

# UPSHOTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN IN THE CITY OF BAMENDA, CAMEROON, 1975 TO 2014

Eugene Muambeh Muntoh

*PhD Research Fellow, Department of History, The University of Yaounde 1, Cameroon*

## ABSTRACT

*Domestic violence is a tenacious inclusive social problem with far reaching concerns at both individual and societal level. Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behaviours in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. This paper discusses the premise of domestic violence in the city of Bamenda, and equally establishes a nexus between domestic violence and the status of women in the city of Bamenda. The paper also analyses responses to domestic violence in the city of Bamenda from state and non-state actors. It argues that domestic violence had an overwhelming influence on the status of women in the city of Bamenda. The article further contends that domestic violence is problem which cuts across various sectors and as such requires a holistic response from all sectors in the society. In order to achieve this goal, the paper made plea to some designated primary and secondary sources and the inferences were drawn after a qualitative historical analysis.*

**Keywords:** *Domestic, Violence, Bamenda, Abuse, Women*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Domestic violence is a subject of global anxiety which in some societies is seen as norms and culturally accepted as part of life. Domestic violence as defined by The Australian Medical Association is the domination, intimidation and victimization of one person by another within an intimate relationship by physical, sexual, or emotional means. Globally, substantial growth has been made in addressing this phenomenon and responses to the problem have evolved rapidly in recent years. However, considerable challenges still exist across a range of jurisdictions in terms of how to define, conceptualise, prevent and respond to domestic violence. The government of Cameroon just like other international partners had developed distinctive approaches to defining and addressing domestic violence. The Cameroon penal code covers such abuses under section 275 through 285, as well as section 338 which covers general assault and battery crimes. The effects of domestic violence at both individual and societal level are long term and far-reaching extending well beyond the experiences of individual women and children to the wider community. Hence addressing domestic violence was a pressing concern for academic practitioners working across a board range of sectors including health, education, housing, social work, criminal justice, law and politics, especially as substantial challenges remained. In the city of Bamenda, domestic violence was a common practice which affected about seven of every ten homes. Though studies acknowledge that domestic violence was a major challenge in the society, it should be noted that the problem of domestic violence had far reaching effects on the status of women in the city of Bamenda. Amongst other forms of violence, domestic violence was most wide ranging yet surprisingly under recognized human rights violation. Thus, this paper elucidates on the upshots of this phenomenon on the status of women, an issue which seemed to have escape policy concerns, but yet ravaging the society.

## 2. THEORETICAL CONTEXTUAL NEXUS

While several schools of thoughts have analysed the issue of domestic violence from various perspectives, this study is anchored on the frustration-aggression theory which explain in theoretical form the context of the study. This theory was first stated in 1939 by Dollard et al., It explains the process by which aggression is directed to the source of frustration. When something interferes with an individual's attempt to reach some goal or end, he feels frustrated

and frustration in turn leads to some form of aggression. After taking various criticisms into account, this theory was modified. Today it is recognized that an actual display of aggression may be inhibited by either internalized norms of external controls, even though the impulse for aggression may be strong following some frustrating experience. This theory relates to this study as it provides an understanding on the basis of domestic violence which emanates from behavioural patterns in individuals. Frustrations can be cumulative and they can remain active over a long period of time. This paper consequently tries to establish a nexus between domestic violence and the status of women in the city of Bamenda.

### 3. APPROACH AND EXPANSIVE FRAMES

This paper espoused a qualitative historical analytical approach. Information was gotten from both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included question guides and oral interviews. The researcher identified and interviewed some informants, especially victims of domestic violence and members of institutions responsible for the fight against domestic violence. Secondary sources consisted of information that had already been produced. The researcher also collected material from libraries as well as informants who had documents linked to the research interest. Tertiary documents were also consulted for information. They included scientific presentations during seminars, conferences and colloquiums. Ethical issues were observed all through the research process. Consents were sought and involvement was based on respondent's free will. The researcher observed discretion by pledging to respondents that the material delivered for the study would be used only for other academic research.

