



THE BELL

WORKING FOR A JUST AND DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY IN THE SOUTH WEST PROVINCE OF CAMEROON
A Monthly Publication of FIDA, GNGG, HELP OUT and MUDEC
Sponsored by *The Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)*



February 2006

OSIWA

INDIGENOUS SOUTHWEST ORGANISATIONS

What Relationships?

The South West is characterized by several indigenous development initiatives that aspire towards concrete development of the province.

The overall giant for the development of the Province is The South West Development Authority (SOWEDA). This government-created structure is mandated to initiate & supervise projects in the Province, such as the Integrated Rural Development Project (IRDP), The Livestock & Fisheries Development Project (LFDP) and The Rumpi Area Participatory Development Project. These projects have met different levels of success and it is proper to solicit the views of the average citizen to ascertain the impact on the ground.

We also find SWECC (a grouping of all chiefs/ traditional rulers) in the province, 99% male with educational levels from the highest (PHD) to the lowest FSLC.

During their regular general assembly meetings, you can expect to see pomp and colour. Beyond that, it is easy to see several chieftaincy disputes that many a times compromise development in the villages, encourage sectarianism and cronyism and partisan politics. Ask your self what have the chief concretely achieved? One doubts if the spirit of self-help/self-sacrifice is in them.

Motions of support, heavy feeding and drinking is common when our chiefs meet. SWECC leadership is rotative. Age, wealth and status dominate or determinant factors. The younger and probably educated chiefs grumble in the backbenches as they watch a potentially giant institution.

Stay on its knees, begging, quarrelling and allow the administration play the role of peacemakers in their chiefdoms.

We move on and find SWELA (a group of the " Elites" who are generally government functionaries) that also stands for the development of the province. It has a rotative leadership, which scarcely produce dynamic and courageous leaders. Most SWELA SGs do " belly politicking".

Their fighting is characteristic of the sons/ daughters of their province. The high government functionaries have politicised the organs - insisting on motions of support that ultimately protect their own jobs and not the welfare of the common person. See the roads in the Province especially during the rains yet



Some South West Chiefs and Elites

there are SWELANS with pregnant personal bank accounts that often contain billions!!

What concrete achievement for SWELA? One may need to visit the Napoleon Nyake era to find something!

Next door we find SWECSON (a grouping of civil society actors) who attempt at developing the province in several domains including Health, Agriculture, Human Rights and Governance. As a grouping of individuals who first aspire for self-employment and then service to communities, their tasks are enormous. Several of them secure funding from within and without Cameroon. Some are effectively operational, while other are GRINGOS, BINGOS and NGIs.

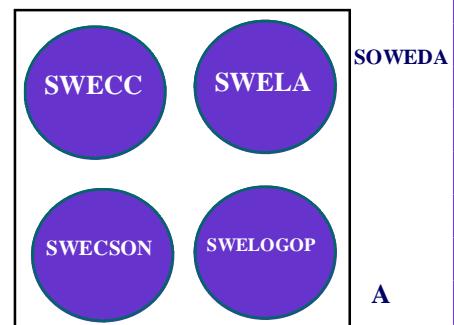
There exist a lot of mudslinging, backstabbing and cut throat competition. As the 3rd force in development, their advocacy, engagement and whistle blowing skills are very lacking. Otherwise how can one account for the facts that so many things including abuses by appointed state officials (who are not South West children) are not advocate against?

Finally we meet SWELOGOP (a recent attempt to bring together all the development forces in the province) that comprises Government Technical Services, Locally elected officials, civil society organizations and businesses. Less than 6 months after its creation it went into a prolong coma as sectarianism and related attributes stepped in.

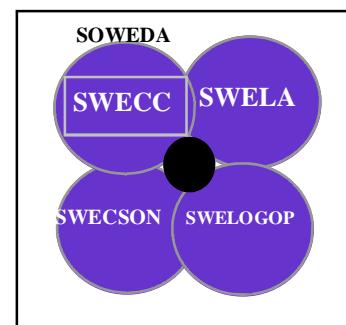
By Charlie Mbonteh
MUDEC Group



The actual situation, depicted in Diagram A, shows there is little contact, no joint planning etc.



A desired situation will be to have synergies in planning execution, monitoring and evaluation of development initiatives.



* What are you striving for in this Province?

* What Strategies can you advance in order to foster synergies for the above organisations?

The Open Society Institute & The Soros Foundations Network

The Open Society Institute (OSI) is a private operating and grant-making foundation based in New York City that serves as the hub of the Soros Foundations Network, a group of autonomous foundations and organisations in more than 50 countries. OSI and the network implement a range of initiatives that aim to promote open societies by shaping government policy and supporting education, media, public health, and human and women's rights, as well as social, legal, and economic reform. To diminish and prevent the negative consequences of globalisation, OSI seeks to foster global open society by



George Soros extends support to Africa

increasing collaboration with other nongovernmental organisations, governments, and international institutions.

OSI was founded in 1993 by investor and philanthropist George Soros to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established starting in 1984, to help former communist countries in their transition to democracy. The Soros Foundations network has expanded its geographic reach to include foundations and initiatives in Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Mongolia, Southeast Asia, Turkey, and the United States. OSI also supports selective projects in other parts of the world.

The Open Society Initiative For West Africa (OSIWA)

The Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA) is dedicated to supporting the creation of open societies in West Africa, marked by functioning democracy, good governance, the rule of law, basic freedoms, and widespread civic participation. OSIWA believes that it best serves by sustaining catalytic and innovative initiatives that add value to the efforts of West Africa's civil society. OSIWA seeks to collaborate with advocacy groups, like-minded foundations, governments and donors. OSIWA further recognises the importance of incorporating global



*Abdul Tejan Cole
Chair of OSIWA's Board of Directors*

developments in building open societies and seeks a greater commitment to the region by rich nations.

OSIWA serves 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as Cameroon, Chad, and Mauritania. The ECOWAS members are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo.

OSIWA is based in Dakar, Senegal. The foundation also maintains an office in Abuja, Nigeria, which focuses on good governance and human rights programs in Nigeria.

EDITORIAL

The democratic and patriotic culture of the population of the South West Province has always been a shiny example to the rest of the nation. Unfortunately it is sad to observe that the elected and appointed local officials (Parliamentarians, Councillors, Mayors, Elites) have not always lived up to the expectations of the people with regards to durable infrastructural development in the Province. Despite its natural and human wealth, most of the South West Province remains largely undeveloped. Good road infrastructure is quasi-absent. Most of the rural population still does not have access to education, healthcare, potable water, adequate housing, employment etc.

During electoral exercises, the population is manipulated by crafty politicians who disappear after they are elected and most often serve their personal interests throughout their mandates. The depth of frustration of the ordinary citizen is immeasurable; his misery, unspeakable. How can THE BELL remain indifferent?

In this issue, we put Parliamentarians and locally elected officials before their responsibility and restate their duties geared towards Good Local Governance that meets the aspirations of the people. We advise our local leaders to organise Public Hearings so that they can explain their

actions to the population that is only begging to understand. We also recommend the building of partnerships with the local village communities. Understanding the difficulties faced by even the most industrious mayors, we highlight a mayor's memorable speech to serve as an example of what the people expect to hear from their elected leaders vis à vis government authorities, instead of motions of support that have become the trade mark of some.

Chieftaincy disputes remain the most eloquent examples of politically motivated and selfish quest for local leadership in the South West Province. Many elites of questionable wealth have taken our traditional chieftaincy thrones, hostage. They set up the greatest confusion by sponsoring trouble shooters to install their puppets or get the thrones for themselves. This shameful attitude must stop!

Dear Readers, your reactions to the first edition have spurred our coalition to forge ahead with this publication that aims at changing attitudes positively in the domain of governance and human rights, so as to make our society in the South West Province more open.

We welcome your articles.

By George Mbella



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South West Development Actors to benefit from OSIWA Funding

A one-year Project to Create More Open Democratic Societies in the South West Province is currently being executed by four civil society organizations active in the domains of Human Rights and Good Governance.

