



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

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ACRONYMS

BPFA	Beijing Platform of Action
CPF	Centre pour la Promotion Feminine
CTA	Appropriate Technologies Centers
HIV/AIDS	Human Immuno Virus/ Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CHRAPA	Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy
GeED	Gender Empowerment and Development
ALVF	Association de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes
WA Cameroon	Women in Action Against Gender Based Violence-Cameroun
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
FBO	Faith Based Organizations
FES	Friedrich Ebert Stiftung
UN	United Nations
CEDAW	Convention on the Eliminate all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
PREPAFEN	Poverty Reduction and Action in Support of Women in the Far North Province project
WAA	Women in Alternative Action
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
CIG	Common Initiative Group
UNFP	United Nations Fund for Population
MBOSCUA	Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association
REFLECT	REgenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques
FIDA	International Federation of Women Lawyers
COMINSUD	Community Initiative for Sustainable Development
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CBC	Cameroon Baptist Convention
VCT	Voluntary Counseling and Testing

CAMNAFAW	Cameroon Association for Family Welfare
FAHEDO	Family Health and Development Organization
VAW	Violence Against Women
FGM	Female Genital Mutilation
STD	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
REACH OUT	Reach Out
ILO	International Labour Organisation
PLANALDIF	National Platform for the fight Against Discrimination of Women
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
UNAIDS	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
NAPMEW	National professional Media Women
NEMAP	National Environment Management Plan
NTFP	Non Timber Forest Products
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
SNAEF	Syndicat National de l'Education et de la Formation
SYNEPMA	Syndicat National des Enseignants du Primaire et de la Maternelle
PTA	Parent Teachers Association
SOWEDA	South West Development Association
GP-DERUDEP	Grassfield Participatory Decentralized Rural Development Project
SIRDEP	Society for Rural Development and Environmental Protection
MIDENO	North West Development Authority
GHAPE	Grounded and Holistic Approach for People's Empowerment
CATTU	Cameroon Teachers' Trade Union
AWICO	Association for Women's Information and Coordination
CEFAN	Cameroon Education For All network
IRAD	Institute of Agricultural Research for Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WOCAM	Women Organizing for Change

RENOFCAM	RESEAU DE NON VIOLENCE AU CAMEROUN
SeP	Ecumenical Service for Peace
WIRA	Women in Research and Action
ACAFEJ	Association des femmes Juristes
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
FBO	Faith-Based Organisation
PRODHOP	Solidarité Pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples
ADEFHO	Association pour la défense de l'homosexualité
SNJC	Syndicat National des Journalistes du Cameroun

SUMMARY

Country Context

Cameroon is a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural country. She ranked 118 out of 134 countries in the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Index for 2009. The report's Index assesses countries



on how well they are dividing their resources and opportunities among their male and female populations, regardless of the overall levels of these resources and opportunities. Cameroonian women represent 52% of the total population and they contribute 75% of agricultural work and produce 80% of the country's food. With so many ethnic groups, languages and the representation of most religions of the world, it is difficult to highlight clearly "the Cameroonian" in a gender profile. Although

the number of cultures is high, one aspect is quite common in Cameroon- the importance given to local traditions.

This widely affects the Cameroonian woman's situation, as traditions don't give as much protection as modern equality laws. The Cameroon constitution upholds the principle of gender equality but there are several obstacles (legal, social, religious and cultural) to gender attaining equality. The dual system of law (French and English) which coexist with customary law; which is highly patriarchal, makes it difficult for equality to be valued. These widely affect the situation of women in the country. In fact, government policy on population and gender is in discourse and declarations. Sustainable commitment is beset by political expediency and arbitrariness so characteristic of budding, unfair and non functional democracies.

There is no legal definition of discrimination that exists and some aspects of the law are prejudicial to women. Violence and discrimination against women remain at high levels with the

law not imposing effective penalties against perpetrators of gender-based violence and spousal abuse, which until now is not a legal basis for divorce.

In practice, women also suffer from discrimination in access to different aspects of life – education, political participation, decision making, bank loans, etc. The persistence of gender discriminatory provisions in several laws and the discriminatory customary law, as well as the prejudices and stereotypical attitudes concerning the role of women and men in the family and society are open doors for continuous violence on women. These are based on the notion of the superiority of men and the subordination of women, promoted by most cultural and religious practices. Furthermore, the low socio-economic status of powerless women, which is, for example, manifested by the high illiteracy rate among women, low percentage of women involved in enterprise development and low representation of women in decision making positions, leaves women more vulnerable to violence at the public and private levels in Cameroon. Above all, the legal, socio-economic and political status of women in Cameroon show the link between the high levels of violence against women 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. Regarding the legal context of family life, Cameroon laws affecting women's socio-economic status, women's access to education, to the labour market and politics contribute to violence against women and their access to redress and reparation.

I. PRESENTATION OF THE STUDY

I.1. Background

a) The gender issue

Gender is a socially constructed definition of women and men. It is not the same as sex (biological characteristics of women and men) and it is not the same as women. Gender is determined by the conception of tasks, functions and roles attributed to women and men in society and in public and private life. **The Gender approach** is distinct in that it focuses on women and men and not on women in isolation. It highlights:

- The differences between women's and men's interest even within the same household and how these interact and are expressed.
- The conventions and hierarchies which determine women's and men's position in the family, community and society at large, whereby women are usually dominated by men.



(Photo GeED, 2011)

- The differences among women and among men, based on age, wealth, ethnic background and other factors.
- The way gender roles and relations change, often quite rapidly, as a result of social, economic and technological trends.

Gender equity requires equal enjoyment by women and men of socially valued goods, opportunities, resources and rewards. Gender equity does not mean that women and men become the same, but that their opportunities and life chances are equal.

Gender Analysis takes into account social and economical differences between women and men at each stage of policy development for the purpose of:

- Revealing potential different impact of policy, program and law on women and men;
- Ensuring equal results for women and men, boys and girls, in measures designed and implementation

It is with this background that the participation of women becomes imperative, thus the importance to elaborate separate documents that can guide the inclusion of women in the mainstream, after leaving them out for such a long time.

b) The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA)

At the Fourth UN World Conference on Women in Beijing, China, in September 1995, government delegates from 189 states adopted by consensus the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BPFA), which was subsequently endorsed by the UN General Assembly on 8 December 1995 (A/RES/50/42).

This was a statement of political commitment by participating governments to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere and to ensure the full implementation of the human rights of women and girls. The Platform for Action set strategic objectives and outlined recommended actions to be taken across 12 “critical areas of concern”.

The BPFA was a culmination of the strong advocacy process and earlier successful steps for recognition of women’s rights as human rights in the 1980s and early 1990s by women human rights defenders and women’s groups worldwide. It reaffirmed the fundamental principles set forth in earlier human rights instruments that the human rights of women are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights.

BPFA is aimed at promoting and protecting the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all women throughout their life cycle. It remains the most comprehensive governmental agreement to date on what needs to be done to achieve women’s empowerment, the full realization of women’s rights and substantive gender equality. It also advances the concept of sexual rights as an international human rights principle.

The Beijing Platform for Action highlights 12 “critical areas of concern” which are:

- *Women and poverty;*
- *Education and training of women;*

- *Women and health; violence against women;*
- *Women and armed conflict;*
- *Women and the economy;*
- *Women in power and decision making;*
- *Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;*
- *Women's human rights; women and the media;*
- *Women and the environment; and*
- *The girl child.*

I.2. CAMEROONIAN CONTEXT

a) Existing instruments

The strategic orientation that provides a basis for the implementation of the BPFAs are the Constitution and the different international conventions ratified by Cameroon to protect the Cameroonian woman. Some of these conventions include:

- Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW);
- The Millennium Development Goals (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 constitute one of the priority elements of those documents.

b) The Journey after 15 years!

Cameroon signed the BPFA in 1995. In addition, Cameroon has signed other international instruments to advance women's rights and fight discrimination against women such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (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 as a developing country with a capacity to become an emerging democracy is party to the BPFA and should make an effort to understand how best to factor the letter of the platform into the country's executive practices, legislation, judiciary, press and the civil society actions. In implementing the BPFA, note should be taken of the prevalence of abject poverty, unhealthy party politics, and a patriarchal political culture that hinder participatory governance in Cameroon. These are issues to be understood as hurdles to be addressed, if the BPFA will be achieved fully. The BPFA is attainable if it is mainstreamed into all critical aspects of governance – executive integrity and accountability, legislative strengthening, judicial reforms and independence, press freedom and knowledge -based reporting for life transformation and an informed civil society for improved citizenship.

15 years after the signing of the BPFA, it is important to know how far the Cameroon state has gone in the implementation of the said document and what strategies have been used to obtain which impact at the national level.

From this review, it is clear that the government of Cameroon and other stakeholders have carried out different actions towards the implementation of the platform. However, reactions in the field also show that all the stakeholders in Cameroon, both private and public are generally of the opinion that there is much more to be done than what has already been realised, with respect to implementing the platform in general and in reducing violence against women in particular.

While the general awareness on the Beijing platform of Action in the country, especially in the regions is grossly limited to those involved in women's promotion, violence against women is very rampant and in many cases, changing and taking more subtle forms. In many cases, the populace feels the direct pinch and strives to take action in their own way and context, based on the costs and consequences. The government and civil society structures working to promote women are generally fully aware of the circumstances. However, the will of the public sector and the means of the private sector must be visible in order that the legal institutional framework can be better adopted and matched with the required actions to better the plight of the woman in Cameroon. In short there is need to move from declarations and discourse to commitment and action.

b.1) Key realisations by Government

- The establishment and reorganisation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs into the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family. 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.
- Cameroon signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The capacities of different actors have been enhanced on the CEDAW.
- A code for the Person and the Family has been drafted, though still pending adoption by the National Assembly. The draft code incorporates provisions favourable to the advancement of women for example, marriageable age, matrimonial regimes, inheritance, etc.
- There exists a National Plan of Action, based on provisions in the Beijing Platform for Action. This plan of action highlights, among other things, better institutional coordination and follow-up procedures for the advancement of women.
- A National Plan is also in place for the promotion of increased vigilance by institutions. The plan emphasizes on legislative measures to combat violence against women and see into the involvement of non-governmental organizations to help create advocacy programmes.

