

GENDERED IMPLICATIONS AND SWAP OF ROLES IN THE ANGLOPHONE ARMED CONFLICT IN THE WESTERN GRASS FIELDS OF CAMEROON

KONGNSO ZAFINATU MAINIMO & NSOH CHRISTOPHER NDIKUM

Pan African University Institute of Governance, Humanities and Social Sciences

<https://doi.org/10.37602/IJREHC.2024.5512>

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the changing socio-cultural and economic role of women and girls in the Grassfields as a result of the ongoing separatist armed conflict in the English speaking regions of the Republic of Cameroon. A case study research design and content analysis to analyze the data. The data is generated through primary and secondary sources. The study found that since the beginning of the conflict in 2016 several men have been killed and a good number forced to seek refuge in other regions of the country. Furthermore, that with the absence of men, especially in rural areas, women and girls carry traditionally male-dominated activities in the communities. According to the study, the grass fields of Cameroon is a strongly patriarchal society, where customs and traditions on social roles are strictly respected and conserved. So, the finding shows the Anglophone armed conflict has a destabilizing effect on gender dynamics in the western grass fields of Cameroon. In managing the conflict, the study commends an inclusive stakeholder merging approach to the shattering impact of the conflict on English speaking women in Cameroon.

Keywords: Gendered, Role, Implications, Anglophone conflict, Grass fields, Cameroon

1.0 BACKGROUND INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade now, the Republic of Cameroon like numerous African countries are challenged with a series of multiple and systemic instabilities as state structures have increasingly been missing terms of political will or engagement and/or capacity to provide the basic utilities needed for poverty reduction, growth and to maintain the safety and human rights of their populations (OECD, 2007). These fragilities whose sources are both exterior and interior have meaningfully donated to rendering some regions and communities in Cameroon defenseless (Kaze & Eposi, 2024). This is the case with regions affected by insecurity like terrorism and violent armed conflicts as is found in the Far North region confronted with Boko Haram incursion, and the two English-speaking regions of the Republic of Cameroon. (North West and South West regions) that have been bedeviled by violent armed conflicts opposing the government security and defense forces and litany separatist armed groups.

Precisely, in the North West and South West regions of the Republic of Cameroon, the ongoing conflict has reinforced the exacerbating socio-economic hardship that characterized the regions before the conflict. For instance, since 2016, the beginning of the conflict, most economic activities in the regions have been slowed down because of the disorder imposed on agricultural and economic activities, the government of Cameroon declared both regions as economically

impracticable. Recently in 2024, a report circulated by the national institute for statistics in Cameroon on the situation of poverty by region, the North West region records 66.8% while the South West region records 20.4 % (NIS, 2024). There is no gainsaying that this downward economic trend has been created largely by the ongoing armed conflict in these regions. In the North West region of Cameroon, historically referred to as the Western grass fields, the conditions are appalling, especially with regards to gender dimension. Generally, in armed conflict situations, women and girls are always the most affected victims and this is the circumstances in the northwest regions of Cameroon.

According to community Centre for Integrated Development (CCID), since the plague of the Anglophone armed conflict, women have remained the highest victims as they have grieved from rape, giving birth in the bush, poverty, displacement, torture, kidnapping, and killings (CCID, 2023). Nevertheless, the most affected victims of the Anglophone conflict, studies have naked that the Anglophone conflict has strained in women and girls as many have played roles both in vigorous combat or as part of the separatist militias' support structure (ICG, 2022). Some women and girls have taken up arms for political motives, others are pursuing vengeance for exploitations they or their families have suffered at the security forces' hands. Undoubtedly, women's roles in the revolution, both as participants and as a social base, help elucidate its firmness and at the same time pose the question of changing gender roles in the framework of the Anglophone conflict. As mentioned above, women and girls in the context of the Anglophone conflict have been acknowledged by international and local organizations to be first and foremost as victims of violence, as they are the majority of the internally displaced and refugees, and are at risk of severe physical damage, as well as conflict-related sexual violence (kaze, 2021). A rights-based attention to their requirements is of dominant importance, but should not surpass the dynamic roles women and girls play in conflict situations. In the North West region, the Anglophone conflict dynamics have transformed gender roles, both positively and negatively. It is against this circumstantial that this paper sets out to scrutinize the socio-cultural and economic gendered effects of the Anglophone armed conflict in Cameroon. Objectively, this study seeks to examine the precise socio-cultural swap of roles caused by the Anglophone armed conflict on men and women in the Western grass fields region; explore the role of gender customs and power dynamics in influencing the familiarities of men and women in conflict-affected communities; and analyze the coping mechanisms and resilience approaches employed by men and women in reaction to the conflict, and how these strategies diverge based on gender. The objective of this article is to examine the gendered role in the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon and its implications on women and development.