Funded by Open Society Initiative West Africa, OSIWA, the project which runs from January to December 2006 is the fall out of a joint study of the South West municipalities by a coalition made up of Help Out, a Buea based Human Rights NGO; the Municipal Development Counseling Group, MUDEC; the International Federation of Women's Lawyers, FIDA Cameroon and The Global Network For Good Governance (GNGG).

According to the Coalition's Coordinator, Mr. Charles Mbonteh of MUDEC, the coalition has produced some 2250 Civic Education Manuals for Civil Societies in Cameroon.

"The manual will be distributed free of charge to development actors within the Province including but not limited to participants to conferences and workshops organized by the coalition, educational institutions with libraries, administrative offices including Councils and Political Parties based in the South West Province" he added.

The coalition has also produced the first edition of its news publication entitled **THE BELL**, which carries the activities within the framework of the project. It is managed by GNGG.

Within the framework of the project, FIDA Cameroon is expected to organize a series of workshops and conferences designed to stimulate awareness by focusing on issues that hinder the female citizen from enjoying her human and political rights.

Help Out will carry out a series of activities designed to improve the conditions of



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Leaders of NGOs involved in the Projects funded by OSIWA

prisoners and to foster human rights awareness in schools by creating clubs and supporting their activities.

MUDEC will focus on local governance by organizing Public Hearings in several Councils, train council officials on good governance and development communicators on people-centered reporting.

As Cameroon in miniature, the Coalition observed that the South West Province is characterized by Human Rights abuses notably intimidation and extortion, the absence of an accountable and responsive governance system, poor participation of grassroots population in the decision making process. Reason why it has as objective to enhance citizen participation in democratic and local governance processes, to improve the respect for human rights in the society, to increase women's participation in political and local decision making and to build the

capacities of civil society organizations for civic engagement.

It is worth mentioning that OSIWA, based in Dakar Senegal is dedicated to supporting the creation of Open Societies in West Africa marked by functioning democracy, good governance, the rule of law, basic freedoms and widespread civic participation. It seeks to collaborate with advocacy groups, like-minded foundations, governments and donors. OSIWA serves 15 members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) as well as Cameroon Chad and Mauritania.

By Mercy Ashu.
HELP OUT, Buea



THE BELL is ringing you to know what you are doing to develop the South West so we can share with other Open Societies!

Mail your articles and pictures to:
thebell@yahoo.com

Join SWECSON!

The South West Civil Society Network

We complement Government's Development Efforts

- Advocacy
- Engagement
- Empower Others
- Human Rights
- Education
- Governance

We have a duty to monitor South West Elites' Association (SWELA), the South West Chiefs' Conference (SWECC). And whistle blow on administrative and law enforcement officials who abuse their powers and Human Rights in the Province!

Roads in the South West Province!

As the saying frequently goes, 'where a road passes, development follows'. The opposition of this is equally true: 'where a road does not pass, no development follows'. The latter is indeed the real situation in the South West Province (SWP) in spite of the laudable effort by the government.

The poor road infrastructure has been, and remains the biggest worry of the South West Elites Association (SWELA). In line with the committed interest it had shown in the development of the South West Province, SWELA has identified roads as number one priority and nerve wire in the development of this Province.

Like elsewhere in Cameroon, road transport is the most important mode of transport stands the chance of impacting the most interior part of every community since everybody uses it. It is however important to make a point from the beginning: SWELA is not, in any way, emphasizing that many roads of the South West Province ought to be tarred. That would be an unrealistic demand. But, without any need to be convinced, SWELA knows that the SWP can have most of its roads done in the simplest definition of the term: 'way between places, especially one with a prepared surface for the use of motor vehicles' (N>R>Nkelle,1994).

If this were done, it will bring the administration nearer to the people by avoiding the present situation whereby people of many areas can only reach their sub-divisional, divisional and even provincial headquarters by transiting through other provinces or meandering in winding creeks in a boat. Also, citizens would not have to go through a foreign country to get to base.

In Lebialem Division, for example, from Menji the Divisional Headquarters, one can access other divisions of the Province or the provincial headquarter only by transiting through Dschang (West Province) and Nkongsamba, Loum (Littoral Province). From Wabane sub-division, the easier road to get to Menji, the divisional headquarters, is through Batibo and Bamenda (North West Province).

In the same vein, for people from Njungo to reach the sub-Divisional headquarter of Nguti in Kupe-Muanenguba, they have to pass through Santcho in the West, Loum in the Littoral or Kumba in Meme Division.

In the same vein, inhabitants of Akwaya in Manyu Division still get to the seat of their division at Mamfe through Nigeria. The point here is not that it is shorter, less expensive, easier or even faster to go one's own sub-division or provincial headquarters through other provinces. To think that way would be to miss the point. Infact such circumstantially imposed touristic adventures are many times longer and more expensive than any direct routes within the same administrative units. The truth is that the people so affected do



*Some of these roads bring **SHAME** to the sons and daughters of the Province especially when they have to carry corpses of loved ones on their heads for too many kilometers in the rainy season!*

not have a choice. For one thing, the province is surrounded by other provinces with far better roads network.

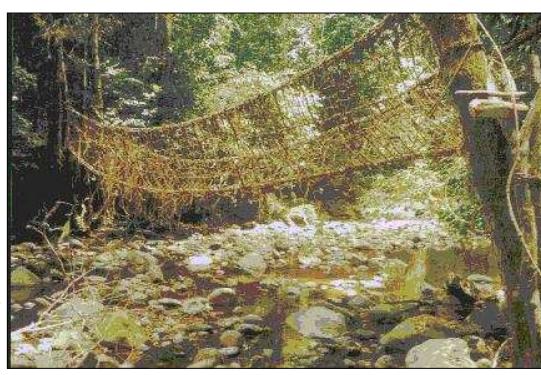
The vast majority of the people of the SWP are farmers. These farmers toil endlessly in their farms and due to the fertility of the soil, produced good harvest. However, most of them have the misfortune of seeing their harvest decay because of the absence of farm to market roads. It is easier to carry a handful of seeds to the farm than the harvest either home or to the market.

Like in other Provinces in the country, roads are classified into national, provincial, divisional and sub-divisional categories. However, though the Mundemba-Kumba-Loum (N16): Ekok-Mamfe-Bachuoakagebe (N16): Ekok-Nguti-kumba-Mutengene (N8) are some of the national roads of the SWP, traveling by them in the rainy/dry seasons is often a nightmare. Few travelers would repeat the experience if it can be avoided. Provincial roads tell the same or even worst story. Limbe-Wututu-Buea (P34); Tombell-Bangem (p17); Bakebe-Fontem (p19) to mention but these few are quite often impassable all year round, but more so during the rainy season. Though they exist on paper, it would be difficult to convince anyone that divisional roads are a reality in the SWP. Some of these roads have never

been used by the population for which they were meant, but for the fact that sometimes, a caterpillar had passed through them.(D100); Mundemba-Wouri-Ekombe (D99); Mbonge-Muyuka (D61); Besongabang-Osing-Nguti(D98) and Idenau-Muyenge (D101). Almost everywhere, the story is the same: impassable roads. When national ,provincial and divisional roads are in such an advance stage of despair, I think it is not necessary to make mention of rural roads.

No one can appreciate the problem of bad roads in its true perspective until one has had the misfortune of visiting a dying parent or relative in an enclaved area, a few kilometers from where one's car will go no further; or when one has to carry the corpse of a loved one on the head for a long distance in the rains or at night because not even a 4-wheel pick-up van can make it, worse still when a woman in labor dies on one's shoulder because she has to be carried on a locally made stretcher for several kilometers to the 'nearest' health center.

