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# The Involvement of Humanitarian Actors in the Ongoing Crisis of The Northwest and Southwest Regions of The Republic of Cameroon

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## ABSTRACT

*The conflict-stricken North West and South West regions of Cameroon formally called West Cameroon is a British colony by virtue of the defeat of the Germans during the 1st world war of 1919 and the League of Nation Trusteeship Agreement. Due to the demand of independence and political infighting, on the 1st of October 1961 West Cameroon gained their independence by joining East Cameroon as a federated state and in 1972, the federated states were transformed to a unitary state under the name of the United Republic of Cameroon. 50 years thereafter as one nation though with differences in education, culture, language and legal system, the suppressed ideology of Anglophone marginalization sprang up resulting to the demand for separation call the Anglophone crisis under the banner of the Ambazonia struggle of independence through secession. This crisis has ignited the need for humanitarian intervention due to the gross violation of human rights. Due to the untold suffering, displacement of persons, mass graves, hunger, diseases and continues fighting, humanitarian actors saw the need to intervene so as to safe lives, encourage peace through dialogue and ensure accountability Since the outbreak of the crisis in late 2016 till present, humanitarian actors have saw an upsurge in violence between armed separatist fighters and State Defense and Security Forces (SDF). State DSF intensified crackdowns on anyone suspected of either being a separatist fighter or having any links with the latter. Also, separatist fighters likewise intensified attacks on any individual suspected to be collaborating with state DSF. Humanitarian actors have monitored and documented human rights violations and abuses including: arbitrary arrests and detention; kidnapping and ransom taking; extrajudicial killings; targeted killings; torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment; arson attacks and property destruction; attacks on protected areas like chief palaces and schools; attack on traditional and religious authorities; attacks on the right to education; rape and other forms of sexual assault.*

**Keywords:** *Cameroon-Northwest and Southwest, human rights, humanitarian actors, Crisis.*

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The works of humanitarian actors are of judicial facts (a think that speaks for itself) in the restive regions of the Northwest and Southwest an Anglophone incline sections in Cameroon. Memory is still fresh with regard to the outbreak of the Anglophone crisis as from 27<sup>th</sup> November 2016. The works of humanitarian actors are a strong force to recon with. Even though, humanitarian actors have engaged fully in the fight against human rights violation, social injustice, and the poor conduct of handling the crisis, most of them are considered feeble owing to their reliance on subsidy from foreign government and international aid bodies. This article seeks to examine the basis and the role of humanitarian missions in the conflict hit north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. The paper further scrutinizes the efficacy of interventions by humanitarian actors in humanitarian missions as concerns the Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. Based on evidence from primary and secondary source materials, the paper argues that despite the relevance of humanitarian actors towards addressing the humanitarian situation in the course of the Anglophone crisis, much is yet to be achieved as far as the attainment of sustainable peace in the crisis stricken regions is concern. The lack of a common platform for humanitarian actors made coordination of their accomplishments impracticable.

### **(A) Synopsys of the Keywords**

#### **1. Cameroon-Northwest and Southwest**

Current-day Cameroon was formed through the merger of French and British colonial territories in 1961 and in 1972, the central government unilaterally replaced a federal system with a unitary state. Northwest and Southwest provinces (formerly UK-held “Southern Cameroons”) remain predominantly English-speaking, with distinct educational and legal systems. In 2016, Anglophones protested over state appointments of Francophone magistrates and teachers to English-speaking areas. The government granted minor concessions but cracked down on unrest, arresting hundreds (including peaceful activists, some of whom were charged with terrorism) and deploying the military to affected areas. ‘In October 2017, protesters marked the anniversary of Cameroon’s 1961 unification by symbolically proclaiming the secession of Anglophone areas. Some groups also took up arms in the name of an independent state of Ambazonia. The ensuing conflict between government forces and a fractious array of rebel groups has featured widespread abuses against civilians. Security forces have been accused of torture, extrajudicial killings, indiscriminate arrests, and burning of villages. Armed groups have reportedly carried out assassinations, kidnappings, mutilations, and attacks on schools and

