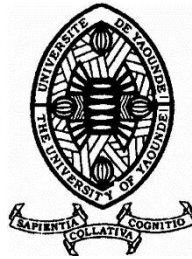


UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

**CENTRE DE RECHERCHE DE
FORMATION DOCTORALE EN
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**UNITE DE RECHERCHE ET DE
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THE UNIVERSITY OF YAOUNDE I

**POST-GRADUATE SCHOOL FOR
SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL
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**DOCTORAL RESEARCH UNIT FOR
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DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

**INTERNATIONAL FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS AND
WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT IN THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST
REGIONS OF CAMEROON FROM 1971 TO 2017**

**Dissertation defended on 28 July 2022 in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the
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Specialisation: International Relations

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DEDICATION

To

My late parents (Nubong Gabriel and Ngenjang Martha) and my children (Emmanuel Eric Akongnui, Martha favour Ngenjang, Nubong Jesse Joel and Nguinui Nadesh).

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In bringing this work to its final completion, we leaned on many people and institutions. I owe a great debt of gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. David NCHINDA KEMING whose criticisms, suggestions and academic assistance proved absolutely indispensable for the final realization of this work. Without his academic guidance and encouragement, this work might never have progressed beyond the planning stage.

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In spite of the appreciable contributions of the aforementioned persons, and especially those whose names have not been mentioned, the interpretation and analysis of facts as well as the defects that may exist in this dissertation are entirely mine.

ABSTRACT

This study examines the participation of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in the empowerment of women within the PCC and the wider society. It explores the extent to which empowerment initiatives of FBOs enhanced the involvement of women in the life of the church and society. The study has contextualized PCC's ecumenical ties with these FBOs before insightfully examining two women's empowerment programs that were funded by these FBOs and implemented by the PCC on their behalf. This involved empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women launched by the WCC in 1988 and the Women's Education and Empowerment Program that was financed by Bread for the World. Based on archival, oral and secondary data sources, which have been exploited using qualitative and quantitative methods, the study addresses the question: To what extent did Faith Based Organizations empower women for full involvement in the PCC and society? The study has revealed that gender agendas of international FBOs acted in combination with the low status of women to occasion an ecumenical partnership between the PCC and religious faith institutions aimed at enhancing the agency of women in church and society. It also found that the Ecumenical Decade that was launched by the WCC yielded more leadership opportunities for women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The study has equally found that the Women's Education and Empowerment Program empowered women through sustainable activities in ways that ameliorated their status. Building on these findings, this study concludes that entrenched patriarchy and accompanying discriminations against women in both the PCC and society were challenged through women's empowerment programs financed by international faith-based institutions despite the field challenges that were encountered. The study recommends that the PCC and other churches should engage with more FBOs in order to pursue the policy of empowering women.

RESUME

Cette étude examine ''la contribution des organisations confessionnelles (OC) à l'autonomisation des femmes au sein du PCC et dans les régions du Nord-Ouest et Sud-Ouest''. Notre travail parcourt les initiatives d'autonomisation des organisations confessionnelles ont renforcé l'implication des femmes dans la vie de l'église. L'étude a mis en contexte les liens œcuméniques de la PCC avec ces organisations confessionnelles avant d'examiner avec perspicacité deux programmes d'autonomisation des femmes qui ont été financés par ces organisations confessionnelles et mis en œuvre par la PCC en leur nom. Il s'agissait d'activités d'autonomisation dans le contexte de la décennie œcuménique des Eglises solidaires des femmes lancées par le COE en 1988 et du Programme d'éducation et d'autonomisation des femmes financé par Pain pour le Monde. Basée sur des sources archivistiques, orales et secondaires, qui ont été exploitées à l'aide de méthodes qualitatives et quantitatives, l'étude aborde la question suivante : Dans quelle mesure les organisations confessionnelles ont-elles donné aux femmes les moyens de s'impliquer pleinement dans le PCC et la société ? cependant, cette recherche révélé que les agendas de genre des organisations confessionnelles internationales ont agi en combinaison avec le faible statut des femmes pour provoquer un partenariat œcuménique entre le PCC et les institutions religieuses visant à renforcer l'agencement des femmes dans l'église et la société. Cette étude a également révélé que la Décennie œcuménique lancée par le COE a offert davantage de possibilités de leadership aux femmes au sein de l'Eglise presbytérienne du Cameroun. L'étude a également révélé que le Programme d'éducation et d'autonomisation des femmes a permis aux femmes de s'autonomiser grâce à des activités durables qui ont amélioré leur statut. Sur la base de ces résultats, cette étude conclut que le patriarcat bien ancré et les discriminations à l'égard des femmes qui l'accompagnent, tant au sein de la PCC que dans la société, ont été remis en question par les programmes d'autonomisation des femmes financés par des institutions confessionnelles internationales, malgré les difficultés rencontrées sur le terrain. Néanmoins, notre exercice recommande que le PCC et d'autres églises s'engagent avec plus d'organisations confessionnelles afin de poursuivre la politique d'autonomisation des femmes.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AMFCO:	Association of Meme Female Counselors
ATR:	African Traditional Religion
BFW:	Bread for the World
BM:	Basel Mission
CCAWT:	Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians
CDC:	Cameroon Development Cooperation
CMF:	Christian Men Fellowship
CWF:	Christian Women's Fellowship
CYF:	Christian Youth Fellowship
ECCMs:	Emergency committee of Cooperating Missions
EDC:	Ecumenical Decade of Churches
EDCSW:	Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women
EEC :	<i>Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun</i>
ENS:	<i>Ecole Normale Supérieur</i>
FBOs:	Faith Base Organizations
FOM:	Faith and Other Movement
IMC:	International Missionary council
LWF:	Lutheran World Federation
MBP:	Menchum-Boyo Presbytery
NGPOs:	Non-Governmental Organizations
PCC:	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
PCCAM:	Presbyterian Church Central Archives in Makon
PCCCAB:	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archives
PEA:	Presbyterian Education Authority
PSS:	Presbyterian Secondary School
PTS:	Presbyterian Theological Seminary
SEC:	Synod Executive Committee
NAVDEV:	Nkong Hill Top Association for Development

WCCs:	World Council of Churches
WEEP:	Women's Education and Empowerment Program
WMC:	World Missionary Conference
WWD:	Women's Work Department
YWCA:	Young Women Christian Association



GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I- CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND OF OUR STUDY

The empowerment of women has in recent decades caught the attention of Faith Based Organizations (FBOs). The latter's focus on women is anchored on the numerous discriminations they face in societies across the world. For many centuries now, religion, women and development are intertwined and it has been established that religion can either empower women for development or treat them in a way that has a negative bearing on the wellbeing of society. Christianity has had a global impact on the status of women. In the early Christian era, women exercised significant roles, given that the period is replete with examples of women who committed themselves to the Great Commission task. Clark describes how women served as owners of the houses in which early Christians gathered and as patrons of monasteries, churches, and the poor throughout the patristic and medieval periods.¹ Clearly, Christ's liberating teachings exemplified a more egalitarian form of Christianity before the trajectory of women's demotion set in following the institutionalization of the church. From this moment through to the emergence of various brands of Protestant faiths, as scholarship reveals, there was a struggle within the church on roles for women.² As centuries passed, the church remained in the path of patriarchization in which women were further pushed to the margins of power and leadership.³

The relegation of women within Christianity was exported to Africa when Western mission agencies sent missionaries to the continent to plant Christianity. With many Africans being converted to Christianity, women began losing the status they had hitherto enjoyed in African Traditional Religion (ATR). In fact, there were complementary roles for men and women in native religious professions. The prophetic roles of women in their societies were huge. Their power and status in traditional religious structures found expression in the roles they played as priestesses, queen mothers and ritual specialists. This implies that African indigenous religious traditions had long offered women leadership opportunities in their structures. Women in traditional communities were known to be powerful queen mothers and priestesses, with religious responsibilities spanning the entire society and affecting both males and females.

¹E. A. Clark, "Women, Gender, and the Study of Christian History", *Church History*, 70 (3), 2001, p. 398.

²M. Bendroth, "Gender and Twentieth-Century Christianity", In *A People's History of Christianity, Vol. 7, Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, edited by Mary Farrell Bednarowski, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, p. 307.

³R. L. Johnstone, *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*, Fourth Edition, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 197.

However, Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa led to the demotion of women's status in religion. Mission agencies that labored for the establishment of Christianity in the continent patriarchalized the mission church, with a second-class citizenship status offered to female faithful. This explains why scholars of women in the history of Christianity in Africa associate the white mission agency era with female demotion. This opened an era of discrimination against women in the missionary church, with nearly all mission societies barring women from the ordained ministry and denying them participation in their leadership structures.⁴

In Cameroon, some missionary societies introduced insights against women. For instance, there was entrenched patriarchy in the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon and women were underrepresented in all its echelons of power. In the slow process of granting autonomy to its mission church in Cameroon, the Basel Mission, just like other mission bodies, left behind a female-hostile legacy, which was inherited and perpetuated by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). So, both the Basel Mission and the PCC resisted including women in leadership positions.⁵ This was not unique to the Basel Mission as other mission agencies were also hostile towards women. The Mill Hill Mission, North American Baptist Mission and American Presbyterian Mission promoted Western gender norms in Cameroon and contributed in demoting the status of local women.

Following the rise of Christian feminism, the demand for inclusiveness in ecclesial ministry and authority gained propensity. Consequently, Christian churches were forced to fashion gender policies aimed at improving the status of women in their structures. This was the context in which FBOs such as the World Council of Churches (WCC), Bread for the World, and Mission 21 took interest in the empowerment of women for full participation in Christian churches and the society at large in the 1980s. This coincided with the global crusade for women's empowerment advocated by international institutions, governments and religious organizations. It was the intensification of Christian feminism that motivated FBOs to take interest in the empowerment of women. These

⁴ G. S. Adasi, *et al.*, "Gender Politics and Social Change: The Status of Women Leaders in the Presbyterian Church of Ghana", *Canadian Social Science*, Vol. 9, No. 6, 2013, pp. 105-110.

⁵ M. K. Lang, "Women and Christianity in Cameroon: The Case of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon since the Basel Mission Era, 1886-2010", *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2016, pp. 1-24.

FBOs began partnering with Christian churches in the developing world with the intent of advancing the status of women.

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) which gained independence from the Basel Mission in 1957 was obliged by this international crusade for women's empowerment in Christian organizations to rethink its gender policy. This amounted to the opening of the ordained ministry to women and the implementation of other gender policies that were intended to roll back the exclusion of women from its power structure.⁶ Tacitly, therefore, the PCC recognized the damage it had done to women, and opted to dismantle the structures that had kept women at the margins of the Eucharistic ministry and authority. The PCC opted to work collaboratively with international Faith Based Organizations such as the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World and Mission 21 in an effort to enhance the political, economic and social empowerment of women. After uplifting the ban on women's participation in the ordained ministry in 1971, authorities of the PCC adopted a gender inclusive policy which was intended to roll away patriarchy in the church and to empower women for leadership. The World Council of Churches which was committed to improve the status of women in its member churches began collaborating with the PCC to empower women.

The WCC had noticed that the power structures of the PCC were dominated by male Christians and resolved to work towards bringing women on board. In an effort to take practical measures to empower women for leadership in church and society, the WCC launched the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988-1998. Its key aim was to work towards the full participation of women in church decision-making bodies. In its 1989 General Assembly meeting in Indiana, the WCC adopted Resolution No. 8936 concerning churches' participation in the ecumenical decade. All member churches of the WCC were called upon to fully participate in the ecumenical decade by taking concrete actions for women's participation in leadership structures.⁷ As member of the WCC, the PCC was expected to take measures geared towards achieving the aims of the Ecumenical Decade. This was an opportunity for the PCC to reject patriarchy and to empower women for leadership. The evaluation of the Ecumenical Decade

⁶M. K. Lang, "The Long Trip to the Front Alter: Women in the Ordained Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, 1957-2010", *Ibadan Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 2, 2015.

⁷ S. D. Brunn, "The World Council of Churches as a Global Actor: Ecumenical Space as Geographical Space", *Geographica Slovenica*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2001, p. 65.

in 1998 revealed that more action was still needed to fully involve women in the church and society. Consequently, the Women's Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) was initiated in 2003 with technical and financial assistance from Bread for the World.⁸

In light of the foregoing, this study examines the contribution of FBOs to the empowerment of women in the PCC. It gives particular attention to women's empowerment in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women launched by the WCC in the 1980s and the Women's Education and Empowerment Program of Bread for the World.

II- LITERATURE REVIEW

The women empowerment debate has been of interest to many scholars resulting in massive scholarly works on the subject. This underlines the importance of women empowerment as an issue that is current. Indeed, it has been accorded a distinguished position by social scientists including sociologists, historians, theologians, feminists, religionists among others. These groups of scholars focused their researches on various aspects of women empowerment in society in general and within organized religions specifically. Those who considered the Christian religious tradition brought to light the patriarchal culture that exists in the church which has relegated women to an inferior position.

As a matter of fact there exists a huge scholarship addressing the marginalization of women in the power structures of Christian organizations. Some streamed their researches on the contribution of Faith Based Organizations in empowering women for greater participation in Christian churches. In this section therefore we are going to explore existing literature in view of understanding the varying approaches and perspectives that exist on the subject. This revision of church policies towards gender and its degree of effectiveness in the ecclesial empowerment of women cannot be examined without engaging it with existing scholarship. The literature, it should be emphasized, has the potential to inform analysis on the financing of women's empowerment programs in the PCC by Faith Based Organizations.

The literature on women's status within Christianity is huge. Ronald Johnstone⁹ examines the inextricable link between women and religion in the society. This sociologist outlines the

⁸ Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), Women's Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP), Gender and Human Rights Manual for Grassroots Population, First Edition, January 2017, p.1.

⁹R. L. Johnstone, *Religion in Society: A Sociology of Religion*, Fourth Edition, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1992, p. 32.

historic patterns of the relationship of women to religion. He notes that women have had and continue to have their relationship to religion, and within which they expressed themselves religiously. He pays particular attention to the church which is a religious institution within which women live their lives in their capacities. He insists that the female should be credited with primary religious responsibilities in churches where they find themselves. But Johnstone sadly notes that women in the church were defined as inferior to men and dependent on them. He notes that in most churches there exist customs subordinating women to men. This pushed the author to remark that there is a long history of second-class citizenship for women within Christianity. This was what pushed women to work for reform within the Christian denominations in the hope of fading away the patriarchal culture. This resulted in the struggle to ameliorate the status of women within Christianity. The movement has visited almost all churches including the PCC. The latter was forced to redefine its gender power and to work towards empowering women for leadership.

In her scholarly article, Margaret Bendroth¹⁰ examines the issue of gender in the 20th century Christianity. She notes that there had existed two millennia of established Christian custom of discrimination against women. This according to her amounted to an age-old pattern of predominantly male leadership in Christian churches. The outcomes of this, the author observes, was women's struggle to knock down laws lowering their status in Christian organizations. It represented a struggle against a deeply rooted social ideology about women's proper place in the church. This struggle as Bendroth notes was fed by the emergence of Christian feminism in the 1970s and 1980s. From this moment controversies over women's rights had to roil probably every religious body as was the case with the PCC. The latter was forced to end decades of arbitrary laws against women. On the overall Bendroth contends that the 20th century Christianity was marked by the struggle for more space to be opened to women, and this struggle also found expression in the PCC. So, Bendroth's work has the capacity to inform our analysis in interesting ways.

Similarly, Stan Guthrie¹¹ in her work on missions in the 3rd millennium discusses the possible role of women in missions. The author stresses that women have always been the backbone of the missionary effort. This explains why this religionist says women will continue providing

¹⁰M. Bendroth, "Gender and Twentieth-Century Christianity", in Mary Farrell Bednarowski, (ed.), *A People's History of Christianity, Vol. 7, Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, pp. 307-326.

¹¹ S. Guthrie, *Missions in the Third Millennium: 21 Key Trends for the 21st Century*, London, Paternoster Press, 2000.

their incalculable contributions in the 3rd millennium just as they did in the first two. She uses biblical evidence to support this view and sadly notes that there seem to be a return to an earlier era, where women were expected to remain in the home to care for husband and children and ministry was to be done by men. However, this author goes on to observe that disputes about women's role including the pastoral ministry inevitably have an effect on the churches. This was exactly what happened to the PCC, when it inherited laws excluding women from many aspects of church life from the Basel Mission (BM). So, the PCC, if one should go by the conclusion of Guthrie, is one of those Christian churches where women are expected to play significant role in the pastoral ministry in the 3rd millennium.

Using specific case studies, some of the scholars, most notably Predelli¹², Sill, and Okkenhaug, have traced female repression in churches to gender hierarchies that were promoted by mission agencies, attributing the improvement of women's status in recent decades to female activism. Overall, studies on the status of women within Christianity are unanimous in concluding that women have had second class status owing to an entrenched culture of patriarchy. These works have demonstrated the connection between patriarchy and female subordination, stressing that this situation occasioned the Christian feminist movement. This conclusion is relevant to the present study as it eases the comprehension of the plight of women in the PCC and why they began to advocate for more participation in the power structures of this Protestant church.

