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UNDP & Gender in Action



A special publication of UNDP Cameroon which highlights the link between Gender Based Violence and Development in Cameroon

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16 DAYS OF ACTIVISM



AGAINST WOMEN NOW !

Awareness, Accountability and **Action**

Gender inequality remains a major barrier to sustainable development, negatively impacting the health and wellbeing of millions of women and girls and society-at-large. Gender equality is a building block for thriving economies, growth, and peaceful societies yet substantial work remains to close the gender gap. In Cameroon, there has been great progress when it comes to gender equality through progressive legislation and the work of individuals and groups advocating and working towards gender parity. However, the gender gap is still persistent and pervasive. Norms, beliefs and traditions continue to exclude women and girls from participation in schools, workplaces, and beyond. In worst cases, they perpetuate sexual and gender-based violence (GBV).

Violence against Women and Girls is one of the most devastating manifestations of gender inequality. Globally, around 35% of women report experiencing physical or sexual violence. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have further exacerbated major risk factors, including unemployment and poverty. 243 million women and girls were abused by an intimate partner in 2020, and it is estimated that 11 million girls might not return to school because of the pandemic, increasing their risk for child marriage and limiting their prospects for employment and financial independence.

Gender influences all arenas of life and likely determines the roles one can have within their households and the opportunities available in society. In Cameroon, only 3% of women own a house in their name, boys have greater access to education than girls, and teenage pregnancy is considerably high. 56% of women have suffered emotional and/or sexual violence and more than 40% of -married women have experienced spousal violence (emotional, physical or sexual). The impacts of gender discrimination and violence against women not only



affect women but also men and the overall development of the country. The empowerment, inclusion, and participation of women at all levels and across all sectors of society is both necessary and beneficial for long-term development gains, including poverty reduction, GDP

growth, access to healthcare, education and peace.

At UNDP, fighting Gender-Based Violence is part of the implementation strategy of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Together, with other UN agencies, civil society, the private sector, the government, women's machineries and national human rights commissions, UNDP works to ensure that:

- GBV response services, including justice services, are made open and accessible, including through online and digital platforms;
- Financial resources for essential GBV services are made available;
- GBV analysis is mainstreamed in assessments to understand and address gaps in capacity and services to promote the inclusion of women's organizations in development, peacebuilding and early recovery;
- Implementation and monitoring of international conventions related to women's rights is adequately supported.

This magazine contains stories from local stakeholders and civil society to highlight the links between GBV, development, and crises within Cameroon. These stories showcase the inspiring achievements towards gender parity but also remind us of the work that remains so that each person, regardless of their gender identity, can live a dignified life.

Jean Luc Stalon,
Resident Representative,
UNDP Cameroon



Gender-based violence

/ˈdʒendər beɪst ˈvi(ə)ləns/

noun

1. Harmful acts directed at an individual or a group of individuals based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, the abuse of power and harmful norms.
2. The term primarily used to underscore the fact that structural, gender-based power differentials place women and girls at risk for multiple forms of violence.
3. The term used to describe targeted violence against LGBTQI+ populations, when referencing violence related to norms of masculinity/femininity and/or gender norms.

The magazine is a part of this year's UNiTE Campaign "END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!" calling for comprehensive and inclusive approaches that can be adapted to change contexts, prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women and girls. Accordingly, the following articles all together illustrate discrimination and/or violence against women and girls on different domains in the Cameroonian society which hinder women to reach their full potential, with both devastating consequences for individuals and the Cameroonian society as a whole aiming to raise Awareness, Accountability and Action to end violence against women now!

The '16 days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence Against Women & Girls' is a global movement taking place between the 25th of November, the International Day for the elimination of Violence against Women,

until the 10th of December, Human Rights Day every year since 1991. 2021 marks the 30th anniversary with over 6000 organizations in 187 countries that have participated during the years, reaching around 300 million people coordinated by the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL). Following this, under the leadership of UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the United Nations launched the UNiTE by 2032 to End Violence against Women campaign (UNiTE Campaign) in 2008 in support for this civil society initiative. The theme for the campaign this

year, 2021 is "END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!" and it calls for comprehensive and inclusive approaches that can be adapted to changing contexts, preventing and responding to all forms of violence against women and girls. As previous years, the colour orange will be used to represent a brighter future, free from violence against women and girls, as a unifying theme running through the UNiTE Campaign.

Campaign background

Reconstruire mieux avec les femmes entrepreneures

Judith Cécile NGO KAM,
ECAM

Quelles soient diplômées ou non, les femmes entreprennent aussi bien dans le secteur informel que formel et le Cameroun regorge de nombreuses femmes entrepreneures. Le recensement général des entreprises opéré par l'Institut National de la Statistique en 2016 présente les données suivantes: 95% des femmes n'ont pas eu accès au financement des établissements de crédit lors du démarrage de leur entreprise; 99% des entreprises promues par des femmes sont des entreprises individuelles; moins de 8% des femmes ont pu franchir le cap de 10 ans d'expérience; 37,5% de promoteurs d'entreprises sont des femmes. Celles-ci sont mieux représentées dans les Très petites, Petites et Moyennes entreprises comparativement aux Grandes Entreprises où elles sont représentées à hauteur de 11,4%. Ces chiffres reflètent le dynamisme à toute épreuve de ces femmes qui souhaitent contribuer à la création de richesses malgré un environnement qui leur est défavorable. Le tissu économique camerounais étant constitué de plus de 80% de TPE, PME, force est de constater que les femmes ont une part importante, dans la vitalité de ce pan de l'écosystème économique du pays.

