale et coloniale et la raison de la création de l'UNIFEM, son évolution, l'étendue de son assistance aux femmes, puis explore plus en détail les retombées de ses activités sur l'ensemble du territoire camerounais. Le modèle théorique proposé comprend des partenariats public-privé durables et, à cette fin, la recherche tient compte de la littérature universitaire, des études et des rapports des secteurs public et privé. Des méthodes de recherche à la fois qualitatives et quantitatives ont été utilisées. Les résultats de la recherche ont révélé que, bien que les actions de l'UNIFEM se heurtent encore à certains obstacles, le statut des femmes a évolué dans divers domaines. La majorité d'entre elles reconnaissent que leur vie a connu des impacts positifs. Parmi les retombées immédiates, citons la formation professionnelle, l'éducation des adultes et le développement d'entreprises résultant des actions de l'UNIFEM. En fin de compte, les données tirées des diverses sources nous ont semblé essentielles à notre sujet et nous ont permis de constater que, dans le contexte d'une société civile en expansion, la nécessité de l'autonomisation des femmes dans les efforts visant à réduire la pauvreté et à favoriser le développement communautaire devient cruciale.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<i>ACAFEJ</i>	<i>Association Camerounaise des Femmes Juristes</i>
ACWW	Associated Country Women of the World
AFWIC	African Women in Crisis
AGDI	African Gender and Development Index
AIPR	Auschwitz Institute for peace and reconciliation
<i>ALVF</i>	<i>Association de Lutte contre les Violence faites aux Femmes</i>
<i>ALDEPA</i>	<i>Action Locale pour un Développement Participatif et Autogéré.</i>
AMCY	Association for Housewives and Cooperating Partners of Yaounde
ASBY	Association of the Bayam Sellam of Cameroun
ASDAM	Association for supporting Domestic Workers
BDPFA	Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action
BONUCA	United Nations Peace-building Office in the Central African Republic
CAMYOSFOP	Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace
CARO	Central Africa Sub-Regional Office
CAWOLED	Cameroon Women in Leadership and Development
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CHRAPA	Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
<i>CMB</i>	<i>Comité Multi Bailleurs</i>
<i>COFTRAKOL</i>	<i>Cooperative des Femmes pour la Transformation du Karité et autres Oléagineux Locaux du Ndé</i>
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
DAW	Division for the Advancement of Women
DRF	Development Results Framework
DSCE	Growth and Employment Document
EC	European Commission
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
EDF	European Development Fund
ELECAM	National Electoral Commission Cameroon
EU	European Union
FEMNET	African Women's Development and Communication Network

FGMs	Female Genital Mutilations
FWCW	Fourth World Conference on Women
GAD	Gender and Development
GBS	General Budget Support
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDI	Gender Development Index
GeED	Gender Empowerment and Development
GEPA	Gender Equality in Public Administration
GESP	Growth and Employment Strategy Paper
GEWE	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
GFPs	Gender Focal Points
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
<i>HEPROGES</i>	<i>Hommes Engagés pour la Promotion du Genre et Egalité entre les Sexes</i>
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
ICBT	Informal Cross Border Trade
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IMC	International Medical Corp
INGOs	International non-governmental organizations
INSTRAW	International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
<i>MINPROFF</i>	<i>Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille</i>
NAYOBEB	National Network of Boys-to-Boys on Ending Violence against Women and Girls in Cameroon
NFLS	Nairobi Forward Looking Strategies
NGPC	National Gender Policy of Cameroon
NOWWEF	North West Women Empowerment Fund
NWMs	National Women's Machineries
OSAGI	Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues
PAFICIT	Cross-Border Informal Trade
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
<i>RENATRAD</i>	<i>Réseau National des Associations d'Appui aux Travailleurs Domestiques</i>
SGBV	Sexual Gender-Based Violence

UN WOMEN	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCHR	United Nations Commission on Human Rights
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNECA	United Nations Economic Commission for Africa
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Fund for Population
UNGASS	United Nations convened its first General Assembly Special Session
INIC	United Nations Information Center
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United nations Industrial Development
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
UN-NGLS	United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNU/INTECH	United Nations University Institute for New Technologies
UNVFDW	United Nations Voluntary Fund for the Decade for Women
VAW	Violence Against Women
WAD	Women and Development
WCNU	Women Cameroon National Union
WEC	Women's Empowerment Centres
WGGE	Working Group on Gender Equality
WICBT	Women informal Cross-border Traders
WID	Women in Development
WIDF	Women's International Democratic Federation
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WIRA	Women in Research and Action
WOMED	Women on the Move for Equal Development
WSCs	Women Cohesion Spaces
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In 1945, the United Nations Charter was adopted, stating that participant states are legally bound by contractual obligation to strive for the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedom for all without distinction of sex¹. This marks a step towards the development of women's rights in the international community². Furthermore, the UN developed Structures aimed at promoting the status of women for instance; Equality of payment between female and male workers in 1951, the political right of women in 1952, and elimination of all forms of discrimination towards women in December 1979³. This was to promote the participation of women in development (WID) processes at the international, regional and national levels⁴.

Women, as a legitimate topic of political debate stepped into the international arena during the United Nations (UN) Decade for Women. Although there had been a Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN for over 25 years, it was only in the 1970s that women's issues moved to centre stage. Between 1975 and 1985, there were three UN conferences held in Mexico City, Copenhagen and Nairobi that brought together women from all over the globe. Although the purpose of the conferences was to promote dialogue and understanding among the world's women, there was deep division between them from the very outset. Women from the socialist countries actively participated in all three conferences, bringing with them their own unique worldview, often challenging and undermining feminists from the United States who viewed themselves at the forefront of the women's movement. In many ways, the first 10 years of the international women's movement were characterized by passionate disagreements about what "women's issues" actually were, a fact that is often forgotten in international feminist circles today.⁵ The World Conferences represented a breakthrough for the promotion of equality of women in which governments of the world recognized that women of the entire world, whatever differences existed between them,

¹ <https://www.un.org/en/sections/history/history-united-nations/index.html>, consulted on 17th July 2019.

² <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/u-n-charter-signed>, consulted on 17th July 2019.

³ "Ministère des Affaires sociale et de la condition Féminine : La Femme Camerounaise de Demain", Yaounde, MINASCOF, 1989, p. 15.

⁴ Ibid, pp. 15-16.

⁵ K. Ghodsee, "Revisiting the United Nations decade for women: Brief reflections on feminism, capitalism and Cold War politics in the early years of the international women's movement", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 33, No. 1, 2009, p.3.

shared the painful experience of unequal treatment, and it was agreed to eliminate all obstacles that stood in the way of equal status between women and men⁶. A number of measures and strategies at national, regional and global levels were recommended in areas of education and employment, health and population, housing and the family, political participation, data collection and the mass media⁷. These conferences adopted a World Plan of Action in encouraging governments to include women fully in the political decisions at national and international level and ensure equal representation of women and men in delegations to international bodies, conferences and committees⁸.

In recognition of the importance of establishing gender equality around the world, the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was established as a separate fund within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 1984. The United Nations Development Fund for Women, commonly known as UNIFEM was established in December 1976 originally as the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women in the International Women's Year (IWY). Its first director was Margaret C. Snyder. It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security as well as supporting women's empowerment and gender equality through its programme offices and links with women's organizations in the major regions of the world⁹. It works in partnership with UN organisations, governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and networks to promote gender equality¹⁰. It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies. UNIFEM offers the findings, recommendations and model Standard Operating Procedures. In this light, it will be able towards the goal to implement the resolution and foster a better integration of women's needs and perspectives in the planning and execution of UNIFEM programmes¹¹. In an attempt to move women away from the margin in 1988, the UNIFEM developed a programme to try elevating the status of women, enabling them to have access to resources and be taken into

⁶ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/vaw/handbook-for-nap-on-vaw.pdf>, consulted on 17th July 2019.

⁷ "Ministère des Affaires sociale et de la condition Féminine : La Femme Camerounaise de Demain", Yaounde, MINASCOF, 1989, p.19.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ A. Lopez-Claros and S. Zahidi., "Women's Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap" Switzerland, 2005, p.1.

¹⁰ N. Purusottam, "Gender Disparity and Women Empowerment in Assam", Bidisha North Eastern Hill University, 26 May 2015 p.2.

¹¹ Ibid.

account in national planning.¹² The United Nations (UN) discovered that the problem that women are facing is that of poverty which prevents them from participating in public decision-making and contribution to good governance and long-term recovery. In this line, the creation of female groupings and Organizations like Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is encouraged in order to finance these associations and enable them to build capacities for engagement in national decision-making and other economic assets should be guaranteed.¹³

In Africa, UNIFEM has contributed to changes that have been the constant phenomenon in economic, social, cultural and political landscape, as women are assuming important roles as civil servants, business women and politicians.¹⁴ Thus, one can say that the image of the woman in the African society comes from the role she plays. The female folk want to see itself emancipated just as in other third world countries. In this line, it is quoted: “Women have become an important force that promotes economic development”.¹⁵ Women are a powerful motive force for global economic and socio-cultural development. They are not passive subjects, but agents capable of initiating and transforming policies and ideologies¹⁶. Their involvement through UNIFEM generates and diversifies new management forms. With natural endowments, characteristics of their sex, they are actually unique in themselves. Thus, through their main groupings, women are highly involved in global economic, social and cultural issues of Cameroon. Their recognition was enforced by the law No. 90/053 of December 1990 which authorized among other things the creation of associations thus paving a way for UN agencies like UNIFEM to establish itself in Cameroon. This was already an adequate legal platform for the promotion of women integration in the society.¹⁷ More Cameroonian women have become family bread winners and many more are, through their activities, putting Cameroon “on the Map” as a country full of talents and potentials.¹⁸

¹² United Nations annual report, “moving women from the margin”, New York, 1990, p.19.

¹³ United Nations, “Women count for peace”, New York, September 2010, p. 21.

¹⁴ E. T. Nana, “Women Association and Socio-economic Development in the Bamenda Central, Cameroon”, Master’s Dissertation in History, The University of Yaounde I, 2007, p.1.

¹⁵ C. Duan, *Women: a Powerful Motive Force for Development*, Santiago, Sumstar Group, 2003, p.58.

¹⁶ R. N. Monteh, “Women and Traditional Politics in the Bamenda Grassfields Cameroon from the Precolonial to Postcolonial Periods”, *IAR Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 10th October 2020, p. 39.

¹⁷ H. M. Tatah, *Female Identity in Modern African Culture: A Socio-moral of Gender Crisis in Cameroon, Bamenda*, Unique Printers, 1996, p. 4.

¹⁸ N. Atabong, “Success story about talented Cameroonians at home and abroad”, *Engendering Empowerment*, No. 7, GNCG, March 2008, p.3.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For the past decades, discussions on African women have been influenced by the prevailing currents within development thinking. These decades have witnessed a steadily increasing awareness of the need to empower women through measures to increase social, economic and political equity, and broader access to fundamental human rights, improvements in nutrition, basic health and education. From the 1990's, Sissel Ron Beck, pioneering on the issue of creative women on changing the society, stressed that there is a growing awareness that positive measures are needed to provide women with the opportunities to participate actively in all areas of the society. Women's Organizations are working with great vigour, and international organizations such as the UNIFEM are giving increasing attention to women's rights.¹⁹ Women, despite the obstacles on their way such as lack of means to bloom and train, impact of colonisation, conflicts and many others have continued strengthening their skills.²⁰ Hence, women organizations have engaged with government and international policy-making institutions to secure consensus on global agreements that lay out concrete areas of action to achieve women's empowerment and gender equality. The agreements are vast and visionary. They range from the creation of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in 1976 to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) adopted in 1979, now ratified by 185 countries. It was later followed by the Platform of Action resulting from the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women which expanded this concept of women empowerment, calling it "gender mainstreaming"; the application of gender perspectives to all legal and social norms and standards, to all policy development, research, planning, advocacy, implementation and monitoring as a mandate for all member states.²¹

The Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325 passed in 2000 and SCR 1820 adopted in June 2008 stand as another mile stone to advance women status in the world. From the above actions and agreements, there is no shortage of globally-agreed commitments to advance women's empowerment as part of inter-linked efforts to achieve development, security and human rights.²² In Cameroon women contribute in many ways to their communities, but very often, they are limited by lack of opportunity and education that

¹⁹ T. Stokland, *Creative Women in changing societies*, New York, Dobbs Ferry pub, 1982, p.5.

²⁰ K. Young, *Planning Development with Women*, London, Macmillan, 1975, pp. 12-15.

²¹ "World Economic Forum, Women Empowerment: Measuring the Global Gender Gap", Geneva, 2005, p.3.

²² UNIFEM, "Achieving gender equality, development and peace", New York, 2005, p. 89.

restrict their ability to achieve their potential and to participate in decision-making and resource allocation in their families and communities.²³ Hence, this necessity of women empowerment and gender equality through the UNIFEM actions within the Cameroonian communities constitutes the main aim of our research.

The vision of UNIFEM was grounded in the equality enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations which works for the elimination of discrimination against women and girls; the empowerment of women; and the achievement of equality between women and men as partners and beneficiaries of development, human rights, humanitarian action, peace and security in Cameroon. Placing women's rights at the centre of all its efforts, UNIFEM leads and coordinates United Nations system efforts to ensure that commitments on gender equality and gender mainstreaming is translated into action throughout Cameroon. The following map permits one to have a better geographical view of UNIFEM's office in Yaounde, covering Cameroon.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This research constructs a substantive theory of UNIFEM's support to women's empowerment in Cameroon. Although the volume of literature on women empowerment has grown rapidly, clear understanding of local and international organizations strategies on women empowerment progress in Cameroon remains under researched. Therefore, the primary purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of how UNIFEM, national and international community can shape women's subjective experiences in promoting women's empowerment at the socio-political and economic level. This research could contribute to this understanding by looking at UNIFEM's mechanism in promoting women empowerment and gender related issues in Cameroon since despite much progress, women empowerment, remains among the greatest challenges of our times.

Much of women's work in Cameroon, like that of most developing countries, is not given enough recognition, and therefore not sufficiently computed in national income statistics. Where women's activities are given some form of recognition, they often do not have the opportunity to excel far as men. At the family level, women are rarely consulted on any basic decision making that directly affects their productive and reproductive lives. In this light, national and international NGOs (Non-Governmental Organization) and organizations

²³ UNICEF, "Empowering Women: Empowering Children, a middle and high School unit an introduction to gender equality", New York, 2008, p. 4.

like UNIFEM are increasingly recognizing the strategic role of women in the development process in Cameroon.²⁴ This research provides women a voice to communicate how they situate themselves in Cameroon. The (WEP) framework and theory developed from this research provides a platform from which other researchers can conduct future research to achieve the gender equality goals of the 2030 Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION

The period under study in this work extends from 1976 to 2015. The year 1976 was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly as United Nations' decade for women²⁵. This was the United Nations' programme that began on January 1st, 1976; the goal was the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women around the world. It was a recommendation of the world conference of the IWY held in Mexico City in 1975. Included in this decade were three major meetings for women; Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi. The UN Decade for Women concentrated mainly on women and development. The UN Decade for Women and its conferences helped establish the legitimacy of women's issues regarding their roles as workers in the home and outside it²⁶. The decade also brought the many inequalities women face in education, health care, and work to the attention of national leaders and the general public, thus, it launched a new era in global efforts to promote the advancement of women by opening a worldwide dialogue on gender equality. Besides, this year is very historic in that it led to the establishment of monitoring mechanisms among which there was the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in December 1976 originally as the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women in the IWY. Since 1976, UNIFEM has been supporting women's empowerment and gender equality through its programme offices and links with women's organizations in the major regions of the world²⁷.

As for 2015, it was called the Year of Women's Empowerment with the global objectives to go beyond the set quotas, thus fixing the target at 50%. The United Nations'

²⁴F. Lotsmart, "Fostering Women's Participation in Development through Non-Governmental efforts in Cameroon", *the Geographical Journal*, Department of Women and Gender Studies, University of Buca, Vol. 167, no. 3, September 2001, p. 223.

²⁵ G. Koczberski "Women in development: A critical analyses", *Third World Quarterly*, Published By: Taylor & Francis, Ltd, vol. 19, no. 3, 1998, p. 395.

²⁶ J. P. Zinsser, "The United Nations Decade for Women: A quiet revolution", *United Nations international school*, Published By: Society for History Education, vol. 24, no. 1, November 1990, p. 22.

²⁷ Ibid, p.24.

initiative set forth by the UN Women, initiative known as “Planet 50-50: step up gender equality” perfectly translates this²⁸. Still in 2015, the African Union adopted this year as “the African Union Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda”²⁹. Its vision, perspectives and operational frameworks equally target the 50% quota of female representation in all sectors of development³⁰. As far as 2015 is concerned, this year marked the period within which the actions of UNIFEM and the government of Cameroon were to attain the “Eight Millennium Development Goals” (MDG). This provided a platform for Cameroon and the civil society to reflect on the advancement of gender equality and women’s rights, strategies and challenges remain³¹.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

This study intends to establish a conceptual and theoretical framework regarding the role and status of women in the development process. As such, it is based on different approaches which have been observed in the women’s empowerment discourse from the 1950s onwards. In order to give a clear overview, this study analyzes theoretical underpinnings, and, on the other hand, it explores their practical implications for women. It critically assesses key concepts, its successes, and limitations. The following part of this study gives a brief overview of some basic terms such as: National Gender Policy, Conventions, Women empowerment, Gender mainstreaming, National Machineries, Decade for Women, Gender Focal Point (GFP) and International instruments.

- Conceptual framework

National Gender Policy (NGP)

Jane Parpart, defines it as a key document for defining areas of intervention to ensure that the fundamental rights and freedoms outlined in the Constitution are realized in the daily transactions between the Territory and its citizens and between individuals in households, communities, in their work places, in the schools and social institutions³². Barriteau Violet Eudine said NGP is a meta-plan for the integration of gender equality and equity concerns

²⁸ https://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_lib/toc_for_vawg_summary.pdf, consulted on 4th July 2019.

²⁹ “Year of Women’s Empowerment and Development towards Africa’s Agenda 2063”, AU ECHO, The newsletter of the AU Commission Issue 1, 2015, p.13.

³⁰ Ibid, p.16.

³¹ “Track record of gender mainstreaming in public administrations, extended to public and semi-public organizations”, MINPROFF, 2017, P. 9.

³² J. Parpart, “The Virgin Islands national policy for gender equity and equality”, Virgin Islands, April 2011, p. 8.

across and within sectors of any state machinery³³. According to the encyclopedia, NGP does not imply that women and men are the same, but that they have equal value and should be accorded equal treatment. Thus, seeking to achieve a gender just society where men and women enjoy equality and equity and participate as equal partners in the development process of the country³⁴.

In the context of our work, the NGP are multi-sectoral plans located squarely in the technical language of the state and public policy, positioned to provide for the state a plan for the pursuit of gender equity and equality throughout the country³⁵. This enriches our research work in that it will enable us see how the Cameroon government expressed its general good will to advance the status of women throughout the country. This is seen in the recent policy framework and programme of the government toward women. In the global movement of the gender approach and the commitment of Cameroon to join that approach, the state has put in place a policy called National Gender Policy. This policy is a tool for planning and implementing government initiatives to promote equality and equity between the sexes in all socio-economic, political or cultural domains.³⁶ To consolidate this policy and grant it a high priority, the President of the Republic of Cameroon, in the inaugural speech delivered on October 4, 2011 during his presidential election campaign, states: “(…) *Notre Septennat sera centré sur (…) la promotion de la condition féminine pour parvenir à l'égalité des droits entre hommes et femmes …*” (Our Septennat will focus on the promotion of the status of women to achieve equal rights between men and women).³⁷

Conventions

A convention is regularity in behaviour, sustained by a system of preferences and expectations that has a possible alternative: so, claims David Lewis. According to David Lewis conventions are established by "populations" in order to solve recurring "coordination problems." Lewis gives eleven examples of "coordination problems" which he claims are

³³ B.V Eudine, “30 Years Towards Equality: How Many More, the Mandate of the Bureau of Gender Affairs in Promoting Gender Justice in the Barbadian State”, *A journal for Caribbean Perspectives on Gender and Feminism*, vol.1, Caribbean Review of Gender Studies, April 2007, p.10.

³⁴ “Household Work”, Family in Society: Essential Primary Sources, Encyclopedia.com, consulted on the 21st February 2022.

³⁵ A. A. Alasah, “Women Empowerment and Communities Development in Cameroon”, Doctorate Thesis in Philosophy, the University of Southampton, 2008, p.5.

³⁶ L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée et al., “Cameroon and the Gender Issue”, *Advance in Anthropology*, vol. 07, no. 01, February 14, 2017, p.36.

³⁷ Ibid.

solved by convention³⁸. While Macmillan Dictionary defines it as a formal agreement between governments of different countries about how they should behave towards each other or towards the people in their country³⁹. The encyclopedia says Conventions are important provisions to sanction violations of the humanitarian rules. They include administrative and disciplinary sanctions as well as sanctions against "grave breaches" (war crimes) enumerated in the corresponding articles of each Convention and in the Protocols⁴⁰.

In line with our work, Conventions can be defined as instruments, which are treaties, covenants and declarations, aimed at promoting the principles of equality and non-discrimination between women and men in different areas of social life, including education, health, the economy and employment. Our research work is interested in this because it shows how the government of Cameroon is determined to put into practice its internationally recognized commitment on the promotion of gender equality and equity, it will help us illustrate how Cameroon has ratified several international, regional and sub-regional legal instruments on the protection of women's rights. It is in this perspective that Cameroon's national policy documents have incorporated resolutions and recommendations resulting from international meetings on women's issues. In this respect, the formulation of the National Gender Policy of Cameroon (NGPC) is revealing. For international conferences, Cameroon has taken part in numerous meetings held on women's issues (United Nations, 2000, 1995, 1994, 1993, 1992, 1985, 1980, 1975). This normative framework has influenced the design of national policies for the advancement of women in Cameroon.

Women empowerment (WE)

The concept of women's empowerment features prominently in the gender and development literature, and many development interventions not only aimed at increasing income and assets but also to empower women⁴¹. Before clarifying this, one would have to define the term "empowerment". According to the encyclopedia, it is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights. Empowerment as action refers both to the process of self-empowerment and to the professional support of people, which enables them to overcome their sense of powerlessness

³⁸ D. Jamieson, "David Lewis on Convention" *Canadian Journal of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, No. 1st September 1975, p.73.

³⁹ Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 8th edition, October 23, 2014, p.311.

⁴⁰"Geneva Convention", Encyclopedia of Modern Europe: Europe 1789-1914: Encyclopedia of the Age of Industry and Empire, Consulted on the 26th March 2022.

⁴¹"Gender and Development", International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, consulted on the 21st February 2022.

and lack of influence, and to recognize and use their resources⁴². The Collins Dictionary views it as the empowerment of a person or group of people as the process of giving them power and status in a particular situation⁴³. To be able to empower others, women need to empower themselves and possess qualities that will make them able to pass on to others. This deals with self-empowerment which is a critical prerequisite for enhancing women's skills. Self-empowerment is a starting process of change from being a passive recipient to becoming an active participant in one's own life and in the lives of others. Hence, empowerment appears as a concept that englobes the socio-economic, political, legal and personal aspects of women's lives.⁴⁴

Empowerment, according to the World Bank, is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices into desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build the individual and collective assets of the poor and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context that govern the use of these assets⁴⁵. According to the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) of the European Parliament, empowerment can be defined as a "multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. It is a process that fosters power (that is, the capacity to implement) in people, for use in their own lives, their communities, and in their society, by acting on issues that they define as important"⁴⁶. Bonnie Keller and Dorcas Chilila Mbewewe, define Women empowerment as "a process whereby women become able to organize themselves to increase their own self-reliance, to assert their independent right to make choices and to control resources which will assist in challenging and eliminating their own subordination"⁴⁷. Talking about women empowerment, one of the most vocal promoters of women emancipation in Cameroon, Yaah Gladys Shang Viban who has been a Cultural Affairs Specialist at the US Embassy in Cameroon, asserted that empowerment is that process which is essential to strengthen and activate a person's capacity to satisfy their own needs, solve their own problems, and acquire the necessary resources to take control over their lives.⁴⁸

⁴²"Empowerment", Encyclopedia of Management, consulted on the 21st February 2022.

⁴³Collins COBUILD Advanced Learner's Dictionary, 8th edition, October 23, 2014, p.1145.

⁴⁴Seminar report, "Association de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes", Maroua, June 2005, p.10.

⁴⁵D. Narayan, *Empowerment and Poverty Reduction*, World Bank, Washington DC, June 2002, p. 13.

⁴⁶FEMM, "Women's empowerment and its links to sustainable development" New York, 14 to 24 March 2016, p.10.

⁴⁷K. Bonnie, and D. Chilila Mbewe, "Policy and planning for the empowerment of Zambia's women farmers" *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, Rutledge, vol. 12, no. 1, 1991, p.76.

⁴⁸N. Atabong, "Success story about talented Cameroonians", p.15.

Women empowerment in the context of our work is about women taking control over their lives, setting their own agendas, gaining skills, and solving problems. It is not only an individual process but a collective social and political process as well, and for development it becomes not only a process but also an outcome. This entails the idea of women's continued disadvantage compared to men, which is apparent in different economic, socio-cultural and political spheres. Therefore, women's empowerment can also be seen as an important process in reaching gender equality, which is understood to mean that the "rights, responsibilities and opportunities of individuals will not depend on whether they are born male or female"⁴⁹. In this, we want to show how an empowered woman has a sense of self-worth. She can determine her own choices, and has access to opportunities and resources providing her with an array of options she can pursue. She has control over her own life, both within and outside the home and she has the ability to influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, both nationally and internationally⁵⁰. Thus, the research seeks to understand the impact of these women's empowerment as a strategy in the development of Cameroon. Along with this, the research will also be seeking to understand why women themselves think that empowerment is a prerequisite for the advancement of their socioeconomic and political status and how they conceive empowerment.

Gender mainstreaming

According to the encyclopedia, Gender mainstreaming is a strategy to make gender perspectives and gender equality central to all activities of the United Nations including policy development, research, and programme implementation. Despite the extensive institutionalization of gender mainstreaming throughout the United Nations, some have argued for the continued need for women-specific activities and enhanced efforts to draw more men into these processes⁵¹. Gender mainstreaming is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the policies and programmes of an institution defined by free dictionary⁵². Gender mainstreaming is a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in its agreed conclusions 1997/2, defined gender mainstreaming as "The process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women as well as men

⁴⁹ N. Atabong, "Success story about talented Cameroonians", p.15.

⁵⁰ L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée et al., "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", p. 36.

⁵¹ "Human Rights: Women's Rights", New Dictionary of the History of Ideas, Encyclopedia.com, 25th February 2022.

⁵² <https://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Gender+mainstreaming>, consulted on the 21st February 2022.

concerns and experiences to be involved in an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally. Thus, the ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality”⁵³. Following the Beijing Platform on Women, development agencies agreed to adopt “gender mainstreaming” as a new strategy for ensuring the incorporation of gender perspectives in all areas and sectors, and at all levels, to promote gender equality.⁵⁴ Thus the responsibility of all government agencies for supporting equality objectives through their policies and programmes is highlighted, including roles of international organizations, NGOs and the civil society, the private sector and other actors⁵⁵.

The concept is better understood in our research context as a strategy to advance gender equality in Cameroon. The researcher is concerned with this because it is one of the main strategies used by UNIFEM and the Cameroon government to look at both women and men as actors and beneficiaries of development and how their rights are defined relative to each other. It highlighted the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all area(s) of social and economic development⁵⁶. Several studies have shown that gender inequalities as such, have direct costs. In Cameroon, public policies have been based on the needs of the dominant group in society or on the needs of those who have traditionally been the decision-makers, mostly men. The women’s rights movement, an increased presence of women in decision-making, strong commitments to women’s human rights at all levels, and the development of gender studies and sex-disaggregated data, have all helped unveiling the fact that public policies often did not take into account women’s differing needs and situations. Thus, the aim of gender mainstreaming according to our research context is to propose to the Cameroon government to take into account these differences when designing, implementing and evaluating policies, programmes and projects, so that it benefits both women and men and enhance gender equality⁵⁷.

Hence the researcher wishes to make the readers understand that, gender mainstreaming is undertaken within sector work, such as in education and shelter interventions, to make sure that the benefits of the sector are equally enjoyed by women and men. This is important in our work because almost all of the UN agencies including UNIFEM review and adopt the approaches of gender mainstreaming in every sector in Cameroon.

⁵³ UN Women, “Gender mainstreaming in development programming”, New York, November, 2014, p. 3.

⁵⁴ “Evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP”, New York, January 2006, p.2.

⁵⁵ UN, “gender mainstreaming an overview”, New York, 2002, p.13.

⁵⁶ “Evaluation of gender mainstreaming”, p.2.

⁵⁷ UN, “gender mainstreaming an overview”, p.13.

According to the Commonwealth Secretariat, the gender mainstreaming approach focuses on the fact that women and men have different life experiences and that development policies affect them differently. Thus, the Cameroon policy framework has committed itself to the concept of gender mainstreaming, and has taken substantive steps to include gender equality goals in national policy guidelines, and to implement national action plans for gender mainstreaming.

National Machineries

Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action defines “National machinery for the advancement of women or national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment” as central policy-coordinating structures inside government machinery, whose main task is to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender equality perspective in all policy areas⁵⁸. As stated by Dzodzi Tsikata, national machineries for the advancement of women are defined by the United Nations as “a set of coordinated structures within and outside government, which aim to achieve equality in all spheres of life for both women and men”. National machineries were designated as central to implementation of commitments made at various UN Women’s conferences and given the task of reporting progress to UN agencies⁵⁹. Broadly defined, a national women's machinery is the organization recognized by a nation’s government as a country's primary body, or system of bodies, dealing with the promotion of gender equality⁶⁰.

Within the context of this work, the concept “National Machinery” refers to “an integrated package” of structures located at various levels of state, civil society and within the statutory bodies. This aspect is important in our research work in that National Machineries stands as key mechanisms for the advancement of women in Cameroon, established as the central policy coordinating unit ensuring that the government of Cameroon is accountable for the commitment made in the CEDAW and BPFA. Also, it contributes in our work in that National Women's Machineries (NWMS) have been UNIFEM’s central point to the 'integration of women in development' strategy of the 1970s⁶¹. Within our research context, national machinery comprises of Cabinet, Office on the Status of Women and Gender Focal

⁵⁸<https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/04/national-womensmachineries>, consulted on, 26th November 20.

⁵⁹ D. Tsikata “National machineries for the advancement of women in Africa: Are they transforming gender relations”, Third World Network-Africa, 2001, p.73.

⁶⁰ M. Innes, *Accelerating Change: Resources for Gender Mainstreaming*, Hull, Quebec, Canada, CIDA, 2000, p. 11.

⁶¹ E. Boserup, *women’s role in economic development*, earth scan publications ltd, London, 1970, p.1.

Points within national and ministerial departments, the growing awareness of the importance of cooperation with civil society, women's NGOs and other community organizations, as meaningful mechanism for gender mainstreaming⁶². Thus, UNIFEM and Cameroon government support of national machineries and its wider policy context within which it operates, are useful for future financial and technical assistance to NWMs and, more broadly, the project of institutionalizing gender in government policy and planning⁶³.

United Nations Decade for Women

The encyclopedia defines the Decade for Women, as a United Nations programme that began in January 1st, 1976, the goal was the promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women around the world⁶⁴. From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the Decade for Women was a period from 1975 to 1985 focused on the policies and issues that impact women, such as pay equity, gendered violence, land holding, and other human rights. It was adopted December 15, 1975, by the United Nations General Assembly by Resolution 31/136⁶⁵. By its very existence the UN Decade for Women, along with the three international conferences which anchored it, promoted and legitimized the international women's movement. Its various activities provided stages at national, regional and international levels where women's issues and priorities could be debated. Required attendance by governments at the three world conferences not only elevated women's issues to the level of international diplomacy, but also provided many women with a brief entry into the male club where major international policy is made⁶⁶.

Alongside with our research context, the concept Decade for Women and its conferences helped establish the legitimacy of women's issues regarding their roles as workers in the home and outside it. The Decade also brought the many inequalities women face in education, health care, and work to the attention of national leaders and the general public. By devoting an entire Decade to women, Cameroonian leaders have demonstrated their political will and commitment to promoting gender equality, women's empowerment

⁶² P. F. Khafagy, National Women Machineries, Senior Gender Consultant, UNWomen, Egypt Country Office, April 2012, pp.8-9

⁶³ B. Byrne and J. K. Laier, *National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons and strategies for institutionalising gender in development policy and planning*, European Commission, Directorate General for Development (DGVIII), Brighton, May 1996, p.1.

⁶⁴ "Fourth World Conference on Women", Social Policy: Essential Primary Sources, Encyclopedia.com, consulted on the 28 February 2022.

⁶⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Decade_for_Women#:~:text=The%20United%20Nations%20Decade%20for,Assembly%20by%20Resolution%2031%2F136, consulted on 26th November 20.

⁶⁶ F. Lotsmart, "Fostering Women's participation in Development", p. 223.

and women's rights. Throughout the Decade, considerable progress was made in translating commitment into measurable action as most Cameroon took giant steps to elevate the status of women through legal and constitutional means, institutional gender mechanisms as well as creating conducive environments for women to realize their potential which is clearly elaborated in our work. During the Decades in Cameroon, new legislation to promote women's rights included a number of WID-related concerns, among them the right to participate in and benefit from development. One of the most comprehensive efforts was the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979), which recognized woman's rights to receive training, education and extension services, as well as equal access to credit and marketing facilities, and equal treatment in agrarian reform. Although it would be folly to equate legislation (especially at the international level) with practice, the recommendations emerging from the United Nations Decade for Women provided a normative environment within which advocates in Cameroon could voice their demands⁶⁷. The importance of this is related to the point that it sparked off the creation of UNIFEM which helps the researcher to trace the history of this UN agency created in 1976. Thus, the Decade for Women played an important part in our work in drawing attention to the role of women in the development process. It permits one to know the main recommendations made for the establishment of international and national machinery to promote woman's interests.

Gender Focal Point (GFP)

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia a "focal point" is a human resources process for employee evaluation⁶⁸. According to Cambridge Dictionary, focal point is the thing that everyone looks at or is interested in⁶⁹. The use of the term Gender Focal Point took effect from the recommendation of the fourth world conference (Beijing 1995) on women whereby government and UN agencies were urged to establish them to deal with gender issues in their various organisations⁷⁰. The Gender Focal Point is the key staff member within an organization dealing with its gender mainstreaming strategy and building capacities among his or her colleagues for incorporating gender into their work, in terms of content and processes⁷¹. It was agreed that the effect of gender focal points within organisations should be

⁶⁷ S. Razavi and C. Miller, *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse*, UNRISD, February 1995, p.6.

⁶⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Focal_point_review, consulted on February 28.

⁶⁹ Cambridge Advance Learner Dictionary, Cambridge University press, 4th edition, 2015, p.597.

⁷⁰ "The Beijing Declaration and platform for action", September 1995, Paragraphes 110, 302, 310.

⁷¹ <http://gender-chemicals.org/what-is-a-gender-focal>, consulted on 26th November 20.

well integrated into policy, planning, programming and budgeting. In response to the call for gender mainstreaming, many development organisations, appointed gender specialists and focal points⁷².

In accordance with our research work, the concept Gender Focal Point (GFP) means to act as “catalyst” to assist the process of gender mainstreaming in a respective office or unit⁷³. That is, to participate in and contribute to the work of UN inter-agency, donors, NGO and academic networks on gender equality in Cameroon. One’s interest in this point is that we are able to see how UNIFEM uses Focal Points to serve as chief advocates for monitoring and improving the status of women across the system in Cameroon.⁷⁴ These focal points provide critical support to their heads of department by giving advice on staff selection processes, identifying qualified female candidates, and supporting the development of policies. They are often required to serve on interview panels and review bodies, and assist with monitoring the status of women within their own departments⁷⁵. The focal points also assist current staff members through counseling on career advancement and conditions of service. Thus, making UNIFEM able to hold regular meetings with the network of focal points; providing guidance and updates on emerging issues; and facilitating networking opportunities in Cameroon⁷⁶. While GFPs may be directly involved in implementing certain gender-specific activities including constituents, we discovered that their contribution focuses on aiding colleagues and management to identify strategies and work methods that enable and build further capacity of colleagues to integrate gender concerns into their own areas of work⁷⁷.

The GFPs serve as the contact and resource persons within their organisations and are tasked to help raise awareness and understanding of gender-related issues, and promote the application of the Gender Mainstreaming Checklist or the concept in the daily work of the staff. For instance, in Cameroon, although the strategy of putting GFPs in place seems advantageous in that all the ministerial departments are targeted at the same time, it has been tagged as being effective. The work of the GFPs is said to be visible both in the ministries they represent and in MINPROFF. Programmes and projects of many ministries in Cameroon

⁷² R. Mehra and G. Rao Gupta, *Gender mainstreaming: making it happen*, International centre for research on women, New York February 2006, p.2.

⁷³ ILO, “A Guidance Note Concerning ILO Gender Focal Points”, New York, May 2006, section 3, p. 1.

⁷⁴ <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/fp.htm>, consulted on 17th July 2020.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=39343, consulted on 17th July 2020.

⁷⁷ N. S. Akmal Ismail, “Examining Gender Focal Point (GFP) roles to implement gender mainstreaming: The experiences of public sectors in Malaysia”, *International Journal of Business and Social Research (IJBSR)*, Volume -2, No.-3, June 2012, University of Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), p.46.

have followed suit with the expectation that GFPs facilitate the accomplishment of the missions of women's machineries, which are the lead agencies for gender mainstreaming⁷⁸.

International instruments

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, the international instruments are legal laws with the aim to prevent violation of human right. These instruments are developed under the auspices of the United Nations and the African Union⁷⁹. The term “international instrument” is not defined in international law. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “instrument” as “a thing used in pursuing an aim or policy; a means”. International law uses the term “instrument” generically, as a broad category that includes binding international agreements as well as non-binding documents, also known as “soft law”⁸⁰. An international instrument is a written agreement between two or more sovereign or independent public law entities such as States or international organizations. It is intended to create rights and obligations between the parties and it is governed by international law as defined by Jean Grosdidier de Matons⁸¹. International instruments provide direction to states' parties on how to meet their obligation to develop and implement legislation on violence against women and girls. The generic nature of the concept does not mean that the term is open-ended. In practice, an “international instrument” refers to a document produced by an international body concerning international law. Based on this understanding, four different sources of international instruments can be identified: a multilateral conference of states, an intergovernmental body, Committees of independent experts and International non-governmental organizations⁸².

The term International instruments in our research context is used generically to describe a variety of treaties, including conventions, agreements, arrangements, protocols, covenants, charters, and acts. In the strict sense of the term, however, many such instruments are not treaties. The key distinguishing feature of a treaty is that it is binding. From the above definitions, we can deduce that there are many International instruments that Cameroon signed. For example, as Cameroon entered the global trend for women's emancipation, she set up a “national gender policy”. However, that process seems to vary by country and by degree

⁷⁸ <https://gender-works.giz.de/competitions2018/cameroon-afrosai-women-leadership-academy/>, consulted on 26th June 2021.

⁷⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_human_rights_instruments, consulted on 26th June 2022.

⁸⁰ S. Chalker and E. Weiner, “The Oxford English Dictionary”, Oxford University Press, New York, 1998, p. 421.

⁸¹ J.G de Matons, “A Review of International Legal Instruments”, SSATP, 2017, p.1.

⁸² <https://www.britannica.com/topic/treaty>, consulted on 3rd March 2022.

of cultural integration.⁸³ Talking about gender, Cameroon as a member state of the African Union, reaffirming herself to other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights, including the Dakar Platform for Action (1994), the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW - 1979), the African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999); the Outcome Document of the Twenty-third Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action (2000); UN Resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security; and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)⁸⁴. Lesson from this is that it urges Cameroon to improve her strategic systems and methods to respond to development concerns. This includes the need to accelerate gender equality in the social, economic and political fields⁸⁵. Thus, Cameroon's commitment to UNIFEM in giving high priority to the implementation of CEDAW, the BPFA and the African Women's Protocol, backed by adequate financial and human resources, and appropriate related monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, provide women with the necessary tools such as legal aid and accessible courts to enforce their rights in line with the fundamental position of women as rights holders.

- Theoretical frame work

Paradigms are nothing more than the cognitive maps that help to organize reality and to make some sense out of the multitude of events that occur in the world each day⁸⁶. For clear understanding of the International organizations in the internal policy of the states, it is important to examine four paradigms which, to some extent, have structured their thinking in the international organizations and international relations. The paradigms are; Empowerment Theory, Gender and Development theory, the Theory of Human Right, Mainstreaming Feminism Theory and the Theory of Change.

⁸³ L. M. Mefire, "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", February 14, 2017, p.34.

⁸⁴ A U, "Solemn declaration on gender equality in Africa", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6-8 July 2004, p.1.

⁸⁵ A. Janneh., "African Women's Report Measuring Gender Inequality in Africa: Experiences and Lessons from the African Gender and Development Index", UNECA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, October 2009, p.1.

⁸⁶ N. K. David, "The United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Cameroon: a historical investigation from 1982- 2011", Doctorate thesis in philosophy, University of Yaounde 1, July 2016, p.25.

As a term, empowerment originates from American community psychology and is associated with the social scientist Julian Rappaport (1981). However, the roots of empowerment theory extend further into history and are linked to Marxist sociological theory. These sociological ideas have continued to be developed and refined through Neo-Marxist Theory (also known as Critical Theory)⁸⁷. The theory of Empowerment is propagated by writers such as Perkins, Rappaport, Zimmennan, and Warschausky. According to them, Empowerment is both a value orientation for working in the community and a theoretical model for understanding the process and consequences of efforts to exert control and influence over decisions that affect one's life, organizational functioning, and the quality of community life. A distinction between the values that underlie an empowerment approach to social change and empowerment theory is necessary. The value orientation of empowerment suggests goals, aims, and strategies for implementing change⁸⁸. In a specific manner, Zimmennan said the theory is a “process which centres on efforts to exert control at three mutually interdependent levels of analysis: individual, organisational, and community”⁸⁹. The development of the empowerment theory also helps advance the construct beyond a passing fad and political manipulation. A theory of empowerment suggests ways to measure the construct in different contexts, to study empowering processes, and to distinguish empowerment from other constructs, such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, or locus of control. One definition of empowerment is useful, but appears to be limited to the individual level of analysis⁹⁰. On the other hand, Kanter's empowerment theory includes a discussion of organizational behaviour and empowerment. According to this theory, empowerment is promoted in work environments that provide employees with access to information, resources, support, and the opportunity to learn and develop⁹¹.

UN Global Compact and UN Women define Empowerment theory as principles offering guidance to countries on how to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the work place, market place and community. This theory is a primary vehicle for corporate delivery on gender equality dimensions of the 2030 agenda and the

⁸⁷ J. Rappaport, “In praise of paradox: A social policy of empowerment over prevention”, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, Vol. 9 No.1, 1981, p.13.

⁸⁸ M. A. Zimmerman, *Empowerment theory: Psychological, organizational and community levels of analysis*, New York: Plenum Press, 2000, p.43.

⁸⁹Ibid, p.28.

⁹⁰ D. D. Perkins, and M. A. Zimmerman, “Empowerment theory, research, and application”, *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol.23, No. 5, October 1995, p.570.

⁹¹ R. M. Kanter, “The Kanter Empowerment Theory to Improve Organizational Commitment”, *Asian Academic Society International Conference*, Indonesia, STIESIA, No. 30, 2019, p. 247.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals⁹². Empowerment theory provides principles and a framework for organizing our knowledge some of which are to: establish high-level corporate leadership for gender equality, treat all women and men fairly at work - respect and support human rights and nondiscrimination, ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men workers, promote education, etc.⁹³

In our research, the empowerment theory enables an analysis of certain vocabulary such as “women as agents of change” and “gender mainstreaming”. The theory applies to women’s roles in increasing their capacities for self-help rather than viewing themselves as passive and helpless; the theory shifts mindsets to be self-empowered and fight oppression. In this “fight,” women take on the roles of facilitators of the process, rather than “rescuers.” The theory also helps women in Cameroon develop awareness on several barrier levels: self-efficacy, guiding women to believe they can change their circumstances; critical consciousness, bringing women together to learn from another and to avoid feeling alone; and tool development, through personal intervention and collective advocacy. This theory also encourages women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors as it is essential to build stronger economies, achieve internationally agreed goals for development and sustainability, and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. Hence it offers to the researcher and the readers a practical guide to business and the private sector on how to empower women in the work place, market place and community which reflects the interests of governments and civil society and serves to support interactions among stakeholders, as achieving gender equality requires the participation of all actors at all level. Thus offers one a practical approach to advance women, and point the way to a future that is both more prosperous and fairer for everyone according to the said principles mentioned under.

The Gender and Development (GAD) theoretical approach focuses on the socially constructed⁹⁴ differences between men and women, the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations,⁹⁵ and the creation and effects of class differences on development⁹⁶. This approach was majorly influenced by the writings of academic scholars such as Oakley (1972)

⁹²UN Women, *Women’s Empowerment Principles: Equality Means Business*, publication design: Kathi Rota, 2nd edition 2011, pp. 4-5.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴T. Bertrand, “Being Women and Men in Africa Today: Approaching Gender Roles in Changing African Societies”, *Global Social Policy*, 2006, p.14.

⁹⁵ H. Reeves, *Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions*, Brighton, 2000, p.8.

⁹⁶B. Lourdes, *Gender, development, and globalization: economics as if all people mattered*, New York, November 2014, p.50.

and Rubin (1975), who argue the social relationship between men and women have systematically subordinated women,⁹⁷ along with economist scholars Lourdes Benería and Amartya Sen (1981), who assess the impact of colonialism on development and gender inequality⁹⁸.

In the mid-1980s, there were calls for a new approach to women's development especially by socialist feminists concerned with the growing poverty of women and men in the world, and by feminists concerned about finding their own solution to developmental problems. The resulting dialogue was Gender and Development (GAD) which emphasized gender rather than WID theory policy and practice⁹⁹. GAD marked a shift in thinking about the need to understand how women and men are socially constructed and how 'those constructions are powerfully reinforced by the social activities that both define'¹⁰⁰. GAD differs from WAD in that it calls for a gender sensitive approach rather than a women-only approach to development. Advocates of GAD do not see the gendered division of labour and power as natural and so emphasize how gender roles and relations are socially constructed. GAD advocates a fundamental social transformation of gender roles in development policy and practice. In the short-term GAD also advocates programmes for education, credit and income-generation¹⁰¹. Unlike WID, however, GAD has long-term goals of challenging established modernization discourses and practices of international and governmental development agencies. It also seeks to find ways to empower women through collective action and to encourage them to challenge gender ideologies and institutions that subordinate women¹⁰². Empowerment perspectives advocate the inclusion of grassroots organizations and the redistribution of power to enable the participation of aid recipients and third world people in controlling the direction of development¹⁰³. GAD's approaches generally advocate a

⁹⁷ C. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development, Theory, Practice and Training*, New York, Routledge, 1993, p.3.

⁹⁸ B. Lourdes, *Gender, development, and globalization*, p. 50.

⁹⁹ A. A. Elizabeth, "Gender and development theory, policy and practice through a feminist postmodern lens: a case study of CIDA's policies on women 1995-2000", Doctorate Thesis in sociology, Queen's University Kingston, Ontario, Canada, August, 2000, p.60.

¹⁰⁰ C. Miller, "From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse", 1st February 1995, p. 12.

¹⁰¹ A. A. Elizabeth, "Gender and development theory, policy and practice through a feminist postmodern lens:", p. 61.

¹⁰² K. Mendes, "Reporting the Women's Movement: A cross-national comparison of representations of second wave feminism and equal rights issues in the United Kingdom and United States daily press, 1968-1982", Doctorate Thesis in gender studies, Cardiff University in United States, 2009, p. 43.

¹⁰³ "Discussing Women's Empowerment: Theory and Practice", Novum Grafiska AB, Stockholm, 2001, P. 73.

reconceptualization of development that is grounded in the concrete and contextual realities, experiences and wisdom of women in the world¹⁰⁴.

This thesis uses the GAD approach to better understand the construction of Cameroon women as agents of change and the different dimensions of this representation. The GAD approach was used to ask questions about the impact of governance in the process of gender mainstreaming and to comprehend the motivations of UNIFEM, donors and governments in positioning women as agents of change. The GAD approach is also used to examine the relationship between UNIFEM, donors and the state. The GAD approach illustrates how Cameroon women are represented as being in need of governance by the international community through the centralization of gender as a development strategy. It critically explores the emerging trends and the roles played by GAD in Cameroon in preparing grounds for UNIFEM in promoting international and local NGOs and the government in capacity building of the women. The main goal of this thesis is to inform the debate about the potential contributions of feminists' thought to gender and development theory, policy and practice in various ways. The first is by examining, how UNIFEM has incorporated strategies and criticism of the GAD approach in its policies, and using these assessments to address the debate on the usefulness of women in Cameroon. Our work specifically examines the issue of gender and policy discourse, participation and context which are issues central to the GAD approach to women's development as discussed in the work. Certain questions will guide this analysis on how UNIFEM has incorporated the concept of gender from its previous focus on women, and how have its policy discourse changed through this attempt, then on how has UNIFEM incorporated participatory approaches in each development phase in its efforts to empower women to understand local contexts in its attempt to address specific needs of women in Cameroon¹⁰⁵.

The theory of human rights is developed by theorists witnessing the pain of others and out of a desire to reduce their suffering. The human rights scholar wants to get involved and to intervene, and to take the side of the victim of all victims against all perpetrators. To be in front of those who are victims of cruelty, humiliation and oppression, and to look at the face of those who suffer are the experiences that gave birth to the theory of human rights. Human

¹⁰⁴ A. A. Elizabeth, "Gender and development theory, policy and practice through a feminist postmodern lens:", p. 62.

¹⁰⁵ S. Edith, "Feminist and Development Theory approach: a critical overview", Paper Series N° 7, Belgium, January 1993, p. 2.

rights theory is solidarity¹⁰⁶. The theory of Human rights (HR) is a special sort of inalienable moral entitlement. They attach to all people equally, by virtue of their humanity, irrespective of race, nationality, or membership of any particular social group. The term came into wide use after World War II, replacing the earlier phrase “natural rights,” which had been associated with the Greco-Roman concept of natural law since the end capabilities reflecting the diversity of human circumstances and history¹⁰⁷. Human rights belong to an individual as a consequence of being human. Some notable theories on human rights are “Interest Theory of Human Rights” propounded by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), a utilitarian, stating the importance of moral rights in legal systems, and “will theory of human rights” given by H. L. Hart (1907-1992), where he cited the importance of human freedom or liberty. He mainly focused on the freedom of every person, which means that freedom and wellbeing are the two necessary conditions for a rationally purposive agent in the first place¹⁰⁸. For Gewirth, the theory of HR is an observable feature upon which one can ground the supreme moral principle as a distinctly human ability to plan and execute an action. Upon this bedrock he founds his theory of human rights, one which is thoroughly secular and can be critically assessed¹⁰⁹. In this manner, then, Gewirth successfully puts forward the first major component of his theory of human rights, namely the idea that all agents have rights¹¹⁰.

In the context of our work, the comprehensive understanding of violence against women has led to the assertion that “women’s rights are human rights” and that women therefore have a right to a life free from all forms of violence¹¹¹. The language of human rights has added a new ethical thrust to women’s efforts to advance their demands for equality and to combat discrimination in Cameroon. This theory aims at analyzing the evolution of the relationship between women, the right to development and human rights based-approaches, with reference to the main theoretical components that have supported the debate on women’s issues, the fight for gender equality and the progressive development of international law in this regard in Cameroon. The thesis then goes on to examine UNIFEM’s adoption of a human rights-based approach to development in order to assess the efficacy of the right to development for women in Cameroon. Thus, using human rights standards, women have

¹⁰⁶ C.S Ronald, “Human Rights in Theory and Practice: A Review of On Human Rights”, *Fordham International Law Journal*, Vol. 18, no. 4, 1994 p.1567.

¹⁰⁷ <https://legalraj.com/articles-details/theories-of-human-rights/>, consulted on 9th March 2022.

¹⁰⁸ <https://lawcorner.in/theories-of-human-rights/>, consulted on 9 March 2022.

¹⁰⁹ A. Kohen, “The Possibility of Secular Human Rights: Alan Gewirth and the Principle of Generic Consistency”, *Human Rights Review* vol. 7, N°1, University of Nebraska, Political Science, 2005, p.55.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p.58.

¹¹¹ UNIFEM, “Not a Minute More: Progress in Ending Violence Against Women” New York, Kumarian Press; November 2003, p.16.

successfully lobbied for legislation, reviewed budget allocations and pushed for policy reform in Cameroon. Thereafter, it attempts to integrate a gender perspective into human rights at the international as well regional levels. The human rights perspective brings the Cameroon governments' obligations into focus, providing a clear framework for what is expected of them, and uses the power of international law to bring change upon women. Thus, in Cameroon, UNIFEM has introduced innovative programmes to engage all sectors of government in the implementation of human rights Conventions and treaties on women.

Mainstream feminism, also called "Liberal feminism", is a main branch of feminism defined by its focus on achieving gender equality through political and legal reform within the framework of liberal democracy¹¹². As the oldest of the "Big Three" schools of feminist thought, mainstream feminism has its roots in 19th century first-wave feminism that focused particularly on women's suffrage and access to education, and that was associated with 19th century liberalism and progressivism. Mainstream feminism "works within the structure of mainstream society to integrate women into that structure."¹¹³ It places great emphasis on the public world, especially laws, political institutions, education and work life, and considers the denial of equal legal and political rights as the main obstacle to equality¹¹⁴.

We use the feminist mainstreaming approach in the thesis to examine the power relations between women, governments and UNIFEM in the process of mainstreaming and professionalizing gender in Cameroon. In addition, this approach will analyze the relations underlying the production of knowledge on women in Cameroon to make sense of the different constructions of WID practice. We also examine the implications of gender mainstreaming and the professionalization of gender by looking at the experience of gender specialists of UNIFEM and women's groups in Cameroon. By representing gender equality as a factor for development, gender mainstreaming has become a requirement in proposals for aid. In Cameroon, mainstreaming, is a process to integrate gender perspectives in all policies and projects throughout the whole cycle from planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation to articulate different development needs and impacts on men and women¹¹⁵. The mainstreaming approach is among the tools used by UNIFEM to reinforce its advocacy

¹¹² V. Rian, *Categorizations of feminism*, SAGE, 1998, p. 25.

¹¹³ M. Maynard, "Beyond the 'big three': the development of feminist theory into the 1990s", *Women's History Review*, University of York, United Kingdom, vol. 4 No 3, 1995, p.260.

¹¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feminist_movements_and_ideologies, consulted on 10th February 2022.

¹¹⁵ <https://openjicareport.jica.go.jp/pdf/1000026850.pdf>, consulted on 10th February 2022.

strategies for inclusive governance and for the elimination of discrimination against women in the public sphere.

Theory of Change emerged from the field of programme theory and programme evaluation in the mid-1990s as a new way of analyzing the theories motivating programmes and initiatives working for social and political change¹¹⁶. It is difficult to trace precisely when the term “theory of change” was first used, but a hint at its origins can be found in the considerable body of theoretical and applied development in the evaluation field, especially among the work of people such as Huey Chen, Peter Rossi, Michael Quinn Patton, and Carol Weiss¹¹⁷. Weiss popularized the term “Theory of Change” as a way to describe the set of assumptions that explain both the mini-steps that lead to the long-term goal and the connections between programme activities and outcomes that occur at each step of the way¹¹⁸. Theory of Change is a methodology for planning, participation, adaptive management, and evaluation that is used in companies, philanthropy, not-for-profit, international development, research, and government sectors to promote social change¹¹⁹.

This theory of change underlies the results framework of UNIFEM’s strategic plan (SP) in our work. It outlines how the priorities of the SP (in the form of outcomes and outputs) are necessary for UNIFEM to effectively and efficiently support Cameroon in their efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, including the full enjoyment of women’s human rights, with the support of development partners and other stakeholders. It describes the actions needed to drive the empowerment of women and girls and details how UNIFEM leverage its triple mandate, comparative advantages and partnerships to achieve this goal. This theory of change first articulates the necessary conditions and actions for the achievement of gender equality and women’s empowerment in Cameroon, as contained in global normative frameworks. Secondly, it explains how UNIFEM supports the implementation of these normative frameworks comprehensively by leveraging its collaborative advantage in an integrated manner and outlines how each outcome area contributes to overall change for women and girls in Cameroon.

¹¹⁶ C. H Weiss, *Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families*, New York, 1995, p.73.

¹¹⁷ <https://www.theoryofchange.org/what-is-theory-of-change/toc-background/toc-origins/>, consulted on the 18 may 2022.

¹¹⁸ C. H Weiss, *Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community*, p. 88.

¹¹⁹ P. Brest, *The Power of Theories of Change*, Stanford, Spring, 2010, p.49.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The rights and status of women in traditional African societies have generated great debate among many African and European scholars for a long time. The colonial governments attempted a more objective investigation which was seen in their report as being passive in decision making. Despite the wide interest in the attempts made at studying feminine status and roles in the African communities, it was and is still difficult because of controversies and intricacies to properly examine African women in the domain of politics, and socio-economic activities. Women empowerment is a global and highly complex phenomenon that challenges policymakers, justice systems, service providers, community leaders, activists, families, and individuals concerned with prevention and response of it. Globally, there is wide variation in the prevalence of Women empowerment, both between countries and even within countries that have marked differences.¹²⁰ It is particularly important for women, in view of their heightened vulnerability relative to men, and the role that women can play at ensuring adequate social fulfillment.¹²¹ The need for women empowerment arises from gender disparities that result from unequal access to education, lack of attention to women's health, lack of political voice and power, patriarchal social systems, unequal access to important resources (notably land), and women's burden of care.¹²²

Apart from the views held above, the work focuses on the main objective of UNIFEM establishment to provide services and skills that could achieve the goal of women's empowerment in Cameroon. Since its inception, UNIFEM has claimed to have taken a number of affirmative actions for socio-economic empowerment of women. These actions mainly included provision of opportunities that are available for women in the form of micro credit, financial assistance, women entrepreneurship and so on so forth. However, there exist no independent or third-party study to evaluate their claim and to assess the impact of UNIFEM that it has yielded on the lives of women in their respective areas in Cameroon. However, there is a dire need that the impact of UNIFEM is assessed to arrive at real-time conclusion. The present study will not only provide an opportunity to conduct third-party evaluation but also take stock of strengths and weaknesses of UNIFEM's project services and give it a feed-back on the basis of prevalent trends of women's empowerment on small- and large-scale level. Besides, this study will help other UN agencies in Cameroon to learn from

¹²⁰ UN Women, *Changing Lives in Africa*, New York, 2012, p. 2.

¹²¹ UNIFEM, "Impact of the Economic Crisis on Women Migrant Workers", New York, 2010, p.7.

¹²² ARD, "Workshop report on sharing of experiences between interdisciplinary PhD research programmes related to agricultural and rural development", Wageningen, 11-12 December 2008, p.34.

the strengths of this initiative as well as avoid those steps which are retarding its progress. Based on these, the following research questions were set to guide field investigations:

- What could be the motivations of the United Nations in creating UNIFEM?
- Women empowerment in pre-colonial and colonial era in Cameroon
- Can we talk of some socio-political strategies put in place by UNIFEM to foster women empowerment and gender related issues in Cameroon and how the cultural values inherent to the communities of Cameroon can help to consolidating and improving the strategies of UNIFEM in promoting women empowerment and gender equality?
- How has UNIFEM with the Cameroon government improved its economic strategies with reference to the change from UNIFEM to UN Women in promoting women empowerment and gender equality in Cameroon?
- To what extent has Cameroon benefited from UNIFEM's actions with regards to women empowerment and gender related issues and what are the impediments to the UNIFEM process of women empowerment and gender equality in Cameroon and some possible recommendations to improve women status.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of this thesis is to contribute to a better understanding of UNIFEM's view of women's empowerment opportunities and challenges to women's participation in decision making. It examines the issue of women's empowerment rights to take part in decision making within the context of CEDAW, Beijing, Cameroon's constitutions, UNIFEM's prime objectives on national and international mechanisms in Cameroon. The following objectives can be spelt out:

- It seeks to provide a road map leading to the creation of UNIFEM with an improved understanding of existing women empowerment mechanisms in Cameroon, the opportunities and challenges in developing more effective social programmes that reach all social layers and especially the poorest and most vulnerable women. The ultimate aim is to strengthen UNIFEM's capacity to contribute to the policy and programme development in this important field within Cameroon.

- More specifically, it examines women empowerment through UNIFEM's economic and socio-political strategies in Cameroon, which is one of the approaches considered to have a significant improvement in community development.
- The research equally aims at shading a light on the limits of United Nations women empowerment strategies in Cameroon before bringing out some possible solutions which would improve, strengthen UNIFEM policy and fasten women empowerment in all social layers in Cameroon.

INTEREST OF THE STUDY

The interest of this to the researcher is that it shows to what extent women's empowerment has been a feature of development assistance since the 1990s. Given the continued resistance to 'gender issues' in some parts of the development community, this alone is an achievement. At the same time, feminists worldwide have made a sustained critique of the dominant approach to women's empowerment. Thus, UNIFEM's concern on the global support for women's empowerment quickly waned after the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing as new (and old) policy agendas returned to the surface.

This research is a contribution to UNIFEM's endeavour, in drawing on a rich heritage of critical reflection on pathways of empowerment for women which enables the government of Cameroon to consider the structural causes of women's oppression and lack of power, examines empowerment, and the programme-related implications of its various interpretations, provides an overview of the main factors that would enable women and their allies to challenge unjust power relations, helps to unpack experiences of women's empowerment that are, in practice, diverse, complex and multidimensional, consider how the concept of empowerment can be operationalised and how progress might be identified and measured and how international actors can effectively support women's empowerment in Cameroon.

To the international community however, it shows some renewed interest of UNIFEM on women's empowerment and gender issues which motivate discussions on sensitive topics of high-level international debate and commitments, thus promoting the re-engagement with the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 and related resolutions on the need to ensure women voices and participation in peace, security issues and decision making.

In 2011, UN Women was created to lead on gender equality and women's empowerment and, with its Executive Director being a UN Under-Secretary-General with a seat in the resident co-ordinator system at the country level, it has a greater ability to do so. It can pave a way for UN agencies to test mainstreaming development trends, devoting themselves. It would help bilateral agencies also to be revived in their commitment to supporting gender-related agendas across a range of development issues. This is therefore an opportune moment for the international development community to reflect critically on its approach to women's empowerment and to ensure that future efforts build on past learning.

In view of all the above, it is obvious that many researchers have made the issue of women's empowerment a real credo. The observation of practices at work within the pedagogical teams of the sectors dedicated to women's issues, interviews and reports of governmental and international organizations such as UNIFEM, dissertations and theses devoted to the history of women and gender issues in Cameroon have served to shed a light on the understanding of the mechanisms underlying the urgent need to accelerate women's empowerment in Cameroon. In this perspective, we thought it was appropriate for us to focus our research on this issue in order to make our modest contribution to this long march, the results of which require not only the collaboration of the women's junta but also the support of men. Our research work has focused on conducting a historical investigation on the activities of an umbrella organization called UNIFEM, which, in collaboration with national institutional machineries, is in charge of issues related to the status of women in Cameroon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Women empowerment issues have been at the centre of enormous preoccupations within local and international thinking. Hence, from individuals to the local civil society and international organizations like UNIFEM, significant literature reviews have been elaborated. They aimed at documenting the theoretical and conceptual foundations of this notion and the relevant policy and institutional contexts within which women empowerment initiatives have taken place. They also provide a mapping of UNIFEM's experience and include other UN agencies work in partnership with UNIFEM on women empowerment in Cameroon, where this has been documented and analyzed in the literature. The following are some of the consulted documentation data analysed below.

N. J. Alobwede analyzed in his PhD thesis the implementation of the African Union's (AU) vision in Cameroon to empower women economically and politically. This strategy is

pulling down gender and ideological barriers (gender parity) to catalyze development and to boost the political representation of women in Cameroon. Cameroon is signatory to the legal and institutional arrangements that inform the AU's policy framework on gender policy. Given its commitment to the AU's mechanisms for fostering gender mainstreaming, the Government of Cameroon has taken steps over the last decade to improve the participation of women in the political and decision-making processes (government and parliament) at the national level as well as the economic empowerment of rural women at the grassroots level, to catalyze development¹²³. Using the feminist theory, the work of Alobwede is vital to our study as it contributes in elaborating the implementation of gender equality in Cameroon in the vision and mechanisms designed by UNIFEM to empower women in order to enhance development. To add, UNIFEM not only draws its inspiration from AU's mechanisms, but also from CSW, UNDP, ministries and NGOs. Thus, helping one assess the progress made by UNIFEM in empowering Cameroonian woman as a vector of socio-economic development.

P. G. Armentia, Carmen de la Calle M. et al, in their book stated that the United Nations gradually recognised and expanded the rights of women in the civil, political, economic, educational and labour arenas. The status of women was seen essentially as a legal concern by the UN in its early years. The objective of the United Nations has been to guarantee equality amongst all human beings and, more specifically, between men and women. Thus, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the organization reiterated its commitment to promoting equality amongst people without distinction of their gender. In all fairness, we must mention that some early displays of a different perception of the feminine issue were also seen during this first period, in which women were no longer passive beneficiaries of development or vulnerable individuals with rights to be protected, to become actors in the economic and social development of the nations. Starting in the late 1960s, the international community began to make the substantial change that would be seen in our research work in UNIFEM's strategy on issues related to the promotion of women, based on their integration in the development processes in Cameroon¹²⁴. These authors have provided us with other strategies to promote women empowerment through their rights following the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but nonetheless our investigation goes

¹²³ N. J Alobwede, "Breaking gender barriers: political representation and the economic self-empowerment of the Cameroonian woman", Doctorate Thesis in Politics and International Relations, university of Yaounde 1, 2015, p.7.

¹²⁴ P. G., Armentia and M. Carmen de la Calle et al, *The Progress of the United Nations in Empowerment and Equality for Women*, intechopen, 2018, p.7.

beyond their focus. This is so because UNIFEM with other intergovernmental organisations take up actions to promote women empowerment in Cameroon.

R. Jahan, in a background paper stated that the First World Conference on Women, in 1975, called for the establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women. It is defined by the United Nations as a body which is recognized by the government as the institution dealing with the promotion of the status of women. The role, structure and functions of national machinery have evolved over the years. Initially the machineries tended to be isolated structures within the government bureaucracy focusing on the implementation of discreet projects to promote women's advancement in different sectors¹²⁵. This aspect is relevant in our research work in that Many countries including Cameroon upgraded the status of the national machinery by making it either a full-fledged Ministry or giving its status just below a ministry such as Vice-Ministry. It also helps us to see how UNIFEM has been taking steps to build capacity for work on national machinery in Cameroon by contributing to the creation of a full ministry in charge of women or gender affairs. It is also important because it shows us an upgrade in status which occurred in Cameroon as a result of a strategic shift in location of the machinery to more central or powerful offices such as in the President's Office, the Prime Minister's Office or the Planning Ministry. Cameroon is reported making the machinery autonomous so that it could independently assess the performance of the government.

O. Njikam, in this article said cross-border trade is usually called informal as: it involves small entrepreneurs; traders do not access preferential tariff agreements; traders may buy, or more often sell, in informal sector markets; and traders do not always pass through formal import and export channels and may be involved in smuggling part or all of their goods. The informal cross-border trade (ICBT) has been ongoing for several years and is an important cash-earning activity. In a context of feminisation of poverty, the ICBT is often considered as offering a lot of employment and income opportunities to women traders. Thus, the ICBT appears to play a vital role in alleviating poverty and promoting women economic empowerment. This work has been inspirational to this study as it provided us with a wide knowledge of UNIFEM on ICBT in three border sites in Cameroon, as well as exposing the role of women as economic agents. It contributes to our work in that it identifies some socio-economic factors allowing or hindering men and women cross-border traders to take

¹²⁵R. Jahan, *The Role of National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality and The Empowerment of Women: Achievements, Gaps and Challenges for the Future*, DAW, Rome, Italy, 31 January 2005, pp. 3-4

advantage of opportunities offered through ICBT. Specifically, the research aimed at providing evidence on the characteristics of women and men cross-border traders, the opportunities offered through ICBT, and the constraints and coping strategies of ICBT in Cameroon¹²⁶. The work agrees with O. Njikam but goes further to examine other factors promoting women economic empowerment in Cameroon.

E. M. Rathgeber, in her journal states that during the past few years, the term "women in development" has become common currency both inside and outside academic settings. "Women in Development" or "WID", is understood as the integration of women into global processes of economic, political and social growth and change. Her work examines the meanings and assumptions embedded in "WID," "WAD" and "GAD" and then look at the extent to which differing views of the relationship between gender and development have influenced research, policy making and international agency thinking since the mid-1960s. It is suggested that each term has been associated with a varying set of assumptions and has led to the formulation of different strategies for the participation of WID strategies¹²⁷. This work is essential in that it inspires UNIFEM in supporting a number of research projects in Cameroon which are attempts to view women as actors in development rather than as passive recipients of change. The research begins from the recognition that women are primary producers and that denial of their rights has negative consequences not only on them personally but also on Cameroon who depends on them in terms of development.

The UNDP evaluation team addresses the task of understanding the implications of gender mainstreaming across the range of activities and responsibilities of UNDP, including corporate and institutional policy, contribution towards shaping development policy at a national and international level and the implementation of development programmes and projects in regions and countries. UNDP has put in place a number of policies and strategies to mainstream gender. The whole point of "mainstreaming" is that working with and for women and working to achieve gender equality, is not a separate activity by a women-focused institution. The expectation is that all development work should purposefully take account of gender differences, and promote gender equality. C. Hannan, clearly stated that mainstreaming was clearly established as the global strategy for promoting gender equality

¹²⁶ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade: Empirical Evidence from Cameroon", *international journal of economics and finance*, vol. 3, no. 3, Faculty of Economics and Management, University of Yaounde II, August 2011, pp. 202-203.

¹²⁷ E. M. Rathgeber, "WID, WAD, GAD: trends in research", p. 2.

through the Platform for Action at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The need to ensure that attention to gender perspectives is an integral part of interventions in all areas of societal development was made clear in that document¹²⁸. Our research findings regarding UNIFEM are not only limited to what UNDP has done to support UNIFEM's work in Cameroon but also we discovered that UNDP ensures that UNIFEM takes the responsibility for mainstreaming gender into all its activities in Cameroon which is vital to our work.¹²⁹ This aspect is relevant to us but adding to this, we took into consideration other UN agencies like (WHO, UNHCR) that also assist UNIFEM in mainstreaming gender in the domain of health, humanitarian assistance and so on.

P. Nath, analysed that the increased representation of women in governance institutions has been shown to increase numbers of women voters, thereby strengthening active citizenship. It also talks on how women in Cameroon are severely under-represented in politics. Even in the politically active regions, women account for only 5% of the region's parliamentarians and for 16% of municipal councilors.¹³⁰ This is relevant to our research work in that it enlightens us on some problems women face in gaining higher profiles as decision-makers in governance which can contribute to a transformation in attitudes towards women in households and communities, and provide positive role models for both girls and boys. This may help deepen the understanding of women's perceptions of their ability to influence political and public decision-making. This work agrees with Nath's but goes further to examine other causes like customs and traditions hindering women, while proposing long-term solutions as suggestions to promote women in decision-making at the level of the parliament and the municipal council in Cameroon.

M. Tsounkeu shows in his book how Cameroon is fully engaged with the MDGs, with various socio-economic stakeholders working toward the achievement of these goals, either purposely or incidentally. There is a positive perception of the MDG framework in Cameroon because, even before the Millennium Declaration, national forces were already mobilised towards poverty reduction, given the miserable situation that people had endured as a result of the economic crisis. Many CSOs were established, with the objective of bringing relief to evolving poverty-related problems. Now, the areas where CSOs have been concentrating are being covered in the MDGs. The advent of the MDGs therefore met a common need for an action framework and brought more legitimacy to civil society's activities. This has provided

¹²⁸ C. Hannan, "Gender mainstreaming: strategy for promoting gender equality", New York, August 2001, p.1.

¹²⁹ UNDP, *Evaluation of gender mainstreaming in UNDP*, New York, January 2006, p.3.

¹³⁰ P. Nath, *Women in Power: beyond access to influence in a post-2015 world*, VSO, August 2013, p.10.

this study with traces that MDGs framework, today, is perceived to be a good implementation and monitoring guideline for the international and national development agenda with the UNIFEM vision of financing for development and to develop useful partnerships in Cameroon. The government and other stakeholders are using MDG as an interest convergence indicator. The government has also played a significant role in the MDG monitoring process, thanks to UNIFEM, which urged the government to accept the principle of collaborating with civil society. In fact, the official national system for monitoring progress of the MDGs calls for the inclusion of an NGO, which is the civil society focal point in the process¹³¹. We therefore diverge from this in that we have pointed other frameworks like the NGP, gender mainstreaming in which UNIFEM focuses to promote women's empowerment in Cameroon.

F. Lotsmart, in "Fostering Women's Participation in Development through Non-Governmental efforts in Cameroon", states that Women's empowerment is currently an issue of national concern and both state and international efforts at mainstreaming WID have so far produced mixed results. He asserted that women constitute 52 percent of the population of Cameroon and play a very crucial role in the development of the society at all levels. The "grassroots" approach of NGOs has been effective in reaching women at all levels. Activities of NGOs have had far reaching but mixed effects in meeting both practical and strategic gender needs. Women's empowerment requires that the population in general as well as the women themselves, know the extent of their problems, so that proper strategies can be adopted to reverse the situation. Without this awareness, referred to as "conscientisation" in the UNIFEM framework, some women are likely to lag behind¹³². As observed so far in this work, most activities of NGOs do not really address these issues other than provide basic needs and coping strategies for women. This work is essential for our research work but differs in that it ventures into the domain of conscientisation in Cameroon whereas we are concerned with all the other organisations like CSO, donors, UN agencies that work with UNIFEM in mainstreaming WID in Cameroon.

A. A. Alasah, brings out how government policy and development organizations in Cameroon are empowering women and promoting their role in Community Development (CD). If the government of Cameroon has to live up to its international commitments vis-à-vis gender equality and women empowerment, it must reform its judiciary, ensure that civil laws take precedence over traditional law, allow both national and international NGOs and human

¹³¹ M. Tsounkeu, *The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Cameroon: How Far From the Target in 2005: A Civil Society Perspective on the Progress and Challenges of Attaining the MDGs*, ADIN, 2005, p. 5.

¹³² F. Lotsmart, "Fostering Women's participation in Development", p. 223.

rights groups to be involved in the employment process in the country, take legal action against those who seek to foster certain negative stigmas against women and, above all, pass legislation that will set employment quarters for women, be it in the private or public sector. It seeks to understand in one respect the importance of their role and whether this is being recognised by the government and other development organisations and adequately being supported. Success or failure depends largely on the effective implementation of programmes and policies that have been designed to meet women's needs¹³³. To this effect, this research differs in that it seeks to review the issue of gaps between policy and implementation in Cameroon and relate this to the UNIFEM Cameroon situation.

In J. D. Tchunkam, we learned that for more than half a century after the independence of Cameroon, a descriptive analysis of the situation of women inspired by sources from MINATD and the National Assembly, vary depending on whether they are senators, parliamentarians or councilors. From the time of the election of the first female parliamentarian in 1957, the number of elected women had been on the increase until the legislative elections of 1997-2012 with only 24 female parliamentarians out of the total of 180 at the National Assembly. Thus we are called to understand that the Network for More Women in politics with the support of UN Women and women's movements within seven (7) political parties represented in the National Assembly and local councils, identified aspects of inequalities that still hinder the active and effective involvement of women in democratic governance.¹³⁴ This falls in line with our work but to add, we are more particular on UNIFEM's determination to overcome the above challenges both at the strategic level (Decision making) as well as the operational level (targets of the programme) to induce important qualitative and measurable changes on women in Cameroon.

L. Stevenson, and A. St-Onge, carried out an assessment of the environment for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Cameroon. For UNIFEM, the promotion of small and sustainable enterprises is a key strategy for generating decent and productive employment for women and men. Women's entrepreneurship can make a particularly strong contribution to the economy and society. If women do not have equal opportunity in education and training, and participation in economic and political life, then it is not impossible, but certainly more difficult for them to access the required knowledge and resources to start and grow successful businesses, and, thus, to contribute fully to the socio-

¹³³ A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 262.

¹³⁴ J. D. TCHUNKAM, Genre, *Leadership et Participation au Cameroun (1931-2013): Le Cameroun sur le chemin de la parité*, ONU Femmes, New-York, Août 2014, pp. 365-366.

economic development of their countries.¹³⁵ This has given us inklings to the problems faced by women in the area of entrepreneurship in Cameroon and that equal opportunities between men and women is a solution to such circumstances. Such lessons show a discrepancy from theirs in that we have examined more other durable solutions to women's problems.

J. Odera, express his own view on the African Ministerial Preparatory Meeting for the 58th session of the CSW which brought together African Ministers of Gender and Experts under the aegis of the African Union Commission (AUC), and in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), and the United Nations Entity for Gender equality and Women's Empowerment (UNWomen), at the African Union Conference Centre, from February 6th - 7th, 2014, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The objective of the consultation was to develop a common understanding and to adopt key recommendations for the post 2015 development agenda, and the 58th session of CSW, to be held from March 10th -21st 2014, in New York, United States. The meeting emphasized on the need to do more, at country, regional and continental levels, on the importance of closing the gender gap in educational attainment and technology fields that act as part of Africa's transformation agenda for 2063, which talks about skills revolution, but this revolution can only happen if it includes the other half of Africa's human resources, girls and women¹³⁶. The work further handles Cameroon's foreign policy towards women and the impacts of education and technology on women empowerment in Cameroon. It provides one with a strategic opportunity to strengthen the women's collective voice with important political platforms to determine the actions required to accelerate progress on women but does not examine other platforms that assisted UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon. Our study therefore seeks to bridge the gaps that have been identified in this work.

This article written by H. Loveday, places the UN Women's Committee at its centre in order to consider the normative implications of having a space within the realm of international law that is headed by women decision-makers, whose remit is specifically gendered and whose task is to uphold the rights of women. It suggests that the Committee's importance has largely been overlooked, which is a considerable oversight. The Committee is uniquely positioned to contribute to the transformation of human rights norms, occupying, as it arguably does, positions simultaneously at the centre and at the periphery of international

¹³⁵L. Stevenson, and A. St-Onge, *Assessment of the environment for the development of women's entrepreneurship in Cameroon, Mali, Nigeria, Rwanda and Senegal*, ILO, Geneva, 2011, p.22.

¹³⁶J. Odera, *The Gender Agenda in West and Central Africa Target (WCAR) 2015: Progress on the horizon*, UNWomen - West and Central Africa Regional Office, Dakar - Sénégal, 2014, p.30.

law.¹³⁷ This information reminds us of women's right to fair hearing before the CEDAW through individual complaints procedure of the Optional Protocol. Our investigation differs in that it has gone so far to present the limitation of UNIFEM in implementing the CEDAW in Cameroon. Our work questions how far the Committee has been able to develop women's rights in recent years into a body of laws. Thus, the work takes into consideration the provisions of this instrument to facilitate enforcement of the national laws as well as assist UNIFEM Cameroon to have a more profound view of the level of implementation of CEDAW in Cameroon.

A. Melinda examines Colonial encounters in Southern Cameroon affecting women in complex and contradictory ways. To her, multiple scholars have demonstrated that many colonial policies spread Western notions of domesticity, constricting the space available for women to participate in public life. Other policies, she said however, opened new opportunities to women for education, salaried employment, travel abroad, and activism in local and international organizations¹³⁸. This work has served as an eye opener to us as UNIFEM Cameroon policies seeks to promote women's participation in public life. The study is relevant in our work in that it shows the important provisions within international human rights law that require states and organisations like UNIFEM to respect, protect and fulfill women's rights to political participation. This has inspired us to suggest good practices for reaching the goal of gender equality in public and political life.

K. Tilder, "Beijing +15, Talks of Gender empowerment and Development (GeED) which has been training women's groups on different income generating activities. It seeks to contribute to development through her direct work with communities and lobbying work with the state. Inclusive processes and structures are needed for women's civil society organizations from grassroots to regional and international levels to effectively participate in the implementation and monitoring in a nation. The BPFA has been a revolutionary platform aimed at giving more voice, more equality, more freedom and simply greater power to the women's group¹³⁹. This study is in line with our research work which seeks to show the role of women's organizations in building sustainable, equitable and peaceful societies. Thus, UNIFEM relies on an almost symbiotic relationship with women's movement, and it

¹³⁷ H. Loveday, "Women's Rights and the Periphery: CEDAW's Optional Protocol", *The European Journal of International Law*, Vol. 25, no. 2, Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 561-562.

¹³⁸ A. Melinda, "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life: The Case of British Southern Cameroons", *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 8, no. 3, Springw, 2006, p. 2.

¹³⁹ K. Tilder, Beijing +15 *The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business: Assessing the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in Cameroon*, GeED, Bamenda, July 2010, p.17.

manifests itself from the ground up from working with local, grassroots associations to including civil society in intergovernmental forums and negotiations. This has provided the study with UNIFEM's framework as to what concerns women's organizations playing a key role in holding governments accountable for the full implementation of and compliance with international norms and standards on gender equality and women's empowerment. Thus, a sustainable future for UNIFEM Cameroon depends on women's full participation, on women coming together for action, on the myriad women's organizations to form a better society.

C. Francis in his work demonstrated the point that GFPs are facilitators tasked with supporting and promoting gender integration into network unit and agencies. GFPs usually work in their own technical area of expertise and have the added responsibility of "facilitating" gender mainstreaming internally and often with external partners. They are not gender experts though they may (or may not) have a good knowledge on gender issues out of their own interest or other previous work experience. Although the gender machinery varies, the Cameroon government has developed a network of gender focal points (GFP) that can be found at various levels in the ministries. Though gender equality has improved since 1997 in many regards, several challenges remain and involve the role of GFPs since in addition to forming part of their own agency structure; they often sit on interagency networks and gender thematic groups that form part of the country¹⁴⁰. The study is significant to our work as it exposes UNIFEM's and MINPROFF's views in identifying GFP as key government agencies designated within a specific government ministry, NGOs, community-based organization, school or business to monitor and stimulate greater consideration of gender equality issues in daily operation of their institutions. This work provided knowledge on GFP responsible for the implementation of the Gender Integration Action Plan. C. Francis work is relevant to this study as it provides one with advice, inspiration, guidance as well as ideas and suggestions that can help enhance the impact of GFP work within the different ministries, NGOs, community-based organizations, schools and businesses in UNIFEM Cameroon.

R. Holmes and R. Slater in their book explained that Gender-Responsive Budgeting is a process that aims to ensure equity and improve efficiency and coherence in public policies through a better allocation of budgetary resources. An analysis of the different documents and of the national policy and strategy regarding the promotion of gender equality generally shows that gender-oriented national mechanisms have not done enough yet in defining cross-

¹⁴⁰ C. Francis, "National Women's machinery and the challenges forced by Gender focal points in mainstreaming gender within the Cameroon public service", Master's Dissertation in Sociology, University of Yaounde I, 2004, p.123.

cutting gender integration strategies. Gender-responsive budgeting initiatives in Cameroon have focused on awareness-raising and capacity building. In Cameroon, in March 2004, the MINPROFF launched with UNIFEM's assistance a programme of awareness-raising seminars for actors including government agencies, the national parliament, local government, civil society organisations and the private sector. Awareness raising was also extended to those involved in the ongoing public finance reform as well as to donor agencies such as the Canadian International Development Agency. One result of the awareness raising was the Ministry of Commerce's inclusion of a line in its 2008 budget for supporting women informal cross-border traders. This also shows the efforts made by UNIFEM and the European Commission (EC) to raise questions as to how transport infrastructure interventions are a major investment area for the EC which influences women directly and indirectly in Cameroon¹⁴¹. The above work of Holmes and Slater is relevant to this study as it has highlighted the role of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) activities that facilitate a change in the government budget to improve the allocation of resources to women, with many other benefits which arise from applying GRB. This work has been inspirational to this study as it provided us with a wide spectrum of UNIFEM in enhancing GRB in strengthening civil society participation in economic policy making, linkages between economic and social policy outcomes, tracking public expenditure against gender and development policy commitments, and gender mainstreaming in macroeconomics.

H. Noeleen, in his article said that no woman or girl is entirely free of its risks or reach. It takes many forms and occurs in many places. This is important in our research work in that ending violence against women and girls is a core part of UNIFEM's history and mandate and one of its four thematic priorities. UNIFEM's role as the United Nations women's fund includes advocacy, building partnerships and developing innovative approaches to respond to violence against women and girls in a wide range of countries and supporting the United Nations system-wide response to gender-based violence. A central tenet of UNIFEM's work is to ensure that the United Nations system and United Nations Country Teams are able to deliver as one in response to national priorities for ending violence against women. UNIFEM leads or participates in joint United Nations programmes to end violence against women at country level, and plays a key role in global and regional inter-agency initiatives that increase the UN's responsiveness and resources to address this global pandemic. In our research context, UNIFEM's strategy for addressing violence against

¹⁴¹ R. Holmes and R. Slater et al, *Gender-responsive budgeting in fragile and conflict-affected states: a review*, New York, August 2014, p.3.

women and girls, seeks to translate existing commitments into realities. Thus, UNIFEM supports in Cameroon is to help implement laws and policies, in particular through National and local action plans to end violence against women and girls that reflect a comprehensive and multi-stakeholder approach to both prevention and response, bringing in all relevant government and civil society actors¹⁴². The work of Noeleen is of great interest to this thesis as it has given us a clue of the prevalence of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Cameroon and its negative impact on women's development. In line with our work, UNIFEM aimed at coordinating UN agencies in harmonising their response with regard to GBV against women and girls as a global pandemic of alarming proportions in Cameroon.

METHODOLOGY

To realize the study, data was collected from primary and secondary sources. As concerns primary sources, we assemble data from national archives in Yaounde, the archives of the women's empowerment centre in Bamenda, those of the Regional Delegation of MINPROFF and ELECAM in Ebolowa, archives from the Kye-Ossi council and the regional delegation of MINPROFF in Littoral.

Concerning the primary sources, questionnaires were administered and interviews conducted in all the administrations that were purposefully selected for the study. The focus group discussions were conducted according to the questionnaires to compliment and clarify issues raised in the questionnaires. During the survey, two sets of questionnaires (a general questionnaire and another one specifically targeting women) were designed. The questionnaires were designed based on the review that was carried out from archival materials, academic literature, reports and information from pre-site visits. The questionnaires consisted of both open and close-ended questions which focused on women related issues. The interviews had a formalized question and answer design in which discussions were performed. In the oral interviews, the researcher relinquished the control of informants to be the teachers, thus focusing on collecting data. The tool used for interviews were collected through a digital camera, digital voice recorder, notebook and pens which were later restructured to the purpose of the research. The populations of the selected communities were stratified into male and female and the questionnaires randomly administered making sure that 90% of the respondents were female and 10% male.

¹⁴² H. Noeleen, "Working Towards a World Free from Violence Against Women: UNIFEM's Contribution", *Gender and Development*. Vol. 6, no. 3, November 1998, pp.17-18.

Following the Secondary data collection, we collected both published and unpublished materials. In order to appreciate the current state of affairs, annual reports, and case files were reviewed at the regional delegations in the South, North West and littoral, etc. as well as Ministry of Agriculture, ministry of Environment, ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Ministry of Arts and Culture, Ministry of Territorial Administration, MINEPIA and UN agencies like the United Nations Information Centre (UNIC's), UN Women, library of the Department of History, the central library of the university of Yaounde I and the main faculty library of the university of Yaounde I. The electronic sources are not to be neglected for the internet constituted one of the important origins of information.

After the careful collection and classification of data, the qualitative and quantitative style helped us to handle events and intricacies grouped from varying sources. The qualitative data was analysed and presented using descriptive and interpretative approaches. This included listing, coding, and classifying. Textual data was examined and grouped into relevant themes in the research thereby making the data ready for thematic and comparative analyses. It was during this process that their interconnectedness was interpreted to answer the concerns of this research. The quantitative approach handled numerical data analysis. This was essential statistical data analyses, tabulations and presentation methods.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

During data collection, the researcher experienced some hardship which affected the cost and time implications of the data collection process. We met with resistance and reluctance as some of the potential informants in some of the ministries like MINPROFF in Yaounde, in the refusal to collecting and filling the questionnaires. The researcher was requested authorisation from UN Women by these ministries before any information on the UN agency can be given out. This is because officials were at times reluctant to release information due to fear of the unknown. Also, we encountered difficulties at interviewing actors involved in the assistance at the level of UN Women and UNICS due to the fact that it required certain bureaucratic procedures which were not easy to overcome. In this case, access to data was conditioned to applications addressed to the representatives of the organisations. Worst, the said applications were most often not treated on time. In some cases, they were never given attention. To solve these problems, we exercised a lot of patience while persuading our informants beyond doubt that the exercise was purely academic. In an attempt

to employ this strategy, it delayed and played negatively to the progress of this work thereby prolonging the duration defined for data collection and analyses.

Also, there was the problem of language at the regional delegations in the Littoral and the south, the council of Kye-Ossi, since they were French speaking areas. Some informants were willing to collect and fill the questionnaire but could not do so, due to language barrier coupled with fear of revealing their personal information. Despite all attempts to convince them, many refused to believe that this questionnaire was solely for academic purposes. As a result, the researcher spent time explaining the questionnaires were meant for academic purposes and not one of government's tools to carry out some political operations. Due to all these, the researcher was most of the time compelled to show the research authorization letter to some respondents and institutions/ organizations in order to have access to data.

The researcher went back severally; some respondents who collected the questionnaires were never available whenever the researcher returned at the given time and as a result, some of the questionnaires were not returned. Others informants were only ready to give information at the general level, but were not willing to give us access to documents. Some informants were also skeptical and suspicious in giving out information for fear of being misinterpreted, contradicted or incriminated. These notwithstanding, many of the informants were willing to talk and share their knowledge and experiences with us. Information collected from oral sources had problems of chronology, credibility and authenticity. Irrespective of these constraints, the completion of this work remained the greatest challenge of the researcher.

CHAPTERS LAYOUT

This thesis is divided into five chapters with respectively a general introduction and conclusion at the beginning and at the end.

Chapter one elaborates the process that led to the establishment of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) which aims at assisting countries and the United Nations system to progress more effectively and efficiently towards the goal of achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and upholding women's rights.

Chapter two focuses on women empowerment in pre-colonial and colonial era in Cameroon. This part of the work talks about Women's roles in pre-colonial Cameroon and

how Women participated both directly and indirectly in public affairs. This section deals with the status of women during the colonial period and the role played by the colonial government to promote women empowerment. Lastly, it examines how colonial policies affected women in British Southern and French Cameroons in complex and contradictory ways.

Chapter three of this work showcases UNIFEM and women's socio-political empowerment in Cameroon through national and international strategies. More precisely, the chapter focuses on UNIFEM's strategies to promote women's empowerment in Cameroon. It also seeks to examine the activities carried out by UNIFEM and women networks in Cameroon in order to fight against social ills and foster development through women empowerment in many domains that include socio - political aspects of their lives.

Chapter four talks about UNIFEM and women's economic empowerment in Cameroon. It examines UNIFEM's undertaking pilot projects to test innovative approaches to women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming. It deals about the concept of women empowerment, government policy for the promotion of women empowerment coupled with the various national strategies to promote gender related issues in Cameroon in GRB, MDG and how pilot projects are being tested by UNIFEM to promote gender mainstreaming in the country.

Chapter five examines UNIFEM and its actions in Cameroon. It talks about the achievements and the impact of UNIFEM's activities on women empowerment strategies. Furthermore, this part brings out the various impediments that hinder this UN agency from fulfilling its missions fully. Finally, some recommendations are given in order to strengthen UNIFEM's strategies towards women's wellbeing.

CHAPTER ONE

PRELUDE TO THE SETTING UP OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT FUND FOR WOMEN (UNIFEM) IN CAMEROON

Introduction

The chapter one of this work studies the process that led to the establishment of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Cameroon. In this chapter, we shall underline the way UNIFEM offers normative support in the formulation and application of global standards and norms; through technical and financial support to implement such standards; and by holding the UN system accountable for its own commitments with regards to women empowerment. In this momentum, we will strive to highlight the precursors of the creation of this organization, its structure, its methods of financing, its objectives, its strategies and the different phases that have punctuated the march towards the creation of this UN entity. This chapter will equally shade a light on the coming of UNIFEM in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. It will highlight the principle of multiple partnerships that characterizes the functioning of this organisation before referring to its transformation into UN Women.

I. Early history of UNIFEM

UNIFEM has become a women friendly global institution inspite of being a forum of governments, the great majority of which until lately has reflected primarily the visions and aspirations of men. Through the strenuous and skillful diplomacy and struggles of the of nations and the founding mothers of this UN agency, over the decades, aspirations and visions have been brought to the forefront by pacifists and feminists on international agenda, resulted in declarations, covenants and programmes for the advancement and empowerment of women, which go beyond the stages of creating UNIFEM and existing legislation and policies in most of the UN member States.

a. Women and the League of Nations

In the 1920s and 1930s women's international organizations, which were still young, had interesting collaboration with the first intergovernmental peace organization, the League of Nations.¹ This collaboration also gave them the necessary experience for participating effectively in the process of the founding of the United Nations after the Second World War.² This early history of engendering inter-governmental politics attracted, surprisingly late, the interest of researchers first at the beginning of the 1990s.³ During this time the process of engendering the global agenda also led to a number of irreversible achievements⁴. The founding of the League of Nations in 1919 marked the beginning of organized and institutionalized inter-governmental collaboration in a form that was unprecedented. This was the first step in joint foreign policy between governments toward supra-national goals such as peace and security instead of each nation merely defending its own individual interests against the interests of others. Women immediately realized the importance of such cooperation and had good reason to become interested in it as it aimed at ending wars and violence, and the settlement of disputes through negotiations, which corresponded with women's yearning for peace. This desire was particularly strong in people's minds right after the destruction and horrors of the First World War.⁵

Another reason for women's commitment to inter-governmental collaboration right from the beginning was their firm belief in the fact that the advancement of women in different countries required governmental policies and democratic opportunities for women to influence those policies. Women were united across borders as they worked to promote peace, and they saw promising chances to empower themselves in these new forms of inter-governmental cooperation. It is amazing to see how well-prepared international women's organizations influenced the inter-governmental process right after the First World War even though women's cooperation was still very young. The first women's international organizations began to emerge at the turn of the century and during the First World War⁶. After the First World War, representatives of governments gathered at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919 to establish the League of Nations and the International Labour

¹ M. Carol. *Lobbying the League: Women's International Organizations and the League of Nations*, University of Oxford, 1992, p.1.

² H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda: A Success Story of Women and the United Nations*, Women's Movement and Internationalisation ECPR Workshop, Mannheim, 26-31 March 1999, p.1.

³ M. Carol. *Lobbying the League*., p.1.

⁴ H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women and the United Nations*, UN-NGLS, New York and Geneva, 2007, p.1.

⁵ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.1.

⁶ Ibid, p.5.

Organization (ILO).⁷ Representatives of women's international organizations were present in order to give their proposals regarding the Covenant of the League of Nations and to prevent the exclusion of women from the provisions and decisions.⁸

In this context women founded the Inter-Allied Suffrage Conference (IASC), whose delegation received the right to participate in certain peace conference commissions (Treaty of Versailles and Paris Peace conference in 1919). Provided with the chance to meet the representatives of 14 Allied Nations, the delegation immediately urged that women be given access to decision-making positions in the League of Nations.⁹ They also made proposals on issues they wished to be included in the programme of the newly established League. They proposed that the League set out to promote universal suffrage in Member States, take measures to recognize the rights of a woman married to a foreigner to keep her nationality, and work to abolish trafficking of women and children and state-supported prostitution.¹⁰ In addition, they called for the creation of an international education and health bureau, and the control and reduction of armaments.¹¹ Based on these proposals, the Covenant of the League of Nations declared that Member States should promote humane conditions of labour for men, women and children as well as prevent trafficking of women and children. It also included provisions that all positions in the League of Nations, including the secretariat, should be open equally to men and women.¹²

At the same time, women from American and British trade unions were on the move when the constitution of the ILO was drafted. Specifically, they called for an eight-hour working day, an end to child labour, support for social insurance, pensions and maternity benefits, equal pay for equal work for women and men, as well as minimum wages for housework, among other things. Their proposals were politely received but quickly shelved as too radical.¹³ Nevertheless, women's efforts resulted in the inclusion of a reference to fair and humane conditions of labour for men, women and children in the International Labour

⁷ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.2.

⁸ M. Carol, "Geneva-The Key to Equality: Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations." *In Women's History Review*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1994, p. 240.

⁹ M. Carol, "Geneva-The Key to Equality: Inter-War Feminists", p. 240.

¹⁰ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.2.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p.3.

¹² H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, pp. 2-3

¹³ *Ibid*, p.4.

Organization constitution.¹⁴ The work toward the other objectives has continued, although some goals have still not been achieved.

After the founding of the League of Nations (LN) and the ILO, representatives of women's organizations began to regularly observe the proceedings and work of the inter-governmental organizations and give their own proposals to government representatives.¹⁵ They founded the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organizations, which became "the voice of women" in Geneva. Women's organizations campaigned throughout the 1920s and 1930s to ensure, among other things, that women and their rights would not be neglected. The League of Nations established a body for international legal protection of the human rights of particular minority groups.¹⁶ This was the start of the dialogue between International Non-governmental Organizations (INGOs) and the inter-governmental organization (IGO) of the League of Nations. Forerunners in this dialogue, which later continued with the United Nations, included women's international organizations such as the International Council of Women (ICW), International Alliance of Women (IAW), International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBPW), International Federation of University Women (IFUW), World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).¹⁷ These were based mainly in Europe and the United States.¹⁸

While each type of organization clearly had distinct goals and priorities, they all believed that the League of Nations was an important vehicle for social and political reforms, in particular, the advancement of the status of women.¹⁹ These organizations were estimated to represent 45 million women, but a leadership cohort of middle and upper-class British, Scandinavian and American women who met on a regular basis in London or Geneva coordinated women's international work.²⁰ Encouraged by the founding of the ILO, American female trade unionists convened the first International Congress of Working Women in Washington DC in 1919, in collaboration with women from the European trade unions. The International Federation of Working Women (IFWW) was also founded at this conference,

¹⁴ G. E. Margaret "Forerunners in Women's Quest for Partnership: In Women, Politics, and the United Nations", Greenwood Press: Westport, 1995, p.3.

¹⁵ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.2.

¹⁶ M. Carol, "Geneva-The Key to Equality: Inter-War Feminists", p.3.

¹⁷ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.3.

¹⁸ M. Carol, "Women on the UN Agenda: The Role of NGOs," Speech at the UN/NGLS Panel, NGO Forum, Huairou, China, 1995, p. 10.

¹⁹ M. Carol. *Lobbying the League: Women's International Organizations*, p.4.

²⁰ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*., p.3.

and decisions were reached regarding a united approach to women's questions at annual International Labour Conferences. The ILO's work toward the development of labour regulations had a brisk start, as early as the 1920s, with women participating intensively right from the beginning.²¹

The activities of women's organizations during that time can be compared to the large-scale NGO conferences arranged in connection with recent UN world conferences. In 1919 in Paris, a handful of newly-established women's international organizations arranged the first parallel NGO conference to coincide with an inter-governmental conference.²² The aim of the parallel conference was to make women's voices heard in governmental discussions. It was not until 25 years later, at the founding of the UN, that some of the proposals made in 1919 by women reached the ears of the governments.²³ Women's early proposals included international collaboration in fields such as education and health care; but the world had to wait until 1946 to see the UN establish the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the World Health Organization (WHO) to address these issues. Women also had clear demands regarding disarmament and arms control issues that were to become fundamental elements of UN's work from the outset.²⁴ In recent decades, parallel NGO conferences have become a permanent feature in connection with UN world conferences and gather thousands of people from around the world to monitor the inter-governmental events. These people create massive publicity for issues that activists from around the world want to bring to the public's attention. NGO events parallel to UN conferences on women have attracted the greatest participation as will be seen in the pacifist and feminist views below.

b. Pacifist and Feminist Aims

Latin American women were instrumental in the International Conference of American States (ICAS) decision in 1928 to create the Inter American Commission of Women (IACW), the first inter-governmental body to address issues related to the status of women. The IACW prepared, and its member governments adopted, the Montevideo Convention on the Nationality of Married Women in 1933.²⁵ This was the first inter-governmental convention providing women and men with equal status in respect to

²¹ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda*, p. 3.

²² Ibid.

²³ H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, pp. 2-3

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ G. Margaret E. "Forerunners in Women's Quest for Partnership:", p. 6.

nationality. In 1935 the League of Nations approved the Convention and urged all Member States to ratify it. The IACW also prepared the 1938 Declaration of Lima in Favor of Women's Rights. At this time the IACW encouraged its member governments to establish women's bureaux, revise discriminatory civil codes, and take women's initiatives regarding these issues to the League of Nations.²⁶ Perhaps the most concrete example of women's ability to make an impact at the international level was the Committee of Experts on the Legal Status of Women. Established by the League of Nations in 1937, it was authorized to conduct a "comprehensive and scientific inquiry into the legal status of women in various countries of the world."²⁷ The Committee's work had barely begun when the Second World War broke out, but its founding was an important step toward putting women's human rights on the agenda of inter-governmental cooperation. The Committee was also the predecessor of the CSW later established by the United Nations.²⁸

To summarize the relationship between women's organizations and the League of Nations, Carol Miller, researcher on gender issues, refers to two ground-breaking achievements. First, women created a model for cooperation and interaction between non-governmental organizations and inter-governmental organizations. Formerly only Heads of State, foreign ministers and diplomats were entitled to participate in inter-governmental conferences. Women, however, demanded the right of access to meetings in the conference hall and to official documents, and the right to distribute their statements in the hall and interact with official delegates literally to lobby. They were first granted these rights at the League of Nations World Disarmament Conference in 1932, and later at other meetings.²⁹

Secondly, through their well-prepared proposals and what were perceived as credible actions, women's international organizations were able to establish so-called women's issues on the agenda of international cooperation. In other words, issues related to the status of women became international issues, not purely domestic concerns. This principle was established at the League of Nations at a time when women in many Member States did not even enjoy political rights, and when women were not accepted as diplomats.³⁰ From this perspective, the founding of the Committee of Experts mentioned above was in itself a victory. It showed that securing equality between women and men, and the status of women,

²⁶ G. Margaret E. "Forerunners in Women's Quest for Partnership:", p. 6.

²⁷ T. Skard, "Getting our history right: how were the equal rights of women and men included the charter of the United Nations", *Forum for Development Studies*, vol. 2, No. 1, NUPI, June 2008, p. 38.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ M. Carol, "Women on the UN Agenda", p. 6.

³⁰ Ibid, p. 7.

were issues that could not be left to governments alone. These early days saw systematic work toward convincing the League of Nations to draw up and adopt an international equal rights convention.³¹ These were the beginnings of the formulation of “dialectic,” indirect and two-way strategy that has been used to advance women’s objectives throughout the history of the United Nations. When women found it very slow or impossible to promote their objectives at the national level in their own countries, they took their issue to inter-governmental organizations³². Such collaboration within these organizations has often resulted in resolutions and recommendations, even international conventions that are more advanced than those adopted at national levels. These accepted inter-governmental instruments then have been used effectively by women to pressure their governments and legislators to adopt and implement compatible laws in their respective countries.³³

As British pacifist and feminist Vera Brittain in the 1920s, (around the period of the First World War) said “The time has now come to move from the national to the international sphere, and to endeavour to obtain by international agreement what national legislation has failed to accomplish”. The League of Nations’ attitude toward women’s activism was based on the realization that women were a valuable lobbying and support group for the League in almost every Member State.³⁴ Women, on the other hand, saw the League as a new and powerful arena for advancing their objectives: peace, human rights and women’s equality in all countries³⁵. Thus, due to women’s tenacious and clever diplomacy, the League of Nations was soon in advance of most of its Member States concerning women’s issues as seen below.³⁶

c. Founding Actors of UNIFEM

Although the United Nations Charter was the “first international agreement to proclaim gender equality as a fundamental human right,”³⁷ the path toward achieving equality has been challenging. Yet, thanks to the determination of women’s rights activists and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), the antidiscrimination clause of the UN Charter

³¹ M. Carol, “Women on the UN Agenda”, p. 6.

³² H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, p.7.

³³ M. Carol, “Women on the UN Agenda”, p. 7.

³⁴ M. Carol, “Geneva-The Key to Equality: Inter-War Feminists”, p.8.

³⁵ NW/ Ba. 1934/1, File No. 568, “League of Nations, conditions of women in the Cameroons under British mandate”, 22nd May 1934, p.6.

³⁶ M. Carol, “Geneva-The Key to Equality: Inter-War Feminists”, p. 8.

³⁷ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women, 1945-1995*, New York: The United Nations, 1995. p.3.

upholds the equal rights of both men and women.³⁸ The existence of the League of Nations for 26 years ended with the onset of the Second World War in 1939. In retrospect, however, the work carried out during its existence was not in vain. History shows that the basis and models for inter-governmental cooperation created by the League of Nations formed a firm base on which to build a new inter-governmental peace organization, which was already being planned by the Allied Nations during the war.³⁹ During the time of the League of Nations, models of cooperation between international NGOs and inter-governmental organizations were also created. Furthermore, so-called women's issues had gained visibility and began to appear more often on the international community's agenda⁴⁰. Due to the actions in the 1920s and 1930s, a substantial number of women gained experience and expertise in the international arena and networking. Women in official government delegations, representatives of women's organizations and women in significant positions in the League of Nations kept in touch with each other and acted in consort to further their common objectives⁴¹.

Women's experience was also an indispensable asset when the founding conference of the United Nations was held in 1945 in San Francisco.⁴² Consequently, women were appointed to several of the government delegations participating in the conference. There were four Latin American women serving as delegates: Minerva Bernardino (Dominican Republic), Amalia Caballero de Castillo Ledón (Mexico), Bertha Lutz (Brazil) and Isabel P. de Vidal (Uruguay). In addition, two women in the Venezuelan delegation, Lucila L. de Perez Diaz and Isabel Sanchez de Urdaneta, served as advisors.⁴³ Other women delegates included Cora T. Casselman (Canada), Jessie Street (Australia) and Wu Yi-Fang (China). The United States delegation had five women, with Virginia Gildersleeve as a delegate and the others as advisors. Ellen Wilkinson and Florence Horsbrugh were assistant delegates for the United Kingdom. Four of the women delegates Minerva Bernardino, Bertha Lutz, Wu Yi-Fang and Virginia Gildersleeve were also among the 160 signatories of the UN Charter as representatives of their governments. Many of these women had several overlapping mandates, which added weight to their contributions. Ms. Caballero de Castillo Ledón was the

³⁸ G.W. Thomas and S. Dews, *The Oxford Handbook on the United Nations*, Oxford: University Press, Eds, 2008. p. 496.

³⁹ R. Tour, *Women and the United Nations: Reflections and New Horizons*, Rochester, Schenman, 2000, p. 189.

⁴⁰ H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, p. 9.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² A. Winslow, "Women, Politics and the United Nations", *American Journal of International Law*, Volume 91, Issue 1, Cambridge University Press, January 1997, p. 194.

⁴³ Ibid.

chair of the Inter-American Commission on Women mentioned above, and both Bertha Lutz and Minerva Bernardino were members. They were instrumental in the movement that demanded the Preamble to the UN Charter reaffirm not only nations' "faith in fundamental human rights" and "the dignity and worth of the human person," but in "the equal rights of men and women." Consequently, this wording was incorporated into the Charter; later generations have regarded it to be of crucial importance since the Charter legitimized from the beginning demands for full equality and equal rights for women and men alike.⁴⁴ The fact that four different Art 3, 55, 68 and 76 in the Charter affirm that human rights and fundamental freedoms belong to all "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion" gave strength to the initial wording.⁴⁵

Jessie Street, an Australian with the backing of a powerful network of women's organizations in her country and good relations with women from several other countries, made a strong impact in San Francisco. She pushed for inclusion of an article in the Charter that corresponded to the stipulation in the Covenant of the League of Nations, which makes all positions in the United Nations equally open to men and women.⁴⁶ The proposal was widely supported and was formulated as article 8 of the UN stated that: the United Nations shall place no restrictions on the eligibility of men and women to participate in any capacity and under conditions of equality in its principal and subsidiary organs.⁴⁷ Thus women activists regarded this Article as another highly significant achievement for the advancement of women. In the years thereafter, however, they must have felt disappointed when observing how the Article was ignored.⁴⁸ Only since 1970s has it been given appropriate recognition, and in recent decades the number of women in high positions in the UN system has been steadily increasing. As of June 30, 2005, women occupied 37.1% of professional and higher positions and 16.2% of the Under-Secretaries-General were women.⁴⁹

The actual work of the United Nations began with an inaugural session of the General Assembly in London in early 1946.⁵⁰ The issue of women's rights reappeared in the session as a prominent item on the international agenda for the first time since the beginning of the

⁴⁴"The Charter of the United Nations", New York, June 26, 1945, p. 6.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ UN, "Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat", Report of the Secretary-General, UN Document A/53/376, September, 1998, p. 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 11.

⁴⁸UN, "Improvement of the Status of Women in the Secretariat", Report of the Secretary-General, (UN document A/54/403), United Nations, New York, 27 September 1999, p. 14.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰UN "Committee, Declaration on the Participation of Women in the Work of the United Nations" League of Nations report of the General Committee, Doc. A/PV.29, 12 February 1946, p. 5.

Second World War. Seventeen women participated in the session as delegates or advisers to delegations.⁵¹ At the same session of the General Assembly, Eleanor Roosevelt, a member of the United States' delegation, read out a prepared document entitled "An Open Letter to the Women of the World", from seventeen women delegates and advisers at the first Assembly of the United Nations.⁵² The letter introduced the UN to women as "the second attempt of the peoples of the world to live peacefully in a democratic world community."⁵³ It called on women to take "an important opportunity and responsibility" in promoting these goals in the United Nations and their respective countries.⁵⁴

Marie-Hélène Lefauchaux of the French delegation initiated the letter, but it was delivered to the Assembly by a delegate of the United States, Eleanor Roosevelt.⁵⁵ Roosevelt urged governments to take the letter home and encourage women everywhere to come forward and "share in the work of peace and reconstruction as they did in war and resistance."⁵⁶ This letter was the first formal articulation of women's voices in the UN and an outline of the role for women to play in a new arena of international politics and cooperation. The letter was neither discussed, nor formally adopted. However, several delegates spoke about it or gave statements supporting it. The letter and the statements were recorded, with the hope expressed by the President of the session that the issue "will be taken into very serious consideration".⁵⁷

The UN Charter established three new substantive elements of crucial importance for women, which had not been features of the League of Nations. The issues concerning economic and social development, codification and the advancement and monitoring of human rights were given a prominent status in the new world organization. Furthermore, the importance and collaborative status of NGO was recognized. The three new substantive elements are;

- Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as a principal organ: In addition to political tasks, the UN was given the mandate "to promote economic and social progress and development." As one of the principal organs, ECOSOC was established to be in

⁵¹"Political Rights of Women", A/RES/56(I) of 11 December 1946, p. 5.

⁵²M. A. Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, Broché, 11 June 2001, p. 29.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ UN, *Improvement of the Status of Women*, p. 11.

⁵⁵ UN "Committee, Declaration on the Participation of Women", p. 5.

⁵⁶ M. A. Glendon, *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt*, p. 29.

⁵⁷ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement*, pp. 93-98.

charge of these operations.⁵⁸ It was also mandated to establish subsidiary bodies, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)⁵⁹.

- Human Rights mandate: The Commission on Human Rights was established under the auspices of ECOSOC with the broad mandate to work for the codification, advancement and protection of human rights and monitoring their implementation.⁶⁰
- The Status of NGOs: The collaborative relationship between NGO and the UN was legitimized and a framework provided within which NGOs can acquire consultative status with ECOSOC.⁶¹

The issue of creating the CSW as a separate entity under ECOSOC represented a considerable struggle. Although, as previously mentioned, the CSW had a precedent in the League of Nations, in the UN founding conference it was initially set up as a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights, contrary to the wishes of participating women.⁶²

However, the first chair of the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, Bodil Begtrup President of the Danish National Council of Women and a former delegate to the League of Nations did manage at the second session of ECOSOC to push through a resolution establishing the CSW as an autonomous entity. Therefore, despite failure to reach a decision on this in San Francisco in 1945, CSW was able to commence its operations as an autonomous Commission as early as 1947.⁶³ Begtrup continued as the chair, and Jessie Street was elected as the first vice-chair of the Commission. The members included Caballero de Castillo Ledón and Ms. Urdaneta, who had been active members of their national delegations in San Francisco.⁶⁴ Why was it that women, right from the very beginning, persistently demanded a special CSW instead of pursuing their cause through a sub-commission of the Commission on Human Rights? Ms. Begtrup argued that women did not want to be dependent on the pace of another commission. They believed that through a commission of their own they could proceed more quickly than in the Commission of Human Rights, where

⁵⁸ECOSOC, “Engaging Philanthropy to Promote Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment” Special Report, New York, 2010, p. 5.

⁵⁹ECOSOC, “Measures to strengthen the role and functions of the Commission on the Status of Women”, (E/RES/1987/22), New York, 1987, p. 1.

⁶⁰ECOSOC “Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the fifty-seventh session (4-15 March 2013)”, (E/2013/27), New York, 2013, p. 7.

⁶¹ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women: NGO Participation*, New York, 18 July 2013, p. 7.