teachers. Attackers have targeted health facilities, spurring a mounting health crisis.<sup>2</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung's Transformation Index (BSTI) Country report 2020 covers the period from February 1, 2017 to January 31, 2019. The BSTI assesses the transformation toward democracy and a market economy as well as the quality of governance in 137 countries. The report noted: *"Equal opportunity is only partially achieved, and discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, and region exists... 'Perception of discrimination is high among Anglophones and the government's heavy-handed response to demonstrations led to a violent secessionist movement. Anglophone activists cite historical cultural, economic, and political grievances that date back to the abolishment of federalism in 1972. These include the diversion of major infrastructural investments to other areas, the absence of sufficient accommodations for English in educational testing and higher education, and the relegation of the tradition of British Common Law to secondary status. The government has tried to address some of these issues by launching a teacher recruitment drive, legislating the creation of a Common Law Bench on the Supreme Court, and revising its training program at the National School of Administration and Magistracy (ENAM)"*<sup>3</sup>

Human Rights Watch 2020 report, considering events in 2019, stated: 'Cameroon's Anglophone regions have been engulfed in crisis since late 2016, when English-speaking lawyers, students, and teachers began protesting what they saw as their under-representation in, and cultural marginalization by, the central government. 'The response of government security forces has included killing civilians, torching villages, and using torture and incommunicado detention. Armed separatists have also killed, tortured, and kidnapped dozens of civilians, including teachers, students, and government officials. On September 10, amid increasing violence and following sustained international pressure, President Biya called for a "national dialogue," a series of nationwide discussions aimed at addressing the Anglophone crisis. The dialogue ended with the adoption of a special status for the two Anglophone regions and the release of hundreds of political prisoners, including Maurice Kamto, leader of the opposition Cameroon Renaissance Movement (MRC), and other people arrested in connection with the unrest in the North-West and South-West regions.'<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Human Rights

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and

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<sup>2</sup> CRS, 'In Focus – Cameroon' (section Anglophone crisis), 12 March 2019,

<sup>3</sup> BSTI, '2020 Cameroon Country Report' (p24-25), 29 April 2020

<sup>4</sup> HRW, 'World Report 2020 events of 2019, Cameroon events of 2019', 14 January 2020

liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. Everyone is entitled to these rights, without discrimination.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is a milestone document in the history of human rights. Drafted by representatives with different legal and cultural backgrounds from all regions of the world, the Declaration was proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris on 10 December 1948 by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) as a common standard of achievements for all peoples and all nations. It sets out, for the first time, fundamental human rights to be universally protected. Since its adoption in 1948, the UDHR has been translated into more than 500 languages - the most translated document in the world - and has inspired the constitutions of many newly independent States and many new democracies. The UDHR, together with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its two Optional Protocols (on the complaints procedure and on the death penalty) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and its Optional Protocol, form the so-called International Bill of Human Rights<sup>5</sup>.

### **3. Humanitarian Actors**

Humanitarian actors are a wide range of organizations, agencies and inter-agency networks that all combine to enable international humanitarian assistance to be channeled to the places and people in need of it. Such as Norwegian Refugee Council, Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa, World Food Program, Youth Center for Sustainable Development and many more.

### **4. Crisis**

A time of intense difficulties or danger. This usually causes the displacement of persons and brings an untold sufferings and death.

#### **(B) Statement of the problem**

Humanitarian emergencies are progressively taking place across the globe, requiring coordinated responses from multiple actors. However, reactions to humanitarian crises often lack the proper contextual knowledge and convening power to work proficiently with multiple actors in these crises. Globally, humanitarian needs continued to grow over the years. The number of people targeted for United Nations led humanitarian assistance increased from 77 million in 2014 to 101 million in 2018. Conflict remains a primary driver of humanitarian need, with more countries entangled in violent internal or international conflict than at any other time

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<sup>5</sup> Human Rights, <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/human-rights>

in the past years and one in five children living in an area affected by conflict (Barnett M., 2011). The consequences of violence continue to deepen around the world, with widespread displacement, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and devastating impacts on the affected population's physical and psychological well-being. This was the case in countries where conflicts and related humanitarian crises have endured for years.