Instances such as these mentioned above are very common and they constitute a key obstacle to the development of the province and a major constraint to poverty alleviation. A good road infrastructure will clearly make communication and transportation, particularly of farm produce and other articles of necessity, faster and easier. More importantly, while rewardingly reducing too much trekking and unavoidable head loads by most would increase both wealth and the quality of life for the people. Additionally good roads are a significant source of government revenue through the payment of taxes by vehicle owners. Roads also link touristic sites and assist both in the development of the tourism industry and increasing much needed employment opportunities.



In the 21st Century, most Southwesterners still use primitive bridges to get to their villages!

By Dr. Mbencho Andrew Tazi
Secretary General, SWELA

Resolving South West Chieftaincy Conflicts

Generally, when people hear of conflict, what first comes to mind is misunderstanding, disagreement, hatred, cheating, fear, antagonism, war, violence etc. even the dictionary meaning of the word 'conflict' gives a negative explanation. This negative picture of conflict may obstruct our ability to resolve differences effectively.

The truth about conflict is that it is neither positive nor negative in and of itself. Conflict is the outgrowth of the diversity that characterizes our thoughts, our attitudes, our beliefs, our perceptions and our social systems and structures. It is as much a part of our existence as is evolution. Each of us has influence and power over whether or not conflict becomes negative and that influence and power is found in the way we handle differences. Many conflict situations can serve as opportunities for mutual growth if we develop and utilize positive, constructive conflicts resolution skills and methodology. Conflicts can serve as engines in the growth of our chieftaincy. They may lead us to alternative ways of thinking and behaving. They may challenge us to manage our lives in ways that utilize our differences for mutual growth and benefit. Sometimes our rulers who finally win the throne are more sensitive to issues by drawing inspiration from some resolved conflicts.

In order to enjoy the benefits of conflicts, we have to transform the perception that conflict is always a disruption of order, a negative experience, an error or mistake in a relationship. We need to see conflict as an outgrowth of diversity that can be utilized to clarify relationships, provided additional ways of thinking and option that we might not have considered and to open up possibilities for our relationships.

We need to understand that conflict is but one of a complex parameter in our relationship and eventual development. A conflict often punctuates the long term relationship which has been negatively pursued, bringing to the surface something that needs to be addressed for that relationship to continue growing positively.

"We also need to transform the perception that people with whom we are in conflict are wrong and we are right. By so doing we judge others and push them to defend their position."

We also need to transform the perception that people with whom we are in conflict are wrong and we are right. By so doing we judge others and push them to defend their position. Understanding conflict is



Some South West Chiefs

therefore indispensable to all effort at resolving conflict.

The South West Province is a melting pot of chieftaincy disputes as well as other conflicts. Though this can always be attributed to its fragile chieftaincy system, these conflicts could compromise our development effort and put it to great risk.

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Managing conflicts

Conflict management is a very broad field that entails a series of processes. For the purpose of this write up, we shall concern ourselves with the management of conflict situations that arise because of chieftaincy disputes. To effectively manage chieftaincy conflicts, the disputing parties must first accept (usually third-party) mediation.

To begin the process, the mediator(s) must have first analyze the causes and consequences of the said conflict and draw certain conclusions. The first task in any mediation process is to open up communication as well establish and build trust. Doing a simple thing like mutual respect to both parties of the conflict and making them understand how important they are to their people can build trust.

The second step is to open up consultant talks after initial counseling. As the talk progress it will be important to instill the notion of win-win by insisting and assuring both parties that no single party is going to carry the day. If a party is seen to be losing make it see win through the costs (human, material, financial) and consequences of the conflict. Consultation is usually the forerunner of negotiation and dialogue, and it prepares the ground for the two parties to come together for direct talks. It is advised

that during such direct talks the focus should be on ideas, information and options, not on personalities. The fear is that peace talks may fail if the discussion focuses on personalities because the human being is always heroic and any attempt on his/her person may be very devastating.

Chieftaincy disputes in the South West Province like elsewhere, result mainly from the psychological feelings of people, their emotions, their self-esteem and their perceptions of what power is or ought to be. One strong element in this regard is the way decisions are made and how people feel about this decision. Decision-making is a key cause of most conflicts. When people feel disenfranchised and deliberately excluded from the decision process; when people feel rejected or ignored and realize that they cannot influence decisions that affect their lives, they may refuse to cooperate with and support such decisions.

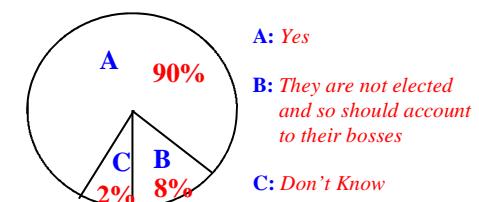
When there is such discontent there are bound to be social and economic setbacks. For example, because of conflict people dissociate themselves from the economic and social fabric of their communities, thereby ridding such communities of constructive ideas. Conflicts have the tendency to kill the spirit of brotherhood amongst people and even push some people to become extremists or fundamentalists.

It would be better for our traditional rulers to avoid conflict situations. However, if this is not possible, the timely resolution of such conflicts before they degenerate into uncontrollable violence will help alleviate chaos, hardship and preserve precious lives

By Mbappong George Atabong

OPINION POLL

Should Appointed Administrators render account of Public Contracts Money to the Public?



Members of Parliament Change the Way You Exercise Power

Multiparty parliamentary elections may be holding in Cameroon, come 2007. Political leaders and organisations can be expected to compete for seats. Some will win. Some will lose. Controversially or not, another democratic election would be under the country's belt. But, as the political change or status quo may not be for the better, many could be left wondering, as they do now, what use elections? Their power is dissipated and trivialised in Cameroon. The 2007 parliamentary elections will be the fourth in a row since the reintroduction of multiparty politics in 1990. They have produced multiparty parliaments and put various coalitions in government. These have enacted new laws, including a revised Constitution and Standing Orders of the National Assembly. But, paradoxically, several of the laws continue to reflect well known colonial administration attitudes in their apparent dislike of the freedom and competitive dynamism that is inherent in the multiparty political enterprise. The opportunity the people so get to choose at elections is made to appear meaningless. The consequences have been devastating. As we noted in *L & E Alert Vol. 2 No.5*, 'lax attitudes thus appear to win in Cameroon. In the executive, in the legislature and in the judiciary, few senior officials appear to direct themselves towards performance and contribution. Instead, the officials look busy trying to monopolise the allocation of goods and/or services in Cameroon society, and claiming (to use President Biya's words) "exorbitant privileges" in the process. Hard, systematic, work can hardly be said to be a feature of the State of Cameroon today. The economic result? Much continuing inefficiency, impoverishing the vast majority of the population, denying the government much needed fiscal revenue to meet its debt obligations and guarantee Constitutionally mandated individual rights and freedoms.' To exercise power in this way is to abuse it completely and wastes the political resources of a people, who can then act unpredictably! Members of Parliament, the people of Cameroon have mandated you and the President of the Republic to exercise National Sovereignty. Conserve their political resources and trust in you. Change the way you exercise power, now!

1. STANDING ORDERS

Standing Orders contain the internal rules and regulations of the National Assembly. They were drawn up by the National Assembly (Parliament) in accordance with Article 17[2] of the Constitution. Standing Orders are crucial to the way Members of Parliament exercise National Sovereignty.



*Has your MP climbed the rostrum to speak out?
Does your MP grumble in private?*

Parliament is required to legislate and control government action (Article 14[2] of the Constitution). National Sovereignty is vested in the people of Cameroon and exercised through the President of the Republic and Members of Parliament or by way of referendum (Article 2[1] of the Constitution).

