Contextually Engendering Conflict Analysis
The Case of the *Anglophone conflict* in Cameroon

By Tanushree Kaushal

THE
**GRADUATE
INSTITUTE
GENEVA**

**GENDER
CENTRE**

Tanushree Kaushal is a researcher working at the intersection of gender, critical security studies and legality with the Gender Centre. Previously, she has worked with both local NGOs and academic institutes exploring issues pertaining the continuum of violence and deconstructing the public-private dichotomy both in law and state policies. She is currently working on feminist legal interpretations in relation to consent.

Cover image: © bmszealand / Shutterstock.com

CONTEXTUALLY ENGENDERING CONFLICT ANALYSIS

The Case of the Anglophone conflict in Cameroon

Executive summary

This background paper is driven by the rationale of paying attention to structures and voices that are often unseen and unheard both during and after periods of conflict. The current 'Anglophone conflict' in Cameroon is being simplified to specific narratives. However, delving into the context reveals the structural and heterogeneous nature of the grievances being voiced during the conflict, particularly those of women. This paper seeks to perceive these disparate demands by embedding the conflict in its context and looking closely at two key historical junctures that have been significant in the shaping of the current conflict – the colonial period and the period of political and economic liberalisation in the 1990s. A historical assessment allows for generating a space of visibility for grievances that have been generally unseen. By embedding the research in its historical context, this paper arrives at the key clusters and threads of social, political and economic concerns that need to be perused further on the conflict field in order to understand the diversity of demands and concerns being raised.

INTRODUCTION

This paper is a review of current and past literature that seeks to reveal areas of interest that can inform research questions – specifically feminist research questions – to understand current conflict and tensions in Cameroon. It is based on the premise that a feminist approach to inquiry of the types typically undertaken by UN and other delegations would first require a review of the underlying drivers – historical, economic and political – of conflict, which asks and questions the place and role of women as a primary point of exploration. Developing context-specific questions that delve beyond the narratives of conflict that are so often relayed through the gaze and voice of men not only visibilises the marginalised and non-combatant voices but provides holistic insights so necessary in addressing root causes and interventions to de-escalate conflict. Listening and documenting conflict from multiple standpoints, and most especially the often-neglected position of women is critical to achieving sustainable peace.

Therefore, methodologically, this review of literature and recent reporting of tensions in Cameroon has explicitly sought to critically reflect on context through a gendered lens – in that throughout the review one question has been placed in the foreground to all reading: where and what is the place of women. It is hoped that by foregrounding questions on the place of women in this review it can better inform the range of questions that might be posed in current and future data gathering when conflict emerges.

PEACEBUILDING, CONFLICT IN CONTEXT: THE CASE OF CAMEROON

Recent conflict in Cameroon has been largely framed as *the Anglophone crisis*, which is said to have emerged in 2016 after several lawyers, union members and teachers in the Anglophone part of Cameroon protested against the Francophone-majority government's policies (Gigova 2016). These protests were reported to have been violently suppressed by the government and what has ensued has been a chain of violence and counter-violence on several sides. Even as the crisis is traced back to 2016, this paper argues that the crisis and the generative factors that spurred the current violence were in existence far before that. It is only upon disbanding dichotomies of conflict and peace that we can uncover the larger dynamics that manifest and feed into the violence within a conflict. In this uncovering, categories of war and peace collapse into each other (Richards 2005) and a timeline of the conflict emerges which is no longer as abrupt as being framed in discourse by the

3

Cameroonian government, prominent secessionist movement leaders and foreign actors. These observations are important as they help to inform what and how we formulate our questions when exploring and researching the current conflict during community engagement and data collection missions that seek to establish analyses upon which conflict resolution and peace activities can be informed.