Aucun domaine n'échappe plus à l'ingéniosité féminine: Industrie, énergies renouvelables, agro-industrie, nouvelles technologies, édition, finances... les femmes se lancent et veulent conquérir l'espace économique pour s'affirmer et marquer l'histoire. Cependant, l'aventure

entrepreneuriale est jalonnée de difficultés qui d'une part sont d'ordre général, concernant aussi bien la gente féminine que masculine comme l'accès au financement; et d'autre part sont spécifiques aux femmes comme les contraintes socio-culturelles. L'accès au financement demeure l'une des difficultés majeures rencontrées par les femmes entrepreneures. Un contraste avec le constat du BIT qui estime que le taux de recouvrement auprès des clientes des institutions de microfinance s'élève à 98% dans le monde. Le taux d'intérêt des emprunts bancaires ne favorisant pas l'accès au crédit, les femmes se tournent généralement vers les structures alternatives comme les tontines - qui reposent généralement sur la confiance - pour financer leurs activités économiques. Cette exclusion financière freine le développement de ces entreprises déjà fragilisées par leur statut de TPE, PE... Les femmes doivent aussi faire face au poids des considérations socio-culturelles et au rôle qu'elles sont censées jouer dans leurs familles en Afrique en général et au Cameroun en particulier :

« Il n'est pas facile d'allier la vie de famille et la gestion de son entreprise... surtout quand on est mariée. Avoir une épouse qui est tout le temps sur la route pour les besoins de son entreprise n'est pas du tout évident. » confie Christelle NOAH, DG des éditions Ecllosion et membre de ECAM au Féminin.



« Il peut nous arriver de nous questionner sur les choix que nous avons fait mais quand nous voyons l'impact de nos entreprises aussi bien sur nos clients que sur les personnes que nous employons, on est confortée dans notre engagement » renchérit un autre membre de ECAM au Féminin.

Les femmes rencontrent également des difficultés liées à la gestion de leurs sociétés. Pour faire face à l'insuffisance des finances et ressources humaines pour le plein développement de leurs entreprises, elles sont parfois amenées à exercer à tous les niveaux de leurs structures, de l'élaboration à l'exécution de leurs stratégies. Ce qui leur laisse peu de place à la recherche d'informations, autre élément capital pour leur développement. Ceci peut donc expliquer le taux de mortalité élevé au bout de deux ans, de ces TPE/PE/PMI/PME visible sur le terrain. Fort de tous ces constats et de la nécessité de rassembler et d'outiller les femmes entrepreneures Entreprises du Cameroun (E.CAM) a mis en place un démantèlement E.cam au Féminin, qui est une véritable plateforme qui permet aux femmes entrepreneures et aspirantes entrepreneures d'identifier leurs besoins et penser les solutions qui peuvent leur être bénéfiques. Quatre actions majeures qui portent déjà leurs fruits :

■ **La mise en réseau des femmes pour les encourager à faire des affaires entre elles ;**

■ **La Clinique de l'entrepreneure : dont l'objectif**

est de faire accompagner les femmes entrepreneures dans la structuration de leur société;

■ **Les voyages d'affaires (Allemagne en 2019, Dubaï et Egypte en 2021) pour leur permettre de valoriser leur savoir-faire et d'acquérir plus d'expérience en échangeant avec leurs consœurs entrepreneures**

■ **CAMEROON WOMEN BUSINESS CHAMPIONS qui est un nouveau programme déployé pour recenser les femmes entrepreneures à fort potentiel, les accompagner par la formation de leurs ressources humaines, la structuration de leur entreprise et le financement de leur activité afin qu'elles soient chacune leaders dans leur secteur d'activité dont le bénéfice se répercutera.**

Dans un contexte post Covid19 où toutes les économies se reconstruisent en mettant un accent sur les ressources internes et ainsi réduire la dépendance à l'extérieure, les femmes entrepreneures par leur dynamisme représentent un atout majeur pour notre pays. Il est donc urgent non seulement de combattre toutes les injustices ou les discriminations dont elles sont victimes dans l'exercice de leur activité économique mais aussi de les accompagner pour les faire passer de l'informel au formel et faire de leurs entreprises des fleurons de notre économie.



Enough is enough:

the European Union places fighting gender-based violence and promoting gender equality at the heart of all its actions

“Keep your head held high, work, and keep your dignity. There is life and there is hope”. This is the advice of Aïssatou, a 27-year old mechanic, to other young girls. Aïssatou is a mother of two and one of the young women who managed to escape an early marriage and get professional training by the Cameroonian NGO APDEL (Association pour la Promotion du Développement Local).

Every year, thousands of girls like Aïssatou are married before the age of 18 to men imposed on them by their parents. Early marriage remains widespread in Cameroon, despite its detrimental consequences on education, health, physical safety and individual freedoms and rights of young girls. It is also illegal according to the Cameroonian penal code. Across several regions in Cameroon, the EU is supporting organisations such as APDEL, ALDEPA (Action locale pour un développement participatif et autogéré) and Reach Out to help survivors of early marriage and of gender-based violence, inform girls on their rights, give them legal assistance, and mobilise women, men, youth and community groups to change harmful norms and practices.