But, even as the Standing Orders have been evolving, they remain far from easing efforts of Parliament to fully assume its responsibilities in the viable representative multiparty democracy that Cameroon is aspiring to become. So much so, and since everything cannot be put to a referendum, the President of the Republic appears alone battling for the people of Cameroon, with

"In the executive, in the legislature and in the judiciary, few senior officials appear to direct themselves towards performance and contribution. Instead, the officials look busy trying to monopolise the allocation of goods and/or services in Cameroon society, and claiming (to use President Biya's words) "exorbitant privileges" in the process."

little input from Members of Parliament, and when they contribute, their effort is hardly competitive and often marginalised. The results have been catastrophic to the wellbeing of the Nation of Cameroon. Poverty is now widespread and rising with bitter feelings of alienation, fragmenting society and agitation for separation in the country. National Unity is jeopardised. The people, seeing their political resources wasted, could act unpredictably! To keep the trust the people have placed in them, Members of Parliament would have to become more responsible in the exercise of National Sovereignty.

They cannot hope to do this without reforming Standing Orders of the National

Assembly. Parliament has to become the civic education centre of intense political competition in co-operation that it should be. A model of increasing productivity and good governance that is open, transparent, accountable, efficient and effective, to be full of positive impacts in government and society. For these to be attained, Members of Parliament would have to ensure that Standing Orders of the National Assembly make it easy for Parliament to obtain and share information, consider policies and bills adequately and decide wisely.

Information Flows

To legislative power, Article 26 of the Constitution reserves many important issues of the people. These include: rights, guarantees and obligations of the citizen; status of persons and property ownership system; political, administrative and judicial organisation; rules governing the issue of currency, the budget, the creation of duties and taxes and the determination of their basis of assessment, rates and methods of collection, land tenure and State lands and mining, and natural resources; programming the objectives of economic and social action; and the system of education.

The obligation requires policymaking at various stages and cycles in government and society and involves a great deal of information, which Members of Parliament need to have to exercise legislative power well. They need to be aware of, track, and provide oversight on, policy - from its formulation through implementation to evaluation - as well as produce and share information in the process, with other branches of government and society. They cannot do these well if it is hard for them to acquire and share information that is relevant, objective, reliable and up-to-date. Members of Parliament have to ensure that Standing Orders of the National Assembly take their information acquisition and sharing needs much more seriously and reorganise the Permanent Secretariat of Parliament accordingly. Acquisition and sharing of information should be more active, with Parliament taking the lead in relating with other arms of government and society. Libraries and archival services should be given much more prominence, together with information communication technologies (ICTs). Parliament needs to be setting up investigative Committees readily, and empowering them to work and report, freely.

Policy Considerations

There is little point setting up Committees to consider policy/bills in detail and spend so much time, as the Standing Orders of Parliament do at the moment, wanting to

Members of Parliament Change the Way You Exercise Power

restrict debate of the issues. Parliament needs to reach out more and tap policy resources of society as a whole, not just those of government departments. The role of the Secretary General as convenor of meetings of Committees needs urgent review. More has to be done to clarify the role of Private Members bills and prevent government business crowding them out of consideration. Public petitions should be received and heard much more readily. Also, the need to re-elect Members of the Permanent Bureau every year helps to make planning short term in Parliament. Even as they are eligible for re-election, Bureau Members surely feel pressurized and less inclined to consider programming legislation and control of government action in the medium and/or long term. Bureau Members oversee parliamentary activities and constitute the majority of the Chairmen's Conference that sets the Agenda of Parliament. Now, Parliament has a five-year mandate, wouldn't it be better to elect the Permanent Bureau into office for that period and make provisions to boot Members out when they do wrong or fail to deliver some election promises?

Decision Making

Standing Orders of the National Assembly allow Members of Parliament to make too many political decisions anonymously. This is not good, because the politicians fail to pay the political price or reap the political rewards of the political decisions they make in Parliament. On the key issues that come before Parliament, it would be great to record and publish the speeches made or papers presented by, and votes of, each individual Member of Parliament.

2. THE HOUSE BUDGET

Parliament enjoys administrative and financial autonomy. It drafts and passes its own budget, which is included *ipso facto* in the general State Budget, every year. It thus fails to become the example in its mission to legislate and control government action. It has to show proof of its own productivity and good governance, by being open, transparent, accountable, efficient, effective and full of positive impacts in its use of scarce public resources. Parliament cannot hope to do this, as it appears at the moment, without a clear medium/long term Agenda of its own, especially as government action is said to be increasingly medium/long term.

The rational base of the House Budget is difficult to discern, if at all. This in part is due to the absence of a clear medium/long term Agenda on which it can be located.

Also, the House Budget is supposed to have been drawn up by Questors who are



The National Assembly

expected to exercise control over House finances and express their opinion only with respect to expenditure commitments within the limits determined by Bureau Orders that are scarcely published. Many issues thus continue to appear unattended, including whether activities of the House can or do generate income, how much, and if they do raise revenue where and how the income is or should be used. Changes in the House Budget thus appear incremental, based more on administrative accounts of the House than on its political considerations of needs of the country.

"Members of Parliament use their micro-project funds to finance projects that meet basic needs, but fail to tackle core constituency political problems. They try to construct school classrooms and benches, health centres, culverts, provide exercise books, pencils and rulers to school children, agricultural tools and seedlings to farmers, etc. But, laudable as the efforts appear, they tend to end in controversy as the micro-project funds are hardly enough to reach all those in need."

3. MICRO-PROJECT CREDIT

An important area of parliamentary activity that grabs much public attention is what is often referred to as Micro-Project Credit. Special allocations in the House Budget that Members of Parliament receive to help finance constituency activities. Members of Parliament appear to enjoy great latitude in the use of this money. However, partly because material needs of many constituencies are indeed very great and urgent, many Members of Parliament use their micro-project funds to finance projects that meet basic needs, but fail to tackle core constituency political problems. They try to construct school classrooms and benches, health centres, culverts, provide exercise books, pencils and rulers to school children, agricultural tools and seedlings to farmers, etc. But, laudable as the efforts

appear, they tend to end in controversy as the micro-project funds are hardly enough to reach all those in need.

Unwittingly, therefore, several Members of Parliament sow seeds of dependency in their constituencies, instead of using their micro-project funds to improve the way they exercise the National Sovereignty of the people of Cameroon. Little information is obtainable in the State Planning system on the life of several political constituencies. So much so, it is so easy for various sections of government and society to perpetuate lies and rumours about development activities and get away with it! So many schools, health centers and public taps that do not exist are said to have been built and installed! Wouldn't it be great to see Members of Parliament invest micro-project funds to build political commitment and capacity in their constituencies? For example, they could so easily increase the scope, quantity and quality of information available to their constituents and engage them more to get feedback and better participation in the various policy making, implementation and evaluation opportunities.

But few are those Members of Parliament who even take time to seek improvements in their own knowledge and understanding of the legal, policy and institutional frameworks in operation, and develop appropriate tools with constituents to regulate and control government action in the constituency, and nationally.

4. INCREASE POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY

Members of Parliament, evaluate your performance in engaging citizens in policy making, and change the way you exercise power, now.

*Culled from
EITD Research Paper*

About EITD Research

Founded in 1992, EITD Research (Research for Enterprise, Industries, Technology and Development) is an independent dynamic research and policy education institution working on development issues related to technology, enterprise and industries. Our mission is to find out how and assist society to take, with responsibility, opportunities offered by science in the use of technology in development via enterprise and industries. Also, to augment strategy and policy recommendations with field services and technical support in resources management.

We are a private non-profit making nongovernmental association that receives support from foundations, governmental and inter-governmental institutions, private corporations and concerned individuals.

The e-Citizens project seeks to encourage civil society to organise and participate more effectively in governance. It is cosponsored by the Open Society Initiative for West Africa (OSIWA).

Know Your Parliamentarians/Mayors

Who are Parliamentarians?

The Members of the National Assembly are Parliamentarians (MP) responsible for legislation. They are citizens elected by the population to represent the interest of the entire nation. The 1996 Constitution states that 180 (one hundred and eighty) MPs shall be elected by direct and universal suffrage for a five-year term of office. Each year they meet in three ordinary sessions lasting 30 days each and hold one extra-ordinary session lasting 15 (fifteen) days. The plenary sessions are open to the general public except on the request of the President of the Republic or an absolute majority of members to hold behind closed doors. Committees hold behind closed doors.