⁶² C. Eichel Berger, *Organizing for Peace: A Personal History of the Founding of the United Nations*, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 260

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ UN Women, *Commission on the Status of Women*, p. 7.

their proposals would end up “in the queue” with many other human rights issues.⁶⁵ In fact, time has shown that in the independent CSW, the proposals by women have gained a totally different weight and significance than would have been the case in the Commission on Human Rights.⁶⁶ As an independent commission, CSW was entitled to set its own agenda, decide its priorities, and report and make proposals directly to ECOSOC.⁶⁷

John P. Humphrey, the first Director of the UN Secretariat Division of Human Rights, gives an interesting account of CSW in his memoirs: “More perhaps than any other United Nations body the delegates to the CSW were personally committed to its objectives and acted as a kind of lobby for the women of the world.”⁶⁸ There was no more independent body in the UN. Many governments had appointed as their representative women who were militants in their own countries”.⁶⁹ Concerning the significance of the UN Charter to women, it “gave them slim, formal recognition, but the human rights provisions gave women constitutional-legal leverage to renew their quest for improvement of their status, achieve full citizenship with men, and enter the world’s political stage” which move us to the next step on the stages for the creation of UNIFEM.⁷⁰

d. Phases of the creation of UNIFEM

The United Nations Blue Book on the advancement of women divides UN work focused on equality and the advancement of women into four different periods: securing the legal foundations of equality (from 1945-1962); recognizing women’s role in development (from 1963-1975); the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985); and “Towards Equality, Development and Peace” (from 1986 onwards)⁷¹. After the inception, the United Nations organization moved quickly to affirm that the advancement of women was a major thrust area of its work. Four progressive phases are discernible in the evolution of these efforts⁷².

⁶⁵ UN General Assembly, *The Work of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Men*, New York, 2013, p. 6.

⁶⁶ S. Farrier, *United Nations Commission on the Status of Women*, Oxford Encyclopedia of Human Rights, 28 June 2013, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁷ M. E. Galey, “Nondiscrimination Against Women: The UN Commission on the Status of Women”, *International Studies Quarterly*, vol. 23, N° 2, 1979, p. 276.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ J. Morsink, “Women’s Rights in the Universal Declaration.” *In Human Rights Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 2, May 1991, p. 230.

⁷⁰ G. Margaret E. “Forerunners in Women’s Quest for Partnership:”, p. 15.

⁷¹ Interview with Sylvie Kwenti, 27 years, worker at the MINAC, 27th May 2018, Yaounde

⁷² K. Ghodsee, “Revisiting the United Nations Decade for Women: Brief Reflections on Feminism, Capitalism and Cold War Politics in the Early Years of the International Women’s Movement”, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, vol. 33, No. 1, 2009, p. 6.

First of all, the phase one starts from 1945-1962 securing the legal foundations of gender equality. From a contemporary vantage point, it seems extraordinary that there were just four women (Minerva Bernardino from Dominican Republic, Virginia Gildersleeve from United States, Bertha Lutz -Brazil and Wu Yi-fang from China) among the 160 signatories to the UN Charter at San Francisco in 1945. Two other women were present at the world body's founding conference but were not signatories. However, this handful of women established a sound foundation for the UN by making sure that women's issues were included. As Devaki Jain explains in her UNIHP volume that, "Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice, the simple act of inserting the word 'women' in the text made sure that the principle of equality between the sexes was part of the founding ideas of the organization".⁷³

The UNCSW (CSW) was the first global institution assigned a mandate to make recommendations "on urgent problems requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights".⁷⁴ It is a political body now comprising 45 UN member states. Although there were precedents in the Committee of Experts on the Legal Status of Women established by the League of Nations in 1937 (consisting of three men and four women)⁷⁵ and the Inter-American Commission on Women in 1928, the creation of CSW was the result of a battle within the UN General Assembly⁷⁶. Brazil proposed a separate women's commission at the first General Assembly session, distinct from the CHR, which had been established in 1946.⁷⁷ The proposal was supported by many of the women delegates but roundly opposed by the US delegate, Virginia Gildersleeve. Gildersleeve argued that a separate women's commission would be discriminatory and unnecessary in that women's questions could be adequately dealt with by the CHR.⁷⁸

This dispute was resolved through compromise between the two positions: the formation by ECOSOC of a sub-commission of the CHR devoted to women. However, at the urging of Bodil Begtrup, a Danish delegate and the first Chair of the Sub-commission on the Status of Women, ECOSOC adopted a resolution for the formation of a separate, free-

⁷³United Nations Intellectual History Project, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, briefing note number 12, New York, April 2009, p. 1.

⁷⁴ "Resolution establishing the Commission on the Status of Women", E/RES/2/11, June 21, 1946, p. 5.

⁷⁵F. De Haan, "Women's Rights: A Brief Survey", p.56.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷J. Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, December 1990, p. 6.

⁷⁸ H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, pp. 2 and 15.

standing functional commission on women in 1946.⁷⁹ This gave CSW formal status within the UN system. As a sub-commission it had been empowered to “submit proposals, recommendations and reports to the CHR regarding the status of women” and through the Commission to ECOSOC.⁸⁰ As an independent commission its reports and recommendations went directly to ECOSOC, thereby enabling it to determine its own timetable and agenda. CSW engaged with the work of the CHR, notably in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁸¹ CSW members were government delegates, but one observer noted that they appeared more personally engaged with the institution’s goals than members of other UN bodies and that they acted “as a kind of lobby for the women of the world”.⁸² Accordingly CSW members built close relationships with women’s NGOs. In her plea to ECOSOC to establish CSW, Bodil Begtrup considered the argument against specialised women’s bodies on the grounds that women’s problems were not separate from men’s. She responded:

This point of view is purely unrealistic and academic. The practice shows that ECOSOC has special problems that are connected with the status of women. These problems have now for the first time in history to be studied internationally as such and to be given the social importance they ought to have. The feeling that this big body (the UN), with all the social and political difficulties before it, still has time to take an interest in the daily life and in raising the status of women has aroused an enormous interest.⁸³

At the time of first phase from 1945-1962, the United Nations worked to secure women’s legal equality to participate in political life. The commission on human rights and commission on the status of women in 1946 have recognized that the process of codifying the legal rights of women and by adopting universal declaration of human rights in 1948, the organization began its work on behalf of the women with a drive to establish the legal basis of the promotion of equal rights. In the early years of the UN, women struggled to get a commission of their own. They succeeded in 1946 with the creation of the CSW (CSW).⁸⁴ But as Jain poses the underlying issue, “one must ask whether women would have wanted their own space within the UN if they had been comfortable in the mainstream. These issues of whether to remain separate or integrate with the mainstream, the common life which is the real life and not of the little separate lives which we live as individuals, as Virginia Woolf put

⁷⁹D. Jain, *Women, Development, and the UN: A Sixty-Year Quest for Equality and Justice*, Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2005, pp. 17-18.

⁸⁰ “Resolution establishing the Commission”, E/RES/5(I) of 16 February 1946, paragraph 2-3, p. 6.

⁸¹ “Resolution establishing the Commission on the Status of Women”, E/RES/48(IV) of March 29, 1947, para. 3, p. 6.

⁸² H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, pp. 2-3

⁸³ B. Boutros-Ghali, *the United Nations and the Advancement*, pp. 101-102.

⁸⁴G. Felice, "Women, International Law and International Institutions: The Case of the United Nations." *Women's Studies International Forum* (32): (1), 2009, p. 62.

it in “A Room of One’s Own” continue to haunt efforts to land UN values on the ground”.⁸⁵ In the years from 1946 to 1962, CSW was created to focus on the mapping of the legal status of women in the Member States and later the preparation of legislation and international conventions for the advancement of the status of women.⁸⁶ The resources of the Commission were extremely small, and the assistance provided was limited to a section on the Status of Women with a very small staff within the Human Rights Division of the United Nations Department of Social Affairs. The shortage of resources was partly compensated by the motivation and enthusiasm of members of the Commission.

In spite of initial difficulties, the CSW was effective and influential, especially over its first three decades. While it was still a sub commission, it took the daring step of advocating that women be given full political suffrage worldwide at a time when only thirty of the original fifty-one UN member states allowed women to vote. The very idea of men and women having equal rights was itself quite new on the world stage. Yet for the first time in an international treaty or instrument, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 introduced this principle in unambiguous terms. In 1952, responding to a call from the Sub-Commission on the Status of Women, the General Assembly adopted the Convention on Political Rights of Women “to implement the principle of equality of rights for men and women contained in the Charter of the United Nations”.⁸⁷ Even so, it was not until 1963 that the General Assembly asked the CSW and ECOSOC to prepare a comprehensive draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (DEDAW).⁸⁸ It was the first time the UN had accepted the need to address discrimination from the perspective of women and to draft principles on which it would deal with the problem.⁸⁹ As Jain explains, “DEDAW moved the idea of women’s equality beyond the confines of a rigid legal construct by pointing out those extralegal barriers that were socially constructed and more resistant to change”.⁹⁰ From the above analyses, tables 1 and 2 show the establishers of the CSW and the fact sheet shows the different women conferences of the first phase from 1945-1963.

⁸⁵ United Nations Intellectual History Project, p. 1.

⁸⁶ G. Felice, "Women, International Law and International Institutions", p.63.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ G.W. Thomas and S. Daws, *Women and Gender*, p. 5.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ G. Felice, "Women, International Law and International Institutions" ,p. 64.

Table 1: The 15 original members of the CSW

Members	Countries
Jessie Mary Grey Street	Australia
Evdokia Uralova	Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic
Way Sung New	People's Republic of China
Graciela Morales F. de Echeverria	Costa Rica
Bodil Begtrup	Denmark
Marie Helene Lefauchaux	France
Sara Basterrechea Ramirez	Guatemala
Shareefah Hamid Ali	India
Amalia C de Castillo Ledon	Mexico
Alice Kandalf Cosma	Syria
Mihri Pektas	Turkey
Elizavieta Alekseevna Popova	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
Mary Sutherland	United Kingdom
Dorothy Kenyon	USA
Isabel de Urdaneta	Venezuela

Source: UN, “Report of the CSW to ECOSOC on the first session of the commission held at Lake Success”, New York, 10-24 February 1947, E/281/Rev. 1, 25 February 1947, p. 1.

Table 2: Fact sheet of women conferences of the first phase from 1945-1963

Year	Conferences
1945	The United Nations Charter is adopted, establishing the United Nations and explaining that treaties created through the organization are to be honored above all other treaties.
1946	The Commission on Status of Women is established. The Commission begins as a sub-commission of the Commission on Human rights. It explores general guarantees of non-discriminations from a gender perspective and helps better define these issues. Its mandate is to create recommendations for urgent problems in women's rights and implement the principle that men and women should have equal rights.
1948	The International Bill of Human Rights is created. The Bill strengthens and extends the emphasis on the human rights of women, previously mentioned in the UN Charter. It lists a comprehensive set of rights to which all persons are entitled.

1952	The Convention on the Political Rights of Women,
1957	The Convention on the Nationality of Married Women,
1963	Resolution 1921 is adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It invites the CSW to prepare a draft declaration on the equal rights of men and women.

Source: D. Jauk, “Fact Sheet Final Revision: Gender, Sexualities, and Human Rights in the context of the UN”, Doctorate thesis in History, The University of Akron, September 7, 2013, p.1.

Furthermore, there comes in the second phase which started from 1963-1975. During this phase, many countries responded to the United Nations and enacted laws and launched different programmes to protect human rights. Adoption of declaration on CEDAW in 1967 acted as catalyst and the organization encompassed apart from codification of rights to economic and social realities of women.⁹¹ With the proclamation of 1975 as the International Women’s Year, the movement for women’s rights gathered momentum. The major conference was held in Mexico on the status of women which developed a theme of equality and peace. The 1960s and 1970s were a time of profound change in the United Nations, whose membership had begun to expand dramatically with the emergence of newly independent nations. The Organization began widening its focus to include the concerns of developing nations. The 1960s and early 1970s also saw the emergence in many parts of the world of a greater awareness of discrimination against women, and a rise in the number of organizations committed to combating it⁹². The burgeoning international women’s movement influenced the approaches to women and development in the UN. The Commission’s efforts increasingly focused on the role of women in development, both as beneficiaries and as agents of change.⁹³

As evidence began to accumulate, the Commission encouraged the UN to expand its technical assistance to further the advancement of women, especially in developing countries. In the wake of Ester Boserup’s influential study *Women’s Role in Economic Development* (1970), and the interest for economic issues it encouraged throughout the feminist movement, the Commission brought greater attention to the question of women’s economic participation,

⁹¹B. Luisa, "The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)" Issues in the U.S. Ratification, 2010, p. 2.

⁹² Ibid, p.27.

⁹³ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women*, p. 24.

cultural and social factors affecting women's participation in development.⁹⁴ In 1968, long-term Commission member Helvi Sipilä, a representative from Finland, was nominated as special reporter for the Status of Women and Family Planning Project and in this capacity launched numerous studies on the subject.⁹⁵ The Commission also appointed a Special Reporter to report on ways to eliminate stereotypes in the mass media portrayal and coverage of women and girl child issues.

In an effort to consolidate standards on women's rights that had been developed since 1945, the General Assembly requested the Commission in 1963 to draft a Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.⁹⁶ The Assembly noted that, while there had been measurable progress in achieving equal rights, "in various fields there still remains, in fact if not in law, considerable discrimination against women." The drafting process was supported from the beginning by women's rights activists working both within and outside the UN system. Drafting of the declaration by a committee, selected from within the Commission, began in 1965. On 7 November 1967, the declaration on the elimination of discrimination against Women was ultimately adopted by the General Assembly. While the declaration was an important step in securing the legal foundation of women's equality, its impact on the ground was more limited: the reporting procedures for the declaration's implementation were voluntary, and the level of response from Governments was low. The need for a legally binding Convention that defined women's rights CEDAW, which was to be ultimately adopted in 1979 largely, grew out of the perception that attempts to implement the Declaration had been limited.⁹⁷

In 1972 the CSW called for an IWY with themes of equality, development, and peace. To mark its 25th Anniversary, the Commission recommended that 1975 be designated IWY an idea introduced by Romania on behalf of the Women's International Democratic Federation.⁹⁸ Its observance was intended to remind the international community that discrimination against women, entrenched in law and deeply rooted cultural beliefs, was a persistent problem in much of the world. It would also encourage Governments, NGOs and individuals to increase their efforts to promote equality between men and women and to enhance their recognition of women's contributions to development. The General Assembly endorsed the

⁹⁴ D. Jain. *Women, Development and the UN*, p. 52.

⁹⁵ Ibid, p. 60.

⁹⁶ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement*, p. 29.

⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 30.

⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 33.

Commission's recommendation on International Women's Year and added a third theme to those of equality and development proposed by the Commission the recognition of women's increasing contribution to the strengthening of world peace thereby setting a three-tier agenda for the advancement of women.⁹⁹

Adding to the above, the third phase goes from 1975 to 1985 which deals with the CSW and the United Nations Decade for Women. The CSW called for the organization of an international conference to coincide with the IWY, a request approved by the General Assembly. The first World Conference of the IWY was subsequently held in Mexico City in 1975.¹⁰⁰ Over 2000 men and women traveled to Mexico for the conference as part of the official delegations.¹⁰¹ At that time, it was the largest meeting in history to deal specifically with women's issues.¹⁰² Of the 133 Governments who participated in the conference, 125 sent official delegations to the conference held between June 23rd and July 4th.¹⁰³ Seventy three percent of the members of the official delegations were women.¹⁰⁴ While for the first time 6,000 representatives of NGOs attended a parallel forum, the IWY tribunal.

The conference defined a World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year, which offered a comprehensive set of guidelines for the advancement of women until 1985.¹⁰⁵ With the conclusion of the conference in 1975, a long sought-after process of change had been set in motion and the Commission was now in a position to help sustain its momentum, while continuing to assess progress towards achieving equal rights for women in all fields.¹⁰⁶ It crystallized the past and present long-term objectives of the women's movement under the theme Equality-Development-Peace. This became the overall theme of the UN Decade for Women and all other world conferences on women afterwards.¹⁰⁷ From the beginning, these three objectives were considered interrelated and mutually reinforcing, such that the advancement of one

⁹⁹ M. E. Galey, *Women Find a Place: Women, Politics, and the United Nations*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995. pp. 41-42.

¹⁰⁰ K. Ghodsee, "Revisiting the United Nations decade, p.5.

¹⁰¹ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women*, p.34.

¹⁰² K. Ghodsee, "Revisiting the United Nations decade, p.5.

¹⁰³ F. S. Arvonne, *The U.N. decade for women: documents and dialogue Boulder*, Westview Press, 1987, p. 5.

¹⁰⁴ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement of Women*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁵ UN, "The World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women's Year", Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 19 June-2 July 1975", (UN document E/CONF.66/34), 1975, p. 35.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, p. 36.

¹⁰⁷ UN, "Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year, 19 June-2 July 1975," Mexico City, (UN document E/CONF.66/34, 76/IV.1.), United Nations, New York, 1976, p. 44.

contributes to the advancement of the others. This interaction is emphasized throughout the document adopted by the conference in Mexico City.¹⁰⁸

The General Assembly, endorsing the Declaration of Mexico and the World Plan of Action, proclaimed the years 1976 as the United Nations Decade for Women.¹⁰⁹ The objectives of the Decade were set out in the World Plan of Action. It also decided to review and appraise the implementation of the outcome of the conference at regular periods in the future. A decision was also taken to hold the World Conference in Copenhagen (Denmark) in 1980 for the first mid-decade review and to define further the objectives for the second half of the Decade.¹¹⁰ During the third phase the United Nations projected the fact that women's equality and rights, far from being isolated issues, were important factors in the well-being of societies everywhere¹¹¹. The decade also generated a series of action programmes that recognized the need to promote equality of men and women¹¹². In addition to reaffirming the importance of the IWY and to update its Plan of Action, three areas of urgent concern for women: employment, health and education came to the forefront, based on the mutual understanding that the broad goals of equality, development and peace enumerated.¹¹³ The Programme of Action called for stronger national measures to ensure women's ownership and control of property, as well as improvement in women's rights to inheritance, child custody and loss of nationality¹¹⁴.

More specifically, one should note that INSTRAW and UNIFEM emerge from the Mexico Conference. Until the 1970s there was only one small section within the UN system focusing on women's interests and needs. This section was upgraded in 1974 to the Branch for the Promotion of Equality between Men and Women.¹¹⁵ During the Mexico City Conference, this situation was considered inadequate for maintaining the momentum created around the world by the IWY and the conference¹¹⁶. Delegates stressed the need to strengthen the institutional structures devoted to women within the UN system.¹¹⁷ After the conference,

¹⁰⁸UN, "Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year", p. 44.

¹⁰⁹ B. Boutros-Ghali, *United Nations and the Advancement*, p. 177.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, p. 310.

¹¹¹UN, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women" *UN Treaty Series*, Vol.1249, No. 20378, 18 December 1979, p.13.

¹¹²J. G. Oyce and P. L. Marian, "Introduction: Perspectives on Women in Nations in a Globalized World", *Women and Politics Around the World: A Comparative History and Survey*. Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 14.

¹¹³ UN, "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination", p.13.

¹¹⁴ B. Boutros-Ghali, *The United Nations and the Advancement*, p. 44.

¹¹⁵Ibid, pp. 169-170.

¹¹⁶UN, "Report of the World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 6-12 March 1995," (A/CONF.166/9.), New York, 1995, p. 43.

¹¹⁷ B. Boutros-Ghali, *United Nations and the Advancement of Women*, pp. 169-170.

the Branch was renamed the Branch for the Advancement of Women, which later evolved into the Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in 1988, and is now part of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in New York.¹¹⁸

During the Mexico City Conference, delegates had already called for the establishment of a special fund for the 1976-1985 decade, which then became the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women.¹¹⁹ This initiative was thought to have promising prospects for funding. First, it appeared that there was some left over money in the IWY Trust Fund, which had been created through voluntary contributions from Member States for financing the IWY and the Mexico Conference.¹²⁰ The delegates were also encouraged by several pledges made at the conference, including US\$1 million by Iran for the Fund and other purposes, and another US\$1 million for the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), which was to be established in Teheran (Iran).¹²¹ The INSTRAW was set up by ECOSOC in 1976 following a resolution of the Mexico conference.¹²² After a series of complicated procedures, the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women was officially established in 1976 to give support to “the poorest women in the poorest countries” in their efforts to implement the goals of the World Plan of Action.¹²³ When the Decade ended in 1985, the mandate of the Fund was expanded to become the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), a separate and identifiable entity within the UN system in autonomous association with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹²⁴ The recommendation to establish INSTRAW was adopted by the Mexico City Conference. Furthermore, the formal decision to establish INSTRAW was made by ECOSOC in 1976 (Resolution 1998 LX of 12 May 1976).¹²⁵ Due to the political developments in Iran, the plan to locate the Institute in Teheran did not materialize. The

¹¹⁸G. W. Thomas and S. Daws, *Women and Gender: The Evolution of Women Specific Institutions and Gender Integration at the United Nations*, London, 2007, p. 2.

¹¹⁹ UN, “Report of the World Conference of the International Women’s Year”, p. 49.

¹²⁰P. Ingrid, *Recommendations Relating to Women and Development Emerging From Conferences Held Under the Auspices of the United Nations or the Specialized Agencies*, World Conference on the UN Decade for Women, Copenhagen, 1980. (UN document A/CONF.94/19.) United Nations, New York, 1980, p. 45.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²²“Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace,” para. 340, 1986, p. 128.

¹²³ U N, “The World Plan of Action for the Implementation of the Objectives of the International Women’s Year, p. 49.

¹²⁴ File 2, CF/GEN, No 12, D. Elson, “Progress of the World’s Women 2000”, UNIFEM, New York, 2000, p. 49.

¹²⁵ G.W. Thomas and S. Daws, *Women and Gender*, p. 4.

Institute initiated operations in New York in the beginning of the 1980s and finally established its permanent headquarters in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) in 1983.¹²⁶

INSTRAW, according to its mandate, is the only institution within the United Nations system to serve at the international level to promote and undertake research and training programmes to contribute to the advancement of women and gender equality worldwide. Its activities cover all Member States of the UN, both industrialized as well as developing countries.¹²⁷ INSTRAW, in consultation with civil society, governments and the UN system, has identified emerging and crucial themes for the integration of women into development. Studies promoted by INSTRAW have shown the effects of globalization in processes such as migration, the impact of structural adjustment policies on women's access to work, health and education, and violence against older women.¹²⁸ Themes related to human rights, gender-based violence and the role of women in processes of peace have also been approached through different research projects.¹²⁹

INSTRAW is funded exclusively through voluntary contributions from Member States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, foundations and private sources. It is not entitled to financing through regular contributions of UN Member States, which is the method of funding of other UN agencies; nor is it funded by an endowment, as is the case with some other UN research institutions. These ambiguities in its financing have hampered INSTRAW in reaching the scope and role it was originally intended to have. In order to revitalize and strengthen its work, the Institute received in 1999 an additional mandate to carry out its activities through the utilization of new information and communication technologies (ICT). As a result, it developed a new operational methodology for the production, management and dissemination of gender related knowledge and information.¹³⁰

The UN General Assembly established the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women UNIFEM, in December 1976 to assist in the implementation of the World Plan of Action adopted at the Mexico Conference.¹³¹ In selecting programmes, the Fund was to focus on rural women, poor women in urban areas, and other marginal groups of women, especially

¹²⁶ G.W. Thomas and S. Daws, *Women and Gender*, p. 4.

¹²⁷ "Statute of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women", Doc. A/39/511, 26 September 1984, art. 2. p. 9.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

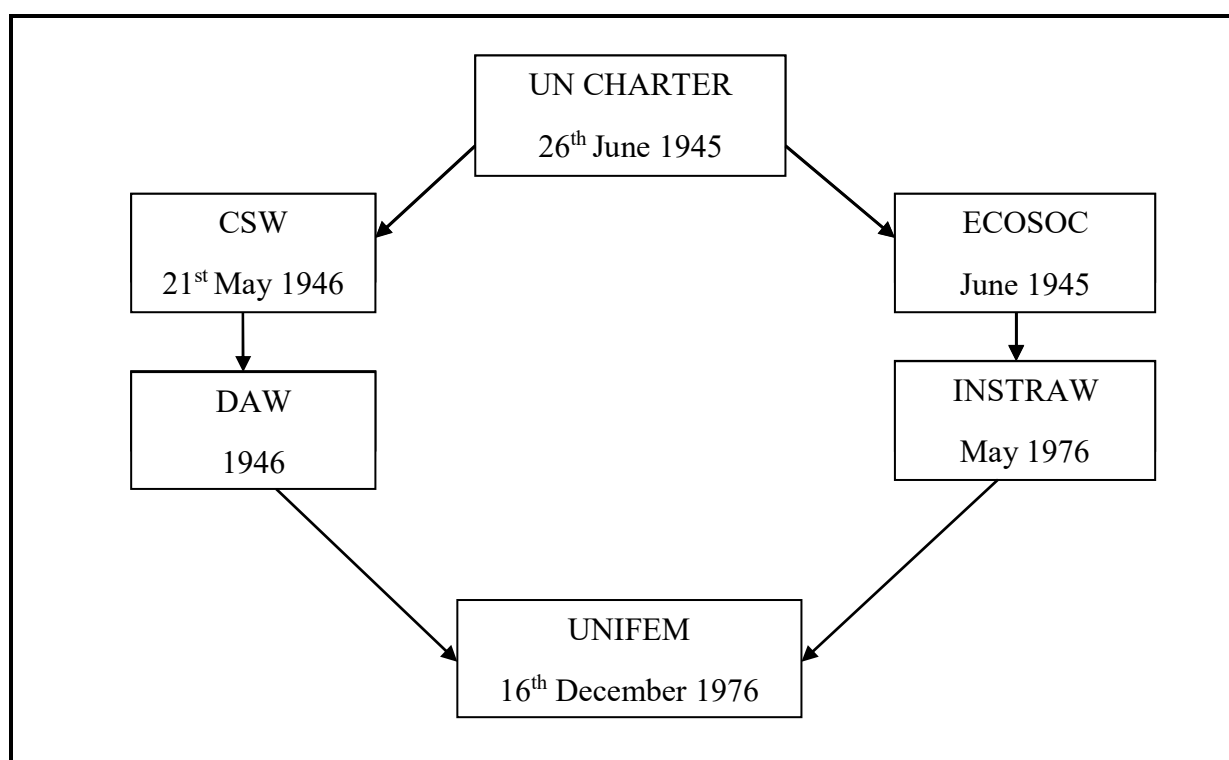
¹²⁹ H. Pietilä, *United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service*, p.45.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

¹³¹ UN, "Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women", A/RES/31/133, 16 December 1976, p.10.

the disadvantaged. The Fund had a Consultative Committee of five states selected by the President of the General Assembly. In 1984, in the lead up to the Nairobi Conference, the Fund became the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). It was designed to be a “catalyst to ensure appropriate involvement of women in mainstreaming development activities and to support innovative and experimental activities benefiting women in line with national and regional priorities under resolution 39/125”.¹³² UNIFEM was granted "executing agency status" by UNDP in 2000 and this allowed the organization to complete and work on projects for UNDP that related to women's rights and gender equality. UNIFEM became an operational presence in countries and a semi-autonomous agency within the UN Development Programme (UNDP).¹³³ In January 2011, UNIFEM was merged into UN Women a composite entity of the UN, with INSTRAW, OSAGI, and DAW. Diagrams 1 clearly gives us the brief.

Diagrams 1: Stages for the creation of UNIFEM



Source: UN, *Women 2000, The Four Global Women's Conferences 1975-1995. Historical Perspective*, Fact Sheet by UN/DPI, New York, 2000, p. 54.

Note: In a historic move, the United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to create UNIFEM as a new entity to accelerate progress in meeting the needs of women and girls worldwide.

¹³² “Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise”, para. 336, p.10.

¹³³ Ibid.

II. UNIFEM and its Structure

UNIFEM incorporates four existing parts of the UN system dealing with women and has been styled as the new UN “gender architecture”. This section highlights the background of UNIFEM from this perspective and sketches the histories of the agencies that it amalgamates. The establishment of UNIFEM unifies the patchwork of international structures dealing with women and offers the opportunity for greater institutional visibility of women’s lives. We then describe the objectives relating to women in international law and institutions before shading a light on the core strategies of UNIFEM.

a. UNIFEM as a Voluntary fund

UNIFEM stand for “The United Nations Development Fund for Women”, commonly known in French as “*Fonds de développement des Nations Unies pour la femme*” dedicated to advancing women’s rights and achieving gender equality.¹³⁴ It was the women’s fund at the United Nations.¹³⁵ It was established in December 1976 originally as the Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Decade for Women in the International Women's Year. UNIFEM is one of three UN agencies whose mandate is directly related to women. Its first director was Margaret C. Snyder.¹³⁶ It adopted its current name in 1985 when it became an autonomous organisation established in association with United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).¹³⁷ It provides financial and technical assistance to innovative programmes and strategies that promote women’s human rights, political participation and economic security.¹³⁸ The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) has a Central African regional office in Yaounde which began operations in June 2004. Its main involvement is with the human rights of women, reduction of poverty among women, the elimination of violence against women, HIV/AIDS among women, and increasing employment for women. UNIFEM also assists women in forming their own social, political, and economic organizations¹³⁹.

UNIFEM works on the premise that it is the fundamental right of every woman to live a life free from discrimination and violence, and that gender equality is essential to achieving

¹³⁴“UNIFEM Committee of the Seventh Olinca Model United Nations (OLINMUN)”, 2010, p.1.

¹³⁵UNIFEM, “Not a minute more Ending Violence Against Women”, John S. Swift Print, New York, NY 10017, 2003, p.1.

¹³⁶“UNIFEM Committee of the Seventh Olinca”, p.1.

¹³⁷ DFID, “Institutional Strategy Paper”, UNFEM, 94 Victoria Street London, March 1999, p.2.

¹³⁸ Ibid, p.2.

¹³⁹ M. D. DeLancey et al, *Historical dictionaries of the Republic of Cameroon*, Lanham, Maryland, 2010, p. 382.

development and to building just societies.¹⁴⁰ Since 1976 it has supported women's empowerment and gender equality through its programme offices and links with women's organizations in the major regions of the world.¹⁴¹ Its work on gender responsive budgets began in 1996 in Southern Africa and has expanded to include East Africa, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central America and the Andean region. It has worked to increase awareness throughout the UN system of gender responsive budgets as a tool to strengthen economic governance in all countries.¹⁴² It worked in close association with the UNDP to support women's empowerment and gender equality through its programme offices. It also linked with women's organizations, placing the advancement of women's human rights at the centre.¹⁴³ Since its inception, the UN Trust Fund has been a key global mechanism for supporting model to end violence against women and girls. It is unique in a number of ways. First, it is the only global grant-making mechanism to unite so many UN agencies at global and sub regional levels to review strategies for addressing women issues leading us on how this organization is structured.¹⁴⁴

b. Structure of UNIFEM

UNIFEM was created by a UN General Assembly resolution, following a call from women's organizations attending the 1975 UN First World Conference of Women in Mexico City. Today, UNIFEM works in over 100 countries and has 14 Regional Programmes.¹⁴⁵ It has Directors and a growing network of affiliated gender advisors and specialists in Africa, the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Latin America and the Caribbean.

- The UNDP Executive Board governs UNIFEM.
- UNIFEM has a five-member Consultative Committee, which meets once a year to provide guidance to the Fund on programme and policy matters.
- The Consultative Committee advises the UNDP administrators on all policy matters affecting the activities of the FUND.

¹⁴⁰ DFID, "Institutional Strategy Paper", p.2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment and gender equality", New York, 2003, p.1.

¹⁴³ D. Dok, "Guide to UN Documentation Dag Hammarskjöld", Library at Uppsala University, 2014, p.1.

¹⁴⁴ I. Alberdi, "The Activities of the United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to Eliminate Violence against Women, 54th Session of the Commission on the status of Women", New York, 1 March 2009, p.1.

¹⁴⁵ UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment", p.1.

- The Committee members serve for a term of three years¹⁴⁶.

- Other departments and cooperating organisations

- Department of Social Development
- Department of Justice and Constitutional Development
- Department of Education
- Department of Health
- Office on the Status of Women in the Presidency
- Commission on Gender Equality
- South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC)

- Executive Directors of the organization 1978 - 2014

Originally established in 1976 by the UN General Assembly as the Voluntary Fund for the UN Decade for Women (1976-85), UNIFEM has been led by several directors from different nationalities as shown in tables 3 and 4.

Table 3: Executive directors of UNIFEM 1978 - 2014

Director	Country of origin	Term of office
Inés Alberdi	Spain	2007-2014
Noeleen Heyzer	Singapore	1994-2007
Sharon Capeling-Alakija	Canada	1989-1994
Margaret C. Snyder	United States	1978-1989

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Development_Fund_for_Women, consulted on 04 May 2018.

The Office of the Executive Director, UNIFEM is responsible for managing and ensuring the provision of substantive support to intergovernmental processes on gender equality and the empowerment of women on a global level. The Office of the Executive Director is also responsible for providing vision, strategic planning and establishing priorities, leading the senior management team, leading advocacy as a global voice for women, ensuring

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.2.

coordination in the UN Common System, providing overall management and oversight and ensuring accountability to governance bodies¹⁴⁷.

- Staffing figures of UNIFEM in 1998

In carrying out its missions, UNIFEM has a variety of resources from different countries. We can then mention an example of human resources of 1998 presented in table 4 and whose effectiveness was well established:

Table 4: Staff of UNIFEM in 1998

UNIFEM head quarter, New York	Overseas staff Africa region	Asia and pacific region	Latin America and Caribbean region
22 professional staff (inc. Executive Director)	3 Regional Programme Advisers (Kenya, Zimbabwe, Senegal)	4 Regional Programme Advisers (India, Thailand, Fiji, Jordan)	4 Regional Programme Advisers (Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Barbados)
1 Technical Support Services Adviser (UNFPA-funded)	1 Gender Adviser	1 Gender Adviser	1 Gender Adviser
1 Junior Professional Officer (funded by Netherlands)	2 Gender, Population and Development Advisers (UNFPA-funded)	3 Junior Professional Officers (funded by Denmark, Germany, and Japan)	1 Gender, Population and Development Adviser (UNFPA funded)
13 general service staff	2 Junior Professional Officers (funded by Finland and Germany)		3 Junior Professional Officers (funded by The Netherlands x2 and Belgium)

Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Nations_Development_Fund_for_Women, consulted on 04 May 2018.

HRH Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan was appointed UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador in 1996. On January 26, 2006 UNIFEM nominated Nicole Kidman as its goodwill ambassador. UNIFEM was a small organisation, with approximately 50 professional staff, about half of whom are based in New York and the rest distributed around the world. Its

¹⁴⁷ UN Women: Executive Director Office (EDO) Intern, New York, 15 October, 2016, p.1.

funding remains modest, though its budget has almost doubled in the 1990s, from around US\$10m in 1990 to more than US\$20m in 1998.¹⁴⁸

- **Financing system of UNIFEM**

The Trust Fund is an important element of UNIFEM's efforts which allows the organization to support innovative projects, primarily at the local and national levels. The Trust Fund focuses on helping new projects get off the ground and move up to more diverse funding. Over the years, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) supported by UNIFEM have developed important pilot programmes that have served as models for larger efforts.¹⁴⁹ The Trust Fund has granted over US\$7 million to community-based, national and regional organizations, in more than 80 countries, that are working for the cause of women, but demand for support far exceeds the available resources: With only about US\$1 million per year to distribute, the Trust Fund receives, on average, requests for support of US\$15 million annually. UNIFEM is financed from voluntary contributions from both government and private donors. South Africa currently has no status in the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which works in association with the UNDP, but may pursue membership in due course. South Africa was elected to the Executive Board of the UNDP and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), for three years which commenced on 1st January 1998. South Africa has made annual voluntary contributions of R100 000, since the 1997/1998 to 2000/2001 financial years.¹⁵⁰

Since 1997, UNIFEM has invested an additional US\$18 million in anti-violence programming including the US\$7 million in Trust Fund grants. All these initiatives, which involved collaborations with many NGOs, governments and UN agencies, have had significant results, including the adoption of new legislation, expanded political will and increased local and national capacity to address violence.¹⁵¹ In 2009, the UN Trust Fund managed a portfolio of 81 active grants across 76 countries and territories world wide with a total value of nearly US\$ 30 million.¹⁵² In addition to governments' voluntary contributions, women in different countries have also raised funds for the work of UNIFEM's. This activity has been formalized by the establishment of UNIFEM National Committees to raise funds

¹⁴⁸ UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment", p.2.

¹⁴⁹ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence", p. 14.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Ibid, p. 15.

¹⁵² I. Alberdi, "The Activities of the United Nation Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)", p. 2.

and disseminate information about UNIFEM's work. These committees now exist in 15 countries with objectives of UNIFEM seen below¹⁵³.

c. Objectives of UNIFEM

The main objective of this organisation is to assist countries and the United Nations system to progress more effectively and efficiently towards the goal of achieving gender equality, women's empowerment and upholding women's rights. UNIFEM plays a key strategic role in the UN in promoting gender equality in international development. It has recently been undertaking a major process of reorientation to sharpen its focus and strengthen its catalytic role within the UN family and the international community¹⁵⁴. It has been one of the quickest among the UN funds and programmes to embrace the challenge of the UN reform process¹⁵⁵. It was mandated to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in the national, regional and international agendas and in the work of the United Nations system.¹⁵⁶ The goal of UNIFEM in its strategic women is to facilitate the implementation and accountability on national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment in six objective areas:¹⁵⁷

- Strengthening women's economic security and rights; and empowering women to achieve economic security as entrepreneurs, producers and home-based workers, especially in the context of new trade agendas and technologies;
- Engendering governance and leadership and peace-building to increase women's participation in decision-making processes that shape their lives;
- Promoting women's rights and the elimination of violence against women;¹⁵⁸
- Reducing feminized poverty;
- Reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS among women and girls;¹⁵⁹
- Achieving gender equality in responsive democratic governance promoting gender

¹⁵³ Interview with Atogho Ekukole Jessie, 50 Years, Head of communication service, 20th December 2013, Yaounde.

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Ndoping Florence, 50 Years, President of NOWWEF, 20th December 2013, Bamenda.

¹⁵⁵ DFID, "Institutional Strategy Paper", p.1.

¹⁵⁶ "Policy and programme work on international migration by the United Nations Development Fund for Women", New York, 2000, p.1.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ "D. Dok, Guide to UN Documentation Dag", 2014, p.1.

¹⁵⁹ "UNIFEM Committee of the Seventh Olinca", p.1.

- In stable and politically fragile countries in times of peace as well as war.¹⁶⁰

To pursue these goals, UNIFEM is active in all regions and at different levels. It works with countries to formulate and implement laws and policies to eliminate gender discrimination and promote gender equality in such areas as land and inheritance rights, decent work for women and ending violence against women. UNIFEM also aims to transform institutions to make them more accountable to gender equality and women's rights, to strengthen the capacity and voice of women's rights advocates, and to change harmful and discriminatory practices in society.¹⁶¹ As stated by Noeleen Heyzer, executive director, of UNIFEM that:

Women want a world free from hatred, violence and poverty, a world of equal opportunities and rights, a world that is prosperous and secure for all. UNIFEM worked to deliver on this vision not only through its work on peace and security, but also through our efforts to foster women's economic security, to secure their human rights and to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.¹⁶²

UNIFEM focuses on working toward three overarching results: strengthened support to the UN Resident Coordinator system to promote women's empowerment and right; new agreements and strengthened collaboration to fulfill commitments to gender equality with UN funds, programmes and agencies; and heightened visibility for field based innovations for gender equality in the inter-governmental arena.¹⁶³ In other words, UNIFEM has the mandate to increase options and opportunities for women's economic and social development in developing countries by providing technical and financial assistance to incorporate the women's dimension into development at all levels.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, UNIFEM review and strengthens its work programme in the light of the Platform for Action, focusing on women's political and economic empowerment. Its advocacy role concentrates on fostering a multilateral policy dialogue on women's empowerment which moves us to UNIFEM's core strategies.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁰ "Policy and programme work on international migration", p.1.

¹⁶¹ "UNIFEM Committee of the Seventh Olinca", p.1.

¹⁶² UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment", p.2.

¹⁶³ UN Women, "Gender Mainstreaming development programming: guidance note", New York, November 2014, p.1.

¹⁶⁴ "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action the Fourth World Conference on Women", 4-15 September 1995, p.126.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

d. The core strategies guiding UNIFEM

UNIFEM has adopted an approach, based on advocacy, brokering, and capacity building. It has identified five core strategies and three areas of concern to build on its comparative advantage in:¹⁶⁶

- Strengthening the capacity and leadership of women's organizations and networks.
- Leveraging political and financial support for women from a wide range of stakeholders in the development process.
- Forging new synergies and partnerships among women's organizations, governments, the UN system and the private sector.
- Undertaking pilot projects to test innovative approaches to women's empowerment and gender mainstreaming.
- Building an operational knowledge based on effective strategies for engendering mainstream of gender concerns into all aspects of development co-operation.

UNIFEM's strategies create a vision and direction for the whole organisation which help in preventing women from losing sight. It is important because it helps to have clear goals following the direction, or mission of the organisation. UNIFEM's strategies give a set of values and purpose. It helps us understand what success actually looks like. It provides a roadmap for UNIFEM and shows its destination and identifies useful stop points along the way. UNIFEM's Strategy outlines the following key aspects that makes women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality. As the Strategy seeks to mainstream a gender perspective into every sector, the purpose of this strategy is to present a comprehensive understanding of what gender mainstreaming means for a sustainable development perspective and to provide guidance on how gender mainstreaming can be put into practice. The strategies above promote greater UNIFEM concentration effort, and have influenced a number of projects and programmes funded around the world by UNIFEM as seen in diagram

¹⁶⁶ DFID, "Institutional Strategy Paper", p.2.

2 and 3 illustrating the five core strategies and three areas of concern to build on its comparative advantage in UNIFEM's strategic plans¹⁶⁷.

Diagram 2: UNIFEM's five strategic Frameworks

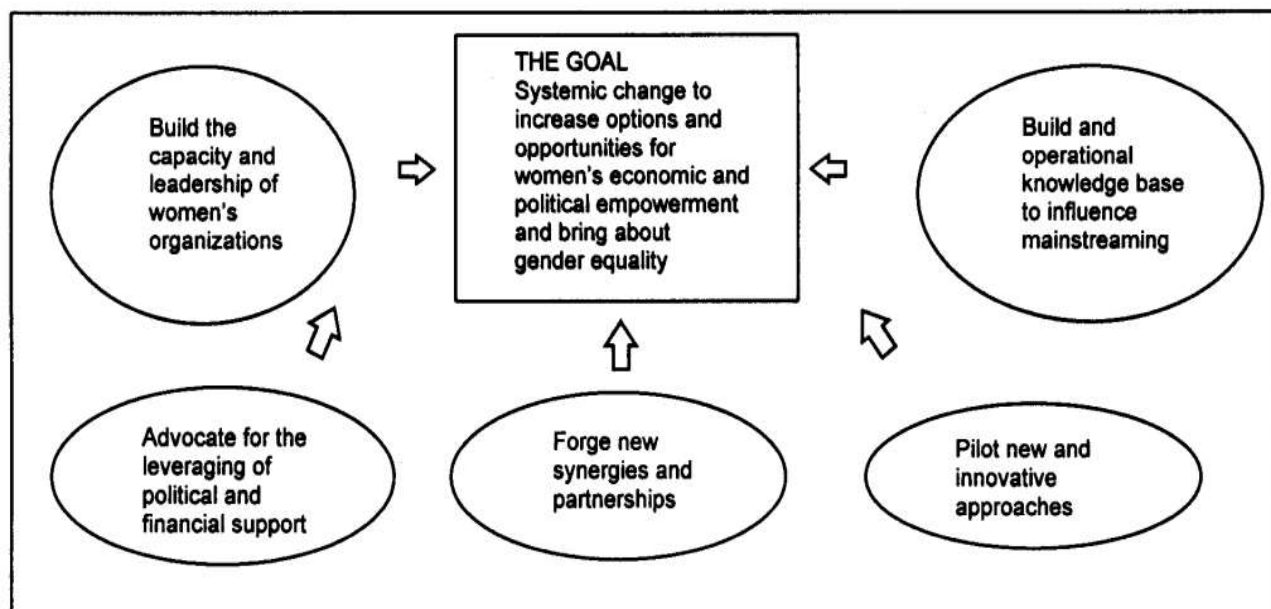
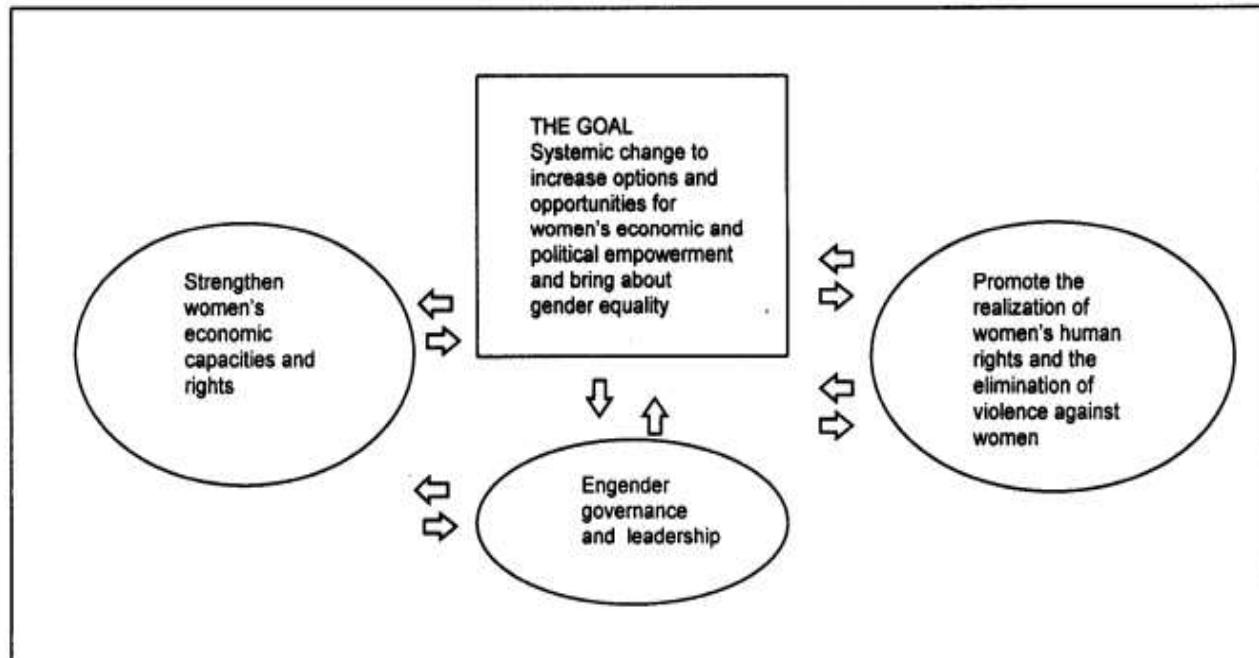


Diagram 3: UNIFEM's three main areas of concern for women



Source: "United Nations second regular session 3-7 April 2000", New York, UNIFEM, February 2003, p.5.

¹⁶⁷ DFID, "Institutional Strategy Paper", p.2.

Note: The diagrammes above outline the overarching goals, programmes and strategies to guide UNIFEM's work in support of the agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment agreed to at the series of United Nations world conferences held in the 1990s, particularly the fourth world conference on women (Beijing 1995).

These Strategies are designed to provide guidance, create an enabling environment and be non-prescriptive. The roll-out of the strategies is key component that provides relevant support for other sector partners in further development and alignment of the strategy. In the response to the need to strengthen the means of implementation and account on the sector gender priorities, monitoring programmes are in place to continually track progress made, review and refine measures put in place to achieve the intended outcomes of the strategies.

Relevant to the goal of the Strategic Plan (SP) UNIFEM seeks to contribute to the achievement of a single goal: National commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment are implemented. UNIFEM's efforts are guided by a theory of change based on a holistic approach that involves influencing changes at the macro, meso, and micro levels as illustrated in table 5.

Table 5: Key Competencies/Capabilities Relevant to the Goal of the SP

Dimension	Competency/Capability	Examples of actors
Development of strategies and normative frameworks (e.g. constitutions, laws, policies, strategies, public finance management systems, etc.) that are gender responsive and in line with national and international commitments. (Macro Level)	Collective Capabilities: Ability to carry out tasks To formulate adequate legislation/policies/strategies to protect women's human rights	Relevant Government organizations/institutions; local governments/local development councils
Implementation of strategies and normative frameworks. (Meso Level)	Ability to build relationships and legitimacy Effectively advocate for, and demand accountability of,	Gender equality advocates and women's groups such as HIV+, NWMs.

Implementation of activities and programmes (Micro level)	Mainstream institutions to develop and implement commitments to gender equality to connect with other individuals/organizations working on the same issues to exchange information and coordinate action	Women's networks, home based women's networks, etc. Journalists/Media institutions; researchers interested in working on gender Service delivery organizations such as equality issues women's groups and other CSOs
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Source: UNIFEM and DFID, *Globalization Gender Markers: strategic concerns for women in micro-enterprise and homework*, PK Printers, Bangkok, 1999, p.33.

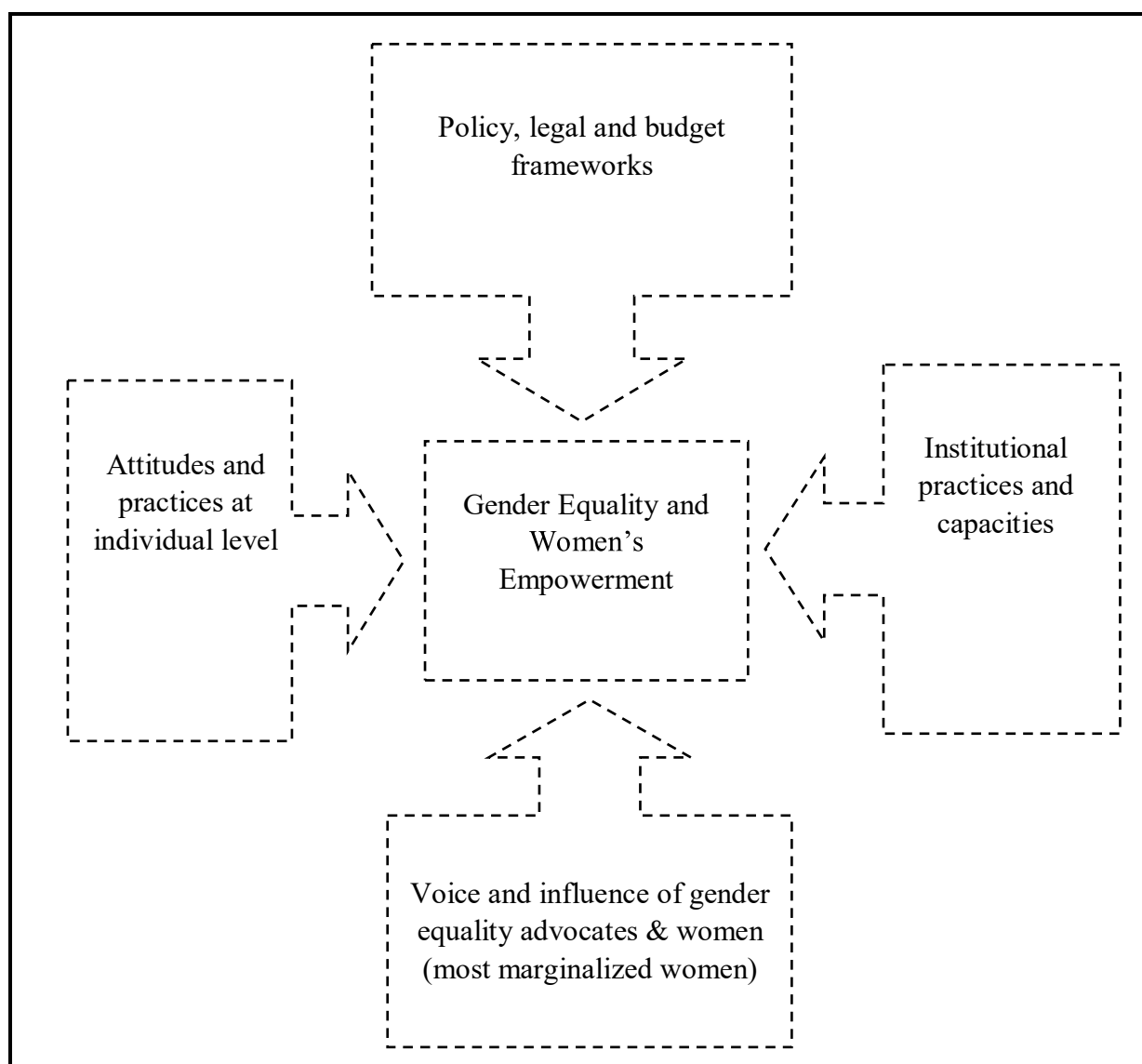
This theory of change is based on a number of key assumptions: There are strong commitments to gender equality at national and international levels which if implemented will substantially enhance gender equality. The implementation of these commitments requires:¹⁶⁸

- At the macro level - the development of strategies and normative frameworks (e.g., constitutions, laws, policies, judicial processes, and budget processes) that are gender responsive and in line with national and international commitments Development Results Framework (DRF);
- At the meso level - strengthened capacities of NWMs and other gender equality advocates and women's groups for lobbying for and demanding accountability of mainstream institutions to implement the development strategies and normative frameworks and;
- strengthened capacities of mainstream institutions to implement the gender responsive development strategies and normative frameworks as they relate to their respective spheres of responsibility to influence the desired changes;
- At the micro level - the availability of model pilots showing how gender responsive development strategies and normative frameworks, combined with well-positioned and capable gender equality advocates and interlocutors, and mainstream institutions with capacities for implementation of these strategies and frameworks, all work together to bring about actual changes in the lives of people towards greater gender equality. Rigorous evaluations of these pilots are essential prerequisites to any plans for their replication or up scaling.

¹⁶⁸UNIFEM, *Globalization Gender Markers: strategic concerns for women in micro-enterprise and homework*, DFID, PK Printers, Bangkok, 1999, p. 32.

With this attention, pressure for international development organizations to present coherent and convincing approaches to it becomes increasing. It is thus not surprising that the 2007 Evaluation of UNIFEM's Multi-Year Funding Framework (MYFF) System concluded that: "While UNIFEM is successful in supporting capacity development of its partners, it has not (yet) systematized its specific experiences into an explicit theory or generic concept of capacity development". In response, the current SP commits UNIFEM to "join with other UN organizations to more concretely identify the methodologies and measurements that underpin its capacity development and investments."¹⁶⁹ This can be further illustrated in diagramme 4.

Diagram 4: UNIFEM's Theory of Change underlying its Development Results Framework



Source: "UNIFEM's framework and guidance note for capacity development", March 2010, p. 16.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 33.

The diagramme shows the SP and its Theory of Change and Results Frameworks that provide a relevant, appropriate and conceptually sound articulation of UNIFEM's core mandate around the achievement of Gender equality and Women Empowerment. The SP appears to be largely providing a conceptual umbrella for thematic and strategic coherence, rather than acting as a strategic driver for operations. The breadth and generality of UNIFEM's theory of change and its outcomes mean that most UNIFEM's activities fit within these.

One of UNIFEM's core strategies is based on UNIFEM's practice to further document and analyse work in the field.¹⁷⁰ It commissioned a series of regional scans by outside experts to assess the nature and extent of issues women are facing in each region, as well as the efforts made to combat it. The report on this helps build on information gathered in those scans, particularly as they shed light on many programmes and networks that have not received recognition outside their own sphere. The analyses from individual countries and numerous regions help the organisation to schedule its programmes on how to rescue women in the world. UNIFEM's documentation of the years of work by activists and other organizations, as well as its own work, has shown that the kind of change needed requires a coordinated and sustained effort on many levels.¹⁷¹ A review of the most promising strategies shows that UNIFEM incorporates international commitments and obligations, utilizes regional organizations and mechanisms where available, demand national commitments, involve local communities and includes and inspires those working for change at the grass-root level. These interwoven connections require strategies that are also linked, bringing together awareness-raising, legal change, national plans of action and research.¹⁷² Thus, government remains accountable for outcomes, drawing on strategic partnerships with civil society organizations, the private sector, the UN System including UNIFEM, and other multilateral and bilateral institutions.

UNIFEM's Strategies set out its commitment to "adopting a human rights-based approach in line with international standards and leaving no one behind by: addressing inequalities and discrimination; meaningfully involving beneficiaries, including women's organisations, and other agents of change, such as men and boys; and responding to the

¹⁷⁰H. Baser and I. Paterson: *Moving towards a Capacity Development Strategy for UNIFEM: What can international practice contribute*, May 2009, p.19.

¹⁷¹ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence", p.11.

¹⁷² Ibid, pp. 11-12

circumstances of the poorest and most excluded women, including those facing marginalization and multiple intersecting forms of discrimination¹⁷³. At a national level, UNIFEM develops its programmatic strategies in consultation with stakeholders and partners. This enables UNIFEM to achieve greater clarity and transparency in prioritising activities and in working with partners¹⁷⁴.

III. The advent of UNIFEM in Cameroon

This section will help us understand the advent of UNIFEM and the commitment of the United Nations to support Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. It will also discuss its establishment in Cameroon before showcasing UNIFEM's partners and representatives as well as the functions of this organization in Cameroon.

a. UN's commitment to support Africa

The UN Decade for Women was the most successful of all the UN theme decades. The time was right and ripe for it. The process which began to mature in the early 1970s became concrete in Mexico City in 1975. The Mexico conference-initiated tools for cooperation with partners in Africa to support its implementation of all into sphere of life. In particular, the conference had established cooperation throughout the world and Africa in providing assistance to States Parties in meeting their commitments under UNIFEM, and has been involved in consultations with UNDP regarding the various phases of the decade for women. This helped pursue further opportunities for collaboration and ways of strengthening the UN's commitment to support Africa¹⁷⁵. In the consultations of the Mexico conference held while designing this project, Government and NGO representatives from across the region expressed tremendous enthusiasm for working to improve implementation for women in Africa and for working with UNIFEM to help create the conditions that will make this possible. Their commitment is an invaluable resource in the struggle to achieve equality for the African women. Their insights and experiences, and willingness to collaborate have helped shape Africa in the development of its implementation strategies¹⁷⁶.

Much took place during the UN Decade for Women 1976-1985 in increasing Women's awareness and self-confidence everywhere in Africa. At the world conferences

¹⁷³ UN Women, "2017-2018 Performance Assessment", MOPAN, February 2019, p.29.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p.33.

¹⁷⁵ "African Women's Decade 2010-2020: Make Woman Count Promoting the Empowerment of African Women and Girls", UK, Oxfam, 2016, p.5.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid, p.5.

women had also reached out to each other across borders; global sisterhood was becoming a reality, and at home it was passed on to those who were not present at the world conferences. The 1970s brought into the discussions the potential contribution of African women to development efforts in each country. The phrase "integration of women into development" was adopted, and women were seen as a resource the utilization of which should be intensified. For this purpose, it was necessary to improve not just the status but also the nutrition, health and training of women. The Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies represented in many ways a turning point in the entire history of African women in the UN. It recognizes women as "intellectuals, policy-makers, decision-makers, planners and contributors, and beneficiaries of development", and obliges both Member States and the UN System to take this into consideration in policy and practice. It clearly stated that:

Women's perspective on human development is critical, since it is in the interest of human enrichment and progress to introduce and weave into the social fabric women's concept of equality, their choices between alternative development strategies and their approach to peace, in accordance with their aspirations, interests and talents. These things are not only desirable in themselves but are also essential for the attainment of the goals and objectives of the Decade¹⁷⁷.

As a result of this a resolution was established to promote the wellbeing of the African woman following the various conferences held in the 1970s. For instance, in the Mexico conference of 1975, its resolutions stated that in relation to research and training for the advancement of women in Africa, the World Conference of the International Women's Year, decided that:¹⁷⁸ Considering the increasingly important role of African women in the political, economic, social and cultural affairs of their countries, considering the need to establish all the conditions required training and the elimination of illiteracy in order to ensure more effective participation of African women, considering the precarious situation of the great majority and the consequent need for vigorous and comprehensive action, considering the objectives of the Pan-African Women's Organization relating to the acceleration of the advancement of African women,¹⁷⁹ considering the decision of the Pan-African Women's Organization to establish a training centre at the organization's headquarters,¹⁸⁰ welcomes the decision of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa, supports the decision of the Pan-African Women's Organization to establish a training centre for the advancement of women and recommending close collaboration to further the aims and objectives calling upon

¹⁷⁷"Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year", p. 73.

¹⁷⁸*Ibid*, p. 72.

¹⁷⁹R. Elisabeth and J. S. Ellen, "Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building", New York, October 2002, p. 5.

¹⁸⁰"Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year", p. 78.

United Nations specialized agencies to give all assistance and advisory services to the development of these centres for the benefit of African woman¹⁸¹.

In relation to UN specialized agencies in Africa, after the creation of UNIFEM in 1976, the UN General Assembly encouraged UNIFEM to expand its work in the area of peace and security. Thus, in the early 1990s, UNIFEM developed the African Women in Crisis (AFWIC) programme, which called attention to women's psychosocial and trauma needs in the aftermath of war and supported African women leaders to build activist peace networks¹⁸². AFWIC expanded on work begun by Laketch Dirasse in East Africa and it has since expanded this programme to almost every region in the world, now supporting women's efforts to advocate for peace¹⁸³. UNIFEM's work in Africa focuses on providing support to women's leadership in post-conflict situations and peace negotiations and on transforming policy processes to eliminate women's poverty, violence against women and HIV/AIDS¹⁸⁴.

UNIFEM participated in the African Union's (AU) newly established Committee of Inquiry, at the time ambassador Baba Gana Kingibe, Head of the AU Mission in Sudan and Special Representative of the Chairperson of the AU Commission, said that setting up the Committee was an immediate response to violence against women in Africa. According to Kingibe, the Committee examines and identifies those responsible for the violations and makes recommendations on appropriate sanctions, in conformity with the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Women, which came into force in 2005¹⁸⁵. Regional Programme Director for UNIFEM in Africa, Nyaradzai Gumbonzvanda, welcomed the urgency with which the Committee was set up saying that; it gives a ray of hope to African women, children and survivors of violence that impunity and inaction by authorities is being seriously dealt with. "It sends immediate warning bells to perpetrators of sexual and GBV that impunity will no longer be the order of the day in Africa," she said. UNIFEM is partnering with the African Union to support African women's participation and facilitate implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1325 and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality¹⁸⁶. The goal of UNIFEM in

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p. 66.

¹⁸² H. N. Florea, *Gender, Human Security and the United Nations: Security Language as a Political Framework for Women*, London: Routledge, 2010, p.99.

¹⁸³ D. Jain. *Women, Development and the UN*, p.120.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid, p.128.

¹⁸⁵ R. Gicira, "UNIFEM join African Union Committee of Inquiry on allegations of sexual misconduct by forces in Darfur: Sudan", UNIFEM, Media Inquiries: Partnerships and Communications Officer, East and Horn of Africa Regional Office, 4th may 2006, p.1.

¹⁸⁶ File 4, CF/GEN, No 10, *African Union Gender policy*, 22 May 2009, p.16.

Africa is to contribute to the realization of African women's empowerment towards the elimination of poverty, gender inequality and all forms of human insecurity¹⁸⁷.

UNIFEM supported the AU in putting gender equality on the policy-making agenda of regional and national actors, and with the establishment of a liaison office to the AU in 2008 with the objective of providing technical and financial assistance to support women's rights. A memorandum of understanding, signed in 2005, guides UNIFEM's partnership with the AU through the Women and Gender Development Directorate in three areas: capacity building for human rights programming, gender mainstreaming and monitoring within the AU; strengthening women's human rights in conflict and post-conflict situations; and mobilizing women's agency and effective participation through AU institutions. UNIFEM has supported the mainstreaming of guidelines and manuals, such the development of the AU Handbook on 'Good Practices in Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Empowerment in Africa'¹⁸⁸.

Additionally, UN Women supported the publication of a quarterly newsletter on progress towards gender equality within the AU, and in partnership with the African Center for Gender and Social Development of the ECA, launched the publication "Multi-Sectorial Approach to Women's Rights in Africa Manual" in May 2011. The Manual was developed to promote the adoption and use of a multi-sectorial approach to women's rights. In the first years of its operations the Liaison Office supported the AU in the mapping of regional and sub-regional networks that either were already working with or had an interest in partnering with the WGDD in supporting AU institutions and organs to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment¹⁸⁹. Until then, UNIFEM had four sub-regional offices in Africa: West Africa (Dakar), Central Africa (Kigali), East Africa (Nairobi) and South Africa (Johannesburg). UNIFEM now UN Women following map 1 currently has two regional offices in Africa, one for West and Central Africa based in Dakar (Senegal) and one for Eastern and Southern Africa based in Nairobi, (Kenya) with decentralised responsibility for regional programming that is; one multi-country office in South Africa covering Namibia, Botswana, Switzerland and Lesotho, 19 country offices in Cameroon, Somalia, Malawi, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and a programme presences in Cape Verde, Guinea Bissau and Ghana¹⁹⁰.

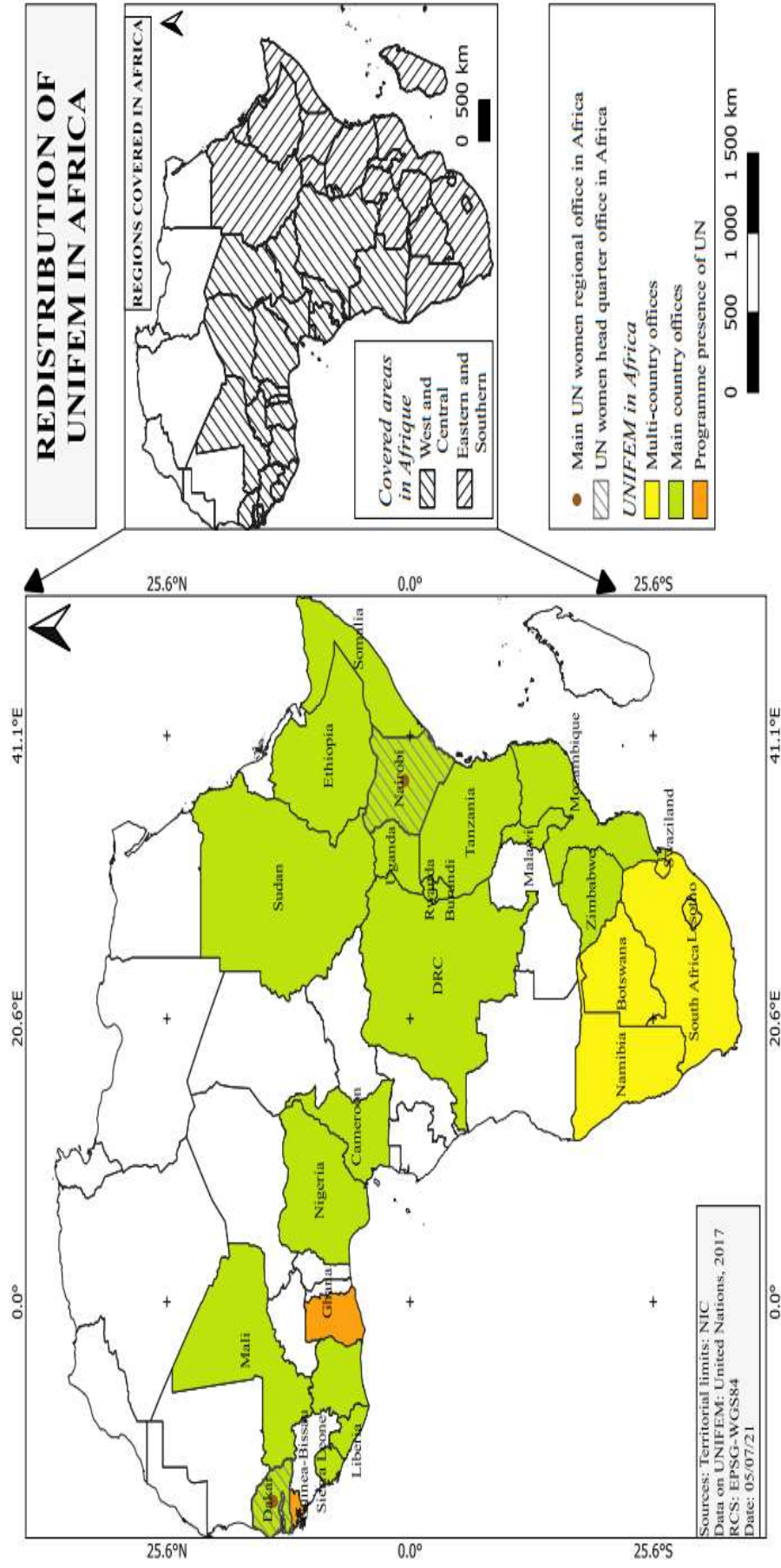
¹⁸⁷ Ibid, p.1.

¹⁸⁸O. Martin, "The African Union's Mechanisms to Foster Gender Mainstreaming and Ensure Women's Political Participation and Representation", IDEA, 2013, p. 20.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ "Gender Equality and Women Empowerment by AU, UNECA and UN Women", Addis Ababa, 2020, p. 3.

Map 1 : Redistribution of UNIFEM in Africa



Source : National institute of cartography (NIC) 5th July 2021, adapted by Bertrand Chancellor Wandji, Department of Geography, the University of Yaounde I.

Note: Through its regional offices in Dakar and Nairobi, and a number of country and multi-country offices, UN Women implements programs tailored to each country, in close collaboration with governments, the UN system and civil society.

Cameroon has since the creation and signature of UNIFEM in 1976, striven to implement its relationship indirectly and directly with UNIFEM in the political, social and cultural fields. Based on the fact that women remain the poorest of the poor, the government has developed programmes and projects to reduce poverty among women, with the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners. The indirect strategic orientations that provide and paved a base for the establishment of UNIFEM in Cameroon are the Constitution and the different international conventions ratified by Cameroon to protect the Cameroonian woman¹⁹¹. Some of these conventions include CEDAW in 1979; the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women (1985), the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1993), and the Cairo Declaration on Population and Development (1994). Cameroon signed the BPFA in 1995, the MDGs; Resolution 1325 of the United Nations on Women's Participation in Peace management and Conflict Resolution; Declaration of African Union Heads of States on equality between men and women; the platform of ECCAS on gender integration in policies and action plans of communities; the policy declaration on the Integration of Women in Development with 7 priority areas, the Multi-sectoral Plan of Action on Women and Development, and the National Plan of Action on the Integration of Women in Development were drafted and approved in 1997 and adopted by the Government in 1999. The advancement and protection of the girl child constitutes one of the priority elements of those documents¹⁹².

Cameroon as a developing country with a capacity to become an emerging democracy prepared the ground for UNIFEM to become a great platform into the country's executive practices, legislation, judiciary, press and the civil society actions. With the same objective, civil society also mobilized itself and development partners in supporting the government's actions to significantly reorganize itself creating several ministries with social responsibilities in December 8, 2004 which went in line with UNIFEM's multi-year funding framework (MYFF) strategic plan for the period 2004-2007 which focused on four goals¹⁹³. These include the Ministries of Social Affairs, Women's and Family Promotion, Employment and

¹⁹¹ "Presentation of International Conventions ratified by Cameroon in favour of women", MINPROFF, 27 August 19, p.1.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ A/60/274, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Sixtieth session", United Nations, 19 August 2005, p.3.

Vocational Training, Labor and Social Security, and Youth. Thus, the government gradually put in place, a solid ground for UNIFEM to be established¹⁹⁴.

Violence Against Women (VAW) is a global problem affecting millions of women and girls of all cultures, religions, socio-economic strata, educational levels and other diversity. It is recognized as a human rights issue that manifests itself in physical, psychological, sexual, social and cultural forms. Violence is the result of the complex interplay of individual, relational, social, cultural and environmental factors. The root cause of violence in most societies is the unequal power relations between females and males, which makes violence a critical gender issue. In the Central Africa sub-region, UNIFEM began working on VAW in 2004 through initiatives at local, national, and sub-regional levels. Efforts have included awareness raising and networking, capacity building of rights holders and duty bearers, advocacy, as well as action-oriented research. Consultations with UNIFEM staff and a review of sub-regional and country level strategies indicate that SGBV has become a more pronounced focus. In Central Africa, particularly in Cameroon, UNIFEM had built long-term relationships with ministries like (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Ministry of health, Ministry of justice, etc) that went beyond the work on VAW. Further, UNIFEM had established in country offices strong relationships with NWMs, women's organizations, gender advocates, and CSOs¹⁹⁵. Consulted CSO stakeholders noted that, among all UN agencies, UNIFEM tended to have the closest links and be most accessible to CSO partners. While having strong relationships with CSOs and women's grassroots movements, UNIFEM's status as a UN agency also allows it to act as a mediator and facilitator between CSOs, government agencies, and donors, as well as other UN agencies¹⁹⁶.

The majority of consulted stakeholders in Cameroon considered this combination of legitimacy and connectedness with a wide range of different partners as one of UNIFEM's key strengths and as its advantage in relation to gender equality and women's rights issues in general when compared to other UN or other multilateral agencies. Trying to open up political spaces, women in Cameroon have for years been able to count on UNIFEM. As early as the 1990s, UNIFEM supported greater dialogue between women from the North and the South to assist in developing a women's agenda. In 2004, UNIFEM consulted extensively with women

¹⁹⁴M. T., Abena Ondo, "54th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, 15 - Year review of the implementation of the Beijing declaration platform for action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000)", New York, March 2nd, 2010, p.2.

¹⁹⁵"Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa sub- region", Universalia, April 2011, p.5.

¹⁹⁶ A/60/274, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities, p.5.

throughout Cameroon on their main concerns: They voiced the need for education and health care, for economic opportunities and the right to own land, for provisions to ensure political participation and to end gender-based violence. Making sure that these priorities are taken into account in planning for the country's future, UNIFEM fed the consultations' findings into the Joint Assessment Mission by the UN, which resulted in the establishment of a guiding framework for the international community's engagement in developing and empowering women in Cameroon¹⁹⁷.

To provide the Cameroonian women with an opportunity to make their voices heard directly, UNIFEM, together with the consulted development and national partners in Cameroon widely recognized UNIFEM's potential role with regard to gender equality in general (in gender mainstreaming and supporting NWMs), their levels of awareness and appreciation of UNIFEM's paved a way to the temporal establishment of UNIFEM project office in Cameroon created in 2004 and it became a full country office only in 2008¹⁹⁸. In Cameroon at the time of its establishment, despite the country office's relatively young age, UNIFEM had progressively been able to build a good reputation and establish its leadership role in relation to gender equality and women's rights. It also had been able to position itself strategically by playing a very active role in coordination and dialogue mechanisms within UN agencies and among development partners and the government (although UN coordination in Cameroon remains at its infant stages and still presents several challenges).

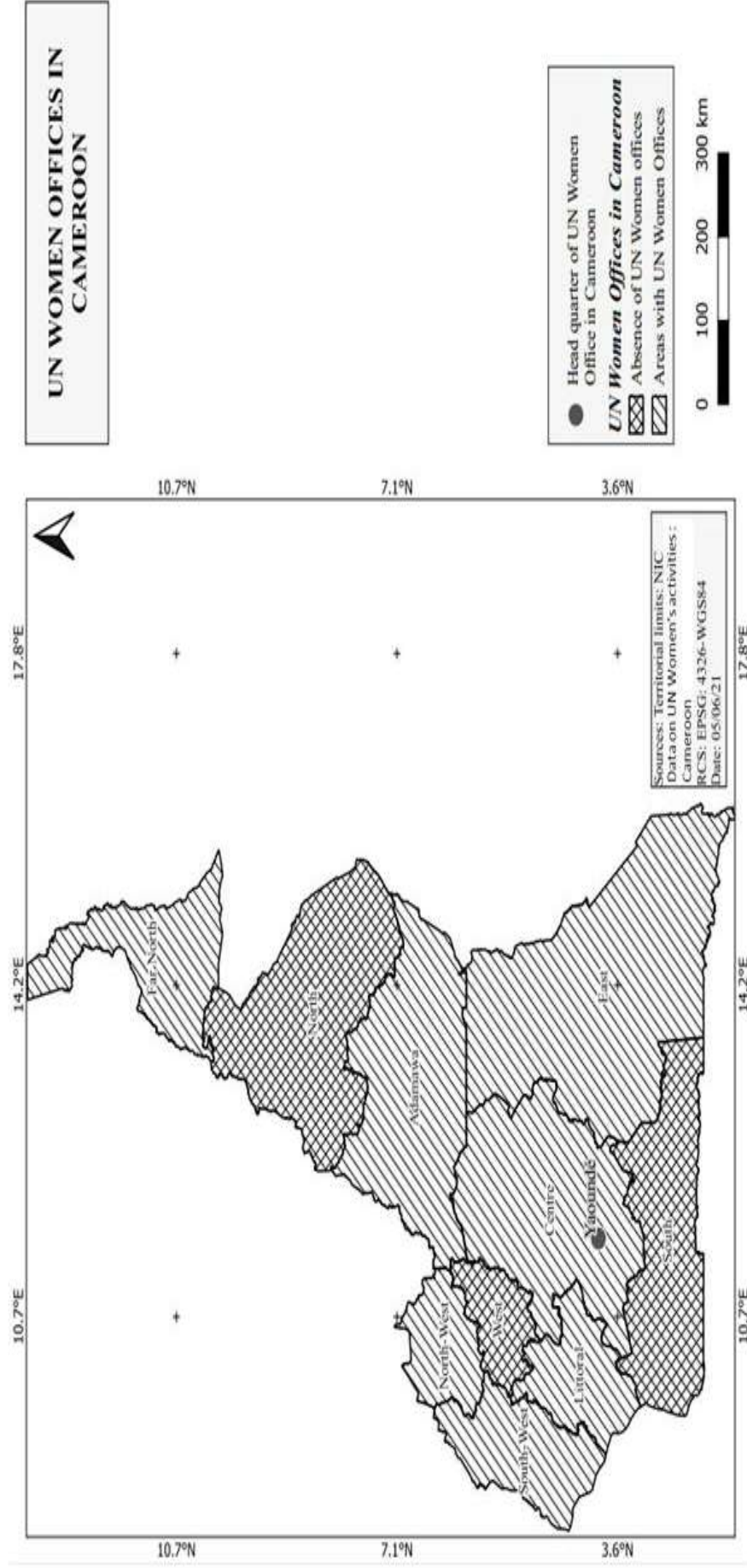
UNIFEM, which has been present in Cameroon since 2004, accompanying the Government of Cameroon in the areas of governance and strategic State management, poverty alleviation and the promotion of growth and employment, environmental management and improving the women's resilience to the effects of societal change, as well reducing its vulnerability in the society¹⁹⁹. UNIFEM capitalizes on its position and successful experience to strengthen the partnerships with key national and regional stakeholders as well as donors to ensure the realization of women's rights in Cameroon. The goal of UNIFEM presence in Cameroon, during the life span of its Strategic Plan, is to ensure that gender equality and women's empowerment is achieved, and women's human rights are enforced. However, to better present UNIFEM's presence in Cameroon, map 2 locates its currently working areas and map 2 and 3 its areas of intense activities that are (Douala, Yaounde, East, Adamawa, North, Far North, Northwest and Southwest regions).

¹⁹⁷ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p. 8.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid, p. 10.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

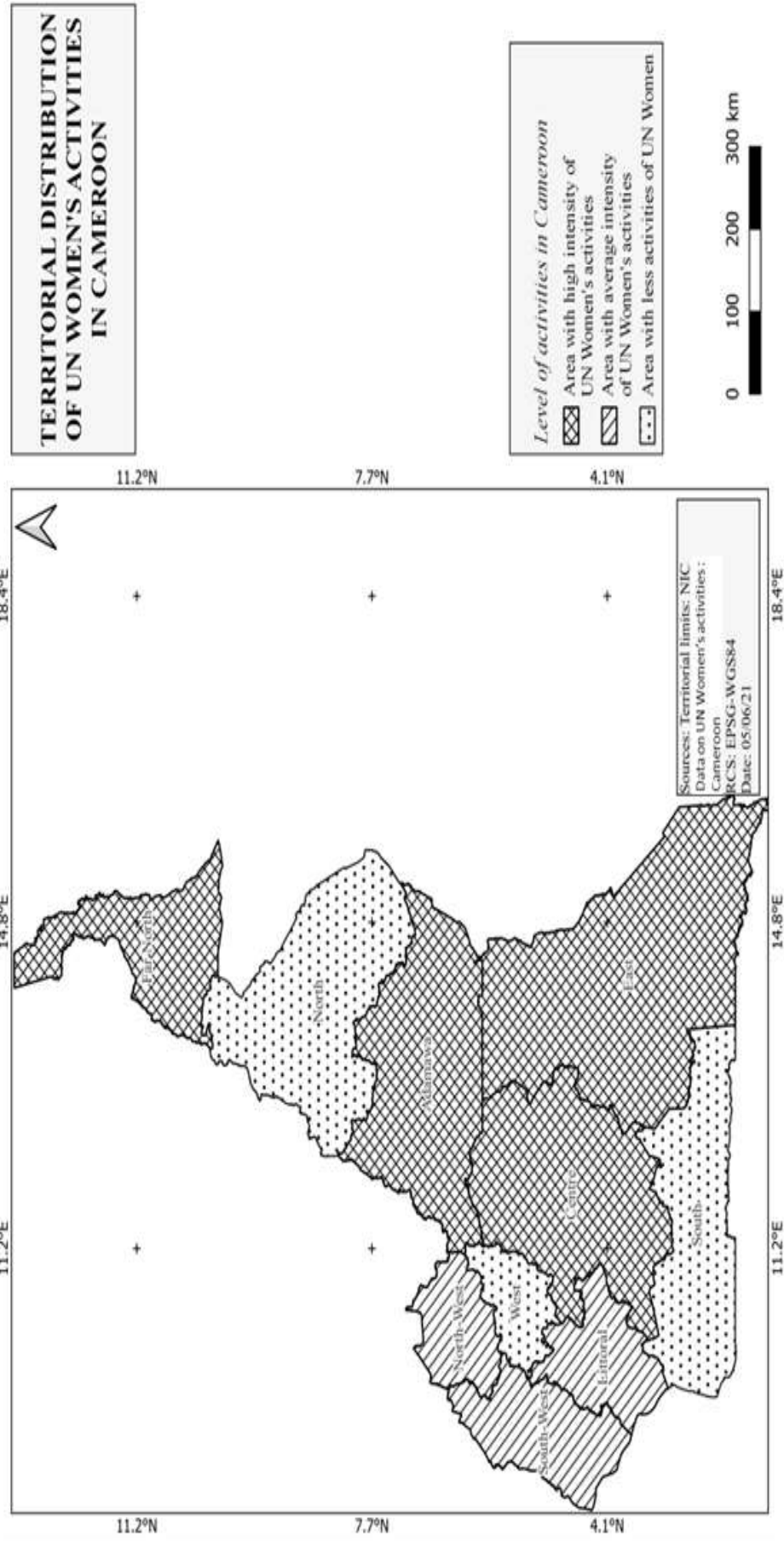
Map 2: UN Women offices in Cameroon



Source: National institute of cartography (NIC) 5th July 2021, adapted by Bertrand Chancelier Wandji, Department of Geography, the University of Yaounde 1.

Note: The UN Women offices provides general direction and guidance for women in the regions while the UN Women main office in Yaounde, covers Cameroon and the Central African Republic for ensuring effective execution of UN Women's mandate and responsibility with respect to the advancement of women.

Map3: Territorial distribution of UN Women activities in Cameroon



Source: National institute of cartography (NIC) 5th July 2021, adapted by Bertrand Chancelier Wandji, Department of Geography, the University of Yaounde I.

Note: UN Women has efficiently combined activities and impact areas, which have contributed to the synergetic approach that was needed to address the complexities of humanitarian, GBV, gender mainstreaming, Women's full participation in political and public decision-making processes and strengthening women's economic empowerment.

The focus of UNIFEM's programme in Cameroon is to contribute to addressing gender equality and women's empowerment through women's political participation, resource allocation and women's economic security and livelihoods. As such, the following areas have been identified as strategic areas for UNIFEM. In order to reinforce its Office in Cameroon, UNIFEM recruited international consultants with proven expertise in programme development, project management, partnership building and resource mobilization to oversee UNIFEM's work in Cameroon. Under the overall guidance of the Regional Programme Director (RPD), the Consultant work in close collaboration with the National Programme Coordinator in ensuring the effective execution of UNIFEM's mandate and responsibility for the advancement of women Human rights in Cameroon and later establishing a UN Women entity as seen below.

b. From UNIFEM to UN Women and its establishment in Cameroon

The transition from UNIFEM to UN Women generated a new institutional frame work in Africa and Cameroon. The establishment of the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women known as UN Women has been a result of years of negotiations between UN Member States and advocacy by the global women's movement. It has been part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact²⁰⁰. It has the following adding to the former UNIFEM main roles which are:²⁰¹

- To support inter-governmental bodies, such as the Commission on the Status of Women, in their formulation of policies, global standards and norms
- To help Member States to implement these standards, standing ready to provide suitable technical and financial support to those countries that request it, and to forge effective partnerships with civil society
- To hold the UN system accountable for its own commitments on gender equality, including regular monitoring of system-wide progress.

Thus, on July 2nd 2010, the United Nations General Assembly voted unanimously to create a new entity to accelerate progress in achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women throughout the world²⁰². The creation of UN Women came about as part of the UN

²⁰⁰ S. Charlotte, *UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women United Nations*, New York, United Nations press release, 2 July 2010, p. 1.

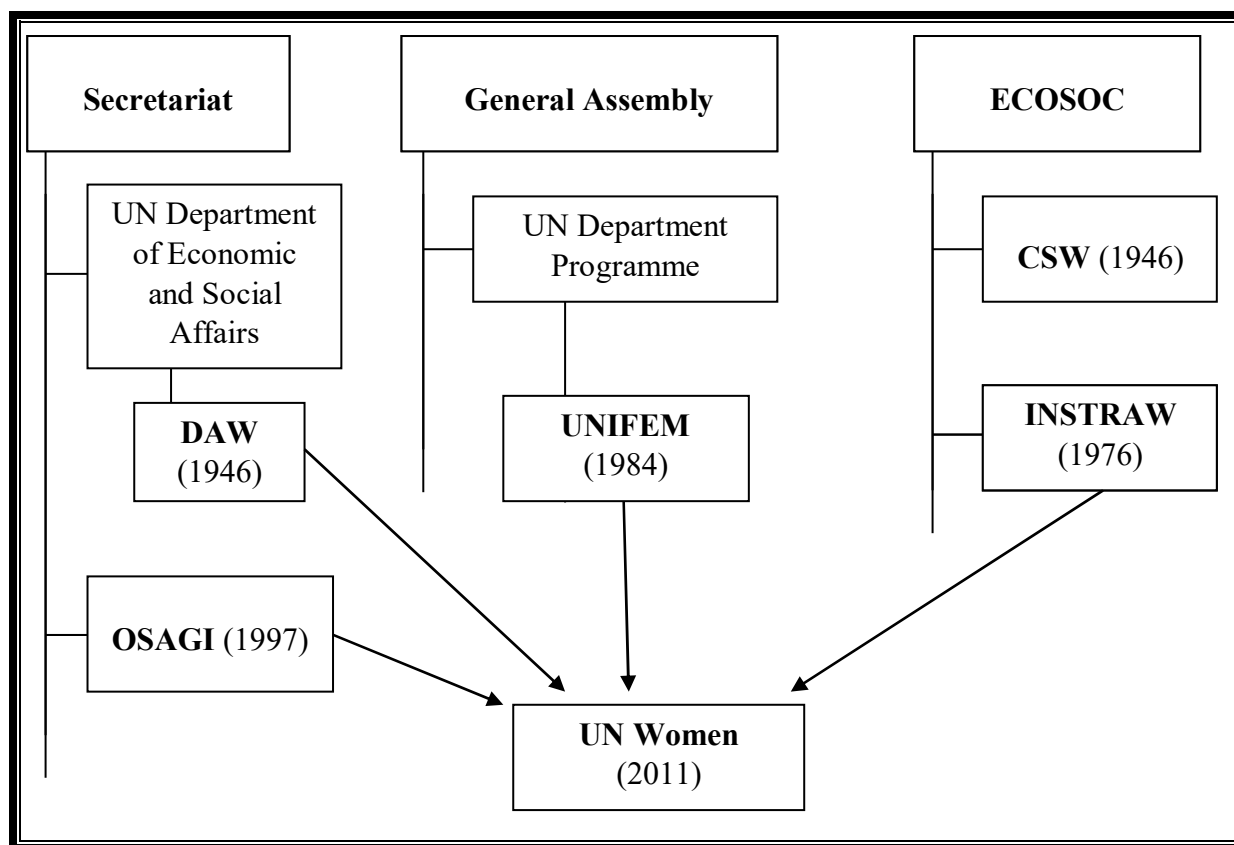
²⁰¹ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/about-us/about-un-women>, consulted on 22nd June 20.

²⁰² "United Nations Development Fund for Women: Australian National Committee part of UN Women", United Nations, New York, 22nd September 2010, p.3.

reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact. It merges and builds on the important work of four previously distinct parts of the UN system as seen in Diagram 5 which focuses exclusively on gender equality and women's empowerment²⁰³:

- Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW, established in 1946)
- International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW, established in 1976)
- Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women (OSAGI, established in 1997)
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM, established in 1976)

Diagram 5: The Four Components of UN Women



Source: M. N. Lynch, "The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women)", The Global Governance Institute, 64 Rue de Neufchatel, 1060 Brussels, Belgium, September 2011, p.14.

The four organizations (DAW, OSAGI, INSTRAW and UNIFEM) as shown in diagram 5 were combined over a six-month transitional phase, and UN Women was fully

²⁰³ S. Charlotte, *UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women*, p. 1.

operational by January 2011. The General Assembly, ECOSOC, and CSW provided intergovernmental governance to UN Women for norm implementation. In addition, the General Assembly, ECOSOC, and Executive Board of UN Women (composed of 41 members from around the world) control operational functions and policy guidance. There are two funds that donors are welcome to contribute to under UN Women; the Fund for Gender Equality and the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. Money is then allocated as grants to programmes and government agencies ²⁰⁴.

They were independently functional. It must be noted that UN Women serves a largely facilitative purpose and provides guidance and direction in the construction of policies which are implemented by other organisations. Till date, efforts related to higher education have been primarily driven by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) while efforts regarding discrimination against women have been tackled by the Commission for the Eradication of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). However, UN Women is in a strong position to make updated advisories and statements of recommendations to such organisations and it is with a broad aim along these lines that it convened from 21-23 February 2014, in London²⁰⁵.

Since its formation, UN Women has achieved progress in several areas such as: building an international movement where national leaders take on pledges to mitigate or eradicate violence against women of all ages; and working with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), governments, and private partners to improve healthcare systems available to women around the world under the Every Woman Every Child initiative ²⁰⁶. UN Women was created in 2010 as the only international entity specifically dedicated to gender equality and women's empowerment. It was immediately established in Cameroon as a full-fledged agency of the United Nations system by the end of 2011. In Cameroon, UN Women's partnership with the private sector produced a working tool for the effective implementation of the Women Economic Principles. Before UN Women, the former UNIFEM supported Cameroon in putting gender equality on the policy-making agenda of regional and national actors, and with the establishment of a liaison office²⁰⁷. It is reminded that UN Women plays a largely advisory and watchdog-like role for the rest of the UN and entities such as the UN

²⁰⁴ M. N. Lynch, "The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality", p.17.

²⁰⁵ "15th sessions: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNWomen) Study Guide", England, Wales, 2014, p. 5.

²⁰⁶ "15th sessions: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality", p. 4.

²⁰⁷ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/cameroon>, consulted on 22nd June 20.

CSW's efforts in promoting women's issues in various fields²⁰⁸. UNIFEM/UN Women have taken several measures to contribute to a greater equality.²⁰⁹ The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon stated that:

UN Women is guided by the fundamental conviction that investing in women is not just the right thing but the sensible thing to do. Women are the breadwinners who can help their families, communities and countries out of poverty. They are the mothers who can feed their children, and the leaders who will educate the next generation. Women are the police and the peacemakers who can help forge peace and stability. No one needs the support of UN Women more than those women who are most marginalized by lack of economic and other opportunities. That is why we are dedicated to working with Member States and other partners in the places where the need is greatest and the benefits of prosperity and education have not yet been broadly shared. I firmly believe in a future where women are free to lead and contribute to their societies, and where girls can grow up safe, healthy, educated and strong, and I will support UN Women in every way possible. Through the creation of UN Women, we have come closer to our goal of a world that ends discrimination, and that fully values and protects women and girls. Together, let us realize that vision"²¹⁰.

Since 2011, the new entity has become one of the main partners of the Cameroonian government for gender mainstreaming in key sectors of national development (health, economy, trade, elections, amongst others). UN Women Cameroon builds capacity of partners: Government (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Commission of National Human Rights and Freedoms, Elections Cameroon); and NGOs (CSO, media, political parties) for the institutionalization of gender. UN Women Cameroon works in four themes: Leadership and Political Participation, Economic Empowerment, Violence Against Women, and National Planning and Budgeting.

Current programmes in Cameroon:

- The Programme of Women Involved in Cross-Border Informal Trade (PAFICIT)
- Prevention and care of victims of gender-based violence through the establishment of a One Stop Centre
- H4 + / AIDS Collaboration on Accelerating Progress in Childhood, Newborn and Child Health Fund for Gender Equality
- UNGTG Gender Project (UN gender thematic group)

A tireless fighter for the cause of women and a great friend of Cameroon, Country Director of UN Women, Rachelle Djangone Mian, was indeed at the end of her mission in Cameroon taking a photo with some partners in a farewell ceremony to thank her and to

²⁰⁸ "15th sessions: United Nations Entity for Gender Equality", p. 13.

²⁰⁹ http://www.unifem.org/gender_issues/women_war, consulted on 22 June 20.

²¹⁰ UNWOMEN, "Annual Report 2010-2011", New York, 2010, p. 2.

testify to the leading role she has played in the fight for the promotion of women and gender equity as seen in picture 1.

Picture 1 : UN Women's team in Cameroon



Source : ONU femmes, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes 2014-2015*, Yaoundé - Cameroun, Avril 2015, p. 5.

Note: This is the dynamic team of UN Women Cameroon. No action would have been possible without these women and men who work daily to implement the commitments made by the organisation in Cameroon, said Rachelle Djangone Mian, UN Women Country Representative and Director (A good bye family picture of Rachelle Djangone Mian and UN Women Cameroon team in 2015).

c. Partners and UNIFEM's representatives in Cameroon

UNIFEM works in partnership with UN organisations, governments and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and networks to promote gender equality.²¹¹ It links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender main-streaming and women's

²¹¹UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence", p. 1.

empowerment strategies.²¹² UNIFEM plays an active role in working with its partners to disseminate lessons learned, and promote the replication of good practice, from innovative approaches to poverty reduction, in particular through the strengthening of women's economic capacity, bringing a gender approach into issues of governance and leadership, and promoting women's rights in Cameroon.²¹³

UNIFEM works closely with other UN agencies, funds and programmes, specifically consulting and including in planning processes, integrated task forces and training exercises, for instance on those agencies with experience and expertise in gender issues in Cameroon, such as UNICEF, UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNDP, UNHCR, United Nations University Institute for New Technologies (UNU/INTECH). Particular attention is paid in collaborating with UNIFEM in strengthening efforts towards promoting gender equality within the framework of the achievement of the international development targets.²¹⁴ UNIFEM also encouraged developing further, and extending to other UN partners, the capacity building support role it is currently developing through its relationship with the UN Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA)²¹⁵. It also continues to build its network of national committees, including the establishment of more of these in Cameroon.²¹⁶ The UN Development Programme (UNDP) is more systematically including women in weapons collection and development packages as a result of its partnership with UNIFEM in Cameroon.²¹⁷ Recent research suggests that there are at least five core capabilities each related to a key function or process that most if not all organizations or institutions need to fulfill in order to be effective. UNIFEM seeks to strengthen its partners' capabilities in Cameroon, as follows:²¹⁸

- The capability to commit or engage, which would include, among others, sensitivity to gender, rights and diversity issues, the motivation to help address those issues, and the capability for participatory decision making and making strategic choices;

²¹²UNIFEM, *Getting it Right, Doing it Right: Gender and Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration*, New York, October 2004, p. 1.

²¹³ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence", p. 1.

²¹⁴ UNIFEM, "Getting it Right, Doing it Right:," p. 3.

²¹⁵ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence," p. 1.

²¹⁶ UNIFEM, "Getting it Right, Doing it Right:," p. 3.

²¹⁷ Ines Alberdi, "The Activities of the United Nation Development Fund for Women," p. 4.

²¹⁸ UNIFEM, *Framework and Guidance Note for Capacity Development*, March 2010, p. 8.

- The capability to carry out tasks that are necessary for the organization or institution to fulfill its purpose including, putting in funding proposals, managing resources including budgets, and reporting on activities in a timely way;
- The capability to build relationships and legitimacy (which in turn can help to attract funding) including brokering strategic partnerships and creating political and advocacy opportunities around key gender issues;²¹⁹
- The capability to learn and adapt to different contexts including analysing and using lessons from experience, building on good practices on how to deliver on gender equality and women's empowerment that have been documented and evaluated; and
- The capability to find balance among the different pressures on an organization or institution to engage strategically by marshalling resources so that development results are achieved. An example would be finding the appropriate balance between a national women's machinery (NWM) taking on the task of writing large sections of the national gender action plan versus developing over a longer time frame the capability of other national partners to collaborate effectively in the formulation process.²²⁰

These abilities are essential to bringing about higher-level change and are particularly relevant to relationship and network building among strategic partners and key constituencies, e.g., NWMs, ministries of finance, budget and other key government agencies, women's organizations such as networks of home-based workers, or women migrant workers, HIV+ women, in Cameroon, etc.

The European Commission (EC) and UNIFEM in Cameroon have a broader collaboration in the area of promoting gender equality including the EC-UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace, which was launched in 2007 with UNIFEM. This partnership supports stronger action on gender equality and women's human rights in national development processes and in cooperation programmes supported by the EC.²²¹ In 2008 UNIFEM launched a three-year programme "Integrating gender responsive budgeting

²¹⁹ H. Baser and P. Morgan, "Capacity, Change and Performance," Study Report, European Centre for Development and Policy Management (ECDPM). April 2008, p. 8.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda: Ten-Country Overview", Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Cape Town, November 2009, p. 2.

into the aid effectiveness agenda.²²² The programme is funded by the European Commission (EC) and consists of a research review and programmatic technical assistance. The first aspect involved research in ten developing countries. The research was intended to investigate how gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools and strategies have been used in the context of currently used aid modalities. This investigation was intended to deepen the understanding of national partners and European Union (EU) decision makers of the opportunities for using GRB to enhance accountability to gender equality in aid effectiveness. More generally, we suggest, the reports are useful for exploring how GRB can be used for promoting gender equality both within and beyond aid²²³.

Looking at the implications of UNIFEM partnerships in Cameroon, it brought in a system capacity that is dependent on the interplay and interrelation of individual competencies, collective capabilities, and contextual factors that has several implications on UNIFEM's support to the development of capacities of its key partners and constituencies. These include:²²⁴

- Strengthening system capacity is normally done by influencing one or more of the key factors/components that feed into capacity (individual competencies, collective capabilities, and context). For example, many of UNIFEM's initiatives related to CEDAW implementation focus on developing collective capabilities such as the abilities of its partners to analyze and critique government policies with reference to women's role in society. This, in turn, is likely to contribute to the overall capacity of the government to address gender equality issues.
- The most visible and accessible "entry points" to influence capacity changes tend to be individual competencies and collective capabilities. It is, however, possible to influence system contexts, for example UNIFEM's initiatives related to the development of national strategies and development plans that support gender equality.
- The exact scope and nature of changes in system capacity that may result from strengthening individual competencies or collective capabilities are difficult if not impossible to predict. It is important to understand the change dynamics to be able

²²² B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 2.

²²³ Ibid, p. 10.

²²⁴ Ibid, p. 11.

to judge whether or not strengthened individual competencies and/or enhanced collective capabilities are likely to contribute to positive changes to system capacity, although predicting them in detail is virtually impossible. When UNIFEM talks about transformational Capacity Development (CD), its intention is to contribute to changes in system capacity. This means that we can distinguish between more immediate efforts to develop individual competencies and collective capabilities and building longer-term system capacity.²²⁵

- Individual or collective abilities such as building relationships are as important as “technical” or “functional” abilities. A lot of UNIFEM’s work involves network building and brokering partnerships among those who would not normally relate to each other in a way that would advance women’s rights and empowerment.
- Described as a “core function” of the United Nations (UN) system, the notion of CD is an ongoing process which implies that a one-time assessment of existing (or missing) capacity constitutes a mere snapshot of something that has evolved and adapted to its ever-changing contexts. This highlights the need to establish baselines and then to track capacity changes periodically, over longer periods of time. This is relevant, for example, to tracking capacity changes in NWMs that UNIFEM has been supporting.²²⁶
- Much of what UNIFEM does can influence system capacity positively. All UNIFEM initiatives rely on competencies and capabilities to reach set goals. The term capacity development is best reserved for those cases where UNIFEM aims to support the achievement of explicitly stated capacity related results.²²⁷

UNIFEM, like other UN agencies in Cameroon, is committed to Human Rights Based Approach (HRBA) to programming. The HRBA is inherently a CD approach in which the UN takes on a role of facilitating the conditions necessary in Cameroon for rights to be realized. The primary actors, the agents of change, are the respective rights holders and duty bearers – both individuals and organizations/institutions. These typically include, but are not limited to the actors identified in table 6.

²²⁵ B. Ki-Moon: *Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System: Implications of General Assembly Resolution 62/208*, New York: Office of the Secretary General of the United Nations. March 6, 2008, p.3.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ UNIFEM, Framework and Guidance Note, p. 11.

Table 6: Partners of UNIFEM 2008-2015

Type	Duty Bearers	Rights Holders
Individuals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministers of Women's Affairs, Planning, Finance Women parliamentarians and local government representative Civil servants Judges (in formal and informal justice systems) Individual Police officials Peace-keeping force commanders Special Representatives of the Secretary General 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community leaders including traditional leaders and women's rights activists Gender equality advocates Women leaders Survivors of gender-based violence Migrant women workers Researchers
Organizations/ Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government institutions/bodies, such as ministries of women's affairs and other forms of NWMs; Government institutions responsible for policy/law formulation and implementation, e.g. ministries of planning and finance, national statistics offices, National AIDS Control Organizations, institutions in the justice and security sector including the police and military, provincial and local governments; Selected nongovernmental organizations/bodies, e.g. informal justice system entities, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NGOs and CBOs including women's groups working on gender equality and women's rights issues; Special interest groups (e.g. human rights groups, groups representing specific cultural and/or religious interests) Interest specific networks (e.g. home-based workers networks) Media Research institutions Women's peace coalitions

Source: H. Baser and P. Morgan, "Capacity, Change and Performance", Study Report, European Centre for Development and Policy Management (ECDPM), April 2008, p. 11.

Adding to table 6, important actors for UNIFEM's overarching theory of change are other international (multilateral and bilateral) organizations such as other agencies within the UN System and donor agencies. UNIFEM's main role as that of a *change agent or broker* is carried out in collaboration with these partners. In identifying key actors and entities whose

capacity UNIFEM aims to help strengthen, it can be helpful to distinguish between different forms of partnerships that UNIFEM engages in Cameroon. UNIFEM's Partnerships in Cameroon have varying implications on the type and extent of CD that are required and appropriate. In this context, UNIFEM's partnerships are broadly divided into four main types in Cameroon:²²⁸

- Partnerships with organizations that have an identified need for specific (technical) CD support, e.g. partnerships with some NWMs that UNIFEM supports in developing individual competencies and/or collective capabilities related to specific thematic areas and issues such as GRB, CEDAW, or VAW; and UNIFEM's partnership with UNFPA to provide technical resources and training to UNFPA staff on GRB.
- Implementation partners (Governmental or Nongovernmental) that are implementing parts of a UNIFEM programme and have identified capacity needs in terms of individual competencies or collective capability linked to such implementation including substantive and/or operational areas.
- Partnerships with organizations that already possess the required technical "know how" and share the same strategic vision as UNIFEM but lack sufficient resources to carry out their work. In these cases, UNIFEM can support CD mostly through funding of gender equality and women's empowerment initiatives, thus strengthening the 'enabling conditions' which are part of the organization's collective capabilities. Many of UNIFEM's partnerships with established NGOs or networks are an example of this type of partnership.²²⁹
- Partnerships with organizations that have identified the need for technical or financial support from UNIFEM. The partnership is focused on working together to achieve common goals e.g. UNIFEM's collaboration with (most/all) other UN agencies.

Currently in its second phase, UNIFEM work in partnership with national governments, regional intergovernmental mechanisms, civil society, the private sector and other international organizations in Africa in general and Cameroon in particular.²³⁰ In 1997, UNIFEM formed partnerships with a number of other UN agencies including the United

²²⁸"Women Watch, "Beijing + 5 Global Forum, Online Working Group on National Mechanisms for Gender Equality 8 February -19 March 1999", New York, 2000, p. 9.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰"Policy and Programme work on international migration" P. 1.

Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to launch the first regional inter-agency campaigns on ending violence against women, which coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This collaboration brought about the first global video conference on ending violence against women. Thousands of women and men watched from every corner of the world as women stood up in the UN General Assembly Hall and described the violence they had experienced and their efforts to end it.²³¹

Cameroon has provided modest support to UNIFEM since its inception. Cameroon's contribution has been stepped up in the wake of the PRSP on International Development, which sees gender equality as an essential pre-condition for the elimination of world poverty. An analysis of current developments within UNIFEM, and feedback obtained from a widespread consultation process, provide a strong case for a further strengthening of Cameroon's PRSP collaboration with UNIFEM²³². One of UNIFEM's biggest comparative advantages within the UN, and in the wider international community, is its strong relationship with grassroots women's organisations and the international women's movement. A network of 19 voluntary national committees provides support to UNIFEM around the world. Although completely integrated efforts to achieve these ends are not yet the norm, many important partnerships have been formed in recent years that serve as a model for the larger effort. UNIFEM had set a goal of fostering stronger partnerships between the women's groups it works with and governments and international agencies that have resources. As groups link with national and regional organizations, they all benefit from shared skills and strategies. The need for ongoing collaboration to bring all sectors into the effort is a pressing issue in an attempt to promote the status of women.²³³ Table 7 illustrates the main stakeholders of UNIFEM/ UN Women, grouped according to their type of organization and per intervention area.

²³¹UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence," p.14.

²³²"United Nations Development Fund for Women: Department," p.1.

²³³ Ibid, p.5.

Table 7: UN Women partners and stakeholders in Cameroon

Intervention areas	Government	UN	CSO/NGO	Others	Donors	Location
WLPP	-MINPROFF -ELECAM		More women in politics		Government	National
Fight against GBV and HIV	-MINPROFF -Ministry of health -Ministry of justice Police	WHO UNFPA UNCEF UNAIDS UNESCO	ALDEPA, ACAFEJ, CAMYOSF OP FEFPLEM PLWHA Associations	Media	CIDA UBRAF UNAIDS Swiss Embassy	-Far north -Centre -Coastal areas -East
WEE	-Ministry of trade - MINPROFF -Ministry of agriculture and rural development -Ministry of public works Local authorities	UNESCO IFAD UNIDO UNDP FAO CNUD	ASBY	Financial institution	Ministry of trade Ministry of public works AFDB	-Centre -South Southwest -Far north
Gender sensitive planning and budgeting	-MINEPAT -MINPROFF -MINEFI		WILFP			National
Support in humanitarian context	MINPROFF	UNFPA UNESCO	ALVF, ACAFEJ, FEFPLEM ALDEPA	IFORD	Government of Japan UNHCR CERF MSB	Far north East Adamawa
Cross cutting	MINPROFF	UN Agencies		Donors		Yaounde national level

Source: UN Women, “Country portfolio evaluation final report: Cameroon strategic note 2014-2017,” UN Women, 13 January 2017, p. 18.

In Cameroon UNIFEM, later UN Women established partnerships with and between various types of stakeholders. UNIFEM works with various Ministries and supports the coordination of the monitoring group in charge of the National Gender Policy implementation²³⁴. UNIFEM built a good partnership with donor and international partners in the country. Moreover, UNIFEM involves civil society as a partner, including by providing

²³⁴A/HRC/7/53–E/CN.6/2008/9, “Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to eliminate violence against women Seventh session”, United Nations, 14 December 2007, p.14.

support to the civil society advisory group to efficiently conduct its action plan as shown in appendix 14.

In relation to the UNIFEM representatives in Cameroon, the UN Women Representative reports to the Director, Regional Office who provides general direction and guidance. The UN Women Representative is responsible for translating the UN Women's Strategic Plan (SP), in line with regional and national priorities, into development initiatives and results by developing, implementing and managing programmes and projects; and developing effective partnerships with Government counterparts, UN system agencies and organizations, CSOs, and bilateral and non-traditional donors in order to promote inter-agency partnerships, support for UN reform, and mobilization of visibility and resources to advance gender equality and women's empowerment. From table 8, we have been able to bring out the main UN Women Representative for Cameroon from 2005-2018 accordingly.

Table 8 : UNIFEM's country representatives in Cameroon 2005-2018

Name	Country of origin	Term of office
Mrs. Sophie de Caen	Canada	2005-2008
Mrs. Marie-Goretti Nduwayo	Burundi	August 2010 - May 2013.
Mrs. Najat Rochdi	Morocco	May - August 2013 (Interim)
Mrs. Rachelle Djangone Mian Anne Marie	Ivory Coast	September 2013 - May 2015.
Mr. Adama Moussa	Mali	2015-2018
Mrs. Hind Jalal	Morocco	2018

Source: UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report: Cameroon strategic note 2014-2017," UN Women, 13 January 2017, p.18.

The UN Women office in Yaounde covers Cameroon and the Central African Republic. The UN Women Representative for Cameroon is responsible for ensuring effective execution of UN Women's mandate and responsibility with respect to the advancement of women in Cameroon and the Central African Republic²³⁵.

²³⁵ S. Charlotte, *UN Creates New Structure for Empowerment of Women*, p. 11.

d. Functions of UNIFEM in Cameroon

The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) was created by the UN to promote women's human rights, political participation and economic security. UNIFEM provides funding for activities to eliminate violence against women through its "Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women". Within the UN system, UNIFEM promotes gender equality and links women's issues and concerns to national, regional and global agendas by fostering collaboration and providing technical expertise on gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment strategies.²³⁶ UNIFEM offers the findings, recommendations and model Standard Operating Procedures contained in the goal of implementing the resolution and towards better integrating women's needs and perspectives in Cameroon.²³⁷ The practical objective is to learn lessons from past processes so that the knowledge gleaned can inform future efforts, as well as those currently underway. A broader objective is to ask how commitment to the inclusion of women and women's perspectives processes can help the UNIFEM.²³⁸

In technology, UNIFEM in collaboration with UNU-INTECH in Cameroon and other bodies such as gender and communications NGOs and gender, science and technology networks in the project design, planning, programming and execution of telecommunications and development projects,²³⁹ jointly work with UNIFEM, to develop gender-desegregated statistical indicators for the telecommunication development bureau.²⁴⁰ UNIFEM does not provide scholarships or funds for individual travel, meeting expenses, education or training but UNIFEM provides grants for activities to eliminate violence against women through the Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence Against Women in Cameroon. Its mandate is to:

- Support innovative and experimental activities benefiting women in line with national and regional priorities.²⁴¹

²³⁶ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more: Ending Violence", p.1.

²³⁷ UNIFEM, "Getting it Right, Doing it Right," p.3.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ V. Malta, "United Nations University Institute for New Technologies (UNU-INTECH) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM): Gender and Telecommunications an agenda for policy" world Telecommunication Development Conference (WTDC-98), New York, 23 March - 1 April 1998, p.6.

²⁴⁰ Ibid, p.7.

²⁴¹ "United Nations Development Fund for Women: Department," p.2.

- Serve as a catalyst, with the goal of ensuring the appropriate involvement of women in mainstream development activities, as often as possible at the pre-investment stage.²⁴²
- Play an innovative and catalytic role in relation to the United Nations system of development cooperation.²⁴³

Today the organization's work touches the lives of women and girls in more than 100 countries and UNIFEM helps make the voices of Cameroon women heard at the United Nations to highlight critical issues and advocate for the implementation of existing commitments made to women. Thus, UNIFEM's obligation as a UN agency is to provide Capacity Development (CD) and to use approaches to planning and progress as a means of support to Cameroon's government which involves is deficient in the relevant elements of women's capacity at all levels and deficiency in such capacity is because of the pervasiveness of discrimination against women.²⁴⁴

In addition, the Strategic Plan (SP) states that in order to support the implementation of gender equality commitments, capacity must be built at all levels, and that Capacity Development (CD) efforts must be approached in a comprehensive, integrated fashion as opposed to support for disconnected one-off initiatives.²⁴⁵ The general reflections on capacity and CD as well as the concrete suggestions for CD related programming reinforces many of the themes which appear in other UNIFEM programming principles²⁴⁶. At the level of Gender mainstreaming in Cameroon, this UN agency provides tools to help identify the individual competencies and collective capabilities needed to ensure that the implications for women and men of planned actions are assessed at all levels and appropriate means are taken to address them²⁴⁷. Thus allows the government and organizations to adapt to changing contexts.²⁴⁸ In its global work, one issue that UNIFEM has recently begun to address is the question of how

²⁴² "United Nations Development Fund for Women: Department," p.2.

²⁴³ Ibid. p.3.

²⁴⁴ A. Ortiz and P. Taylor, "Learning Purposefully in Capacity Development, Why, what and when to measure?", Opinion paper prepared for IIEP, July 2008, p.2.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ C. Arab and M. Guruswamy "CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming", May 2007, UNIFEM, New York, p.15.