In Cameroon, since October 2016 humanitarian actors have been very instrumental in humanitarian missions in the crisis-stricken regions (north-west and south-west). This crisis resulted from peaceful demonstrations about sectoral demands that later degenerated into a socio-political crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon<sup>6</sup>. The crisis which started with well-founded socio-professional grievances by the Lawyers and the Teachers trade unions took another turn when political interest groups later hijacked the genuine struggle and took interest in social unrest. The crisis led to the reemergence of the question of the marginalisation of the people of the former British Southern Cameroons and highlighted the limits of the Cameroonian governance in addressing the problem. The crisis was further escalated by the radicalisation of its proponents mainly due to the government's response is denial, disregard, intimidation and repression.

The dwindling trust between the population and the government aggravated the population's resentment to the point that probably most people of the former British Southern Cameroons saw a return to federalism or even secession as the only feasible ways out of the crisis. In 2017, the crisis in Cameroon's north-west and south-west regions degenerated into an armed conflict with constant attacks on state army and security elements by non-state armed men. The constant tension created by the attacks and counter-attacks between both camps created an uneasy atmosphere for civilians, followed by humanitarian challenges. It is against this backdrop that this study examines the role of humanitarian actors in addressing the humanitarian challenges faced by both regions in conflict.

### **(C) Aims of paper and Method**

This paper dwells on the basis and role of humanitarian missions in Cameroon's conflict zones of the north-west and south-west regions. It further scrutinises the efficiency of humanitarian actors' efficiency as far as these conflict zones are a concern. The study used two main sources of information in order to achieve its objectives: primary and secondary sources were consulted, gotten from varied locations. Extensive use of unpublished and published works was explored, which addressed issues directly related to the study. The methodology of the study constituted

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<sup>6</sup> Bar Agbor Balla, Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa. 2017 report.

a collection of data from various complementary sources and rigorous historical analysis.

#### **(D) Literary Review and Concepts**

There has been substantial debate on the issue of humanitarian missions in conflict zones over the years. Different scholars have explained from diverse perspectives the concept of humanitarian work by humanitarian actors. Wilfred Abia et al. examines the probable values and weaknesses plaguing the civil society in Cameroon contending that due to the pressures of obtaining and maintaining funding, less effort is placed on management leading to a lack of accountability and inefficiency in services offered to the public. The authors highlight the distance NGOs have covered as development actors in Cameroon with recommendations dedicated to valorising NGO's existence in Cameroon. Meanwhile, Alan Bryden, and Marina Caparini scrutinises the private actors and security governance. The authors consider the phenomenon of security privatisation from the perspective of both the top-down decision to outsource military- and security-related tasks to private firms, and the bottom-up activities of armed non-state actors such as rebel opposition groups, insurgents, militias and warlord factions that challenge the state's authority. On their part, Rosan Smits and Deborah Wright present the findings of a review of literature on the role and functions of non-state actors in fragile states and an analysis of international policy frameworks that guide their involvement in state-building processes. The authors depict some of the main challenges for the new deal on engagement in fragile states, and concludes that its success will rest or fall on donors engaging with a full range of non-state actors based on their assets and how their activities are relevant to the overall transitional goal rather than on their formal structure.

This study is anchored on Grotius's guardianship theory of humanitarian intervention. Grotius chose to model humanitarian intervention on the fiduciary relationship between guardians and wards. Grotius begins his humanitarian intervention account with the observation that the relationship between a sovereign and his subjects shares common features with the parent-child relationship. Like parents, a sovereign bears special responsibility for "the support of his dependents or subjects."

