



His Excellency PAUL BIYA
President of the Republic of Cameroon

“In the area of women’s empowerment, I commit myself to ensuring the preparation and implementation of the special plan of action for women’s empowerment (...). I will make sure that your work is recognized and valued everywhere; I will make sure that you are well represented in all governing bodies of the country. I commit myself to making equality between men and women a reality”

**Excerpt of the Head of State’s keynote address
in Maroua on 02 October 1997**



His Excellency PHILEMON YANG,
Prime Minister
Head of Government



Mrs. ABENA ONDOA née
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Minister of Women's Empowerment
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PREFACE

Cameroon's Gender Policy Document is a tool for planning, guiding and ensuring consistency in Government and other stakeholders' actions in favour of gender equality and equity in all sectors of national development.

Its preparation falls within the implementation of the Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA's plan for a sustainable future, one of which concretizations in the social domain has to do with empowering women and building an ideal Republic, based on the equal rights of citizens of both sexes.

Given that development goes beyond economic processes in the strict sense, due to the social and governance aspects that go along with it in modern societies, the Government is striving to implement institutional reforms in order to ensure the participation of all social groups in nation building, daily life, and in the sharing of benefits derived from national efforts.

In addition to the ratification of almost all international and regional legal instruments for the protection of women's rights, and the national legislation which is constantly being updated, Cameroon, in 1999, adopted a Policy Statement and a National Action Plan for Women in Development.

By so doing, our country confirmed the consistency of its stances, as well as its irreversible adherence to international community rulings in the domain.

The policy was made up of seven (07) strategic areas, namely: (i) improvement of women's living conditions, (ii) improvement of the legal status of women, (iii) promotion of female human resources in all development sectors, (iv) effective participation of women in decision making, (v) protection and promotion of the girl-child, (vi) fighting violence against women, and (vii) improvement of the institutional framework for women in development.

If the results of the implementation of this policy are qualitatively and quantitatively eloquent, the global assessment of the Women in Development (WID) approach reveals significant risks of stagnation as concerns the pursued objective of sustainable development, hence the need to move on to the gender and development approach which is more forward-looking. This approach consists in promoting social progress based on equality of citizens without discrimination as to sex.

The Gender Policy Document is a response to this requirement. It is a new stage and a decisive step in Government's determination to put gender equality into practice, and to speed up the quest for sustainable development and emergence.

Though initiated by the Government, the document was produced following a participatory and inclusive process. Interested civil society organizations and development partners took active part in all stages of its preparation. This is a forum for the Government to express its gratitude to all these stakeholders for their valuable contributions.

This Policy Document is intended for all stakeholders, notably government ministries, public and semi-public organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations and development partners, whose assistance and various support will further facilitate the process of achieving gender equality and equity, and hence the sustainable development of our beloved country.

Le Premier Ministre,
 Chef du Gouvernement
 Philémon YANG



ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AIDS	: Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ANAFOR	: National Forestry Agency
ATC	: Appropriate Technology Centre
BC	: Buildings and Constructions
CAMCCUL	: Cameroon Cooperative Credit Union League
CBC	: Communication for BehaviorChange
CECPROM	: Coopérative d'Épargne et de Crédit des Promotrices Matures
CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEMAC	: Economic and Monetary Community of Central Africa
CFA	: Communauté Financière Africaine
CI	: Clothing Industry
CIDA	: Canadian International Development Agency
CIMA	: Inter-African Conference on Insurance Markets
CMPJ	: Multifunctional Centre for the Promotion of Youth
CNDHL	: National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms
CNPS	: National Social Insurance Fund
COBAC	: Banking Commission of Central Africa
CSO	: Civil Society Organization
DHS	: Demographic and Health Survey
DPNG	: National Gender Policy Document
ECAM	: Cameroon Household Survey
EESI	: Employment and Informal Sector Survey
EFA	: Education For All
EMF	: Micro-Finance Establishment
EPA	: Education Priority Area
FGM	: Female Genital Mutilation
GBV	: Gender Based Violence
GDP	: Gross Domestic Product
GE	: Gender Equality
GESP	: Growth and Employment Strategy Paper

GPHC	: General Population and Housing Census
GTZ	: German Technical Cooperation
HDI	: Human Development Index
HDR	: Human Development Report
HIPC	: Heavily Indebted Poor Country
HIPCI	: Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative
HIV	: Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ICPD	: International Conference on Population and Development
ICT	: Information and Communication Technology
IEC	: Information, Education, Communication
IFAD	: International Fund for Agricultural Development
IGA	: Income Generating Activities
ILO	: International Labour Office
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IPES	: Private Institutes of Higher Education
M	: Men
MDGs	: Millennium Development Goals
MFI	: Micro Finance Institution
MICS	: Multiple Indicators Clusters Survey
MINADER	: Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
MINAS	: Ministry of Social Affairs
MINASCOF	: Ministry of Social and Women's Affairs
MINCOF	: Ministry of Women's Affairs
MINCOMMERCE	: Ministry of Trade
MINEDUB	: Ministry of Basic Education
MINEDUC	: Ministry of National Education
MINEP	: Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection
MINESEC	: Ministry of Secondary Education
MINESUP	: Ministry of Higher Education
MINFI	: Ministry of Finance
MINFOF	: Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife
MINFOPRA	: Ministry of Public Service and Administrative Reform

MINJUSTICE	: Ministry of Justice
MINPMEESA	: Ministry of Small and Medium Size Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts
MINPROFF	: Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family
MINREX	: Ministry of External Relations
MINSANTE	: Ministry of Public Health
MPPF-Cam Productive	: Micro Projects for Women in Cameroon
MUFFA	: Mutuelle Financière des Femmes Africaines
NA	: National Assembly
NAPWID	: National Action Plan for Women in Development
NEPAD	: New Partnership for Africa's Development
NGO	: Non Governmental Organization
NGP	: National Governance Programme
NGPD	: National Gender Policy Document
NIS	: National Institute OF Statistics
OECD	: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHADA	: Organization for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa
OVC	: Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PADMIR	: Support Project for the Development of Rural Micro Finance
PAJER-U	: Support Programme for Rural and Urban Youth
PARFAR	: Programme for the Improvement of Rural Family Income
PASE	: Educational Development Capacity Building Project
PIAASI	: Integrated Support Programme for Actors in the Informal Sector
PIFMAS	: Socioeconomic Integration Project through the creation of micro enterprises for the Manufacturing of Sporting Equipment
PMTCT	: Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
PREPAFEN	: Poverty Reduction Project and Action in Favour of Women of the Far North
PRSP	: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSFE	: Forestry and Environment Sector Programme
RENATA	: National Network of Aunties
RIB	: Rehabilitation Institute of Buea
RSDSP	: Rural Sector Development Strategy Paper
SAP	: Structural Adjustment Programme

SEG	: Socio-Economic Group
SFE	: Social and Family Education
SG	: Secretary General
SI	: Social Indicator
SOS	: Save Our Souls
STI	: Sexually Transmitted Infection(s)
TFR	: Total Fertility Rate
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	: United Nations Fund for Population Activities
UNICEF	: United Nations Children's Fund
UNIFEM	: United Nations Development Fund for Women
UPE	: Universal Primary Education
W	: Women
WEC	: Women's Empowerment Centre
WFP	: World Food Programme
WID	: Women in Development

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INTRODUCTION

Women form over half the world's population. In Cameroon, they are nearly 50.5% of the estimated population of 19,406,100 inhabitants, according to the 2005 third General Population and Housing Census (3rd GPHC) results published in 2010. The growth rate of the female population from 1987 to 2005 is 10.1% as against 09.9% for males. Women are socio-economic agents required in all sectors. Although the situation has improved in several areas of national life, women's participation continues to be a cause for concern, because of persistent gender inequality in key areas such as education, health, employment and environment.

In order to eliminate these inequalities, Cameroon has subscribed to international and regional commitments aimed at the full development of women, notably the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women, the International Conference on Population and Development, the Beijing Platform for Action, the Millennium Development Goals, the Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the African Union on equality between women and men, the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and on the Rights of Women in Africa. All these international and regional legal instruments establish the gender approach as a strategy for sustainable and equal development, leading to the country's resolve to implement a National Gender Policy.

At the national level, social policy is based on the ideals and principles of social justice, respect for human rights, good governance and democracy to achieve equality and equity between women and men. Efforts by the government have led to significant actions for the empowerment of women. These actions have so far been developed within the framework of the Women in Development Policy, where emphasis has been laid on improving the living conditions of women and not on factors underlying their status.

With a view to creating an environment that is conducive for equality between women and men, Cameroon found it necessary to adopt a National Gender Policy.

This National Gender Policy document, which falls within that framework, has four main parts, namely:

1. The general context of the National Gender Policy in Cameroon in which the country's characteristics are described, national guidelines and development priorities, and Cameroon's position on the sub-regional, regional and international scene on promoting gender equality and equity;
2. The situational analysis of gender in Cameroon which highlights these issues in various areas as well as women's empowerment mechanisms;
3. aspects of the National Gender policy which revolve around the concept, vision, values and principles, purpose, objectives, and strategic issues;
4. The institutional framework and implementation mechanisms which define implementation, coordination, consultation, monitoring and evaluation modalities of the Policy.

Part one

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

The general context of the National Gender Policy globally deals with the country's general characteristics, national guidelines and development priorities, and Cameroon's position on the sub-regional, regional and international scene on promoting gender equality and equity.

1.1. General characteristics

1.1.1. Geographic situation

Cameroon is a Central African country, covering a surface area of 475,650 sq. km. It extends from latitude 2 to 13 degrees North and longitudes 9 to 16 degrees East. It has a triangular shape that stretches from the South to Lake Chad over nearly 1200 km, while the base extends from West to East over 800 km. It has a South-western maritime border of 420 km along the Atlantic Ocean. It is bounded on the West by Nigeria, South by Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, East by the Central African Republic, and North-East by Chad.

Several types of natural zones contribute to the geographical diversity of the country:

- The *forested south* located in the maritime and equatorial area is characterized by dense vegetation, dense river network, hot and humid climate and abundant rainfall;
- The *high plateaus* of the west whose average altitude is above 1100 m is characterized by fertile soils and low temperatures;
- The *sudano-sahelian* north which is a region of savannas and steppes: apart from the Adamawa plateau where the climate is more temperate, the rest of this region is characterized by hot, dry climate and rainfall that gradually subsides as one approaches Lake Chad.

Cameroon is called "Africa in miniature" because of the physical, climate, human and cultural diversity of its natural regions, which reflects the different types of natural regions found elsewhere within the continent.

1.1.2. Socio-demographic situation

The population of Cameroon in 2010 is characterized by its extreme youthfulness. The median age of the population is 17.7 years and average age stands at 22.1 years. Those under 15 make up 43.6% of the total population while those under 25 years form 64.2%. As for people aged 60 and above, they represent 5.0% of the overall population. Women form about 50.6% of the population as against 49.4% of men. By age group, there are no sharp differences in sex structure at younger ages; they are clearly visible only at older ages.

The population density in 2005 was 37.5 inhabitants per sq km as against 22.5 inhabitants in 1987, being an increase of over 66%. The population is unevenly distributed throughout the country, and this distribution is marked by an urbanization rate estimated at 52%. Thus, on the one hand,

there are regions with thick populations such as the Far North and high plateaus of the West and, on the other hand, under-populated regions such as the East and South. The urbanization rate increased from 37.9% to 48.8% between 1987 and 2005. In fact, the number of cities with over 100,000 inhabitants increased from 6 to 9 between 1987 and 2005, with the cities of Douala and Yaounde having about two million inhabitants each.

In 2007, the average household size was 4.4 persons and 26% of households were headed by women .

Fertility is still high but maternal and infant mortality are also high. The overall fertility rate (TFR) is 6.4 children per woman in rural areas as against 4.2 children in urban areas for a national average of 5.2. As for the maternal mortality rate, it rose from 430 deaths per 100,000 live births in 1998 to 669 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2004 , despite the higher life expectancy of Cameroonian women (57.1 years) as compared to that of men (53.4 years) for a national average of 54.8 years.

Migration affects both women and men with male and youth having a slight edge as they search for greener pastures. There is a significant rural exodus. In fact, almost all types of immigrants can be found in major cities of the country (Douala and Yaounde) where there are employment opportunities. International migration is still very poorly documented. A significant part of this migration is clandestine and difficult to capture. The emigration of Cameroonians that was insignificant before the 1990s is increasing at an alarming rate.

Cameroon has over 230 ethnic groups divided into six major groups: the Sudanese, the Hamitic and Semitic living in the Adamawa, North and Far North Regions, the Bantu, the Semi-Bantu and related groups, and Pygmies in the rest of the country.

There are three major religious groups: Catholics 38.4%, Protestants 26.3%, and Muslims 20.9%. They are followed by Animists 5.6%, other Christians 4.0%, free thinkers 3.2%, other religions 1.0%, and Orthodox 0.6%.

The civil status picture of the people aged over 15 is as follows: married people represent 51.2% for women as against 47.1% for men, while the unmarried represent 32.7% for women as against 47.1% for men; consensual unions represent 4.5% for women as against 4.7% for men; the divorced represent 1.2% for women as against 0.6% for men; those who are separated from bed and board represent 1.2% for women as against 0.7% for men ; as for widows, they represent 9,2% as against 1,5% of widowers.

The proportion of single women between 35 and 39 years of age is only 2%. Cameroonians marry early, that is 22% of women aged 25 to 49 years engaged in a union at 15 years of age and 50% of women entered their first union at the age of 17.⁶ years.

Despite the predominance of monogamy (69%), polygamy remains a widespread practice, affecting 30% of married women. It is also noted that the proportion of women with at least one co-wife increases steadily with age, from 20% at 20-24 years to 33% at 30-34 years and 45% at 45-49 years .

1.1.3. Socio-economic situation

After experiencing a steady growth rate from 1965 to 1985, Cameroon witnessed a deep recession from the 1985/1986 financial year, due to a sharp drop in export revenue, falling prices of major exports (oil, coffee, cocoa, cotton), the dive of the U.S. dollar used as standard currency for pricing of these products on the international market and problems of a structural nature that greatly affected the competitiveness of its economy. Among other manifestations of this serious crisis we can mention: the steady fall in public investment and in credit grants within the economy, the outstanding foreign debt which rose from less than 1/3 to more than 3/4 of the GDP, the interruption of execution of the 6th Five Year Plan, etc. This situation lasted till the 1995/1996 financial year. With the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, Cameroon returned to a positive growth rate.

The reduction in public expenditure and burden of public sector enterprises introduced from the outset of the crisis was not sufficient to improve the situation, so much so that the country was forced to drive its economy through the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) drawn up with the Bretton Woods institutions. Public finances continued to worsen and that led to drastic salary cuts in the public service in 1993.

The economic crisis was mainly felt through falling incomes, deteriorating economic and social infrastructure and inadequate provision of social services, as well as lay-offs. The restructuring of public and private sector enterprises, the freezing of recruitment into the public service and workforce reduction measures resulted in a sharp rise in unemployment. This ultimately led to poor living conditions of the population, affecting households and increasing women's responsibilities, notably with regard to access to social services.

In 2003, the adopted PRSP recorded mixed results in the first round of its programming. Reaching the Completion Point of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPCI) on 12 April 2006 enabled Cameroon to benefit from debt remission. To strengthen its means of programming and development efforts, Cameroon designed a vision called "Cameroon's Vision by 2035" which is the foundation of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), a revised version of the PRSP, henceforth the integrated reference framework for sustainable human development.

1.1.4. Political situation : administrative, judicial organization and institutional reforms

The Republic of Cameroon is a decentralized unitary State. It is a bilingual country with English and French as official languages. The country is divided into 10 Regions, 58 Divisions and 360 Sub-Divisions, respectively placed under the authority of Governors, Senior Divisional Officers and Divisional Officers. The State authority is exercised by the President of the Republic and the Parliament. The President of the Republic is the Head of the Executive. Legislative power is wielded by the Parliament, which includes the National Assembly with 180 MPs and the Senate with 100 Senators. Judicial power lies with the Supreme Court, Courts of Appeal, High Courts and lower law-courts.