### 4. THE SUBSTANCE AND LOCUS OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1. Premise of Domestic Violence in the City of Bamenda

There is no one lone element that explains domestic violence entirely in various households in the city of Bamenda. Several multifaceted and interrelated social and cultural dynamics kept women particularly vulnerable to the violence directed at them by men in their relationships and marriages. Among elements accountable for domestic violence in the city of Bamenda included the following:

Violence on women appeared to be normal as far as the culture of the Bamenda community was concern. It was common for a husband to beat his wife because the wife to him was a mere property to him and he had the right to control her behavior.<sup>1</sup> Women who challenged the tradition were punished and even in some cases such punishments came about by merely asking their husband for money and needs for the children. It is noted that in many cases women shared the feelings that men had the right to discipline their wives by applying force and some women also subscribed to the fact that beating was justified in certain circumstances. The patriarchy system of the people's tradition laid much emphasis on male dominance which placed men at the center of authority leading to violent at home.<sup>2</sup>

Excessive consumption of alcohol and smoking was also noted as an element that provoked domestic violence against women in Bamenda. With a culture of palm wine consumption which was a part of daily routine, most men who indulged in palm wine consumption were aggressive and violent towards women and children. Based on past reports from victims of domestic violence in Bamenda, a good number of cases of physical abuse were associated with the husband's excessive alcohol consumption.<sup>3</sup>

Lack of legal protection, particularly within the sanctity of the home, was a strong factor in perpetuating domestic violence. Until recently, legal protection for victims of domestic violence was not common. Increasingly, however, some secret societies were seen as responsible for protecting the rights of women even in connection with offences committed within the home, an example of such secret societies was the *Takenbeng* which was the most dangerous secret society strictly for women. Most of the women who experienced domestic violence revealed that such incidents actually started when their husbands were involved in love affairs with other women.<sup>4</sup> This factor,

---

<sup>1</sup> Johnson Takwa, *Violence Against the Women and the Girl Children in Cameroon*, Poster presented at the International Conference on Population, 27 September-2 October 2009, Marrakech, Morocco.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Mary Tumfor, housewife, interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Mildred Ayafor, *A Situational Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in Cameroon, Yaounde*, 2014.

however, was recorded to be the most common because of the prevalence of adultery (*njumba*) which was normalized in the culture of the people.

Another major contributing factor to the prevalence of domestic violence was the issue of early and forced marriages. In the Bamenda community, early marriages occurred in the form of child betrothal, this involved marrying out a girl child immediately after she was delivered. While forced marriage on the other hand was simply marrying out a girl against her wish, it was also referred to as induced marriages.<sup>5</sup> In some cases, the girls were withdrawn from school or even denied access to education. There were instances in which parents forced their grown daughters into marriages against their wishes either due to cultural, social, economic or political reasons. This state of affairs contributed to pervasive incidences of domestic violence in matrimonial homes.

Gender bias upheld by the male-child syndrome was another contributing factor to domestic violence in Bamenda community. Birth of male children generally attracted praises and encomiums from friends, while that of female children caused women real problems in matrimony. In addition, the birth of a male child assured the mother of a high status in the family, who had fulfilled her marital obligations. Therefore, the desire for male children which was an essential part of gender inequality in African societies at large, was among the identified factors for domestic violence in the Bamenda. Male children were regarded as the heads of the family, who will continue to sustain the family's lineage while the female children will surely be married to someone else.<sup>6</sup> So, where a man did not get a male child who will take over the headship of the family, he was disturbed and in most cases, subjecting his wife to verbal abuse and threats of divorce or remarriage.

Widowhood and Inheritance was another cause of domestic violence against women noted in Bamenda. As demanded by tradition, when a man died his successor was eligible to inherit his properties including his wife if he so wished. Women who entered such relationships suffered untold misery coupled with the fact that these successors viewed them as mere sex tools. On this note, the woman was deprived of all family property immediately her husband died. Women were equally subjected to perform some dehumanizing rites upon the death of their husbands. The woman affected was not allowed to take bath, comb her hair, change her dress or even leave her compound for a period ranging from twenty to forty days.<sup>7</sup>

Jealousy also accounted for many cases of domestic violence in the Bamenda community. Jealousy most often occurred when the spouse was either suspected of being unfaithful or was planning to leave the relationship. Such situations led to social stress and increased pressures. Violence was not always caused by stress, but was one of the ways that some people responded to stress. Couples in poverty were likely to experience domestic violence, due to increased stress and conflicts about finances and other aspects.