According to official data, more than half of women in Cameroon have experienced physical or sexual violence. In recent years, the Government of Cameroon has improved the legal framework to promote women's rights and address discrimination and violence, including through the adoption of a National Gender Policy and a National Strategy to Combat Gender Based Violence. However, it is important to accelerate the pace of implementation, and we stand along with the national authorities in that goal across all our sectors of cooperation.

Impunity, poverty, traditions and the lack of an



Philippe van Damme,
*Head of the Delegation of the European Union
to Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea*

effective civil registry prevent women and girl's access to education, employment and resources such as land, and stand in the way of their effective protection. In the regions of Cameroon currently affected by insecurity and conflict, human rights in general, and those of women and girls in particular, are endangered even more. And the COVID-19 crisis has further exacerbated gender based violence – in Cameroon as well as in the European Union.

Given the magnitude of these challenges, decisive action and determination are necessary to end violence against women and girls. For this reason, the EU together with its member states launched in 2020 its third Gender Action Plan (GAP III), as a global call for action to mobilise support for gender equality around the world. We believe that in order to drive structural change, we must translate global commitments to women's rights into concrete action. This is why, as part of GAP III, we have committed to ensure that by 2025, 85% of our actions include gender equality as a significant or



main objective. In Cameroon, we have been speaking with numerous women's rights defenders committed to bringing change, a vibrant civil society, national and local authorities and UN partners to develop a plan for turning our commitments into concrete actions. As a result, together with the EU Member States based in the country, we have set three priorities as a Team Europe for continuing and expanding our support to women's rights and gender equality in Cameroon.

Firstly, we have committed to combat violence, harmful practices and discrimination, so that everyone can exercise their rights, free of discrimination, fear or violence. In this domain, we will continue working with women's rights organisations and national stakeholders who are at the forefront of protecting survivors of gender-based violence and ending early marriage.

Second, in recognition of the important role of women in sustainable economic development, we committed to improve the economic and social rights of women and girls, and their access to entrepreneurship and resources such as land. Through better access to employment and education, women and girls can be empowered to take the reins of their own lives, better defend their rights and be at the forefront of the economic, green and digital transitions in Cameroon.

Finally, to promote lasting improvement of gender equality, we are determined to promoting the effective participation of women in decision-making at community and national level, as well as in the resolution of conflicts as advised by the 1325 UN Security Council Resolution on Women, Peace and Security. In the words of Marthe Wandou, President of ALDEPA and laureate of the 2021 Right Livelihood Prize: "Training and educating women will increase their participation in decision-making and conflict resolution, and this is important for boosting gender equality, better governance, and lasting peace."

During the 16 Days of Activism on Violence Against Women, the EU will announce new projects in partnership with Cameroonian civil society organisations, in recognition of the crucial role of women's rights defenders and human rights organisations in addressing gender-based violence and other human rights violations. A total of 1.88 million euros (1.2 billion FCFA) will be mobilised before the end of the year for that purpose, complementing our current initiatives.

With all the partners that have accompanied us over the latest years, we share the belief that all women and girls have a right to a future of their own choice, and free from violence. Keep your heads held high; there is life and there is hope.

Regards sur les personnes déplacées internes :

entre vulnérabilité, auto résilience et développement des communautés hôtes

Cathérine est une jeune déplacée interne du Nord-ouest à l'Ouest. Elle a perdu son mari lors d'une attaque de son quartier et a pu s'enfuir avec ses trois filles âgées entre 8 et 4 ans. « Sur le chemin et à mon arrivée ici à Bafoussam, j'ai été victime de viol plusieurs fois. Quand je suis arrivée j'ai été dans les champs pour chercher un emploi. Je travaille pour une dame dans ses champs de maïs et tout près de chez elle m'a donnée un espace sur lequel j'ai pu faire une butte ; j'y cultive du maïs aussi pour mes filles et moi. Avant tous ces problèmes, j'étais couturière ; propriétaire d'un salon de couture qui fonctionnait très bien. Si seulement je pouvais avoir une machine à coudre, je reprendrais mes activités ici et mes enfants et moi pourrions mieux nous en sortir.»

Des histoires comme celle de Cathérine sont le lot quotidien des personnes déplacées internes, surtout les femmes et les filles comme nous démontre l'échantillon des données de suivi de la protection du sous-cluster VBG suivant : malgré le fait que les VBG ne soient pas couramment signalés, dans le Nord-Ouest et le Sud-Ouest uniquement et de janvier à juin 2021, 4575 cas de VBG ont été signalés, les victimes sont majoritairement des femmes (93%), dont 1% sont des survivants handicapés et 36% sont des enfants.

Tous les acteurs sont soucieux d'offrir aux déplacées internes des solutions de protection, de prévention des fléaux qui naissent ou s'exacerbent avec le déplacement des personnes tels que les violences basées sur le genre, les incidents de droits de l'homme, la perte d'identité légale et autres besoins immédiats.

« Lorsque je suis arrivé à Bonaberi, j'ai trouvé des menuisiers qui y travaillaient déjà mais je leur ai apporté des techniques de tapisserie nouvelle des fauteuils, ils sont nombreux à se faire former par moi aujourd'hui et j'ai trouvé un emploi stable dans la menuiserie en tant que tapissier moderne comme ils m'appellent tous ici ».