## **II. HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CONFLICT IN CAMEROON'S NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS**

In July 1884, the German government and the traditional Douala chiefs signed a treaty establishing a protectorate called Kamerun. After the German defeat at the end of the First World War, the territory was shared out between Britain and France. The League of Nations appointed France and the UK as joint trustees of Kamerun. The Southern Cameroons question

of marginalisation has its roots in the colonial period. During the period of the mandate and the UN trusteeship over the Cameroons, each colonial power shaped her own part of the territory in her own image. This ensued major differences in the political and cultural aspects. English was the official language in the territory under British administration. The justice system (Common Law), the education system, the currency and social norms followed the British model. The indirect rule system allowed traditional chiefdoms to remain in place and promoted the emergence of a form of self-government to the extent that freedom of the press, political pluralism and democratic change in power existed in British Southern Cameroons before independence. The territory was administered as though it were part of Nigeria and several members of British Cameroon's Anglophone elite were ministers in the Nigerian government in the 1950s. The process leading to the reunification of the two Cameroons is at the heart of the Anglophone problem.<sup>7</sup> The Francophone territory gained independence on 1 January 1960, becoming the Republic of Cameroon. The British territory comprised Southern Cameroons and Northern Cameroon. In the referendum held on 11 February 1961, Northern Cameroon chose to join Nigeria and Southern Cameroons chose to join the Republic of Cameroon. Southern Cameroons became independent on 1 October 1961 when it joined the Republic of Cameroon. At the time of the 1961 plebiscite, the political landscape in Southern Cameroons was already dynamic. According to reputed Cameroon historians like V. G. Falso, the majority of the population aspired to independence. But the UK and some developed countries were against it on the grounds that Southern Cameroons would not be economically viable and that it was best to avoid the creation of micro-states. They advocated a vote in favour of joining Nigeria. The UN, therefore, excluded the independence option and limited the plebiscite to a choice between joining Nigeria and reunification with the Republic of Cameroon. The question of marginalisation of the people of British Southern Cameroons remains a threat to peace and stability in the territory as resistance keeps persisting for outright independence. Ever since the independence quest metamorphosed into an armed conflict, a series of humanitarian challenges aroused, thus making it incumbent for humanitarian actors to engage in humanitarian missions to rescue the vulnerable population.

### **III. RATIONALE FOR HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS IN CAMEROON'S CONFLICT ZONES**

To appreciate the rationale for humanitarian missions in Cameroon sufficiently necessitates a systematic background informed by humanitarian actors' motivations underlying humanitarian missions in Cameroon's conflict zones. The motives behind humanitarian services by

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<sup>7</sup> Falso V.G., 1989.



humanitarian actors in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon were diverse.

Most humanitarian actors accorded significant attention to the vulnerable population's welfare to ensure survival in the desperate situation of intense fighting between separatist fighters and the state army (UN Human Rights Council, 2018). There was indeed an emphasis on the need to ensure that women and children receive sufficient upkeep basic needs, which amounted to the putting in place of specific action plans on how to address the challenges faced by the vulnerable population. These plans were conceived and implemented in various communities in the conflict affected regions.

Across the north-west and south-west, the rapid increase in the number of deaths recorded per day among civilians was a major cause for concern for humanitarian actors who found it imperative to intervene and provide assistance to the helpless population affected by the conflict.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the major concern was on women and children who remain the most affected group in the conflict zones. It was evident that the high death rate among children could lead to a drop in population. This could have a negative bearing on the availability of man power for future development of the region. These deaths were mostly attributed to malaria which was mostly contracted in the bushes while seeking safety. Hunger and malnutrition was another cause of death among children specifically.