Interpretation of scriptures and Christian religious teachings about the role of men and women in marriage played on the psychology of women and as a result reinforced domestic violence. Some victims argued that strong masculine images used for God in the writings of Christian Theology was the foundation to of male dominance. This line of thought was also picked up from another victim who said she believed that the Bible was mostly written by men. And to her, the Bible has a very strong patriarchal tendency within what is being written. So it is being written from a male perspective and it's been written to promote the male.<sup>8</sup> Such kind of thinking had been picked up by the church and was been taught by the church throughout the ages. Thus, the issue of male dominance from the teachings of the church perhaps needs to be revisited and unlearn. There is need to teach the proper theology with regard to what a man and a woman ought to be and how they ought to relate to one another within a relationship or within a household.

Finally, experiences during childhood such as witnessing domestic violence and experiencing physical and sexual abuse, also laid the foundation for domestic violence in some aggressors. Violence was learnt as a means of resolving conflict and asserting manhood by children who had witnessed such patterns of conflict resolution. Abusers molested mostly in order to establish and maintain control over their partner. Abusers' effort to dominate

<sup>5</sup> V. G Fanso, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2, The Colonial and Post-Colonial Experience*. Limbe: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1989, p. 45.

<sup>6</sup> P.N. Nkwi and J.P. Warnier, *Elements For A History Of The Western Grassfields, Yaounde*, Publication Of The Department Of Sociology 1982, Pp. 80-85.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture: Cameroon, 06/12/2000, UN Doc. A/56/44.

was attributed to low self-esteem or feelings of inadequacy, unresolved childhood conflicts, the stress of poverty, hostility and resentment toward women, personality disorders, genetic tendencies and social cultural influences.<sup>9</sup>

#### 4.2. Nexus Between Domestic Violence and The Status of Women in The City of Bamenda

Domestic violence had far reaching effects on the status of women in the city of Bamenda. Most women who experienced domestic violence faced a lot of challenges as far as living a normal and stable life was concern. Several factors abound establishing a link between domestic violence and the status of women in the city of Bamenda as examine subsequently.

To begin with, domestic violence had an adverse influence on the liberty of decision making in the life of women in the Bamenda community. Women who experienced domestic violence looked upon their abusers for every decision to be made in all aspects. This deprivation from decision making accounted for several untold complications in the lives of the victims. Even when the victim was in a desperate situation, she still looked up to her abuser to determine whether she survived or not. A more worrying aspect of this situation was coupled to the fact that even over her own children she did not have a say as far as major decisions in the life of the child was concern. As a result of this, the children tended to depend on the directives of their father whom in most cases showed less interest in their affairs. According to some victims, each time they made a proposal on major issues for the interest of the family, the husband misunderstood such proposals for attempts to take over family matters.<sup>10</sup> A victim revealed that when she tried to advise her husband on the need to take savings seriously in case of difficult times, the husband interpreted it to mean she was putting an eye on his financial dealings. This placed the victims in a difficult situation because they had to bear the consequences of bad decisions made by their abusive husbands.

Furthermore, domestic violence ensured a devastating weight on the financial autonomy of women. Women who lived in abusive relationships were constantly monitored especially when it came to their financial dealings. This made it complex for the victims to embark on any meaningful financial endeavours which most often benefited even the abusive husband. Some victims attested to the fact that their abusive husbands even went as far as taking custody of their sources of income. Women who operated business were bound to watch their husbands taking note of every financial benefits that accrued. Worst still, some abusive husbands went as the extent of retaining the ATM card of their wives and collecting their monthly salaries in the case of working class victims.<sup>11</sup> Considering the huge needs of women in a month, this placed the victims in a desperate end. Note should be taken on the fact that this mostly applied to women whose husbands had sponsored them through education and secured a job for them. It was for this reason that women in such situations put in less resistance. Domestic violence in this form had laid a serious burden on the victims, given that even in times of ill health they had to depend on the mercy of their husbands for proper medical attention as noted by a victim in Nkwen.