Ces propos sont ceux de Mike déplacé interne installé à Douala 4eme qui a eu, en plus du handicap créé par la perte de sa carte d'identité, à faire face à une intégration difficile au sein de sa communauté d'accueil parce qu'empreinte de toutes sortes de propos et de gestes discriminatoires ; certains inspirés par la peur.

Ces éléments d'analyse sont d'une importance capitale pour tout acteur voulant intervenir pour prévenir les violences basées sur le genre sur un fond de cohésion sociale ; violences qui, faut-il le rappeler trouvent leur lit dans les relations de pouvoir au sein de la société. Une approche holistique de la réponse basée sur l'individu lui-même et sa capacité à rebondir de la vulnérabilité est la conclusion à laquelle le Programme des Nations Unies pour le Développement est parvenu à la suite d'une formation de 2000 déplacés internes dont 80% de femmes et 20 % d'hommes dans les régions du Littoral

Il serait intéressant, dans le but non seulement d'instaurer une cohésion sociale entre les populations déplacées internes et les populations qui les accueillent, mais également de lutter contre la stigmatisation dont font face ces déplacées, d'agir dans le sens de changer le narratif sur la manière dont ils sont vus. Les déplacées internes sont un potentiel de développement certain des communautés qui les accueillent.

et de l'Ouest Cameroun sur les violences basées sur le genre, la cohésion sociale et l'entrepreneuriat.

Julie Madeleine Mballa Epse Eloundou
Spécialiste en Genre et Droits Humains
au PNUD

Don't let stigma hinder you're awareness

About 20 years ago, early 2000, HIV was perceived as

a death sentence and shameful disease as approximately 90% of HIV infections are transmitted sexually. Frightening messages and images were relayed by all available means (radio, TV, posters, flyers, etc.), causing fear that made people unwilling to know their HIV status, until it was too late to be able to save them. This was the time, where I was expecting my second child and despite the frightening communication about the disease, I decided to go for a test. Surprised, not only that my status was positive, but also for the fact that I didn't get any post-counselling or support. So, while going for antenatal consultation with my regular gynaecologist I presented my results to the gynaecologist who then got scared and advised me to even terminate my pregnancy...

An anonymous story about HIV and stigma

ordinary. Those affected remain discriminated against, rejected and stigmatised.

Nevertheless, stigma is difficult to assess, but the direct consequences from stigma linked to HIV and discriminatory behaviour are as destructive as the disease itself. It's one of the main barriers to screening and treatment, it often bring social rejection, family abandonment, loss of employment, etc. and people living with HIV (PLHIV) and AIDS are victims of discriminations from the population but also, indirectly, from public administration. In spite of the improvement of treatment provided to HIV positive people, the society's perception of HIV does not change significantly, even in educated societies. Self-stigmatisation is also common among PLHIV that lead people to turn inward and not seek support to live a productive life. As for my own situation, I was afraid to know about my own status, many other pregnant women were as well and many pregnant women still are afraid to know their status today. Many women get called prostitutes even if they are married when they are found to be HIV-positive, and accused of being the ones spreading the disease, especially since in Cameroon, about 2/3 of HIV-positive people are females.

The systematic violations of the basic rights of PLHIV include violation of medical secrecy, violation of privacy, violation of the right to work, violation of the right to health care in some settings, violation of the right to housing (for instance some HIV positive people have been sent away from houses they were renting due to their HIV status or even those who were just suspected to be HIV positive), violation of the right to free movement (for example visa refusal), violation with regard to insurance and credit (if an HIV positive person discloses his or her status, their request of an insurance policy or bank credit is very likely to be rejected), and the discrimination continues.

As a pregnant woman, it is thus of extra importance to know ones status of HIV since medicine are developed enough to prevent transmission of the infection through birth. Both of my children tested negative at their age of 18 months each, but they surely wouldn't if I hadn't known



#16Days of Activism

#OrangeTheWorld:

End violence against women now!

about my status. So, my advice to all women of childbearing age is to be aware of their status despite all the stigma! At the same time, my hope is for more knowledge and information to reach civil society in order to actually get

rid of all devastating stigma that circulates in Cameroon and also, of course in order to reduce the transmission of the virus.

Women with disabilities versus violence in Cameroon

Cameroonian women living with disabilities face three-fold discrimination as a result of their sex, perceived inability and low socio-economic status. The discrimination is perpetrated on multiple fronts, causing low self-esteem and in some cases more severe mental health issues. It is often generated from the family level and is pervasive throughout their communities. Add a layer of crisis and you have the reality of many women and girls in the Anglophone region of Cameroon.

The government of Cameroon has made several strides towards addressing discrimination and providing support for persons with disabilities. Law No. 2010/002 of 13th April 2010 protects and empowers persons with disabilities in Cameroon, focusing on the prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation, psychological, social and economic support. The Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) has signed partnerships with the Ministry of Secondary Education to implement fees exemption for children with disabilities and children of parents with disabilities in government schools. The MINAS has also signed partnerships with the Ministry

*Veronica Ngum Ndi,
CAVP-Bamenda*

of Public Contracts to promote infrastructural accessibility for persons with disabilities. Despite these steps, people living with disabilities in Cameroon face financial hardship, unsustainable livelihoods, and are underrepresented in leadership and decision-making at all levels of society.

According to the WHO, persons with disabilities live on the extreme margins of society. Women with disabilities in Cameroon live on less than \$1 USD a day with insufficient capital to run businesses and even meet their own daily needs. They have limited access to training opportunities (vocational or formal training), are discriminated against at the labour market and are often judged by their disabilities. Moreover, women with disabilities often experience sexual threats, rape and the issue of convincing men to use condoms.