Since 2004, decentralization has been ongoing with the adoption of relevant laws. These laws delegate more responsibility to decentralized public authorities in the designing, financing, programming and implementation of development programmes and projects in their area of jurisdiction.

1.1.5. Potentials and performances

Cameroon is a country with tremendous potentials, especially arable land suitable for agriculture and development of agribusiness. On a total surface area of 47 million hectares, 9.2 can be used for agro-pastoral activities. Arable lands cover about 7.2 million hectares to which should be added nearly 2 million hectares of pastureland. Currently, only 1.8 million hectares or 26% of the arable land is used.

Added to this are:

- A vantage geographical position in the Gulf of Guinea, with a large sea port potential and consumers estimated at over 200 million (Central Africa and Nigeria);
- A rich subsoil (oil and various minerals);
- A high potential in factors of production such as energy, and a relatively well trained labour force;
- A high tourism potential, whose development may lead to several other labour-intensive activities (hotels, restaurants, handicrafts, etc.).

Despite all these potentials, the situation in Cameroon has improved only marginally since 1985. Currently, the country ranks 144th out of 177 classified countries, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.532 .

1.2. Guidelines, priorities and national development prospects

Guidelines, priorities and national development prospects are defined in Cameroon's Vision by 2035 and the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper.

1.2.1 Long term development vision

The shared Vision of Cameroon's development by 2035 is that of "an emerging, democratic country, united in its diversity". Achieving this vision, as far as the economy is concerned, means Cameroon is entering the era of sustainable social development with a strong, diversified and competitive economy. The economy will therefore be characterized by the dominance of the industrial sector in general and manufacturing in particular (in GDP and exports) and effective integration into the global economy.

The road to the vision includes four overall objectives, namely: reducing poverty to a socially acceptable level; becoming a middle income country; reaching the stage of a newly industrialized country; and strengthening national unity and consolidating the democratic process. This vision is based on the key role of growth whose pace is expected to be remarkable over a long period, and the rather unequal distribution of income. In this regard, there is need

NIS/ECAM 3 (2006)
NIS/HDS 3 (2004)
BUCREP/GPHC 3 (2010)
IS/HDS 3, 2004

to support growth by diversifying production while fully integrating the different industries. Specifically, the idea is to significantly increase the share of products from the manufacturing industry in the GDP and exports.

The first ten years of implementation of the Vision will focus on accelerating economic growth, creation of employment opportunities and poverty reduction. The Government plans to increase the annual rate of expansion of economic activity from 3.3% to 5.5% over the 2010-2020 period. In that regard, the authorities intend to boost the agricultural sector by raising primary sector growth around 5%, given the great potential likely to be tapped from this sector.

In addition, the authorities are convinced that the creation of wealth, while being an essential pillar of poverty reduction, should be accompanied by multiple employment opportunities as a means of income redistribution. The Government intends to implement the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper to create thousands of employment opportunities annually in the formal sector, while addressing, inter alia, the issue of having informal sector operators move into the formal sector.

By the end of the first decade of the Vision, the Government intends to reduce poverty to about 28.7% as against 39.9% in 2007. Globally, it is envisaged to continue achieving the Millennium Development Goals which are clearly anchored in the long-term Vision, and aimed at improving the living conditions of the people.

To achieve the set objectives, the Government has adopted three coherent and integrated strategies, namely a growth strategy, an employment strategy, and a governance and state management strategy, as stated in the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESp).

1.2.2. Growth and employment strategy

The growth and employment strategy is based on six interrelated key elements, namely: raising from 20 to 30% (by 2020) the share of public investment in the overall public expenditure and supervising this share for use, to a large extent, in the construction of visible infrastructure; allocating significant resources to large public investment projects; easing procurement procedures and budgetary control; diversifying economic policy options by providing the possibilities of implementing the monetary policy; finally controlling the inability to absorb funds; and channelling official development assistance.

The implementation of these key elements will depend on strategies, programmes and projects affecting all sectors of the economy to accelerate growth, reduce poverty and make progress towards the MDGs, especially MDG 3, "**Promote gender equality and empower women**". In addition, the National Population Policy, updated in 2002, aims to improve people's standard of living and quality of life through sustainable human development, in accordance with human dignity and fundamental human rights and, in particular, to ensure adequacy between population growth and available resources. This is to give the country a quality human potential. To achieve this, a number of general objectives are set, including "**the promotion of gender equality and equity**".

1.3. Cameroon's position within the sub-regional, regional and international context of promoting gender equality and equity

In Cameroon there is the rule of law. The country is hence bound to respect international, regional and sub-regional guidelines and commitments for the promotion of gender equality and equity. As such, several legal instruments have been ratified. Similarly, resolutions and recommendations of international meetings have been incorporated into pro-gender equity and equality policy and strategy documents.

1.3.1. Legal instruments

To ensure respect of the rights of women and men, Cameroon has ratified most international and regional instruments for the promotion and protection of fundamental human rights, notably those specific to women's rights. Basically, these are treaties, conventions, pacts and statements advocating the principles of equality and non discrimination between women and men in different fields (education, health, economy, employment, participation in public and political life, decision making, etc.).

Apart from international instruments, there are national instruments adopted by Cameroon which generally or specifically take into account the principles and values that underpin gender equality, human rights and social justice: the Constitution, Codes, laws, regulatory instruments, etc.

1.3.2. International conferences

Cameroon has always taken part in major international gatherings on development issues, most of which have addressed gender concerns. Among the most important conferences are:

- The Mexico Conference (1975), which helped change the way society perceives women, with particular emphasis on their empowerment, their involvement in economic activities and the assumption of their roles;
- The Copenhagen Conference (1980), which identified as key actions in favour of women: reducing the scope of implementation of the Mexico programme to three priority areas, notably health, education and employment; preparing and adopting a programme to ensure women's right to ownership and control of land as well as improving their rights to inheritance, child custody and nationality;
- The Nairobi Conference (1985), which introduced the forward-looking strategies regarded as the way to promote women's participation in politics and decision-making;
- The Rio Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development (1992), which recognizes the vital role of women in environmental management and development, and considers their full participation as essential to achieving sustainable development;
- The Vienna Conference on Human Rights (1993), which recognizes the fundamental rights of women and the girl child as an undeniable, integral and indivisible part of the

universal rights of human beings;

- The Global Summit on Social Development (1993), which brought world leaders to commit themselves to mobilizing their energies and intellects in order to solve pressing problems including poverty and unemployment that primarily affect women;
- The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994), which admitted that improving the political, social, economic and health status of women is both an important end in itself and a sine qua non condition in achieving sustainable development;
- The Beijing World Conference on Women (1995), which established gender equity and equality and erected the "gender and development" approach as a strategy in achieving this equity and equality. This Conference also identified twelve critical areas of concern in lifting obstacles to women's empowerment, namely: poverty reduction, education and training, health, fighting violence against women, preventing armed conflicts, boosting the economy, opening up decision making and power sharing, introducing institutional mechanisms to promote equality, promoting the human rights of women, the media, environment and the girl child.
- The United Nations Conference on the 3rd Millennium (2000), where a statement from which the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are drawn was made, namely: to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, ensure primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce mortality of children below five years, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, establish a global partnership for development.

1.3.3. National policies and strategies for women's empowerment

Basically, these include the women in development policy, the national population policy, the poverty reduction strategy and the growth and employment strategy.

1.3.3.1. The Women in Development Policy

In 1997, the Cameroon Government designed and adopted its first policy document on women's empowerment, a document which defined government priorities and strategies in this area. This was the policy statement coupled with the National Action Plan for Women in Development (NAPWID). The seven areas of intervention in this document stem from the twelve points selected within the framework of the Beijing recommendations. The seven areas of intervention include: improving living conditions of women, improving the legal status of women, developing female human resources in all vital sectors, ensuring effective participation of women in decision-making, protecting and promoting the girl child, fighting violence against women, and improving the institutional framework for effective integration of women in development.

1.3.3.2. The National Population Policy Declaration

In 2002, the National Population Policy Declaration (NPPD) was updated following the 1994 ICPD and the Millennium Summit in September 2000. This policy establishes the gender approach as a development approach and notably aims to universalize quality primary education, promote functional literacy for both sexes and reduce gender disparity in all sectors of economic and social development.

1.3.3.3. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and sector strategies

The Government, in seeking solutions to the well-being of the population, successively prepared, using the participatory approach, a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) adopted in April 2003, and sector strategies in the areas of health, education, rural development, social development, etc. The PRSP has marked a milestone in the continuation of reforms by authorities since attaining the completion point under the enhanced debt relief initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). It adopted the following guidelines for gender equality: the improvement of the socio-legal status of women, the improvement of women's living conditions, the promotion of gender equality and equity, the promotion of family welfare, the strengthening of institutional mechanisms and the promotion of good governance.

1.3.3.4. The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper

The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) adopted in August 2009, which is a revised version of the PRSP, has set out guidelines for gender equality in the following seven sectors: rural infrastructure, industry and services, governance, education, social and health services.

As concerns gender promotion, the Government will continue to educate parents and communities on allowing the young girls to enjoy equal access to education. In the same light, the Government and communities will ensure that girls are represented in all sectors including vocational training, higher education and employment.

The GESP is the springboard of all development activities, including the National Gender Policy which is based on its guidelines.

PART TWO

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER ISSUES IN CAMEROON

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF GENDER ISSUES IN CAMEROON

Gender equity and equality, which are real challenges in the search for social justice and respect of human rights, are a major concern to the national and international community. In Cameroon, despite a marked improvement in the situation of women, gender disparities and discrimination persist in many areas of national life.

2.1. Situational analysis of gender issues in the social sector

This analysis presents the status and roles of women and men, gender disparities in areas such as education (primary, secondary and tertiary), health as well as gender-based violence.

2.1.1. Analysis of the status and roles of women and men

The status of Cameroonian women depends largely on the perception that society has of their role. This perception is inherent in the traditions of different ethnic groups, which are an expression of cultural patterns internalized in the socialization process. It is worth noting that though declarations and opinions still sustain adherence to these traditional patterns, behaviours gradually distance themselves from them, due to drastic social changes. The traditions of different ethnic groups in Cameroon show that the distribution of roles between men and women includes women's empowerment, while respecting the man's authority.

In a strongly patriarchal social context where men very often exert authority, women nevertheless, enjoy some amount of power. Thus, the perception of the woman and the place reserved for her vary from one region to another: a woman knows that, so long as she is from the northern, southern or western region, her status is determined by the influence of social perceptions. These perceptions also differ, depending on whether we are in the rural area, influenced by traditional beliefs, or in urban areas, inclined to modernity.

2.1.2. Women and men in the Cameroonian traditional society

Different cultures reserve different treatments for men and women and unequal social consideration. Generally, the different national ethnic groups base their family relations on the fundamental difference between women and men where men are considered as family heads, and women as mothers and wives. Power relations and authority within families are based on these statuses attributed to women and men. This differentiation is inculcated in children, girls and boys, in the process of socialization, thereby determining the social values and norms to be acquired by women and men through rites, ceremonies, customs and behaviours.

In these societies, which are basically patriarchal, life in households is based on the subordination of women and supremacy of men. Thus, the man embodies authority in the household, sets the pace, fixes rules, manages and controls family assets, takes major decisions and provides for the livelihood of household members.

Furthermore, motherhood is the core of family and community life. Fertility is valued by society, the woman is supposed to “bear children for her husband, preferably boys”, failing which she could face social stigma. The high rate of fertility is a justification for early marriages and a contributing factor to polygamy.

In most regions, tradition has remained rooted in people’s behaviours. A woman has value only if she is married, fertile, humble and docile, dignified and a good housewife. Moreover, some religious and traditional beliefs confine women to their homes and will not tolerate their appearing in public places.

2.1.3. Women and men in the Cameroonian modern society

Urban development and access to new forms of information and communication technologies have led to changes in some social values. Both women and men are now exposed to new lifestyles and practices that contrast with traditional habits and beliefs. Faced with the prevailing changes, some women, who have become more aware of issues relating to power relations and the influence of the dynamics of organized groups, assert themselves and are less subjected to male dominance.

The vulnerability of women in society, due to their social and cultural status as the dominated, has fostered a remarkable female dynamism. Through associations, some women do achieve social, economic and cultural inclusion as these groupings represent for them a means of promoting personal and collective advancement. Rural and community life around women’s activities confers on them a social value, that of economic and social promoters of the family. In urban areas, those who have access to reflection forums succeed in taking part in debates on developmental issues and decision-making.

For some, this has led to the transformation of their social, legal, economic and political status. For others who form the majority living in rural areas and particularly in some urban areas, relations and relationships with men are still firmly rooted in the traditional values mentioned above. Notwithstanding signs of modernity, women’s social and economic responsibilities have not evolved significantly.

In conclusion, it is important to note that the Cameroonian woman is still a victim of discrimination and oppression. She is still confined to socio-cultural beliefs that hinder her full development. She hardly enjoys her rights in a strongly patriarchal society and is therefore burdened with the sole responsibility for family care and early childhood education. She is still regarded as the weaker sex, in a traditional society that has been structured to favour men with access to and control over resources.

2.1.4. Analysis of gender issues in the area of education

There are two educational systems in Cameroon: the French system and the English system. In addition, there is a non-formal system of education for young girls and boys dropped out of the mainstream educational system. Moreover, there are denominational and traditional systems of education as well as special education programmes developed for youth with specific needs, notably children with disabilities.

Education is provided by both the public and private sectors. The number of women without education is more than 1.7 times that of men in a similar situation and there is growing inequality between girls and boys as we move up the educational ladder (91 women at primary level, 79 at secondary level and 44 at tertiary level, respectively per 100 men) .

The various educational systems are marked by gender disparities in preschool, primary, secondary and higher education levels. There are also disparities between various regions of the country, especially between the highly educated southern regions where the parity index between girls and boys is close to one, and the less educated northern regions where it is barely 0.6.

2.1.4.1. Providing education to girls and boys at primary level

Primary education is characterized by a higher number of educated boys as compared to girls', with differences varying from 8 to 16 percentage points between 1989 and 2009. The net enrolment ratio at the national level is 83.1%, being 88.6% for boys and 69.2% for girls. At the regional level, gender disparities are more noticeable in the Far North and East. In the Far North region, for example, 69.2% of girls are enrolled in school against 98.3% of boys, which shows a differential rate of about 30%. The goal of universal primary education may not be achieved in the Adamawa, East, Far North and North Regions.

Nationally, the rate of primary school completion is 72.6% with 78.8% for boys against 66.4% for girls, a difference of 12 percentage points in favour of boys .

An analysis of the completion rate, an indicator of progress towards Universal Primary Education (UPE), shows improvement in the overall rate (by 21 %) from 59.1% to 71.5% in the period from 2001 to 2007, including girls (16%) of which the rate rose from 49.8 to 65.3% between 2003 and 2008. However, the attrition rate remains higher for girls than boys.

Although some improvements have been observed in the schooling of girls thanks to the introduction in 2001 of free government primary education , as well as to the positive effects of awareness campaigns and advocacy for girls' education, it remains true that access to and retention of girls in school fall short of targets.

2.1.4.2. Providing education to girls and boys in secondary education

In secondary education, girls are also less noticeable than boys, though with a wider difference than at the primary level. According to the Global Monitoring Report on Education, the enrolment ratio for girls was 22.9% and 32.2% for boys in 1990, making a difference of 10 %. In 2007, these rates were respectively 28% against 32%, with a difference of 5 points, showing improvement in girls' school enrolment.

2.1.4.3. Providing education to girls and boys in tertiary education

In higher education, disparities in education against girls are more blatant, despite their having been narrowed from 2003 to 2007 when women accounted for 44.2% against 55.7% for men in 2008, 39.2 % in 2003-2004, 39.7% in 2005 and 41.7% in 2006; 43.9% of the 132 101 students enrolled

in the six State universities and private institutions of Higher Education (PIHE) in 2007. In addition, women are as under-represented (less than 21% from 2003 to 2007) in science and technology in higher education as they are in secondary education. The number of women taking up science subjects in State universities was 6,499 (20.8%) in 2003-2004 and 9742 (19.7%) in 2006/2007.