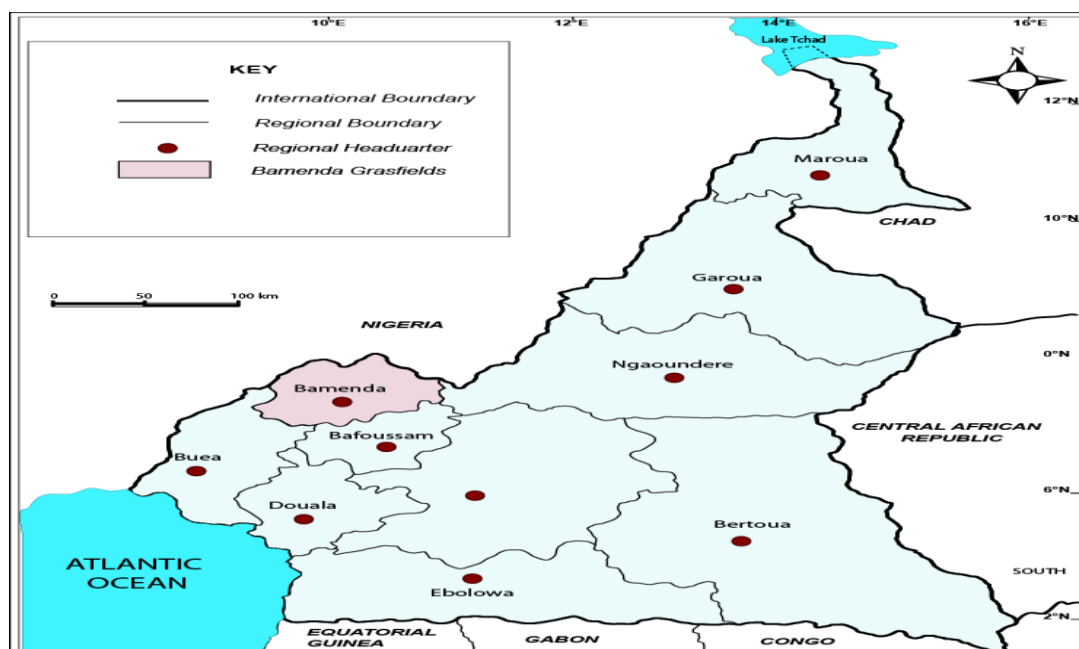
2.0 OVERVIEW OF WESTERN GRASS FIELD

The western or the Bamenda grass fields is a socio-cultural and political unit in which the term Western grass fields are used to denote the previous administrative partition of Wum, Nkambe, and Bamenda (Chilver, 1961). Administratively, the Western grass fields correspond roughly to what is today known as the North-West region of Cameroon with headquarters in Bamenda. The Western or Bamenda grass fields are today made up of seven divisions namely, (Mezam, Bui, Momo, Menchum, Boyo, Ngoketunjia, and Donga-mantung) and thirty-one sub-divisions. (see map 2) the study zone is limited by natural structures (Neba, 2007), to the North and the North west by the Federal Republic of Nigeria, to the South by the South West region, to the

East and North East by the region of Adamawa. The Bamenda grass fields cover a surface area of approximately 17302 km square and with a population density of about 99.9 inhabitants per square kilometer (Bucep, 2010).

The term grass fields came into actuality upon the German colonial exploration and subjugation of the area. It was used to label part of the German-Kamerun hinterland that was categorized by its extraordinary altitude and grassy nature. Dankler termed the Cameroon grass fields as a "sea of grass which stretches for hundreds of kilometers providing one of the most magnificent panoramas on earth (Chilver, 1961). however, labelled as grassland or grass fields, the area was also characterized by mountains and isolated forest galleries, highlands ranging from 900 m to just over 3000m, located some 200–300 kilometers from the Atlantic coast are some of the natural features of the area (fowler, 2011).

Fig 1: Map showing the Bamenda Grassfields in Cameroon



Source: adapted from macmillan school atlas of cameroon, 2005.

3.0 CONCEPTUAL REVIEW

3.1 Gender

Historically, the perception of gender is not a long one; unlike the concept of, class, the clue of gender does not have origins in the nineteenth-century origins of sociology. Numerous institutions and scholars have attempted review of gender. Among these clarifications, the most prominent is that of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (2023)- which sees gender as the socially constructed roles, behaviors, expressions, and identities of girls, women, boys, men, and gender-diverse people. In the similar tone, UNESCO (2023) notes that in addition to the social features and prospects associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, gender also refers to the relations amongst women and men.