Understanding the nature of the current conflict requires carefully looking at the underlying structures, systems and networks that enable for a conflict to take place at a particular time. As we study the conflict in Cameroon, we see how the past is reinvented and reused in the present by different interest groups as a mode of self-identity creation vis-à-vis the other. This goes to show how the present is interspersed with the past and interpretations of the past, a history that is typically re-told from the standpoint of male actors and male voices. A historical evaluation grounds the conflict in dynamics that preceded the conflict but are crucial factors in the unravelling of the conflict. This paper seeks to bring to light the distinct tensions underlying the conflict which has so far been largely framed as a relatively simplistic conflict between two linguistic groups[1]. This paper argues, that among other drivers, two historical junctures are key to understand the nature of the current conflict – the colonial period under the British and the French and the period of economic and political liberalisation in the 1990s. Each of these brought several changes to the social and political fabric of Cameroon, including regionally in the North-West and South-West. These changes altered women's positions in terms of gendered division of labour and access to public spaces and provisions. In light of this, this paper seeks to unravel the underlying dimensions and tensions along social, economic and political lines that are obscured by most discourse on the current conflict.

From a feminist perspective, this further allows us to move beyond the dominant frames provided to assess the conflict and instead probe where women are in all this and what are their voices. What nature of exclusions and inclusions have women faced, during the conflict and prior to it, which feed into the current state of affairs? With the aims of unravelling the wider structures at play in the conflict and at including the voices of women which are often marginalised, this paper will be tracing the historical junctures that have influenced and informed the dynamics of the current crisis. These are (a) the colonial period and (b) the 1990s which witnessed political decentralisation in Cameroon, as in other African countries.

Moreover, there has been a growing sociological and human-focused turn in international politics and peace studies (Brewer 2010). This has argued for a shift towards uncovering the everyday workings of peace and assessing how these connect with individuals' and groups' competition over social capital in conflict settings and in the institutions and conditions that predated the upsurge in conflict. Research based on recent peacebuilding efforts has argued against approaches that adopt a social-engineering mode which seeks to replace or accelerate the process of state formation which usually occurs more organically (Krause and Jütersonke 2005); it further considers the 'state' to be a universally common notion even as the ideas associated with statehood are those that have emerged from a particular Westphalian context and historical moment in time. Counter-arguments to these more traditional approaches have contended that more localised studies need to be conducted and specific particularities of a region are to be considered in order to unpack a conflict and the reasons why actors partake in it. Why are people 'giving' their *security* and *protection rights* to non-state actors? What forms the basis of trust (and distrust) for people and communities and how can this trust be 'built' or regained? What are the forms of people's grievances and how do these find expression within specific regimes? What are the internal cleavages within supposedly unified groups (such as, the 'Anglophones') and how do these play into the conflict and its aftermath? These are questions that allow for us to locate the conflict in its specificity and enable the move towards particularised context argued for by those that have researched peace-building efforts in recent conflicts. It is only through the recognition and compre-hension of particularities of a conflict that more efficient solutions and answers can be reached – ones that truly address the structural underpinnings and the broader *continuum of violence* encompassing the lives of individuals and communities.

4

1 This framing of the conflict as a conflict of interests of two distinct linguistic groups has been gaining significance on the side of the secessionist movement over time as more radical groups and voices have been gaining prominence; these argue for complete independence and require the rationale of distinct peoples to further their demands. On the government's side, there have been efforts at denying the very existence of any conflict within Cameroon but these have been interspersed with suppressing moderate voices within the movement so as to present to the international community that the entire movement has radical demands and modes of operation which cannot be dialogued with (ICG 2017; ICG 2019; RFI 2017).

COLONIAL RULE: KEY JUNCTURE IN CONFLICT AND IDENTITIES FORMATION

Introduction: a recent contextual history

Starting in July 1884, what is present-day Cameroon and parts of neighbouring countries became a German colony, Kamerun. Germany had a particular interest in the agricultural capacity of Cameroon and several German trading countries established themselves in the region. During World War One, the British invaded Cameroon from the Nigerian side in 1914 and after the war, the colony was partitioned off between the UK and France under the 1919 League of Nations mandates. France received the larger geographical area (French Cameroun) and a thin strip bordering Nigeria came under the British (British Cameroons). British Cameroons were ruled indirectly by the British from Nigeria (Mawhood 1993, 189). The colonial legacies left behind in the two regions were distinct on several counts.