The number of deaths recorded due to stray bullets and targeted killings was very high and continued to increase as time went on. As a fundamental principle of humanitarian agencies to save lives in desperate situations, it was incumbent for humanitarian actors to address such critical issues in extreme anxiety times. Their activities corresponded with the international campaigns for the protection of women and children in situations of armed conflicts which was proclaimed by UN General Assembly resolution 3318 (XXIX) of 14 December 1974 urging all nations to ensure the wellbeing of women and children during arm conflicts (UN Resolution 3318 (XXIX), 1974). This resolution expressed its deep concern over the sufferings of women and children belonging to the civilian population who in periods of emergency and armed conflict in the struggle for peace, self-determination, national liberation and independence are too often the victims of inhuman acts and consequently suffer serious harm.

However, some organisations understood their interventions through humanitarian actions as a mechanism to attract more funding from donors (Labonte M., 2013). This treacherous humanitarian agenda was visible given that irrespective of the multiple organisations and individuals engaged in humanitarian service in the conflict zones, the impact on the field was

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<sup>8</sup>Tomuschat C., Langrange E., & Oeter, S., 2010.

very insignificant as the people continued to suffer as the conflict persisted. As a result of this hidden agenda behind humanitarian works, most humanitarian actors did not envisage working as a team to address a common issue that was of paramount importance to them. In such a complex context, programs geared towards addressing internally displaced persons' needs were flawed with several limitations. For this reason, the local population sought to attain more survival chances through self-reliant strategies, while ensuring the sustenance of existing indigenous survival services. Nonetheless, irrespective of how diverse these motivations were, certain common themes can be identified as informing the decision of humanitarian actors to focus on humanitarian missions in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon.

Apparently, as already revealed, some of the motives were economic which involved attracting more funding from foreign donors through misleading presentations and some humanitarian actors concerning especially Christian associations who saw the amelioration of the situation of women and children in conflict situations as their prime responsibility (Konings P., & Nyamnjoh B., 1997). Cumulatively, the provision of humanitarian services was buttressed by the circumstances of the conflict as it evolved. As such, the basis for the promotion of humanitarian works in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon yields the thinking that it was a philanthropic response flawed by greed in the endeavors to enhance a better living standards for people living in the conflict zone and the need to ease the fulfillment of disguised agendas on the other.

#### **IV. HUMANITARIAN SITUATION AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN CAMEROON'S NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS**

The crisis leading to humanitarian challenges in the former British Southern Cameroons began on 11 October 2016 in Bamenda when lawyers from the Northwest and the Southwest went on strike to ameliorate working conditions and a request for reform in the justice system. The escalation of this crisis into an armed conflict sparked the internal displacement of more than 679,000 people to other regions as well as over 51,000 people to Nigeria (Amnesty International, 2017).

Intensification in the crisis was further compounded by the elections which reduced access to displaced populations both in Cameroon and in Nigeria. The warning for humanitarian actors to halt operations was also a pointer to risk and impediments associated with delivering humanitarian assistance to the area. The closure of over 40% of the health centers and the escalation of the crisis because of the elections intensified the deteriorating health conditions for the over 4 million people living in the English-speaking regions. Outbreaks of diseases such

as cholera were recorded at the end of 2019. There were 13 hospital beds per 10,000 populations.

Only 22.4% of children with diarrhea received treatment (WHO, 2019). Existing health facilities complained of a lack of technical and medical personnel. Medical personnel's unavailability necessitated doctors and nurses from the Cameroon Special Forces (BIR) to help with dispensing health services. Separatists regularly staged and enforced lockdowns in the English-speaking regions to protest the Cameroonian government's protest decisions and enforce these shutdowns with checkpoints to confirm compliance. These lockdowns went on at times for two weeks at a stretch, disrupting livelihoods and preventing public and private businesses from operating. Education was the most affected domain as 80% of schools remained shut down, and over 600,000 children forced out of school since the crisis began in 2017. Students were forced to stay at home as their school buildings were either burnt or converted to separatists' camps. Separatists also enforced forced school boycotts in the English-speaking areas. These numbers kept increasing with the escalation of the crisis in the election period as the 'back to school' campaign launched by the president failed to encourage school returns. Many displaced children continued to live on the streets of urban centers, although the trend was in decline as a result of stringent security measures were put in place. According to estimates by the International Organisation for Migration, there were approximately 2,570 unaccompanied children in the north-west, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