Gender is a fragment of the extensive socio-cultural context, as are other essential standards for socio-cultural analysis together with class, race, poverty level, ethnic group, sexual orientation, and age. Within the framework of this study, gender in the western grass fields of Cameroon intends to be measured as to the features of women, men, girls, and boys that have been historically, anthropologically, and socially constructed and submitted to the vicissitude period. This includes norms, behaviors, and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl, or boy, as well as relationships with each other. As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and can change over time. It is worth pointing out that regardless of the negligible position of women in the area of study, their participation in group conflicts was very significant, particularly in the political and economic domains (Funteh and Gormo, 2009). They got involved as combatants, instigators, service providers, political activists, and conflict solvers.

3.2 Gender-sensitive conflict analysis

Generally, Gender-Sensitive Conflict Analysis (GSCA) is understood as the orderly study of the gendered causes, structures, stakeholders, and dynamics of conflict and peace. It is conflict analysis with a gender lens. GSCA is the starting point to understanding, retorting to, and renovating how gender inequality causes conflict and discrimination, exclusionary politics, and fierceness against some groups in society (Pond, 2020). By understanding the gendered dynamics of conflict, GSCA can empower peacebuilders to do more comprehensive and effective work. The procedure is also a peacebuilding intervention, as it unlocks space for conversation and reflection that can contest participants' views on gender and conflict. In the context of this study, Gender-Sensitive Conflict Analysis (GSCA) will assist us to investigate and analyze how gender inequality has shaped social, economic, and political systems, institutions, and structures in the Western grass fields by privileging male elites and those working with them to benefit or gain extra than any other group. It will also help highlight how diverse types of violence are recycled to maintain power in public (political) and private (family and community) spaces, and how these spaces are connected.

3.3 Armed Conflict

According to ICRC (1952), an armed conflict is believed to exist when there is an armed clash amongst the armed forces of states (International Armed Conflict), or between governmental authorities and organized armed groups, or between such groups within a state (Non-International Armed Conflict). Other circumstances of violence, such as internal disturbances and tensions are not measured to be armed conflicts. Referring to the common article 3 of the Geneva Conventions Non-International Armed Conflict is an "armed conflict not of an international character arising in the territory of one of the high contracting parties (Schmitt, 2006). These features corroborate the type of conflict ongoing in the English speaking regions of the Republic of Cameroon.

On October 11, 2016, lawyers from the North West and the South West regions went on strike. Their demands, unnoticed until then by the justice ministry, were associated to the justice system's failure to use the common law in the two regions. The lawyers requested for the translation into English of the code of the organization for the harmonization of business law in Africa (OHADA) and other legal texts. They complained of the 'francophonisation' of Common Law jurisdictions, with the nomination to the English speaking regions of

francophone magistrates who did not comprehend English or the common law, and the appointment of notary public, to perform the functions which according to the common law system are performed by lawyers and that has been the practice in these two regions. This was followed on the 20th of November 2016 by a teachers' strike. They organized a rally against the deficiency of English speaking teachers, the nomination of teachers who did not have a clue of the English language, and the failure to respect the 'Anglo-Saxon' character of schools and universities in the English speaking zone (ICG, 2017). At the rally, several thousand people joined teachers to express grievances extending from the lack of roads in the North West to the marginalization of English speaking Cameroonians. The police and the army violently dispersed the demonstrators where several people were brutally beaten, dozens of others were detained and at least two people were shot dead. (Tembom, 2018)

In response to the degrading social atmosphere, the government of Cameroon dispatched the Prime Minister to listen and find a solution for teachers and lawyers who had constituted themselves into a consortium. Unfortunately, no deal was reached between the Prime Minister and his delegation and the members of the consortium. on November 21st, 2016, a local radio newscaster sparked a popular movement that was later referred to as the 'coffin revolution' (ICG,2017).

The radio broadcaster known as Mancho Bibixy went to one of the eventful traffic junctions in the city of Bamenda in the North West region of Cameroon and symbolically staged in a coffin, what became known in Cameroon as the coffin revolution, criticizing the government for the socio-economic and infrastructural degradation of the North West region (VOA, 2018). This incident was followed by students' demonstrations at the University of Buea in the south west region of Cameroon on November 28th 2016. (France24, 2016) Among their grievances were the disappointment of the government to remit education grants for students in their final year and the persistence of the university administration that all students must pay a fee to check their results at the university's online portal system. It should be well-known that the government's feedback to these expressions were arrest and detention. Students of the university of Buea and members of the consortium were arrested and accused of crimes of revolution, insurrection, and public disorder (Tembom, 2018).

However, as the demonstrations persisted, the government endeavored to provide some solutions by negotiating with the lawyers and teachers trade unions in Bamenda up station. Some English speaking Cameroonians judged it as irrelevant and cosmetic. Some of the solutions from the negotiation include the translation from French to English of the OHADA Business Code, the opening of an English section for the training of English speaking magistrates at the National School of Administration and Magistracy, and the recruitment of 1000 bilingual teachers to be deployed in North and South West regions regions.