Distinct forms and legacies of French and British Colonial Rule in Cameroon

The distinctions and similarities in French and British colonial rule(s) across different regions have been the subject of significant research across several social scientific disciplines. The 'traditional' contrast has been made on the grounds that British rule was comparatively more 'indirect' and French rule was more 'direct' and focused on assimilation of the colonised. More nuance has been shown in this dichotomous classification of colonial rule which has shed light on the diversity of tools and mechanisms that both British and French colonisers adopted in several contexts – which relied upon the use, invention and re-invention of local authorities, albeit driven by distinct colonial policies (Geschiere 1993). Present-day Cameroon presents us with a case whose different regions fell under British and French colonialism respectively; a comparison of the two allows for carving out the significant, general variations between the two.

Two crucial lines along which British and French governance systems differed in certain respects are matters of customary law and local chieftaincy. British Cameroons fell under the common law system which provided somewhat greater rights to investors and property owners than the civil law system used by France in French Cameroun (Mamdani 1996). British law and administration were largely practiced to give greater room to native chiefs in performing executive and judicial roles. While the French also employed chiefs in their administration, their exercise of power *through* the chiefs was more direct and visible, which threatened the chief's position as a trustworthy native authority among the locals[2]. A particular space in which this was (and continues to be) visible is in the domain of land ownership and inheritance. The French administration introduced a land registration and certification system under which individuals could obtain titles that subsequently gave them rights to exploit forest products within a specified forest territory. In comparison, the British lent greater recognition to native customary laws and practices in the use and ownership of land. The hybrid of colonial and customary systems of land ownership under the British were completely replaced by land ownership as a system of individual rights in 1974 (Baye 2008). Customary systems relied upon notions of common sharing of land around which rested the social security of a village. A transformation in land ownership patterns under law also changed the social systems and relations in rural Cameroon. There was a marked rise in competition for land which placed women in particularly unpredictable and precarious positions. While the national legal framework of Cameroon extended individual rights for land ownership to men and women, under most customary legal frameworks, women could not directly own or inherit land. However, there were several other mechanisms in place which ensured women access to resources such as, the products that they cultivated on land and the right to use and sell these. As legal ownership of land became a possibility for women under the changes introduced under the land reforms of 1974, new modes and methods came to be

---

2 One point of significance here is also the gendered nature of chiefdom; these 'native' authorities rested with men as only men have historically been permitted to become chiefs across most regions. In a recent development in early 2019, 123 women were appointed as decision-making authorities in the chiefdoms for the very first time. Several of these women have previously made demands and taken action on social issues pertaining to health provisions, access to education in their respective regions (BBC Pidgin 2019).

employed which denied women access to new forms of property (Goheen 1997). These further threatened rights and access that women previously enjoyed such as the ownership of crops grown on a piece of land directly owned by a man. These changing social dynamics and their associated grievances, particularly within the Anglophone part of Cameroon, will be discussed in the later section on political and economic liberalisation of the 1990s, a period that witnessed deep and substantial changes in the socio-political fabric of Cameroon. It is these grievances that have fed into the Anglophone movement and require careful probing in the next sections to understand the multi-layered nature of the current conflict.

An associated space in which these distinctions translated was that of chieftaincy. As stated earlier, the British allowed native chiefs greater freedom in performing executive and judicial functions on their behalf, often following hybrids of customary laws in relation with new British demands. This gave greater authority and legitimacy to chiefs in the British Cameroons vis-à-vis the French Cameroun. As Mawhood argues, "for the forty years of divided existence, Eastern Cameroon was something of a showpiece in French colonial administration, while the western unit was almost forgotten as a small outlying part of the administration of Nigeria" (1993, 189). The disparity in degree of attention and directness of rule continued in the role and involvement of the French and the British respectively in Cameroon post-independence. The two Cameroons were unified in 1961 under a federal system; however, this federal system was disbanded in favour of a unitary, centralised legal system in 1972. This further put the existing chiefdoms under pressure in relation to the State. As the state contested several roles previously performed by village chiefs, the position of these village chiefs was left in ambiguity. This further impacted the social ecology in rural areas where chiefdoms were prevalent. These changes further intensified during the political liberalisation of the 1990s and will be discussed in the following sections in greater detail.