The Role of the Parliamentarians in Local Governance

They debate and pass bills into law tabled either by MPs or the President of the Republic on the following issues:

- The fundamental rights, guarantees and obligations of citizens
- The status of persons and property ownership system
- The political, administrative and judicial organisation
- Financial and patrimonial matters
- Programming the objectives of economic and social action
- The system of education

Some Good Practices for MPs

- Promote participatory planning and implementation of projects financed with parliamentary grants annually
- Work closely with their Mayors and Councillors on issues of Governance
- Find out the problems of the population and reflect them in laws they vote
- Inform their constituencies on decisions deliberated in Parliament
- Operate a regular consultative bureau in the constituency
- Spearhead development in the constituency
- Sensitise the population on their rights and obligations
- Ensure that their constituency is enjoying peace
- Monitor public investment, performance of the civil service, executive, judiciary and non-public sector
- Be a spokesperson of the constituency

Parliamentarians and Micro Project Grants

- Do you know how much your MP receives as micro project grants each year?
- Have you ever questioned your MP on the use of the micro project grants?
- Does your MP consult the electorate on how to use the micro project grants?
- Have you bothered to know how your MP voted on issues affecting the electorate?

Parliamentary Elections

(Law Nº 91-020 of 16 December 1991 modified by Law Nº 97-13 of 19 March 1997 to lay down conditions governing the election of Members of Parliament) Members of the National Assembly are elected for a five-year term through direct and secret universal ballot. They can be re-elected after their term of office.

Conditions For Election To Parliament

To run for election as a parliamentarian, the citizen should be a member of a political party. It is a political party that nominates candidates on a list.

The nomination papers must be deposited at least 40 days before the election. The nomination papers should contain the following information:

- The full name, date and place of birth, filiations, occupation and residence of the candidate
- The name of the list and the political party sponsoring the list
- The symbol selected for the purpose of printing ballot papers for the party
- The name of the representative, whether he/she is a candidate or not, and the residence.

The nomination papers should also contain:

- A copy of the birth certificate not more than three months old
- A declaration by the candidate stating that his/her name is only on one list and that the law does not disqualify him/her
- A tax certificate

An attestation by which the party puts up the person concerned as candidate. The Senior Divisional Officer has seven (7) days to ensure that the list is in conformity with the provisions of the law. Once the list is accepted the candidates have 24 hours to pay a deposit of 50.000 francs into the treasury. This money is returned to the candidate if he or she scores at least 5% of the vote in the constituency.

Candidates' lists for parliamentary re-elections may be rejected because:

- They are incomplete
- They do not contain nomination documents
- They include candidates who are not party members.

Division	Constituency	Name	Sex	Political Affiliation	Term of office
Fako	Buea urban	Meoto Paul Njie	M	CPDM	First term
	Buea Rural	Emilia Lifaka	F	CPDM	First term
	Limbe East	Catherine E. Meboka	F	CPDM	First term
	Tiko	Eftti Andrew	M	CPDM	First term
Kupe Muanenguba	Bangem	Chief Esong Joseph	M	CPDM	First term
	Nguti	Fotabe Hannah	F	CPDM	First term
Liabalem	Liabalem	Dr. Forju Bernard	M	CPDM	First term
	Akwaya	Justice Ayah P. Abine	M	CPDM	First term
	Eyumojock	Dr. Ayuk-Arrey Peter	M	CPDM	First term
Manyu	Mamfe Central	Rose Abunaw Agbor	F	CPDM	Second term
	Kumba Central	Nkelle Mboe Palmy	M	SDF	First term
	Mbonge/Konye	Bokwe Samuel Ngoe	M	CPDM	First term
Ndian	Bamusso	Emmanuel S. Naseli	M	CPDM	First term
	Ekondo Titi	Imbia Sylvester Itoe	M	CPDM	First term
	Mundemba	Mbile Norbert	M	CPDM	First term

CONDITIONS FOR THE ELECTION OF MUNICIPAL COUNCILLORS

According to Law Nº 92-002 of August 1992, (later amended), Municipal Councillors are elected for a term of five years.

They may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office.

How can a citizen run for elections to become a councillor?

The citizen must:

- Be an active member of a political party
- Be a good citizen
- Be resident in the council area where one is standing for elections. However one can run if one has a house in the area.
- Be chosen by a political party as one of its candidates
- Therefore be on a party's list for election
- Be 23 years old or above
- Pay the sum of 10,000 frs into the treasury.

Those who cannot stand for council elections within their administrative jurisdiction Governor, Secretary General of the Province, Senior Divisional Officer, District Head or Assistant District Head, Police Officer, Gendarme, Military Service-Man, Prison Administrator, Secretary General of a Council, Municipal Revenue Collector and Municipal Service Head, Magistrate, Government Delegate and Deputy Delegate to a City Council.

South West Province: Municipal Divide

Division	Council Area	Status	No of councillors	Mayor	Sex	Political Affiliation
Fako	Buea	Rural	41	Mbella Moki Charles	M	CPDM
	Idenau	Rural	21	Esanji Elong James	M	CPDM
	Muyuka	Rural	41	Nkea Peter	M	SDF
	Tiko	Rural	41	Rosaline NdongueToto	F	CPDM
	Limbe	Urban	61	Motanga A Mojimba	M	CPDM
Kupe Muanenguba	Bangem	Rural	25	Alobwede James	M	CPDM
	Nguti	Rural	25	Along Mbome James	M	CPDM
	Tombel	Rural	25	Tanyi mekolle Epie	M	CPDM
Lebialem	Alou	Rural	25	Jean -Maria Fogap	M	CPDM
	Menji	Rural	25	Nkemabin Mbiaoah	M	CPDM
	Wabane	Rural	25	Tanyi Simon Tedju	M	CPDM
Manyu	Akwaya	Rural	35	Mega Denis Nzam B	M	CPDM
	Eyumojock	Rural	25	Ndep Moses Odu	M	CPDM
	Mamfe	Rural	25	Arrey Eyoung Ashu	M	CPDM
	Tinto	Rural	25	Enow Bayie Oscar	M	CPDM
Meme	Konye	Rural	35	Esie Ngoh Eliberth	F	CPDM
	Kumba	Urban	61	Asapngu Ferdina	M	SDF
	Mbonge	Rural	45	Prince Ebako Motamga	M	CPDM
Ndian	Bamusso	Rural	25	Etongo Gabrial Nasa	M	CPDM
	Dikome Balue	Rural	25	Misondi Tobial Nasabi	M	CPDM
	Ekondo Titi	Rural	25	Chief Esoh Itoh	M	CPDM
	Idabato	Rural	25	Masango Philip	M	CPDM
	Isangele	Rural	25	Anki Ambo Daniel	M	CPDM
	Kombo Abedimo	Rural	25	Aboko Patrick Anki	M	CPDM
	Kombo Itidi	Rural	25	Etonde Cornelius	M	CPDM
	Mundemba	Rural	25	Verine Ekolle Ikongo	M	CPDM
	Toko	Rural	25	Ekale Rils	M	CPDM

By Ule Eyakwe, MUDEC Group

Decentralisation & Good Local Governance

Decentralisation is the transfer of responsibilities, in the management of local affairs, from the central government to the local governments.

The purpose of Decentralisation is to bring the administration closer to the people. It remains the best way to improve the living standards of the populations. Local communities are the principal poles of local development. They are the laboratories that are inevitable in the fight against poverty and the implantation of democracy.

The process of decentralisation could take two distinct forms (Deconcentration and Devolution) that lead to different results.

Deconcentration designates an administrative process of decentralisation of resources. The local services remain under the control of the central government. The participation of the local populations is only a tool in the accomplishment of projects.

Devolution, on the contrary, is the delegation or surrender of powers of a central government to local authorities. Local councillors and mayors are chosen by local electors to whom they are accountable. The participation and information of the local populations are the objectives of such a policy. The second process of decentralisation (devolution) permits more participation, transparency and accountability.