Structural barriers for women with disabilities often starts at an early age in the context of education, with many families failing to prioritize the education of a girl child with a disability. They think it is not useful for her to attend school due to her disability. Most girls with disabilities are left at home to do chores and

learn how to run the home, resulting in less than 2% of persons with disabilities in Cameroon having had formal education and less than 5% of women and girls with disabilities having had access to education and empowerment opportunities, in other words, opportunities to gain skills for a sustainable livelihood and an independent life.

Now, add a crisis context ... Or simply turn your attention to the present Anglophone crisis, where women and girls with disabilities are disproportionately affected by the crisis. They experience numerous challenges like neglect, abandonment, loss of assistive devices, properties, homes and small business capital. They face gender-based violence due to forced displacement and living in overcrowded host communities. Oftentimes, humanitarian interventions in these affected areas fail to take into consideration the specific needs of women and girls with disabilities.

The organization Community Association for Vulnerable Persons (CAVP)-Bamenda is a woman with disability-led organization that advocates for and promotes the rights for women and girls with disabilities and/or HIV/AIDS. In order to reduce stigma and discrimination, CAVP works with associations of persons with disabilities and support groups of persons living with HIV/AIDS to advocate for their inclusion at all levels of development and

humanitarian action. The problems faced by women with disabilities, just as women with HIV/AIDS in the North West region, mapped by the organization includes inaccessibility and insufficient drugs at Health Centers, financial hardship, marginalization, stigmatization, discrimination, abandonment and living in isolation among other problems.

CAVP has been working with approximately 54 women with HIV/AIDS and 120 women with disabilities in Bamenda I, II & III to carry out advocacy actions to educate and sensitize families and communities of persons with disabilities and persons with HIV/AIDS on their rights to education, justice and law, access to ITC, economic empowerment and volunteering opportunities. They have organized digital and economic empowerment training workshops and collaborated with GBV stakeholders. Vocational training opportunities in the Women Empowerment Centre are linked to opportunities for start-up grants that can change the trajectory of their lives. While organizations such as CAVP have made great headway, the needs are still great and both development and humanitarian actions are needed to ensure equal rights and opportunities for women and girls with disabilities in Cameroon. Violence against women and girls with disabilities, whether physical, psychological, sexual or economic, needs to end. Now.



Assuming she's immune to HIV/AIDS

Many ordinary people and even healthcare workers in Cameroon falsely assume that persons with disabilities are not sexually active, can't get pregnant and are immune to HIV/AIDS. Parents of children with disabilities often refuse to acknowledge that their children could be sexually active and persons with disabilities are often placed last on the list of those who should receive care for HIV/AIDS. Furthermore, healthcare centers that provide HIV/AIDS service and counseling are often inaccessible for persons with disabilities due to structural barriers of the facilities.

There is also a common misconception that those living with HIV/AIDS can become free of HIV/AIDS if they have sex with a person who has a physical or mental disability because of the false notion that they are immune to the virus. These false notions are deeply harmful and put persons with disabilities at high risk of exposure and make it more difficult for them to for them to access HIV/AIDS education and services including counseling and testing when needed.

Persons with disability are equally as prone to HIV/AIDS as persons without a disability. They can be sexually active and therefore can be exposed to risks. Countering misconceptions through education and minimizing barriers to services such as counseling, testing, and treatment are necessary to make sure people with disabilities get the care they need and deserve.

*Veronica Ngum Ndi,
CAVP-Bamenda*

Inclusiveness to Effectiveness in Sustainable Development

A gender officer's journey into the South/Eastern Cameroonian forest areas where local communities live in symbiose with and depend on the forest and its resources.

Fannie Elveljung,

*Women's Empowerment Support
Officer UNDP Cameroon*

As data and literature have come to show that addressing gender-based inequalities and especially empowering women to fulfil their potentials gives greater possibilities to enhance gender equality but also sustainable development, there has been an awakening awareness of the importance of taking gender into account in initiatives and projects of sustainable development. Hence UNDP's gender officer in Cameroon visited the South/Eastern forest areas of the country to discover the Gender Roles and Relations there in preparation for an upcoming project on forest conservation and sustainability. Through consultations and discussions with local women and men Gender

Roles and Relations were explored to be particularly attached to cultural and patriarchal structures, connected both to everyday forest activities as to health and educational status of children and youths. Entering the forest around Dja and Ngoyla Wildlife Reserve gives eye opening experiences and insights on how gender and forest is connected in Cameroon. Norms at a national level, with its representants, commitments and laws, inevitable reflect on life circumstances in local communities so just as Cameroon as a whole has traditionally and customary attached gender norms, the local communities of these forests has too. Men play the main role of breadwinning and decision-making in

households, whilst women are often constrained to the household sphere, with limited access and opportunities to education, healthcare services, financial means and are substantially exposed to gender-based violence. Here, indigenous “Baka” populations live as well as local “Bantou” populations either in distinct communities or mixed ones. Both populations use a lot of similar practices in the forest hence the “Baka” populations practices and activities are more traditionally attached.