The peaceful demonstrations organized by English speaking Cameroonians were the expression of their defiance to the Francophone-dominated central government and this led to the government the responding with the use of force, arrests, and torture of protesters which pushed some English speaking Cameroonians to the declaration of independence on the 1st of October 2017, and hoisted the "Ambazonia Republic" flags of blue and white stripes in major cities of the North west and South west regions to indicate their autonomy and sovereignty (ICG, 2017). The explicit pronouncement of independence and hoisting of the "Ambazonia"

flag was perceived by the government as an act of treason and destabilization of the state. Government security forces were installed in the two English-speaking regions to normalize the situation, but the situation degenerated into a confrontation between government forces and the demonstrating population. The outcome was disastrous as scores of deaths, injuries, and arrested persons were enumerated. It is very difficult to ascertain the number of people injured, killed, or arrested as the conflict is ongoing for close to 8 years. Moreover, most eyewitnesses and potential informants have fled out of the area and during the conflict, some government forces have been killed in the South west region of Cameroon by the non-state armed groups. This was the event that sparked military intervention in the North west and South west regions. This event also marked the emergence and propagation of numerous separatist groups claiming secession.

4.0 THEORETICAL REVIEW

for better comprehension of gendered effects of the Anglophone armed conflict in Cameroon, specifically in the western grass fields region, three theories guided the analysis of this paper. These are the feminist theory, intersectionality theory, and security sector reform theory.

4.1 Feminist Theories

These theories appeared out of the women's movement and directed to understand the place of women in society for the sole purpose of improving their position in society. Beasley, C. (1999) What is specious in these theories is their focus on the cultural construction of gender. Since the 1970s, it has become common practice to split feminist theories into categories (Marxist, radical, liberal, etc.) to highlight the contrasts between them. In Marxist feminism, for example, gender inequalities are argued to ascend from the mechanisms of the capitalist economic system that it necessitates, and benefits from, women's unpaid labor in the home. The subordination of women to men in society (or patriarchy), consequently, tends to be regarded as a by-product of capital's subordination of labor. Class disparity is the central feature of society and it is this which regulates gender inequality. Mary, E. (.2006)

Feminist theories of transformation in armed conflict situations accentuate the significance of challenging patriarchal or male-controlled structures and power dynamics that disseminate gender inequality and violence. These theories advocate for the empowerment of women and the recognition of their agency in conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes.

4.2 Intersectionality Theory

As noted by Rahel Kunz (2022), the micro-dynamics of violent conflicts, the realisms, awareness, and practices of people in violence-affecting communities remain concealed, as ensures the role of gender and interconnecting axes of differentiation in motivating conflict cycles. Gender, as an intersectional concept that incorporates masculinity, plays an essential role in fashioning the understanding of a conflict (Rooney, 2018). Feminist security studies have made noticeable the unnumbered ways in which gender inhabits local practices of violent conflict, by intellectualizing war as a complex, context-specific experience (Kunz, 2022; Sylvester, 2010), ethnographically exploring practices of sexual violence (Kunz, 2022; Eriksson Baaz and Stern c2018b), and analyzing the partaking to women in armed struggles

(Kunz, 2022; Parashar, 2009) and the local governmentalities of the women, peace and security agenda (shepherd, 2020).

Intersectionality theory highlights how multiple characteristics of identity, such as gender, race, class, and sexuality, interconnect to shape individuals' experiences in armed conflicts. It highlights how women and men may experience conflict differently based on these intersecting identities.

4.3 Security Sector Reform Theory

security sector reform means transforming the security sector/system, 'which includes all the actors, their roles, tasks, and actions – working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of effective governance, and thus adds to a well-functioning security framework'(Anderlini, 2004). There is a strong acknowledgement that security sector reform (SSR) should encounter the different security needs of men, women, boys, and girls.

The integration of gender issues is also key to the efficiency and responsibility of the security sector, and local ownership and lawfulness of SSR processes. Long-standing feminist tussles, scholarly critiques vis-à-vis the neglect of women and gender in SSR, as well key international policy documents on gender, peace, and security have prompted efforts to mainstream gender in this field (Kunz, 2014). In this context, a specific GSSR policy discourse has emerged that goes as follows: SSR oftentimes disregards women and gender issues. As a result, the different security needs of women, girls, men, and boys are marginalized, and effective security provision is hindered. In this study, the security sector reform theory focuses on the prominence of gender mainstreaming in security sector reform efforts. It emphasizes the need to address gender biases and promote gender equality within military and police forces to improve their effectiveness and responsiveness to the needs of all populations.