- A draft Act is being put in place on measures to prevent sexist violence and combat violence against women and girls. The Draft Act has as objective to introduce measures that will shape ways of conduct towards women, with punishment being the only ultimate recourse against perpetrators of violent acts.
- A number of focal points have been created at the ministerial level to monitor the inclusion of women and the mainstream of the gender approach in their actions.
- Government has put in place different programmes in different Regions, for example RUMPI project, SOWEDA, MIDENO, GP-DERUDEP with activities that benefit women directly.

b.2) Key realisations by the Civil Society

The Civil Society on its part has carried out many different actions towards the implementation of the Beijing Platform. The following actions have been carried out.

- NGO's and FBO are educating women to eliminate prejudices and negative customary practices based on the inferiority or superiority of either of the sexes and on sex stereotype roles.
- A number of CSOs have been working on these issues e.g. WA Cameroon, CHRAPA, COSADER, GeED, REACH OUT, WAA, ALVF, Dynamic Citoyen, More Women in Politics, SIRDEP, COMINSUD, SeP, the Churches etc. They have educational forums, debates and discussions and carryout sensitisation and awareness creation programs to promote women. Most CSOs have been involved in lobbying and advocacy programs to promote the rights of women and also empower women to work and benefit in an equitable manner with the men in the country. A lot is changing in this regard.
- Some awareness is being raised on what constitutes gender based violence and strategies to combat gender based violence within the rural and urban communities.
- There are massive grassroots sensitization sessions on human/women's rights especially on CEDAW in some localities through workshops, radio talks and others.
- Some civil society organizations monitor and present shadow reports to the UN Human Rights Committee and the CEDAW Committee.
- Awareness-raising activities to combat violence against women have included:

- Design and dissemination of specific messages through posters, leaflets and picture boxes;
- Organization of activities during the annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence campaign, launched by the United Nations;
- Organization of educational workshops on diverse topics for the interest of women;
- Radio and television programmes such as “Entre nous les dames” (Just For women only), “Calling the Women” on CRTV National Radio, Femmes, familles et société (Women, Families and Society) and Planète femmes (Planet Women), as well as the publication of ‘Femmes et Familles Magazine’ (Women and Families Magazine) by MINPROFF, the production of posters, banners, television spots, flyers, leaflets, pennants, T-shirts, caps, bulletin boards, etc.

However, the basic level of awareness on the BPFA in most parts of the country is very low. Meanwhile it is averagely understood to have been a revolutionary platform aimed at giving more voice, more equality, more freedom and simply greater power to the women. The Beijing platform was misunderstood by many persons especially the male folk, hence the expression “you women went to Beijing” meaning that women gained some freedom and equality in Beijing.

It can be observed from the discussion above that a good number of actions have been ongoing, (both consciously and unconsciously) towards the implementation of the Beijing platform of Action.

I.3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Civil society organizations are key development actors in their own right. They provide a significant share of the development actions in the country and merit an important voice on the implementation of national and international instruments geared towards equitable development. They apply their own operations, including a greater coordination with government programmes

to ensure improved transparency and accountability. Gender empowerment and Development (GeED) is a member of the National CSO Forum in Cameroon and seeks to contribute to development through her direct work with communities and lobbying work with the state. Using innovative approaches that complement national development programmes. GeED seeks to promote development through a gender sensitive and human rights approach. In the past years GeED has been involved in promoting and protecting human rights in general and women's rights in particular through for:

- Education and training,
- Providing alternative reports on the human rights situation in the country,
- Promoting women's participation in decision making,
- Organizing tailor made sessions on gender and human rights for women, men and youths,
- Networking with other CSOs to do budget tracking and other activities in common, etc

Through the networking activity of GeED, the collaboration with FES was realized. This collaboration has yielded the financial backup for this review.

I.4. OBJECTIVES OF THE REVIEW

This review is to see what has been achieved since Beijing in 1995 as well as identify the gaps and challenges related to Strategic Objective 'D' so as to collectively define what remains to be addressed.

1.4.1 Specific objectives

- To scrutinize and assess the level of implementation of the Beijing Platform of Action in general and strategic objective D in particular by Cameroon government and the Civil Society.
- To identify existing gaps and emerging issues as well as new forms of violence on women that exist in Cameroon.
- To elaborate a capitalisation document on what has been achieved and propose strategies for a way forward towards renewing and reviving the commitments made in 1995.

- To create increased awareness in the country as a means to elaborate a way forward on the situation of violence against women.

I.5. THE DURATION OF THE STUDY

This review was carried out from May to August 2010 and during this period; visits were made to the North West, South West, Centre, Littoral, West, South and Extreme North regions of the country.

II. METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was used to critically assess what has been done:

- Analysis of local knowledge on the Beijing Platform of Action,
- Analysis of Actions realised in the country as a follow-up of the Beijing Platform for Action,
- Analysis of the general impact of the actions realised,
- Analysis of the present conditions of women with respect to various forms of violence and discrimination against them,
- Identification of priority areas of intervention mechanisms/proposals to reduce incidences of violence against women,
- Analysis of possible pertinent issues not raised during the Beijing conference

The review process was designed to be inclusive and participatory. It does not and did not pretend to be an academic/intellectual exercise but basically consisting of the following:

- An assessment of the general understanding of the Beijing Platform of Action by people in different parts of Cameroon,
- An understanding of the various actions realised as a follow up of the Beijing Platform of Action, and their related impact;
- An understanding of the general issues of violence presently faced by women in Cameroon, fifteen years after the Beijing Platform of Action;
- Presentation or restitution and discussion of preliminary findings and considerations;
- Recommendations and elaboration of an assessment document of Beijing +15 in Cameroon.
- A review of the report by a review committee constituted by representatives of different stakeholders.

Main information sources consulted were primary sources such as interviews, use of questionnaires, brainstorming sessions, focus group discussions and secondary sources which consisted of reviews of international and national conventions that promote the rights of women, electronic journals, newspapers and magazines, and other internet sources.

III. RESULTS/FINDINGS

III.1. THEMATIC AREA A: WOMEN, POVERTY AND THE ECONOMY

Women and Poverty: Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Review, adopt and maintain macroeconomic policies and development strategies that address the needs and efforts of women in poverty.*
- 2. Revise laws and administrative practices to ensure women's equal rights and access to economic resources.*
- 3. Provide women with access to savings and credit mechanisms and institutions.*
- 4. Develop gender-based methodologies and conduct research to address the feminization of poverty.*

Women and the Economy: Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action

- 1. Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources.*
- 2. Facilitate women's equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade.*
- 3. Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women.*
- 4. Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks.*
- 5. Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination.*
- 6. Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men*

In Cameroon as elsewhere, 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 Cameroon 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 poverty and promote

women's economy, there is need for women to be physically present and participate actively, in the elaboration of policies, projects and programmes to fight poverty.

III.1.1 What the State has done

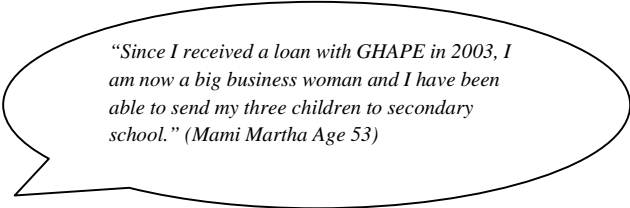
Cameroon has since the signature of the BPFA striven to implement it in the political, social and cultural fields. Based on the fact that women remain the poorest of the poor, the government has developed programs and projects to reduce poverty among women, with the assistance of bilateral and multilateral partners. These include designing the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) goals relating to women to improve women's conditions of life on the basis of:

- Enhancing women's economic power, with particular emphasis on rural women;
- Promoting appropriate technologies for easing women's work;
- Improving women's access to credit and to production factors;
- Encouraging and developing women's entrepreneurship.

In addition, the Ministry of Women's Affairs has been carrying out within the framework of the socioeconomic advancement of women, a number of activities in support of women's microenterprises, encouragement of women's employment and strengthening of women's capacities. The following programmes and projects have been developed:

- In 2007, the state established an assistance service in the agricultural sector but the women did not benefit from this. This project was more of administrative – training only those civil servants at the ministries to deliver the services.
- Chambers of Agriculture /Commerce do exist to enhance agricultural and commercial activities of women. The problem is how many women are represented in these chambers?
- The National Governance Programme, where women's poverty is taken into consideration in connection with aspects of economic governance;
- The Global Programme for the Advancement of Women and Gender Equality financed by UNDP, which grants micro-credits to women in the Adamawa, Coastal, North-Western and Western pilot Regions. Two hundred and forty women's micro-projects have been financed under this programme;

- The “Productive micro-projects for Cameroon’s women” project, which enjoys financial assistance from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA).
- The “Support to women’s integration in micro-enterprises” project provides equipment and materials to needy women organized in associations and Common Initiative Groups (CIG) with a view to enabling them to carry out their projects in such areas as agriculture, stockbreeding, food processing, handicrafts, etc.
- The Poverty Reduction and Action in Support of Women in the Far North Province project (PREPAFEN) receives financial assistance from the African Development Bank and UNDP. It has granted micro-credits to a total value of 600 million CFAF, 70% of the recipients of that total being women. PREPAFEN has made community micro- infrastructures available to needy populations, including women, with the aim of improving their living and working conditions. Women in rural areas have received training in food and agriculture skills, poultry keeping and breeding of small ruminants.
- Several meetings were organized with the informal-sector “Bayam sellam” market women from the Yaoundé, Mbalmayo and Kumba markets. The women were trained in the management of income- generating micro-projects and in taxation and regulation matters.
- The Family Incomes Improvement Programme in the Northern Regions, which receives financial assistance from the African Development Bank. A large section of this programme is devoted to support women’s economic activities;



“Since I received a loan with GHAPE in 2003, I am now a big business woman and I have been able to send my three children to secondary school.” (Mami Martha Age 53)

III.1.2. Actions by Civil Society

- Civil society organizations have been running revolving loan and credit schemes for women over the years. In the North West Region, SIRDEP, GHAPE, just to cite a few have been running revolving loan schemes to farmers. Through these revolving loan programmes, women have developed skills and knowledge in loan management and are

running different loans schemes within their communities toward the economic empowerment of women.