Decentralisation today is amongst the priorities on the African political agenda because it empowers local institutions thereby enhancing and modernising democratic societies and states in Africa.

The Legal Framework Governing Decentralisation in Cameroon

Law Nº 74/23 of December 5 1974 governs the organisation of councils. Law Nº 87/015 of July 15 1987 created City Urban Councils. Law Nº 90/057 of December 19th 1990 amends and completes the provisions of Law Nº 74/23 of December 5 1974 governing the organisation of councils.

Law Nº 95/21 of August 8 1995 amends certain provisions of Law Nº 74/23 of December 5 1974.

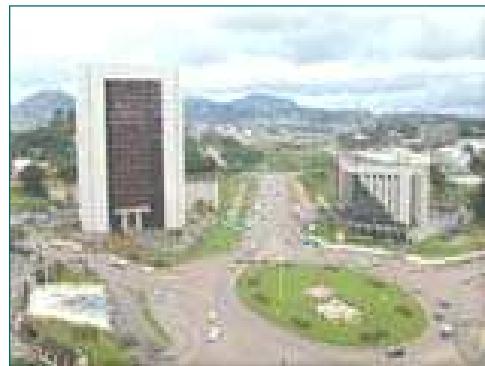
The 1996 Constitution distinguishes two types of decentralised authorities - Councils and Regions.

Today, 9963 elected councillors from different political parties sit in municipal councils throughout the country. They come from six political parties: CPDM; SDF; CDU; UPC; UNDP and MDR.

Laws are still awaited to implement the relevant provisions of the 1996 Constitution that defines the decentralisation process in Cameroon.

Decentralisation as a tool of Good Governance

Decentralisation is an effective means of implementing Good Governance. Put otherwise, Decentralisation is one of the most effective



Decentralisation favours Infrastructural Development

ways of improving living standards and governance because its success will contribute to cohesion and social peace through poverty alleviation thanks to the transparency and opportunities created to enable the population participate in the management of their own affairs.

What is Good Governance?

Governance is the exercise of politico-administrative and managerial authority and order. In other words, Governance refers to the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented). An analysis of Governance focuses on both the formal and informal actors involved in decision-making and implementation. It also looks at the formal and informal structures set in place to arrive at and implement decisions.

Good Governance is the exercise of politico-administrative and managerial authority which is legitimate, accountable, transparent, democratic, decentralised, efficient and equitable in resource allocation and utilisation, responsive to the critical needs of promoting human welfare and positive transformation of society, following the rule of law.

Good Governance also intends to assure that corruption is minimised and the views of women, minorities and voices of the most vulnerable in society are heard in decision-making.

The different **actors** in Governance are: The State; Private Sector; Civil Society; Media; Political Parties; Financial Donors; Military; Local Governments; Traditional authorities; socio-professional associations; Multinational Corporations, Religious etc.

Governance exists in different domains: Companies (Corporate Governance); Councils (Local Governance); City Councils (Urban Governance); Environment Management (Environmental Governance); Territorial Administration (Territorial Administration); State (National Governance); Management of World Affairs (International & Global Governance).

The Ten Principles of Good Governance

Participation

To encourage all citizens to exercise their right to

express their opinion in the process of making decisions concerning public interest, both directly and indirectly.

Transparency

To build mutual trust between the government and the public through the provision of information with guaranteed easy access to accurate and adequate information.

Equality

To provide equal opportunities for all members of the society in order to improve their welfare.

Accountability

To increase the accountability of decision-makers with regards to decisions in all matters involving the public's interests.

Responsiveness

To increase the sensitivity of government administrators to the aspirations of the public.

Rule of Law

To realise law enforcement which is fair and impartial to all, without exception, while honouring basic human rights and observing the values prevalent in the society.

Vision

To develop the region or municipality using clear vision, foresight and strategy, with the participation of the citizenry in all the processes of development so that they acquire a sense of ownership and responsibility for the progress of their regions or municipalities.

Supervision

To increase the efforts of supervision in the operation of government and the implementation of development by involving the private sector and the general public.

Efficiency & Effectiveness

To guarantee public service delivery by utilising all available resources optimally and responsibly

Professionalism

To enhance the capacity and moral disposition of government administrators so that they are capable of providing easy, fast, accurate and affordable services.

The Necessity for Good Governance

Since its inception into the 1996 Constitution, Decentralisation has gradually been introduced into Cameroon, with more powers and authority devolving from the central government to the municipal councils, accompanied with corresponding responsibility for the delivery of most basic services (potable water, energy, transportation, waste management, health, education, etc.)

During the one-party era, service delivery by local councils was not very effective and efficient. This was because, the position of a Mayor was merely a political function that did not give the population any opportunity to participate. There was little regard to transparency, accountability and professionalism in the management of council affairs. The municipal administrators were not fully responsive to the needs of the people. Most basic services were provided, inadequately though, by the central

Decentralisation & Good Local Governance

government.

This is no longer the case today. With a more pluralistic setting, there have been changes in municipal management and administration. While the final laws to implement effective decentralisation are still awaited, there's growing emphasis on the introduction of responsive, participative, transparent and accountable management practices in council affairs. Radical changes such as the rationalisation of municipal organisations and modifications in planning, programming, budgeting and financial management of these councils must be placed under the banner of Good Local Governance.

GUIDELINES FOR GOOD LOCAL GOVERNANCE

The population, Councillors, Administrators, Mayors, Government Delegates, have a direct role to play in ensuring Good Local Governance. Other key players are Political Parties, CEFAM, FEICOM, the Central Government, Media, Civil Society, Traditional Authorities and the Private Sector, for they are also concerned in the effective functioning of our local councils.

The Role of the Population in Good Local Governance

The population should be allowed to participate in the management of local affairs. How?

Public Consultations and Public Hearings should be introduced in the annual and/or strategic development planning process. There should be ample opportunities for the people to participate. Through public consultations and hearings, the socio-economic constraints in the community should be identified and the community should be encouraged to take actions to overcome the constraints by themselves through 'Quarter Meetings'.

During Public Hearings, the population should be allowed to express their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with regards to public service delivery and should state priorities for improvement. Local Newspapers and interactive Radio talk-show programmes should be used to ensure transparency and accountability.

Public Participation provides the population with an active role in Local Governance, increases their sense of responsibility as citizens and encourages councils to improve service delivery.

The Role of Municipal Councillors in Good Local Governance

Councillors are the 'guarantors' of Good Local Governance. They control the actions of the Mayor and his deputies and see to it that the latter meet the expectations and needs of the population, whom they represent.

Councillors are accountable to the people and so must be informed regularly about the activities of the council. They must ensure



Councils should rehabilitate historical structures for Tourism

that there is transparency, accountability and efficiency in the management of local council affairs. It is their legal and moral duty to pass a '**vote of no confidence**' on the Mayor and/or his deputies, if they find that the latter's services are contrary to the aspirations of the people. They should watch the Mayor's lifestyle for any signs of illicit enrichment that can be linked, through verifiable evidence, to the poor management of council's funds.

Councillors should not let their political affiliations; personal grudges or prejudices mar the smooth functioning of councils. They should not also transform session debates into senseless score-settling encounters.

Councillors should desist from facilitating corrupt practices between the council staff and members of the public. They should also watch against indiscipline and laxity within the ranks of the council staff.

The Role of the Council Staff in Good Local Governance

The Council Staff should aim at achieving and improving on efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery.

Indiscipline, corruption and laxity should be erased from bureaucratic functions. Mechanisms for evaluation should be put in place to periodically, select and reward hardworking staff.

The Role of Mayors in Good Local Governance

Most Mayors are basically with little or no skills or experience in management, at the time they are taking office. Hence, their first duty is to listen to all stakeholders involved in council affairs. They should always seek advice from the appropriate persons, when confronted with problems linked to local management policies, funding, public-private partnerships and the involvement of the population.