These children faced many challenges, including limited access to school, health, and protection. As in 2018, thousands of children were negatively impacted by the North-west and Southwest humanitarian crisis. These children faced significant abuses of their rights by armed forces and non-state armed actors alike (International Organisation for Migration, report 2018). The government had not established structures to ensure that internally displaced children were protected from recruitment by non-state armed groups. Through the Ministry of Social Affairs and in joint action with the International Organisation for Migration, the government provided temporary shelter to unaccompanied children in September.

An announcement by an armed separatist group on social media imposed a restriction of movement on all persons and closure of businesses for three weeks. This led to a further exodus of persons from the Northwest and Southwest Regions. Even prior to the announcement, relief agencies estimated that more than 2,800 persons fled the two regions to seek refuge in the Littoral and West, and an additional 879 individuals crossed the border into Nigeria (Country Reports on Human Rights Practices, 2019). The government did not put in place mechanisms to promote the safe, voluntary return, resettlement, or local integration of IDPs in the North-

west Region. Aid relief actors provided basic social services to IDPs and assistance to returnees with minimal support from the government. The government made efforts to ensure unhindered access for humanitarian actors to deliver aid to persons in need. Although it made some effort to provide urgently needed in-kind assistance to crisis affected IDPs based on its Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan, this assistance was distributed to populations without an assessment of their needs and only to persons in accessible areas, especially in regional capital cities.

Government security forces were widely believed to be responsible for disappearances of suspected Anglophone separatist. In a 2018 report, Human Rights Watch (HRW) documented the cases of 26 detainees, including two women and an 18-month-old child, who were held incommunicado at the State Secretariat for Defense for the Gendarmerie (SED) between January 2018 and January 2019, many for several months, without any contact with family, friends, or legal counsel. HRW also reported that it had received additional credible accounts indicating that these violations continued. According to some pundits, the government did not readily account for most of the inmates removed from prisons following riots provoked by overcrowding, poor living conditions, and extensive delays in cases going to trial. Family members of detainees were unable to obtain information about individuals' welfare or whereabouts.

The Mandela Center described the situation as forced disappearances. Anglophone separatist leader Julius Sisiku Ayuk Tabe and nine other members of his entourage staged a hunger strike to protest the disappearances. Amnesty International and HRW revealed several cases in which security forces severely mistreated political opponents, and others where armed separatists mistreated civilians and members of defense forces. In a July 26 press release, Amnesty International stated security forces had abused the 59 opposition supporters, women, beating them and forcing them into humiliating positions before they were eventually released (ICRC, March-April 1981). There were credible reports that government members physically abused civilians and prisoners in their custody, including those detained in the conflicts in Southwest and Northwest Regions. Some community neighborhood watch groups, known as vigilance committees, used and recruited children as young as 12. Anglophone separatist armed groups in the Southwest and Northwest Regions used children as well (OHCHR, 2018). There were also repeated attacks on health workers and institutions and firearms around health facilities by both security forces and Anglophone separatists. Armed men reportedly attacked Health Centers using heavy weapons, destroyed property, and took valuable items belonging to the institutions and its personnel. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights revealed that it had recorded 74 cases of rape as of July 21, with only 13 victims being able to obtain

health-care services due to the absence of services in their localities. The deliberate use of civilian shields and the taking of hostages were rampant. The use of civilians, as human shields from attack is a violation of international humanitarian law amounting to a war crime.

The forcible use of civilians or other non-combatants as human shields by separatist fighters violates the prohibition on the taking of hostages. All these deplorable state of affairs let to the urgent need for humanitarian missions.