4.4 Empirical Literature

Examining the nexus between gender and armed conflict, Amani (2003) examines how armed conflict negatively affects women and men and degenerates in gender-specific shortcomings, predominantly for women that are not always acknowledged or addressed by the mainstream, gender-blind understandings of conflict and reconstruction. Gender variation reflects power imbalances in social structures that exist in pre-conflict periods and are intensified by armed conflict and its repercussion. The acceptance of gender stereotypes is one of the main motives that such gender sightlessness continues to emphasize on. To Amani, the social confusion caused by conflict creates the potential to redefine gender relations. Without suitable funding, support, and resources devoted to encouraging gender equality in all aspects of reconstruction, nonetheless, there is a risk that old, oppressive, and discriminatory patriarchy, patriarchal institutions and practices will be re-established, as opposed to transformed, in the aftermath of conflict.

Drar (2016) on his part notes that sites of armed conflicts are multifaceted surroundings in which the experiences of men and women differ extensively. Consequently, it is compulsory to maintain a nuanced understanding of the relations between gender and armed conflict to deliver protection, accountability, and compensation for women and men equally. An

understanding of the gendered constituents of armed conflict allows international law to be a commanding instrument in addressing systematic gender inequalities. Scholars contend that the laws governing armed conflict are ancient and reinforce gender stereotypes and patriarchal structures. Two of the most controversial gender stereotypes concern the “active” male perpetrator and the “passive” female victim. these stereotypes shape on pre-existing gender roles that lead to expectations about means and women’s roles in armed conflict, namely, women are passive, peace-loving, and subordinate - they do not take part in combat. Men are active, violent, and dominant - they are not victims of sexual violence.

Analyzing the relationship concerning men, masculinities & armed conflict, Alan Greig(2022) reveals that many men across the world oppose these unyielding, discriminatory, and violence-endorsing norms, and work in commonality with women and those beyond the gender binary to resist them, even though in many settings far too many people persist to endorse them. However, peace processes continue to be dominated by the voices, perspectives, and needs of those men who hold power, and who require the perpetuation of patriarchal systems to retain this power. To accomplish a feminist peace, based on principles of equality, justice, and demilitarized security, to address the root causes of violence with a feminist lens that pays consideration to power dynamics and that challenges patriarchy and traditional gendered roles, we must fortify coalitions between men and women and other stakeholders around a collective agenda for institutional revolution and personal transformation.

Schaftenaar (2022) opines that women’s rights are not only recognized as ultimate human rights but have also been interrelated to matters of peace and security by scholars and policymakers. Nonviolent campaigns and violent political protests are often misplaced from conflict literature that explores the gendered determinants of conflict. Scholarship has additionally paid little rigorous attention to how we quantitatively scrutinize the affiliation between gender equality and armed conflict. Schaftenaar offers a global study on the effects of gender equality on nonviolent movements and armed conflicts. The author argues that gender equality affects crusades' mobilization expectations and societal conflict norms, subsequently impacting the choice of armed conflict or nonviolent campaigns.

International Committee of the Red Cross (2022) contends that gender shapes an individual’s experience of armed conflict in multifarious ways such as the structural gender inequalities pre-exist in armed conflict, gender roles, and social power dynamics can change and/or be exacerbated in the course of armed conflict, and gender overlaps with other factors including age, class, disability, race, religion, and sexual orientation to regulate individual experiences. Gendered impacts of armed conflict vary accordingly across contexts and people: in one background, women and girls may face sensitive barriers when accessing health care after an attack, while in another, men and boys of a particular race may too quickly be presumed to be soldiers. In a place of detention, sexual violence might be targeted against persons of diverse sexual orientation or gender identity. Women of a specific ethnic group might be sold into sexual slavery, while men might be summarily executed.

Traditional birth attendants may fight to meet their community’s needs as health systems buckle under conflict and other crises like covid-19. Networks of women may come together to provide peer sustenance to those with missing loved ones. Bjarnegård (2015), highlighted how gender provides key insights into security and conflict. Contemporary history has seen

dramatic developments in gender relations. In general, in most places and most spheres relations between men and women have become less unequal, even if no truly equal society yet exists. If the studies that find a relationship between gender equality and peace are taken seriously, it follows that the decline in the severity of wars in recent decades can in part be attributed to advances in gender equality.

5.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study was conducted in the headquarters of the seven divisions that make up the North West region of Cameroon which include; Boyo, Bui, Donga–Mantung, Menchum, Mezam, Momo, and Ngokentunjia. The study employed survey and case study research designs, with purposive and systematic random sampling techniques for field data collection. The study population included selected groups of women and men associations who were directly or indirectly affected by the ongoing English Speaking armed conflict opposing the security defense forces of the Republic of Cameroon and armed separatist groups. The total sample size was 149 respondents, with 96 women and 53 men. Content analysis was used as the method of data analysis, using the themes to make a robust analysis of the research findings.