Basic services and needs such as water, sanitation, education, reproductive health, employment, and transportation are concerns that no right-thinking Mayor should ignore. Access to basic services must always remain at the centre of policies and must be considered as a prerequisite for democracy, equity and justice.

Mayors should promote ecotourism, cultural,

professional, sports and business activities like Trade Fairs, Agro-pastoral shows that bring a lot of publicity and revenue to the council and the local population.

Mayors should initiate the construction of attractive motor parks, tarred roads, playgrounds, public gardens, public toilets, green spaces etc. They should participate whenever possible in capacity-building workshops and seminars. Summits, like Africitics, should also be taken seriously as they offer opportunities for fruitful partnerships, networking and twinning conventions.

Mayors should strive to meet requirements laid down for funding by the Special Council Support Fund for Mutual Assistance (FEICOM). They should also look for funding opportunities away from the traditional sources and develop the local economies.

Transparency, accountability, efficiency and responsibility should be the key principles that should guide Mayors towards Good Local Governance. The council funds should not be confused for private funds. Hence, embezzlement, misappropriation and corruption should be watched against, as legal, moral and political sanctions exist to punish defaulters.

Mayors should initiate Networking and Partnerships with other Councils. This is to share experiences that shall benefit the population. Mayors should participate in Environmental Governance by ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources. Mayors should also seek to attain the Millennium Development Goals and NEPAD objectives at the level of their communities.

CONCLUSION

The welfare of the people constitutes the most important objective for achieving sustainable development, to bring relief to those in poverty, who are disempowered and who are dispossessed socially.

To address these issues, the Government of Cameroon has put in place the legal framework for Decentralisation and has progressively transferred powers to the local authorities in view of granting broad, real and responsible autonomy. Much reference is made to Good Governance.

The implementation of Good Governance through Decentralisation has become an urgent need and key prerequisite for restoring the faith of the people in the institutions of Government and also giving them the means to manage their affairs.

The principles of Good Governance can encourage all relevant stakeholders to exercise their capabilities to the full in order to improve the overall living conditions of the people.

By Mukete Tahle Itoe
Secretary General, GNGG



Partnership & Participation

Council & Village Communities

In Cameroon, councils remain the organs mandated by the central government to provide basic services to their respective populations who live in diverse communities (villages, quarters, etc.). While the population give the council legitimacy through the ballot box, they in turn expect their voices to be heard (responsiveness) by the council management so that their human development needs in the domains of education, health, water, food security and communication infrastructure now consolidated in world-wide Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can be attained. Paradoxically, the above bond is often very readily met by the population willingly or unwillingly, but the councils seldom do. Once voted into office, council executives and their cohorts adopt a "deaf-ear" syndrome as regards the needs of their various communities. The electorates are completely sidelined in the council management process: no accountability, one person show -Lord!. This situation blocks participatory and equitable development that form the basis for good governance and aggravates corruption & poverty. The puzzle in development now-a-days is whether councils are trustworthy organs to channel development to village communities. Councils are very confident that they are by law, but their communities have all the doubts. Councils and village communities the World over do singly carry out local development activities, but for services to effectively reach the beneficiaries, a concerted effort is inevitable. Better service delivery therefore requires a good working relationship among the beneficiaries or village communities and the councils. (World Development report 2004, overview). The development of a global partnership for development is 1 of the 8 United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Such partnerships among other things, often results to exchange of information, joint learning, sharing resources, improved coordination, joint planning, creation of synergy and improvement the institutional and structural environment in which the actors interact. It's a process, not just a task and requires a cooperation environment, and development of common agendas (SNV Cameroon 2004).

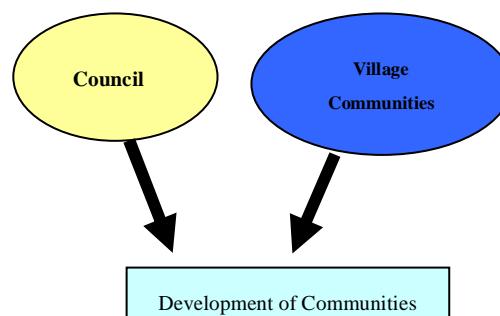
This write-up presents highlights of participatory diagnostic studies carried out in some councils in the Northwest Province on partnership & participation between councils and village communities (Batibo & Kumbo Rural Councils partnership with village communities workshop reports July 2004 and June 2005).

Dear Readers,
Read More, Drink Less!

Advice from ANUCAM BOOKS

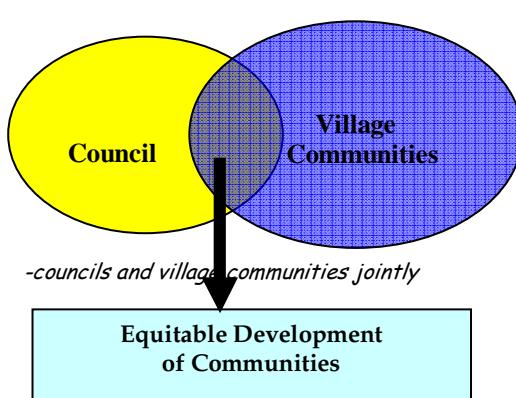
Situation Frameworks:

Fig1: Present Councils-Village communities partnership model



- councils and village communities each carrying out development in communities
- inequitable distribution of council investment resources..
- little or no collaboration

Fig2: Desired Councils-village communities partnership model.



- councils and village communities jointly
- carrying out village development in villages and/communities.

- equitable distribution of council investment resources..
- high level of collaboration (win-win)

Approach:

The diagnosis were carried through workshops organised by the councils grouping council executives, 3 core staff, representatives of traditional authorities, women, youths, Community based organisations (including village water & road maintenance committees, education and health committees, etc.). Apart from council representatives, other participants were drawn from existing administrative and/or cultural zones for an equitable participant mix in terms of power relations and gender. External facilitators were sought to direct the discussions, ensure greater participation, and coordinate report writing. Group-work and plenary presentations were guided by frank & participatory discussions.

Projects realised and on-going by village communities and the council as an institution within 5 years were reviewed considering the

aspects of what?, where?, when? and with whom?. Difficulties encountered by village communities within their respective zones working with the council and proposed solutions to address these difficulties were highlighted, while the council did the same exercise. Action plans covering what?, who?, with whom?, means?, and when? were drawn-up and small committees set-up with clear terms of reference to follow-up their realisation. SNV advisors were also given the "go between" responsibility of overseeing the effective execution of the plan.

Results

Difficulties councils-village communities	Envisaged solutions
"Councils concentrate development in headquarters and villages of elite."	"Council planning (strategic & operational) based on village problems and opportunities diagnosis."
Village communities have little or no information about Council activities and service	"Councils and village communities communication strategy to include: agreement on locations for display of councils information (notice-boards), channelling information through churches and other village meeting places like markets, funerals, fountains, etc.)."
"Self-centeredness of some villages especially those with viable and politically powerful elite."	"Sensitise councilors to meet respective village communities regularly to share information on council activities & services (birth certificates, market shades) and listen to village concerns."
"Inability of villages to initiate projects	"Encourage joint projects to reduce cost and enhance unity."
Political lineage	"Training in project identification at village level."
	"Village problems and needs diagnosis."
	"Sensitisation on development focus, not politics."

Follow-up Strategy:

A committee composed of 1 representative each from the council assembly (chair), council staff (secretary), traditional authority, village cultural and development association, and women group was elected to follow-up the implementation of the action plans. The terms of reference for the committee covered:

- holding of quarterly meetings
 - making field visits
 - giving feedback in writing to council executive.
- The council executive were requested to provide the necessary logistics for the effective functioning of the committee including access to documents.

Conclusion:

- ↔Collective planning rooted from village problems and opportunities is a prerequisite for equitable development within a council area.
- ↔Greater partnership between councils and village communities increase population participation in the management of their affairs.
- ↔Information sharing on council activities/ services and vice versa will greatly foster council-village communities partnership that can usher in more development.