## **V. HUMANITARIAN MISSIONS IN THE NORTH-WEST AND SOUTH-WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON**

The process of sustainable peace and improvement of the social well-being of the population, especially in crisis situations, requires all stakeholders' participation. In order to achieve this, it is worthy to note the synergy between the State and humanitarian actors which is not always an easy alliance. This corporation was enforced thanks to backing provided by international bodies like the World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and International Labour Organisation (UN Human Rights Council, 2018). The yearning of individuals to take care of themselves permitted humanitarian actors to get in partnership with the State and other aid relief agencies to contribute to the effort of peace building and addressing humanitarian crisis in Cameroon. Humanitarian missions in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon were basically geared towards enhancing the promotion and respect for human rights, rule of law, and democratic principles, Promoting good governance through on and offline campaigns, Developing strategies and gathering resources in securing compliance with human rights norms, Working with government authorities to improve human rights situations, to keep abuses to a minimum, and to encourage respect of international treaties and agreements related to human rights. Most humanitarian actors also provided legal services to victims of human rights violations in close collaboration with legal practitioners. There were also efforts to Collaborate with members of the legislative, judicial and executive branches so as to bring the necessary legal changes and to Serve as a liaison with other (domestic and international) Non-Governmental Organisations focused on human rights, ranging from educational institutions, governmental and intergovernmental bodies to charities. Humanitarian actors also collaborated with the media to disseminate information pertaining to human rights education awareness-raising.

The Center for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa (CHRDA) monitored human rights violations closely in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. The organisation also monitored the implementation of existing human rights standards in these regions and engaged

stakeholders on such issues in order to make constructive changes. CHRDA conceived and developed a commendable initiative to establish an empowerment centre for IDPs' training in tailoring/ fashion designing in 2019. With at least (30) thirty sewing machines donated by partners and people of good will, the Centre was inaugurated on the 18th of December 2019 and started operating in February 2020. This was a pilot project with prospects of expanding to other fields (CHRDA, 2019). Canadian High Commission in collaboration with the organisation supported the project with sewing machines to facilitate the functioning of the centre. The Canadian High Commission was particularly concerned about the sustainability of the centre, recruitment of trainees/trainers, and impact in the community.

Trainees in the project were retained upon graduation for them to produce quality products, which will be sold. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) also played a leading role in an international response that included aid. Yet it took the world's media's involvement to spark the widespread public outpouring of compassion for the crisis. For example, the BBC, Aljazeera, France 24 among others reported on the deepening humanitarian crisis portraying a picture of starving children in refugee camps on television. In response to this, humanitarian actors in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon were able to create and take care of a permanent dialogue on the common socio-economic questions confronting the north-west and south-west regions (International Crisis Group, 2017).

Pressure was equally mounted on decisions that could provide a lasting solution to the arm conflict to permit the people to live their normal lives in these areas. Some organisations and individuals used strategies such as debates, social movements, lobbying, dialogue, and pressure groups to make heard the voiceless voice in the afflicted zones. For example, in the course of the past years, civil society organisations were instrumental in the elaboration of strategies in providing support for people affected by the armed conflict in the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. Some NGOs contributed enormously in providing shelter and medical care especially for women and children (International Monetary Fund, 2004). Some civil society organisations concerned mostly with rights violations during the armed conflict brought actions in favour of changing the judicial environment through their activism concerning the respect of international and regional conventions such as the African Charter for Human and Peoples Rights. In the defense of the rights of the vulnerable population, non-governmental organisations contributed to the process of consolidating a state of peace or rule law. This was mostly common with International NGOs better placed at fostering capacity building needed to guarantee peace sustainability (Bratton M., 1989). NGOs were also involved in small and large-scale projects geared at empowering internally displaced persons such as the socio-economic

empowerment of women and efforts at gender mainstreaming tailored to improving the population's welfare and livelihood. NGOs such as plan international organized capacity building training on human rights violations to enable the vulnerable population understand the importance of protecting their basic rights. In Bamenda, trainings were organized to build capacities of women to enable them stand against injustice (Edstrom J., 1999).