In private institutions, two facts are noteworthy: firstly, the slight over representation (more than 50%) of female students since 2005; secondly, the fluctuation of this indicator above the minimum of 50%: from 53% in 2005 to 50.7% in 2006, then 53.1% in 2007 to 51.4% in 2008 .

2.1.4.4. Literacy among men and womenn

As for literacy, women are also lagging behind men, with a gap ranging from 31 points to 27 points in nearly 20 years as shown by the parity indexes.

Literacy rates have improved from the older generations to the younger ones. Actually, the proportion of uneducated persons has decreased from 91% to 27% among women aged 65 and above and girls aged 6-9 years. These proportions are 57% and 25% for men of the same age groups, respectively. The literacy rate among adults (aged 15 years or above) were respectively 82% and 65% among women and men in 2004, against 80.3% and 67% in 1998. While these rates are increasing among men, they are decreasing among women.

2.1.4.5. Vocational Training

There are disparities in vocational training between girls and boys. In institutions placed under the supervision of the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training (MINEFOP), girls made up 45.4% of the total enrolment against 54.6% of boys for the 2008/2009 academic year . The dropout rate in the area of vocational training is 14.2% for girls and 10.6% for boys .

Girls are mostly enrolled in Home Economics (ESF), Clothing Industry (CI) and Secretaryship /office automation sections, which are meant to replicate women's traditionally assigned roles. They are beginning to enrol in electronics and micromechanical sections for which studies have shown that they have the potential to acquire skills needed in these domains.

Finally, the negative disparities in education and training for women could be explained by socio-cultural factors, family difficulties in meeting the costs of education and training, with preference given to boys' education, the assignment of girls to household and productive activities, early marriages and pregnancies, and poor perception of employment and school opportunities. There are also school-related factors such as cosmetic free education, few educational opportunities, girls' exposure to violence, lack of separate toilets for girls and boys in schools, and the negative influence of stereotypes and discriminatory pictures against women in textbooks.

2.1.5. Health

In the area of health, the level of key indicators has not improved between 1991 and 2006, despite government efforts with the support of development partners. In fact, the general population still suffers from endemic diseases (HIV-AIDS/STDs, malaria, tuberculosis, etc...)

and inadequate access to care and medications. This condition is characterized by unfavourable gender disparities to women particularly in reproductive health, and by the consequences of violence towards them.

The inequalities against women are basically three-fold, namely: persistent and increasing maternal mortality, higher HIV-AIDS/STDs prevalence rate with more women contracting the infections, and low contraceptive prevalence.

2.1.5.1. Maternal morbidity and mortality

Many women still lose their lives in childbirth. Sometimes, they bear the after-effects that can disable them for the rest of their lives, because of difficulties during pregnancy or in labour. This is also true with obstetric fistulas which are a factor of social exclusion, especially in the northern regions. Female cancers such as breast and cervical cancers are also common causes of morbidity and death.

With regard to obstetric fistula, a study on the existence of cases of fistula in two regions of Cameroon (Far North and North) conducted in 2004 showed that obstetric fistula due to the effects of an abnormally prolonged childbirth, often without the assistance of qualified personnel was a real public health problem. A total of 162 women with obstetric fistula were identified. Behind these figures lies the true reality of the problem identified in areas where the persistent practice of early marriage exposes girls to this plague whose consequences are unbearable at the physical and psycho-social levels.

Maternal mortality has worsened over the past decade, increasing from 430 to 669 deaths per 100 000 live births between 1998 and 2004 , which is far from the goal of 344 deaths per 100 000 live births by 2015.

Some causes of maternal mortality include late decisions to seek medical advice, late arrivals at health facilities and late administration of first aid.

This gloomy picture is due to socio-cultural prejudices against seeking medical attention, dependence of women on the authority of men who decide on reproductive health matters, ignorance, women's low economic power, the absence of an effective social protection system. Furthermore, there are inadequate and poor health and transportation facilities. Moreover, there is shortage of qualified health personnel, lack of staff motivation, poorly organized services, lack of appropriate equipment, medications and supplies, and costly healthcare.

In spite of measures taken by the government to reverse the curve of maternal mortality notably through the implementation of a roadmap for reducing maternal and neonatal mortality and the National Programme on Reproductive Health which focuses primarily on maternal and child health, mortality rates remain high.

2.1.5.2. Family planning and contraceptive prevalence

In Africa in general and Cameroon in particular, the child is at the centre of the life of a couple. A formal or consensual union in which the birth of a child is still hypothetical remains precarious and can result at any time in separation. Thus, family planning aims not only at controlling

fertility in order to ensure the health of mother and child, but also at helping childless couples to have children. The proportion of childless women aged 35 to 39 years dropped significantly from 12.1% in 1978 to 3.6% in 2004.

An analysis of contraceptive prevalence shows disparities along socio-demographic lines. Thus, it appears that contraceptive prevalence is lower in rural areas (16%) than in urban areas (36%); it is especially higher in the cities of Douala and Yaounde (42%) than in other cities (33%) .

This low prevalence rate has a correlation with the education and income level of women. In fact, the rate of contraceptive use is 4% for uneducated women living with a partner, as against 25% for those with primary education and 48% for those with secondary or higher education. This rate is 7% for women from very poor households, as against 46% for those from households of the highest income.

The rate of contraceptive use by women living with a partner is virtually identical to that of women not living with a partner. However, the rate of contraceptive use remains low among women living with a partner and aged 15-19 years (49%) and 45 to 49 years (47%) than among other age groups (above 56%). Only 14% of women use modern contraceptive methods. This proportion can drop to 13% among women living with a partner. The modern methods mostly used are the male condom (31%), pills (10%), injections (5%) and the morning pill (3%). In the past, periodic abstinence (43%) and withdrawal (24%) were the most used traditional methods. The proportion of women whose family planning needs are met is 26%. This accounts for 64% of the total potential demand already met. Demand in family planning is still high: 14% of women aged 15-49 years in 2004, approximately 10% for spacing and control to 4%. Family planning, especially in rural areas, is considered primarily in terms of access to all relevant information, then to relevant products and finally to the possibility of continuous follow-up, because of the taboo nature of sexuality in most cultures.

Despite persistent unwanted pregnancies, abortions and deaths, access by women to contraception is still difficult. The barriers to reproductive health, including contraceptive decisions are due, among other things, to women's reliance on their husbands' consent, ignorance of contraceptive methods by both women and men, and reluctance on socio-cultural and religious grounds.

2.1.5.3. HIV infection/STIs

Women and girls pay a heavy price to HIV/STIs with the feminization of the pandemic. In 2004, the prevalence rate of women infected by HIV/STIs (6,8%) was higher than that of men (4.1%), while overall HIV prevalence in the country was estimated at 5,1% for adults aged 15 to 49 years in late 2007 . Out of 560 306 infected people, there are 326 278 women and 234,028 men. The average prevalence rate is estimated at 3.3% with a female / male ratio of 3.4, with 4.8% of girls against 1.4% of boys among youths aged 15 to 19 years. The risk of infection is much higher among girls (54.7%) than boys (13%). As for the rate of condom use, it stands at 57% for men and 46% for women, from 1999 to 2005 , attributable to gaps earlier mentioned.

⁸NIS/DHS III (2004)

⁹MINEDUB, statistical yearbook 2008/2009

¹⁰MINEDUC / DPRD/SDP and MINEDUB

Moreover, in 2007 HIV prevalence among pregnant women (7.4%) was slightly higher than among other women (6.8%). In 2008, 6.5% of 276 177 pregnant women attending antenatal clinics tested HIV positive.

Actions to fight the pandemic, such as awareness and education campaigns, distribution of condoms, free treatment, especially for pregnant women, mother and child care, have not helped curb the pandemic and reverse the trend of its feminization. The vulnerability of women to HIV/STIs can be explained by biological, economic, socio-cultural and political factors. These include the poor control by women of their sexuality, multiple partners (polygamy and extramarital sex), prostitution, sexual violence, traditional practices (levirate and sororate marriages), beliefs, habits and customs leading to discrimination or differentiation in treatment between men and women, lack of information on sex education for women and men, lack of access to condoms and lack of legal provisions on the protection of people living with HIV-AIDS/STIs.

2.1.6. Gender-based violence

Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is a reality in Cameroon. In fact, 52.0% of women have experienced domestic violence at least once, 53.0% of women have experienced violence since the age of 15, 1.4% of women aged 15 to 49 years have undergone Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

This confirms the results of the study on violence against women, where in a heterosexual relationship, 99.7% of women have at least been once victims of violence from their partners. Among these abused women, 30.5% experienced physical violence, 30.8% sexual violence, 53.7% emotional violence, 54.7% psychological violence and 50.24% economic violence.

Regarding sexual violence, according to a 2008 study on rape and incest, 5.2% of women, that is, 1 woman out of 19, were victims and 33% of them became pregnant while 16% contracted STIs. More than one million girls and women are reported to have suffered an attempted rape, some several times (27%). Rape is becoming widespread in all regions of the country and often includes incest (18% of raped women) committed by a family member.

While violence is perpetrated everywhere in Cameroon, specific violence related to certain customary practices are confined to particular regions. FGM is practised in Cameroon in the Far North and South West regions. The rate of circumcised women is 1.4%. As for early marriages, they occur mostly in the northern regions.

Socio-cultural norms, women's ignorance of their rights and existing remedies, poverty and financial dependence on their husbands are factors of Gender Based Violence (GBV), which, despite their illegality and negative impact on development, are still tolerated in the name of culture.

GBV leads to physical and mental trauma on the victims. At economic level, significant financial costs and expenses incurred by work absenteeism and incapacitation result in low productivity. Violence also prevents female victims from participating in public life and other development activities in the country.

2.2. Situational analysis of gender issues in the area of economy and employment

The situation profile of women and men in the economic field will be appreciated at the domestic level and at the level of employment and work in both the formal and modern urban formal sectors. Issues of social security, as well as access to resources and factors of production and control thereof will also be addressed.

2.2.1. Home economics

The traditional division of labour confines women to domestic spheres, especially household activities, while men are engaged in public life. Home economics is thus an area reserved for the woman who will derive little value and recognition thereof. . She invests most of her time in it, which significantly reduces her participation in gainful and trading activities which become the preserve of men.

In Cameroon, housewives make up a significant number (946 103 women aged 15 years and above, and 703 577 aged 25 and above).

The woman, mother or wife is socially responsible for the household. She prepares meals, handles health care and education of the children, the sick and the elderly, supplies the family with water and domestic energy, takes care of the hygiene and sanitation. She is also responsible for household repairs; she takes an active part in productive activities including food security. The woman also assists her husband in his own social responsibility as family head and, in some communities; she plays an important role in some secret societies. She takes charge of all that helps the man to perform his duty. In case of incapacity of the latter, the woman refers to her husband's family for possible decisions.

The woman is torn between her professional status and her status of woman, wife and mother. She finds it extremely difficult to reconcile the different roles assigned to her by society, as "her administrative functions are simply added to those considered normative and intended for the wife" . But today, she tends to focus on her professional work which somewhat empowers her and give her social visibility. The woman today is a professional whose career has a setback due to her status as mother and wife or even her womanhood. As a mother, her work interruptions due to maternity slow down her career and help jeopardize her evolution unlike that of her male colleagues. As a wife, she carries out activities which must be compatible with her status as a wife, because she must have sufficient time to care for her family. While the man has the right to return home late, the woman must be there earlier to watch over the children and prepare the family meal. As a woman, there are areas that are inaccessible to her because of her socialization and the roles attributed to her, thus not enabling her to participate in productive labour and decision-making.

This is explained not only by sociological and cultural mores, but also by the underestimation of activity rates, which exclude household chores in the system of national accounting.

¹¹MINESUP and NIS, Higher Education statistical yearbook,

¹²MINEFOP, Vocational Training Report 2009

¹³MINEFOP, Vocational Training Report

2.2.2. Employment and work

2.2.2.1. Situation in economic activities, level and conditions of employment

The economic crisis of the late '80s and most especially that of 2008 resulted in the fall in the price of cash crops on the world market, lay-offs in some sectors and reduced purchasing power of households. This went a long way to increasing the vulnerability of families and the burdens of women.

Economic activities are carried out both in urban and rural areas. Two sectors provide employment in Cameroon: the formal and the informal sectors.

The profile of the workforce presented here, is made up of the following: the gainfully employed or unemployed active population, first applicants, pupils, students, pensioners and private income earners with no economic activity, household women and other inactive persons.

Out of the 52.6% of the gainfully employed population, women make up 44.5% against 61.3% of men. Regarding the active temporarily unemployed, out of an estimated population of 3.0%, women form 2.2% against 3.8% of men. As concerns the unemployed active population in search of first-time employment, out of a total population of 6.1%, there are 5.6% of women against 6.5% of men. As regards pupils and students with no gainful employment, who form 17.8% of the population, the proportion of women stands at 16.4% as against 19.3% of men.

As regards private income earners with no gainful employment, they form 0.6% of the population, with 0.5% of women as against 0.7% of men. In the category which consists of pensioners with no gainful employment, i.e. 0.7% of the population, women make up 0.3% as against 1.2% of men. The proportion of other inactive persons without gainful employment, consisting of 7.4% of the total population comprises 7.6% of women and 7.3% of men. As for housewives without gainful employment, they form 11.8% of the population.

2.2.2.2. Domestic employment

A household or domestic worker is any person who is formally employed or not to handle on a regular basis household duties (babysitters, housekeepers, gardeners, caretakers, cooks, drivers, laundry workers, etc.). Domestic work is a profession on its own; it is becoming increasingly important because of the growing number of women taking up paid work outside the household. 64.7% of Domestic workers are aged between 25 and 59 years.

This activity is performed mainly by women (60.2% as against 39.8% for men). It is common in urban areas because 85% of the domestic workers are city dwellers. This is because in rural areas, social and family organization is such that one can do without a household servant. Household workers continue to serve beyond the authorized age, because they are not registered with the social security service.

Generally, it is assumed that household workers are victims of such abuses as failure to comply with the tasks description, work overload, indecent housing, food deprivation, sexual harassment, insults and humiliations, threats, delays in the payment of wages, wages paid to a third party or below the guaranteed minimum wage (minimum wage), failure to respect the work contract, non-

payment of overtime, absence of leave or leave without pay, non-registration at the NSIF, human trafficking, etc.. All these work against the women who are more exposed than the men.

Also, there are few household workers most of whom are not trained at all for the tasks assigned to them. They are not allowed to join trade associations or unions under the Labour Code which regulates all professional activities.

Finally, more women than men face many difficulties that prevent them from expressing themselves on the job market. These include: overload of household tasks, lack of education and vocational training, and difficult access to funding.

2.2.2.3. Formal and informal sectors

The formal sector has instruments governing gainful employment, while the informal sector lacks a normative framework despite its productivity.

2.2.2.3.1. Formal sector

In the formal public sector, the Public Service General Rules and Regulations establish the principle of equality and access for all in the labour market, without gender discrimination, and to accruing benefits. However, it appears that the rate of promotion of women to senior positions, with equal qualifications, is still low, regardless of the grade required. According to statistics from the Public Service, the percentage of women drops sharply as one rises in scale such as from category D to category A2, where the rate is respectively 44% and 16.5%.

Although the Labour Code is democratic, the situation of women in the formal private sector, like in the formal public sector, women are on the disadvantage with an imbalance which favours men in the distribution of positions held according to socio-economic groups. Thus, in the category of executive officer / manager, 0.7% are women as against 1.6 of men . This gap becomes wider in the other categories (supervisors, secretaries, office staff) where women are 1.1 as against 4.9 of men. In urban areas, there is a higher percentage of people gainfully employed in the formal sector being 19. 5%.