The involvement of Faith Based Organizations in the empowerment of women in Christian churches has caught the attention of academics in recent decades. In his article, Brunn analyzed the history of the World Council of Churches, arguing that it is a global actor in matters of conflict resolution, human rights, environmental protection and women's empowerment. Regarding the empowerment of women, Brunn notes how the World Council of Churches launched the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in 1988 in an effort to empower women for leadership in its member churches. It is important to stress that the WCC has 342 fellowship churches in 120 countries. The ecumenical decade was therefore implemented in 120 countries by

¹² L. N. Predelli, "Contested Patriarchy and Missionary Feminism: The Norwegian Missionary Society in Nineteenth Century Norway and Madagascar", Faculty of the Graduate School, University of Southern California, 1998; U. Sill, *Encounters in Quest of Christian Womanhood: The Basel Mission in Pre- and Early Colonial Ghana*, London, Brill, 2010; I. M. Okkenhaug, ed., *Gender, Race and Religion: Nordic Mission, 1860-1940*, Studia Uppsala, Missionalia Svecana XCI, 2003.

342 churches among which was Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The decade, notes Brunn, was aimed to be a call to the churches to reflect on the theological and ecclesiological structures that deny women their full participation and to plan strategic steps to bring changes.¹³ Brunn's paper also presents the operational mechanism of the WCC which can permit comprehension of how it partnered with the PCC to empower women for full participation in church leadership.

Etanefila used Bread¹⁴ for the World as a case example to explore the contribution of FBOs in community development in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. He particularly examined women's empowerment initiatives of this German-based religious agency, arguing that its activities liberated women from discrimination and empowered them for greater participation in the society. Bread for the World's collaboration with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in the sphere of women's empowerment is scratched from the surface by Ngam when he examines the Women's Education and Empowerment Program. The genesis of the programme, its execution and its bearing on the situation of women still beg for an insightful analysis, especially as new archival documents are available on the subject. This dissertation builds upon letters, reports, meeting minutes and other correspondences to reconstruct the history of PCC's partnership with Bread for the World in the domain of women's empowerment.

The vision and challenges of the PCC, a key partner of FBOs, are well developed by Dah¹⁵. He x-rays the church's historical developments and its understanding of gender equality. It should be emphasized that the financial and material difficulties faced in the implementation of its gender programmes, necessitated cooperation with foreign partners. Dah states that while the church has attained a level of self-propagation and self-governance, it is still striving towards financial autonomy. It was this lack of financial autonomy that pushed officials of the PCC to prioritize collaboration with FBOs in view of implementing its gender policy which was tilted towards granting more space to its marginalized female faithful. Though Dah's findings are very significant to our study especially as concerns the autonomy and ecumenical policy of the PCC, it should however be stressed that his conclusion on the strides made by the church as regards the

¹³ S. D. Brunn, "The World Council of Churches as a Global Actor: Ecumenical Space as Geographical Space", *Geographica Slovenica*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2001, pp. 65-78.

¹⁴ V. N. Etanefila, "Bread for the World (Brot Fur Die Welt) and Community Development in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, 1961-2015", PhD Thesis in History, The University of Yaounde I, 2021.

¹⁵J. N. Dah, "The Vision and Challenges of an Autonomous Church", in Dah J. N., (ed.), *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: 50 Years of Selfhood*, Limbe, Presprint, 2007", pp. 34-74.

empowerment of women are seemingly misleading. In fact, this is inappropriate when consider the fact that power structure of the church has remained male-dominated despite decades of empowerment.

Lang¹⁶ examines the bearing of PCC's partnerships with churches and Faith Based Organizations in Europe on local development in Cameroon. He has used the ecumenical partnership between Menchum Presbytery and Goppingen Deanery as a case example, arguing that it was the first large scale attempt by a presbytery of the PCC to engage in ecumenical relations with a foreign church district. It originated within the background and circumstances of PCC's ecumenical policy and international networks. The partnership offered the MBP great potential for improving the economic and social wellbeing of its people and the society as a whole. This is evidenced by the financing of a women's empowerment centre in Wum by the Goppingen Deanery which was intended to ameliorate the economic status of women. But in an effort to achieve its objectives, it initially laid its base on mutual trust and did not implant any mechanism for checks and balances which provided a conducive environment for mismanagement. The absence of transparency eroded the trust and confidence which the German partners had in it as well shattered the foundation on which development was to thrive. Lang's work is relevant because it provides the context of PCC's connection with international FBOs which no doubt explains why the empowerment of women became the focus of these religious institutions.

In his published seminar paper, Dah¹⁷ concentrates his investigations on how churches can collaborate in the field of missions. He explains that Jerusalem was the point of departure for world mission and goes on to say that the success of this mission was thanks to the financial aid from Gentile Churches which acted in partnership. This religious historian of academic reference argues that partnership in mission is a very daring venture for parties that decide to realise it. He sustains a pessimistic view on the involvement of Africans from varied denominations in any partnership. For him, partnership between parties from different cultural backgrounds is most difficult if not impossible due to inequality in decision making and funding; content and vision of the partnership,

¹⁶M. K. Lang, "The Menchum-Boyo Presbytery-Goppingen Deanery Partnership 1968-2008: A Historical investigation", PhD Thesis in History, University of Yaoundé I, 2012.

¹⁷ J. N. Dah, "Partnership in Mission: Its Origin and Development" in Dah, J. N., (ed.), *Mission in a Post Missionary Era*, Papers Presented at the Consultation on Mission held in the Presbyterian Church Centre Kumba, 8-15 April 2007, Bamenda, Pentecost, 2008, pp. 83-95.

reaction of the recipients and ability to implement programmes. He further looks at how ecumenism evolved from the 1910 Edinburgh WMC through the 1921 International Missionary Council up to the creation of the WCC in 1948. In fact, Dah's paper positions the PCC in the international ecumenical system, positing that the PCC leaned on its faith-based partners to address a plethora of issues: poverty, women's empowerment, promotion of healthcare and provision of educational facilities.

Similarly, Werner¹⁸ focuses on the beginning of mission work in the grassland and the difficulties engendered by World War I. According to him, the war led to the internment and ousting of German and Swiss Basel Missionaries from Cameroon. Apart from highlighting the role of the local evangelists in maintaining the churches alive, he largely dwells on the opening of the Mbengwi, Weh, Kishong and Bafut stations after the war. Werner gives a solid analysis of the economic, social and political background under which the PCC gained independence in 1957. He evokes the basic principles (constitution), structure and order of the church and goes on to present the thirteen districts that comprised the PCC by 1957. The importance of his work cannot be underrated since it provides vital material on the birth and evolution of the MBP. He also agrees with other scholars like Lekunze, Elangwe and Ndamukong that the Basel Mission despite her good initiatives failed to prepare the PCC towards effective autonomy.

The agency of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon has been examined by some scholars. In 2015, Lang's paper discusses the institutionalization of policies barring women from the ordained ministry by the Basel Mission, which were inherited and continued by the PCC. Lang adds that growing feminism within the PCC led to demands for the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry, and this culminated in the adoption of a gender inclusive policy, thus permitting women to become pastors.¹⁹ However, female pastors have suffered marginalization, and there is an ongoing call for their inclusion in the power structure of the PCC. Lang concluded that clergywomen were confined at the margins of the church's leadership, despite their call for leadership inclusiveness.

¹⁸ K. Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*, Victoria, Presbook, 1969.

¹⁹ M. K. Lang, "The Long Trip to the Front Alter: Women in the Ordained Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, 1957-2010", *Ibadan Journal of Gender Studies*, Vol. 2, 2015.

In another study, Lang²⁰ examined the evolutionary dynamics of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon since the era of the Basel Mission. He observed that during the era of the founding mission, the enhancement of a “Christian Home” was prioritized, causing the Basel Mission to adopt and pursue a domesticity gender policy that excluded women from the power structure of the missionary church. It was this predominantly male-dominated missionary church that gained autonomy as the PCC in 1957. Even though the latter was roiled by the Christian feminist movement that advocated for Christian women’s empowerment, the Basel Mission domesticity gender approach was inherited and perpetuated, at least for a few decades. The plethora of women empowerment reforms that were initiated such as female ordination, the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), and the gender perspective of the *Agenda 2000 and beyond Programme* all failed to dismantle the patriarchal culture in the PCC. But Lang’s study revealed that a few women gained empowerment and were associated with the leadership of the church, though mostly at the base of the power structure. Most of the affluent women emerged as leaders of the Women’s Work Department (WWD) and Christian Women’s Fellowship (CWF) which are narrowly defined female leadership avenues. The paper concluded that opportunities for female leadership in the PCC are more limited than for males, and these limitations have produced a composite picture of women that at least suggests leadership marginality. This dissertation, which pays particular attention to the contribution of FBOs to women’s empowerment in the PCC, took its inspiration in some substantial part from Lang’s paper.

Lang’s book analyses the repression and exclusion of women from positions of leadership in both the Basel Mission in Cameroon and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. In both churches as Lang insists, women were underrepresented in the echelons of power owing to entrenched patriarchy and recourse to controversial empowerment. According to Lang, female missionaries to Cameroon trained local women in fields like motherhood, domestic science and marriage, which yielded little or no leadership opportunities for them. The patriarchal culture was handed down to the PCC, whose power structure became all-male. But growing feminism and pressure from international FBOs led to a revision of the gender policy and the implementation of women’s empowerment programs. Two of these programs are briefly discussed in the book: female eldership

²⁰ M. K. Lang, “Women and Christianity in Cameroon: The Case of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon since the Basel Mission Era, 1886-2010”, *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2016, pp. 1-24.

and activities that were carried out in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

Klatt²¹ gives a synopsis of the evolution of the partnership between Menchum Presbytery and Goppingen Deanery from 1992 to 2005. According to Klatt, increased awareness about the partnership was achieved thanks to yearly collections, reciprocal Easter Sunday prayers, information leaflets, photo exhibitions among others. Talking about the partnership projects during this period, he states that while some projects were partly financed, others were completely financed from Goppingen, always in cooperation with Stuttgart and Basel. Generally, he makes reference to the economic empowerment of women by officials of the partnership with funds provided by churches in the Goppingen Deanery in Germany. He notes how the construction of a women's centre in Wum enabled women to be trained in fields like sewing and pig keeping.

Thus far, most of this scholarship has said very little about the financing of women's empowerment initiatives in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The literature is also silent about how empowerment programs funded by Faith Based Organizations transformed the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. So, this dissertation tells a different story of women's empowerment in the church by FBOs, which complements and extends the existing scholarship in this field. Using evidence from the PCC, the study outlines a new analytical framework that examines the effectiveness of FBOs' advocacy to challenge discriminations against women in church executive structures. Simply put, the literature has demonstrated a positive contribution of FBOs in women's empowerment for leadership in Christian churches. This study partly subscribes to this stance as it builds on evidence from the financing of women's empowerment programs in the PCC to argue that, even though there is a positive contribution of religious institutions, patriarchy remains a defining feature in the church.

III- THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

The participation of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in the empowerment of women in its structures and the society was started in the 1970s and has been supported by international Faith Based Organizations. The PCC, it should be stressed, inherited a patriarchal culture from the

²¹ H. Klatt, "The Partnership Since 1992-Developing the Bridge Supports", in Bernd, F. and Lehr, R., (eds.), *25 Years Partnership Between Menchum-Boyo and Goppingen*", Parish Pastorate, Eschenbach, 2005, pp. 28-35.

Basel Mission in 1957 and this led to women having a second-class status in the church. In order to ameliorate the status of its women, the PCC fashioned a gender inclusive policy in 1971 and began taking measures to empower women for full participation in its structures and society as a whole. In pursuing this goal, officials of the PCC established ecumenical partnerships with international FBOs whose work gave considerable attention to the amelioration of women's status in the church and society. These are institutions that are working for women and women's rights for a long time. They had been empowering women for their own rights, opportunities and equality in societies and churches specifically. By working together with these FBOs, the PCC wanted the much-needed financial resources and technical assistance with which to implement its gender inclusive policy. The policy was intended to free women from an entrenched patriarchal culture which had maintained them at the margins of power.

Little wonder the PCC participated actively in the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women launched by the WCC. The ecumenical decade spanned from 1988 to 1998 and was implemented using funds provided by the WCC and other international faith-based institutions. The activities of the ecumenical decade involved the inclusion of more women in the ordained ministry, the promotion of female eldership and the association of more women in the decision-making structures of the church. When the Ecumenical Decade ended in 1998, it was realized that more women had accessed the ordained ministry and the power structure of the church. However, patriarchy was very present and there was need for more effort to better the status of women in the church and society. This concern gave birth to the Women's Education and Empowerment Program whose overall mission was to empower and situate women at the forefront of decision making and socio-economic development. In specific terms, the program was intended to increase the literacy rates of women and girls in order to better their status, to enhance women's participation in decision making processes and finally to increase men's awareness on gender and development.

These two projects stand as evidence on the involvement of FBOs in women's empowerment, through the financing of the gender equality initiatives of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. While this women's empowerment agenda was positive for women in the sense that it opened up greater space for them in the church and society, very little evidence is available about the gender-related implications of the practical initiatives of FBOs to empower women. There is

need to probe into whether the empowerment program implemented with financial resources from FBOs actually liberated women from patriarchy and discrimination. As such, this study sustains the argument that the FBOs empowered women for greater participation in church and society despite the numerous challenges they encountered. These Faith Based Organizations, notably WCC, Bread for the World and Mission 21, worked through the PCC and eliminated discriminations against women by funding empowerment projects.

IV- RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study seeks to address the following research question: How far did Faith Based Organizations influence women's empowerment and what was its bearing on their status in the PCC and society. Likewise, from this central puzzle are pulled the following subsidiary questions: What were the bases of FBOs' involvement in the empowerment of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon? Again, what were the activities carried out by the PCC in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women? Foremost, in what ways was the Women's Education and Empowerment Program implemented by the PCC on behalf of FBOs and what was the situation of women in the PCC and society after the intervention of Faith Based Organizations?

V- AIMS/OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to assess the contribution and the empowerment of women in the PCC. Its overall objective is to examine the contribution of Faith Based Organizations in promoting women's empowerment in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the society. This general objective yields the following subsidiary objectives:

- The study seeks to contextualize FBOs' involvement in women's empowerment and the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.
- It examines PCC's women empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and financed by the World Council of Churches.
- The study analyzes the Women's Education and Empowerment Program which was funded by Bread for the World and implemented by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

- The study examines the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the society after the implementation of FBOs' empowerment program.

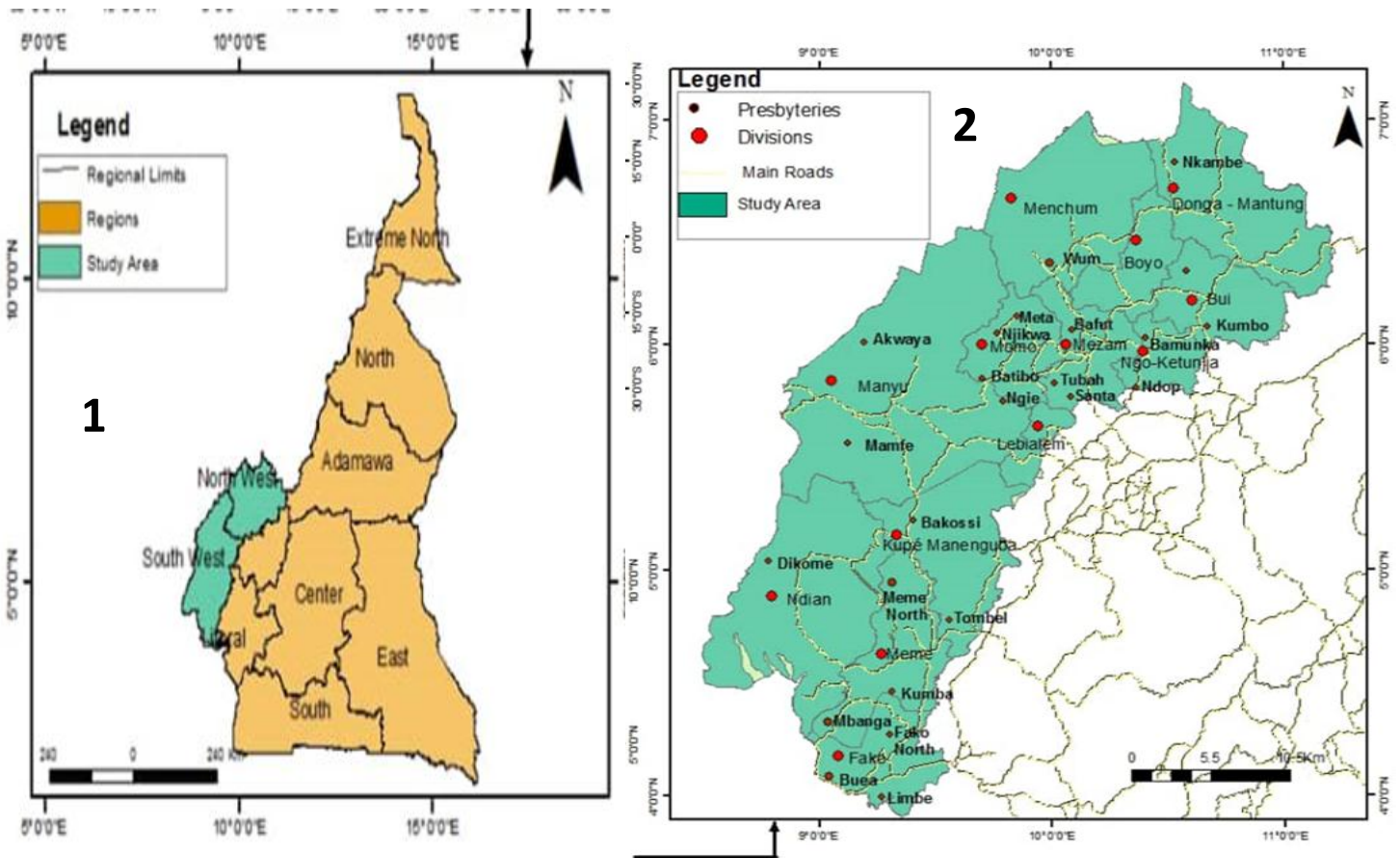
VI- DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

In this section, the study is delimited in terms of space, time frame and interest. Regarding the interest of the study, it is important to stress that Faith Based Organizations' participation in furthering the status of women provides an interesting opportunity to analyze the interplay between the implementation of women's empowerment programs and the involvement of women in decision making structures within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the society as a whole. The study therefore focuses on the contribution of FBOs in the amelioration of women's status in the PCC.