6.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

About findings, the armed conflict in the grass field has significantly affected women and girls in different ways, extending from displacement and vulnerabilities as most of the displaced persons are women and girls struggling to access basic services, housing, and employment on their own and facing sexual abuse from both quarrelsome parties that is the government security forces and the armed separatist fighters using rape as an impunity against women supportive to opposing side. women play pertinent and diverse roles relating to the Anglophone conflict in the grass field as some women and girls join the insurgency due to political beliefs or desperation whereas others advocate for peace and strive towards peace-building initiatives.

The finding shows that women and girls have been disproportionately affected by the Anglophone conflict, facing continuous risk of violence, displacement, and economic hardship, a discriminating risk of social violence as conflict avenues often lead to increased existing gender-based violence, shows that women and girls in the grass field region have contentiously lamented different occurrences of rape, sexual assault, and forced marriages by the armed actors. These acts of conflict do not only have immediate physical and psychological effects on women and girls but also cause cycles of trauma and stigma within the grass field communities. Another key finding worth highlighting is the fact that conflict has disrupted traditional gender roles and changing aspects in the western grass field as the area is constantly shifting from the old patriarchal society with many men involved in armed groups or displaced from their homes, women have taken on new responsibilities as head of households, caregivers, palm wine tappers, burial rights, and income earners. This change in roles has empowered some women and girls to take on leadership positions and challenge traditional norms around gender roles and power dynamics.

The findings illustrate that grass field women and girls have been greatly impacted by the Anglophone armed conflict with limited aspects of livelihood and resources. Furthermore, displacement, destruction of infrastructures, and restriction of movement have been a significant interruption to women and girls engaged in income-generating activities thus

strengthening poverty, slowing down of socioeconomic development, and a soaring food insecurity. Another important issue is the lack of access to education, and health care services which is having negative implications on women and most especially young girls who are denied basic rights of education as schools have been burnt down or destroyed limiting education opportunities for girls. Healthcare services also are dislocated aggravating the risk of maternal mortality and limited access to reproductive health services. Due to these gender biases in the Anglophone armed conflicts in the grass field region, this study is appealing for the need of a gender-sensitive approach towards peacebuilding and humanitarian response.

7.0 DISCUSSIONS

It is imperative to note that discussions concerning gender effects in the Anglophone grass field are crucial aspects for comprehending the complications of the conflicts and engaging in the development of efficient and effective solutions. The following discussions are essential to ensuring that the roles and needs of women and girls are not neglected, their experiences and voices should be at the central axis in shaping a more just and sustainable peace in the grass field. The paper explores the Anglophone conflict from a gender perspective, recognizing the exclusive exposures of women and girls beyond physical violence thus discussing how the conflicts impact women's economic security, access to education, health care, social networks, mental well-being, examining the role of cultural norms demonstrating how traditional gender roles and social norms can hinder women and girls access to resources thus multiplying armed groups. It is emphasizing the importance of considering women and girls' experiences and roles in conflict dynamics as the conflict has unreasonably affected women and girls with many displaced and some repeatedly endure responsibilities of running households and taking care of the family devoid of any external support. Women face challenges in sexual abuse by belligerents using rape as punishment against women for supporting opposing sides.

The Anglophone armed conflict has seriously impacted women and girls in the grass field as they circumnavigate a hash landscape of hostility conflict now in its seventh year has seriously impacted women and girls in the grass field as they navigate a hash landscape of hostilities across different aspects such as displacement and vulnerability, lack of access to education and healthcare, economic impacts, gender-based violence, trauma and mental health. Women participating in peace-building, legal and social reforms by foregrounding women's perspectives we can address the root causes and work towards sustainable peace by engaging different stakeholders such as community based dialogue, through effective organizations of workshops, community leaders to get firsthand experiences, collaboration with civil societies and international actors to incorporate the voices and expertise of women's right organizations, humanitarian actors, international organizations and governments to address the gendered effects of conflicts in the grass field. These findings have greatly augmented to current literature as a lot has been written to highlight this pertinent issue for example, the United Nations Organization has documented over 4000 cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the Anglophone regions in 2020. some insights and potential research direction include investigating how women's and girls' roles and experiences intersect with conflict dynamics, considering ethno-sociological studies that capture women's and girls' perspectives during conflicts, exploring the place of women in conflict narratives beyond the male-centric perspectives, evaluating the impacts of gender dynamics on conflicts escalation and de-

escalation, examining how gender frames and discourses are used to assemble backing for conflicts.