- COSADER: Service d'Appui pour la lutte contre la pauvreté au service rural has carried out the following actions in line with this thematic area in the Center Region:
 - Drafted a memorandum to the Vice President in charge of Agriculture on food security + 10,
 - Signed a contract with IRAD to document all creative innovations so that new technologies should be transferred to the organizations in charge of production and transformation for women's benefit.
 - Signed a document with Ekona to refer women to the center for training on production techniques.
 - Has a gender focal point within COSADER, which monitors the implementation of actions from a gender perspective
- 'Reach Out', based in the South West Region has carried out the following actions toward poverty alleviation for women:
 - Advocating reduction/cancellation of taxes for women's products in the markets in the South West Region, by the Municipal Councils
 - Advocating for the availability of market information systems that can assist women to market their produce
 - Focus in minority areas to reinforce production capacities of women
 - Provided boats to women in the Ndian Division to facilitate their farm to market access and increase household economy level and security
 - Establishment of micro projects in the Kumba Central sub-division with 18 communities trained.



(Photo by GeED, 2006)

- GeED has been training women's groups on different income generating activities in Boyo division of the North West Region (production of basic needs like washing soap, body lotion, detergents, etc)

- SOWEDA and the ROUMPI project established micro-credit schemes, livestock and farming project for women in the South west Province. They are also involved in improving farm to market roads.
- The DRUMBAYA Micro Credit Scheme is also available to help women and contribute to the poverty alleviation process in the country.
- Within the rural communities, women are grouped into different types of groups for self help promotion. Through the different activities they carry out, they mobilize finances either by their own contributions or through contract jobs to help each other.
- Then Commonwealth Women and Youth Mixed Farming Group in Bali Nyonga comprising 16 women and 4 men with its major objective to alleviate poverty among the women fold through sustainable agriculture has been carrying out different activities to increase the income level of women.

III.1.3. Some major challenges to the realization of this objective

1. Illiteracy: The high illiteracy level of women is a big challenge because they cannot access available necessary information easily. It is also a big problem because the women find it difficult to understand some of the critical issues of gender and development
2. Equal access to resources: Women's access to resources is a key problem. This even makes it difficult for the women to have access to loans because they hardly will have

good collateral. They lack access to and control over property and landed property, which makes it difficult for them to use these resources to better their poverty situation.

3. **Markets and Trade:** Women's experience in cross border trading is not the best. The conditions surrounding this type of trading puts women in a position where they are bound to bow to certain degrading treatments like sexual harassment, corruption, etc. In agriculture women do the bulk of the work and produce but are not taken into consideration when it comes to decision making.
4. **Commercial Networks:** The problem here is that women don't have skills which permit them to have effective commercial networks. Most women are producer, processors, marketers, etc. Without division of labour, the women are overloaded and will hardly succeed in their endeavours. There are hardly any available services like Information services, market services, help services that can effectively help women and advance their economy level.
5. **Women's participation in the Chambers of agriculture and commerce –** These structures are not gender sensitive and women's concerns are hardly taken into consideration. Those who benefit from these Chambers are those who are rich, meaning that women, who form the greater portion of the poor, can hardly benefit from their services. The registration costs for these Chambers are usually so high making it even more difficult for women to be members and be able to participate in the decision making process and management of the structures.
6. **Government action is not coherent** because initiatives are put in place aimed at reducing poverty, but at the same time high taxes are levied on individual initiatives aimed at raising income level of women, for example, rural women are given tickets in the market to pay as an income generating activity for the councils
7. **The available banks and cooperatives which lend money do so with very high interest,** making it difficult for the women to access these loans and raise income for themselves.

Impact

Women are now more organized in groups, motivated by the different grant and micro credit programs that have been put in place by government and civil society organizations (e.g. the PIAASI programme, UNDP/MINPROFF scheme, GHAPE micro credit scheme, etc)

III.1.4. Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

- Include women in the management and decision making process of the Chambers of Agriculture and Commerce;
- The Government should facilitate Cross border trading with neighboring countries for women;
- Promote capacity building initiatives for women in order to develop their expertise in various domains;
- Institutionalize decisions making in the light of promoting equity and equality in structures, measures and mechanisms of fight against poverty;
- Promote equitable and equal impact contributions for both men and women in the poverty alleviation process in the country.

To the Civil Society

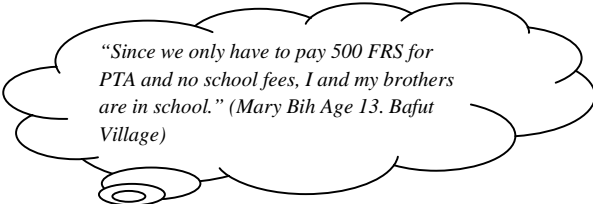
- Continuous capacity building for women to be able to manage the different income generating activities that they carry out;
- Lobbying and advocate for a national gender policy that will take into consideration the problems of women and allow for equity and equality to be attained in Cameroon.

III.2. THEMATIC AREA B: EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

1. *Ensure equal access to education.*
2. *Eradicate illiteracy among women.*
3. *Improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education.*
4. *Develop non-discriminatory education and training.*
5. *Allocate sufficient resources for and monitor the implementation of educational reforms.*
6. *Promote lifelong education and training for girls and women.*

Generally, the Government has very good intentions for the education of women and the girl-child. This can be seen through the policies put in place and the declarations made to this effect. The problem lies in the implementation of the policies and declarations made by Government due to the absence of a policy implementation and monitoring system.



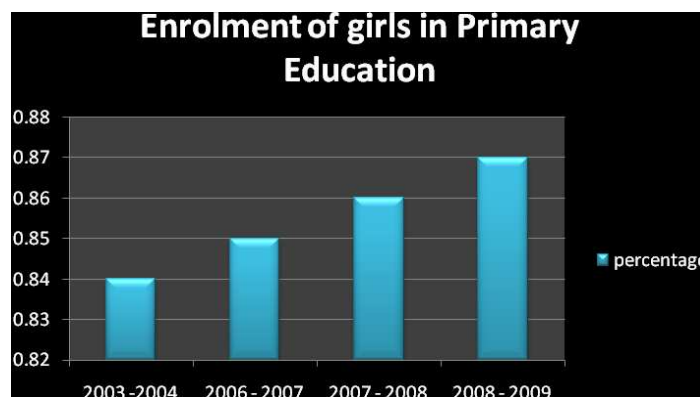
"Since we only have to pay 500 FRS for PTA and no school fees, I and my brothers are in school." (Mary Bih Age 13. Bafut Village)

III.2.1 What the State has done

- In the year 2000, documents on the organization and operation of Women's Advancement Centres and Appropriate Technologies Centres (CTA) for women were signed by the Prime Minister. The main task of these Centres, which are specialized technical units of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, is to provide civic, moral and intellectual education to women and girls. There are at present 31 operational women's advancement Centres and one CTA;
- With a view to achieving equal access to education and in conformity with Goal 2 (universal primary education) of the Millennium Development Goals, a Presidential Decree establishing free primary education was issued;
- A theoretical and practical guide has been prepared for the education of women and some rural group leaders have received training in its utilization;

- To promote the education of the girl-child in the local communities, more than 600 community group leaders have been trained as part of the mobilization of society towards the education of the girl-child;
- In the 2002-2003 school year, a ceremony under the name of “Excellency – Feminine Gender” was held to distribute prizes to the 152 best girl students of the country’s French-language and English- language in general and technical secondary schools;
- Gender disparities have been reduced in schools by allowing pregnant girls to continue with schooling during pregnancy;
- A training programme for women on information, communication and technological skills named “Operation 100,000 women by 2012’ was elaborated in partnership with the African Institute of Computer Science and according to records, 69.800 women have benefited from this programme;
- Created an education for all program launched with a focus on the vulnerable and the girl child;
- The government has also, created a national care and support program for orphans and vulnerable children ensuring equal access to education.

Generally, there has been a consistent increase in the number of girls enrolling in primary education as illustrated by the chart below.



III.2.2 Actions by Civil Society

- Civil society organizations have been carrying out different adult literacy programmes to the benefit of women, based on the realities of their target groups. The Mbororo Social and Cultural Development Association (MBOSCUDA) have been actively involved in the education of the Mbororo Fulani woman through their famous adult literacy programme known as REFLECT.
- Different CSO structures, for example GeED, CHRAPA, WAA Cameroon, ALVF, FIDA, Association of Female jurists, COMINSUD, MBOSCUDA, Reach Out, More women in politics, etc have been carrying out different educational programmes to train women on diverse topics. Some Civil society organizations have created vocational centers in some rural areas to offer vocational training to women on different topics.
- Activities designed to eliminate illiteracy among women are being conducted by rural and community group leaders who are themselves women within the rural and urban communities.
- SNAEF, FECASE, SNEPMA and CATTU have been advocating for:
 - the increase of and timely provision of running budget for schools;
 - government to penalize those in the field who collect huge sums of money from the pupils;
 - and have been sensitizing parents on their rights as far as PTA issues are concerned.