In addition to this, domestic violence equally influenced negatively the ability of women to gain and retain employment. Taking into consideration the grievous effects of domestic violence on the health situation of women, amounting to physical and psychological violence, it was hard for victims in such conditions to gain access to employment. Even in a situation wherein the victim managed to secure employment for herself, keeping the job was another major challenge. Lack of concentration on duty and the worries of returning home to her abuser rendered her performance on duty inefficient. The possible outcome of this setback was lost of employment and suspension in some cases. Victims who were suspected of infidelity had much mess to deal with even on duty as they were constantly monitored even at their job sites. Being conscious of such trend of events, the victims could barely focus on her job. Some pundits subscribe to the fact that domestic violence had a devastating effect of economic

---

<sup>9</sup> Laurence, L. et al, *Measuring the costs of domestic violence against women and the cost-effectiveness of interventions: An initial assessment and proposals for further research*, Washington, D.C, Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1996.

<sup>10</sup> Evodia Lum, Housewife, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

<sup>11</sup> Laura Mangwi, Secretary, interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

development as female entrepreneurs who encountered domestic violence could not effectively monitor and control their own businesses.<sup>12</sup>

More so, the issue of domestic violence also depicted a deleterious influence on the land and property rights of women in the Bamenda region. Living in an abusive relationship did not permit victims to acquire and keep land and properties. Abusive men stood at the center of every transaction that transpired in the household. This was made complex by the fact that the tradition of the Bamenda community placed women at a disadvantage in the case of eventual death of her husband. Depriving women from land and property rights created a general situation of misery when her husband passed on. It should be noted that relatives of the husband in most situations had the preconception that the victim was a bad wife to their brother and in some cases she was even accused of killing her husband and all properties confiscated by the husband's family.<sup>13</sup>

In the same light, domestic violence placed women in the Bamenda community in a very tough situation as far as their health status was concerned. In the situation of women who had health challenges like high blood pressure and diabetes, having to deal with domestic violence in such conditions was very puzzling. This situation accounted for an increase in the mortality rate among victims with health deficits in such relationships. Victims complained of depression and emotional torture as the most difficult aspects to deal with. A further disturbing aspect of domestic violence on the health of women occurred during pregnancy. Taking into account the numerous impediments a woman was exposed to during pregnancy, it was very difficult to deal with an abusive relationship under such circumstances. Instances of miscarriages and maternal deaths upon delivery were very common occurrences. Even in instances of successful delivery, some victims still suffered from post-natal complications with many health damaging effects. According to medical experts from the Bamenda Regional hospital, women who experienced domestic violence during pregnancy had higher chances of serious complications during child birth.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from this, domestic violence played a negative role on the access of women to opportunities. Considering that most victims were given deterring orders and most often in confinement and isolation, it was very difficult to access opportunities that could improve on their wellbeing. Women who were exposed to social networks had enough exposure which provided them with coping strategies in difficult moments. This factor accounted for the lack of awareness on support services against domestic violence among women. Most victims expressed ignorance on the existence of activities geared towards combating domestic violence by various state and non-state institutions.<sup>15</sup> Cognisance of the fact that most abusive husbands deprived their wives from keeping friends, it made it difficult for the victims to get help out of such relationships.

Moreover, several evidences abound attesting to the fact that domestic violence had a major effect on the educational attainment of women. In the case of women who were victims of forced and early marriages, the quest for educational achievement could not be attained. A victim of this phenomenon revealed that her husband categorically rejected the idea of her going back to school.<sup>16</sup> This accounted for low level of scholarship among women and particularly young women who had the zeal to meet up with changing trends in the society. Taking into account the fact that education is a key element of enlightenment, it was very difficult for deprived women to stand up for their fundamental rights. Even when some men permitted their wives to go back to school, they did not allow them to exit a certain level of academics. Despite this, a woman experiencing domestic violence could not afford the state of mind which takes to pursue academics.

Finally, past research on domestic violence in the city of Bamenda holds that this phenomenon also affected the fundamental duty of women to take care of their children. The stress that accompanied living in an abusive relationship could not permit victims to focus on the wellbeing of their children. A victim of this situation noted that even when her child fell sick, the husband abandoned the child to her with little or no means of providing proper

---

<sup>12</sup> Johnson T.Takwa, *Causes, Prevention and Solutions to Domestic Violence against Women in Cameroon: A Qualitative Study of Opinions from Perpetrators and Victims*, International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) |Volume III, Issue III, March 2019|ISSN 2454-6186.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Annual report, Bamenda regional hospital, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Ebule, Gender Activist, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> Joyce Manka, Housewife, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

medical care for her child.<sup>17</sup> Most children from such homes were forced to drop out of school because of the irresponsible behaviour of their father. Even children who managed to be educated under such circumstances could not perform well in school due to psychological problems. It was due to the above discussed elements that the intervention from various actors became incumbent.