8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Anglophone armed conflicts have noteworthy effects and addressing them is very relevant for long-lasting peace as such, this paper materializes the following commendations. It is important to primary address the root causes of the violent conflicts through inclusive governance and participation of women and girls in all levels of government as well as the decision-making process. The government equally needs to promote policies and programs addressing discrimination and structural inequality thus promoting access to justice and the rule of law, ensuring answerability for violation of women's rights, develop and implement a comprehensive strategy for the protection of women and girls such as early warnings, safe spaces and safe passages for displaced women and girls. Measures should be taken for educating and training humanitarian workers and communities on gender sensitives and addressing women and girls' exploitations and trafficking. There should equally be an increase in funding for women's protection by ensuring that adequate resources are allocated for agendas associated to women's' rights, safety, and participation in peacebuilding, highlighting the critical need to integrate a gender perspective in conflict resolution, peacebuilding, and even humanitarian response. Furthermore, the promotion of women's participation in peacebuilding processes especially in all segments of negotiation, mediation, and women and girls' economic empowerment especially women-led businesses, vocational training, and access to microfinance access are economic empowerment strategies that can be used in addressing gender implications of the Anglophone conflict in the Bamenda grass field.

The promotion of gender equality, women's rights, and women's governance advances awareness of gender equality issues and training women in leadership skills which in turn creates opportunities for women to hold leadership positions in the government, communities, and civil societies. Women's and girls' perspectives and active participation are essential elements for a sustainable solution in gender effects of conflicts and addressing gender-based violence via methods like self-reporting mechanisms, provision of psychological and legal support for ensuring access to lawyers specialized in gender-based violence, trauma healing, and counseling. The promotion of community-based initiatives is also another factor worth elucidating in the domain of recommendations as communities are encouraged to establish vigilance groups, awareness campaigns, and restorative justice programs to address gender-based violence within the grass field communities. Perpetrators should also be held responsible and accountable through investigations and persecutions regardless of their status, position, or affiliation in society. Although no peace process currently exists, donors should prepare to include influential women activists most especially from the rural area in future talks when they transpire.

9.0 CONCLUSION

Understanding gender effects on women and girls in the Anglophone armed conflicts, it is pertinent to highpoint that even as the conflict has affected all genders, women and girls have faced unique susceptibilities resulting in a complex interplay of gender-based displacements, economic hardship violence and as such, women and girls go beyond framing them as ordinary inactive recipients of conflicts as they have been active from the start of the conflicts through

fending for themselves, negotiating access to basic services, such as housing and employment. The Anglophone women have faced a harsh landscape of hostilities and prevalent sexual violence. Despite their active role in the conflicts, some fighting alongside male insurgence while others campaign for peace, women's concerns have seriously been ignored by both combatants even though no substantial peace process currently exists, the Anglophone armed conflict in Cameroon's grass-field has profoundly impacted the lives of women and girls. Pointing out the critical needs to integrate a gender perspective in conflict resolution, peace-building, and humanitarian response by addressing the specific needs of women and girls, ensuring their full participation in the peace process, and maintaining gender equality, it is possible to pave the way for a more just and sustainable peace in the region.

REFERENCES

Alan Greig, *Men, Masculinities & Armed Conflict*, 2022.

Amani El Jack, *GENDER and ARMED CONFLICT*, Institute of Development Studies August 2003.

Anderlini, S.N. with Conaway, C.P. – ‘Security Sector Reform, Inclusive Security, And Sustainable Peace: A Toolkit for Advocacy and Action, 2004.

Asha Pond (2020), *Facilitation guide Gender-sensitive conflict analysis*, london, Saferworld Publication.

Bjarnegård, E., Melander, E., Bardall, G., Brounéus, K., Forsberg, E. et al. (2015) Gender, peace and armed conflict. In: Ian Davis (ed.), *SIPRI Yearbook 2015: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (pp. 101-109). Oxford: Oxford University Press

Community Centre for Integrated Development (CCID) (2023) "The Impact of the Anglophone Crisis on Gender Equality in Cameroon," *Journal of International Women's Studies*: Vol. 25: Issue. 4, Article 8. Available at: <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol25/iss4/8>

CRC, *Commentary on the First Geneva Convention: Convention (I) for the Amelioration of the Condition of the Wounded and Sick in Armed Forces in the Field, Art. 2*, ICRC, Geneva, 1952: <https://ihl-databases.icrc.org/en/ihl-treaties/gci-1949/article-2/commentary/1952?activeTab=1949GCs-APs-and-commentaries>,

Crisis Group interviews, members of the Commission for Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, Yaoundé and Buea, March 2017

E.M Chilver., ‘Nineteenth Century Trade in the Bamenda Grassfields, Southern Cameroons’, *Afrika undAoebersee*, Vol. 45, 1961, p. 233.

E.W. Tembon, ‘Crisis in the Republic of Cameroon: An overview of the Anglophone crisis, 2016–2018’. Cameroon Association for Bible Translation and Literacy Facilitator Platform for Impact, 2018.