Zooming in to the everyday life of these forest communities, men are involved in a lot of hunting-



activities but are also producing cacao, plantain and other agricultural products. Women who's normally taking care of the households, are also involved with some agricultural activities, often in collaboration with their husbands but rarely involved in sales of the products. The “Baka” women are the ones collecting traditional medicinal plants and herbs, taking care of the health of their community members, and are the main bearers of traditional languages and dialects.

Nevertheless, women, indigenous people and not least indigenous women continue to face marginalization and exclusion here and all over the country, often by limited access to education, healthcare services, financial means, ownership and autonomy. These structures and discriminatory gender norms, that generally subordinate femininity to masculinity, is not only destructive for the wellbeing of women but also men and children as it's limiting great opportunities for development.

Children in these communities are normally malnourished and not attending school at all or only for a few years. Hence, isolating the problem of malnutrition, this is not always a result of food shortage, but rather of old habits and incorrect knowledge that cause the children a deficient diet and it's shown that this problem aggregates wherever discrimination against women is identified. Continuing to the problem of lacking educational status, girls usually drop out of secondary school because of pregnancies in as early ages as 12-14 years old. All this clearly and strongly linked to the limited sexual and reproductive rights of women and girls in Cameroon. So access to sexual and reproductive health and rights is not least important to avoid girls to dropping out of school and to reach better nutrition and health for children over all but to also boost the sustainable development that one wants to reach.

Continuing to explore the everyday life of populations within the forest it's impossible not to notice or mention the widespread consumption of alcohol that puts a barrier to sustainable development and healthy relationships, as it triggers a lot of gender-based violence. Found was that many men even get too drunk to consult and discuss with after lunch-time in several communities, making some of the consultations complicated and sometimes impossible. This problem ripples down to earlier ages too as while girls drops out of secondary school due to pregnancies, a lot of boys drops out of secondary school



too, but because of consuming alcohol. Nevertheless, violence is highly triggered by the consumption of alcohol, often connected to jealousy and sexual abuse. One “Baka” woman say she even has problems with her husband stealing the small money she’s got to buy alcohol while another elder “Baka” woman shows marks on her and her daughters faces and bodies after being beaten up by a man who tried to sexually abuse the daughter but got interrupted by the mom.

The literature on the field of gender and conservation is growing and urging the need to include and empower the capacity of women and girls in conservation practices. At UNDP we stress the necessary to

understand and respond to the discrimination of women and girls and act to empower them in their everyday life through cross-cutting development projects and programs. Responding to inequalities should not be an optional extra, and not least when it comes to conserve biodiversity, mitigate and adapt to climate change.. Inclusiveness will bring about more effectiveness to more sustainable conservation practices in the forest areas of Cameroon and globally!

It’s on time to bring about more inclusive and effective conservation practices into the forests of Cameroon!

La Fracture Numérique de Genre

Delphine NANA MEKOUNTE,
Directrice du CEFEP/ROD

Malgré toutes les conférences mondiales, les plans d’action adoptés, les conventions ratifiées, la mobilisation constante des militantes des droits des femmes, nous constatons encore aujourd’hui que l’égalité entre les hommes et les femmes est loin d’être atteinte, loin d’être une réalité palpable. Les chiffres sont là pour prouver que les femmes n’ont pas atteints les scores d’égalité souhaités. Elles sont encore les pauvres des pauvres, les analphabètes des analphabètes, les exclues des exclus malgré toutes les mesures prises notamment la discrimination positive. now...

Parlant des TIC, on pourrait dire que les femmes sont les premières victimes du fossé numérique. Dans l’ensemble, bien qu’il y a des avancées, elles ont moins accès que les hommes aux services des TIC. Pour plusieurs raisons, elles ont une attitude ambiguë envers les technologies et les machines, pour avoir de tout temps été socialisées dans la croyance que les machines et la technologie sont le domaine des hommes et non des femmes et des filles, ce qui crée un préjugé sexiste dans les attitudes devant l’étude ou l’utilisation de la technologie de l’Information. Sitôt arrivées à l’école, les filles sont détournées des filières scientifiques et techniques, consciemment ou non, par les préjugés des parents et des enseignants. Dans certaines régions du Cameroun, les filles sont incitées à se marier ou à trouver un emploi plutôt qu’à poursuivre leurs études. La décision des parents d’investir dans l’éducation des garçons se fait souvent au détriment des filles, à qui on demande de participer aux tâches domestiques.

Leur participation à la Société de l’information se heurte à tous ces nombreux obstacles socio- culturels et institutionnels qui fondent et pérennisent les disparités

entre hommes et femmes face aux TIC. Nous avons cité le faible niveau de formation, la faible participation des filles dans les filières scientifiques et techniques, les nombreuses tâches traditionnelles quotidiennes, la situation économiques défavorisées, (manque d’accès au crédit) la faible mobilité et le manque de temps. Les technologies de l’information et de la communication (TIC) sont une dimension transversale pour l’atteinte des Objectifs de Développement Durable (ODD). Assurer la prise en compte adéquate des préoccupations des hommes et des femmes dans l’élaboration des politiques de TIC, et l’égalité d’accès aux contenus et à leur contrôle, aux capacités et à la connectivité permettent de réduire les disparités de genre dans l’éducation, les opportunités économiques et la prise de décisions.

Cependant le déficit statistique sur la fracture numérique de genre conduit à des déficiences importantes dans le système de connaissance et d’approche analytique des problèmes et des solutions liées à la construction d’une Société de l’information qui soit juste et inclusive.