The British-ruled Cameroons (Southern Cameroons) became an autonomous region in 1953 and held their first elections in 1954. In 1961 however, the UN organised a plebiscite which gave Southern Cameroons two options – union with Nigeria or union with Cameroon. The option of independence was rejected by the British and was not presented as an alternative. Southern Cameroons voted to join Cameroon. Over the years, the Cameroonian government feared that Southern Cameroons might secede and in 1972, a referendum was passed in which a new constitution was adopted. This replaced the earlier federal state with a unitary state and power became heavily concentrated with the President. Southern Cameroons lost its previously autonomous status and became the Northwest region and Southwest region of the Republic of Cameroon (Tajoche 2003). The above sections highlight the disparate systems of colonial rule that were unified as a singular state which later became centralised in 1972. The transformations required to generate a unified Cameroonian state sought to generate a unified national template for a highly diverse and heterogeneous social landscape in which colonial rule had relied upon local forms of governance and organisation. These changes introduced novel systems with changed positions for women vis-à-vis men, which often clashed with existing systems. These changes left women in uncertain positions in relation to the legal-social frameworks they could turn to, their social positions (with respect to land ownership, individual rights) vis-à-vis men and, the political authorities that they could seek redressal and justice with.

POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC LIBERALISATION OF THE 1990S: TRANSFORMING SOCIAL LANDSCAPE

Anglophone secessionist movements rose soon after the abolition of federalism in 1972. However, they attained prominence and wider popularity in the 1990s, which was a period during which they came to represent a wide range of grievances of the Anglophone population of Cameroon.

Displacement and dispossession: Changing relationships with land

The Cameroonian economy relied heavily upon exports such as cocoa and coffee. In the mid-1980s, prices of these commodities dropped which contributed towards an economic recession. Structural adjustment policies were introduced from 1987 onwards but were initially unsuccessful in addressing pivotal macro-economic

factors. The slump lasted for over a decade with GDP growth rate reaching negative points during several of those years. However, owing largely to Cameroon's large oil reserves, the economy was able to stabilise in the late 1990s. The structural adjustment programme and other changes that had to be made following the recession meant that several previously state-owned enterprises were privatised and government spending was greatly reduced (DeLancey and DeLancey 2000). This was accompanied with the incursion of private companies into Cameroon, as was the case with rest of Africa during this period. This was followed by large-scale land acquisitions in which previous land users were often marginalised and left displaced in the process. Land which was commonly held in practice, particularly in the northwest and southwest regions, was now privatised. Under Subsections 14 and 15 of Ordinance No. 74, 1974, all lands, including those under customary tenure, without a land certificate were state-owned irrespective of the length of time they were occupied. Land titles were the only legitimate proof of land ownership but were often too difficult and expensive for most communities to obtain; hence, prior ownership was invalidated and owners' rights to their land became highly insecure (Ndi and Batterbury 2017). The local village chiefs often played a crucial role in facilitating land grabbing and acting in cooperation with the state and companies. As interviews conducted in Ndi and Batterbury's research show, this led to a loss of trust in local chiefs and disbanding of previous social hierarchies and moral economies of trust. The deep-running changes in sociocultural networks and historical relationships that bound and secured a community left people displaced in more ways than one – not only were they insecure in the ownership of their land, they were also uncertain of their social networks in the village (Ndi and Batterbury 2017).

Political liberalisation and the changing role of chiefdoms

The 1990s in Cameroon were witness to the advent of multi-partyism and a limited degree of freedom of association. Multi-party politics was officially announced for on December 19, 1990 and the number of political parties rose from just one in 1990 to 149 in 1997 (Socpa 2016). One of these parties was the Social Democratic Front (SDF), which was largely composed of Anglophone members and leadership. Several associations and interest groups from the Anglophone community also emerged during this period. Long-standing grievances linked to exclusions from wider economic growth and major areas of national spending began to be voiced by the Anglophone population and gained momentum and popularity (Geschiere 2018, 49). The introduction of a multi-party system started to change the nature of politics in the villages. As decentralisation set in, the earlier authority of chiefs in the Northwest region was deeply challenged. The chiefs in this region were caught between their subjects, most of whom were opposed to the president and his government, and the government, which was responsible for paying their salaries and exerted pressure upon them. As multiple parties emerged, each of them began to contest for 'local' clout and the local chiefs were instrumental in this arrangement. These chiefs were faced with the tension of profiting from their access to statist political power or retaining trust and authority among their followers. As many chiefs came under the fold of the state in several of their decisions, they lost traction and moral authority among local villagers. This further contributed towards transforming existing moral economies of trust in rural areas where older social relations were challenged as individuals entered into new social relations and networks (Mqeke 2003).