Concerning the locale of the study, it is relevant to emphasize that most of PCC's congregations are based in the two English-speaking regions of North West and South West, known collectively as Anglophone Cameroon. Hence, the locale of the study is limited to the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon where the PCC was concentrated. Besides, nearly all the women's empowerment projects by FBOs were implemented in these two regions. Erstwhile known as Presbyterian Church in Southern Cameroons, the PCC emerged from the missionary work of the Basel Mission. The Basel Mission began its mission work in Cameroon in 1886 and opened mission stations in the coastal and interior parts of the territory. In 1957, this Swiss-based mission agency terminated its work in Cameroon by granting independence to the local church under the name Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The Basel Mission, it should be emphasized, pursued a controversial gender policy which lowered the status of women in its structures. The resultant patriarchy was inherited by the PCC. This background permitted the existence of male dominance in the power structure of the PCC, which was only challenged when Christian feminist ideas were picked up by some members of the church. As such, the PCC was forced to initiate women's empowerment policies whose implementation was partly funded by Faith Based Organizations. So, this study on the involvement of FBOs in the empowerment of women in the PCC has as principal locale the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon as illustrated in maps I and 2 below.

Concerning the time frame, the study begins in 1971, when the PCC adopted a new gender policy aimed at improving the status of women in the church and society. This made it possible for FBOs interested in the welfare of women to finance a chain of women’s empowerment programs. The study ends in 2017 when the Women’s Education and Empowerment Program which was financed by Bread for the World was evaluated. It emerged from the evaluation that more women had been empowered for participation in decision making in the church and society. It is hoped that this study would contribute to the ongoing debate on the amelioration of women’s status in churches in Cameroon through the lens of Faith Based Organizations.

Cameroon showing the study area (1) , Presbyteries in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon (2)



Source: PCC Central Archive and Library, Buea, Cameroon

VII- SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The relevance of this study on FBOs' financing of women's empowerment programs in the PCC takes three dimensions. First, the study adds to the scholarly research and literature in the field. In focusing on empowerment programs and their bearing on women's status in the PCC, this study contributes to the women in religion historiography in a number of ways. It builds on evidence from the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to highlight how contemporary women's empowerment activities in local churches in Cameroon are tied to the visions of international Faith Based Organizations. In addition, the dissertation enriches the literature on women in the PCC by discussing how many women accessed leadership positions in the church thanks to the empowerment initiatives of FBOs. The dissertation joins a number of studies that have demonstrated that PCC's gender inclusive policy which has freed its female faithful from discrimination and marginalization was part of an international Christian feminist movement animated by FBOs. This study is therefore a contribution to our understanding of how the status of women in the PCC was improved in a way that was consistent with contemporary Christian gender policies.

Second, the study has the potential to help improve the quality of women's empowerment programs and their bearing on the status of women in Christian churches. It focuses on the financing of empowerment programs by FBOs in view of using it as a lens to explain why there was a consistent mismatch between the visions of FBOs and those of their partner churches, especially the PCC. Existing literature by women in Christianity scholars have raised the issue of continuing subordination of women to men despite decades of implementation of empowerment programs, and this study contributes to this debate by using evidence from the PCC to argue that programs funded by FBOs have empowered women for church leadership. But the gains made are limited by continuing opposition and reluctance by the male leaders to offer more opportunities to women. As such, this study provides predictions and prescriptions in view of ensuring that gender equality becomes the norm in Christian churches.

Third, the study, it is hoped, will improve FBOs' policy on women's empowerment. In fact, the conclusions of this study will act as a data base to FBOs such as the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World and Mission 21 and Christian churches, particularly the PCC. This will act as a guide in the formulation of meaningful policies aimed at improving on the quality of

empowerment programs. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon will gain from this study a greater awareness and more critical understanding of how FBOs can be a strong incentive for the agency of women in its system. And by highlighting how empowerment programs impacted upon the lives of women, this study will spur further research in the women and religion sector. Overall, this study explores an important issue and fills in a gap in the knowledge base. In this light, the worth of the study is evidenced by its usefulness to knowledge, authorities of FBOs, churches and gender policy-makers.

VIII- METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES

The realisation of this study is the outcome of profound research started in 2020. The research involved the collection of the required data through the exploitation of primary, secondary, tertiary sources. We devoted much time collecting both published and unpublished secondary sources on the PCC in general and the women's empowerment activities of FBOs. Secondary sources were obtained from public and private libraries in Yaoundé, Bamenda, Buea and Kumba. The documentation centres include the main library of the University of Yaoundé I, the library of the Department of History of the University of Yaoundé I, the library of the Protestant University of Central Africa, the PCC Central library in Buea, the library of the Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Kumba, the library of the Ministry of Scientific Research and Innovation, the *Ecole Normale Supérieure* (ENS) Yaoundé library, the History, Geography and Archaeology library of the University of Yaoundé I, and the library of the University of Buea. Published material was composed of books, articles, journals, newspapers, dictionaries, and magazine reports. Unpublished secondary sources included theses, dissertations and conference papers. The consultation of these sources related to the study yielded information on various aspects of the study and permitted us to identify areas on which more data was required.

In addition to secondary sources, vital information on women's empowerment programmes in the PCC that were financed by FBOs was obtained from primary sources. The primary sources comprised of archival materials (letters, reports, speeches, memoranda, correspondence, minutes of meetings and confidential documents) as well as interviews. It should be stressed that the foundation of this thesis is based on primary material. The required primary data for the writing of this work was obtained thanks to the consultation of archival repositories such as the Presbyterian

Church in Cameroon Central Archives in Buea (PCCCAB), the Presbyterian Church Centre Archives in Mankon (PCCAM), and the archives of FBOs that participated in the empowerment of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Repeated visits to the above archival repositories permitted us to have an appraisal of what already exist. It also enabled us to be aware of areas and issues on which to focus our interview questions for the fieldwork. At the PCCCAB, we consulted documents relating to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women and the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme that were financed by FBOs. After data garnered from archival sources was analysed, it became imperative for oral data to be obtained from carefully identified informants. This was necessitated by the relevance of confronting information from archival materials with the one from oral sources in view of ascertaining credibility. It was in an effort to meet this goal that we elaborated our working method and means of research. This enabled us to design a mechanism for the selection of our informants and the variables to be used. Some of these were age, sex and socio-professional qualities. With these in mind, we sought, identified and interviewed quality informants, especially those at the forefront of the women's empowerment projects. Generally, our informants were comprised of female pastors, church officials, coordinators of women's empowerment projects, representatives of FBOs and persons who in one way or the other were affected by the partnership. In a nutshell our informants were leaders and beneficiaries of the women's empowerment initiatives of FBOs. In order to collect credible data, we established a question guide focused on the "leading question method" wherein the informant's mind is explored, provoking other questions as the interview unfolds. The informants were scattered mostly in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. Both individual and collective interviews were conducted and data was recorded either in the form of note taking or with the use of a recorder. The linguistic ability of informants dictated our use of English, Pidgin and local languages during the interviews.

Generally, a total of three field trips were made during which a total of fifty-five interviews were conducted. The final stage of the research was characterized by the verification and authenticity of collected data. Both the internal and external criticism mechanisms were used to ascertain the trustworthiness of the data. While the degree of authenticity of documents was tested through external criticism, the reliability of their contents was determined through internal

criticism. This was followed by the putting of the material collected into a narrative account of the topic under investigation, and this was attained by selecting, organizing, and analysing the materials into topical themes with strict adherence to the chronological flow of the events. Thus, a blend of the thematic and chronological approaches was used to pull the evidence together in order to sustain the central thesis. The research is mainly qualitative in nature even though quantitative data in the form of tables and graphs is used to capture dynamics in women's empowerment programmes and their bearing on the situation of female faithful in the PCC. Largely, the study is based on quantitative data collected from the various primary and secondary sources. It is largely qualitative because we are dealing with a wide range of qualitative data from a plethora of historical sources. By using the qualitative method, we collected and analysed large quantities of non-numerical data. This enabled us to track and understand the experiences of FBOs and the women they empowered. Pictures and maps have been used in the hope of giving illustrative evidence in support of the study's main thesis.

IX- RESEARCH DIFFICULTIES

This study was realized amid difficult conditions. Finding informants to provide oral information on the subject was a very difficult task. Most of the actors and beneficiaries of women's empowerment programs are based in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. So, given the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon which is largely our study area, some of the informants refused to provide the needed information on grounds of doubts about the intentions of the research. Some of those who opened up were very selective in the information they provided. Also, travelling to meet these informants was sometimes stalled by the ongoing crisis, which had a negative bearing on planned visits to archival repositories in Buea. In order to surmount this difficulty, we braved the fear and threats which permitted us to travel to meet key informants and to collect data at the archives in Buea. Indeed, measures were taken at every level to resolve the problems that were stalling the research.

X- STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

The study is comprised of a general introduction, four chapters and a general conclusion. The general introduction highlights the context, analytical framework, statement of problem, objectives, significance, delimitation, methodology and organization of the work. It also engages

the study with existing scholarship in a way that reveals the originality and academic relevance of the study.

Chapter 1 provides a historical context of Faith Based Organizations and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon as a leeway to appreciate women's status in Christianity in Cameroon since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The historical roots of FBOs are examined in view of appreciating their gender agendas and these were placed at the center of their collaboration with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The changing status of women in the PCC will also be examined in an effort to understand how entrenched patriarchy necessitated the implementation of empowerment programs for women.

In Chapter 2, women's empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women are examined. The Decade was launched by the World Council of Churches in 1988 in view of increasing the participation of women in the leadership structures of its member churches. The PCC collaborated with FBOs to implement programs that were intended to achieve the goals of the decade. This chapter therefore contextualizes the Decade and explores the various activities that were carried out in the PCC with funds from FBOs.

Chapter 3 examines the Women's Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) that was financed by Bread for the World. It pays particular attention to the origins and vision of the program and insightfully examines its implementation. The impact of the program on the status of women as well as the difficulties that stalled its proper execution are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4, examines the impact and challenges of women's empowerment programs. It establishes the connection between the empowerment programs and the status of women. The chapter seeks to analyze why patriarchy remained the norm in the PCC despite the implementation of women's empowerment programs. The work ends with a general conclusion which apart from summarizing the entire work provides the findings of the study on the basis of which an overall conclusion is drawn.



**CHAPTER I: CONTEXTUALIZING FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS
AND WOMEN'S STATUS IN THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
CAMEROON**

Introduction

This opening chapter of the work seeks to contextualize the involvement of international Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in women's empowerment and the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The chapter examines the changing status of women in the PCC in an effort to understand how entrenched patriarchy necessitated the implementation of empowerment programs by FBOs. In addition, the chapter provides a historical context of Faith Based Organizations and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon as a leeway to appreciate women's status in Christianity in Cameroon since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The historical roots of FBOs are examined in view of comprehending their gender agendas and how these were placed at the center of their collaboration with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The central argument sustained in the chapter is that gender agendas of international FBOs acted in combination with the plethora of discriminations against women to occasion an ecumenical partnership between the PCC and religious faith institutions aimed at empowering women for leadership.

I- THE PCC: A SKETCH HISTORY

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) partnered with the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, and other faith-based bodies in the empowerment of women in its system and society. The PCC emerged from the mission work of the Basel Mission in Cameroon. In this section therefore, we will briefly describe the advent and spread of the Basel Mission in Cameroon as a context from which the PCC became an autonomous church in 1957. It was in 1886 that the Basel Mission began its mission work in Cameroon following the annexation of the territory by Germany in 1884.²² The Basel missionaries intensified their activities on the Cameroon coast by opening mission stations in many places.²³

²² E. Hallden, *The Culture Policy of the Basel Mission in the Cameroons 1886-1905*, Lund, Berlingska Boktryckeriet, 1968, pp, 22-25; Groves, *The Planting ...*, Vol. 2, p. 399. The Basel Mission paid 3000 pounds in all for lands and buildings taken over from the English Baptists. See for example Fanso, *Cameroon History...*, vol. 2, p. 101.

²³ J. A. Arrey, "Missionary Activities in the Upper Cross River Region: The Basel Mission in the Banyangland 1912-1957", Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1991, p. 34.

Thereafter, the authorities of the Basel Mission extended their mission work into the grassland region.²⁴ This was the context in which the Bali Mission Station was opened in 1903.²⁵ The station became the main center from where other interior areas were reached. This was followed by the opening of new interior Basel Mission stations in Bafut in 1904, Bamoun in 1906 and Babungo in 1914.²⁶ Unexpectedly, the expansion of the Basel Mission was temporarily halted by the outbreak of World War I in 1914. In Cameroon, the war continued until 1916 when the Germans were finally defeated and forced out of the territory. Following the departure of these missionaries, Basel Mission stations, churches and schools were abandoned in the hands of indigenous Christians. Basel missionary activities in the coastal and grassland regions were therefore continued by indigenes who were already converted before the war under the supervision of ordained Cameroonians like Jacob Shu, John Ashili and John Mosi were among the first grassland Christians. The Anglo-French partition of Cameroon shortly after the war further threatened the work of the Basel Mission. In what became known as French Cameroon, Basel Mission Churches were taken over by the Paris Evangelical Mission.²⁷

In British Cameroon, efforts by British colonial authorities to terminate the work of the Basel Mission were fiercely rejected by officials of the mission agency, arguing that it was underpinned by selfish British colonial desires. In 1924, during the Conference of Missionary Societies in Europe and America held in Birmingham, obstacles to evangelization in Africa were discussed. The agenda to replace German missions with British ones, especially in Cameroon was denounced. In response, the British government in 1924 lifted the embargo on mission work by German missionaries in its possessions. The Colonial Office then abolished all restrictions which had been placed on the Basel Mission since the war. In December 1925 Reverend Adolf Vielhauer arrived in Cameroon from Basel to coordinate Basel Mission work in British Cameroon. This caused the mission territory of the Basel Mission to be limited only to the British sphere.²⁸ Their

²⁴ H. O. Ojong, "Missionary Activities in Kumba Division 1916-1961: A Study of their Presence", Maitrise Dissertation in History, University of Yaounde, 1987, p. 36. For more information on this subject, read B. Omgba, *Histoire de l'Eglise Catholique au Cameroun*, Yaoundé SOPECAM, 1985, pp. 12-15; Mveng, *Histoire des Eglises*, p. 36.

²⁵ Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian...*, pp. 62-64.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-64.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²⁸ In the initial years, Basel Mission's Cameroon mission territory covered the entire German protectorate of Cameroon. However, its mission work during the German era from 1886 to 1916 was limited to the southern zone, given that its

activities were mostly concentrated on the coastal region thereby neglecting the Basel Mission stations in the grasslands. Fortunately, the British Government in 1925 permitted the Basel Mission to fully operate in British Cameroon by lifting the ban on German missionaries. This marked the beginning of a new era as Rev. Adolf Vielhauer led a powerful team to Cameroon. This time around, their activities were limited only to the British portion.²⁹ Working in partnership with indigenous evangelists, Basel missionaries reopened abandoned stations and intensified activities in Buea, Victoria and Bali. These stations became the main centers from where virgin fields were reached. The result was the emergence of new mission stations like Weh Station which was opened in 1932, Bafut Station in 1937, Bamenda Station in 1957 among others.³⁰

It is important to emphasize that the Basel Mission was conscious of the fact that independence would one day be granted to the indigenous Christians. Consequently, measures were designed to prepare Cameroonians towards autonomy. The Basel missionaries started training and arming more indigenous workers (pastors, teachers, health personnel, administrators and finance experts) with required skills to enable them replace the white missionaries. Consequently, the journey towards autonomy was commenced as early as 1935 when the first official constitution of the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon was drafted and adopted. The constitution was not only intended to lay down the guiding principles of the church, but also geared towards integrating and linking the numerous Basel Mission stations and churches with one another. The structure of the Church in ascending order was comprised of Local Congregations, Station, Districts and the whole Church.³¹ As a matter of fact, leadership was to be gradually passed down to Africans at the different levels of church organization as well as at the helm of educational and medical institutions. The highest governing body of the church was the General Synod which before 1949 had a membership of 25 (9 white missionaries and 16 indigenous pastors and elders).³² Thus

missionaries were prohibited from extending into the Muslim-dominated north. But following Anglo-French partition of the territory during the First World War, its mission territory was reduced to the British sphere.