²⁴⁷ http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/CEDAW_HRBA_guide_pt1_eng.pdf, consulted on 4th April 2018.

²⁴⁸ "United Nations Development Fund for Women: Department", p.11.

changes to partners' capacity can be identified and tracked over time, thus, UNIFEM uses a multitude of approaches and strategies to support CD of its different partners.²⁴⁹

UNIFEM has been a close partner in global efforts to raise the visibility of violence against women. In 1992, this international organization published "Battered Dreams: Violence Against Women as an Obstacle to Development". Up to that time, development agencies had considered GBV to be outside their scope of work. Since then, UNIFEM extended its advocacy and networking, promoted awareness and public education, and continued funding innovative projects organized by UNIFEM partners in nearly every region of the world.²⁵⁰

In 2000, UNIFEM published a report on lessons learned from some of these efforts: *With an End in Sight: Strategies from the UNIFEM Trust Fund to Eliminate Violence Against Women*. The Trust Fund, begun in 1996, seeks out and supports innovative, often experimental projects that are just getting off the ground. It gives them the financial boost they need, as well as knowledge acquired from other initiatives we have funded, to help them grow and eventually reach out to other interested donors.²⁵¹ UNIFEM works to transform women's lives by ensuring that commitments made by the international community to achieve gender equality are fulfilled. These include the Beijing Platform for Action and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women. Within the UN system, UNIFEM works to ensure that gender concerns are taken into account in all levels of programming and in efforts towards the fulfillment of the Millennium Development Goals²⁵².

Given its mission and mandate, and in response to the feminization of migration flows in the world, UNIFEM has been implementing Programmes on Empowering Women Migrant Workers since 2001. The programmes seek to empower women migrant workers by strengthening policies, institutional and social environments in favour of women migrant workers especially female domestic workers to claim their rights and entitlements.²⁵³ In Cameroon, UNIFEM advanced the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and various other non-CEDAW mechanisms which address women migrants' rights.²⁵⁴ In particular, CEDAW adopted general

²⁴⁹ A. Ortiz and P. Taylor, "Learning Purposefully in Capacity Development", p. 23.

²⁵⁰ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more Ending Violence", p.11.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² P. Fielding, "Gendered Perspectives in Higher Education: Women in Science and Engineering in Cameroon", Doctorate Thesis in Philosophy, University of California, 2014, p.1.

²⁵³ "Policy and Programme work on international migration" p.1.

²⁵⁴ "UNIFEM Committee of the Seventh Olinca", p.1.

recommendations on migration due to advocacy work by UNIFEM, such as convening regional and global multi-stakeholder meetings, including the involvement of reporter on Migration.²⁵⁵

UNIFEM pursues a dual strategy towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment in Cameroon. It supports stronger women's organizations to enable them to negotiate on their own behalf with their governments and international agencies and assists governments to implement their commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality. And it supports the UN system in ensuring that gender concerns are incorporated into all policies, programmes and activities in Cameroon. UNIFEM focuses its work at the country level within the context of the United Nations Resident Coordinator System. Playing a strong advocacy role, the Fund concentrates on fostering a multilateral policy dialogue on women's empowerment.²⁵⁶ UNIFEM focuses on three areas of immediate concern. It strengthens women's economic security and rights and empowers women to enjoy secure livelihoods. It works on engendering governance and peace building to increase women's participation in the decision-making processes that shape their lives. UNIFEM also promotes women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women to transform development into a more equitable and sustainable process.²⁵⁷ UNIFEM also made sure that concern for women was integrated into the CEDAW review process of how migration was to be addressed in Cameroon²⁵⁸, and how governments and non-governmental organizations in Cameroon are trained on how the Convention could be effectively invoked to address the rights of women migrants.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁵UNIFEM, "The Global Forum on Migration and Development" Philippines, 2008, pp. 6-7

²⁵⁶UN Women, "Gender Mainstreaming development programming: guidance note", New York, November 2014, p.1.

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ UNIFEM, "The High-level Dialogue on International Migration and Development" New York, 2006, pp. 1-2.

²⁵⁹"Policy and programme Work on International Migration by the United Nations Development Fund for Women" New York, 2006, p.2.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have endeavored to highlight the different phases that have punctuated the march towards the creation of UNIFEM. Thus, we have noticed that the issue of women's empowerment is indeed at the centre of the concerns that have been brewing the spirit of the United Nations system since its creation in 1945. Thereby, the UNCSW (CSW) was the first global institution assigned a mandate to make recommendations on urgent issues requiring immediate attention in the field of women's rights. Hence, this part of the work has allowed us to take note of precursors of the creation of UNIFEM, its structure, its methods of financing, its objectives, its strategies, its advent to Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. We were also able to highlight the principle of multiple partnerships that characterizes the functioning of UNIFEM before referring to its transformation into UN Women. From what emanates, we are entitled to question the memoranda of understanding that bind Cameroon and UNIFEM, leading us to think about conventions and conferences involving UNIFEM and Cameroon.

CHAPTER TWO

WOMEN EMPOWERMENT IN PRE-COLONIAL AND COLONIAL ERA IN CAMEROON

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to exploring the status of women in pre-colonial and colonial Cameroon, and the key roles they played at the time. In that line, more light will be shed on the status of women, which has undergone tremendous changes and brought gender issues to the forefront of many concerns. One should note that the concept of status is central to sociology which reflects a person's evaluation of his or her position. Furthermore, we would be talking about the improvement of the status of British and French colonial policies and its impact on women in Cameroon. Here, clear illustrations will be given on the role of the Second World War and the birth of the Commission on Status of Women that paved the way to the UN Charter in San Francisco. Particular emphasis will be placed on nationalism in British and French Cameroon and how it improved the status of women. Before concluding this chapter, we shall equally look into the encounters between Cameroonian and European women as colonial agents to promote the status of women in the national territory.

I. Women in pre-colonial Cameroon before 1884

Focused on Women in pre-colonial Cameroon, this portion talks on women and men that formed a complementary organization. It also pointed on the political and economic role played by women in pre-colonial Cameroon as well as the current feminist revisionist tendency in African historiography on colonialism in Africa.

a. A dual system

In pre-colonial Cameroon, as in some other African countries, one of the main social orders was a dual system: women and men formed complementary organizations, in which both genders managed their own areas of life. In some indigenous Cameroonian communities, women and men formed two parallel, gender-segregated systems that were complementary for

economic and social roles.¹ Most of the dually organized ethnic groups were also patrilineal, giving men the head positions in these communities.² During the colonial era that lasted over seven decades, the dual system was disrupted throughout Cameroon and the continent of Africa.³ Colonialism placed men in the public sphere and women in the private.⁴ However, in many African communities the meanings given to gender relations are more fluid and ambiguous. Despite the interference of colonialism, many old principles still organise family structures and gender relations. On a large scale, however, the post-independence era has resulted in an increasing awareness of the oppressed position of women, as well as the need for change. Nego-feminism, for example, has emerged as a specific African concept of feminism. It emphasizes the necessity to negotiate gender roles anew.⁵

b. Women's political roles in pre-colonial Cameroon

Women's roles in pre-colonial Cameroon were at once numerous and varied. Women participated both directly and indirectly in public affairs.⁶ Women were leaders in indigenous institutions in Cameroon and other parts of Africa in the pre-colonial and post-independence eras. While some led directly, others did so indirectly.⁷ In the few societies where direct participation was the norm, a select few did so either as queen mothers, co-chiefs, or as sovereign queens. Among which we have the Bavek and Ide who were sovereign queens and women co-chiefs. Elderly women appeared in public when the need arose and often controlled the men who controlled the societies. In fact, they controlled these societies through their control of the men who controlled them.⁸ The Bavek sovereign queen provided effective political leadership, but it diminished with the imposition of German and British rule in the area. Their power or leadership was no less important than that of men. They both governed their people in cooperation and understanding. This was indeed pragmatic executive leadership. Apart from women's participation in political leadership in traditional institutions prior to

¹ H. Ngoa, *Non, la femme africaine n'était pas opprimée*, Yaoundé: Société Camerounaise de Publications, 1975, p. 4.

² K. Okonjo, *The dual-sex political system in operation*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976, p. 6.

³ I. Sakki and M. Salminen, "Stability and Change in the Representations of Female Politicians in Cameroon", *Peer Reviewed Online Journal*, Volume 24, no 4, University of Helsinki, Department of Social Research, 2015, p. 5.

⁴ K. Okonjo, *The dual-sex political system in operation* p. 6.

⁵ I. Sakki and M. Salminen, "Stability and Change in the Representations of Female Politicians in Cameroon", p. 5.

⁶ C. Robertson, *Putting the Political in Economy: African Women's and Gender History, 1992-2010*, New York: New York University Press, 2013, p. 67.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ E.N. Konde, "Western Education and Women's Social Mobility in Cameroon.", *Proceedings and Papers of the GAH*, vol 14, 1993, p. 90.

colonial rule, they also led people during the colonial era. There was legislative leadership through the local or municipal councils, parliament, executive arms of government, and international organizations.

However, the majority of Cameroonian women were involved in other equally important socio-economic activities, and politics was regarded as a male domain.⁹ Thus, although women could only speak to the council of male elders through the Queen Mother and the males kept decisions and initiatives on their hands, women did have a representative who could seek to influence male councils. Some women held high political office, either through heredity or election.¹⁰ Thus Women were and still are leaders of traditional female societies in Cameroon. These include the Takembeng of the Ngemba-speaking people, Anlu of Kom, Kelu of the Laimbwe, Liengu of the Bakweri, and Koo of the Bassa.¹¹ In the kingdom of Nso, power or leadership was gendered meaning that it resided in both male and female members of the kingdom.¹² In Ntankah village in Bamenda, the Ntankah Women Common Initiative Group (C.I.G) got a woman elected into the all-male traditional council. These women almost never equaled the authority of male officials, but they wielded considerable power and some authority. These women not only influenced male-dominated councils, they often had important ritual roles, especially those concerned with fertility and social survival. Women also exerted power through religious roles. Some women were ritual specialists in women's affairs, especially concerning fertility.¹³ Women's province was the private sphere, where they engaged in a myriad of domestic tasks which included working on the farms, nurturing the children, preparing the meals, and keeping the household. Though these activities were important to the overall functioning of society, the indigenous system virtually confined most women to the private sphere with hardly any opportunity to realize their full potential.¹⁴

On the other hand, Atanga and Ntongho argue that female leadership institutions are not equal to male regulatory societies in their functions. Traditional institutions like Takembeng were mobilised by the Social Democratic Front (SDF) party in Bamenda in the early 1990s to fight social injustice and unemployment in Cameroon. This mobilization provided women with

⁹ B. Jean-Claude, *Femmes du Cameroun: Meres pacifiques, femmes rebelles*, Paris: Orstom-Katharla, 1985, p. 133.

¹⁰ H. K Kah, "Women as Makers of History: The Kelu Women Movement in Bu- Wum, North West Cameroon 1957-1959." *Castalia: Ibadan Journal of Multidisciplinary and Multicultural Studies*, vol 17, no1, 2004, p. 16.

¹¹ L. L. Atanga, *Gender, Discourse and Power in the Cameroonian Parliament*, Mankon, Bamenda: Langaa 2010, p. 7.

¹² M. Goheen, "Gender and Accumulation in Nso." *Paideuma* vol 41 no 3, 1995. p. 73.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ E. N. Konde, "Western Education and Women's Social Mobility in Cameroon", p. 90.

collective political leadership for a national cause. Similarly, Assiga Ahanda Marie-Therese, chief of the Ewondos of Yaounde, was an active leading first-class female traditional ruler. She occupied high-ranking political positions in both the Cameroon National Union (CNU) and the Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement (CPDM) parties¹⁵. She is one of the few female traditional leaders in Cameroon integrated into modern political leadership in the country by the ruling party.

c. Economic role of women in pre-colonial era

There is no doubt that women were significant in terms of economic development during the pre-colonial era. Yet in spite their enormous contributions in providing labour for agricultural purposes, they were discriminated against because they were seen as weaker sex. Women in the past have meaningful contributions towards better development of the economy and the society at large. They were not isolated when it comes to economic activities. They were only discriminated when it comes to the issues of sacred societal norms and values which tend to see women involvement in these selected areas as taboo. These were the result of myths and legend which people in relation with their gods upheld. Thus, women in certain areas were compelled not to function. Without this backdrop, women would have been potent and successful agents of socio-cultural and economic change.¹⁶ Even at that, they were not totally left out in the scheme of things especially when it comes to trade, cooking, children bearing and labour. These form the basis of economic development as men in isolation could hardly achieve anything. "Women in pre-colonial Cameroon have a predominant role in agricultural production; a fact which has been substantiated by a number of investigators." One of the pioneering efforts at synthesizing this information is contained in Easter Boserup's book, "Women's role in Economic Development".¹⁷

We can best understand the contribution of women towards economic development in pre-colonial Cameroon from the following parameters; role in agriculture, trade, salt production, cotton and textile industry, politics, Gold and Jewelry making among others. Historical accounts and oral records revealed that, the Cameroonian women had actively participated in the social; economic and political development of their societies as far back as

¹⁵ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership, 1960-2015", *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, Volume 9, No 2, 2018, p. 8.

¹⁶ N. J. Gimba, "The economic role of women in pre-colonial or traditional African societies", *Journal of Arts and Contemporary Society*, Department of History University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Volume 4, September 2012, p. 6.

¹⁷ Ibid.

the 19th century. This is not only true about the Cameroonian women but true of all African women. This is because, nowhere in Africa that the women were found guilty of idleness. The Cameroonian women occupied a significant position in pre-colonial organization, religion, family life and in terms of economic development. Women “possess independent source of ritual, economic and political influence and that, they could count on their fathers people for financial assistance in their trading ventures.”¹⁸

d. Revisionist tendency

Notwithstanding, the current feminist revisionist tendency in African historiography maintains that the incidence of colonialism in Africa resulted in a decline of the traditional importance of women.¹⁹ This may have been true of some, but not necessarily all, African societies. In Cameroon, for instance, until the establishment of colonial rule women, as a social category, were not educated to assume responsibility in public affairs. Consequently, when examined from the perspective of the impact of western education, it will be shown that women may have gained more than they lost.²⁰ Pre-colonial Cameroonian society was male-dominated, and a woman’s social position was determined largely by her sex and whether she was of privileged birth or not. In the absence of any advantageous factors of social mobility, some women could be condemned to a life of menial labor simply because the accident of birth had placed them in less-advantaged families.²¹

II. Women’s status in colonial times (1884 -1960)

This section deals with the status of women during the colonial period and the role played by the Patriarchal authoritarianism predominantly male bias. We will later handle a point on the African women’s movement that has been strongly influenced and shaped by the activism against colonial rule and racist ideologies including the Second World War and Commission on Status of Women that stood as a challenge to the UN Charter on Human Rights and the Legal Status of Women in Cameroon.

¹⁸ N. J. Gimba, “The economic role of women in pre-colonial”, p. 6.

¹⁹ E. N. Konde, “Reconstructing the Political Roles of African Women: A Post revisionist Paradigm”, Boston University, *African Studies Center*, vol 7, No. 161, 1992, p. 56.

²⁰ E. N. Konde, “Western Education and Women's Social Mobility in Cameroon”, p. 90.

²¹ Ibid.

a. Patriarchal authoritarianism

Women have provided comparatively limited leadership in the legislature and executive arms of government in Cameroon since its independence from French Cameroon in 1960 and the reunification of British Southern Cameroons with the Cameroun Republic in 1961.²² Yet the plethora of literature on political leadership in African countries clearly shows a predominantly male bias, beginning with the indigenous governing institutions and moving forward to modern leadership.²³ Colonial rule clearly laid the basis for women's limited involvement in leadership or even their exclusion from leadership in such African countries as Sierra Leone, Nigeria, and Dahomey.²⁴

In Cameroon the colonial rule drastically transformed the economic, political and social structures of traditional Cameroon. Cameroonians women began to see in a different light.²⁵ Wide-ranging surveys of the role of African women in the development process have portrayed women as an indispensable human resource whose outputs are significant in all the different facets of social and economic life²⁶. Thus, while traditional structures protected most women from absolute starvation, rural life was increasingly onerous for women during the colonial period. Pushed by patriarchal authoritarianism and rural drudgery and pulled by rumored economic and social opportunities in the towns, many enterprising women voted with their feet and moved to urban areas. Despite opposition from government officials and chiefs, many women managed to get to town and, once there, to support themselves²⁷. As colonial penetration of African economies intensified in the late 1930s, however, and the "second colonial occupation" increased the need for a stable disciplined and trained labor force, colonial authorities in the urban areas became more determined to control both the reproduction and production of labor²⁸.

²² L. R. Day, "Nyarroh of Badasuma, 1885-1914: A Re-Interpretation of Female Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone", *The Journal of African History*, vol 48, no 3, 2007, p. 416.

²³ N. Sudarkasa, "The Status of Women" in Indigenous African Societies", *Feminist Studies*, vol 12, no 1, p. 91. 1986, p. 92.

²⁴ L. R. Day, "The Evolution of Female Chiefship during the Late Nineteenth-Century Wars of the Mende", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol 27 no3, 1994, pp. 502-503.

²⁵ F. A. Nwadiwe, and C. E. Nwadiwe, "Can these Wings Fly? Dramatic Representation of Women and the Elite Syndrome in Nigeria's Political Space.", *Epasa Moto: A Multidisciplinary Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities of the University of Buea*, vol 1 no 2, 2014, p. 137.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ E. Midden, "Feminism in Multicultural Societies: An analysis of Dutch Multicultural and Postsecular Developments and their Implications for Feminist Debates", Doctorate thesis s in Professional Ethics, University of Central Lancashire, May 2010, p. 11.

²⁸ L. A. Linda, "Female missionary activities and changes in the Bamenda Grassfields 1904-2006", Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2016, p. 64.

b. African women's activism

The contribution of women to Cameroon's development goes beyond the fight for freedom and equality during the colonial era, however. It is much broader and part of a long historical process going back several centuries, including the pre-colonial and colonial periods. In effect, despite the constraints imposed by the colonial institution, some of which included racial discrimination and division of labor along gender lines, women's perseverance in the sphere of subsistence agricultural production ensured the survival of families, making them the bedrock of resistance in the face of economic uncertainty and political instability²⁹. The Cameroons women became involved at various levels in the development of their countries. In this context, assessing the contribution of women to Africa's development from a historical perspective provides a better understanding of potential causes and historical processes underpinning gender inequality.³⁰ It also has the potential to shed some light on the extent of women's contribution to Africa's development and the growing wave of economic empowerment, besides the struggle for freedom. In effect, while freedom is the first critical step to personal growth and emancipation, economic empowerment is the sure and sustainable path to true equality³¹.

Generally speaking, the African women's movement has been strongly influenced and shaped by the activism against colonial rule and racist ideologies. African women's activism cannot be seen separately from the larger context of repression and exploitation of both men and women. This has given rise to a feminism and activism primarily aimed at changing social and humanitarian conditions. African feminists have to a lesser extent aimed their arrows at personal and sexist conditions (contrary to Western feminists) of course Africa too knows a broad spectre of feminism³². In this we will focus primarily on the situation in Cameroon. The position of Cameroonian women has much more in common with that of women from the other African country. Because of the conditions of women, pressure has been exerted more to increase women's participation in more areas - this is often done by stating it as a condition for investments or development aid³³. African activists are constantly performing a wire act between devoting themselves to women's rights and supporting the right of African states to

²⁹ H. Fofack, *Celebrating the contribution of African women to development in Africa*, A quarterly knowledge publication of the Operations Evaluation Department of the African Development Bank Group, p. 111.

³⁰ R. A . Phillott-Almeida, *A profile of the roles of women as economic producers and family supporters in the Gambia (education of women in Africa)* , Dakar : Unesco, Regional Office, January 1994, p. 4.

³¹ H. Fofack, "Celebrating the contribution of African", p. 111.

³² M. Maerten, *African Feminism*, Brussels, Belgium: Rol en Samenleving, 2004, p. 2.

³³ Ibid.

make autonomous decisions. They are faced with the difficult task of finding an activism that turns the existing gender hierarchy into something that is at the same time liberating for women, and offers a valid political alternative.³⁴ Western and African actors on the political level usually disagree about the implementation of a policy to improve the situation of women. Western and African NGO's tend to find it difficult to cooperate with one another for the same reasons. Generally speaking, Western activists take women's autonomy as their starting point, whereas African feminist start out from culturally linked forms of participation. The main differences can be traced back to differing outlooks on private public debate³⁵.

During the colonial period in Cameroon from July 1884 with the Germans' annexation of the territory to 1960-61 when France and Britain left the territory, women fought for leadership in executive decision-making institutions. They started by achieving suffrage in October 1946, but were only able to vote men into political leadership positions.³⁶ Six years later, however, the first women contested for seats in the Constituent Assembly of French Cameroon. But all of them lost. Later, in 1957 and 1959, the first female parliamentarians in French and British Southern Cameroons respectively were co-opted members into parliamentary and political leadership.³⁷ Many were not able to lead as members of the assembly because of their limited Western education. Political parties like the Evolution Social Camerounaise (ESOCAM) described them as best suited for household duties than in leadership.³⁸

c. The Second World War and Commission on Status of Women

Before the great World Wars the role of women was usually to be kept at home. The status quo was for women to stay at home and take care of the children. The stereotypical, perfect African family had the father that brought home the bacon each day during the week and the mother who raised their children.³⁹ The fact of the matter is, women always worked outside the house but it just wasn't glorified as much. These women were usually in the lower class or the minority and many men did not have the best attitude toward them.⁴⁰ During WWII all of this changed and a revolution in the work force was eventually seen. From the 1950s,

³⁴ M. Maerten, *African Feminism*, Brussels, Belgium: Rol en Samenleving, 2004, p. 2.

³⁵ Ibid, p.3.

³⁶ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p.4.

³⁷ L. L. Atanga, *Gender, Discourse and Power in the Cameroonian*, pp. 9-10.

³⁸ M. Terretta, "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism." *Stichproben*, vol 12, no 7, 2007, p. 63.

³⁹ S. Bruley, *Women in Britain Since 1900*, New York, 1999, p, 121.

⁴⁰ M. Pugh, *State and Society: A Social and Political History of Britain 1870-1997*, London, 1999, p. 257.

sociologists and social historians were particularly interested in the idea that the war had the effect of initiating or accelerating social change.⁴¹ Numbers of women in British and French Cameroon working outside the home rose exponentially and they thought they were there to stay. Women also played a large role in the military, which had never been seen before. Gender roles had changed in the modern world; women throughout the nation including British and French Cameroon women made a huge impact on the Second World War efforts. While the traditional gender roles may not have been erased, the war served as a personal empowerment for women, many of whom would not be the same housewives after the war.⁴² Women's role as dependants in wartime stimulated the development of social policies which reduced inequalities and raised women's status as wives and mothers.⁴³

After WWII the world was no longer the same. It was the dawn of many newly emerging states, and new economic principles started playing the world's fore-field. This climate of change gave an impulse to women's activism all over the globe. A number of factors played here. The new states' nationalism went hand in hand with a fair amount of activism. Their renewed "élan" saw some major day dreaming about women's independence⁴⁴. Another important factor is capitalism and the emergence of a global economy. The surge of (or brake on) women's employment determines the emergence of women's activism and women's rights. Remarkably women's activism is usually connected to the emergence of larger movements.⁴⁵ All over the globe women's activism rises in the wake of nationalist or class struggle, the struggle for democracy, or for human rights or peace. Finally, it is also the worldwide backlash against feminism (in whatever form or name) that gives a permanent feed to women's activism. Feminist ideas have, throughout history, been the subject of attack from most religions and political ideologies.⁴⁶

In the 1960s and 1970s Arthur Marwick popularised the view that the Second World War contributed significantly to the growth of equality between the sexes. Like Myrdal and Klein he argued that women did men's jobs in wartime and received equal pay, and that these were lasting gains. Unlike them he believed that government conscription "played a very minor

⁴¹ P. Summerfield, "Research on women in Britain in the second world war" *An historiographical essay*, vol 3, n° 4, CHTP-BEG, 1998, p. 207.

⁴² P. Summerfield, *Women, war and social change: women in Britain in World War II*, London, Macmillan, 1988, p. 96.

⁴³ P. Summerfield, "Research on women in Britain in the second world war", p. 207.

⁴⁴ M. Maerten, "African feminism" July 2004, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 8.

role in the changes in women's employment". He also argued that married women became more acceptable as employees.⁴⁷ Marwick argued that both twentieth century wars gave women greater self-confidence and a more public and visible role in paid work, politics and social life.⁴⁸ In a discussion of the effects of the war on British, French, American, Russian and German women, published in 1974, he argued that participation in the war effort "can be seen at work everywhere in further developments in the status of women".⁴⁹

Titmuss, Myrdal and Klein, and Marwick all subscribed to the idea that the war and post-war years constituted "a period of increasing emancipation for women".⁵⁰ However such an unproblematised view of progress for women was challenged in the 1970s by scholars working within new feminist theoretical frameworks which redefined the concept of emancipation. In the liberal view, 'emancipation' did not necessarily refer to equality with men, but encompassed the idea of higher status based on differences between the sexes.⁵¹ Thus it could involve recognition of women's special contribution to society as women, through practical competence and motherhood, and also signs of greater feminine independence manifest for example in changes in manners and mores.⁵² The proportion of all working women (full- and part-time) rose during the war and after a small dip immediately post war when readjustment from war to peace production was occurring, remained high and rising in the 1950s.⁵³ The proportions were 16 per cent in 1931, 43 per cent in 1943, 40 per cent in 1947, 43 per cent in 1951 and 52 per cent in 1959.⁵⁴ The implication of these wartime social policies was that "the great bulk of wartime domestic work was thrown back to the private sphere of a woman's own resources and those of her family, friends and neighbourhood".⁵⁵ For instance Julia Swindells says that women are traditional sustainers of the family life.⁵⁶ According to her point of view, women should be praised for their contribution to the war effort.⁵⁷

⁴⁷ A. Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War. War, Peace and Social Change 1900 - 1967*, London, the Bodley Head, 1968, pp. 291-292.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 127.

⁴⁹ A. Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century*, London, Macmillan, 1974, p. 137.

⁵⁰ R.M. Titmuss, 'War and social policy' and 'The position of women: some vital statistics', in *Essays on the welfare state*, London, Allen & Unwin, 1958, p. 101.

⁵¹ A. Marwick, *Britain in the Century of Total War*, p. 127.

⁵² A. Marwick, *The Home Front: The British and the Second World War*, London, Thames & Hudson, 1976, p. 138.

⁵³ P. Summerfield, *Women, war and social change*: p. 100.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ P. Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War. Production and Patriarchy in Conflict*, London, Routledge, 1989, p. 185.

⁵⁶ J. Swindells, "Coming home to heaven: manpower and myth in 1944 Britain" *Women's History Review*, vol 4, no 2, Homerton College, Cambridge, United Kingdom, 1995, p. 228

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 232.

By the mid-1960s, the CSW created in 1946 had begun to recognize and address women's role in economic and social development⁵⁸. Delegates from developing countries drew attention in particular to the situation of women in rural areas and the need to enhance their contributions and address their priorities and needs. The Commission played a major role in transforming the understanding of the role of women in development⁵⁹. An important part of the work of the Commission is promoting and monitoring implementation of the gender mainstreaming strategy at national level and within the United Nations system⁶⁰. The United Nations has played a critical role as a catalyst for gender equality and the empowerment of women, largely due to the foresight, dynamism and persistence of the Commission on the Status of Women. Over the past six decades, the Commission has provided an important political forum where much of the critical discussion has been located and important global decisions have been made⁶¹. Throughout its history, the Commission on the Status of Women has been a strong advocate for gender equality and empowerment of women across the globe and has provided a unique space for exchange of national experience and good practice and for bringing the voice of the women's movement to the work of the United Nations⁶².

Through the Decade for Women, United Nations efforts to advance the status of women expanded and increasingly mainstreamed other development programmes. As time went on, the Commission was no longer the only entity working on women's issues in the UN. The reporting and implementation mechanisms established for the Decade had been diffused throughout the UN regional commissions, specialized agencies and funds. New organizations dedicated to women had been established, such as the United Nations Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)⁶³.

The Commission stresses that the realization of gender equality and the empowerment of women, including women's economic empowerment and full and equal access to resources, and their full integration into the formal economy, in particular in economic decision-making, as well as their full and equal participation in public and political life is essential for addressing the structural and underlying causes of violence against women and girls⁶⁴. The Commission

⁵⁸C. Hannan, "The achievements of the Commission" p. 2.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

⁶¹ Ibid, p. 5.

⁶² Ibid, p. 6.

⁶³J. M. Grey, *Short History of the Commission*, 2000, p. 11.

⁶⁴ UN women, "Commission on the Status of Women Fifty-seventh session", New York, 4 - 15 March 2013, p. 3.

recognizes that women's poverty and lack of empowerment, as well as their marginalization resulting from their exclusion from social and economic policies and from the benefits of education and sustainable development can place them at increased risk of violence, and that violence against women impedes the social and economic development of communities and States, as well as the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals⁶⁵.

d. The UN Charter on Human Rights and the Legal Status of Women in Cameroon

"The UN Charter gave women slim, formal recognition, but the human rights provisions gave women constitutional-legal leverage to renew their quest to improve their status, achieve full citizenship with men, and enter the world's political stage," is how Margaret Galey (1995) assesses the significance of the UN Charter to women.⁶⁶ The Charter of the United Nations established at the founding of the United Nations in June 26, 1946 endorsed equality between women and men as a fundamental human right⁶⁷. Its Preamble declared faith "in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small."⁶⁸ This was largely the result of intensive lobbying by women delegates and representatives of the 42 non-governmental organizations accredited to the founding conference⁶⁹. Furthermore, Article 1 of the Charter stipulates that one of the purposes of the United Nations is to promote respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms "without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."⁷⁰

Nevertheless, the Charter of the United Nations became the first international agreement to proclaim the equal rights of men and women as part of fundamental human rights. An international women's movement at grassroots level struggling for women's rights began many years before the founding of the United Nations.⁷¹ In the later part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th the economic and social changes caused by the industrial revolution led to the creation of voluntary associations of various kinds. In some cases, women participated together with men, but they also set up separate organisations, among others to combat discrimination and improve the position of women. As the work gained momentum,

⁶⁵ UN Women, "Commission on the Status of Women", p.3.

⁶⁶ E.G. Margaret, *Women Find a Place*, New York: The Macmillan, 1995, pp. 13-14,

⁶⁷ C. Hannan, "The achievements of the Commission" p. 1.

⁶⁸ UN, "Women's rights are human rights", New York and Geneva, 2014, p. 3.

⁶⁹ C. Hannan, "The achievements of the Commission" p. 1.

⁷⁰ UN, "women's rights", p. 3.

⁷¹ T. Skard, "Getting Our History Right: How Were the Equal Rights of Women and Men", p. 38.

collaboration extended across national borders.⁷² In the 1920s and 1930s international women's organisations collaborated with the League of Nations and the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva. The organisations included the International Council of Women (ICW), the International Alliance of Women (IAW), the International Cooperative Women's Guild (ICWG), the International Federation of Business and Professional Women (IFBOW), the International Federation of University Women (IFUW), the World Young Women's Christian Association (WYWCA), the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) and the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW). These were mainly based in Europe and the United States.⁷³ The Charter started a process of internationally agreed norms and standards, programmes and strategies for the advancement of women worldwide and it became much more important than the founding fathers and mothers probably envisaged. But decades of struggle were needed to bring women's human rights high on the international agenda and start turning rhetoric into tangible realities.⁷⁴

In 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted. It, too, proclaimed the equal entitlements of women and men to the rights contained in it, "without distinction of any kind, such as sex."⁷⁵ In drafting the Declaration, there was considerable discussion about the use of the term "all men" rather than a gender-neutral term.⁷⁶ The Declaration was eventually adopted using the terms "all human beings" and "everyone" in order to leave no doubt that the Universal Declaration was intended for everyone, men and women alike.⁷⁷

The active women present and CSW had a decisive role in the process of drafting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1946-48. Starting from the Declaration's preamble, they had to make sure that the phrase "equal rights of men and women" incorporated through great effort in the UN Charter would not be watered down. Minerva Bernardino of the Dominican Republic⁷⁸ in particular was alert and called for an explicit phrase as it was not enough to use the term 'everyone' because "in certain countries the term 'everyone' did not

⁷² T. Skard, "Getting Our History Right: How Were the Equal Rights of Women and Men", p. 38.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charter_of_the_United_Nations, 4:43pm, 8/9/2019.

⁷⁵ UN, "women's rights", p. 3.

⁷⁶ Ibid, p. 4.

⁷⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Human_Rights, 4:31pm, 8/9/2019.

⁷⁸ J. Morsink, "Women's Rights in the Universal Declaration", *Human Rights Quarterly*, vol.13, no.2, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, p. 232. (Minerva Bernardino (1907-1998) was a delegate of the Dominican Republic to the UN founding conference in San Francisco in 1945 and her country's first UN ambassador until 1957. Her positions included the Chair of CSW and First Vice President of ECOSOC, and she was the only woman of those present at the UN founding conference who also took part in the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the UN in 1995 in San Francisco.)

necessarily mean every individual, regardless of sex." In the end, the countries even voted upon whether the Declaration should reproduce the exact phrase contained in the preamble to the UN Charter. The results of the vote were convincing thirty-two in favour, two against and three abstentions⁷⁹.

A Sub commission on the Status of Women was established in 1946 to lead the work of the United Nations in promoting the advancement of women, under the Commission on Human Rights.⁸⁰ From 1947 to 1962, the Commission focused on setting standards and formulating international conventions to change discriminatory legislation and foster global awareness of women's issues and also contributing to the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.⁸¹ Since the codification of the legal rights of women needed to be supported by data and analysis, the Commission embarked on a global assessment of the status of women. Extensive research produced a detailed, country-by-country picture of their political and legal standing, which over time became a basis for drafting human rights instruments.⁸²

The Commission drafted the early international conventions on women's rights, such as the 1953 Convention on the Political Rights of Women, which was the first international law instrument to recognize and protect the political rights of women; and the first international agreements on women's rights in marriage, namely the 1957 Convention on the Nationality of Married Women, and the 1962 Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages⁸³.

The modern idea of universal human rights was popularized in the wake of World War II through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and, the establishment of a United Nations Commission on Human Rights.⁸⁴ This gave birth to movement for women's human rights which crystallized around the second World Conference on Human Rights. It emerged in response to numerous concerns and reflected the collaboration of women's efforts in diverse contexts. In particular, many women in different regions believed that the issues they were organizing against especially different forms of gender-based violence such as battery, rape, female genital mutilation, female infanticide, or trafficking and forced prostitution were human

⁷⁹ H. Pietilä, *Engendering the Global Agenda: A Success Story*, p. 14.

⁸⁰ C. Hannan, "The achievements of the Commission" p. 1.

⁸¹ F. Gaer, "Women, international law and international institutions: The case of the United Nations", *Women's Studies International Forum*, vol. 32, no. 1, January 2009, p.62.

⁸² <http://www.bpw-international.org/history-of-cooperation-bpw-un>, 4:45pm, 8/9/2018.

⁸³ UN Women, "Commission on the Status of Women", p. 1.

⁸⁴ N. Reilly, *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights*, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, August 1996, p. 1.

rights crises that were not being taken seriously as such by the international community.⁸⁵ Women want a world where they can have equal access to shelter, food, education, health, a secure environment, and the right to equal wages. They are not waiting for permission to have our human rights recognized, but rather are stating that issues like female infanticide, illiteracy, violence against women, female sexual slavery, and the feminization of poverty are all fundamental human rights issues and must be addressed as cornerstones of all human development agendas.

Thanks to the unyielding efforts of the women present, Article 1 of the Declaration now reads "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights" instead of "All men..." The words 'everyone' or 'no one' are used throughout the final text instead of using the words 'every man' and 'no man'⁸⁶. The Commission stresses that the right to education is a human right, and that eliminating illiteracy, ensuring equal access to education, in particular in rural and remote areas, and closing the gender gap at all levels of education empowers women and girls and thereby contributes to the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls.⁸⁷

The adoption of the Declaration by the General Assembly in Paris on December 10, 1948 was a triumph and a defining moment for CSW. Ever since, CSW has used the Declaration as a basis for action for the promotion of the cause of equal rights and freedoms. In the UN, the Declaration has been the basis for codifying human rights into well-known legally binding international Conventions.

Initially, the Commission focused on legal measures to protect the human rights of women and developing awareness of the status and situation of women around the world. From the very beginning, the work of the Commission attracted the interest, participation and support of the growing international women's movement and debates in the Commission brought unfamiliar issues into the international political arena.⁸⁸

The first task of CSW was to conduct a global survey on the status of women's rights. Thus, in fact, it took up the work where the League of Nations had left off a decade earlier. The questionnaire sent to governments was positively received, and 74 countries promptly provided

⁸⁵ N. Reilly, *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability*, p. 3.

⁸⁶ UN women, "Commission on the Status of Women", p. 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ C. Hannan, "The achievements of the Commission" p. 2.

their replies including countries that at that stage were not even members of the UN. The survey revealed that four areas were found to be of particular concern:

- political rights and the possibility to exercise them;
- legal rights of women, both as individuals and as family members;
- access of girls and women to education and training, including vocational training;
- working life.

An analysis of the legal and socio-economic and political status of women in Cameroon shows the link between the high levels of violence against women in Cameroon and their low status in all aspects of life. Besides the fact that laws relating to women's legal status reflect social attitudes that affect the human rights of women, such laws often have a direct impact on women's ability to exercise those rights.⁸⁹ The legal context of family life, Cameroon laws affecting women's socio-economic status, women's access to education, the labour market and politics contribute to violence against women and their access to redress and reparation.⁹⁰ As a result of the ethnic diversity, one cannot distinguish the Cameroonian woman in a gender profile. However, all ethnic groups give great importance to local traditions, which widely detrimentally affect the status of women and their enjoyment of human rights.⁹¹ Cameroon inherited two different legal systems; notably French law from the former Oriental Cameroon and British law from the former Occidental Cameroon, which coexist with local customary law. In addition to regional laws, there is a growing body of federal laws. While criminal procedures remain distinct between East and West Cameroon, criminal law itself was unified between 1965 and 1967 in one single Penal Code.⁹² Women in Cameroon experience high levels of discrimination, which despite Constitutional provisions recognising the human rights of women, is also enshrined in the law. No legal definition of discrimination exists. However, civil law offers a more equal standard than customary law, another source of law in Cameroon, which is far more discriminatory against women. The broad persistence of customary law infringes the human rights of women, particularly in the areas of marriage and inheritance laws. Customary law varies depending on the ethnicity of the parties involved and the region.⁹³ In cases where the two types of legal systems have equal weight, an individual can choose whether

⁸⁹ "Violence against Women in Cameroon", A Report to the Committee against Torture, Cameroon, 2003, p. 123.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p. 124.

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² "Women of the World: Laws and Policies Affecting their Reproductive Lives", Center for Reproductive Rights, Francophone Africa, 2000, p. 70.

⁹³<https://www.refworld.org/docid/3c2b4e020.html>, 5:00pm, 5/8/19

to bring the case before the statutory law courts or customary law courts. The traditional jurisdiction cites custom except when custom is opposed to law and order and good morals.⁹⁴ The Supreme Court has sanctioned the primacy of contemporary law over traditional law.¹⁸ However, due to the importance attached to traditions and customs, laws protecting women are often not respected.⁹⁵ The United Nations has on several occasions expressed concern about the lack of progress made by the Government of Cameroon in reforming laws and combating practices that discriminate against women and girls and violate their human rights.⁹⁶

III. Women as colonial agents in Cameroon

Moving from general findings to a specific case, this section examines how colonial policies affected women in British Southern and French Cameroons. British Southern and French Cameroons, which the British and French controlled from 1922 to 1961, were comprised of what are today the 10 regions of Cameroon. Specifically, the work focuses on the last decade of colonial rule from 1950 to 1961, which differed in important ways from earlier periods. Colonial records provide evidence that British and French administrators strove to instill Western gender norms in African women and to mold “suitable” wives for educated, Christian men.

a. British and French colonial policies

One should note that records also support the claim that the British and French administration at least in the terminal colonial period sought to incorporate women more fully into public life, by providing certain African women with opportunities for education, travel abroad, and salaried employment. Still, it is important to note that significant disparities continued to exist in the kind and length of education of girls as opposed to boys. Additionally, women were recruited for a narrow range of positions within the colonial administration, and women’s associations were constructed as inherently non-political bodies. The colonial administration interpreted activities that did not challenge British and French colonial rule and capitalist ideals as non-political. Any activity that overstepped these boundaries was deemed political and, therefore, suspect⁹⁷.

⁹⁴ “Women of the World: Laws and Policies Affecting their”, p. 69.

⁹⁵ “Violence against Women in Cameroon”, p. 124.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ C. F. Nchia, “Party politics in the Bamenda Grassfields 1955-2004: transmutation and implications”, Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2013, p. 91.

While early colonial policies reflected the biases of the overwhelmingly male colonial administrators, after World War II, the British colonial administration focused greater attention on the education of girls and women.⁹⁸ This increased attention to girls' and women's education was linked to the growth in the number of female colonial officers in the British administration.⁹⁹ The success of these initiatives can be partially gauged through school enrollment and attendance figures for girls and women in the Southern Cameroons. The complex nature of the educational system in the territory, which included government, native authority, and mission schools, presents some difficulty in gathering total school enrollment and attendance figures.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, British reports to the League of Nations and later to the United Nations provide general data on girls' school attendance rates in Southern Cameroons, which indicate that they increased over the course of British colonial rule. Narrative reports also indicate that these gains were not accidental but rather a part of a conscious effort to increase girls' and women's access to education.¹⁰¹ The 1954 report notes, for example: "Prejudice against the education of women dies hard, but the number attending school is increasing gradually throughout the territory".¹⁰²

Describing increases in girls' primary enrollment rates between 1950 and 1980 in sub-Saharan Africa, Claire Robertson notes: "These figures indicate a strong commitment to increasing girls' education, both before and after independence, but generally higher pre-independence growth rates."¹⁰³ In part, rapid growth rates during the 1950s reflected the low levels of girls' primary school enrollment before this period. They also, however, indicated administrations' growing commitment to girls' education during the terminal colonial period.¹⁰⁴

Still, even as girls' attendance rates increased, the gains occurred overwhelmingly at the primary level, meaning that women were still greatly underrepresented in fields requiring higher levels of education. In 1949, the governor of Nigeria, who also controlled Cameroons,

⁹⁸ C. Helen, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987, p. 115.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ "Great Britain Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1954", London: HMSO, 1955, p. 80.

¹⁰² "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom 1954", p. 80.

¹⁰³ R. Claire. *Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa, 1950-1980: In Women and Class in Africa*, New York, Africana Publishing Company, 1986, p. 93.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

established a commission to examine how to train Nigerians (and Cameroonians) to take on Senior Service posts.¹⁰⁵ The study placed special attention on women, noting:

It has already been recommended that women should be given equal consideration with men for any departmental scholarship and training schemes for which they may possess the necessary educational qualifications but the Commission considers that in addition a special allocation of thirty scholarships in all should be made during the three year period to enable women to obtain qualifications overseas for posts, such as nursing, secretarial and librarian and certain other specialists appointments, in which a larger number of skilled Nigerian women officers are urgently required.¹⁰⁶

In 1949, Great Britain launched a special training program to increase the number of educated African women in Nigeria and the Cameroons, and in that year, three women from Cameroon undertook studies in Great Britain.¹⁰⁷ In 1950, five women from the Cameroons were pursuing higher education in either Nigeria or Britain due to this program.¹⁰⁸ These gains were small, and women were limited to a narrow range of occupations. One respondent, who benefited from this program, noted: “Only a few Cameroonians went to Nigeria for education on government scholarships. Very few girls were selected for these places.”¹⁰⁹ Despite the fact that only a few women benefited from the program, its existence at least indicates that incremental changes were occurring in colonial policies towards women during the terminal colonial period. Reports throughout the 1950s state that there were a growing number of women working as nurses, teachers, and clerks. By 1958, there were 222 teachers, five nursing sisters, and 55 nurses and midwives, and a number of women held clerical positions in the public service and in commercial concerns.¹¹⁰ In this context, higher education provided by the colonial administration to a limited number of women enabled them to take on new roles outside the home.

The colonial administration also sought to eradicate practices like polygyny and bride wealth through education. British reports on the Cameroons emphasize that legal approaches to eradicating these cultural practices were largely ineffective and difficult, if not entirely

¹⁰⁵ R. Claire. *Women's Education and Class Formation in Africa*, p. 93.

¹⁰⁶ “Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1949”, London: HMSO, 1950, p. 107.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ “Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1950”, London: HMSO, 1951, p. 107.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ “Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1958”, London: HMSO, 1959, p. 166.

impossible, to enforce. Recognizing the limits of legal strategies, the documents advocate education as the best avenue toward social change. The 1950 report notes, for example:

The development of education, notably of girls, will have as one of its results, the spreading of a higher conception of the role of women in society... which will lead them to resist the requirements and usages of old and harmful customs.¹¹¹

From this perspective, exposure to Western norms and values disseminated through schools and centers would lead Cameroonians to choose European over African practices. Western women, as colonial administrators, missionaries, or wives, were to serve as role models, offering African women alternatives to their traditional gender roles.

It is important to highlight that colonial agents frequently had only a cursory understanding of these cultural practices, which impeded their ability to understand the complex ways that these practices affected women's position in society. In her fieldwork in Cameroon, Fiona Bowie, found, for example, that traditional marriage with exchange of bridewealth gives women some security as a woman's husband cannot dismiss her without losing his 'investment.'¹¹² Thus, under certain conditions, the prohibition of cultural practices like the exchange of bridewealth could render women's status in society more precarious rather than more secure.

While opening opportunities for professional employment and seeking to eradicate certain cultural practices, one must not overestimate the "liberating" potential of British educational policies. Throughout its years in the Southern Cameroons, Great Britain also employed domestic science education to create "good" wives and mothers.¹¹³ In this context, colonial policies did seek to spread European notions of domesticity to African women. Consider the following quotation from a 1958 colonial report:

The girls ... come in straight from the hill pagan villages, without having previously attended any kind of school, to learn simple cookery, baby craft, health and hygiene, and local crafts. At the end of their two years, they can qualify for a Housecraft Certificate or, if they can read a little a Certificate of Merit. The girls usually marry at once on returning to their villages and they make excellent housewives.¹¹⁴

The domestic science centers established throughout the colonial territory were a means through which European norms of hygiene and domesticity could be transferred to African

¹¹¹ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government", 1951, p. 115.

¹¹² B. Fiona, *Introduction: Reclaiming Women's Presence, In Women and Missions: Past and Present, Anthropological and Historical Perceptions*, Providence, Berg, 1993, p. 17.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom 1950", p. 166.

women. The 1950 British report describes the spread of these centers. During the year, at the request of the wives of the African junior staff, a woman's institute was started in Bamenda. The institute was managed by a committee of which the president is the only European, and is conducted on much the same lines as a women's institute in the United Kingdom. At its meetings, which take place once a week, the women learn sewing and knitting, play games and do useful work for the community such as mending hospital linen.¹¹⁵

This school and others like it did not seek to encourage women's participation in the public sphere. Nevertheless, some women were able to benefit from domestic science education. As this quotation indicates, these initiatives enabled women to take on leadership roles, which could, and often did, serve as stepping stones to broader involvement in public life.¹¹⁶

Domestic science education also provided some women with an economic livelihood as enterprising students used sewing and baking skills learned in these programs to earn an income or even open a small business.¹¹⁷ Information on hygiene and nutrition reduced infant mortality rates and responded to real needs.¹¹⁸ It would be a mistake, therefore, to believe that the African women who participated in these domestic science groups and classes unquestioningly accepted the gendered discourses offered by European women. Moreover, as noted previously, many of the European women who led these domestic science classes had ambivalent feelings towards their subject matter, viewing them as a jumping off point into broader studies. Elizabeth O'Kelly, for example, used corn mills societies in the Northwest grass fields to attract women to join women's groups but then used the groups to address a wide range of issues.¹¹⁹

In sum, for some women, education opened new opportunities for travel abroad and professional employment. Particularly during the last years of colonialism, the British administration sought to incorporate more women into the civil service. To do so, it needed to promote women's education at the secondary and university levels. For others and this includes the vast majority of African women colonial educational opportunities consisted entirely of

¹¹⁵ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom 1951", p. 166.

¹¹⁶ K. Emmanuel. "Cameroonian Women in National Politics Since the Second World War, 1945-1985: An Historical Study of Women and Politics in a Male-Dominated Society." Doctorate thesis, Boston University, 1991. p. 296

¹¹⁷ S. Kathleen "I studied with the Nuns Learning to Make Blouses': Gender Ideology and Colonial Education in Mozambique." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol.31, no. 3, 1998, p. 595.

¹¹⁸ A. M Tripp, "A New Look at Colonial Women: British Teachers and Activists in Uganda (1898-1962)." *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 38, no.1, 2004, pp.123-124.

¹¹⁹ E. O'Kelly, *Aid and Self-Help: A General Guide to Overseas Aid*, London: Charles Knight & Co. Ltd, 1973, p. 111.

primary school and domestic science courses. Yet, even within this restricted framework, Cameroonian women were able to take the elements of domestic science courses that were useful to their lives and leave the rest behind. In some cases, they used the skills learned in these domestic science courses to enter the public sphere as entrepreneurs, teachers, and leaders of women's groups.

Colonial encounters between African and European women have frequently been studied through the lens of domesticity.¹²⁰ This perspective emphasizes that colonial and missionary institutions played an important role in diffusing Christianity, European languages, and Western norms throughout Africa. This focus on domesticity also emphasizes the role that colonial and mission policies played in socializing African women into European gender norms and "appropriate" forms of social organization. In general, this literature argues that European influences including colonial administrations, missions, and informal organizations narrowed women's sphere of activities and increasingly confined them to the home and family¹²¹. These influences propagated "an ideology of female domesticity that laid stress on women's reproductive and nurturing roles above their autonomy and productivity¹²²." The major focus of this literature is on how the colonial state and Christian missions contributed to the "housewifisation" of African women¹²³.

Nancy Rose Hunt, for example, examines the links between gender and domesticity in the Belgian Congo. Describing the *foyers sociaux* established by missionaries, social-service agencies, and colonial women's associations with the support of the Belgian colonial administration, Hunt argues that they are a key component in a "Belgian colonial project to refashion gender roles and instill a Western family ideology into African urban life."¹²⁴ Within the *foyers sociaux*, women participated in classes on sewing, cooking, housekeeping, and maternal hygiene. They also took part in home visits, decorating contests, graduation ceremonies, and other public rituals, all of which, according to Hunt, attempted to re-define gender roles and domesticate African women¹²⁵.

¹²⁰ M. Amina, "Women's Studies and Studies of Women in Africa During the 1990s", Working Paper Series 5/96, Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA, 1996, p. 28.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² W. Cherryl, *Women and Gender in Southern Africa to 1945*. London, James Currey, 1990, p. 13.

¹²³ M. Amina. "Women's Studies and Studies of Women in Africa", p. 29.

¹²⁴ N. R. Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgium Africa: Usumbura's Foyer Social, 1946-1960", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 15, no. 3, 1990, p. 469.

¹²⁵ N. R. Hunt, "Domesticity and Colonialism in Belgium Africa", p. 469.

Similarly, Deborah Gaitskell has examined the diffusion of ideologies of domesticity through colonial and mission institutions in Southern Africa.¹²⁶ Specifically, she has examined hostels for African women established in Johannesburg by the Anglican and Methodist churches and the American Board Mission. Gaitskell argues that these mission-run hostels sought to control African women's sexuality, protect them from the dangers of city life, and ensure a supply of female domestic workers as the men who previously filled these positions turned to work in the mines¹²⁷.

Yet other work, focusing on different contexts, finds that colonial and mission influences on women are more complex, providing African women with both opportunities and constraints. Examining colonial female education in Mozambique, Kathleen Sheldon finds that despite the imitations of the domestic science curriculum emphasized at such schools, girls and women gained some valuable skills through these schools¹²⁸. She argues that "criticism of the gender bias of domestic science programs ignores that some women were able to use that education to enter into new arenas of work during and after the colonial era."¹²⁹ Through these programs, some women became literate, gained fluency in Portuguese, and learned other skills that helped them survive in the colonial economy. Sheldon concludes: It has been easy to critique the Portuguese colonial education system for its racism and sexism, ideologies that were central to the overall organization of the mission school system. Yet a history of that system should also include the experience of a small number of Mozambican girls who desired to attend the mission schools and who later found success as workers and professionals¹³⁰. Her findings complicate our understandings of colonial mission activities, demonstrating that while certain aspects of curriculum served to diffuse Western gender norms and confine women African Studies Quarterly Spring 2006 to the domestic sphere, others provided women with valuable skills that opened new economic opportunities.

Other scholars make similar claims, demonstrating that colonial ideologies served both to limit and to empower women. In his study of the Friends Africa Mission in Kenya, Samuel S. Thomas argues that female students subverted the ideology of domesticity disseminated at

¹²⁶ G. Deborah. "Christian Compounds for African Women in Johannesburg, 1907-1970." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1979, p. 44.

¹²⁷ Ibid, p. 45.

¹²⁸ S. Kathleen. "I Studied with the Nuns Learning to Make Blouses': Gender Ideology and Colonial Education in Mozambique." *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 31, no. 3, 1998, p. 595.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ S. Kathleen. "I Studied with the Nuns Learning, p. 625.

the mission school¹³¹. These students strategically used the school to “delay marriages and control their choice of partners” and to move beyond the domestic sphere as they used the skills they learned in dressmaking, needlework, and cooking to provide an independent source of income¹³². Barbara Moss, in a study of the British Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society (WMMS) in Rhodesia similarly found that women transformed their women’s prayer union to better meet their needs. Moss argues that these women rejected “the dependent image that Christian missionaries and colonial authorities concocted” and created an organization that enabled them to help themselves and other women in the community “by contributing labor and pooling their resources.”¹³³ Thus, African women were not just passive recipients of missionary and colonial doctrine, they were also active agents who reinterpreted and reshaped these messages.

Recent scholarship has also directed its attention to colonial women, emphasizing the diversity of women involved¹³⁴. Kumari Jayawardena, for example, has argued that western women’s experience with patriarchy in their own societies led some to fight for women’s liberation in South Asia.¹³⁵ Many of the women who traveled to Africa as missionaries, representatives of international women’s organizations, and even as colonial administrators were iconoclasts within their own societies and viewed domestic science courses not as the goal of education but as a launching pad for other work¹³⁶. Examining the work of the World Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in Africa, Nancy Boyd describes how Celestine Smith, an African American who briefly worked for the World YWCA in Lagos, Nigeria from December 1934 to June 1935, felt about the YWCA’s work in Nigeria:

While admitting that, to her surprise, she had enjoyed patching and darning, hemming baby clothes, covering lampshades, baking cakes for the Bishop’s tea parties, and other unaccustomed chores, Celestine Smith was appalled by Miss Bentall’s suggestion that her successor be a teacher of dressmaking and home economics. Pointing out that no one in Nigeria will freeze if she never wears a dress, she advises her to choose ‘the most intelligent, Christian YWCA Secretary or social worker whom you can find’¹³⁷.

¹³¹ S. S. Thomas, “Transforming the Gospel of Domesticity: Luhya Girls and Friends Africa Mission, 1917-1926,” *African Studies Review*, vol.43, no. 2, 2000, P.3.

¹³² Ibid, p. 15.

¹³³ M. Barbara. “To Determine the Scale of Wants of the Community: Gender and African Consumption.” New York, Routledge, 1997, p.103.

¹³⁴ S. Margaret, *European Women and the Second British Empire*. Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1991, p.1.

¹³⁵ J. Kumari. *The White Women's “Other” Burden: Western Women in South Asia during British Rule*, New York, Routledge, 1995, p. 32.

¹³⁶ T. A. Mari. “A New Look at Colonial Women: British Teachers and Activists in Uganda (1898-1962).” *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol..38, no.1, 2004, p. 6.

¹³⁷ B. Nancy, *Emissaries: The Overseas Work of the American YWCA 1895-1970*, New York, The Woman's Press, 1986, pp. 126-127.

Smith recognized that while enjoyable and sometimes useful, domestic science should not be the sole, or even the primary, focus of the YWCA in Nigeria. European women did not always “push” domestic science classes on African women. In some cases, they responded to Africans’ desire to learn some of these skills. Though nearly all missions and colonial governments diffused domestic ideologies, these ideologies varied in significance and affected women differently. Class, context, religion, and the colonial administration were all important variables that influenced how these ideologies affected specific women. In certain contexts, ideologies of domesticity were tempered by other policies that explicitly sought to increase women’s participation in the public realm. Moreover, African women frequently subverted these domestic ideologies, taking what was useful and leaving the rest behind.

The outbreak of the second world war showed proof of the weakness of the league of nations to maintain peace in the world and promote cooperation among its members as desired by the founding fathers. By 1945, with the end of the war, it was replaced by a new international body called UNO. This same year 1945 marked the birth of a radical African nationalism that was going to be felt in the remotest and almost all the territories under colonial influence, the Cameroon being no exception. This nationalism was manifested in the two territories of Cameroon administered by Britain and France¹³⁸.

The French part of the territory witnessed a more vigorous or radical nationalism with the creation of trade unions and the birth of political parties from 1948 following the decision arrived at the Brazzaville conference held in 1944.¹³⁹ The British part of the territory witnessed a relatively mild nationalism.¹⁴⁰ It militated in Nigeria politics under the banner of the NCNC and it should be noted that the first indigenous pressure group was formed in the territory in 1939 known as the Cameroon Welfare Union CWU by GJ Mbene.¹⁴¹ Therefore, active political activity only began in the territory after the creation of the NCNC in 1944 by Nnamdi Azikiwe. While nationalism started in French Cameroon with the formation of some pro-French groups *Union Camerounaise* in 1937 and *Jeunesse Camerounaise française* (JEUCAFRA) in 1938 which were mainly out to counter the Nazi propaganda that was developing in the territory.¹⁴²

¹³⁸ D. Mokam, “Les association Regionales et le Nationalisme Camerounaise 1945-1961”, Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2004-2005, p. 239.

¹³⁹ V. J. Ngoh, “The political evolution of Cameroon, 1884-1961,” Master’s Dissertation in History, May 17th 1979, Portland State University, p. 50.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 56.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 85.

¹⁴² V. J. Ngoh, “The political evolution of Cameroon’, p. 43.

In Africa at large and in Cameroon, the impact of women was felt during the colonial era and most precisely during the independence struggle. In French Cameroon, the first female uprising against the European was staged in French Cameroon precisely in Douala in 1931 due to the extension of head tax to women. As early as 1949, a certain Marie- Irene ngapeth, encouraged by her husband joined the UPC. Other women like Marthe Moumie, Marthe Ouandie and many others under the military wing of the UPC party,¹⁴³ the Armée de Liberation Nationale du Kamerun (ALNK) acted as spies, seduced men to get information and led sensitization and manifestation against the French. The three women, together with Gertrude Omog and Emma Mbem, started a discussion aimed at the formation of a women's party as a companion of the UPC.¹⁴⁴ When invited to attend the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF) in 1951, they seized the opportunity to found the UDEFEC.¹⁴⁵ Although some UPC members were against an independent UDEFEC, the Secretary General of the party, Um Nyobe, defended their independent political leadership from the UPC.¹⁴⁶ UDEFEC therefore offered a platform for women to be in the executive arm of a political party. It should be noted that during the first congress of the UPC that held in Dschang in April 1950, it was chaired by a woman in the person of Mambou Nganou, a princesse of the Bana chiefdom. Under the banner of *Union Democratique des Femmes Camerounaise* (UDEFEC), women defended their rights.¹⁴⁷

b. Native Authorities (NA) and women's participation in Cameroon

Meanwhile, in British Southern Cameroons, the colonial administration gathered information about women's participation in the Native Authorities (NAs) and representation in local government. Only women with salaries or another form of easily accessible income (like barkeepers) were eligible to vote and occupy leadership positions in these NAs.¹⁴⁸ This condition of course limited the number of women members of the NAs who were considered on an equal basis with men. In other parts of the territory, provision was made for special representatives of women's interests in the NAs, important legislative arms of the British colonial administration.¹⁴⁹ In Bamenda, for example, the South Western Federated Council

¹⁴³ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p.4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam, *L'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique et Politique Camerounaise*, Cameroon, 2014, p. 211.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ A. Melinda, "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life: The Case of British Southern Cameroons." *African Studies Quarterly* vol. 8, N° 3, Spring 2006, p, 7.

¹⁴⁹ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership, 1960-2015", p. 5.

provided four places for women representation, while the South Eastern Federation allowed for three seats. Although women gained representation on behalf of women's interests, they never had the same rights and privileges as their male counterparts. Apart from the fact that a woman was appointed into parliament, another was appointed to the British Southern Cameroons Scholarship Board.¹⁵⁰

The colonial authorities recognized only limited women political leadership in parliament; men continued their domination of this legislative arm of the administration. After independence and reunification, Ahmadou Ahidjo and Paul Biya were influenced by several factors to have women serve in the legislature and executive positions. Politics was mostly animated by men. It was only from December 1957 that women gained greater political power following the adaptation of the new British Southern Cameroons Electoral Regulations which allowed women to vote and to be voted for without the taxation requirement that had earlier impeded women's ability to participate in politics.¹⁵¹ Thus from 1957, women became very active in the liberation of the territory through cultural organization like the Anlu through political parties like the KNC, KPP and KNDP. They equally participated in the 1961 plebiscite elections which led to the reunification of Southern Cameroon to East Cameroon.¹⁵²

Certain colonial practices, intentionally or unintentionally, decreased women's influence in the public sphere by undermining their traditional bases of authority. In pre-colonial societies, women's authority stemmed from both their reproductive and productive roles.¹⁵³ The colonial administration's introduction of cash crop agriculture and its preference for recruiting men to civil service posts during much of the colonial period undermined women's status. Other policies, however, explicitly sought to increase women's participation in public life.¹⁵⁴ The 1954 report to the United Nations notes, for example: "In the Southern Cameroons there is a trend towards an increasing independence for women who have the encouragement of the Southern Cameroons Government."¹⁵⁵ To track these trends, the British colonial administration in Southern Cameroons collected data on women's participation in "native authorities," supported educational programs that aimed to prepare women to take on

¹⁵⁰ A. Melinda. "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life", p. 7.

¹⁵¹ F. M Jane, "Women's Participation in Governance in Cameroon Improves", Yaounde, March 8, 2014, p. 1.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ S. Nana-Fabu, "An Analysis of the Economic Status of Women in Cameroon" *Journal of International Women's Studies* Vol. 8, no.1, Bridgewater State University, Massachusetts, November 2006, p. 155.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 156.

¹⁵⁵ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom", 1955, p. 79.

decision-making posts, and sponsored female participants in regional and international training programs.

The British colonial administration in Southern Cameroons sought information on women's participation in native authorities and collected data on women's representation in local government throughout the territory. Specifically, the government asked administrators across the territory to provide information on whether and to what extent women were participating in the native authorities.¹⁵⁶ Synthesizing the data, the administration found that women's participation was generally quite low. In most areas, participation in native authorities was linked to the payment of tax. Since few women paid taxes, women were, unsurprisingly, excluded from leadership positions, although there were a few exceptions. In general, only women with salaried positions or another form of easily assessable income (primarily barkeepers) were therefore eligible to vote and serve in leadership positions. In a few locations, one or two women participated on the councils on an equal capacity with men. In others areas, provisions enabled special representatives of women's interests to participate in native authorities.¹⁵⁷ In Bamenda, for example, the South West and South East Native Authorities allowed for special representatives of women's interests on the councils (four women participated in the first and three in the latter). These women's representatives, however, did not have the same rights and privileges as male members. They were able to represent women in the community but not the community as a whole. In still in other councils, women had no representation at all.¹⁵⁸

Cameroonian women acquired the right to vote and to be elected into parliament in October 1946¹⁵⁹; but in southern Cameroon, Women gained greater access to political roles following the adoption of the December 1957 Southern Cameroons Electoral Regulations, which allowed women to vote and to stand for election without the taxation requirements that impeded women's ability to participate in political affairs in the past and in French Cameroon in the 1960's. A 1957 British report on the Cameroons notes that a woman was present on the Southern Cameroons House of Assembly to represent interests of women, a woman was appointed to Southern Cameroons Scholarship Board, and in "Victoria Division each council nominated women councilors to represent women's interests on the council and one woman

¹⁵⁶ NAB, safe 1957/1, "participation in native Authorities"

¹⁵⁷ A. Melinda. "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life", p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ *Participation des Femmes a la Vie Politique et au Processus de Prise de Décision*, Genève, CIDP, 1988, p. 46.

was appointed a court member on the Tiko Council.”¹⁶⁰ In addition, the report indicates that “Native Authorities continued to employ an increasing number of midwives, female teachers and some female clerical staff.”¹⁶¹ A document on the participation of women in native authorities also indicates that women were taking on a broader range of occupations. They were becoming telephonists, midwives, nurses, teachers, clerics, machine operators, wardresses, and receptionists.¹⁶² Although women’s participation increased, it continued to lag significantly behind that of men. Moreover, many of the women who served on these councils represented “women’s interests” and, therefore, did not have equal rights with male representatives. Still, these examples point to some positive developments that resulted from colonial policies that had the explicit intention of increasing women’s participation in the public sphere¹⁶³.

Colonial encounters in Southern Cameroons affected women in complex and contradictory ways. As multiple scholars have demonstrated, many colonial policies spread Western notions of domesticity, constricting the space available for women to participate in public life. Other policies, however, opened new opportunities to women for education, salaried employment, travel abroad, and activism in local and international organizations. In this section, we use the case of Southern Cameroons to demonstrate that British colonial and missionary policies did not seek solely to domesticate African women.¹⁶⁴ Although certain colonial projects did aim at creating good Christian wives and mothers for educated African men, others, particularly during the last decade of colonial rule, sought to promote women’s participation in public life. This case study supports and extends recent, nuanced work on colonial encounters that complicates relations between Europeans and Africans, demonstrating that African women were frequently active agents, rejecting and transforming colonial ideologies that did not meet their needs.¹⁶⁵

Particularly as the period of colonial rule began to draw to a close, Great Britain recognized the roles that women and women’s associations Would play in the territory Circular 212/60 on “The Participation of Women in Public Life”, for example, discusses how women were “increasingly participating in the social and public affairs of the community” and noted

¹⁶⁰ “Great Britain, Report by His Majesty’s Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1957”, London: HMSO, 1958, p. 165.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² NAB, Safe 1957/1, “Participation of Women in Native Authorities”, p. 2.

¹⁶³ R.N Tati, “women in the history of Bali chamba of Cameroon, 1980- 1958: with focus on Balikumbat and Balinyonga”, Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2015-2016, p. 173.

¹⁶⁴ A. Melinda, “Colonial Policies and Women’s Participation in Public Life”, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

that the “development of women’s clubs has been symptomatic of the new movement”.¹⁶⁶ Britain supported the formation of women groups in Southern Cameroon and encouraged these groups to form links with international associations.¹⁶⁷

Its motives for this support are evident in the following excerpt: much valuable work can be done through the work in each territory of women organizations and societies. Such organisations, where sufficiently advanced, can be greatly helped in their educative task by affiliation at the territorial level with appropriate, responsible international women’s organizations, such as the International Council of Women, the International Alliance of Women, the Associated Country Women of the World, and other such non-political organisations. Such affiliation may also counter any attempt by communist-dominated bodies, such as the Women’s International Democratic Federation (WIDF) to secure allegiance of local women’s organisations.¹⁶⁸

Such organizations were sufficiently advanced and could greatly help in their educative task by affiliation at the territorial level with appropriate, responsible international women organizations, such as the International Council of Women, the International Alliance of Women, the Associated Country Women of the World, and other such non-political organizations. Thus, while Britain supported the formation of women associations in Cameroon and the affiliation of these groups with international women organizations, it only supported certain kinds of organizations, namely non-communist at the time and non-political ones. Great Britain not only encouraged the formation of such groups but provided funds for representatives of appropriate women organizations to attend international meetings, which enabled Cameroonian women to establish links with women in other countries.¹⁶⁹

The administration chose Minerva Martins, for example, to represent the Southern Cameroons at a United Nations Regional Seminar on “The Participation of Women in Public Life” in Addis Ababa in December 1960. The conference program addressed subjects like women participation in all levels of government, the wider implications of this participation, and the factors that facilitated and impeded women ability to participate in public affairs (e.g. educational, economic, social, and legal issues).¹⁷⁰ As one of the series of regional conferences sponsored by the United Nations, it was part of a global effort to increase women participation in public life.¹⁷¹ An abortive coup in Ethiopia, which occurred during the conference, created unforeseen difficulties. Martins spent several days at the British Consul in Ethiopia, prompting an endless trail of paperwork between the United Nations and Great Britain over which agency

¹⁶⁶ NAB, Safe 1960/1, Circular 212/60, “The Participation of Women in Public Life,” March 1, 1960.

¹⁶⁷ A. Melinda, “Colonial Policies and Women’s Participation in Public Life”, p. 8.

¹⁶⁸ NAB, Safe 1960/1, Circular 212/60, “The Participation of Women in Public Life,” March 1, 1960.

¹⁶⁹ A. Melinda, “Colonial Policies and Women’s Participation in Public Life”, p. 8.

¹⁷⁰ NAB, Safe 1960/1, UN Regional Seminar, December 12-23, 1960 in Addis Ababa.

¹⁷¹ “Seminar on the participation of women in public” held in Bogota, Columbia from May 18-29, 1959, p .6.

should cover her additional expenses.¹⁷² Despite this unfortunate outcome, the example demonstrates that the British colonial government took tangible steps to increase women's participation in political life in the Cameroons by providing funding and logistical support for Martins' participation in the meeting.

Missionaries, colonial administrators, and wives of colonial agents also encouraged the formation of women groups in Southern Cameroons.¹⁷³ British colonial reports list a number of women's organizations active in the region. These include the Young Ladies' Improvement Society (Victoria), the Women's Progressive Society (Kumba), The Ladies' Dramatic Society (Buea), the Ndola Bitu Women's Fellowship (Buea), and the Ladies' Glee Club (Mamfe).¹⁷⁴

Girl Guides, the female equivalent of the Boy Scouts linked to the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS) also had a small but growing presence in Southern Cameroon. As of 1959, there were 250 registered Girl Guides.¹⁷⁵ Other organizations included the Red Cross, the Mothers' Union, women's sports clubs, women's farm clubs, and corn mill societies. The 1950 report to the United Nations notes that a women institute was established in Bamenda and functioned similarly to Women Institutes in Great Britain.¹⁷⁶ Though modeled after a British organization, the women institute enabled Cameroonian women to take on leadership positions. The Bamenda women institute was managed by a committee of which only one member was European.¹⁷⁷ Thus, even groups patterned after British organizations took on a life of their own and provided women with opportunities to take on leadership positions.¹⁷⁸

While men greatly outnumbered women in the colonial service, British women served as colonial agents in various capacities, particularly after World War II. Specifically, they

¹⁷² NAB, Safe 1960/1, UN Regional Seminar, December 12-23, 1960 in Addis Ababa.

¹⁷³ A. Melinda, "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life," p. 9.

¹⁷⁴ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1953", London: HMSO, 1954, p.108.

¹⁷⁵ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to the Trusteeship Council of the United Nations on the Administration of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Trusteeship for the Year 1959", London: HMSO, 1960, p.59.

¹⁷⁶ J. Inez, *The History of the Women's Institute Movement of England and Wales*, Oxford, The University Press, 1953, pp. 7 - 8. (The Women's Institutes movement began in Canada in 1897 and in Great Britain in 1915. Women's Institutes were rural women's groups that, as written in the first constitution, sought to promote that knowledge of household science which shall lead to the improvement in household architecture with special attention to home sanitation; to a better understanding of economics and hygienic value of foods and fuels; and to a more scientific care of children, with a view to raising the general standard of the health of our people. In short, organizations aimed to better the home and the community more broadly and to bring women together without regard to "political, religious, or ethical belief.)

¹⁷⁷ "Great Britain, Report by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom", 1951, p. 107.

¹⁷⁸ A. Melinda, "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in public life" p. 9.

tended to work as nurses, teachers and principals, and colonial administrators.¹⁷⁹ Elizabeth O’Kelly was a British colonial officer in Southern Cameroons from 1950 until 1961. Upon her arrival in Cameroon, O’Kelly worked at the Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) in Buea, where she planned and ran literacy classes and courses on history, geography, arithmetic, hygiene, and diet. In October 1952, she became a woman education officer in the British Colonial Service and was assigned to Bamenda Province in the Northwest grassfields.¹⁸⁰ After talking with Phyllis Kaberry, an anthropologist who worked in the Bamenda area who had recently published *Women of the Grassfields*, O’Kelly learned that grinding corn was one of women’s most time-consuming tasks. She created a program to provide grinding machines to groups of women. By 1960, there were 200 groups encompassing thousands of women. Most of this section draws on O’Kelly’s perceptions of the corn mill societies since the colonial and expatriate records are better preserved than Cameroonian records.¹⁸¹ Unfortunately, there are scant written records of the corn mill societies from Cameroonian perspectives.

The first corn mill society was established in July 1954. By October of that year, eight societies were functioning. Groups averaged about 70 members, and each group established rules regarding the use of the corn mill, how the loan for the mill would be repaid, and members’ responsibilities. O’Kelly notes that chief rule was “that membership was open to any women regardless of tribe or religion and that the movement was non-political.”¹⁸² To ensure that the societies were inclusive, O’Kelly refused to provide a corn mill until it was clear that all women in the area had the opportunity to join. Describing this requirement, O’Kelly states: “Because of this the corn mill societies were perhaps the only group in the country which could claim members from every section of the community and from every tribe and religious denomination.”¹⁸³ While earlier organizational forms were primarily emerged along ethnic lines, corn mill societies brought together women of different ethnic and religious groups. For O’Kelly, “One of the greatest achievements of the societies over the years had been the gradual breaking down of the barriers between tribes so that the women worked amicably with each other regardless of their different origins.”¹⁸⁴ This emphasis on “non tribalism” became even

¹⁷⁹ C. Helen, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial*, p. 100.

¹⁸⁰ E. O’Kelly, “Corn Mill Societies in the Southern Cameroons.” *African Women*, 1955, pp. 33-35.

¹⁸¹ E. O’Kelly, *Aid and Self-Help*, pp. 108-110.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, p. 111.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 115.

¹⁸⁴ O’Kelly, *Aid and Self-Help*, p. 123.

more central to women's organizations in the immediate post-colonial period as the Cameroonian state sought to build a sense of nationalism.

While the corn mills were an important component of the new associations, they were not the sole reason for women to come together. O'Kelly targeted grassroots women who lacked a formal education and were primarily engaged in subsistence farming. Describing women's ambivalence towards colonial educational initiatives, O'Kelly observed: "women have very little free time and still less inclination to attend the already established domestic science centres which cater largely for the wives of the educated Africans."¹⁸⁵ This quotation highlights the class distinctions that emerged in the colonial period. At least initially, many women in the rural areas had little interest in domestic science and English classes. Thus, O'Kelly sought to use the corn mills to bring women together to address a wide variety of issues. She states:

The mills were really a bait to attract women to the societies and to classes that might help them in other ways. Now that the women had more time, freed as they were from their most time-consuming task, they did begin to consider other activities. They enjoyed the sociability of gathering around the corn mill and many societies initiated regular meetings. Some women decided that they wished to learn more about cooking and making soap.¹⁸⁶

In a number of cases, members of the corn mill societies built community halls where they could hold these meetings and classes. These buildings were no small endeavor as they had to be large enough to hold a hundred or more women. Many groups expanded their work to include poultry schemes that relied on the bran from the milled corn to feed the chickens, fuel plantations, which increased the supply of firewood available to women, and, in one case, a cooperative shop.

By 1960, a year before O'Kelly left Cameroon, there were more than 200 corn mill societies comprising over 20,000 members.¹⁸⁷ The very success of the groups created some difficulties. As the plebiscite to determine whether Southern Cameroons would join Nigeria or Cameroon drew near, male politicians sought to co-opt the corn mill societies. Describing this period, O'Kelly states: "feelings ran high, and as the largest organised body in the country the corn mill societies were under repeated pressure to join one or the other of the two main political parties, and constant vigilance was necessary to ensure that their neutrality was not infringed."¹⁸⁸ In an increasingly politicized environment, this was not the only attempt to

¹⁸⁵ E. O'Kelly, "Corn Mill Societies in the Southern Cameroons", pp. 33-34.

¹⁸⁶ F. Marion and E. O'Kelly, *Technology for Women and Corn Mill Societies of Cameroon, In Each in Her Own Way: Five Women Leaders of the Developing World*, Boulder, Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1985, p. 133.

¹⁸⁷ F. Marion and E. O'Kelly, "Technology for Women and Corn Mill Societies of Cameroon", p. 142.

¹⁸⁸ E. O'Kelly, *Aid and Self-Help*, pp. 122-123.

associate women's associations with partisan goals. Emmanuel Konde argues that male politicians similarly attempted to co-opt a traditional, informal women's organization, *anlu*, in the lead up to the plebiscite.¹⁸⁹ In the immediate post-colonial era, the Cameroon National Union (CNU), which quickly emerged as the most significant political party in independent Cameroon, also sought to bring independent women's groups under the umbrella of its women's wing.¹⁹⁰

While the accomplishments of the corn mill societies were impressive, at times O'Kelly's discussion of them reflects the patronizing attitude towards Africans common among colonial administrators. Describing how the societies worked in a 1955 article in *African Women*, O'Kelly notes, for example: "it must be borne in mind that arrangements had to be of the simplest when all members are illiterate."¹⁹¹ She concludes the article: "whilst gradually, as the women get used to the idea of meeting together, it should be possible to introduce to them a better knowledge of child welfare and hygiene and generally raise their standard of living. That this is necessary there can be no doubt."¹⁹² These quotations reflect a top-down approach through which information is transferred from Europeans to Africans. O'Kelly also indicates that one goal of these activities was to explain colonial practices, which Cameroonian women often viewed as arbitrary and authoritarian. O'Kelly explains, for instance, that women in the region did not respond favorably to the introduction of sanitary inspectors in local markets. These inspectors would patrol markets and destroy women's produce that did not meet their food safety requirements. While bringing a sanitary inspector to a corn mill society meeting a suggestion offered by O'Kelly would enable women learn more about the requirements and possibly avoid the destruction of their goods, it would not enable them to challenge the very premise of having an external authority impose new rules on food production.

The legacies of the corn mill societies, for good and bad, were far-reaching. During O'Kelly's tenure in the grass fields from 1952 to 1961, the cooperatives experienced incredible growth, encompassing thousands of women. They brought women together to alleviate one of their most time-consuming tasks, to learn new skills, and to socialize. Yet the corn mill societies

¹⁸⁹ K. Emmanuel, "Cameroonian Women in National Politics Since the Second World War, 1945-1985: An Historical Study of Women and Politics." P. 70. (Though different scholars offer different explanations of the 1958 uprising, it was at least partially a protest against colonial policies affecting women, including rising taxes and laws regulating farming techniques.)

¹⁹⁰ A. S. Yene, "A Critical Survey of the Resuscitation, Activation, and Adaptation of Traditional Female Political Institutions to the Exigencies of Modern Politics in the 1990s: The Case of the Takumbeng Female Society in Cameroon." Paper presented at the CODESRIA 10th General Assembly, Kampala, Uganda, 2002. P.3.

¹⁹¹ E. O'Kelly, "Corn Mill Societies in the Southern Cameroons", 1955, p. 34.

¹⁹² *Ibid*, p. 5.

also demonstrate the pitfalls of relying too heavily on a single leader and on external sources of support, two lessons that still have relevance today. While many of the organizations failed following O'Kelly's departure, others were integrated into programs organized by the newly independent state.¹⁹³

The final verdict on the corn mill societies remains ambiguous. Discussing cooperative movements in the Northwest and Southwest provinces, Mark W. DeLancey writes: "A recent report blames the failure of the corn mill societies on the inability to increase the functions of the organizations, the lack of cooperative education, the failure to include the women in planning or management, and the inability of the members to locate spare parts for the mills."¹⁹⁴ A 1977 report published by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) argues that the failure of the corn mill societies decreased women's willingness to enter similar ventures.¹⁹⁵ Community development workers provide a different perspective. They argue that the corn mill societies "had become the hub of the cooperative movement in Bamenda."¹⁹⁶ The success of the corn mill societies between 1952 and 1961 demonstrated that Cameroonian women could successfully form cooperatives and provided experience for the women involved. The societies' subsequent failure, though, made women more cautious of entering into similar arrangements in the future.

Founded in 1937 as a counterpart to the male Corona Club, the Women's Corona Society was an association of women of all races connected in some way either directly or indirectly with Britain's overseas service.¹⁹⁷ The Women's Corona Society established clubs throughout Britain's colonial territories. Members engaged in philanthropic and social welfare work. The organization also provided support to women travelling to and living in Great Britain's colonial territories as well as women visiting England¹⁹⁸.

Two branches existed in the Southern Cameroons: one in Victoria (present-day Limbe) and one in Buea. After Southern and Northern Cameroons came under British rule in 1922 as a League of Nations mandate territory, Great Britain ruled these territories as part of Nigeria until

¹⁹³ F. Marion and E. O'Kelly, "*Technology for Women and Corn Mill Societies of Cameroon*", p. 145.

¹⁹⁴ D. W. Mark, "Women's Cooperatives in Cameroon: The Cooperative Experiences of the Northwest and Southwest Provinces." *African Studies Review*, 30 no. 1, 1987, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ "UN Economic Commission for Africa annual report", 1st march 1976 - 3rd march 1977, volume 2, 1977, p. 28.

¹⁹⁶ F. Marion and E. O'Kelly, "*Technology for Women and Corn Mill Societies of Cameroon*", p. 10.

¹⁹⁷ S. Cecillie, *Forty Years of Service: The Women's Corona Society, 1950-1990*, London: The Society, 1992, p. 21.

¹⁹⁸ K. Joseph, "Women and the independence struggle", p. 60.

1961. Thus, the Cameroonian clubs were linked with both the Corona Society headquarters in London and branches in Nigeria. According to a letter written by Mrs. J.O. Fields, the president of the Buea branch of the Women's Corona Society, the organization had two primary aims: "service and friendship between members and from members to the community as a whole."¹⁹⁹

The Cameroon branch undertook a number of tasks. It welcomed newcomers to the community, provided support to members, organized educational programs, and worked closely with organizations like the Red Cross, the Girl Guides, the hospitals, and the missions. The Victoria and Buea branches held regular meetings "with a varied programme arranged for pleasure, interest, and usefulness."²⁰⁰ Specifically, members organized "how-to-do-it" demonstrations on activities like cake making, embroidery, flower arranging, and dressmaking. They also organized public events like Library Day, Botanist Day, a pet show, and the Victoria Centenary Celebration. Members were willing to support alternate programs such as a children's party, a history of Victoria, a needlework competition, a parade of traditional African dress, or a baby show, but they drew the line at a beauty contest.²⁰¹

The club's multi-racial character provided opportunities for its African and European members to have cultural exchanges. Cooking demonstrations, for example, did not only teach African women how to cook European dishes, but also enabled African women to share their favorite dishes with European women. In some meetings, European members provided practical information to Africans travelling to Great Britain, teaching Cameroonian women how to stop a taxi, to greet people on the street, to eat with a knife and fork, to post letters, and to stand in a queue. They also shared advice on dress for Great Britain and where to purchase necessary items. At other meetings, Cameroonian women shared their cultural practices with European members. Anna Foncha, for example, gave a talk on marriage customs in Bamenda province.²⁰² These exchanges demonstrate that the diffusion of information was not one-way from Europeans to Cameroonians but rather a two-way exchange, with both groups sharing information.

The Women's Corona Society was open to Europeans and Africans, and some, primarily elite, Cameroonian women participated in the organization.²⁰³ Corona would, for example,

¹⁹⁹ NAB, Safe 1956/1, September 9, 1958.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

²⁰¹ NAB, Safe 1956/2, Minutes of the Women's Corona Society meeting held at Bota Club, June 19, 1958.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ C. Helen, *Gender, Culture, and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria*, pp. 215-216. (Helen Callaway argues that in Nigeria the Women's Corona Society became an important multiracial organization where African

invite high-profile women like Anna Foncha, the wife of the future prime minister John Foncha, to baby shows or other events to help raise the hygiene and health of lower-paid Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) workers.²⁰⁴ Still, differences in perspective and priorities between African and European members existed, particularly as independence drew near. A letter written by J.O. Fields to Women's Corona Society members highlights some of these differences:

Finally, I would ask, with all urgency that I can, that we all do all in our power to foster goodwill between Government and non-Government, and between black and white. Politics are often difficult to understand, and even distressing. Let us try to understand what is going on in these momentous days while Nigeria is being built up into a great country; let us not do harm by ignorance, or by suspicion, or ill will. As women, we do have great influence, we set the whole tone of our homes. Let us, as Corona members, think of this and let us be on the side of the angels²⁰⁵

Despite attempts to bridge cultural differences, Cameroonian women chose to leave the Women's Corona Society to found their own associations as independence approached. Commenting on these developments, Anna Foncha writes:

In the past women's activities in the social and economic field were confined to villages or at most in the tribal groups. These activities were soon to assume new faces with the broadening of society and contact with foreign air. As Cameroon was coming into its own as recently as in 1960 a Corona Society invited a selected number of Cameroon women who enrolled as members. This society may be described as an organisation with a colonial bias, the idea having been mooted by the Colonial Office. It served the needs of expatriate women, some of whose husbands were serving in the overseas territories. It soon became evident that such a society could not serve the needs of a true Cameroon Women Society and this missing link led to the resignation of some Cameroon women from the Corona society.²⁰⁶

Foncha believed that this division between expatriate and indigenous women brought Cameroonian women together and led to the creation in September 1960 of the Buea Women Social Organization. As it became clear that colonialism was coming to an end, Cameroonian women chose to form their own organizations rather than continue to participate in those created by expatriate women and linked to the colonial government.

and European women came together to undertake voluntary work. By 1953, the organization had a school, a nursery, and regular activities in Lagos. Schools were later established in Kano and Jos. In Cameroon, the Women's Corona Society was established much later. As late as 1956, the president of the Buea branch notes that the organization "only exists on paper." Thus, the Women's Corona Society in Cameroon was not as effective at bringing together African and European women on a long-term basis)

²⁰⁴ NAB, Safe, 1956/2, Letter written by Mrs. J.O. Fields, November 29, 1956. (The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC) is a government-controlled parastatal specializing in agricultural production. It was formerly called the Commonwealth Development Corporation. The British handed over the CDC to the independent government, which renamed it the Cameroon Development Corporation. Tea, palm nuts, bananas, rubber, and coconuts are grown on CDC plantations. The CDC is currently in the process of being privatized, although there is little evidence that this is actually taking place).

²⁰⁵ NAB, Safe, 1956/2, Letter written by Mrs. J.O. Fields, November 29, 1956.

²⁰⁶ NAB, Safe 1962/1, "National Council of Cameroon Women."

Though these topics would generally fit within under the rubric of domesticity, discussions of hygiene, nutrition, and health care were far from irrelevant in Cameroonian women's lives. The baby shows taught women how to deal with fevers and other common sicknesses among infants and young children and allowed women to share information on nutritious foods that could increase the health of children. Child mortality was high at the time, and these topics responded to women's real concerns. Describing similar initiatives in Uganda, Tripp notes: "To denigrate domestic training and see it only as part of a civilizing and domesticating imperial project misses its relevance to ordinary women in a very pragmatic sense most of it was quite essential to the healthy survival and welfare of children and families."²⁰⁷ Moreover, the organization of baby shows served as a means of bringing women together to share information and to address a broad array of issues. These shows initiated conversations between urban and rural women, served as a means to attract new members to women's associations, and led to the "frank exchange of views and first-hand information regarding problems common to all in the Federation."²⁰⁸ Finally, by mobilizing women around such issues, some women like Burnley were able to break out of the private realm to become community activists and politicians.²⁰⁹ Through tours of West Cameroon organizing baby shows, meetings, talks, and other events, Burnley became well known. These activities raised her profile within political circles and launched her political career.²¹⁰ Burnley served as a representative to the West Cameroon House of Assembly from 1970 to 1973 and as a member of the Cameroon's National Assembly from 1973 to 1983.²¹¹

The newly founded Cameroonian women's groups continued to interact with European women through exchange visits, participation in international conferences, and affiliations with international organizations such as the Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW) and the International Council of Women (ICW).²¹² With independence, significant changes in women's organizing occurred as Cameroonian women formed their own multi-ethnic women's associations. However, continuities also existed as these associations maintained some of the same projects and activities as expatriate groups.

²⁰⁷ A. M. Tripp "A New Look at Colonial Women: British Teachers and Activists in Uganda (1898 -1962)," pp.123-124.

²⁰⁸ A. S. Yene, "A Critical Survey of the Resuscitation, Activation, and Adaptation of Traditional Female Political Institutions to the Exigencies of Modern Politics in the 1990s", P.3.

²⁰⁹ G.E. Burnley, "Status of Women" Paper delivered at the Ministry of Women's and Social Affairs Seminar on Appropriate Technology for Women, Limbe, Cameroon, February 1989, p. 4.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ A. Melinda, "Colonial Policies and Women's Participation in Public Life", p. 13.

²¹² Ibid.

In pre-colonial Cameroon, women's authority stemmed from their productive and reproductive work. Women gained prestige from their roles as primary food producers and as child bearers.²¹³ In pre-colonial Cameroon, women's authority stemmed from their productive and reproductive work. Women gained prestige from their roles as primary food producers and as child bearers.²¹⁴ At the same time, women gained in other realms, particularly in the area of formal political power. In many pre-colonial societies, cultural norms prohibited women from assuming most political roles.²¹⁵ While informal constraints continued to limit women's access to formal political offices, a number of women were able to leverage their education and activism in women's associations into political power in the immediate post-colonial period.

The history of encounters between European and African women in Southern Cameroons was characterized by complexity and ambiguity. To be sure, British colonial agents frequently asserted authority over Cameroonian women and imposed norms of domesticity that were irrelevant to Cameroonian women's daily lives. At the same time, it would be a mistake to deny the agency of Cameroonian women in these encounters. Cameroonians managed to take some of the skills attained in colonial schools, domestic science centers, and colonial women's associations and put them to use in the post-colonial era in ways that increased their status in society and facilitated their participation in the public sphere. Dorothy Gwan-Nulla, writing about women's status in the region in 1963-two years after the departure of Great Britain made a similar point: "Educated women are on the increase and with their education they are eligible to enter into government service or private enterprises. As working-class women, the earning of and free use of money renders them a vast degree of independence."²¹⁶ Gwan-Nulla also indicated that membership in women's associations grew rapidly immediately following independence, building partially on the foundation established in the last decade of colonial rule.

Specifically, there were at least three legacies of Euro-Cameroonian encounters. The first involved the development of multi-ethnic associations. Both the corn mill societies and the Women's Corona Society brought together women from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and sought to bridge ethnic, religious, and even racial divides. Multi-ethnic

²¹³ P. M. Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields*, Colonial Research Publication, No. 14, 1952, pp. 149-150.

²¹⁴ A. S. Yene, "A Critical Survey of the Resuscitation, Activation, and Adaptation of Traditional Female Political Institutions to the Exigencies of Modern Politics in the 1990s", P.3.

²¹⁵ P. M. Kaberry, *Women of the Grassfields*, pp. 151-152.

²¹⁶ D. Gwan-Nulla, "The Role of West Cameroon Women in the Family and Society" Paper prepared for a seminar in Germany from April 29-May 24, 1963 organized by the German Foundation for Developing Countries, National Archives, Buea (NAB), Safe 1960/1, p. 6.

membership was a significant departure from pre-colonial women's groups, which became even more important in the post-colonial period as the newly independent state sought to establish a national identity. The second legacy involved organizational forms and activities. Cameroonian women carried some forms and activities from colonial to post-colonial groups. While many of the corn mill societies failed following the departure of O'Kelly, those that survived provided a foundation for women's cooperatives in independent Cameroon. The legacies of the Women's Corona Society are easier to trace. Prominent women like Anna Foncha took relevant ideas to new organizations. Thirdly, the corn mill societies and the Women's Corona Society both explicitly stressed their non-political character. Both eschewed participation in political debates, focusing instead on development and social welfare. This choice to avoid political disputes affected the nature and work of organizations after independence, where the norm of "non-political" organizing was disseminated widely.

These encounters also differed in important ways. The corn mill societies were directed at grassroots women, while the Women's Corona Society sought out educated, elite Cameroonian women. Class differences, in particular, mediated the agency of Cameroonian women. Immediately following independence, the corn mill societies experienced a period of hardship and neglect that stemmed from a dearth of leadership. Women's groups like the Buea Women's Social Organization, in contrast, experienced a period of growth. In fact, a year after its formation, the Buea Women's Social Organization was renamed the Women's Cameroon Society to reflect its broader membership. Unlike the corn mill societies, these associations had a ready supply of educated, politically savvy, and internationally connected Cameroonian women who were willing and able to assume the reins of leadership.

British colonial policies in the Southern Cameroons affected women in contradictory ways. Certain policies and ideologies constricted the space available to women for public action, while others opened new possibilities for women in the areas of education, salaried employment, public life, travel abroad, and activism in local and international women's organizations. Cameroonian women instrumentally rejected and incorporated elements of colonial practice and selectively incorporated certain gender discourses into their post-colonial activities.

c. Women's struggle for liberation

The contribution of women in Cameroon to the struggle for liberation from colonial rule manifested itself in many diverse forms, including mass mobilization, petitions, boycotts, and

engagement in overtly hostile acts. The women's revolt was well thought-out and their activities in the different *fondoms* carefully synchronized. This organization was also the upshot of an authoritative and menacing use of symbols that startled men's institutions like *kuiifuai* or *kwifoyn* which out-rightly or tacitly supported the colonial subjugation of women. These were forced into lassitude, and the result was the sovereignty of British Southern Cameroons through reunification with the Republic of Cameroon on October 1st, 1961.

The Cameroonian women played a cutting-edge role in the liberation struggle against colonial rule, as did women throughout the continent. The role of women, however, has unfortunately not achieved the same attention as that of men. The works of Awasom (2002, 2006), Shanklin (1990), Nkwi (1976, 1985), and Diduk (1989, 2004) though focused on women's role have not placed women as a central factor in the liberation struggle in Cameroon. Nkwi and Nkwain (1963) have, however, examined some aspects of organization but the focus of the literature on the liberation struggle in Africa has been on the role of male elites. This work seeks to elevate the role of women from the footnotes of history to which they have been relegated in the official narratives and restore them to their rightful place in securing the reunification of British Southern and French Cameroons with the Republic of Cameroon.

Drawing on women's petitions to the UN, one of the largest collections of political documents written by ordinary African women, as well as archival research and oral interviews, the thesis explains the formation of the *Union Démocratique des Femmes Camerounaises* (UDEFEC), a women's political party linked with the UPC.²¹⁷ The study demonstrates that the UDEFEC transcended ethnic, class, educational, and social divides, and popularized nationalism in both urban and rural areas throughout the Trusteeship Territories of Cameroon under French and British administration.²¹⁸ By premising issues such as economic autonomy and biological and agricultural fertility, UDEFEC politics wove anti-imperial democracy into locally based political philosophies. More "womanist" than "feminist," UDEFEC's history sheds light on the essential components of women's successful political mobilization in Africa, and contributes to the discussion of women's involvement in nationalist movements in formerly colonized territories.²¹⁹

²¹⁷ T. Meredith, *Petitioning for our Rights, Fighting for our Nation: The History of the Democratic Union of Cameroonian Women, 1949-1960*, Langaa RPCID, January 2013, p. 136.

²¹⁸ D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam, "L'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique ", 2014, p. 211.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

In 1949, Cameroonian women from throughout the United Nations trusteeship territories under French and British administration began to petition the UN Trusteeship Council, demanding an end to racial discrimination, increased economic opportunities and better social services for women and children.²²⁰ From 1949 to 1960, over a thousand petitions written by women nationalists, members of the *Union Démocratique des Femmes Camerounaises* (UDEFEC) flowed into the Trusteeship Council. An additional 5,000 were composed by members of the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC), the *Jeunesse Démocratique du Cameroun* (JDC), and the *Union des Syndicats Confédérés du Cameroun* (USCC).²²¹ The petitioners wrote from both sides of the Anglo-French border in Cameroon, indicating that the movement spread from Cameroun under French administration to the British Cameroons. Together these parties comprised the popular nationalist movement claiming independence for Cameroon, and reunification of the territories under French and British rule.²²² Archival records in Cameroon, Britain, and France, the UN petitions and oral interviews with survivors of the nationalist period, reveal that women's involvement in the anti-colonial movement reshaped gender roles within the liminal space of nationalism.²²³ Defying arrest, women such as Elisabeth Mapondjou in the 3rd Ward of Nkongsamba opened their homes to UPC freedom fighters, allowing them to spend the night when traveling from place to place. Young married women such as Thérèse Mewa carried UPC documents and petitions to the UN under their dresses, smuggling them across the Anglo-French boundary, where they could be posted from British territory.²²⁴

Discussions of women's participation in nationalist movements in formerly colonized territories have proliferated during the last two decades.²²⁵ Much of the recent historiography of decolonization portrays women's involvement in anti-colonial movements as subversive of the colonial order, and as challenging patriarchally ordered "nation" as a modular form derived from post-Enlightenment European political tradition.²²⁶ Many theorists of revolutionary nationalism in colonial territories suggest that men embodied the struggle for political and economic emancipation, and assigned to women the passive role of upholding cultural, moral

²²⁰ T. Meredith, "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien* Nr. 12, no. 6, 2007, p. 64.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 64.

²²³ H. K. Bhabha, *Dissemi Nation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation*, London and New York: Routledge, University Press, 1991, p. 291.

²²⁴ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 64.

²²⁵ T. Kanogo, *Kikuyu Women and Politics of Protest: Mau Mau*, New York: MacMillan, 1987, p. 174.

²²⁶ E. Schmidt, *Emancipate your Husbands!': Women and Nationalism in Guinea, 1953-1958*, Bloomington, IN: Indian University Press, 2002, p. 282.

and spiritual traditions managed through hearth and home. The consensus that nationalism is constituted as a gendered discourse premising male citizenry is upheld by scholarship on nation and nationalism ranging from Europe to the Americas to South Asia to Africa.²²⁷

Furthermore, in studies of African women nationalists, the moment of nationalist or anti-colonial protest has often been considered outside the diachronic continuum of African women's response to political and/or social crisis. Recent historians of women's role in independence struggles in African territories under foreign rule have argued that "stretching the limits of gender norms" was "crucial" to anti-colonial movements, emphasizing the essential role women played in fighting for independence.²²⁸ While it is certainly agree that most, if not all, nationalist movements in Africa depended in some capacity on women's active role in the struggle for independence, one would suggest that it was not the nationalist era that prompted women's reconfiguration of gender roles.

In our analysis of Cameroonian women's nationalism, one draw on Cheryl Odim-Johnson's argument that women's involvement in independence wars followed the same trends that women's political resistance had established in the past even prior to European occupation.²²⁹ One wants to demonstrate that women followed preexisting patterns of mobilization when joining the struggle for Cameroon's independence.²³⁰ Women's participation in or precipitation of political upheaval constitutes the norm, not the exception, across time throughout Africa.²³¹ A violation of gender norms on the part of both men and women was historically a socio-political reaction to catastrophic change and was often accompanied by the transgression and renovation of other social norms including oligarchies and structures of traditional power and governance.²³² Gendered tensions increased in many cases during the colonial period, particularly when linked to collective resistance against colonialism and the economic changes it introduced.²³³ In addition to concerns over access to

²²⁷ A. McClintock, *No Longer in a Future Heaven: Women and Nationalism in South Africa*, In *Transition*, 51, 1991, p.108.

²²⁸ S. Geiger, *TANU Women: Gender and Culture in the Making of Tanganyikan Nationalism, 1955-1965*. Portsmouth, N.H Heinemann, 1997, p. 162.

²²⁹ C. Odim-Johnson, *Actions Louder than Words: The Historical Task of Defining Feminist Consciousness in Colonial West Africa*, Indiana University Press, 1997. p. 77.

²³⁰ C. Odim-Johnson, *Actions Louder than Words: The Historical Task of Defining*, p. 78.

²³¹ V. A. Judith. "Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women", In *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1972, p.165.

²³² G. Mikell, "African Feminism: Toward a New Politics of Representation", In *Feminist Studies*, vol. 21, no. 2, 1995, p. 408.

²³³ C. Robertson, "Gender and Trade Relations in Central Kenya in the Late Nineteenth Century." In *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* vol. 30 no.1, Boston University African Studies Center, 1997, p. 23.

land and its fecundity, Cameroonian women nationalists focused on reproductive fertility, and began to reclaim motherhood and birthing practices as an act of resistance to colonial rule. In so doing, they voiced their insecurities during the chaotic and violence decolonization era and articulated their political critique of men in power as African women periodically had in previous generations, and throughout the colonial era.²³⁴

In short, during the twilight years of the Trusteeship, Cameroonian politicians' struggle for independence took place against the backdrop of shifting gender roles. As they conceived the nation-to-be, Cameroonian politicians debated the role of women in society, and sought to redefine ideal womanhood and manhood.²³⁵ The conservative *Evolution Sociale Camerounaise* (ESOCAM), founded in 1949 with the support of the French administration to combat the UPC's growing popular influence, cautioned that Western-educated women "nearly always look forward to rising above African society," and that Cameroonian women "are not sufficiently trained in household duties."²³⁶ ESOCAM party members, drawn from the ranks of the *évolués* those Africans whom French administrators deemed "civilized" collaborated with the French administration in gradual nation building projects that kept pace with De Gaulle's visions for a Greater France.²³⁷ Many elite Cameroonian politicians such as those who belonged to ESOCAM envisioned becoming part of a French Union or Community, made up of the inhabitants of France's colonies. While In British Southern Cameroons, elite individuals such as Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, John Ngu Foncha, and Nerius Namaso Mbile, as well as chiefs formed parties or otherwise acted militantly to advance the cause of independence.²³⁸ Political pressure groups and tribal associations from the late 1930s created a political consciousness in British Southern Cameroons women as well as French Cameroon through the creation of organizations such as the Cameroon's Welfare Union (CWU), Cameroon's Youth League (CYL), Cameroons National Federation (CNF), Kamerun United National Congress (KUNC), the Kamerun Society, Bakweri Land Committee (BLC), and French Cameroons Welfare Union (FCWU) in the Southern Cameroons and the *Union Camerounaise* (UC), *Jeunesse Camerounaise*

²³⁴ S. Diduk, "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action in the Cameroon Grassfields", *In Africa*, 1989, p. 338.

²³⁵ K. Emmanuel, "The Use of Women for the Empowerment of Men in African Nationalist Politics: the 1958 "Anlu" in the Cameroon Grassfields," Working Papers in African Studies no. 147. Boston: African Studies Center, 1990, p. 63.

²³⁶ UNTC, "Petition from the Evolution Sociale Camerounaise concerning the Cameroons under French administration", 22 Nov 1949, T/PET.5/54, p.30.

²³⁷ R. Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun: The Social Origins of the UPC Rebellion*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977, pp. 176-177.

²³⁸ E. M. Chiabi, "Chieftaincy: Traditional Rulers in National Politics", *Annals of the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences* vol .1, no. 2, 1990, p. 23.

Francaise (JEUCAFRA), and the *Union Camerounaise Francaise* (UNICAFRA) in French Cameroon.²³⁹ The politicians of Southern Cameroons went through their apprenticeship in these pressure groups, which prepared them to challenge colonial rule and push for self-government and independence. This was and has remained the case in other parts of Africa.²⁴⁰

Accounts of the liberation struggle have not accorded African women the same attention as their male counterparts. In some cases, they are lumped with small shopkeepers and petty traders who did not have the opportunity for wage employment within the colonial enterprise as did their male counterparts.²⁴¹ It has been noted that women played a significant role in the women's wings of political parties but after independence, they were underrepresented in the parliaments.²⁴² There is no gainsaying, however, that women played a cutting-edge role in the liberation struggle in the continent. From north to south and east to west they held their own in many different ways against earlier and, eventually, colonial subjugation.²⁴³ This was because colonialism presented African sexuality as demeaning and intimidated people regarding the exploitation of the continent.²⁴⁴ The colonizers tried to and/or dismantled African social, political, and economic structures and created a European persona out of the African female.²⁴⁵ The description of society through the works of ethnographers, male and female, argues Chapman reinforce maleness. This dominance has been described by Chapman as a problem in human history that no revolt has succeeded in undoing.²⁴⁶

Women's groups like other voluntary associations in the colonial era served as vehicles for new ideas and a proving ground for political leaders, thus refuting the official narratives that have relegated them to the, footnotes of history. This can be seen, for example, in the 1929 women's uprising in Eastern Nigeria.²⁴⁷

²³⁹ R.A. Goodridge, *Activities of Political Organizations: Southern Cameroons, 1945-61*, Limbe: Design House, 2004, 13-14.

²⁴⁰ A. Abimbola, "Pressure Groups and Democratic Process in Nigeria, 1979-1993", *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, vol. 12, no.1, 2003, p. 39.

²⁴¹ W. Tordoff, *Government and Politics in Africa*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 61-62

²⁴² C. Ifeka-Moller, "Female Militancy and Colonial Revolt: The Women's War of 1929, Eastern Nigeria", In Shirley Ardener (ed.), *Perceiving Women* (London: Malaby Press), 1975, pp. 127-28.

²⁴³ A.A. Akosua, "Asante Queen Mothers in Government and Politics in the Nineteenth Century", *Journal of the Historical Society of Nigeria* vol. 10, no. 1, 1977, pp. 12-13.

²⁴⁴ B. Carton, "We are Made Quiet by this Annihilation: Historicizing Concepts of Bodily Pollution and Dangerous Sexuality in South Africa", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* vol. 39, no. 1, George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, United States, 2006, p. 85.

²⁴⁵ E. N. W. Kisiang'ani, *Decolonising Gender Studies in Africa: In African Gender Scholarship: Concepts, Methodologies and Paradigms*, Dakar, CODESRIA, 2006, p. 12.

²⁴⁶ M. Chapman, *Edwin Ardener the Voice of Prophecy and Other Essays*. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 187-188.

²⁴⁷ C. Ifeka-Moller, "Female Militancy and Colonial Revolt: The Women's War of 1929, Eastern Nigeria", p. 29.

Cameroonian women as elsewhere on the continent acted in such a way that they thumb printed their names in the sands of time.²⁴⁸ Women petty traders from British Southern Cameroons boycotted the Douala market in protest against the imposition of price restrictions by the French colonial administrators.²⁴⁹ In the Bamenda western Grass fields region, the *anlu* and *kelu* women's organizations became more political and served as the basis for the uprising that was based on women's grievances against suppression and exploitation.²⁵⁰ During the colonial period, women's contribution to the emancipation of their people, region, and country was substantial. The successful contribution of women as a group poses a challenge to Amadiume's argument that women have greater freedom and choices as individuals but a weaker collective power.²⁵¹ The women of the western Grass fields of Cameroon during the last decade of the independence struggle were more militant in their demand for independence as a well-coordinated group from different fondoms including Kom, Kedjom Keku, Baisso, Mughom, Teitengem, Mbengkas, and Bu than as individuals.²⁵² Although women made individual choices with regards to freedom in their lineages or families, they enjoyed and exercised greater freedom and power when they came together in organized groups. This was facilitated by an adept leadership that successfully opposed and weakened the forces of division epitomized in the British and French colonial system of administration. Other cases include the market women's resistance to border restrictions between British and French Cameroons and the women's protest in Douala in 1930 against French colonial policies. Such mass mobilization when joined with other forces yielded fruit. The ultimate result was the independence of Southern Cameroons in 1961 and reunification with the Republic of Cameroon, which had obtained its own independence from the French on January 1, 1960²⁵³.

In spite of visible signs of women's resistance in the Cameroons, they have not formed a fundamental part of the existing literature on the contribution of women and subalterns to the same extent as for Nigeria and Ghana.²⁵⁴ While this study focuses on the contribution of women

²⁴⁸ W. G. Nkwi, "The Anlu Factor and the 1959 Elections in the British Southern Cameroons: The Case of Kom Fondom, 1958-1961", *Epasa Moto: A Bilingual Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities*, vol. 1, no. 6, 2003, pp. 154-156, 175.

²⁴⁹ H.K. Kah, "The Reunification Movement in Cameroon 1948-61: Socio-Economic Considerations", *Journal of Applied Social Sciences*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2004, p. 125.

²⁵⁰ H.K. Kah, "Women as Makers of History: A Study of the Kelu Women Movement in Bu-Wum", p. 30.

²⁵¹ I. Amadiume, *Sexuality, African Religio-Cultural Traditions and Modernity: Expanding the Lens*, CODESRIA Bulletin Special Issue: The African Woman, 2006, p. 26.

²⁵² S. Diduk, 1989, "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action", pp. 339-340.

²⁵³ L. N. Joseph, "French Cameroon in the decolonization politics of the southern Cameroons, 1945-1961", Doctorate thesis in History, University of Yaounde 1, 2011, p. 53.

²⁵⁴ C. Fayorsey, *Chieftaincy in Ghana: Culture, Governance and Development*, Accra, Ghana, Sub-Saharan Publishers, 2006 pp. 651-52.

in the western Grass fields during the colonial era, there is need to acknowledge the contribution of women in other parts of Cameroon and for further investigation to enrich the existing literature on Cameroon and more decisively the literature that addresses the liberation struggle mounted by women all over Africa to free their territory from colonial subjugation.²⁵⁵ The existing literature on the role of women in liberating the western Grass fields from the grip of colonial rule is drawn from different disciplines that include anthropology, sociology, history, literature, and ethnography.²⁵⁶ This literature has intensely focused on the activities of the women in the different fondoms that are under study. The omitted link is the near absence and/or mediocre examination of the nature and nourishment of cooperation among their movements against continued French and British rule of Southern Cameroons.²⁵⁷

Regarding the acts within colonial history, one has situated the power of groups in the liberation struggle in this part of Cameroon and Africa more broadly. The very nature of the structure and organization of the women's movements have been interrogated to establish the link between these and the success of the rural women ,to pull the rock' from under the colonial officials and some supporting male institutions or individuals of eminence and stature. Leadership within and between ethnic groups was effective and also well-coordinated to the extent that the combination of symbols and other factors made a serious impact on loosening the attitude of the British towards independence for the British Cameroons²⁵⁸.

In a general sense, symbols have been used in history to serve different purposes and occasions. Different people for different reasons give varying interpretations to symbols and in some cases symbolic actions take place but are not fully understood by a majority of onlookers. Symbols enable people to communicate with one another on issues that embarrass, terrorize, or make it difficult for them to deal with unutterable and other invisible entities. Symbols were powerful instruments of protest and change among the women of Cameroon and other ethnic regions of the country.²⁵⁹ Symbols clearly revealed the European hegemonic visions and power tactics which met with African grassroots confrontations, especially their use by women in

²⁵⁵ E.M. Chilver, *Women Cultivators, Cows and Cash Crops in Cameroon: Persons and Powers of Women in Diverse Cultures*, Oxford, Berg Publishers, 1992. P. 105.

²⁵⁶ H.K. Kah, "Women's Resistance in Cameroon's Western Grassfields: The Power of Symbols, Organization, and Leadership, 1957-1961", *African Studies Quarterly*, Volume 12, no. 3, 2011, p. 71.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 71.

²⁵⁸ L.B. Churchill, "Exploring Women's Complex Relationship with Political Violence: A Study of the Weathermen, Radical Feminism and the New Left", Master dissertation in Women's Studies College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida, 2005, p. 26.

²⁵⁹ H.K. Kah, "Women's Resistance in Cameroon's Western Grassfields", p. 75.

different parts of Equatorial Africa to harass over-zealous colonial officials into compliance.²⁶⁰ The body of the African woman was used in response to civic participation in the democratization of the continent. The display of the nakedness of the African woman was and remains her expression of utter anger and outrage at both public injustice and private male viciousness.²⁶¹ There is therefore no gainsaying that the women subjected their bodies to various frightful and disturbing acts as a direct affront to debasement from the British and French colonial 'lords' and to challenge indigenous collaborators of colonial exploitation.²⁶²

Symbol has the power to unify, differentiate, challenge, contest and dominate. Aware of the power, women used it as a potent weapon against the colonial system and the limitation of women's political space. Women wore male dress in a particularly frightful way. The result was very positive because they were able to push the colonial system into reconsidering some of its reforms that affected rural women like the Agricultural Law of 1955 in British Cameroon and Sooner rather than later the British colonial officials yielded to pressure, and it quickened the decolonization process in the territory.²⁶³ During the colonial period it was also used to invade the space of colonial leadership to renegotiate or impose a pattern of behavior. The symbols women used in their struggle for the liberation were not only symbolically powerful but also greatly impacted the people in such a way that it enabled them to achieve victory. Although the British and the French seemed/pretended not to have understood the message through women's symbolic actions, it spoke as powerfully as the greatest word. Among the different women symbolic actions were those surrounding the power of the body when used correctly to address an anxiously expectant audience.²⁶⁴ The advent of colonialism and its incapacitating effects transformed many of these women's groups into political associations through which grievances were expressed in various forms against the ruling authorities. This was the case with the *anlu* of Kom, which initially was meant to sanction the exiling of people who became an irritation to the community.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ H.K. Kah, "Women's Resistance in Cameroon's Western Grassfields", p. 75.

²⁶¹ A. S. Yene, "A Critical Survey of the Resuscitation, Activation, and Adaptation of Traditional Female Political Institutions to the Exigencies of Modern Politics in the 1990s", P.2.

²⁶² N. W. Gam, "The Anlu Factor and the 1959 Elections in the British Southern Cameroons: The Case of Kom Fandom, 1958-1961", Epasa Moto, *A Bilingual Journal of Arts, Letters and the Humanities* vol. 1, no. 6, 2003, pp. 158-159.

²⁶³ K. Joseph, "Women and the independence struggle in the British Cameroons, 1945-1961: A historical study", Master's Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde1, p. 74.