### **4.3. Responses to Domestic Violence in The City of Bamenda**

#### **4.3.1. State response**

The State of Cameroon had the primary responsibility for prevention of violence against women and girls, established under international law (section 2.1).<sup>18</sup> Development agencies, donors, regional and international institutions and civil society organisations also played key roles in supporting the State to implement integrated prevention programming for example through the provision of technical assistance, resources and training especially where the state lacked institutional capacity. The Cameroon government recognized the importance of protecting victims of domestic violence from abuse and punishing the perpetrators of the crimes through its various institutions as examine subsequently.

#### **4.3.2. Response of the Judiciary**

The role of the Judiciary in addressing the issue of domestic violence in Bamenda was basically through the reinforcement of the message that violence was a serious criminal matter for which the abuser would be held accountable. The judges who handled cases of domestic violence dictated the tone in the courtroom and made the most critical decisions affecting the lives of the victim, perpetrator, and children, thus, he was sensitive to the dynamics of domestic violence in order to pass equitable verdicts. The court room was not only a place for judgment, but it was equally a venue for sensitization of gender issues to the general public which created awareness on the consequences of perpetrating domestic violence. Judicial and correctional interventions played an important role, both in ensuring victims' safety and in directing victims to the resources they needed.<sup>19</sup> These interventions included following up with victims on the progress of their file as well as their participation in the judicial process.

#### **4.3.3. Police Response**

The police were the only authority with the power of arrest for domestic abuse. The police statement was one of the most important documents to validate the violence as evidence of a crime. The role of the police in domestic violence cases unfolded in various steps; the police carried out investigations as provided in the Cameroon Criminal Procedure Code and based on sufficient grounds remanded the abuser in their custody for a stipulated duration. In this respect after staying in custody for this duration the police brought the abuser before an examining Magistrate. Regarding the complaint against the abuse, it was lodged by the victim themselves, the parents or a relative of the victim. Other people, for instance friends or neighbours, could equally give information to an enforcement officer should they have reason to believe that an offence involving domestic violence was being or had been committed.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, only the victim had the right to decide what further action was required from the police to resolve the case. All known cases pertaining to domestic violence in the Bamenda were dealt with by the Police.

#### **4.3.4. Response of Public Health Sector**

Domestic violence had been identified as a public health priority. Public health personnel played a vital role in addressing this issue. Since violence against women was both a consequence and a cause of gender inequality, primary prevention programs that addressed gender inequality and tackled the root causes of violence were all essential. Most health care providers diagnosed and registered cases of domestic violence even though in some situations, socio-cultural and traditional barriers, lack of time, resources and inadequate physical facilities acted as hindrances to the process.<sup>21</sup> Besides this, lack of awareness, knowledge and poor clinical practices with limited direct communication and failure to do a full physical examination often played a negative role in addressing the issue of domestic violence in Bamenda. The fear of violence and stigma reduced many victims' willingness to use

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) GA res. 34/180.

<sup>19</sup> Association Camerounaise Des Femmes Juristes (ACAFEJ). N.D.A. "Qui Sommes-Nous?", Yaounde, 2019.

<sup>20</sup> Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes (ALVF), Yaounde, Cameroon. 31 March 2010.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

health services. Despite this, the health sector minimized the prevalence of domestic violence by promoting community awareness on the adverse effects of domestic violence. Improving the patient-provider interaction was the most feasible, affordable and efficient intervention within health care system aiming to address the survivors of domestic violence effectively.