Below are some photos taken by GeED at different training workshops with women from rural and urban areas of Cameroon.



(Photos by:
GeED
2009)



Impact

- *There is a certain degree of equality and equity in education, with Government owned primary schools created in many villages.*
- *The laws do not discriminate with regards to access to education thus encourages it and there is no legal basis to perturb girl child education.*
- *Through adult literacy centres, many women, especially in the rural areas have acquired basic communication skills.*

III.2.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To Government

- The State should encourage more young girls and women with scholarships, and financial support thus encouraging female education.
- To capitalize on the experience of retired educationist, government should involve them when drafting papers in relation to education and developing education policies for women's educational programs.
- Gender mainstreaming should be taken into consideration when elaborating policies for formal, non formal and informal education programs for women and the girl-child.
- Open literacy centers in the different Municipal Council areas for women around the country.

- Set up a mechanism for the staff of the Ministry of Education to inform Parents and about their rights and responsibilities as far as their children schooling is concerned and also about the Government stand on the issue of school fees.
- Institute affirmative action in the admission of girls into technical educational institutions.
- Increase the number of women social centers for the promotion of women in all regions of Cameroon.

III.3. THEMATIC AREA C: WOMEN AND HEALTH

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Increase women's access throughout the life cycle to appropriate, affordable and quality health care, information and related services.*
- 2. Strengthen preventive programmes that promote women's health.*
- 3. Undertake gender-sensitive initiatives that address sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health issues.*
- 4. Promote research and disseminate information on women's health.*
- 5. Increase resources and monitor follow-up for women's health.*

A health strategy document was adopted in October 2001, which emphasizes the special place of women in the programme to combat sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. The prevention of the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child and the encouragement of the use of condoms is prominent among the strategies recommended in the document.

"I am so disappointed with the health system of this Country. In 2010, I was at a government hospital for eco-graphy and i was told everything was ok whereas my baby was death in the worm." (Sophie Kinyuy Age 31)

III.3.1 What the State has done

- Enhanced awareness of the HIV/AIDS problem among women and girls; by promoting voluntary counseling and testing especially amongst pregnant women to avoid mother to child transmission.
- Facilitating access to reproductive health and information services for women of childbearing age and adolescent girls;
- A plan for combating HIV/AIDS, incorporating a special section devoted to women was adopted in May 2003 but has not yet been implemented until now.
- Leaders of women's organizations and associations as well as the staff of different Ministries have been trained on HIV/AIDS in a bid to mainstream and promote sectoral response and HIV/AIDS awareness at all levels, through associations and organized groups of women.
- Different events devoted to people living with HIV/AIDS have been organized especially for women and orphans.

- Local AIDS committees were created within the local communities. These local AIDS committees have been very useful to the women in particular in communities where they are active.
- A programme (the “Roll Back Malaria” programme) was adopted, to combat malaria with the goal to halve the morbidity and mortality due to malaria by 2010, especially among the most vulnerable sectors of the population (children below 5 years of age and pregnant women). Impregnated mosquito nets with an insect-repellent substance are being distributed to pregnant women under this programme since 2003.
- National strategic plan to fight HIV has been reviewed recently focused on gender
- The state has put in place PMCT programmes at regional levels to help women living with HIV/AIDS
- A particular department set up by the government for disease control to ensure follow-up as far as treatment and anti retro viral considering gender perspective.

III.3.2 Actions by Civil Society

Many civil society organizations have been active in the field of HIV/AIDS through education, lobbying and advocacy for free treatment. The civil society has been very active at the grassroots, carrying out education and sensitization on the HIV/AIDS prevention, voluntary counseling and testing and advocating for free treatment. Most organizations have been involved in the care and support of orphans and vulnerable children and organizing training programs for foster parents to the orphans.

The activities of the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) Health Board which provides specialized health care services for women including VCT and care for HIV/AIDS patients has gone a very long way to promoting the prevention of HIV/AIDS in the country. Through HIV/AIDS activities, many community based organizations and support groups have been created to take care of HIV/AIDS issues within the local communities.

Civil Society Organizations have been advocating for the reduction of stigma and discrimination against PLWHA. They are also promoting sex education and HIV/AIDS awareness through

schools and other women's rights groups, for example CAMNAFAW, FAHEDO, GeED, and church groups. WA Cameroon has worked on training and sensitization manuals on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence and the Spread of HIV AIDS. These manuals have been widely distributed and are being used in sensitization and education in the North West Region.

REACH OUT in the South West Region has pioneered home based care and psycho social support in the South west region. Together with some CSOs they have organized candlelit memorials and youth entertainment programs in schools whereby gender, HIV/AIDS and reproductive health are mainstreamed in Buea sub division.

Most CSOs compliment Government action by implementing the National Programme for the care and support of Orphans and vulnerable children. Many community systems (FBO, CBO, CIG, etc) have been strengthened, with women being the majority to help reduce the trend of HIV within their communities.

Dynamic Citoyen has elaborated and carried out a project together with DED to fight against HIV/AIDS in the South Region and is also lobbying Government to solve the problem of infected immigrant girls who are abandoned to die at the borders. This is very common at the KIOSE/ GABON/ EQUATORIAL GUINEA boarder.

III.3.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government:

- Responsive parenthood should be encouraged, so as to limit the number of children and avoid deadly abortions;
- Decentralize HIV/AIDS treatment so that the rural women who are living with the virus can easily access treatment;
- Health insurance packages should be encouraged;
- Government should cultivate a culture of balancing social services.

III.4. THEMATIC AREA D: VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN (VAW)

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

1. *Take integrated measures to prevent and eliminate violence against women.*
2. *Study the causes and consequences of violence against women and the effectiveness of preventive measures.*
3. *Eliminate trafficking in women and assist victims of violence due to prostitution and trafficking.*

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. Violence Against Women (VAW) has serious consequences which are far reaching and include the erosion of self-esteem, self-worth, physical, mental and psychological health, loss of productivity, costs of health care, unwanted pregnancies, HIV /AIDS and other STDs, legal and judicial costs for women.



(Photo GeED, 2011)

Violence against women and girls is highly prevalent, in particular within the family, and remains widely socially tolerated. Marital rape is not a criminal offence. The government has not established shelters or legal aid clinics and victims generally suffer from a culture of silence and impunity.

The broad persistence of customary law infringes upon the human rights of women though Civil law offers more equal standard than customary laws which has discriminatory provisions against women. Also the distance between law and justice discourages victims who suffer in silence.

Statistics show that 53% of women are subjected to one form of violence or another as from the age of 15. In 36% of the cases it is the husband who is the perpetrator of violence. Amongst women who are assaulted, 55% are those living in marital unions while 19% are single women class or status. Studies revealed that educated women suffer more violence (45 %) than uneducated women (36 %). 64 % of employed women suffer physical violence. Furthermore, domestic violence is common amongst the childless (77 %), while 53 % of those with five or more children are victims of such violence. Most female victims of violence do not seek for medical assistance. Only 10 % of those who suffer from physical and sexual violence do seek medical care while 50 % rely on their families for support. (EDS111, 2004)

III.4.1a) What the State has done

Cameroon has ratified the recommendations of international conventions aimed at eliminating various forms of violence against women and girl children. Notable examples are the ratification of:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948;
- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against the Woman adopted by the United Nations in 1979;
- The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights of June 1993 (A/Conf.157/25), and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against the Woman adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in its Resolution 48/104 of 20th December, 1993;
- The Convention for Civil and Political Rights
- The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights with special emphasis on the rights of women adopted in Maputo in 2003.

At the national level, the following measures are being taken to end violence against women and girl children:-

- The updated National Population Policy Declaration issued in 2004 includes measures to eliminate violence against women;
- A special Ministry responsible for women's affairs was initially established by presidential decree in 1984. In 1988 the Ministries of Women's Affairs and Social Affairs were merged into a single Ministry by Decree No. 88/1281 of 21 September 1988. In December 1997, because of the special problems of women and the anxiety to improve their status, a new Ministry of Women's Affairs was set up by Decree No. 97/205 of 7 December 1997 and later changed to the Ministry for the Protection of the Family and the Woman in 2004. The missions of this ministry include- the promotion of the status of Cameroonian women through education, improved access to credit facilities, decision making, gainful employment, prevention of all forms of discriminations and violent acts against women and girl children, the promotion of the right of women to inheritance, etc

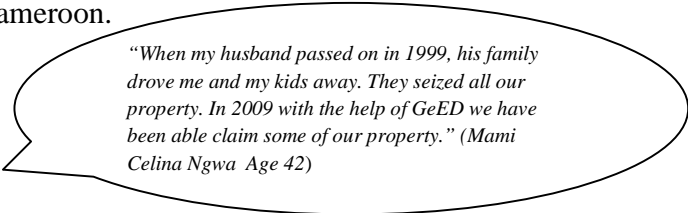
III.4.1b) Some legal dispositions towards ending VAW

- Article 296 of the Cameroonian Penal Code prescribes an imprisonment term of 5 to 10 years for any man who uses physical or moral 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 a fine if necessary on anybody who uses physical or any other method to cause injury on the other person or persons;
- Article 356 of the Cameroonian penal code prescribes an imprisonment term of 5 to 10 years and a fine on anybody 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 any one who makes an abusive request for a bride prize.