²⁶⁴ J. Allman, *Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress: Fashioning Africa: Power and the Politics of Dress*, Indiana University Press, 2004, p.2.

²⁶⁵ P. N. Nkwi, *Traditional Female Militancy in a Modern Context*, Paris, Karthala, 1998, p. 181

In April 1948 demands for political and economic independence and the reunification of territories under British and French rule became increasingly popular and found voice in the radical nationalist party, the UPC, created in Cameroun's main port city, and economic capital, Douala.²⁶⁶ The twelve men who finalized the UPC statutes had actively participated in discussions of politics common to most of colonial Africa after the war.²⁶⁷ Initially a part of the RDA, taking root throughout French West Africa, UPC's definition of nationalism fit a Fanonian, revolutionary and Pan-African model, one that necessarily included women.²⁶⁸ The UPC's founders included low-level administrative functionaries, entrepreneurs, planters, traditional notables from the territory's various regions, and wage laborers.²⁶⁹ These diverse representatives envisioned a nationalist movement that would usher in independence from foreign rule while transforming the lives of Cameroonians throughout the territories, economically and socially, for the better.²⁷⁰ *Upécistes* (party members) advocated for higher wages, better working conditions, the right for African farmers to cultivate cash crops, such as coffee, cocoa, and bananas for export, and the removal of price controls, export laws, and licensing restrictions which limited the economic autonomy of Cameroonian merchants and planters while benefiting white settlers, who numbered around 17,000 by the 1950s.²⁷¹

As early as 1949, women created UPC "women's committees" within which women's concerns ranked second to a male UPC leadership. One such *comité féminin* of the UPC complained in 1949 that women were "kept to one side when it is a question of the political, economic, social and cultural interests of their country."²⁷² Three young, Western-educated Cameroonian women, Marie-Irène Ngapeth, Marthe Ouandié, and Julienne Niat, met as a result of their common interest in politics in the twilight of the trusteeship period, each holding a leadership position in the nascent Union des femmes Camerounaises (UFC), a women's party subordinate to ESOCAM.²⁷³ Specifically, these three women shared a desire to increase the political rights of women in the territory during the new postwar age. Although they agreed that democracy was contingent upon the rights and equality of women, their paths soon diverged.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁶ R. Joseph, *Radical Nationalism in Cameroun*, pp. 176-177.

²⁶⁷ F. Fanon, *Les damnés de la terre*, "The Wretched of the Earth" R. Philcox, trans. New York, Grove Press, 1963 p. 142.

²⁶⁸ F. Fanon, *Algeria Unveiled*, Haakon Chevalier, trans. New York: Grove Press, 1965, p. 160.

²⁶⁹ R. Um Nyobé, *Le problème national kamerunais*, Paris, Harmattan, 1984, p. 29.

²⁷⁰ Ibid.

²⁷¹ R. Joseph, "Settlers, Strikers, and Sans-Travail: The Douala Riots of September 1945." In *Journal of African History*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1974, pp. 670-671,

²⁷² UNTC, "Petition from the Comité féminin de l'UPC concerning the Cameroons",

²⁷³ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 68.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

Frustrated by the UFC's submission to a patriarchal, socially and politically conservative ESOCAM, Ngapeth-Biyong, Marthe Ouandié, Gertrude Omog, and Emma Mbem began to discuss the foundation of a women's party to be a companion to the UPC, while maintaining their membership in the UFC. In 1953, Niat complained to the French administration that Ngapeth and Ouandié were carrying out "Communist activities" and had them expelled from the UFC.²⁷⁵

The city of Douala provided fertile ground for *UDEFEC* to take root, since in 1947, 71 percent of the female population was unmarried and working mainly in the informal sector.²⁷⁶ As early as 1949, the women's committee of the UPC had requested the "abolition of licenses required for seamstresses working at home," permission for women to sell alcoholic beverages, and to sell food in public and private work yards, especially at meal times.²⁷⁷ Marie-Irène Ngapeth, the Secretary-General of *UDEFEC* at the time, confirmed that founders of *UDEFEC* in 1952 protested against the fees required by the French administration for market stalls that targeted women sellers.²⁷⁸ *UDEFEC*'s strategy of seeking economic independence for traders and the self-employed must have appealed to single women, eking out a living in the cities.²⁷⁹

Women's participation in the UPC nationalist movement was supported by leftist, anti-imperial non-governmental organizations such as the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF). It was after the WIDF invited Cameroonian women political activists to Vienna in 1951 to participate in planning the International Conference in Defence of Children that *UDEFEC* was founded. During Um Nyobé's second trip to New York in 1953 to address the General Assembly, Mrs. Menon,²⁸⁰ representing India in the 4th Committee, asked "whether women showed an interest in the country's political life and what part they took in the movement."²⁸¹ Both the WIDF invitation and Mrs. Menon's intervention became part of *UDEFEC* oral history and were recounted in local meetings in urban and rural areas alike,

²⁷⁵ F. Ngoumou, Archives nationales, Yaoundé (ANY), 3 AC 3520, "Haut-Commissaire de la République Française au Cameroun" 12 jan. 1953, p. 2.

²⁷⁶ A. Mbembe, *La naissance du maquis dans le Sud-Cameroun (1920-1960)*, Paris, Karthala, 1996, pp. 225-26.

²⁷⁷ UNTC, "Petition from the Comité féminin de l'UPC", 20 Nov 1949, T/PET.4/32.

²⁷⁸ R. Joseph, "Settlers, Strikers, and Sans-Travail: The Douala Riots of September 1945", p. 673.

²⁷⁹ L. Schler, "Looking through a Glass of Beer: Alcohol in the Cultural Spaces of Colonial Douala, 1910-1945." In *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 35, no. 2/3, 2002, p. 331.

²⁸⁰ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 69. "Unfortunately, Mrs. Menon's first name does not appear in the UN General Assembly reports, although she is referred to as Mrs. Menon, perhaps to distinguish her from the prominent V. K. Krishna Menon, Chairman of the delegation of India to the United Nations from 1953 to 1962. In contrast, Mrs. Menon was India's representative on the UN Fourth Committee, overseeing Trusteeship and decolonization matters.

²⁸¹ "United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Report of the Trusteeship Council, 5 Dec 1953, Fourth Committee, 393rd Meeting, 8th Session", Official Records, A/C.4/SR.393, p 20.

providing members with a sense of the movement extending beyond their own locale. The way these stories were recounted at local meetings demonstrates women's cultural translation of (inter)nationalism, and their local appropriation of faraway anti-colonial discourses.²⁸²

Following the lead of the UDEFEC's international supporters, male leaders of the UPC and the JDC upheld women's decision to mobilize. The UPC Director's Committee founded the Ecole des Cadres on 7 March 1955, in New Bell, Douala, in order to educate and train nationalists as future administrators and civil servants.²⁸³ The strategies learned in the halls of the Ecole des cadres radiated outwards into local committee meetings, until most members became familiar with the act of petitioning, the importance of tracts, and the UPC's progressive stance on women's involvement in politics.²⁸⁴ Thus leaders of the UPC, UDEFEC, the affiliate planters' cooperative, etc stated a Joint Proclamation" of solidarity before assembled crowds in Yaoundé, the political capital, in Douala, and in Nkongsamba. This Joint Proclamation" of solidarity made High-Commissioner Roland Pré, officially proscribed the nationalist parties by decree on 13 July 1955; an action the UPC insisted was illegal in a UN trusteeship territory.²⁸⁵

After the ban of the party in July 1955, Ecole des cadres graduates spread out throughout the territory, educating others, and planting the party's nationalist ideology in the fertile ground of rural areas. Soon, Marthe Moumié launched the periodical *Femmes kamerunaises* as the official mouth-piece of UDEFEC, with herself as editor-in-chief, Marie Ibang as manager, and Ngapeth and Omog as regular contributors.²⁸⁶ UDEFEC women in exile remained visible in Pan-African conferences organized in the late 1950s and early 1960s. At the All-African Peoples' Conference held in Accra in 1958, Marthe Moumié of the UDEFEC was the only African woman to address the assembled audience. Her public appearance demonstrated that the UPC, alone among African political parties represented at the conference, continued to support women's role, even in this Pan-African forum.²⁸⁷ Petitioners such as Anne Langue, whose goods were impounded and whose clerk, Nestor Nomba, was imprisoned for forgetting her license for selling at her home, asked the UN what citizenship meant for Cameroonians if

²⁸² ANY, 1 AC71, 7 Dec 1956, Réunion d'UDEFEC and 4 Dec 1956, Grande Conférence d'UDEFEC, Section de Babimbi.

²⁸³ Centre d'Archives d'Outre-Mer (CAOM), "Affaires Politiques 3335/1", 10 May 1955, Ecole des Cadres, Douala, New Bell, Note de renseignements.

²⁸⁴ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 69.

²⁸⁵ UPC, "The UPC denounces the planned systematic tortures in the Kamerun", Cario: Bureau of Leading Committee of the Union of the Populations of the Cameroons, 1958, p. 30.

²⁸⁶ CAOM, Affaires politiques 3325, Rapport de Sûreté, Note de renseignements, 11-18 Feb 1956

²⁸⁷ CHAN, Foccart Papers, Fonds publics 2092, Special Outre-Mer, Bulletin Sud-Sahara, 11 Dec 1958,

the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights could be so violated.²⁸⁸ In their petitions and speeches, UPC and UDEFEC nationalists, as RDA supporters in Guinea, “expertly exploited the rhetoric of French universalism” in claiming their rights.²⁸⁹

d. Rural women: a Local Gendered Nationalism

Premising the issue of economic autonomy, traveling UDEFEC delegations visited local committees in villages, and facilitated linkages between literate and non-literate women, single urban workers, widowed planters in the towns of the Mungo region, and farmers in the Grass fields. As the movement spread beyond the boundaries of urban centers, the women of UDEFEC shifted the anti-colonial struggle to the contested terrain of agricultural and reproductive fertility.²⁹⁰

Rural women desired to broaden their economic opportunities, traditionally mediated through access to land. Women farmers understood land usufruct in various ways, depending upon their local modes of land distribution. For example, by the 19th century, the Grass fields region was comprised of a hundred or more chieftaincies, linked by shifting alliances.²⁹¹ The chiefs (*mfo* or *mfen*) distributed the land to titled notables and lineage heads in each chieftaincy. According to the customary system of land titles, compatible with a cosmology that views land as a sacred whole from which many may reap the fruits of their labor,²⁹² the principal heir or notable within each lineage, compound, or quarter indicated which plots were available to cultivate. Once granted permission by a notable, a male landholder, or a titled representative, women acquired the legal right to cultivate plots, and settled disputes over particulars among themselves.²⁹³

New colonial land policies, requiring land permits and titled ownership – documents which could only be acquired by those knowledgeable in the colonial system – obstructed women’s access to land, by premising the new modes of access over “rights of usufruct

²⁸⁸ UNTC, “Petition from Anne Langue”, Manjo station, Mungo region, 4 April 1955, T/PET.5/573.

²⁸⁹ E. Schmidt, *Mobilizing the Masses: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Nationalist Movement in Guinea, 1939-1958*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 2005, pp. 61-62.

²⁹⁰ T. Meredith “A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism”, p. 74.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² M. Goheen, *Men own the Fields, Women own the Crops: Gender and Power in the Cameroon Grassfields*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996, p. 390.

²⁹³ J. H. B. den Ouden, *Incorporation and Changes in the Composite Household, The Effects of Coffee Introduction and Food Crop Commercialization in Two Bamileke Chiefdoms, Cameroon*, Wageningen: H. Weenman & B. V. Zonen, 1980, p. 46.

guaranteed by traditional tenure arrangements.²⁹⁴ In regions such as the Sanaga-Maritime, where traditional governance was more decentralized prior to colonization, European administrators centered an artificially hierarchical, “traditional” government around a “chief,” similarly changing patterns of land use and farming.²⁹⁵

Cameroonian women nationalists also requested that the colonial state’s appropriation of unoccupied or uncultivated land under the “scheduled forestry” law be banned, except in cases in which the rightful owner of the land gave his or her permission.²⁹⁶ Administrative policies on “scheduled forestry,” passed on 19 April 1948, forbade the cultivation of lands that the French had set aside for their own use.²⁹⁷ Information about the scheduled forestry decree had not been made available to women farmers, and often administrators attempted to retrieve the land only after cultivators had planted their crops. The *Fonkouakem* (Bamileke region) UDEFEC committee wrote in 1954, the foreigner makes use of this famous term scheduled forestry to gain possession of our inheritance. The colonialists have even found a ‘scheduled forest’ in an area of grasslands and crops with a dense population.”²⁹⁸

The classification of the most fertile lands as cash-cropping plantations in the Mungo and Grass fields also limited women’s access to land.²⁹⁹ The French administration controlled access to coffee seedlings and monitored cash crop productivity by requiring plantations to be registered with state authorities.³⁰⁰ In 1949, women members of the UPC writing from the coffee-planting regions of Bamileke and Bamun demanded complete freedom to grow coffee and to sell produce wherever they wished.³⁰¹ The petitioners considered that administrative policies prevented women from cash-crop farming, thus minimizing their economic opportunity vis-à-vis male planters.³⁰² The 1949 petition also requested technological improvements for women farmers, including “the supply of agricultural machinery to free women from the toil of

²⁹⁴ M. Goheen, *Men own the Fields, Women own the Crops*:”, p. 118.

²⁹⁵ J. Guyer, “Female Farming and the Evolution of Food Production Patterns Amongst the Beti of South-Central Cameroon.” *In Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 50 no. 4, 1980, p. 342.

²⁹⁶ UNTC, “Petition from the Comité féminin de l’UPC”, 20 Nov 1949, T/PET.4/32.

²⁹⁷ ANY, 2 AC 1032, “Le Conservateur, Chef du Service des Eaux et Forêts, à M. le Directeur des Affaires Politiques et Administratives”, Yaoundé, 8 April 1954.

²⁹⁸ UNTC, “Petition from UDEFEC, Fonkouakem, Bafang region, to the Chairman of the 4th Committee”, 9th Session of the UNGA, 22 Nov 1954, T/PET.5/512.

²⁹⁹ J. Guyer, “The Food Economy and French Colonial Rule in Central Cameroun.”, *In Journal of African History*, vol. 19, no. 4, Cambridge University Press, 1978, p. 597. 577-597

³⁰⁰ N. M. Mbapndah, “French Colonial Agricultural Policy, African Chiefs, and Coffee Growing in the Cameroun Grassfields, 1920-1960.”, *In the International Journal of African Historical Studies*, vol. 27, no. 1, Boston University African Studies Center, 1994, p. 58.

³⁰¹ UNTC, “Petition from the Comité féminin de l’UPC”,

³⁰² M. Goheen, *Men own the Fields, Women own the Crops*:”, pp. 84-85.

hoeing in plantations and of extracting palm oil from kernels by pounding.³⁰³ UN authorities also granted women the right to bear arms to protect their crops from marauding elephants and cattle.³⁰⁴ In 1959, in the French portion of the Grass fields (the Bamileke region), women planted crops in the roads, effectively aiding ALNK troops by preventing the circulation of administrative and military vehicles. Women's stand as agriculturalists formed a counterpoint to the ALNK's eventual sabotage of European-owned plantations.³⁰⁵

In their claims to the UN as UDEFEC nationalists, women in the Grass fields, Mungo, and Sanaga-Maritime regions argued that colonial land policies had eroded their options as cultivators. Women nationalists voiced the popular consciousness that land shortages arising in the Grass fields and Mungo regions were linked directly to administrative land policies that deprived Cameroonian planters of their limited land-holdings, just as licensing requirements had targeted women sellers and seamstresses in urban areas. The UDEFEC became a medium through which women could seek to dismantle the colonial economy which threatened their livelihood.³⁰⁶

As petitions from women farmers in the Mungo and Bamileke regions increased, UDEFEC membership spread easily along the social networks created by agricultural patterns in the region, following women's associational structures already in place.³⁰⁷ Prior to European occupation and colonization, women's access to land constituted a "household level network," forming "intergroup ties [that] were and are realized by women cultivating their food crops in the estates of various principal heirs."³⁰⁸ Furthermore, in the Grassfields under British rule, women belonged to village associations such as *Fombuen* or *anlu* in the northwest which safeguarded agricultural and biological fertility. Historically, women in associations such as these joined together when they felt it necessary to publicly voice their disapproval of male chiefs and notables, husbands, and other "high-ranking, politically and economically privileged men," in the village polity.³⁰⁹ As urban, educated UDEFEC activists passed the baton to rural, non-literate agriculturalists, women's political perspectives in rural areas began to mold and

³⁰³ S. Diduk, "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action", p. 342.

³⁰⁴ E. Shanklin, "Anlu Remembered: The Kom Women's Rebellion of 1958-61", *In Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 15, 1990, p. 159.

³⁰⁵ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 76.

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ C. Odim-Johnson, *Actions Louder than Words: The Historical Task of Defining Feminist Consciousness in Colonial*, p. 82.

³⁰⁸ J. H. B. den Ouden, *Incorporation and Changes in the Composite Household*, pp. 44-45.

³⁰⁹ S. Diduk, "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action", p. 343.

shape the movement into one which would draw increasingly on a locally rooted political culture comprised of spiritual and socio-political meanings.³¹⁰

Petitioning reached its peak in 1958, when women and youths smuggled petitions addressed to the UN to post offices across the Anglo-French border under their dresses or overcoats.³¹¹ These petitions were hand-written on scraps of paper, and carried thumb-prints more often than signatures, indicating the growing number of non-literate petitioners. Rural women and women laborers used less Europeanized language than their leaders, adapting nationalist narratives to their own cultural, social and economic needs. Women and men's concerns over the well-being of pregnant mothers and children rose to prominence as the independence war engulfed the Grassfields.³¹²

As UDEFEC women joined together, they cast off colonial perceptions and models of gender-roles, reclaiming instead patterns of women's access to power that predated European occupation. European administrators and settlers most often perceived motherhood as a domestic quality removing her from socio-economic spheres outside the house.³¹³ But for many African women, as was the case in the Grass fields of Cameroon, identity as woman revolved around motherhood, as a source of institutional and ideological empowerment within the household.³¹⁴ In most Cameroonian societies, motherhood brought women outside the household, by marking their transition to adulthood, their entry into socio-economic realms of planting, trade, and belonging to associations, and their participation in political processes³¹⁵. It is thus only fitting that the question of reproductive fertility should become one of the most crucial as the nationalist movement took root in rural areas during the years before and after independence.³¹⁶

From the early days of the UDEFEC, its founders stressed the importance of medical care for women, particularly pre-natal care, and the need for improved birthing clinics and maternity wards in dispensaries. The importance of biological fertility, reproduction, and

³¹⁰ T. Meredith, "God of Independence, God of Peace." Politics and Nationalism in the Maquis of Cameroon, 1957-1971.", In *Journal of African History*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 46, no. 1, 2005, p. 99.

³¹¹ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 78.

³¹² UNTC, "Petition from the Merged Branches of the JDC Concerning the Cameroons under British Administration", 2 Aug 1957, T/PET.4/144/Add.1.

³¹³ V.A. Judith, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political", p. 165.

³¹⁴ C. L. Okopyn, "Reconstructing Women's Identities: The Phenomenon Of Cosmetic Surgery In The United States Master dissertation in Women's Studies College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida, 2005, p. 5.

³¹⁵ I. Amadiume, *Reinventing Africa: Matriarchy, Religion, and Culture*, London and New York: Zed Books, Ltd, 1997. P. 198.

³¹⁶ S. Diduk, "Women's Agricultural Production and Political Action", p. 346.

maternity care resonated with Cameroonian women in urban and rural areas alike. As women from regions such as the Grassfields, the Mungo region, and the Sanaga-Maritime voiced these concerns, they began to refuse European medical facilities or medical care altogether, perceiving them as threatening to biological fertility.³¹⁷ Petitions contained numerous references to the administrations' abuse of pregnant women in the wake of the party's dissolution, which often resulted in miscarriages.³¹⁸ Women complained to the UN that after members of the UPC and the UDEFEC had to flee into the maquis, "nursing mothers feed their babies in disease-ridden forests... Children die of malnutrition or parasitic diseases."³¹⁹ After the UPC launched a successful boycott of the elections of December 1956, Hélène Siewe wrote from the Bafang region "while the men are away in the bush fleeing arrest, the French colonialists come and maltreat women, untold numbers of whom have been killed, including some who were pregnant."³²⁰ Naturally, the disappearance of their husbands, whether they had fled into the maquis or had been arrested or killed, threatened women's reproductive fertility.³²¹ Poline Matachange, a farmer from the Grassfields village of Bamendje, wrote, "Since 1955, the women of Kamerun no longer give birth, you know well that a hen can lay eggs only if she has been with the cock. We women of Kamerun want to have back our husbands."³²²

In the Bafang region, petitioning women demonstrated their mistrust of the medical facilities and care provided by the French. In early 1957, a series of petitions came into the UN expressing concern over the injections given to children in the region. Passa Tchaffi and Agathé Matene wrote: "the French have prepared injections and put schoolchildren into a hut, where they gave them these shots to weaken their minds."³²³ Rose Marie Mouna of the Bafang subdivision wrote: "On October 1956, France prepared medicaments with which to inject school-children; the shots drove the children mad."³²⁴ Elisabeth Aguemani believed that "the most scientific French men have infected all the dogs in the Cameroons by means of injections

³¹⁷ T. Meredith "A Miscarriage of Revolution: Cameroonian Women and Nationalism", p. 79.

³¹⁸ UNTC, "Fifty-three petitions containing complaints relating to various repressive measures in the Cameroons under French administration, 5 Nov 1958, T/PET.5/1351".

³¹⁹ UNTC, Petition from Marie-Irène Ngapeth, 20 June 1955, Kumba, T/PET.5/913.

³²⁰ UNTC, Petition from Siéwé Hileine, Member of the UDEFEC Committee, Moumée, 19 Feb 1957, T/PET.5/1108.

³²¹ P. Feldman-Savelsberg, T. F. Ndonko, et al "Remembering 'The Troubles': Reproductive Insecurity and the Management of Memory in Cameroon." *Africa, Edinburgh University Press*, vol. 75, no. 1, 2005, p. 20.

³²² UNTC, "Petition from Poline Matachange, farmer, Central Quarter, Bamendje to President of the 13th Session of the UN", 10 Dec 1958, T/PET.5/1399.

³²³ UNTC, "Petition from Mrs. Passa Tchaffi, Chairman of the UDEFEC Committee at Bafang, and Mrs. Agathé Matene", received 20 Feb 1957, T/PET.5/1109.

³²⁴ UNTC, "Petition from Mrs. Rose Marie Mouna concerning the Cameroons under French Administration", received 20 Feb 1957, T/PET.5/1113.

and all these mad dogs have now bitten almost 100 per 1,000 of the total population of the Cameroons.”³²⁵ Chrestine Emachoua wrote, “When a woman gives birth at the dispensary, they give the baby an injection to kill it.”³²⁶

At UDEFEC meetings in Babimbi, the Sanaga-Maritime, regional leaders told women that the administration wanted to exterminate all members of the nationalist movements and that European bio-medicine served their purpose: “Whites came to Cameroon for no other reason than to cheat blacks. The Doctor infects us with all sorts of sicknesses. For us, dying is as common as shitting; this is what decreases the population so they can uproot our liberation movement.”³²⁷ In light of the all-pervasive rejection of colonialism throughout the territory, the injections became an idiom expressing women’s refusal to allow European medical personnel to regulate child-birthing practices.³²⁸ The birthing centers, bringing mothers and their newborns under their control, seemed the perfect place for the administration to carry out its project of eradicating the nationalist movement by eliminating future generations of nationalists.³²⁹ As they became more prominent in the nationalist struggle, members of UDEFEC pieced together a view of the European administration and missions as disseminating ill health, infertility, and death, framing the achievement of independence as a restoration of health and well-being.³³⁰

Issues of fertility were of equal concern to women and men, not only as husbands and fathers, but also as “traditional” political leaders in particular regions of Cameroon, as, for example, in the Grass fields where governments of chieftaincies included male notables responsible for regulating both reproductive and agricultural fertility. Tabitha Kanogo argues that with the advent of colonialism in Kenya, elite men’s role as mediators between women and the colonial administration facilitated their control of women’s reproductive practices.³³¹ The end result of women nationalists’ rejection of European bio-medicine was the reification of traditional notables and spiritual specialists in their roles as protectors of biological fertility.³³²

³²⁵ UNTC, “Petition from Elisabeth Aguemani, Bafia”, 30 Aug 1956, T/PET.5/949.

³²⁶ UNTC, “Petition from Mrs. Chrestine Emachoua concerning the Cameroons under French Administration”, Baboucha, 13 Dec 1956, T/PET.5/112.

³²⁷ ANY, 6 Dec 1956, Marie-Anne Nsoga to UDEFEC meeting held at the home of Suzanne Mbok, Babimbi.

³²⁸ L. White, *Speaking with Vampires: Rumor and History in Colonial Africa*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press. 2000, p. 113.

³²⁹ T. Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya, 1900-50*. Athens, OH: Ohio University Press. 2005. P. 164.

³³⁰ ANY, Dec 7, 1956, Ernestine Mouthamal to UDEFEC meeting, Babimbi region.

³³¹ T. Kanogo, *African Womanhood in Colonial Kenya*, P. 166.

³³² S. P. Feldman, *Plundered Kitchens, Empty Wombs: Threatened Reproduction and Identity in the Cameroon Grassfields*, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1999, p. 77.

With considerable opposition to the government cleared, Ahidjo engaged in discussions with France and the United Nations (UN) for the independence of French Cameroon. In British Southern Cameroons, John Ngu Foncha won the general elections of January 1959 on the platform of secession from Nigeria, a period of trusteeship and eventual reunification with French Cameroon. The opposition leader, Dr. E.M.L. Endeley, championed integration with Nigeria. By the time independence was declared in French Cameroon on 1 January 1960³³³. British Southern Cameroonians were preparing for a UN-organised plebiscite on 11 February 1961.³³⁴ The February 1959 meeting at the U.N. between the Premier of British Southern and French Cameroons, John Ngu Foncha and Ahmadou Ahidjo respectively, contributed to the independence of British Southern Cameroons in 1961 through reunification with the independent Cameroun Republic.³³⁵

e. The place of women in the 1972 Cameroon's constitution

The movement for the empowerment and autonomy of women in Cameroon, and the improvement of their political, social, and economic status, has walked a long distance, but is still far from reaching its intended destination. Cameroon has made key strides toward gender equality and women's empowerment through major international commitments, including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on Equality Between Women and Men, and the Sustainable Development Goals³³⁶. However, though these international and regional commitments take precedence over Cameroon's national laws, customs, and traditions, the preference for customary laws remains, which means discrimination against women continues in Cameroon, especially in rural areas. Further, the Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon includes several provisions that enshrine gender equality,³³⁷ but many questions about ending inequalities faced by women continue to linger, such as the recognition of rape between husband and wife, protection for unemployed women, pension for widows, the continuation of child marriage, breast ironing, and other issues .

³³³ H. K. Kah, "Impact of Independence of the Republic of Cameroun on the Future Independence and Reunification of British Southern Cameroons", *Social Science Review*, Volume 2, No. 2, the University of Buea, Cameroon, December 2016, p. 2.

³³⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

³³⁵ Ibid.

³³⁶ B. Guest, Ending Inequality Against Women in Cameroon, December 7 2017, p.1.

³³⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

On May 20, 1972, a national referendum was held on the proposition to create a unitary state between East and West Cameroon. The referendum received 3,217,056 votes for unification and 158 votes against it." The Federal Republic of Cameroon thus became known as the United Republic of Cameroon. The state was no longer managed by two independent states, but by one dominant centralized state. A new Constitution, the 1972 constitution, was set up to establish the structures of power and determine the role of the citizens within the new unified structure. *Prima facie*, the 1972 Constitution represented the people's voice, since it was established by national consensus through the referendum. It stipulated the basic conditions of their civic, political and economic rights. It also defined the powers of the organs of government. It is with this constitutional name that Cameroon took part in the Mexico conference in 1975 to promote gender issues in a new unified country so as to foster national integration and development³³⁸.

In its Constitution signed on 2 June, 1972, and revised by law No. 96/06 Violence Against Women: 10 Reports / Year 2003 on 18 January 1996, Cameroon incorporated some provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as of the African Charter of Human and People's Rights in the Preamble. The Preamble states that the nation "shall protect women, the young, the elderly and the disabled"³³⁹. According to article 65 of the Constitution, the Preamble has legal force: "The Preamble shall be part and parcel of the Constitution." The Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon includes several provisions that enshrine gender equality. The revised Constitution of 18 January, 1996 puts an end to all controversy concerning the legal force of the Preamble to the Constitution. Thus, article 65 states:

The Preamble shall be part and parcel of this Constitution. It shall have legal force. This stipulation is of primary importance insofar as the Preamble refers to the international human rights conventions in the following terms: We, the people of Cameroon... affirm our attachment to the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and all duly ratified international conventions relating thereto.³⁴⁰

There can be no doubt that the Convention forms part of the conventions relating to human rights, which are not simple treaty provisions within the meaning of art. 45 of the constitutional norms in accordance with the above-mentioned art. 65.³⁴¹ Well before the ratification of the Convention, UNIFEM Cameroon was already taking an undeniable interest

³³⁸ M. N. Westmarland, "Rape and Human Rights: A Feminist Perspective", Doctorate Thesis in Social Policy and Social Work, University of New York, 2005, p.1.

³³⁹ "Violence Against Women in Cameroon", p. 124.

³⁴⁰ "Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon", pp.1-2.

³⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 40.

in questions relating to the advancement of women, as reflected in the establishment of appropriate government bodies as detailed below:

- Thus, as early as 1975, the year of the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City, a Ministry of Social Affairs was set up.
- In 1984, on the eve of the Second World Conference on Women in Nairobi, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was established by Decree No. 84/95 of 26 March 1984.³⁴²
- With the economic crisis, which became increasingly serious after 1987, Cameroon adopted a structural adjustment plan which called for a cutback in public expenditure and, among other measures, the restructuring of the Government. Thus, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Ministry of Social Affairs were merged by Decree No. 88/1281 of 21 September 1988 which established the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs (MINASCOF).³⁴³ This ministerial department included a Directorate for the Advancement of Women, despite the reorganization of the Ministry under Decree No. 95/100 of 9 June 1995.³⁴⁴

Later, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was re-established by Decree No. 97/205 of 7 December 1997 on the organization of the Government.³⁴⁵ In contrast to the spirit of the decree of February 1984, which restricted the role of the Ministry of Women's Affairs essentially to carrying out studies, the new Ministry had its powers of intervention reinforced and a general secretariat, a general inspectorate, specialized technical directorates and local departments in the provinces were placed under its authority.³⁴⁶ UNIFEM acknowledge that it is difficult to isolate the role of ministries in reform outcomes, particularly because ministries sometimes achieve their goals by working productively with other actors and institutions within and outside government, including the civil society. Ministries can simultaneously perform a variety of different roles and functions in pursuit of gender equality and empowerment goals. These include advocacy, awareness-raising, policymaking, and coordinating policy implementation. UNIFEM argues that the Ministries influence over national decision-making and their ability

³⁴² Decree No. 84/95 of 26 March 1984 concerning the organization of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, p. 1.

³⁴³ Decree No. 88/1281 of 21 September 1988 concerning the organization of the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs, p. 1.

³⁴⁴ "Ministry of Women's Affairs replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing platforms", Cameroon, 1999, p. 2.

³⁴⁵ Ibid.

³⁴⁶ Decree No. 95/100 of 9 June 1995 establishing the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs, p. 1.

to hold other parts of government to account on gender equality issues is very essential as clearly seen in the principle of equality and Beijing resolutions in Cameroon below.³⁴⁷

Conclusion

This chapter was dedicated to exploring the status of women in pre-colonial and colonial Cameroon, and the key roles they played at the time. From the foregoing analyses, it is clear that the status of women was transformed by Cameroon's socio-political and economic structures during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Following the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations was able to promote the advancement of women, under the Commission on Human Rights. Thus, British and French administrators in Cameroon were indirectly pressurized in fostering women status to be in accordance with the UN system. With the existence of Female uprising in the British and French Cameroons, they were able to acquire the right to vote. Hence support from the formation of women groups and encouraged them to form links with international associations aimed at fostering nationalism and independence of the two Cameroons in the 1960s. These above-mentioned analyses highlight the need to examine UNIFEM and its socio-political strategies to promote women's empowerment in Cameroon.

³⁴⁷ UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment", p. 5.

CHAPTER THREE

UNIFEM AND WOMEN'S SOCIO-POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT IN CAMEROON 1993-2015

Introduction

This chapter focuses on UNIFEM and women's socio-political strategies to promote women's empowerment in Cameroon. First of all, we would talk about the social points which deals with UNIFEM's forging new partnerships among women's organizations, governments, the UN system and the private sector. It seeks to examine the activities carried out by UNIFEM and women networks in Cameroon in order to fight against social ills and foster development through women empowerment in many domains that include socio-cultural and political aspect of their lives. The above strategy is linked to the UNIFEM's political support for women from a wide range of stakeholders. This strategy would be broken down into various stages which would enable one to understand how the women in Cameroon became more involved in politics and emerged in leadership positions. From this perspective, more light would be given on UNIFEM and its national mechanisms in promoting gender equality in Cameroon. After elaborating the concept of National mechanisms or machinery, we would mention the various Strategies and instruments adopted by the National Women Machinery (NWMs) to influence Government Policy and Planning, the National Gender Policy (NGP) and the institutional framework in Cameroon.

I- Social empowerment

Focused on women's social empowerment in Cameroon, this section examines UNIFEM's actions on VAW and its partnerships with women's organisations. Also, it talks about UNIFEM's policy in skills building as well as cohesion spaces and menstrual hygiene management. Finally, some light is shaded on and domestic workers rights in Cameroon.

a. UNIFEM's actions on VAW and partnerships

The United Nations Trust Fund to End VAW, was established by the UN General Assembly in 1996 and managed by UNIFEM, supports local organizations and governments

in tackling gender-based violence¹. During the 10 years of its existence, the Trust Fund has supported 234 initiatives in 109 countries². During the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985), many institutions specifically devoted to the advancement of women were established at the national, regional and international levels. At the international level, we had the INSTRAW, UNIFEM, and the CEDAW³. At the national level, a number of countries including Cameroon established or strengthened national mechanisms to plan advocate for and monitor progress in the advancement of women⁴. UNIFEM is dedicated to building stronger women's organizations and networks so that women themselves have the power to negotiate new and better policies with their governments and international agencies⁵.

Over the past years, women's organizations have created a paradigm shift in understanding and acting to end VAW.⁶ Activist organizations, with or without the support of governments, have developed innovative efforts: providing services; drafting and lobbying for legislation; raising awareness through advocacy, education and training; and developing strong national, regional, and international networks to end violence against women.⁷ The thesis seeks to reflect strategical initiatives to end VAW conducted by (UNIFEM) in Cameroon. This is presented in the context of current research and advocacy and of ongoing antiviolence organizations. This comprises three stages. First, a desk review explored UNIFEM's support to initiatives that seek to eliminate VAW (governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental). Second, UNIFEM's regional offices commissioned a series of 10 regional "scans" to map the landscape of GBV and initiatives that combat it, covering a significant portion of the global aspect. Third, several of UNIFEM's regional offices have been conducting in-depth case studies of interventions aimed at ending VAW in Cameroon.⁸

When UNIFEM began working to end VAW, pressure on governments from civil society organizations had already culminated in the UN Declaration on the Elimination of

¹ E/CN.6/1999/6, "Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination of violence against women Forty-third session", United Nations, 15 January 1999, p. 2.

² UNIFEM, "Annual report 2006-2007", New York, USA, 2007, p. 1.

³ "Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the 4th World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 Sept 1995", United Nations, New York, 1996, p. 117.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ UNIFEM, "Working for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality", New York, USA, 2001, p. 6.

⁶ UNIFEM, "Not a Minute More: Progress in Ending Violence Against Women" New York, Kumarian Press; November 2003, p. 15.

⁷ T. F Susana, "Violence against women", *Health and Human Rights*, Vol. 6 No. 2, Harvard College, 2003, pp. 89- 90.

⁸ Ibid, p. 90.

VAW.⁹ UNIFEM was among the first UN agencies to take on the challenge of translating the UN Declaration into effective policies and concrete programmes for ending gender-based violence. From an informant view, domestic violence (Wife battering) is not prohibited by law. However, a woman can file a complaint under the assault provision of the Cameroonian penal code, which is however precarious as the traditional set up generally considers that a man has disciplinary rights over his wife and the government does not effectively enforce the law in cases of assault on women¹⁰. Thus in 1992, UNIFEM identified ending VAW as an important organizational concern with the publication of “Battered Dreams: VAW as an Obstacle to Development”.¹¹ UNIFEM actively supported the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights and its advocacy efforts at the 1993 UN World Conference on Human Rights, which produced the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.¹² The Global Campaign's lobbying resulted in governments' explicit recognition that "VAW is a human rights violation" and that “women's rights are human rights”¹³. However, it was in 1995, with the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing, that eliminating VAW became the organization wide priority for UNIFEM¹⁴.

Regarding its financial status, UNIFEM received in 1998 the sum of \$1.8 million from Governments and four Non-Governmental Organizations in contributions to the Trust Fund. Since then, UNIFEM has committed resources and funds in excess of \$19 million for a range of projects whose aims are to end VAW. The Trust Fund's main purpose is to identify and support innovative projects primarily of local or national origin¹⁵. In 1998 and 1999, several of UNIFEM's regional offices spearheaded major regional campaigns to end VAW¹⁶. These campaigns held first in Latin America and the Caribbean, then in Asia and the Pacific, followed by ones in Africa, and most recently in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have been among the most significant efforts to raise awareness by UNIFEM and other UN

⁹“Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted by the 4th World Conference”, p. 117.

¹⁰ Interview with Paschaline Fonyuy Tar, 35years, Executive Secretary CAWOLED, Douala, 20 September 2018.

¹¹ R. Carrillo, *Battered Dreams: Violence Against Women as an Obstacle to Development*, New York: UNIFEM, 1992, p.13.

¹²A/CONF/ 157/23,“Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993”, UN Doc, 12 July 1993, p. 20.

¹³ J.M. Pinto, “Resistance from Within: Domestic violence and rape crisis centres that serve Black/African American populations” Master Dissertation in Women’s and Gender Studies College of Arts and Sciences, University of South Florida, 2017, p. 57.

¹⁴ A/CONF/ 157/23,“Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, adopted by the World”, p. 20.

¹⁵ E/CN.6/1999/6, “Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women on the elimination”, p .2.

¹⁶“Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment and the Paris Declaration on Aid effectiveness: Issues Brief 3 Innovative Funding for Women’s Organisations”, Dac network on Gender Equality, July 2008, p. 7.

agencies.¹⁷ The 10 regional scans of the assessment demonstrate the extent of women's organizing and networking efforts and the leadership position that women's groups have taken in ending VAW. Most frequently, these groups have mobilized around particularly egregious acts of violence, such as those involving rape, sexual harassment, trafficking, and domestic violence. For example, the scan on Francophone Africa (covering Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Senegal, etc.) tells how women's groups mobilized to support Veronica Akob who was severely sentenced after being found guilty of murdering her employer after he had abused and raped her. The groups' lobbying efforts resulted in her pardon.¹⁸ UNIFEM figured out that to fight VAW, institutional strengthening and gender mainstreaming in response to VAW would include: Mapping and assessment of governmental and non-governmental policies and programmes to end VAW must be put in place; Create channels for dialogue among women's organization's which aim at building solidarity, knowledge networking and advocacy, provide direct technical assistance to the Ministry of Women's Affairs and women's organizations in the areas which they have identified as priorities¹⁹.

Following a competitive and open bidding process, UNIFEM's Central Africa Sub-Regional Office (CARO) in 2010 conducted an evaluation. The objectives of the assignment were: to analyze the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of UNIFEM's action to end VAW at country level; to identify strengths, weaknesses, challenges and current trends in UNIFEM initiatives that have implications for strengthening its future managerial, programmatic and funding directions; to provide forward-looking recommendations and a potential Theory of Change to strengthen VAW programming in Cameroon. The evaluation focuses on UNIFEM programming in Cameroon and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) during the period 2008-2010. The Evaluation Team reviewed seven initiatives in Cameroon, all funded with UNIFEM's core resources²⁰.

All of UNIFEM's initiatives to end VAW in Cameroon have been aligned with the broad objectives outlined in national commitments in relation to VAW²¹. In Cameroon, UNIFEM has contributed to strengthening the capacity of MINPROFF for addressing and increasing its engagement in the fight VAW through the 16 Days of Activism. The 16 Days Activism is an organizing strategy for individuals and groups around the world to call for the

¹⁷ T. F. Susana, "Violence against women", *Health and Human*, p. 110.

¹⁸ A. S. Sidibe, Report of the Regional Office of Francophone West Africa, New York: UNIFEM, 2002, p. 24.

¹⁹ UNIFEM "Supporting Gender Justice, Development and Peace: in Haiti", Caribbean Office, July 2004, p. 8.

²⁰ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p. 8.

²¹ Ibid, p. ii.

elimination of all forms of Gender-Based Violence (GBV) against women²². The dates for the campaign were chosen to link VAW and human rights and emphasize that GBV is a violation of human rights. Since 1991, the campaign takes place annually from November 25, the International Day Against VAW to December 10, International Human Rights Day²³. In Cameroon, the 16 Days of Activism campaign aims to raise awareness on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) as a widespread social, health and economic issue.

The SGBV became an explicit priority in 2008 and since then UNIFEM Cameroon has increasingly worked on VAW, focusing on two key aspects; strengthening the legal framework and the formal and informal justice systems to fight SGBV and VAW prevention, in particular in relation to traditional harmful practices such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early marriage, widowhood rites, and domestic violence. Key strategies employed are advocacy, sensitization, awareness raising and mobilization at the community level. As far as VAW is concerned, UNIFEM's partners in Cameroon have been the MINPROFF, Ministry of Justice (MINJUST), and several local civil society organizations (CSOs)²⁴. UNIFEM's work with the MINPROFF has included the support for a variety of initiatives, including: popularization and sensitization campaigns on Women Human Rights (WHR) and the legal provisions (including the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women CEDAW) defending them; the production of the CEDAW report. With UNIFEM's assistance, the MINJUST has organized training on CEDAW and its applications for magistrates. UNIFEM has also played an active role in mechanisms such as the UN Gender Group, pushing for UN coordinated initiatives to fight VAW and Domestic Workers Rights in Cameroon²⁵.

b. UNIFEM and Women's Organisations

In the pursuit of its organizational goal that national commitments to advance gender equality and women's empowerment are implemented in stable and fragile states, UNIFEM works together with a variety of different actors at the global, regional and national levels. UNIFEM's partnerships with women's organizations have grown and there is increasing recognition of the fact that engaging in such partnerships can be a strategy which strengthen

²² "The 16 Days Activism against gender-based violence campaign: Americas region 25 November - 10 December 2018", UNHCR, Regional Legal Unit of the Americas Bureau, 2019, p. 1.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p. 11.

²⁵ T.F. Susana, "Violence Against Women", *Health and Human*, p. 92.

the capacity of women's organizations to support country-level work on gender equality as a key mechanism for expanding UNIFEM's reach as will be analysed below.

- **International Medical Corp (IMC)**

In 2010, women's organisations were invited by UNIFEM to help develop a strategy, priority and methodology for UNIFEM's action in Cameroon. Several organizations have expressed an interest in securing more funding for their work, and training for professional upgrading. It is also apparent that skills in planning and project development will need great attention. The approach was to examine women's organizations as part of a wider review of civil society, the experiences and potential in this period of Cameroon's history.²⁶

Supporting this advocacy is increasingly sophisticated action-oriented research, such as that conducted by the, International Medical Corp (IMC) Activities in Djohong District with the support of the UNIFEM Trust Fund. Refugee from the continuing migration have settled in border settlements of the Adamaoua Region, Mbéré Division, Djohong District a significant distance from the UNHCR offices in Bertoua, and the East Region.²⁷ The international NGO International Medical Corps (IMC) is the only NGO (local or otherwise) currently working in this area. With funding from the UN Development Fund for Women UNIFEM and its Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate VAW, IMC launched its "Critical Health Support for Survivors of GBV Amongst Central African Republic Refugees in Eastern Cameroon" project with the specific goals of:²⁸

- Improving access to quality GBV and reproductive health services for female refugees and host community victims of violence in the Djohong District
- Reducing the stigma and discrimination around GBV and ensuring community participation in GBV prevention activities.

The project complements an ongoing emergency primary health care project that uses mobile health clinics. IMC's mobile clinic programme provides immunizations, growth monitoring, basic medical treatment, and supplemental feeding. The IMC mobile clinics also make emergency referrals to Djohong Hospital.²⁹ IMC asked the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative (HHI), a University-based centre that provides population-based research support to

²⁶ P. Parveen and A. Pooja, *Women's Health Study, Djohong District, Cameroon*, Harvard Humanitarian Initiative, Boston, Massachusetts, USA, February, March 2010, p.14.

²⁷ Ibid, p.17.

²⁸ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p.12.

²⁹ P. Parveen and A. Pooja, *Women's Health Study* p. 14.

humanitarian relief agencies operational in conflict affected areas, to assist their efforts under the UNIFEM grant. HHI was asked specifically to conduct a population-based assessment of women's health with an emphasis on the prevalence of GBV and domestic violence and its associated societal stigmatization, fears of abandonment and retaliation; the forced marriage of young girls; current reproductive health services; the perceptions of human security and livelihoods; education; household income; and household food security.³⁰

Since the refugee population is essentially integrated within the host population and shares the same resources, both populations are targeted in this assessment. This second Quantitative assessment was undertaken to understand the impact of IMC's GBV programming and to better elucidate changes in the population with regards to the same variables that were quantified during the first phase in June 2009. UNIFEM also identifies the needs and gaps in GBV services and prevention in order to guide programme development and establish foundational information from which IMC can monitor and evaluate community knowledge, attitudes, and practices around GBV and women's health and livelihood issues.³¹ Due to the short time frame of IMC's cooperative agreement with UNIFEM, the quantitative assessment commenced February 26, 2010 and was completed in less than two weeks. During the three days, HHI consultants trained IMC staff, as well as selected Ministry of Health staff and community health workers on the use of the quantitative survey instrument. HHI worked with the IMC site director to discuss the quantitative sampling methodology and establish the sampling frame. During the subsequent 8 days, HHI and IMC conducted the quantitative survey.³²

- Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers (ACAFEJ) - UNIFEM programming in Cameroon

The evaluation was carried out between 2008 and 2010 in Cameroon and managed by the UNIFEM Central Africa Sub-Regional Office (CARO). All of UNIFEM's initiatives to end VAW in Cameroon have been aligned with the broad objectives outlined in national and regional commitments in relation to VAW, and with some specific priorities outlined at national and regional levels. In Cameroon, UNIFEM contributed to strengthening knowledge and awareness of CEDAW and its application as a legal instrument to fight VAW within the legal community and to some extent in the broader population. With UNIFEM support,

³⁰ P. Parveen and A. Pooja, *Women's Health Study* p. 15.

³¹ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p.12.

³² P. Parveen and A. Pooja, *Women's Health Study* p. 17.

ACAFEJ sensitized its members and representatives of the legal community on CEDAW and its applications; according to consulted stakeholders, this resulted in increased demands for information on CEDAW being addressed to UNIFEM and ACAFEJ. However, this situation has improved as ACAFEJ has been able to study on the application of CEDAW in rulings on VAW in Cameroon, in particular by trained magistrates. ACAFEJ provided technical and facilitation expertise for the MINJUST training, and is conducting a study on how CEDAW is being applied by magistrates in Cameroon³³.

- Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy CHRAPA and UNIFEM.

In Cameroon, UNIFEM staff suggested that involving traditional leaders in the fight against VAW, FGM and traditional harmful practices (THPs) was innovative. This approach was pursued by CHRAPA with a United Nation Trust Fund (UNTF) grant and then by WOMED and the MINPROFF. CHRAPA has been carrying out a series of trainings on women's rights for Traditional Rulers, the Judiciary, administrators and the women themselves³⁴. According to consulted stakeholders like the victims, missionaries, hospitals, state administrators, NGOs and traditional councils, health economists, commissioners and representatives from third sector organisations (charities and advocacy groups), community level sensitization campaigns conducted as part of these initiatives helped to "break the silence" on FGM, early marriage, and THP, and as a result, community media, traditional chiefs, and imams have become more involved in the fight against SGBV and have been more willing to talk about VAW³⁵.

A third UNTF project, by the Cameroonian NGO CHRAPA, was implemented in 2007, but completed in 2008, with UNIFEM's support. An important focus of UNIFEM's work on VAW in Cameroon has been on strengthening the informal justice system to better promote and protect women's rights, particularly as concerns THP and other forms of SGBV. Following a successful UNTF project implemented by the NGO CHRAPA in the Northwest and Southwest Regions in 2007, UNIFEM continued supporting initiatives in those regions aimed at increasing traditional leaders' awareness and knowledge of VAW and THP as well as their commitment to act as agents of change in their communities. Consulted stakeholders reported some positive changes triggered by these interventions in terms of increased

³³ P. Parveen and A. Pooja, *Women's Health Study* p. 15.

³⁴ K. N Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, p. 52.

³⁵ R. Smith, *Cameroon: The law and FGM*, Abengla Law Firm, July 2018, p. 6.

engagement of traditional leaders to fight against VAW in the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Also, according to UNIFEM, as a result of these initiatives women in targeted areas have increased access to justice on SGBV through the informal justice system and more details about VAW can be found in appendices 6 and 7. Picture 2 shows a Traditional Ruler encouraging his people in ending VAW and FGM with the help of CHRAPA.

Picture 2: The traditional ruler of Aboh



Source: K. N Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, Assessing the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in Cameroon by Gender Empowerment and Development (GEED), July 2010, p. 73.

Note: Above is a photo of the Aboh traditional Ruler in the Northwest Region of Cameroon addressing his population in a restitution meeting on GBV as part of the Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy (CHRAPA) initiative to raise awareness and understanding among traditional leaders on CEDAW and women's rights in 2007.

- Women on the Move for Equal Development (WOMED) and UNIFEM

According to UNIFEM staff, once the UNTF-funded CHRAPA project ended at the end of 2007, UNIFEM decided to continue investing in the model of involving traditional leaders to fight SGBV at the community level, with the idea of replicating it in other regions. UNIFEM funded the WOMED project in the Southwest Region. UNIFEM also worked with the MINPROFF, supporting its leadership role on the issue of FGM and THP. In Manyu Division (southwest), the NGO WOMED worked with UNIFEM to mobilize traditional leaders against SGBV and monitor the implementation of the Manyu Chiefs Convention to ban THP. While consulted stakeholders and project reports indicate that traditional leaders and village chiefs have been sensitized on SGB, VAW, FGM, and early marriages in targeted communities in Manyu

division, it is not clear what results have been obtained in terms of monitoring and spreading the application of the Chiefs convention. By Decision 00785/DGSN/CAB of 2005, the Director of the National Security Department established within INTERPOL-National Central Bureau (NCB) a Special Morals Brigade, with the specific mission of eliminating all forms of violence and discrimination against all vulnerable population groups, but especially women and children. The Brigade is part of the Extradition and Investigation Service of INTERPOL-NCB in Yaoundé.³⁶

In 2008, the government of Cameroon signed cooperation agreements with three NGOs (AWA, WOPA and ASSEJA) aimed at ensuring that all acts of violence and discrimination against women are reported, that trafficking networks are exposed and dismantled, and that the police force receives support in caring for and assisting in the reintegration of women victims of violence into society and their families³⁷. This cooperation also seeks to build the capacity of the NGO personnel and facilitate regular exchange of information. In terms of the agreement, the awareness-raising activities to combat VAW which includes; design and dissemination of specific messages; design and dissemination of posters and picture boxes; participation in the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign launched by the United Nations.³⁸

As far as VAW is concerned, UNIFEM's partners in Cameroon have been the MINPROFF, the Ministry of Justice (MINJUST), and several local civil society organizations (CSOs). Until 2008, the Cameroon office focused on economic empowerment and supported only a very limited number of initiatives to fight VAW³⁹. Sexual GBV (SGBV) became an explicit priority in 2008 and since then UNIFEM Cameroon has increasingly worked on VAW, focusing on two key aspects⁴⁰:

- Strengthening the legal framework and the formal and informal justice systems to fight against SGBV; and
- VAW prevention, in particular in relation to traditional harmful practices such as FGM, early marriage, widowhood rites, and domestic violence. Key strategies employed were advocacy, sensitization, awareness raising and mobilization at the community level (of traditional leaders and genital mutilators).

³⁶ UNECA, "Violence Against Women in Africa", New York, 2000, pp. 29-30.

³⁷ A/HRC/7/53-E/CN.6/2008/9, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to eliminate violence", p.13.

³⁸ UNECA, "Violence Against Women in Africa", New York, 2000, pp. 29-30.

³⁹ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence in the central Africa region", UNIVERSALIA, April 2011, p.11.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 11.

UNIFEM's work has been aligned with MINPROFF's priorities relating to VAW, as spelled out in its Annual Road Map. UNIFEM Cameroon has lobbied and provided technical and financial support for the revision of the Cameroon Family Code and the development of a law on VAW⁴¹. UNIFEM's work with the MINPROFF has included the support for a variety of initiatives, including: popularization and sensitization campaigns on Women's Human Rights (WHR) and the legal provisions (including CEDAW) defending them; the production of the CEDAW report; the organization of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence; and a sensitization, information and capacity development campaign for female genital mutilators to encourage them to abandon the practice⁴². Expectations for the fight against GBV is handled in two aspects; first in the dissemination of existing national laws, regional and international instruments on women's protection and empowerment, ratified by Cameroon and the lobbying for the adoption of specific laws of protection t⁴³.

UNIFEM has further supported local NGOs in sensitization activities for rights holders and duty bearers on WHR, GBV and CEDAW; the development of the CEDAW shadow report; strengthening the informal justice system, in particular in the Northwest and southwest regions, to fight against traditional harmful practices and other forms of GBV; empowering female genital mutilators to abandon their practice.⁴⁴ With UNIFEM's assistance, the MINJUST has organized training on CEDAW and its applications for magistrates. UNIFEM has also played an active role in mechanisms such as the UN Gender Group, pushing for UN coordinated initiatives to fight VAW in Cameroon, including joint initiatives for the 16 Days of Activism⁴⁵. UNIFEM, under the leadership of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), entrusted ALVF with the management of this pilot project to integrate the prevention of GBV in the activities of the centres in charge of the training and the socio-cultural and economic advancement of women at the level of the community⁴⁶. Women empowerment is merely understood to be a strategy or a means to improve women conditions without any attempt of challenge to unequal power

⁴¹ *Feuille de Route du Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de La Famille*, Cameroon, 2010, p.1. (One of the MINPROFF objectives was to intensify the fight against female genital mutilation. (Identified strategies to do so included the training of current female genital mutilators regarding other sources of revenue and campaigns to raise awareness).

⁴² "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 35.

⁴³ "Coordination of Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Settings: Facilitator Manual", UNFPA and Ghent University, August 2010, p. 13.

⁴⁴ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

⁴⁶ "Coordination of Multi-Sectoral Response to Gender-Based Violence in Humanitarian Settings", p. i.

relations⁴⁷. The formation of UNIFEM gave institutional recognition to the need for a focused approach to women's empowerment at global and local levels. Many of our African women occupied early influential positions in UNIFEM, many academics and activists in the diasporas actively helped UNIFEM and other UN agencies formulate powerful interventions around women's rights⁴⁸. To sustain the above explanation, one of our informants Baleng Ferdinand said:

We are seeking to be seen at the forefront of addressing GBV through innovative and effective practice. We aim to show other ministries that addressing GBV, gender inequality and promoting greater male involvement in areas such as parental leave and flexible working condition are compatible with providing a quality service. We aspire to leverage our status as a HeForShe Thematic Champion to take the message that GBV and gender inequality is a policing issue to other services nationally and internationally⁴⁹.

On the 10th December, 2014, UN Women in Cameroon, in collaboration with the government, inaugurated the first GBV Call Centre in Douala, Cameroon's economic capital. This event which was the first of its kind in the country took place in the presence of several officials among which the SWISS Government representative Mrs. Ngonga'a Nya Cécile Eda, Mr. Jean Jacques Messima ITU, representative for central Africa and Madagascar, Mr. Jean Jacques Lengue Malape and the Mayor of Akwa I, Douala. According to available statistics, more women and girls suffer sexual and GBV in Douala than in any other town within the Central African nations⁵⁰. The Call Centre assist in ending VAW by offering immediate health, psychological, administrative, judicial and legal assistance to survivors. This structure is a UN Women initiative with financial support from the SWISS government. It was launched in line with the 16 Days Activism and also has a toll-free line for survivors⁵¹. In line with the aforementioned allegations, one of our informants Njock Bernadette stated that:

The implementation of the call Centre contributes to strengthening our mission to promote gender equality in various ways. The most notable innovation is that the Centre makes a greater impact on the policies which include gender diversity that has been given a higher value. This centre aims to investigating the concerns and experiences of community members related to sexual assault, harassment, gender equality, internationalization, disabilities, and city safety and the Centre took a great initiative in conducting a survey, together with MINPROFF. Linking our approach to domestic abuse and sexual violence to gender inequality within our communities, the call Centre offers a sustainable base for enhancing activities and functions concerning the promotion of gender equality and to look at new ways in which one can engage with the communities on the subject of VAW and girls, focusing more broadly on addressing the attitudes and behaviour of men and boys and how this manifests itself. Taking this a step further, by recognizing that the call Centre is a reflection of the society we serve, we

⁴⁷ File 5, CF/GEN, No. 42, "Working for women's empowerment and gender equality", UNIFEM, 2000, p.30.

⁴⁸ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 11.

⁴⁹ Interview with Baleng Ferdinand, 40 years, Chief of service in charge of gender issues, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office, Douala, 21st July 2021.

⁵⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/UNWomenAfrica/posts/douala-cameroon-un-women-in-cameroon-has-inaugurated-the-first-gender-based-viol/>, consulted on 26th July 2021.

⁵¹ Interview with Asafou Ellen, 37 years, Chief of service in charge of General affairs, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office, Douala, 21st July 2021.

are able to challenge our own attitudes and how these attitudes can affect response to gender-based violence. By making better use of this Centre, it promotes more research activities by engaging ministries who work on gender studies.⁵²

Call Centres are a model of “ONE Stop Centre” and are part of the national response implementation to gender-based violence⁵³. The main goal of this mechanism is to improve GBVs care and prevention through the implementation of 24/24 free Call Centres, for the victims’ and survivors’ early alert, listening, dialogue, advice, information and orientation. Picture 3 gives us a light of a Call Centre with the Chief of service in charge of the GBV Call Centre in Douala.

Picture 3: The researcher at the Douala GBV call Centre



Source: Sydony Endali, Douala, 21st July 2021, field work.

Note: Picture taken with Njock Bernadette, Chief of service in charge of the Gender-Based Violence Call Centre in Douala after field interview with her. (The present structure in the picture is a UN Women initiative with financial support from the SWISS government)

c. UNIFEM as Skills builder on HIV/AIDS and ICT

UNIFEM worked to deliver on this vision not only through its work on peace and security, but also through the efforts to foster women’s economic security, to secure their

⁵² Interview with Njock Bernadette, 50 years, Chief of service in charge of the GBV call centre, CPFF’s Littoral regional office, Douala, 21st July 2021.

⁵³ File 7, CF/GEN, No. 11, *National strategy for the elimination of gender base violence*, UNFPA- MINPROFF, 1999, p. 19.

human rights and to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS⁵⁴. Women, however, insist on a broader vision, one that puts human development and human rights at the forefront; one that includes lives free from violence and HIV/AIDS⁵⁵. In 2001, UNIFEM continued to focus on advancing women's human rights concentrating on three areas⁵⁶. Among the three areas, one of it is the UNIFEM programme that enhances the understanding of governments, advocates and UN partners about the gender and human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS⁵⁷. UNIFEM HIV/AIDS programme focuses on building bridges of support, advocacy, and activism at the global, national, and regional levels within the women's movement, key stakeholders working on HIV/AIDS, and policy makers⁵⁸.

In support to the Government's efforts through the HIV/AIDS working group, 10 agencies of the United Nations system (WHO, UNDP, UN Women, UNICEF, UNESCO, UNDP, UNHCR, etc) have been implementing a joint AIDS plan since 2004 within the framework of UNAIDS Cosponsoring. UNIFEM is part of this working group, which each year develops an action plan based on the priorities of each agency. Regular meetings aimed at monitoring the implementation of the plan are held, as well as mid-term and annual reviews. It is important to note that the plan is strongly linked to the National Strategic Plan and constitutes the United Nations' contribution to its implementation, in addition to other multifaceted support⁵⁹. This perspective gives great impetus to UNIFEM's work on addressing gender, human rights and HIV/AIDS⁶⁰. UNIFEM Cameroon advocates on behalf of women, children and families in the fight against HIV/AIDS⁶¹. UNIFEM Cameroon mobilises the community by strengthening its capacity to prevent, control and mitigate the impact of the pandemic through information and education. It provides medical and

⁵⁴ DP/2006/25, "United Nations Development Fund for Women Implementing the multi-year funding framework, 2005", Geneva, 10 April 2006, p.11.

⁵⁵ UNIFEM, "working for Women's Empowerment and gender equality: Annual Report 2002-2003", New York 2003, p.3.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 24.

⁵⁷ UNIFEM, "working for Women's Empowerment and gender equality", p.19.

⁵⁸ "Brainstorm Workshop on ILO/UNIFEM Programme: The Care Economy, HIV/AIDS and the World of Work", TURIN, 22-23 November 2001, p. 11.

⁵⁹ MINPROFF, "Report of the republic of Cameroon under the 25th anniversary of the Beijing declaration and platform for action", Cameroon, May 2019, p.98.

⁶⁰ UNIFEM, "working for Women's Empowerment and gender", p. 28.

⁶¹ A/61/292, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Sixty-first session", United Nations, 25 August 2006, p.12.

psychosocial support (care, counseling) to HIV/AIDS sero-positive persons and their families, free consultations and care for infected persons⁶².

UNIFEM Cameroon amplifies the voices of women living with HIV so that their knowledge is shared and acted upon. This is essential to achieving the 10 targets of the 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on HIV and AIDS⁶³. The knowledge given by UNIFEM Cameroon to women is to build their skills and capacities so that women can take control of their lives and contribute to their communities⁶⁴. UNIFEM Cameroon has been delivering HIV testing, treatment and care, adherence support programmes, advocacy, monitoring and service delivery at all levels, as well as creating networks to share knowledge, support each other, and to mobilize and sensitize communities⁶⁵. For instance, the Society for Women and AIDS in Africa (SWAA) Cameroon advocates on behalf of women, children and families in the fight against HIV/AIDS⁶⁶.

UNIFEM work hand in glove with NGOs on women in Cameroon living with HIV has shown huge initiative in becoming active agents for sharing health knowledge and skills in their own communities thanks to UNIFEM Cameroon⁶⁷. For example, some women living with HIV who were determined to have a child, educated themselves about HIV science and discovered supportive doctors within the public health system. Enlightened health-care systems connect with networks of women with HIV in their communities and promote and support women living openly with HIV as staff in their services⁶⁸. UNIFEM with the help of NGOs in Cameroon established women's support centres that offer training to help women and children affected by HIV⁶⁹. For instance, Cameroon policy involves well designed national guidelines on the prevention of vertical transmission from mother-to-child through the creation of these centres for voluntary testing in all the health care structures for women; provision of nevirapine to at least 60% of seropositive pregnant women and follow-up with mother and child after delivery⁷⁰. The creation of reinsertion centres for pregnant adolescent women, integrating the counselling for women living with HIV/AIDS and family control in

⁶²“Cameroon country sheet”, Yaounde, November 2008, p. 12.

⁶³ *Women out loud: How women living with HIV will help the world end AIDS*, UNAIDS, 2012, p. 7.

⁶⁴“Cameroon country sheet” p. 25.

⁶⁵Ibid, p. 40.

⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

⁶⁷ J. Awuba and G. Macassa, “HIV/AIDS in Cameroon: Rising gender issues in policy-making matters” *African Journal of Health Sciences*, Department of Public Health Sciences, Division of Social Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden, Volume 14, Number 3-4, July- December 2007, p. 121.

⁶⁸ *Women out loud: How women living with*, p. 7.

⁶⁹ H. Ruth, “Women's empowerment and HIV prevention - donor experience, unedited draft for discussion under item 3ii at the 5th meeting of the DAC network on gender equality”, 27-29 June 2007, p. 7.

⁷⁰ J. Awuba and G. Macassa, “HIV/AIDS in Cameroon: Rising gender issues in policy-making matters”, p. 122.

all health centres, increases the knowledge of seropositive women on contraception methods by at least 20% each year⁷¹.

Local partners work with NGOs to create innovative solutions to raising public awareness and understanding of women's rights, reaching women with information on their rights and providing access to legal support⁷². For example, according to the *Plan Stratégique National de Lutte Contre le SIDA*, Cameroon policy on gender and HIV/AIDS involves the following aspects: prevent sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS by promoting programmes among high risk groups such as awareness programmes for women, provision of female condoms and microbicide, conduct training among traditional midwives, leaders of initiation societies, and traditional leaders on prevention of STDs and AIDS and develop systematic STD testing for pregnant women consulting in hospitals⁷³. NGOs also do life skills training for women with a clear gender focus. It helps women and children affected by HIV, raising awareness of legal rights and teach HIV/sexual safety, raise awareness about how conventional gender systems reinforce risk-behaviours, stimulate peer education and try to get volunteers to work with⁷⁴. UNIFEM focuses on health communication, training in health education and gender awareness specifically related to HIV/AIDS. Male IDUs transmitting HIV to female partners are now seen as the greatest risk by UNIFEM. UNIFEM also informs and educates health care providers in hospitals, clinics, and prisons. Workshops for journalists and the training of HIV/AIDS awareness trainers are carried out and a manual has been developed on the rights of women in the HIV epidemic⁷⁵.

During 2014, UN Women applied for and received funding from UBRAF funds to conduct a project called: "Support to the national response to HIV and AIDS among women and girls at risk, infected or affected in high prevalence areas in Cameroon". This project was carried out for a period of 6 months in the Central (Yaounde), Coastal (Douala) and South-Western regions with the support of three (03) partners: the Ministry for the Promotion of Women and the Family, the Institute of Demographic Training and Research, the NGO Cameroon Youths and Students' Forum for Peace (CAMYOSFOP). The beneficiaries of the project were women living with HIV, victims/survivors of GBV, infected or affected

⁷¹ *Plan Stratégique National de Lutte Contre le SIDA, Third Draft 2000-2005*, Yaounde, 2000, p. 7.

⁷² Ibid, p.6.

⁷³ Ibid, p.30.

⁷⁴ M. E. Anna, and Anders R., et al, *Gender and HIV/AIDS In Eastern Europe and Central Asia*, Karolinska Institute Stockholm, Sweden, 2004, p.26.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.49.

populations and men and young people involved in the fight against HIV/GBV. It should be mentioned that this project has had significant results in the areas concerned⁷⁶.

Also, at the level of Operational knowledge on ICT, it represents a unique “knowledge-based social Infrastructure” which can be of great help for women to evade marginalization⁷⁷. UNIFEM believes that ICT symbolizes an exceptional enabling instrument when deployed and used properly⁷⁸. ICT works as a noble opportunity to enhance women’s access to information and knowledge⁷⁹. ICT promotes the interaction of women within the society and opens up new channels which allow women to openly discuss issues that are considered a “taboo” using classical means, especially in traditional societies⁸⁰. To increase African women’s access to ICTs, UNIFEM turned to successful entrepreneurs to enlist their support in tackling the challenges of feminized poverty. UNIFEM’s digital initiative is aimed at harnessing their technical knowhow and business expertise as well as financial resources⁸¹. Links with women’s organizations and business associations in Africa are forged to empower women economically through training in the use of ICTs, the creation of business partnerships and access to finance⁸². In May 2003, UNIFEM organised a meeting in collaboration with UN partners. The meeting called for the formation of consortium of Diasporas teams to provide assistance in nine pilot countries; Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Rwanda, Tanzania, etc, to develop a portfolio of women and ICT projects for potential financing⁸³.

UNIFEM Cameroon has provided training programmes in basic ICT skills for thousands of women. Motivations for this training are diverse, including increased demand for employees with ICT skills, the desire for rural women to help their children with homework and the necessity of accessing knowledge and communicate through the Internet⁸⁴. The good news for Cameroon is that the Cameroonian Government has taken the issue of the gender gap in ICT seriously. That is why women in Cameroon aspire to attain basic ICT skills

⁷⁶ MINPROFF, “Report of the republic of Cameroon under the 25th anniversary of the Beijing declaration”, pp.98-99.

⁷⁷ Z. F. Abbasi, *Pro-Poor and Gender Sensitive Information Technology: Policy and Practice*, Quisumbing, 2001, p. 6.

⁷⁸ K. S. Rabayah, “Economic and Social Empowerment of Women through ICT: A Case Study of Palestine”, *The Journal of Community Informatics*, vol. 6, No. 1, Arab American University, 2010, p. 11.

⁷⁹ C. Sharma, *Using ICTs to Create Opportunities for Marginalized Women and Men: The Private Sector and Community Working Together*, Washington, DC: World Bank 2001, p.16.

⁸⁰ L. Obijiofor, “Future of Communication in Africa's Development”, *Futures*, vol. 30, no. 2/3, 1998, p.163.

⁸¹ <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/technology-unifem-task-force-work-to-increase-access-for-women-0>, consulted on 26^h June 2020.

⁸² UNIFEM, “Working for Women’s Empowerment”, p. 10.

⁸³ E. E. Florence and E. Laurent, *At the cross road: ICT policy making in east Africa*, p. 190.

⁸⁴ K. S. Rabayah, “Economic and Social Empowerment of Women through ICT: A Case Study of Palestine”, p. 2.

to enhance the quality of their lives in terms of knowledge or for employment purposes⁸⁵. The importance of knowledge and the ability of ICT to improve access to knowledge for work and education, seemed to be well known by the female students and labour force participants who have undertaken the ICT training courses⁸⁶.

d. UN Women cohesion spaces and menstrual hygiene management (MHM)

With the influx of refugees in the East and Far North of Cameroon, UN Women defined a strategy that enabled and provided assistance to refugee women and girls within the camps. Based on the successful strategies called peace hut in Liberia and WOYE SIIFA Mali in the humanitarian response⁸⁷, the Cameroon Office established five “Spaces for social cohesion of women and girls” in refugee camps in the East and Far North⁸⁸. Within the areas of social cohesion for women, UN Women and its partners (ACAFEJ, ALVF), in collaboration with the UNHCR, has conducted activities in the areas of psychosocial care, medical orientation, economic support and awareness-raising/social cohesion. Initiatives in the Far North in the Minawao camp started in September 2014; those in the East in the Gado, Lolo, Mbilé and Timangolo sites were also launched in July 2014⁸⁹.

This Social Cohesion Analysis examines the situation in Cameroon in relation to refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), focusing in particular on the situation in the East along the CAR border⁹⁰. Cameroon has been affected, in the last few years, by crises in several neighbouring countries (Chad, CAR, and Nigeria) which have caused great insecurity on many fronts, challenging vulnerable communities such as women, children, and the poor many of whom live in border areas. In this atmosphere of insecurity (physical, food, hygiene, and health), sexual and GBV is prevalent and social cohesion between various groups is threatened⁹¹. The Minister of MINPROFF, in her 2013 statement at the UN CSW, listed the following causes of VAW: “customs and traditions that condone some specific cases of VAW (husband’s right to beating, the practice of Female Genital Mutilation, early marriage, wife inheritance etc.), differentiation in the socialization of boys and girls, poor access to resources

⁸⁵ “Narrowing Cameroon’s gender gap: reasons for hope”, Web Foundation, October 7, 2015, p.1.

⁸⁶ S. Melhem and N. Tandon, “Information and communication technologies for women's socio-economic empowerment”, World Bank, Washington, D.C. June, 2009, p.27.

⁸⁷ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation des femmes 2014-2015*, Yaoundé - Cameroun, Avril 2015, p.12.

⁸⁸ UNHCR, *Cameroun : régions de l'Adamaoua, de l'Est et du Nord : profil des réfugiés centrafricains*, 10 June 2015, p.10.

⁸⁹ UNHCR, *Central African Republic regional refugee response plan Jan-Dec 2016*, Cameroon, 2015, 2nd version, p.23.

⁹⁰ USAID, *Conflict Analysis Framework (CAF)*, Washington D.C, Version 2.0. June 2012, p.40.

⁹¹ UNOCHA, *Aperçu Des besoins Humanitaires 2016*, Cameroon, December 2015, p.7.

and lack of control over these resources, low representation of women in decision-making spheres, poverty, low level of education of women, and ignorance by these women of their rights and existing means of redress⁹².”

UN Women’s work with local women’s groups in the Gado-Badzere camp and around Garoua-Boulai on female refugees particularly those at risk of sexual and GBV and other violations of human rights⁹³. A quick impact assessment conducted in 2014 indicated that GBV was common in Gado and Garoua-Boulai. Refugee women were particularly vulnerable to violence (most often by Cameroonian men outside the camps, but also by men from CAR inside the sites) when collecting firewood or water, travelling outside the camp for business, or when using the latrines at night⁹⁴. For example, in Garoua-Boulai, UN Women were conducting a project in what they labeled “Social Cohesion Spaces”, with activities focused primarily on reducing GBV. The project aimed at⁹⁵;

- Promoting civic and moral education including rights and duties of citizens and refugees.
- Implementing community activities to promote social cohesion
- Promoting inter-religious dialogue
- Promoting cultural and sports activities, after preparing each group separately

Specific details about the refugees in the east indicate that about 30 percent are located in five camps (which the government of Cameroon calls “*sites aménagés*” or “improved sites” for legal reasons). These are Gado-Badzere, Mbile, Lolo, Timangolo, and Ngarisingo⁹⁶. The other 70 percent have settled into host villages, which generally set aside tracts of land where all the refugees can set up a community within the village boundaries⁹⁷. Fortunately, most of these 85 or so locations are clustered along the axes between the three major cities: Bertoua, the regional capital of the East, Batouri, a sub-office where regional partners are located, and

⁹² M. T. Abena Ondoua, “Minister of Women’s empowerment and Family of the republic of Cameroon (2013) elimination and prevention of violence against women and girls: Statement at the 57th Session of the commission on the Status of Women”, New York: 5 March 2013, P.3.

⁹³ L. McGrew, *Social Cohesion Analysis: Cameroon*, Technical editing: Solveig Bang, October 2016, p.16.

⁹⁴ J. P. Dargal, et al, *Gender-based violence in Garoua-Boulai and Gado refugee camp: a rapid assessment by international Medical corps*, Cameroon, May 2014, p.30.

⁹⁵ L. McGrew, *Social Cohesion*, p.43.

⁹⁶ MINPROFF, “Report of the republic of Cameroon under the 25th anniversary of the Beijing declaration”, p.101.

⁹⁷ UNHCR, *Central African Republic - regional refugee*, p.23.

Garoua-Boulaï, the border city where many refugees are located⁹⁸. Other statistics indicate that almost half of the refugees that arrived since 2013 are in improved sites, and the other half with host communities⁹⁹. UNHCR-reported refugees from CAR living in Cameroon have come from the following prefectures in CAR: Nana-Mambéré 32%; Ouham-Pendé 21%, Bangui 16%, Mambéré-Kadéï 14%, Ombella-M'Poko 10%¹⁰⁰. Experience and research show that when women are included in humanitarian action, the entire community benefits¹⁰¹. UN Women, in collaboration with UNHCR in Cameroon, has strengthened the capacities of humanitarian workers in terms of gender mainstreaming and GBV in their humanitarian actions in accordance with Inter Agency Standing Committee (IASC) standards, with the support of the Dakar Regional Office and a social cohesion specialist from Mali as seen in picture 4¹⁰².

Picture 4: Women's cohesion space



Source: "UN Women's Humanitarian Achievements in Cameroon", African newsletter, April 11, 2016, P. 1.

Note: Social Cohesion Space put in place by UN Women at the Minawao refugee camp in Maroua to sensitize women on GBV. In Cameroon, those spaces offer integrated services based on a psycho-social basic assistance which includes listening, individual advice, reference and/or counter-reference for medical and/or legal approach, and discussion groups. Spaces allow women to meet discreetly in order to share their experience and talk freely.

⁹⁸ UNHCR "Réponse régionale à la crise des réfugiés en République centrafricaine: portail inter agence de partage de l'information", Cameroon: East, UNHCR, 14 March 2016, p.15.

⁹⁹ http://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/cameroon_en.pdf, consulted on 29^h June 2020.

¹⁰⁰ UNHCR "Cameroun : régions de l'Adamaoua, de l'Est et du Nord : profil des réfugiés centrafricains", UNHCR, 10 June 2015 p.30.

¹⁰¹ <https://www.UNWomen.org/en/news/in-focus/humanitarian-action/2016>, consulted on 29^h June 2020.

¹⁰² UNHCR, *Central African Republic - regional refugee*, p.23.

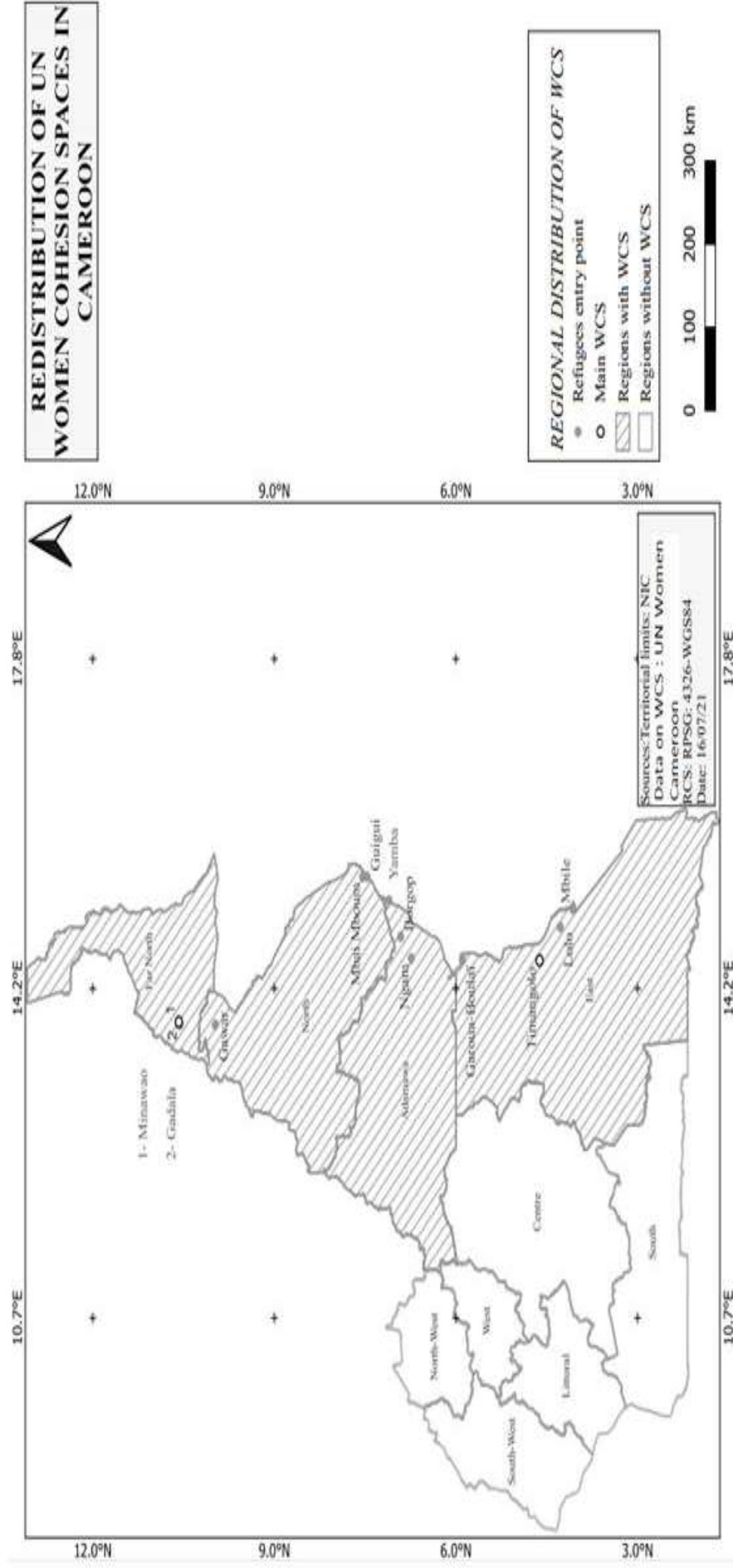
In order to enable the women most concerned to have the necessary "weapons" for their involvement in the humanitarian response, UN Women organized a workshop in October 2014 on the role of women in crisis management and conflict prevention, bringing together 100 actors, more than 80% of whom were women, as well as the need to develop an action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325¹⁰³. In response to the humanitarian crisis, UN Women helped to integrate gender in strategic documents, such as: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2014 and 2015, Strategic Response Plans 2014 and 2015.

In addition, we also have the "Gender score card" which was an online financial system coordinated by United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the weekly production of a Gender and Humanitarian Newsletter¹⁰⁴. The creation, with UN Women's support, of women Cohesion Spaces in refugee camps located in regions like the East (Timangolo), Adamawa (Ngam), North and Far North (Minawao), was to provide a safe space for women and girls, to share information, learn new skills and receive support. UN Women Cameroon office in these areas trained women, some municipal councilors and regional chiefs as community mediators to resolve conflicts in households and different religious communities in collaboration with the local chiefs and traditional councils. The community mediators also served as advocates for a gender dimension in their respective state institutions and reduced the risk of GBV. However, to better present the WCS in the regions of Cameroon, we have located the various areas through the following redistribution of UN Women WCS in map 4.

¹⁰³ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁴ UNOCHA, *Aperçu Des besoins Humanitaires*, p. 7.

Map 4: Distribution of UN Women cohesion spaces in Cameroon



Source: National institute of cartography (NIC) 16th July 2021, adapted by Bertrand Wandji Chancelier, Department of Geography, University of Yaounde 1.

Note: Map of WCS whose objective is to provide women, refugee girls, and women from the host communities who survived GBV with efficient and discreet care services are implemented in sites and camps particularly; 4 in the Eastern region (Gado, Iolo, Mbilé and Timangolo), 2 in the Adamaoua region (Ngam and Borgop) 2 in the Far North region (Minawao and Gawar).

As part of the humanitarian assistance operation for refugees, UN Women Cameroon implemented Holistic Prevention and Management of the GBV project for instance WCS, call centres and gender desk were created to assist women and girls who are refugees. During these activities, UN Women noticed a misuse of sanitary napkins thus initiated a Joint Programme on Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation, designed and implemented by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council (WSSCC)¹⁰⁵. Implemented in three countries (Cameroon, Niger and Senegal), with the main objective to accelerate policies and practices to promote equity and the human right to water, hygiene and sanitation for the women and girls of West and Central Africa. In the same line, UN Women Cameroon conducted a pilot study in 2014 on “Menstrual Hygiene Management: behaviours and practices” in Kye-Ossi (south), Bamoungoum (west) published by WSSCC in 2015¹⁰⁶. In June 2015, Cameroon, with the support of the UN Women Office sent 6 trainers to Niger who were trained on menstrual hygiene management (MHM). These trainers were to promote this training at different levels. With this in mind, UN Women organized a training of trainer’s workshop on MHM for staff working in the refugee camp in Minawao. Representatives of UN agencies were present with a total of 27 participants which were 5 men and 22 women. The objective of the workshop was to develop and strengthen the capacity of humanitarian actors on MHM to¹⁰⁷:

- Transfer skills to participants so that they can sensitize refugees and others on proper MHM.
- Improve the quality of sensitization on sanitary napkin use in refugee sites
- Participants become MHM trainers
- Participants understand the importance of MHM in relation to education, sanitation health and the environment
- Participants master safe disposal techniques for sanitary napkins
- Participants master the 03 pillars of MHM (Gender, Hygiene and Sanitation)

The representative of the delegate, Mr. Mahamat noted the need for the participants in this workshop to break the silence that prevails in the communities on the subject of women's menstrual hygiene so that this subject is no longer taboo for the majority. He assured the assistance and support of MINPROFF to the NGOs in promoting the gender approach and the development of activities necessary for the full development of women in general and young

¹⁰⁵“Menstrual Hygiene Management: Behaviour and practices in Kye-Ossi and Bamoungoum Cameroon”, conducted the review by WSSCC and UN Women, 2015, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ "Atelier de formation des formateurs des acteurs humanitaires sur la gestion de l’hygiène menstruelle Maroua du 13 au 16 octobre 2015", ONU Femmes, Décembre 2015, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p. 6.

girls in particular¹⁰⁸. The participants were taught on the existence of several types of sanitary napkins available on the market. Each type of sanitary napkin has advantages and disadvantages; some sanitary napkins promote infection, like dried leaves should be avoided. Hygienic protection such as sanitary napkins, pads, tampons, etc are ideal. They also emphasized on the importance of menstrual hygiene and its impact on health. Precautions were given on how to do away with the sanitary napkins depending on each and every woman either to bury it in the ground, burn or have a Safe disposal of waste¹⁰⁹. Pictures 5 and 6 below clearly illustrate the above analyses.

Picture 5: Participants of the workshop in Picture 6: Presentation on MHM
MHM



Source: "Atelier de formation des formateurs des acteurs humanitaires sur la gestion de l'hygiène menstruelle, Maroua du 13 au 16 octobre 2015", ONU Femmes, Décembre 2015, p. 1.

Note: Family picture of the Participants of the workshop on MHM organized by UN Women in Maroua from the 13-16 October, 2015



Source: "Atelier de formation des formateurs des acteurs humanitaires sur la gestion de l'hygiène menstruelle Maroua du 13 au 16 octobre 2015", ONU Femmes, Décembre 2015, p. 8.

Note: Mr. Bouchard ZAMBO presenting and commenting on the 03 pillars of MHM to the Participants of the workshop organized by UN Women in Maroua from the 13-16 October, 2015

From the responses, one can see that the MHM sees the need for men and society in general to lift the taboo on the subject of menstrual hygiene for women so that their dignity is promoted, if nothing is done, they are exposed to diseases and infections, thus limiting their development and the full expression of their potentials. The participants of the workshop gained a better understanding of the notion of gender, sex and the MHM. At the end of the discussions, the participants retained that the development of a gender approach in the MHM would thus be a means of correcting the stigmatization and even the exclusion that

¹⁰⁸ "Atelier de formation des formateurs des acteurs humanitaires sur la gestion de l'hygiène menstruelle", p. 5.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Bouchard Zambo, 40 years, Gender Expert on HIV issues, UN Women, Yaounde, 20 November 2019.

women/girls undergo in society during their menstrual period moving us to the next stage on UNIFEM's domestic Workers Rights.

e. UN Women and Domestic Workers Rights in Cameroon

UN Women is working with Governments, unions and the private sector to promote the rights of domestic workers and ensure that their profession is both regulated and covered by social protection. UN Women also work in Africa, through initiatives supported by its Fund for Gender Equality. In Cameroon, UN Women supported the formation of women worker's networks and strengthened the capacity of the existing organization to influence policy and claim entitlements. This includes technical and financial support to advocate with local governments for legislation¹¹⁰. UN Women has also raised awareness at the community level and worked with partners to ensure gender-sensitive provisions in the governing national law and the protection of Domestic Workers' Rights. For instance, in Cameroon, the National Association Supporting Domestic Workers organizes training sessions on labour legislation, the drafting of work contracts, as well as professional ethics. With this training, domestic workers have been able to affirm their social status and better defend their rights. According to UN Women, domestic workers comprise a significant part of the global workforce in informal employment and are among the most vulnerable groups of workers.

Since domestic workers are considered as an integral part of the global labour force, UN Women, in close partnership with the International Labour Organization and national governments, supports women domestic workers to mobilize for change. In 2010, domestic workers joined international advocacy for a global International Labour Organization convention that upholds their rights; it was adopted in June 2011¹¹¹. Domestic workers highlighted their concerns, from the provision of adequate pay to safeguards against harassment and violence, at the 2010 annual International Labour Conference¹¹². To deepen advocacy skills among domestic workers, UN Women continues to sponsor training around national labour laws that equips advocates to call on employers to comply with labour standards as can be seen in pictures 7 and 8.¹¹³

¹¹⁰ <https://www.UNWomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/11/exploited-domestic-workers-in-cameroon-organize-themselves-to-defend-their-rights>, consulted on 9th June 2020.

¹¹¹ https://jobs.undp.org/cj_view_job.cfm?cur_job_id=91716, consulted on 12th June 2020.

¹¹² UN Women, "Annual Report 2010", p. 13.

¹¹³ Ibid.

Picture 7: A walk by female domestic workers to raise public awareness in Buea.



Source: [https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/stories/2012/11/ domestic-workers-in-cameroon-organize-themselves-to-defend-their-rights](https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/stories/2012/11/domestic-workers-in-cameroon-organize-themselves-to-defend-their-rights), consulted on 9th June 2020.

Note: A walk to raise public awareness and widen advocacy efforts for the specific problems linked to domestic employment, organized in Buea in the Southwest and simultaneously in other regions of Cameroon on Tuesday, November 13, 2012.

Picture 8: Participants of a national conference on domestic work in Cameroon



Source : L. Chiwara, *UN Women Changing Lives in Africa 2012*, New York, 2012, p. 5.

Note: Participants of the first national symposium on domestic workers in Cameroon to revalorise the socio-judicial status of domestic workers right in Cameroon which took place in Yaounde on the 19-20 December 2011, in the centre Jean XXIII of Mvolye.

Félicité Mbida, a domestic worker abused and exploited by her employers right from the beginning of her work-life, 50-year-old Félicité Mbida, a domestic worker for more than twenty years, fights to promote the rights of workers in Cameroon as part of the National Association Supporting Domestic Workers (RENATRAD) *Réseau National des Associations d'Appui aux Travailleurs Domestiques* in French)¹¹⁴. As is the case for a number of young girls in Cameroon, Félicité started working as a domestic worker and planned that she would do this type of work only for a short time, but with the lack of other options, she was forced to continue this work in order to provide for her two children¹¹⁵. When she started working in 1996, Félicité was often subjected to sexual as well as psychological violence from her employers. She worked without a contract or social security and had no clearly defined work

¹¹⁴ Source: <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/stories/2012/11/exploited-domestic-workers-in-cameroon-organize-themselves-to-defend-their-rights>, consulted on 9th June 2020.

¹¹⁵ L. Chiwara, *UN Women changing lives in Africa 2012*, New York, 2012, p. 5.

hours. Exhausted and fed up with such abuse, in 2004, she decided to set up an Association for Domestic Workers in order to promote solidarity amongst professionals in this field¹¹⁶.

On November 13, 2012, the National Association Supporting Domestic Workers RENATRAD organised a walk to raise public awareness and widen advocacy efforts for the specific problems linked to domestic employment across various regions of Cameroon with huge participation in the city of Yaounde¹¹⁷. Through RENATRAD, two more organisations were born namely; AMCY (Association for Housewives and Cooperating Partners of Yaounde) and Association for supporting Domestic Workers-ASDAM. AMCY and ASDAM encouraged the success of RENATRAD, integrated into RENATRAD, bringing together 65 associations with an average of 20 to 50 members¹¹⁸. The UN Women Fund for Gender Equality supported RENATRAD in organizing training sessions on labour legislation, the drafting of work contracts, as well as professional ethics¹¹⁹. With this training, domestic workers were able to affirm their social status and better defend their rights¹²⁰. Negotiation was made such that domestic workers could benefit from social security through joining the National Social Security Service (CNPS). The programme greatly changed a lot of things for domestic workers as compared to what was the case in the previous years¹²¹.

II. Leveraging Political Support for Women from Stakeholders

This section endeavours to bring out the political support for women from stakeholders and the UNIFEM's gender café on peace building and leadership networks. Another area of concern is the concept of UN Women engaging men as well as the electoral code on women in Cameroon.

a. UNIFEM's gender café on peace building and leadership networks

UNIFEM has long been a partner to women in conflict-affected areas: bringing women together across geographic or political lines to agree on common positions in peace negotiations or post-conflict elections; supporting their engagement with security and justice institutions to stop impunity for VAW; facilitating their inclusion in post-conflict planning

¹¹⁶ UN Women, "Exploited domestic workers in Cameroon organize themselves to defend their right", Yaounde, November 13, 2012, p. 1.

¹¹⁷ E. M. Muntoh, "The Adversities of Domestic Workers in the City of Yaounde, Cameroon, 1994 To 2015" Department of History, University of Yaounde I, Cameroon, *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, Volume 7, no. 4, April 2020, p.16.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p. 16.

¹¹⁹ L. Chiwara, *UN Women changing lives*, p. 5.

¹²⁰ Interview with Violet Etoh, 29years, Master's student in management, Yaounde 13october 2019

¹²¹ E. M. Muntoh, "The Adversities of Domestic Workers in the City of Yaounde, Cameroon," p.16.

processes to ensure their needs are addressed; and strengthening their engagement with peacekeeping forces to encourage creative responses to the considerable security threats women face.¹²² UNIFEM works to ensure that gender issues are incorporated in peace-building and post-conflict reconstruction in order to integrate gender perspectives in peace-building and to support women's full and equal participation in decision-making.¹²³ As the nature of warfare has changed, the Security Council recognizes that international peace and security are advanced when women are included in decision-making and when they contribute to peace-building. In October 2000 the first UN Security Council Resolution on Women and peace and security was passed unanimously (Resolution 1325)¹²⁴.

Resolution 1325 is a watershed political framework that makes women and a gender perspective relevant to negotiating peace agreements, planning refugee camps and peace keeping operations and reconstructing war-torn societies. It makes the pursuit of gender equality relevant to every single Council action, ranging from clearance to elections to security sector reform.¹²⁵ In the domain of conflict, women clearly play a crucial role in conflict prevention, management, resolution and post conflict reconstruction since they are very engaged actors of the administrative machinery of the country¹²⁶. Thus, Resolution 1325 emerged from the leadership of supportive governments, the advocacy of a coalition of NGOs and technical assistance from the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and other gender advocates in the UN system. The Resolution set a new threshold of action for the Security Council, the UN system and for all governments. A number of agencies are well positioned to strengthen their work in the area of women, peace and security. The General Assembly has encouraged UNIFEM to expand its work in the area of peace and security.¹²⁷ UNIFEM developed the AFWIC called to the attention of women's psychosocial and trauma needs in the aftermath of war and supported African women leaders to build activist peace networks. It has since expanded this programme to almost every region in the

¹²² <https://www.UNWomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/unifem-resources-on-women-peace-and-security> consulted on 27th January 2020.

¹²³ E. Rehn and E. J. Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, New York, 2002, p. xi.

¹²⁴ <http://daccess-ods.un.org/UNDOC/GEN/N00/720/18/PDF/N0072018.pdf>, consulted on 29th January 2020.

¹²⁵ *Ibid*, p. 3.

¹²⁶ R. N. Monteh, "Women and Traditional Politics in the Bamenda Grassfields Cameroon from the Precolonial to Postcolonial Periods", *IAR Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 1(1), 10th October 2020, p. 45.

¹²⁷ <http://daccessods.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/271/39/PDF/N0027139.pdf>, consulted on 27th January 2020.

world, now supporting women's efforts to advocate for peace, as well as women's leadership in re-building war-torn countries.¹²⁸

International groups have also become facilitators, helping to bring together groups of women so they can plan strategy as well as learn new leadership skills and UNIFEM is one of the pioneers of this approach.¹²⁹ In relation with how UN Women works in the strategic plan Resolution 1325, the following can be enlisted, that is¹³⁰;

- Drive more effective and efficient coordination and strategic partnerships.
- Work with civil society around the world both by promoting their engagement with national and global decision making, and through dedicated Civil Society Advisory Groups around the world that advice on priorities and approaches
- Promote inclusiveness, highlighting the crucial role of men and boys, and focusing, where appropriate, on the poorest and most excluded groups.

A UN Women fifth edition of the Gender Café was held on 9 October 2014 on the theme "Women's Participation in Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management: Lessons Learned from Mali, Nigeria and Cameroon," followed by a two-day workshop on the same theme, with more than 200 participants from both chambers of the National Assembly, local authorities, civil society, development partners, the private sector and the UN System in Yaounde¹³¹. The edition enlightened on the resolution 1325 in seeking solutions for women's participation in conflict prevention and crisis management. The participants of this edition took a full measure of the humanitarian situation on the two borders of Cameroon and their impact on Cameroonian communities in the East and the Far North. In particular, it was highlighted that women and girls are the first victims of these conflicts and that strong measures must be taken to curb the negative effects of these crises. The outcome was that a plan on women's participation in conflict management and resolution for the East and Far North Regions was drafted and finalised by mid-November according to the UN Resolution 1325. To conclude this edition, and endorse, concluding points were made by Atounga Paul, Technical Adviser to MINPROFF that "the role of women in conflict prevention and

¹²⁸ E. Rehn and E. J. Sirleaf, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts'* p. 5.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p. 79.

¹³⁰ UN Women, "Strategic plan 2014-2017: Making this the century for women", p. 13.

¹³¹ ONU Femmes, "La Participation des femmes dans la prévention des conflits et la gestion des crises: Leçons apprises du Mali, Nigeria et Cameroun", Café Genre au Cameroun, bulletin d'information n°5, Octobre 2014, p.1.

management is fundamental"¹³². Pictures 9 and 10 are on workshop organized by UN Women on conflict resolutions.

Picture 9 : Members involved in the preparation of the strategic plan 1325



Source: ONU femmes Cameroun, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes 2014-2015*, Yaounde -Cameroun, Avril 2015, p. 13.

Note: Participants of a workshop organized by UN Women in October 2014 to examine the role of women in crisis management, conflict prevention and the need to develop an action plan for the implementation of Resolution 1325 and other resolutions in high-risk areas.

Picture 10 : Participants of UN Women's Gender Café



Source: ONU Femmes, "La Participation des femmes dans la prévention des conflits et la gestion des crises: Leçons apprises", p. 1.

Note: Participants of the fifth edition of Gender Café organized in Yaounde by UN Women Cameroon on October 9, 2014 on conflict management.

UNIFEM promotes women's leadership to ensure that they have an equal voice in shaping the policies that affect their lives. Women remain vastly under-represented in national or local assemblies, accounting for a worldwide average of less than 15 per cent of seats in national parliaments. In conflict situations, women's exclusion from decision making is even more pronounced.¹³³ UNIFEM's work to promote women's leadership in governance and peace building centres on ; gender justice by supporting women as candidates and voters, strengthening the capacity of women judges and lawyers and engendering legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms; peace and security by advocating for increased assistance to women in conflict situations and supporting their participation in peace processes. UNIFEM's work in this area is guided by the Security Council resolution of 1325 on women, peace and security.¹³⁴ When countries revise or create new constitutions, it is essential to provide gender expertise and take advantage of opportunities to strengthen gender equality provisions.

¹³² ONU Femmes, "La Participation des femmes dans la prévention des conflits et la gestion des crises: Leçons apprises ", pp. 2-3.

¹³³ UNIFEM annual report, "Working for women's empowerment", p. 12.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

Women's networks secure support from UNIFEM to advocate for major proposals that are found in the new Constitution.¹³⁵

In 2002, UNIFEM demonstrated once again how its impact across the world reaches far beyond simple resources. In many other countries where gender issues have long been neglected, UNIFEM's persistence and leadership in promoting women's rights has been indispensable,¹³⁶ and it has also, as recognized by the Security Council, played a very important role in directing attention to the needs of women in leadership as well as their role in bringing gender issues and decision-making¹³⁷. The fortunes of women as leaders in contemporary times all over the world differ from one country or region to another.¹³⁸ They are in legislative and executive leadership positions in countries like Sweden, Argentina, and Rwanda.¹³⁹ Every country in Africa and the Americas has had at least one woman as a Minister.¹⁴⁰ Cameroon has at least ratified the main international and regional legal instruments for promoting and protecting women's leadership rights.¹⁴¹ These developments could, of course, be partly a result of pressure at the international level. The Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 called on governments all over the world to take measures to ensure that women had equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.¹⁴² The African Union (AU), on its part, has made several declarations, which include Article 4(1) of the Constitutive Act, Dakar Platform for Action (1994), African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999), Protocol for the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004).¹⁴³ These instruments all aim at promoting the full participation of women in political leadership and processes in African countries.

¹³⁵ UNIFEM annual report, "Working for women's empowerment", p. 12.

¹³⁶ Annual report, "Working for women's empowerment", p. 2.

¹³⁷ File 2, CF/GEN, No 13, "La participation des femmes au processus de prise de décision dans la vie politique et parlementaire", no 16, Genève, 1989, p.30.

¹³⁸ D. R. Montemarano, *Gender Equality in Cameroon: Political Participation and Leadership*, Global Conscience Initiative, Kumba: Cameroon, 2011, p. 3.

¹³⁹ P. Paxton, and K. Sheri et al. "Gender in Politics." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 33, JSTOR, 2007, p. 264.

¹⁴⁰ "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013: Le Cameroun sur le chemin de la parité", More Women in Politics, ONU Femmes, Cameroun, 2014, p. 15.

¹⁴¹ D. Richard-Antonin and S. S. Lisa, "Regional development and spatial inclusion: Cameroon African Economic Outlook", UNDP- OECD, 2015, p. 12.

¹⁴² H. K. Kah and M. Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 2.

¹⁴³ "Report Division for the Advancement of Women of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa", September 4-October 14 2007, p. 3.

Taking into cognizance the impact of female leadership on fair and harmonious development of our states, the fourth edition of “Gender Café” dwelled on the theme “Female leadership in decision-making: Lessons learned from Africa and Cameroon” was organized by UN Women on June 26, 2014. Pictures 11 and 12 clearly shows this in reference to the above analyses

Picture 11 : Participants involved in the UN Women’s 4th edition of Gender Cafe



Source: ONU Femmes, "Leadership et participation des femmes à la prise de décision", n°4, juillet 2014, p. 1.

Note: A family picture taken in Yaounde on the occasion of the UN Women 4th edition of Gender Café on June 26, 2014.

Picture 12: A presentation at the UN Women’s 4th edition of Gender Cafe



Source: ONU Femmes, "Leadership et participation des femmes à la prise de décision", n°4, juillet 2014, p. 2.

Note: On the occasion of the UN Women 4th edition of Gender Café on June 26, 2014, Mrs. Chantal Ekambi, UN Women Programme Officer was making a presentation.

More than 200 persons including those from the Upper and Lower House of Parliament; Civil Society, different private and public services of Cameroon and development partners participated. They discussed the importance in the struggle for advocacy carried out for many years by women's rights defenders around the world. From the rich debates and presentations held, several recommendations were drawn within the framework of the Gender Café by Mian Djangone Anne Marie Rachelle, UN Women Country Representative and Director¹⁴⁴.

¹⁴⁴ ONU Femmes, "Leadership et participation des femmes à la prise de décision ", Café Genre au Cameroun, bulletin d'information n° 4, Juillet 2014, pp. 1-2.

b. Presidents Ahidjo and Biya's policies on women

After independence and reunification, Ahidjo and Biya were influenced by several factors to have women serve in the legislature and executive positions.¹⁴⁵ Several forces determined the policy of Ahidjo and Biya towards women's participation in the legislature and executive arms of government as leaders of their own constituencies. These forces in Cameroon and other African countries were socio-cultural, political, and economic in nature.¹⁴⁶ In keeping with the socio-cultural and family values of many ethnic groups in Cameroon Ahidjo at first encouraged women to remain good mothers and housewives.¹⁴⁷ It was not the wish of his government to generally encourage women to improve their participation in governance. A few years later, however, the Ahidjo government decided to encourage women's participation in politics but in a separate structure of their own, the Women Cameroon National Union (WCNU), an arm of the CNU formed in September 1966.¹⁴⁸ Even with this, though, the new party opted to emphasize traditional roles for women. Women were encouraged to engage in such domestic activities as knitting, sewing, cooking, and taking care of the household.¹⁴⁹

In the last years of the 1960s, the Ahidjo government became more sensitive to women's participation in leadership at the legislature and executive arms of government. This might have been caused by the increasing number of women who went to school and became literate. Several women were appointed to public office, and a special ministry charged with women affairs was created.¹⁵⁰ Other women were elected or chosen on the list system into the West and East Cameroon Houses of Assembly, and a few of them were also appointed into ministerial positions during the presidency of Ahidjo. One of these women, Julienne Keutcha, was appointed as a member of the Political bureau of the ruling CNU party.¹⁵¹ This gradual change to elect or appoint women into political leadership positions was probably due to the need to mobilize all and sundry towards the socio-economic and political development of Cameroon. It was also because of the Western education a few of them had acquired, which

¹⁴⁵ H. K. Kah and M. Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 6.

¹⁴⁶ L. R. Arriola, and C. J. Martha, "Ethnic Politics and Women's Empowerment in Africa: Ministerial Appointments to Executive Cabinets." *American Journal of Political Science*, vol. 58, no.2, 2014, p. 495.

¹⁴⁷ S. D. Galega and T. Martha "Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice in Cameroon", Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 2004, pp. 237-238.

¹⁴⁸ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ S. D. Galega and T. Martha "Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice", pp. 237-238.

¹⁵⁰ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 6.

¹⁵¹ S. D. Galega and T. Martha "Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice", p. 238.

enabled them to overcome barriers and work in the public sphere.¹⁵² The UN International Decade for Women, 1975-1985, created awareness in the Ahidjo government to appoint some women into executive positions in government. Although during his speeches Ahidjo hailed women for their contributions to national development, his government was not genuinely committed to making them actively participate in their numbers in the political affairs of Cameroon.¹⁵³

Cameroon took a bold step towards the attainment of the global objective for gender equality, an objective that falls in line with the ideals of justice and equality, a core issue of the socio-political development policy of the Head of State, Paul Biya¹⁵⁴. Under the presidency of Paul Biya other forces contributed to make women take up elective and appointive positions in parties and the state. Biya was more educated than his predecessor. He was also trained in the tradition of enlightenment, whose features were represented in his book *Communal Liberalism*.¹⁵⁵ Besides, the Women conference in Nairobi in 1985 and Beijing in 1995 and the resolutions arrived at contributed to the creation of the Ministry of Women Affairs in Cameroon. Many other women's movements, both at home and abroad, have been engaged in advocacy to pressure the government to consider some degree of gender balance in appointments in Cameroon.¹⁵⁶ In the same line, during the "HeForShe" Campaign, Women in Parliaments Global Forum, held in Mexico City, from the 7-9 October 2015, President Paul Biya declared: "We need more women in parliaments and in decision making because it is an equity and gender equality issue. The equal access of women to decision making positions and the elimination of all gender discrimination are undeniably a way to build a more equitable and open human society" as seen in appendix 11¹⁵⁷.

Women's leadership in the local legislative structures was grossly lagging behind than that of men. Several years after independence and reunification, women still occupied only backstage positions in the municipal councils.¹⁵⁸ From the late 1980s onwards, there was an increase in the number of women councilors, leaders in their council areas, but the increase was still not significant enough. In the politically active North West Region, there were only

¹⁵² N. Konde, "Western Education and Women's Social Mobility in Cameroon.", p. 102.

¹⁵³ S. D. Galega and T. Martha "Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice ", p. 240.

¹⁵⁴ "Track record of gender mainstreaming in public administrations, extended to public", p. 72.

¹⁵⁵ H. K. Kah and M. Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 7.

¹⁵⁶ F. Lotsmart. "Fostering Women's Participation", p. 223.

¹⁵⁷ "Track record of gender mainstreaming in public administrations, extended to public", p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ H. F. Niyindi, "Challenges Confronting Women Leaders in Local Governments-Cameroon Experience", African women's report, 2008, p. 5.

three female Mayors in 2016.¹⁵⁹ In the National Assembly of Cameroon after independence and reunification in 1960/61, women were still grossly under-represented. The first to contest and win elections into the National Assembly of the Republic of Cameroon on April 10, 1960, was previously mentioned: Julienne Keutcha, wife of a Bamileke district governor. The first Muslim woman got elected in 1973.¹⁶⁰ Madam Keutcha's political ascendancy saw her elected Secretary of the Bureau of the National Assembly. She was also a member of commissions of the legislative and administrative affairs and social affairs. During the Garoua Congress of the Cameroon National Union (CNU) in 1969, Keutcha was elected into the central committee of the party, which constituted 35 members. Another worthy woman in decision-making structures of the CNU was Delphine Tsanga, elected President of the Women's Cameroon National Union (WCNU). And elected vice-presidents of the legislature have included Madam Gladys Silo Endeley and Joséphine Nguetti.¹⁶¹ A list of other elected women political leaders includes Madam Alvine Ekotto, who became secretary of the WCNU; Madam Rosalie Motaze, the Assistant Secretary; Madam Jeannette Tagny, the treasurer; Madam Regina Ngeng, the assistant treasurer; Madam Djamaré, the auditor. The advisers of the WCNU were Madam Martha Bouquet and Julienne Keutcha. During the period from 1965 to 1970, Gladys Difo was also member of a male-dominated parliament of the Federal Republic of Cameroon.¹⁶²

The under-representation of women in legislature and its leadership structures lasted until the 1980s, more than twenty years after independence and reunification. In the mid-1980s the percentage of women represented in the National Assembly rose above 5 per cent of the total number of parliamentarians. Among the few women parliamentarians in the early period were Julienne Keutcha, Gladys Difo, Gwendolyne Burnley, Chilla Prudence Helena, Rosalie Motaze, Jeanne Fotso Magne, Isabelle Ebanda, and Sarah Nwanack.¹⁶³ Madam Chilla joined Julienne Keutcha in the third legislature of Cameroon, who as an old member was elected member of the Commission for Foreign Affairs, Commission on Constitutional Law, Legislation, Federation Administration, and the Armed Forces. Chilla, on her part, was elected secretary of the Commission on Finance, Economic Affairs, Plan and Infrastructure,

¹⁵⁹ C. Mussa, "Lone Woman Candidate Eyes Presidency in Cameroon.", Global Press Institute, February 12, 2011, p. 23.

¹⁶⁰ L. L. Atanga, *Gender, Discourse and Power in the Cameroonian*, p. 2.

¹⁶¹ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 10.

¹⁶² D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam. *l'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique et Politique Camerounaise*, Cameroon, 2014, p. 221.

¹⁶³ H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 10.

and member of the Commission on Social and Cultural Affairs of the National Assembly.¹⁶⁴ For over two decades under Ahidjo's leadership of Cameroon, only a handful of women were parliamentarians and members of other public agencies in Cameroon.¹⁶⁵

A pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders was held in Yaounde on the 26-27 May 2008 on Leadership Capacity Development Needs and Strategies Approaches for Enhancing Collaboration and Exchange for Strengthening Women's Leadership in Local Government.¹⁶⁶ Its main objectives were about the international framework on women, power and decision making, provide some examples of women's experiences at the local level of government and discuss strategies for strengthening women's leadership. That is the Seminar focused on the exchange of experiences for identifying strategies aimed at strengthening their role and leadership capacities to effectively implement decentralized governance programmes for poverty eradication in Africa and Cameroon.

Within the framework of the overall Seminar objective and the specific objectives and thematic areas outlined in the aide-memoire, the Seminar received a number of presentations from country representatives and officials from the United Nations and development partner organizations. Together with intensive and focused group discussions over two days, the presentations contributed to the generation and adoption of the Seminar recommendations for submission and presentation to the Ministerial Conference on Leadership Capacity Development for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa, during the panel on "Gender issues in implementing decentralization", on May 28, 2008.¹⁶⁷

The Seminar was opened by Ms. Rose Zang Nguele, the Deputy Government Delegate of Yaoundé on 26 May 2008. She stressed the importance of networks of local government women leaders as they are professionally enriching and can advance the cause of women representation in decision-making bodies. The session included opening comments from Ms. Dede Ekoue, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP-Cameroon, Ms. Pontso Matumelo Sekattle, Minister of Local Government of Lesotho, Ms. Suzann Bomback, Minister for the Promotion of Women and Family of Cameroon, and Mr. Marafa Hamidou Yaya, Minister of State, Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization of Cameroon.¹⁶⁸ The

¹⁶⁴ D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam. *l'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique*, p. 201-202.

¹⁶⁵ Galega, S. D. and T. Martha, *Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice in Cameroon.*, 2004, p. 240.

¹⁶⁶ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders "strengthening women's leadership in local government for effective decentralized governance and poverty reduction in Africa: roles, challenges and strategies", Palais des Congrès, Yaounde, Cameroon 26-27 may 2008, p. 1.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, p.3.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

Seminar received twelve formal presentations over three panels. Each of the inputs is summarised in this section, together with the issues and perspectives articulated after each of the presentations. In addition to serving as direct input on the various themes of the Seminar, the presentations served as a basis for enhancing dialogue and debate during the group discussion sessions.¹⁶⁹

Dede Ekoue, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP-Cameroon, stated that decentralization offers an important opportunity to increase women's leadership. Specifically, local leadership is relatively easier to enter into since women already have a solid understanding of local issues; they have been involved in helping address them, and will be better able to balance leadership and other responsibilities through local rather than national governance; local leadership helps local communities meet the immediate needs that women and their families face on a daily basis; local elections are less expensive, less confrontational and aggressive than national elections, and therefore good training for national leadership; women often are involved in social or grassroots development activities and can draw from the informal or semi-formal networks at the local level to address grassroots issues; and local leaders are typically already well-known in the community, causing less intimidation than national leadership. Once in office, women would offer the benefits of representing a target population in the decision-making process; greater diversity in leadership style, approaches and visions and experience; promoting dialogue with and support for grassroots community development projects; as well as inspire future leadership by women and other under-represented groups, e.g. youth.¹⁷⁰

She provided an overview of UNDP actions supporting women's leadership. This includes sensitization campaigns that challenge societal and cultural norms that discourage women's leadership in politics. In collaboration with UNIFEM in the efforts at ending VAW in general and in particular against women in politics; strengthening legal instruments that provide a conducive environment for women's participation in political decisions (Mauritania); enhancement of women's participatory capacity by training potential women leaders such as electoral candidates and women councilors; strengthen social and political capital by supporting women's networks (in Cameroon and Kenya); support to knowledge management and virtual platforms; promoting integration of gender and women in the design

¹⁶⁹ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders" strengthening women's leadership", p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, p. 4.

and reform of electoral systems: and strengthening gender-sensitive perspectives within political parties (Turkey).¹⁷¹

c. UN Women engaging men in Cameroon

UN Women's work on engaging men and boys for gender equality is anchored in the belief that achieving gender equality is about transforming unequal power relations between men and women. This involves challenging notions of masculinity and traditional perceptions of manhood¹⁷². It requires men to question power dynamics in their actions or their words at the personal, interpersonal and societal level and to take responsibility for change. Men need to be engaged as gender advocates speaking out as active agents and stakeholders who can transform social norms, behaviours and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and inequality¹⁷³. Men play an important role in the eradication of all forms of injustice, discrimination and practices that prevent the woman and young girl from thriving, and in the fight against gender-based violence¹⁷⁴. UN Women is actively engaging men and boys for women's rights¹⁷⁵. From the classroom to the streets, local leaders and everyday male champions are addressing VAW and redefining masculine identities through community intervention programmes, education and even music¹⁷⁶. UN Women trained young male volunteers to give interactive presentations in high schools on ending VAW and girls¹⁷⁷. Volunteers also participated in radio programmes to discuss the role of men in ending VAW and girls, and organized a youth event to start a public discourse on the issue¹⁷⁸.