This was necessary due to sexual violence and discrimination against women which was widely reported. Women and girls were vulnerable to sexual assault. Rape, sexual exploitation, public humiliation, and torture were also reported committed by security forces and non-state armed groups. However, evidence abound attesting that these efforts to address the issue were very much inadequate with respect to the trend of insecurity that characterize the north-west and south-west regions of Cameroon. Contribution to the amelioration of social and health services during the Anglophone crisis was of vital interest to humanitarian actors. The health sector in particular required an urgency for the participation of all sectors to address the population's medical requirements. Some NGOs embarked on activities such as health education and training, HIV/AIDS sensitisation and community awareness on basic hygiene and sanitation in a bit to avoid eventual health complications.

The Ayah Foundation procured vital and integrated assistance to internally displaced persons and host populations. In the field of child protection, the organisation provided psychosocial support to displaced children through social workers managing child-friendly spaces and assisted the reunification or placement in alternative care of several children separated from their families. It also provided technical assistance to enable social workers to reunite children arrested by security forces during man-hunting operations against separatists with their families. As far as education was a concern, the organisation provided teaching and learning supplies to displaced children.

Tacking these children back to school protected them against exploitation and several forms of abuses while enabling quick recovery from psychosocial traumas. In collaboration with the media, the organisation also played a major role to strengthened communication and public advocacy strategy in order to sensitise more people and engage them in a strategic partnership with humanitarian work. One of the compelling examples was the need for collaboration in times of emergencies. In order to raise and maintain awareness and commitment of communities on collaboration, the media aired programmes that portrayed local examples of emergency situations interwoven with local cultural beliefs.

Through its coordinated approaches, the Ayah Foundation established and operated camps for

displaced persons affected by the conflict, providing health care and medical equipment and distributing food and non-food items. Likewise, the effort to promote menstrual hygiene was very important, especially for young girls. With the limited supply of sanitary pads caused by the tense atmosphere of conflict, NGOS like Hope for the Needy Association and The Hope Center Cameroon which were mostly concern about gender-based violence and female empowerment provided reusable sanitary pads to women occasionally, especially those in the rural areas. For long years, hygiene and sanitation among young girls were considered an exclusive health issue (Butt T. I., 2013). This impartial health approach greatly played against the effectiveness of poor habits that hindered a healthy living.

Through the use of multimedia (newsletters, Facebook, Twitter), High-level missions in the field of humanitarian assistance were promoted to reach a wider population. Numerous Christian initiatives offered a range of protection and assistance services in Bamenda and Buea, including those managed by the arch dioceses of Bamenda which provided both adult and child educational programmes, psychosocial services for internally displaced persons. In addition to hosting worship services for IDPs and providing Christian educational programmes for Christian IDPs, the Catholic Church also provided relief, health, educational, income generation, and social and cultural activities for members of the wider IDP community of all faiths. It also provided self-reliance programmes, spiritual guidance, and encouragement to newly arrived IDPs in Buea and Bamenda (Fonjong L N., 2007).

## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

In summary, it is noted that humanitarian actors in Cameroon, even in their primary phase of existence conducted activities that had an impact on the process of peace- building and humanitarian works in the country. It is also acknowledged that despite their significant contribution to the population, they faced a substantial number of difficulties of which it is imperative to find solutions. These issues must be addressed for the State and donors to be the full partners in development and well-being. Regardless of their recognition and active participation in consolidating peace and social well-being of the population, humanitarian actors in Cameroon are facing challenges. There is an issue with implementing projects because most local organisations lack the necessary funding and are not comprehensive in negotiation skills, analytical, and decision-making to quickly mobilise resources. Most local organisations in Cameroon also suffer from a lack of institutional structures that cause them not to function properly and meet populations' needs, so their impact does not reach the assigned communities. This indicates the urgency of these organisations' capacity building projects so that they become



professionals and reach the level required for the effective management of their activities.

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