L'élaboration de politiques pertinentes de TIC devrait être fondée sur la production et l'utilisation de données désagrégées sur la fracture numérique de genre. Il est évident que les femmes qui ont beaucoup de retard à rattraper doivent résolument s'inscrire dans cette révolution technologique. Mais l'accès des femmes aux TIC ne se fera pas naturellement, elles devront s'atteler à élaborer des stratégies d'ancrage dans la modernité dont l'une d'elles pourrait être l'utilisation -judicieuse de l'approche genre qui pourrait leur permettre de s'arrimer de manière durable à tous les projets de développement.

De plus, dans les pays en développement, les infrastructures des TIC se trouvent le plus souvent dans les zones urbaines alors que la majorité des femmes se trouvent dans les zones rurales. Pour que les femmes puissent sortir de ce cycle infernal, il faudrait que l'approche genre soit instituée et adoptée dès la mise en place des projets de développement. La dimension genre

doit être intégrée à la base et non venir se greffer après coup. Il apparaît donc clairement que pour ne pas rater le Rendez-vous avec la révolution numérique, il ne faut pas manquer de conjuguer harmonieusement femmes et TIC, en fait de combiner judicieusement la dimension genre avec les TIC. Il ne s'agit pas non plus de faire des femmes des consommatrices passives de TIC, il faudrait qu'elles soient impliquées dans le choix des contenus, qu'ils reflètent leur spécificité, leurs besoins et leurs aspirations. Pour ce faire, il ne faudrait pas retomber dans le piège et répéter la même erreur historique et se contenter des petits métiers du secteur.

Pour être plus précis, il est essentiel de mobiliser les femmes à tous les niveaux de l'action, dans un esprit d'égalité, dans toutes les sphères de la société, y compris l'accès aux responsabilités et la participation à la prise de décision, afin que l'égalité, le développement et la paix deviennent une réalité dans la société de l'information.

Participation des femmes à la vie publique

l'action du Ministère de la Promotion de la femme et de la Famille

Françoise Bekono

Sub-Director in charge of Women's Rights Promotion

La promotion et la valorisation des ressources humaines féminines au sein des administrations publiques et parapubliques s'inscrit au rang des priorités nationales. Elles constituent un impératif majeur découlant de l'orientation démocratique de la politique de développement socioéconomique par laquelle le Cameroun entend parvenir à l'émergence, et asseoir définitivement les bases de l'Etat de droit. Si les avancées dans ce domaine sont indéniables du fait de la volonté politique enracinée, des efforts supplémentaires

s'avèrent indispensables pour résorber les disparités et discriminations sexistes abyssales qui s'observent aujourd'hui dans certains secteurs d'activité. Dans le souci d'éclairer l'opinion publique sur le niveau de mise en œuvre au Cameroun des objectifs mondiaux auxquels le Cameroun a souscrit relativement à l'égalité entre les hommes et les femmes dans l'occupation des postes décisionnels et la direction publique, depuis 2016,

Le Cameroun à travers le MINPROFF produit le Palmarès Genre des administrations publiques et parapubliques, pour mesurer ces avancées vers cet objectif ; c'est un document plaidoyer qui permet de mettre en évidence le niveau de prise en compte du principe d'égalité des sexes inscrits dans l'agenda mondial consécutivement à la 4 -ème Conférence des nations Unies tenue à Beijing en 1995.

Ce document fournit une masse critique d'informations rigoureusement contrôlées sur la répartition des postes entre les hommes et les femmes au sein des administrations ciblées. L'analyse situationnelle globale des données disponibles fait apparaître une amélioration des indicateurs sexo-spécifiques dans certains des structures explorées. Le souhait est que cette tendance se consolide en se généralisant. Le palmarès genre s'intègre dans la trousse à outils dont se dote le Gouvernement pour renforcer sa stratégie de plaidoyer en faveur de la gouvernance inclusive et de la lutte contre les

discriminations à l'égard des femmes dans la vie publique. il est conçu pour produire un miroir pour les administrations, et susciter un surcroît d'attention et d'intérêt pour les questions inhérentes à la participation des femmes à la citoyenneté et à la promotion de l'égalité des chances pour les hommes et les femmes dans la cité. De tels outils sont indispensables pour le suivi de politiques et des initiatives en

faveur de l'égalité des sexes et la progression vers les cibles des ODD au comme ailleurs, sans oublier le lien intime entre la promotion de l'égalité des citoyens et la bonne gouvernance. L'évolution positive des indicateurs au sein de certaines administrations jadis moins bien classées est encourageante. Une inversion des tendances est possible, pour peu que la volonté et la sensibilité genre articulées avec le respect des engagements de notre pays deviennent un credo partagé, un mode de fonctionnement universel et le fil conducteur du management des ressources humaines à tous les niveaux.



Gender stereotypes exacerbating food security concerns in Cameroon

Caleb sits through the cooking demonstration class with rapt attention. He needs to be sure he masters the process of cooking split peas before going home. He has just received a monthly ration of food items from WFP. Normally, his wife would do the cooking. But he lost her to violent confrontations in Manyu, South West region of Cameroon when he was forced to flee with his four children. While he is in a safe environment now, Caleb says the process of choosing what meal to cook feels like a chore sometimes. “My wife always knew what combination of ingredients was best

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for our health. I just cook what is easy and available,” he says. He can only hope that the help he gets from the WFP cooking demonstrations is enough to guide and support the nutrition needs of his family. Evidence shows that higher levels of both acute and chronic malnutrition for women and girls is directly related to gender-inequitable access to nutritious foods. Women often sacrifice entire meals or portions of food so that their children and or husbands can eat first. In worst case scenarios, women may neglect their nutrition and health because of the effects of violence at home or from



crises like the one in the North West and South West regions of the country. The Cameroon national strategy to fight gender-based violence, 2017-2020, highlights that discriminatory laws and rights for spouses, coupled with patriarchal stereotypes also limit women and girls' capacities to assure their food security and nutrition. In our communities, gender roles prevent boys and men from acquiring cooking skills, which reinforce their vulnerability to hunger and malnutrition in times of crisis.