Men are needed to challenge gender stereotypes, to share equitably in family and household responsibilities, to be positive role models in their communities and their families. Gender-linked comportments displayed by men and boys have a direct impact on the health and well-being of women and young girls¹⁷⁹. Men Engaged in Cameroon is led by Community Centres with strong membership that works to engage boys and men to reduce gender inequality and promote gender equality, the rights of women and end GBV

¹⁷¹ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders" strengthening women's leadership", p. 7.

¹⁷² UN Women, *Engaging young Men in advancing Gender Equality*, Cairo-Egypt, 2017, p.6.

¹⁷³ <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/in-focus/engaging-men>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁷⁴ Interview with Songo Théodore, 45 years, Lab Technician, Ebolowa, 13 July 2021

¹⁷⁵ UNFPA, "Impact annual report", p.30.

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/in-focus/engaging-men>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁷⁷ UN Women, *Engaging young Men in advancing*, p.11.

¹⁷⁸ <https://www.UN Women.org/youth/engaging-boys-and-young-men-in-gender-equality>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁷⁹ <https://www.UN Women.org/2014/11/ed-inaugural-at-menengage-symposium>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

through community leaders, policy-makers and other civil society organisations¹⁸⁰. This is why UN Women in partnership with UNFPA in Cameroon, using an approach that involves communities in the promotion of human rights, has engaged in reversing the trend in Cameroon by recruiting men to talk to other men. It is the case for example of the association of Men Engaged in Gender Promotion and Equality (HEPROGES) *Hommes Engagés pour la Promotion du Genre et Égalité entre les Sexes*, in French) created in Bertoua with the support of UNFPA¹⁸¹. This association was born out of the awareness that men play an important role in the eradication of all forms of injustice, discrimination and practices that prevent the woman and young girl from thriving, and in the fight against GBV as seen in pictures 13 and 14¹⁸².

Picture 13 : Men engaged to fight against GBV in Bertoua



Source: “UNFPA annual report: special review 2008-2012” New York, Semini group, 2013, p. 31.

Note: Following the HeForShe policy, the above association of Men Engaged in Gender Promotion and Equality (HEPROGES) was created in Bertoua with the support of UNFPA.

Picture 14 : The researcher with the Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division in his Office.



Source: Sydony Endali, Kye-Ossi-South, 12th July 2021, field work.

Note: During field interview with the Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division in his office in Kye-Ossi, the researcher discussed with him about the importance of HeForShe support on Kye-Ossi women.

As for the HeForShe, it is the UN Women solidarity movement for gender equality,¹⁸³ launched on 20 September 2014, at the United Nations, by then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and UN Women Global Goodwill Ambassador, Emma Watson¹⁸⁴, hundreds of thousands of men from around the world including Heads of State, chief executive officers

¹⁸⁰ <http://menengage.org/regions/africa/cameroon/10>: consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁸¹ UNFPA, “Impact annual report”, p. 30.

¹⁸² Ibid, p. 31.

¹⁸³ <https://www.UNWomen.org/en/news/stories/2019/9/press-release-un-women-heforshe-movement-rallies-students-in-canada-for-gender-equality>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁸⁴ UN Women, *HeForShe: Action kit*, New York, May 2017, p. 3.

(CEOs), and global luminaries from all walks of life committed themselves to gender equality¹⁸⁵. The HeForShe was created by UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women, the HeForShe solidarity movement for gender equality provides a systematic approach and targeted platform where a global audience can engage and become change agents for the achievement of gender equality in our lifetime¹⁸⁶. HeForShe invites people around the world to stand together as equal partners to craft a shared vision of a gender equal world and implement specific, locally relevant solutions for the good of all of humanity¹⁸⁷. HeForShe deliberately uses the word “commitment” rather than “pledge” because to truly achieve gender equality, a commitment is required. HeForShe is an inclusive platform on which men, women and all genders can identify and engage. Everybody has a role in the HeForShe movement; every voice counts; every action will make a difference¹⁸⁸. In the same vein, one of our informants, Zue Zue Jean Marie asserted that:

Men need to be engaged as gender advocates speaking out as active agents and stakeholders who can transform social norms, behaviours and gender stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and inequality. UN Women’s work on engaging men and boys for gender equality is anchored in the belief that achieving gender equality is about transforming unequal power relations between men and women, he was therefore moved to appoint the first deputy mayor of Kye-Ossi Antoinette Angono Aba'a as the president of the association called *Mutuelle des Bayam-Sellam* (MUBASE) because she is a *Bayam-Sellam* and the best person to handle *Bayam-Sellam women issues in market*. This appointment facilitated UN Women’s supports in enhancing women’s economic empowerment in Kye-Ossi through MUBASE¹⁸⁹.

HeForShe is engaging men and boys in removing the social and cultural barriers that prevent women and girls from achieving their potentials, enlisting men and boys as equal partners in the responsible crafting and implementing of a shared vision of gender equality, with norms of gender equality, non-violence and respect, thus, together positively reshaping society¹⁹⁰. Men and boys play important roles in the movement for gender equality and have a responsibility to shoulder. Mobilizing men and boys can break down barriers, open up new paths and foster new kinds of relationships¹⁹¹. HeForShe also provides a platform for men and boys to become advocates for women and girls, and to behave accordingly, telling their

¹⁸⁵ UN Women, *HeForShe: Emerging solutions for gender equality*, New York, 2018, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ <https://www.heforshe.org/en/why-solidarity-and-allyship-matter-un-women-heforshe-global-gender-equality-champions-release10/>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁸⁷ <https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/un-women-heforshe-movement-rallies-students-in-canada-for-gender-equality-847041258.html>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

¹⁸⁸ UN Women, *HeForShe: Action kit*, pp. 8-9.

¹⁸⁹ Interview with Mr. Zue Zue Jean Marie, 45 years, Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021.

¹⁹⁰ UN Women, *HeForShe: Frequently asked questions*, New York, 2015, p.1.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid*, p.6.

stories to the global community about the actions they are taking to end inequality¹⁹². In the same line, one of our informants, Nkolo Menguele Florence declared that:

UN Women needs to further strategize its partnership to achieve wider coverage and stronger impact. The capacity of MINPROFF, being the main Ministry in the field of gender, should be further strengthened. A capacity assessment needs to be conducted at central and local levels and steps taken accordingly. UN Women's support to MINPROFF requires critical review, adaptations and corrective measures. It is important that men share this issue with women to encourage them to participation in all spheres of life and allow women to exceed in life... it is then that the "HeForShe" approach will be respected and that women will one day be able to say like former US President Obama, "Yes, we can". Through HeForShe, Male leaders can also utilize media appearances to make targeted statements advocating for change, raising awareness on the lack of women's representation and leadership in their communities, or supporting the realization of women's rights to participate in elections. That is why it is important that male leaders (e.g. tribe leaders, religious leaders, cultural leaders) should take an active role in sensitizing their communities on women's political participation and leadership¹⁹³.

In Cameroon, Joannes Paulus Yimbessalu describes his trip to three primary schools as the highlight of his year. In December of 2014, Joannes visited his school projects that his NGO, "Hope for children Cameroon", was involved with. A deep believer in HeForShe, he integrated gender-equality messages into his talks and inspired the children's male relatives to make public promises to respect their wives. Joannes learned about the HeForShe campaign through a youth network he belonged to, and personally attended the campaign launched in New York in September, 2014. At the three schools in rural communities in Northwest Cameroon, Joannes spoke to the children, their parents and their grandparents, as well as local government authorities. Deeply aware that in these communities, the rights of women and girls is still neglected and some women are poorly treated, Joannes made a point to address the fathers and grandfathers. He listed the many socio-cultural challenges that women and girls face in their part of the world, from child marriage and teen pregnancy to VAW¹⁹⁴. The men nodded and admitted that they have witnessed all these. Joannes then pointed out the role that men and boys can play in promoting gender equality. He explained the many benefits of sending girls to school, as many local men care only about the bride price.

Convinced and inspired, the men agreed to make public promises right then and there to respect their wives and give them the rights they deserve. The traditional heads in all three communities, including Mbororo, an indigenous community, also made commitments to spread the word. Joannes Paulus thinks that being a HeForShe champion presents a unique opportunity to work together across governments, corporations and academia to bring about profound and lasting change. Men and boys then play important roles in the movement for

¹⁹² UN Women, *HeForShe: Frequently asked*, p.1.

¹⁹³ Interview with Nkolo Menguele Florence, 45 years, South Regional Delegate of MINPROFF, Ebolowa, 13th July, 2021.

¹⁹⁴ <https://www.heforshe.org/en/promise-healthy-tomorrow>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

gender equality and have a responsibility to shoulder. Mobilizing men and boys can break down barriers, open up new paths and foster new kinds of relationships. Each level of commitment gained would be an achievement in its own right¹⁹⁵. Every story of a champion making a difference has the potential to inspire others to become more engaged. Each man who takes a new action helps all of humanity to take an additional step towards gender equality as seen from pictures 15 and 16.

Picture 15 : Public promises made by men on HeForshe



Source: <https://www.heforshe.org/en/promise-healthy-tomorrow>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

Note: In December 2014 in the northwest, parents and grandparents (here on the above picture), participated in a HeForShe campaign coordinated by Joannes Paulus Yimbessalu, founder of the NGO “HOPE for Children Cameroon”.

Picture 16 : Children, parents, and grandparents attend a HeForShe event in Cameroon



Source: <https://www.heforshe.org/en/promise-healthy-tomorrow>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

Note: Parents and grandparents attending a HeForShe event in the Fujia Government primary school in the northwest region of Cameroon.

On behalf of President Paul Biya of Cameroon, the Prime Minister and Head of Government, Philemon Yang pledged his support for UN Women’s HeForShe campaign at a launch event attended by government representatives on 17 August 2016, heads of UN agencies and civil society organizations. Speaking at the official launch, Prime Minister Yang said: “My wish is to see the HeForShe campaign benefit all the women, children, men and boys in Cameroon”¹⁹⁶. Pictures 17 and 18 illustrate the above analyses.

¹⁹⁵ <https://www.heforshe.org/en/promise-healthy-tomorrow>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

¹⁹⁶ <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/stories/2016/8/heforshe-in-cameroon>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

Picture 17: HeForShe campaign in Yaounde



Source : <https://yaounde.sites.uniconnetwork.org/category/h eforshe-campaign/>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

Note: Attendees of UN Women's HeForShe campaign launched in Cameroon on Wednesday, August 17, 2016.

Picture 18 : UN Women's /+ Regional Director Presents a HeForShe gift to the Prime Minister.



Source : <https://un-women-rd-officially-launch-the-heforshe-campaign-in-cameroon>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

Note: Philemon Yang, Prime Minister of Cameroon is welcomed as a HeForShe by Diana Ofwona, Regional Director, UN Women Office for West and Central Africa.

In line with the Prime Minister's statement, the Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family Marie Therese Abena Ondoa said the objectives of the HeForShe campaign are matched with Cameroon's policy and development priorities, and Cameroon has ratified without any reservations all the legal instruments in the area of gender equality. "The Head of State has just promulgated a new Penal code for Cameroon which integrates gender and punishes acts like female genital mutilation," the Minister added¹⁹⁷. In relation to MINPROFF, an informant Nlend Joseph said that:

HeForShe has provided MINPROFF with a platform on how organizations should approach the issue of women and men by linking it to its core missions to protect the community from harms. As a HeForShe Champion, we aim to create a work environment where our different views, perspectives and uniqueness are embraced. At a national level, with the engagement in the movement of other ministries and CSOs, HeForShe has provided a platform for sharing best practice among agencies. MINPROFF partnering with UN Women has led to greater alignment between the internal programmes, our community programmes and by uniting around a common goal. Making an external HeForShe commitment holds one to account and creating a flexible working area where we are innovative in our approach¹⁹⁸.

The HeForShe Champions initiative confronts the gender inequalities faced in three key pillars of society: government, work and academia. UN Women and MINPROFF have

¹⁹⁷<https://africa.unwomen.org/fr/news-and-events/stories/2016/08/cameroon-pm-and>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Nlend Joseph, 40 years, Chief of service of women economic empowerment, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office, Douala, 21st July 2021.

embarked on an expansive and extensive campaign to advocate for male support through HeForShe as can be seen in pictures 19 and 20.

Picture 19: Official launch of the HeForShe campaign



Source : <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/stories/2016/8/heforshe-in-cameroon>, 5:40pm, 5/6/20

Note: The Prime Minister, Philemon Yang, Marie Therese Obama Ondoa Minister of MINPROFF and other attendees pledging support for UN Women's HeForShe in Hilton Hotel, Yaounde

Picture 20: HeForShe supporters with the researcher



Source : Sydony Endali, Douala, 21st July 2021, field work.

Note: After field interview with some officials of the Littoral regional office of MINPROFF in Douala, the researcher took a picture with Baleng Ferdinand, Chief of service in charge of gender issues (Left) and Nlend Joseph, Chief of service in charge of women's economic empowerment (Right).

UN Women's Regional Director for West and Central Africa Diana Ofwona commended Cameroon for the progress it has made on gender equality and women empowerment, including a contribution to UN Women's core resources for the next three years. Speaking about the HeForShe campaign, Mrs. Ofwana said: "HeForShe is the movement for fathers who love their daughters and believe in their potentials and for husbands who consider their wives as partners. HeForShe is for leaders who believe in the full potential of women and help them to fulfill it, CEOs for whom women in the workforce is a great asset for the profitability of the enterprises"¹⁹⁹. To confirm this, an informant asserted that:

An important challenge that must be addressed is a potential lack of understanding of what women's empowerment means. Being a meaningful advocate for women's empowerment he required a better understanding of the challenges women face in Kye-Ossi market. Initiatives such as the HeForShe have been instrumental in mobilizing MUBSE in Kye-Ossi which helped in breaking down gender barriers and stood as a successful tool because it provided easy guidelines to follow, such as the pledge to only speak at panels that include women. Proactive work by male in partnership with women is necessary to

¹⁹⁹<https://yaounde.sites.unicnetwork.org/category/heforshe-campaign/>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

establish an environment that empowers women's participation at all levels. Men's partnership is required in addressing issues that hinder women's economic engagement, including: structural barriers, discriminatory practices and violence that prevent women from exercising their right²⁰⁰.

On the other side, a Catholic University Institute (CUIB), launches HeForShe Cameroon, in March 8, 2015. CUIB was selected by the UN Women amongst 10 other institutions to promote the HeForShe campaign in Cameroon and West Africa. The HeForShe campaign was officially launched in Buea by the President of the Catholic University Institute of Buea CUIB Rev. F. George Nkeze on the 8 of March under the working theme, "Forming new mindsets for promoting gender equality and women empowerment." The campaign was aimed at getting men and boys advocate for gender equality and the empowerment of the woman. He called on the men folk particularly the men and boys of CUIB to review their perception of women, to foster inclusive growth and development of the woman and for them to shun women who dress indecently. He appealed to all to begin the fight in Molyko (Buea) through sensitization in schools and communities²⁰¹. Meoto Ruth, a gender counselor concurred and acknowledged the fact that a woman is indispensable in the world and on this note called on all to turn away from the traditional practices that relegate the woman or the girl child to the back such as no education, early marriages and other cultures²⁰². According to Nlend Joseph:

HeForShe has sparked a real desire about what gender equality looks like and their commitment to HeForShe, along with MINPROFF promotes their goals to improve the gender balance of their staff, and to ensure equality in pay, in career opportunities and in work flexibility, they are working towards a change in their understanding of skills needed to get the job done. Staff, no matter what their gender, should be able to bring their innate abilities to the forefront, we want to get away from gender stereotyping of what makes an effective manager, or an effective team leader, or an effective support staff. We don't want to become "gender blind," but rather value the differences that each staff brings to the table. Success means that we demonstrate gender equality within MINPROFF and to other ministries, so that they also get involved in HeForShe programme²⁰³.

The fundamental objective of HeForShe is to change discriminatory behaviours, through building awareness of the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment and the crucial role men can play in their own lives, and at more structural levels in their communities, to end the persisting inequalities faced by women and girls globally²⁰⁴. This will lead us to the next phase that has to do with women's involvement in elections in Cameroon.

²⁰⁰ Interview with Nfoumou Michel, 27 years, *Bayam-Sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, 12 July 2021, Kye-Ossi.

²⁰¹ <https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/NewsArchive/CUIB-launches-HeForShe-Cameroon-320715>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Interview with Nlend Joseph, 40 years, Chief of service of women economic empowerment, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office, Douala, 21st July 2021.

²⁰⁴ UN Women, *HeForShe: Frequently asked questions*, New York, 2015, p.1.

d. UN Women and the electoral code in Cameroon

The legal framework governing the legislative and municipal elections is Law No. 2012/001 of 19 April 2012 relating to the Electoral Code, including some provisions which were amended by Law No 2012/017 of 21 December 2012²⁰⁵ and made gender a legal consideration in creating all candidate lists for parliament, municipal council, Senate, and regional council elections²⁰⁶. UN Women- Cameroun supported the national government and civil society to incorporate gender language into the electoral code. According to one of our informants Efandan Assako Patience:

UN Women has been supporting the promotion of women's political empowerment through awareness campaigns, and by giving technical support to the national institution for referendums and elections (ELECAM), political parties, and women leaders. Women outnumber men by a wide margin and are a force and a weight that can change the course of electoral consultations when they take part in them. But for such a scenario to play out, women were encouraged to abandon the prejudice that has nailed them in a position of incapacity for ages. By taking over the public squares of Ebolowa on weekends, UN Women and ELECAM shared messages of awakening with women: "Woman, your voice counts, register, withdraw your card and vote when the time comes", in Ebolowa, Ambam, and in Kye-Ossi, the message was the same in public places, addressed to women by women. This made it possible to glean some inscriptions here and there. UN Women following the gender sensitive election information processing in Cameroon, stressed on the role of the media in conducting, promoting and in preparing the minds of women towards electoral processes in Cameroon which cannot be undermined because it renewed women's confidence and encouraged more women to be involved in politics²⁰⁷.

The electoral code required gender to be considered as a legal prerequisite in the compilation of all candidate lists for the municipal, legislative, regional and Senate elections²⁰⁸. For parliament and municipal councils, votes are cast for lists of candidates, which are submitted by political parties, for the seats available in a constituency. Seats are filled in order of appearance on the list, particularly in the case that seats are filled from multiple lists when one list does not gain a majority of the votes²⁰⁹. For the senate, seats are filled in part by indirect universal suffrage on a regional basis and in part by appointment of the President²¹⁰. With the municipal, legislative and Senate elections of 2013 in mind, this important roadmap set in motion a series of strategic interventions including advocacy, capacity strengthening and awareness-raising. These were aimed at key constituents in the electoral process such as Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), the organization in charge of

²⁰⁵“Cameroon legislative and municipal elections”, Commonwealth expert team, 30 September 2013, p. 8.

²⁰⁶ http://www.elecaml.cm/uploads/media/Electoral_Code_Fnl_.pdf, consulted on 28th June 2020.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Efandan Assako Patience, 37 years, Head of communication department, ELECAM's South regional office, Ebolowa, 13th July 2021.

²⁰⁸ J. Brandy, “Thematic Evaluation on Women's Leadership and Political Participation 2011-2015”, UN Women, August 2016, p. 34.

²⁰⁹ <http://www.elecaml.cm/en/civic-education/election-ofmembers-of-parliament.html>, consulted on 28th June 2020.

²¹⁰ <http://www.elecaml.cm/en/news/news/article/senatoriales-2013.html> consulted on 28th June 2020.

elections, along with the Government, media, traditional and religious leaders, and women candidates. Targeting public opinion, the aim was to bring about a significant and visible increase in the representation and participation of women in decision-making bodies²¹¹.

The 2012 election law appears to have made an impact during the electoral process. The law sought to require that each candidate list has at least one female candidate²¹². A UN Women Gender and Elections expert supported the meetings and discussions on ELECAM activity on a regular basis. This involved integrating gender dimension throughout the electoral process, as well as information sharing²¹³. With the support of a UN Women Gender and Elections expert, the electoral board ELECAM rejected 48 of 250 candidate lists from 38 political parties 20 of those 48 rejected candidate lists were denied for failing to meet the gender requirement²¹⁴. In addition, at least two of the major political parties of Cameroon introduced roughly 30% quotas for women candidates, directly impacting the candidate lists for election²¹⁵. UN Women urged women to register massively in order to voice their concerns and as part of the cooperation between Election Cameroon (ELECAM) and UN Women in Cameroon. A massive campaign to promote women registration on the electoral lists was launched in Yaounde and Douala. This operation took place in 7 districts of Yaounde and 6 districts of Douala, which are the two major centres²¹⁶.

On April 14, 2013, Cameroon held its first senatorial elections²¹⁷. Of the 70 seats that were elected, women were elected to 17 seats, and the President appointed 3 additional female senators out of 30 appointments²¹⁸. Although the elections and appointments bring the representation of women to 20% in the senate, it is still “inadequate” according to the More Women in Politics Network²¹⁹. Prior to the 2013 parliamentary elections, the percentage of women in the National Assembly was below 15%, and women represented only 23 of 180 seats in the National Assembly²²⁰. Results of the September 2013 election, however,

²¹¹ <http://www.elecam.cm/en/news/news/article/senatoriales-2013.html> consulted on 28th June 2020.

²¹² “Cameroon legislative and municipal”, p. 8.

²¹³ UN Women, “Cameroon Elections Catapult Women, more than doubling their representation in the National Assembly”, 25 October 2013, p. 1.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ “Municipal-Legislative Elections: Civil Society Presses for Women Representation”, Cameroon, 10 July, 2013, p.1.

²¹⁶ Interview with Nanji Madeleine, 38 years, Secretary at ELECAM’s Littoral regional office, Douala, 22nd July 2021.

²¹⁷ <http://www.elecam.cm/en/news/news/article/senatoriales-2013.html>, consulted on 28th June 2020.

²¹⁸ E. Dorine, “Women in politics: Looking to Cameroon’s Women Senators”, Inter Press Service (IPS), June 2013, p. 1.

²¹⁹ UN Women, “Cameroon Elections Catapult Women, more than doubling”, Cameroon, 2013, p. 1.

²²⁰ <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204309.pdf>, consulted on 28th June 2020.

showed an increase in female representation in parliament. Women were elected to 56 seats of the National Assembly's 180 total, representing 31.1% of all seats and for proper understanding,²²¹ pictures 21 and 22 clearly portrays the above analyses.

Picture 21: UN system partners and representatives of the Cameroon's political parties.



Source: <https://www.UN Women.org/en/news/ 2013/10/ cameroon-elections-catapult-women>, 10: 52pm, 28/5/20.

Note: Justine Diffo, National Coordinator of the NGO More Women in Politics (left), joins Arlette Mvondo, National Programme Officer UN Women (centre) and Paul Ngounou, journalist for Cameroon Radio Television (CTRV) (right), in a panel discussion with traditional and religious leaders in September 2013.

Picture 22: Women's registration on Electoral registers in Ebolowa



Source: Efandan Assako Patience, Head of communication department, ELECAM's South regional office, Ebolowa, 13 July 2021.

Note: On the eve of the 2013 Municipal, Legislative and Senatorial elections, UN Women joined the local government to foster mass enrolment of women on Electoral registers in the South Region.

The Network for More Women in Politics, based in Yaounde, Cameroon, is a network that supports women's political participation. It is a non-profit civil society organization, legalized on March 12, 2007, and working to improve the socio-legal status of women and their effective involvement in democratic governance²²². UN Women in partnership with More Women in Politics have established the National Gender Lawyers Pool of 40 men and women. A Gender Advocate is an opinion leader, an influential person who is committed to the promotion of gender equality and who is committed to the elimination of the negative harms and constraints associated with the promotion of gender, including women's leadership and participation in decision-making²²³. The Network for More Women in politics with the

²²¹ UN Women, "Cameroon Elections Catapult Women, more", p. 1.

²²² J. D. Tchunkam, "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013, p. 39.

²²³ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 17.

support of UN Women and women's movements within seven (7) political parties represented in the National Assembly and local councils, identified aspects of inequalities that still hinder the active and effective involvement of women in democratic governance, and are determined to overcome them both at the strategic level (decision making) as well as the operational level²²⁴. Pictures 23 and 24 illustrate the above analysis.

Picture 23 : Working session during a seminar on national pool of gender advocates.



Source: ONU Femmes Cameroun, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes 2014-2015*, Yaoundé - Cameroun, Avril 2015, p. 17.

Note: In partnership with UN Women, More Women in Politics organized a seminar in Yaounde in 2014 to establish a national pool of gender advocates consisting of 40 men and women. The participants took the above picture during the working session.

Picture 24 : The researcher with the ELECAM's head of communication department of the South Region.



Source: Sydony Endali, Ebolowa-South, 13th July 2021, field work.

Note: Picture taken with the ELECAM's head of communication department of the South Region in front of her office after field interview on Network for women's political empowerment in Ebolowa.

UN Women is committed to supporting the Government's efforts through two key areas of action: (i) capacity building of actors for gender mainstreaming in plans and budgets; and (ii) establishment of a pool of gender advocates and monitoring of Cameroon's international commitments on gender. This takes us to the next stage on UNIFEM and National Mechanisms for Gender Equality.

²²⁴ J. D. Tchunkam, " Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013" p. 165.

III. UNIFEM and National Mechanisms in Promoting Gender Equality

This section deals with the UN Women's national mechanisms and its evolution as well as NWMs influence on government policy and planning in Cameroon. It also looks into national institutions for women's empowerment and gender issues coupled with institutional framework of the national gender policy (NGP).

a. National mechanisms and its evolution

The national mechanism is designed as an inter-ministerial body having an articulated policy framework between governmental and non-governmental actors participating in matters related to women issues.²²⁵ These include those bodies and institutions within different branches of the state (legislative, executive and judicial branches) as well as independent accountability and advisory bodies that together, are recognized as national mechanisms for gender equality by all stakeholders.²²⁶ They may include, but not be limited to: the national machinery for the advancement of women within government (ministry, department); inter-ministerial bodies (working groups, commissions); consultative bodies, gender equality observatory and ombud, parliamentary committee²²⁷.

The First World Conference on Women, in 1975, called for the establishment of national machineries for the advancement of women which permitted 127 Member States of the United Nations to establish some form of national machinery.²²⁸ As of 2004, 165 countries had established national machineries.²²⁹ Defined by the United Nations as a body "recognized by the government as the institution dealing with the promotion of the status of women," the role, structure and functions of national machinery have evolved over the years.²³⁰ Initially the machineries tended to be isolated structures within the government bureaucracy focusing on the implementation of discreet projects to promote women's advancement in different sectors. The Platform for Action adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women in

²²⁵UNHR, "National Mechanisms For Reporting and follow-up: A Practical Guide to Effective State Engagement with International Human Rights Mechanisms", New York and Geneva, 2016, p. 2.

²²⁶AIPR, *National Mechanism for the prevention of genocide and other Atrocity Crimes: Effective and sustainable prevention begins at home*, New York, 2015, p. 17.

²²⁷UNDAW, "Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Expert Meeting in Preparation for Regional Studies on National Mechanisms for Gender Equality", Internal Report, 15 July 2009, p.2.

²²⁸"Directory of National Focal Points for the Advancement of Women", *Women 2000* New York: United Nations, No. 3, 1987, p.7.

²²⁹DAW "Directory of National Machineries for the Advancement of Women", New York: United Nations, March 2004, p.23.

²³⁰CWS, "National machinery for monitoring and improving the status of women, Report of the Secretary-General, United Nations, Vienna, Austria, E/CN.6/1988/3, p. 11.

September, 1995 in Beijing defined a national machinery for the advancement of women as “the central policy coordinating unit inside government” and its main task as being “to support government-wide mainstreaming of a gender-equality perspective in all policy areas” and considered their “location at the highest possible level in the government” as a necessary condition for effective functioning²³¹. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women were identified as one of the twelve critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action²³². The agreed conclusions 1999/2 adopted by the CSW on institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women reiterated the recommendation that national machineries be placed at the highest possible level of government and be invested with the authority and resources needed to fulfill their mandates²³³. The outcome of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly entitled “Women 2000: Gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century” noted the achievements as well as constraints of national machineries²³⁴.

The First World Conference on Women, which launched the UN Decade for Women in 1975, endorsed the World Plan of Action which identified national machinery as “effective transitional measures for accelerating the achievement of equal opportunities for women and their full integration into national life”²³⁵. The machineries were often under-staffed and under-funded, with unclear mandates, frequent shifts in structural location and weak capacity to perform the myriad functions assigned to them. By the time of the Fourth World Conference on Women (FWCW) in Beijing in September 1995, there was a growing consensus on the role, structure and functions of the national machinery, that the machinery should act as a catalyst rather than an implementer and that its main function was mainstreaming a gender equality perspective in all policy areas²³⁶. In order for the Platform for Action to be implemented, it will be necessary for Governments to establish or improve the effectiveness of national machineries for the advancement of women at the highest political level²³⁷.

²³¹ UN Women, *Beijing +5 political declaration and outcome*, New York, 2014, (para 201), P. 127.

²³² R. Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women*, Global Synthesis Study, New York, 2010, p. 1.

²³³ Ibid, p. 1.

²³⁴ United Nations, “Commission on the Status of Women: Report on the Forty-third Session”, 1-12 March and 1 April 1999, New York, 1999, p.18.

²³⁵ C. O. Moser, *Gender Planning and Development: Theory, Practice and Training*, Routledge, London, New York, 1993, p. 111.

²³⁶ DAW, “The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women: achievements, gaps and challenges” 29 November 2004 - 2 December 2004 Rome, Italy, 31 January 2005, p. 3.

²³⁷ UN Women, *Beijing +5 political declaration and outcome*, (para 296), P. 179.

Four documents, agreed on by UN Member States, are central guides for UNIFEM efforts: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the 'Women's Bill of Rights' is a cornerstone of all UNIFEM's programmes. One hundred and seventy-three countries are parties to the Convention. The Beijing Platform for Action, adopted by governments at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, was reaffirmed and strengthened in 2000 during the global five-year review of progress organized by the UN as reflected in Appendix 3²³⁸. Since FWCW in Beijing, in addition to national machineries, new mechanisms for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment were set up at national level in many countries²³⁹. Focal points were established in line ministries, facilitated by the national machinery. In some countries, parliamentary caucuses of women parliamentarians or of male and female parliamentarians were established which focused on gender equality in the work of parliaments. Other countries established separate gender equality or women's commissions, and a few have appointed Ombudspersons for gender equality²⁴⁰.

In mid-1970's, discussion around the role of institutional mechanism for the advancement of women and the need for such mechanisms started²⁴¹. In addressing the issue of mechanisms for promoting the advancement of women, Governments and other actors has promoted an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes so that, before decisions are taken, analyses are made²⁴². The necessary functioning of national machineries includes the institutional mechanisms or processes that facilitate, as appropriate, decentralized planning, implementation and monitoring with a view to involving non-governmental organizations and community organizations from the grass-roots upwards²⁴³. The functioning of national mechanisms for gender equality and the empowerment of women remains closely related to political, social, economic and institutional contexts prevailing in the various countries and regions across the world²⁴⁴.

Since the FWCW, global progress was achieved in the establishment and strengthening of national machineries. Only a few countries reported an absence of national machinery. After Beijing, national machineries were created (for the first time) in many

²³⁸ "Working for women's empowerment", p. 4.

²³⁹ R. Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 1.

²⁴⁰ DAW, "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment ", p. 5.

²⁴¹ F. Khafagy, *National Women Machineries*, UN Women Egypt Country Office, April 2012, P. 5.

²⁴² UN Women, *Beijing +5 political declaration and outcome*, (para 202), P.128.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ R. Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 7.

countries as an integral part of the government²⁴⁵. In countries that already had such machineries (inter-ministerial bodies, consultative bodies, gender equality observatory, and parliamentary committees), measures have been taken to strengthen them. The strengthening efforts included upgrading in status, increased budget and staff, enhanced authority, vertical extension into municipal, district, regional and provincial government structures, as well as horizontal extension in various line ministries and agencies and through improved intergovernmental co-ordination²⁴⁶.

More than 127 countries upgraded the status of the national machinery by making it either a full-fledged Ministry or giving it status just below a Ministry such as Vice-Ministry. Some countries created posts of deputy or full Ministers in charge of women or gender affairs. An upgrade in status also occurred in several countries as a result of a strategic shift in location of the machinery to more central or powerful offices such as the President's Office, the Prime Minister's Office or the Planning Ministry. Some countries reported making the machinery autonomous so that it could independently assess the performance of the government. A few countries continued with the NGO status of the machinery with increased function and activities.²⁴⁷

The study from Africa also underscores the influence of regional organizations and agreements to strengthen the work of national mechanisms in "creating additional accountability, harmonizing approaches across countries and circumventing national level resistance and challenges to gender equality²⁴⁸". National mechanisms have an essential role as catalysts for its systematic use across all areas of government²⁴⁹. National mechanisms have also pursued the use of targeted measures for women or a special group of women²⁵⁰. Many countries in all regions have developed national action plans for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. These plans have been used as instruments for advocacy and campaign for policy reforms and specific actions. Practically everywhere, with very few exceptions, national plans and national strategies constitute the main instrument for

²⁴⁵ R. Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 7.

²⁴⁶ DAW "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality and the empowerment ", p. 7.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ D. Tsikata, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Regional study: Africa*, 2010, p. 9.

²⁴⁹ M. F. Dolores, *National Mechanism for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Latin America and the Caribbean region*, Santiago de Chile, 2010, p. 37.

²⁵⁰ D. Tsikata, *Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality*, p. 23.

the pursuit of gender equality²⁵¹. It also noticed that national action plans for equal opportunity or gender equality are the main instruments to comply with international agreements. The majority of countries have in place national action plans to establish priorities and milestones to better women's lives in the region. National mechanisms usually play a central role both in the preparation and in the implementation of such plans²⁵². The vast majority of mechanisms are located at the national level although increasingly, countries are setting up decentralized mechanisms at the state, municipal and other local levels. At the national level mechanisms are generally located in the executive branch of the government but increasingly also within the legislature. In a smaller number of countries, mechanisms have been established within the judiciary. Some countries have formed independent accountability mechanisms such as ombudsperson's offices or equality boards²⁵³. This will lead us to the next phase that has to do with National women machineries women involvement policy and planning in Cameroon.

b. National Women Machineries (NWMs) influence on Government Policy and Planning

- Gender in development and training

UNIFEM's efforts to integrate gender in development through NWMs have produced many strategic gains. Above all, they have legitimized a place for gender issues in development. Government units dedicated to promoting gender equality in development innovated policy analysis and monitoring tools such as gender checklists and guidelines for cross government use²⁵⁴. Two main strategies have been adopted; the first is the development of a national policy and/or action plan on gender issues (possibly as an interim measure) and the second is the integration of gender into the main planning process.²⁵⁵

Gender training is, again, a widely used instrument by national mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality²⁵⁶. The study from Africa uses a cautionary note and points out

²⁵¹R. Tavares da Silva, "Strengthening National Mechanisms for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in EU Member States and Candidate Countries and other Developed Economies of the UNECE Region", Regional Study, 2010, p. 31.

²⁵² M. F. Dolores, *National Mechanism for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women in Latin America*, 2010, p. 38.

²⁵³ R. Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 18.

²⁵⁴ A. M. Goetz, "National women's machinery: state-based institutions to advocate for gender equality", New York, 2018, p. 90.

²⁵⁵B. Bridget and K. L. Julie, "National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons and strategies for institutionalising gender in development policy and planning", *institute of development studies*, Brighton, no. 36, May 1996, p. iv.

²⁵⁶ Rounaq Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 38.

that gender training was one of the earliest instruments used by national machineries to promote gender equality on the belief those obstacles to gender equality were mostly caused by ignorance and the lack of capacity to implement policies and agreements²⁵⁷. However, after years of “gender training at all levels of society within communities, directed at women, development workers, government officials and officers of institutional mechanisms, some realism has developed about the value and limitations of training for achieving gender equality”²⁵⁸. The African study calls for changes in the existing methods of gender training. It argues that in future gender training needs to be more technical and specialized to impart the skills necessary for the use of some of the tools of gender mainstreaming, such as gender sensitive budgeting, gender impact assessments, gender audits, and so on²⁵⁹. Gender training is particularly important in overcoming bureaucratic resistance and affecting attitudinal change.²⁶⁰

- Focal points and NGOs

UNIFEM makes use of “Focal points” as the main mechanism adopted to create linkages between NWMs and other ministries and departments²⁶¹. Focal points have legitimate and consistent channels for interacting with both the NWM and focal points in other agencies. This is essential to maintaining the technical and political support required for mainstreaming activities. Regular exchanges and workshops involving the NWM and selected agencies can go over problems and successes, discuss best practices, and offer training. This type of “team approach” broadens the mainstreaming base, prevents isolation of focal points and provides opportunities for productive communication and networking²⁶².

The role played by the NGOs and civil society institutions is also defined as part of the UNIFEM’s national mechanism for the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women. Most member states acknowledge the contribution made by the other non-governmental institutional structures²⁶³. The legitimacy and accountability of the NWM are dependent in part on the quality of its links with women's organisations and NGOs representing women's interests. A number of factors influence this relationship, particularly

²⁵⁷ L. Ankiambom Lawyer, “Female missionary activities and change in the Bamenda grassland, 1904-2006: A historical survey”, Doctorate Thesis in History, University of Yaounde I, 2012, p. 306.

²⁵⁸ D. Tsikata, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 22.

²⁵⁹ Rounaq Jahan, *Strengthening National Mechanisms*, p. 39.

²⁶⁰ B. Bridget and K. L. Julie, “National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons, p. iv.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

²⁶² M. Innes, *Accelerating change: resources for Gender Mainstreaming*, Agriteam Canada Consulting Ltd, February 2000, p. 22.

²⁶³ F. Khafagy, *National Women*, pp. 6-7.

the degree of autonomy granted to NGOs co-operating with the state, the views which women's organisations themselves take of the state and the sector of co-operation. A variety of mechanisms, both formal and informal, for consultation between NWMs and women's organisations have been tried, ranging from seats on government committees, to public hearings and informal consultation²⁶⁴. Women's NGOs and other community organizations are channels for mainstreaming and serve as privileged partners of political power in society²⁶⁵. No single measure to promote gender mainstreaming in itself provides a solution. Gender mainstreaming occurs through a co-ordinated process, based on the building of alliances both within and outside government, towards the development and implementation of gender policies.²⁶⁶

- Inter-ministerial co-ordinating committees

These are other mechanisms used by UNIFEM to overcome bureaucratic resistance and co-ordinate policy on gender issues. Such committees comprise representatives from a range of ministries and sometimes non-government experts, chaired or coordinated by the NWM. Here, the status of the NWM is crucial in terms of its ability to call meetings and influence other ministries and civil servants. Ministers may be reluctant to attend without additional incentives.²⁶⁷

Inter-ministerial committees, working groups or teams, chaired by a representative (or external nominee) of NWMs are useful ways for UNIFEM in addressing specific priority subjects or sectoral areas. They allow for collaboration across specialisms and sectoral divisions and can help to ensure the consistent application of gender policies.²⁶⁸ However, the ability of the NWM to influence the inter-ministerial committee whether it has a servicing, chairing or co-ordinating role may be crucial. Particularly if gender is not considered a high priority, ministries may be unwilling to become involved in such co-ordinating bodies. Inter-ministerial committees are likely to run up against bureaucratic resistance to the crossing of sectoral boundaries.²⁶⁹ Inter-ministerial collaboration is often organised through a system of "focal points" for WID/GAD within each ministry. These can play a key role in the mainstreaming of gender in government. However, their roles are frequently ill-defined and

²⁶⁴ B. Bridget and K. L. Julie, "National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons, p. iv.

²⁶⁵ F. Khafagy, *National Women*, P. 9.

²⁶⁶ B. Bridget and K. L. Julie, "National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons, p. iv.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ G. Ashworth, "Model actions to strengthen National Women's Machineries", paper written for the Commonwealth Secretariat, London, 1994, p. 14.

²⁶⁹ Ibid.

they are often under-funded moving us to the next stage on national institutions for gender issues.²⁷⁰

c. National institutions for women's empowerment and gender issues

Following Decree n°75/467 of June 28, 1975, the Social Affairs Department was established as a Ministry in its own rights. The Ministry of Social Affairs was organised by Decree n°75/723 of November 1975²⁷¹. Madam Delphine TSANGA, economist, the Head of this ministerial department at the time, handled central and external services. This department was established in 1975 within the Ministry of Social Affairs with the creation of a service in charge of women's affairs²⁷². This was later transformed into a ministry in 1984 called the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MINCOF), the first government ministry with a mandate pertaining to women's empowerment²⁷³. After several changes, the latter became the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family (MINPROFF) on 8 December 2004²⁷⁴. Organized by Decree No. 2005/088 of 29 March 2005, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family is responsible for the drafting, implementation and evaluation of measures relating to respect of women's rights and the protection of the family as seen in appendix 9²⁷⁵. To this end, it ensures the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the increase in equality guarantees in favour of women in political, economic, social and cultural domains; studies and submits to the Government, conditions facilitating the employment of women in the administration, agriculture, trade and industry; liaising with the relevant national and international policy organizations of women's empowerment; supervising organizations training women, excluding institutions under the supervisory authority of the Ministries in charge of Education and; studies and proposes strategies and measures aimed at enhancing harmony in families²⁷⁶. Some national institutions for women's empowerment and gender issues are:

²⁷⁰ B. Bridget and K. L. Julie, "National machineries for women in development: experiences, lessons ", p. 29.

²⁷¹ File 8, CF/GEN, No 15, "Ministry of social and women's affairs: women and fundamental right", March 1996, p.12.

²⁷² http://www.minas.gov.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=132&Itemid=145&lang=en&limitstart=2, consulted on 28th April 2020.

²⁷³ M. T. Abena, Ondo, "54th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, 15 -Year review of the implementation", p.2.

²⁷⁴ MINPROFF, *National gender policy document 2011-2020*, Yaounde, 2011, p. 54.

²⁷⁵ <http://www.minproff.cm/en/documentation/the-prime-minister/>, consulted on 28th April 2020

²⁷⁶ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 54.

- Public administrations and Development Partners

UNIFEM makes use of public administration which is the bedrock of government and the central instrument through which national policies and programmes are implemented. An accountable and inclusive public administration is at the core of sustainable development. The participation and leadership of women in the civil service is therefore important for ensuring truly inclusive development and democratic governance, as well as enhancing the sustainability and responsiveness of public policies implemented by governments that mirror the diversity of the population, they serve²⁷⁷. Gender Equality in Public Administration (GEPA) initiative aims to Support women's empowerment and expanded participation and leadership in public institutions; and contribute to the availability of up-to-date information on gender equality in public administration and of evidence and analysis to facilitate informed policy and decision-making²⁷⁸. Ministries, public and semi-public organizations each have a GFP responsible for ensuring the operational relay in gender mainstreaming, monitoring systems and advocacy aimed at guaranteeing the consideration of women's interests in the drafting, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of sector policies. Some ministries and organizations have services or committees dealing with gender issues²⁷⁹.

UNIFEM counts on development Partners Act as an external regulatory instrument of the process by ensuring the effective participation of every player in the participatory monitoring of the strategy. Development partners (bilateral and multilateral partners), support government's efforts by facilitating the attainment of set objectives for women's empowerment²⁸⁰. Their multifaceted support is consistent with national priorities in the area and focuses on four main aspects, namely: improvement of the living conditions of women; improvement of the socio-legal status of women; promotion of equality and equity between the sexes in all sectors of national life and strengthening of the institutional framework for gender promotion and women's empowerment²⁸¹. Although deeply committed to the promotion of gender equality, most development partners working in the domain operate in a dispersed and uncoordinated manner. But in 2006, thanks to the Paris Declaration on effective

²⁷⁷ <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/democratic-governance-and-peacebuilding/responsive-and-accountable-institutions/GEPA/>, consulted on 28th April 2020

²⁷⁸ <https://www.globalgovernmentforum.com/gender-equality-in-public-administration-what-happens-now/9:45pm,28/4/2020>

²⁷⁹ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 55.

²⁸⁰ A. Lounasmaa, "Women and Modernity: The global and the local in moroccan women's NGOs' ", p.155.

²⁸¹ Ibid.

aid, some of them are now grouped into a consultation platform, the Working Group on Gender Equality (WGGE).

- Local Councils and Civil society organizations

Since the adoption of the orientation law on decentralization, Local Councils (LC) are responsible, among other things, for the management and maintenance of Women's Empowerment Centres (WECs), which are MINPROFF Specialized Technical Units providing local technical and vocational supervision, as well as financial support to women and youth²⁸². The contributions from Local Councils and Women's Empowerment Centres as Specialized Technical Units of MINPROFF and UNIFEM, with regard to reducing inequalities between the sexes, are adequate resources to ensure women's empowerment²⁸³.

Civil society organizations "are buffers between state and citizen"²⁸⁴. They support work in areas that cut across several aspects; they include Non-governmental organizations (NGOs), associations for the defense of women's rights, consulting firms, training institutions, research institutes, networks of associations and religious or faith-based organizations as well as the private sector²⁸⁵. Modern history has shown that the future states and regions of the world lie in a strong relationship between states, civil society organizations and the private sector UNIFEM Cameroon currently has a significant number of women's groups and institutions for the promotion of women's rights which help realize the government objective of gender equality and equity for the private sector, the gender-promotion actions developed still have limited visibility²⁸⁶. As for CSOs, they have capacity due to appropriate human, technical and financial resources. They also have managerial skills, energy and the government coordinates to an extent their contributions and some of their actions. They are most often contented with the residual means of their sponsors, the little contributions of their members and the sporadic and sometimes highly oriented support of a few development partners²⁸⁷.

²⁸² <http://www.minproff.cm/en/documentation/the-prime-minister/>, consulted on 28th April 2020

²⁸³ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 55.

²⁸⁴ A. Lounasmaa, "Women and Modernity: The global and the local in Moroccan women's NGOs' advocacy and public awareness work", Doctorate Thesis in Sociology, National University of Ireland, Galway, August, 2013, p.104.

²⁸⁵ UNDP, "A Guide to Civil Society Organizations working on Democratic Governance", New York: Oslo Governance Centre, May 2005, p. 10.

²⁸⁶ U. Essia, *Civil society organizations- public- private partnership in Cameroon: review of possible models, challenges and prospects*, Pan African Institute for development West Africa (PAID- WA), Buea- Cameroon, p. 1.

²⁸⁷ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 56.

d. Institutional framework of the National Gender Policy (NGP)

As African states have entered the global trend for women's emancipation, many have then set up a "national gender policy".²⁸⁸ In the global movement of the gender approach and the commitment of Cameroon to join that approach, the state has put in place a policy called the NGP.²⁸⁹ The NGP is founded on various international, regional and sub-regional commitments advocating gender equality and the protection of women's rights.²⁹⁰ The National Gender Policy vision stems from Cameroon's long term vision by 2035 which reads as follows:

Cameroon an emerging country, built on the principles of good governance, where women and men enjoy the same rights and participate in development in an equitable and equal manner. To consolidate this policy and grant it a high priority, the President of the Republic of Cameroon, in the inaugural speech in Maroua on 02nd October 1997 said that, in the area of women's empowerment, I commit myself to ensuring the preparation and implementation of the special plan of action for women's empowerment. I will make sure that your work is recognized and valued everywhere; I will make sure that you are well represented in all governing bodies of the country. I commit myself to making equality between men and women a reality.²⁹¹

Determined to put into practice its internationally recognised commitment on the promotion of gender equality and equity, Cameroon has ratified several international, regional and sub regional legal instruments on the protection of women's rights.²⁹² Among these instruments, there are treaties, conventions, covenants and declarations, promoting the principles of equality and non-discrimination between women and men in different areas of social life, including education, health, the economy and employment.²⁹³ It is in this perspective that Cameroon's national policy documents have incorporated resolutions and recommendations resulting from international meetings on women's issues and in this respect, the formulation of the NGP is revealing. For international conferences, Cameroon has taken part in numerous meetings held on women's issues;²⁹⁴ and this normative framework has influenced the design of national policies for the advancement of women in Cameroon. The Constitution of Cameroon enacted in May 1972 declares that respect of human rights is its principle and that men and women are equal, Cameroon ratified CEDAW in August 1994, and the National Population Policy Declaration in 2002 aims at universal primary education,

²⁸⁸ L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée, et al, "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", *Advances in Anthropology*, vol. 7, Faculty of Nursing, University of Montreal, Canada, 2017, p. 34.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 36.

²⁹⁰ MINPROFF, *National gender policy document 2011-2020*, p. 75.

²⁹¹ MINPROFF, *National gender policy document 2011-2020*, p. 3.

²⁹² L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée, et al., "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", p. 36.

²⁹³ Ibid.

²⁹⁴ "United Nations Millennium Declaration", New York, NY: United Nations, 2000, p. 37.

improvement of literacy of men and women, and reduction of gender disparities in all areas in the economic and social development.²⁹⁵

In 1997, Cameroon developed and adopted its first policy paper on the advancement of women, defining government priorities related strategies to this goal and these documents were the policy statement associated with the National Action Plan for the integration of Women in Development.²⁹⁶ The seven lines of action emerging from this document stems from twelve points of the Beijing recommendations. In 2002, the National Declaration of Population Policy was updated following the International Conference on Population and Development of 1994 and the Millennium Summit in September 2000.²⁹⁷ It enshrines gender issues as development issues. In addition, it aims to universalise quality primary education, promote functional literacy for people of both sexes and reduce gender disparity in all sectors of economic and social development²⁹⁸. In 2003, Cameroon adopted the Poverty Reduction Strategy Document.²⁹⁹ Its revision in 2009 resulted in the adoption of the Strategy for Growth and Employment Document (DSCE).³⁰⁰ Thus, the guidelines on equality between women and men are prioritised in the areas of health, education, industry and services, to name a few. For the Government of Cameroon, the DSCE is the foundation supporting all development activities including the main directions of the Gender Policy. The NGP of the Republic of Cameroon is seen as a foundational guiding and reference document for UNIFEM and government interventions in the field of promoting equality and gender equity. Table 9 shows the NGP development as part of the measures Cameroonians authorities implemented in the context of strengthening and modernizing the institutional mechanism for the advancement of women.³⁰¹

Table 9: Cameroon's National gender policy (NGP)

At the international level	The NGP is based on legal instruments that have been ratified by Cameroon (treaties and conventions relating to basic human rights and gender equality) but also on resolutions and recommendations from international conferences.
At the regional level	It derives mainly from the constituent act of the African Union

²⁹⁵ "Gender Profile Cameroon", Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), December 2015, p. 20.

²⁹⁶ République du Cameroun, "Plan d'Action National d'Intégration de la Femme au Développement" (PANIFD) 7 December 1997, p.1.

²⁹⁷ République du Cameroun "Déclaration de Politique Nationale de Population" (DPNP), Mars 2002, p. 2.

²⁹⁸ NW/Saled. 2000/1/ BK, M Shiri Halle Awa, "Gender Fundamental and Contemporary issues: A religious and historical perspective", 2000, p.20.

²⁹⁹ Document de Stratégie de Réduction de la Pauvreté (DSRP)", 2002, p.2.

³⁰⁰ "Document de Stratégie pour la Croissance et l'Emploi (DSCE)", 2009, p.3.

³⁰¹ Mefire, L. M., Vissandjée, B., and Bibeau, G. Cameroon and the Gender Issue, p.37.

	and the Declaration of African Heads of States of the African Union on equality between women and men
At the national level	The NGP is sustained by the fundamental Law, programme-oriented speeches of the Head of State and guidelines from reference documents such as the 2035 Vision and the GESP

Source: MINPROFF, *National gender policy document 2011-2020*, p. 75.

The DSCE (employment strategy document) in 2009 which also commits itself to the promotion of gender equality in all areas,³⁰² and the NGP Document 2011-2020 that was developed, both based on the country's long-term development plan called "Cameroon's long-term vision by 2035".³⁰³ The Vision declares that its principles are unity in the diversity, as well as equal rights and equal participation of women and men in development. The NGP Document is based on the principal values of equality, equity, social justice, and good governance, and declares its basic concepts as follows:³⁰⁴

- Gender equality is an integral factor of all policies, plans and activities.
- Gender equality does not mean that women and men are same (differences between sexes are respected).
- Women's empowerment is prerequisite to the achievement of gender equality. Promotion of women's participation in economy, society and politics as agents for change is prerequisite to the achievement of gender equality.
- Partnership of men and women and means for eradication of gender discrimination contribute to the achievement of gender equality.

The objectives of NGP are aimed at solving major problems identified in the sectors selected. Six (6) strategic aspects have been identified and broken down into intervention objectives and strategies in the matrix as follows in table 10:

Table 10: National Gender Policy strategies

Strategic Area No 1	Promote equal access of girls and boys, women and men to education, training and information.
Strategic Area No 2	Improve women's access to health services, particularly with regard to reproductive health.
Strategic Area No 3	Promote equal opportunities for women and men in the economic and employment sectors.
Strategic Area No 4	Promote a favourable socio-cultural environment for the

³⁰²Republic of Cameroon, "Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP)", Yaounde, Cameroon, August 2009, p. 7.

³⁰³Republic of Cameroon, *Cameroon Vision by 2035*, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development of the Republic of Cameroon, Yaounde, Cameroon, 2009, p. 25.

³⁰⁴"Gender Profile Cameroon", p. 20.

	respect of women's rights.
Strategic Area No 5	Enhance women's participation and representation in public life and decision making.
Strategic Area No 6	Strengthen the institutional framework for gender promotion.

Source: Mefire, L. M., Vissandjée, B., and Bibeau, G. Cameroon and the Gender Issue, *Advances in Anthropology*, 7, 2017, p. 37.

Under the institutional framework of the NGP in Cameroon, there is a Technical Committee which is headed by MINPROFF. It is responsible for the implementation of the NGP. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the gender focal points of the ministries, civil organizations and development organizations, the Technical Committee has discussions with the stakeholders in the quarterly meetings, assists the ministries to secure budget, and carry out monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the NGP. The gender focal points are responsible for gender mainstreaming of each ministry's policies and projects. They conduct gender training for the staff and ensure that gender perspectives are incorporated by making sure that questions about gender are included in the questionnaires for project design.

MINPROFF participates in the gender committees of each ministry, and checks the progress of the ministry's policies and projects from gender perspectives. MINPROFF's budget is 5% of the national budget. Each ministry is responsible for obtaining a budget for its gender-related activities. In the regions, there are gender committees at every level from Region, Division to Sub-Division. Each gender committee implements policies and projects at each level. All regions have its Appropriate Technology Centre which runs training for women farmers about food processing and improvement of productivity. The main Committees headed by MINPROFF to promote NGP in Cameroon include the following;

- Inter-ministerial Committee and Technical Committee

The inter-ministerial committee, which is the steering committee, is responsible for the general coordination, orientation and management of the NGP. It is presided over by the Prime Minister, Head of Government at the central level of Cameroon³⁰⁵. It is made up of all sector ministries. It meets once a year depending on the report on gender issues presented by the National Mechanism for the promotion of equality between women and men³⁰⁶

³⁰⁵"Gender Profile Cameroon", p. 22.

³⁰⁶MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 86.

A Technical Committee exists to support the Ministry in charge of women's empowerment and the family MINPROFF. It is responsible for the implementation of the NGP³⁰⁷. More specifically, it helps to³⁰⁸:

- facilitate communications between the various stakeholders involved in implementing the NGP by holding quarterly meetings;
- help MINPROFF draw up documents for the Steering Committee;
- help find and mobilize internal and external financial resources and establish databases on the various issues pertinent to the Gender Policy;
- take part in Gender Policy monitoring and evaluation missions;
- enforce the guidelines of the Inter-ministerial Committee;

The above points help to preside over the Ministry in charge of promoting equality between women and men, in conjunction with UNIFEM, the Ministry in charge of planning, development and international technical cooperation. The Technical Committee is made up of representatives of the various ministries, having at least the rank of Director in the central administration, social partners (employees and employers) and civil society organizations. It meets twice a year³⁰⁹. The Technical Committee executes its tasks on the basis of a multi-sectoral plan of action earlier drafted using the participatory approach. Priority actions shall be identified in this multisectoral plan to serve as sequential and yearly working programmes. Gender Focal points from the various sector ministries shall also represent their respective ministries on the Committee. The Technical Committee is supported in the field by UNIFEM, regional, departmental and local commissions made up, like the Technical Committee, of representatives of the decentralized offices of the sectoral ministerial departments, decentralized local communities, and the civil society.

Following UN Women strategic plan for Cameroon from 2014-2017, a steering committee was foreseen, chaired by the “*Ministère de la Planification et de l'Aménagement du Territoire (MINEPAT)*” and UNIFEM to monitor its implementation. The committee meets twice a year and is composed by all sectoral ministries involved in the implementation of the strategic plan, financial partners, the advisory group of civil society and UN agencies. The committee's role is to validate the strategic direction, provide guidance in relation to national priorities and support all initiatives to mobilize internal and external resources for

³⁰⁷ "Gender Profile Cameroon", p. 22.

³⁰⁸ "Cameroonian Association of Women Lawyers", ACAFEJ, Cameroon, 2005, p. 3.

³⁰⁹ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 86.

regular monitoring of the SP. The Technical Committee co-chaired by MINPROFF and UNIFEM, meets once a quarter with implementing partners. The Technical Committee is responsible for the selection of partners' proposals, organization of progress review and reporting, and ensuring the availability of indicators target and baseline³¹⁰.

- Technical Secretariat

Placed under the supervision of the ministry in charge of women's empowerment and gender promotion, the Technical Secretariat is presided over by the Secretary General of the said ministry and shall hold quarterly meetings. It is responsible, inter alia, for³¹¹:

- Coordinating interventions within the framework of the implementation of the NGP;
- Maintaining dialogue with stakeholders in the implementation of the NGP;
- Preparing supporting documentation for the mobilization of resources to fund ` NGP programmes;
- Participating in programming with the State and development partners;
- Drafting evaluation reports on implementation of the NGP as well as annual reports on the situation of gender equality and equity in Cameroon;

For an effective coordination of activities, the Technical Secretariat establishes collaboration protocols with the various stakeholders in Cameroon thus forming relationships with development partners like UNIFEM to mobilize the necessary resources for the implementation of the Gender Policy in cooperation with the authorities concerned.

- Implementation mechanisms and Commitments of the stakeholders

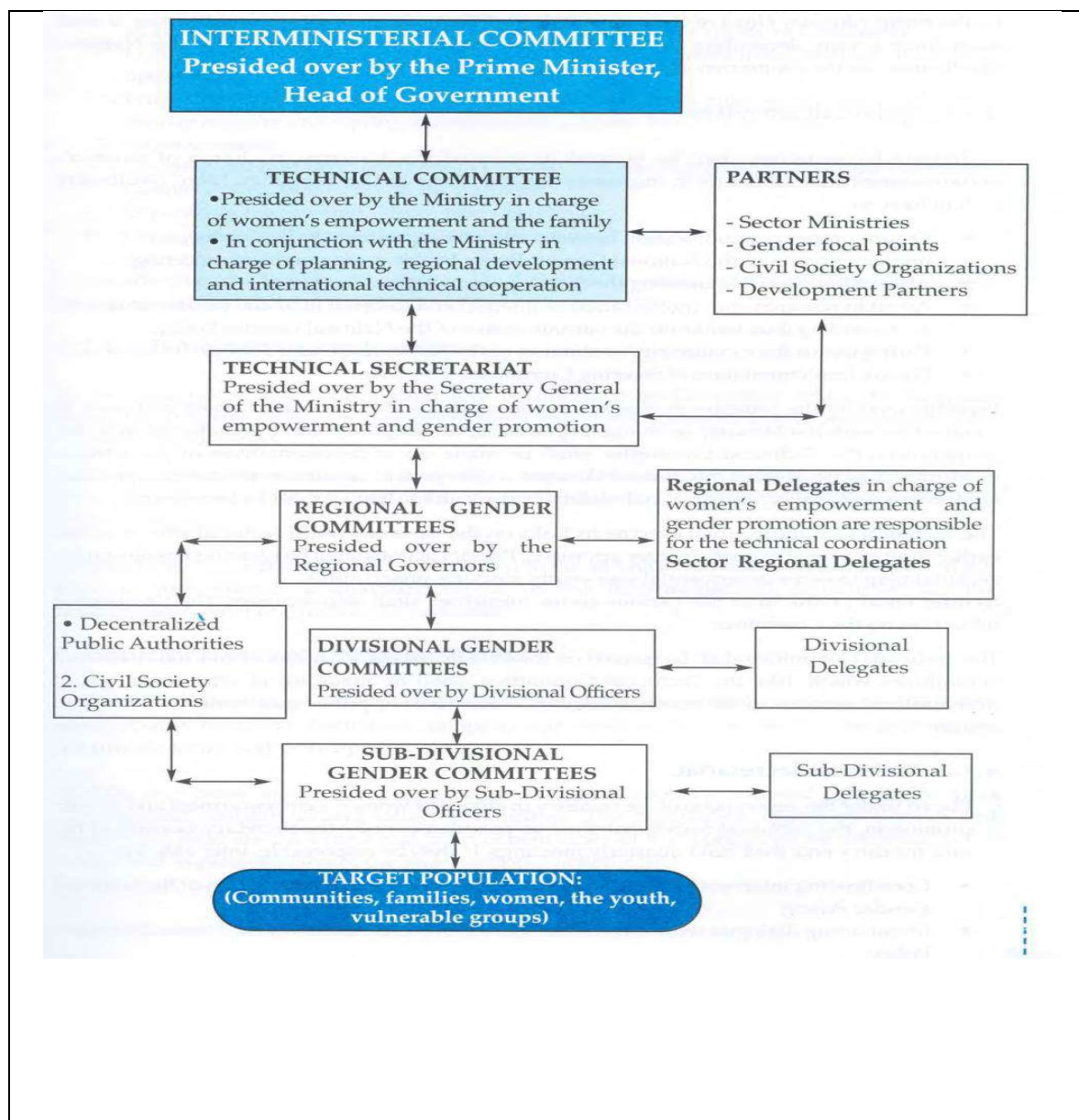
In the regions, general coordination is overseen by Governors while the Regional Delegates in charge of women's empowerment and gender promotion are responsible for technical coordination. Regional Committees in charge of the policy's implementation and follow-up operates along the lines of the multi-sectoral plan of action, under the coordination of the Governors. Regional committee reports are submitted to the technical coordination committee, which in turn submits a quarterly report to the inter-ministerial committee, on the

³¹⁰ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report: Cameroon strategic note 2014-2017", UN Women, January 2017, p. 17.

³¹¹<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsoVqDbaslinb8o>, 28/11/20 consulted on 28th November 2020.

recommendation of the Technical Committee³¹². The diagram 6 illustrates the various committees headed by MINPROFF.

Diagram 6 : The institutional framework diagram for implementing national gender policy



Source: "Gender Profile Cameroon", Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) TAC International Inc, December 2015, p. 23.

The above are mechanism to monitor activities in such a way as to ensure the continuous evaluation necessary for the improvement of the plans and programmes developed on the basis of the strategies of the Gender Policy at the national, regional and sectoral levels.

³¹²<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhsoVqDbaslinb8o>, 28/11/20 consulted on 28th November 2020.

Monitoring and evaluation also help strengthen and enhance the capacity to manage and administer all institutions involved in the implementation of the defined plans and programmes.

The success of this Policy on the firm commitment of all the stakeholders, will depend notably on: political, administrative, traditional, religious and moral authorities, NGOs, the civil society, the private sector and development partners. NGOs and other associations or groups will most often be solicited, especially local development committees and village committees. The population, especially women and young girls who are the actors and main beneficiaries of this policy will be involved in the design and implementation of the multi-sectoral action plan³¹³.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it appeared that UNIFEM has boosted the government of Cameroon in the social and political areas to promote women awareness. Following UNIFEM's concern on the need of putting in place an umbrella organization that can better coordinate the process of women empowerment within the regions of Cameroon, the government have been able to establish institutional frameworks to better harmonize the activities of women in the nation. This can be seen with the establishment of the NGP, DSCE, etc. On the other hand, it appears that UNIFEM through its actions constitutes a permanent support that stands with the Cameroon government in her support of women in their process of self-reliance in the MDG domain. This is proven by a number of substantial activities carried out by the government and UNIFEM in partnership with other UN agencies like the UNDP, etc., in order to empower women on how to ameliorate their living standards in all the domains. Finally, it is worth noting that both UNIFEM and the government have worked hand in glove to organize educative seminars, training workshops and media activities that have projected and promoted the various strategies and empowerment of the women in Cameroon. These strategies have equipped a number of women's organizations from the regions with the skills needed in the process of female self-reliance and this makes us see the need of exploring UNIFEM and women's economic empowerment in Cameroon.

³¹³<http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPRiCAqhKb7yhsoVqDbaslinb8o>, 28/11/20 consulted on 28th November 2020.

CHAPTER FOUR

UNIFEM AND WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN CAMEROON 1997-2015

Introduction

This chapter highlights UNIFEM and women's economic empowerment in Cameroon. It talks about women's empowerment, linking it with UNIFEM's various national strategies to promote women in gender mainstreaming in the Country. This is followed by UN Women's activities which came about as part of the UN reform agenda, bringing together resources and mandates for greater impact in Cameroon. From these perspectives, we will examine how UNIFEM later UN Women works with government and non-governmental partners to help them put in place policies, laws, services and resources needed by women in order to move towards economic empowerment. Financial support follows through the Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and Millennium Development Goals (MDG) in the area of gender equality and maternal health, UNIFEM's global work in GRB and MDG highlighted some key factors to ensure the success of its programmes. The most prominent were the engagement with key gender advocates, including the economic commission, CSOs, NWM, and donors supporting public sector and public finance management reform, and a rights-based approach to help inform women's priorities in the economic sector-level work.

I. UNIFEM innovative approaches to women's empowerment

Based on UNIFEM innovative approaches to women's economic empowerment in Cameroon, this chapter brings out, UNIFEM's studies of women empowerment through its national policies and strategies to fulfill its mission of fostering women's wellbeing. Furthermore, this part of the work examines MDGs with regards to this UN agency as well as the CEDAW Advocacy and Women's right in Cameroon.

a. UNIFEM's economic women empowerment-

UNIFEM played an important role in framing empowerment as attainable through both the provision of basic needs, as well as the through socio-political strategies that address customs and attitudes that maintain women's subordinate position¹. UNIFEM began a campaign to define "women's rights as human rights" and how violence against women was also an economic development issue. UNIFEM hired researchers such as Roxanna Carrillo to demonstrate how violence against women was linked to a lack of women's access to economic empowerment opportunity². In its guidelines on women's empowerment (1997), UNIFEM explains economic empowerment as a "process where women, individually and collectively, become aware of how power relations operate in their lives and gain the self-confidence and strength to challenge gender inequalities at the household, community, national, regional and international levels"³. Thus, UNIFEM's overall goal of empowerment includes elements of conscientization, of building confidence, of acquiring skills, and of mobilizing for change⁴. UNIFEM identifies four components of women's economic empowerment⁵:

- Acquiring knowledge and an understanding of gender/power relations and ways in which these relations may be changed;
- Developing a sense of self-worth, a belief in one's ability to secure desired changes and the right to control one's life;
- Gaining the ability to generate choices thereby acquiring leverage and bargaining power; and
- Developing the ability to organize and/or influence the direction of social change to create a more just social and economic order, nationally and internationally.

UNIFEM's work on strengthening women's economic capacity focuses on enlarging opportunities within an economic sector or subsector⁶. Specifically, UNIFEM's expectations

¹M. Carr and M. Chen et al, *Speaking Out: Women's Economic Empowerment in South Asia*, UNIFEM, 1996, p.24.

²N. Hudson Florea *Gender, Human Security and the United Nations: Security Language as a Political Framework for Women*. London: Routledge, 2010, p. 99.

³UNIFEM, *ACC task force on basic social service for all: guidelines on women's empowerment*, New York, UNIFEM, 2007, p. 23.

⁴ D. R. Katy, "A Case Study of a UNIFEM-funded Intervention to Empower Women in India", Master's Dissertation in Anthropology, Syracuse University, May 2003, p. 24.

⁵S. Bisnath, and D. Elson, "Women's Empowerment", a background paper for the United Nations Progress Report of the World's Women, A New Biennial Report, 2000, p. 12.

⁶A/58/168, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Fifty-eighth session", United Nations, 18 July 2003, p. 6.

for an economic empowerment pilot project was that it should build women's capacity to access and shape markets, enhance women's marketing, negotiation, and bargaining skills to achieve sustainable livelihoods as entrepreneurs, producers, and home-based workers, support women's networks and business associations, and provide women with access to new technologies⁷.

As far as feminists view on empowerment is concerned, empowerment in its broadest sense can be seen as increasing power to especially, people and groups who are farthest down the ladder in the power over hierarchy and who have least access to knowledge, decisions, network and resources.⁸ Empowering people therefore involves a complex understanding which includes their own perspectives as well as those of other players of how power is exercised and how it affects them.⁹ Young, 2007 postulates that empowerment is about people taking control of their own lives, gaining the ability to do things, to set their own agendas, to change events in ways previously lacking and to be self-reliant. Furthermore, Batliwala defines empowerment as the process by which the powerless gain control over the circumstances of their lives.¹⁰ This explains why empowerment has become such an important element in the development process. From another perspective, Parpart 2007 has criticized the view that empowerment of the poor or women has any impact on power structures and development.¹¹ More boards based representation of marginalized groups on government boards and committees has done little to challenge national and regional power structures.¹² He further argues that participatory empowerment as a development practice cannot rely on the assumption that giving people the voice and increasing participation will solve development problems. It will have to pay more attention to national and global power structures constraint and define the possibilities for change at the local level.¹³

For feminists, it has meant an emphasis upon women gaining control over their bodies, as in demands for self-definition access to contraception, and demands for reproductive rights.¹⁴ The World Bank and most western based development organizations like the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development (DFID) have identified Women's

⁷ D. R. Katy, "A Case Study of a UNIFEM-funded Intervention", p. 26.

⁸ B. Humphries, *Critical Perspectives on Empowerment*, venture press, 1996, p. 36.

⁹ J. Fook, *Social Work Critical Theory and Practice*, SAGE Publication, 2007, p. 103.

¹⁰ S. Batliwala, *The meaning of women's empowerment. New concepts from action in population policies reconsidered*. Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 69.

¹¹ O. A. Pala, *Definitions of Women and Development: An African perspective*, in *African Gender Studies*, 2005, p. 79.

¹² K. Saunders, *Feminist Post-Development Thought*, Zed Books London -New York, 2004, p. 47.

¹³ Ibid, p. 53.

¹⁴ B. Humphries, *Critical Perspectives on Empowerment*, p. 20.

empowerment as a major constituent element of poverty reduction and community development especially in developing countries. The promotion of Women's empowerment as a development strategy is based on the argument that empowering and investing in women brings development dividends and that women's equality is more than a right.¹⁵ A similar rationale for supporting Women's empowerment has been postulated by the policy statements put forward by the platform for Action, the Beijing +5 declaration and resolution, the CEDAW, the Cairo programme for action and the MDG.¹⁶ The UK DFID has further emphasized that empowerment means the ability of women to acquire the power to think and act freely, exercise choice and fulfill their potential as full and equal members of society¹⁷. Drawing mainly from the human right and feminists' perspectives, many definitions which contain in a fundamental shift in perceptions or inner transformation is essential for the formulation of choices. That is, women should be able to define self-interest and choices and consider themselves as not only able but entitled to make choices.¹⁸ Stromquist 1993 has gone further including in his definition elements of cognition and psychology as he writes: "Empowerment involves women's understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of such conditions at both micro and macro levels of society; it involves understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural and society's expectation".¹⁹

Women's economic empowerment includes women's ability to participate equally in existing markets; their access and control over productive resources, access to decent work, control over their own time, lives and bodies; and increased voice, agency and meaningful participation in economic decision-making at all levels from the household to international institutions²⁰. Economic empowerment is also the capacity of women and men to participate in, contribute to, and benefit from growth processes in ways that respect their contributions and dignity and makes it possible to negotiate a fairer distribution of the benefits of growth. UNIFEM supports women's economic empowerment in line with these, and with the

¹⁵N. Alobewede, "Breaking gender barriers: political representation and the economic self- empowerment of the Cameroonian woman", Doctorate Thesis in politics, University of Yaounde 1, 2015, p. 85.

¹⁶ S. Batliwala, *The meaning of women's empowerment*, p. 69.

¹⁷ DFID "Poverty Elimination and the Empowerment of Women Strategies for Achieving the International Development targets", London DFID, 2000, p. 77.

¹⁸A. Malhotra, and S.R. Schuler, *Measuring Women's Empowerment as a variable in International Development*, World Bank, Washington DC, June 28, 2002, p. 6.

¹⁹N. P. Stromquist, "The Theoretical and practical bases for Empowerment", Report of the International Seminar held at VIE, January 27- February 2nd, Hamburg Germany, UNESCO, 1993, p. 14.

²⁰File 2, CF/GEN, No 9, "Participation des femmes a la vie politique et au processus de prise de décision", no 15, CIDP, Genève, 1^{er} Avril 1988, p. 20.

growing body of evidence that shows that gender equality significantly contributes to advancing economies and sustainable development. In all of these, economic empowerment programmes, UN Women reach out to women most in need, often by engaging with grass-roots and civil society organizations. Particularly less privileged persons include rural women, domestic workers, some migrants and low-skilled women. Our aims are higher incomes, better access to and control over resources and greater security, including protection from violence. Pictures 25 and 26 further illustrate the above analysis²¹.

Picture 25: First Deputy Mayor of Kye-Ossi with the researcher



Source : Sydony Endali, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021, field work.

Note: Picture taken with the First deputy Mayor of Ntem Valley Antoinette Angono Aba'a after field interview in her office on women's economic empowerment in Kye-Ossi.

Picture 26: Focus group discussion with the researcher



Source : Sydony Endali, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021, field work.

Note: The researcher leading a focus group discussion on women's economic empowerment with Bayam-sellam in Kye-Ossi market.

One of the most vocal promoters of women's emancipation in Cameroon, Yaah Gladys Shang Viban who has been a Cultural Affairs Specialist at the US Embassy in Cameroon, asserted that empowerment is that process which is essential to strengthen and activate a person's capacity to satisfy their own needs, solve their own problems, and acquire the necessary resources to take control over their life.²² For Cameroon to become an emerging economy by 2035, and to foster sustainable development, she must improve opportunities for women and youth. Indeed, 80% of women are unemployed or underemployed²³. The majority of them work in informal businesses, not only with complex and costly

²¹ "Leave No One Behind: A Call to Action for Gender Equality and Women's Economic Empowerment", Report of the UN Secretary General's High-Level Panel, UN, New York, 2016, p. 30.

²² N. Atabong, "Success story about talented Cameroonians", p. 14.

²³ Interview with Endali Ruth, 28 years, Guidance, Councilor at CITEC, Yaounde, 12 November 2019.

regulatory processes but also with difficult access to credit and capital due to a policy and institutional framework that sometimes are obstacle to their empowerment.²⁴ It thus enhances through sustainable economic programmes, enhance women's knowledge for self-development through Productive capacity-building and provision of micro credits and Micro Enterprise Development.²⁵ Without the empowerment of members of the community, they would be unable to make the contribution which they should for the development of the community. The empowerment of women in Cameroon is linked with their role in the community development process, because empowerment determines the position held in the community and the degree of influence. Thus, the first time that the subject on empowerment came into public discussion in Cameroon was after the 1995 Beijing international conference on women. Hence the Cameroon government showed much interest in fostering women empowerment and advancing their status.²⁶

Regarding government policy for the promotion of women's empowerment, a Ministry in charge of women's affairs was established in 1984. But as a result of the economic crisis in 1987, Cameroon adopted a structural adjustment plan. Hence the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Social Affairs were joined into one Ministry by the Decree N° 88/1281 of 27th September, 1988. Aware of the specific problems and difficulties of women and at the same time being anxious to improve their status, the government set up the new Ministry of Women's Affairs by the Decree N° 97/205 of 7th December, 1997.²⁷ This Ministry was created to be in charge of drafting and implementing measures relating to the respect of women rights and strengthening the issue of gender equality in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres. So far, the advancement of the status of women in the economic and socio-cultural aspects is seen in these women's groups that have government support.²⁸ In 2004, the Ministry of Women's Affairs was renamed as the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Protection of the Family. All these changes were due to the fact that the Cameroonian government had the political will and was committed to implement the Beijing platforms of action. The Cameroonian government acknowledged that in order to promote and encourage the performance of women in the community development process, women must be totally empowered in order to break the barriers which withhold them to perform well. The

²⁴ Seminar report, "Association de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes", Maroua, June 2005, p. 10.

²⁵ A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 124.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

²⁷ "Ministry of Women's Affairs: replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms", 2003, p. 3.

²⁸ Ibid.

Ministry knows that Women's Empowerment (WE) is imperative for the development of the rural areas since women constitute 52% of the population of Cameroon and play a very crucial role in the development of the society at all levels. Due to this, Women's Empowerment is currently an issue of national concern and state institutions.²⁹ In Cameroon's policy terms, (WE) means "giving access to and control over resources, decisions-making positions, economic and political power and credit facilities". That is why the creation of women's ministries in Cameroon is a government favour because through these, the country is able to achieve at a fast rate some of the goals of the head of state as far as development is concerned. This is confirmed through a speech made by the President of the republic, Paul Biya who declared in one of his policy speeches in 1997 in Maroua: "Cameroonian women, I pledge to foster women's advancement and shall not fail to do so".³⁰ Picture 27 sustains the above analyses.

Picture 27: The researcher with the MINPROFF's South Regional Delegate



Source: Sydony Endali, Ebolowa, 13 July 2021, field work.

Note: Picture taken with the MINPROFF's South Regional Delegate in her office after a field interview on the promotion of women's economic empowerment in the South Region.

²⁹M. T. Abena Ondo, "54th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, 15 - year review of the implementation", p. 2.

³⁰ MINPROFF, *National gender policy document 2011-2020*, p. 3.

b. National policies and strategies for women's empowerment in Cameroon

Basically, these include the women in development policy, the national population policy, the poverty reduction strategy and the growth and employment strategy. So far as the advancement of the status of women in the economic and socio-cultural areas is concerned, the policy declaration on the Integration of Women in Development (WID), the Multi-sectoral Plan of Action on Women and Development (WAD), and the National Plan of Action on the Integration of WID were drafted and approved in 1997 and adopted by the Government in 1999³¹. The seven areas of intervention in this document stem from the twelve points selected within the framework of the Beijing recommendations³². The seven areas of intervention include: improving living conditions of women, improving the legal status of women, developing female human resources in all vital sectors, ensuring effective participation of women in decision-making, protecting and promoting the girl child, fighting violence against women, and improving the institutional framework for effective integration of women in development³³. Also in 2002, the National Population Policy Declaration (NPPD) was updated following the 1994 ICPD and the Millennium Summit in September 2000. This policy establishes the gender approach as a development approach and notably aims to universalize quality primary education, promote functional literacy for both sexes and reduce gender disparity in all sectors of economic and social development³⁴.

More to that, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and sector strategies helps the Government, in seeking solutions to the well-being of the population, successively prepared, using the participatory approach, a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) adopted in April 2003, and sector strategies in the areas of health, education, rural development, social development³⁵. The PRSP has marked a milestone in the continuation of reforms by authorities since attaining the completion point under the enhanced debt relief initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC).³⁶ It adopted the following guidelines for gender equality: the improvement of the socio-legal status of women, the improvement of women's living conditions, the promotion of gender equality and equity, the promotion of family

³¹"Ministry of women's affairs replies to questionnaire on the implementation of the Dakar and Beijing platforms", Cameroon, p. 1.

³² MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 25.

³³File 2, CF/GEN, No 17, *Document de stratégie de sous-secteur promotion de la femme*, Cameroun, Décembre 2003, p. 21.

³⁴ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 26.

³⁵ "Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)", IMF Country Report No. 10/257, Yaounde, Cameroon, August, 2010, p. 11.

³⁶ Ibid, p. 35.

welfare, the strengthening of institutional mechanisms and the promotion of good governance.³⁷ Talking about the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) it was adopted in August 2009, which is a revised version of the PRSP, it has set out guidelines for gender equality in the following seven sectors: rural infrastructure, industry and services, governance, education, social and health services.³⁸ As concerns gender promotion, the Government will continue to educate parents and communities on allowing the young girls to enjoy equal access to education. In the same light, the Government and communities will ensure that girls are represented in all sectors including vocational training, higher education and employment³⁹. The GESP is the springboard of all development activities, including the National Gender Policy which is based on its guidelines⁴⁰. In Cameroon, UNIFEM has contributed to strengthening the capacity of MINPROFF for addressing and increasing its engagement in the fight for women's empowerment through the main mission of MINPROFF which is;

- To empower all Cameroon women,
- To ensure that women's rights are respected in the society,
- To advocate the eradication of all forms of discrimination against women,
- To contribute to the political, economic, social and cultural advancement of women,
- To work for the autonomy of women,
- To participate in the drawing up of policies, programmes that take into account gender approaches at the multi sector level and the strengthening of gender equality in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres⁴¹.

UNIFEM funded MINPROFF pilot projects in order to test what it believed was an innovative approach to women's empowerment that could be duplicated, if proven successful. UNIFEM's objective in funding MINPROFF was to have an effective empowerment program documented that could easily be shared globally⁴². Thus, the movement to mainstream women's empowerment as a development objective was strengthened through plan of action in recent years. This can be seen in terms of education and training, MINPROFF trains, supervises, and teaches basic trades to women in Empowerment Centres and Centres for Appropriate Technologies. It educates, sensitizes and supervises rural women in animation

³⁷ MINPROFF, *National gender policy*, p. 26.

³⁸ Republic of Cameroon, "Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP)", Yaounde, Cameroon, August 2009, p. 14.

³⁹ File 2, CF/GEN, No 17, *Document de stratégie de sous-secteur promotion*, p. 21.

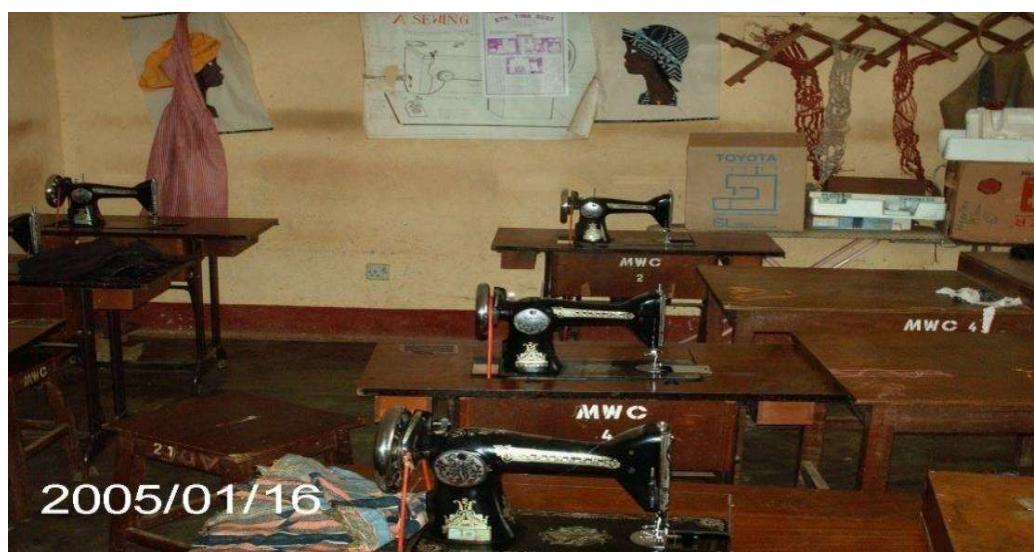
⁴⁰ MINPROFF, *National gender policy*, p. 26.

⁴¹ A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 126.

⁴² D. R. Katy, "A Case Study of a UNIFEM-funded Intervention", p. 26.

pools and encourages the training of girls in science and technology fields⁴³. This is seen as a step towards empowering women in the field of science and technology where they are very far behind men⁴⁴. UNIFEM assist the Ministries in establishing women's centres to provide legal, psychosocial and health services for women, as well as literacy and skills training⁴⁵. Picture 28 shows how the setting up of a support mechanism for women in Women's Empowerment Centres (WEC) which, in addition to the various training courses for their self-employment, grants women revolving credits to promote income-generating activities⁴⁶.

Picture 28: The Bamenda Women's Empowerment Centre



Source : A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 126.

This was on the occasion of a workshop organized by MINPROFF with the help of UNIFEM in 2005 in Bamenda where women and young girls are taught and trained on how to sew dresses and to also improve their skills in tailoring.

UNIFEM-MINPROFF provides support to rural women, female entrepreneurs and women of the informal sector in Cameroon by financing income generating activities⁴⁷. With regards to this statement, one of our informant Noah Delma asserted :

Addressing women's needs in development support remains a big challenge. Not only is women's general unemployment rate higher, more women are also more strongly involved in the informal sector (68.6%) and operate in harsh conditions especially within border areas like Kye-Ossi. In rural areas, they represent a critical mass of household workforce with limited access to land. Only 4% of landowners are women. Moreover, the responsibility for household chores and reproductive role still often hampers women's full involvement in other activities⁴⁸.

⁴³ Interview with Mbogbe Abenoun Angele Marie, 45 years, director of WEC, Douala, 2nd September 2018

⁴⁴ A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 124.

⁴⁵ UNIFEM, "working for women's empowerment and gender equality", Cameroon, 2002-2003, p. 17.

⁴⁶ MINPROFF, *National gender*, p. 57.

⁴⁷ A. A. Alasah, "Women Empowerment", p. 124.

⁴⁸ Interview with Noah Delma, *Bayam-Sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2012.

That is why UNIFEM supported a national Forum for Women Entrepreneurs in which entrepreneurs established a fund that will be used to increase the access of businesswomen to finance, markets, technology and training opportunities⁴⁹. UNIFEM, along MINPROFF with women's networks from all regions, helped ensure the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all areas, focusing especially on support to women entrepreneurs, which encourages women to operate in Common Initiative Groups (CIGs) co-operatives and professional groups as well as identifying and making known funding sources to women. It promotes and disseminates technologies that are appropriate to women⁵⁰. MINPROFF and UNIFEM undertook studies and research to improve women's quality of life. It encourages and negotiates partnership contacts with NGOs and women advancement oriented, associations and negotiates and draws up cooperation contracts with national and international partners and produces and disseminates statistical data on the situation of women leading us to the next phase MDGs⁵¹.

c. UNIFEM and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

UNIFEM is one of the numbers of UN agencies charged with helping countries move forward on the MDGs.⁵² The MDGs, adopted after the 2000 Millennium Summit, marked the first time the international community embraced a common set of basic development goals on poverty, education, gender, child mortality, maternal health, epidemic diseases, environmental sustainability and development financing.⁵³ UNIFEM maintains that reducing violence against women should be recognised as an MDG target, as it is a critical step in building the capacity of women to engage fully in economic, political and social life.⁵⁴

More broadly, UNIFEM is playing a key part in seeking to help achieve the eight (MDGs) that arose out of the historic Millennium Declaration in 2000.⁵⁵ Not only is the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women entrenched as the third of these goals, but the issue cuts across all the others, from reducing maternal and child mortality, to

⁴⁹ UNIFEM, "working for women's empowerment", p. 11.

⁵⁰ UNIFEM, "Progress of the World's Women 2000", Biennial Report, p. 143.

⁵¹ Ministry of Women's Affairs "Mission and activities of the Ministry of Women's Affairs", Cameroon, 2000, p. 1.

⁵² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/gender-justice-key-to-achieving-the-millennium-development-goals>, consulted on 2nd May 2020

⁵³ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women: Who Answers to Women?* New York, 2008, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. P. 15.

⁵⁵ D. W. Joan, *A Summary of Gender Strategies of Multilateral Development Agencies and Selected Bilateral Donors*, U.S. agency for international development, Arlington, Virginia, September 2004, p. 2.

halving hunger and putting all children in school by the deadline of 2015.⁵⁶ All eight MDGs touch essential aspects of women's well-being; women's advancement is in turn critical for achieving the goals. Although Goal Three specifically refers to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, the plans recognize that all eight of the MDGs have critical gender dimensions and are crosscutting.⁵⁷ UNIFEM is deeply involved with four critical entry points on MDG which are monitoring, analysis, advocacy and operational programmes that help countries transform the promises of the goals into real progress.⁵⁸ In an explicit manner, through the monitoring progress; UNIFEM helps women evaluate whether or not their countries are on track to meet the MDGs, including through the use of sex-disaggregated data and indicators that fully account for gender gaps, and the budgets allocated to address those gaps⁵⁹. Following Analysis, the UN Millennium Project has brought together 300 of the world's top development scholars and practitioners. UNIFEM's background papers, proven strategies and network of gender experts have made essential contributions to the project's visionary proposals for how to achieve and pay for the MDGs.⁶⁰ In relation to advocacy, longstanding partnerships with women's organizations have ideally been positioned by UNIFEM to spread awareness, spark debate and encourage participation in MDG activities. These include the national and international advocacy efforts led by the UN Millennium Campaign, which rouses popular support for the MDGs around the world.⁶¹ Thus all the four branches of UNIFEM's operational programmes contribute to the MDGs: reducing feminized poverty, ending violence against women, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and achieving gender equality in democratic governance. UNIFEM pilots innovative strategies and strengthens the capacity of other UN programmes to support women's advancement.

Cameroon is one of the main country pilot projects to integrate gender across national MDG efforts that UNIFEM is executing for the UN Development Programme⁶². UNIFEM is assisting the Cameroonian government and women's groups in establishing mechanisms to routinely bring women's perspectives into national policy-making. UNIFEM has mobilized the media, NGOs, the government and the private sector to eliminate gender disparities in

⁵⁶ UNIFEM, "Working for women's empowerment and gender equality", New York, USA 2002-2003, p. 2.

⁵⁷ D. W. Joan, *A Summary of Gender Strategies of Multilateral Development Agencies and Selected Bilateral*, p.2.

⁵⁸ <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2010/1/gender-justice-key-to-achieving-the-millennium-development-goals> consulted on 2nd May 2020

⁵⁹ File 3, CF/GEN, no 1, "Making the MDG work better for women: implementing gender responsive national development plan and programmes", UNIFEM-UNDP, New York, 2009, p.12.

⁶⁰ UNIFEM, "Annual Report 2006-2007", p.3.

⁶¹ UNIFEM, "Supporting Gender Justice, Development and Peace: in Haiti", Caribbean Office, July 2004, p. 7.

⁶² File 3, CF/GEN, no 1, "Making the MDG work better for women: implementing gender responsive national development", p.17.

primary and secondary schools, a stipulation of the third MDG. Cameroon's Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) partnered with international agencies, including UNIFEM, to analyze factors that constrain women's development, propose policies for ensuring that women can fully reap the potential benefits of the MDGs and assign responsibility for taking action to specific sections of government. In Cameroon, UNIFEM assisted with the preparation of an MDG report on gender. Work in Cameroon highlights the need for MDG data disaggregated by gender on such critical national concerns as violence against women and constraints on women's access to land. Globally UNIFEM has developed a number of global advocacy materials to help women understand and use the MDGs, starting with the 2002 report "Progress of the World's Women" which examines in detail the links between the goals and gender equality.⁶³ Women's empowerment is not a stand-alone goal. It is the driver of efforts to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, reduce child and maternal mortality, and fight against major diseases like HIV/AIDS and malaria. Women's empowerment is also a driver of sound environmental management and is finally, essential for ensuring that development aid reaches the poorest through making women a part of national poverty reduction planning and resource allocation. If women are not benefitting from progress in achieving the MDGs as much as men, this represents an accountability problem for national governments and international aid institutions alike.⁶⁴

At the level of the regions in Cameroon, measures have been taken for the promotion of women's rights; the socio-economic advancement of the woman. The example of Financing of Investments in Agricultural and Community Micro Projects (FIMAC), financed projects in the regions; the creation of centres for women's advancement; free enrollment of women in schools and food aid to them as well as their families by MINADER and Ministry of Education in the Northern Region.⁶⁵ To achieve gender equality and empower women of MGD3, a legal framework, namely the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), has been ratified by the Republic of Cameroon.⁶⁶ To achieve the millennium development goals, according to the Cameroon government, it was necessary to improve the socio-legal status of women; improve women's living conditions; promote responsible parenthood; promote gender equality and equity in all sectors of the

⁶³ UNFPA, "Independent country programme evaluation: Cameroon 2008 - 2011", New York, January, 2012, p.138.

⁶⁴ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women: Who Answers to Women?* p.17.

⁶⁵ "MDGs: Progress Report at the Provincial Level", Republic of Cameroon, December 2003, p.8.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

national life; ensure success of the social security system reforms; make greater efforts, especially in the Northern Regions, to raise girl/boy ratio to, at least, attain the national figure; greater sensitization of parents against traditional customs in the Northern provinces which predispose the girl child for marriage with its constraints such as household chores and child-bearing; improve the conditions of women in the ten regions.⁶⁷ Development assistance priorities has led to the improvement of quality and access to education with special focus on the attainment of the objectives of education for girls; capacity building at all levels of the educational system to facilitate the reform in the sector;⁶⁸ extension of the Food Assistance Programme; improvement in the economic role and influence of women in rural and urban areas, greater access to land for women, and the promotion of income generating activities for women in urban areas.⁶⁹ Through the Operational programmes UNIFEM pilot innovative strategies that strengthen the capacity of other UN programmes to support women's advancement and Advocacy through partnerships for research and campaigns that understand how the MDG targets affect women.⁷⁰ This partnership can be seen between UNFPA and UNIFEM to provide a framework of national priorities and to outline a Strategic Plan for the MDG to be attained in Cameroon.⁷¹

From 1990-2000, the maternal mortality rate was at 430 deaths and 2008 estimate is 600 deaths proportion of deliveries with the assistance of qualified staff seems to be improving with an increase from 78.8 per cent in 1998 to 83.4 per cent in 2004.⁷² To meet its needs in reproductive health, and particularly in line with the MDG 5 agenda, Cameroon has with the help of UNFPA and UNIFEM elaborated a roadmap for the reduction of maternal and neonatal health for the period of 2006-2015⁷³ which aimed at reducing the MMR in half by 2010 and by 75% by 2015 (the MDG 5 target) as compared to "current levels" as stated by the "Feuille de Route" (elaborated in 2005).⁷⁴ UNFPA and UNIFEM provided support to strengthen community-based reproductive health services, particularly maternal health referrals and contraceptive promotion, alongside other contraceptive distribution initiatives.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ "MDGs: Progress Report at the Provincial Level", p.8.

⁶⁸ MDG, "International Millennium Declaration Development Goals", United Nations Country Team Cameroon, Republic of Cameroon, June 2001, p.19.

⁶⁹ "MDGs: Progress Report at the Provincial Level", p.8.

⁷⁰ UNIFEM, "Annual Report 2009- 2010", New York, 22 September 2010, p. 3.

⁷¹ UNFPA, "Independent country programme evaluation", p. 39.

⁷² Ibid, p. 138.

⁷³ *Feuille de route pour la réduction de la mortalité maternelle et néonatale au Cameroun 2006-2015*, République du Cameroun, 2006, p.7.

⁷⁴ UNFPA, "Independent country programme evaluation ", p.138.

⁷⁵ Ibid, p.12.

This was done through interventions to reduce maternal mortality including piloting of emergency obstetric care services comprising development of cost sharing mechanisms for the treatment of obstetric complications. Gender activities implemented include development plans and training resources for leaders of women's associations and training of government staff. Dialogue with local leaders and community mobilization activities have helped the implementation of a number of activities, in particular utilization of reproductive health services and support for obstetric fistula services.⁷⁶

The objective to be attained at that time for the maternal mortality rate according to the Cameroon government was to achieve a drop from 430 deaths per 100,000 live births to 350 deaths per 100,000 live births. Already, from 1990 to 2000, it remained almost unchanged at 430. This means more efforts were needed to be deployed from 2000 to 2015. The challenges to be met were human and material as well as financial. At the human level, improving maternal health is dependent on an increase in health staff, particularly in the Northern Region, a vast and inaccessible region with population scattered in the rural area.⁷⁷ Improving maternal health involves: improving the quantity and quality of health staff; enhancing collaboration between modern and traditional health methods for benefit of health ; increasing investment in the health sector by constructing, rehabilitating and equipping integrated health centres so as to improve health care provision;⁷⁸ if possible, to gain better control over the informal sector ; maintain the current trend in the proportion of births attended by qualified medical staff in all the regions.⁷⁹

UNIFEM and development partners in Cameroon have concentrated their assistance on promoting immunization campaigns so that vaccine preventable diseases in the mother and child can be avoided in all the regions; promoting access to quality health care and at low cost in all the regions; reducing as much as possible the influence of the informal sector by making generic drugs available in a good quantity and quality in the provinces; strengthening partnership between NGOs operating in the health sector and the State throughout the national territory, increasing the health staff and centres/hospitals particularly in the Adamawa, North and Far-North provinces; undertaking measures that eradicate traditional practices that destroy health care and strengthening local organisations as shown in appendix 13.⁸⁰ To

⁷⁶UNFPA, "Independent country programme evaluation ", p.138.

⁷⁷ "MDGs: Progress Report at the Provincial Level", p.12.

⁷⁸ MDG, "International Millennium Declaration Development Goals", p. 21.

⁷⁹ "MDGs: Progress Report at the Provincial Level", p.12.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.15.

clarify the above analyses, table 11 shows to what extent the government of Cameroon has been able to achieve the MDG with the assistance of UNIFEM to improve the level of women.

Table 11 : The Millennium Development Goals

MDG	World Targets (Reference: MDG)	Nationalized Targets (Reference PRSP)
1. Reduce extreme poverty and hunger	Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of persons living below the poverty line.	Halve between 1990 and 2015 the proportion of persons living below the poverty line.
2. Achieve primary education for all	Provide all Cameroonian children with the means to complete primary education by 2015.	Provide all Cameroonian children with the means to complete primary education by 2015.
3. Promote gender equality and empower women	Eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education by 2005 if possible and subsequently at all levels of education latest by 2015.	Eliminate gender inequality in primary and secondary education by 2005 if possible and subsequently at all levels of education latest by 2015.
4. Reduce child mortality	Reduce the under-five mortality rate by two -thirds, between 1990 and 2015.	Reduce the under-five mortality rate by two -thirds, between 1990 and 2015.
5. Improve maternal health	Reduce maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015.	Reduce maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015.
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases	Have halted and begun to reverse the current spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015.	Have halted HIV/AIDS spread and brought down its prevalence to 9%
7. Ensure environmental sustainability	Considerably improve the living conditions of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020.	Considerably improve housing conditions for Cameroonians by 2020.
8. Develop a global partnership for development	In cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry, render essential drugs available and affordable in developing countries	Render essential drugs available and affordable to all those who need them.

Source : MDGs, *Republic of Cameroon: Progress Report at the Provincial Level*, December 2003, p.vi.

Note: The MDG framework has fostered the strengthening of statistical systems at both national and international levels to enable the production of quality data for monitoring progress towards the set of concrete, time-bound Goals in Cameroon. In Cameroon, a specialized technical committee has been set up to coordinate the integration of the MDG indicators into the National Development Plan. All Government Ministries are involved in the process, providing basic data and reviewing and updating data. This is followed with UNIFEM- CEDAW advocacy and women's right in Cameroon.

d. UNIFEM / CEDAW Advocacy and Women's right in Cameroon

States that party to CEDAW like Cameroon submit regular reports to the CEDAW Committee on women's economic issues. The reports are reviewed during the CEDAW Committee sessions, which are held several times a year in New York⁸¹. The reporting State sends a government delegation, including the heads of women's machineries and other key officials such as those responsible for foreign affairs and the administration of justice, to engage in a dialogue with the Committee members. When the Committee is considering the reports, it will also draw on information provided by UN agencies and women's NGOs from the reporting countries. There are specific meeting times set aside during the sessions for the Committee to hold discussions with the UN agencies, and with the women's NGOs. Women's NGOs can also submit alternative reports on their countries' progress often called "shadow reports" to the Committee⁸². The Committee places great value on hearing from women themselves about their economic situation in their countries. UNIFEM has for many years supported women's NGOs to attend the CEDAW sessions and present shadow reports through the "Global to Local" programmes.⁸³ To confirm the above analyses, one of the informants Bouchard Zambo said that;

All of UNIFEM's offices are supporting legal economic reform initiatives, to ensure that the standards set by CEDAW and the other human treaties are given legal force at the national level, in areas ranging from women's economic empowerment, violence against women, to land ownership, to electoral processes. UNIFEM is currently supporting the Government and CEDAW in Cameroon to introduce gender into its newly emerging performance budgeting system. In Cameroon, UNIFEM has introduced an innovative programme to engage all sectors of government in the implementation of the Convention. As part of its CEDAW programme in Africa, UNIFEM provided training for a network of non-governmental organizations in Cameroon. This network subsequently prepared the Country's first-ever shadow report on CEDAW implementation. Under the same programme, UNIFEM supported advocacy efforts by the Cameroonian Committee to Promote Women in Politics ahead of communal elections. Women's representation at the communal level has increased today⁸⁴.

Following a CEDAW workshop in Cameroon, participating lawyers from 20 law firms are citing the Convention in court. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the Country's Bar Association is now working to expand the training to all lawyers, and the Government is developing a plan to train the judiciary on CEDAW.⁸⁵ UNIFEM-support to intergovernmental roundtables in Cameroon on CEDAW have allowed governments to share positive

⁸¹UNIFEM, "CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach to Programming", Thames and Hudson Ltd, London and New York, May 2007, p.10.

⁸² Ibid, p.11.

⁸³ UNIFEM, "CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach ", p.11.

⁸⁴Interview with Bouchard Zambo, 40 years, Gender Expert on HIV issues, UN Women, Yaounde, 20 November 2019.

⁸⁵ UNIFEM, "Annual Report 2006-2007", p.5.

experiences and successes in implementing the Convention, and these roundtables have led to improved institutional arrangements.⁸⁶ For example, many governments approach CEDAW implementation as the exclusive responsibility of their women's machineries. The obligation to implement CEDAW rests with the State as a whole, and in Cameroon UNIFEM has introduced an innovative programme to engage all sectors of government in the implementation of the Convention.⁸⁷

The achievement of substantive equality for women requires government action to ensure that the state functions without discrimination against women, and that the state works to overcome inequality in households, communities, markets and businesses. The Advocates for Human Rights is a non-governmental organization established in 1983 that seeks to implement international human rights standards to promote civil society and reinforce the rule of law. Article 11(1) of CEDAW requires that "States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment in order to ensure, on a basis of equality of men and women, the same rights ..." as men in the field of employment. The Advocates conducts a range of programmes to promote human rights in Cameroon, including monitoring and fact finding at the economic level, direct legal representation, education and training of women. The Advocates is committed to ensuring human rights protection for women around the world. Article 11 is aimed at the obligations of the state to end discrimination against women and to ensure equality in all employment contexts. It has relevance to public employment creation programmes designed to provide employment for poor people. This addresses Cameroon's compliance with its obligations in the context of women's rights and access to education.⁸⁸ Thus Cameroon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women on August 23, 1994 in view of promoting women's economic rights.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ UNIFEM, "CEDAW and the Human Rights Based Approach ", p. 37.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ "Cameroon Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 57th Session 10 February - 28 February: Submission on the Rights of Women in the Republic of Cameroon Prepared by the Advocates for Human Rights a non-governmental organization in special consultative status", Yaounde, January 24, 2014, p. 1

⁸⁹ MDG, "International Millennium Declaration Development Goals", p. 19.

Article 10 of the Convention requires Cameroon to “take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure equal rights with men in the field of education.”⁹⁰ This includes providing “the same conditions for career and vocational guidance, for access to studies and for the achievement of diplomas in educational establishments of all categories in rural as well as in urban areas”, which applies to all levels of education and vocational training.⁹¹ Women must have access to the same curricula, examinations, qualified teachers and schools with the same quality of facilities and equipment. Cameroon must take all measures to provide women with equal opportunities for scholarships and study grants, as well as access to continuing education, including adult literacy programmes. Cameroon agreed under the Convention to take all measures to reduce female dropout rates and organize programmes for girls and women who left school prematurely.⁹² The Domestic Legislative Framework was established in the Law No. 98/004 of 14 April, 1998 sets out the general legal framework of education in Cameroon, which guarantees a child’s right to education and states that primary school is free and mandated.⁹³

II. Leveraging financial support for women from stakeholders

Generally focused on financial support for women from stakeholders, this section provides an analysis on UNIFEM and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Cameroon and studies its partnership with the European Commission. It also shades a light on Donors and Official Development Assistance (ODA) aiming at fostering gender equality within the national territory.

a. UNIFEM and Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) in Cameroon

UNIFEM’s rights-based approaches to GRB are grounded in CEDAW and Beijing commitments both in the broad conceptualization of GRB and in the practical application of GRB in specific contexts. Following Beijing, UNIFEM’s GRB programming represents an approach that applies to all of the budget, not only “women’s projects” and to all aspects of the budgeting process from policy formulation, to resource allocation and taxation decisions, to monitoring budget execution and impact assessment as found in appendix 12.⁹⁴

⁹⁰ "Cameroon Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women 57th Session", p. 2.

⁹¹ "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women: Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 34/180 of 18 December 1979 entry into force 3 September 1981, in accordance with article 27(1)", p. 4.

⁹² Ibid, Article 10(f).

⁹³ "Loi No. 98/004 du 14 avril 1998, sur l’orientation de l’éducation au Cameroun", article 6, p. 2.

⁹⁴ UNIFEM, "Gender-responsive budgeting overview evaluation unit", New York, 2009, p. 22.

GRB has been advocated since the 1980s⁹⁵. It was only at the fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 that it was explicitly endorsed as a gender-mainstreaming tool as part of a global call on governments to increase their accountability for gender equality commitments⁹⁶. The United Nations Platform for Action recommended that governments should make efforts to systematically review how women benefit from public sector expenditures; adjust budgets to ensure equality of access to public sector expenditures.⁹⁷ Gender-responsive budgeting, was a three-year programme from 2007-2009. It was implemented in 10 countries in Africa; Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zimbabwe.⁹⁸ From 1984 to 2011, over 40 countries have tried gender budgeting, including some developing countries⁹⁹.

Analyzing the impact of government expenditure and revenue on women and girls as compared to men and boys is fast becoming a global movement to build accountability for national policy commitments to women.¹⁰⁰ The importance of Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) lies in its capacity to ensure more streamlined allocation of resources towards national gender equality commitments and to increase the participation of civil society in the budgeting process.¹⁰¹ Through development and application of various tools and techniques, women's budgets can make a number of crucial contributions. These include efforts to:¹⁰²

- recognize reclaim and revalue the contributions and leadership that women make in the market economy, and in the reproductive or domestic (invisible and undervalued) spheres of the care economy, the latter absorbing the impact of macroeconomic choices leading to cuts in health, welfare and education expenditures;
- promote women's leadership in the public and productive spheres of politics, economy, and society, in parliament, business, media, culture, religious institutions, trade unions and civil society institutions;

⁹⁵R. Nallari, and B. Griffith, *Gender and Macroeconomic Policy, Directions in Development*, Washington: World Bank Institute, 2011, p. 140.

⁹⁶ E. Combaz, "Impact Gender-responsive budgeting", GSDRC Helpdesk Research Report, 22/07/2013, p. 2.

⁹⁷R.Sharp, *Budgeting for equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a framework of performance-oriented budgeting*, New York: UNIFEM, 2003, p. 112.

⁹⁸L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, "Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality: Global findings", Paper prepared for EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace, New York: UNIFEM, 2008, p. 25.

⁹⁹ R. Nallari, and B. Griffith, "Gender and Macroeconomic Policy", p. 145.

¹⁰⁰ UNIFEM, "Working for Women's Empowerment ", p. 17.

¹⁰¹ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 13.

¹⁰² C.M. Blackden, and C. Bhanu, "Gender, Growth and Poverty Reduction", World Bank Technical Paper, 428, World Bank, Washington DC, 1999, pp. 64-65.

- Engage in a process of transformation to take into account the needs of the poorest and the powerless; and build advocacy capacity among women's organizations on macroeconomic issues¹⁰³.

The aims of GRB can be categorised into three main (and often interlinked) goals: (1) to raise awareness and understanding of gender issues in budgets and policies; (2) to foster governments' accountability for their gender equality commitments; and (3) ultimately to change budgets and policies in the light of the assessments and accountability effected.¹⁰⁴ In order to achieve these objectives, GRB can be implemented at all levels of government national, state and local by a range of stakeholders and through the use of a variety of tools as shown in table 15. The tools and strategies used over the past 20 years have been adapted to local circumstances¹⁰⁵ "There can be no single recipe" for gender-responsive budgeting since the processes and practices differ significantly¹⁰⁶. GRB aims at mainstreaming gender into public finance.

The Beijing Platform for Action explicitly refers to the "integration of a gender perspective in budgetary decisions on policies and programmes, as well as the adequate financing of specific programmes for securing equality between women and men"¹⁰⁷. Finally, while the scope of GRB is large, and the country examples show that GRB can be done in very diverse contexts, we echo the caution that GRB should not be seen as the solution to all problems, or even to all gender-related problems. It is, instead, an approach that can assist alongside other interventions in promoting gender equality, and that can be a useful weapon against "policy evaporation" as it can be seen in table 12¹⁰⁸.

Table 12: GRB approaches

The implementation of GRB can take numerous forms.	Coverage	Budget classification	Stage of budget cycle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at national, regional or local levels of government; • inside government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the whole budget; • expenditure of selected departments or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Line item: expenditure by payments (salaries, travel, equipment, buildings, etc.); 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • planning to identify objectives; • appraisal to

¹⁰³ D. Budlender, and G. Hewitt, *Gender budgets make more cents: Country studies and good practice*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 2002, p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ R. Sharp, *Budgeting for equity: Gender Budget Initiatives within a framework of performance*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁵ D. Elson, and R. Sharp, *Gender-responsive budgeting and women's poverty*, Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd, 2010, p. 522.

¹⁰⁶ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ K. Schneider, "Manual for Training on Gender Responsive Budgeting", GTZ, Eschborn, 2006, p. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

departments, organized by officials and ministers; • in elected assemblies, organized by elected representatives; • outside government, organized by researchers and civil society organizations	programmes; • expenditure on new projects; • Selected forms of revenue (taxes, user fees, etc.); • changes in the tax system; • implementation of new legislation	• Functional: expenditure by broad purpose (police, defense, education, health, transport, etc.); • Economic: financial operations by economic impact (capital and current expenditures etc); • Administrative: expenditure by institutions responsible for managing funds	identify financial allocations to meet objectives; • audit to identify any misappropriation of money; • evaluation of the extent to which objectives have been met
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Source: D. Elson, *Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives: Key Dimensions and Practical Examples in UNIFEM Strategies*, New York, UNIFEM, 2001, p. 15.

Note: The table above of the awareness raising that occurs at the beginning of most GRB initiatives. If this message is not clearly disseminated, the achievements made in GRB are likely to be undervalued because of unrealistic expectations.

Also, GRB's work is about ensuring that government budgets and the policies and programmes that underlie, address the needs and interests of individuals that belong to different social groups.¹⁰⁹ If a government's national budget is not gender-sensitive, it is most likely missing women's roles and contributions to national development efforts and thus not serving women's needs and priorities¹¹⁰. The GRB helps governments understand how they may need to adjust their priorities and reallocate resources to live up to their commitments to achieving gender equality and advancing women's human rights including those stipulated in CEDAW, the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs¹¹¹. There are opportunities to promote women's political and economic empowerment, promote inclusive governance institutions and transform societies if women's contributions are recognised and their needs taken into account¹¹². Also, studies on gender-responsive budgeting in particular sectors appear to focus on a few areas, such as education and health sectors typically associated with women's issues¹¹³. A full gender budget analysis examines all sectoral allocations of

¹⁰⁹ UNIFEM, *Gender Responsive Budgeting and Women's Reproductive Rights: A Resource Pack*, New York, U.S.A., 2006, p. 12.

¹¹⁰ UNDP, "Resource Guide for Mainstreaming Gender in Water Management", p. 120.

¹¹¹ Ibid, p. 16.

¹¹² UNDP, *Price of peace: Financing for gender equality in post-conflict reconstruction*, New York, 2010, p. 5.