2.2.2.3.2. Informal sector

The informal sector, both agricultural and non-agricultural, has the bulk of the active population (92.0%), nearly 55.2% of women as against 8.0% in the formal sector (both public and private). More women than men perform activities in the informal sector. These informal activities are more dominant in rural areas. Women participate in all kinds of income or profit generating activities for their families. The proportion of women involved with income generating activities rose from 42% in 1987 to 63% in 1996 and to 77.5% in 2001 . The female participation rate is 68.9% as against 74.8% for men .

Child labour refers to young children's productive activities carried out outside the home with or without payment, on a part or full time basis, be it casual or regular, legal or illegal. It does not include work done at home or at school . The rate of activities by children aged 6 to 14 years is 8.6% and is higher among girls, 9.1%, than among boys, 8.0%. According to place of residence, child labour stood at 12.6% in rural areas as against 2.4% in urban areas .

¹⁴NIS/DHS II and III

¹⁵NIS/DHS II and III

2.2.3. Rural sector

It covers all production activities related to agriculture, livestock, fisheries, aquaculture, hunting and logging.

2.2.3.1. Agriculture

Agriculture plays a key role in the nation's economy. It contributes 20% to the Gross Domestic Product . This sub-sector employs 70% of the Cameroonian labour force, which is also the population group most exposed to poverty. In fact, the incidence of rural poverty is the most striking with 80% of the poor forming approximately 55.0% of the population. This population is predominantly female .

The agricultural sector encompasses two groups of activity, food crop and cash crop cultivation. Food crops (maize, cassava, millet, sorghum, banana, groundnuts, rice, tubers, etc...) are grown mostly by women. However, many men do grow crops such as sorghum and millet in the Far North. As for cash crops (cocoa, coffee, cotton, etc...), which for many years were very profitable and grown mostly by men, women also grow them now.

Women are more involved in growing, processing and marketing food crops. This has been hijacked by men in recent years because of the falling prices of some cash crops.

In the cash crop sector, women tend to face enormous difficulties, including access to land and land ownership, agricultural inputs, financial resources (credit, subsidies, grants, etc.) and modern agricultural techniques.

2.2.3.2. Livestock and fisheries

Stockbreeding is a major activity. One household out of every three carries out that activity which is more developed in rural (48.7%) than in urban areas (9.1%). This involves mainly cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, horses, donkeys, camels, poultry farms as well as unconventional animals (cane rats, quails, snails, guinea pigs, rabbits, frogs etc...)

Women invest in small scale farms (poultry, sheep and goats, etc...), while cattle breeding is carried out mostly by men. This sub-sector is hence deeply influenced by the patriarchal organization marked by control of inputs (land, pasture resources) by the men.

As regards fisheries, this includes: inland, marine and industrial fishing, inland small scale fishing and aquaculture.

While inland, marine and industrial fisheries are the prerogative of men who use modern efficient and expensive equipment; small scale fishing is restricted to women who use traps, canoes and other basic equipment. Women process, preserve and market of fishery products, but the proceeds of the sales often slip out of their hands.

With regard to aquaculture, it is a new activity, still at an emerging stage, handled mostly by men because this requires huge investments.

Regarding fish farming, this is becoming more popular especially in wetlands. It is done by creating and managing individual and collective fish ponds run by women and/or men.

Finally, in the rural sector, women still face many obstacles including: socio-cultural bias, the gender division of labour, illiteracy, lack of facilitation mechanisms for women's access to funding, the absence of agricultural banks, high interest rates in commercial banks, an unsuitable system for the mobilization of women's savings, the timid development of decentralized rural credit, ignorance of credit and negotiation schemes for successful partnerships at national and international level, absence of alternative energy sources, etc.

2.2.4. Industry, building and construction

The industrial sector seems to be reserved for men. Among the few women involved in this activity, very few are business owners or managers. The majority of them are just employees in certain sectors. They are almost excluded from industries such as mining, textiles and construction, which generally employ only men. Women are much more active in industries that require less physical strength and time. This is especially the case of the food industry (processing of local produce into fruit juice or jam, etc...), with small production units, usually informal, whose average size in terms of employment is very low, made up mostly of self-employed workers.

Women are also scarce in the Building and Construction sector where they remain on the fringes in subordinate and related activities. At the level of professional training, there is the gradual emergence of women in the building sector where the number of female public work technicians and civil engineers is increasing.

This situation could be explained by the shortage of a critical mass of trained women having access to credit and capable of setting up a business.

2.2.5. Trade, handicraft and tourism

As regards the tertiary sector, it can be noted that there are very many women in trade (10.3% as against 9.3% for men) who are very active in this sector. Their strong presence in the cross-border trade is also noticeable.

Trading appears to be the main activity of urban women ("bayam sellam ") where they are mostly active in small business and retail (sale of fresh food, manufactured goods of primary necessity, used clothing, etc...). They spend long hours carrying out these activities. These activities are characterized by low profitability, small capital and precariousness. Wholesale trade and large-scale distribution (supermarkets, big stores, import-export) which are more profitable are controlled by men, with an increasing number of women engaged in import (cars, clothing).

With regard to crafts and tourism, there are many women and men working in that sector, especially in the informal sector.

¹⁶ NIS/DHS III 2004

¹⁷ NIS/DHS III, 2004

¹⁸ MINSANTE, National Strategic Plan for the fight against HIV-AIDS/STIs 2010/2011

In the domain of handicrafts, more women sell snacks, small scale agro-processing equipment, tailoring, hairdressing, basket weaving and pottery products, etc., while there are more men in activities such as shoemaking, etc. These activities appear to be more of subsistence than business in the economic sense of the word, because investment is low.

In tourism, women and men are all active at different degrees and at various stages. While men own and run the majority of classified hotels, women are more involved in travel agencies and unclassified hotels. The majority of staff in these hotels is composed of women.

In touristic areas, women's participation is limited to catering and marketing of various food produce. They are also engaged in prostitution which seriously exposes them to STIs and HIV / AIDS.

2.2.6. Factors of production

2.2.6.1. Access to land and agricultural inputs

Depriving women from land ownership, especially through inheritance is a socio-cultural practice resulting from the patriarchal system governing most of the Cameroonian society. Though women use land to grow food crops, they only have usufruct rights.

This hinders the creation of mortgages, which is the necessary guarantee for the extension of women's agricultural activities.

As for access to inputs, techniques, technologies and equipment necessary for agricultural production, things are not always easy, especially for women. They face such difficulties as low level of education, inadequate information and training and low economic power.

2.2.6.2. Access to credit

In Cameroon, like in most African countries, tremendous efforts are being made by various stakeholders to promote women's access to financial services offered by microfinance institutions located primarily in urban areas and in some rural and suburban areas.

The area of micro-finance which has, in recent years, experienced a relatively high growth has nearly 426 establishments operating under Cameroon law and gradually set up as community initiatives and with the support of development projects and programmes. About 224 micro finance institutions have formed a network and nearly 202 carry out their activities independently. In the governance of the accredited 426 microfinance institutions, women are said to form only 11.5% whereas they make up the bulk of members in all customer categories counted. They play important roles as shareholders or members, or even customers of local credit unions. Approved micro-finance institutions owned and managed exclusively by women form only 1.4% of the total. However, they make up the bulk of owners of informal savings and credit unions operating outside regulation.

Micro finance institutions are governed by several regulatory instruments, among which is Regulation No. 01/02/CEMAC/UMAC/COBAC of 13 April 2002 to lay down the conditions for carrying out micro finance activity in the CEMAC zone, and Law No. 92/6 of 14 August 1992 relating to credit unions and common initiative groups and its implementation decree that

regulates the operation of micro finance institutions established as credit unions. These two instruments, together with the OHADA Uniform Act on the law of commercial companies and EIGs, although binding in some respects, provide women with a framework of association for the creating microfinance establishments and networks.

In 2007, there were about 1111 service points established throughout the ten regions providing services to 962,627 members and individual customers or grouped in associations, especially among women. That is why in some networks and basic cash points, there are few women while they are many in associations recognized as legal entities.

In the same period (2007), the microfinance sector has been able to collect nearly CFAF 198.8 billion, that is 10% of the outstanding deposits mobilized by the banking sector. Women's contribution to this is significant, whether individually or through their cooperatives and associations. The outstanding amount of credit available to customers amounted in 2007 to 117.2 billion CFA francs. The amount of credit granted to women is deemed to have remained low, that is loans contracted individually or through associations where the members have to share loan granted.

The conditions for granting loans especially to women are not always favourable. Interest rates in this respect range between 1% and 5% monthly. That is, 12% and 60% per annum in accredited institutions. In the informal micro finance sector which is largely dominated by women, the interest rates recorded are said to vary between 1% and 7.5% monthly, i.e. 12% and 90% per annum. These rates are very high if one refers to the internal output from the activities performed by women. Such practices, noticeable in urban and rural areas, are encouraged by the liberalization of interest rates with the induced effect which is the absence of a ceiling interest rate in this sector. Furthermore, there is the increasing demand for tangible guarantees where the required loan is considered high or too risky. In addition, the repayment terms which are binding and, particularly, the lack of grace period, while the reimbursement of initial funds invested is well beyond the first deadlines. As a consequence, some women and organizations are compelled to resort to other means to cope with the debt burden, exposing them in most cases to loss.

Despite these hurdles, the microfinance sector in Cameroon is still a means for women to support their self-promotion and create micro and small enterprises, but also a support for solidarity and contribution to recorded capital.

2.2.7. Basic Facilities

2.2.7.1. Water and electricity

Access by households to basic facilities such as water and electricity depends on a number of factors.

Regarding access to water, 53% of households have access to safe water nationwide. However, the situation differs depending on whether one is in an urban or rural area. In urban areas, people live at about 800 metres away from water points. About 3/4 of the population consume safe water, that is 35% from taps and 6% from pumped wells. In rural areas where distances

are longer, only 3 out of 10 households have access to safe water. These distances make domestic work such as fetching water, which is done by women, more difficult both in urban and rural areas.

The situation is no better for electricity, with a disparate power distribution to households in both urban and rural areas. Less than one out of two households has electricity. Despite the efforts made, there is disparity between residential areas: in rural areas, only 16% of households have electricity, against 77% in urban areas .

Concerning living standards, the majority of households (64%) do not have adequate toilet facilities (57% use very basic sanitary facilities and 7% have no toilets at all). Moreover, differences between residential areas are outstanding: in rural areas, 73% of households have only rudimentary latrines and 13% do not have any at all; in urban areas, 42% of households have improved latrines and 14% have flushing toilets .

As far as housing is concerned, there is also disparity in convenience between urban and rural areas. Poor households are on the disadvantage in terms of comfort and the building materials used. This makes such homes vulnerable and sometimes exposed to disease .

2.2.7.2. Transportation

Transportation is a key factor in economic development. Rural areas generally lack good roads or have none at all. Motorcars and cycles are obsolete, inadequate or even nonexistent in some areas with high transport costs. The flow of agricultural produce from rural to urban areas is thus hampered and women are unable to market their produce. They are compelled to carry their crops over long distances or cram them onto vehicles in poor conditions endangering their lives. In so doing, they record heavy post-harvest losses and the country's food security is undermined.

2.2.7.3. Information and Communication Technology

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) helps in opening women and men up to the modern world. This openness depends on the availability of electricity, educational level and economic power. The digital divide between women and men, which disfavours women, is all the more acute in rural areas.

As regards radio and television, the existence of shadow areas does not facilitate access by all to information, especially to the rural population. The case is the same for the telephone and Internet, where access is unequal to the disadvantage of women because of their low educational level and lack of financial means, among other things.

It can be noted that in urban areas, women have taken ownership of ICTs through such social programmes as Operation 100 000 women by 2012. The establishment of multipurpose community e-centres in rural areas and media centres in schools and universities across the country helps to reduce the digital divide.

However, more women than men still face many barriers such as language, illiteracy, lack of time due to family responsibilities, low propensity to learn.

2.2.8. Social security

Like the vast majority of the world's population, the majority of Cameroon's population lives in social insecurity. Social Security is restricted to formal sector employees (public and private) and covers 10% of the workforce. This social security is inaccessible to the majority of the population. It has limited possibility of guaranteeing a good standard of living to families, groups or communities.

Out of the nine social services recommended by the International Labour Organization (ILO), only seven are provided in Cameroon. These are: family benefits, maternity allowances, old age pension, disability, death, occupational diseases and industrial accidents benefits. Sickness and unemployment benefits are not provided. As for the available services, only 10% of the population benefits from them. This service is provided to insured persons from the National Social Insurance Fund (NSIF) and public sector employees.

As regards women, those employed enjoy the same rights as men. The services offered fall short of their needs. The National Social Insurance Fund refunds 300 CFAF on consultation fees. Family allowance per child ranges between CFAF 1,200 and CFAF 1,800. There are disparities depending on whether one is in the public or private sector, on the number of children and on the amount.

The treatment of women and men is unequal when it comes to compiling pension documents. This causes delays in the payment of pension rights to women and children.

The lack of a health insurance policy framework leads to the marginalization of workers in the informal sector, specifically women, who form the bulk of the rural workforce (both agricultural and non-agricultural) that is 68%, and 91.3% in urban areas and only about 1/3 of formal sector employees. However, community and private initiatives are underway to fill the gap. These are mutual aid companies and micro social insurance organizations (tontines, mutual health organizations, and associations) and private insurance companies.

Women work in precarious conditions. In the public sector, there is no labour control mechanism, including maternity leave. In the private sector, inadequate means for labour inspectors deprives women of their rights to decent treatment. In addition, ignorance of the Labour Code, the indifference of some employers, the little participation of women in trade unions and gender advocacy worsen their situation.

2.2.9. Environment and Sustainable Development

According to studies by the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife (MINFOF), women and men play different roles both in forestry development, production enhancement, and the community management of forests and wildlife resources. While they are both involved in forestry, the men are mostly involved in logging, timber and rare species exploitation, this being a personal source of income over which they have total control. As for women, they sell logs, manage and exploit community

²³ UNESCO/UNFPA, « La violence à l'égard des femmes au Cameroun, Connaissances, attitudes et pratiques », Rapport final, Mai 2001, P. 5

²⁴ RENATA/ GTZ, Etude sur le viol et l'inceste au Cameroun, 2008

²⁵ UN/Programme of action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)

²⁶ ILO

forests and non-timber products for the daily subsistence of the household. However, the high returns on the marketing of non-timber products (okok / eru, etc.), encourages men to be highly involved in this activity. Men are also greatly involved in small scale mining and petroleum industries.

Despite laws regulating the environmental sector, illegal and improper exploitation leads to the destruction of forests, biodiversity degradation, air and water pollution, reduced fallow and risks of soil erosion, which are all responsible for the imbalance in cycle regeneration of natural resources.

It is clear that women and men alike contribute to environmental destruction and conservation. Women's activities such as the production of plastic waste and other household garbage, disorderly fetching of firewood etc, are likely to contribute to environmental pollution and undermine the balance of ecosystems.

As regards environmental preservation, women like men are engaged in reforestation and collection of non-toxic household and industrial waste (malt, cattle-dung, etc.). As concerns sanitation, women and children are at the forefront of joint initiatives devoted to sorting and reprocessing household waste, regrouped in associations and NGOs. This activity, characterized by the collection of plastic waste, is growing fast in the informal sector and could be an enticing source of income for women (manufacture and marketing of pillowcase, environment-friendly cushions etc.).

It should also be noted that climate change, which affects the entire population, has a stronger impact on women who are compelled to travel over long distances to fetch household water, firewood, etc.

In conclusion, although the combined action of women and men undermine the environment, the absence of alternatives such as use of cooking gas, persistence of socio-cultural prejudices, inadequate resources, social distribution of roles between women and men still hinder its sustainable management.

2.3. Situational Analysis of Gender Issues in the Domain of Rights and Legislation

The rights of individuals and the family in Cameroon are governed by two legal systems. English-speaking regions of the country are governed by Common Law and French-speaking regions by the Civil Code of 1804. However, in order to administer justice in an equal manner nationwide, a process to harmonize these two systems was embarked on. This consisted in revising the Criminal Procedure Code and reforming the civil law to develop a civil code applicable to all.