DIVERSITY OF DEMANDS AND GRIEVANCES WITHIN THE 'ANGLOPHONE MOVEMENT'

Alongside these internal changes within Cameroon, by the 1990s, there was also a significant Anglophone diaspora in America and Europe. They have also used their resources to mobilise members from the diaspora and the population back home. The internet has provided the wider field through which a wide spectrum of Anglophone interests and demands have been voiced and large communities have been reached (Anyefru 2008). The array of webpages dedicated to the Anglophone cause is an indicator of the diversity of demands and objectives which underlie what is framed as a singular Anglophone movement. While certain pages have been

radically secessionist in their demands, others have demanded federalism and greater autonomy within the existing Cameroonian state. The conflict itself stemmed from a set of demands raised by lawyers, teachers and trade union members in 2016 against the appointment of Francophone judges in the Anglophone Region and the sentiment of broader imposition upon the common law/customary law frameworks in everyday judicial practices. The government has imprisoned several moderate activists who are pro-decentralisation and pro-federalism and in this, strengthened the more radical, secessionist groups (ICG 2017). Analysts are arguing that this approach is the result of a deliberate strategy to discredit the Anglophone movement among the Francophone population and international actors by conflating it entirely with a secessionist movement. As the analysis above shows however, the Anglophone movement is composed of a vast range of grievances that are economic, political and social in nature and have thus far gone relatively unaddressed by the Cameroonian state. One significant sub-group is that of women's demands and grievances, which, as stated above, have found expression as women have come together and mobilised. These have translated into several social media campaigns, which go far beyond striving to bring attention to the violence women face during the conflict – towards including issues such as children's access to schools and education, women's inclusion in peace processes, making dialogue processes more inclusive of distinct parties and interest groups and safety for vulnerable groups in public spaces (Tchouta Mougoué 2019).

Coverage of the conflict

A key issue observable in the current Cameroonian conflict is the availability of multiple, often contesting and contradictory information and narratives around particular events and the rationales behind these. For instance, it was recently reported that over 50 schools have been occupied and are being torched by separatists. However, the counter claims to this report that the Cameroonian military has been burning schools to target any possible hiding and gathering spots for rebellious groups. The burning and destruction of schools has become an increasingly important concern in the region as hundreds of schools have been left destroyed and bereft of facilities; teachers and students are embroiled in fears and even as activists are campaigning for schools to become absolute no-go zones for both insurgents and the military, they continue to be principal sites for the unravelling of the conflict. Recent news reports emerging from Cameroon have reported similar narratives and counter-narratives to an incident in a prison, where one claim is that military opened fire on unarmed prisoners while another is that it was the prisoners that set the prison on fire.

In light of the historical background outlined above, it can be discerned how distinct narratives emerge from specific locations and historicity. However, despite these contextual contestations, a key concern is that much of the information on the ground is also not able to be recorded and disseminated. Journalists have been imprisoned, which has had serious consequences on the nature and extent of coverage of everyday news concerning the conflict. The case of Mancho Bibixy gained prominence in social media in 2018 with several hashtags and posts circulating which demanded action against his imprisonment. He is a journalist who predominantly covered news from the Anglophone region and was sentenced to 15 years in prison on charges such as performing 'acts of terrorism'. Actions such as these have repercussions for journalism in general as an atmosphere of fear envelops the decisions made around which information to publish and which voices to be given expression. In addition to local news media, research activities of international organisations and NGOs are also being curtailed. In April 2019, a Human Rights Watch researcher was not allowed to conduct research in the country. Organisations such as Human Rights Watch and International Crisis Group have previously published reports that outline the nature of the current conflict; however, even more detailing is required as voices of those that are usually pushed to the margins need to be heard in order to decipher the nature of the conflict and its accompanying violence. Women's voices from distinct socio-political locations are largely marginalised in the coverage of the conflict. However, women's groups are organising and making demands both to the state and to other bodies. For instance, in 2017, Anglophone Cameroonian women mobilised using traditional modes of protest to generate political solidarity and demand for greater inclusion within the State. These protests included women

from distinct age groups and sought to use methods that would shock male state agents, such as, disrobing in public, in order to assert their agency within public spaces (Tchouta Mougoué 2019). Several women's groups such as South West/North West Women's Task Force (SNWOT) and Women for Change have come together to demand the inclusion of women in the peace processes and any future dialogues. They led a social media campaign on International Women's Day in 2019 to bring attention to these demands (BBC News Pigdin 2019).