²⁹ Mark Bolak Funteh, "Intra-Cameroon Baptist Convention Conflicts 1954-2002: A Historical Investigation", PhD Thesis in History, The University of Yaoundé I, 2008, p. 27.

³⁰ Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian...*, pp. 58-64.

³¹ J. Dah, "The Vision and Challenges of an Autonomous Church", in Dah J. N., (ed.), *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: 50 Years of Selfhood*, Limbe, Presprint, 2007, p. 34.

³² *Ibid.*

Cameroonians could now make their voices and opinions heard whenever Church issues were discussed during General Synod meetings.

Basel missionaries, however, accorded much priority to the training of African pastors who were expected to act as frontrunners in the evangelistic endeavours of the would-be independent church. Before 1937, the founding mission had only two ordained Cameroonian pastors. They were Revs. Joseph Litumbe Ekesse and Peter Essoka Diso ordained in 1917 and 1929 respectively.³³ In order to foster the drive towards autonomy, Rev. H. Stahl ordained twelve other indigenes between 1937 and 1945.³⁴ It was thanks to the efforts of these African ministers that the churches were kept alive after the ousting of missionaries of German origin during World War II. Indeed, the church had embraced the path towards self-determination especially as the number of ordained pastors further increased thanks to the Theological Training Centre of Nyasoso opened in 1952.³⁵ The anti-colonial storm in Africa was an added impetus.

As a matter of fact, the rise and intensification of African nationalism did not only wreck the foundation of the colonial regime, but also that of Christian missionary domination. The emergence of independent churches free from the control of founding missions became a recurrent affair. The wind of change was expressed with great momentum by indigenous clerics of mission churches who wanted their churches to cease being ecclesiastical colonies under foreign control.³⁶ Within the Basel Mission Church in Southern Cameroons, pastors such as Revs. J. C. Kangsen and Samuel Ando Seh embraced the anti-colonial campaign which they radiated into church circles.

The Second World War, it should be stressed, created administrative loopholes in the Basel Mission Church in Southern Cameroons, caused principally by the internment of missionaries of German Nationality. This was a long awaited opportunity for African pastors to prove their worth since plans were made for them to take over leading posts within the church's set up. The idea of appointing indigenous Christians to important positions was first suggested to the General Synod in 1946 by the Field Secretary, Rev. E. Peyer. He insisted that it was time for a Cameroonian to be appointed as Chairman of the General Synod so as to promote the handing over of more and even

³³ Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian...*, p. 78.

³⁴ J. Dah, "The Planting of Christianity in the Grassland", In Dah, J. N., (ed.), *A Century of Christianity in the Grassland of Cameroon 1903-2003*, Bamenda, Unique Printers, 2003, pp. 82-83.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Bosch, *Transforming Mission...*, p. 450.

delicate responsibilities from the mission to the church.³⁷ This was followed by serious discussions between 1946 and 1950 when the proposal finally materialized. It was a non-negligible break through as Revs. Essoka and Shu became Chairman and Vice Chairman of the General Synod respectively.

Similar transfer of authority was witnessed at the level of the presbyteries, mission stations and schools. Crucial posts such as treasurers and financial secretaries became placed under the command of Africans. This was preceded by the attempted preparation of Cameroonians and the church towards financial responsibility and proper stewardship. As early as 1926, Christian giving was encouraged as a means of preparing the stations towards self-support. The presbyteries that emerged from 1935 were encouraged to drive towards financial responsibility and self-sufficiency. Before the granting of autonomy, presbyteries such as Kumba, Buea, Victoria and Bafut had shown signs of financial responsibility, while the others were still seriously lagging behind.³⁸

Later in 1957, the Basel Mission judged that the local church was ripe for autonomy. That same year, the General Synod established a committee charged with the revision of the constitution. However, the issue of independence had to be brainstormed upon during the forthcoming General Synod meeting scheduled to hold in Bali from 10 to 15 November 1957.³⁹ Heavily attended by African and white clerics, the draft constitution alongside suggestions from presbyteries were carefully studied. The outcome was the unanimous adoption of the constitution which granted a quasi-autonomous status to the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon under the name Presbyterian Church in the Cameroons. Following political evolutions in Cameroon (reunification and the creation of the unitary state), the name of the church evolved into the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. From the name of the Church, it becomes clear that governance was the shared responsibility of the elders (laity) and the ordained clergy at the various levels of its organization. From 1957 onwards, the Basel Mission became a key ecumenical partner of the PCC. Their partnership was among other things aimed at closing the gender gap in the PCC through women's empowerment programmes, some of which will be examined later in this study.

³⁷ Werner, *The History of the Presbyterian...*, p. 80.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 82.

A- Understanding Women's Status in the PCC

The status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon prior to the intervention of Faith Based Organizations was anchored on the patriarchal culture inherited from the Basel Mission. This was a product of the biased interpretation of biblical texts and the cultural and institutional set-up of the Christian church. As such, society was offered with a patriarchal image of God which served as a basis for the marginalization of women in Christian churches and organizations. In the Western society in which the Basel Mission was created in 1815, the mutual influence between Christianity and the patriarchal culture resulted in a similar status of women in the church and society.⁴⁰ It was a decreased status of women within Christianity caused by the strong influence of patriarchal values which were characteristic of Western societies.

This attitude yielded what has been labeled as an age-old pattern of predominantly male leadership in Christian churches.⁴¹ It validates the contemporary depiction of missionary societies as patriarchal and sexist. As a matter of fact, women across the dauntingly diverse world of modern Christianity continued to sit in pews and work in kitchens in the way as their mothers and grandmothers many centuries before. This long history of second-class citizenship for women within Christianity was in part fed by St. Paul's perception of women.⁴² In fact, this Paul's view of women as inferior to men was entrenched and reinforced throughout much of the history of Christianity.

Within the Basel Mission, women were exposed to all sorts of discrimination as they were not allowed to exercise their spiritual gifts as well as to respond to God's call. The Basel Mission believed that the home was the woman's space which it considered to be at the center of the universe. The theology of marriage and family brought about the need to emancipate local Christian women. The emancipation was intended to introduce women to a respectable domestic sphere of proper female activity. According to Dana Robert, "issues addressed by the concept of the "Christian Home" included relationships between husbands and wives, principles of child-rearing, and a whole range of tangible components such as cleanliness, clothing, and domestic tasks."⁴³ In

⁴⁰ K. Klingorova and T. Havlicek, "Religion and Gender Inequality: The Status of Women in the Societies of World Religions," *Moravian Geographical Reports*, Vol. 23, 2015, p. 2.

⁴¹ M. Bendroth, "Gender and Twentieth-Century Christianity", in *A People's History of Christianity, Vol. 7, Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, edited by M. F. Bednarowski, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, p. 308.

⁴² Johnstone, *Religion in Society...*, p. 204.

⁴³ Robert, "The Christian Home...", p. 136.

Cameroon, the Basel Mission promoted a domesticity ideology that was meant for local Christian women whom European missionaries assumed to be lacking in modern aspects of home care, childcare, cookery and the like.

This domesticity ideology played a crucial role in inspiring missionaries and in shaping their attitude to the peoples and the Cameroon mission field in which they worked. This caused local Christian women in Cameroon to experience controversial transformation in their families and societies. The emancipation women received secured them a new status often defined in terms of dressing, cooking, and child-rearing, not full participation in church leadership. In fact, the limitations of the domesticity empowerment ideology and the resultant effects on the status of women in mission fields were huge. Women's sphere of activity was narrowed to the home and family. This outcome of the diffusion of Western women's emancipation norms by European missionaries is described by Lang as the "housewifisation of African women."⁴⁴ This was at the origin of women's leadership woes in the church in mission fields. It contributed in further deepening patriarchy in the leadership structures of the Basel Mission in its areas of operation. As a mission agency at the mercy of Western gender beliefs and practices, the Basel Mission played a central role in shaping gender expectations in its mission fields in Africa, especially Cameroon. Through its work, the mission enforced boundaries between male and female roles in ways that were detrimental to the status of women. This was to be in stark contrast with the privileged positions women occupied in traditional religious structures in most African societies. This complicates the claim that the empowerment of women began in the Western world. Rather, it is the exclusion of women from the leadership structures of the church that is attributable to Western society.

Overall, the development of the Basel Mission in Cameroon, from 1886 when its pioneer missionaries arrived in the territory to 1957 when partial autonomy was granted to the local church, was influenced by patriarchy. The roots of this patriarchy are traced to the emergence of the Basel Mission, its patriarchal beliefs and practices, its controversial "Christian Home" ideal, and its endorsement of the "civilizing mission" of colonialism discussed earlier in this chapter. In Cameroon, the Basel Mission incorporated into its system and work, the patriarchal standards of

⁴⁴ M. K. Lang, *Empowered Without Power: Women and Leadership in the Basel Mission and Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*, Bamenda, Langaa RPCIG, 2020, p. 34.

the Western world, causing its leadership and mission work to be defined as male. In the power structure of the Basel Mission which comprised hierarchical organs from the Station through to the General Conference, the voices of women were virtually absent.⁴⁵ These governing structures alongside those in charge of education and health served as instruments through which women were marginalized in the system of the Basel Mission in Cameroon. This patriarchal structure of the mission and the patriarchal beliefs and practices of the missionaries it sent to Cameroon, led to a controversial emancipation of local Christian women and their marginalization in the leadership structures of the church. The presence of a few missionary wives and single female missionaries in the Cameroon mission field rather increased the marginalization of women. This controversial women's empowerment measures carried out by these female missionaries contributed in narrowing women's sphere of influence and increasingly confined them to the home and family.

In both Girls' Schools and missionary homes, local women were consistently trained to function within the home and were hardly encouraged to play a front role in church leadership. No wonder leadership in the power structure of the Basel Mission remained in the hands of men. There was consistent discrimination against women to the point of barring them from theological education and ordination. The Basel Mission refused to train and assign women as pastors, evangelists and catechists. The ministry in the Basel Mission was therefore a men's world as women were totally sidelined. Lang assembles evidence of women's exclusion from theological functions, declaring that "Indeed the prohibition of local women from becoming unordained and ordained ministers of the Basel Mission Church served as a basis for their marginalization in the clerical leadership structures of the church."⁴⁶ This discrimination was also evident in ministry leadership structures like the Session of congregations, District Synods and the General Synod. Similar discrimination towards women was manifested in Basel Mission educational and healthcare structures as most of the administrative officials were male. In fact, the desire of women to be associated with the leadership of the Basel Mission was obstructed by an entrenched patriarchal culture.

⁴⁵ M. K. Lang, *Empowered Without Power: Women and Leadership in the Basel Mission and Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Bamenda, Langaa RPCIG, 2020, p. 34.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

This patriarchal culture and the resultant marginalization of Christian women were handed down to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in 1957. The PCC inherited a patriarchal culture from the Basel Mission, with its male members, especially the pioneer all-male leadership, aiming to reserve to themselves the power and authority for decisions and administration of the independent church. In the first two decades of independence, female Christians remained powerless as there was continuing recourse to patriarchal practices. Male members of the young Church assumed the power bestowed on them by the founding mission agency, and sought to legitimize the exclusion of women from the Church's leadership, notwithstanding that there were more women than men in the Church. So, the domination of leadership by a single sex (male) became a gender agenda of the PCC.

The all-male leaders failed to recognize the fact that every member of the Church, whether male or female, was gifted to serve if he/she was empowered to do so. Expectedly, the domesticity ideology was promoted as a hallmark of women's emancipation and empowerment. As such, the domesticity agenda of the Basel Mission was continued by the PCC through some of the activities of the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) in ways that further placed women on the path to marginalization and discrimination, not full participation in leadership.⁴⁷ The barring of women from the ordained ministry was also upheld by the new Church, as theological education and ordination were accessed only by men. The pursuance of these gender insensitive policies yielded an exaggaratingly male-dominated leadership in congregations, presbyteries, and central administration of the Church. Leadership in education, healthcare, and economic structures of the Church were also largely in male hands.

The PCC, as noted already, had an ascending hierarchical organizational chart comprised of Congregations, Presbyteries and the Synod. In the Presbyterian system, therefore, governance was exercised by the Christians through representatives whom they elected and who were called presbyters or elders. They held to the unity of the church, and the institution was administered through a series of ascending administrative units and institutions. Although leadership in the church was shared between the ministers and laity, key positions such as Moderator, Synod Clerk, Presbytery Secretaries, and Presbytery Treasurers remained the province of the ordained ministers, who unfortunately were all male.

⁴⁷ M. K. Lang, *Empowered Without Power...*, p. 34.

The foregoing status of women in the PCC, which was a reflection of the plight of women within the Basel Mission system, served as a context for the implementation of women's empowerment programs by international Faith Based Organizations such as WCC and Bread for the World. In the remaining sections of this chapter, we pay attention to the Faith Based Organizations that were pushed by the foregoing low status of women to partner with the PCC in order to empower women for greater participation in the church and society.

B- Faith Based Organizations in Context

In this section, the origin of Faith Based Organizations that worked with the PCC to empower women in Cameroon is examined. Specifically, the section discusses the historical roots of three FBOs, namely, the World Council of Churches, Bread for the World, and Mission 21. These faith institutions partnered with the PCC to ameliorate women's status in the church and society through the financing and implementation of empowerment programmes. It is widely accepted in international development that FBOs are important for development, especially for sectors such as the empowerment of women. The history of Christian organizations is traced to early era of Christianity when monasteries served as places of refuge and hospitality for the needy. This was swiftly followed by the establishment of Catholic orders for the purpose of providing charity to the poor, medical care to the sick, education for children and hospitality to strangers.⁴⁸

The birth of Protestantism in the sixteenth century led to the proliferation of Christian humanitarian organizations in Europe. Their charitable work was viewed as central to the mission of the Christian church, and their existence was anchored on Christian values of charity, mercy and the belief in the absolute value of the human person. Later in the nineteenth century when many missionary societies were established in Europe and North America, a conscious effort was made to send missionaries and humanitarian assistance to areas that were described as mission fields. This was the broad context in which Western mission agencies planted Christianity in distant continents, most notably Africa. The continent received missionaries and humanitarian workers deployed by mission agencies such as the Church Missionary Society, London Baptist Missionary Society, Basel Mission, Mill Hill Mission, Paris Evangelical Mission, Pallotine Fathers, American

⁴⁸ E. Ferris, "Faith-Based and Secular Humanitarian Organizations", *International Review of the Red Cross*, Vol. 87, No. 858, 2005, p. 313.

Presbyterian Mission, among others. In fact, the presence of these missionary societies in Europe and Africa served as context for the emergence of faith-based institutions.

The humanitarian crisis provoked by the First World War exposed the significance of FBOs in ameliorating the welfare of people greatly affected by the war. Little wonder the war increased the necessity of faith institutions and more of such organizations were created to care for victims of the war and other conflicts around the world. According to Michael Marrus, the immediate post-World War II era was marked by a dramatic increase in the number of Christian organizations that were created to provide humanitarian assistance.⁴⁹ It was in this context that FBOs such as Christian Aid, Church World Service, and Care International were created. The relevance of these faith institutions increased during and after the Second World War. The disturbing humanitarian crisis generated by the war motivated Catholic and Protestant church to set up more Christian faith based organizations. In 1947, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was created to respond to the needs of Lutherans forced from their homes by the Second World War. This was also the context in which the two FBOs which partnered with the PCC to empower women in Cameroon were created. I am referring to the World Council of Churches (WCC) that was established in 1948 and Bread for the World that was created in 1959. It is important to examine how these two organizations were established alongside their operation mechanisms in view of appreciating their ecumenical ties with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

II- GENESIS OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

The birth of the World Council of Churches is traced back to the ecumenical reawakening in the first decade of the twentieth century. The ecumenical reawakening initially took the form of cooperation among Protestant mission agencies aimed at rolling away their differences and resolving the numerous problems they encountered in missionary fields, most notably in Africa and Asia. The outcome of this cooperation was the holding of the 1910 World Missionary Conference (WMC) in Edinburgh. The gathering deviated from previous church unity endeavours by focusing on the world instead of persistently searching for a doctrinal consensus. Many scholars in the field of theology have described the conference as a fundamental ecumenical breakthrough⁵⁰.

⁴⁹ M. Marrus, *The Unwanted: European Refugees in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985, p. 83.

⁵⁰D. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, New York, Orbis Books, 1991, p. 369.

The conference inspired church men and women who were to be at the forefront of the ecumenical movement. Chaired by John Mott, the WMC resolved that efforts be made to promote joint action among Protestant missionary societies.