Cameroon has made some progress in drafting a Family Code, meant to protect women's rights, including the right to live free from violence. The State still has much to do as far as VAW is

concerned because most of the violence inflicted on women is a result of discriminatory traditional beliefs and practices, which needs a human face.

The Ministry of social affairs has launched a campaign called “SOS enfant” to sensitize the population on child trafficking and its effects. The campaign also aims at taking concrete actions to end trafficking in children in Cameroon.



“When my husband passed on in 1999, his family drove me and my kids away. They seized all our property. In 2009 with the help of GeED we have been able claim some of our property.” (Mami Celina Ngwa Age 42)

III.4.2 Actions by Civil society

Civil society organizations for example, Reach Out, Women in Alternative Action (WAA), Gender empowerment and Development (GeED), WA Cameroon, More women in politics, the Centre for Human Rights and Peace Advocacy (CHRAPA), Help Out and Human Rights Focus, ALVF, the National platform to fight against violence against women (PLANALDIF), Ecumenical Service for Peace, etc have been actively involved in activities to end violence against women in Cameroon. WA Cameroon for example has been organizing sensitization activities to commemorate 16 Days of Activism to end violence on women. Faith-based organizations like CWF and CWA have been working on a marriage encounter sexual harassment etc.

These activities range from lobbying and advocacy for the signing of the draft Family code, education and training on women’s rights, sensitization activities at the level of parliamentarians, traditional leaders, administrators, the judiciary, the media and the women. A coalition of civil society networks led by Ecumenical Service for Peace(SeP) Women in Research and Action (WIRA) International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and Association des femmes Juristes (ACAFEJ) prepared the first ever shadow report on the implementation of CEDAW and presented to treaty bodies.

International organizations operating in Cameroon such as United Nations Population Fund, UNICEF, WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP as well as local non-governmental organizations such as the Cameroon Association of Female Jurists and the Association for the Fight against Violence on

the Women, etc have been actively engaged in the advancement of women and the fight against violence carried on them.

Trafficking of women and girls

Human Rights Organizations have been educating the masses on the rights of women and girls and the ills of human trafficking. The Justice and Peace commission of the Arch Diocese of Bamenda is implementing a project on child trafficking in the North West Region. A survey was carried on the prevalence of trafficking in the region and massive sensitizations on the problem of trafficking were organized. Vigilante committees have been set in collaboration with municipal councils to identify perpetrators, and bring to justice. The project has rehabilitated over 30 victims.

WA Cameroon carried out a survey of House maids/sales agents in the North West Region and established that most of the victims are orphans and girls and their working conditions are deplorable. Advocacy actions are being carried out to improve on the working conditions of this category of victims of trafficking through the establishment of work contracts with their masters and mistresses.

A network of organizations called 'Foi et Liberation' has been actively involved in sensitization and high level advocacy to end trafficking of children for sexual exploitation. Surveys have been carried out in Cameroon and Europe to establish the seriousness of the issue and strategies are being developed at national and international level to fight it.



(Photo by GeED, 2007)

Impact

- *Violence against women is no longer seen as a foreign ideology, but as a problem that needs to be solved.*
- *There is a draft family code in Cameroon to take care of issues of VAW, once it has been adopted*

III.4.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

- Cameroon needs to provide for greater implementation of international commitments to empower and end discrimination against women through the domestication of these instruments and proper communication to populace, judges and other enforcement officers at all levels.
- Evaluate realistically all the cultures that exist in Cameroon and design an implementation plan for the BPFAs that will take all these into consideration and permit the attainment of desired results in the next years.
- The State should put in place more education and awareness creation programmes, to educate the Cameroonian public on the BPFAs and other available legal instruments to promote women and end gender based violence. These programs will enhance the understanding of girls and women on their rights and will also enhance the dignity of the woman in the society.
- International, national and local laws should be harmonized and there should be constant collaboration and handing down of information to empower the grass root with ongoing discussion on important issues like the BPFAs.
- Educate citizens from basic education on ‘non violence’ in our curriculum under citizenship education.
- Encourage the government to through the ministry of communication disseminate information about the Beijing Platform of Action and its provisions to everyone in the country. Information is power and as much as possible, the population should be informed on the different actions that are carried out by the state.

- Media women should update their knowledge on international and national instruments to address women's issues and promote gender, so as to better report on this and also develop programs around those thematic areas.
- The media should project the positive image of the woman to the public, not necessarily the negative side of the woman.
- To regulate VAW in Cameroon, there is need to have regulatory laws that highlight punishment for perpetrators of such violence. Domestic violence must be recognized as a human rights abuse and regulated by the state, not in discourse and declarations but in committed policy that takes the aspirations and participation of the people.

To Parliament

- Approve the draft law against FGM's concerted actions/efforts from CSO's so that impact is better felt.
- Approve the draft family code, which has been pending for some time now.
- Put in place a regulatory instrument to regulate customary practices that are discriminatory to women.

To the Traditional Authorities

- Review customary laws, belief and practices that promote violence against women within their communities.

To the Civil Society

- Continuous sensitization and awareness creation on women's rights at all levels
- Develop innovative strategies that can be more practical and can leave more substantial impact, to use in working on issues of violence against women.

III.5. THEMATIC AREA E: WOMEN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Increase the participation of women in conflict resolution at decision-making levels and protect women living in situations of armed and other conflicts or under foreign occupation.*
- 2. Reduce excessive military expenditures and control the availability of armaments.*
- 3. Promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and reduce the incidence of human rights abuse in conflict situations.*
- 4. Promote women's contribution to fostering a culture of peace.*
- 5. Provide protection, assistance and training to refugee women, other displaced women in need of international protection and internally displaced women.*
- 6. Provide assistance to the women of the colonies and non-self-governing territories.*

Most conflicts that have been witnessed in Cameroon since 1995 have been tribal conflicts, especially in the North West, South West and the Northern Regions, and the Bakassi conflict between Nigeria and Cameroon. All these conflicts affected women in different ways, but these women have never been included in the peace building process by Government or by the traditional leaders involved.

III.5.1 What the State has done

After these conflicts, the state has tried to rehabilitate those who are affected, especially the women, but no particular programmes have been put in place for them. In resolving these conflicts, women have never been considered in the process because most of the conflicts have been handled from a cultural perspective, where women are not culturally allowed to meddle in such matters because it is viewed as a “men’s issues”

III.5.2 Actions by Civil Society

Civil society organizations have been busy in educating and sensitizing the communities on peaceful cohabitation and the ills of tribal conflicts. Some organizations have been involved in

rehabilitation activities, like supplies of food to the affected women and children, but most of these activities were not directly focused on the women.

The Ecumenical Service for Peace within the framework of a project supported by Canadian Cooperation-Cameroon on Women and conflicts has trained women mediators in the South, Centre and South Regions of Cameroon. The women are actively participating in resolving community conflicts in their communities. In all its intervention zones, SeP targets women for training in conflict resolution techniques in order to increase the participation of women in processes of peace in their communities. Women are leaders in Peace Committees in Bagam, Bafanji, Balikumbat, etc.

On the Bakassi conflict, SeP worked together with AFRICAPHONIE and produced a documentary on citizen participation in the Bakassi Peacebuilding process. A gender sensitive group of 30 participants from all of Bakassi area has produced the Bakassi Peace and Development plan which sees development from the point of view of the Bakassi population.

In 2001, SeP launched a campaign against war toys and firecrackers in Cameroon. The campaign has become an annual campaign since then and the objective is to combat the proliferation of small arms. The TRAUMA Centre has been involved in rehabilitating refugees from Tchad, Central African Republic, Democratic republic of Congo, Burundi etc. This has been through the trauma healing sessions, skill development and health and education support. The Justice and Peace Commission of the Arch Diocese of Bamenda has been mobilizing women in Bali Nyonga/Bawock conflict zone to take leadership roles in reconstruction efforts

III.5.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the State

The state should;

- Develop a national gender sensitive conflict management plan.
- Train key personnel in gender sensitive conflict management strategies.
- Include conflict management and non-violence in the school curriculum.

III.6. THEMATIC AREA F: WOMEN IN POWER AND DECISION-MAKING

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

1. *Take measures to ensure women's equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making.*
2. *Increase women's capacity to participate in decision-making and leadership.*

Over the years, there has been a will to promote women to take up positions in the decision making process, but party politics in perverse terms, hostile and money needing elections as well as some repulsive and repugnant traditional practices and the hostile political environment blocks the women from full participation.