An inability to pay attention to the diversity of voices involved in the conflict ends up simplifying the conflict to a dualistic clash, which is largely the way it is being presented by the most visible and audible voices on both sides. Such an approach fails to address the concerns and grievances which are at the heart of the conflict for most groups, and particularly serves to exclude women's voices from discourse on the conflict. Social media offers relatively more space for a wider diversity of issues and demands to come to light and tracing social media activity on the conflict can aid in tracing women's voices. Considering the above discussion on the key changes, ruptures and political demands that have emerged historically at two key junctures, this paper distils the following principal concerns that are/potentially can be of significance to the ongoing conflict.

CLUSTERS TO DRIVE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON THE GROUND

Considering the above historical background and analysis of socio-economic and political structures and changes in Cameroon, along with the occurrences during the current conflict, this paper arrives at particular clusters of issues that require deeper exploration on the field. The answers that emerge from exploring these elements will go on to feed this research and help in the following ways: (a) locating the specificities of the issues in different regions, (b) eliciting the voices of women and their diverse understandings and grievances during the conflict and, (c) understanding the structural nature of exclusion. This exploration becomes even more relevant in an environment where journalists are being prevented from publishing and disseminating stories that express 'marginalised' voices. The following sections explore the primary themes that require careful attention on the field in order to research the nature and extent of the conflict and its violence. Each of the four clusters below concludes with broad research questions to guide further information and data gathering

Displacement and the political economy

Cameroon now has the world's sixth-largest displaced population with over half a million people living in highly precarious and insecure conditions which lack basic provisions for subsistence such as food, water and protection. It has been estimated that there are 1.3 million Cameroonians currently in urgent need for humanitarian aid and assistance in the English-speaking regions. Among those that are internally displaced, approximately 68% are women, who are now living in extremely vulnerable conditions. While isolated cases of sexual violence against women are often presented in news items during conflicts, such coverage can descend into larger narratives of the plight of women suffering at the mercy of men in different parts of the world. In light of this, it is particularly relevant to explore the more structural issues and networks at play, within which gendered violence and exclusions occur and continue to be perpetuated. As a first step, this requires broadening the understanding of displacement itself.

The farming sector has been hit hardest by the ongoing conflict as farmers, whose livelihoods and skills are contingent upon a fixed piece of land, have had to flee the region. The output and revenues from coffee and cocoa production (which is mainly carried out in the Northwest and Southwest regions) have declined sharply over the last few years. Despite this, the overall Cameroonian economy has managed to remain stable, largely owing to oil exports, which have formed a significant proportion of the economy since the 1980s. The lack of impact on the overall economy isolates the issues of farmers in the Anglophone regions and leaves these as more likely to remain unaddressed.

In the discussion above on economic liberalisation since the 1990s, we saw that commercial crops such as coffee and cocoa have come to dominate the agricultural production of the Anglophone region. This change has been further

9

accompanied by large-scale privatisation of previously commonly-held resources and land grabbing by private corporations in connection with the Cameroonian state itself. The livelihoods, sources of income and relationship with the land of several groups have been left uncertain. Large groups have been left displaced of previously-held rights and previously-available resources, without finding alternatives that can sufficiently replace these. This more long-term, structural displacement underlies the current displacement as social structures and protection networks that could provide alternatives to displacement have been significantly altered.