The outbreak of World War One in 1914 intensified differences among Protestant mission agencies, especially as the Allied Powers associated German missions with the German war effort and targeted them in the German territories they invaded. In fact, there was a clash between imperial concerns and missionary neutrality, with national sentiments threatening the ecumenical spirit began at Edinburgh in 1910. German missionary societies were caught between their patriotic tendencies that manifested as support for the German colonial enterprise and the required abidance to the ecumenical prescription of neutrality in the mission field. The expectation in German missionary circles was that the international ecumenism and mission cooperation could rescue them from Allied mistreatment. As military operations unfolded, it soon became evident that the defining of missions as natural partners of German colonialism was having an edge over their understanding as neutral and supranational, with no loyalty to Germany. So, the First World War had a negative bearing on the ecumenical movement which was intended to foster greater cooperation among missionary societies.

Despite the obstruction of the reawakening of ecumenism by the war, measures were taken by leaders of mission bodies to rescue the ecumenical movement. In 1918 just after the end of the war, a new ecumenical institution called the Emergency Committee of Cooperating Missions (ECCM) was created to ensure that there was cooperation among missionary societies torn apart by the exigencies of the First World War. The leaders of the Committee attended the post-war Paris Peace Conference where they worked behind the scenes to protect German missions and to sensitize world powers on the neutrality of missionary societies. While in Paris, those at the forefront of the ECCM insisted that a clause protecting German missions be added to the Versailles Treaty that was still under preparation.⁵¹

The challenges created for missionary societies heightened the need for greater cooperation. In 1920, Germanus V, Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, wrote an open letter to all the Churches of Christ in which he called for closer cooperation among separated churches.

⁵¹E. Spohn and C. Sauer, "War Zeal, Nationalism and Unity in Christ: Evangelical Missions in Germany during World War I". *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2009, p. 34.

In the conclusion of the letter, Germanus V suggested that a League of Churches parallel to the newly founded League of Nations be created as an ecumenical body. This suggestion motivated leaders of churches and missionary societies to renew reflections on the necessity to create an inclusive ecumenical structure. This served as context for the emergence of two organizations in the 1920s. The first was the International Missionary Council (IMC) which concentrated on the practical activities of Christian churches. The second ecumenical body was the Faith and Order Movement (FOM) whose activities focused on the beliefs and organization of the churches and the challenges on the path of their collaboration. Before the close of the 1920s, these two bodies had begun working together to enhance cooperation among Christian churches. In the 1930s, the need to create a single ecumenical organization became the main goal of the collaboration between the IMC and FOM.

It was therefore thanks to these two ecumenical organisations that practical measures were taken to create the World Council of Churches (WCC).⁵² The turning point was in 1937 at two separate conferences. During the Faith and Order Conference at Edinburgh and the Life and Work Conference at Oxford, deliberations yielded the commitment towards creating a council of churches. In order to implement this resolution, a conference of church leaders was held at Utrecht, Netherlands, to prepare a constitution for the would-be council of churches. Unfortunately, the outbreak of the Second World War in 1938 interrupted activities that were directed towards creating the World Council of Churches. It was only after the war that officials of the Faith and Order Movement and those of Life and Work Movement planned a broad-based meeting of church leaders with the intent of creating a World Council of Churches. On 23 August 1948, delegates of 147 churches assembled in Amsterdam and created the World Council of Churches by merging the Faith and Order Movement and the Life and Work Movement.

The main achievement of the creation of the WCC as a faith-based institution was a fresh discovery of the Christian fellowship which transcends denominational oppositions and national antagonisms. The existence and work of this body made relationships between churches not to be based on divisive confessional issues. Instead, churches were made to apply the gospel in all realms

⁵² For more information on ecumenical bodies, see W.R. Hogg, *One World, One Mission*, New York, Friendship Press, 1960, pp. 76-80; W. Gairdner, "*Edinburgh 1910*": *An Account and Interpretation of the World Missionary Conference*, Edinburgh and London, n. p., 1910, Pp. 17-25.

of human life: industrial, social, political and international⁵³. To follow up these concerns, the Department of Social and Economic Research and Counsel of the WCC explored the possibilities of supporting younger churches as well as Christians in Africa. Generally, the socio-economic and political concerns of the third world were placed at the forefront of the ecumenical movement. In short, development, women's empowerment and poverty alleviation were placed in a world perspective⁵⁴. The debate about the empowerment of women for purposes of enhancing development went alongside policy and procedures for church support to development projects, structure and organisation of ecumenical assistance to development projects and the mobilisation of the required funds. In fact, Christians were inspired to participate in reducing poverty and underdevelopment through obedient cooperation. The vision was the drive towards renewed communities in mission. Since the creation of the WCC, the faith-based institution has worked closely with its member churches through what may be described as bilateral ecumenical partnerships to empower women for greater participation in the church and in the wider society. To achieve this goal and its other missions, the WCC acted through both its member churches and other religious and social organizations.

Regarding its operational mechanism, the WCC has a membership comprised of Protestant and Eastern Orthodox Churches, excluding the Roman Catholic Church. Presently, the Council has 342 fellowship churches in more than 120 countries. Eligibility for membership in this ecumenical institution was based on the agreement of interested churches with the basis upon which the Council was founded. To qualify for membership, such churches had to confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the scriptures.

In terms of mission and vision, the WCC was constituted by the churches to serve the one ecumenical movement. No wonder it incorporated the work of the world movements for Faith and Order and Life and Work, the International Missionary Council, and the World Council of Christian Education. The Constitution of the WCC summarises its overall mission in these words:

⁵³ For a comprehensive study of the World Council of Churches see H.E. Fey, (ed.), *The Ecumenical Advance: A History of the Ecumenical Movement 1948-1968*, London, SPCK, 1970; A.J.V. Bent, *Index to the World Council of Churches' Official Statements and Reports, 1948-1978*, Geneva, WCC, 1978; W.A. Hooft, "The Genesis of the World Council of Churches", in Rouse et al., *A History of the Ecumenical*, pp. 697-719.

⁵⁴ Lossky et al., (eds.), *Dictionary of the Ecumenical Movement*, Geneva, William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991, pp. 268-269.

The primary purpose of the fellowship of churches in the World Council of Churches is to call one another to visible unity in one faith and in one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and common life in Christ, through witness and service to the world, and to advance towards that unity in order that the world may believe.⁵⁵

This main purpose of the WCC pushed the institution to identify key specific goals to be achieved through cooperation with its member churches. First, the Council sought to promote the prayerful search for forgiveness and reconciliation, the development of deeper relationships through theological dialogue, and the sharing of human, material, and spiritual resources with one another. Second, the WCC aimed at facilitating common witness in each place and in all places, and support each other in their work for mission and evangelism. Third, the faith based institution was out to express commitment to diakonia in serving human need, breaking down barriers between people, promoting one human family in justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation in view of permitting all human beings to experience the fullness of life. It was in this context that the WCC committed itself towards promoting gender justice in its member churches and society at large. Finally, the WCC had the task of nurturing the growth of an ecumenical consciousness through processes of education and a vision of life in community rooted in each particular culture context.⁵⁶ It was in light of these objectives that the WCC fashioned a gender agenda which will be discussed later in this chapter.

A- Structural Organization of the WCC

The organizational structure of the WCC was hierarchical from top to bottom. It discharged its functions through an assembly, a central committee, an executive committee, and various subordinate organs. The supreme governing organ of the WCC was the Assembly which met in various cities throughout the world at intervals of between six and eight years. Usually, the Assembly focused on a major theme. Assemblies were held in New Delhi, Uppsala, Nairobi, Vancouver, Canberra, and Harare.⁵⁷ At the helm of the Assembly was a President who played the role of President of the WCC. The Assembly was comprised of official representatives of the

⁵⁵ Constitution of the World Council of Churches, 2013.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ S. Brunn, "The World Council of Churches as a Global Actor: Ecumenical Space as Geographical Space", *Geographical Slovenica*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2001, pp. 65-78.

member churches, known as delegates, elected by the member churches. Its key functions were to elect the President of the WCC, elect members of the Central Committee, determine the policies of the organization, and to delegate to the Central Committee specific missions. Worth mentioning is the fact that the decision to partner with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon on matters of women's empowerment was taken by the Assembly of the WCC.

The Assembly appointed a Central Committee that in turn chose from its membership an Executive Committee of twenty-six members.⁵⁸ The Central Committee was the governing body of the WCC. Its primary responsibility was to implement the vision and policies of the Assembly and to fashion the strategies to do so. It was responsible for elaborating institutional and pragmatic strategic plans based on the policies adopted by the Assembly and for ensuring their implementation. It was equally the responsibility of the Central Committee to elaborate institutional and pragmatic strategic plans based on based on the policies adopted by the Assembly and to ensure their proper implementation in the interest of all WCC's member churches. Achieving this goal required the Central Committee to offer coherence and strategic leadership to the one ecumenical movement, and provide opportunities for consultation among Christian churches on issues of mutual concern, most notably rolling away patriarchy in Christian churches and society. In addition to these powers, the Central Committee elected the Executive Committee, the General Secretary, committees, commissions, and consultative bodies. It planned for the meetings of the Assembly, ensuring that there was provision for the conduct of its business. The Central Committee determined the number of delegates to the Assembly and allocated them among the member churches giving due regard to the size of the member churches of the Council.⁵⁹

It is important to stress that the day-to-day functioning of the WCC was ensured by the Executive Committee which was usually accountable to the Central Committee. It was entrusted with and made accountable for specific governance authority and responsibility of the WCC as delegated by the Central Committee.⁶⁰ So, at the headquarters of this faith based institution in Geneva were members of the Executive Committee and a large staff. The Executive Committee

⁵⁸ Constitution of the World Council of Churches, 2013.

⁵⁹ Read H. Kraemer, "The Formation of the World Council and its Significance for the Relations of the Churches to One Another", *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 1, No. 3, 1949, pp. 260-266.

⁶⁰ Read D. Heller, "World Council of Churches", *The Oxford Handbook of Ecumenical Studies*, Edited by Geoffrey Wainwright and Paul McPartlan, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2021.

was composed of the Moderator, Vice Moderator, and a General Secretary. There were twenty-two other persons who sat on the committee. The Moderator headed the Executive Committee which ensured that decisions taken by the Assembly were implemented. The General Secretary of the WCC was the secretary of the Executive Committee. The pioneer General Secretary was Vissert Hoof of the Dutch Reformed Church. The Executive Committee was comprised of twenty-five members and served for a term of four years. It was prohibited for a member to serve on the Executive Committee for more than two terms.⁶¹

The functions of the Executive Committee were many. First, it was its duty to oversee the finances of the World Council of Churches. It ensured that there was financial stability by coordinating investments, promoting income generation, preparing and adopting the budget, and taking measures to see into it that the finances of the WCC were properly managed. As a matter of fact, the Constitution of the WCC stresses that the Executive Committee shall “monitor resource management, assuring that the human, physical and financial resources the World Council of Churches needs are available and properly employed.”⁶² Clearly, the Executive Committee played a central role in the disbursement of funds to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon earmarked for the implementation of women’s empowerment programmes. In the second chapter of this work, we shall examine how the Executive Committee worked closely with officials of the PCC to carryout activities linked to the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women.

In addition to the Executive Committee were specialized committees. There were various commissions of Diakona and Development, Education and Ecumenical Formation, International Affairs, Evangelism, Communication, and Inter-Religious Relations. There was a subcommittee in charge of programmes whose chief function was to initiate and terminate projects and activities.⁶³ It played a crucial role in initiating the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women in 1988 and worked collaboratively with member churches to ensure the proper implementation of the programme. It monitored and oversaw projects and activities connected with the Ecumenical Decade in the PCC, especially the allocation of resources. As a member of the WCC, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was represented in some of the governance structures of the faith-based institution such as the Assembly and Central Committee. At certain moments, the PCC

⁶¹ Read D. Heller, *“World Council of... 2021.*

⁶² See Constitution of the World Council of Churches, 2013.

⁶³ Brunn, “The World Council of Churches as a Global Actor...”, p. 66.

was represented in the Executive Committee, subcommittees and in various specialized commissions. This is evidence that the PCC played a central role in the activities of the WCC, most notably in the domain of gender equality which was implemented through a policy of women's empowerment.

Since its creation in 1948, the WCC has always had a department specialized on women's work. The name of this department changed with time and circumstances even though its overall objective has always been to increase the participation of women in church and society. Initially, the structure went by the name Commission on the Life and Work of Women in the Church. In 1954, the structure was renamed as the Department of Cooperation of Men and Women in Church and Society with a broadened mission. This time around, the WCC committed itself towards ameliorating the status of women in both church and wider society. Later in 1971 when the WCC underwent a significant restructuring, the department charged women's issues was again renamed as Women in Church and Society.⁶⁴ This was the context in which the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was launched by the WCC in 1988. The PCC cooperated directly with the Department of Women in Church and Society to carry out activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade. Throughout the history of the WCC, the department in charge of women's work has usually been manned by a Working Committee of about fifteen members comprised of women and men representing member churches of the Council. The Working Committee was headed by an Executive Secretary who was responsible for specific programmes intended to improve women's status in church and society.⁶⁵ The Ecumenical Decade which will be insightfully examined in Chapter Two was one of the programmes implemented by the Department of Women in Church and Society.

B- Historical Roots of Bread for the World

The creation of Bread for the World (BFW) as a Faith Based Organization in 1959 is traced back to the devastating effects of hunger and poverty and the humanitarian crisis caused by the Second World War. The history of Christianity is marked by a commitment of churches to address societal problems like hunger, poverty, natural disasters, and human challenges generated by

⁶⁴ J. E. Crawford, "Rocking the Boat: Women's Participation in the World Council of Churches 1948-1991", PhD Thesis, Victoria University of Wellington, 1995, 35.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

conflicts. Clearly, the establishment of Bread for the World was a product of churches' commitment to address the problem of poverty. In fact, its birth was motivated by the vision and actions of faith-based organizations that applied Christian ethics to social problems, especially issues of social justice and poverty. It is relevant to stress that Faith Based Organizations have always gone beyond personal conversion by extending their work to social reform and the transformation of human societies.⁶⁶ There is biblical evidence demonstrating Christianity's connection with compassion for the needy in society. For example, Jesus Christ is presented in the Gospel of John for caring for the poor. In John 16:35, Jesus says, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."⁶⁷ Bread was considered a staple food that is a basic dietary item to fight hunger. A person could survive a long time on only bread and water. Bread was such a basic food item that it became synonymous for food in general. Today, the phrase "breaking bread together" is used to indicate the sharing of a meal with someone. Bread was also prominent in the Jewish Passover meal. The Jews ate unleavened bread during the Passover feast and then for seven days following as a celebration of the exodus from Egypt. The Bible tells us that during the Jews' wandering in the desert, God rained down "bread from heaven" to ensure that they survived.⁶⁸

This biblical context explains why Christian churches around the world took interest in ameliorating the welfare of poor and hungry people. This was happening at a time when societies across the world, especially in developing countries were confronted by hunger, poverty, conflicts and various associated challenges that rendered life extremely difficult. A key example that had a direct connection with the creation of Bread for the World was a famine in India, which affected over twelve million people. The famine was caused by persistent drought which began in 1945 shortly after the Second World War. It resulted in millions of deaths primarily due to widespread crop failure.⁶⁹ The Bengal Famine as it came to be described was also attributed to the Asian threat of the Second World War alongside with malaria, starvation and malnutrition. It is reported that military and political events had a negative bearing on the Bengal economy, thus producing the

⁶⁶C. Tichi, *Civic Passions: Seven Who Launched Progressive America (and What They Teach Us)*. Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2009, p.25.

⁶⁷ The Gospel of [John 6:35](#).

⁶⁸ See [Exodus 16:4](#).

⁶⁹ V. Mishra et al., "Drought and Famine in India, 1870-2016", *Geophysical Research Letters*, No. 46, pp. 2075-2083.

likelihood of famine. This was aggravated by the influx of refugees from Burma and wartime grain import restrictions imposed by the British government. The injurious effects of this famine in the heavily populated Bengal region generated international concern. Touched by the disaster, Christian churches in Germany began reflecting on how they could intervene even though Germany was still grappling with the devastating consequences of World War II.

The Second World War destroyed the German economy and caused an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. The immediate post-war period was characterized by a commitment of Christians in other parts of the Western world to provide assistance to Germans. The rapid reconstruction of Germany after the war was thanks to the generous assistance the country received from churches and governments across the world. Interestingly, Germans appreciated this assistance, and this motivated them to do same to other people trapped in poverty and hunger. The Second World War therefore played a pivotal role in generating interest to create Bread for the World. Aware of the famine in India and growing poverty and hunger in other developing countries, clerical leaders in Germany began encouraging Christians to donate funds in view of providing assistance to the suffering populations.

It was this heightened concern towards suffering people in India and other parts of the world that Protestant churches in Germany opened the first Bread for the World campaign in Berlin's Deutschland Halle in front of twelve thousand visitors. Held on 12 December 1959, the massively attended fundraising ceremony turned out to be an inaugural ceremony for Bread for the World. During the ceremony, the sum of 19 million marks was raised and placed at the disposal of the young faith-based organization. Indeed, the success of this first campaign was a breakthrough to the establishment of Bread for the World as an organization. The funds were earmarked for 13 projects in more than ten countries on three continents. This was how the project began moving to other continents after its birth. From its birth, the focal point of Bread for the World's work was India, where child nutrition was improved and agricultural projects were developed. Due to its great success, the campaign was repeated during the Advent period of 1960 and was finally made a permanent institution under the umbrella of the *Diakonisches Werk* that is the Social Service Agency of the Protestant Church in Germany.