¹¹³ Y. Mishra, *Breaking New Frontiers for Gender-Responsive Budgeting: The Kerala Model*. UN Women 2011, p. 4.

governments for their differential impacts on women, men, girls and boys. They can go further and look at the sub-groups of the gender-age groupings¹¹⁴. Gender-responsive budgeting provides an entry point for strengthening monitoring and tracking of allocations and expenditure for gender equality by governments and donor partners. In order for gender-responsive budgeting to have an impact on directing and/or increasing the allocation of resources for gender sensitive policies and programmes, it needs to be directly linked to the reform of public finance management systems at country level.¹¹⁵ That is why UNIFEM has funded a number of initiatives which have focused on tracking gaps between budget allocations (planned) and budget expenditures (actual), in order to identify instances where funds intended for women's needs and priorities have gone missing. Engendered budgets can be critical to transforming rhetoric about women's empowerment into concrete reality¹¹⁶.

We focus on the budget because it is the most important policy tool of government¹¹⁷. This is so because without money the government cannot implement any other policy successfully and GRB can help improve the quality of decision-making processes on budgets¹¹⁸. Thus, a government can have a very good policy on reproductive health, GBV, or HIV/AIDS, but if it does not allocate the necessary money to implement it, the policy is not worth any more than the paper it is written on. Many terms are used for GRB work¹¹⁹. Some people refer to "gender budgets," some to "women's budgets," some to "gender sensitive or responsive budgets." For the most part, these terms all refer to the same thing; efforts to ensure that government budgets promote gender equality and equity.¹²⁰ The term "women's budget," for instance, can make people think that GRB is about separate budgets for women or men. GRB is not about separate budgets for women or men, girls or boys. Neither is it about seeing how much money is allocated for women and girls or for gender projects. It is not about seeing how many women and men are employed in government and at what levels and salaries, nor is it concerned with how many women owned businesses get procurement contracts from government. Instead, GRB is about mainstreaming, ensuring that ultimately

¹¹⁴ D. Budlender, "The Political Economy of Women's Budgets in the South", *World Development*, vol. 28, no.7, 2000, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, "Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality", Global Findings and Key Messages, UNIFEM, 2008, p. 4.

¹¹⁶ N. Farzana, *U4 Expert Answers provide targeted and timely anti-corruption expert advice to U4 partner agency staff*, 24 June 2009, p. 5.

¹¹⁷ K. Schneider, "Manual for Training on Gender", p. 37.

¹¹⁸ D. Elson, and R. Sharp, *Gender-responsive budgeting*, pp. 522-523.

¹¹⁹ N. Farzana, *U4 Expert Answers provide targeted and timely anti-corruption expert advice*, p. 12.

¹²⁰ UNIFEM, *Gender Responsive Budgeting and Women's*, p. 13.

there is gender awareness in all the policies and budgets of all government agencies (although, for practical and strategic reasons, the focus will initially be on selected agencies).¹²¹

The GRB allow government departments, NGOs, and other stakeholders to improve accountability and targeting of services, ensure that ministries and municipalities respond to their constituencies' needs and priorities, ensure that policies are being implemented with the relevant budgetary allocations and assist in implementing government commitments to international conventions¹²². The fact that GRB is intended to promote mainstreaming means that usually Ministries of Finance must play a lead role. Gender equality machineries also play a support role. Other line ministries have responsibilities in relation to their own planning and budgeting processes. The Ministry of Finance is especially necessary if the initiative is attempted across a number of different line ministries.¹²³ GRB is not about 50% male: 50% female, it is about determining where the needs of men and women are the same and where they differ. Where needs are different, allocations should be different.¹²⁴ In addition, women tend to have greater reproductive health and health services more often than men. Thus, the role of women as carers also means that we need to think beyond the direct beneficiaries to the impact on the other people with whom they live and interact.¹²⁵

The importance of GRB lies in its capacity to ensure more streamlined allocation of resources towards national gender equality commitments and to increase the participation of civil society in the budgeting process and also for the fact that national budgets tend to fail to take into account the fact that men and women have different resources, roles and responsibilities, which perpetuates gender discrimination and inequality¹²⁶. By enhancing the monitoring of financial allocations and tracking of expenditures, GRB promotes transparency in budget allocations and increases the accountability of donor and national governments for achieving their commitments to gender equality and other development goals.¹²⁷ In countries where GRBs are active and have been the most successful, the exercise was led and coordinated by the relevant ministry, a women's agency or NGO and/or a research centre or

¹²¹ N. Farzana, *U4 Expert Answers provide targeted and timely anti-corruption expert advice*, p. 13.

¹²² P. Khosla, *Water, Equity, and Money: The need for gender-responsive budgeting in water and sanitation*, the Netherlands Council of Women, 2003, p. 5.

¹²³ UNIFEM, *Gender Responsive Budgeting and Women's*, p. 14.

¹²⁴ D. Budlender, "Expectations versus Realities in Gender-responsive Budget Initiatives." UNRISD 2004, p. 52.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ D. Elson, "Integrating gender issues into national budgetary policies and procedures: Some policy options", *Journal of International Development*, vol. 10, no. 7, 1998, p. 933.

¹²⁷ R. Holmes and R. Slater et al, *Gender-responsive budgeting in fragile and conflict-affected states: a review*, New York, August 2014, p. 4.

university¹²⁸. GRB can also result in the increased capacity of key Ministries in the development planning and implementation process, particularly those of Finance and Economic Planning, to analyse policies and programmes from a gender perspective. In this context, capacity development of government institutions on gender sensitive tools and methodologies can facilitate the integration of gender priorities in PFM systems and sector plans.¹²⁹ A gender responsive budgeting strategy was launched in Cameroon in 2005 by UNIFEM in partnership with MINPROFF, the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme) and the UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund).¹³⁰ Support for gender responsive budgeting, including capacity building for ministry personnel, is provided by UN-Women, the UNFPA and other international organisations and development agencies (such as the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA). However, as a 2008 UNIFEM report stated, budgeting (financing) efforts for gender equality are more often supported by donors than by the government leading us to the next phase on European Commission partnership on GRB in Cameroon.¹³¹

b. UNIFEM and European Commission partnership on GRB in Cameroon

The European Commission (EC) is the main funding body in Cameroon in terms of available funds. The EC lends its support to Cameroon within the framework of a co-operation policy defined in the country's strategy document¹³². The EC and UNIFEM have a broader collaboration in the area of "Integrating GRB into the aid effectiveness agenda" launched in 2008 by UNIFEM which was a three-year programme¹³³. The programme is funded by the European Commission and was intended to investigate how GRB tools and strategies have been used in the context of currently used aid modalities in Cameroon.¹³⁴ This investigation was intended to deepen the understanding of national partners and European Union (EU) decision makers of the opportunities for using GRB to enhance accountability to gender equality in aid effectiveness. This partnership supports stronger action on gender equality and women's human rights in national development processes and in cooperation

¹²⁸ UNDP, "Resource Guide for Mainstreaming Gender", p. 121.

¹²⁹ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 13.

¹³⁰ R. Sharp, *Budgeting for Equity: Gender budget initiatives within a framework of performance*, p. 16.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² F. M. Takeu Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda Cameroon Country Report", New York, 2008, p. 20.

¹³³ B. Sharma and A. Kanchi, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda: Ten-country overview", Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Cape Town, November 2007, p. 4.

¹³⁴ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 4.

programmes supported by the EC¹³⁵. The second stage of the programme (June 2009 - June 2011) involves targeted technical support in five of the countries (Cameroon, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, and Tanzania) to improve capacity to further institutionalize GRB¹³⁶.

The GRB programme research was carried out in ten developing countries (Cameroon, Mozambique, Morocco, India, Uganda, and many others) in July 2008¹³⁷. The research investigated how GRB tools and strategies have been used in the context of currently used aid modalities—specifically general budget support (GBS) and sector budget support (SBS)¹³⁸. The ten countries were selected by UNIFEM and EC on the basis of criteria such as the existence of GRB work, the use of GBS or SBS, and the presence of budget reform processes¹³⁹. The investigation was intended to deepen the understanding of national partners and European Union (EU) decision makers of the opportunities for using GRB to enhance accountability to gender equality in aid effectiveness. The second stage of the programme will involve the selection of five countries in which targeted and tailored technical support will be provided to improve country capacity to further institutionalise GRB¹⁴⁰.

In reality, several of the selected countries did not neatly match these criteria. Several countries, India in particular received minimal aid even though, in absolute terms, the size of aid is considerable and India is the largest single recipient of EC funds¹⁴¹. Where countries receive aid, the use of “new” aid modalities such as GBS and sector budget support is sometimes limited. Several countries like Cameroon stood out here in having a very limited experience of GRB work beyond awareness-raising¹⁴². This perhaps unintended diversity and deviation from the selection criteria has the advantage of emphasising that there can be no single recipe for development interventions in general, and GRB in particular¹⁴³. The realization of partnership between Cameroon and its main funding bodies calls for several instruments and follows several channels, defined especially on the basis of progress made in the process that began with the Paris Declaration. Interventions noted in the partnership and strategy framework documents take into account the goals, needs, modalities and management

¹³⁵ UNIFEM, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda: country summaries", New York, 2009; p. 3.

¹³⁶ UNIFEM, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda", p. 1.

¹³⁷ B. Sharma and A. Kanchi, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 3.

¹³⁸ "Discussant, 8th International Conference Engendering Macroeconomics and International Economics, Istanbul, Turkey, July 20-22, 2007, p. 13.

¹³⁹ B. Sharma and A. Kanchi, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 5.

¹⁴² "Discussant, 8th International Conference Engendering Macroeconomics", p. 16.

¹⁴³ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 5.

rules of the various forms of assistance defined in the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)¹⁴⁴.

Tables 19 and 20 provide some key indicators for the ten selected countries as recorded in the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report 2007/08 (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 2007). The countries are listed in alphabetical order below, but the tables include the ranking order in respect of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita, the human development index (HDI), Gender Development Index (GDI) and percentage of members of parliament (MPs) who are women. (The last-named indicator refers to the lower house where a country has two legislative houses.)¹⁴⁵ Tables 13 and 14 illustrate significant diversity across the countries in respect of all of the indicators. It also shows that the ranking for different indicators differs.

Table 13: Key indicators for the ten selected countries

Country	GDP pc	Rank	HDI	Rank	GDI	Rank	% women MPs	Rank
Cameroon	2,299	4	0.532	144	0.524	126	8.9	9
Ethiopia	1,055	9	0.496	169	0.393	149	21.9	6
India	3,452	3	0.619	128	0.600	113	8.3	10
Morocco	4,555	2	0.646	126	0.621	112	10.8	8
Mozambique	1,242	7	0.384	172	0.373	150	34.8	2
Nepal	1,550	6	0.534	142	0.520	128	17.3	7
Peru	6,039	1	0.773	87	0.769	76	29.2	5
Rwanda	1,206	8	0.452	161	0.450	140	48.8	1
Tanzania	744	10	0.467	159	0.464	138	30.4	3
Uganda	1,921	5	0.505	154	0.501	132	29.8	4

Source : B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda: Ten-country overview", Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Cape Town, November 2009, p. 7.

The table shows phase I (March 2008-March 2009) included in-depth research studies in ten countries that explored the extent and ways in which GRB concepts and approaches are being applied in the respective countries. Countries included in this phase were: Cameroon, Ethiopia, India, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

¹⁴⁴ F. M.N TAKEU Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid", p. 10.

¹⁴⁵ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 7.

Table 14 : Selected donor country and sector and extent of aid by country

Country	Donor	Sector	Aid % GDP	Aid % budget
Cameroon	France	Health	1	5-10
Ethiopia	DFID	Health		33
India	UK	Health		2
Morocco	Spain	Health	1.8	6
Mozambique	Sweden	Health	19.4	48.9
Nepal	UK	Education	4	20-25
Peru	Spain	Employment	0.5	4
Rwanda	UK	Education	24	50
Tanzania	Netherlands	Education		34
Uganda	UK	Education		30

Source : B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness agenda: Ten-country overview", Community Agency for Social Enquiry, Cape Town, November 2008, p. 9.

The table above shows the choice of donors, in addition to the EC, for each country. For the most part, this donor represented the largest bilateral donor to the country. Table 16 shows aid as a percentage of GDP, while table 17 shows aid as a percentage of the national budget. The indicator giving aid as a percentage of GDP is probably more reliable than the indicator showing aid as a percentage of the total budget. In Cameroon, the Bank was the third of the five largest donors to the country. Of these five donors, the Bank disbursed the smallest percentage (78%) of committed funds. The Bank was the largest donor for the sectoral programme on HIV/AIDS in 2005¹⁴⁶. In Cameroon, four official donors and the global funds together account for 95% of aid¹⁴⁷. A multi donor or "basket" funds was created in Kenya, Cameroon, and Indonesia to enable donors to give support to different aspects of gender equality¹⁴⁸. In most countries, like Cameroon, all official development assistance to government is meant to go through the central government. Some of this money might, however, then be channelled to sub-national (regions, local) governments. The number of

¹⁴⁶ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 9.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World's Women: Who Answers to Women* p. 97.

donors active in a particular country also differs. In Cameroon, four official donors and the global funds together account for 95% of aid.¹⁴⁹ Donors have also realized its efficacy as a tool for gender mainstreaming.¹⁵⁰ The examples of donor programmes in Cameroon highlight the extent to which donor support can contribute to the realization of the national gender agenda and priorities.¹⁵¹ In Cameroon government ministries undertake gender-related actions; these generally involve “projects for women” that are primarily supported by donors. It is noticed that the gender agenda is seen as being orchestrated by donors and organisations within civil society¹⁵². A key finding on harmonization is the increase in government-donor coordination mechanisms that act as platforms for joint analytical work and harmonized programming on development priorities, including gender equality. However, the impact of donor harmonization mechanisms on gender equality on donor programming, joint analytical work and pooling of resources for gender equality varies significantly, as seen in the cases of Cameroon below¹⁵³.

c. Donors and Official Development Assistance (ODA) in Cameroon

In a number of countries, ODA represents about 30-50% of the national budget thus reflecting a significant weight of ODA. Donors, both individually and collectively, have made numerous commitments to advance gender equality through their ODA¹⁵⁴. Cameroon is not dependent on foreign contributions. The State’s resources come mostly from natural resource export earnings (coffee, cocoa, cotton, rubber, banana, timber, petroleum and so on). The amount of aid is estimated to be less than 1% of the country’s GDP, 5 to 10% of the State’s budget, and slightly less than 40% of its public investments¹⁵⁵. The highest proportion of aid comes through bilateral co-operation and Cameroon’s main bilateral and multilateral funding bodies over the last five years are stated in diagram 7.

¹⁴⁹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 11.

¹⁵⁰ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 14.

¹⁵¹ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, "Mapping Aid Effectiveness", p. 4.

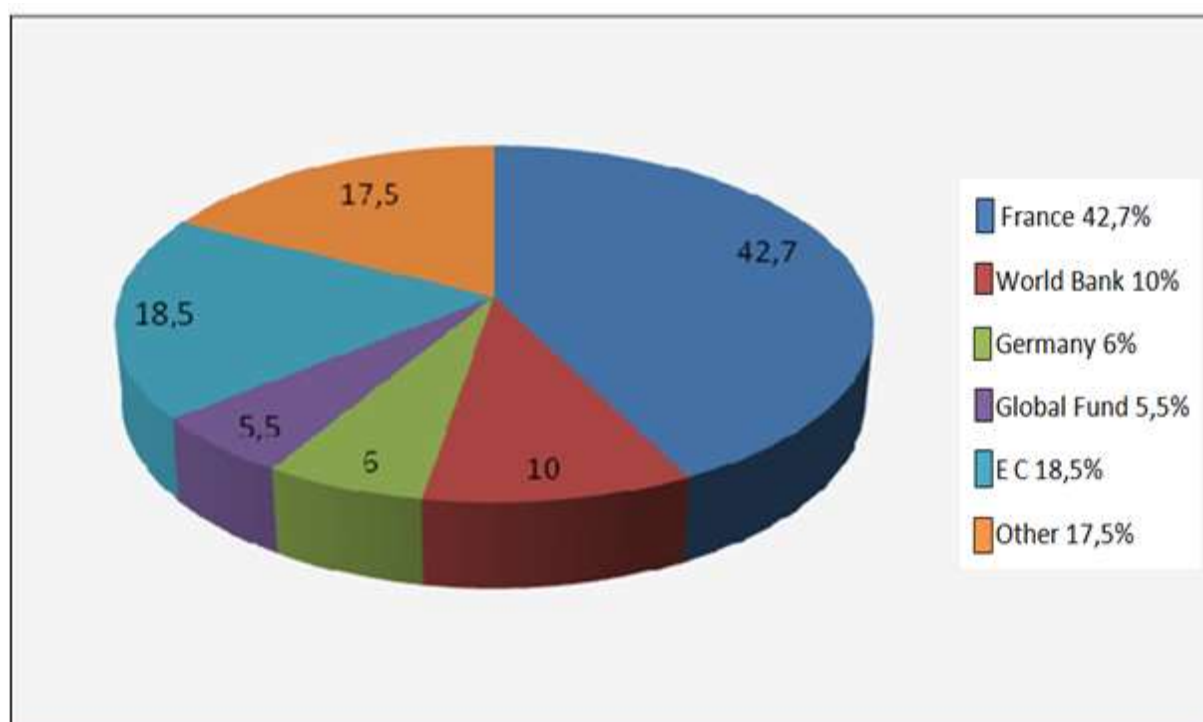
¹⁵² B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 19.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ UNIFEM, "Implementing policy commitment to gender equality and women’s right: the theory of change of gender responsive budgeting", New York, July 2010, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ F. M. AKEU Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid", p. 19.

Diagram 7: The top five ODA contributors in Cameroon in % (2007 statistics)



Source : F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda Cameroon Country Report”, New York, 2008, p. 19.

The highest proportion of aid comes through bilateral co-operation. Cameroon’s main bilateral and multilateral funding bodies over the last five years are stated in the figure above. ODA covers an average of 5 to 10 per cent of a recipient country’s budget¹⁵⁶. France, the European Commission, Germany, the World Bank and Global Funds make up the five greatest technical and financial ODA partners in Cameroon¹⁵⁷. This shows that the past five years have seen a significant reform of ODA as a result of the “aid effectiveness agenda” prioritizing government to government funding, and re-examining allocations from a gender equality perspective¹⁵⁸. Table 18 shows that these five have supplied more than 95% of the sums they programmed, France and the European Commission having fulfilled the totality of their commitment. The statistics on France include the amount coming from debt reductions within the framework of Debt clearing and Development Contract¹⁵⁹ and table 15 below gives details on the above analyses.

¹⁵⁶ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World’s Women*, “Who Answers for Women”, p 90.

¹⁵⁷ F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid”, p. 20.

¹⁵⁸ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 2.

¹⁵⁹ F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid”, p. 20.

Table 15: Commitments and payments of first five donors in Cameroon in 2007 (in million CFA)

Donors	Programmed payments	Effective payments	Payment rate in %
Germany	29	26	90
World bank	58	45	74
European Commission	84	84	100
Global Fund	24	25	104
France	190	194	102
Total	385	375	97

Source : F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda Cameroon Country Report”, New York, 2008, p. 20.

It is noticed that 97% of the amounts programmed by these donors have been paid. One should note however, that the aid amounts include Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative funds coming from debt reduction. With the reform of aid management reflected in the Paris Declaration principles, national planning and budgeting instruments are increasingly used as the main mechanisms for managing ODA¹⁶⁰. According to the results of the assessment of the implementation of the Paris Declaration in Cameroon, donors had programmed to pay 521 million USD globally in 2007, but only 51% of this sum, that is, 265 million USD was registered as disbursement by the government. Donors are committed to strengthening government capacity and provide joint programme support to the lead Ministries.¹⁶¹

Donors play a significant role in relation to national development priorities in economic and social policies through their technical assistance, trade policies, and political relations¹⁶². In 2006, net disbursements of ODA from donors to developing countries stood at roughly \$US 103.9 billion - equivalent to 0.3 per cent of developed countries combined national incomes¹⁶³. Table 19 shows the ODA amount from Social Development Fund (FSD) allocated to the Ministry of Women’s Affairs and the Family (MINPROFF) which is active in the promotion of women’s rights through French Cooperation from 2004 to 2006. In 2006, the budget support provided by the EC represented 19% of the total ODA allocated by the EC to

¹⁶⁰ UNIFEM, “The theory of change of gender”, p. 3.

¹⁶¹ *Gender Equality: Women’s Empowerment and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness*, OECD-DAC Gendernet, 2008, Paris, p. 12.

¹⁶² UNIFEM, “The theory of change of gender”, p. 3.

¹⁶³ UNIFEM, *Progress of the World’s Women*, p 90.

Cameroon during the 9th European Development Fund (EDF)¹⁶⁴. The proportion of French aid allocated to gender equality is very small as shown below in table 16.

Table 16 : Evolution of French ODA cooperation through FSD in Cameroon 2004-2006 (in thousands CFA Franc)

Year	ODA allocated	Amount allocated to FSD	% of ODA allocated to FSD
2004	3 714 286	6 876	0.2
2005	4 863 977	76 045	1.6
2006	4 050 000	5 113	0.1
Total	12 628 263	88 034	0.7

Source: F. M. N TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid Effectiveness Agenda Cameroon Country Report”, New York, 2008, p. 24.

Under the principle of alignment, ODA is expected to be aligned with national development strategies, institutions and procedures. The implementation of the alignment principle places increased emphasis on the strengthening of Public Finance Management (PFM) systems in developing countries.¹⁶⁵ Reforms aiming at strengthening PFM systems and promoting performance-based budgeting in Africa for example, Cameroon, DRC, Ethiopia and Ghana have reformed their PFM systems, while improvements to their human and institutional capacities have also been established to facilitate donor alignment to national development plans as seen in the cases of Cameroon below.¹⁶⁶

d. UNIFEM and EC donors on gender equality in Cameroon

The main focus of the EC/UNIFEM research was on assistance to government. In Cameroon, donors quite often channel gender-related assistance to NGOs and perhaps do this more frequently than they channel explicit gender-related assistance to government. Thus where countries described the targets of non-government assistance, these almost always included gender groups or projects¹⁶⁷. In Cameroon less than 1% of France’s support to NGOs appeared to be expressly targeted at projects or organisations focusing on gender or women. Several country papers noted that beyond such money provided from the donor country offices, further money was channeled to NGOs through the donor headquarters.¹⁶⁸ This latter money generally passes through the hands of intermediaries, such as international NGOs.

¹⁶⁴ F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid”, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 11.

¹⁶⁷ Interview with Harritte Ekimi Martha, 40 years, civil servant in MINAC, 15 October 2019, Yaounde

¹⁶⁸ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", pp.18-19.

Most country papers do not give any indication that it is donors who are driving the “gender agenda”. Indeed, many papers suggest that the donor agencies have not taken gender very seriously. The Cameroon paper is an exception in this respect. It suggests that where government ministries undertake gender-related actions, these generally involve “projects for women” that are primarily supported by donors. The report concludes that the gender agenda is seen as being orchestrated by donors and organisations within civil society. Beyond a few sectors such as education, health and the environment, the paper claims that sectors have paid little attention to gender issues.¹⁶⁹

Cameroon does not appear to receive GBS, but has sectoral approaches in education, health, environment and rural development. Donors in Cameroon are generally reluctant to provide budget support until the country addresses problems of corruption and other weaknesses in public finance management.¹⁷⁰ In terms of structures, in countries with substantial aid volumes, large numbers of donors, and significant use of “new” aid modalities, donors will feel a greater need to create structures in which they can plan their collaboration. In less aid-dependent countries, there might also be structures, but they are likely to focus more on information-sharing. This is in line with the division of labour principles of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.¹⁷¹ The country reports make reference to an overwhelming number of coordination, theme groups and working groups. Many of those have a different membership of key donors, government representatives, and in some cases include civil society and UN agencies. It is possible to distinguish between coordination mechanisms for planning purposes, aid coordination purposes (with a focus on GBS or sectoral support), information sharing processes and performance monitoring coordination mechanisms.¹⁷² As asserted that:

The fact that awareness raising on GRB is crucial regarding UN Women which might really carryout and achieve some major activities in the field, problems could come from the partners working directly or indirectly with UNIFEM who may be working for their personal interest or some groups and not all the women which may be different from UNIFEM’s objectives in Cameroon. UN Women may give financial assistance but what if the CSOs don’t practice what is requested in the field. In case of any financial assistance from UN Women, measures should be taken to ensure that there are follow ups in the fields¹⁷³.

¹⁶⁹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 19.

¹⁷⁰ UN Women, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Aid Effectiveness”, p. 36.

¹⁷¹ Ibid, p. 27.

¹⁷¹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 19.

¹⁷² Ibid, p. 20.

¹⁷³ Interview with Noah Delma, *Bayam-Sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021.

That is why evolution of Many processes involving monitoring and reviewing of past performance, with the aim of influencing future plans, budgets and implementation has been solidified. Some of these processes involve only donors, while some others include government as well as, in some cases, civil society. These monitoring and review processes exist alongside the standard processes associated with developing, implementing, monitoring and auditing of government budgets that exist in any country. Thus, it is within this context that the EC, UNIFEM, and the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization (ITCILO) are partnering to implement the programme “EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace”, designed to foster country-level demand for action to strengthen gender equality in national development processes. The programme is being implemented in 12 countries including Indonesia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Honduras, Suriname, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Cameroon, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan.¹⁷⁴

In Cameroon, CIDA created the GAD Fund, linked to the country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy and the MDGs agenda as a pilot funding mechanism to support gender equality¹⁷⁵. The Fund was implemented through a strategic plan that prioritizes women’s economic empowerment, reproductive health, HIV/AIDS, and action research and advocacy¹⁷⁶. The first phase (2002-2006) had a budget of about 500 million Canadian dollars and provided support to more than 40 local initiatives to strengthen the capacity of women’s organizations to influence national policy-making processes and support lobbying and advocacy initiatives. Among the results are the creation of a rural women’s association with representatives in 22 villages of the Northwest Province, leading to increased respect for women’s rights in a region where male norms predominate; greater involvement of women as voters and candidates in national elections through the More Women in Politics network; and more effective public and media outreach, contributing to an increase in women’s representation in parliament from 10 to 23 in 2007.¹⁷⁷

The EC delegation in Cameroon intensified efforts to mainstream gender equality in national development planning and worked closely with UNIFEM and the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and Family and Civil Society Organizations to revise the 10th European Development Fund (EDF) to strengthen its gender dimensions, integrating gender

¹⁷⁴ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, “Mapping Aid Effectiveness”, p. 6.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, p. 13.

¹⁷⁶ F. M. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid”, p. 20.

¹⁷⁷ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, “Mapping Aid Effectiveness”, p. 13.

concerns in the context, objectives and strategic areas and outlining potential areas of intervention. “A road passes through a region with people, thus people (especially women who are at the heart of all community activities) should be at the centre of all road programmes.”¹⁷⁸ This was the guiding message which inspired a group of major stakeholders of the development of Cameroon including; bilateral and multilateral institutions, NGOs, Government partners, leaders of women’s groups and road construction companies who gathered together to reflect on how to mainstream gender equality in the EC Road Sector Programme. Within the framework of the EC/UN Partnership, the European Commission, ITC/ILO and UNIFEM have initiated the process of mainstreaming the Road Sector Programme with the objective of transforming the stumbling blocks hindering women’s participation in the road sector and ensuring just and equitable development in Cameroon¹⁷⁹. The initial step was the holding of a Forum that brought together various stakeholders including government, donors, United Nations agencies, and representatives of rural women. The consultation came up with a set of priorities for a gender-responsive road sector programme and these included the construction of feeder roads to reduce the workload of women, the recruitment of women in all phases of a road programme, equal pay for both women and men for work of the same value, the introduction of healthcare facilities, the creation of markets, the availability of programmes to modernize agriculture and increase production, as well as facilities to process agricultural products.¹⁸⁰

The process of engendering the road sector in Cameroon is expected to increase the participation of women in all activities related to the road programme. It will also improve their technical and economic capacity so that they engage actively in road infrastructure projects, increase incomes, and improve living standards and social status. This reduces their vulnerability and eventually leads to better gender relations. The importance of GRB lies in its capacity to identify gaps in gender equality support, align government expenditure and revenues to fill these gaps and expand the range of interlocutors that are involved in budget processes.¹⁸¹ In Cameroon, the Government has put in place a number of processes and mechanisms in order to improve public finance management. The Ministry of Finance has prepared a global Mid-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) consistent with the strategic priorities laid out in the PRSP as well as approved sector policies and programmes, thereby

¹⁷⁸ "Cameroon EC/UN Partnership", UNIFEM, Newsletter no. 1, September 2008, p. 5.

¹⁷⁹ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, "Mapping Aid Effectiveness", p. 11.

¹⁸⁰ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 12.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 14.

helping to align the budget with PRSP priorities. In preparing the 2006 budget, the Ministries of Education, Health and Public Works used, for the first time, the respective sector expenditure frameworks to align resource allocations with policy priorities and programmes, which the Government plans to extend to all ministries. In 2007, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family used the MTEF to elaborate its budget even though a sector strategy is not yet available.¹⁸²

A National Platform has been set up to support the reform process bringing together representatives from government, donors and civil society organizations. The Platform consists of working groups on different thematic areas: the environment, the PRSP, gender equality, governance and human rights, among others¹⁸³. The EC, France and Canada play an active part in this process, which enables donors to coordinate dialogue and support in line with the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability framework on gender equality. With financial support from CIDA, the programme has provided training to technical staff in key ministries like (the Ministry of Finance), members of the Platform on Public Finance Reform and local government offices to enhance their capacity to implement and monitor budgets from a gender perspective. However, an evaluation of the 2007 budget revealed that despite the level of awareness and interest generated, the resource shares allocated to gender equality are inadequate¹⁸⁴. The next step has to do with mainstreaming gender in Cameroon. The EC was an active and visible partner in the initial activities of the programme such as the Mapping Study, the project launch and the national consultations. In addition, UNIFEM and the EC engaged in a process to engender the EC's own programmes in Cameroon, more specifically, the Country Strategy Paper 2008-2013 and a Road programme under the 10th European Development Fund¹⁸⁵. This Partnership was built at different levels within the EC: from a cross cutting gender perspective (thanks to the involvement of the Gender Focal Point); at the sectoral level (thanks to the involvement of the infrastructure division); and at the policy level, (thanks to the buy-in of the EC Representative)¹⁸⁶.

UNIFEM is a founding member of the Gender Theme Group (GTEG), created in December 2005 as a part of the multi-Donor committee (CMB). Within the framework of this

¹⁸² L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p.15.

¹⁸³ UNIFEM, *Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge briefs*, New York, 2009, P.2.

¹⁸⁴ L. Chiwara and M. Karadenizli, "Mapping Aid Effectiveness", p. 15.

¹⁸⁵ DP/2009/21, "United Nations Development Fund for Women", New York, 20 April 2009, p.9.

¹⁸⁶ "Final Evaluation of the Programme: EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality for Development and Peace ", UNIVERSALIA, December 2010, p.7.

programme, UNIFEM has played an important role in mobilizing the GTEG in favour of mainstreaming gender in national development processes¹⁸⁷. In particular, the GTEG has undertaken advocacy and policy dialogue efforts and provided technical support to the MINEPAT to engender Cameroon's long term development strategy (Vision 2035) and medium term strategy (the PRSP II first, and then, when it was abandoned, the Strategic Document for Growth and Employment-DSCE); to the MINEPAT to institutionalize GRB (through the inclusion of a specific provision in the annual budget circular for 2010-2011), to MINPROFF for the development and validation of the National Gender Policy; to the National Assembly for awareness raising and capacity development of the Members of Parliament on gender sensitive budgetary and planning processes. The programme has also pursued through GTEG, increased coordination and "division of labour" among GTEG members, on initiatives to further GE mainstreaming in Cameroon. UNIFEM is currently the chair of the UN Sub-Thematic Group on Gender, which provides a forum for discussion and coordination among UN agencies on Gender. UNIFEM has used this forum to further EC partnership priorities with sister agencies¹⁸⁸.

III. UNIFEM innovative approaches to gender mainstreaming

Dedicated to UNIFEM innovative approaches to gender mainstreaming, this section highlights the concept and origin of gender mainstreaming and the gender focal points in Cameroon. It is equally focused on UNIFEM's economic empowerment and gender equality through ICT, the UN Women partnership and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness as well as the Cross-Border Informal Trade (PAFICIT) and GRB in the national territory.

a. Origin of gender mainstreaming

We mainstream gender concerns to achieve gender equality and improve the relevance of development agendas. Efforts to integrate gender into existing institutions of the mainstream have much value for women's sake.¹⁸⁹ At country level, gender mainstreaming is most evident during PRSP formulation, work on indicators for MDGs, and the preparation of national Human Development Reports¹⁹⁰ Gender mainstreaming, based on the concept of GAD, is a process to integrate gender perspectives in all policies and projects throughout the

¹⁸⁷ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p.13.

¹⁸⁸ "Final Evaluation of the Programme: EC/UN Partnership on Gender Equality", p.4.

¹⁸⁹ UNESCO's, *Gender Mainstreaming Implementation Framework*, New York, April 2003, p. 3.

¹⁹⁰ UNDP, *Evaluating Gender mainstreaming*, New York, January 2006, p. viii.

whole cycle from planning, implementation, monitoring and to evaluation to articulate different development needs and impact on men and women¹⁹¹.

Gender mainstreaming is a globally recognized strategy for achieving gender equality according to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), in its agreed conclusions 1997/2.¹⁹² Gender mainstreaming assesses the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality.¹⁹³ In simple terms, gender mainstreaming is undertaken within sector work, such as in education and shelter interventions, to make sure that the benefits of the sector are equally enjoyed by women and men¹⁹⁴. Since the Fourth World Conference of Women held in 1995 in Beijing, gender mainstreaming has become an internationally acknowledged strategy for promoting gender equality¹⁹⁵. The concept of Gender Mainstreaming (GM) was proposed for the first time in 1985 during the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi. The idea of GM was brought forward by the United Nations to emphasis on development of society. It was then debated seriously and eventually was made as an official item to be implemented in the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995¹⁹⁶. The GM basic principles are to enhance the role of women and to delegate more authority to women especially to handle their issues of human rights, poverty, decision making, young women, violence against women and other women related matters. Therefore, a document had been created in the Conference as steps to achieve this mission Diagram 8 shows how UNIFEM prioritizes gender mainstreaming as the main strategy to achieve gender equality¹⁹⁷. Its approach to gender mainstreaming is a dual one: it supports the empowerment of women and girls through

¹⁹¹"Gender Profile Cameroon", p. 1.

¹⁹²UNDP, *Evaluating Gender mainstreaming*, p. v.

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ K. Schneider, "Manual for Training on Gender Responsive Budgeting", GTZ, Eschborn, 2006, p. 2.

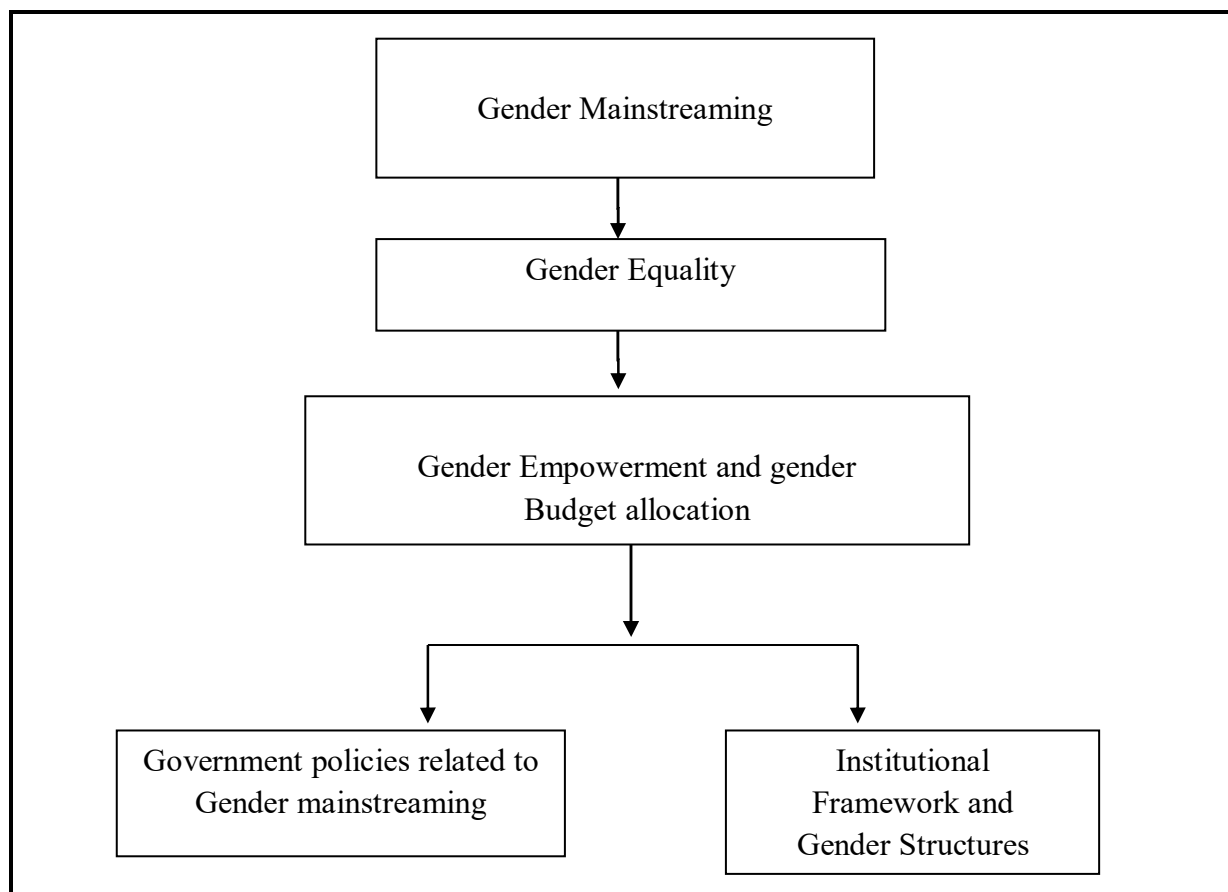
¹⁹⁵"Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual framework, methodology and presentation of good practices", Strasbourg, May 1998, p. 13.

¹⁹⁶N.S. Akmal Ismail, "Examining gender focal point (GFP) roles to implement gender mainstreaming: the experiences of public sectors in Malaysia", Doctorate Thesis in Public Policy and Administration, University of Kebangsaan, Malaysia (UKM), May, 31 2011, p. 39.

¹⁹⁷ N.S. Akmal Ismail, "Examining gender focal point (GFP) roles to implement gender mainstreaming: the experiences of public", pp. 39-40.

gender-specific targeted interventions and also addresses gender concerns in the developing, planning, implementing and evaluating of all policies and programmes.¹⁹⁸

Diagram 8 : Framework of the Gender Mainstreaming



Source : D. Elizabeth, *Gender Mainstreaming in Forestry in Africa United Republic of Tanzania*, FAO, 2007, p. 8.

Note: On the basis of this, the committees in the ministries of Cameroon are to prepare a conceptual framework and a methodology for mainstreaming gender equality and identify techniques, tools and actors for integrating and evaluating the gender dimension in an effective and visible way.

The Gender Mainstreaming Framework merges two major theoretical models: the Gender Integration Framework, which guides UNIFEM-Cameroon on how to mainstream gender throughout its operations and programmes, and the Gender Equality, which tracks the impact of gender mainstreaming in Cameroon¹⁹⁹. More to that, the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa, adopted by Member States of the African Union during the third Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 2004, is a product of all

¹⁹⁸ UNDP, *Gender equality strategy 2014-2017*, New York, 2015, p. 4.

¹⁹⁹ G. Barun, *Gender Mainstreaming Framework*, PRGA Program, Cali, Colombia, September 2008, p.1.

stakeholders working on gender and development, including members of the civil society.²⁰⁰ In operative paragraph 12 of the Solemn Declaration, the Heads of States and Government commit themselves to report annually on progress made in gender mainstreaming and to support and champion all issues raised in the Declaration, both at the national and regional levels, and to regularly provide each other with updates on progress made during Ordinary Sessions of the Assembly.²⁰¹ These Guidelines have been developed to assist in reporting by AU Member States, in accordance with the provision of operative paragraph 12 of the Declaration. Consideration has been given to the fact that there are a number of existing formats for reporting on women's rights at the international level. Good practices have been drawn from these formats and used in the Guidelines.²⁰²

The United Nations has strengthened its commitments to advancing gender equality and women's empowerment in all its work. In 2010, the United Nations General Assembly established the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) to strengthen coordination and accountability for gender equality results across the organization. United Nations system-wide action plan (UN-SWAP), under the leadership of UN Women, UN-SWAP was developed to implement the United Nations policy on gender equality and women's empowerment.²⁰³ Approved by the Chief Executive Board in April 2011, UN-SWAP establishes a common understanding of and standard requirements for mainstreaming gender equality and women's empowerment in the following six areas: accountability, results based management, oversight, human and financial resources, capacity, and coherence, knowledge and information management²⁰⁴. UNIFEM will support the mainstreaming of gender equality and women's empowerment in disaster and climate risk reduction policies and plans, as well as in the budgetary frameworks of key sectors (such as water, agriculture, energy, health and education). This includes supporting national capacities to collect, analyse and use sex and age-disaggregated data and analyse climate and disaster risk from a gender perspective.²⁰⁵ Institutions are the rules of the game in a society; key institutional frameworks in formal and informal sector are to be analyzed in relation to gender equality, empowerment and mainstreaming. Policy is an explicit statement of government

²⁰⁰ AU, "Guidelines for reporting on the au solemn declaration on gender equality in Africa", Adopted at the first African union conference of ministers responsible for women and gender Dakar, Senegal, 12-15 October, 2005, p. 2.

²⁰¹ AU, "Solemn declaration on gender equality in Africa", Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 6-8 July 2004, p. 3.

²⁰² AU, "Guidelines for reporting on the au solemn declaration ", p. 2.

²⁰³ UNDP, *Gender equality strategy 2014-2017*, New York, 2015, p. 7.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 2.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p. 14.

priorities as interpreted in action and reflected in laws, operational directives and regulations; this thesis looks at the regional and international government policies that are related to sectorial policy statements that mainstream gender issues and concerns as a guide to country.²⁰⁶ According to the UNIFEM, the gender mainstreaming approach focuses on the fact that women and men have different life experiences and that development policies affect them differently as seen in the case of Cameroon below²⁰⁷.

b. UNIFEM and gender focal points on Mainstreaming in Cameroon

The promotion of gender mainstreaming in Cameroon, is based on the opinions of the organizations that the diversity, not only about gender, but also about ethnic groups, languages, religions, and geographical areas, is an important value in Cameroon. Selection of staff/members is usually made taking diversity into consideration to have balanced members from different groups. From this perspective, the government, both at central and regional level, accept gender equality and women's empowerment as their proper missions and do not have resistance against them²⁰⁸. For example, the National Gender Policy Document stipulates that at least 30% of government staff and related positions should be women, and women actually account for considerable share. Also, some of assistance programmes by other development organizations take affirmative actions to ensure women beneficiaries' participation in the project activities, such as appointing a woman over men who made better results than her in the test for selection (ILO)²⁰⁹.

From the 19-22 December, 2007 the Ministry of Planning, Programming and Regional Development requested and received support for training of its programme staff on why and how to mainstream gender equality in National Plans and Programmes. Participants formulated action-oriented recommendations for the government to institutionalize gender mainstreaming in the PRSP and SWAPs processes. A Gender Advisory Committee comprised of gender focal points from various divisions and bureaux at UNIFEM headquarters, guides UNIFEM's work on gender policy, strategy, and capacity-development initiatives²¹⁰. At the country level, the GFP mechanism includes both a designated programme staff person and a representative of senior management to ensure attention to gender issues in the decision-

²⁰⁶ D. Elizabeth, *Gender Mainstreaming in Forestry in Africa United Republic of Tanzania*, FAO, 2007, p. 8.

²⁰⁷ Interview with Etoh Brunhilda, 31 years, Master's student in Anthropology, Yaounde, 15 October 2019.

²⁰⁸ E. N. Annette, "Gender mainstreaming in the public administration in Cameroon: a case of the public service and administrative reform", Master's Dissertation in sociology, university of Yaounde 1, 2014, p. 20.

²⁰⁹ "Gender Profile Cameroon", p. 29.

²¹⁰ "Gender mainstreaming for gender equity: the experiences of international development agencies", Frankfurt, March, 2006, p. 12.

making process. A GFP network collaborates closely with the network of gender focal points in regional bureaux and country offices to formulate and review strategies at the country level, including country strategy notes and mid-term reviews²¹¹.

GFPs are persons who have been designated within an institution or organization to monitor and stimulate greater consideration of gender equality issues in daily operations. Some use the term to refer to National Ministries of Women's Affairs or heads of administrative services that exclusively work on the promotion of women's rights and equal opportunities²¹². Gender focal points take their origin from the Implementation of the women in development WID approach²¹³. Gender focal points are one of the most frequently mentioned instruments for supporting gender mainstreaming. They are established in ministries, departments and agencies in order to facilitate gender mainstreaming at all levels²¹⁴. The gender mainstreaming strategy, along with gender focal points are the most frequently mentioned tools and instruments used by institutional mechanisms²¹⁵. Gender Focal Points play an important role in influencing those in decision-making positions to take gender experts and gender equality and women's empowerment seriously²¹⁶. The success of GFPs is key to making progress in this regard. Progress towards gender equality depends on the active and relentless efforts of determined individuals and groups such as Gender Focal Points and national women's machineries to promote gender-sensitive policies and agendas²¹⁷.

In following up the Fourth World Conference on Women, all entities of the United Nations system focusing on the advancement of women should support the efforts of gender focal points within organizations and enable it to be well integrated into overall policy, planning, programming and budgeting²¹⁸. The gender focal points are responsible for gender mainstreaming of each ministry's policies and projects²¹⁹. That is the GFPs are designated member staff within each ministry or department who have the responsibility of promoting

²¹¹ "Gender mainstreaming for gender equity: the experiences of international", pp. 12-13

²¹² J. Annette, *Handbook for Gender Focal Points in UNESCO National Commissions*, Paris, France June 2005, p. 61.

²¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Women_in_development, consulted on 21st November 2020

²¹⁴ UNECA, *Recent Trends in National Mechanisms for Gender Equality in Africa*, p. 14.

²¹⁵ Ibid, p. 16.

²¹⁶ ILO, "A Guidance Note Concerning ILO Gender Focal Points", ILO Gender Network Handbook, May 2006, p. 1.

²¹⁷ J. Annette, *Handbook for Gender Focal Points in UNESCO*, p. 55.

²¹⁸ UN, Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, 4-15 September 1995, New York, 1996, p. 122.

²¹⁹ DAW, "The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality", p. 9.

the incorporation of the gender perspective in the work of their organisation as elaborated in appendix 15²²⁰. Gender Focal Points (GFPs) are often the representatives of UN and government agencies that participate in inter-agency thematic groups on gender mainstreaming²²¹. The presence of national machineries and gender focal points in a country is an indication of commitment to sector-based gender mainstreaming²²². According to a 2002 UNIFEM/UNDP scan, of the 1,300 United Nations (UN) staff that has gender equality in their terms of reference, nearly 1,000 of these are gender focal points²²³.

In 2004, the GFP system was adopted in Cameroon ten years after Beijing Conference where the recommendation was made as a strategy to mainstream gender in all policies, programmes and projects. The adoption of this strategy came in 2005 with the creation of a sub department in MINPROFF specifically in charge of the promotion of gender and women's rights. At the request of MINPROFF to various ministries and semi-public institutions the first GFPs were designated in 2006²²⁴. MINPROFF has acted in a number of ways including the institution of gender-focal points in all ministries and para-public institutions (which have received training from UNFPA, UNIFEM and others and the organization of special celebrations throughout the country such as the "Fight against Female Genital Mutilation Day")²²⁵. Almost all ministries including the Prime Minister's Office and the general secretariat of the presidency of the republic have designated GFPs. We can equally mention state owned enterprises like the Cameroon Radio Television, *Credit Foncier*, the National institute for statistics and national school of administration and magistracy that have established them in their organisations²²⁶.

Usually, each administration designates one person as GFP and as it is noticed; during research in the field, a good number of them are women²²⁷. The GFP system has given rise to Gender Committees as a recommendation from training seminars. Ministries of livestock, fisheries and animal industry MINEPIA, higher education MINESUP, Tourism and leisure

²²⁰C. Francis, "National Women's machinery and the challenges forced by Gender focal points in mainstreaming gender within the Cameroon public service", Master's Dissertation in Sociology, University of Yaounde 1, 2013, p. 3.

²²¹ UNIFEM, "Resource Guide for Gender Theme Groups", New York, January 2005, p. 43.

²²² "A Fifteen-Year Review of the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Africa (BPfA) +15 From 1995-2009", February 2010, p. 7.

²²³ H. Pietilä H. Pietilä, *The unfinished story of women*, p. 137.

²²⁴ MINPROFF, *Etat de lieu de la prise en compte du genre dans les politiques, programmes et projet du Cameroun*, 2004, Yaounde, p. 82.

²²⁵ UNFPA, "Independent country programme evaluation", p. 44.

²²⁶ Interview with a GFP, Hadidjatou Amadou Epse Alioum, 45 years, Sub-Director at MINEPIA, 30 November 2019, Yaounde.

²²⁷ C. Francis, "National Women's machinery and the challenges forced by Gender in mainstreaming", p. 46.

MINTOURL and that of small and medium size enterprises MINPMESA were the first to create gender committees through the initiatives of GFPs. Between October 2012 and March 2013, the Ministries of Agriculture and Rural Development MINADER, Urban Development and Housing MINDUP created theirs²²⁸. GFPs serve as operational linkages between MINPROFF and other ministries meanwhile the terms of references are drafted by MINPROFF in collaboration with GFP assigning specific duties. GFPs are always invited to meetings relating to the celebration of commemorative days, ceremonies and other specific activities organized by MINPROFF²²⁹.

In relation to the main role of a GFP in Cameroon ministries and organizations, it acts as a “facilitator, catalyst and advisor” to assist the process of gender mainstreaming in a respective office or unit²³⁰. GFPs are to serve as a clearinghouse, and source of knowledge and information, including new development and ideas relevant to the sector, and to participate as members of a wider community of practice on gender²³¹. While GFPs may be directly involved in implementing certain gender-specific activities including constituents, their contribution focuses on aiding colleagues and management to identify strategies and work methods that will enable and build further capacity of colleagues to integrate gender concerns into their own areas of work. This is critical to avoid all gender-related work assigned only to GFPs²³². Moreso in promoting mainstreaming, the majority of countries established gender focal points in various ministries, government departments, and agencies such as those related to agriculture, education, health, but also to law, security, justice, interior, police, prisons, foreign affairs, trade and many other sectors. These focal points and special units were primarily created to promote and mainstream gender issues in the work of all sectors and levels of government²³³. To coordinate the activities of these different sectors and levels, many governments created special mechanisms such as an interagency commission or committee. Several other Member States attempted coordination through agreements and letters of intention among line ministries and between governments, private sector and non-government organizations²³⁴.

²²⁸ C. Francis, “National Women’s machinery and the challenges forced by Gender in mainstreaming”, p. 47.

²²⁹ ILO, *A Guidance Note Concerning ILO Gender*, p. 1.

²³⁰ N. S. Akmal Ismail, “Examining gender focal point (GFP) roles to implement gender mainstreaming”, p. 44.

²³¹ “A plan of Action: Operationalising Gender mainstreaming at the African development bank group”, ORQR Department, November 2014, p. 5.

²³² ILO, *A Guidance Note Concerning ILO Gender*, p. 1.

²³³ N. S. Akmal Ismail, “Examining gender focal point (GFP) roles to implement gender mainstreaming”, p. 50.

²³⁴ (UNDAW) “The role of national mechanisms in promoting gender equality”, p. 7.

Adding to the above, a consultation forum (involving government partners, donors, NGOs, and women's representatives) has been formed by Gender Focal Points in 40 Government Ministries who are committed to mainstreaming gender equality within the programmes of the different ministries. This forum was an output of the training of GFPs organized by UNIFEM, the Canadian Cooperation, UNDP and the Ministry of Women's Empowerment²³⁵. The training of Gender Focal Points (GFP) from different Ministries on the institutionalization of Gender mainstreaming in all sectors has led to the creation of a consultative forum of GFP. The main task of this group is to lobby for the use of gender mainstreaming tools during planning and budgeting of activities in the different government ministries²³⁶. The programme is establishing relationships with the CMB and has obtained their formal declaration to support the programme achieve its results within the on-going PRSP review processes well as dialogue with government on NAMs. The project was also presented to the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) in July 2007 by UNIFEM. As a result, in partnership with UNDP and UNFPA, UNIFEM is supporting UNCT develop a Gender Mainstreaming Strategy with a pilot Joint UN Project on eliminating Violence Against Women. Subsequent contacts are underway to have the programme figured out in the UNCT Coordination plan of work²³⁷.

Specifically, from the 10 to 14 December, 2007, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family requested and received support to train Gender Focal Points appointed in all line ministries on GRB, Gender Normative and Policy Frameworks, gender mainstreaming approaches, tools. At the end participants drew up an action plan for follow-up actions in their respective departments and also started action on creating a forum for further consultations and sharing of experiences. To complement the gender mainstreaming initiatives within the Government in Cameroon, the Women's Commission has also assisted the Government in establishing a network of Gender Focal Points, in most instances a directorate officer from each bureau and department, who serves as the contact / resource person to assist in raising awareness and understanding of gender related issues and promote gender mainstreaming initiatives in their respective areas²³⁸. To maximise its benefits, the

²³⁵UNIFEM, "EC-UN partnership on Gender equality for development and peace template for country reporting", Cameroon/ Central Africa, 1 April 2007-31 April 2008, p. 6.

²³⁶W. M Adeline, "Gender mainstreaming in the agricultural competitiveness project (PACA), Cameroon: approaches, levels, and implications for gender equality", Master's Dissertation in Gender and Development, university of Yaounde I, pp. 33-34.

²³⁷ UNIFEM, "EC-UN partnership on Gender equality for development and peace", p. 7.

²³⁸ Ibid.

Commission has been introducing gender mainstreaming to the community in a progressive manner. In recent years, the Commission has established a GFP network in the District Councils to promote gender mainstreaming at the district level, and to promote collaboration and communication between the Commission and District Councils in Cameroon. To further raise the awareness of gender mainstreaming in the community, the Government and the Commission have launched another GFP network among listed companies. Listed companies are encouraged to join the network by nominating a representative (at director level or equivalent) to be the GFP for the company. The Gender Focal Points would help raise awareness and understanding of gender-related issues, and promote gender sensitivity in the daily work of their staff. They will also serve as the contact and resource person for communication and collaboration on gender-related matters between the company and the Government / Commission Moving us to the next stage on gender equality through ICT ²³⁹.

c. UNIFEM's economic empowerment and gender equality through ICT

ICT is seen by women as an enabler to increase their economic empowerment in terms of earning power, position and entrepreneurship²⁴⁰. This is mainly seen in terms of additional social status and increased participation in decision making²⁴¹. Grace Okonji, UNIFEM African programme specialist at the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) preparatory meeting in 2002 at Accra, Ghana stated; “if we accept that the access and use of ICTs is a powerful driving force towards economic growth and poverty alleviation then it must be imperative that women gain equal opportunities to access the technologies and exploit them for their own economic empowerment”²⁴².

About the rationale for economic empowerment, UNIFEM also stated that in a world where economy is undergoing major transformation as a result of the technological revolution, having the capacity to take advantage of the opportunities generated by ICTs is particularly critical in order for business to remain competitive²⁴³. Women must be positioned to take advantage of these opportunities given the explosive growth in women's

²³⁹ UNIFEM, “EC-UN partnership on Gender equality for development and peace”, p. 7.

²⁴⁰ S. Ranjana, “Problems and prospects of women entrepreneurship with special reference to MSMES in the state of Gujarat”, Doctorate Thesis in philosophy, Gujarat technological university, Ahmedabad, 2017, p. 50.

²⁴¹ U. Daigavane, Women Empowerment through New Technology in India, *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)*, L.A.D. College, Shankar Nagar, Nagpur, Vol. 5, no. 10, October 2018, p. 70.

²⁴² A. Chritobel, *Neo-liberalism in women in development discourse using ICT for gender and development in Africa: the case of UNIFEM*, New York, p. 139.

²⁴³ A/59/135, “Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Fifty-ninth session”, United Nations, 12 July 2004, p.7.

entrepreneurship around the world in the past twenty years²⁴⁴. The executive director of UNIFEM at WSIS panel noted in his speech that:

UNIFEM is committed to ensuring that women..., are not excluded from the benefit of ICTs... those who remain excluded from an increasing globalized and IT-based job, trade and production market, thereby missing out on many possibilities to lift themselves out of poverty, enhance their economic security and contribute to the overall development of their communities, regions and countries. ICTs have the potential to help women increase their productivity and efficiency, building of their existence income-generating activities and enabling them access to new employment and entrepreneurship opportunities in the information economy. Thus, ICTs offer not only email, e-commerce and e-jobs but equality²⁴⁵.

However, an increase in self-confidence can be seen to be one of the most important impacts stretching across age groups and occupational status. Increase in self-confidence can help women to be aware of their own skills and competencies and hence make them more likely to struggle against social norms and barriers associated with gender. It is thus very important to see that one of the major positive perceptions of the ICT training courses has been an improvement in this aspect²⁴⁶.

In addition to this increased self-confidence, many women in Cameroon have reported expansion in their relations with others. This is an encouraging sign, given that only a small proportion of women sought ICT training in order to improve their social connections. For instance more and more women use a well-known Facebook group called “*Kamer*”, gathering more than 7,000 Cameroonian women based in or outside Cameroon, to advertise their products and businesses and look for jobs. It is not rare to see women looking to hire nannies, or young women looking for such positions²⁴⁷. According to focus group discussions, many rural women have seen this initiative as a good opportunity to establish connections and be more social simply socializing outside of the house was a major benefit in some cases, where women face social barriers to participating in activities outside their houses or villages²⁴⁸. In addition to this, and perhaps as a result of increased self-confidence and skills, many women recorded that they had noticed changes in the perceptions of them in the eyes of other²⁴⁹.

²⁴⁴UNDP/UNIFEM, “Bridging the gender digital divide in Africa through strategic partnerships”, prepared for the WSIS, Geneva 2003, p. 65.

²⁴⁵ WSIS, “Report of the Tunis phase of the World Summit on the Information Society”, Tunis, Kram Palexpo, 16-18 November, 2005, p. 5.

²⁴⁶K. S. Rabayah, “Economic and Social Empowerment of Women through ICT: A Case Study of Palestine”, p.3.

²⁴⁷“Narrowing Cameroon’s gender gap: reasons for hope”, p.1.

²⁴⁸File 3, CF/GEN, No 12, E.B. François, “Etude de quelques associations des femmes rurales du centres- sud du Cameroun”, Genève, 1984, p.31.

²⁴⁹ K. S. Rabayah, “Economic and Social Empowerment of Women through ICT: A Case Study of Palestine”, p.3.

UNIFEM in building gender E-quality in ICTs work in collaboration with its partners, and is committed to²⁵⁰:

- Reversing the gender disparities that are growing across the spectrum of ICT development and use.
- Working to understand and promote ways in which ICTs can create new opportunities for women's economic and political empowerment.

UNIFEM's global gender and ICTs programming is supporting E-quality in national and global ICT governance and policy, E-quality in the institutions which regulate and govern ICT development and E-quality in ICT projects and programmes designed and carried out on the ground. With a focus on activities at the national and regional levels, UNIFEM's field offices are at the forefront of many of the organization's E-quality initiatives²⁵¹. Examples of current initiatives supported by UNIFEM and carried out in collaboration with NGOs, governments, private sector companies and other UN agencies include ASAFE in Cameroon. In developing countries today, ICTs jobs can be provided through the booming mobile phone industry. Women have job opportunities in call centres and in sales and repair services, as can be seen in the Cameroon's case²⁵². The programme developed by ASAFE supports the creation of small-scale enterprise in rural and urban areas for the maintenance and commerce of cell phones. Women were trained on how to repair cell phones, sell them and run viable businesses. Women are provided technical and management training modules (which last for 14 days) and a loan to acquire 10 cell phones, pay for needed equipment and rent a small space. So far 100 women were trained. Twenty set up repair workshops and earn an average of US100 US per month²⁵³. This will lead us to the next phase that has to do with UN Women's partnership and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.

d. UNWomen's partnership and Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness

In the same light in order to foster Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Cameroon, the UN Women Country Team for actions undertook a programme from January 2014 to April 2015 within the country. UN Women has placed great importance on strengthening the line of work with the United Nations system in Cameroon through the development of two joint programmes: one aimed at rural women and the second on the fight

²⁵⁰ UNIFEM, *Fostering equality building gender-responsive ICT development*, New York, 2004, p. 24.

²⁵¹ Ibid, p. 25.

²⁵² S. Melhem and N. Tandon, "Information and communication technologies" p. 28.

²⁵³ Ibid, p.36.

against gender-based violence. UN Women Cameroon builds capacity of partners: Government (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Family, Ministry of Economy, Planning and Spatial Planning, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Commerce, Commission of National Human Rights and Freedoms, Elections Cameroon); and NGOs (CSO, media, political parties) for the institutionalization of gender. UN Women Cameroon works in four themes: Leadership and Political Participation, Economic Empowerment, Violence Against Women, and National Planning and Budgeting²⁵⁴. UN Women's Current programmes in Cameroon include the following:

- The Programme of Women Involved in Cross-Border Informal Trade (PAFICIT),
- Prevention and care of victims of gender-based violence through the establishment of a One Stop Centre,
- H4 + / AIDS Collaboration on Accelerating Progress in Childhood, Newborn and Child Health Fund for Gender Equality,
- UNGTG Gender Project (UN gender thematic group),²⁵⁵

Thus the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness aims to strengthen partnerships between donors and countries receiving aid in order to make aid more effective with the aim of maximising development results²⁵⁶. Over 150 countries and organizations endorse in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness²⁵⁷. It provides guidance for improvements in the delivery of aid through five principles:

- Ownership: Developing countries will exercise leadership over their development policies and strategies, and will coordinate development actions;
- Alignment: Donor countries will base their overall support on recipient countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures;
- Harmonisation: Donor countries will work so that their actions are more harmonised, transparent, and collectively effective;
- Managing for results: All countries will manage resources and improve decision making for results;

²⁵⁴ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/cameroon>, consulted on 22nd June 2020

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ "Evaluation of the Paris declaration on aid effectiveness and the Accra agenda for action Samoa country report", Government of Samoa, 28 December 2010, p.12.

²⁵⁷ D. Niels and Q. P. Michael, "The Paris declaration on aid effectiveness: history and significance", *the Canadian journal of program evaluation* vol. 27, no. 3, 2013, p. 20.

- Mutual accountability: Donor and developing countries pledge that they will be mutually accountable for development results.²⁵⁸

UN Women advocates for gender equality provisions in all areas and works through donor coordination mechanisms that define priorities for development assistance. UN Women also supports national institutions to lead and sustain advancements for women. As stated by Maria Dolores Almeida, Deputy Minister of Finance, from Ecuador that her dream was that gaps in gender equality close, that women can have equal opportunities to contribute to economic and social development. She said she hopes that UN Women continues supporting them on fiscal policy that favours gender equity, because fiscal policy is not neutral, and has different effects on men and women²⁵⁹.”

UN Women is committed to the aid-effectiveness agenda and engaged in processes related to the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action²⁶⁰. Working in partnership with donors and national partners in Cameroon, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda and Tanzania, UN Women has helped bring women’s voices and priorities into aid coordination mechanisms by extending the application of gender-responsive budgeting to overseas development assistance. This has resulted in the inclusion of gender equality priorities in sector programmes that draw on a combination of domestic and international resources, and the integration of gender-related indicators in performance monitoring²⁶¹. In Cameroon, UN Women collaborated with national partners and bilateral and multilateral agencies to conduct a beneficiary assessment of reproductive health services. This analysis helps the health sector address high maternal mortality rates, among other issues, by responding to root socio-economic causes²⁶².

UNIFEM supported gender equality advocates from both Government and civil society to engage in multi-stakeholder platforms, providing analyses relating to the impact of new aid modalities on women’s empowerment and advocating for the inclusion of agreed national commitments, such as national plans of action on gender equality, where such plans

²⁵⁸ M. Roselynn and S. Kasia, “An Information Pack and Engagement Guide for Women’s Organizations and Gender Equality Advocates on the Outcomes of the High-Level Forums on Aid Effectiveness in Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011)”, 2012, p. 12.

²⁵⁹ UN Women, “Annual Report 2010”, p. 19.

²⁶⁰ M. Roselynn and S. Kasia, “An Information Pack and Engagement Guide for Women’s Organizations”, p. 12.

²⁶¹ UN Women, “Annual Report 2010”, p. 19.

²⁶² <https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2011/11/the-oecd-dac-fourth-high-level-forum-on-aid-effectiveness>, consulted on 1st June 2020.

existed²⁶³. For example, with European Union support for aid effectiveness, the Government of Cameroon formed a multi-stakeholder platform through a decree from the Ministry of Planning to oversee national development processes and the aid process. Its membership includes the Ministers of Planning, Women, and Finance, the Canadian International Development Agency, the European Commission, UNIFEM, UNDP and representatives of the civil society. Gaps relating to gender equality within Vision 2035 and the Strategy Document for Growth and Employment were identified through the coordinated efforts of the Gender Equality Working Group, which used the national gender policy as a basis for the effective mainstreaming of gender equality in the national plans. Specific gender equality commitments included in the plans centre on boosting women's participation in decision-making processes, reducing maternal mortality, increasing women's economic potential and integrating a gender dimension into planning and budgetary processes at all levels²⁶⁴.

In 2010 in Princeton, UNFPA held a Global Meeting with the presence of the Executive Directors of UN Women and of UNFPA²⁶⁵. Their main vision is on how both agencies should operate at global and country level in light of the creation of UN Women. At the same time, in Cameroon, the UNFPA Country Office had held the mid-term review of its country programme and started preparing its 2011 Annual Work Plans (AWPs)²⁶⁶. UNFPA and UN Women representatives saw a golden opportunity to strengthen and review their existing collaboration, focusing on comparative advantages of both agencies and on complementarity in their respective programme niches. UNFPA supports the establishment of UN Women in Cameroon that is why the Minister of Women's Empowerment and Family (MINPROFF) Marie Thérèse Abena, met with UNFPA and UN Women to welcome their determination to start a new era of UN cooperation and coordination²⁶⁷.

By establishing UN-Women, the Member States of the United Nations have recognized the need for a more cohesive and coordinated approach to promote gender equality. As a result of this, UNFPA recognize and strengthen UN Women's coordinating role of the UN System's operational activities on gender in Cameroon²⁶⁸. UNFPA staff and the

²⁶³ A/65/218, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Sixty-fifth session", United Nations, 2 August 2010, p.18.

²⁶⁴ DP/2010/29, "United Nations Development Fund for Women", Geneva, 4 May 2010, p.8.

²⁶⁵ <https://www.unfpa.org/events/unfpa-global-meeting>, consulted on 6th June 2020.

²⁶⁶ M. G. Nduwayo and A. Sibenaler, *UNFPA-UN WOMEN collaboration in Cameroon*, Yaounde, 2011, p. 1.

²⁶⁷ UNFPA, "Cameroon independent country programme evaluation", p.53.

²⁶⁸ "Mainstreaming gender through the work of the agencies and envisaged collaboration with UN-Women: Joint Meeting of the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA, UNICEF, UN-Women and WFP 4 and 7 February 2011", New York, 2011, p. 1.

UN country team on this basis had a meeting between the Ministry and all UN agencies working on gender issues whereby it insisted on the need for the Government to be in the driver's seat. Thus, the UN system, through UN Women provided a coordinated support to the Government taking full ownership and leadership on gender and women's issues in Cameroon²⁶⁹.

UNFPA has played a key role in the setting up of a coordination unit within the MINPROFF, which regroups all UN agencies²⁷⁰. As a result of this, MINPROFF created a coordination unit among all entities of the Ministry, i.e. a platform and one-stop shop which interact directly with the UN System, through UN Women²⁷¹. This was extremely important since various directorates or specifically created project units of the Ministry were used to work directly with separate UN agencies often leaving government entities and the UN System without properly coordinating or communicating among themselves UN Women's coordination and convening role²⁷². UNFPA offered a national expert to UN Women, whose task consists in planning, coordinating and monitoring the UN system's activities on gender and who interacts directly with the MINPROFF's coordination unit²⁷³. UN Women plays the overall coordinating role of the UN System and supports the Government on normative and strategic issues such as the National Gender Policy, Gender-based Budgeting and Financing, Mainstreaming Gender in the revised PRSP etc²⁷⁴. UNFPA has provided support to the elaboration of a national gender policy and strategy in the following ways;

- UNFPA has become a prime sponsor of the MINPROFF's activities and has supported the institutional development of the response to adverse conditions and situations affecting women and girls. It has done so through the initiation of and support to the development of the National Policy on Gender (2010-2020), which includes an action plan since the beginning of the fifth country programme²⁷⁵.
- UN Women assisted MINPROFF to translate its Action Plan into a comprehensive results and resource framework, including new indicators in line with the UN System's comparative programming strengths.

²⁶⁹ M. G. Nduwayo and A. Sibenaler, *UNFPA-UN Women collaboration*, p. 1.

²⁷⁰ UNFPA, "Cameroon independent country programme evaluation", p.57.

²⁷¹ UNFPA, "Impact annual report : special review 2008-2012", New York, Semini group, 2013, p. 15.

²⁷² M. G. Nduwayo and A. Sibenaler, *UNFPA-UN Women collaboration*, p. 1.

²⁷³ UNFPA, "Impact annual report", p. 15.

²⁷⁴ M. G. Nduwayo and A. Sibenaler, *UNFPA-UN Women collaboration*, p. 2.

²⁷⁵ UNFPA, "Cameroon independent country programme evaluation", p.47.

- Annual work plans (AWPs) of UN agencies were then aligned to the Government's Action Plan avoiding duplication and maximizing their pooling their resources²⁷⁶.

Both UN Women and UNFPA now coordinate their field support to the Ministry's regional delegations in areas like socio-economic re-integration of victims of violence, including obstetric fistula and establishing local platforms on how to prevent GBV. The collaboration between UNFPA and UN Women and Cameroon has had a positive spill-over effect to the UNFPA and UN Women offices in Chad and the Central African Republic since both countries are covered by the UN Women Office in Cameroon²⁷⁷. Strengthening UN Women's operational capacity to carry out its coordinating role with UNFPA, this has led to a clear understanding of shared responsibilities between UNFPA and UN Women in Cameroon with UNFPA providing direct support to develop the thematic priority areas on health and human rights under the National Gender Policy²⁷⁸.

e. UN Women on Cross-Border Informal Trade (PAFICIT) and GRB in Cameroon

Mme Goretti Nduwayo, one of the representatives of UN Women Cameroon, said that economic empowerment of women is one of the key areas of UN Women commitment since 2008 in Cameroon through the programme Support for Women in informal trans-border trade (PAFICIT) to include the construction of a Gender Sensitive commercial structure that permits women to be fully engaged and increase participation and generation of income. UN Women advocates for economic empowerment as women's right, and as an enormous benefit for societies and economies. It helps countries enact laws and policies that increase women's access to economic resources, and to establish services that support sustainable livelihoods. Across sub-Saharan Africa, women trade goods such as crops, handicrafts, electronics, minerals and clothes across borders. As informal small-business owners, they make vital contributions, helping to reduce poverty by creating wealth and employment. Women comprise up to 70 percent of people involved in informal cross-border trade, an activity that provides nearly \$18 billion a year for the economies of Southern Africa alone²⁷⁹. One of the Current programmes of UN Women Cameroun is the Programme of Women involved in Cross-Border Informal Trade (PAFICIT)²⁸⁰. In 15 countries, UN Women's informal cross-

²⁷⁶ M. G. Nduwayo and A. Sibenaler, *UNFPA-UN Women collaboration*, p. 2.

²⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 3.

²⁷⁸ UNFPA, "Impact annual report", p. 15.

²⁷⁹ UN Women, "Annual Report 2010", p. 13.

²⁸⁰ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/west-and-central-africa/cameroon>, consulted on 22nd June 2020.

border trade programme draws attention to women's considerable economic contributions, and advocates for favourable tax regimes, supportive institutions and services, and recognition in national development plans. It interacts directly with cross-border traders, and helps communicate their concerns in global trade talks, including the World Trade Organization²⁸¹.

UN Women in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade implemented a project called: Support Programme for Women Involved in Informal Cross-Border Trade since 2012²⁸². The aim of the programme was to contribute to poverty reduction in rural and urban areas through the improvement of the socio-economic position of women involved in informal cross-border trade²⁸³. Three major border areas are covered by this programme, namely: (i) the Cameroon-Nigeria border area, with the Idenau project site; (ii) the Cameroon-Gabon-Equatorial Guinea border area, with the Kyé-Ossi project site; (iii) the Cameroon-Nigeria-Chad border area, with the Mora project site²⁸⁴.

Kye-Ossi is a border zone of Cameroon with Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, demographically dense and very commercial²⁸⁵. In order to enable local women to carry out their trade in hygienic conditions and in the best possible way, a number of measures have been taken to make their activities more profitable. In collaboration with the Kye-Ossi City Council, The Minister of Trade, Luc Magloire Mbarga Atangana, the Resident Coordinator of the UN System in Cameroon, Najat Rochdi and the Representative of UN Women, Marie-Goretti Nduwayo jointly laid the Foundation Stone for the first Gender-Sensitive Market and Commercial Centre at Kye-Ossi, frontier town between Cameroon, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea as seen in pictures 29 and 30²⁸⁶.

²⁸¹ UN Women, "Annual Report 2010", p. 13.

²⁸² UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 46.

²⁸³ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade: Empirical Evidence from Cameroon", *international journal of economics and finance*, vol. 3, no. 3, Faculty of Economics and Management, University of Yaounde II, August 2011, p. 202.

²⁸⁴ ONU Femmes, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et de l'autonomisation des femmes : 2014-2015*, Yaoundé-Cameroun, Avril 2015, p. 15.

²⁸⁵ T. Hervé, H. T. Frankie, et al, "Le Marché Dans La Construction De L'inter Territorialité Transfrontalière : Le Cas Du Marché De Kye-Ossi Dans L'analyse A Travers La Distribution Des Produits Agricoles Entre Le Cameroun, La Guinée Équatoriale Et Le Gabon (Sud Cameroun)", *European Scientific Journal*, Vol.16, No.11, Département de Géographie, Université de Dschang, Cameroon, April 2020, p. 206.

²⁸⁶ ONU Femmes, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes*, p.15.

Picture 29: Laying of the foundation stone



Source : *ONU Femmes, progrès vers l'égalité des sexes*, p. 15.

Note: The Minister of Trade and UN Women Resident Representative were laying the foundation stone for Kye-Ossi Gender Sensitive market.

Picture 30: The researcher in front of the main shade of Kye-Ossi market



Source : Sydony Endali, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021, field work.

Note: Standing in front of the main shade built by UN Women in Kye-Ossi market, the researcher had just finished field interviews.

These market elements include: (i) a 50-seat shed that serves as a sales outlet, with integrated baby crib spaces and play areas for young children; (ii) a building that serves as a sleeping area for women traders in transit, (iii) an improved latrine, (iv) a hand-pumped borehole, and (v) a garbage receptacle. The inauguration of this gender-sensitive market took place on 4 March 2015. UN Women worked hand in glove with an association called *Mutuelle des Bayam-Sellam (MUBASE)* in Kye-Ossi to promote the installation of the above-mentioned infrastructures²⁸⁷. In this line, Antoinette Angono Aba'a, president of MUBASE and first deputy Mayor of the Ntem Valley, Kye-Ossi asserted that:

In relation to Kye-Ossi market Women, UN Women had committed herself to sustain MUBASE and its activities in that area which contributed in strengthening women's economic empowerment within vulnerable groups, thus supporting income increase of rural women and those involved in informal cross-border trade. For instance, UN Women planned a two days seminar in 2014 to work with MUBASE to increase financing for women's specific needs and interests to boost their business and to support gender national policy functional coordination and monitoring mechanisms of MUBASE in Kye-Ossi. UN Women helped women get better direct access to markets and means for transport, thus enhancing their income by avoiding middlemen. A number of women have made progress in moving up the value chain, through UN Women's work with MUBASE. UN Women via MUBASE provided micro-credit in revolving fund, enhancing the access to finance women with small businesses, who are usually not able to obtain credit from banks²⁸⁸.

²⁸⁷ *ONU Femmes, progrès vers l'égalité des sexes*, p.15.

²⁸⁸ Interview with Mrs. Antoinette Angono Aba'a, 60 years, president of *MUBASE*, Kye-Ossi, July13, 2021.

In 2012, UN Women fully funded a project in IRESCO to Support and assist the ASBY in Cameroon for the empowerment of its members thus helping women retailers to empower themselves. Thanks to the strong mobilisation of technical and financial staff, IRESCO successfully conducted a training workshop for ASBY regional leaders and coordinators. The training covered the areas of networking, advocacy, leadership and business planning. UN Women and IRESCO also provided support by training some fifty members of ASBY in the efficient management of a microcredit and the use of the cash book for a better profitability of their income generating activities. In terms of capacity building, it should be noted that the training was not only aimed at ASBY members, but also at IRESCO staff. For example, a staff member benefited from a training organised by UN Women in results-based management and the human rights-based approach. This training enabled IRESCO to optimise the supervision of ASBY members in achieving the results of this project as seen pictures 31 and 32²⁸⁹.

Picture 31: ASBY regional leaders training



Source : "Appui et accompagnement de l'Association des Bayam Selam en vue de l'autonomisation de ses membres", IRESCO, Yaoundé, Cameroun, 2013, p. 1.

Note: A workshop on Capacity building of ASBY regional leaders in networking and advocacy.

Picture 32: Handing over of cash register books



Source: "Appui et accompagnement de l'Association des Bayam Selam en vue de l'autonomisation de ses membres", IRESCO, Yaoundé, Cameroun, 2013, p. 1.

Note: Handing over of cash register books to microcredit beneficiaries after the workshop.

²⁸⁹ "Appui et accompagnement de l'Association des Bayam Sellam en vue de l'autonomisation de ses membres", IRESCO, Yaoundé, Cameroun, 2013, p. 1.

The objective of micro-credits is to help beneficiaries to grow their income generative activities. Women retailers have difficulty accessing credit through the banking system, due to the often out-of-reach bank conditions. To break this barrier to access to finance, a support fund or microcredit has been made available to ASBY members. These micro-credits, amounting to 100,000 CFA francs per beneficiary called "test micro-credits", on the one hand to evaluate the application of the lessons learned and on the other hand to test the capacity of these women to faithfully repay their loans. In order to monitor the accounting of their income generative activities on an annual basis, the trained women each received a cash register book produced by IRESCO. Supervision of microcredit beneficiaries was carried out after the micro-credits were granted. Thus, the field visits, which consisted of meeting the retailers individually at their point of sale, helped to strengthen their capacities, particularly in the proper keeping of the cash register book, with a view to better monitoring their accounts. The contribution of the micro-credits granted to ASBY members by UN Women undoubtedly revealed an economic increase in the activities of the beneficiaries. As one microcredit beneficiary from the Nsam-Efoulan market in Yaounde testified: "The microcredit we received enabled us to expand the range of products we sell. Before, we were only involved in small scale businesses, but now, with the microcredit, we have expanded our businesses in several areas, which have greatly increased our monthly income"²⁹⁰.

f. UN Women's strategic plan on GRB and "gender café" in Cameroon

UN Women on GRB, supports the adoption and implementation of constitutional reform, laws and policies that promote women's inclusion, including temporary special measures to fast-track greater women's participation and leadership, Gender-responsive electoral management Capacity development and institutional change to attract more women into economic leadership positions in service delivery institutions²⁹¹. The 2014 Strategic Plan in Cameroon, sets out the organization's programme to support the priorities as defined by the country²⁹². To ensure the implementation of its Strategic Plan in a more accountable and impactful manner, UN Women was committed in strengthening capacity in results-based management and building a strong culture of effective and efficient economic programme

²⁹⁰ "Appui et accompagnement de l'Association des Bayam Sellam en vue de l'autonomisation ", p.1.

²⁹¹ UN Women, "Strategic plan 2014-2017: Making this the century for women and gender equality", New York, 2014, p. 5.

²⁹² ONU Femmes, *Cameroon : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 6.

management²⁹³. In response to Cameroon's gender challenges at the institutional and economic levels, UN Women developed a Strategic Plan in 2014 which, in partnership with other UN agencies and other development partners, supports the Government's efforts to reduce women's economic poverty²⁹⁴. For the effective implementation of this plan, UN Women built strong partnerships and strategic alliances to monitor evaluate, communicate and put in place mechanisms to strengthen policy dialogue and leadership on gender issues within the United Nations system, with the Government, civil society, technical and financial partners and the private sector.²⁹⁵

At the level of ministries in Cameroon, UNIFEM's strategic orientations consisted in ensuring greater consideration for better practices of the local and international lessons from experience, including consideration for gender issues in budgeting and the improvement of management in ministries through GRB. However, numerous seminars, workshops and consultations have been organized by the EC for Senior Officials of Ministries (MINREX, MINEPAT, MINEFI) in charge of preparing partnership programmes. Picture 33 for instance, shows a sensitization seminar organized in 2014 by UNIFEM with the staff of MINREX to reserve some budgetary lines for developing activities in favour of women of MINREX.

Picture 33: Gender training for MINREX managers on GRB



Source : ONU Femmes, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et l'autonomisation des femmes 2014-2015*, Yaoundé - Cameroun, Avril 2015, p. 17.

(UN Women building a group of capacity actors for gender mainstreaming in planning and budgeting in MINREX to reduce the gaps in the different economic sectors of the country).

²⁹³ <https://cameroun.minajobs.net/emploi-stage-recrutement/2188/job-opportunities-national-consultantunwomen-cameroon-situational-analysis-for> , consulted on 29th June 2020.

²⁹⁴ ONU Femmes, *Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 6.

²⁹⁵ L. McGrew, *Social Cohesion*, p. 43.

Responding to the demand from countries to introduce or institutionalise GRB, the UN Women contributes extensively to building interest, capacity and commitment to incorporate a gender equality perspective in budgetary processes and practices. Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) has become an internationally acknowledged tool for achieving gender equality²⁹⁶. UN Women's supported GRB initiatives operate on different levels and vary in their objectives, but they are united in their ultimate goal: to contribute to the realization of women's rights and gender equality through changes in budget priorities as well as increased women's participation in budgetary debates and decision-making²⁹⁷.

In April 2012, UN Women commissioned the Universal Management Group Limited to carry out the evaluation on its behalf, following a competitive and open bidding process²⁹⁸. The programme was structured in two phases that roughly corresponded to the two programme outcomes:

- Phase I (March 2008-March 2009) included in-depth research studies in ten countries that explored the extent and ways in which GRB concepts and approaches are being applied in the respective countries. Countries included in this phase were: Cameroon, Ethiopia, India, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda²⁹⁹.
- Phase II (July 2009 - March 2012) focused on providing tailored technical support to Ministries of Finance and line ministries in five of the original ten programme countries (Cameroon, Nepal, Peru, Rwanda and Tanzania) towards the achievement of Outcome 2 (improving country capacity)³⁰⁰.

The five countries included in Phase II of the GRB in AE programme subsequently received additional funding for a further year beginning April 2012 under the Financing for Gender Equality Programme (F4GE)³⁰¹. The F4GE was to increase the volume and effective use of aid and domestic resources to implement national commitments to gender equality and women's empowerment. It was implemented in sixteen countries by UN Women in partnership with the International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization

²⁹⁶UN Women, "Evaluation of UN Women's contribution to Gender-responsive budgeting in the Europe and central Asia region", Istanbul, May 2017, p. 4.

²⁹⁷ Ibid, p. 5.

²⁹⁸UN Women, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Aid Effectiveness Agenda: End of Programme Evaluation", UNIVERSALIA, September 21, 2012, p. 1.

²⁹⁹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 3.

³⁰⁰ UN Women, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Aid Effectiveness", p. 1.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

and funded by the European Commission³⁰². The F4GE programme (2011-2014) sought to strengthen accountability to implement gender equality in financing decisions and practices of donors and programme countries in 16 countries. The five GRB in Aid Effectiveness (AE) countries will be part of the F4GE for the first year of its implementation, with the expectation that the other countries involved in the F4GE will be able to build on the lessons learned in the GRB in AE programme³⁰³.

UN Women supports national capacity building on GRB at national and local levels through trainings and direct support and consultations which help stakeholders understand the definition and purpose of GRB, providing to them practical tools and action plans for the utilization of the GRB approach at national and local levels³⁰⁴. UN Women Supports the formulation of National GRB Capacity Assessments and Plans. In Cameroon the programme assisted in carrying out an institutional capacity assessment which highlighted the need for greater government commitment to implement GRB and to address gender gaps in policy, planning and budgeting. The assessment was rolled up into a capacity development plan which outlined necessary training and training of trainer sessions to expand the reach of GRB capacity development. Comparable activities were carried out in Peru, Nepal, and Cameroon³⁰⁵. In Cameroon, GRB-related awareness raising and training to a wide range of government official programmes was delivered to train on GRB and Aid Effectiveness to 58 government officials from the Ministry of Finance and sector ministries, which led to subsequent requests for training from the Prime Minister's Office and other government entities. In relation to GRB/gender monitoring at both national and local levels provided by UN Women in Cameroon, a programme established to deliver training to 35 CSOs from CSO network *Dynamique Citoyenne* in order to develop a monitoring methodology for GRB application all the health sectors³⁰⁶. All these facilitated a change in the government budget to improve the allocation of resources to women and other benefits that arises from applying GRB in ministries. These benefits include; enhancing democracy, civil society participation and accountability, supporting gender mainstreaming in macroeconomics; strengthening civil society participation in economic policy making; enhancing the linkages between economic and social policy outcomes; tracking public expenditure against GAD policy commitments; and contributing to the attainment of the MDG as shown in appendix 12.

³⁰² UN Women, "Evaluation of UN women's contribution to Gender-responsive budgeting", p. 62.

³⁰³ UN Women, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Aid Effectiveness", p. 1.

³⁰⁴ UN Women, "Evaluation of UN women's contribution to Gender-responsive budgeting", p. 5.

³⁰⁵ UN Women, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Aid Effectiveness", p. 33.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid*, p. 35.

After series of meetings between development partners and UN Women's representation in Cameroon, it was noted that there was limited strategic and national discussions on gender issues and a need for an understanding of UN Women's mandate in the country. To bridge this gap, UN Women launched an innovative initiative called "Gender coffee" in March 2014³⁰⁷. The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, with the technical and financial support from UN Women organized "Gender coffee" sessions in the ten regions of the country under the central theme: "Reinforcement of women's participation and representation in public life and decision-making". Gender café serve as a platform for dialogue and exchanges towards boosting women's participation in political life³⁰⁸.

Concerning the Gender Café, it is a space for discussion on any topical issue on gender and the advancement of women, breaking down barriers on gender sensitive issues/themes and lobbying for more equality in the country³⁰⁹. During the year 2014, seven editions of the Gender Café with a total of 1500 participants were organized in the presence of Ministers, Ambassadors, diplomats, academics, parliamentarians/senators, opinion leaders, Civil Society Organizations and a strong presence of UN agencies³¹⁰. The first two editions of the Gender Café took place in the spring of 2014. The second session was dedicated to Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), and acted as a platform for Mali and Senegal to provide their lessons learnt, in terms of GRB and Gender Responsive Planning. Over 80 participants from partners' organisations and stakeholders, civil society and bilateral partners, media, and the Government met to increase awareness around the subject, speak loud and clear about the situation in Cameroon, as well as sharing their own experiences and advice³¹¹. With wide dissemination through the national media and a massive presence of decision-makers, the Gender Café has rapidly established itself in the national landscape as an essential tool for policy dialogue on gender issues in the country³¹². Thus, the Gender Café meetings contribute in a sustainable way to the advancement of gender priorities, and disseminate best practices and standards among various countries³¹³. In terms of its impact on policy dialogue, the

³⁰⁷ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 18.

³⁰⁸ MINPROFF, "National Action Plan to support women's participation in decision making in Cameroon", UN-Women, 2018, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ "Gender Café: gender responsive budgeting and planning a comparative perspective on Cameroon, Mali and Senegal", May 2014, p. 1.

³¹⁰ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 18.

³¹¹ "Gender Café: gender responsive budgeting and planning a comparative", p. 1.

³¹² <https://africa.unwomen.org/fr/news-and-events/stories/2017/08/gender-cafe-encourages-some-in-cameroon>, consulted on 6th June 2020.

³¹³ <https://africa.unwomen.org/fr/ns/2017/07/gender-cafe-in-cameroon>, consulted on 6th June 2020.

Regional Director of UN Women has classified the Gender Café as a good practice in the region that should be replicated in other countries³¹⁴.

Adding to the above analyses, the CSOs, MINADER, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the French Development Agency (AFD), during a third edition of gender café in Yaounde described rural women as “a key for change” agreeing to join forces with UN Women Cameroon in speeding up progress on economic empowerment. UN Women’s Gender Café in Cameroon is a space for debate and concrete discussions on gender issues. Pictures 34 and 35 illustrate the first and third Gender Café edition organized by UN Women in Cameroon.

Picture 34 : UN Women’s Gender Café on GBV in Cameroon



Source: ONU Femmes, *progrès vers l'égalité des sexes*, p. 18.

The first edition of Gender Café on GBV in Cameroon, on a Thursday 27th March 2014 with the presence of Madam Abena Ondo M. T. the Minister of MINPROFF, the Brazilian Ambassador Nei Futuro B, including two other Ministers and UN agents held at the UN Women office in Yaounde.

Picture 35 : UN Women’s Gender Café on economic empowerment of rural women



Source: ONU Femmes: "Autonomisation économique des femmes rurales au Cameroun...", p. 3.

The third edition of Gender Café meeting of more than 100 participants who converged to the UN Women office in Yaounde, on May 28, 2014 to voice their experience and lessons, as well their concerns for advancing the values and goals of gender equality and women empowerment.

The Gender Café clearly intends to show that progress is at reach and that others’ experiences can help find new ways for Cameroon to step up actions and reach progress today. According to the Minister Delegate in the ministry of Agriculture and Rural development, Clementine Ananga Messina, during this third edition underscored that fewer funding opportunities, training programmes, land ownership and access to market are the major challenges facing rural women and girls. Thus, she insisted on the point that women

³¹⁴ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 18.

should be given the right to have access to land since they contribute to 80 percent of food production in the country³¹⁵. Moreso, a national policy and reference document on the promotion of gender equality was officially presented on 23 January, 2015 in Yaounde by the Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family (MINPROFF), M. T. Abena Ondo. This document helps put women at the heart of economic development policies³¹⁶. The compendium took stock of issues related to the low level of education of girls, discrimination and violence against women, the high rate of maternal mortality, the low economic power of women, their low participation in public life and decision-making, etc. It is also a useful reference tool for those who want to learn more about women's rights³¹⁷.

Conclusion

From the above analyses, this chapter has elaborated UNIFEM's and women's economic empowerment strategies which is associated with frameworks and institutional systems. It assesses UNIFEM's experience of implementing its economic plans in the country. However, it is important to note that for UNIFEM to be able to accomplish these various strategies in Cameroon, it made use of the mainstreaming method through the establishment of gender focal points in the various government departments in the nations. Also, we have been able to identify what worked well, what worked less and what more was needed for UNIFEM and its successor UN Women to effectively monitor performances. The study has found out that the UNIFEM and later on UN Women's strategic plans and its associated results frameworks on GRB and MDG were relevant and appropriate to the core UNIFEM/UN Women mandates and subsequent operations. This is evidenced through the research done to permit one to understand the economic changes which provide knowledge, skills and abilities to the Cameroon government and Non-Governmental Organizations to promote women and gender equality, advocates participating effectively in the mainstreaming policy processes. At corporate level, the various ministerial departments in Cameroon act as pillars through which it operates and influences a number of government economic actions on women. This will lead us to the next chapter on UNIFEM's impact, impediments and recommendations in Cameroon.

³¹⁵ ONU Femmes: "Autonomisation économique des femmes rurales au Cameroun, la clé du changement", Café Genre au Cameroun, bulletin d'information n° 3, Juin 2014, p. 4.

³¹⁶ <https://www.mediaterre.org/afrique-centrale/actu,20150601100719.html>, consulted on 6th June 2020.

³¹⁷ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 7.

CHAPTER FIVE

UNIFEM IMPACT, IMPEDIMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN CAMEROON

Introduction

This chapter aims at evaluating and examining achievements of UNIFEM's activities and strategies studied. From our investigations, it appears obvious that the actions of UNIFEM in Cameroon have influenced not only the women, but the entire country in several aspects of life. This clearly means that the presence of UNIFEM has brought in the life of women a remarkable influence that flows to equally influence the evolution of the society. As all the UNIFEM's strategies studied in this thesis have the same goals which is to militate for the empowerment of women from their various communities and the development of Cameroon, UNIFEM have carried out a wide range of achievements which have produced significant impacts in the life of women and that of the entire nation. These achievements and impacts are diversified and include several domains such as the national and international impact of UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon; it is obvious to note that UNIFEM faced some Impediments and made recommendations in order to palliate to the difficulties faced by UNIFEM in Cameroon.

I. National impact of UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon

With a focus on national impact of UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon, this section examines how the actions of this organisation have influenced women in leadership within the nation. It also talks about women in parliament and the Electoral Code; as well as UN Women and humanitarian aid. Furthermore, it gives some highlights on UNIFEM and national machineries and finally explains its impact on education, health and gender equality.

a. UNIFEM and promotion of women leadership

“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” and the desire to understand and enhance leadership has spanned centuries. While definitions of leadership have varied, one thing is consistent, we count on leaders' abilities to transform

and influence people and institutions¹. UNIFEM's support to Cameroon women's leadership has enabled them to voice their needs and create a common vision for the future following some truly ground-breaking results of parliamentary elections in the country². For example, Women in leadership positions at the level of municipal councils (Celestine Ketcha-Courtès Bangante, Amougou Noma Régine, Yaounde IV 2015, Caroline Bi Bongwa first female mayor in the Northwest Region 2013) in Cameroon after 2012 changed notably³. From the 2013 municipal elections, more women were elected assistant mayors into councils than ever before. The number of female mayors represented about 9% of the total number of mayors in the country, and for the female assistant mayors, it was about 30%⁴. The regions with the highest number of women mayors after the mayoral elections of 2013 were the South West, Littoral, and East. Meanwhile, the Centre, South, and South West registered the highest number of female assistant mayors in all the councils of Cameroon⁵. UNIFEM's work on leadership has strengthened linkages across women's machineries, women parliamentarians and the women's movement in the nation⁶. UNIFEM has contributed to the development of the capacities of elected women and candidates at the regional level, so that they will have the instruments to access and maintain positions of political representation both in public instances as well as in political parties in Cameroon⁷.

UNIFEM's strong partnerships with the Cameroon government were particularly effective in connecting women's priorities with political processes, since UNIFEM, as part of the UN system, had access to a variety of political and governmental actors⁸. It was also able to help forge the diverse partnerships required to push forward increases in women's political participation, drawing on longstanding connections with women's groups, women politicians and national gender machineries⁹. Thus, historic outcome of UNIFEM left an important positive impact on women's status in Cameroon, including women's political participation

¹ M. Kowalski-Braun, "An Examination of How Feminist Perspectives and Generational Differences influence the Leadership Practices of Women Administrators in Higher Education", Doctorate Thesis in Educational Leadership, Research and Technology, Western Michigan University, December 2014, p. 18.

² "United Nations Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, Second regular session 23 - 27 September 2002", New York, UNIFEM, 8 August 2002, p. 6.

³ H. K. Kah and M. Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 9.

⁴ D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam. *l'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique*, p. 221.

⁵ H. K. Kah and M. Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p. 9.

⁶ "United Nations Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, Second regular ", p. 7.

⁷ UNIFEM, "11th Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean", ECLAC, 2012, p. 2.

⁸ Interview with, Minkoulou Solange Agnés, 43 years, Chief of Service on socials actions of MINAC, 15 November 2019, Yaounde.

⁹ "Democracy with women, for women: seven grants that helps change the face of governance", UNIFEM, New York, 2008, p. 2.

and representation. The growing influence of global feminism and the strength of grassroots women's rights movements in different parts of the country have been at large facilitated by the women's group through UNIFEM¹⁰. In 2007 the network of More Women in Politics, with support from UNIFEM organized a training session on the theme "Women and Politics in Parliament", put in place a gender network in parliament, which is made up of both men and women¹¹. Despite historically low representation of women in government, currently, women comprise 7 of 23 elected members of the National Assembly, while others have taken new leadership positions in the army and police forces. Increasingly, women are also leaders in science and technology, albeit educational disparities in certain provinces¹².

UNIFEM has worked in close collaboration with organizations and Institutes for GAD Studies (IGDS) to implement projects aimed at developing women's leadership capacities. These projects promote women's equal participation in politics and decision-making in the regions of Cameroon¹³. For example, with UNIFEM's assistance, North West Women Empowerment Fund (NOWWEF) organized a conference on April 21st, 2007 at the Bamenda congress hall under the theme "empowering women politically". During this conference, speeches were made by some dignitaries to encourage women to enter into political life¹⁴. For instance, the speech made by Dr. Uphie Chinje Melo who said: "it is widely recognized that women are agents of change and always first to cross the devise line"¹⁵. According to Mrs. Regina Mundi, each one is responsible for his/her way forward¹⁶. When you have an objective and a goal, don't let anybody dissuade you from it. Behind every successful man is a woman¹⁷, so she equally assumed that if women can make men successful, they should be able to do so for themselves¹⁸. Training and capacity-building initiatives have also been undertaken in specific areas to promote the active citizenship of women from distinct social and ethnic backgrounds¹⁹. UNIFEM'S relationship with the Government of Cameroon helped

¹⁰ K. Heideman, "Beijing +20 looking back and the road ahead: reflections on milestones in women's leadership in the 21st century", Woodrow Wilson International Centre, Middle East, 2014, p. 24.

¹¹ K. N. Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, p. 47.

¹² S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders strengthening women's leadership in local government for effective decentralized governance and poverty reduction in Africa: roles, challenges and strategies", Palais des Congrès, Yaounde, Cameroon, 26-27 May 2008 p. 7. 27.

¹³ Interview with Hadidjatou Amadou Epse Alioum, 45 years, sub director of MINEPIA, 30 November 2019, Yaounde.

¹⁴ File No NW/Saled. 2008/54/BK, "North West Women's Empowerment Forum", 2008, p.3.

¹⁵ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders 2008 p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ J. Clare, "Becoming leaders: an investigation into women's leadership in male-defined and male- dominated professions", Doctorate Thesis in educational innovation, Queensland University of Technology, 2003, p. 27.

¹⁸ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders 2008 p. 7.

¹⁹ Interview with Menghem Genelova, 28 years, Civil servant MINAC, 5 October 2019, Yaounde.

to firmly commit herself to improving the level of women's participation in public life. This political will is manifested through a number of initiatives which are in table 17:

Table 17: Women's participation in public life

Year of creation	Political will
1984	The creation in 1984 of a Ministry in charge of women's issues whose name Was changed to the Ministry of Women's Affairs, which became the Ministry of Women's empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) in 2004);
1990	The Human Rights Committee, which in 2004 became the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF);
1990	Law No. 90/053 on freedom of association of December 19, 1990;
1996	The adoption of the National Governance Programme (NGP), one of the objectives of which is to promote the protection of vulnerable groups and minorities;
2002	The affirmation of political will for the integration of the gender approach in all areas with the inclusion of the promotion of women in government policies;
2007	MINPROFF's financial support for female candidates for the 2007 legislative elections;
2008	The circular letter n° 006/29 April 2008, from the President of the Republic on the integration of gender in the State budget ;
2009	The elaboration of the vision of development 2035 which intends to make Cameroon "A Nation favoring the equal access of women and men to electoral mandates and elective functions as well as their professional equality";
2009	The preparation of the Growth and Employment Strategy Document (GESD), which places particular emphasis on the creation of conditions favorable to the development of women and their best contribution to socio-economic development;
2009	The Government signed an agreement on (June 2009) with UNIFEM (now UN Women), with the purpose to raise awareness of the CEDAW among magistrates and to monitor/evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the CEDAW;

Source: "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013: Le Cameroun sur le chemin de la parité", More Women in Politics, ONU Femmes, 2014, p. 278.

These instruments all aim at promoting the full participation of women in political leadership and processes in Cameroon. Today, Women's issues, role and involvement in public life have gained great and increased concerns not only on the national level, but also on the regional and global level. This will be followed with the next step that talks about Women in parliament and the Electoral Code in Cameroon.

b. Women in parliament and the Electoral Code

UNIFEM's profound impact on the legal and political development of Cameroon is visible in the strengthening of institutional provisions for the protection of women's rights and efforts to bring existing legislation to conformity with Convention principles, and in the improvement in the capacity of national institutions and gender budgeting to guarantee equality between men and women²⁰. UNIFEM has facilitated the incorporation of a gender perspective in the drafting of new constitutions and legislation, including specific laws on gender issues in Cameroon²¹. UNIFEM have supported the Electoral Commission and local women's organizations in developing a shared strategy and action plans to ensure women's full participation in future elections as illustrated in table 18²².

Table 18 : Evolution of the Number of Women in the National Assembly in Cameroon

Year of election	Assembly seats	No. of men	No. of Women	% of women
1960	100	99	1	1.0
1962	50	49	1	2.0
1964	50	49	1	2.0
1970	50	48	2	4.0
1973	120	113	7	5.8
1978	120	108	12	10.0
1983	120	103	17	14.2
1988	180	153	27	15.2
1992	180	157	23	12.8
1997	180	170	10	5.6
2013-2015	180	124	56	31.1

Source : H. K. Kah, and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership 1960-2015", *Afro Asian journal of social sciences*, volume 9, N° 2, 2018, p. 11.

After 1980 the percentage of women in the national assembly rose to more than 10 per cent, reaching 14 per cent between 1988 and 1992. A total of 27 women were then elected into parliament in 1988, which represented an increase of ten women in a parliament of 120 members; between 1960 and 1964 the number of women elected into the national assembly remained static. In the 1970 elections, the number increased from one to two out of a total of 50 parliamentarians. In 1973, after the May 20, 1972, Referendum that transformed Cameroon from a federal to a unitary state, seven women were elected into a parliament of

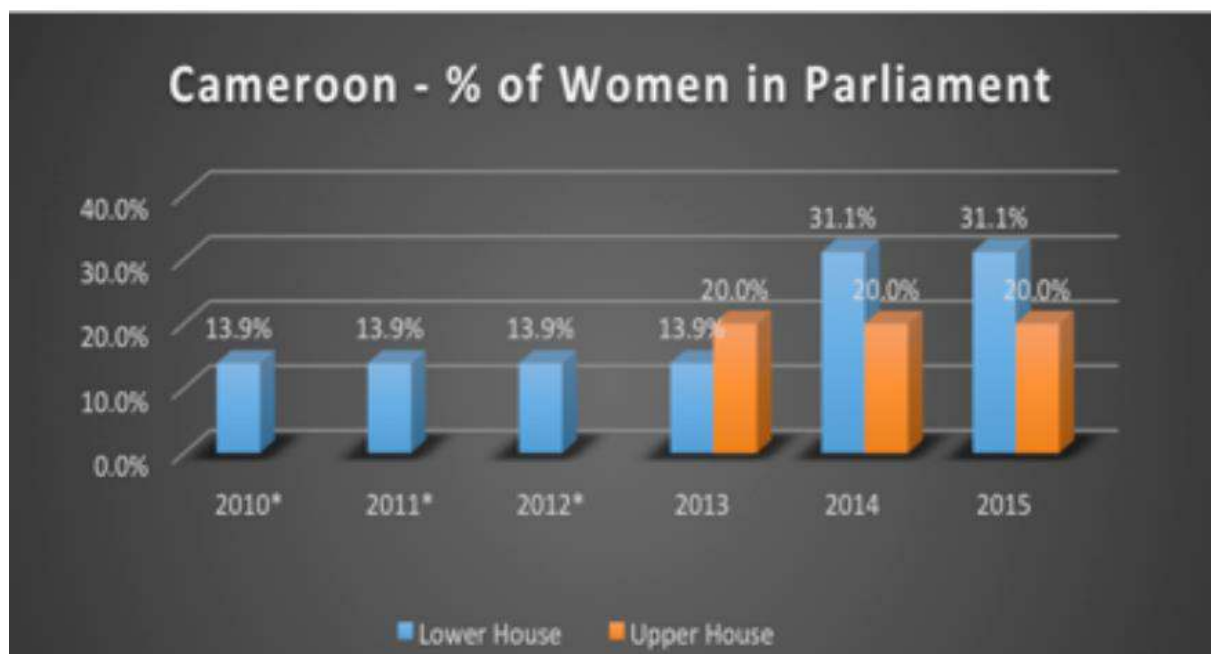
²⁰"Beijing +20 looking back and the road ahead: reflections on milestones in women's", p. 44.

²¹"Partnership for gender equality : the role of multilateral and bilateral agencies in Africa", Beijing + 10 Synthesis Report, UNIFEM, March 2005, p. 24.

²² Ibid, p. 23.

120 members. It was not until 2000 and 2015 that 27 and 56 women were elected into a parliament of 180 deputies as seen from the diagram 9²³.

Diagram 9 : Percentage of women in parliament 2000 - 2015



Source: “African Women's Decade 2010-2020: Make Woman Count Promoting the Empowerment of African Women and Girls”, UK, Oxfam, 2016, p. 25.

The percentage of women in the National Assembly had risen from 16 (8.9%) in 2005 to 25 (13.9%) in 2010 to 56 (31.1%) in 2015²⁴. In 2005, Cameroon was ranked 106th, 84th in 2010, and in September 2015 Cameroon was ranked 33rd by the Inter Parliamentary Union²⁵. The recent elections for the senate mark positive progress toward equality for women in decision-making positions. On April 14, 2013, Cameroon held its first senatorial elections²⁶. Of the 70 seats that were elected, women were elected to 17 seats, and the President appointed 3 additional female senators out of 30 appointments²⁷. Although the elections and appointments bring the representation of women to 20% in the senate, it is still “inadequate” according to the More Women in Politics Network²⁸. Table 19 shows the increase in women

²³ Galega S. D. and Martha T., “Reversing Decades of Gender Injustice”, p. 252

²⁴ “African Women's Decade 2010-2020: Make Woman Count Promoting the Empowerment of African Women and Girls”, UK, Oxfam, 2016, p. 25.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁶ http://ct2015.cameroon-tribune.cm/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=72747:first-ever-senate-elections-hold-in-april&catid=1:politique&Itemid=3, consulted on 22nd May 2020.

²⁷ <http://www.ipsnews.net/2013/06/looking-tocamerouns-women-senators/>, consulted on 22nd May 2020.

²⁸ <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2013/10/cameroon-elections-catapult-women>, consulted on 22nd May 2020.

representation in the senate because of the law which requires each candidate list to have at least a female candidate without which, their file will not be validated.

Table 19 : Distribution of Senators by sex, by method of designation and by Region

Region	Elected women	Appointed women	Total
Adamawa	1	0	1
Centre	0	0	0
East	3	1	4
Far north	2	0	2
North	2	1	3
Northwest	1	0	1
South	3	1	4
South west	3	0	3
West	1	0	1
Littoral	1	0	1
Total	17	3	20

Source: MINPROFF Statistical Yearbook, NIS, 2014, p. 11.

UN entities operational in Cameroon, including UN Women, and the Regional Office of UN Human Rights for Central Africa, contributed to the electoral process within their mandates and respective areas of intervention in Cameroon²⁹. In 2012, following sustained pressure from the women's movement, Cameroon's Electoral Code was amended to include gender among the criteria required in determining candidate lists for municipal, legislative and regional elections³⁰. For the 2013 legislative elections, in the absence of an implementation decree stipulating modalities, National Electoral Commission Cameroon (ELECAM) introduced a 30% gender-based requirement in the drawing of candidate lists for legislative elections. In the majority part of the legislative elections, ELECAM required that for each candidate, the alternate must be of the opposite sex³¹. On that basis, ELECAM, Cameroon's electoral board, has moved to enforce that provision and rejected 20 lists for failure to comply with the gender requirement³².

The actions of UNIFEM in Cameroon helped enact electoral laws that afford women greater access to political party backing and candidate lists, and thus greater representation and political leverage. The number of parliamentary seats occupied by women more than

²⁹ A. O. Adegbola, "Report of the electoral needs assessment mission, 10-21 July 2017", Cameroon, August 2017, p. 15.

³⁰ Inter-parliamentary union, "Women in Parliament in 2013", Geneva-Switzerland, January 2014, p. 3.

³¹ A. O. Adegbola, "Report of the electoral needs assessment mission", p. 11.

³² Ibid, p. 3.

doubled in the lower houses of Cameroon³³. In Cameroon, women comprise 31.1 per cent of the country's lower house and 20 per cent of the newly-established upper house (composed of both elected and appointed seats). A voluntary 30 per cent quota adopted by the main political parties in 2012 lacked teeth and had little or no impact on women's representation³⁴. In 2012, following sustained pressure from the women's movement, Cameroon's Electoral Code was amended to include gender among the criteria required in determining candidate lists for municipal, legislative and regional elections³⁵.

c. Female Ministers and councilors

To this effect, UNIFEM in collaboration with structures like ELECAM, MINPROFF, More Women in Politics, has done much to raise the women's awareness on the importance of their numeric strength in politics³⁶. Women in Cameroon have been encouraged and instilled to show an interest and involve themselves in politics. Women have been motivated through many ways including testimonies of politically active women. In the same light, efforts have been put in place in various occasions to identify political aspirants and seek ways of encouraging and supporting their efforts and there after equipping them with necessary tools for action in the field. The management skills, knowledge and awareness created in women have made some to acquire leadership skills and have become very active in decision making.³⁷ Among these women, who went on to play different political leadership positions in Cameroon, were Yaou Aïssatou, Isabelle Bassong, Gwendolyne Burnley, Ruth Ekindi, Josepha Mua, just to name few of them³⁸.

Thanks to women's emancipation, there has been a significant increase in female ministers and female senators in Cameroon government. The first Muslim woman got elected in 1973³⁹. Cameroon had its first woman in government as early as 1970, ten years after independence, with the appointment of Delphine Zanga Tsogo (Vice-Minister of Health and Public Welfare from 1970 to 1975 and Minister of Social Affairs from 1975 to 1984). Since 1970 to 2013, Cameroon has had about 24 other women as Ministers, Ministers Delegate or

³³ Interview with Njuwipe Hollande, 35 years, worker at ELECAM's Littoral regional office, Douala, 22nd July 2021

³⁴ "Women in Parliament in 2013", p.3.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ File No. 0020, *Tabloïd Trimestriel de Communication de la délégation régionale du Sud*, ELECAM, June 2016, p.3.

³⁷ NOWWEF, conference report, "Empower women politically", Bamenda, 2nd April 2007, p. 3.

³⁸ D. Abwa, and J. D. Tchunkam, *l'Evolution Perfectible des Femmes dans la Vie Publique*, pp. 212-213

³⁹ L. L. Atanga, *Gender, Discourse and Power in the Cameroonian*, p. 9.

Secretaries of State⁴⁰. On the 9th December, 2011, President Paul Biya carried out a ministerial appointment in which 7 out of 38 ministers were female, and among which 2 out of 10 Secretaries of State were female. Therefore, 9 out of 52 (17.31%) members of government in Cameroon were female⁴¹ as seen from table 20.

Table 20: Evolution trend of the number of female Ministers

Year	No. of Minister	No. of women	% representation of women
1970	28	1	3.6
1972	26	1	3.8
1975	32	2	6.3
1978	21	2	9.5
1983	34	3	8.8
1985	42	5	1.9
1992	45	1	2.2
1996	43	2	4.7
1997	51	3	5.9
2004	60	6	10.0
2006	60	6	10.0
2007	57	6	10.5
2009	71	6	8.5
2011	60	9	15.0

Source: MINPROFF Statistical Yearbook, NIS, 2014, p. 16.

From the late 1980s onwards, there was an increase in the number of women councilors, leaders in their council areas. Between 1987 and 2012, the number of women councilors in Cameroon rose from 436 out of 5,347 to 1,651 out of 10,632 councilors. Within the same period, the percentage of women's representation in these councils rose from 8.3 to 15.5. The number of female mayors also rose from only 1 in 1987 to 24 in 2012. But these 24 women mayors were out of a total of 360 mayors in the country (Gender Empowerment and Development, 2010, p. 46)⁴². The 2007-2012 and 2013-2015 municipal mandates equally show an evolution in women's representation: from 22 female mayors, 35 1st deputies, 47 2nd deputies, the number has increased to 29 female mayors, 72 1st deputies, and 149 2nd deputies as shown in table 21⁴³.

⁴⁰ <http://www.mewc.org/index.php/tools/political-participation-a-election-monitroing/2013-elections-monitoring/5486-cameroon-senatorial-elections-2013>, consulted on 22nd May 2019.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² H. K. Kah and M.Y. Temba, "Cameroonian women in political leadership", p.6.

⁴³ "Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family Statistical Yearbook", NIS, 2014, p. 9.

Table 21 : Female Councilors

Year	No. of councilors	No. of women	% representation of women	No. of female Mayors
1987-1992	5347	436	8.3	1
1996-2001	9932	1061	10.7	2
2002-2007	9963	1302	13.7	10
2007-2012	10632	1651	15.5	24(out of 360)

Source : K. N Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, Assessing the Implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in Cameroon by Gender Empowerment and Development (GEED), July 2010, p. 46.

Note: Looking at the above table and analysis, one will realize that though there is some progress, there is still so much left to be done in getting women into the decision-making process in Cameroon. Good governance and partisan politics of tolerance, magnanimity and accommodation will bring more women on board.

d. UN Women and Humanitarian aid

UNIFEM also worked to improve State capacity for gender-mainstreaming, including the development and implementation of specific tools to address the gender differentials of post-disaster humanitarian response and early recovery programmes⁴⁴. For instance, UN-Women's supports to gender in the humanitarian context was important following the Boko Haram activism at Cameroon's northern border with Nigeria in the Far North⁴⁵. In the humanitarian areas, the interventions were programmatic and more geared towards awareness raising and services for GBV, protection of women and support to income generation⁴⁶. The humanitarian support of UN Women has been mostly linked to gender issues in emergency relief, as it was offered as a reaction to the influx of refugees in Cameroon precisely in the East and Adamaoua⁴⁷. UN Women carried out humanitarian activities in two domains with the establishment of Women cohesion spaces (WCSs) and National Action Plan (NAP) 1325.