Besong Bakia.
Governance Expert,
SNV- Cameroon.

Presentation, Rumpi Project Workshop with
councils Kumba 26 January, 2006.





Memorable Speech

A Welcome Address by the Lord Mayor of the Buea Council on the Occasion of the Installation Ceremony of the Governor of the South West Province by His Excellency Marafa Hamidou Yaya, August 18 2005

Mbella Moki Charles
Lord Mayor
Buea Council

His Excellency, The Minister of State Incharge of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation, Members of Government Present, The Outgoing and Incoming Governors, The Vice-Chancellor, University of Buea, The President, South West Court of Appeal and Learned Procureur General, General Managers of Public Corporations, Senior Divisional Officers His Excellency, The Consul General of Nigeria and Members of the Diplomatic Corps Honourable Members of Parliament Government Delegates The President of SWEC The Secretary General, SWELA Municipal, Political, Traditional and Religious Authorities Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

We the people of South West Province desire to greet your Excellency the Honourable Minister of State for Territorial Administration and Decentralization, Mr Marafa Hamidou Yaya, with the expression of our unfailing allegiance to the leadership and institutions of this country on this very significant visit marking the installation of our incoming Governor.

Your Excellency, it is my great fortune as Lord Mayor of the Buea Municipality to be given the privilege of expressing to you the deep loyalty, which we the communities, councils and city managers of the South West Province feel towards you.

The people of this province have watched and read of your journeys to other provinces and envied the peoples of those lands, the opportunity you had given them to show their loyalty and attachment to the State. We have been earnestly hoping that you will find the time and opportunity to visit this blessed province of yours with its peace, loving hospitable as well as exotic scenery. We are indeed grateful for the honor you have bestowed on us today.

I can assure your Excellency that the people of Buea greatly appreciate your presence in our midst because, it is a noble gesture which is destined to draw our particular communities closer in comradeship with the spirit of a one and indivisible Cameroon Nation under the guided leadership of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon. We therefore heartily welcome you and your entourage to Buea. We are proudly grateful and deeply indebted as we constantly pledge our loyalty to the Head of State and the institutions he incarnates. We subscribe to the great ideals of freedom, liberty and equality so cherished by the people yearning for good governance every where in the world and which distinguishes in broad relief the equitable, rational and meritorious distribution of the abundant human and material resources of our country at a time that cries aloud for a just and transparent management approach to public affairs. You know the scripture says: *withhold not good from whom it is due when it is in your power to do so.* (Proverbs3:23)

Your Excellency,
We have things that worry us,
We have things that bewilder us,
We have things that make us wonder
We ask questions and do not find ready answers.
We have highlighted them in other circles. But let me touch on the most topical- roads, floods.

destruction and social pain.

Your Excellency, this Province is not new to you. It harbours the oil wells with its rich agro-industrial and touristic environment. While elsewhere royalties are enjoyed for Timber and other resources, we of the South West are yet to have royalties for the Black Gold and our Conserved forests. Roads are a vital instrument for the consolidation of our national unity. But travelling around our Province is a nightmare. Our new Governor will have to grapple with what is left as roads- from Mutegene to Kumba-Tombel-Bangem, Kumba-Mamfe-Toko- Dikome Balue and Bakebe, Menji-Wabane. You may get the heart of the South Westerner, but to get his soul work on his roads. Government should step in and provide the needed assistance in disaster areas, to find a way out of the predicament since Council resources are lean and limited to face this pathetic situation.

As you may have noticed, local councils can barely survive now since measures were adopted in the finance law. Current taxation procedures rather scare away investors and kill small and medium size enterprises in our cities. the National Social Insurance Fund has arbitrarily closed the account of our council with disregard for laid down laws and regulations. FEICOM, under the supervision of your ministerial department is the unwanted tax collector for scarce council revenue, because of their expertise in the mismanagement and the unhealthy relationship with councils.

Our lands are being commandeered by unscrupulous government officials sent here. They usually act like the early white men who scrambled here and wanted to get the choicest lands before they were chased

"You may get the heart of a South Westerner, but to get his soul, work on his roads"

away or overtaken by new comers.

May these land-grapping see end under the present dispensation.

Insecurity is assuming an awful dimension in some parts of the province, despite the creation of many new police stations.

The creation of local tender boards has become a source of enrichment for administrative authorities. They are said to have been outstretching and collecting huge sums of money from contractors thereby compromising the award and execution of public contracts. The government allocates huge sums for projects in this province, but how are they awarded? Who gets what? With what expertise? What is the quality of work done and what percentage of realisation?

Blood has started flowing in some localities over chieftaincy disputes. We have never known this in this part of the country. It shows that even a quiet people may in the long run, unfortunately, resort to do extreme things when they can no longer stand the questionable and unwise decisions of the administration.

Recent experiences have come to reveal how sensitive the South West Province has become. And anyone sent here must have in his baggage a collection of competence, experience, maturity and level-headedness to tactfully attend to the things that happen here- even the most unexpected.

We think the incoming governor has what it takes to face the challenges of his new office. He had served in a lower capacity as Senior Divisional Officer for Fako, and has a foretaste of the complexities and pleasures of the province he is now going to head. 'Nous vous souhaitons le bienvenu, Monsieur le Gouverneur'.

Your Excellency, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and

Gentlemen, let us reason together in this short story; two very young people went to challenge an old man considered to be very knowledgeable and full of wisdom. He was rich and had many things, he was loyal, simple, honest, very hospitable and kind. He won the admiration of everybody and so many people fell in love with him. So the two young people agreed to trick him one day. They caught a bird or dove if you like. One of them said he will carry it and said to the old man that this bird was dead and so though it was alive he will listen to what the man would say. If the man said the bird was alive, he was to release it to fly in the air. The other young man said he was going to tell the man that the bird they were carrying was a dead bird - but if this wise man accepted that it was a dead bird, then they would quickly and quietly twist its neck. So, they walked up to this old man and they said: This that we hold in our hands today, is it dead or is it alive? They both asked. The old man looked at the young people and he smiled. Of course he told them wisely and clearly - the bird is in your hands".

ALLAH says concerning the unity of mankind in the Holy Quran: "O mankind, we created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other not that ye may despise each other. Verily, the honoured of you in the sight of ALLAH is he who is the most righteous of you. ALLAH has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things". Holy Quran Chapter 49 verse 13.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, you must have realised that the music coming from the South West Province is not complete because the territorial orchestra is not harmonious. Let us together look for that vital instrument so that the music can be complete.

To the out-going Governor of the South West Province, Mr. EJAKE MBONDA THOMAS, we express our unreserved thanks for your selfless service to this province during your stay here. Our wish was for you to stay longer so that we discover you more. We sincerely congratulate you on the good job you accomplished at the head of this province during your tenure of office. The hospitality and fun we shared with you and your wife at the residence and public occasions were remarkable. We enjoyed your faithfulness to the State. We thank you and wish you well and success in the new office you have been called upon to assume.

Finally, permit me say once more on behalf of our population to the incoming Governor - His Excellency EYEYA ZANGA LOUIS - Congratulations. You know most of us and we have a good knowledge of you as a faithful servant of the State. When you were here with us, the speaker was a YCPDM Section President, but you are coming back today to find him as Lord Mayor of Buea. I want to thank you for the orientation. When I was a child, I reasoned like a child but now that I am grown up, and I am a Mayor, I reason like a Mayor. You can count on us, we shall work with you.

Your Excellency, the Minister of State, the people of this Province have a great reputation of respect for State institutions and have an established covenant with the Head of State - His Excellency, Paul Biya. Our attachment to him has cords that cannot be broken. Because He has never failed us, we shall never fail him. By the grace of GOD, we shall together make of this country a better and more prosperous place on the face of the earth.

Once more we welcome you heartily Mr. Minister of State as you perform this ceremony which is loaded with deep rooted meaning.

God bless you all, God bless Cameroon.

By Mbella Moki Charles