Later on 9 November 1960, the Working Group for Overseas Service of Protestant Churches in Germany was put in place.⁷⁰ This was made possible by the establishment of an "Overseas Register" in the Protestant student congregations, which alerted interested young academics to important responsibilities in other regions of the world. By 1961, Bread for the World had gained the status of an international faith based institution as it was already fighting poverty and hunger in over ninety countries. As a matter of fact, the organization became a globally active development and relief agency of Protestant churches in Germany. With its work focused on food security, the promotion of health and education, access to clean water, the strengthening of democracy, respecting human rights, keeping peace and the integrity of creation, the organization commenced work in many African countries. An essential feature of its work in this part of the Global South was the close and continuous cooperation with local, often church-related partner organizations. Overall, Bread for the World is best understood as the development agency of the Protestant churches in Germany. It is anchored in the Protestant regional and free churches in Germany, in their parishes and diaconal agencies. Its work is rooted in Christian charity and practical solidarity. Writing to leaders of the United States Senate in 2020, the President of Bread for the World, Rev. Eugene Cho, described the organization in these words:

Bread for the World is a collective Christian voice urging our nation's leaders to end hunger at home and abroad. We are an advocacy network with 250,000 activists, 3,500 local churches, and partnerships with many national denominations and other faith-based and anti-hunger organizations throughout the world.⁷¹

The crafting of the modern Cameroon state in 1961 from a dual colonial mould and the increasing level of poverty caught the attention of Bread for the World. This German-based Christian aid agency expressed the concern to extend its work to Cameroon which was grappling with weak healthcare services and a lack of potable water inherited from the colonial masters. The lack of potable water, poor agricultural methods with the potential of food insecurity and the marginalization of women were key problems facing Cameroon at the time. Little wonder Bread for the World resolved to extend its development activities to Cameroon in the early 1960s. The Bread for the World-Cameroon cooperation was further made possible by local Protestant churches

⁷⁰ V. Ngam, "Bread for the World and Community Development in Cameroon, 1961-2016" PhD Thesis in History, the University of Yaounde I, 2021.

⁷¹ Letter by Rev. Eugene Cho to leaders of United States Senate, 13 December 2020.

that emerged from the mission work of German Protestant churches. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was one of the mainstream Protestant churches whose ecumenical relations with German Protestant churches enabled Bread for the World to be aware about Cameroon and its health, educational, water, and gender challenges.

1- Objectives and Structural Organization of Bread for the World

The principal mission of Bread for the World was to address challenges that humanity faces. No wonder the Faith Based Organization placed the right of marginalized and disadvantaged people to live in dignity at the heart of its work. Key issues of the organization's work were food security, the promotion of health and education, the access to water, the strengthening of democracy, respecting human rights, keeping peace, and the integrity of creation. Pointedly, gender equality was also a key objective of Bread for the World. The disadvantages faced by women and girls were manifold particularly in Africa. Of the malnourished people in the world, more than half were women. Women worldwide usually earn significantly less than men for the same work done. Maternal mortality was unnecessarily high, girls had fewer educational opportunities than boys, and inheritance laws almost everywhere in Cameroon discriminate against daughters and wives. In addition, women and girls suffered from widespread gender-based and sexualized violence. Bread for the World wanted to change all that and this was possible because gender relations were not static that is, they changed in accordance to economic, social and societal developments.

In an effort to achieve its objectives, Bread for the World cooperated with churches in recipient countries. One of the agency's objectives was to join with ecumenical partners in organizing the church's contribution to overcoming poverty, hunger and need in the world and tackling their root causes. Specifically, this meant that individuals, communities, churches and civil society organisations share their experiences and work together for justice and peace, and to preserve the integrity of creation. This was facilitated by the structural organization of Bread for the World. It had a hierarchical administrative structure and Berlin was its headquarters.⁷² The supreme governing organ was the Board of Directors which took important decisions on the work of the organization. The decisions of the Board of Directors were promulgated by the President.

⁷² A. Simon, *the Rising of Bread for the World: An Outcry of Citizens against Hunger*, Mahwah, N.J., Paulist Press, 2009, p. 23.

An organ for the maintenance of policy assisted the Board of Directors in relation to International and Domestic policy issues. While the Finance Department lobbied, kept and dispatched funds for programs earmarked by the Board of Directors. In order to ensure the implementation of various projects at the continental level, continental representatives were designated in the various continents. It is important to note that the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon was based in Africa and all its projects that were funded by Bread for the World were monitored by the African Regional representative.

It emerges from the structural organization of Bread for the World that there was no official representing the organization in Cameroon. Rather, Bread for the World worked with local partners such as the PCC who implemented its projects in Cameroon. This was done under the supervision of the Regional Representative for Africa whose duty was to monitor all the projects funded in Africa and Cameroon. The African Regional Representative visited annually to see and evaluate the progress of projects in Cameroon. The Regional Representative met with all partner organizations in Cameroon during his annual visits.

2- PCC and FBOs: Partners in Women's Empowerment

The collaboration between the PCC and Christian organization in the empowerment of women is traced to the rise and intensification of Christian feminism. The latter was born in the context of Enlightenment with the intent of ending discriminations against women within Christianity. It was the propagation of the Christian feminist ideals that pushed Western Christian churches to initiate policies and programmes aimed at rolling away various forms of discriminations directed at women. Faith Based Organizations like Bread for the World and the World Council of Churches defined gender policies and took practical steps towards implementing them through partnerships with Christian churches and secular organizations.

This was the context in which the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon entered into a partnership with the World Council of Churches. The PCC gained independence from the Basel Mission in 1957 and later on became a member of the WCC in 1961.⁷³ The PCC accepted to adhere to the common tenets and basis of this international faith based institution. This meant that the PCC

⁷³ A.J.V. Bent, *Index to the World Council of Churches' Official Statements and Reports, 1948-1978*, Geneva, WCC, 1978, p. 76.

had accepted to revise its gender policy in order to create more space for women. As a matter of fact, the promotion of gender justice in its member churches was one of the chief goals of the WCC. The PCC and the WCC recognized the need to build a culture of justice with no discrimination against women in church and society. This paved the way for the empowerment of women to be positioned at the centre of the ecumenical partnership between the WCC and Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. In 1988 when the WCC launched its Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, the PCC revised its gender policy and carried out activities in the context of this Ecumenical Decade with the intent of associating more women with church life and leadership.

The PCC also entered into a partnership with Bread for the World in an effort to empower women in church and society. It is important to stress that Bread for the World depended on recipient institutions for the implementation of its gender justice programmes in Cameroon.⁷⁴ Quite often, this German-based faith organization was dependent upon the PCC to implement some of its projects. This was because the PCC had detailed and invaluable knowledge of community development needs and local populations. The partnership was also a product of PCC's ecumenical policies and international networks. According to this policy, the PCC maintains very special relations with churches and ecumenical organizations inside and outside Cameroon.⁷⁵ In the late 1960s PCC's partnership with BFW was officialised. From this moment, the authorities of the church began receiving ecumenical aid from BFW for various social and economic projects, most notably in the domain of women's empowerment. As a recipient institution whose duty was to use ecumenical funds in ways beneficial to recipient communities, the PCC had to submit reports to BFW on the women's empowerment projects that were initiated. So, the Women's Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) which will be insightfully examined in chapter three was one of the projects in Cameroon that was adequately funded by BFW and executed by the PCC.

Generally, the gender agenda of the ecumenical partnerships between the PCC and FBOs was the building of just communities of women and men. These ecumenical partners had come to the realization that experiences, perspectives and participation of both women and men are equally needed for the transforming renewal of church and society. They understood just gender relations

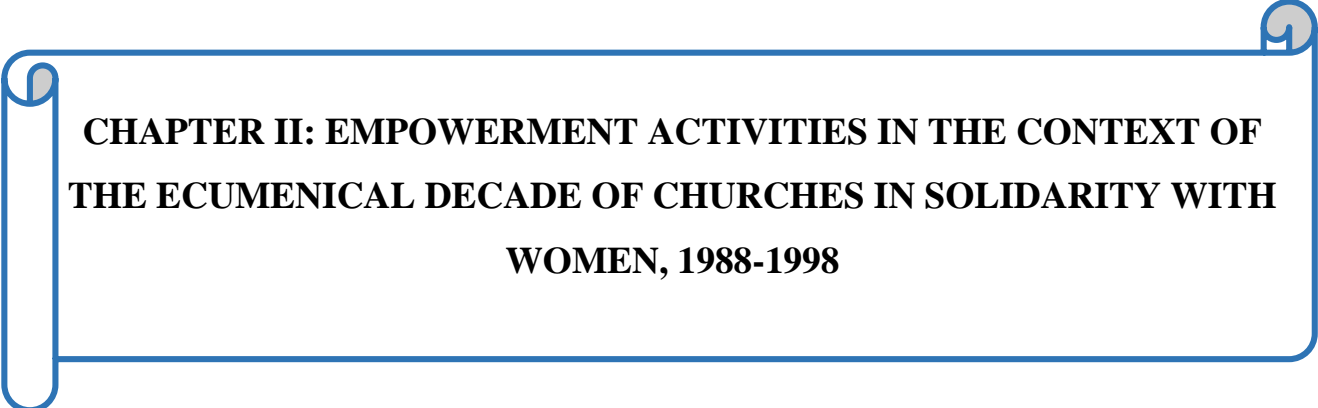
⁷⁴ Simon, *the Rising of Bread for the World...*, p. 72.

⁷⁵ Presbyterian Church Centre Archives, Mankon (PCCAM), Constitution of the Presbyterian Church in the Cameroons, 13 November 1957, p. 9.

as an essential element in both the church and wider society. No wonder practical efforts were made to promote gender justice in the PCC and Cameroonian society.

Conclusion

This chapter has contextualized the involvement of international Faith Based Organizations in women's empowerment and the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The chapter has provided a historical context of Faith Based Organizations and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. This has served as a leeway to appreciating women's status in Christianity in Cameroon since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The historical roots of FBOs have also been examined in ways that have exposed their gender agendas and how these were placed at the center of their ecumenical ties with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The changing status of women in the PCC has also been examined, and this has revealed there was entrenched culture of patriarchy within the church. This situation, as the chapter further demonstrates, necessitated the implementation of empowerment programs for women. The chapter concludes that gender agendas of international FBOs acted in combination with the low status of women to occasion an ecumenical partnership between the PCC and religious faith institutions aimed at enhancing the agency of women in church and society.



**CHAPTER II: EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF
THE ECUMENICAL DECADE OF CHURCHES IN SOLIDARITY WITH
WOMEN, 1988-1998**

Introduction

The main objective of this chapter is to examine PCC's women empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and financed by the World Council of Churches. The mission of this decade of solidarity was to empower women within member churches of the WCC. As a member of the WCC, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon embraced the vision of the Ecumenical Decade and took measures to open more space for women within its structures. In this chapter, attention is given to activities of the Ecumenical Decade in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, with funding and supervision by the World Council of Churches. The first section discusses the origins and vision of the ecumenical decade. In the second section, the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry through theological training, ordination, and placement are examined. The third section examines women's agency in eldership which was male-dominated prior to the launching of the Decade. The final section discusses the challenges of the ecumenical decade in the PCC. The chapter sustains the argument that the Ecumenical Decade that was launched by the WCC yielded more leadership opportunities for women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

I- ORIGINS AND VISION OF THE ECUMENICAL DECADE

The launching of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women is traced to the commitment of the WCC to empower women for leadership within Christian churches and the wider society.⁷⁶ Following its establishment in 1948, the WCC raised questions about women's role in the church and made the issue the focus of discussions at its meetings. This was how the WCC placed gender justice at the heart of its work considering that patriarchy had placed men in the structures of power at the detriment of women. In nearly all member churches of the WCC, including the PCC as noted in the previous chapter, women were subjected to conditions of injustice and oppression. Rolling away this injustice and promoting the agency of women in Christian churches became one of the chief goals of the WCC.

Considering its status as an international FBO, the WCC initiated global women's work programs in collaboration with its member churches. During its pioneer Assembly in Amsterdam

⁷⁶ B. Mbatha, "Decade of Solidarity", *Agenda*, Vol. 11, No. 25, 1995, pp. 51-54.

in 1948, the WCC released a statement titled “The Life and Work of Women in the Church.”⁷⁷ This was evidence that the FBO was serious about its intention to fight against gender injustice in Christian churches. The statement emphasized that churches were not making the best use of women’s gifts owing to indifference to the ministry of women and robust opposition from men. In 1958, the pioneer General Secretary of the WCC, Willem Visser’t Hooft, drew churches’ attention to the lack of gender justice in their structures. He stressed that churches had not really faced up to the basic tenets of their own faith concerning the relationships of men and women in the fellowships of the Church of Christ.⁷⁸ This necessitated deeper reflections on how discriminations against women in Christian churches were to be addressed.

In the 1970s, growing feminist voices in the WCC transformed the liberation of women from oppression and marginalization into a prioritized ecumenical goal. This was evidenced by the WCC’s participation in the 1974 UN International Women’s Year through its sponsoring of a consultation on “Sexism in the 1970s.” Later in 1975, the WCC held its 5th Assembly in Nairobi and recognized sexism as oppression. The FBO further pledged to resist and uproot gender discrimination in Christian churches. As a matter of fact, the WCC linked women's oppression with dehumanizing theologies and patriarchal church structures. In the words of Allan, “Women's absence from decision-making structures was named as an obstacle to church unity and churches were urged to engage in theological and biblical work drawing on the experiences and insights of women.”⁷⁹ No wonder the years following the Nairobi Assembly were characterized by WCC-sponsored consultations in view of generating awareness of the marginalization of women in Christian churches and society. This culminated in a study on the community of women and men in the church in 1978. In the course of the study, women and men were invited to constitute study groups to reflect on their experiences and visions as members of the same Christian community. The study touched on various issues ranging from the ordination of women to their participation in all aspects of church life and leadership. In 1981, the findings of the study were submitted to the Central Committee of the WCC. The study found that women were subjected to incredible pain and agony in Christian churches. It recommended that the WCC should work towards building a

⁷⁷ G. Allan, “We Intend to Move Together: The Story of Ecumenical Women on a Pilgrimage of Gender Justice”, *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 104, No. 1, 2015, pp. 3-17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

church in which all its members irrespective of gender share, serve, and celebrate in solidarity without any discrimination.

By this time, it had become clear that robust action was needed to free women from the grips of patriarchy in Christian churches. The Central Committee of the WCC resolved to work towards equal participation for men and women in its member churches. Little wonder it called for a consistent monitoring of churches' responses to the community study and discussion of women's participation in the life of the church. In 1984, a team sent by the WCC supervised how the PCC was grappling with the issue of women's marginalization and promised to accompany the church in that direction. Similar teams were dispatched to all member churches of the WCC for the same purpose. These events, it should be noted, coincided with the UN Decade for Women, 1976-1985. Unfortunately, there was little or no response from churches to the concerns of the UN Decade. Indeed, the gifts and voices of women in churches were continuously overlooked despite work done in the context of the UN Decade for Women.

It was this failure of the UN Decade and WCC's rich experience in matters of women's emancipation that created the need for a special decade for women in church. The Central Committee of the WCC therefore agreed to launch an Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988–1998) in view of the need for a long-term framework for addressing the concerns and perspectives of women.⁸⁰ At Easter 1988, the Decade was officially opened. The WCC released a message launching the Decade, declaring that:

During the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with women, we as a church will rise up and identify the obstacles to women's full and active participation in church and society. We will work to remove the obstacles. We will affirm women's perspectives and contributions. We will pluck up and break down, build and plant. We will participate with God in transforming the world. We will say to each other, We will roll the stone away.⁸¹

The Ecumenical Decade was subsequently launched across the world by member churches and national and regional ecumenical organizations. The All African Conference of Churches (AACC) to which the PCC is a member launched the Decade in August 1988 and called on all its member churches to initiate women's empowerment activities. The PCC launched the Decade in September

⁸⁰ Mbatha, "Decade of Solidarity...", p. 53.

⁸¹ World Council of Churches, Easter Message, 1988, p.1.

1988 and pledged to revise its gender policy and to empower women for leadership in its power structures.

A- Objectives of the Ecumenical Decade

The Ecumenical Decade was aimed at ameliorating the status of women in Christian churches. It was addressed to churches and to women at the local level to empower women to challenge structures and to respond to the issues in the society around them. The Decade prioritized the situation of women in the churches as well as the churches' participation in improving the conditions for women in society. The central committee further affirmed that as the Decade was implemented the emphasis should be “on work with women and not for women,” with the intention of encouraging every parish, community, diocese and district to work out specific ways to bring about needed changes to ensure greater participation of women.⁸² These intentions were given substance in five aims that guided work throughout the Decade.