UNIFEM is supporting its partners to ensure gender-responsive humanitarian and reconstruction efforts to meet the needs of women and their families. This can be seen with WSCs which provided a safe space where women and girls in humanitarian setting shared

⁴⁴ UNIFEM, "11th Regional Conference on Women", p. 3.

⁴⁵ UNICEF Annual Report 2017, Cameroon, p. 1.

⁴⁶ P. Nana-Dombe, "Rapport de la mission d'observation sur la pratique de la prostitution de survie des Femmes et jeunes filles Centrafricaines à l'Est du Cameroun", IEDA, December 2014, p. 50.

⁴⁷ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 37.

information, learn new skills and receive support⁴⁸. The UN Women in the middle of the Minawao refugee camp in the Far North Region of Cameroon constructed two outstanding structures called the WCs in Cameroon on a surface area of about 3000 metres square each, with the support of the Swedish Civil Contingency Agency (MSB) and the government of Japan⁴⁹. Women constructed similar structures in Ngam and Gado-Badzere refugee sites in the Adamawa and East Regions respectively since 2014⁵⁰. Through WCs, over 4000 refugees have been sensitized on social cohesion. About 100 cases of GBV victims have been identified and assisted and 7 specialized units in Police stations to assist victims of GBV known as “Gender Desks” have been established, following the training of some 400 Police Officers on how to protect women and children in crisis situations⁵¹. For instance, in the east three gender desks were open in the police stations of Bertoua, Batouri and Meiganga, where GBV cases are regularly reported and addressed. In addition, over 200 women refugees and women in refugee host communities received training on income generating activities accompanied by economic kits to start small businesses. A number of Call Centres were equally established in the three affected regions to provide assistance to victims of GBV. The WCs also provide water and toilet facilities taking into account MHM of women and girls in the refugee camps⁵². Through supporting the development of the National Action Plan (NAP) 1325, UN Women also contributed to an increasing role for women in conflict resolution and peace brokering⁵³. UN Women made a considerable effort to involve women in decision making, for instance in the NAP 1325 process, and in political participation in impact in 2014 and in humanitarian context in 2015⁵⁴. In general, women’s participation was treated as a priority. Participation in the design of UN Women’s programmes and Strategic Notes by women but also by partners in general was rated mixed though: some partners were aware of the contents of the Strategic Plan and had participated in its design⁵⁵.

On December 18, 2015 in Bertoua-Cameroon, some 50 law enforcement officers, drawn from the Police corps across the East Region of Cameroon poised to protect women

⁴⁸ “United Nations actions in Cameroon: a bilingual publication of the UN system”, UN, no. 1, June, 2017, p. 21.

⁴⁹ UN Women Cameroon, “Mainstreaming Gender into Humanitarian Response and Protection of Women and Girls Affected by Boko Haram Terrorism in the Far North of Cameroon”, Mid-term Progress Report to the Government of Japan, April - September 2016, p. 51.

⁵⁰ J. P. Dargal, et al. *Gender-based violence in Garoua-Boulai and Gado Refugee Camp: A rapid assessment*, p. 40.

⁵¹ “United Nations actions in Cameroon”, p. 21.

⁵² Ibid. p. 21.

⁵³ A. Matundu, “WILPF Cameroon: the adoption Cameroon’s UNSCR 1325 NAP”, Yaounde, 2014, p. 1.

⁵⁴ UN Women, “Country portfolio evaluation final report”, p. 35.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

and children in humanitarian situations-armed and non-armed conflict areas. They also took the commitment to respect the rights of refugees and pay particular attention to the plights of women and children. The Police Officers took the commitment on Friday 18 December 2015 at the end of a five-days capacity building workshop on how they can better protect women and children in humanitarian conflicts. “We, the law enforcement officers in the East Region promise to put into practice and vulgarize all what we have apprehended as we go back to our various duty stations and police posts”, the representative of the participants pledged at the end of the training. Assiga Thomas, Senior Police Commissioner and Director of Training at the General Delegation for National Security lauded UN Women for the initiative but also requested more capacity building workshops. “We are pleading on UN Women to consider assisting us in formulating a training module that can be integrated as a full course for initial training in Police schools in Cameroon”, the Director requested⁵⁶. Picture 36 presents the event which was organized by UN Women Cameroon within the framework of the project on the provision of life-saving integrated GBV services and protection for women and girl refugees in Adamaoua and East Regions of Cameroon, supported by Japan.

Picture 36: Police officers in group work during the capacity building workshop



Source: <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2015/12/un-women-cameroon-drills-police-force-on-protecting-women-children-in-humanitarian-situation>

Note: During the event, a cross section of Police Officers brainstorming on how to better protect women and children took place in group work as shown in the above picture.

The Programme Officer at UN Women, Joseph Ngoro, seating in for the Country Representative told participants that “UN Women intends to train 150 Police Officers and set up Gender Desks-specialized units on gender-based violence, in Police stations in Bertoua,

⁵⁶ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2015/12/un-women-cameroon-drills-police-force-on-protecting-women-children-in-humanitarian-situations> consulted on 22nd July 2021.

Batouri and Meiganga”. During the five-day capacity building workshop which was the first in a series of three, the Police officers were drilled on the current state of the humanitarian situation in Cameroon, gender-based violence and the role of the Police, legal and in situational frameworks in the area of protecting women and children in humanitarian crises among others⁵⁷.

e. Integrated centres on VAW

UN Women has also been instrumental in developing and supporting MINPROFF in the revision and dissemination of the NAP to end VAW and the Female Genital Mutilation. Moreover, UN Women supported gender mainstreaming in the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan, of which a new version was launched. UN Women plan to set up 30 integrated prevention and care centres for GBV/HIV/AIDS survivors in 2017. Since the beginning of 2014, five (5) integrated centres have been set up in by UN Women in the Yaounde council area with the support of UNFPA, a centre in Douala 1 municipality and Maroua. Two others are being completed in the district hospital of Maroua and in the council of Yaounde 7. The integrated centre in Douala provided assistance to nearly 94 GBV/sexual violence survivors, including three women living with HIV/AIDS, one of whom was a rape victim.⁵⁸ In the camps and refugee sites in the East (Gado, Iolo, Mbilé and Timangolo) and Far North (Minawao and Gawar), UN Women and its partners provided assistance to 416 GBV survivors, including 252 in the East and 164 in the Far North⁵⁹. To consolidate this, UNIFEM now UN Women opened a structure in the region of Far North on a Tuesday 12 may 2015 to follow up cases of VAW⁶⁰. Pictures 37 and 38 below show the inauguration that took place in the presence of the administrative, municipal and traditional elites, headed by the governor of the Far North Region, Midjiyawa Bakari. After listening to the presentation of the GBV Unit coordinator of UN Women’s projects in the Far North region Flore Tatchoua, the Minister for the Promotion of Women and the Family admitted that this framework provides an opportunity for everyone to call for help, listen, provide advice and exchange information and guidance to victims in order to find the most appropriate solutions to the problems identified⁶¹.

⁵⁷ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2015/12/un-women-cameroon-drills-police-force-on-protecting-women-children-in-humanitarian-situations> consulted on 22nd July 2021.

⁵⁸ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 8.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 11.

⁶⁰ "Trimestriel d'informations du MINPROFF : Soutien et réconfort aux victimes des exactions de secte terroriste Boko Haram", *21^e journée internationale de la famille*, n° 016, Yaounde, 25 juillet 2015, p. 13.

⁶¹ "Trimestriel d'informations du MINPROFF : Soutien et réconfort aux victimes des exactions de secte", p. 13.

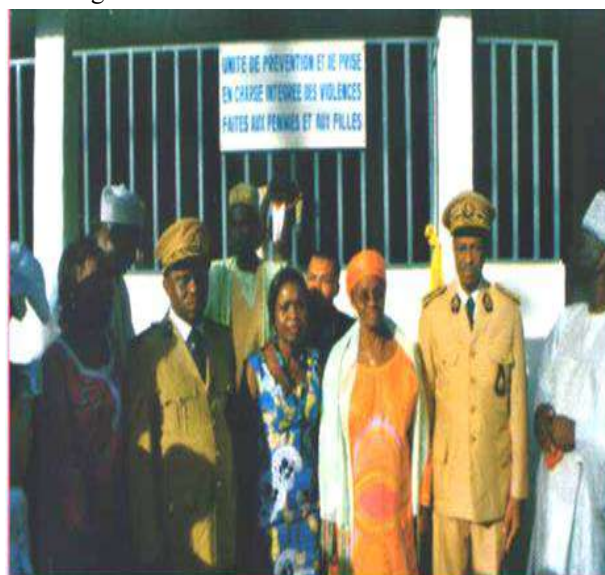
Picture 37 : Ribbon cutting at the inauguration of the Integrated centres on VAW



Source : "Trimestriel d'informations du ministère de la promotion de la femme et de la famille : 21^e journée internationale de la famille", n° 016, 25 juillet 2015, p. 13.

Note: During the inauguration ceremony of the integrated centres, MINPROFF minister, assisted by the Cameroon UN Women team was having a ribbon cutting session.

Picture 38 : Representatives during the inauguration of the Integrated centres on VAW



Source : "Trimestriel d'informations du ministère de la promotion de la femme et de la famille : 21^e journée internationale de la famille", n° 016, 25 juillet 2015, p. 13.

Note: Surrounded by administrative and local authorities who took part in the inauguration ceremony, the MINPROFF Minister took a family photo in front of the unit for the prevention and integrated management of violence against women and girls in Maroua.

Alternatively, some countries create sectoral plans that are administered under an education or health department, but coordinate with other government sectors.⁶² In Cameroon, the governments have created localized plans, where each of the nation's ten regions has an agency for the promotion of women's rights that provides trained counselors to administrative units that deal with gender-based violence.⁶³ UNIFEM's awareness-raising support in terms of the agreement and awareness-raising activities to combat violence against women in Cameroon include; the design and dissemination of specific messages; design and dissemination of posters and picture boxes; participation in the annual 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence campaign launched by the United Nations; organization of educational talks; education for a culture of peace and for family and conjugal life; premarital counselling; marriage counselling; radio and television programmes such as *Entre nous les dames* (Just Between Us Ladies), *Femmes, familles et société* (Women, Families and Society)

⁶² UNIFEM, "Not a minute more: Ending Violence Against", p. 55.

⁶³A. S. Sidibe, "Evaluation of Programmes for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali, Senegal", UNIFEM, 2002, p. 20.

and *Planète femmes* (Planet Women)⁶⁴. Followed with the publication of the Ministry's magazine *Femmes et Familles* (Women and Families Magazine) and production of posters, banners, television spots, flyers, leaflets, pennants, T-shirts, caps, bulletin boards, CD-ROMs, etc⁶⁵. In Cameroon, the work done by UNIFEM on the 16 Days of Activism with MINPROFF, other UN Agencies and CSOs; and on CEDAW with the Ministry of Justice and CSO have been a positive example⁶⁶. Picture 39 was taken on the 6th December 2015 in Buea during an occasion where the Vice Chancellor of the University of Buea-Cameroon and the entire university community highlighted the need of having a campus void of violence against women and girls. They hailed the United Nations, particularly UN Women Cameroon on the strides made in ending violence against women⁶⁷.

Picture 39: UN Women, Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence in Buea



Source: UN Women, Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence, Cameroon, December 14, 2015, p. 1.

Note: Vice Chancellor (second from left in orange), Regional Delegate of Women's empowerment and the family (fourth from left) and UN staff say "NO" to violence against women in Cameroon.

UNIFEM has played a significant role with its regional offices in bringing together government, civil society, UN, and other international and intergovernmental organizations to work toward review and reform of the Penal Code which provided preventive and punitive

⁶⁴ UN Women, *Inventory of United Nations system activities to prevent and eliminate violence against women* February 2013, p. 76.

⁶⁵ "Trimestriel d'informations du MINPROFF : Soutien et réconfort aux victimes des exactions de secte", p. 13.

⁶⁶ "Thematic Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence against women in the central Africa", p. 26.

⁶⁷ UN Women, Sixteen Days of Activism against Gender Violence, Cameroon, December 14, 2015, p. 1.

measures to GBV in Cameroon. The law on marriage allowed girls to marry at the age of 15, but now this has been changed to 18 in the Penal Code. UNIFEM staff and partners from women's organizations have used proclamations about violence against women and advocacy by powerful women's human rights coalitions to press governments to create appropriate mechanisms to prevent violence and protect women and girls.⁶⁸ These efforts have resulted not only in global agreements, such as the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, but also in regional and national plans of action to end violence against women.⁶⁹ UNIFEM in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders, supported the introduction and strengthening of legislation against gender-based violence, including laws against domestic and sexual violence, rape and family law provisions⁷⁰. For instance, government legal dispositions towards ending VAW in Cameroon are:

- The Cameroonian Penal Code Article 296 prescribes an imprisonment term of 5 to 10 years for any man who uses moral or physical constraint to have sexual relations with a woman no matter her age (rape).
- Article 279 of the Cameroonian Penal Code prescribes a punishment of 5-10 years imprisonment and if necessary, a fine on any person who uses physical or any other means to cause injury on the other person or persons;
- Article 356 of the Cameroonian penal code also stipulates that an imprisonment term of 5 to 10 years and a fine is given to anyone who forces the other into marriage;
- Article 357 of the Cameroonian penal code prescribes an imprisonment term of 3 months to 5 years and a fine on anyone who makes an abusive request for a bride prize.⁷¹

As women's groups and networks have gained experience, they have also begun to recognize the limitations of a strategy that focuses primarily on legislative and criminal justice reform.⁷²

f. UNIFEM and National machineries

UNIFEM is seen important in reminding Government of the importance of women's rights and supporting national machineries as the guardian of these rights. UNIFEM played a

⁶⁸“Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, adopted by the General Assembly”, 20 Dec. 1993, UN Doc. A/RES/48/29.

⁶⁹ “Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence”, p. 4.

⁷⁰ UN Women, *Inventory of United Nations system activities to prevent and eliminate violence*, p. 40.

⁷¹ K. N. Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, p. 38.

⁷² T. F Susana, “Violence against women “, p. 96.

primary role in building the capacity of civil society actors to respond effectively to peace and security issues, VAW, and also strengthen collaboration with other organizations in Cameroon⁷³. UNIFEM have established links with, More Women in Politics, the Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy CHRAPA, ACAFEJ, *Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes* (ALVF), which have enabled the organizations to commemorate various activities like the 16 Days of Activism to end violence on women⁷⁴. UNIFEM now UN Women through civil society, has enabled support to wider networks, which helped them increase their coverage. For instance, CAMYOSOP works with a number of local partners to support UN Women's interventions and map their best practices⁷⁵.

UNIFEM has played a catalyst role in bringing partners from various backgrounds together and in building and sustaining networks. In collaboration with the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the civil society in Cameroon have been able to advocate for the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 of 2000 and the Protocol to the African Charter on the Rights of Women in Africa of 2003, which provide the legal framework for mainstreaming gender into regional peace-building efforts in the country⁷⁶. In some cases, UN Women helped to establish a working relationship between CSOs and Government, like in the case of *ASBY* and *MUBASE*, who is now working with MINPROFF⁷⁷. In this line, one of our informants asserted :

MUBASE as CSO was created by the operators in the informal sector to unite actors involved in the production and support marketing of agricultural production and establishing a marketing chain, and to combat increasing cost of living. According to her, UN Women has managed to target the most vulnerable women; these include refugees and Internally Displaced Persons, women in the humanitarian areas, but also poor women facing vulnerability because of their businesses in cross border trade or in general through lack of access to information, productive means and credit through working with the *MUBASE*. A number of women have made progress in moving up the value chain, including through UN Women's work with *MUBASE*. The support of UN Women has helped the association to put in place a revolving fund for poor women in business in Kye-Ossi, which greatly contributes to the sustainability of such support⁷⁸.

UN Women working with CSOs in Cameroon has reinforced their credibility and image with local communities, government bodies and even with other UN agencies as they advocate a variety of issues across the social spectrum such as poverty; democracy;

⁷³ E. T Thelma and N. Mashumba, "The peace-building role in central Africa of civil society", policy seminar report 10 - 12 April 2006, Hotel Sawa, Douala, Cameroon, p. 9.

⁷⁴ <https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2018/12/government-of-cameroon-launch-16-days-of-activism-to-end-violence-against-women-and-girls>, consulted on 7th August 2019.

⁷⁵ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 45.

⁷⁶ E. T. Thelma and N. Mashumba, "The peace-building role in central Africa p. 9.

⁷⁷ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 39.

⁷⁸ Interview with Momo Germaine, Chief sector of the Kye-Ossi market and a former member of *MUBASE*, 12 July 2021.

governance; human rights; elections; and gender issues thus assuming a critical role⁷⁹. For example, the Gender Cafés which is an innovative mechanism to contribute to the coordination, visibility and attracting attention to gender and women's empowerment related topics. A seminar was held from 10 to 12 April, 2006 in Douala, which brought together 30 key actors in the peace and security field from civil society organizations⁸⁰. This event permitted UN agencies like United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), United Nations peace-building office in the Central African Republic (BONUCA), and the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in Yaounde to provide useful insights into the various possibilities and avenues available to enhance the capacities of civil society organizations and policymakers to respond effectively on societal issues⁸¹. The main aim of the Douala seminar was to gather a cross-section of stakeholders to formulate realistic strategies for strengthening collaboration between civil societies and promotes the role of UN agencies in supporting civil societies and governments⁸². Participants of a seminar organized in Douala on the strengthening of the links between civil societies and UN agencies can be seen in picture 40;

Picture 40 : Participants of the seminar organized in Douala



Source: E. T Thelma and N. Mashumba, “The peace-building role in central Africa of civil society”, policy seminar report 10 - 12 April 2006, Hotel Sawa, Douala, Cameroon, p. 12.

Note: In picture A, we have Ms. Thelma Ekiyor, Centre for Conflict Resolution, Cape Town, South Africa, left; Mr. Gounoko Haounaye, Governor of Littoral Province, Douala, Cameroon and picture B we have From right: Mr. Alphonse Barancira, UN Sub-regional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy, Yaoundé, Cameroon; Mr. Jean-François Obembe, Economic Community of Central African States, Libreville, Gabon; Mr. Gounoko Haounaye, Governor of Littoral Province, Douala, Cameroon.

⁷⁹ E. T. Thelma and N. Mashumba, “The peace-building role in central Africa p. 10.

⁸⁰ <https://www.africap.org/publicat/peace-building-civil-society-central-africa/>, consulted on 7th August 2019.

⁸¹ E. T. Thelma and N. Mashumba, “The peace-building role in central Africa p. 12.

⁸² <https://www.africap.org/publicat/peace-building-civil-society-central-africa/>, consulted on 7th August 2019.

In November 2014 during a Gender Café workshop in Douala, UN Women supported the establishment of NETCOM. NETCOM is a network of young people in the media, who report, on stigmatization related to HIV/AIDS, on GBV and on other aspects relating to GEWE. This group has approximately 40 members and also has a branch in Yaounde. It establishing contributed to the strengthening of UN Women's engagement with the media and created opportunities to attract attention for GEWE through the media, reaching a wider audience with a focus on young people⁸³. Some television and radio stations broadcast spots on HIV/AIDS and GBV (CRTV, STV, Channel 2) and nearly 100,000 Cameroonians were reached by these channels⁸⁴. The coordination and cooperation within the UN Family is very good in Cameroun, and UN Women. For instance, UNFPA partnered with UN Women in Mainstreaming Gender into Humanitarian Response and Protection of Women and Girls projects, first in the East and in the Far North. UN Women also coordinated subgroups of GBV under the lead of MINPROFF and in collaboration with UNHCR.

UNIFEM has worked to support the strengthening of the institutional capacities of the Cameroon's national machineries for women at the local, national and sub-regional levels. It also works to strengthen civil society organizations and their networks, with a special emphasis on the training of leaders of women's movements on strategic issues, as well as on social control and monitoring of public policies. For example, UNIFEM's project "Strengthening Gender Equality in the regions in Cameroon has developed a plan for the institutional strengthening of national machineries for women, in addition to periodic sessions of exchange and support for the creation of the Network of Machineries for Women and the Council of Ministers of High Authorities for Women in the Regions⁸⁵. UNIFEM influenced the establishment and re-organisation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs into the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family in 2004⁸⁶. The Ministry has as objective to better address women's problems, promote women and the family, develop the family and set up institutional reforms and a governance strategy regarding women. The budget of this ministry was recently raised from 0.25% as was the case between 2006 and 2009 to 0.27% in 2010. A code for the Person and the Family has been drafted⁸⁷. The draft code incorporates provisions favourable to the advancement of women for example, marriageable age, matrimonial

⁸³ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 39.

⁸⁴ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 10.

⁸⁵ UNIFEM, "11th Regional Conference on Women", p. 1.

⁸⁶ <http://www.minproff.cm/the-ministry/historique-du-ministere/>, consulted on 6th September 2019.

⁸⁷ "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Twenty-third session 12-30 June 2000", p.1.

regimes, inheritance, etc⁸⁸. Technical teams of MINPROFF (call centres were set up in 2014 by MINPROFF in partnership with UN Women. These call centres are in charge of giving a listening ear to female survivors of violence, receiving, orientating, and giving holistic care. There are collaboration mechanisms between call centres and focal points in the office of the Governor, the police, the Gendarmerie, the judiciary, Health and Social Welfare services, and some NGOs that fight against violence against women and girls⁸⁹.

UN Women in Cameroon has been to an extent successful in involving men into the fight against GBV by working with (CAMYOSOP) Cameroon Youths and Students Forum for Peace and (NAYOBEB) National Network of Boys-to-Boys on Ending Violence against Women and Girls⁹⁰. This network has been successful in involving young men into the fight against GBV⁹¹. They have been working on engaging community leaders against early marriage and FGM and in favour of girls' education. Since the activists are not only male, but also young, they extensively make use of the social media, with it, appealing to youth⁹². For instance, a two-days' workshop was organised in 2014 in Limbe by CAMYOSFOP in partnership with UN Women. The workshop focus was on the new strategy which aimed at strengthening the multi-sectoral male involvement in the promotion of gender equality principles by improving their knowledge and skills in mobilising them in activities to combat sexual and gender-based violence⁹³. UN Women and CAMYOSFOP have set up 5 micro-projects for the benefit of associations of people living with HIV/AIDS: 142 women living with HIV/AIDS and their families derive income that is used to purchase treatment and associated drugs, the rest for food supplements and family support⁹⁴. UN Women's approach to focusing on youth through CAMYOSFOP was promising in offering young women and men the chance to enjoy empowerment and youth to influence society for a long time.

⁸⁸<https://africa.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/01/un-women-and-minproff-politics-and-decision-making-in-cameroon>, consulted on 9th September 2019.

⁸⁹ UN Women, *Republic of Cameroon: national action plan for the 1325 and companion resolution of the United Nations security council on women, peace and security 2018-2020*, August 2017, p. 9.

⁹⁰ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 32.

⁹¹<https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/NewsArchive/Activists-set-up-new-national-network-to-fight-violence-against-women-315629>, consulted on 8th August 2019.

⁹² UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 32.

⁹³<https://www.camerounweb.com/CameroonHomePage/NewsArchive/Activists-set-up-new-national-network-to-fight-violence-against-women-315629>, consulted on 8th August 2019.

⁹⁴ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 10.

g. UNIFEM on education, health and gender equality

Through UNIFEM's actions in Cameroon, education has been recognized as the only institutional mechanism through which women can really develop their skills and knowledge in order to become more productive and able to overcome the problems of social injustice in all its forms and ramifications that they currently face. The actions of UNIFEM through the MDG3 contributed to greater access education and employment for women. Such changes have profoundly impacted gender roles and relations within the family, community and workplace⁹⁵. For example, the Overall, parity index girl / boy increased from 94 to 99 girls enrolled for 100 boys in 2001 and 2014 for primary education. For secondary education, this index has also increased from 95 to 98 girls enrolled for 100 boys in 2001 in 2014⁹⁶. This improvement of girl's enrollment in primary education is probably due to the initiative of UNIFEM and the World Economic Forum (WEF) developed criteria to measure empowerment by assessing patterns of inequality between men and women⁹⁷.

UNIFEM also encouraged education received by women in their groups through educational talks. With this, women are emancipated and are made to be aware of their role in the society and place as nation builders. As the saying goes, "educating a woman is education the whole nation". As such, the education of the members of these associations has helped ameliorate the understanding capacity of their various communities. More women can now read and write as the result of many efforts put in place by these groups through seminars, conferences, workshops and educational talks to educate their members⁹⁸. In the same light, the leadership skills, training, expansion of social and economic opportunities and the advancement of women's rights have contributed in developing their various communities, and the Cameroon society at large⁹⁹. Through the help of these associations, many women get connected to other women's groups within and out of Cameroon for humanitarian and business purposes. Hence, this has helped in exchanging ideas which have influenced and fostered the status of these women¹⁰⁰. It is commonly said that when the members of a

⁹⁵J. Eshuchi and T. Ojuku, "The impact of academic mobility on the conceptualisation of gender roles and relations among Kenyan and Cameroonian students", *Internationalisation of African Higher Education-Towards Achieving the MDGs*, UK: Oxfam, 2013, p. 73.

⁹⁶ "National report on the millennium development goals", p. 27.

⁹⁷ World Bank, "Engendering development through gender equality in rights, resources, and voice", New York, USA: Oxford University Press, 2001, p 20.

⁹⁸ M. T. Abena Ondo, "54th Session of the Commission", p. 7.

⁹⁹ C. McKenzie, "Exploring inter-sectionality, unravelling interlocking oppressions: feminist non-credit learning processes", Doctorate Thesis in Psychology, University of Toronto, 2011, p. 73.

¹⁰⁰ M. T. Abena Ondo, "54th Session of the Commission", p. 3.

community advance in ideas, the community automatically advances. As the result of the influence of these female groups, many women have been able to interact and sensitize others on societal issues. Women have equally been given opportunities to participate in seminars, workshops and conferences which have helped instill leadership, skills, self-reliance capacities and access to information. These leadership skills acquired by women have enabled them to ascend into decision making positions as found in appendix 10.¹⁰¹

Multipurpose community tele-centres have been established in Cameroon to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas. Seen from this angle, building women's capacities and improving access to information technology and markets have been fundamentally seen as a tool to achieving women's empowerment and advancing their role in the community¹⁰². Women's empowerment is central to the elimination of poverty and ICT can address poverty related issues such as lack of access to education¹⁰³. By the use of ICT, women have broadened the scope of their activities and addressed issues previously beyond their capacity¹⁰⁴. Thanks to ICT women now have the knowledge to make use of, and can deliver potentially useful information such as market prices for women in small and micro-enterprises. Access to ICT is by all means a key requirement for Women's empowerment and the advancement of their role in the community development. There exist more than 102 tele-centres across the country presently¹⁰⁵.

A capacity strengthening workshop on the theme 'Integrating Gender and HIV/AIDS Dimensions in National Budgets' was jointly organized by the National Assembly, the National Committee for the Fight against AIDS, MINPROFF, the Ministry of Finance with support from UNDP and UNIFEM in 2006¹⁰⁶. Participants at the workshop came from several ministries, UN agencies and bilateral and multilateral co-operation institutions, and civil society organisations and parliamentarians. The general objective was to enable participants to Consider problems in relation with other national priorities and to understand the impact of Gender and HIV/AIDS on the national economy, public finance and budget¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰¹ E. T. Nana, "Women Association and Socio-economic Development in the Bamenda Central", Cameroon, Master's Dissertation in History, The University of Yaounde I, 2007, p. 73.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Interview with Atogho Ekukole Jessie, 50 Years, Head of communication service, 15th December 2013, Yaounde.

¹⁰⁴ *Gender equality and empowerment of women*, Austrian Development Cooperation, Vienna, April 2006, p. 11.

¹⁰⁵ M. T. Abena, Ondo, "56th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, general debate", p.6.

¹⁰⁶ UNIFEM, Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge, p.3.

¹⁰⁷ F. M. TAKEU Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid", p. 31.

Moreover, UNIFEM helped women in acquiring knowledge in different domains of life including health and sanitation which enabled women to be aware of some medicinal plants that can help take care of their health needs and that of their families¹⁰⁸. Gender-sensitive projects had been done by the government of Cameroon in collaboration with UNIFEM to increase reproductive and sexual health; thus, reducing maternal mortality¹⁰⁹. Projects in this area include the training for midwives, obstetric facilities, and awareness-raising programmes for young people regarding STDs, HIV/AIDS and measures to prevent female genital mutilation¹¹⁰. In 2010 and 2011, the training schools for registered birth attendants were re-launched to train midwives in order to increase their number in view of reducing the rate of maternal and infant mortality in Cameroon¹¹¹. Two law offices mandated by UN Women and its partners provided legal assistance and counselling to 118 women living with HIV/AIDS and GBV survivors in Yaounde and Douala between 2014 and 2015¹¹².

UNIFEM has placed special emphasis on supporting rural women through the Programme for the Eradication of Ethnic and Gender Discrimination¹¹³. Rural Women have been able to make a significant contribution far greater than that of men as far as rural development is concerned. Around 70 per cent of the food in the country is produced, processed and even sold by them; thanks to the suitable measures taken by UNIFEM and the Cameroon government¹¹⁴. For example, of adapted technology for cultivation, tree planting near residential areas, improvements in Gender equality and empowerment of women management and water supply are designed to alleviate the enormous workload of women in agriculture, family and home. A major component in rural development policy is the equality of women when it comes to access to and use of land, social services and agricultural consultancy, and also loans adapted to their needs and possibilities, and to the markets. Of equal importance is the empowerment of women through suitable training measures and information with a view to increasing their opportunities for direct participation in social, political and economic decision-making processes¹¹⁵.

¹⁰⁸ Interview with Carol Ava, 30 years, *Bayam-sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021.

¹⁰⁹ A/HRC/13/71-E/CN.6/2010/8, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to eliminate violence against women Thirteenth session", United Nations, 17 December 2009, p.7.

¹¹⁰ *Gender equality and empowerment of women*, p. 11.

¹¹¹ M. T. Abena, Ondo, "56th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, general debate under the item: the empowerment of the rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication and in development 27th February- 9th March, New York, 2012, p.4.

¹¹² ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p.10.

¹¹³ UNIFEM, "11th Regional Conference on Women", p. 1.

¹¹⁴ CEDAW, "The implementation of the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women", UNIFEM, Cameroon, 2003, p. 13.

¹¹⁵ M. T. Abena, Ondo, "56th Session of the Commission on the status of Women, general debate", p.6.

In Cameroon, despite the country office's relatively young age, UNIFEM has progressively been able to build a good reputation and establish its leadership role in relation to gender equality and women's rights. It also has been able to position itself strategically by playing a very active role in coordination and dialogue mechanisms within UN agencies and among development partners and the government¹¹⁶. Gender equality is generally used to describe a situation: A given society at a given time can be considered more or less gender equal. It is common to distinguish between two dimensions of equality: equality in outcomes and equality in opportunities. Equality in outcomes means that women and men enjoy the same standard of living, degree of autonomy, status and other socially valued goods. Equality in opportunities means that men and women have equal access to education, borrowing, election to legislative assemblies, labour market careers, etc¹¹⁷. United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) describes this concept in the following way:

Gender Equality implies a society in which women and men enjoy the same opportunities, out-comes, rights and obligations in all spheres of life. Equality between men and women exists when both sexes are able to share equally in the distribution of power and influence, have equal opportunities for financial independence through work or through setting up businesses; enjoy equal access to education and the opportunity to develop personal ambitions.¹¹⁸

UNIFEM has helped the government of Cameroon to make key strides toward gender equality and women's empowerment through major international commitments. These commitments were the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the Declaration of Heads of States and Governments of the African Union on Equality Between Women and Men, and the Sustainable Development Goals¹¹⁹. In the last thirty years, several important legal instruments have been implemented by the Republic of Cameroon with the aim to promote and protect women's rights and advancement to implement it. The most notable one is the Reform of the National Constitution in 1996 that states in its preamble that "all Men are equals in rights and duties"¹²⁰. Following this, UNIFEM helped the Cameroonian law to go through positive changes meant to enforce a few fundamental rights for women and band harmful customs¹²¹. For instance, the civil code specifies that any marriage officiated without the clear consent of both spouses is null, while the penal code forbids any form of forced marriage. Jurisprudence also plays a role in changing traditional customs, sometimes even

¹¹⁶ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 35.

¹¹⁷ A. C. Mbah, "Gender Equality", p. 7.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.11.

¹¹⁹ <https://unfoundation.org/blog/post/ending-inequality-women-cameroon/>, consulted on 22nd May 2019.

¹²⁰ "Constitution of the republic of Cameroon", p.1.

¹²¹ L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée, et al. "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", p. 36.

before the law. A good example of that being the Supreme Court establishing equality in inheritance between men and women in 1992, even before the constitutional reform¹²².

In parallel to the legislative evolution, the government has also put in place a policy called National Gender Policy of Cameroon (NGPC), formerly known as National Action Plan for the integration of Women in Development. This policy was adopted a year after the constitutional reform and is considered as a foundational instrument in the development and implementation of institutional mechanisms for gender equality, both nationally and locally¹²³. Table 22 displays the overall objective which contributed to the systematic elimination of inequalities between women and men at all levels of social life which can be seen in the eight specific objectives and seven strategic axes of intervention stems from points taken from international conventions¹²⁴.

Table 22: Evolution of laws for gender equality and protection of women

Year	Laws
1804	Civil Code: It regulates protection of men's and women's rights in the family Ordinance No. 81/02 (1981): It supplements the Civil Code and stipulates gender equality in marriage and divorce.
1974	Ordinance No. 74/1: It regulates land ownership. Decree No. 2005/481 (2005): It stipulates that, men and women are entitled to land ownership
1990	Law No. 90/053: It regulates freedom of association. Women like men are entitled to form and join associations.
1992	Labour Code: It stipulates that labour is a basic human right for men and women.
1996	Constitution: It stipulates basic human rights and gender equality.
1999	Law (19 December 1999): A woman can travel without consent of the husband.
2004	Law No. 2004/016: It established the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms. It works on women's issues.
2016	Law No. 2016/007 published the new Penal Code on 12 July 2016: It established preventive and punitive measures for Gender-Based Violence.

Source: MINPROFF, *National Gender Policy Document 2011-2020*, p. 48.

Note: Apart from international instruments, there are laws adopted by Cameroon which generally or specifically take into account the principles and values that underpin gender equality, human rights and social justice.

¹²² <http://contranocendi.org/index.php/en/news-press/229-gender-equality-in-modern-day-cameroon-between-empowerment-policies-and-the-social-representation-of-women>, consulted on 23rd May 2019.

¹²³ L. M. Mefire, B. Vissandjée, et al. "Cameroon and the Gender Issue", p. 38.

¹²⁴ <http://contranocendi.org/index.php/en/news-press/229-gender-equality-in-modern-day-cameroon-between-empowerment-policies-and-the-social-representation-of-women>, consulted on 23rd May 2019.

The presence of UNIFEM in Cameroon has helped women in influencing their behaviours towards the society. This results in the fact that women are taught on the moral duty which consists of respecting others¹²⁵. Respect for others is then promoted among women and presented as a must in their cultural habits. This entails valuing their entire character or some specific virtues¹²⁶. For instance, the International Women's Day (IWD) is used as a tool to educate and inform women on universal standards. This can be seen following the various themes to raise women's awareness in the society.¹²⁷ UNIFEM has provided key welfare packages and improved the wellbeing of women in Cameroon. Solidarity appears as a social engagement, a dialogic relationship that has been inculcated among women and one basis for women's solidarity is the concrete interests which women, as a gender, do share¹²⁸. It recognizes preparedness and the tendency to sacrifice for one another and mostly commended for its tangible outcomes. It is widely defined as being the existence of social ties and the stock of active connections among women¹²⁹. Solidarity within women is characterized by trust and reciprocity, and strategically mobilized by individuals and groups for particular ends. Elsewhere, it encompasses norms and networks facilitating collective and cooperative action for mutual benefit, collective progress to improve the wellbeing of members.¹³⁰

UNIFEM's support of community initiatives in Cameroon yielded a promising short-term result. In Cameroon, UNIFEM supported a limited number of interventions at the community level, that helped to "break the silence" on Female Genital Mutilations (FGMs) and other Traditional Harmful Practices (THPs). Through the Community Mobilization Programme initiatives, UNIFEM contributed to three types of results in targeted communities; greater community awareness and commitment to fight against VAW, strengthened local capacities to work in synergy on SGBV prevention, protection and response, and improved services for VAW survivors¹³¹. Several small immediate results have been achieved (e.g., in Manyu division, 90 village chiefs were sensitized and 55 female genital mutilators trained on micro business development by WOMED. There is anecdotal evidence of changes in behaviours one UN staff member commented, "In targeted communities, people now know that FGM is a crime; they still do it, but now they feel that they have to hide" and the

¹²⁵ Interview with Tala Mercy Limbi, 35 years, business lady, 12th June 2018, Yaounde.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Interview with Ekeni Elvis, 27 years, University student, 13th December 2019, Yaounde.

¹²⁸ Interview with Njene Irene, 47 years, Secondary school teacher, 10th November 2018, Yaounde.

¹²⁹ A. Whitehead, "Women's solidarity and divisions among women", New York, 1990, p. 6.

¹³⁰ Interview with Ekeni Elvis, 27 years, University student, 13th December 2019, Yaounde.

¹³¹ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. iii.

MINPROFF campaign led to some powerful, symbolic acts, such as FG mutilators renouncing their knives in public ceremonies¹³².

One of the important influences resulting from UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon is the promotion of unity among women organizations both nationally and internationally through peace building. Women's peace-building and reconstruction efforts have been supported by UNIFEM in Cameroon not only because it is the right thing to do, but also because nations have noticed that countries consumed by conflict need the strength of their women¹³³. A member of an organization said that: "Unity makes their strength".¹³⁴ This is due to the fact that women are the ones who hold their families and communities together during the worst of the fighting. They keep a measure of stability during times of chaos and during displacement¹³⁵. The General Assembly encouraged UNIFEM to expand its work in the area of peace and security¹³⁶. In the early 1990s, UNIFEM developed the African Women in Crisis (AFWIC) programme, which called attention to women's psychosocial and trauma needs in the aftermath of war and supported African women leaders to build activist peace networks. It has since expanded this programme to almost every region in the world, now supporting women's efforts to advocate for peace¹³⁷. For example, a study was carried out in 2014 in the East Region of Cameroon by a women-led civil society The WILPF assess the level of awareness of peace in the area on behalf of UN Women¹³⁸. WILPF Cameroon has been a key contributor and is working for the substantial increase of women's participation in peace processes in Cameroon which will be clearly illustrated in the next step below¹³⁹.

II. International impact of UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon

Dedicated to studying the international impact of UNIFEM's activities in Cameroon, this part of the work examines the effects of the international human rights and that of the Women's International League for Peace (WILPF) in the nation. Another area of concern is that of UNIFEM's support to sub-regional bodies as well as Self-employment and MDG. It

¹³² "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 24.

¹³³ R. Elisabeth and J. S. Ellen, *Women, War and Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-building*, New York, UNIFEM, 1990, p. vi.

¹³⁴ Interview with Mbatu Justine, 65 years, retired teacher, 17th May 2019, Yaounde.

¹³⁵ R. Elisabeth and J. S. Ellen, *Women, War and Peace*, p. vi.

¹³⁶ <http://daccessods.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/271/39/PDF/N0027139.pdf>, 9:45 pm, 23/5/19

¹³⁷ R. Elisabeth and J. S. Ellen, *Women, War and Peace*, p. 8.

¹³⁸ H. A. William, "Challenges to implementing 'inclusive and human-centred' security mechanisms for sustainable peace and development in Africa: implications for policy and practice", Nkafu Policy Institute, 2019, p. 23.

¹³⁹ Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Africa, p.1.

also focuses on the effects of GRB and PRSP as well as Informal cross-border trade and Gender focal points.

a. Prioritizing international human rights

The promotion and protection of human rights have been the central principles to the mandate of the UN and all its agencies. UNIFEM has been focused on addressing and achieving women's human rights in Cameroon¹⁴⁰. This can be seen in UNIFEM's support to the Government in monitoring CEDAW and giving assistance to the yearly reports of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and Outcomes. UNIFEM's support to the human rights agreements contributed to the improvement of the Penal Code and the Electoral Code, the Family Code in the country¹⁴¹. The regional reports in UNIFEM's assessment repeatedly stressed that violence against women is a human rights violation, has moved the antiviolence agenda forward in many ways¹⁴²:

- First, it has provided a powerful lens that shifts the focus on violence against women from a private to a public matter. In so doing, it has added greater credibility to activists' claims and established a common language.
- Second, it has offered an opportunity to anchor and build global and regional networks.
- Third, it presents a methodology for determining government obligations. Under human rights law, for example, states are required to act with due diligence to address and end violence against women.

Under this obligation, government officials, or those acting with the sanction of the state, must not commit acts of violence against women that is, they must respect the human rights of women to be free from violence. Governments must also protect women's rights by instituting laws, policies, and practices that protect victims of violence, provide them with appropriate remedies, and bring the perpetrator to justice. Finally, they must also fulfill these rights, by ensuring the appropriate infrastructure to support these laws, policies, and practices to render them effective. Moreover, the progress of these instruments and infrastructures must

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Senge Solange Salomon, 27 years, civil servant MINAC, 25 November 2019, Yaounde

¹⁴¹ A/HRC/4/069–E/CN.6/2007/6 “Report of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Human Rights Council Fourth session, 14 December 2006, p.8.

¹⁴² “Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication of Violence against Women”, Convention of Belem do Para”, organization of the American state, Mesecvi, June 9, 1994, p. 4.

be reviewed periodically and steps taken to remove any obstacles and barriers that prevent the elimination of violence against women.¹⁴³

b. The Women's International League for Peace (WILPF)

WILPF was formed in 1915 and officially, came into being in 1919 in New York. As a result of the UN Women's activities in Cameroon, WILPF was established on January 31, 2014. WILPF Cameroon was created to ensure that Cameroonian women get involved in the global quest for social justice, especially as the country was facing increasing regional security challenges, the influx of refugees into the Northern and Eastern parts of the country¹⁴⁴. WILPF Cameroon's first actions were the training of its members and other CSO leaders to ensure outreach and more effective advocacy in implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda according to the recommendations of Resolution 1325¹⁴⁵. The first high-level discussion in Cameroon on the issue was held from 9 to 10 October, 2014 in Yaounde, during the regional workshop on women's participation in conflict prevention and crisis management, in partnership with the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family and UN Women. It was about mobilizing all stakeholders (CSOs, NGOs) in the process of developing a National Action Plan of Resolution 1325 and advocating for its adoption by the Cameroon government¹⁴⁶. On the 30th October 2014, UN Women and Sylvie Jacqueline Ndongmo, president of WILPF Cameroon participated at the 14th anniversary of the Resolution 1325 in New York, to talk on the panel on Boko Haram, which gave the opportunity to show the urgent need of the Resolution 1325 in Cameroon¹⁴⁷. Another workshop was organized in Yaounde from 27 to 28 November, 2015 by WILPF Cameroon with the support of Folke Bernadotte Akademy through WILPF Sweden and under the patronage of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family to conduct a baseline study at national level on the assessment of the level of knowledge of UNSCR 1325 and the impact of armed conflicts on women and girls in Cameroon, in order to draw priority areas of the NAP¹⁴⁸.

¹⁴³“Inter-American Convention on the Prevention, Punishment, and Eradication”; p. 7.

¹⁴⁴<https://namati.org/network/organization/womens-international-league-for-peace-and-freedom-cameroon-wilpf-cameroon/>, consulted on 10th July 2019.

¹⁴⁵ <https://www.peacewomen.org/node/>, consulted on 10th July 2019.

¹⁴⁶ UN Women, “WILPF Cameroon and fire consortium on gender conflict analysis project to UN Women and international stakeholders”, Yaounde, 2019, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷ <https://lisd.princeton.edu/announcements/un-panel-discussion-focuses-boko-haram-extremist-violence-against-women-and-girls>, consulted on 10th October 2019.

¹⁴⁸ “Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in Africa”, p. 1.

c. UNIFEM's support to sub-regional bodies

Working at the national level, and often in collaboration with other agencies, UNIFEM has built a capacity on women and has advocated for increasingly gender-sensitive macroeconomic policies that address poverty reduction¹⁴⁹. For instance, CIDA has provided funds in cooperation with UNIFEM for gender-economics expertise to be applied to analysis of the PRSP in 2006¹⁵⁰. This can be seen in the “Productive micro-projects for Cameroon’s women” project, which enjoys financial assistance from the CIDA in 2007. The existence of a dialogue on public finance reforms provides space to strengthen gender-responsive budgeting within this broader macroeconomic framework in order to ensure its institutionalization and sustainability¹⁵¹. Three savings and credit cooperatives have been set up under this project with a view to enabling women to engage in income-generating activities. Since 1998, nearly 8,000 women have received loans of five billion CFA¹⁵². In 2007, MINPROFF made additional efforts to raise awareness of women's rights among the persons tasked with the PRSP follow-up. With the support of UNIFEM, a workshop was organized in Yaounde on 29 March 2007 on “Why gender should be mainstreamed into poverty reduction planning”¹⁵³. UNIFEM, in collaboration with CIDA, has also gone on to train members of the national platform on the gender focal points from all the ministries on GRB and concepts and related tools regarding the integration of the gender dimension¹⁵⁴. The Ministry of Finance has secured support from UNIFEM and CIDA and has done training on the Platform on Public Finance Reform in this regard. Many other training courses have been realized with the support of CIDA and discussions have established in view of integrating GRB into the evaluation of the sector strategies¹⁵⁵.

Along with UNDP, UNIFEM has supported gender-sensitive budgeting in the country and developed methodological tools for engendering MDGs and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) created by national governments. UNIFEM and UNDP supported and financed the Global Programme for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality, which granted micro-credits to women in the Adamawa, North-Western and Western pilot Regions. Two hundred and forty women’s micro projects have been financed under this programme.

¹⁴⁹ “Partnership for gender equality: the role of multilateral and bilateral”, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 14.

¹⁵² Cameroon, “Ministry of women’s affairs: replies to questionnaire on the implementation”, p. 5.

¹⁵³ Cameroon, “Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights”, UNESCO, July 2010, p. 28.

¹⁵⁴ UNIFEM, *Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge*, p.3.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, p.12.

They also supported women's integration in micro-enterprises, projects, providing equipment and materials to needy women organized in associations and Common Initiative Groups (CIG) with the aim of enabling them to carry out their projects in such areas as agriculture, stockbreeding, food processing, handicrafts. Training has been provided to technical staff in key ministries and particularly to the members of the Platform on Public Finance Reform and to local government structures to enhance their capacity to plan, implement and monitor budgets from a gender equality perspective¹⁵⁶. The initiative gained momentum and the Government is open to more information and training¹⁵⁷. The existence of a dialogue on public finance reforms provides space to strengthen GRB within this broader macroeconomic framework in order to ensure its institutionalization and sustainability. UNIFEM's work on CEDAW in Cameroon has strengthened partnerships between Governments and NGOs to use the Convention to create stronger legal and policy frameworks for gender equality¹⁵⁸. A CEDAW workshop was carried out in Cameroon, bringing in participants of lawyers from 20 law firms who are now citing the Convention in their court. In collaboration with UNIFEM, the country's Bar Association is now working to expand the training to all lawyers, and the Government is developing a plan to train the judiciary on CEDAW¹⁵⁹.

d. Millennium Development Goals (MDG) and Self employment

UNIFEM contributed positively to Women's empowerment, in terms of self-esteem, economic independence and social emancipation. Many women, who have benefited from these educational talks, have spoken of feeling a sense of personal empowerment as a result. Hence, the impact of these talks creates an environment which permits the women who essentially achieve goals of aiming at eradicating poverty, achieving gender equality and ensuring sustainable development, peace and democracy. Women who are educated are more likely to send their children to school than those who have not seen the need.¹⁶⁰

Through these female groups, women have learnt a lot. They have learnt diverse methods of farming and cultivation which have helped to boost their harvest for those who are farmers, and for those doing petty trade and other types of businesses, they have been taught good saving methods which help to make their revenue grow. They have learnt more

¹⁵⁶ Interview with, Dongo Noella Mechelle, 37 years, civil servant of MINAC, 9 December 2019, Yaounde.

¹⁵⁷ J. Muteshi, *Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Africa Regional Issues and Trends*, UNIFEM, New York, 2008, p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ "United Nations Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, Second regular session", p. 8.

¹⁵⁹ UNIFEM, Annual report 2006-2007, p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Mbah N. Margaret, 60 years, former President of MOWOCUDA, 1st February 2018, Yaounde.

advanced book-keeping methods which have helped to make their trading boom. As a result, they can educate their children, live good lives, make them less dependent and contribute to the advancement of their families and community at large. They learned among other things how to manage their little businesses which are the main source of revenue for their children.¹⁶¹ Many NGOs like CIDA, CAMYOSFOP, ASBY, and WILFP in Cameroon in collaboration with UNIFEM have focused on making women more productive and competitive in the job market. Training is organized in workshops, seminars, demonstrations and training centres and emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge, skills and information as basics for self-reliant development, which better equips the women.

UNIFEM helped women who produced “shea butter” learn how to improve the quality of their product. This in turn helped them move up the value chain, establishing a specialized, niche market for their products that are now bought by corporations at better prices than the women were receiving previously¹⁶². This is to show how informal workers are visible and that the totality of their work especially in the case of women is valued. For instance, we have “*Cooperative des Femmes pour la Transformation du Karité et autres Oléagineux Locaux du Ndé*” COFTRAKOL (a Women's Cooperative for the Transformation of Shea nuts and other Local Plant life), which is composed of 25 members specialized in processing karate¹⁶³.

UNIFEM developed a model for gender responsive indicators to monitor progress towards achieving gender equality across all MDG goals by harmonizing notational commitments¹⁶⁴. In Cameroon, UNIFEM helped the government in Pathway to Gender Equality, by raising the concern that the MDGs should be treated not as a brand-new agenda but as a new vehicle for the implementation of the Convention and the Beijing Declaration, and that gender equality should be cross-cutting for all MDGs¹⁶⁵. UNIFEM also recommended the mainstreaming of gender in each MDG goal in Cameroon¹⁶⁶. Generally, Cameroon has made reasonable progress in the implementation of the MDGs as far as women are concerned. Cameroon women represent 50.5% of the population¹⁶⁷. This permitted the

¹⁶¹ Interview with Ndoping Florence, 50 years, President of NOWWEF, 20th December 2013, Bamenda.

¹⁶² M. Boffa, “Opportunities and challenges in the improvement of the shea (*Vitellaria paradoxa*) resource and its management”, Nairobi: World Agroforestry Centre, 2015, p. 4.

¹⁶³ M. Kaonga, *Agroforestry for biodiversity and ecosystem services: science and practice*, Janeza Trdine, 2012, p.146.

¹⁶⁴ Z. Mounla, “MDG3, MDGs and Gender equality: A Contribution to the Regional MDG Review in Europe and the CIS”, UNIFEM, 17 March 2010, p. 14.

¹⁶⁵ UNHR, *Claiming the Millennium Development Goals: A human rights approach*, UN, New York and Geneva, 2008, p.8.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁶⁷ “National report on the millennium development goals in 2015”, NIS, Cameroon, September 2015, p. 27.

government authorities to recognize that sustainable development must take into account the socio-demographic structure; hence the equitable gender distribution in all aspects of public life. The efforts made so far are considerable and progressive¹⁶⁸.

e. UNIFEM, GRB and PRSP

UNIFEM has played a key role in the development of thinking on approaches to GRB. Regarding on the decision-making positions in the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Plan and Economy they have been able to acquire knowledge on GRB techniques after a training financed and co-organized by UNIFEM¹⁶⁹. The Ministry in charge of women's Empowerment and Family (MINPROFF), with support from UNIFEM launched, in March 2004, a sensitization programme for different social actors.¹⁷⁰ Several seminars like (The Global coalition on women and AIDS 2001 Yaounde) were organized within this context, and they launched a programme of awareness-raising seminars for actors including government agencies, the national parliament, local government, civil society organisations and the private sector¹⁷¹. Subsequent years have seen further seminars, as well as other actors besides MINPROFF and UNIFEM initiating action. Awareness raising has also been extended to members involved in the ongoing public finance reform as well as to donor agencies such as CIDA.¹⁷²

With financial support from CIDA in 2005, a GRB programme was initiated with UNIFEM in partnership with MINPROFF, UNDP and UNFPA, which raised awareness and generated interest among a broad spectrum of stakeholders including the UNCT, Government ministers, parliamentarians, general managers of state corporations, the media and CSOs- especially women's networks. Training has been provided to technical staff in key Ministries and, particularly, to the members of the Platform on Public Finance Reform and to local government structures, to enhance their capacity to plan, implement and monitor budgets from a gender equality perspective.

One of the main venues for working in this area has been the UNIFEM Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, which the General Assembly asked UNIFEM to coordinate soon after the Beijing Conference. The Trust Fund supports

¹⁶⁸ "National report on the millennium development", p. 28.

¹⁶⁹ UNIFEM. "EC-UN partnership on Gender equality for development and peace", p. 6.

¹⁷⁰ R. Holmes and R. Slater et al, *Gender-responsive budgeting*, p. 18.

¹⁷¹ UNIFEM, *Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge*, p.3.

¹⁷² B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 30.

community-based initiatives and advocacy work on ending violence against women throughout the world¹⁷³. For example, UNIFEM and MINPROFF also operate a hotline, which permits victims of violence or anyone with information on violence cases to reach the Ministry's services at any time like the (social welfare services in Yaounde, SOS Family that is based in Douala created on 11 November, 2008 and ACAFEJ offers free legal counselling at three assistance centres located in Bafoussam, Douala and Yaounde). Health and financial assistance provided by UNIFEM and MINPROFF includes medical care for the victim and payment of associated costs in the case of indigent victims of violence, or arranging for such payment by the Ministry of Social Affairs or the Ministry of Public Health¹⁷⁴. In 2009, VAW activities in Cameroon were funded with UNIFEM's core funds in which MINPROFF received a contribution of approximately \$85,000 contributions under one year.

In Cameroon, UNIFEM now UN Women provided support to a local CSO Municipal Development Counselling Group (MUDEC) for institutionalizing¹⁷⁵. UN Women provided support to improve the technical capacities of local councils to integrate gender priorities into the planning and budgeting process. MUDEC also contributed to develop the capacities of women's groups to monitor and enforce Output Based Budgets in councils¹⁷⁶. In 2006, with support from UNIFEM, EC initiated a training programme on GRB for its staff and a rationale of sensitization, a seminar to initiate mayors and municipal councilors on the adoption of Gender Responsive Budgeting was conducted¹⁷⁷. This seminar was the initiative of an NGO working for the promotion of gender equality with support from UNIFEM. The main objective of this seminar was to sensitize mayors and municipal councilors on the importance of preparing and adopting Gender Responsive Budgeting with a view to developing their municipalities¹⁷⁸. Indeed, newly elected representatives often have a development programme, which is different from that of their predecessors, which may mean that policies of the municipality change.¹⁷⁹

Gender Responsive Budgeting in Cameroon has mainly focused on strengthening the technical and operational capacities of 70 target ministry (MINEPAT, MINPROFF, MINFI) and municipalities senior executives on GRB. A sub-regional training workshop on "the

¹⁷³ "Partnership for gender equality: the role of multilateral and bilateral", p. 17.

¹⁷⁴ UNECA, "Violence Against Women ", p. 30.

¹⁷⁵ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 14.

¹⁷⁶ "Strengthening local councils in Cameroon to respond to women and girls needs", UN Women, Cameroon, 2014, p.1.

¹⁷⁷ UNIFEM, *Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge*, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ F. M. N. TAKEU Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid", p. 31.

¹⁷⁹ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 14.

integration of Gender in national planning and budgeting” was held in Mali in 2003 with the support of UNIFEM and attended by three government officers. The objective of the workshop was to reflect on the limits of the “woman” vertical approach and to highlight the political role and technical support that national mechanisms should play and which are so often marginalized in the national planning and budgeting processes¹⁸⁰. This was found to be of additional value in Cameroon, enabling donors in 2003 to establish the *Comité Multi Bailleurs* (CMB) to monitor the Poverty reduction strategy paper (PRSP)¹⁸¹.

Also known in English as Multi-Donor Committee (CMB), the committee had eight thematic sub-groups, including the Gender Thematic Group (GTEG). The committee meets monthly and its objective is to share information, discuss cross-cutting issues, and agree on common positions¹⁸². Donors shared that they appreciated the work and message of UN Women on human and women’s rights; they found that with other agencies, this message is often diluted and crowded out by other priorities. Almost all donors nowadays have human rights and gender as a high priority on their agenda, and they found that UN Women has helped them live up to this priority.

In December 2005, UNIFEM was one of the founding members of the Technical Working group on gender Equality (GTEG) where the EC Delegation and ILO were active members¹⁸³. In this programme, partnership has been strengthened between the government of Cameroon with the group and extended to other working groups set up by the Multi-donor Committee (CMB), within the framework of the Paris Declaration (the PRSP working group and the Public Finance Reform Platform)¹⁸⁴. In Cameroon, the group undertook impressive advocacy with the Technical Follow-up Committee on PRSP to mainstream gender in all the on-going processes (policy dialogue, sensitization of Secretary generals of line ministries, etc). With UNIFEM, the group has sensitized and advocated for GE in New Aid Modalities with the Multi-donors Committee (CMB)¹⁸⁵.

UNIFEM also supports trainings for municipal education professionals on gender budgeting. Thus, municipal Decisions bearing on Increasing Financing for Gender Equality have been adopted in 10 out of the 16 targeted councils. This facilitated the creation and

¹⁸⁰ F. M. N. TAKEU Bruno, “Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid”, p. 31.

¹⁸¹ B. Debbie, “Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness”, p. 28.

¹⁸² UNIFEM, Gender-responsive budgeting and aid effectiveness: knowledge, p.3.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Debbie, “Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness”, p. 28.

¹⁸⁵ UNIFEM. “EC-UN partnership on Gender equality for development and peace”, p. 7.

functioning of Women Foundations for Inclusive Governance (WOFIG) and Gender Committees in 16 councils. At least 3 WOFIG members in each council area have been elected as Councilors during the September 30, 2013 local elections. Furthermore, 7 members of WOFIG were elected as Alternate Members of the National Assembly (MPs). These members are now playing a key role in local decision making specifically on the allocation of resources and budgets¹⁸⁶.

f. Informal cross-border trade and Gender focal points

Women play a key role in informal trade. For example, it is estimated that 70% of informal cross-border trade in Southern Africa is by women¹⁸⁷. UN Women has managed to target the most vulnerable women facing difficulties in their businesses in cross border trade in Cameroon¹⁸⁸. Women's trading activities contribute to poverty reduction, employment and wealth creation in Africa. At the household level, UNIFEM surveyed 2,000 women ICBTs in 2007–2009 in Cameroon, Liberia, Mali and Swaziland¹⁸⁹. A great majority stated that (the proceeds from their trading activities is the main source of income for the family; women traders use their income to buy food and other items for the household, pay for school fees, health care services and rent, save, bank and reinvest in their businesses¹⁹⁰.

In Cameroon, the UN Women and the Government has prioritised support to women's informal cross-border traders, providing them with information and services in support of their activities¹⁹¹. To prove this, UN Women set up a revolving fund for the Association of “Bayam Sellam” of Cameroon called in French as *Association des Bayam-Sellam* (ASBY)¹⁹². ASBY provided micro-credit through a revolving fund, enhancing the access to finance of women with small businesses¹⁹³. Thus, MINPROFF and UN Women financed gender sensitive and built women capacity to organise and manage themselves in cooperatives and helped women get better direct access to markets and means for transport, thus enhancing

¹⁸⁶ L. Chiwara, *The aid effectiveness agenda: an opportunity to mainstream gender*, p. 14.

¹⁸⁷ UNIFEM “Findings of the Baseline Studies on Women in Informal Cross Border Trade in Africa”, Brussels, 24 March, 2009, p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ UN Women, “Country portfolio evaluation final report”, p. 25.

¹⁸⁹ R. L. Blumberg, *Women cross-border traders in southern Africa contributions, constraints, and opportunities in Malawi and Botswana*, USAID, March 2016, p. 30.

¹⁹⁰ UN Women, *Unleashing the Potential of Women Informal Cross Border Traders to Transform Intra-African Trade*, New York, 2006, p. 2.

¹⁹¹ UN Women, *Unleashing the Potential of Women Informal Cross Border Traders to Transform*, p.3

¹⁹² ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 16.

¹⁹³ UN Women, “Country portfolio evaluation final report”, p. 25. (The Bayam-Selam Association of Cameroon (ASBY) was created by the operators in the informal sector to unite actors involved in the production and support marketing of agricultural production and establishing a marketing chain, and to combat increasing cost of living.

their income by avoiding middlemen. In line with Cameroon's commitments and orientations, UN Women supported the constitution of two cooperatives. These are the Coast Beach Cooperative of women fish traders in Idenau and the Coast Beach Cooperative of women traders in Kye-Ossi¹⁹⁴. For instance, the gender-sensitive infrastructure in Idenau consists of (i) a cold store, (ii) a block of 6 latrines, (iii) a borehole equipped with a human-powered pump. It is placed at the disposal of the Coast Beach cooperative, composed of 110 women fish traders. Thanks to this cold store and the related equipment, the women will be able to make the sale of fish more profitable and improve their living conditions as well as those of their families. The informal cross-border trade involved three regions; that is Gabon/Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Nigeria¹⁹⁵. According to Antoinette Angono Aba'a:

For women in cross border trading area like Kye-Ossi, a gender sensitive infrastructure was provided that is a shed of 52 places with sales stalls, lockers and 15 cradles for nursing mothers, a warehouse with rest beds for traders, a group of improved latrines with double ventilated pits, a rubbish bin and a positive borehole equipped with a human-powered pump was established by UN Women in 2015. She also said that the commercial complex has allowed the women traders of Kye-Ossi not only be protected from the bad weather, also the commercial complex generating revenue to the council through collection of taxes and rentage¹⁹⁶.

Numerous seminars, workshops and consultations have been organized by the EC for senior officials of Ministries (MINEPAT, MINEFI) in charge of preparing partnership programmes. For instance, a seminar was organized for officials of the cooperation office and members of civil society in June 2007 with the objective of considering specific projects for women within the construction of the Maroua-Garoua Boulai and Nandeke highways¹⁹⁷. The awareness raising has had at least one concrete result in terms of budget allocations in that the Ministry of Commerce included a line item of support for women's informal cross-border traders (WICBT) in its budget for 2008.¹⁹⁸ Another allocation to support WICBT was made within the 2009 budget and discussions were carried out in respect of a permanent budget line to be created for this purpose¹⁹⁹. A UNIFEM project, with a specific focus on women's informal cross-border traders, has contributed to this achievement.²⁰⁰ One of the interesting developments has been the efforts made by UNIFEM and the EC to raise questions as to how

¹⁹⁴ ONU Femmes, *Cameroun : Progrès vers l'égalité des sexes et autonomisation*, p. 16.

¹⁹⁵ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade", p. 16.

¹⁹⁶ Interview with Mrs. Antoinette Angono Aba'a, 60 years, president of MUBASE, Kye-Ossi, July, 13th 2021.

¹⁹⁷ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade", p. 22.

¹⁹⁸ R. Holmes and R. Slater et al, *Gender-responsive budgeting*, p. 18.

¹⁹⁹ B. Debbie, "Integrating gender-responsive budgeting into the aid effectiveness", p. 29.

²⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 30.

interventions in relation to transport infrastructure; a major investment area for the EC²⁰¹, benefit women in terms of those employed and their remuneration, direct beneficiaries and those indirectly affected by positive and negative externalities in Cameroon²⁰².

UNIFEM's supports to various ministries in Cameroon helped to established many Gender Focal Points within certain structures²⁰³. These have been installed in many ministries in response to the Beijing recommendations²⁰⁴. One should also note with satisfaction that the UNIFEM and MINPROFF have designated focal points in all the ministries, with a view to taking gender-specific matters into account in all national programmes and policies benefiting women²⁰⁵. In particular, it welcomes the national action plan for the advancement of women. The Gender Focal Points were trained on gender and HIV/AIDS related topics. Even if the Gender Focal Points had changed jobs in a number of cases, most of them reported that they were still dedicating an important part of their time to defending and mainstreaming gender equality, a number of them also participated regularly in the Gender Cafés²⁰⁶.

III. Impediments

In Cameroon, women's poverty level and their comparative lack of leadership and participation in decision making and lack of control over assets are often attributed to a number of personal factors. These factors include low literacy, skills, self-esteem, financial security and ignorance of their rights. However, women in the region live in a predominately patriarchal society in which their economic dependency on men is determined by discriminatory customary practices, laws and policies in public institutions. To properly fight theses calamities and promote women's empowerment, there is need for women to be physically present and participate actively, in the elaboration of policies, projects and programmes to fight for their empowerment.²⁰⁷

a. Gender disparities in education and Insufficient knowledge on ICT

Despite progress in improving access to education, 46 percent of individual countries had achieved parity in lower secondary and 23 percent in upper secondary by 2014 as millions

²⁰¹A/64/164, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women: Operational activities for development Sixty-fourth session", United Nations, 23 July 2009, p. 7.

²⁰² F. M.N TAKEU Bruno, "Integrating Gender Responsive Budgeting into the Aid", p. 22.

²⁰³ "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Twenty-third session", p. 2.

²⁰⁴UN Women, *Republic of Cameroon: national action plan for the 1325 and companion resolution of the united*, p. 1.

²⁰⁵ "Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women Twenty-third session", p. 3.

²⁰⁶ K. N. Tilder, *Beijing +15 The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, p. 16.

²⁰⁷ K. Tilder, *The Reality of Cameroon*, p. 21.

of young women and girls continue to be left out of educational and learning opportunities. These trends reflect the socio-economic and gender-based barriers to education faced by women and girls²⁰⁸. The problem of illiteracy precludes the dissemination of essential information for women and their development. The high rate of illiteracy among women has been noted by all government departments and NGOs as a key constraint in their work with women and a contribution factor to the failure of UNIFEM programmes and activities in Cameroon. This issue of illiteracy stands definitely as a huge handicap that hinders the integration of community development.²⁰⁹ According to the CEDAW's Report in 2007, the literacy rate for all women in Cameroon is 60% as opposed to 70% for men. However, this percentage is not proportionate across all ages and regions of the country. The rate in rural areas is far lower than in urban areas and still lower among older women aged 50 and above than between women aged 15-49. The literacy rate among older women above the age of 50 in the North West is 30% one of the lowest in the country as found in appendix 10.²¹⁰

Another problem is that most of these women who after primary education have never had the opportunity for any further training or jobs that require literacy skills tend to lose these with time and age. It was discovered that many women above the age of 40 with only primary education are unable to take up functions in their groups or communities such as minute secretaries, financial secretaries, or any role that requires writing and calculation skills²¹¹. Many of them simply lack the confidence as they doubt their ability to take up roles of responsibilities within the group or the community. This also explains the reason for their massive absence in positions of responsibilities within the community and country.²¹² Gender disparities mainly concern the retention of girls in the education system. While they are more marked in certain regions of Cameroon (Far North, North and East regions), these disparities are more pronounced in secondary and higher education than in primary education. As an illustration, the completion rate in primary school is 69.68% while in secondary school it is 54.6%. According to the Survey on Employment and the Informal Sector carried out by the National Institute of Statistics in 2010, the illiteracy rate of the female population aged 15

²⁰⁸“UN Women facilitates access education and vocational training for women and girls affected by humanitarian crisis in Cameroon”, Minawao refugee camp, April 2, 2019, p. 1.

²⁰⁹ F. P. Bongoa, “The role of the women in rural space dynamics: a case study of Alou-Subdivision in the South West Province of Cameroon”, Master’s Dissertation in Geography, the University of Yaounde I, 2004, p. 52.

²¹⁰CEDAW, “Combined second and third periodic reports by States parties in Cameroon”, New York, 2007, p. 37.

²¹¹G. Livingston “For most highly educated women, motherhood doesn’t start until the 30s”, January 15, 2015, p. 1.

²¹² CEDAW, “Combined second and third periodic reports by States”, p. 38.

years is 33,3%. The consequences for women are as follows: quantitatively less qualified; qualitatively less competitive; disqualification for lack of sufficient education²¹³.

Due to this illiteracy issue, most of these women suffer from the lack of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) knowledge which has been found to be a major setback which explains why they are unable to benefit from the programmes of government and other development partners.²¹⁴ Closely linked to this is the lack of a forum or mechanism for exchanging information among women and networking with the outside world. Women of Cameroon especially those in the rural areas not only lack access to modern ICT which is faster and cheaper to connect them to the entire world around them but they equally lack a forum for local information transmission such as local newspapers, radio and television through which information about development and women's issues could be obtained locally. The lack of such information forum makes it difficult for them even to know what resources are available around them, which government departments or NGOs are offering what for their benefit and when is the right time to apply for any available funding or assistance.²¹⁵ In this globalized world, where modern information technology has led to the death of distance and narrowing the world down to what is commonly referred to as the global village. These women from the various regions of Cameroon are still a long way from taking enough advantages of these modern communication technologies notably computer literacy. The World Bank has noted that equitable access to information and communication technology can be an important tool for empowering women.²¹⁶

b. Media and culture

Moreover, many women are involved in the media as journalists and some programmes are broadcast and print media at national and rural levels with the intention to educate the women and the public on their rights. However, most media women fear to be stigmatized as activists and feminists. Also, the image of women portrayed by the media is more negative than positive. However, some women do not have the opportunity to listen to radio or watch television programmes due to their many activities as well as the time of broadcast, which does not take into consideration the calendars of women within the

²¹³J. D. Tchunkam, "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013", pp.381- 382.

²¹⁴ Interview with Ndoping Florence, 50 Years, President of NOWWEF, 20th December 2013, Bamenda.

²¹⁵Interview with Atogho Ekukole Jessie, 50 Years, Head of communication service, TRB, Yaounde, 15th December 2013, Yaounde.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

society²¹⁷. Also, the language problem is a barrier both for men and women. The Civil Society on her part often forgets that though the media is important, it is also expensive. For this reason, they hardly consider media aspects in their project budgeting, which makes it difficult for their actions in the field to be made visible²¹⁸.

In Cameroon, the majority of UN agencies and other development partners are not completely aware of what UNIFEM had been doing in relation to various activities carried out and some have a very limited understanding of it. Government and CSO partners tend to know about what directly concerned their collaboration with UNIFEM, but are not mostly aware of the bigger picture of UNIFEM's programmings. This lack of visibility has limited the potential for synergy, coordination (with UNFPA in Cameroon), identification and circulation of good practices, and mobilization of other development partners. It has also undermined UNIFEM's, and now UN Women's credibility as a player in the fight against VAW. Thus, despite reported efforts to communicate on the transition to UN Women, there remains considerable confusion and thirst for information on the transition to UN Women among national and development partners²¹⁹.

Like many countries around the world, Cameroon has dealt with women's inequality. There are several laws in Cameroon that are severely discriminatory towards women, and even after observations and suggestions made by the CEDAW Committee to the government of Cameroon in 2000 and 2009, there have been no legal reforms to improve the protection of women's empowerment in Cameroon. To make matters worse, customary law is applied next to statutory law, which brings about many contradictions and inconsistencies²²⁰. There are many customs and traditions that impede the implementation of statutory laws and it should be noted that it encourages male domination in all domains of socio-cultural life. These factors prevent some women from enjoying full affiliation in politics and the benefits it offers thus preventing them from achieving equality in politics²²¹. So doing, women continue to be placed in a subordinate position thereby preventing them from exercising their full potentials for the development of the community. High bride price and the notion that a woman is a man's property remains a reality in these communities in spite of the education

²¹⁷ K. Tilder, *The Reality of Cameroon and the Unfinished Business*, Bamenda, July 2010, p. 55.

²¹⁸ S. A. Suddeth, "(Dis) Enchanted: (Re)constructing Love and Creating Community in the Once Upon a Time Queer Fandom", Master's Dissertation in Women's and Gender Studies, University of South Florida, 2017, p. 7.

²¹⁹ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. 38.

²²⁰ C. Spicer, "Legal reforms to key women's empowerment in Cameroon", Huffington post, November 29, 2017, p. 1.

²²¹ J. D. Tchunkam, "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013", p. 382.

level of many of their members. This has prevented some young people truly in love but financially limited, from living their dream by getting married to the one they love.²²²

The economy of polygamy is a significant factor that gnaws the life of some of the members of these women's groups especially in rural areas: "family work needs more hands". More hands mean more agricultural production and therefore more income: more income means a man can purchase more wives; this in turn increases production and income. More wives also mean more daughters and therefore more bride-prices. However, the large polygamous families of the past are decreasing in number as time goes on. Women have often been given only minor roles and are not entrusted with such challenging tasks as their male counterparts. Instead, marginal decision-making processes, especially those that are considered to be traditionally female-oriented, are given to them.²²³ Kusimba, said that due to cultural and historical injustices, most women are not financially independent and are economically disempowered in comparison to their male counterparts. This prevents them to make meaningful contribution or participation in leadership decisions making. Culturalism is a weapon of class oppression²²⁴. Generally, the subordinate position of women appears obvious given the fact that most of these women have to succumb to the conditions that society or their husbands place them into. To this effect, husbands can decide whether or not their wives can further their education, or engage in any business or social activity.²²⁵

It is worth noticing that many women are still constrained by very stringent gender biases and socio-cultural practices and they can neither own nor inherit property or land. Very few girls go beyond primary school, they are focused on marriages (often when they are still teenagers); and very few women can decide on the number of children they want to have. Cameroon has around 250 ethnic groups, and there are 24 major tribal language groups used in the country²²⁶. Tribes are at the service of the nation. The finality of the tribe is to bring its uniqueness so that the nation can be enriched for the good of all²²⁷. Despite UNIFEM's effort to foster women's empowerment in Cameroon, the existence of tribalism hampered some of their activities in that female elite tend to favour their tribe women for development purposes

²²² H. M. Nyamnjoh, *Bridging mobilities*, p. 177.

²²³ Ibid, p. 178.

²²⁴ C.M Kusimba, "The Declining Significance of Traditional African Women Question of Gender Inequalities and the; The Plight of Kenyan Women", Paper presented to I.A.S., University of Nairobi, 1992, p.49.

²²⁵ A. A. Alasah "Women Empowerment", p. 191.

²²⁶ <https://cruxnow.com/church-in-africa/2019/12/cameroons-bishops-warn-against-rise-of-tribalism/>, consulted on 8th September 2020.

²²⁷ <http://www.cameroonintelligencereport.com/kick-tribalism-out-of-african-political-and-religious-establishments/>, consulted on 8th September 2020.

instead of building the women of the nation. For instance; many educated women in Cameroon have demonstrated a penchant for excessive emotional attachment to their respective tribes or ethnic groups in such a manner as to generate ethnic consolidations and inter-ethnic competition, which tends to put in jeopardy valid aspirations towards national unity²²⁸. Women from disadvantaged groups such as the Mbororo Tribe and minorities in particular face discrimination, exploitation and limited employment opportunities in Cameroon. It should equally be said that most of the cultural, economic and social values promoted by these groups are restricted only within the members.²²⁹

The Penal Code punishes any person who reduces a person to slavery or is involved in trafficking human beings with a prison sentence of between 10 to 20 years.²³⁰ The areas addressed in this draft law seek effectively to ensure protection of the person and rights of women in society.²³¹ Despite the progress made in creating new legislation, many women still suffer under patriarchal laws that provide them with few, if any, rights.²³² Criminal codes entrenched in notions of honour and chastity is the basis for laws that protect men at the expense of women. Rape laws, for example, sometimes provide loopholes for perpetrators by dropping charges if the rapist marries his victim as is the case in Cameroon.²³³

c. Gender inequality and VAW

One of the main challenges for UNIFEM's performance in VAW in the sub-region has been the lack of strategic guidance and programmatic coherence at the sub-regional and country levels. UNIFEM has not been able to develop explicit strategies in the sub-regions and country level for VAW and UNIFEM country staff has been expressing a lack of strategic direction on how to address VAW. As a consequence, UNIFEM's programming on VAW in Cameroon has manifested itself as a sum of individual activities rather than a coherent, systematic, and long-term thematic programme. The absence of strategic guidance has also affected partner selection and some VAW programming choices²³⁴. UNIFEM's assessment has illustrated that violence against women remains at epidemic proportions. Among its key findings is that advances in legislation and policy have not been followed by strong and

²²⁸ Interview with Ayuk Plany, 35 Years, secondary school teacher, 11th October 2018, Yaounde.

²²⁹ N. G. Njang, "The socio-economic impact of the Moghamo Cultural and development association in Batibo Sub-division 1982 - 2003", Master's Dissertation in History, The University of Yaounde I, 2005, p. 78.

²³⁰ "Violence against Women in Cameroon : a report to the Committee against Torture, 2003, p. 136.

²³¹ "The UN Secretary- General's database on violence against women", New York, December 1, 2006, p. 3.

²³² UNIFEM, "Not a minute more: Ending Violence Against", p. 43.

²³³ R. Coomaraswamy, "Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women.", Human Rights Council, UN, Jan. 6, 2003, p. 163.

²³⁴ "Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. iv.

sustainable implementation plans. Moreover, its findings have revealed a significant gap in efforts to evaluate, measure, and monitor legislation, programmes, and policies. Ultimately, UNIFEM's Ending Violence Against Women assessment has shown that closely tracking achievements and accurately identifying obstacles and gaps are critical to achieving a world that is safer for women. For instance, in strengthening formal and informal justice systems, UNIFEM has contributed to some short-term output level in Cameroon, where UNIFEM has put particular emphasis on it (UNIFEM contributed to strengthening knowledge of CEDAW and its application within the formal legal system, and to the sensitization of traditional leaders and village chiefs on VAW). However, the limited scope, duration and coherence/synergy of UNIFEM's supported initiatives limit their contribution to broader changes at the national level²³⁵.

Cameroon hosts the largest number of refugees from the Central African Republic - approximately 260,000. The vast majority of them (more than 158,000) have arrived since the onset of the latest crisis in the country in December 2013. 100,000 others have been in Cameroon since 2003²³⁶. In recent years, more than 65,000 Nigerian refugees have also sought refuge in the country's Far North region, due to the escalating violence in Nigeria's Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States. In Cameroon, approximately seventy percent of refugees live side by side with locals in host communities. The conflict and insecurity have rendered such communities more vulnerable, and has created rifts. As a result, women in particular have been more exposed to violent extremism and intolerance²³⁷. Thus, women are at risk of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) and other violations of human rights²³⁸, inside and outside the camps by men from various backgrounds²³⁹. Despite UN Women's investments in human and financial resources to address this situation, the humanitarian challenges, including in the area of gender and especially related to GBV and poverty, remain persistent²⁴⁰.

Despite UNIFEM advances in all "Delivering as one" pilot countries, challenges to stronger action on gender equality remain in Cameroon. (Delivering as one is an approach that emerged from a process of intergovernmental decision-making on the UN system's

²³⁵ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 24.

²³⁶ "United Nations in Cameroon", annual report, New York, 2016, p. 20.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ P. Nana-Dombe, "Rapport de la mission d'observation sur la pratique de la prostitution de survie des Femmes et jeunes filles", p. 23.

²³⁹ J. P. Dargal, et al, *Gender-based violence in Garoua-Boulai and Gado Refugee Camp*, p. 28.

²⁴⁰ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 24.

operational activities established in November 2006)²⁴¹. These include the need to ensure that national development strategies address gender equality priorities, and national and local gender equality advocates are included in the consultative processes of country teams, the strengthening of staff capacities to work on gender equality issues within country teams, and better monitoring of the performance of country teams in relation to gender issues in Cameroon²⁴². For instance, the phenomenon of violence against women and girls is a social reality in Cameroon. It produces a negative impact on the victims, the perpetrators, the development of the family and, indeed, on the country as a whole.

Despite UNIFEM's commitment in promoting human rights view on equality through trainings sensitizations and media, there still exists class socialization among women in Cameroon. It is known that women are a mixture of people from all spheres in the society and from their respective communities and since they have the habits of cohabiting in groups or organisations, it is obvious for certain realities of life to occur. Thus, as women meet together on a regular basis this has exposed and made obvious the potentials as well as the limits of each woman. The knowledge of each other has gradually created a spirit of complex in the attitude of many women. Due to this, social classes have progressively gained the ground within these women. In fact, it has been noticed that some members of the upper class in the society like collaborating with those of the same rank. This attitude has finally caused unavoidable barriers between those who are well established in life and members who did not have the same chances to succeed in the community. For instance, women of the same rank usually like playing their *njangi* with those of the same level of financial or intellectual fulfillment. It is equally obvious to note that true friendship is mostly real between members that belong to the same social class.²⁴³

Another impact among women is that of competition among them. Highly desiring to live a high standard life, women find themselves struggling to imitate the life style of those who are financially more settled in life than others. This pushes women to always find themselves admiring and endeavoring to appear like others.²⁴⁴ It goes without saying that this applies to members of all the social classes. When an upper-class member buys a new model car, those who are equally fulfilled financially will most likely endeavour to acquire the same

²⁴¹“Independent evaluation of Delivering as One”, United Nations, New York, September 2012, p. 2.

²⁴² “Executive Board of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women”, 27-30 June 2011, New York, Annual session of 2011, p. 12.

²⁴³ Interview with Edengue Nathalie, 28 years, *Bayam-sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, Kye-Ossi, 12 July 2021.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

model of vehicle. This spirit of competition therefore excites members who are poor to live a constant unsatisfied life due to many material things that they spend time admiring but cannot acquire them because of the lack of money. On the other hand, this challenge equally pushes some of the women to work very hard in order to gain enough money to live similar life styles like others.²⁴⁵

d. Fund acquisition, PRSP and Paris Declaration

One of the major problems of women is that of finances. It has been noticed that one of the major aspects that UNIFEM cares about is that of UNIFEM's Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women. Even though efforts are done by UNIFEM and the Cameroon government to acquire funds for the realization of various projects which aim at changing the life style of the women and their respective communities, yet women's needs are not all met. Furthermore, poverty on a large scale is an issue which makes it difficult for most women to meet up with their financial engagements in the society. Poverty has increased in rural areas, while three regions recorded poverty rates above the average as seen in table 23.

Table 23: Trend of poverty 2001 - 2007

Regions	2001 %	2007 %
Littoral	35.5	31.1
South West	33.8	27.5
Adamaoua	48.4	53.0
Centre	48.2	41.2
East	44.0	50.4
Far North	56.3	65.9
North	50.1	63.7
North West	52.2	51.0
West	40.3	28.9
South	31.5	29.3

Note: Cameroon women and those of the rural regions in particular are the poorest in the country. The main course of this persistent poverty has been identified as the lack of education. Increased investment in their education and lifelong is therefore essential if they are to be empowered to contribute more to the development of the country and eliminate poverty.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Interview with Tongagi Hortance, 50 years, *Bayam-sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, 12 July 2021 Kye-Ossi.

²⁴⁶ Interview with Alama Sandrine, 35 years, *Bayam-sellam* in Kye-Ossi market, 12 July 2021, Kye-Ossi.

The CEDAW report (2012) highlighted that women's poverty ratio decreased from 40.5% in 2001 to 33.4% in 2007. Yet, Women's poverty was found more serious in the rural areas than in the cities, probably because the sources of income in rural areas are often limited to small-scale agriculture. Women mostly grow crops for self-consumption and not cash crops and men often represent the business. Women are slightly more affected by poverty: 52% of poor household members are female²⁴⁷. Poverty rates in the North and Far North Regions are very high; about two of every three people were poor. The rate of abject poverty in these regions is also very high: 41 per cent in the Far North and 31 per cent in the North. About 40 per cent of people classified as the poorest live in the Far North and 17 per cent in the North²⁴⁸.

It should also be noted that the reality of women marginalization in Cameroon appears more evident. In the economic domain, they are mostly found in the informal sector, where they operate as small entrepreneurs. (Selling food-stuff, and other articles on the street and they operate small bars and restaurants) who cannot expand their businesses because of inadequate access to credit. Even in terms of waged employment, these women are mostly found in the teaching and nursing professions, which are generally looked upon as an extension of their caring roles.²⁴⁹

Many factors have contributed to the lack of progress in mainstreaming gender into the PRSPs in Cameroon. UNIFEM has been able to identify some of these factors and they include: the level of civil society participation tends to decline or even break down key stages of the PRSP process, current macroeconomic frameworks do not recognize non-market work, which is not reflected in national accounts and the PRSP doesn't attempt to correct this, which results in policies that do not address issues of time and energy, poverty and inadequate technical capacity for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming by those in key positions in government, development partners and civil society organizations, and the lack of financial and institutional capacity of gender sensitive civil society groups including women's groups²⁵⁰.

NGOs such as WILFP, CAMYOSFOP and CIDA have been involved mainly as implementing partners under the various areas that has been more strategic. These NGOs are

²⁴⁷ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p.7.

²⁴⁸ "Cameroon: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper", IMF Washington, D.C., No. 10, August 2010, p. 40.

²⁴⁹ F. Lotsmart, "Fostering Women's participation in Development", p. 226.

²⁵⁰ UNIFEM, "Addressing Feminization of Poverty in Africa: A Concept Paper", 2005, p .7.

shortlisted on the basis of capacity assessments, and submit their proposals to Calls for Proposals launched by UN Women. UN Women outsources the publicity, the capacity assessment and the selection procedure to an independent agency. Though this procedure was appreciated for its transparency, at the same time it forces the NGOs into a role of implementing partner and reduces the potential for UN Women to work with them on a more strategic basis. NGOs and CSOs have voiced their need for more support from UN Women to identify and obtain funding for GEWE and to strengthen relationships with Government and other UN Agencies. Civil society organizations lack enough funds especially women's organizations, which leads to insufficient participation of such groups during the PRSP process. Also, the content and burden of women's unpaid work is generally insufficiently presented in the poverty diagnosis of PRSP in Cameroon. This leads to the implementation of policies and programmes that do not adequately address women's needs²⁵¹. A recent UNIFEM study found that the gender content of the PRSPs is inadequate in much the same way as is the employment content: the prescriptive recommendations are far weaker than the diagnostics; gender-specific recommendations are frequently limited to a handful of issues or interventions (Reproductive health or girls' education); and gender-specific targets and indicators are insufficient or absent altogether²⁵².

UNIFEM is the executing agency for the EC/UN Partnership at the country level in relation to the Paris Declaration principles to build alliances and open spaces for policy dialogue among governments, donor partners and civil society organizations, including gender-equality advocates in order to enhance inclusive development and increase the role of aid in Cameroon²⁵³. As a result of this, UNIFEM and the EC/UN Partnership in Cameroon have been facing capacity challenges and inadequate financial management systems; thus, donors are reluctant to shift to new approaches, especially Direct Budget Support. Until this is achieved, the implementation of the Paris Declaration runs the risk of focusing narrowly on the efficiency of financial management while neglecting development impact, particularly as it relates to gender equality and women's empowerment commitments²⁵⁴.

²⁵¹ UNIFEM, "PRSP Guidance Note on UNIFEM's engagement with the PRSP process", ESR Team - UNIFEM, December 2009, p.5.

²⁵² C. Martha, *Progress of the world's women: women*, p. 20.

²⁵³ J. Muteshi, *Mapping Aid Effectiveness and Gender Equality in Africa Regional*, p. 7.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 8.

e. Programming strategies and limited resources

UNIFEM has used a variety of programming strategies, with varying degrees of consistency and effectiveness. These were: creating, coordinating, and maintaining networks, partnerships, and dialogue mechanisms; capacity development; knowledge generation and sharing; advocacy and policy dialogue; sensitization and awareness-raising; developing and testing new/innovative approaches. While in most cases the programming strategies used by UNIFEM were appropriate for their specific purpose, they were selected and implemented in a fragmented and non-systematic way. For example, UNIFEM has supported various training activities in Cameroon, but these were not part of a clear capacity building strategy. This has affected the potential of individual initiatives in Cameroon to contribute to broader results²⁵⁵.

UNIFEM's centralized structure and limited financial and human resources have to some extent affected its effectiveness and credibility for programming in Cameroon. Several results at the output level were achieved by the reviewed initiatives supported by UNIFEM in Cameroon. However, it is difficult to assess the extent to which outputs contributed to UNIFEM's envisaged outcomes as in most cases these were small scale, short-term initiatives that were dispersed geographically, and synergies across interventions were not pursued in the country. Monitoring and follow up is a challenge for both UNIFEM and its partners due to the fact that there are not enough systems or resources to ensure follow up, establish credible baselines, or measure the effects of initiatives on targeted communities. Also, UNIFEM supported and trained network of experts on Gender Responsive Budgeting and planning and assisted the Ministry of Finance to ensure mainstreaming gender in budgets but still, the efforts remain limited though on paper. The Ministry of Finance is following up on gender, but there is not much change in the national programmes and budgets. For this reason, it has been difficult for UNIFEM-supported initiatives in Cameroon to contribute to institutional and behavioural changes that go beyond their immediate results²⁵⁶.

UNIFEM Cameroon has not been able to completely eliminate the different challenges and barriers affecting women trying to do business in the modern world of today. Many of these barriers are linked to limited access to resources. For example, lack of or insufficient capital to start or grow a business, cultural restrictions on ownership of land, insufficient technical skills, little knowledge of financial and business management and complex market

²⁵⁵"Evaluation of UNIFEM action to end violence", p. iv.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 19.

structures that make it difficult for women to access potential regional and international trading platforms to market and sell their goods and services.

In 2007, UNIFEM and Cameroon's Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family developed its budget based on the Medium-Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF). However, allocations to MINPROFF were traditionally less than 1 per cent of the national budget and often included only a few isolated projects on gender. No specific attention was given to gender equality and women's empowerment issues in the whole budgetary process. In 2005, UNIFEM partnered with MINPROFF, UNDP and UNFPA on a gender-responsive budget initiative to sensitize and build the capacity of government technical staff, CSOs and parliamentarians to promote performance-based budgeting and ensure financial allocations for gender equality priorities. However, an evaluation of the 2007 budget of some ministries revealed that despite the level of awareness and interest generated, the resource shares allocated to gender equality are still very unsatisfactory.

f. Women traders facing challenges and MDG

Women traders in Cameroon specifically face challenges accessing opportunities due to market saturation. Indeed, an increase in women entering the ICBT often leads to a concomitant increase in informal traders, which increases competition, and can depress earnings as markets quickly become saturated²⁵⁷. According to a UNIFEM's study, "Harassment and sexual exploitation by border officials seeking bribes constitute the biggest obstacles for female informal cross-border traders in Africa and Cameroon"²⁵⁸. UNIFEM's study showed that women traders in Cameroon have limited access to formal credit; reason why they turn to the informal financial intermediaries that are fragmented. Thus, information on market prices and other pertinent matters is piecemeal; transactions are small; and interest rates are typically higher than those in the formal sector²⁵⁹. Women involved in ICBT are away from their families for extended periods of time and women who are traders operating from service market stalls such as in flea-markets, work for at least 10 hours a day and often make their way home very late at night²⁶⁰. Another hurdle women are facing with regard to ICBT is that of obtaining formal financing. When women begin in the ICBT business they

²⁵⁷ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade: Empirical Evidence", p. 207.

²⁵⁸ *Strengthening Accountability, Sustaining Trade: Who Responds to Women Informal Cross Border Traders*, UNIFEM, New York, 1990, p. 23.

²⁵⁹ O. Njikam, "Women in Informal Cross-border Trade: Empirical Evidence", p. 207.

²⁶⁰ D. Njiwa, "Tackling informal cross-border trade in Southern Africa", *Bridges Africa Review*, Vol. 2, no. 1, March 2013, p. 10.

will usually require some kind of startup capital. It has also been noticed that it is difficult for low-income women to obtain legitimate funding. In general, women have a lower likelihood of borrowing from formal sources because of the “collateral, social and cultural barriers”²⁶¹; thus, they have to rely on informal funding which is characterised “by a lack of regulation, high interest rates and improper modes of recovery”²⁶².

With greater trade liberalization globally, outdated and bureaucratic border clearance processes imposed by customs and other agencies in Cameroon are now seen as posing greater barriers to trade; thus, inefficient customs and border management creates opportunities for corruption²⁶³. UNIFEM’s study in Cameroon proved that women traders face particular constraints when it comes to customs and border management. Low levels of literacy and lack of information and knowledge about cross-border trade regulations and procedures are more prevalent among female than male traders²⁶⁴. In the same line, Momo Germaine asserted that:

Women in cross-border trading have benefited for a consecutive number of years from the interventions in partnership with UN Women, such as building their capacity and access to gender responsive infrastructure. Though a good number of cases, women had been able to expand their business and have better access to markets, the access to finance component and partnership with financial institutions does not seem to have been materialized to an extent. She expresses the problem of many checkpoints with their corollary of corruption, multiple and arbitrary taxation of goods and sheds that women face in Kye-Ossi market and she pleaded that UN Women assist them financially and also the government to reduce taxes on behalf of women²⁶⁵.

UNIFEM Cameroon Achievement of the MDG faced a lot of impediments by inadequate investment in the gender dimensions of the Goals. Reducing poverty Goal 1 depends on improving access to decent work, particularly for women and young people, and securing access to assets including land. Reducing hunger depends on real and equal access to and control over productive resources for men and women in rural areas. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) notes that investing in women farmers and closing the gender gap in agricultural productivity would reduce the number of under-nourished people by 12 to 17 per cent²⁶⁶. Despite the recognized role of women in combating food insecurity and poverty, and the importance of women’s access to sustainable energy,

²⁶¹L. Chopamba, *The Struggle for Economic Support of the Indigenous Business Women in Zimbabwe*, Xlibris, Corp, February 17, 2010, p. 52.

²⁶²S. Kiratu, and S. Roy, *Beyond Borders: The Gender Implications of Trade Liberalization in Southern Africa*, International Institute for Sustainable Development, IISD: Winnipeg, 2010, p. 23.

²⁶³McLinden et al, *Border Management Modernization: A Practical Guide for Reformers*, Washington DC: World Bank, 2011, pp.1-2.

²⁶⁴UNIFEM, *Unleashing the potential of women informal cross border traders*, p. 2.

²⁶⁵Interview with Momo Germaine, Chief sector of the Kye-Ossi market and a former member of MUBASE, 12 July 2021.

²⁶⁶*Women in Agriculture: Closing the Gender Gap for Development*, UN, Rome, 2011, p. 30.

water, sanitation, education and health to the overall development of a country, funding streams have not matched policy commitments²⁶⁷.

UN Women has been successful in obtaining and leveraging Government funding, which is a rare achievement and important in the light of the fact that Cameroon is a lower middle-income country and may not be prioritized by donors. On the other hand, most of the interventions are small scale and mainly targeted at women's income and sustainable livelihood, and under that result area mainly at supporting women in obtaining more income and moving up the value chain, than at improving access to finance. Other mechanisms with a potential larger (and national) reach are less pursued. There is little effort towards supporting the adoption of national plans, legislation, policies, strategies, budgets and justice mechanisms to strengthen women's economic empowerment. Furthermore, though gender equality advocates were supported, they exerted little influence over economic policies promoting women's economic empowerment²⁶⁸.

g. Women in decision-making

The reasons why many women do not assume top political, military and managerial positions are obviously compounded by their triple roles (reproductive, productive and community). In Cameroon, family sizes are generally large; which means that women have to care for and feed a large number of people, many of whom are very young or ageing. These activities are time consuming and demanding. Women are, therefore, left with very little time and energy to benefit from training, education or employment opportunities alongside males. Their reproductive role which demands long periods of absence from work (during maternity leaves), does not encourage employers to readily employ them at good rates. Furthermore, women tend to be absent from political or trade union meetings where most candidates for important posts are invested. This is probably because the timing of these meetings does not usually take into consideration women in household and community development.²⁶⁹

Despite women comprising more than half of the Cameroon's population, they continue to be drastically underrepresented in political leadership positions in the country. It is believed that a full and robust democracy depends on the equal participation of women. For over a decade, the Women's Network like the women in politics network created in 2007 in

²⁶⁷“Gender Justice: Key to Achieving the Millennium Development Goals”, UN-Women, September 2010, p. 9.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 10.

²⁶⁹ NOWWEF, conference report, “empower women politically”, p. 8.

Cameroon has brought women activists from around the regions together to identify and target barriers to women's political participation, leadership and representation. One such barrier is a lack of information about the degree to which women are fully represented in the Cameroon's government decision-making. Even after overcoming hurdles to assuming elected office, women in government often find themselves marginalized in the day-to-day work of developing legislation, enacting policies, and overseeing budgets²⁷⁰. Education remains a guarantee of social success and an important factor in access to decision-making spheres where a minimum level of skills is required²⁷¹. Cameroonian legislation with the help of UNIFEM ensures equal access to schooling in Cameroon but in many cases, women do not have access to quality education and training to enter politics²⁷². Leadership involves a number of skills and attitudes that are acquired and developed. These include the ability to express one's ideas, public speaking, the ability to defend one's opinions, self-esteem and self-confidence, self-control, and democratic culture. In an analysis of national and regional commitments to women in Cameroon, UNIFEM has found that many governmental and organizational plans and analyses refer to women's vulnerability without recommendations for action. The challenges facing women, such as impoverishment and inequalities in relation to human rights, participation and decision-making are recognized, but the underlying causes of gender inequality and women's vulnerability are rarely analysed and actions to address the situation are not formulated. In many cases, women do not have the support of political parties. They are confined to menial tasks even though they represent the majority of activists. The reluctance of all Cameroonian political parties is due to among other things on the low economic and financial capacity of women, which places the burden of responsibility on their political parties; the low representation of women in the decision-making bodies of political parties. As an illustration, in the ruling political party, the Democratic Rally of the Cameroonian People (RDPC), out of 23 members of the political office, there are 4 women. As for the Social Democratic Front (SDF), the main opposition political party, out of 70 members of its bureau politics, 12 are women²⁷³.

National partners (CSOs like CHRAPA, More Women in Politics) commented on the need for more opportunities to share experiences and build synergies. In Cameroon, some

²⁷⁰ *Women's political empowerment, representation and influence in Africa: A Pilot Study of Women's Leadership in Political Decision-Making*, IRI, September 2016, p. 2.

²⁷¹ G. S. Zamen, "The role of education on the empowerment of women in Gorakhpur district," Doctorate Thesis in Social Science & Education, university of Kampala, 2004 p.102.

²⁷² D. B. Boubacar, *l'Education en Afrique : hier, aujourd'hui et demain*, World Bank, Juin 14, 2010, p. 150.

²⁷³ "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013", p. 383.

partners belong to common networks or umbrella organizations and thus know each other, but noted that UNIFEM had organized none or very limited formal occasions to meet and exchange at the country level. Despite the calls of CEDAW and more recently the BPFA, for more sex-disaggregated statistics, there is still no international database that provides a breakdown of the incidence of women's monetary poverty in comparison with men's UNIFEM²⁷⁴. Leading on from this, a third element in the "feminization of responsibility and obligation" is that while responsibilities for dealing with poverty are becoming palpably feminized, there is no corresponding increase in women's rights and rewards. Indeed, the self-same rise in women's burdens seems to have curtailed the resources at their disposal to negotiate gains of any description. As underlined by the United Nations/UNIFEM²⁷⁵:

UNIFEM's relationship with national women machineries in Cameroon came in contact with some difficulties. This is due to the fact that national machineries have had to compete with NGOs for limited donor funding. NGOs have tended to carry out their work without much interaction with NWMs particularly in situations where there is a history of government co-option and repression. However, NGOs need to take NWMs seriously as their governance and participation that is increasingly concerning the civil society²⁷⁶. National machineries in Cameroon have been affected by economic and government restructuring. This is certainly exacerbated by donor stipulations on aid and debt relief. Failure to develop support across the ministries, departments and different political parties made national women machineries vulnerable to political change²⁷⁷. UNIFEM and National women machineries often face the problem of inadequate human resources. They often have very few staff or staff who have little motivation or knowledge of gender issues²⁷⁸.

Related to Government partnership, UNIFEM closely works with MINPROFF under a Letter of Agreement and with a number of other Ministries, such as the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of National Security and the Ministry of Finance²⁷⁹. Even though the Ministry of Finance is very important in view of

²⁷⁴ UN Women, "Progress of the World's Women", Vol. 2, 2002, New York: Geneva, p. 3.

²⁷⁵ Manila, "To Produce and to Care: How do Women and Men Fare in Securing Well-being and Human Freedoms", UN Country Team/UNIFEM, 2003, p.14.

²⁷⁶ D. Tsikata, "National machineries for the advancement of women in Africa: Are they transforming gender relations?", Third World Network-Africa, 2001, p.26.

²⁷⁷ "National Machineries for Gender Equality", Expert Group Meeting, Santiago, Chile, 31 August - 4 September 1998, DAW/ECLAC, 1998, p.13.

²⁷⁸ Ibid.

²⁷⁹ A/HRC/10/43-E/CN.6/2009/10, "Activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women to eliminate violence against women Tenth session", United Nations, 18 December 2008, p.5.

gender budgeting and making available funds for women at the national level, the partnership is rather limited. Moreover, there are no discernable partnerships with MOARD, even if the programme contains various livelihood components related to agriculture, and almost no cooperation with MINEPAT (which could be important for their strong role in the UNDAF) or the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education (important to support UN Women's focus on working with youth²⁸⁰). There is no strong partnership with the Ministry of Justice yet, but UN Women shared that in 2017 cooperation would be established. Most of the Ministries shared, that they need another form of formalisation of partnership, which UN Women has not been able to provide yet²⁸¹. UN Women's partnership with the private sector is assessed as weak. Even though there were a number of activities in the field of women's economic empowerment, the involvement of and linkage to private sector including microfinance providers has been limited. Moreover, UN Women had not succeeded in exploiting the opportunity of involving the private sector in co-funding certain components²⁸². UN Women with MINPROFF set up Call Centres to combatting GBV. Though this result is promising, more gender desks and Call centres are needed and also, the coordination between gender desks, call centres and CPFFs is still in its infancy.

IV. Recommendations

After taking note of several factors that hinder UNIFEM actions in Cameroon, this section aims at suggesting some pathways of some authors that are likely to help this UN agency to counteract the said obstacles. It suggests the enhancing of women capacity-building and decision making as well as the promotion of women entrepreneurial skills. Fostering ICT skills and building machinery to support women coupled with mobilizing communities to prevent violence are also some of the areas suggested here in.

a. Enhancing women capacity-building

Many women possess the experience and qualifications needed to hold political office, but, possibly due to direct or indirect gender-based discrimination, do not always have access to the same information or opportunities as men in terms of learning how to launch a political career. UN Women Cameroon can promote Capacity-building training to promising women

²⁸⁰<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/recommendations/recomm.htm#recom23>, consulted on 5th June 2020.

²⁸¹ "Report of the joint mission of the mechanisms of the special rapporteur on the rights of women in Africa and the committee on the rights of people living with HIV, and those at risk, vulnerable to, and affected by HIV to the Republic of Cameroon", AU, September 2012, p. 41.

²⁸² *Women in Power: Beyond Access to Influence in a Post-2015 World*, VSO UK, August 2013, p. 4.

which can help encourage more women to enter into politics and political leadership positions. This strategy is aimed at stimulating women's interest in politics, providing them with critical political skills and knowledge and empowering them to apply these skills in their political careers. As a result, it will help mobilize and capitalize on the knowledge and skills of women that stands as a driving force to nurture a new generation of female leaders in Cameroon²⁸³. Following a pre-conference seminar organized in Yaounde with UNIFEM's support, one of the participant Ms. H. F. Elouna Nyindi, Deputy, Municipal Councilor, and Mayor of Yaoundé recommended that; "training should be taken seriously to overcome remaining biases and inequalities, thus raising awareness of the role of women which help in consolidating and strengthening their position as political leaders. She recommends that preference should be given to the female candidate between two equally qualified candidates for government positions".²⁸⁴ To raise awareness on the challenges faced by women in seeking public office in Cameroon, and to inspire women to become a more robust force in the parliament, media campaigns have to be organized more and more with support from national authorities and from organizations²⁸⁵. An educational talk can be programmed at the national and regional levels for local government elections so as to bring out profiles and experiences of Cameroons's elected female leaders. A series of media activities can be held to help featuring prominent women in politics in Cameroon as well as a radio drama series, TV spots and an online forum²⁸⁶.

In addition to provisions guaranteeing minimum representation of women in decision making bodies, party leadership in Cameroon can also introduce provisions to ensure a minimum representation of women in decision-making processes and activities, such as party congresses or conferences, or annual general meetings²⁸⁷. How prospective women candidates and women MPs relate to their own political parties and sometimes to others, are also fundamental to increasing women's representation and influence in parliament. Trends show that when women in a region pinpoint the challenges of gaining seats in a national chamber, political parties play a fundamental role in their success or failure whether through candidacy, finance, endorsements or access to a range of resources. In order for women to increase their presence in parliament globally, they need to become genuine "insiders" within their parties,

²⁸³ "Handbook on promoting women's participation in political parties", OSCE/ODIHR, Miodowa, 2014, p. 73.

²⁸⁴ S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders "strengthening women's leadership in local government", p. 7.

²⁸⁵ V. DeLaurentis, "Five ways to enhance women's political leadership in Africa", Washington, DC, August 20, 2014, p. 1.

²⁸⁶ "Women in parliament in 2013", p. 5.

²⁸⁷ "Handbook on promoting women's participation", p. 56.

taking on leadership positions²⁸⁸. Women have the right to participate in all decision-making processes. Full participation means full citizenship. Second, it is critical that women's views and experiences are represented in decision-making bodies to ensure that the interests of women are taken into consideration in policy-making and implementation of projects related to economic development and poverty alleviation. Also, women become more visible and influential when they achieve a certain number of positions and are more likely to enter and remain in political life if they have role models in the arena²⁸⁹. The democracy argument tells us that the equal representation of women and men enhances democratization of governance. The lack of women, on the other hand, undermines democracy²⁹⁰. Of course, the presence of women in local government does not necessarily mean that women's issues are addressed. By the same token, achieving equality between women and men is not just the responsibility of women, but requires also male leaders who advocate for equality²⁹¹.

The need for codes of conduct that clearly outline norms of behaviour in line with gender equality standards is demonstrated by numerous incidents in some parliaments where women party members have been verbally abused, belittled and/or humiliated²⁹². UN Women and political parties in Cameroon can further boost the participation and role of women in political parties by introducing or enhancing political party codes of conduct and by mainstreaming a gender perspective into these codes of conduct. For example, a political party code of conduct can supplement existing parliamentary codes of conduct and further raise the professionalism of politics by outlining minimum standards of behaviour and respect for its members in political debates within the party, in parliament or in other elected offices, as well as in public to preserve women²⁹³.

b. Women in decision making

Women's sections, also referred to as women's wings, are internal party bodies established to facilitate women's participation in the party. They can play a key role in promoting women's political advancement by advocating on issues of concern to members, supporting women's leadership development and helping to select potential new members and candidates, as well as providing resources and support to women running for public office.

²⁸⁸ UNFPA, "Women empowerment", ICPD POA, Cairo, 1994, p. 7.

²⁸⁹ UN Women, "women in power and decision-making", January 2014, p. 1.

²⁹⁰ UN, "Absence of women from leadership position undermines democracy, commission on the status of women Fiftieth session", News and Media Division: New York, 26 February 2006, p.1.

²⁹¹ UN Women, "women in power and decision-making", p. 1.

²⁹² "Handbook on promoting women's participation", p. 56.

²⁹³ "Winning for Women. A guide to what Labour has delivered for women", UK Labour Party, 2010, p. 23.

Party leaders alone do not always have the expertise, resources or time to introduce the changes to party statutes, by-laws, policies and strategies that are necessary to promote women's political advancement and encourage greater gender equality²⁹⁴. An efficient and effective means of capitalizing on the gender expertise of party members is to support the establishment or strengthening of women's sections within parties. Women's sections can provide expertise to party leaders on how to introduce more gender-friendly practices and policies, as well as to conduct gender audits and assessments. Furthermore, women's sections can be used to collect sex-disaggregated data to inform a party's substantive positions and messages, conduct research on issues of importance to women voters and help party leaders develop party platforms that appeal to women voters²⁹⁵. Quotas are defined as measures adopted voluntarily by the state, usually through reforms to constitutions, statutes and rulebooks. By introducing quotas, the government pledge to select a certain proportion of women or place minimum or maximum limits on members of each sex among their candidates and, in some instances, for decision making positions²⁹⁶. In addition to making the rules for candidate selection more transparent, fair and equitable, UN Women Cameroon can consider additional, more specific strategies to increase the number of women in the Parliament, Senate, Municipal, Ministerial, Council, etc. to run as candidates, in order to increase quotas²⁹⁷. Quotas reduce gender disparities and increase's Women's Leadership and Political Participation²⁹⁸.

c. Promoting women entrepreneurial skills

Large scale capacity building needs to be conducted to enable women to access skills, information, networks and credit for improved delivery and higher level of competitiveness. Women also need to form pressure groups in order to ensure that their experiences and opinions are taken into consideration when policy is developed²⁹⁹. Secondly, UNIFEM Cameroon needs to ensure that the Government improves data collection on ICBT in order to capture the contribution of ICBT to economic development and inform trade policy-making

²⁹⁴ "Handbook on promoting women's participation", p. 57.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ M. L. Krook, *Quotas for Women in Politics: Gender and Candidate Selection Reform Worldwide*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2009, p. 36.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

²⁹⁸ "Genre, Leadership et Participation Politique au Cameroun 1931-2013", p. 79.

²⁹⁹ R. Mupedziswa, *Structural Adjustment and Women Informal Sector Traders in Harare*, Zimbabwe, Perpetua Gumbo, p. 12.

and regional integration processes³⁰⁰. While UNIFEM continues to explore partnerships with non-traditional donors in Cameroon, especially corporations, greater investment in staff capacity and concrete guidelines are needed to ensure that these are consistent with UNIFEM values and priorities. Increased capacity and more intensive media outreach are needed to develop more partnerships that generate financial support from private foundations and individuals³⁰¹. With regard to customs procedures several changes may be made such as simplifying and reducing documentation requirements, and formalities, lowering the levels of fees and charges for importing and exporting, expediting the release and clearance of goods from customs custody, enhancing transparency and predictability of trade related regulations and fees, improving border agency coordination, enhancing efficiency of controls at the border in order to lower the incidence of corruption and the creation of a one-stop border post. There are also development policies which may be put in place such as the implementation of finance schemes tailor-made for ICBT and the use of a common traders' licence, UNIFEM has also made a suggestion that a favourable tax regime be introduced for ICBT traders.

UNIFEM has previously highlighted the need for the development of a corps of national experts in gender and PRSPs from whom countries can draw for practical technical support, as well as the need for broader coordination within government, and capacity building on macroeconomics³⁰² and gender to methodologies to enable greater participation by those bodies like the Ministry for Women, or civil society organizations that already work with a gender perspective³⁰³. Under the leadership of the government, UN (including UNIFEM on gender issues) in Cameroon should provide coordinated support to the PRSP process, alongside the World Bank and the IMF³⁰⁴. When working with the Government of Cameroon, UNIFEM should incorporate gender into the PRSP process and also make sure that the UN entities are speaking with one voice. This coherence has been called for by the UN Secretary General in the "Delivering as One" process³⁰⁵. UNIFEM should therefore position itself within the UNPRSP team in Cameroon based on three questions: What is UNIFEM's added-value within the UN team? What specific expertise can UNIFEM harness

³⁰⁰ <https://docplayer.net/77772583-Evaluation-of-unfpa-support-to-population-and-housing-census-data-to-inform-decision-making-and-policy-formulation.html>, consulted on , 18th May 2020.

³⁰² DP/2006/25, "United Nations Development Fund for Women Implementing the multi-year funding", p.12.

³⁰³ N. Katherine, *Failing Women, Sustaining Poverty*, UK, Gender and Development Network, 2003, p. 12.

³⁰⁴ UNDP, "Supporting the achievement of millennium development goals in Asia and the Pacific: Linkages between the MDGs and PRSPs, Phase II, 2006, p. 3.

³⁰⁵ UNIFEM, "PRSP Guidance Note on UNIFEM's engagement", p.6.

in the area of gender and macroeconomics? And how can UNIFEM position itself with the UN PRSP team to contribute to a constructive and coherent UN voice in Cameroon³⁰⁶.

UNIFEM Cameroon must support women in the informal economy in their efforts to gain voice and build capacity so they have the skills to negotiate and influence policy. Organizations such as trade unions, NGOs and multilateral agencies can stand with UNIFEM to provide financial and technical support to help women build and sustain member-based organizations at the local, national, regional and international levels. UNIFEM Cameroon can provide ways through which these organizations can increase their numbers, scale up their initiatives, and network to increase visibility and power. They can assist them to improve organizational effectiveness through deepening democracy, implementing innovative strategies, empowering women leaders and members and attaining financial sustainability.

Trade unions can make even greater efforts to join with organizations of informal workers to maximize the voice of workers at the international level and to insert employment issues into the general debate on poverty reduction. There are three main areas where increased support and activism can have a profound effect: (1) strengthening grassroots, member-based organizations, (2) promoting the right to organize and (3) creating an enabling environment by increasing informal women workers' representation in policy and law processes³⁰⁷.

An effective way of tackling gender inequality is entrusting women with entrepreneurial work. The state can take initiatives to train women in business skills for better job opportunities. Looking at the global developments, many developing countries are spending a percentage of annual revenues in women's developments. By investing in women's education and providing them with entrepreneurial opportunities, the unequal pay gap can be ruled out from the socio-economic scene, encouraging women to increase their participation in the supply chain³⁰⁸. In Cameroon, the Constitution does not provide for women as household heads, except when the husband dies or he is unable to encounter his responsibilities. State employed women belonging to this category should benefit from the family allowance scheme of the public service. Private sector employees may also benefit from the above-mentioned allowance, when the employers adhere to the Cameroon Labour Code (a great number do not adhere to it and proper disciplinary measures may be applied).