III.6.1 What the State has done

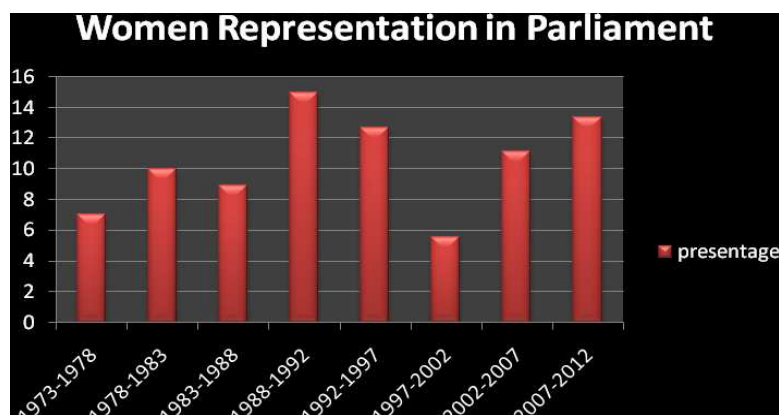
From 1995 women have been represented in decision making as follows:

In the Administration, the number of women in ministerial position has had the following trend:

Year	Total number of Ministers	Number of women	% Representation of women
1995	27	2	7.41%
1998	49	3	6.12%
2004	65	6	9.23%
2010	62	6	9.68%

There are 58 female directors in the administration out of a total number of 366, making a total percentage of 15.8

In Magistracy, as of November 2009, there were 203 female magistrates out of 722, which gives 28.12% of women as magistrates. In the judiciary as a whole there are 1157 persons in decision making positions and out of this number, 215 are women, making a total percentage of women in decision making within the judiciary to be 18.5. The evolution of percentage participation of women in Parliament has been as follows over the years:



The number of women who have held some function within the parliamentary bureaus are as follows:

- 1992 – 1997 - 5 women
- 1997 – 2002 - 9 women
- 2002 – 2007 - 19 women
- 2007 – 2012 - There are 25 women in parliament from the 2007 elections. All these women belong to each of the 21 committees that are in parliament, but only two women are chairpersons of committees – the cultural and finance committees

At Municipal level the evolution has been as follows:

Year	Total number of councilors	Number of women	% representation of women	Number 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 (24 out of 360 Mayors)

Women in Selected Senior Posts	Number of Women
Minister	5
Vice Minister	1
S. G. in Ministry or University	6
University Rector	0
University Vice Rector	2
D.G, of State Companies	0
Plenipotentiary Minister	5
State representatives in International Institutions	2
Sub Divisional Officer	3
Senior Traditional Rulers	2
Chief Superintendents of Police	3
Senior Officers in the Armed Forces	3

MINPROFF AND MINAD STATISTICS OF 2004 AND 2007 RESPECTIVELY

The general trend shows that a majority of women endorsed as candidates for elections have often been alternate rather than substantive candidates (i.e. 19 female parliamentarians and 33 alternates in the 2002 against 161 males). Substantive candidates are the real candidates while alternate candidates take the place of the substantive candidate only in case of vacancy. In the 2007 parliamentary elections, 25 women were elected. During the 2002 municipal elections, of the 9963 candidates, only 1302 were women, making a 13.1% of the 337 elected mayors, only 10 are women constituting 2.9%. This is relatively low.

Looking at the above tables 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.

III.6.2 Actions by Civil Society

- 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 women.
- 30 journalists were trained in gender sensitive reporting of election proceedings.

- The Cameroon Gender and Development Network (CAMGADNET) organized a series of training workshops in the country for women from different Political Parties on how to organize and run campaigns during elections.
- SEP mobilized women to lobby and claim 30% quota within their political parties.
- Within the framework of its programme on Democracy and Empowerment of Women (DEW), Community Initiative for Sustainable Development has trained women on political leadership in the North West and West Regions of Cameroon.

Impact

- *More women are anxious to participate in decision making though the process is still difficult for women*
- *The participation of women in public life through appointments and elections has gradually improved over the years in Cameroon*
- *The appointment of 2 women in the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization as sub prefects is innovative*
- *Women have developed their self esteem and are taking up the challenge despite the difficulties that still exist*
- *The importance of women's political participation is being debated at different levels.*
- *Talented women leaders are identified at all levels*

III.6.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

The Cameroon government should:

- Come up with an implementation plan for the quota system put in place for women and materialize the quota system.
- Educate the population on the concept of political culture to make the population understand the importance of participatory governance.

To the Civil Society

The civil society should:

- Carryout a general monitoring of elections to ensure that the quota system put in place for women is respected by all political parties.

- Continuous awareness creation on the importance of the participation of women in the decision making process.

To Political parties

- Political parties should formalize their quota system and make it practical by promoting affirmative action in winnable constituencies where women are candidates.

To the Women

- Women should build their capacity towards political participation and develop the zeal and character needed for this.
- Women should consciously prepare themselves to claim their 30% quota within the political party to which they belong.

III.7. THEMATIC AREA G: INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Create or strengthen national machineries and other governmental bodies.*
- 2. Integrate gender perspectives in legislation, public policies, programmes and projects.*
- 3. Generate and disseminate gender-disaggregated data and information for planning and evaluation*

The institutional framework for the promotion and protection of Women Human Rights in the country comprises democratic political institutions, a judiciary, a budding Constitutional Council and a national Human Rights institution with reinforced prerogatives. In the past years, the Ministry for the empowerment of women in Cameroon has evolved as follows;

- In 1975 issues concerning women in the country were handled under the ministry of Social Affairs,
- In 1984 women's issues were handled through the department for the advancement of women ,
- In 1988 women's issues were handled through the department for the promotion of women's rights and
- In 2004 women's issues were handled through the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family though in the department of Women's Social Empowerment and the Sub Department for the promotion of women's rights and gender. The External services of this ministry are spread over the regions to ensure extensive coverage of the national territory by the Ministry's activities;

A National Women's Observatory was established by Decree No. 97/068 of 4th May 1998. The observatory is supposed to be responsible for monitoring the development of the situation of women in Cameroon. This decree formally established the Observatory and defined it's functioning but it has not yet gone operational.

Women's advancement centres and women's forums have been created in some regions that serve as a platform to debate women's issues. While the women advancement centers focus on capacity building of women, women forums provide dialogue space for political debates for women. Focal points of the Ministry of Women's Affairs in other Ministries in line with the across-the-board approach have been envisaged.

III.7.1 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government and International partners

1. The international partners should work with local partners to support the adoption of laws against domestic and sexual violence
2. There should be an increase enforcement of international and national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls, with special capacity-building workshops organized for judges and parliamentarians, who are actively involved in enforcing the laws.
3. International and national bodies should establish funding mechanism devoted to supporting projects to eliminate violence against women.

III.8. THEMATIC AREA H: HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Promote and protect the human rights of women, through the full implementation of all human rights instruments, especially the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.*
- 2. Ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and in practice.*
- 3. Achieve legal literacy.*

There are poor implementation plans in the area of Human Rights which do not take into consideration the vulnerable position of women. Because of the peculiar local cultures, most women, the youths and the very poor are not able to claim their rights. This is specifically difficult because the international human rights laws and instruments to promote women's rights have not been domesticated and communicated to the available structures that facilitated the implementation of the BPFA. The few legal provisions that guarantee equality between men and women and can promote to a larger extent the implementation of the BPFA are only paper provisions, declarations and discourse.

There is a certain degree of laxity in implementing actions that will help to reduce violence against women, especially violence as a result of the different cultural beliefs. There is seemingly a lack of political will by the government to put in place structures that can adequately address issues of gender based violence and properly punish perpetrators of gender based violence.

III.8.1 What the State has done

- The creation of a National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms

III.8.2 Actions by Civil Society

- CHRAPA has been carrying out a series of trainings on women rights for Traditional Rulers, the Judiciary, Administrators and the women themselves.

- GeED has organized the National Consultation for Women Human Rights Defenders, a training on security for Women Human Rights Defenders and has also been carrying out sensitization and conscientisation on women human rights at community levels;
- GeED together with PRODHOP (Solidarité Pour la Promotion des Droits de l'Homme et des Peuples) ADEFHO (Association pour la défense de l'homosexualité) SNJC (Syndicat National des Journalistes du Cameroun) ALVF (Association de Lutte contre les Violences faites aux Femmes) and ALTERNATIVES CAMEROUN presented an alternative report on the human rights situation in Cameroon to the UN Human Rights Committee.
- CEFAN works with schools to educate students on human rights issues in general and on women's rights in particular. Through their work, a code of conduct has been developed to guide how teachers and students can sit together and discuss issues on human rights of women.
- RENOF CAM (RESEAU DE NON VIOLENCE AU CAMEROUN) is working on human rights issues through human rights committees created in schools.

Below is a photo of women at a Human Rights workshop organized by GEED Foundation and Front Line in Bamenda in 2006.



(Photo by: GeED, 2006)

III.8.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

- A multi-sectoral approach should be put in place to ensure the implementation and monitoring of women's rights made at national and international levels in response to local concerns, to strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls.
- Cameroon should come out with a clear national gender policy that highlights women's issues clearly and provides implementation strategies that can be used by all sectors in the country to promote gender and women's rights actively

To the Civil Society

- The civil Society organization should allocate more resources for activities geared towards gender and empowerment of women and intensify their actions in the rural areas.
- Sensitization sessions on women's rights should be taken into the rural areas so that the rural woman should also understand and assert her rights.

To the National Commission on Human Rights and freedoms

- Develop and implement a gender sensitive approach to promoting rights, that takes into consideration the specificities of women

To the UN Agencies in Cameroon

- Continuously support and promote activities geared towards protecting and promoting women's rights.
- Follow-up closely the implementation of UN Conventions to promote and protect women's rights to which Cameroon is a signatory.
- Empower Human Rights Defenders to disseminate CEDAW and other international human rights instruments in the country.

III.9. THEMATIC AREA J: WOMEN AND THE MEDIA

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media and new technologies of communication.*
- 2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media*

Many women are involved in the media as journalists and some programmes are broadcast over the 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, most 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 society. 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 visible.

III.9.1 What the state has done

- Created gender specific Medias, for example UNESCO/Government sponsored 'Radio Femme', a community radio in the North and Mbalmayo to broadcast women programs as much as possible within their time frame, to encourage their participation and follow-up.
- The state has increased the number of women's programme over CRTV to two in the English language and one in the French language

III.9.2 Actions by Civil Society

NAPMEW, the National Association of Professional Media Women has been active in the field of education and training of women through different activities in the media. It has been sensitizing, educating and building the capacities of the public and women in particular from a

gender perspective. NAPMEW broadcast special radio and television programmes in the official as well as the many indigenous languages.