Cameroon's legislation is enshrined in a normative framework that contributes to the promotion and protection of women's rights. Although this framework contains many relevant international, regional and national legal instruments, it does not necessarily guarantee effective enjoyment by women of all their rights.

2.3.1. International Legal Instruments for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Woman

There are instruments of general application which provide for gender equality, and instruments that are gender sensitive to enable women to fully enjoy their rights.

2.3.1.1. International Instruments of General Application

The most important are:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, which emphasizes the principle of equal human rights without discrimination;
- The International Covenants of 16 December 1966, on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which provide opportunities for men and women to fully exercise their rights in the relevant areas;
- ILO Convention No. 100 on Equal Remuneration of 29 June 1951, which advocates the principle of equal pay for male and female employees for services of equal value;
- ILO Convention No. 111 on discrimination in employment of 25 June 1958, which aims to eliminate discrimination based on race, colour, sex, religion, politics, national or social origin, in access to employment, training and working conditions. It also intends to promote equal opportunity and treatment;
- The Convention against Torture and Other Forms of Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 10 December 1984, which protects men and women against torture;
- The Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992, which gives women opportunities to enjoy the benefits of their traditional knowledge;
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 December 1989, which grants equal rights to both girls and boys;
- ILO Convention No. 182 on the Worst Forms of Child Labour of 17 June 1999 focusing on urgent prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour; it promotes an international legal standard to protect children from the worst forms of exploitation such as slavery, child prostitution and pornography; using children for unlawful activities (drug trafficking); all work described as dangerous by their nature or conditions under which if it is carried out may endanger the health (physical or mental), safety or morals of children (mining, agriculture, use of pesticides or chemicals, etc ...);
- The UN Convention of 2000 on Transnational Organized Crime and its two additional protocols to prevent, abolish and punish trafficking in humans, especially women and children;
- ILO Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Trade Union Right of 9 July 1948, which guarantees employees and employers the right to establish organizations of their choice to promote and defend their interests, or to join organizations without prior authorization.

2.3.1.2. International Legal Instruments specific to women

Among the most relevant are the following:

- The Declaration on the Protection of Women and Children in Emergency and Armed Conflict adopted in December 1974, which outlaws all forms of repression and cruel and inhuman treatment of women and children, including imprisonment, torture, shootings, mass arrests, collective punishments;
- The Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 20 December 1993, which commits countries or State Parties to take all suitable measures to eliminate violence against women;
- ILO Convention No. 3 adopted in 1919 and ratified by Cameroon on 25 May 1970 on maternity protection;
- ILO Convention No. 89 on Night Work of Women, revised on 9 June 1948;
- The Convention on the Political Rights of Women adopted by the UN General Assembly on 7 July 1954, which guarantees women the right to vote and to be eligible in all elections without discrimination;
- The 1957 Convention on Nationality of Married Women, which grants the latter the power to take her husband's nationality without losing her own;
- The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), adopted on 18 December 1979 and its Additional Protocol of 6 October 1999. The Convention obliges States to promote women in all domains: political, legal, economic, social and cultural development;
- Resolution 1325 of the UN Security Council which provides an opportunity for women to participate in the preservation of peace and conflict resolution. This Resolution was supplemented by Resolution 1820 of 19 June 2008 which recognizes rape as a crime against humanity, whose perpetrators are prosecuted at the International Criminal Court.

2.3.2. Regional and Sub Regional Instruments

In this context one can cite:

- The Treaty of 17 October 1993 on the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), which provides guarantees to all, with regard to the exercise of commercial activity in Africa: Article 7 of this text recognizes the woman's full capacity to carry out business;
- The 1993 Treaty establishing the Inter-African Conference of Social Welfare (ICSW);
- NEPAD, which is a mechanism put in place on 23 October 2001 to promote the eradication of poverty, position African countries towards sustainable development and promotion of women in all areas with, among others, emphasis on an increase in gender equality, reducing maternal mortality, access to reproductive health services for all concerned;
- Constitutive Act of the African Union (July 2000), which promotes parity of representation in the various elective offices of the Union;

- The African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights of 27 June 1981, which protects human rights in general and minorities in particular regardless of gender;
- Solemn Declaration on Equality between Men and Women in Africa adopted in July 2004 by the Heads of State and Government of Member States of the African Union (AU), which calls for the promotion and full protection of women's rights at national and regional levels, focusing on topics such as HIV / AIDS, the recruitment of child soldiers and the setting up of economic, social and legal gender specific measures.
- The Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women, adopted on 11 July 2003, which protects the specific rights of women in various areas of national life, including reproductive health, and emphasizes the need to eliminate all forms of traditional practices harmful to women;
- The CIMA Code entered into force on 15 February 1995, which allows women living in common-law marriage with the victim of an accident to seek compensation for damages.

One may also mention, within the CEMAC framework, the Convention on trafficking in women and children, which protects these vulnerable groups against acts such as trafficking, exploitation for prostitution, etc.

All these international, regional and sub regional legal instruments, reinforce the legal arsenal of Cameroon.

2.3.3. National Legal Instruments

The national legal arsenal includes both general texts and those expressly protecting women in specific situations.

2.3.3.1. Texts of General Application

They include, among others :

- The Constitution of 18 January 1996 which, in its preamble, sets forth the basic human rights and promotes equality between women and men;
- The Civil Code of 1804, which contains several provisions that protect the rights of women and men within the family and the household and supplemented by Ordinance No. 81/02 of 29 June 1981 introducing the civil legislation, rules relating to the socio-cultural context of Cameroon, which guarantees the principle of equality between men and women with regard to both marriage and divorce;
- The Penal Code of 1967 which provides that criminal law is binding on all without gender distinction;
- The Labour Code dated 14 August 1992, which recognizes the right of women and men to work as a fundamental right;

³¹ NIS / ECAM III

³² NIS / ECAM I and II

³³ NIS / ECAM III

³⁴ According to UN Convention on the Rights of Children

³⁵ BUCREP, GPHC - 2005

- The Criminal Procedure Code of 2006, which establishes the principle of equality between women and men in recognition of their rights in the proceedings initiated against them for committing an offence;
- Ordinance 74 / 1, of 6 June 1974 to establish land tenure; Decree No. 76/165 of 27 April 1976 laying down the conditions for obtaining land title and Decree No. 2005/481 of 16 December 2005 amending and supplementing certain provisions of the foregoing Decree; these texts allow women and men to acquire land;
- Law No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 on freedom of association which establishes freedom of association, in general, and for women, freedom to form and join any association of their choice in the same way as men;
- Law No. 92/006 of 14 August 1992 relating to credit unions and common initiative groups (CIGs), which encourages groups without discrimination;
- Law No. 2004/016 of 22 July 2004 establishing a subcommittee on the rights of vulnerable groups including women within the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, which takes into account the specific problems of women;
- Law of 29 December 2005 on the fight against trafficking and child trafficking, which also protects the girl child;
- Electoral laws that deal with electoral capacity and eligibility requirements, which are the same for women and men;
- Legislation on the creation of political parties and their financing, which offers women and men equal opportunities;
- Law No. 96/03 of 4 January 1996 on the framework legislation in the field of health, which puts forward the idea of streamlining the system of health management and financing of the health sector;
- Law No. 2009/004 of 14 April 2009 on the organization of judicial assistance, giving the benefit of such assistance to the spouse left without resources, allows women to enjoy the related benefits;
- Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and promotion of disabled persons, which provides a package of measures for persons with disabilities;
- Ordinance of 1973 on the organization of social welfare, which organizes the management of social welfare in Cameroon;
- Ordinance No. 81-02 of 29 June 1981 on the organization of civil status and various provisions relating to the status of individuals and marriage, which offers women the opportunity to exercise a separate profession;
- Decree of 1968 revised in 1976 on employment of servants and domestic workers, which protects domestic workers irrespective of gender;
- The public service General Rules and Regulations, which guarantee equal rights to men and women as regards employment in the civil service and career management (access to public service, compensation, leave, increment, promotion, etc..).

2.3.3.2. Specific Instruments

These include:

- Law on the profession of pharmacist of 1990 authorizing the sale of contraceptives, which was adopted with the aim to protect women against STIs, unwanted pregnancies, and allow them to freely decide on the timing, number and spacing of births ;
- Law of 19 December 1999 which establishes, inter alia, the abolition of husband's authorization for the movement of women;
- Decree of 1994 relating to civilian pension scheme, which recognizes that, the widow is entitled to survivor's pension;
- Circular No. 10-7-562/MINEDUC that allows female students suspended due to pregnancy to be readmitted to school after childbirth.

New regulations are being developed, including bills on the Code of Individuals and Family, Civil Procedure Code, Civil and Commercial Code, Code on Child Protection, General Framework for Social Security, Organization of Social Security and Health Protection Insurance.

It is worthwhile to note the ongoing revision of the Criminal Code, which incorporates the bill on the prevention and punishment of violence and gender-based discrimination. It is also worth recalling that the overall objective of these instruments on reform of the legislation is to harmonize the domestic legal texts with international and regional human rights that Cameroon has ratified.

Consequently, it can be observed that there is an arsenal of legal instruments whose judicious implementation would promote and protect the rights of women. But several factors hinder the impact of these texts, namely: their limited dissemination, lack of harmonization of domestic legislation with the specific international legal instruments to protect women's rights, selected implementation of the laws and regulations in force, the coexistence of written laws and customs, the reluctance of some judicial stakeholders to implement the instruments, etc.

2.4. Governance

The involvement of women in decision-making is at three levels, namely: the family, the community, and public affairs and politics. Women are generally underrepresented in these different spheres of decision-making.

2.4.1. In the Family

Decision making in households depends on the issues at stake, even though for important matters (family plans, revenue management), the decision is taken by men. With regard to cooking, the final decision frequently comes from women (64.0%). But for other aspects of life (health care, major purchases) 21.0% of women ultimately decide and in 58.0% of cases, the husbands do. .

It can however be noted that many women who take decisions by themselves are more likely to be single, from broken homes (52.0%), or perform paid work. In most cases, men fully and totally enjoy their status as family heads and are at the center of all major decisions.

At the family level, gender disparities are the result of the burden of traditions, the low educational level of most women, their low economic power and ignorance leading to their lack of self-confidence.

2.4.2. In the community or community organizations for self-promotion

In Cameroon, women and families are increasingly being promoted through women's associations, a lever for self-promotion at the community level. Taking advantage of Law No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990, in which is enshrined freedom of association and Law No. 92/006 of 14 August 1992 relating to credit unions and common initiative groups (CIG), many associations, credit unions, CIGs, EIGs and NGOs emerged, including many women's organizations, as well as mixed organizations. Moreover, democracy enabled civil society organizations to assert themselves and play an active role in various sectors of national life. All these organizations have a common will to work towards the fulfilment of their members and improving the living conditions of their population or beneficiaries in the social, economic and political domains, and thereby conduct activities that contribute most significantly to the sustainable development of Cameroon.

Existing associations of active women in several sectors intervene, mostly, in the areas of health and the fight against discrimination against women based on gender equality and equity in all sectors of public life, with emphasis on increasing opportunities for women in elected positions, improving their access to factors of production, and fostering harmony and stability within families, etc.

Associations are undeniable relays to women at the grassroots, on which MINPROFF relies to carry out its mission of empowering the woman. So this Government Department has embarked on an extensive programme of structural and functional improvement of women's groups, to revitalize women's associations, through networking according to sector of activity. The first step of this operation was the identification of all women support structures, which led to a list of 10 784 groups and associations, grouped in 249 networks (24 women/ Association) i.e. a total of 5976 women.

These groups, which nurture all categories of women, contribute, by their modus operandi, to the emergence of women leaders in all categories: locally elected officials, entrepreneurs, opinion leaders, etc. who are able to represent women and defend their views in national, sub regional and regional decision-making bodies at somewhat higher levels.

However, these organizations face many challenges, including: at the individual level, the difficulty for their female members to ensure their strategic interests are taken into consideration, lack of self-confidence, low empowerment and low decision-making power. And at the institutional level, lack of accurate planning, poor extension and leadership skills, lack of training in planning, difficult access to information, leadership conflicts, etc. These are all an impediment to a true fulfilment of the woman.

In mixed associations, men occupy key positions, while women's participation is usually limited to lesser positions. Generally, the income of these associations is controlled by men. Moreover, with respect to community work, women often make up the majority but remain mere underlings.

2.4.3. Public affairs management and politics

The decentralization process advocates that public affairs and politics should be run at the base. Decentralized communities (municipalities) will become the prime contractors for projects and

programmes that communities have approved and selected according to the specific needs of women and men. Women participate in their numbers in the life of political parties but are not involved in management because they have lesser access to elective posts and are poorly represented in decision-making bodies.

2.4.3.1. Participation of women and men in the Executive Arm of Government

These include the government, territorial administration and the council executive.

The **Cameroon government today** (30 June 2009) has 60 members, including 6 women and 54 men, a percentage of 10% for women and 90% for men. Women, under represented in this cabinet, are generally assigned portfolios of a social nature. Only one of them holds a position in the research domain.

In territorial administration, disparities are still very noticeable with: over 360 Divisional Officers, 4 women and 356 men, or 1.1% of women against 98.9% of men, 0 woman Senior Divisional Officer of all the 58, i.e. 0 % against 100% of men, 0 female Regional Governor of all the 10, i.e. 0% against 100% of men, 0 female Government Delegate of all the 11, i.e. 0% against 100% of men.

The council executive (2007-2012), which is also unfavourable to women, includes: 339 mayors, including 23 women against 316 men, a percentage of 6.8% for women and 93.2% for men, and 15.5% of female councillors against 84.5% of men.

2.4.3.2. Participation of women and men in the Legislative Arm of Government

Out of 180 Members of Parliament in the National Assembly for the 2007-2012 legislature, there are 24 women and 155 men, i.e. 13.3% and 86.7% respectively. As regards the administration of this institution, the House Bureau for the 2010 legislative year comprises: 5 Vice-Presidents, including 1 woman and 4 men, 4 Questors, including 1 woman and 3 men, 12 Secretaries, including 5 women and 7 men. With regard to the nine (9) Committees, there is only one (01) female Chairperson as against 8 for men.

The low representation of women in the National Assembly does not enable them to influence national decisions on developmental and gender equality issues. The recent establishment of the Parliamentarian Thematic Group on Gender issues is a god-sent opportunity, and its ability to influence decisions in favour of better integration of the gender dimension into development activities is a challenge.

2.4.3.3. Participation of women and men in the Judicial Arm of Government

The Judiciary is largely held by men . In 2010, of 994 magistrates, 242 were women as against 752 men, i.e. 24.3% of women and 75.7% of men; of 75 High and First Instance Courts, 11 are headed by women and 64 by men, i.e. 14.7% of female Presidents and 85.3% of men. There is only one female Attorney General out of 10, i.e. 10% women and 90% of men, 2 female

³⁶ NIS/EESI-2005

³⁷ BUCREP/ 3rd GPHC- 2010

³⁸ NIS/DHS 3, 2004

³⁹ NIS/DHS 3, 2004

⁴⁰ NIS/DHS 3, 2004

Prosecutors out of 70 since independence, i.e. 2.9% of women and 97.1% of men; 1 female President of Court of Appeal out of 10 Courts, i.e. 10% of women and 90% of men; no female Attorney General at the Supreme Court out of 10; 6 female Advisers at the Supreme Court out of 51 positions, i.e. 11.8% of women and 88.2% of men.

2.4.3.4. Participation of women and men in Public and Semi Public Administration

In public administration, statistics provided by MINFOPRA in 2008 profile the representation as follows: 16.7% of female Secretaries General and officials of similar status in Ministries as against 83.3% of men; 15.9% of female Directors and officials of similar status, as against 84.1% of men; 21.2% of female Sub-Directors and officials of similar status as against 78.8% of men; 27.8% of female Service Heads as against 72.2% of men; 34.9% of female Bureau Heads as against 65.1% of men and no (0) female Rector of the 7 Universities; out of 21 Vice-Rectors, three are women and 18 are men, i.e. 14.3% of women as against 85.7% of men.