First, the Decade was aimed at empowering women to challenge oppressive structures in the global community, their country, and their church. Second, it was intended to affirm, through shared leadership and decision-making, theology and spirituality, the decisive contributions of women in churches and communities. Third, by launching the Ecumenical Decade, the WCC wanted to provide visibility to women's perspectives and actions in the work and struggle for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Fourth, it aimed at empowering the churches to free themselves from racism, sexism and classism; from teachings and practices that discriminate against women. Finally, the WCC saw the Decade as a means through which churches could be encouraged to take actions in solidarity with women.⁸³ Taking into consideration these five aims and conscious of previous failures since 1948, the WCC called on its member churches to initiate actions and activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade. In its capacity as a member of the WCC, the PCC accepted to recognize that the position of women in the church is a theological issue requiring the attention of the church. From 1988 therefore, an inclusive gender policy was promoted which found expression in the ordained ministry, eldership and work of the Christian

⁸² A. K. Hammar, “After Forty Years: Churches in Solidarity with Women?”, *Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 40, Nos. 3-4, 1988, p. 531.

⁸³ For more on the purpose of the Ecumenical Decade, read M. Oduyoye, *Who Will Roll the Stone Away? The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women*, Geneva, WCC Publications, 1990, pp. 4-9.

Women Fellowship. These activities of the Ecumenical Decade are examined in the remaining sections of this chapter.

B- Preparations within the PCC to Respond to the Ecumenical Decade:

The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon identified with the vision of the Ecumenical Decade and took appropriate measures to enable her respond to the plight of women. The PCC began by filling a questionnaire relating to the status of women sent out by the WCC. Findings from the questionnaire revealed that the patriarchal culture inherited from the Basel Mission was still very much in practice, with a resultant negative bearing on the status of women. Generally, it emerged from the questionnaire that women's agency in the PCC was still at infancy considering that nearly all the power structures of the church were manned by men. This was happening at a time when women outnumbered men in the church. After exploiting the questionnaire, the WCC called upon the officials of the PCC to take action in the context of the Ecumenical Decade to ameliorate the situation of women.⁸⁴

With the above mission placed on its shoulders, the PCC officially launched the Ecumenical Decade in Solidarity with Women in September 1988 in a ceremony presided over by its Moderator, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom. Activities that were to be carried out in the context of the Decade were placed under the tutelage of the Women's Work Department. In order to ensure proper follow up, the Moderator appointed Catherine Muke Chofor, an official of the WWD with experience of issues of gender in the PCC, as the Coordinator of the Ecumenical Decade program.⁸⁵ She was commissioned to coordinate activities of the Ecumenical Decade by ensuring that they were tailored towards the liberation of women from patriarchy and discrimination. Put differently, Catherine Chofor's mission was to empower women to challenge the patriarchal culture in the PCC and wider society. Most importantly, it was her duty to associate more women with the power structure of the PCC, give visibility to women's voices and perspectives, and to see to it that the church was taking action in solidarity with women. The main office of the Ecumenical Decade was set up at the Presbyterian Church Congregation in Bonamoussadi in Douala and a qualified staff was recruited to carryout Ecumenical Decade activities under the coordination of Catherine Chofor.

⁸⁴ E. Gana, "History of CWF as a Development Agent", In E. Gana, (ed.), *Christian Women Move on in Hope and Hope in Christ*, Limbe, Press book Print, 1995, pp. 48-49.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

From her Office in Douala and with the help of workers and funds placed at her disposal, Catherine Chofor's pioneer task was to sensitize male and female members of the PCC about the objectives of the Ecumenical Decade. This was done through radio talks, seminars, and workshops. At these events, Catherine Chofor and her staff drew the attention of members of the PCC to the necessity to empower women for full participation in the life of the church, most notably in its leadership structures. Women were challenged to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the Ecumenical Decade launched by the WCC. Catherine Chofor's lectures and talks during these sensitization seminars and workshops were quickly reproduced in joint publications of the Women's Work and Men's Work Departments of the PCC. These publications were used as study materials during leadership courses organized for members of the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) and Christian Men Fellowship (CMF).⁸⁶

When the sensitization phase was over, measures were then taken to give more space to women in domains such as the ordained ministry and eldership which were identified as having the potential to enabling women access the power structure of the church. The Palm Tree was then adopted as PCC's symbol of the Ecumenical Decade on grounds that women are as productive as the palm tree.⁸⁷ This symbol was intended to serve as a motivator for women to challenge patriarchy within the PCC. The ordained ministry was one of the spheres that were accessed by women thanks to the Ecumenical Decade as demonstrated in the next section.

1- Women in PCC's Ordained Ministry in the Context of the Ecumenical Decade

The entry of women into the ranks of the ordained ministry was one of the important developments in the history of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women. This section of the chapter examines the admission and training of women in PCC's Theological College, the ordination and placement of female pastors in ministry roles, and the challenges they encountered.

⁸⁶ Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archive Buea (PCCAB), File No. 228, Women's work in the PCC.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

2- Brief context

The Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women was launched by the WCC at a time when women had been barred from the ordained ministry since the Basel Mission era. Women were excluded from pursuing theological education and admission into the seminary was the preserve of men. In 1957, the PCC inherited the law excluding women from the ordained ministry and took measures to implement the patriarchal practice.⁸⁸ As such, the ordained ministry in the PCC became an all-male affair, which culminated in a total masculinization of leadership positions that could only be accessed through ordination. This was problematic because the PCC at that time was holding fast to the principle of the priesthood of all believers, a notion built on the belief that all are priests before God. Hence the PCC considered God as the source of all ministries in the church before opening ordination to women. The church believes that the ordained ministry should be collegial. It is important to highlight that this Biblical position of the PCC was opposed by some members of the church who wanted the exclusion of women to continue.

But due to growing feminism and recourse to Biblical texts favouring the association of women with ordination, the PCC was forced to initiate discussions on a possible revision of its gender policy. Indeed, Christian Feminism caused controversies over women's right to ordination which roiled the PCC. It made opposing voices to emerge and challenge the custom excluding women from theological education and the ordained priesthood. It became common to find some members of the PCC advocating the knocking down of laws that made ordination the preserve of men. Undeniable therefore the Christian feminism movement positioned the PCC on the part to training and ordaining women as pastors. The PCC was not an isolated case, since Christian feminism affected the whole Christendom. As a matter of fact women in Christian churches, mostly in the liberal protestant churches gradually gained access into theological education. This caused many mainline protestant denominations to approve women's ordination.

Obviously for women in the PCC the emergence of Christian feminism had a fundamental permanent effect on the manner in which they viewed women's right to ordination. Feminist ideas

⁸⁸ P. Ndamukong, "From the Basel Mission to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, an Expanding Landscape in the Grassland", in Dah, J. N., (ed.), *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: 50 Years of Selfhood*, Limbe, Presprint, 2007, p. 24.

deeply altered the expectations of both men and women in the PCC.⁸⁹ Consequently the exclusion of women from ordination became interpreted as heathen degradation subservience to men. Within the first decade of its independence, many men and women in the PCC no doubt had experienced the rapid changes resulting from Christian feminism. This was how the central drama in the PCC in the late 1960s was women's fight for ordination rights.⁹⁰ Spurred by the feminist ideas, arbitrary roles against women in the PCC's pulpit slowly began to erode. Indeed, the inclusion of women in theological education and the ordained priesthood was only a matter of time.

In 1971, the General Synod (the supreme governing organ of the PCC) deliberated the question of women's ordination and resolved to open the ordained ministry to women. The General Synod emphasized that women's inclusion in the ordained ministry had the potential to enable women to access leadership positions at the level of congregations, presbyteries, and central administrative organs of the PCC. Even though the law barring women from the ordained ministry had been officially rolled away, the PCC was reluctant to practically train and ordain women. Throughout the 1970s and most of the 1980s, women were still denied admission into the seminary.

This explains why there was advocacy from various quarters for the authorities of the PCC to bring women on board the ordained ministry. The Basel Mission encouraged the PCC to start training women for ordination sending female pastors as ecumenical co-workers to teach at the Presbyterian Theological College (PTC) in Kumba. One of them was Rev. Ruth Epting who was ordained in 1947 in Basel and was sent to Cameroon to teach in the PTC.⁹¹ Born in 1919 in Basel, Switzerland, Rev. Epting completed primary school and then studied minor theology in Berlin where she was brought under the influence of women pastors, especially Anna Paulsen.⁹² The outbreak of World War Two caused Rev. Epting to relocate to Basel where she pursued theological studies. She was ordained in 1947 and evolved to become President of the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA) in Switzerland. Ruth questioned why the Swiss Reformed Church upheld the discrimination of women in its leadership structures. She later joined the Basel Mission and served

⁸⁹ Lang, *Empowered Without Power...*, p. 124.

⁹⁰ Jonas Dah, *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: History of the Theological College Kumba, 1952-1992*, Owerri, Nnamdi Printing Press, 1992, p. 86.

⁹¹ Atem, "Women's Empowerment for Leadership...", p. 28; Lang, "The Long Trip to the Front Alter...", p. 8.

⁹² Anna Paulsen was among the pioneer woman theologians in Germany. She challenged the women's restriction from the ordained ministry and inspired Ruth Epting to take interest in theological education.

as Secretary for Women's Work in Asia, Latin America and Africa. This was the context in which she worked in Cameroon as lecturer in PCC's Theological College in the 1970s.⁹³

The presence of Rev. Epting at the PCC theological education system dragged the debate on women's ordination into the Synod. Expectedly there were voices for and against women's ordination. In fact, the demand for women's ordination attracted a lot of criticism within and outside the church. But the advocates remained steadfast in battling this Basel Mission-inherited practice excluding women from the Eucharistic ministry. In further response, critiques maintained that ordination of women had no justification in either church tradition or its understanding of scripture; because Christ called only men to the apostolic succession. Advocates for the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry built on doctrinal texts such as Galatians 2:28 and Acts 2:17 to support the elimination of laws barring women from theological education. This made it clear that the PCC was already trapped in an irreversible course toward the ordination of women as bona fide pastors irrespective of the both male and female voices that continued in opposition. While in the college Rev. Epting began questioning why she was training only male pastors for the PCC. When interviewed on the issue in 2008 by Martina Heinriche, Rev Epting noted that the male membership of the PCC even questioned why the BM had to send a woman as teacher at the PTC.⁹⁴ This was how this female ecumenical co-worker got involved in the struggle to eliminate continuing opposition to women's ordination in the PCC. Gladys Atem writes that Rev Epting's presence in and brilliant performance as a female pastor in the PTC eventually amazed her male colleagues, students and the authorities of the institution.⁹⁵ Later Rev Epting was joined by other female lecturers sent by the BM such as Rev Erika Gymn in 1973 and Rev Marsha Haney who was a chaplain at the Presbyterian Secondary School in Kumba. These female ecumenical co-workers encouraged Presbyterians to develop interest in training their Cameroonian women to become pastors.

In 1985 when the long-serving Rt. Rev. Kangsen retired, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom who had worked with the BM in Germany as fraternal worker became Moderator. A new Synod Clerk was also elected in the person of Rev. Dr. Jonas Dah, who had equally experienced how the BM was

⁹³ Roswitha Golder, "Farewell to Ruth Epting", *Women's Letter*, No. 53, October 2016. Women's Letter is written by women in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America under the sponsorship of Mission 21.

⁹⁴ Rev. Dr. Ruth Epting, Retired Theologian, Interviewed by Martina Heinriche at Chisinau-Moldova, March 2008.

⁹⁵ Atem, "Women's Empowerment for Leadership...", p. 28

training women as pastors during his study in Basel, Switzerland. These forward-looking church officials enhanced the entering of women into the ordained ministry by resolving to implement the 1971 Synod resolution opening the ordained ministry to women. These new church leaders, it should be stressed, were motivated by from the launching of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998) by the WCC. As a member church, the PCC signed on to this program. The offering of more opportunities to women for theological training and ordination was one of the ways in which the PCC implemented the WCC program. In the next section, we examine trends in the training and ordination of women as pastors as a key activity of the Ecumenical Decade.

II- DYNAMICS IN THE TRAINING AND ORDINATION OF WOMEN

In 1987 the PCC had its first two qualified candidates for theological training at the seminary. The two women in the persons of Perpetua Numfor (now Rev Dr. Mrs. Fonki) and Adombang Vivian were given the opportunity for a career path in the ministry.⁹⁶ These women like future ones met the necessary requirements and educational qualification to pursue theological education. The church understood that they had the calling and selected them for training. This made it clear that they were not selected just for the sake of having female candidates. Out of these two women only Perpetua Numfor completed the program and her ordination was delayed, making her the first trained PCC's female candidate, but not the first to be ordained. Her brilliant performance in the first year of her studies was a motivation for other women. This explains why the number of female enrollment grew slowly with three women against seven men in 1988. They were Martha Essem, Agnes Ngwa Shirri and Ngu Elizabeth Akwi.⁹⁷ This push came not only from the heightening of publicity but also from the launching of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women (EDCSW), from 1988 to 1998 by the WCC. The purpose of this program was to encourage member churches of the WCC to empower women to be able to think, talk and act for themselves. As a member church the PCC signed on to this program. One of the reasons why she accepted to implement the program was because she intended to use it to create more awareness on the need to train women as pastors. At this time the Women's Work Department

⁹⁶ Interview with Rev. Dr. Azange Margaret, *Presbyterian Messenger*, Interviewed by Achowah Umenei, December 2007.

⁹⁷ Dah, *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon...*, p. 36.

(WWD) of the PCC challenged the church to train at least thirty female pastors before the end of the decade.

So the offering of more opportunities to women for theological training was one of the ways in which the PCC implemented the WCC's program. At the same time, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (CCAWT) was founded in 1989. This circle which was headed by Mercy Oduyoye had as objective the motivation of women to develop interest in the ordained ministry.⁹⁸ This explains why one of its four study commissions was named Ministry and Theological Education and Formation. The activities of the circle in one way or the other affected the participation of women in the ordained ministry of the PCC. The circle made women to believe that the study of theology from the women's perspective is a gift to the church, because it calls the church for repentance for its role in the subordination of women. It is a gift to women because it gives them the opportunity for theological training which can enable them to contribute to the leadership of the church.⁹⁹

The PCC as earlier noted was affected by the academic works of the circle which was an encouragement for the church to effectively implement the WCC women's program. In 1989, three other women gained admission into the seminary among them were N. Angela Manka and Ekinde Mary Mbolle.¹⁰⁰ This was evidence that the PCC was implementing the Ecumenical Decade program of the WCC. During this period the PCC appointed Catherine Muke Chofor from the WWD as a motivator to the program. She ensured that the objectives and activities of the program regarding the participation of women in the ministry were effectively carryout. Consequently, Chofor organized seminars and workshops with men and women sensitizing them on the need to be encouraged to join the ordained ministry.¹⁰¹

By 1990 there were six women pursuing theological education in the seminary.¹⁰² This was an encouraging number in spite the fact that they were actually supposed to be eight. In fact, two of them been dismissed from the seminary for misconduct. It is important to mention also that in

⁹⁸ M. A. Oduyoye, "African Women Theologians", in *A People's History of Christianity, Vol. 7, Twentieth-Century Global Christianity*, edited by Mary Farrell Bednarowski, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 2008, pp. 88-91.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ Interview with Rev. Dr. Azange Margaret, *Presbyterian Messenger*, Interviewed by Achowah Umenei, December 2007.

¹⁰¹ Atem, "Women's Empowerment...", p. 25.

¹⁰² Interview with Rev. Ngwa Agnes, aged 62, PCC Pastor, Bamenda, 18 June 2021.

1990, all the thirteen candidates that were admitted into the seminary were males. This represented a drawback at a time when the PCC was implementing the WCC women's decade program. In 1991, no male and female candidates were admitted into the college because the church did not find the need. In 1992, twelve of the fourteen candidates were women while the intake in 1993 had only one woman.

Later in 1994, the achievements of the Ecumenical Decade in the field of the ordained ministry were visible. This was because two out of the three candidates who were admitted into the seminary in 1988 were ordained in a crowd-pulling ceremony that was officiated by the Moderator of the church, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom. The other female candidate Ngu E Akwi was not ordained together with Martha Essem and Agnes Ngwa. This was because of what Rev. Peter Amungwa termed as administrative problem, which he could not disclose to me during an interview in his office. However, Ngu Akwi was later on ordained just like the case of Perpetua Fonki. The ordination of the two women, Rev. Martha Essem and Rev. Agnes Ngwa (see plate 1 below) was an encouragement to other women since they were the first female pastors to be ordained by the PCC.

Plate 1: Portrait of Rev. Agnes Ngwa



Source: Private Album of Rev. Agnes Ngwa, 10 October 2021.

From 1995 onwards more women had the opportunity to pursue theological education. In 1998, when the WCC women's decade program ended, eighteen women had received training in the seminary as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Male and Female Enrolment at the PCC's Seminary, 1987-1999

YEARS	INTAKE	MALE	FEMALE
1987	13	11	02
1988	10	7	03
1989	19	16	03
1990	13	13	-
1991	-	-	-
1992	14	12	02
1993	13	12	01
1994	18	18	-
1995	13	11	02
1996	15	14	01
1997	16	14	02
1998	15	12	03
1999	15	12	03

Source: Compiled from various reports by the author.