Club Media West in 2010 organized a workshop in Bafoussam on Gender sensitive reporting bringing together journalists from private and public media. They came up with strategies to make their reports more gender sensitive. WAcameroon also organized a workshop for journalists in the North West Region in November 2010. The workshop was on Gender Sensitive Reporting. The over 70 journalists that attended came up with a Gender Advocacy Network and a platform for collaboration between journalists and civil society organization.

The print media has also been promoting the rights of the women though most of them often focus on less important issues. For instance, rather than focus on issues that can further educate women and promote their development and progress they focus on human interest stories that stigmatize the woman. There is a total absence of highlights on available feminine competences in the country by the media.

III.9.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

- State media should increase the number of women's programs that are broadcast over their media.
- The number of women in decision making positions in the state media should be increased, so that women specific issues can be brought to the decision making table.
- The capacity of Journalist should be reinforced on gender issues and gender sensitive reporting.

To the Media houses

- Create a women's or gender desk in media houses and build the capacities of those working on these desks.
- Encourage more male journalist to report on gender matters, as gender issues are not just about women.

To the Civil Society

- Create communication and information components in their structures and consider media costs in their project budgeting.
- Develop a media plan for their structures, which maps out how media coverage will be done.

III.10. THEMATIC AREA K: WOMEN AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action:

- 1. Involve women actively in environmental decision-making at all levels.*
- 2. Integrate gender concerns and perspectives in policies and programmes for sustainable development.*
- 3. Strengthen or establish mechanisms at the national, regional, and international levels to assess the impact of development and environmental policies on women.*

III.10.1 What the State has done

A National Environment Management Plan (NEMAP) has been elaborated, which includes a “Women in environmental programmes” section. Its goal is the integration of women in environmental programmes and the promotion by women of the use of environmental protection methods.

III.10.2 Action by Civil Society

Civil society organizations active in the field of environments have over the years trained women on how to benefit from Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP). Through these trainings, most women in the South West and South Regions of the country are actively involved in the exploitation of the NTFP in their areas. This has raised the economic level of women.

Women belong to environment management committees in some areas in the country, but it is not clear if they are just there to represent the women or their contributions are taken seriously in the management process of the environment.

Many CBOs and CSO are engaged on environmental issues for women. Reach Out and the RUMPI project are working on the sustainable exploitation of NTFP and have developed a database on who benefits more than the other from the forest resources in the South West Region. Demonstration farms have been opened on forest products for women in the South West Region.

RUDEC is currently working on a solar energy project for women and Nature Cameroon has introduced the solar energy for women in the South West Region. An NGO called Women

Organizing for Change (WOCAM) is implementing a project titled, *Women Land Rights and Implications for Climate change*. The main argument of the NGO is that women poor access to land rights impacts negatively on the fight against climate change.

III.10.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government:

The government should;

- Elaborate and put in place a functional gender sensitive national forest management strategy.

III.11. THEMATIC AREA L: THE GIRL-CHILD

Strategic objectives in the Beijing Platform for Action.

- 1. Eliminate all forms of discrimination against the girl-child.*
- 2. Eliminate negative cultural attitudes and practices against girls.*
- 3. Promote and protect the rights of the girl-child and increase awareness of her needs and potential.*
- 4. Eliminate discrimination against girls in education, skills development and training.*
- 5. Eliminate discrimination against girls in health and nutrition*
- 6. Eliminate the economic exploitation of child labour and protect young girls at work.*
- 7. Eradicate violence against the girl-child.*
- 8. Promote the girl-child's awareness of and participation in social, economic and political life.*
- 9. Strengthen the role of the family in improving the status of the girl-child*

Physical violence exercised against women and girls takes many forms. It can take the form of sexual aggression which involves the use of force to have sexual relations with either a very young girl or a mature woman. Sexual aggression also takes place within marriage circles.

It can also be practiced by someone who is very close to the young girl such as the father, teacher, the pastor, the doctor, a brother, etc. Forced sexual intercourse is usually carried out without the use of the condom and is often accompanied by injury, STD infection and unwanted pregnancies. In other cases, sexual aggression may take a milder form where the aggressor uses persuasive methods such as the use of money or the offer of non-financial items to lure the woman or the girl child into sexual relation. The men involved in such sexual acts are usually quite older and financially viable than their female partners (sugar daddies) and most often have many other sex partners. Sexual relations occurring under such circumstances expose the girl child to various forms of unpleasant effects including injury which leads to high rates of infection by sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS.

Many attempts have been made to stop female genital mutilation in Cameroon both at the international and national levels. At the national level, the National Action Plan for the Fight

against Female Genital Mutilation was adopted in December 1998. Despite these efforts made by the government of Cameroon and local and international NGOs, this special form of violence against the girl child still persists especially in the South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon. Female genital mutilation is believed to reduce the sexual desire of the women and girls thereby assisting them to remain virgins as long as possible and faithful to their husbands when they later marry. However, this practice constitutes a permanent health risk.

This act which is usually performed by traditional methods without the use of anesthesia often lead to severe pain, hemorrhage, and other complications that often result in difficulties of conception and child delivery. It equally increases the exposure of the concerned women to HIV/AIDS and tetanus infection. It also reduces the possibility of attaining full sexual satisfaction as it hinders victims from reaching orgasm.

III.11.1 What the State has done

Concerning the girl child, the Cameroonian penal code in articles 294, 295, 344, 345, 347, 350 and 356 protects her against

- Prostitution;
- Sexual abuse (rape, incest, etc.)
- Participation in the production of pornographic material;
- Forced marriage;
- Physical violence, etc.

Cameroon has also ratified different treaties and conventions to protect the woman and the girl child as well as the Convention on Children's Rights adopted by the United Nations in 1989. Despite all the above measures, violent acts against women and girls take place daily in many parts of Cameroon. Some social and cultural norms permit the practice of sex specific violence such as female genital mutilation or subjecting women to humiliating widow rites. One of the key reasons for the persistent high rate of violence against women and girls in Cameroon are the fact that some are either ignored or even tolerated by the society.

III.11.2 Actions by Civil Society

Many civil society organizations are involved in education and sensitization activities toward the girl child. Particular organizations like Reach Out, ALVF, CHRAPA, WAA Cameroon, GeED, among others are actively involved in the fight against trafficking in girls, child labour and violence against women and young girls.

CATTU has been working to promote girl child education in the North West Region since 1995. The trade union has distributed text books to underprivileged girls in G.S Mantum (Bali Sub Division), G.S Nyienmuwah, G.S Bukeu (Ndop), G.S Jakiri (Bui Division) and newly sewn uniforms to underprivileged girls in G.S Nwanawen, Wum. However, the girl child still suffers from different types of violations due to the different cultural beliefs and practices.

III.11.3 Recommendations for Further Action

To the Government

- Women and girls should be given legal and educational support to promote their rights
- There is need to expedite the validation of the family law, that promotes women's rights.
- Vulgarize CEDAW at national level

To the Civil Society

- Empower and encourage women headed organization to contribute actively in the decision making processes that can take into consideration women and girl-child issues

IV. MAJOR CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN IMPLEMENTING THE BPFA

IV.1 At the level of Government

- Lack of **measures by the government to eliminate domestic violence** against women which is still regarded as culturally acceptable by certain sectors of society. Women in Cameroon experience high levels of discrimination, despite Constitutional provisions recognizing the human rights of all.
- **A Lack of Political Will** to implement the Commitments taken at the international level and like many other African countries that have ratified CEDAW and Other International Instruments, there are still many limitations to fully integrating into national laws.
- Government does not see the **Platform as a priority**, consequently has not allocated adequate resources for its implementation. Budgetary allocations to national machineries or to critical sectors such as education, health and agriculture have not been sensitive and sensible to gender differences.
- There has been limited partnership, **collaboration and dialogue** between government and the CSOs on the implementation of the Platform for Action. Government has thus continuously used the banking system that does not bring the informed citizens on board.
- Government ministries charged with gender issues suffer from acute lack of resources; both financial and human thereby have been inefficient in the implementation of the Platform for Action.
- The absence of **monitoring mechanisms** in the state and non-state sector and a clearly articulated right agenda in support to women's social, economic, political and cultural rights are the main constraints to implementation measures.

IV.2 At the level of the Judiciary

- **Lack of 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. However, due to the importance attached to traditions and customs, international commitments are not respected.

Also there has been limited progress made by the Government of Cameroon in reforming laws and combating practices that discriminate against women and girls and violate their human rights.

- Most lawmakers are ignorant about the stereotypes that negatively affect women and continuously promote VAW and the differing provisions for criminalization of violations of Human Rights (HR) laws for men the women. Otherwise, those who are knowledgeable are overwhelmed and have no technical staff to assist them.
- According to articles 1421 and 1428 of the Civil Code, women are not fully entitled to use, enjoy or sell their property, although this right is stipulated in the Constitution. In this context, article 1421 grants the husband the right to administer communal property, thereby giving him the right to sell or mortgage the couple's property without the wife's consent.

IV. 2a) The Penal Code

- Adultery is systematically if committed by a woman, but is only punishable when committed by a man if it is "habitual" or takes place in the matrimonial home (art. 361). – Abortion is criminalized, except if the mother's life is in danger or if pregnancy is the result of rape (arts. 337 and 339). – Rape is criminalized, unless it takes place within marriage (art. 296).

IV.2b) The Civil Code

- The minimum age for marriage is 15 years for girls and 18 years for boys (art. 52).
- Girls under 18 are not required to consent to marriage, parental consent is sufficient (art. 49).
- The man can choose which matrimonial regime applies (monogamy or polygamy). If no choice is made, the couple is married under common law, which allows polygamy and community of marital property. The payment of dowries is authorized (art. 70).
- The husband is considered to be the head of the family (art. 213). He also has the sole right to determine the family domicile (arts. 108 and 215) and, in the interest of the household and the children, may prevent his wife from taking employment (Regulation 81-02, implementing the Civil Code).
- Women are not entitled to full use and enjoyment of property (arts. 1421 and 1428).