- Eriksson Baaz, Maria, and Maria Stern. 2018a. "Curious Erasures: The Sexual in Wartime Sexual Violence." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 20 (3): 295–314.
- Ian FOWLER, Kingdoms of the Cameroon Grassfields. In: *Reviews in Anthropology*, 40 (2011) 292–311
- ICG, *Rebels, Victims, Peacebuilders: Women in Cameroon's Anglophone Conflict*, Report / Africa 23 February 2022, available at : <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/rebels-victims-peacebuilders-women-camerouns-anglophone-conflict>, Accessed on May 17, 2024.
- International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), *Gendered Impacts of Armed Conflict and Implications for the Application of International Humanitarian Law*, ICRC, Geneva, June 2022.
- International Crisis Group, 'Cameroon's Worsening Anglophone Crisis Calls for Strong Measures'. ICG Briefing No. 130, 2017. Accessible at <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/130-cameroon-worseninganglophone-crisis-calls-strong-measures>, consulted on June 08, 2024.
- Jean Pierre WARNIER, Histoire du peuplement et genèse des paysages dans l'ouest camerounais. In: *Journal of African History* 25 (1984) 395-410.
- Kaze, T. N. S. (2021) 'Towards the Sustainable Integration of Internally Displaced Anglophones in the West Region of Cameroon', *Researching Internal Displacement*, Working Paper No. 6, University of London, Internal Displacement Research Programme at the Refugee Law Initiative, pp. 1-35.
- Kaze, Tindo Narcisse Saturnin, and Elokobi Eposi Ethel, (2024), "State Fragility, Non-State Armed Groups, and the Privatization of Violence in the Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon" in *Institute of African Studies Journal*, Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada), Issue 11, pp.47-60. Available at: <https://carleton.ca/africanstudies/nokoko/>
- Kenneth Lyell STALLCUP, "La géographie linguistique des Grassfields". In: Larry HYMAN et Jean VOORHOEVE. *L'expansion bantoue* (Paris: SELAF, 1980) 43-57.
- M.N. Schmitt, G.C. Marshall, C.H.B. Garraway, Y. Dinstein, *The Manual on the Law of Non international Armed Conflict*, International Institute of Humanitarian Law, Sanremo 2006.
- Mark Bolak Funtéh & Jean Gormo (2009), "Women, Conflict and Peace in the Grassfields of Cameroon", *Africana Studia*, N°13, pp.91-113.
- Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralisation. *Official Journal*, BUCREP, 2010
- National Institute of Statistics, *State of Poverty in Cameroon*, 2024.

- OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). 2007. Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States & Situations: Principles – April 2007; Paris, OECD
- Parashar, Swati. 2009. "Feminist International Relations and Women Militants: Case Studies from Sri Lanka and Kashmir." *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 22 (2): 235–256.
- Philippe LAVACHERY, Le Peuplement des Grassfields : Recherches Archeologiques dans L'ouest du Cameroun. In : *Afrika Focus*, 14, 1 (1998) 17-36
- Rahel Kunz (2014) Gender and Security Sector Reform: Gendering Differently? *International Peacekeeping*, 21:5, 604-622, DOI: 10.1080/13533312.2014.963319
- Rahel Kunz (2022), Gender and the micro-dynamics of violent conflicts, *Gender and the Micro-Dynamics of Violent Conflict*, Pages 345-367, Available at : <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14616742.2022.2083652>, accessed on June 9, 2024.
- Rooney, Eilish. 2018. "Intersectionality: Working in Conflict." In *The Oxford Handbook of Gender and Conflict*, edited by Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, Naomi Cahn, Dina Francesca Haynes, and Nahla Valji, 328–339. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sara Parikh Drar (2016), *Gender Stereotypes and Armed Conflict – A Study of the Repercussions for International Justice*, FACULTY OF LAW, Lund University.
- Schaftenaar, S. 2022. *Gender Equality and Conflict. Gendered Determinants of Armed Conflict, Violent Political Protest, and Nonviolent Campaigns*. Report / Department of Peace and Conflict Research 129. 56 pp. Uppsala: Department of Peace and Conflict Research. ISBN 978-91-506-2962-0.
- Shepherd, Laura J. 2020. "Situating Women, Peace and Security: Theorizing from 'the Local'." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 22 (4): 456–461.
- Sylvester, Christine. 2010. *Experiencing War*. London: Routledge.
- The National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms Crisis Group has had access to this unpublished report, sent to the presidency of the Republic on 30 November 2016.
- Voice of America news broadcast of May, 26, 2018, English speaking activists in Cameroon given jail sentences. Accessible at: <https://allafrica.com/stories/201805280447.html>, accessed on May 25, 2024.