In semi-public administration, out of 71 directors general of state corporations, 4 are women and 67 men, being 5.6% women as against 94.4% men.

In diplomatic services abroad, only one (1) woman is Ambassador and Head of a Diplomatic Mission out of 36 ambassadors; there is one (1) female judge at the International Criminal Court and one (1) female commissioner for Trade and Industry in the African Union.

2.4.3.5. Participation of women and men in Defence and Security Forces

The number of female senior military and security officers is on the increase, though our statistics are not exhaustive.

In conclusion, the above statistics roughly indicate that there are very few women in decision-making positions. In fact, we are far from achieving the 30% bench mark advocated at the Beijing Conference.

The little presence of women in the management of public affairs and politics, as well as in the family and the community, is due to a number of factors. These include the patriarchal system of society which restricts the woman's access to some decision-making spheres in the family and in the community in favour of the man, persistent sexist prejudices and socio-cultural values, the woman's lack of independence, the lack of a woman/man quota policy in the choice of representatives for elections and appointments. The contribution of a large segment of the population is thus neglected, causing a negative impact on national labour productivity and undermining the country's development.

2.5. Situational Analysis of mechanisms for women's empowerment

Mechanisms for women's empowerment include: public institutions, civil society organizations and development partners.

2.5.1. Public Institutions

2.5.1.1. The national mechanism for gender promotion: the ministry in charge of women's empowerment and gender issues

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 is 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 ensures 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; studies and submits to the Government, conditions facilitating the employment of women in the administration, agriculture, trade and industry; liaising with the relevant national and international policy organizations of women's empowerment; supervising organizations training women, excluding institutions under the supervisory authority of the Ministries in charge of Education and; studies and proposes strategies and measures aimed at enhancing harmony in families.

This mission is 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.

However, it should be noted that the appropriate conditions for the coverage of the practical needs and strategic interests of women are not always met.

At the organizational level, we note a lack of visibility of gender issues in the very name of the mechanism, which appear on the organization chart under a mere Sub-Department. This poor strategic position of the service in charge of gender is prejudicial to its capacity for coordination, advocacy and leadership required by the multifaceted nature of gender.

Such a situation undermines the results of gender mainstreaming in all the sectors concerned. Moreover, the instability of ministers, that is four (4) ministers since 2000, is a factor that destabilizes the mechanism.

As concerns human resources allocated to gender, the staff of MINPROFF and its specialized technical units are insufficient in both quantity and quality. Furthermore, they have no proven expertise in gender issues, which makes it difficult for gender to be integrated into policies and programmes.

Equally, infrastructure for socio-economic empowerment and the promotion of women's rights are proving to be quantitatively and qualitatively insufficient in view of their missions to protect women and the family.

Regarding financial resources, those allocated by the State to MINPROFF, despite a slight increase noted since 2006, remain very insignificant compared to the general State budget (0.26% in 2010). The insufficient mastery of Results Based Management (RBM) leads to a low consumption of financial and material resources made available by development partners and

the government.

2.5.1.2. Other public administrations

The Presidency of the Republic and the Prime Minister's Office do not have an official in charge of gender issues. Other ministries, public and semi-public organizations each have a gender focal point responsible for ensuring the operational relay in gender mainstreaming, monitoring systems and advocacy aimed at guaranteeing the consideration of women's interests in the drafting, implementation and monitoring-evaluation of sector policies.

Some ministries and organizations have services or committees dealing with gender issues, notably: the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (Population Policy Unit), the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (Women's Activities Service), the Ministry of Public Health (Gender Approach Promotion Bureau), the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries (Gender Committee), the National School of Administration and Magistracy (Gender Committee) and the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (Sub-Commission on the Rights of Vulnerable Groups in which MINPROFF is represented).

In Universities, the introduction of gender in training programs is an irreversible option. In addition to the University of Buea that has a Department of Women Gender Studies, the University of Dschang offers courses in gender and the University of Yaounde I has, for the 2010-2011 academic year, launched a professional Masters Degree program in Gender and Development.

That notwithstanding, gender focal points established at the level of public administrations do not have the capacity to really influence decisions within their administrations, due to their profiles, their poor strategic position and their lack of institutionalization. These focal points, though benefiting from capacity-building activities on gender issues, do not yet have the means and technical tools to fully play their roles for effective gender mainstreaming and its institutionalization. Where they exist, they continue to suffer from staff shortage and financial resources. Moreover, existing and small bodies that have not yet been integrated into organization charts, with limited momentum and advocacy.

Focal points and committees do not always fall under services in charge of gender issues in the public, semi-public and private administrations that have them, thus hindering effective action.

2.5.1.3. Local Councils

Since the adoption of the orientation law on decentralization, Local Councils (LC) are responsible, among other things, for the management and maintenance of Women's Empowerment Centres (WECs), which are MINPROFF Specialized Technical Units providing local technical and vocational supervision, as well as financial support to women and youth. They face infrastructural difficulties (lack of suitable premises for the services they have to provide), technical difficulties (lack of skilled human resources) and organizational problems (difficulty to collaborate with officials of the Ministries in charge of social affairs).

The contribution expected from Local Councils and Women's Empowerment Centres (WECs) as Specialized Technical Units of MINPROFF, with regard to reducing inequalities between the sexes, is seriously limited by the lack of qualified and adequate resources to ensure women's empowerment.

2.5.2. Civil society organizations

These are nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), associations for the defence of women's rights, consulting firms, training institutions, research institutes, networks of associations and religious or faith-based organizations as well as the private sector.

Cameroon currently has a significant number of women's groups and institutions for the promotion of women's rights which help realize the government objective of gender equality and equity

For the private sector, the gender-promotion actions developed still have limited visibility. As for CSOs, they have limited capacity due to lack of appropriate human, technical and financial resources. They also lack managerial skills, energy and the government does not coordinate their contributions and some of their actions. They are most often contented with the residual means of their sponsors, the meagre contributions of their members and the sporadic and sometimes highly oriented support of a few development partners.

2.5.3. Development Partners

Development partners support government efforts by facilitating the attainment of set objectives for women's empowerment. Their multifaceted support is consistent with national priorities in the area and focuses on four main aspects, namely: improvement of the living conditions of women; improvement of the socio-legal status of women; promotion of equality and equity between the sexes in all sectors of national life and strengthening of the institutional framework for gender promotion and women's empowerment.

Although deeply committed to the promotion of gender equality, most development partners working in the domain operate in a dispersed and uncoordinated manner. But in 2006, thanks to the Paris Declaration on effective aid, some of them are now grouped into a consultation platform, the Working Group on Gender Equality (WGGE). This has helped to reduce problems of internal collaboration and harmonization of actions between the Government and Civil Society. This group has thus become the Government's privileged interlocutor.

However, the absence of technical and financial partners or their representatives in this group causes the problem of harmonization and synergy of actions to persist. Moreover, dispersed and duplicated interventions remain frequent due to lack of coordination between the ministry in charge of women and gender issues, the other ministries and development partners.

The lack of harmonized procedures between the development partners and between the latter and the Government has resulted in the low consumption of mobilized resources. Furthermore, some representatives of development partners in this group do not monitor only gender in their portfolio, which limits the time devoted to this theme.

Finally, the different mechanisms cannot work smoothly, thus slowing progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. These difficulties are greatly linked to insufficient human, financial, physical, technical, informational, and organizational resources.

2.6. Measures/actions taken to promote gender equality and gender equity

Measures relating to the promotion of gender equality are political, legal, economic and socio-cultural.

2.6.1. Political Measures

Political measures for the promotion of gender equality concern the gradual integration of women in the decision-making process especially in Government, Public Administration, state corporations and Diplomacy (Ambassador, Plenipotentiary Ministers). Women have started entering sectors that were once reserved exclusively for men such as territorial command as well as international and regional bodies. Equally, their access to defence forces and the penitentiary administration started taking place gradually from 1984.

2.6.2. Legal Measures

Cameroon has ratified almost all international and regional legal instruments on the protection of human rights. These texts have permitted her to carry out actions with positive effects in some social sectors like the education of the girl child, women's literacy, health (specifically reproductive health) and the prevention of mother to child transmission of HIV-AIDS/STI.

The beginning of the process to revise national laws with legal vacuums and loopholes as well as discriminatory provisions against women, aims to internalize the texts adopted at international and regional level on gender equity and gender equality.

2.6.3. Economic Measures

Economic measures for the promotion of gender equality and equity are translated by the development of programmes and projects aimed at the economic empowerment of women and their participation in development. These measures include:

- the Project for the setting up of a support mechanism for poor women in Women's Empowerment Centres which, in addition to the various training courses for their self-employment, grants women revolving credits to promote income-generating activities;
- the Programme for the Improvement of the Rural Family Income (PARFAR), which has resulted in the construction of several Women's Empowerment Centres and has also improved the ways women are supervised at the local level.
- the Project for Poverty Reduction and Action in favour of Women executed in the Far North (PREPAFEN) through which loans have been granted to women's groups and infrastructure has been provided to improve their living conditions;
- the Project for the Capacity-Building of Women's Networks to fight against poverty in the Republic of Cameroon (CAREF) which has helped professionalize networks of women's organizations through technical and institutional capacity-building actions;
- the Project to Support the Integration of Women in Micro-Enterprise which, by granting various materials, supports women organized in Common Initiative Groups (CIG) and associations for the realization of their projects in the domains of agriculture, livestock,

- food processing, handicrafts, etc..
- the Support Project for Women Entrepreneurs in Rural Areas (PAEFMIR) which helps in the carrying on of income-generating activities for rural women, through actions to enhance the organizational and managerial capacities of rural women's groups and financing their micro-projects;
- the National Programme for Participatory Development (NPPD) has put in place mechanisms and fora for participatory planning that promotes the participation of communities in their development, and more especially rural communities;
- Pilot Centres for Business Development Formalities (CPFC);
- the Bank for the financing of SMEs (MINPMEESA) ;
- the Support Programme for the creation of processing companies (MINPMEESA);
- the Support Fund for women's entrepreneurship (MINPMEESA);
- the job incubator initiated as a pilot project by MINPMEESA;
- Actions carried out to guarantee women's participation in the management of community forests.

2.6.4. Social and cultural measures

In the area of education and training:

- the Project "Operation 100 000 women by 2012", which aims to train women in ICT;
- improved educational services for girls and women;
- the Cameroon Education Development Capacity-building Project (PASE), which promotes academic excellence for young Muslim girls;
- the Basic Education Programme;
- the Support Programme for Girls in Scientific Fields of Study;
- the Education for All Programme;
- the provision of free primary education;
- the National Literacy Programme;
- Supporting vocational training through scholarships;
- Facilitating access and retaining girls in fields considered "reserved" for boys;
- Continuing education for women in employment without qualifications.

In the health domain, the health sector strategy focuses on women within the context of reproductive health, whose priority areas are: mother and child health, family planning, the fight against STIs / HIV-AIDS, the fight against breast and genital cancers, care for the reproductive health of adolescents and elderly persons, and the fight against practices that are harmful to women's health.

The Malaria Control Programme responds to a need to care for pregnant women of whom 37.0% suffer from malaria, especially by providing treated mosquito nets and subsidizing generic drugs for the treatment of this disease.

The Women-Families Sector Plan for the Fight against STI / HIV-AIDS promotes the social mobilization of women and women's associations for the fight against STIs and HIV-AIDS as well as the capacity-building of staff and leaders of women's groups in the domain of

communication for behaviour change on the prevention of STI / HIV / AIDS.

In the domain of culture, it is important to note the creation of a special allocation account to support cultural policy and encourage excellence in the creation, production and dissemination of intellectual works.

2.7. Results

The steps taken to promote gender equality and equity have yielded significant results in the areas of education, health and environment, economy, employment and vocational training, decision-making and participation in public life, law and women's rights.

2.7.1. Education, health and environment

In the area of education, families and communities now see the advantages of girl education thanks to increased awareness campaigns, advocacy, social mobilization and encouragement from development partners. School enrolment ratios have improved, apart from pockets of resistance in the Northern and East regions and in the cities of Douala and Yaounde.

In health, the implementation of the government's public health strategy has had poor results with health indicators pointing to an increase in the prevalence of HIV-AIDS/STI and maternal mortality as well as low acceptance of modern contraceptive methods.

In the area of the environment, efforts for increased consideration of the gender dimension in the sector by MINEP and MINFOF have resulted since 2008, in the organization of many capacity-building activities for their staff and the incorporation of gender in some programmes such as the Forest and Environment Sector Programme (FESP).

2.7.2. Economy, employment and vocational training

Despite the feminization of poverty, certain actions carried out to promote female entrepreneurship and fight poverty have contributed in improving the situation of women. We note that women are better informed on credit and investment opportunities thanks to the periodic publication of a guide for the female entrepreneur and other specialized journals, and the organization of many training workshops to encourage cross-border trade and partnerships with socio-professional sectors abroad.

Local vocational training institutions have been set up nationwide.: 84 Women's Empowerment Centres and 1 Appropriate Technology Centre (ATC), home-workshops and Rural Artisan Sections / Home Economics Sections (RAS / HEC) that help the social rehabilitation and professional integration of women and girls who dropped out of the formal school system. The number of beneficiary women and girls increased from 13 000 to 450 000 between 2005 and 2010, and 2930 women's micro-projects were financed between 2006 and 2009.

Other initiatives in the area of vocational training and employment also benefit youth of both sexes. These are mainly: multimedia centres, vocational training centres, functional literacy centres and programmes like the Support Programme for Rural and Urban Youth (U-PAJER),

the Integrated Support Project for Stakeholders of the Informal Sector (PIAS), the Project for the Socio-Economic Integration of youth through the creation of micro-enterprises for the Production of Sport Materials (PIFMAS), the Multifunctional Centre for the Promotion of Youth (CMPJ).

In addition, there are the results achieved thanks to initiatives developed by civil society organizations and the private sector.

However, as concerns micro-credits granted to women to develop their income-generating activities, they had rather poor results. In most cases, this assistance did not create the desired impact which is the economic empowerment of the beneficiaries. Women still have limited access to funding and continue to depend on conditionalities such as high interest rates, short term repayments, small credits and the difficulties in marketing their products.

Although the impact is still insignificant, the actions carried out within the context of vocational training have provided girls with access to the following fields of study in 2009-2010: boiler work (1); industrial electricity (2); metal work construction (15), coastal shipping (2), welding / piping (2), etc..

Furthermore, the difficulties women face in obtaining bank loans, unlike men, stem from the problems they face in meeting the eligibility requirements (collateral) and their low propensity to incur debt or take risks.

2.7.3. Decision making and participation in public life

Government efforts over the past decade have culminated in the entry of women in territorial command, an option that breaks with the past where the administrative authority was embodied exclusively by men. In the municipal executive and parliament, we also note a slight increase in the number of women. They are increasingly numerous in the Defence and Security Forces, where they sometimes hold high level decision-making positions. Also, they are now in the traditional command as rulers or paramount chiefs.

2.7.4. Legislation and women's rights

The legal status of women has gradually improved thanks to the ratification of international and regional instruments on the protection of their rights and the promulgation of specific laws in their favour.

The legal aid system, established within the framework of Law No. 2009/4 of 14 April 2009 on the organization of legal aid grants, among others, legal assistance to any unemployed and destitute person abandoned by their spouse. It offers the woman, most often destitute, the possibility to avail herself of her rights. To this end, the involvement of the ministry in charge of gender issues within legal aid commissions set up in the different jurisdictions is a step forward in the protection of the rights of the woman and the family.

Civil society organizations also provide assistance to women by setting up legal clinics,

counselling and support centres and carrying out public awareness activities on women's rights.

2.8. Limitations of actions taken

Despite the multifaceted actions taken to promote gender equity and equality, limitations can be noticed at political, economic, legal, and socio-cultural levels.

2.8.1. Development policies

In spite of a strong and undisputed political will, the ownership of the gender approach and its implementation through programmes remains inadequate. This situation has been due to the lack of a national reference document for the promotion of gender equality, and the poor consideration of gender in the PRSP, GESP, and sector specific matrixes.