- The husband has the right to administer communal marital property, thereby giving him the right to sell or mortgage the couple's property without his wife's consent. These provisions are contrary to the Constitution.
- No specific laws have been enacted to prohibit female genital mutilation. There are no laws prohibiting traditional harmful practices, and female genital mutilation (FGM) and the practice of breast ironing persist in parts of the North and the South-West of the country: it is estimated that 20% of women are victims.

IV.3 At the level of culture/tradition

- The **entrenchment of patriarchy** in customs, traditions, attitudes have led to an intensification of discrimination against women in all forms. More brutal forms of violence and deprivation of rights confront women. Cultures are being reinvented with a male face rather than from the perspective of gender justice.
- Too much importance is still attached to customs and traditional laws especially in the rural areas. Women continue to be disadvantaged by discriminatory cultural practices and patriarchy is still deeply entrenched in rural areas.
- The greatest challenge to the implementation of the BPPFA is the lack of a proper evaluation of the different cultures regarding women at the local levels to see how well a comprehensive engagement can be carried out to end the different forms of violence against women in the many cultures that exist. The absence of monitoring mechanisms in the state and non-state sector and a clearly articulated agenda in support to women's social, economic, political and cultural rights are the main constraints to implementation measures.

IV.4 At the level of Education

- **Obstacles to access education** have been a major constraint. The literacy rate for the 15-26 age group is 72% for boys and 59% for girls. This disparity can be explained in part by families' decisions to favour boys' education if financial resources do not permit sending all children to school. Although some efforts have been made by the government to promote girls' access to education, there remain fewer girls than boys in secondary and higher education. Only a handful of girls have been able to benefit from the scholarship policy (even

though the policy imposed a quota of 40% girls). In rural areas, the quality of education is far lower than in urban areas.

- Except among the very younger generation, the degree of scholarisation among the female population is still very low. Most of those who are encouraged to go to school as an implementation strategy for the BPFA are often forced out of school because of different social factors. Some of them are unemployed, vulnerable and powerless and are living in abject poverty.

IV.5 Generally,

- There is ignorance at all levels of society and above all ignorance of the provisions of the BPFA and other related human rights instruments have remained big challenges to the implementation of the platform of action.
- Civil society organizations are not strong enough financially to ensure more elaborate grassroots awareness- raising campaign/ trainings.
- The poor infrastructure, e.g. roads makes it difficult to reach many people at the grassroots level.

V. KEY LESSONS LEARNT

The following lessons can be drawn from the review process:

- The absence of a legal definition of discrimination makes it difficult for discriminations based on gender to be handled properly and for this reason some points of civil and common laws are continuously prejudicial to women.
- Some traditional laws have taken precedence over civil laws. For this reason a woman's complains are not dealt with appropriately and therefore there is the need to reform the judiciary sector.
- Some issues like sexual harassment suffer from limited visibility, reporting and prosecution, due to the limited importance attached to such acts. For this reason, sexual harassment continues to be a problem for women at different levels and in different forms.
- It has been difficult to deal with the issue of trafficking and sexual exploitation that has remained invisible since children and parents are reluctant to come forward out of fear, and other aggravating factors such as poverty.
- Most violence against women takes place within the private sphere. State responsibility arising out of acts by private individuals lies at the heart of the gender-interpretation of the Convention against Torture. A growing body of international human rights laws have recognized State responsibility for private acts when the state fails to exercise due diligence in preventing, investigating, prosecuting, punishing and repairing human rights violations.
- Governments have not reported on substantive actions taken to reform customary laws and traditional practices that are repugnant to natural justice and good conscience. The government has equally not done substantive reports or taken action to reform Customary Laws and traditional practices that are repugnant to natural justice.
- Article 361 of the Penal Code defines the crime of adultery in terms, more favourable to men than women. While a man may be convicted of adultery if the sexual acts take place in his home, a female may be convicted without respect to venue.
- The Government has failed to take decisive action to combat the problem of woman battering, such as passing legislation specifically prohibiting domestic violence abuse or training officials so that they understand the complexities of issues surrounding this type of abuse. Also the government has not initiated any awareness raising campaign in order to

eliminate domestic violence against women. As there is no special law dealing with domestic violence, victims of this type of violence have to file a complaint under the assault provisions of the Penal Code. However, the Penal Code negates the specific circumstances and needs that are involved in violence between domestic inmates. In fact, domestic violence continues to be seen as a private matter by the law enforcement officials.

- Lastly, the Cameroon government has given undue premium to unity in uniformity instead of unity in diversity thus has failed to sustainably recognize cross cultural, i.e. tradition vs western, Anglophone vs francophone conflicts and problems.

VI. EMERGING TYPES OF VAW IN CAMEROON

Domestic violence

Domestic violence is still regarded by society as a whole as well as by law enforcement agents as a private concern. The attitude of both men and women to the criminality of domestic violence impedes prosecution in most cases. This violence is difficult to prove in court while traditional laws have not been substantively used by government to check VAW (violence against women). In most cases, GBV is hardly addressed at the level of the courts because it is often referred to as a family issue. Some issues of violence such as sexual harassment suffer from limited visibility, reporting and prosecution. In addition, institutions that can facilitate the implementation of the BPFAs lack the requisite financial and human resources to be able to execute their functions and programmes effectively. **Domestic violence** are such acts as; wife battering, child defilement, desertion, and abusive language, marital rape, incest, child labor and sexual exploitation of domestic workers. Although there are no reliable statistics on domestic violence against women in Cameroon, reports indicate that it is a widespread problem in the country especially with the lack of measures taken by the government to eliminate domestic violence against women, which is still regarded as culturally acceptable by certain sectors of society.

Marital Rape

It is not clear whether marital rape is considered a crime or not, since the doctrine is divided into two camps and the courts are careful not to take a decision in favour of either side. However, it seems to be culturally accepted that consent to marriage constitutes consent to mutual request of sexual intercourse.

Economic violence

It includes deprivation of necessities such as food and basics like clothing and school fees for girl children, the denial of the right to work and grabbing of widow's property by relatives of the deceased spouse and orphaned children.

Trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation

Human trafficking, especially trafficking in children is widespread in Cameroon. Children especially girls are usually trafficked for labour purposes and sexual exploitation internally, to and from neighbouring countries, and also to Europe and the US. An ILO study revealed that trafficking accounted for 83% of child labourers. There are reports from the North West Region and Bafoussam that indicate that trafficking is a business, with the girls regarded as just another product to be bought and sold and used as sources of income by city dwellers.

Socio-cultural practices

These include Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), early and forced marriage, widowhood rites that cause physical and psychological suffering, discriminatory dietary practices, child labour and wife inheritance. The practice of ***Female Genital Mutilation (FGM)*** constitutes a serious offence against the physical and psychological integrity of the girl child. This practice, which mainly affects young girls, still exists in some regions of Cameroon, especially in the Extreme North, the South-West and the North West regions of the country where the practice is said to affect 100% of Muslim girls and 63.6% of Christian girls. According to the WHO and UNFPA, up to 20% of all women in Cameroon undergo the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM). Reportedly, the following three forms of FGM occur in Cameroon: clitoridectomy; excision; and the most severe form, infibulations.

Sexual violence

This includes incest and different types of rape - attempted, gang, date, marital and systemic, as well as sexual harassment, demand for sex in return for favors, sexual abuse of children and mentally or physically disabled people. Also forced marriage, denial of the right to use contraceptives, forced abortion, violence against the sexual integrity of women including FGM, and forced prostitution aggravated this problem.

Breast ironing

Another form of violence against girl children in Cameroon is the modeling of the breasts. This usually involves the use of very painful methods such as breast ironing to keep the breasts of

young girls especially those who start developing breast by the age of nine small. A study carried by the German Technical Corporation (GTZ) in 2006, showed that 24% of adolescent girls and 50% of girls who show early signs of breast development had undergone this form of violence in Cameroon. This practice is intended to disturb the development of the breast of girls and keep them away from boys and sexual activities.

VII. CONCLUSION

It should be noted that every sustainable human endeavour must take into consideration inclusive strategies that bring on board women, the old, the young, the impaired, minorities, etc. 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.

WAY FORWARD

Given that this is an ongoing process, the activities to ensure the implementation of the Beijing platform will continue in different ways by government and CSOs. This will mean planning and executing different activities that will promote women's rights and work toward ending discrimination against women in Cameroon. 2011 and 2012 will be hosting key elections in the country, activities will be focused on the aspect of "Women's participation in Politics", which will act as a clarion call to the presidential candidate to take up women's issues actively in their agendas and also act as a pointer to the importance of getting more women into parliament in the 2012 elections.

SUCCESS STORIES ON THE BEIJING PLATFORM OF ACTION IN CAMEROON

According to UNIFEM (2010), civil society organizations in Cameroon, in collaboration with relevant government stakeholders, in 2007 recognized the value of CEDAW as a powerful tool to stimulate change if widely disseminated and used as the basis for understanding universally accepted human rights principles, namely those relating to gender equality. They developed a training manual titled "CEDAW Made Easy," which was used as a resource for a network of traditional leaders. The manual aimed to empower them to use the Convention to bring about concrete improvements in the lives of women in their communities. UNIFEM (2010) also points out that there has been evidence of change following the training. Certain practices, based on the idea of women's inferiority, such as sitting and sleeping on the bare floor or being stripped of clothing upon the death of one's husband, have been abolished in some regions.

Below is a photo of the traditional Ruler of Aboh in the Northwest region of Cameroon addresses his population in a restitution meeting on gender-based violence 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.



(Source: CHRAPA 2007)

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