³⁰⁶ UNIFEM, "PRSP Guidance Note on UNIFEM's engagement", p.7.

³⁰⁷ C. Martha, *Progress of the world's women: women, work and poverty*, p. 82.

³⁰⁸ H. Saeed, *Five ways we can empower women*, p. 1.

One of the biggest concerns about gender inequality is women's unpaid labour. Many marginalized groups, including rural women and domestic workers, are often deprived of economic independence and many times their labours go unnoticed. With empowerment policies striving to raise the incomes of women in Cameroon, resources can be appropriately managed to eradicate the issue. Unpaid labour is a growing concern among many women, and this is primarily associated with rural and low-skilled women workers in Cameroon. By controlling the driving factors and protecting women from violence and social abuses, women can be encouraged to explore and utilize their potential as found in appendix 11³⁰⁹.

d. ICT skills

In relation to ICT in Cameroon, it is crucial for UNIFEM to improve systems to share lessons and respond to key challenges across themes. As a relatively small United Nations fund, UNIFEM has limited investment capacity to acquire the technologies and systems needed to support e-learning, yet to fulfill its mandate as a catalyst for gender mainstreaming and equality, it is essential that UNIFEM staff and partners be engaged in reflection, analysis and dissemination of learning to an ever-widening constituency. Training, time and incentives are needed to ensure that all staffs make full use of electronic learning platforms such as intranets and extranets, both as contributors and as users³¹⁰.

Women's education has a lot of externalities. For instance, a mother's schooling not only improves the quality of her children's intellectual achievement but also her own employment opportunities. Also, investment in women's education increases skill sets, thus leading to better equipped women who can contribute to the economy. Education and awareness play an important role in building women's empowerment in the society. UNIFEM Cameroon in relation with UN agencies, NGOs, trade unions and others could provide support at this very basic level. UNIFEM Cameroon in partnership with member-based organizations, can offer to support or provide education classes for women workers to build solidarity, self-esteem and confidence. For example, UNIFEM can work with NGOs and informal women workers, with the support of UNDP, to build a coalition to include poor women's voices in the MDG process in Cameroon³¹¹.

³⁰⁹ Interview with Mr. Bakalack David, 40 years, Divisional Service of Social Affairs, Douala, September, 26th 2018

³¹⁰ <https://docplayer.net/-Evaluation-of-unfpa-support-to-population-and-housing-census-data-to-inform-decision-making-and-policy-formulation.html>, consulted on 18th May 2020.

³¹¹ Ibid.

ICTs can be a driving force in providing new spaces and mediums for expanded participation of women in the public sphere. A broad policy approach that focuses on access to ICTs cell phones, Internet, and social media and the quality of content is required. Greater access to ICTs can be achieved in part by reducing costs and creating safe spaces where women can access hardware and training. Creating a media network that is relevant and accessible to women and girls is valuable. Service providers can team up with women's groups to produce tools and services that meet the needs of women and provide new spaces for online or mobile collaboration. Greater use of ICTs for participatory mapping can provide valuable information on mobility and access to public spaces by highlighting specific constraints facing women and girls. Using ICTs in this way can provide a low-cost alternative for monitoring and assessment, including assessments on the perceptions of violence³¹².

e. Building machinery to support women

Women's movements play a pivotal role in building the necessary momentum and consensus for progressive policy and legal reform. UN Women in collaboration with other UN development agencies and partners can help support policy reforms that create the space for collective action to operate and can help foster stronger dialogue among collective action groups and policy makers. UN Women Cameroon can support knowledge exchange among women groups within and across the country and can provide financial support to pilot innovative and locally driven programmes that use collective action processes to help shift norms and behaviours. UN Women Cameroon's support to women's groups for specific interventions should embody large elements of local problem solving and learning by doing, which can be achieved in part by devolving responsibility to and empowering the groups with local legitimacy as frontline implementers³¹³. An informant complained that:

In spite of all investments in terms of infrastructure and trainings offered to women, this UN agency does not have enough follow-up mechanism put in place to make sure that women make good use of the knowledge or property acquired. She recommended that regarding Government, since gender is a crosscutting issue, it is important to work with a number of Government bodies. Once the most suitable partners have been identified, the partnerships should be formalized and a participative planning process should be developed and followed³¹⁴.

³¹² M. Fernández, *Voice and agency: Empowering women and girls for shared prosperity*, World Bank, 2014, p.164.

³¹³ Ibid, pp.165-166.

³¹⁴ Interview with Mrs. Antoinette Angono Aba'a, 60 years, First Deputy Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division, Kye-Ossi, July 13, 2021.

The pre-conference seminar organized in Yaounde with UNIFEM's support under the panel on strategies for enhancing and strengthening women's leadership, enlisted several recommendations for overcoming the main challenges women face. These were; design and advocate for the women's agenda; build a female constituency through education, raising political awareness, and networking; build machinery to support women in politics (train potential women leaders in gender sensitivity and leadership skills, influence NGOs and other entities to allocate resources for training women in politics, creating opportunities for women to enter the political process, seek and encourage strong and willing women leaders to participate in mainstream political parties, pressure political parties to include women in party hierarchy and on party lists, and recognize women political leaders as valuable resources for women in politics), advocate for electoral reforms that encourage women leadership, and advocate for key issues such as increasing women's participation, health and reproductive rights, and human rights.³¹⁵

f. Mobilizing communities to prevent violence

UNIFEM Cameroon should act to empower women and take steps to eliminate inequalities between men and women by the following means:

- putting in place a mechanism for women's equal participation and representation at all levels of the political process and public life in the country and each region, thus enabling women to articulate their concerns and needs;
- encouraging women's potentials through education, skills development and employment, giving paramount importance to the elimination of poverty, illiteracy and ill health among women;
- Eliminating all practices that discriminate against women; assisting women to establish and realize their rights, including those that relate to reproductive and sexual health;
- establishing appropriate measures to improve women's ability to earn income beyond traditional occupations, achieve economic self-reliance, and ensure women's equal access to the labour market and social security systems;

³¹⁵S. Hordosch, "Pre-conference seminar for elected women local government leaders "strengthening women's leadership in local government", p. 9.

- Making it possible, through laws, regulations and other appropriate measures, for women to combine the roles of child-bearing, breast-feeding and child-rearing with participation in the workforce³¹⁶.

Mobilizing communities to prevent domestic violence involves engaging communities in supporting, developing, and implementing prevention strategies that target change in women, as well as in the community and society. Potential strategies include educating the community, building support among key stakeholders for prevention efforts, developing programmes that strengthen social networks, organizing community groups to challenge social norms that contribute to the use of violence against women, and advocating for community accountability³¹⁷. Community mobilizing strategies hold the potential for transforming those social norms and structures that are the root causes of domestic violence. The cultivation of grassroots community leadership can enhance the long-term sustainability of violence prevention efforts³¹⁸. Equal opportunity laws can empower women to act on their legal rights with regard to violence by promoting their rights to work, to equal wages, to freedom of movement and to freedom from discrimination in the public sphere.³¹⁹

Regarding Government, since gender is a crosscutting issue, it is important for UN Women to work with a number of Government bodies. Once the most suitable partners have been identified, the partnerships should be formalised and a participative planning process should be developed and followed. UN Women can then also become instrumental in interministerial coordination on women, by bringing Ministries together and also by establishing and supporting an exchange platform for gender focal points from the various Ministries. The capacity of the MINPROFF, being the main Ministry in the field of gender, should be further strengthened. A capacity assessment needs to be conducted at central and local level and steps taken accordingly. UN Women's support to MINPROFF requires critical review, adaptations and corrective measures. As for the civil society, it is important that UN Women not only selects organizations to implement activities, but also those that are essential for advocacy, communication and networking on women; by supporting more CSOs and/or

³¹⁶ UNFPA, "Women empowerment", p. 1.

³¹⁷ "Community Mobilization for Ending Violence against Women", India, OXFAM, February, 2015, p.3.

³¹⁸ <https://vawnet.org/material/mobilizing-communities-prevent-domestic-violence>, consulted on 12th September 2020.

³¹⁹ UNIFEM, "Not a minute more: Ending Violence Against", p. 48.

networks that are active in the women's movement, UN Women can build their capacity whilst simultaneously benefit from their outreach³²⁰.

UNIFEM may also further strengthen its role in ensuring gender is mainstreamed in the programmes and portfolios of other UN agencies. One of the aspects could be UNIFEM's support to development and implementation of joint programmes, including in the area of promoting gender-responsive planning and budgeting at central and local level, programmes supporting women and girls in the margins of the humanitarian response, and interventions to assist women's leadership in politics and public life. UNIFEM, with support of the UN family, in particular UNDP and the Resident Coordinator, may look into the feasibility of putting in place a "Gender Basket Fund" to support national programmes. As for the humanitarian situations, since this has been acknowledged as a priority, UN Women should join other UN agencies in identifying financial resources and take a leading role in ensuring gender is sufficiently addressed in the design as well as implementation stage³²¹.

UNIFEM has successfully taken the first steps in engaging youth. UN and the government of Cameroon recommended that UNIFEM further strengthen this engagement. Establishing a partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education could contribute to this, linked to the existing partnership with CAMYOSFOP. Girls and young women may also be more strongly involved in certain interventions, such as leadership in politics, but also in advocacy and awareness raising on VAW, including on FGM and early marriage. It is important to have tailored capacity building activities for girls and young women, who may be more vulnerable in some contexts, but whose youth on the other hand also holds a promise for larger impact and sustainability of women's achievements. More Women in Politics would be good partnership to engage into such capacity building and a mechanism needs to be found, to link the young women (from cities as well as rural areas) with the elections, to elect themselves as well as to participate³²².

³²⁰ UN Women, "Country portfolio evaluation final report", p. 49.

³²¹ Ibid, p. 51.

³²² Ibid, p. 50.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, it has been noted that UNIFEM now UN Women carries out several activities on a regular basis in Cameroon. This translates Cameroon's government firm commitment to heighten the image of women in the country and that of their respective communities. So, it has been obvious to note that within the execution of UNIFEM's constant plans and projects that aim at empowering women's conditions and sustaining the alleviation of poverty in Cameroon, the life of women and that of their communities have been impacted. This influence is felt within numerous domains including economic, socio-cultural and political aspects. However, apart from impacting the women and the nation, we have equally been able to discover a number of obstacles that gangrene the entire fulfillment of UNIFEM's activities and strategies in Cameroon. These observations have then given us an opportunity to propose a number of pathways for possible solutions given the fact that the active participation of women in the development process of Cameroon is very vital if people centered development will be attained. International and national instruments put in place for the empowerment of women should be treated as important tools that will go a long way to facilitate a gender sensitive approach and process that will promote inclusive development moving one, to the general conclusion of this thesis.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

After making a careful review of available literature on the subject, as well as using such tools as interviews with different people to obtain the desired information, the present study is based on qualitative and quantitative methods of research, relevant primary and secondary sources (official documents published), and reports of an assortment of teams and commissions on the rank of female such as political surveys, economic surveys, census reports, household surveys, as well as statistical surveys have been used.

This study has involved empirical researches on the historical survey of UNIFEM in women empowerment strategies in Cameroon. In this work, we have presented the historical background that led to the establishment of UNIFEM. Alongside, we have presented the genesis and the objectives of the studied organisation before shading a light on the various activities, strategies and achievements. We dedicated investigations to evaluate UNIFEM's missions and we started off with a general introduction which laid the foundation for the study. The foresight of the establishment of UNIFEM is set out in the General Assembly resolution 39/125 of December 1984 in addressing the ways to promote women's empowerment and gender equality. The establishment of UNIFEM helped support innovative and experimental activities benefiting women in line with national and regional priorities in Cameroon. In Cameroon, UNIFEM has been motivated to fully use its capacities in order to provide operational support for follow up actions at the national level and to exercise a catalytic role in promoting effective UN coordination at the country level through the resident coordinator system. However, even before the creation of the UNIFEM, at the founding summit of the League of Nations (1919), women met at what could be called the "first parallel forum of NGOs". Over the next two decades, contacts between international non-governmental organisations for women and the League of Nations increased, placing pressure on the government delegations present at several summits on essential issues for women such as health, education, peace-keeping and disarmament, although an adequate legal and institutional framework was lacking.

The thesis has been able to illustrate on how UNIFEM pursues a dual strategy towards the achievement of gender equality and women's empowerment. It supports stronger

women's organizations to enable them negotiate on their own behalf with their governments and international agencies and assists governments to implement their commitments to women's empowerment and gender equality. It also supports the UN system in ensuring that gender concerns are incorporated into all policies, programmes and activities. UNIFEM focuses its work at the country level within the context of the United Nations Resident Coordinator System. Playing a strong advocacy role, the Fund concentrates on fostering a multilateral policy dialogue on women's empowerment. Notes have been taken on UNIFEM focusing on three areas of immediate concern; that is strengthening women's economic security and rights and empowering women to enjoy secure livelihoods, working on engendering governance and peace building to increase women's participation in the decision-making processes that shape their lives and promoting women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women to transform development into a more equitable and sustainable process.

Within this research work, we also looked at how women status in pre-colonial and colonial Cameroon evolved and showed the key roles they played at the time. From the following analyses, it is clear that the status of women has been transformed by Cameroon's socio-political and economic structures during the pre-colonial and colonial periods. Here, we examined the influence of women in the pre-colonial era and later the Second World War and the United Nations in improving the status of women from its origin until 1995, when the fourth World Conference on Women took place. Clear analyses have been illustrated on Commission on the status of women. In 1963, efforts to consolidate women's rights standards led the UN General Assembly to request the CSW to prepare a draft Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, which was finally adopted by the General Assembly in 1967. Following the establishment of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations was able to promote the advancement of women, under the Commission on Human Rights. Thus, British and French administrators in Cameroon were indirectly pressurized in fostering women status to be in accordance with the UN system. With the existence of Female uprising in the British and French Cameroons, they were able to acquire the right to vote. Hence support from the formation of women groups and encouraged them to form links with international associations aimed at fostering nationalism and independence of the two Cameroons in the 1960s.

In pre-colonial Cameroon, women's authority stemmed from their productive and reproductive work. Women gained prestige from their roles as primary food producers and as

child bearers. At the same time, women gained in other realms, particularly in the area of formal political power. In many pre-colonial societies, cultural norms prohibited women from assuming most political roles. While informal constraints continued to limit women's access to formal political offices, a number of women were able to leverage their education and activism in women's associations into political power in the immediate post-colonial period. Certain colonial practices, intentionally or unintentionally, decreased women's influence in the public sphere by undermining their traditional bases of authority. The colonial administration's introduction of cash crop agriculture and its preference for recruiting men to civil service posts during much of the colonial period undermined women's status in Cameroon. Other policies, however, explicitly sought to increase women's participation in public life. Colonial encounters in Cameroon affected women in complex and contradictory ways. As multiple scholars had demonstrated, many colonial policies spread Western notions of domesticity, constricting the space available for women to participate in public life. Other policies, however, opened new opportunities to women for education, salaried employment, travel abroad, and activism in local and international organizations.

The next aspect portrays UNIFEM cooperation through national and international strategies in Cameroon at the socio-political level. We enumerated some of these strategies to bring clear understanding that is examining the context of our work which includes factors such as political will, national resources, human capacity, organization and strength of women's movements, in addition to the general status of women (education, health, legislation, employment and political participation). The social aspects appear as the first strategy of UNIFEM's forging new partnerships among women's organizations, governments, the UN system and the private sector. In our research we found out that every sustainable human endeavour must take into consideration inclusive strategies that bring on board women. The active participation of women in the development process of Cameroon is very vital if people centred development will be attained. We noted that UNIFEM and international and national instruments put in place for the empowerment of women stands as important tools that goes a long way to facilitate a gender sensitive approach and process that promotes inclusive development. Though the selection of various partners from different backgrounds as well as the choice of CAMYOSOP and RENATRAD as partners was assessed as strategic, a broader partnership has helped UN Women enlarging their scope. In view of the partnership with NGOs, this mainly focused on implementing partners. Establishing more strategic linkages with women's networks and CSOs working on GEWE have been beneficial for UN

Women as well as for the CSOs in Cameroon. The approach towards VAW was found holistic, with support encompassing legislation, prevention and protection and service provision related activities; a synergetic approach was used to address the gender related complexities in humanitarian context. The aspect of access to justice was addressed through call centres and gender desks, which benefited a larger group of women. UN Women's effort in involving boys and men in addressing VAW was found good; through the well-running HeForShe campaign and the support to CAMYOSFOP/NAYOBEB, UN Women managed to secure a real involvement of boys and men. UN Women had been able to leverage Government funding technically by assisting GRB and planning.

Under UNIFEM's political empowerment of women, we focus on women in political parties. It highlighted on leaders like Ahidjo's and Biya's view to promote women politicians. UNIFEM's political influence in Cameroon on women confirms that institutional competence and individual characteristics of female parliamentarians are critical factors enhancing the attention to women's issues in parliament. From the findings, there is sufficient ground to uphold that UNIFEM's political strategy like the HeForShe movement, and the electoral code contributed to the representation of women in the Cameroonian parliament and resolution 1325 for conflict management. UNIFEM's efforts to integrate strategies in development through NWMs produced many gains in Cameroon. We continued with background information on NWMs, followed by an overview of the implications for NWMs of the changing macro-political and institutional environment, emphasising the current interest in "good government," specifically, programmes of decentralisation and civil service reform as well as broader issues of participation and democratisation. UNIFEM's Strategies adopted to further the implementation of gender-aware policy are clearly presented in our work and further case studies make up the final part of this work. We also noted that ministerial approach has been significant because it comes in spite of the longstanding criticism of the ministries of women in Cameroon as lead institutional mechanisms by the women's movement. It regards them as potentially resulting in the further consideration of gender equality issues by creating a situation where all issues concerning women would be passed on. It has been pointed out that the majority of national mechanisms established in Cameroon through UNIFEM since the 1970s were the result of bureaucratic action.

The main findings of the research analysed in chapter four reveals the major area of concern that has been UNIFEM's economic empowerment in Cameroon in piloting projects undertaken to test innovative approaches to women's empowerment. Given the importance of

empowering women and increasing their influence in the community, the benefit of which will accrue not only to the community but to the entire country, this research investigates UNIFEM's efforts at achieving this goal at the grassroots level. The main focus of the research has been articulated and we have presented an overview of key themes in the chapter. An examination of UNIFEM's innovative approaches to women's empowerment in Cameroon has been given especially on UNIFEM's concept of women's empowerment, feminist view on empowerment, Government policy for the promotion of women empowerment followed by why women's empowerment is a categorical imperative if they are to play a role in building the Cameroon nation through National policies and strategies. From what has been hitherto discussed from the genesis of this thesis, one conclusion could be that, UNIFEM can pride itself for the endeavours it is making to advance the status of women in Cameroon and to help deliver them from the bondage of poverty. The creation of a special ministry for women headed by a woman is great and is seen from one perspective as a sign of seriousness and dedication to the course of women's empowerment. Women's empowerment remains popular among governments and other bilateral and development organisations as the only means through which women in particular can gain access to resources and major decision-making positions in order to change things and be in control of their own lives. Women's empowerment is also seen as a means to social justice. Women's empowerment is currently one of the foci of government programmes and is seen by UNIFEM as the catalyst that speeds up local development. We have shown how MINPROFF has been working with UNIFEM to empower women and promote their role through its many programmes and policies. We also examined the key programmes of MINPROFF and showed how these are aimed at empowering women and advancing their status economically.

From the above analyses, we discovered how UNIFEM and many NWMs in Cameroon have been reliant on external funding and technical assistance thus issues highlighted in this section illustrated the major role played by UNIFEM and GRB, donors and the ODA, the EC and donors Development Cooperation in Cameroon in the degree to which national machineries operated. Donors in Cameroon like the European Commission (EC) partnership on GRB in Cameroon have ensured that funding supports capacity building as well as short term project objectives link with other sectors and civil society to develop a funding package, etc. UNIFEM's strategy has been to develop cooperation programmes to strengthen NWMs with respect to good governance and women's Human Rights on the one hand and on the other to enhance the capacity of NWMs for women to get more involved in

overall national policy development, particularly the development of Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP's) and Sector Wide Approaches (SWAPs), and also how UNIFEM's central concern has helped to link NWMs more strongly with Gender Focal Points in ministries and departments in Cameroon .

The study discussed availability of financial resources in terms of the percentage of the annual budget going to the work of institutional mechanisms. These were found to be a minuscule share of national budgets in Cameroon. In Cameroon one study found that about 30-50% of the national budget have been made by donors to advance gender equality through their official development assistance (ODA). From 2004-2006, the MINROFF's budget accounted from 0.2-0.7 per cent of the general state budget provided by the EC representing 19% of the total ODA allocated by the EC to Cameroon. Another area of concern in relation to financial resources is that of the work of institutional mechanisms largely funded by donors in Cameroon. The research gives five main donors that worked with UNIFEM to advance aid management reflecting the Paris Declaration principles. These donors are the EC, France, Global fund, World Bank and Germany.

This chapter has reviewed the key concepts of gender mainstreaming and gender focal points efforts as applied to the Cameroon context. UNIEFM's strategies helped to integrate proposals for strengthening NWM and for mainstreaming gender in government planning and administration drawing them more closely with programmes of the civil service and administrative reform, at the design stage, with a particular focus on ensuring that gender issues are not marginalised in the process of down-sizing the bureaucracy; on strengthening mechanisms and procedures for gender planning and on issues of accountability to women in service provision in Cameroon. We also point out the various measures adopted by UNIFEM to increase the impact of NWMs through gender mainstreaming. While the process itself will be outside the direct influence of external agencies, there is a certain scope for strategic technical and financial support in areas as training, the establishment of focal points and coordinating committees, convening policy workshops, data gathering exercises, coalition building, and policy advocacy. The results of the research showed that the GFPs appointed have performed their roles based on the tasks listed by UNIFEM in Cameroon. However, the tasks were carried out based on the needs and interests of the respective GFPs' organizations only. Besides that, the GFPs also have other duties and their knowledge of gender issues contributed to the effectiveness of their role as GFPs and could promote the overall objective of GM implementation in the various ministerial departments in Cameroon. We also saw how

evidently, the GFPs have been granted more authority by UNIFEM in order for them to function more effective and efficiently while executing their own set of administrative tasks. In coordination with and between Government, CSOs and UN Agencies, in a number of cases UN Women has managed to play a catalyst role. UN Women facilitated contacts and initial cooperation between some CSOs and MINPROFF, through mutually exposing them in development contexts and by regular coordination meetings in humanitarian contexts. Gender cafés proved to be a good occasion to group stakeholders around Gender Equality and Women Empowerment (GEWE) related topics, which enabled them to exchange views and initiate aligned activities.

The last chapter has attempted an evidenced-based analysis of the implementation of the gender parity programmes of UNIFEM's strategies in Cameroon at international and national level. In implementing UNIFEM's gender equality roadmap, the state has taken concrete steps to empower woman. Significant progress has been achieved in the political, economic, and social self-empowerment of women as a strategy to boost development. UNIFEM and the state has actively supported and encouraged women to run for political and administrative office; significant hurdles however remain in this effort. A research of this kind inevitably faces a number of limitations that need to be taken into consideration when drawing relevant conclusions and drafting recommendations. On the whole, the evaluation of the implementation of the UNIFEM's strategy is satisfactory with respect to the core strategic pillars. Based on consultations between the Government and UNIFEM, and on the lessons learned from UNIFEM's implementation of the strategy, it was decided that the acceleration of the pace of implementation of ongoing and new operations in Cameroon by UNIFEM will improve the achievement of its objectives. We acknowledge the attempts and advancements made by UNIFEM and the State in putting in place some legal instruments and policies for the promotion and protection of women's rights despite that there still exists some difficulties and challenges. Cognisance has been taken of UNIFEM and State's proposals to increase their effectiveness in promoting women's rights through grassroots awareness and advocacy, legislative reforms, reduction of poverty and HIV/AIDS transmission, strengthening of institutional mechanisms, and lastly the strengthening of partnerships with development partners and the civil society.

Theories like mainstreaming feminist, human right and empowerment theories revealed the underlying meanings in GAD and gender mainstreaming processes. These theoretical approaches also showed the nuances in the power relations between the different actors such

as women's organizations, CIDA, gender professionals, and donors etc. The mainstreaming feminist approach exposed that the representation of women as agents of change in development policy and practice exists within the larger policy arena of gender mainstreaming. The knowledge of some Cameroonian women's successes in the development arena is used to justify donor practices to make aid more effective, however; these practices take power away from the Cameroon government and women's groups to shape the development process according to their own priorities and to construct their own solutions for development's issues. The empowerment approach showed that the gender mainstreaming process and the professionalization of gender have contributed to the stagnation of the government's struggle to achieve gender equality because women are embedded in the aid system and their focus is on maintaining the system rather than seeking ways to challenge and question the system's perpetuation of inequality. GAD approaches helped to further the goal of gender equality through the analysis of gender in development policies and practices but GAD's momentum has been stunted by its own achievement. The professionalization of gender has not been sufficient to change the structures that sustain gender inequality. The mainstreaming of gender in institutions and the creation of training opportunities for women has constructed Cameroonian women as agents of change but it has not been enough to change the lives of the majority of women in Cameroon. The GAD approach like the WID continues to be driven by economic arguments for women's inclusion in development policy and application.

The lesson gotten from this research work is necessary to highlight and conclude that in addition to the measures indicated in the UNIFEM/UN Women and state reports, the elimination of discrimination and the respect of women's human rights is more effective through the following formulation of programmes and actions geared towards, like the elimination of patriarchal foundations and established stereotyped roles ; the elimination of societal attitudes hindering de jure and de facto equality of women; the improvement of access to information in general, and to gender issues in particular, the creation of monitoring indicators to evaluate the progress of the status of the woman; the mainstreaming of gender in all laws, policies and programmes; the repeal of all discriminatory laws; the enforcement of mechanisms for the implementation of national and international instruments that ensure gender equality; and the enactment of the law on the Family Code and the Law on Gender Based Violence. The researcher disseminated widely the contributions of UNIFEM/UN-Women and its partners towards accelerating women's empowerment and reducing gender

inequalities in Cameroon as certain and considerable from 1976 to 2015. UNIFEM/UN-Women has initiated a real extension, having mobilized financial resources allowing it to diversify its interventions, at the national level, as a partner accompanying the implementation of the national gender policy, leader of gender mainstreaming in the humanitarian response, but also leader accompanying gender mainstreaming in major national projects.

This study guided the researcher to learn and understand that with MINPROFF, there has been a significant advance in strategic planning, with the adoption of the National Gender Policy, but a challenge remains, namely that of having a multi-sectoral plan, as well as the mobilization of funds for its implementation, in order to which UNIFEM/UN Women intends to continue to support. UNIFEM/UN Women built the capacity of national managers, valuing the services of both ministry and agency staff. Gender has been mainstreamed in some national budgets, but deserves to be mainstreamed in more plans and programmes. To this end, the advocacy started with the pool of gender advocates, community leaders, as well as the training of senior managers which will continue in order to influence public policy and societal attitudes. All these achievements, hindrances and recommendations deserve to be extended and consolidated. The consolidation of the achievements, hindrances and recommendations and the extension of these are the key words of this conclusion. To this end, the search for funds will continue, with actions directed towards both the usual donors and the private sector. The researcher has carefully studied the enabling factors, the important problems both general and women specific and the prospective factors which according to UN Women have encouraged women's empowerment to keep going in their endeavours. In the case of women's empowerment in Cameroon, family and inner zeal and willpower are vital enabling factors which elevate their motivation scale to perform in the state. Limitations are always a reality with any study. Most hurdling, limiting factors have been women's dual role in home and business, poor knowledge of government support schemes, ignorance about procedures and formalities, poor knowledge of financial management, lack of leisure time and lack of technological skills. With regard to prospect, the researcher found that there exists ample of empowerment theory for women engaged to improve their quality of life, which is important for intrapersonal empowerment and development.

The objective and findings of this study is to improve the understanding of the complexity surrounding gender equality concerning gender mainstreamed policies and its impacts on women's empowerment. The thesis has focused on UNIFEM's impact on both women and men, as well as the relationship between them, regarding the impacts derived

from gender mainstreamed policies with its primary focus on women. It has further been seen to affect the efficiency and capacity of policies with objectives to achieve gender equality. Such impact is illustrated in the constructed analytical model where it clarifies the symmetric interrelationship between UNIFEM's development policies with gender approaches, women, and men. Furthermore, gender equality may in some cases be hard to achieve, and that the outcome of gender equality processes can instead be seen as creating a state of backlash where such processes have been seen to contribute to increased burden for women and negative responses from men. The findings from this research indicate that the continuous focus on women and girls in development and gender policies can be seen as hampering the ability for women to perform their advanced roles. On the basis of data analysis, the following findings have been observed; there is significant shift of UNIFEM interest in increasing women's empowerment depending on their education level in the state. In Cameroon, women entrepreneurs face a maximum of general financial problems followed by financial problems due to personal interest and at last socio-financial problems.

The empowerment theory of women and the improvement of their political, social, economic and health status is a highly important end in itself. In addition, it is essential for the achievement of sustainable development. The full participation and partnership of both women and men is required in productive and reproductive life, including shared responsibilities for the care and nurturing of children and maintenance of the household. In all parts of the world, women are facing threats to their lives, health and well-being as a result of being overburdened with work and of their lack of power and influence. In most regions of the world, women receive less formal education than men, and at the same time, women's own knowledge, abilities and coping mechanisms often go unrecognized. The power relations that impede women's attainment of healthy and fulfilling lives operate at many levels of society, from the most personal to the highly public. Achieving change requires policy and programme actions that will improve women's access to secure livelihoods and economic resources, alleviate their extreme responsibilities with regard to housework, remove legal impediments to their participation in public life, and raise social awareness through effective programmes of education and mass communication. In addition, improving the status of women also enhances their decision-making capacity at all levels in all spheres of life, especially in the area of sexuality and reproduction. This, in turn, is essential for the long-term success of population programmes. Experience shows that population and development programmes are most effective when steps have simultaneously been taken to improve the status of women.

In view of the findings and subsequent conclusions certain recommendations adding to this work are made. The research analyses and interpretations have come to the conclusions that the situation of women's empowerment definitely needs an improvement especially in Cameroon because although there are many indicators which highlight the situation of women's empowerment better than before (especially the trend of increasing the number of women in decision making and leadership positions), there are various problems they face which calls for immediate solutions for encouraging more women to participate in the socio-political and economic shaping of the nation. The researcher suggests the following solutions to the important women specific problems on basis of observation made during the survey:

- UNIFEM needs to further strategize its partnership to achieve wider coverage and stronger impact. To decide which partners would be most valuable to liaise with, a partnership assessment needs to be conducted among Government partners as well as civil society partners. Regarding Government, since gender is a crosscutting issue, it is important for UNIFEM to work with a number of Government bodies. Once the most suitable partners have been identified, the partnerships should be formalised and a participative planning process should be developed and followed. UNIFEM can then also become instrumental in inter-ministerial coordination on women empowerment, by bringing Ministries together and also by establishing and supporting an exchange platform for GFP from the various Ministries.
- The capacity of the MINPROFF, being the main Ministry in the field of gender, should be further strengthened. A capacity assessment needs to be conducted at central and local levels and steps taken accordingly. UN Women's support to MINPROFF requires a critical review, adaptations and corrective measures. As for civil society, it is important that UN Women not only select organisations to implement activities, but also those that are essential for advocacy, communication and networking on GEWE; by supporting more CSOs and/or networks that are active in the women's movement, UN Women can build their capacity whilst simultaneously benefit from their outreach.
- Micro and small business enterprises (MSEs) have empowered women in developing countries through enhancing their decision-making in the household and the community. Evidence suggests that MSEs have strengthened women's bargaining power in decision - making on family resource access to use and control and income allocation and expenditure of household resources. We recommend that the cooperation of UNIFEM and Cameroon can increase performance in microenterprises and improve motivation, success,

trust, and perceptions of women entrepreneurs through business training. Teaching women business skills has the potential of long-term benefits in sustaining a business and in developing new ones in a nation. Governments should take every possible action to remove all gender gaps and inequalities pertaining to women's livelihoods and participation in the labour market through the creation of employment with secure incomes, which has been shown to advance women's empowerment and enhance their reproductive health. Legislation ensuring equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value should be instituted and enforced.

- UNIFEM, with support of the UN family, in particular UNDP and the Resident Coordinator, may look into the feasibility of putting in place a "Gender Basket Fund" to support national programmes. UNIFEM should lead the revival of the Gender Theme Group (GTG); this revival is not only meant in terms of regularity of meetings, but also regarding the level of participation. Leading a UN GTG has appeared a very valuable process for UNIFEM in many countries. Leading such a group is seen as a core role of UNIFEM and essential to achieve coordination and consensus on gender and women empowerment issues and solutions among UN organisations and other development actors, as well as to draw attention to upcoming issues and new developments.
- UNIFEM should improve the office structure by adapting the organigram and recruiting more senior staff. Also, support to more and better-quality data collection needs to be pursued. Though UNIFEM avails a good number of knowledgeable and committed staff, who work at a cost-effective basis, this does not respond to the immediate need of a larger number of senior staff members at the strategic level. Recruiting more senior staff will enable UNIFEM not to only maintain its position in coordination, but also to focus more strongly on the normative area, and to jointly identify and request for funding. Having more senior staff may contribute to further improving the performance of all office staff, providing more scope for guidance and information sharing, and will thus improve the performance of the office as a whole
- Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills, self-esteem and confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process. Promoting the fulfillment of women's potentials through education, skill development and employment, gives paramount importance to the elimination of poverty, illiteracy and ill health among women; and eliminates inequalities between men and women as soon as possible. By investing in women's education and providing them with

entrepreneurial opportunities, the unequal pay gap can be ruled out from the socio-economic scene, encouraging women to increase their participation in the supply chain.

- UNIFEM and the Government should establish mechanisms to accelerate women's equal participation and equitable representation at all levels of the political process and public life in the community and enable women to articulate their concerns and needs and ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making processes in all spheres of life. UNIFEM, the government and the civil society should take actions to eliminate attitudes and practices that discriminate against and subordinate girls and women and that reinforce gender inequality.
- The equal status of women and the human rights of women should be integrated into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity. These issues should be regularly and systematically addressed throughout relevant United Nations bodies and mechanisms in Cameroon. In particular, steps should be taken to increase cooperation and promote further integration of objectives and goals between the CSW, the Commission on Human Rights, the CEDAW, the UNIFEM, the UNDP and other United Nations agencies. Cooperation and coordination should be strengthened between government and UNIFEM.
- UNIFEM has successfully taken the first steps in engaging youth. UNIFEM can further strengthen this engagement in establishing a partnership with the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education. Girls and young women may also be more strongly involved in certain interventions, such as leadership in politics, but also in advocacy and awareness raising on VAW, including on FGM and early marriage.

UNIFEM women's empowerment programmes are investing abundantly in the welfare and empowerment of women, encouraging women to break free from their traditional roles and do away with gender stereotypes. There are various ways of achieving women's financial empowerment and the aforementioned recommendations are only to name a few. To keep up with the changing global trends and fulfill sustainable development goals, it's time to break barriers and explore alternative programmes for advocating equal opportunities for women and promoting financial inclusivity.

APPENDICES

1. Interview guide;
2. Research authorization from MINPROFF;
3. Ad hoc committee document for further action and initiatives to implement the Beijing declaration and the platform for action;
4. Letter for the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of Beijing declaration and action plan;
5. Letter for the participation to 8th African Regional Conference on women;
6. Report on reviewed Projects / Initiatives evaluation of UNIFEM action to end VAW in Cameroon 2008-2011;
7. Country notes on violence against women in Cameroon;
8. Gender information brief;
9. 54th session of the commission on the status of women;
10. 55th session of the commission on the status of women;
11. 56th session of the commission on the status of women;
12. Report on GRB in Aid Effectiveness Agenda 2008-2012;
13. Progress of MDG 2000-2008;
14. UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework in Cameroon 2014-2017;
15. Representatives of gender focal points in public and semi-public administrations in Cameroon.

Appendix 1

Interview guide

A

(For the ministries)

1. Have you ever heard about a UN organization called UNIFEM?
2. What is the purpose of this organization within Cameroonian society?
3. How does UNIFEM relate with the administrative authority in Cameroon?
4. What is the nature of UNIFEM's assistance to women?
5. How is that assistance implemented?
6. Who are those involved in the assistance to women?
7. What do you understand by conventions and conferences on women?
8. Has UNIFEM established conventions and conferences on women? If yes when?
9. What are some of the objectives of the conventions and conferences on women?
10. How many conventions has Cameroon signed on women?
11. Have these conventions and conferences influenced women's empowerment in Cameroon?

B

(For the field work)

1. Are you aware of the change from UNIFEM to UN Women?
2. According to you what could have motivated the change from UNIFEM to UN Women?
3. How does the change from UNIFEM to UN Women help women's issues in Cameroon?
4. What are some of the UNIFEM mechanisms in empowering women in Cameroon?
5. How does UNIFEM relate with the administrative authority in Cameroon?
6. To what extent does UNIFEM apply these mechanisms in the socio-political and economic life of women in Cameroon?
7. How does UN Women empower women socially in (Education/health, employment, humanitarian aid etc.)?
8. How does UN Women empower women politically in (Leadership skills, decision making, participation in elections etc.)?
9. What do you know about UN Women and HeForShe concept?

10. How does HeForShe enable UN Women attain its objectives on women in Cameroon?
11. How has HeForShe impacted women's empowerment in Cameroon?
12. How does UN Women empower women economically in (Training skills, trading, subventions, etc.)?
13. What are the lessons learnt by the women from UNIFEM's assistance?
14. What could be your assessment of the UNIFEM activities in Cameroon?
15. What are the challenges faced by UNIFEM and what are the possible ways out?
16. Generally, what could be your recommendations to UNIFEM and the government for a better implementation of their policies to foster women's wellbeing in Cameroon?

C

(For UNIFEM)

1. What is the nature of UNIFEM's assistance to women?
2. How is that assistance implemented?
3. Who are those involved in the assistance to women?
4. How do women react to UNIFEM's assistance in Cameroon?
5. How does UNIFEM relate with the Gender focal points in the administration?
6. How does UNIFEM interact with its partners, administration and the women?
7. What is the share of responsibility between the UNIFEM's partners, and the administration?
8. In your opinion, what accounts for the low representation of women in post of responsibility?
9. How does the UNIFEM's assistance to women influence the local population?

Appendix 2

Research authorization from MINPROFF

<p>REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN Paix-Travail-Patrie</p> <p>MINISTRE DE LA PROMOTION DE LA FEMME ET DE LA FAMILLE</p> <p>SECRETARIAT GENERAL</p> <p>DIRECTION DES AFFAIRES GENERALES</p> <p>SOUS-DIRECTION DU PERSONNEL DE LA SOLDE ET DES PENSIONS</p> <p>SERVICE DE LA FORMATION, DES STAGES ET DE LA GESTION PREVISIONNELLE DES EFFECTIFS</p> <p>BUREAU DE LA FORMATION ET DES STAGES</p> <p>00001834 N°20/L/MINPROFF/SG/DAG/SDPSP/SFSCPE/BFS</p>	<p>REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON Peace-Work-Fatherland</p> <p>MINISTRY OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE FAMILY</p> <p>SECRETARIAT GENERAL</p> <p>DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL AFFAIRS</p> <p>SUB-DEPARTMENT OF PERSONNEL, SALARIES AND PENSIONS</p> <p>SERVICE FOR TRAINING, INTERSHIPS AND FORWARD MANAGEMENT OF PERSONNEL</p> <p>OFFICE OF TRAINING AND INTERSHIP</p> <p>Yaounde, the 09 DEC 2020</p>
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THE MINISTER
TO
Madam ENDALI Sydney Etoh
Student at the University of Yaounde I
Tel : 674717769/698087519
YAOUNDE

Subject: Research authorisation
Ref : Y/L 1st December 2020

Madam,

Following your letter with the above mentioned reference,


I would like to inform you that your request to consult the archives of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family from December 2020 to February 2021 has been approved.

I hereby call on you to contact the Documentation and Archives Service as well as the Department of Women's Social Empowerment, with regards to the practical modalities relating to your request.

Yours sincerely,

Copy :

- DPSF ;
- SDA .



Le Ministre de la Promotion
de la Femme et de la Famille

Le Ministre
The Minister

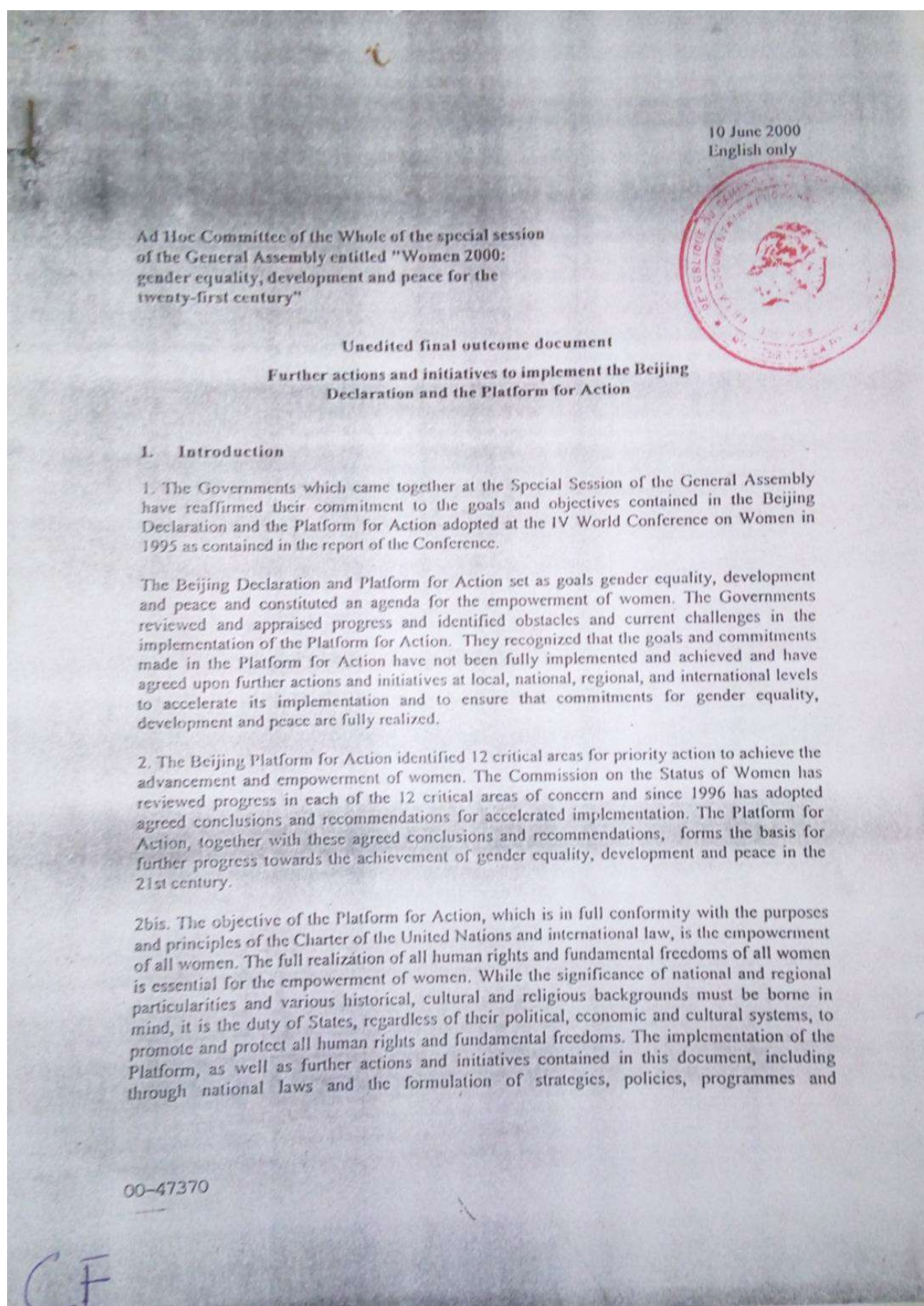
Mme ABENA ONDOA
Mme OBAMA Marie Thérèse

Direction des Affaires Générales, (SDPSP) Tél : 222.22 43 87 site web : www.minproff.cm

Source: Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, 09 December 2020

Appendix 3

Ad hoc committee document for further action and initiatives to implement the Beijing declaration and the platform for action



development priorities, is the sovereign responsibility of each State, in conformity with all human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the significance of and full respect for various religious and ethical values, cultural backgrounds and philosophical convictions of individuals and their communities should contribute to the full enjoyment by women of their human rights in order to achieve equality, development and peace.

The Platform for Action emphasizes that women share common concerns that can be addressed only by working together and in partnership with men towards the common goal of gender equality around the world. It respects and values the full diversity of women's situations and conditions and recognizes that some women face particular barriers to their empowerment.

The Platform for Action recognizes that women face barriers to full equality and advancement because of such factors as their race, age, language, ethnicity, culture, religion or disability, because they are indigenous women or because of other status. Many women encounter specific obstacles related to their family status, particularly as single parents; and to their socio-economic status, including their living conditions in rural, isolated or impoverished areas. Additional barriers also exist for refugee women, other displaced women, including internally displaced women as well as for immigrant women and migrant women, including women migrant workers. Many women are also particularly affected by environmental disasters, serious and infectious diseases and various forms of violence against women.

Appendix 4

Letter for the commemoration of the 15th anniversary of Beijing declaration and action plan

Jul 15, 2009 12:30PM

Année 509
N° 7109

No. 7260 P. 1/3

Mission Permanente de la
Republique du Cameroun
auprès des Nations Unies

Mec

No. 558/1 DEN/5

16-7-09
36/DBEF 14 jours
pour organisation pratique
préparation

22 East 73rd Street
New York, N.Y. 10021
Tel: (212) 794-2295
Fax: (212) 249-0533

Permanent Mission of the
Republic of Cameroon
to the United Nations
JUL 16 2009
New York, L.A.

The Ambassador, Permanent Representative
L'Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent

To

S.E. Monsieur le Ministre
des Relations Extérieures
Yaoundé

176 JUL 16 2009
1165

**Objet : Commémoration du 15^e Anniversaire
de la Déclaration et du Plan d'action de Beijing**

J'ai l'honneur de vous rendre compte de ce que, dans le cadre de la session de fond du Conseil Economique et Social (ECOSOC) en cours à Genève, le Vice Président de cet organe, l'Ambassadeur Hamidon Ali de Malaisie, a désigné Mlle MBALLA EYENGA Cécile, Premier Secrétaire, co-facilitateur du projet de résolution intitulé : Commémoration du 15^e Anniversaire de l'adoption de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Beijing. L'intéressée était assistée dans cette tâche par Mme Karine Khoudaverdian, Conseiller à la Mission Permanente d'Arménie, dont l'Ambassadeur assure la Présidence de la Commission de la Condition de la Femme.

Les deux co-facilitatrices ont mené avec succès les négociations ayant abouti à l'adoption du texte consensuel que vous voudrez bien trouver en annexe. Ce texte sera adopté par l'ECOSOC pendant sa session de fond.

L'objectif du projet de résolution est de permettre à l'Assemblée générale des Nations Unies d'organiser une réunion commémorative du 15^e Anniversaire de l'adoption de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Beijing durant l'un des tous premiers jours de la 54^e session de la Commission de la Condition de la Femme prévue du 1^{er} au 12 mars 2010.

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Cette célébration solennelle qui est une marque de l'importance accordée à l'événement, se fera sous le format ordinaire des réunions commémoratives, avec des interventions des officiels des Nations Unies, des représentants des cinq groupes régionaux et du pays hôte.

Il convient de souligner qu'au départ, les pays occidentaux étaient opposés à une telle réunion dans la mesure où, selon eux, elle occasionnerait des dépenses supplémentaires pour l'Organisation. Cependant, le véritable enjeu était la participation des organisations non gouvernementales dont l'accès aux travaux de l'Assemblée générale reste très limité.

Il importe de rappeler par ailleurs que la 54^e session de la Commission de la Condition de la Femme a pour thème : Examen de la mise en œuvre de la Déclaration et du Programme d'action de Beijing et des textes issus de la vingt-troisième session extraordinaire de l'Assemblée générale et contribution à la mise au point d'une perspective de l'égalité des sexes qui permette d'atteindre pleinement les objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement.

Pour la préparation de cette session, le Poste suggère que le Département puisse d'ores et déjà solliciter les contributions des ministères techniques pour ce qui est de la politique nationale en matière de promotion de la femme y compris son intégration, les textes relatifs à la famille, au respect de la dignité de la femme, à sa participation à la vie nationale, à la protection de l'enfance et notamment de la petite fille. Le point sur les textes juridiques en vigueur pourrait inclure les différents freins à l'action gouvernementale.

Le Poste recommande enfin que le Ministre de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille puisse envisager de participer à cette importante session.

P.J. : Le projet de résolution

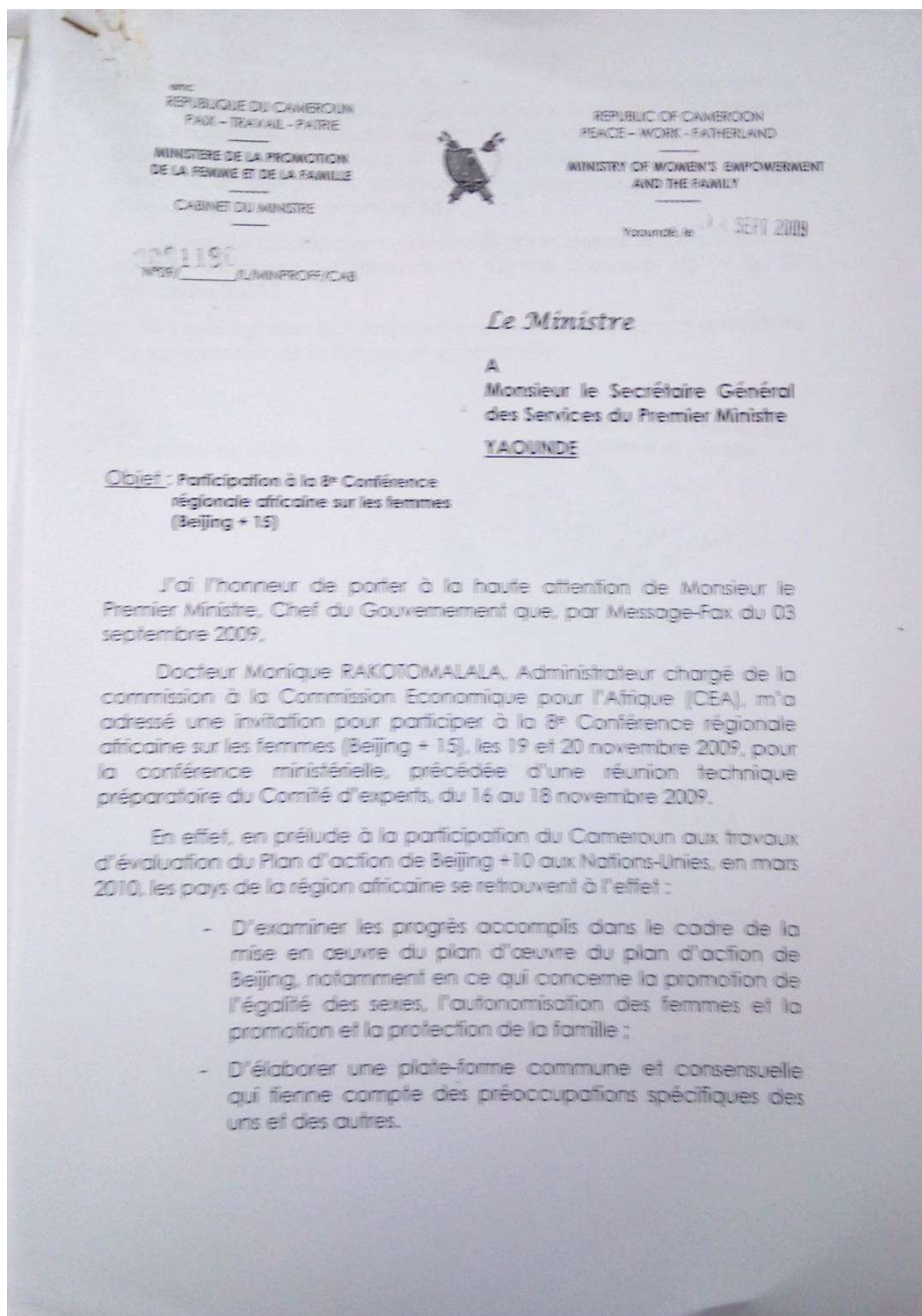
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Appendix 5

Letter for the participation to 8th African Regional Conference on women



Eu égard à l'importance de ces travaux dont les thèmes rentrent en droite ligne de la politique des « Grandes Ambitions » du Président de la République, Son Excellence Paul BIYA et de la mise en œuvre des objectifs du Millénaire pour le développement, je me propose de conduire la délégation, constituée de deux collaborateurs auxdits travaux du 17 au 22 novembre 2009.

Ainsi, les collaborateurs concernés participeront aux travaux de la réunion technique préparatoire du Comité d'experts du 14 au 22 novembre 2009.

La délégation du Cameroun sera prise en charge par le Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille.

P.J :

- Invitation de la CEA



Appendix 6

Report on reviewed Projects / Initiatives evaluation of UNIFEM's action to end VAW in Cameroon 2008-2011

Country	Partner	Title	Location	Project Start - End	Budget (US Dollars)	Source of funding
Cameroon	MINPROFF	Réseau, Réseautage, Promotion des Droits de la Femme et du Genre	Yaoundé and the 10 regions	2008-2009	\$84,000	UNIFEM Core
	MINJUST	Formation des magistrats sur l'Application de la CEDEF	Yaoundé	12/2009 ³⁹	\$20,000	UNIFEM Core
	WOMED	Empowering the Informal Justice System to fight against female genital mutilation, early marriages and Gender based violence in Manyu Division	Manyu Division, South West Region	10/2009 – 10/2010	\$ 35,000	UNIFEM Core
	ACAFEJ	Sensibilisation à la CEDEF et étude sur le niveau d'appropriation et d'utilisation par les acteurs du monde judiciaire	Yaoundé and Douala, Régions du Centre, du Littoral, de l'Extrême Nord et du Sud Ouest	10/2009-ongoing	\$28,000	UNIFEM Core
	ALVF	16 jours d'activisme contre les violences faites aux femmes : Violences faites aux femmes / Violations des droits humains	Yaoundé	10-11/ 2008	\$5,000	UNIFEM Core
	WIRA	Shadow Report on the Implementation of CEDAW in Cameroon	Yaoundé	2009 (duration 6 months)	\$13,600	UNIFEM Core
	UNCT	Contribution to UNCT 16 Days of Activism	Yaoundé	2008, 2009, and 2010	\$15,000 (\$5,000 per year)	UNIFEM Core

Country	Partner	Title	Location	Project Start - End	Budget (US Dollars)	Source of funding
DRC	CHRAPA	Human Rights Based Approach to Combating VAW in Cameroon	North West, South West and Central Regions	2007- 2008	\$23,000	UNTF
	IMC	Critical Health Support for Survivors of Gender based Violence (GBV) Amongst Central African Refugees in Eastern Cameroon	Adamaoua Region, Mbéré Division, Djohong District (Eastern Cameroon)	2009- 3/2010	\$707,600	UNTF
	Action Aid/Plan Cameroon	Tackling violence against girls in schools in the far north region of Cameroon	North Region	2009-2011 11/2010 – on going	\$591,192 \$300,000	UNTF
	MINGE	Institutional support to MINGE for the development of the National Strategy on SGBV, SCR 1325 Action Plan, and Family Code	Kinshasa	2008 – 2009	?	UNIFEM Core
	Women for Women	Formation des magistrats, Chefs coutumiers et officiers de l'armée à la lutte contre les violences basées sur le genre dans la Province du Nord Kivu	Province du Nord Kivu (Goma, Butembo and Beni)	10-12/ 2009	\$31,430	SIDA Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program ⁴¹
	Centre Multifonctionnel KOKO	Projet d'appui psychosocial de prévention et de soutien socioéconomique aux femmes et filles vulnérables dans le contexte des violences sexuelles, violences basées sur le genre et le VIH/Sida en groupement de Kaniola, territoire du Walungu	Kaniola, Walungu, Sud Kivu	9/2009 - 7/2010	\$48,978	SIDA Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
	COFEKI	Projet de prise en charge psychosociale et réinsertion socioéconomique des femmes victimes de violences sexuelles dans le Territoire de Kimbombo en Collectivités de Matapa et Aluba dans la Province du Maniema	Province du Maniema (Collectivités de Aluba and matapa, in the territory of Kibombo)	1/2010- 7/2010	\$36,302	SIDA Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program

Country	Partner	Title	Location	Project Start - End	Budget (US Dollars)	Source of funding
	CFPD (une partie du projet est sous contracté avec COFEBU)	Appui au centre multifonctionnel de Bumba et renforcement des capacités des communautés en vue de la prévention et lutte contre les violences sexuelles basées sur le genre dans la province du Sud Kivu	Province de l'Equateur (Bumba) et du Sud Kivu (Bukavu and Nyangezi)	2/2010 - 8/2010	\$69,800	SIDA
	FORFEM	Mobilisation communautaire et renforcement des capacités en vue de la prévention et lutte contre les violences basées sur le genre et le VIH/Sida dans la province de l'Equateur	Province de l'Equateur	01/2010 - 8/2010	\$70,000	Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
						SIDA
						Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
	Fondation Femme Plus (et Centre Wamba pour une partie du projet)	Appui au Centre des Femmes de Wamba (Centre Multifonctionnel de Wamba) et lutte contre les violences sexuelles et VIH/Sida	Territoire de Mambasa (2 health zones: Mambasa and Niania) and Wamba, Province Orientale	2009/2010 (6 months)	\$75,267	SIDA
						Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
	World Relief	Projet de Sensibilisation et Support Psycho Social et Socio-économique des Survivante de Violence Sexuelle du Territoire de Rutshuru	Province du Nord Kivu	12/2009 – 7/ 2010	\$55,431	SIDA
						Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
						Community Mobilization to Prevent VAW Program
	SOFEPADI	Projet de lutte contre les violences sexuelles en Ituri	District d'Ituri, ville de Bunia et Ville et Territoire de Beni, North Kivu	1/2009 – 12/2009	\$150,000	UNTF
	RENADEF	Projet d'appui à la réduction des deux pandémies de la violence faite aux femmes et du VIH/Sida en RD Congo.	Goma (province du Nord Kivu), Bukavu et Uvira (Province du Sud Kivu), Kisangani (province orientale), Kindu (province du Maniema), Kalenje (province du Katanga)	6/2008 – 6/2009	\$ 200,000	UNTF

Source: Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, 28 December 2020

Appendix 7

Country notes on violence against women in Cameroon

Criteria	Key Observations
Interventions' profile	<p>Since 2008 UNIFEM's work on Violence Against Women (VAW) has focused on two key aspects: 1) strengthening the legal framework and the formal and informal justice systems to fight against VAW; and 2) VAW prevention, in particular in relation to domestic violence and Traditional Harmful Practices (THPs) such as Female Genital Mutilations (FGM), early marriage, widowhood rites:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNIFEM Cameroon has lobbied and provided technical and financial support for the revision of the Cameroon Family Code and the development of a law on VAW. • With the Ministère de la Promotion de la Femme et de la Famille (MINPROFF), UNIFEM's has supported a variety of initiatives, including: popularization and sensitization campaigns on Women Human Rights (WHR) and the legal provisions (including CEDAW) defending them; the production of the CEDAW report; the organization of the 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence; and a sensitization, information and capacity development campaign for female genital mutilators to encourage them to abandon the practice. • With local NGOs, UNIFEM has provided support to sensitization activities for rights holders and duty bearers (including formal and informal justice systems) on WHR, VAW and CEDAW; the development of the CEDAW shadow report; strengthening the informal justice system, in particular in the northwest and southwest regions, to fight against traditional harmful practices and other forms of VAW; empowering female genital mutilators to abandon their practice. • With the Ministry of Justice (MINJUST), UNIFEM has provided assistance to the organization of trainings on CEDAW and its applications for magistrates. • UNIFEM has also played an active role in mechanisms such as the UN Gender Group, pushing for UN coordinated initiatives to fight VAW in Cameroon, including joint initiatives for the 16 Days of Activism. <p>VAW activities in Cameroon were funded with UNIFEM's core funds. With the exception of the MINPROFF, which received a contribution of almost \$100,000, contributions were relatively small, from \$5,000 to \$40,000 for periods under one year.</p> <p>During the period under review, two UNTF projects were implemented in Cameroon. One was executed by the international NGO International Medical Corps, and provided medical support for GBV survivors amongst Central African Republic refugees in Eastern Cameroon. The other project was initially implemented by the international NGO ActionAid and subsequently by the NGO Plan Cameroon, to tackle violence against girls in five districts of North Cameroon. These projects had substantially larger budgets (\$700,000 and \$590,000 respectively) than UNIFEM's VAW initiatives in Cameroon.</p>
Context	<p>Prevailing VAW SGBV issues and their root causes</p> <p>Cameroon is one of the few stable countries in Central Africa, yet has significant poverty challenges, and is highly diverse in terms of cultural, linguistic and religious point of view, with more than 250 ethnic groups. Therefore, there is a broad range of cultural practices that regulate social life and affect lives of women and girls, particularly in the areas of sexual and</p>

	<p>reproductive health, marriage and inheritance. Despite the ratification of CEDAW and the Maputo Protocol, discriminatory social customs and practices, low social status, and stereotyped attitudes towards women prevail. The large majority of acts of VAW spring from cultural practices that are accepted as part of the morality of the community. Among the most common harmful traditional practices are son preference and its implications on the status of girls, early marriage and pregnancy, female genital mutilation, and widowhood rites. These practices are particularly prevalent in the north, northwest and southwest regions. Also, domestic violence is widespread.</p> <p>Capacity and willingness at the country level to address VAW</p> <p>The Cameroon government has not yet developed a holistic approach to the prevention and elimination of the various forms of violence against women and girls. There is no legal framework that specifically addresses VAW; and there is insufficient knowledge and use of ratified international instruments by law officers. This problem is intensified by some discriminatory elements in some of the national legal instruments and by the fact that abuses of women's human rights are often compounded by customary laws. Where laws are non-discriminatory towards women, high levels of ignorance and illiteracy make it difficult for women to assert and defend their rights.</p> <p>According to consulted stakeholders, awareness and mobilization against VAW are gaining momentum in Cameroon, although they remain relatively new. It appears that discussing VAW is becoming less of a taboo in the public discourse, and that the media are addressing the issue more frequently. There is an emerging political will to address VAW, in particular FGM, as demonstrated by the engagement of the MINPROFF on this issue. However its capacities, resources and governmental clout remain very limited. Another challenge is the limited availability of recent and comprehensive data on VAW in the country.</p> <p>UNIFEM environment</p> <p>UNIFEM Cameroon was created as a project office in 2004, and became a full country office only in 2008. UNIFEM Cameroon's work on VAW is relatively new: until 2008, the Cameroon office focused on economic empowerment, and supported only a very limited number of initiatives to fight VAW. The current transition to UN Women is creating a lot of expectations among partners and other stakeholders: however a lot of uncertainty remains in relation to the consequences of this transition at the country level.</p>
Relevance	<p>Relevance to national and regional commitments and priorities</p> <p>In Cameroon, there are no specific strategies or policy frameworks spelling out the Government's overall priorities in addressing VAW. UNIFEM's work has been aligned with the MINPROFF priorities relating to VAW, as identified in its Annual Feuille de Route, in particular in relation to the eradication of FGM, and with the new human rights orientation of the Ministry of Justice. UNIFEM has supported the Government of Cameroon's commitment to CEDAW implementation by assisting the MINPROFF in CEDAW reporting.</p> <p>Relevance to identified needs at the country and local level</p> <p>Consulted stakeholders agreed that UNIFEM's initiatives responded to important perceived needs at the country level, but that the limited size and scope of these initiatives often made them a "drop in the bucket". UNIFEM's focus on eradicating traditional harmful practices, through information and sensitization of vast populations and the mobilization of traditional leaders was very relevant to country needs. Similarly, the focus on strengthening the knowledge on CEDAW and WHR within the formal justice system was relevant to needs, given the fact that the vast majority of magistrates have very limited/inexistent knowledge of this legal instrument.</p>

	<p>several consulted stakeholders mentioned that the initiatives of UNIFEM and its partners have strengthened women's knowledge of their rights, legal provisions, and how to access justice.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UNIFEM supported initiatives in the northwest and southwest regions aimed at increasing traditional leaders' awareness and knowledge of WHR, VAW and THP as well as their commitment to act as agents of change in their communities. Consulted stakeholders reported some positive changes triggered by these interventions in terms of increased sensitization and engagement of traditional leaders to fight against VAW. According to UNIFEM, as a result of these initiatives women in targeted areas have increased access to justice through the informal justice system. However the evaluation team does not have data to triangulate this information. <p><u>Outcome C Strengthened and empowered duty bearers, rights holders and their organizations:</u></p> <p>In Cameroon, UNIFEM has contributed to strengthening MINPROFF capacity to address VAW, in particular to conduct nation-wide sensitization campaigns. UNIFEM has also supported local CSOs in their advocacy and sensitization efforts and in developing and presenting one coordinated CEDAW shadow report. However, UNIFEM support was short-term and focused on specific activities; consulted partners did not feel that UNIFEM had substantially contributed to increasing their organizational capacities.</p> <p>Beyond immediate results, several consulted stakeholders mentioned that UNIFEM, through lobbying, capacity development, and partner mobilization, contributed to the increased engagement of MINPROFF in the fight against VAW, FGM and THP in Cameroon. They noted in particular that MINPROFF has taken the lead for the 16 Days of Activism campaign. In addition, it is widely recognized that UNIFEM has contributed to an increased and diversified mobilization for the 16 Days of Activism, including leading a joint UN initiative in support of it. Consulted stakeholders also agreed that in the last few years VAW has become a more public subject of debate and discussion that is being addressed more often in the media and at public events; this can be seen as the result of the many sensitization and capacity development activities conducted in recent years, to which UNIFEM and its partners have contributed. While these observations are encouraging, evidence remains anecdotal and behavioural change is difficult to measure, especially in the absence of systematic M&E and reliable and comprehensive studies.</p> <p><u>Outcome D Relevant and effective models of community-led initiatives:</u></p> <p>In Cameroon, UNIFEM supported a limited number of interventions at the community level. According to consulted stakeholders, community-level sensitization campaigns conducted as part of these initiatives helped to "break the silence" on FGM, early marriage, and THP, and as a result, community media, traditional chiefs, and imams have become more involved in the fight against SGBV and more willing to talk about VAW. Several small immediate results have been achieved (e.g., in Manyu division, 90 village chiefs were sensitized and 55 female genital mutilators trained on micro business development by WOMED), but how these will affect behaviours at the community level is unknown. There is anecdotal evidence of changes in behaviours and the MINPROFF campaign led to some powerful, symbolic acts, such as FG mutilators renouncing their knives in public ceremonies. However, UNIFEM staff and other consulted stakeholders agreed that results at the community level have been minimal and difficult to measure and that no clear model has emerged from these initiatives.</p> <p>Catalytic and Innovative Programming</p> <p>There is no strong or consistent evidence that UNIFEM's work on VAW is innovative or catalytic. UNIFEM staff suggested that involving traditional leaders in the fight against VAW, FGM and THPs was innovative. However, the Evaluation Team had no data to confirm that other stakeholders see this as innovative programming. Also, there is no data showing that UNIFEM has actively and systematically tried to capture and share lessons learned from its innovative work, or mobilize support for any</p>
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	particular approach. According to UNIFEM staff there are examples of UNIFEM's work being continued with other funding: for example, the work done with CHRAPA and the MINPROFF on FGMs is now being continued by UNFPA. However, this has not happened in a planned and coordinated way.
Efficiency	<p>Consulted UNIFEM staff indicated that they were generally satisfied with achievements made to date given the very limited resources (staff, money) available for VAW work. In Cameroon, UNIFEM prides itself on being very cautious in its expenditures, to the point that this seems to have become an organizational culture trait. Some consulted stakeholders within UNIFEM felt that, by comparison, UNTF projects were less efficient.</p> <p>Major challenges for UNIFEM's efficiency as noted by most UNIFEM staff and stakeholders, are UNIFEM's bureaucratic heaviness, highly centralized structure and very moderate delegation of responsibilities and signing authority to the country level. This delayed fund disbursement, project implementation, and reporting.</p>
Sustainability	<p>The likelihood of results being sustainable and contributing to substantive changes is limited, as UNIFEM as well as its partners and funders have not planned for or systematically addressed sustainability in their work. In addition, several characteristics of UNIFEM-supported interventions in Cameroon are likely to negatively affect sustainability, including: the punctual, short-term, fragmented nature of most initiatives, which limits the potential for program coherence and synergies; and the little, if any, follow up support provided to project partners.</p> <p>On the other hand, factors that may support the likelihood of results being sustainable are: the favourable international environment, fostering increasing investments and commitment to VAW; and the MINPROFF's engagement in fighting FGMs (however its capacities are limited).</p>
UNIFEM's niche and role in view of VAW	<p>During the period under review, UNIFEM did not have a well-established niche in VAW programming at the country level. While consulted development and national partners at the country level widely recognized UNIFEM's role with regard to gender equality, their levels of awareness and appreciation of UNIFEM's work on VAW in Cameroon varied considerably. Our data suggest that almost no stakeholders consulted in Cameroon see UNIFEM as possessing particularly strong technical expertise on VAW at the country level. For this reason, as far as VAW is concerned, its partners (especially CSOs) have perceived UNIFEM mainly as a (small) funder and as an organization capable of creating opportunities for dialogue between civil society, the government and the donors. To a much lesser extent UNIFEM was seen as provider of technical assistance in relation to VAW. Consulted individuals agreed that other UN agencies (e.g., UNFPA) were considerably better placed and equipped than UNIFEM to lead initiatives on VAW in the field.</p> <p>However, recent developments are contributing to better define UNIFEM's (future) role in VAW from that of other players. Despite the country office's relatively young age, UNIFEM has progressively been able to build a good reputation and establish its leadership role in relation to gender equality and women's rights. It also has been able to position itself strategically by playing a very active role in coordination and dialogue mechanisms within UN agencies and among development partners and the government. Also UNIFEM's role in sensitization for and advocacy on VAW has been recognized, in particular during the 16 Days of Activism against VAW campaign.</p> <p>UNIFEM's key areas of expertise at the national level are widely seen to lie in GRB and gender mainstreaming. However, our consultations indicate that development partners increasingly view UNIFEM as also playing (or at least having the potential to play) a coordination role with regard to work on VAW. At the same time, UNFPA continues to be regarded as the technical leader in this area.</p>

Source: UN Women Cameroon, 28 March 2018

Appendix 8

Gender information brief

EC Gender Help Desk

CAMEROON **Gender Information Brief**

The Gender Information Briefs (GIBs) prepared by the EC Gender Help Desk are meant to provide an overview of a country's available information on

- the existing situation with respect to gender equality issues
- the main issues that need to be addressed in order to support the promotion of gender equality, in coherence with and as condition to the achievement of the national development goals

Each GIB contains:

Part 1 – Basic data: key statistical data, and information on the country's commitment to international legal instruments related to gender equality

Part 2 – Information resources: contacts and references to institutions, policies and information resources providing updated and more in-depth statistics and qualitative information, in the following order (where available):

a. National resources

- i. Governmental institutions/Ministries
- ii. National gender equality policy documents
- iii. National reports on women's and gender equality status
- iv. PRSP gender priorities/profile
- v. Academic institutions
- vi. NGO networks

b. International resources

- i. UN Common Country Assessment – Gender issues
- ii. UNIFEM gender profile/priorities
- iii. MDG3 report
- iv. Other relevant information resources (Donors' research etc, sectoral studies of particular relevance)
- v. Agencies or NGO networks at regional level

Whenever possible, the list provides web links to access directly the documents. All the documents referred in the Briefs can be requested at the EC Gender Help Desk (eu-gender@itcilo.org) or at Aidco E4 (Daniela.rofi@cec.eu.int).

Ratification of women and gender equality related conventions (see Note 1):

Conventions / UN system	Signature	Ratification	Entry into force	Receipt of instrument
CEDAW - Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women	06/06/83		22/09/94	23/08/94
CEDAW - OP - Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women		07/01/05 [accession]		
CERD - International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	12/12/66		24/07/71	24/06/71
CMW- International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families				
CRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child	25/09/90		10/02/93	11/01/93
CRC-OP-AC- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	05/10/01			
C100 - I.L.O. Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value		25/05/70		
C111 - I.L.O. Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation		13/05/88		
Convention on consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages				

Conventions / African Union	Signature	Ratification	Deposited
African Charter on Human and Peoples' rights	23/07/87	20/06/89	18/09/89
Maputo Protocol [Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's rights related to the rights of Women]			

Other useful indicators**MDG 3 : Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women**

Indicator 9 - Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE - 2004 UNESCO	Primary Education	0.86
	Secondary Education	0.82
	Tertiary Education	0.63
Indicator 10 - Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE - 1990 UNESCO		0.88
Indicator 11 - Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE - 1990 ILO		20.7 %
Indicator 12 - Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE - 2005 IPU		9%

Maternal Mortality rate estimate per 100,000 live births MOST RECENT DATA AVAILABLE - 2000 WHO/UNICEF	730
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HIV/AIDS: Women over total adult population living with HIV estimate [15-49 years old] MOST RECENT DATA - 2003 UNAIDS	Rate	290,000 women of 520,000 adults
	Percentage	55.76%

Source: Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family, 28 December 2020

Appendix 9

54th session of the commission on the status of women



CAMEROON



54th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

15-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly (2000)

STATEMENT BY
Pr. ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie-Thérèse
MINISTER OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE FAMILY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

New York, March 2nd, 2010

Check at the delivery

MISSION PERMANENTE DU CAMEROUN
 AUPRES DES NATIONS UNIES

PERMANENT MISSION OF CAMEROON
 TO THE UNITED NATIONS

22 EAST 73rd STREET NEW YORK, N.Y. 10021
 (212) 794-2295 FAX: (212) 249-0533

Mr. Chairperson,

I wish to, on behalf of the Cameroon delegation and on a personal note, extend to you and your team our hearty congratulations for the conduct of the 54th session on the Commission on the Status of Women.

We are confident that your skills and the contribution of all Stakeholders participating to the deliberations will be combined to allow a comprehensive 15-years review.

As, His Excellency President Paul BIYA, was declaring years ago, and I quote:

"I am committed to ensure that the equality of human rights and the rights of women is a reality notably in promulgating the law to punish all forms of violence against women." (President Paul BIYA of Cameroon, Maroua, October 1997).

Mr. Chairperson,

The Cameroonian government has the political will and a commitment to implement the Beijing platform of Action and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) as demonstrated by our active participation in Beijing in 1995.

Looking at gender disaggregated data, much still needs to be done to achieve parity. The weight of tradition and culture is still very strong in our society. Gender issues are still considered women's issues. This constitutes a barrier for the development of women and the consideration of the Gender approach.

Women represent 52% of the population of Cameroon; contribute to 75% of the agricultural work, and produce 80% of food.

What has the Cameroonian government done concretely?

1- Institutional framework

This one has evolved significantly by the creation of specific Ministries.

- 1975, the Ministry of Social Affairs through the service of Women's Education;
- 1984, the Ministry of Women's Affairs through the Department for the Advancement of Women;
- 1988, the Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs through the Department of the Promotion of Women's Rights,
- 2004, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family through the Department of Women's Social Empowerment, Sub-Department for the Promotion of Women's Rights and Gender.

2- Strategic orientations

Ratification of Conventions

- Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- The Millennium Development Declaration (2000);
- Resolution 1325 of the United Nations on Women's Participation in Peace Management and Conflict Resolution;
- Declaration of the African Union Heads of State on equality between men and women;
- The Platform of ECCAS on gender integration in policies and action plans of the community;

The Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family is working in conjunction with all other ministries and partners in bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the framework of an approach that is both cross-sectional, holistic and participatory.

Policy

In 1999, a national policy declaration for the integration of women in development was adopted with seven priority areas of concern:

- Women and Poverty;
- Women and the Economy;
- Women and Health, with an emphasis on the fight against HIV/AIDS;
- Education and training of women;
- Violence against women;
- Women and Decision-making;
- The female child.

Income generating activities

Cameroon has since then, striven to implement the Beijing Platform of Action in the Political, Social, Economical and Cultural fields.

Based on the fact that women remain the poorest of the poor, the government has developed programmes and projects to reduce poverty among women, with the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners. These include:

- The Global Programme for the advancement of Women and Gender equality that contributed to the financing and monitoring of 240 projects by women in the Adamawa, Littoral, West and North-West Regions to the tune of 170 million francs CFA;

- The Programme for the Improvement of Rural Family Income (PARFAR) that enabled the construction of twelve (12) Women Empowerment Centres in the Northern Regions;
- The Poverty Reduction Project and Actions in favour of Women in the Far North Region (PREPAFEN) that granted loans amounting to 785 million francs CFA, 76% of which beneficiaries were women;
- Thanks to the debt relieve funds of HIPIC Initiative, the government has developed a certain number of projects including the Project to set up a Support Mechanism for underprivileged Women in Women' Empowerment Centres, aimed at granting micro credits to individual women and groups.

This project is operational in 57 Centres and the number of women and associations having benefited from this support stands at 2430 for a total amount of 693 million francs CFA.

Representation at high level

In the Administration, the number of women in ministerial positions has showed the following trends:

02 out of 27 (7.41%) in 1995;

03 out of 49 (6.12%) in 1998;

06 out of 65 (9.23%) in 2004;

06 out of 62 (9.68%) in 2010

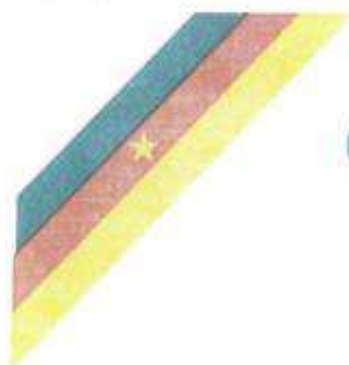
Some efforts have been made. But, much still needs to be done to attain acceptable representation,

In Magistracy, as of November 30 2009, 203 out of 722 (28.12%) magistrates are women.

In Parliament, the situation is as follows in different legislatures:

Appendix 10

55th session of the commission on the status of women



CAMEROON



55^{EME} SESSION DE LA COMMISSION DE LA CONDITION DE LA FEMME

DEBAT GENERAL

Thème : « Accès et participation des femmes et des filles à l'éducation, à la formation, à la science et à la technologie, y compris pour la promotion de l'égalité d'accès au plein emploi et à un travail décent ».

Déclaration du PR. ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie Thérèse

MINISTRE DE LA PROMOTION DE LA FEMME ET DE LA FAMILLE

New York le 24 février 2011

A vérifier au prononcé

55th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

Theme: Access and participation of women and girls in education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work

GENERAL DEBATE

Statement by Pr. ABENA ONDOA née OBAMA Marie Thérèse
MINISTER OF WOMENT'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE FAMILY

New York, February 24 2011

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PERMANENT MISSION OF CAMEROON
TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Monsieur le Président,

Je voudrais tout d'abord vous adresser les chaleureuses félicitations de la délégation camerounaise pour le doigté avec lequel vous conduisez ces travaux depuis l'ouverture de la présente session consacrée à la Condition de la Femme. Permettez-moi en outre d'associer à ces félicitations les membres de votre bureau qui vous assistent avec tant de dévouement et d'efficacité.

Je saisis cette occasion pour saluer la création de l'ONU-Femmes, entité stratégique de protection et de promotion du statut de la femme ainsi que la nomination de Mme Michelle Bachelet comme première Directrice de cette entité.

Monsieur le Président,

Le thème de la 55^{ème} Session de la Commission de la Condition de la Femme, qui s'intitule « **Accès et participation des femmes et des filles à l'éducation, à la formation, à la science et à la technologie, y compris pour la promotion de l'égalité d'accès au plein emploi et à un travail décent** », est en droite ligne des préoccupations du Gouvernement camerounais en ce qui concerne la Promotion de la Femme.

Au Cameroun, les femmes représentent 50,6 % de la population estimée à 19 406 100 habitants, selon les résultats du troisième Recensement Général de la Population et de l'Habitat (RGPH), publiés en 2010. Elles sont des agents socio-économiques qui s'investissent dans tous les secteurs de la vie nationale et leur rôle est reconnu dans le développement de la famille, de la communauté et de la société.

En souscrivant aux engagements internationaux visant le plein épanouissement de la femme, le Cameroun a pour objectif d'éliminer progressivement les inégalités fondées sur le sexe, dans les secteurs stratégiques que sont l'éducation, la formation, la santé, la science, la technologie, l'économie, l'emploi et le travail en vue de garantir la participation égale des femmes et des hommes à la vie publique et familiale en rapport avec les Objectifs du Millénaire pour le Développement.

Ces Objectifs correspondent aux options démocratiques qui sous-tendent le Projet de société du Chef de l'Etat, Son Excellence Paul Biya. Les actions entreprises par le Gouvernement, avec l'appui des partenaires techniques et financiers et la Société Civile contribuent à l'atteinte des réformes engagées.

Monsieur le Président,

Dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation, les actions du Gouvernement s'appuient principalement sur la Stratégie Nationale du Secteur Education et sur un dispositif juridique spécifique mis en place pour l'accompagnement des enseignements. Ces actions sont réalisées à travers des programmes et projets tels que :

- le Programme d'Appui au Système Educatif Camerounais (PASE), destiné à promouvoir l'excellence scolaire ;
- le Programme Education de Base ;
- le Programme d'Appui aux Filles des Filières Scientifiques ;
- le Programme Education Pour Tous ;
- le Programme National d'Alphabétisation ;

- le Projet « Opération 100 000 femmes à l'horizon 2012 » qui vise la formation des femmes en TIC ;
 - le Projet « amélioration de l'offre de services éducatifs aux filles et aux femmes ».
- D'autres actions et mesures sont prises à l'instar de :
- la gratuité de l'enseignement primaire ;
 - l'appui à l'accès à la formation professionnelle par l'octroi des bourses ;
 - la facilitation de l'accès et du maintien des filles dans les filières dites « réservées » aux hommes ;
 - la formation continue pour les femmes qui travaillent sans qualification ;
 - le renforcement de la lutte contre les stéréotypes sexistes et les violences dans les ouvrages ;
 - l'implication des parents dans l'éducation des filles.

Par ailleurs, des structures de formation professionnelle de proximité sont mises en place sur l'étendue du territoire national : 84 Centres de Promotion de la Femme (CPF) et 01 Centre de Technologies Appropriées (CTA), des Home-ateliers et des Sections Artisanales Rurales/Sections Ménagères (SAR/SM) qui permettent la récupération sociale et l'insertion professionnelle des femmes et jeunes filles déperdues du système scolaire formel. Le nombre de femmes et filles bénéficiaires est passé de 13 000 à 450 000 entre 2005 et 2010, soit une augmentation de 94,4%. En outre, 2 930 microprojets ont été financés entre 2006 et 2009.

D'autres initiatives en matière de formation professionnelle et de création d'emplois bénéficient également aux jeunes des deux sexes. Il s'agit principalement : des centres multimédia, des centres de formation professionnelle, des centres d'alphabétisation fonctionnelle. Bien que l'impact soit encore faible, les actions développées dans le cadre de la formation professionnelle ont permis l'accès des filles dans les filières jusque-là réservées aux garçons en 2009-2010 : chaudronnerie, électricité industrielle, construction d'ouvrage métallique, navigation côtière, soudage/tuyautage.


Dans le domaine de l'emploi et du travail, l'activité économique se déploie aussi bien en milieu urbain qu'en milieu rural. Deux secteurs constituent le marché de l'emploi au Cameroun : le secteur formel et le secteur informel. Le profil de la population active présentée ci - après comprend : les actifs exerçant ou non un emploi ; ceux à la recherche d'un premier emploi ; les élèves, les étudiants, les rentiers et les retraités n'exerçant aucune activité économique ; les femmes au foyer et les autres inactifs. Sur les 52,6% représentant la population des actifs ayant un emploi, les femmes constituent 44,5% contre 61,3% d'hommes.

Au niveau du secteur public formel, le Statut Général de la Fonction Publique pose le principe de l'égalité et de l'accès de tous, sans discrimination de genres, au marché du travail, et aux avantages y relatifs. Toutefois, il apparaît que la promotion des femmes aux postes de responsabilité, à compétences égales, reste faible, quel que soit le grade considéré.


Malgré la féminisation de la pauvreté, des actions sont menées dans le cadre de la promotion de l'entrepreneuriat féminin et de la lutte contre la pauvreté telles que : l'information des femmes sur les opportunités de crédits et d'investissement grâce à la publication périodique d'un guide de la femme entrepreneur et autres journaux spécialisés, l'organisation des formations permanentes pour encourager le commerce transfrontalier et la recherche de partenariats avec les milieux socioprofessionnels étrangers. Toutes ces actions ont contribué à améliorer la situation de la femme.

Appendix 11

56th session of the commission on the status of women



CAMEROON



56th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

NEW YORK, 27th FEBRUARY – 9TH MARS 2012

STATEMENT OF

MRS. ABENA ONDOA Née OBAMA MARIE THERESE

MINISTER OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT OF AND THE FAMILY

GENERAL DEBATE UNDER THE ITEM :

THE EMPOWERMENT OF RURAL WOMEN AND THEIR ROLE IN POVERTY
AND HUNGER ERADICATION AND IN DEVELOPMENT

Wednesday, 29th February 2012

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Madam. Chairperson,

I wish, on behalf of the Cameroon Delegation, to extend to you and your team our hearty congratulations for the conduct of the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

We are confident that your skills and the various contributions of stakeholders taking part in the deliberations will be combined to guarantee a comprehensive and fruitful Session.

Madam. Chairperson,

The theme of the 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, "**The empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication and in development**", reflects one of Cameroon Government's major concerns, with a pride of place given to rural women in the country's Development Vision by 2035.

According to results of the 3rd General Population and Housing Census (GPHC) published in 2010, Cameroon's overall population is estimated at 19,406,100 inhabitants, with a rural population of 9,314,928 inhabitants, 4,745,697 of whom are women.

Most of these women living in rural areas work in the primary sector and their ratio, as compared to men, is quite significant (100 women as against 92 men). They are the main agricultural labor force, 50 to 70% depending on various regions, and are found in the sectors of food and cash crops, livestock, fishery, exploitation of non timber forest products where they have a key role in food self-sufficiency and security.

Although the overall incidence of poverty among women has dropped from 40.5% in 2001 to 33.4% in 2007, there is great variability between Regions. In some, it has increased while in others, it has dropped. It is worth noting that ¼ of households and 1/3 of promoters/heads of Enterprises are women.

Rural women however are the subject of a constant concern in Cameroon's various economic policies as they remain overwhelmingly, dependent on subsistence economy because of numerous economic, social, cultural, and infrastructural obstacles. Thus, in addition to farming, they have the burden of domestic responsibilities.

Despite this situation, which tends to make them more vulnerable than their urban counterparts, they contribute to the development of the rural world. Hence the need to empower them and build their capacities on coping with challenges such as eradicating poverty, hunger and contributing to the economic development of Cameroon.

To this end specific actions have been defined, in their favor, by the government in the areas of education, health, decision making, agriculture and rural development.

As concerns education and training, measures have been taken to facilitate the access of rural women and girls to education and training. These include, among others:

- The massive creation of primary schools and general and technical secondary education establishments. In addition, the Government has developed a non-formal system of education where it can be noted that:
- 408 community schools have been established and are managed by communities;
- 89 Women's Empowerment Centers have been established in urban and rural areas. These Centers have, from 2007 to 2010, trained 86,000 women, more than 70% of whom are found in rural areas;
- 189 proximity vocational training facilities. These institutions recorded 24,269 trainees between 2009 and 2010, including 8,984 girls as against 15,285 boys;
- Free primary education which, generally, is of prime advantage to the rural population, because of their numbers and low income level;
- The establishment of incentive programs for girls to go to school and to retain them there, with special assistance for school-age girls;

- In addition, mothers have been sensitized to send the girl child to school and to equally share the household chores between boys and girls to give the latter the same chance for success in school;

As concerns healthcare, numerous actions have been undertaken in order to improve the health situation in rural areas and consequently improve on the health of women living in these areas. As illustration,

- A program for the construction of health centers in rural areas was launched in 2005. To date, 3,067 Integrated Health Centers and Sub-Divisional Medical Centers have been constructed in view of bringing health facilities closer to women;
- Free management of HIV-infected pregnant women and the reduction of treatment and laboratory cost are effective, with the actual cost standing at 6 US Dollars, down from 54 US Dollars ;
- The promotion of mother and child's health, reproductive health, and family planning is also effective. To this effect, the reopening of training schools for registered birth attendants and nurses in 2010 and 2011 and the re-launching of midwifery training, suspended for the past 20 years now are worth noting;
- There has been an increase in the number of midwives and registered birth attendant in health centers of the rural areas in order to reduce the rate of maternal and infant mortality;
- Health care workers in rural areas are provided with incentives to stabilize them in those areas: financial, housing facilities;
- Malaria prevention has been ongoing through the free distribution of treated mosquito bed nets to pregnant women and the launching of the campaign to distribute close to 9 million treated mosquito bed nets to families;
- Awareness campaigns are being carried out on the importance of prenatal consultations and the repair of obstetric fistulae, the majority of which victims come from rural areas. As part of the 2012 International Women's Day activities, free repair of fistulae has been underway at the University Teaching Hospital Center in Yaounde since last week.

- Since 2010, 25% of women operated upon in the Far-North and North Regions have received psychological, financial and material assistance for their socio-economic reintegration.
- Significant actions for the fight against harmful traditional practices to rural women's health, notably Female Genital Mutilation and early marriages are being carried out by the government, with the support of technical and financial partners and civil society.

As concerns decision making, numerous measures have been taken to increase and enhance women's participation in the preparation and implementation of local development plans. They include:

- The involvement of rural women in the preparation and implementation of local development plans;
- The presence of women in management structures, including executive boards and management committees. For some specific programs on food security, such as the National Roots and Tubers Development Program (PNDRT) and the Program for the Improvement of Rural Household Income in the Northern Regions (PAR FAR); they are over 70% in these programs;
- Although traditional chieftaincies are dominated by men, some women have been able to access this sphere of decision making. Among other duties, they ensure that women are involved in community activities.

Within the framework of reducing rural women's agricultural and domestic work load, the government, civil society organizations, notably elected representatives and the elites are carrying out specific actions such as:

- The popularization of appropriate technologies (improved techniques of production, conservation, processing and marketing of agro pastoral products);
- The provision of agro-pastoral equipment

As concerns **access to Information and Communication Technologies**,

- Multipurpose community telecenters have been established in rural areas to help bridge the digital divide between urban and rural areas. To date, there are 102 of such centers across the country.

Added to all these government efforts are the actions of the First Lady, whose activities contribute to the fight against poverty, disease and improving the living quality of life for rural women.

Given their greater number in rural areas, women play a key role in the fight against poverty and hunger through:

- **The practice of farming**

They have full responsibility for agro-pastoral production, processing and marketing as well as home consumption. FAO estimates at 90% their contribution in the production of foodstuffs necessary for the livelihood of people in Cameroon.

- **The management of their own expenses and those of the household**

According to the Survey of Household Consumption, among women aged 15-49 years, 62% of them partially or totally manage their own expenses and 54% contribute to household expenses.

- **Women's participation in community and political life** is enhanced in rural areas by the existence and action of civil society organizations and political parties.

- **Participation in Development**

In Cameroon, the vitality of rural women sustainably improves on the livelihoods of people through:

- The improvement of income; income generated from rural women's various activities helps to increase the purchasing power of households, thereby enabling them to devote more resources to the healthcare, feeding and education of children and access to decent housing;
- Access to credit and agricultural loans; this is facilitated by the existence of 224 micro finance institutions established in networks. Rural women, in all

categories of customers, constitute the majority of members of these micro finance institutions. They play important roles as member sponsors or users of established credit;

- Education and training; an empowered woman in a rural area is more likely to finance the education of her children without discrimination and to build her capacities in other domains. The direct consequence of this change is the reduction of illiteracy.

- Healthcare improvement

Rural women's financial autonomy enables them to access health facilities and quality healthcare services, particularly reproductive healthcare services.

In conclusion, the empowerment of rural women and their role in poverty and hunger eradication and in development needs to be improved. Although Cameroon has made significant efforts and has the required potentials, to capacitate a greater number of rural women, we count on the varied assistance of United Nations system organizations and other development partners to meet up with the challenges we are still facing in this domain.

Thank You.

Appendix 12

Report on GRB in Aid Effectiveness Agenda 2008-2012

Contribution Areas	Types of Achievements/Contributions	Peru	Nepal	Rwanda	Tanzania	Cameroon
Strengthening the enabling national environment for GRB institutionalization	Formulation of National Capacity Assessments and Plans	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Analysis of gender/GRB programming/sector gaps and subsequent strengthening strategies/support provided	✓		✓		
	Technical support to integrate/ strengthen gender and GRB in national budget guidelines		✓		✓	
	Technical support to include/ strengthen gender and GRB in policies, directives	✓	✓		✓	
	Technical support to cost GRB sector strategies			✓		
	Technical support to integrate gender indicators/guidelines into poverty reduction strategy			✓	✓	
	Technical support to strengthen national GRB programme classification/rating system		✓			
	Developed GRB tracking methodologies for sector budgets (to be implemented by CSOs to monitor government)		✓	✓		✓
	Promoted policy dialogue		✓		✓	
	Capacity assessment /development of plan to support integration of gender in SWAp			✓		✓
Strengthening People (individual and collective capacities)	Gender-Aware Beneficiary Assessment (GABA) of SWAp					✓
	Documented experiences to disseminate at local/national and global levels	✓	✓	✓		
	Awareness raising/advocacy with Ministries of Finance, Ministries of Gender	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Supported consultations on budget preparation		✓			
	Provided training in GRB to government officials (including MoF)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Provided training in GRB to civil society members and organizations	✓	✓			✓
	Provided training in GRB to UN Country Team Gender Taskforce			✓		
	Provided training in GRB/gender monitoring at local level	✓	✓			✓
	Trained staff at government training institutes on how to integrate GRB into their training modules		✓	✓		
	Developed a training programme for government officials implemented at an educational institution			✓		

Contribution Areas	Types of Achievements/Contributions	Peru	Nepal	Rwanda	Tanzania	Cameroon
Influencing and Engaging donors	Participation in Donor Coordination Group(s)		✓	✓	✓	✓
	Chairing gender donor coordination group /sub-committee	✓	✓		✓	✓
	Technical support to integrate gender marker in Aid Information Management System (AIMS)		✓			
	GRB Training for Donor Group				✓	✓

Appendix 13

Progress of MDG 2000-2008

	Goal	Achievements
1.	Eradicate extreme hunger and poverty	From 2001 to 2007, the national proportion of people living below the poverty line remained virtually stable 40.2% to 39.9% (1); 18% children underweight (Source: INS; CCA)
2.	Achieve Universal Primary Education	Between 2001 and 2007, the net primary school enrolment ratio increased slightly. Illiteracy among 15- to 24 year olds remained virtually unchanged, increasingly slightly from 82.3 % to 83.1% (1) Average rates conceal disparities at the province level (2)
3.	Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women	The situation of women has been improving in some areas, particularly in primary education where the girls/boys ratio rose from 0.83 to 0.89 between 2001 and 2007 (1). Female literacy increased between 1990 and 2000 from 74.1 to 77% (2). The proportion of women in the National Assembly has dropped from 11.8% in 1992 to 10.6% in 2002(2)
4.	Reduce Child Mortality Target: Reduce under-5 mortality by 2/5 th to 75.8 per 1000 live births	Rate: 149 in 1990 ¹²⁰ to 131 deaths per in 2008 and significant further reduction is required to meet the MDG target.
5.	Improve Maternal Health Target: Reduce maternal mortality by 1/5th to 350 deaths per 100 000 live births.	From 1990-2000 the maternal mortality rate was unchanged at 430 deaths (2) and 2008 estimate is 600 deaths¹²¹. Proportion of deliveries with the assistance of qualified staff seems to be improving with an increase from 78.8 per cent in 1998 to 83.4 per cent in 2004 (1)
6.	Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and other Diseases Target: Halt HIV spread and reduce prevalence by 9%; Control malaria and bring down incidence by 8%	From 1990 to 2000 the AIDS prevalence rate rose from 2 - 11% (2) Malaria 40% in 2004 to 15 % in 2005 (1)
7.	Ensure Environmental Sustainability i) Target: reduce proportion of population using solid fuels to 42.2% ii) Target: 72.1% population have access to drinking water	Recent usage estimates: 82 % population using solid fuels (1) Access to drinking water increased from 40.6 % in 2001 to 43.9% in 2007 (1), but in 2001 only 31.3% of rural households had access compared to 86.2% of urban households (2) Proportion of the population with access to a better public sanitation system increased from 8.5 % in 2001 to 31.7 % in 2007 (1)
8.	Develop a Global Partnership for Development Target: Devise and implement strategies enabling youth to find decent and useful jobs	Youth unemployment dropped in 2001 and 2007 from 14.3% to 8.2% (2)

Source: Growth and employment strategy paper, Republic of Cameroon

Appendix 14

UN Women's organizational effectiveness and efficiency framework in Cameroon 2014-2017

Outputs/ Activities	Output cluster 1: To drive more effective and efficient United Nations system coordination and strategic partnerships on gender equality and women's empowerment
1.1	Develop joint programs: (i) Support the fight against poverty feminization and rural UN WOMEN ensures an effective and efficient coordination of gender mainstreaming in 2013-2017 UNDAF implementation
1.1.1	Develop joint programs: (i) Support the fight against poverty feminization and rural women's economic empowerment in the poorest regions (UNIDO, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UN WOMEN), (ii) support the prevention and fight against gender-based violence/women and HIV / AIDS feminization (UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, UN Women, UNESCO)
1.1.2	Develop specific plans for funds mobilization in connection with (i) gender promotion in plans and budgets and local development; (ii) humanitarian response at national and local levels (iii) Revision of the project to support women involved in informal cross-border trade (Programme d'Appui aux Femmes Impliquées dans le Commerce Inter Frontalier (PAFICIT)) (iv) post-election support for Elected women to strengthen women's leadership and political participation (WLPP)
1.1.3	Organize partners' meetings on the UN Women 2014-2017 Strategic Plan and sub programmes with the Resident Coordinator's support
1.1.4	Identify UN agencies contributions within the National Gender Policy implementation in the context of joint programming, develop and monitor annual work plans through the UN Gender Group
1.1.5	Participate in joint missions, joint activities in the program intervention areas
1.2	Partnership between UN WOMEN, government, TFP, the private sector and civil society is effective
1.2.1	Support the CMP Gender group coordination
1.2.2	Support UN Women Gender Civil Society Advisory Group AWP formulation and implementation
1.2.3	Establish strategic alliances with the private sector (phone companies or banks foundations, private companies)
1.2.4	Launch and facilitate "Gender Coffee" discussion fora
	Output cluster 2: To institutionalize a strong culture of results-based management, reporting, knowledge management and evaluation
2.1	Results-based management principles results are observed in plans and programs.
2.1.1	Develop UN Women monitoring and evaluation plan
2.1.2	Conduct review analysis to identify the strategic plan key indicators
2.1.3	Document promising practices undertaken by UN WOMEN Cameroon (gender sensitive markets, UNS partnership/CMP, civil society consultation group, government funding, Integrated support Centre)
2.1.4	Draft and disseminate the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan implementation annual reports
2.1.5	Conduct projects/programs as well as the strategic plan assessments
2.1.6	Participate in the 2014-2017 UNDAF mid- term and final evaluation
2.1.7	Organize training workshops on UN Women reporting and implement partners' accountability guidelines
2.1.8	Set up a database to monitor program indicators
2.1.9	Strengthen project / program staff and implementation partners' management capacities
2.1.10	Draft quarterly reports and a synthesis gender challenges in UN Women Cameroon intervention areas
2.2	UN Women actions in Cameroon are made visible at national and international levels
2.2.1	Develop the Office communication plan
2.2.2	Draft communication articles on UN WOMEN activities
2.2.3	Produce a gender quarterly newsletter on UNDAF implementation with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature
2.2.4	Post articles on UN WOMEN initiatives in UN WOMEN site (at least 5 per year)
2.2.5	Feed and update the Cameroon page on the WCARO blog and UN Website

2.2.8 Build alliances with national and local medias	
Output cluster 3: To enhance organizational effectiveness, with a focus on robust capacity and efficiency at country and regional levels	
3.1	UN WOMEN Cameroon has the required technical management skills to ensure an effective implementation of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan and achieve related outcomes
3.1.1	Finalize the transition process in Cameroon by shifting the CPM (Full Time Equivalent (FTE) - P4) into a Representative position (FTE - P5) and recruit Deputy representative position
3.1.2	Create FTE positions: (i) Program Specialist (2 NOC), National Programme Officer (1 NOB), Coordination and planning specialist (NOC), (iii) Research, Monitoring and evaluation Analyst (National Professional Officer (NOA)), (iv) Communication associate (G7)
3.1.3	Create three new FTE positions within IB: (I) Operation Manager / Human Resource (P3); Executive assistant (G5)
3.1.4	Provide wages (payment) for the following FTE positions: G7 (IB - Finance) G6 (Core - Admin) G3 (Core - driver)
3.1.5	Manage office operation (rent, water, electricity, internet/phone, mobile phones) and three sub-offices
3.1.6	Establish a partnership links with staff mobile service interconnection of as in the UNDP model
3.1.7	Contract with two service providers to (i) office cleaning and (ii) caretaker
3.1.8	Develop the office annual procurement and monitoring plan implementation
3.1.9	Develop and plan staff training and career each year and monitor its implementation/evolution
3.1.10	Provide staff training with required modules and International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS), ATLAS, safety
3.1.11	Strengthen safety measures office in accordance with Minimum Operation Security Standards (MOSS) Security and adapt to each Minimum Operation Residential Security Standards (MORSS) change
3.1.12	Buy supplies and office equipment
3.2	UN WOMEN implements a strong culture of risk management, accountability, harmonization of practices and transparency in its financial management
3.2.1	Finalize DoA process and sign Agreement with Government (Standard Basic Assistance Agreement (SBAA))
3.2.2	Finalize, post and regularly update Cameroon ICF based on Office changing staff
3.2.3	Facilitate staff's access to ATLAS in accordance with ICF
3.2.4	Conduct budget analysis and produce timely reports for donors
3.2.5	Draft and post "month end reviews" on time
3.2.6	Draft the office annual purchase plans and monitor their implementation
3.2.7	Participate in the OM group to set up service providers' database
Output cluster 4: To leverage and manage resources	
4.1	The office funding sources are diversified
4.1.1	Develop relevant strategies for 2014-2017 resource mobilization, communication and partnership and the 2014 work plan;
4.1.2	Develop UN Women Country Programme in Cameroon based to the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan
4.1.3	Develop program / project briefs
4.1.4	Organize resource mobilization missions in Brussels and other international/national (Douala) bodies
4.1.5	Convene meetings with potential donors (mobile foundations / Breweries / Guinness; companies
4.1.6	Identify international tenders and submit proposals
4.1.7	Organize a round table on the UN Women Country Programme chaired by MINEPAT and the Resident Coordinator RC

Source: UN Women Cameroon, 28 March 20

Appendix 15

Representatives of gender focal points in public and semi-public administrations in Cameroon

ADMINISTRATIONS	GENDER FOCAL POINTS OR REPRESENTATIVES
Prime Minister's Office	EPOH ADYANG Clémence
Senate	BISSECK Paulette
National Assembly	NGO NTAMACK Véronique
Ministry in charge of Defence	BEYALA
Ministry in charge of Supreme State Control	AÏSSATOU ABDOULAYE
Ministry of Public Contracts	OUSMANOU
Ministry of External Relations	NGONO NDONGO
Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation	MAÏRO Elisabeth
Ministry of Justice	MANKENTSOP Sylvie
Ministry of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development	MAGNE Anne Mélanie
Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform	SOSSO épouse ETOA MOUSSONGO
Ministry of Basic Education	- ATEMAJONG Justina épouse NJIKA - Helen ULE NGOE
Ministry of Secondary Education	- KOUESSO Ernestine - DAOUDOU BEKA R.
Ministry of Higher Education	NGUINI CUSULE Solange
Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training	YANKALBE Dari
Ministry of Public Works	MAPAMBA Epse MAMBOULA
Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications	KOUYAHBE Merveille
Ministry of Transports	ABENG Muriel
Ministry of State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure	EKOKO Henriette
Ministry of Energy and Water Resources	EBOT née AGBOR ETANG Caroline
Ministry of Housing and Urban Development	BITSONG née TANGHA LEUKWI Annie
Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development	NKOH MEKONG Rosette
Ministry of Communication	ESSAMA née MVONDO MBELE Elisabeth

Ministry of Tourism and Leisure	BEKATE née SAPOUMA Marie
Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation	THE NGAH Pauline Carole épouse MONDO
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	- BAMZOK MBADOBE Louissette Clémence - OWONO Marie Paule - MOUAHA Marie
Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development	DJUAYONG ZEBONG
Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries	ALIOUM née HADIDJATOU AMADOU
Ministry of Forests and Wildlife	AMBANI Epse BIALO Nadège Dorothée
Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family	- NGUEMBA Nathalie - ONGOLA Martine - KOUKREO MAÏPA WESPA - BEKONO Bernadette Françoise - MOTO YOUNG Francisca - ABENA Agnès Yolande - ESSIMBI Marie Bernadette - ENAMA ELOUNDOU Claude Alexis - TCHONKO WESSIDJAM Léon - EBALE MONEZE Chandel - BETAMBO NGOTTE J. Carmel - KENDEMEH Vivian Jioy - ONDOBO TSALA Yves - NTSANGA Alice Christiane - SANAMA Tarsile - NGOLLE NDOUMBE Daniel - BALLA née NNOMO Rosine Sergine - NGO MBOU épouse LOGMO - PENDA TIMBA Auguste Sylvain
Ministry of Public Health	LEBA Scholastique
Ministry of Sports and Physical Education	MAZOUME Marie Chantal
Ministry of Arts and Culture	- MINKOULOU Solange - DOUBE Blandine
Ministry of Youth and Civic Education	ETOUNDI Cécile
Ministry of Social Affairs	MAKANI Marie Madeleine
Ministry of Labour and Social Security	NGONGA Georgette
Cameroon and Telecommunications (CAMTEL)	ABOSSOLO Mireille
National Investment Corporation (SNI)	BIAKAN Joseph
Special Council Support Fund (FEICOM)	NGOMO Julie
National Rehabilitation Centre for Persons with Disabilities (CNRRPH)	DJOUM Idrissa
Electricity Sector Regulatory Agency (ARSEL)	EDOUA Marie Liliane
National Institute of Statistics (NIS)	NIEKOU Rosalie
National Employment Fund (NEF)	NNANG Thérèse
Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV)	NGUETH Rosette
Public Procurement Regulation Agency (ARMP)	EPEE NDOLO Hermine
National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM)	ENJEH MUGRI
Crédit foncier	BEYALA EYENGA Félicité

Advanced Institute of Public Management (ASPM)	WANGA Marine
Agence de Régulation des Télécommunications (ART)	ZANGA Brigitte
Elections Cameroon (ELECAM)	BINTOU SARR
Société NationalHydrocarbons Corporation (SNH)	ELOUNDOU Flora

Technical and institutional support: Mr. MBALLA Jean-Claude, Member of UNESCO National Commission

Secretariat : - ZAMBOU Rose (Secretary)

- NYONSE Patricia Caroline (Agent).

Source: “Track record of gender mainstreaming in public administrations, extended to public and semi-public organizations”, MINPROFF, 2017, PP. 74 – 76

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N°	Name of informant	Age	Social Status	Place of Interview	Date of Interview
01	Abonoh Mirriama	32	Guidance Counselor	Mbandjock	19/11/2020
02	Alama Emilienne	54	Nurse	Yaounde	21/11/2020
03	Alama Loïc	30	Computer teacher	Yaounde	25/11/2020
04	Alama Sandrine	35	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
05	Antoinette Angono Aba'a	60	First Deputy Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division and President of <i>MUBASE</i>	Kye-Ossi	13/07/2021
06	Anwi Patience Tasi	38	Accountant	Yaounde	26/11/2020
07	Asafou Ellen	37	Chief of service in charge of General affairs, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office	Douala	21/07/2021
08	Atogho Ekukole Jessie	45	Head of communication service, TRB, Yaounde	Yaounde	15/12/2013
09	Ava Carole	30	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
10	Ayuk Plany	35	Secondary school teacher	Yaounde	11/10/2019
11	Bahiha Lagog Cécile	27	Chief of service of the mail department in MINPROFF	Yaounde	17/12/2020
12	Bakalack David	40	Divisional Service of Social Affairs	Douala	26/09/2018
13	Baleng Ferdinand	40	Chief of service in charge of gender issues, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office	Douala	21/07/2021
14	Bekono Benadette Francois	50	Sub-Director of DPEF in MINPROFF	Yaounde	15/11/2020
15	Bouchard Zambo	40	Gender Expert on HIV issues, UN Women	Yaounde	20/11/2019
16	Danga Margaret	28	Bureau Head in MINPROFF	Yaounde	17/12/2020
17	Dongo Noella Mechelle	37	Civil servant MINAC	Yaounde	09/10/2018

18	Edengue Nathalie	28	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
19	Efandan Assako Patience	37	Head of Communication Department, ELECAM's south regional office	Ebolowa	13/07/2021
20	Ekenu Elvis	31	University student	Yaounde	13/12/2019
21	Emmanuel Ateba	41	National expert in women economic empowerment	Yaounde	20/11/2019
22	Endali Ruth	28	Guidance Councilor in CITEC	Yaounde	12/11/2019
23	Etama Eugenie	18	Secondary school student	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
24	Etame Christine	35	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
25	Etoh Brunhilda	31	Master's student in Anthropology	Yaounde	15/10/2019
26	Fochive Charlotte	45	<i>Action sociale</i> , MINEPIA	Yaounde	01/12/2020
27	Gladys Echamanège	50	Business lady	Yaounde	19/11/2020
28	Hadidjatou Amadou Epse Alioum	45	Sub-Director at MINEPIA	Yaounde	30/11/2019
29	Kende Meh née Tukah Vivian	55	Sub-Director of SDPG in MINPROFF	Yaounde	15/11/2020
30	Kiahla Rufine	36	Guidance Councilor	Mbandjock	19/11/2020
31	Kinga Donald	48	Personal of the national assembly	Yaounde	21/11/2020
32	Makou Tene Fosso	28	Guidance Councilor	Mbandjock	19/11/2020
33	Mandi Helene	37	DEPCS at MINEPIA	Yaounde	01/12/2020
34	Mbah N. Margaret	60	Former President of MOWOCUDA	Yaounde	01/02/2018
35	Mbatu Justine	65	Retired teacher	Yaounde	17/05/2019
36	Mbogbe Abenoun Angele Marie	45	Director of WEC	Douala	02/09/2018
37	Mbong Lydie	37	Professional Translator	Ebolowa	13/07/2021
38	Menghem Genelova	28	Civil servant, MINAC	Yaounde	05/10/2019
39	Minkoulou Solange Agnés	43	Chief of service on social actions of MINAC	Yaounde	15/11/2019
40	Momo Germaine	50	Chief sector of the Kye-Ossi market and a former member of <i>MUBASE</i>	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
41	Nanji Madeleine	38	Secretary at ELECAM's Littoral regional office	Douala	22/07/2021
42	Ndiome Viviane	40	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021

43	Ndoping Florence	50	President of NOWWEF	Bamenda	20/12/2013
44	Nelly Kamdem	40	Assistant to the program Women Count	Yaounde	20/11/2019
45	Nfoumou Michel	27	<i>Bayam-Sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
46	Ngo Yede Ludie	28	Master's student	Yaounde	27/11/2020
47	Ngono Blandine	35	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
48	Nicoletta Ngambi	43	Expert in gender and humanitarian issues	Yaounde	20/11/2019
49	Njene Irene	47	Secondary school teacher	Yaounde	10/11/2018
50	Njock Bernadette	50	Chief of service in charge of the GBV call center, CPFF's Littoral regional office	Douala	21/07/2021
51	Njuwipe Hollande	35	Worker at ELECAM's Littoral regional office	Douala	22/07/2021
52	Nkolo Menguele Florence	45	South Regional Delegate of MINPROFF	Ebolowa	13/07/2021
53	Nlend Joseph	40	Chief of service of women economic empowerment, MINPROFF's Littoral regional office	Douala	21/07/2021
54	Nloka Channel	40	DPAIE of MINEPIA	Yaounde	01/12/2020
55	Noah Delma		<i>Bayam-Sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market Kye-Ossi	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
56	Paschaline Fonyuy Tar	40	Executive Secretary CAWOLED	Douala	02/09/2018
57	Rhea Eta Agbor	38	Teacher	Yaounde	20/11/2020
58	Senge Solange Salomon	27	Civil servant, MINAC	Yaounde	25/11/2019
59	Songo Théodore	45	Lab Technician	Ebolowa	13/07/2021
60	Tala Mercy Limbi	35	Business lady	Yaounde	12/06/2018
61	Tandajo Tsopfack	45	Teacher	Yaounde	26/11/2020
62	Tongagi Hortance	30	<i>Bayam-sellam</i> in Kye-Ossi market	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021
63	Ulrich Waffo	45	Expert in gender statistics	Yaounde	20/11/2019
64	Valerie Mengue	42	Coordinator of the program women, peace and security	Yaounde	20/11/2019
65	Violet Etoh	29	Master's student in Science of Education	Yaounde	13/10/2019
66	Zue Zue Jean Marie	45	Mayor of Ntem Valley Sub-Division	Kye-Ossi	12/07/2021

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