2.8.2. Economics

At the economic level, the factors that limit actions to promote gender equality and equity are: the conditions and criteria for women's access to means of production (access to credit, access to land, appropriate techniques and technology), and the lack of organization in the informal sector where women are most active. All of these factors are grounds for the feminization of poverty.

2.8.3. Legal affairs

Limitations in the implementation of the law deprive women of their legal rights, resulting in a negative impact on their development on all fronts. The main limitations identified are:

- *The non-ratification by Cameroon of certain legal instruments in favour of women:* the Convention on the Rights of Disabled Persons, the Convention on the Rights of All Migrant Workers and their Families, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, etc.
- *Lack of harmonization of internal legislation with international legal instruments:* the internal legislation in force in several of its provisions does not conform to international legal instruments ratified by Cameroon on the promotion and protection of human rights in general, and women's rights in particular. Indeed, there are not only discriminatory provisions against women (marriage age, administration and property management, practice of a separate profession by the woman, repression of adultery, possibility given to the rape perpetrator to marry his victim), but also legal loopholes (no definition of the concept of discrimination against women, non-repression of the specific forms of violence they suffer, no regulation on engagement, and the non-clarification of the effects of matrimonial systems);
- *the insufficient dissemination of legal instruments on the promotion and protection of women's rights:* legal instruments, both national and international, are not sufficiently known by women. In addition, personnel responsible for the implementation of the rights contained in these instruments do not always take into account the decisions made. This not only poses a problem for the applicability of the texts, but also limits the enjoyment

- by women of their recognized fundamental human rights;
- ***poor implementation of the legal and statutory provisions in force*** : legal practice is not always favourable to the recognition of women's rights. This is partly due to the resistance of judges to implement international legal instruments, whereas the Constitution and ratified international treaties and conventions have prevalence over national legislation in matters of human rights. In principle, the clear and unequivocal provisions of international instruments are implemented immediately upon the entry into force of these texts. The latter must therefore be applied where there is conflict with national law or a legal vacuum. This is not always the case in practice;
- ***the coexistence of written law and custom*** : the judicial system in force provides for customary courts and modern law courts. Cases in traditional courts are tried using customs which vary from one region to another. Cases before modern courts are tried under written law. This differentiation has repercussions for women, in the sense that the customs referred to do not favour them in most cases.
- ***the reluctance of some legal actors*** : the attitude of some stakeholders in the legal world, notably judicial police officers and medical staff, does not always encourage women to have recourse to justice in case of violations of their rights. For instance, it was noted that these officers and medical staff take lightly problems of domestic and family violence as well as sexual assaults;
- ***the difficulties for women to assert their rights*** : women generally have difficulties in mastering the provisions of instruments in their favour. Even when they know these laws, they have trouble enforcing them for fear of being shunned in the society, leading to their resignation. Hence, many women who suffer violations of their rights do not dare denounce them, let alone take legal action.

2.8.4. Social affairs

Despite measures taken to advance women, several factors compromise their social welfare and worsen their vulnerability, notably:

- early and forced marriages;
- the persistence of customs and cultural values contributing to the school drop out of girls;
- the woman's incapacity to control her body and sexuality;
- the lack of interest by families, communities and the girls themselves in scientific fields of study;
- the feminization of HIV-AIDS/STI;
- the insufficient provision of reproductive health services, early motherhood, close and excessive births due to false beliefs, the poor knowledge of modern contraception techniques, the lack of information on sex education for women and men, girls and boys, unassisted childbirths, illegal abortions;
- inadequate social coverage as concerns infrastructure;
- sexual harassment undergone by women while seeking for employment and negotiating contracts exposes them to different forms of violence that are generally witnessed in the

Convention No. 102 of ILO, minimum standards for social security, 1952
Gnetum africanum

professional milieu, thereby increasing their vulnerability to gender based violence.

2.8.5. Institutions

Cameroon has ratified almost all international conventions on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, but their application is still timid for the following reasons:

- the lack of comparative analysis strategies and tools for gender equality (GE) or assessment of differential impacts in terms of GE in national programmes, projects, policies and budgets;
- the lack of synergy and coordination of actions between the Ministry (MINPROFF), development partners and civil society;
- the unclear overall gender institutional and regulatory framework in Cameroon, a situation attributable to the absence of a national policy on gender, leading to disorderly interventions;
- the absence of a gender component in policies and its unenviable place in the organization chart of MINPROFF;
- the lack of consideration for gender in the Medium-Term Expenditure Frameworks of government programmes;
- weak institutional memory systems which cannot sustainably capitalize achievements.

Institutionalizing the gender approach by removing the difficulties mentioned above would enable Cameroon to achieve a sustainable, effective and equitable human development.

2.9. Stakes and challenges

From the situational analysis of gender issues in Cameroon, it emerges that the status of women is not sufficiently valued at all levels. The NGP focuses on key issues and challenges to be considered as levers for the establishment of an egalitarian society between women and men.

The stakes to consider are:

- the development of women's resources;
- the equal participation of women and men in governance at all levels;
- the economic empowerment of women in urban and rural areas;
- the extension of social protection to segments of the population that are not covered;
- the effective enjoyment and exercise by women of their rights;
- the equal access of women and men, girls and boys to education;
- access to basic social services;
- the improvement of mother and child health;

- the existence of a sustainable and healthy environment.

The challenges to be met include:

- the eradication of socio-cultural constraints that are unfavourable to the establishment of an egalitarian society;
- the eradication of gender-based violence;
- the provision of adequate basic social services;
- the eradication of the feminization of HIV-AIDS/STI;
- the elimination of poverty among women;
- the education, training and information of women, especially those in rural areas;
- the education and training of women and girls in specialised scientific and technical fields of study;
- the reduction of maternal and child mortality;
- the implementation of legal instruments for the promotion and protection of women's rights;
- the eradication of practices that destroy the environment.

PORTRAIT CHIFFRE DES FEMMES ET DES HOMMES AU CAMEROUN

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
STRUCTURE OF THE POPULATION						
Gender pattern	Total population	49,5	50,5	100	BUCREP/ 3rd GPHC	2010
EDUCATION AND TRAINING						
Literacy	Literacy rate (15 years and +)	78,9	62,9	70,6	NIS/ECAM 3	2007
Primary Education	Gross intake rate	123	107	115	MINEDUB/ School map	2008/2009
	Net school attendance rate (6-14 years)	77,6	88,6	83,1		
	Primary school completion rate	78,8	66,4	72,6		
	Percentage of children of secondary school going age who are still attending primary school	40,0	31,0	35,4	NIS/MICS	2006
	Transversal retention rate in primary school	65,2	63,2	64,2	MINEDUB/ School map	2008/2009
Secondary Education	Transition from primary to secondary school	53,0	58,0		MINESEC/ Education Strategy Document	2005
	First cycle completion rate	76,2	77,4			
	Transition rate between the 1st and 2nd cycle	62,0	54,0			
	Retention rate during the 2nd cycle	16,0	54,6			

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
Higher Education	Students in Higher Education	55,7	44,3	100	MINESUP/ Statistical Yearbook of Higher Education	2008
	State Universities	56,8	43,2	100		
	Private Institutions of Higher Education	48,6	51,4	100		
	University teachers	94,1	5,9	100		
	24. Professors	92,3	7,7	100		
	25. Associate Professors	81,0	19,0	100		
	26. Lecturers and assistant lecturers					
	State University teachers	83,8	16,2	100		2006/2007
Vocational Training	Learners in RAC/HEC	61,0	38,9	100	2009 Vocational training Report	Vocational training
	Learners in rapid public vocational training centres	63,5	36,4	100	-/-	
	Learners in rapid private vocational training centres	46,1	53,9	100 %	-/-	
	Total	54,6	45,4	100 %		
	Dropout rate	10,6	14		Vocational training Strategy	

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
HEALTH						
	Declared morbidity rate	23,0	25,9	24,5	NIS/ECAM3	2007
	Declared HIV-AIDS/STI screening rate	18,0	23,4	20,7	NIS/EDS3	2004
	HIV prevalence	4,1	6,8	5,5		
	Rate of possession of vaccination card	70,7	69,3	70,0	NIS/ECAM2	2001
	Rate of vaccination coverage of children between 12 to 23 months	56,7	53,8	55,3	INIS/ECAM 2	2001
EMPLOYMENT						
Activity	ILO activity rate (15-64 years)	86,2	79,5	82,8	NIS/ECAM 3	2007
	Overall activity rate	87,3	82,4	84,7		
Unemployment	Overall unemployment rate (15-64 years)	3,8	7,0	5,4		
Under-employment	Overall under-employment rate (15-64 years)	60,2	78,8	69,6		
Occupation Distribution of active persons with or without a job	Occupation rate	96,2	93,0	94,6		
	Employed active persons	61,3	44,5	52,6%		
	Unemployed active persons	3,8	2,2	3,0%		
	Unemployed active persons seeking employment	6,5	5,6	6,1%		
	Pupils and students	19,3	16,4	17,8%		
	Individuals without economic activity	0,5	0,7	0,6%		
	Other inactive persons without economic activity Housewives	7,3	7,6 11,8	7,4%		

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
Sectors of Activity	Distribution of active persons in the formal sector	11,9	4,1	8,0		
	Distribution of active persons in the informal agricultural sector	58,6	68,6	63,5		
	Distribution of active persons working in the informal non-agricultural sector	29,6	27,3	28,5		
Branches of activities	Primary	59,4	69,1	64,2		
	Industry	10,0	8,4	9,2		
	Trade	9,3	10,3	9,7		
	Services	21,4	12,3	16,9		
	Senior staff/ public manager	2,6	1,1	1,8		
Socio-economic Groups	Other public employees	2,8	1,2	2,0		
	Senior staff/formal private employees	1,6	0,7	1,2		
	Other formal private employees	4,9	1,1	3,0		
	Farmer	30,0	28,6	29,3		
	Dependent on informal agriculture	28,6	40,0	34,2		
	Informal non-agricultural private employee	1,0	0,4	0,7		
	Self-employed farmer in the informal sector	16,1	18,0	17,0		
	Employee of the non-agricultural informal sector	12,5	8,9	10,7		

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
CHILD LABOUR (5-17 YEARS)						
Economic activity carried out by children	Occupation	52,4	50,5	51,5	ILO/National report on child labour in Cameroon	2007
Type of children's activity	Children who only work	10,3	14,3	12,3		
	Children who only go to school	50,3	47,5	48,9		
	Children who work and go to school	31,0	26,4	28,7		
	Children who do not work and do not go to any school	8,3	11,9	10,1		
House chores	Child bound to do house chores	89,6	93,4	91,5		
Type of chore	Cooking	14,5	37,8	26,9		
	Shopping	37,3	45,7	41,4		
	Washing of dishes and cleaning the house	58,9	82,4	70,5		
	Laundry	61,0	65,0	63,0		
	Fetching water	71,1	76,2	73,6		
	Gathering firewood	40,4	39,9	40,1		
	Taking care of children and the elderly	24,0	37,0	30,4		

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		M	F			
POLITICS						
National Assembly	Members of Parliament	86,1	13,9	100	NIS/TBS3	2009
	Alternate members	78,9	21,1	100	MINFOPRA MINPROFF/ Women's Statistical Yearbook MINPROFF/ Study on the participation of women in active life in Cameroon	2008 2010
Council Executives	Vice-President	80,0	20,0	100		
	Questors	75,0	25,0	100		
	Members of the NA bureau	69,6	30,4	100		
	Mayors	93,3	6,7	100		
	Municipal Councillors	84,5	15,5	100	MINFOPRA MINPROFF/ Study on the participation of women in active life in Cameroon	2008 2010
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION						
Public Administration	Posts occupied	74,9	25,1	100	MINFOPRA MINPROFF/ Study on the participation of women in active life in Cameroon	2008 2010
	Prime Minister	100	0	100	NIS, TBS 3	2009
	Vice Prime Minister	100	0	100		
	Ministers of State	100	0	100		

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS	
		M	F				
	Ministers	83,9	16,1	100		2008	
	Minister Delegates	89,9	11,1	100			
	Secretaries of State	83,4	16,6	100			
		Secretaries-General	83,3	16,7	100	MINFOPRA	2009
		Directors of State corporations	95,3	4,3	100		
		Directors	84,2	15,8	100		
		Sub-directors	78,8	21,8	100		
		Service heads	72,2	27,8	100		
		Bureau heads	65,1	34,9	100		
Command	Governors	100	0	100	NIS, TBS 3	2008	
	Senior Divisional Officers	100	0	100		2009	
	Sub-divisional Officers	98,9	1,1	100			
	District Officers	100	0	100		2010	
Officials of State Universities	Rectors	100	0	100	MINFOPRA		
	Vice-rectors	85,7	14,3	100			
	Professors	94,1	5,9	100	NIS, TBS 3		
	Associate Professors	92,3	7,7	100			
	Teaching staff	83,8	16,2	100			
	Magistrates	75,6	24,4	100			
Judicial Administration	Presidents of courts of first instance and high court	85,3	14,7	100	Meeting of the Higher Council of the Magistracy	2010	
	Presidents of the court of Appeal	90	10	100			

HEADINGS	INDICATORS	%		TOTAL	SOURCES	YEARS
		H	F			
	State Counsels	90	10	100	Ministry of Justice	
	State prosecutors	97,1	2,9	100		
	Counsels at the Supreme Court	88,2	11,8	100		
	Attorneys General at the Supreme Court	100	0	100		
	Court Registrars	68,8	31,2	100		
	Bailiffs	76,3	23,7	100		
	Notaries	42,4	57,6	100		
	Lawyers	56,2	43,8	100		
	Prison administrators	97,2	2,8	100		

PART THREE

BASIS OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

BASIS OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

3.1. Basis of the National Gender Policy

The National Gender Policy is founded on various international, regional and sub-regional commitments advocating gender equality and the protection of women's rights.

At the international level, the National Gender Policy is based on legal instruments that have been ratified by Cameroon (treaties and conventions relating to basic human rights and gender equality) but also on resolutions and recommendations from international conferences.

At the regional level, it derives mainly from the constituent act of the African Union and the Declaration of African Head of States of the African Union on equality between women and men.

At the national level, the National Gender Policy is sustained by the fundamental Law, programme-oriented speeches of the Head of State and guidelines from reference documents such as the 2035 Vision and the GESP.

3.2. The National Gender Policy vision

The National Gender Policy vision stems from Cameroon's long term vision by 2035 which reads as follows : *" Cameroon: an emerging, democratic country, united in its diversity"*.

It is couched as follows: *Cameroon an emerging country, built on the principles of good governance, where women and men enjoy the same rights and participate in development in an equitable and equal manner.*

3.3. Values and principles

The National Gender Policy is based on values such as: equality, equity, social justice and good governance which result in the following guiding principles:

- Gender equality should be a constituent element of all policies, all programmes and projects;
- achieving gender equality does not imply that women and men are identical;
- empowering women is essential for the achievement of gender equality;
- promoting the participation of women as agents of change in economic, social and political processes is indispensable for the achievement of gender equality;
- men / women partnership as well as measures to eliminate gender-based discrimination contribute in achieving equality between women and men.

3.4. Purpose

The purpose of the National Gender Policy is to promote an impartial and egalitarian society for women and men in order to ensure sustainable development.

3.5. General Objective

The general objective of the National Gender Policy is to contribute to the systematic elimination of inequalities between women and men at all levels.

3.6. Specific Objectives

The following specific objectives will contribute to achieving the general objective mentioned above:

1. Create a favourable environment for the social protection of women and men and their equal access to social services;
2. Ensure equal rights and opportunities to men and women regarding access and control of resources;
3. Create favourable conditions for equal participation of women and men in development activities;
4. Ensure effective institutionalization of gender.