#### **4.3.5. Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family**

This department was established in 1975 within the Ministry of Social Affairs with the creation of a service in charge of women's affairs. This was later transformed into a ministry in 1984 called the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MINCOF), the first government ministry with a mandate pertaining to women's empowerment. After several changes, the latter became the Ministry Women's Empowerment and Family (MINPROFF) on 8 December 2004. Organized by Decree No. 2005/088 of 29 March 2005, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family was responsible for the drafting, implementation and evaluation of measures relating to respect of women's rights and the protection of the family. To this end, it ensured the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women and the increase in equality guarantees in favour of women in political, economic, social and cultural domains. This mission was carried out through diverse and multifaceted activities such as: advocacy, interpersonal communication, studies and research on the protection of the rights of women and gender issues, the granting of micro-credits, the capacity-building of women, men and families in the economic, social and political domains.<sup>22</sup> Possible strategies were put in place by the ministry to surmount socio-cultural factors influencing public perception of violence against women by their spouses (wife Beating). In order to achieve this, the ministry employed measures geared towards the improvement and protection of women's right in the society and promoted the active involvement of women in the socio-economic system as well change in their educational attainment. The Ministry through workshops and media sensitization played a major role in educating and sensitising community members to shun cultural practices that promulgated domestic violence.<sup>23</sup> Measures were taken to ensure that perpetrators of domestic violence were brought before the law to answer for their crimes.

#### **4.3.6. Non-State Responses**

Non-state responses to domestic violence in Bamenda was essentially premised on service provision, advocacy in the areas of legislation and policy, organisational dimensions of the fight against domestic violence, training, sensitisation and awareness creation, as well as research. Non-state actors, including both international and local organisations, were at the frontline in grassroots mobilisations and the promotion of human rights generally. There was a strong presence of local responses in the fight against domestic violence. As a collective front, these organisations, together with the women's movement in Bamenda and other like-minded groups, brought about the realisation of several project against domestic violence. Other areas of action included the tabling of the place of men and boys in approaches to domestic violence, and ongoing advocacy for an egalitarian society.

#### **4.3.7. Traditional Institutions and Community Response**

Victims of domestic violence in some cases relied on traditional institutions and community-based support mechanisms for assistance. The traditional institutions mobilized to oppose domestic violence in its midst. Actions that were taken by local population included greater surveillance of domestic violence situations, offering support for victim-survivors, and challenging men to stop the violence. Complacency needs to be replaced with active intervention and education. Traditional information systems were developed in Mankon and Nkwen regarding the nature and unacceptability of domestic violence. Such information systems addressed cultural forms of behavior that uphold male aggression, beating, punishment and abuse of women as acceptable.<sup>24</sup> Traditional cultural practices, such that violated women's integrity were re-examined and challenged. Some pundits noted that culture was not static, and emphasized on the fact that newer forms of cultural norms were needed to be developed that respected women and promote their dignity and safety. Community elders had the responsibility to demonstrate leadership in this area. These elders highlighted the need to re-examine doctrines and cultural practices that led to the subordination of women and violation of their rights.

#### **4.3.8. The Media**

<sup>22</sup> UK Home Office, Country Assessment of Cameroon, 2001.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> M, CHILVER and K, Phyllis, *Traditional Bamenda: The Precolonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Ministry of Primary Education and Social Welfare a West Cameroon Antiquities Commission, 1967, 34.

The local media played a pivotal role in both influencing and changing social norms and behaviours in the Bamenda. Such Medias included Abakwa FM and Afrique Nouvelle FM whose reports exposed cases of domestic violence in homes through social awareness programmes. For instance, Abakwa FM Radio aired a programme (Lovers Digest), which permitted victims to call some times in anonymity to express themselves on their experiences living in violent relationships. Media campaigns helped to reverse social attitudes that tolerated violence especially against women by questioning patterns of violent behaviour accepted by families and societies. Collaboration between the media and victims-survivors was focused on creating responses to reduce domestic violence. Efforts to make victims aware of resources available to them in a situation of domestic violence played an important role in addressing the problem. Media interventions was not only limited to the activities of community radio, the use of local television and the internet played a major role to sensitise a wide range of people and effect change.<sup>25</sup> The main aim was to increase knowledge, challenge attitudes in order to modify behaviours.

#### **4.3.9. Upkeep Facilities by NGOs**

Provision of counseling, legal consultancy, treatment of battered women and referral was undertaken by a number of women's and Human rights NGOs. They provided these initial supports through some volunteer skilled lawyers and doctors. The victims were provided proper consultancy and advice without any harassment. However, the volunteers of these organizations were frequently threatened by oppressors. Victims fell in more critical situation when the violent person knew about their communication with such organizations. To ensure their presence in course of legal proceedings and to save them from further violence, some women and Human rights organizations arranged shelters for battered and expelled women. They also provided necessary advice and services for their employment to income generating projects and employment agencies.<sup>26</sup>

### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the foregone affirmation, this study puts forward the following recommendations:

There should be an intensification in the rate of sensitisation of the Bamenda community on the availability of support services for victims of domestic violence.