Women's position within the political economy

As the precarity and uncertainty associated with economic life has heightened over recent years and decades, the effects of these have been particularly pronounced for women. Access to land has been a deeply gendered subject in customary law; while the precise formulations are variable, women largely do not have inheritance and ownership rights akin to men. However, in several cases, women do have land use rights. Customary law intercepts with the unified, national legal framework that confers inheritance and ownership rights to women, to result in a complex confluence of rights and women's relationship to land. As the number of women owners of land has been growing over the last decades, there has been a response to this that has aimed to curtail rights that women had even under customary law, such as access to land usage and the earnings from crops grown and sold. In addition to this, women are the majority in the informal sector. Limited economic channels are available to displaced women and many have been reported to have had to turn to prostitution or work as domestic workers in urban centres. Women's grievances cannot be captured under an umbrella understanding; instead they require exploring different groups of women's relationships with and within the political economy, particularly addressing the following: what are the economic avenues available to women? What is the gendered division of labour? How much of the household and social responsibility are women performing vis-à-vis men? What are the fixed resources that women own? What are the women doing? Where are they spatially doing what they do? What has changed? What is the distribution of their time of different tasks and activities?

Social systems of trust and distrust

The transforming political economy landscape has been accompanied by deep transformations in the social fabric and social hierarchies. As mentioned earlier, since the political and economic liberalisation of the 1990s, village chiefs have been caught in the midst of maintaining loyalties among local supporters and gaining from the economic and political changes. Economically, this has been particularly evident in cases of land grabs, in which local chiefs have often had to lend support to the state and companies to facilitate land grabbing. This has resulted in a loss of trust in their chiefdom and people have started to turn to different sources in order to have their grievances redressed and a sense of justice restored. The changes in the moral economy of the region and in accompanying systems of trust and distrust is important to keep in mind, particularly in today's context where trust in the state is also being eroded. This leaves the local populations in a particularly vulnerable position of distrust towards most authorities.

During the current conflict, cases of sexual violence committed against women by the military have also come to light. However, detailed reports and numbers are not available as the plight of women is enveloped in silence. Women themselves are also refraining from reporting sexual abuse and violence as they fear retaliation and there are not enough structures of social trust available that can ensure that their grievances will be registered without harmful consequences. Moreover, there have been recent incidents in which kidnappings or threats of kidnapping have been used as means of extracting funds and resources from local populations by insurgent groups. However, even as there is use of force by insurgents in several cases, the precarity of social trust relations requires probing this matter further – what kind of support does insurgency have among local groups? How does this support vary by gender? Which actions/ideas of insurgents enjoy support and which are not supported? What are the reasons for support or absence of support? Who do women trust? Who do they no longer trust? What institutions do

they trust and not trust? How have all these changed? These questions can pinpoint the precise nature of (dis)satisfaction with both local authorities and the state, and subsequently allow us to better understand how trust can be generated.

Political and economic inclusion into the Cameroonian State

A study of the social media pages on the Anglophone struggle both during and prior to the current conflict shows the diversity of agendas and demands at play. A large portion of these reflect the demand for greater autonomy and federalism for the Anglophone region to have greater freedom in making decisions. This was also the principal demand by protestors constituted of lawyers, trade unionists, teachers, etc. who started voicing their grievances and mobilising together in 2016 – the start of the conflict. Steps such as imprisonment of 'moderate' protestors and journalists have fuelled more radical demands and have further made insurgents more central to the movement. Despite the continuously changing nature of the conflict, it is crucial to ask local groups questions along the following lines: how included/ excluded do they feel within the Cameroonian State vis-a-vis other groups? What has made them feel excluded/included? Do they demand an independent state and who do they believe would lead? Where would women be in such a state? Do they demand greater inclusion within the state? Who/what are they extending support to during the current conflict (if anyone) and why? Where are the women leaders in the community? From what and whom do they derive their power and status? From where will future leaders be found? What are the consequences of school closures and education access on girls? On boys? On households? What do women think the men are likely to demand? How do they talk about the ways in which the men are engaged in conflict?

CONCLUSION

This research has led us to the above key clusters that aid in asking context-aware questions on the field. In the above assessment, this paper has striven to ask 'where are the women' in each trend and facet of the conflict. Asking this question allows for understanding women's roles in conflict that go beyond framing them as mere passive recipients of violence, particularly, sexual violence. Women's engagement with conflict is enmeshed into each dimension and driver of the conflict. Dialogue and resolution of the ongoing conflict will need to be attentive to the multifaceted nature of women's and other groups' engagement in a conflict in order to truly address and perceive the grievances at the heart of the conflict.