3.7. Strategic Areas of the National Gender Policy

The objectives of the National Gender Policy are aimed at solving major problems identified in the sectors selected. Six (6) strategic aspects have been identified and broken down into intervention objectives and strategies in the matrix as follows:

1. **Strategic Area No 1:** Promote equal access of girls and boys, women and men to education, training and information.
2. **Strategic Area No 2 :** Improve women's access to health services, particularly with regard to reproductive health.
3. **Strategic Area No 3 :** Promote equal opportunities for women and men in the economic and employment sectors.
4. **Strategic Area No 4:** Promote a favourable socio-cultural environment for the respect of women's rights.
5. **Strategic Area No 5:** Enhance women's participation and representation in public life and decision making.
6. **Strategic Area No 6:** Strengthen the institutional framework for gender promotion.

Domain : Education**Main Problem: Unequal access of girls/women and boys/men to education****Strategic Aspect No 1: Promotion of equal access of girls and boys, women and men to education, training and information.**

Expected outcome	General Objective	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Strategies
Girls and boys, women and men gain equal access to education, training and information.	Ensure equal access of girls and boys, women and men to education, vocational training and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the perception of girl's education and schooling at the level of families and communities, especially in Education Priority Areas (EPAs) and rural areas. • Reduce the rate of school dropout affecting girls. • Reduce the illiteracy rate among women from 35% to 10%. • Encourage girls' and women's access to ICTs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I.E.C/C.B.C. in communities and families on the importance of girls' education. • Strengthening of partnership between the school, families, communities, and opinion leaders for better management of girls' education. • Inclusion of the gender approach in training curricula at all levels. • Fight against sexist stereotypes in textbooks and practices. • Encouragement of girls' school attendance. • Functional literacy. • Training in ICTs. • Partnership with Associations, NGOs and other stakeholders to develop and implement strategies to enhance girls/ womens participation in scientific endeavours. • Enhancement of measures regarding girls and women's access to education. • Valorization of women's specific educational orientation.

Domain : Health

Main Problem: *Poor access of women to quality health services*

Strategic Aspect No 2: *Improvement of women's access to health services, particularly with regard to reproductive health.*

Expected outcome	General Objectives	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Stratégies
<p>Better women's access to health services, particularly reproductive health</p>	<p>Improve women's access to health services, particularly reproductive health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the maternal mortality rate to at least 50%. • Reduce HIV / AIDS prevalence among women from 6.8% to 3%. • Ensure comprehensive management of infected pregnant women and young girls. • Ensure health and nutritional education for women and young girls. • Reduce 1/3 of maternal mortality due to malaria. • Improve the contraceptive use prevalence of women of child bearing age. • Ensure the involvement of men and boys in the management of reproductive health and HIV/ AIDS / STI issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEC/CBC on reproductive health and nutrition • Socialization of medical care for women and young girls, especially pregnant women. • Intensification of campaigns to roll back malaria, HIV and other illnesses. • Advocacy for the construction of appropriate road infrastructure to health facilities. • Cooperation with NGOs dealing with maternal mortality. • Consideration of gender specific needs with regards to HIV/ AIDS. • Men's responsibility in reproductive health.

Sector : Economy / Employment

Main Problem : Unequal access of women and men to economic opportunities and productive resources

Strategic Aspect No 3: Promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in the economic and employment sectors.

Expected outcome	General Objectives	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Stratégies
<p>Women gain access to means of production and economic opportunities and control these means in much the same manner as men</p>	<p>Ensure equal opportunities for men and women in the economic and employment sectors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the poverty rate among women from 40.2% to 28.7%. • Ensure access to and control of means of production by women even in rural areas. • Reduce inequality between women and men in employment and vocational training. • Build women's entrepreneurship capacities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional support (training courses, various donations, promotion of female savings, promotion of MFI for women). • Partnership development to empower women economically. • Positive discrimination in favor of women in employment and recruitment in both public and private enterprises/institutions. • Promotion of female entrepreneurship. • Setting up of an aid and support fund for women's activities. • Ensuring that women and girls' specific needs are taken into consideration in economic planning including infrastructure, electrification, and ICTs. • Enhancing the capacities of women's empowerment and family centers for them to appropriately target women's know-how. • Advocating for policies and laws that promote women's ownership of land.

Sector: Law

Main Problem : Unfavorable socio-cultural environment for the respect of women’s rights

Strategic Aspect No 4: Promotion of a favorable socio-cultural environment for the respect of women’s right.

Expected outcome	General Objectives	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Stratégies
<p>Women’s rights are better known and respected</p>	<p>Create a favourable socio-cultural environment for the protection and promotion of the rights of women and young girls</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Popularize women’s rights and related legal instruments. • Reduce by half the prevalence rate of violence against women including FGM. • Ensure the rehabilitation of victims even during periods of humanitarian crisis and propose appropriate penalty measures for GBV perpetrators. • Harmonize national legislation with international and regional legal instruments for the protection of women’s rights. • Ensure effective implementation of texts relating to the protection of women’s rights. • Ensure the management of specific problems encountered by rural women and widows. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IEC/CBC for the consideration of women’s and girls’ rights within families and communities. • Capacity building for men and women on the rights and the means of prevention of gender based violence (GBV). • Strengthening of the legal framework regarding the repression of gender based violence (GBV). • Popularization of legal instruments for the protection of women’s rights • Review of legal provisions that are discriminatory to women. • Drafting of more egalitarian laws. • Advocacy among administrative, traditional and religious authorities for the elimination of discrimination and GBV. • Capacity building for social workers on gender. • Varied assistance to rural women and widows. • Implementation of relevant observations and resolutions, treaties and special procedures. <p>Data collection on gender based violence within public and private spheres.</p>

Sector: Governance

Main Problem: *Unequal participation and representation of men and women in public life and decision making*

Strategic Aspect No 5 : *Enhancement of women's participation and representation in public life and decision making spheres*

Expected outcome	General Objective	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Stratégies
<p>Women are better represented and they fully participate in the public and political life of the nation.</p>	<p>Ensure women's participation and representation in public life and decision making spheres.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematize the 30% minimum quota principle for women at the level of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The National Assembly - The Government - Council Executives - Diplomatic services - Defense and security forces - Territorial administration - Judicial administration - Strategic positions in the administration - State enterprises • Capacity building for women in leadership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy among leaders and decision makers for the application of the minimum 30% quota system for the participation of women in decision making. • Positive discrimination for a better representation of women in decision making spheres in order to meet up with the 30% quota system. • IEC/CBC among women for their involvement in public and political life. • Strengthening of partnership with Associations and NGOs in view of women's capacity building

Sector: Gender promotion

Main Problem : *Poor impact of intervention in favor of equality and equity between men and women*

Strategic Aspect No 6 : *Institutional Reinforcement*

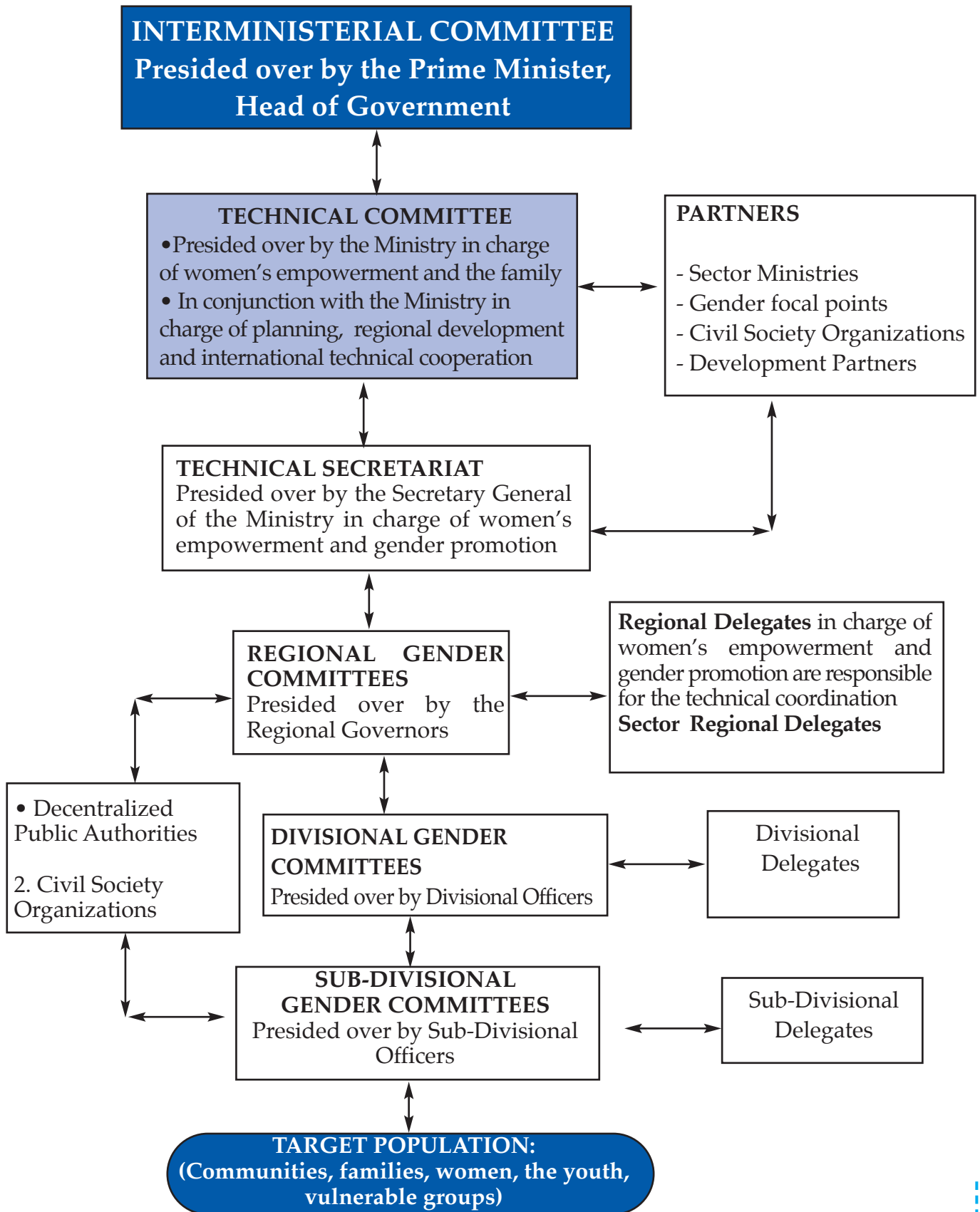
Expected outcome	General Objective	Specific Objectives (in 10 years)	Stratégies
<p>Taking into account the different needs of men and women becomes a reality in all sectors of national life.</p>	<p>Improve the institutional framework for the promotion of gender and governance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure the consideration of gender specificities in sector policies and budgets. • Reinforce national expertise on gender. • Reinforce efficiency in monitoring the implementation of international and regional recommendations on gender. • Ensure the consideration of gender in policies, programmes and projects. • Increase resources allocated to gender programmes and projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building the capacity of institutions on gender. • Advocacy among decision makers for the consideration of gender in policies, strategies, programmes and projects. • Partnership development and capacity building. • Promotion of Gender budgeting.

PART FOUR

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK AND IMPLEMENTATION MECHANISMS OF THE NATIONAL GENDER POLICY

4.1 Institutional framework

The institutional framework for implementing the national gender policy is described in the diagram below:



4.1.1. Inter-ministerial Committee

The inter-ministerial committee, which is the steering committee, shall be responsible for the general coordination, orientation and management of the National Gender Policy. Presided over by the Prime Minister Head of Government, it shall be made up of all sector ministries. It shall meet once a year depending on the report on gender issues presented by the National Mechanism for the promotion of equality between women and men.

4.1.2. Technical Committee

A Technical Committee shall be created to support the Ministry in charge of women's empowerment and the family in implementing the National Gender Policy. More specifically, it shall have to:

- Ensure proper communication between the various actors involved in the implementation of the National Gender Policy by convening quarterly meetings;
- Assist MINPROFF in drafting the Steering Committee documents;
- Assist in research and mobilization of internal and external financial resources as well as in creating data banks on the various stakes of the National Gender Policy;
- Participate in the monitoring/evaluation of the National Gender Policy;
- Ensure implementation of Steering Committee directives.

Presided over by the Ministry in charge of promoting equality between women and men, in conjunction with the Ministry in charge of planning, development and international technical cooperation, the Technical Committee shall be made up of representatives of the various ministries, having at least the rank of Director in the central administration, social partners (employees and employers) and civil society organizations. It shall meet twice a year.

The Technical Committee shall execute its tasks on the basis of a multi-sectorial plan of action earlier drafted using the participatory approach. Priority actions shall be identified in this multi-sectorial plan to serve as sequential and yearly working programmes.

Gender Focal points from the various sector ministries shall also represent their respective ministries on the Committee.

The Technical Committee shall be relayed on the field by regional, divisional and sub-divisional committees which, like the Technical Committee, shall be made up of representatives of decentralized services of the sector ministries, decentralized public authorities and the civil society.

4.1.3. Technical Secretariat

Placed under the supervision of the ministry in charge of women's empowerment and gender promotion, the Technical Secretariat shall be presided over by the Secretary General of the said ministry and shall hold quarterly meetings. It shall be responsible, inter alia, for:

- Coordinating interventions within the framework of the implementation of the National Gender Policy;
- Maintaining dialogue with stakeholders in the implementation of the National Gender Policy;

- Preparing supporting documentation for the mobilization of resources to fund the National Gender Policy programmes;
- Participating in programming with the State and development partners;
- Drafting evaluation reports on implementation of the National Gender Policy as well as annual reports on the situation of gender equality and equity in Cameroon;
- Ensuring the creation of a data base on the situation of women and men and its regular updating;
- Proposing legislative and statutory measures to the Inter-ministerial Committee on gender equality and equity, in conjunction with the Ministry in charge of women's empowerment;
- Carrying out mid-term and annual evaluation of the implementation of the National Gender Policy, together with the partners;
- Organizing the Steering Committee's meetings;
- Organizing the Steering Committee's Secretariat.

For an effective coordination of activities, the Technical Secretariat shall establish collaboration protocols with the various stakeholders.

4.2. Implementation mechanisms

In the regions, general coordination will be overseen by Governors while the Regional Delegates in charge of women's empowerment and gender promotion will be responsible for technical coordination.

Regional Committees in charge of the policy's implementation and follow-up shall be created. They shall operate along the lines of the multi-sectorial plan of action, under the coordination of the Governors.

Regional committee reports shall be submitted to the technical coordination committee, which shall in turn submit a quarterly report to the inter-ministerial committee, on the recommendation of the Technical Committee.

4.3. Commitments of the stakeholders

The success of this Policy will depend on the firm commitment of all the stakeholders, notably: political, administrative, traditional, religious and moral authorities, NGOs, the civil society, the private sector and development partners.

NGOs and other associations or groups will most often be solicited, especially local development committees and village committees. The population, especially women and young girls who are the actors and main beneficiaries of this policy will be involved in the design and implementation of the multi-sectorial action plan.

4.4. Monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the National Gender Policy

The Government will put in place a mechanism to monitor the activities to ensure continuous evaluation which is useful for the improvement of plans and programmes that have been designed from the National Gender Policy strategies at the national, regional and sector levels. Monitoring and evaluation will also contribute to building and improving the managerial capacities of all the institutions engaged in the implementation of drawn up plans and programmes.

The overall evaluation will consist in measuring the results on the basis of each sector's general and specific objectives. This evaluation will be done within a given period, on a specific domain and with fixed objectives, so as to facilitate the evaluation of ongoing programmes and make possible adjustments. Small scale sample surveys will be carried out regularly as a major part of this evaluation.

Monitoring/ evaluation activities will be carried on regularly as decided by the Technical Committee. The principles of Results-Based Management and programming based on human rights will guide the monitoring/evaluation of this policy.

The following monitoring /evaluation mechanisms are proposed to support the organs thus defined:

- Collaboration protocols between the national mechanism and other partners;
- An information system on gender issues at the national level;
- Monitoring/evaluation reports on implementation of the National Gender Policy by stakeholders;
- Annual situational report to be submitted to the Prime Minister;
- Discussion themes on gender issues in all political, economic, social and cultural, to support advocacy for the creation of an institutional environment favorable to gender promotion and its integration into development;
- Periodic review, follow-up assignments, control and auditing.

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