It is because of situations like the one Caleb and his family find themselves in that WFP integrates protection concerns in the fight against food insecurity and malnutrition. In its gender policy 2018-2021, WFP has implemented measures for gender equality and women's empowerment ensuring that men, women, boys and girls are equally equipped with the tools to sustain their food security. For Caleb, WFP cooking demonstrations provided an opportunity to adjust to the challenges of

running a home without his wife. "I thought I had failed to keep my promise of looking after my children" Caleb said. In every corner of the world, women are more likely than men to live in extreme poverty; their work is generally underpaid or not paid at all. Cultures and traditions uphold sexist norms and boys often receive more resources than girls for the same work. Women make up a little over half of the world's population but suffer unequal access to resources and education in every corner of the globe. Globally, women are more likely than men to suffer from hunger and food insecurity.

Despite the inequalities, women continue to be strong agents when it comes ending hunger. Therefore, organizations such as The World Food Programme are committed to reducing inequality and empowering women with the means to take command of their livelihoods through secure access to food and opportunities.

HAWAWOU Aissatou

Un espoir pour la lutte contre toute forme de violence faite à la jeune fille !

Looking closer at the situation of stigma when it comes to people living with disabilities, many ordinary people and even healthcare workers in Cameroon falsely assume that persons with disabilities are not sexually active, can't get pregnant and are immune to HIV/AIDS. Parents of children

with disabilities often refuse to acknowledge that they could be sexually active and persons with disabilities are often placed last on the list of those who should have the priority to receive care for HIV/AIDS while also healthcare centers that provide HIV/AIDS service and counseling often are inaccessible for persons with disability due to physical structures of the buildings.



Digging deeper into the stigma that negatively affects persons living with disabilities, many people assume that those living with HIV/AIDS could become free from HIV/AIDS if they have sex with

a person who has a physical or mental disability. Because of this and the false notion about persons with disabilities immunity to HIV/AIDS, they are often left out of HIV/AIDS education and services including counseling and testing, which they really need. Nevertheless, there is a fear that if information about sexual health is shared with those with disability, they will become even more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS. Persons with disability are as equally prone to HIV/

AIDS as persons without disability and they are also just as sexually active as persons without disability according to a few reports. A lot of work will need to be done to educate persons with disability about HIV/AIDS and also healthcare workers in Cameroon about giving the persons with disability the most deserving attention in HIV/AIDS issue.

Media And GBV: the case of Cameroon



Violence against women in Cameroon has through the advent of Social media gone from physical harm and deprivation of their rights violence in online spaces. Gender Based Violence exists in newsrooms, ranging from assaults and sexual harassment at the office to sending female journalists on coverage where media owners have negotiated sex deals with event organizers on behalf of the female journalist.

Female journalists are sometimes refused employment or fired for failing to give in to the erotic demands of promoters and supervisors. This is usually worse for journalism students on internships as supervisors at times promise them a fail evaluation mark if they refuse their advances. Hence, like all forms of GBV at the work place, GBV in media enterprises is also underreported. Women continue to suffer in silence.

With the rise of social media, women are facing violence based on their gender through web pages, WhatsApp groups and various social media platforms used by

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both men and fellow women. It ranges from victim blaming, slut-shaming, body-shaming to brutal and sexualized threats of death, rape and violence.

Recorded cases of offensive comments, comments on appearance, sexuality, sexual orientation or gender roles as well as false compliments, using 'humor' to humiliate and ridicule the women or a targeted gender is pervasive.

GBV in the media and online spaces of Cameroon is often political and ethnic related. In a political or election period, female politicians face attacks to the point that many shy away for their ambitions. From the first lady of Cameroon, to female opposition political leaders and top ranking female journalists, social media has not spared anyone in violating their rights because of their gender. Ethnic-related GBV online is also on the rise, related to tribes and areas of origin with clear intentions of promoting violence. As examples, the cases of verbal violence and insults on Banyangi ladies, Bansa ladies and Bassa ladies are all over the social media.

Impact

Online GBV can seem harmless or be perceived as nothing serious. However, the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy states that, "Not only does online GBV undermine freedom of speech for women and girls, but its psychological, emotional and/or physical impacts are real and severe." It undervalues female skills and opinions, destroys their reputation, limits their participation in diverse sectors and has severe physical and psychological implications. Therefore, media professionals need to play a vital role in increasing awareness about GBV and crimes through a mutual approach that puts sensitive reporting together with advocacy, sensitization and support for media personnel! Together, against GBV and violence online and all other spheres of society.

Big thanks to the team who contributed to this magazine!

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Our anonymous contributor for the
article regarding HIV and Stigma

As we usually say here in Cameroon,

“We are together!!”

Let's orange the world and

“END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN NOW!”