REFERENCES

Anyefru, E. 2008. Cyber-nationalism: The imagined Anglophone Cameroon community in cyberspace. *African Identities,6*(3), 253-274. DOI: 10.1080/14725840802223572

Baye, F. M. 2008. Changing Land Tenure Arrangements and Access to Primary Assets under Globalization: A Case Study of Two Villages in Anglophone Cameroon. *African Development Review, 20*(1), 135-162. DOI:10.1111/j.1467-8268.2008.00180.x

BBC News Pidgin. 2019. International Women's Day na 'Black Friday' for woman dem for Northwest and Southwest Cameroon - SNWOT. March 8. https://www.bbc.com/pidgin/tori-47495176

Brewer, J. D. 2010. *Peace Processes: A Sociological Approach*. London: Polity.

DeLancey, M. W. and M. D. DeLancey. 2000. *Historical dictionary of the Republic of Cameroon*. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow.

Geschiere, P. 1993. Chiefs and colonial rule in Cameroon: Inventing chieftaincy, French and British Style. *Africa,63*(2), 151-175. DOI:10.2307/1160839

———. 2018. African Chiefs and the Post-Cold War Moment: Millennial Capitalism and the Struggle over Moral Authority. In *The politics of custom: chiefship, capital, and the state in contemporary Africa*. (Eds.) J. L. Comaroff and J. Comaroff. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Gigova, R. 2016. Rights groups call for probe into protesters' deaths in Cameroon. CNN. 15 December. https://edition.cnn.com/2016/12/15/world/cameroon-protesters-deaths/index.html

Goheen, M. 1997. *Men own the fields, women own the crops: Gender and power in the Cameroon grassfields*. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

ICG (International Crisis Group). 2019. Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis: How to get to talks? Report n°. 272. Brussels: International Crisis Group https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/272-crise-anglophone-au-cameroun-comment-arriver-aux-pourparlers

ICG (International Crisis Group). 2017. Cameroon: A worsening Anglophone crisis calls for strong measures. Briefing n°130. Brussels: International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/central-africa/cameroon/130-cameroon-worsening-anglophone-crisis-calls-strong-measures

Krause, K. and O. Jütersonke. 2005. Peace, Security and Development in Post-Conflict Environments. *Security Dialogue, 36*(4), 447-462. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010605060449

Mahwood, P. 1993. Applying the French Model in Cameroon. In *Local Government in the Third World*. (Ed.) P. Mahwood. Africa Institute of South Africa. 2nd edition.

Mamdani, M. 1996. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Mqeke, R. B. 2003. *Customary Law and the New Millennium*. Alice: Lovedale Press.

Ndi, F. A. and S. Batterbury. 2017. Land Grabbing and the Axis of Political Conflicts: Insights from Southwest Cameroon. *Africa Spectrum,52*(1), 33-63. https://doi.org/10.1177/000203971705200102

RFI (Radio France Internationale) Afrique. 2017. Cameroun: Les premiers leaders anglophones libérés. August 31. http://www.rfi.fr/fr/afrique/20170831-cameroun-premiers-leaders-anglophones-liberes

Richards, P. 2005. *No peace, no war: the anthropology of contemporary armed conflicts.* Ohio University Press.

Socpa, A. 2016. On "autochthon" and "allochthon" divide: ethnic stereotypes and social conflict in Cameroon. *African study monographs,37*(1), 17-28. DOI:10.14989/209028

Tajoche, J. T. 2003. *Cameroon: History in the 19th and 20th Centuries.* Buea (Cameroon): Education Book Center.

Tchouta Mougoué, J. B. 2019. Gender in Cameroon's anglophone crisis. Africa Is a Country. 23 June. https://africasacountry.com/2019/06/gender-in-cameroons-anglophone-crises

13

The Gender Centre
is the Graduate Institute's centre dedicated to research and dissemination of knowledge
on gender in development and international relations. Through its research, training, and outreach
activities, the Gender Centre seeks to advance solutions to pervasive problems of gender injustice,
discrimination and exclusion.

Gender Centre
Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies
Chemin Eugène-Rigot, 2 | P.O. Box 1672 | 1211 Geneva 1 | Switzerland
T: +41 22 908 57 00 **M:** gender@graduateinstitute.ch

graduateinstitute.ch/gender