The government should create more facilities to empower women in other for them to acquire skills that will enable them self-reliant as such limiting the rate of domestic violence,

A regional committee should be created strictly to handle issues of domestic violence.

### **6. CONCLUSION**

In spite of the fact that various efforts were made by the state as well as efforts by Non-governmental organizations, domestic violence continued to be an engaging contest. It is thus imperative for combined efforts by all stakeholders to come on the panel as the battle against domestic violence remains interwoven requiring the efforts of everyone. Yet again, further studies have to be dedicated to the area to detail the long term influence domestic abuses are having on the society at large. It is anticipated that such studies will look at the impact of this phenomenon on community development.

### **7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to express gratitude to my supervisor Confidence Ngam Chia, Associate Professor of History of International Relations at the University of Bamenda, Cameroon, for his unstinted and invaluable guidance and support. My immense appreciation also goes to my lovely wife Veraline Muambeh, for her great insightful contribution in realising this study.

### **7. REFERENCES**

- [1] Annual report, Bamenda regional hospital, 2016.
- [2] Association Camerounaise Des Femmes Juristes (ACAFEJ). N.D.A. "Qui Sommes-Nous?", Yaounde, 2019.
- [3] Association de Lutte Contre les Violences Faites aux Femmes (ALVF), Yaounde, Cameroon. 31 March 2010.
- [4] Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture: Cameroon, 06/12/2000, UN Doc. A/56/44.
- [5] Evodia Lum, Housewife, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.

<sup>25</sup> Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture: Cameroon, 06/12/2000, UN Doc. A/56/44.

<sup>26</sup> United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports 2003, available at [www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty\\_f\\_CM.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty_f_CM.html). 10 Ibid.

- [6] Johnson T.Takwa, *Causes, Prevention and Solutions to Domestic Violence against Women in Cameroon: A Qualitative Study of Opinions from Perpetrators and Victims*, International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS) |Volume III, Issue III, March 2019|ISSN 2454-6186.
- [7] Johnson Takwa, *Violence Against the Women and the Girl Children in Cameroon*, Poster presented at the International Conference on Population, Marrakech, Morocco, 2009,
- [8] Joyce Manka, Housewife, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.
- [9] Laura Mangwi, Secretary, interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.
- [10] Laurence, L. et al, *Measuring the costs of domestic violence against women and the cost-effectiveness of interventions: An initial assessment and proposals for further research*, Washington, D.C, Institute for Women's Policy Research, 1996.
- [11] M, CHILVER and K, Phyllis, *Traditional Bamenda: The Precolonial History and Ethnography of the Bamenda Grassfields*. Buea: Ministry of Primary Education and Social Welfare a West Cameroon Antiquities Commission, 1967.
- [12] Mary Tumfor, housewife, interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.
- [13] Mildred Ayafor, *A Situational Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in Cameroon*, Yaounde, 2014.
- [14] Nancy Ebule, Gender Activist, Interviewed, Bamenda, 2020.
- [15] P.N. Nkwi and J.P. Warnier, *Elements For A History Of The Western Grassfields*, Yaounde, Publication Of The Department Of Sociology 1982.
- [16] UK Home Office, Country Assessment of Cameroon, 2001.
- [17] United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) GA res. 34/180.
- [18] United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Reports 2003, available at [www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty\\_f\\_CMR.html](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty_f_CMR.html).
- [19] V. G Fanzo, *Cameroon History for Secondary Schools and Colleges, Vol. 2, The Colonial and Post-Colonial Experience*. Limbe: Macmillan Publishers Limited, 1989.

## 8. BIOGRAPHY



**Eugene Muambah Muntoh** Doctorant in the Department of History at the Faculty of Arts, Letters and Social Sciences, The University of Yaounde 1(Cameroon). He is a professional teacher of History for Secondary and High Schools in Cameroon. He is an examiner of the *Certificat D'Aptitude Professionnelle (CAP)*, supervised by the Ministry of Secondary Education. His research interest is focused on aspects of social history, political history and history of international relations.