It is relevant to analyse the interesting trends that are evident in table 1. The eleven figures show that the trend of female enrolment and training in the PTS was one of slight increases. In spite of this growth, the table exposes that the number of women as a percentage of the total enrolment in the PTS which in this period was strikingly small when compared with that of male intake. The number of female enrolments dropped from ten to six during the period from 1993 to 1997 because no woman was admitted into the PTS in 1994. All the eighteen candidates for that year were male. Evidently the ordained ministry of the PCC by 1998 was still male-dominated. This relatively low proportion of clergywomen was due to the persistence of the patriarchal culture

which discriminated against women. Indeed, many of the members of the PCC still looked upon the women who pursued theological education to be abnormal unlike the male.¹⁰³ Hence, the slow progress of women's enrolment for training and ordination was a signal that old-gendered division of labour, with men in theological leadership and women in silent service, was still very much in operation. These disturbing statistics pushed the PCC to initiate strategic planning for its ministry in 1999. Irrespective of this male dominance, the stark reality was that the World Council of Churches had pushed the PCC to train and ordain women. The PCC now had female pastors who were expected to contribute towards the growth of the church in all dimensions. The next section examines the placement and activities of the female clergy in various structures of the PCC.

A- Placement and Activities of Female Pastors

The women who received theological training at the PTS were expected to serve as ministers in parishes and in schools as chaplains. Since women's acceptance in the ordained ministry came with a lot of hesitation caused by the patriarchal culture, the expectations of the PCC and the Cameroonian society for these clergy women were far more than those expected from their male counterparts.¹⁰⁴ It started as a kind of experimentation by the authorities of the church who wanted to see how women could aid the church in its mission service. In light of this, female pastors were expected to work harder in the parishes and other places where they were posted to perform the ministry. As the first postings were being conducted, it was common to hear both male and female Christians making statements such as "women must prove that they are capable".¹⁰⁵ This among other statements were challenging to the women pastors who became committed to prove that they were not only called by God but had also received the required theological training to act in the ordained ministry.

It was in the above context that female pastors were quite often posted to various parishes upon graduation from the seminary. After graduating from the seminary in 1993, Rev Azange Margaret was posted to the Fako North Presbytery of the Lykoko Membea and chaplain to Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School (PCSS). She was eventually moved to the Bassa Congregation in the Douala, where she served as congregational pastor along with the position of

¹⁰³ Interview with Rev. Mbella Ikome Lyonga, aged 52, PCC Pastor, Bamenda, 6 April 2021.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with Rev. Dr. Azange Margaret, aged 58.

¹⁰⁵ *Idem*.

co-pastor of the Bonamossadi Congregation.¹⁰⁶ Her dedication to the ordained ministry of the PCC made her to be appointed as the coordinator of Presbyterian Meditation over the Littoral Radio Station of the Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV). In all these places Rev. Azange had to confront the numerous challenges pertaining to the ordained ministry. Apart from managing these parishes, she had to conduct worship services, carried out evangelisation and baptized catechumens. These activities undoubtedly resulted in the growth of PCC in such places. Another very influential female pastor who served (and is still serving) in the ordained ministry of the PCC is Rev. Dr. Perpetua Fonki, spouse of the current Moderator of the PCC. She was the first trained female pastor of the PCC and graduated in 1991. She began her ordained ministry as an assistant pastor in PC Azire from where she was later transferred to Ntaturu parish in the Mezam Presbytery.¹⁰⁷ Her commitment urged the church to appoint her as the coordinator of the North West Provincial Communication Office. She later worked in Yaounde as a congregational pastor, and as a teacher in the Protestant University of Central Africa in Yaounde. To the foregoing should be added Rev. Geraldine Fobang and Rev. Ebongole Mejang who played prominent roles in PCC's ordained ministry after their training and ordination as female pastors (see plates 2 and 3 below).

The placement of female pastors in parish positions was therefore a continuous process as women who completed theological training were always appointed to parishes by the Staffing Committee of the church. On the overall the women who completed their studies at the seminary were placed in ministry positions. What also comes out evident is the fact that these women were quiet often transferred to new parishes and new positions as it was deemed necessary by the church. So, since the first placements were done in the early 1990s, these clergy women had served in different parishes.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁶ *Interview with Rev. Dr. Azange Margaret, aged 58.*

¹⁰⁷ *The Sunday Eden*, No. 13, November 2009, p. 24.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

Plate 2: Rev. Geraldine Fobang and Spouse (Fonbang)



Source: Private Album of Rev. Geraldine Fobang, 10 October 2021.

Plate 3: Portrait of Rev. Ebongole Mejang



Source: Private Album of Rev. Ebongole Mejang, 10 October 2021.

Although it is indicative that women have been integrated and accepted into the ordained ministry of the PCC, it is important to mention that it took some of them longer to be placed in parishes. What is also evident is that women pastors were rarely placed in influential parishes and congregations that were quite often the preserve of their male counterparts. Some of them served

as assistant pastors for long with little opportunities to rise to executive level.¹⁰⁹ Some worked mostly as chaplains in Presbyterian Schools and hospitals. This makes it clear that more men than women were placed in parish positions that offered more prestige and autonomy. Irrespective of this undeniable marginalization women were able to get along with the job as they carried out the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the parishes where they worked.

In their places of work, women pastors had to perform numerous tasks placed on them by the church. They preached, conducted worship services, engaged in evangelization tours and prepared catechumens for baptism. They also managed their parishes and congregations as they presided over session meetings. Carrying out all these activities was a very difficult task as these women had to confront the patriarchal culture that was still deep-rooted in the congregations. In fact these female pastors without any exception had to struggle against opposition from laity regarding their call to the ministry.¹¹⁰ While some saw these women as a threat to the future of the church, some held the opinion that female pastors were inferior. Surprisingly, these clergy women reported during field interviews that they were generally satisfied with and support from their male counterparts, but they could not have depended only on their male peers, given that they had daily contact with resistant church members than with supportive colleagues.¹¹¹ But the commitment and charisma of these women permitted them to be able to surmount this resistance to the extent that their resistant church members ended up accepting their call to ministry. Even within the clerical corps, female pastors were gradually accepted by their male colleagues and they were bound to work in synergy for the development of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon as illustrated in picture three below.

¹⁰⁹ *The Sunday Eden*, No. 13, November 2009, p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Beer, "Gender Justice...", p. 197.

¹¹¹ Interview with Rev. Ngwa Agnes, 62 years.

Plate 4: Female and Male Pastors Working in Synergy



Source: Album 16 at Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Central Archive, Buea, 2002.

The bravery of female pastors in surmounting resistance and carrying on with their work is therefore an evidence of good training they received. They simultaneously occupied other roles such wife, parent, club members etc. They kept their parishes and congregations alive, even as they found themselves quite often observed and scrutinized more closely than men. As we shall point out later, all the way from being refused ordination to being denied the call to the parish and to members' hostilities toward the women once installed, the profession of the female pastor was a daunting one. On the overall, the clergy women lived their lives working with and for lay church members. Those who distinguished themselves ended up in elective and appointive administrative positions as will be demonstrated in the final chapter of this work.

B- Ecumenical Decade and Women's Participation in Eldership

In order to further express its commitment to the vision of the Ecumenical Decade launched by the World Council of Churches, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon promoted female eldership in its system. It is important to point out that women's participation in eldership increased during the ecumenical decade in ways that permitted many of them to access various echelons of power previously held by men. Indeed, although the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon originated as a patriarchal institution with limited opportunities for female leadership, its recourse to an inclusive policy helped in positioning many women in eldership roles in the church's

congregations. Female elders, just like their male counterparts, had a certain amount of power and influence in each PCC congregation. The PCC inherited eldership as a non-ordained ministry role from the Basel Mission. Even though there was entrenched patriarchy and women's marginalization in the Basel Mission era, eldership was gender sensitive as it was opened to men and women whose responsibilities ranged from preparing couples for Christian marriage, moral guidance, counselling of backsliders, collection of alms, to spiritual care. Elders worked collaboratively with ordained indigenous pastors and evangelists in congregations.¹¹² In his scholarly work, Guy Alexander Thomas describes elders as informal leaders in several Basel Mission congregations, stressing that qualification for eldership required weeks of preparation in training camps and retreats. He notes that "elders were, jointly with the teacher-catechists-in-charge, responsible for shaping the moral economy of the congregations. And this moral economy constituted the foundation for the transformation of converts into recognized adherents of the church."¹¹³ In this section, the promotion of women's participation in eldership is examined as a key activity of the Ecumenical Decade in the PCC.

The Ecumenical Decade, it should be emphasized, helped in enhancing female eldership in the PCC. The Decade pushed the PCC to fashion a gender equality policy, and leaders of this church were encouraged by the WCC to increase women's participation in the life of the church. It was clearly established that the participation of women in eldership roles is biblically legitimized as it does not conflict with scriptural interpretation. From that moment, women were seen by the Synod of the church as being able to fulfil the requirements for the eldership listed in 1 Timothy verse 3. To put it another way, the office of elder is not gender specific and qualified women were prepared and encouraged to contest for elections to become elders. With the launching of the Ecumenical Decade in 1988, women's participation in eldership increased as the rest of this section demonstrates.

In all PCC congregations, women took interest in the eldership thanks to the seminars that were organized by the Coordinator of Ecumenical Decade activities in the PCC, Catherine Chofor. The latter toured PCC's presbyteries and congregations during which she particularly called on

¹¹² Lang, *Empowered Without Power...*, p. 152.

¹¹³ G. A. Thomas, "Why do we need the White Man's God? African Contributions and Responses to the Formation of a Christian Movement in Cameroon, 1914-1968", PhD Thesis in History, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, 2001, p. 231.

members of the CWF to take interest in the eldership. Little wonder there are hundreds of examples of female elders who participated in the leadership of congregations in exceptional ways during and after the Ecumenical Decade. It is necessary to make an excursion into the practical connection between eldership and women's participation in the power structure of the church as narrated by female elders. Such life histories, I believe, can accord credibility to the contention that the election and dedication of women as elders exposed them to leadership roles in the church.

During the Ecumenical Decade from 1988 to 1998, some women became elders and build upon it to play leadership roles in the PCC. The most prominent among them was Ida Mallett. The road to her eldership and prominence in church leadership is traced to her contributions to the empowerment of women in the church. Ida Mallett studied in Basel Mission schools at Nyasoso and Kumba in the late 1930s and early 40s before passing through Edgerley Memorial School in Calabar. She was later trained as a teacher at the Teacher Training College Shagamu, Nigeria.¹¹⁴ In addition to her teaching career, Mallett played a frontline role in the organization of women's work in the Basel Mission, which at that time was unfortunately limited to domestic science. When the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon gained independence as the PCC in 1957, Ida Mallett became a promoter of women's empowerment for leadership in the church. She advocated powerfully for the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry of the church. As member of the Committee of the Ministry, she consistently lobbied for the admission of women into the Presbyterian Theological Seminary in Kumba. Her pressure yielded in 1988 when the pioneer female candidates were admitted into the seminary to be trained and ordained as pastors.¹¹⁵ These contributions to the growth of the PCC earned Mallett the Certificate of Meritorious Service at the Silver Jubilee of the church in 1982. She was also recognized with a Certificate for Outstanding Contributions towards the growth of the PCC on the occasion of the Basel Mission's Centenary in 1986.¹¹⁶

Another woman who distinguished herself in the eldership is Justine Abeng. She held numerous positions of great leadership in the church. Elder Justine served the church at the frontline for more than 25 years. Born into a Christian family and baptized into the Basel Mission Church

¹¹⁴ Thomas, "Why do we Need the White Man's God?...", p. 213.

¹¹⁵ Interview with Lilian Njalla Quan, 74 years, Elder PCC Yaounde, 20 April 2021.

¹¹⁶ Thomas, "Why do we Need the White Man's God?...", p. 214.

in a tender age, Justine Abeng rose from an ordinary Christian to become an elder in the Bonamoussadi Congregation in the East Mungo South Presbytery. The loyalty and commitment she manifested as an elder propelled her to occupy leading positions at various levels of the church's power structure: congregation, presbytery, and synod. She was a committed member of the Bonamoussadi Congregation, whose roots are traced to 1969 when it started as a prayer cell. In 1970, the prayer cell gained the status of a congregation under the cover of *Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun* (EEC), PCC's ecumenical partner. Later in 1989, the Bonamoussadi Congregation came under the direct administration of the PCC under the newly created East Mungo Presbytery. The foundation stone of the church was laid in 1990 by the Moderator of the PCC, Very Rev. Henry A. Awasom.¹¹⁷ This was the congregation which Justine Abeng joined in 1990 and worked hard for it to grow numerically and spiritually. Working closely with other women, particularly Elizabeth Samkoh, she constituted the CWF group in the congregation and was eventually elected as its president.

In 1996 when the Bonamoussadi Congregation became the seat of the newly created East Mungo South Presbytery which was carved out from the East Mungo Presbytery, Elder Justine Abeng worked committedly with other elders towards the growth of the young presbytery. This commitment helped Justine to serve two terms as Vice Chairperson of the presbytery from 2004 to 2014. Elder Justine served in this administrative position in collaboration with pastors and elders such as Rev. Samuel Fonki, Rev. Ignatius Jum, Rev. Daniel Mokake Kulu, and Elder Abiyah Moise. This enabled the number of congregations and Christians in the presbytery to increase in an unprecedented manner. These achievements did not go unnoticed by the central administration of the church. Little wonder Elder Justine became a member of the Synod Executive Committee, where she served for ten years before retiring from active service in 2015. As member of the prestigious Synod Executive Committee, Elder Justine brought a rare female voice into decision-making and implementation in the church, given that her opinion on issues such as the creation of new congregations and presbyteries and the management of church schools and health facilities was sought. She participated in the making of policies that helped in shaping the church in many spheres. The Synod Executive Committee, it should be stressed, oversees the implementation of

¹¹⁷ S. Fonki, "Facts about East Mungo South Presbytery 29th September 1996 till 2006", in J. N. Dah, ed., *Presbyterian Church in Cameroon: 50 Years of Selfhood 1957-2007*, Limbe, Presprint, 2007, p. 93.

church policies defined by the Synod. This fascinating institution serves the church in many ways. It plays an important role in the election of moderators and synod clerks and executes decisions on important issues in the spheres of health, education, businesses, ecumenism, and communication.

Also, worth mentioning is the fact that Elder Justine served in the World Council of Churches (WCC) as a Commissioner of Churches in the International Affairs Committee. Her membership in the International Affairs Committee was made possible by her commitment in the PCC. Elder Justine's services to the church at the congregational, presbytery, and synod levels caused the leadership of the PCC to recommend her to the WCC. During a special church service at the Bonamoussadi Congregation of the PCC to celebrate Elder Justine's life of service to the Lord and the PCC for over 25 years, Rt. Rev. Festus Asana, PCC's former moderator, said he was so impressed by Justine's character, when they worked together for many years in the church, including trips they made abroad in the service of the PCC. Rt. Rev. Asana stressed that "We took note of her honest attitude and frank talk. She would present the truth firmly, but calmly, no matter the situation. She faced some very tough challenges in life, but maintained her faith and calm."¹¹⁸ On his part, the Chairperson of the Bonamoussadi Congregation, Thaddeus Fon, said "the Christians were finding it difficult to see the congregation without Justine at the frontline." Without doubt, Elder Justine stands tall as a healthy role model for younger women in the PCC. Her contribution to the growth of the PCC cannot be gainsaid and stands as evidence that the absence of restrictions against women in eldership increased their presence in the power structures of the church.

Another woman who demonstrated prominence in the PCC owing to eldership is Elder Elizabeth Mbiwan. Born in 1929 to Thomas Mbongo, a catechist and Sophie Namondo, Elizabeth was baptized in 1930 as an infant and was nurtured as a Christian in the Buea Congregation of the Basel Mission Church in Southern Cameroons. Elder Elizabeth attended Basel Mission Girls School in Victoria before proceeding to the Teachers Grade Three Training School in Oron, Nigeria. After completing her studies in this institution, she returned to Cameroon and taught in the Basel Mission Girls School Victoria for one year and enrolled in Umuahia Teachers Training College in Nigeria. Upon her graduation, she resumed teaching at the Basel Mission Girls School

¹¹⁸ For details on Rt. Rev. Festus Asana's remarks about Elder Justine, read *The Post Newspaper*, 9 February 2015.

Victoria. She served the church as Sunday School teacher, choir mistress, elder, and CWF leader. As a Sunday School teacher, Ma Mbiwan, as she was widely known, offered Biblical knowledge and grounding in the faith to young Christians of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Tall and slim, Ma Mbiwan, as described by Rt. Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, “was exquisite in beauty, refined in manners, diligent in her faith and elegant in her gait.”¹¹⁹ As an Elder, Elizabeth Mbiwan (see plate 5 below) contributed to the growth of the church in Yaoundé and Buea. Peter Mafany Musonge recalls her contribution to the church, stressing that “she was a strong, devoted and committed Christian of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon; she led many to Christ including children and family members.”¹²⁰

Plate 5: Elder Elizabeth Mbiwan



Source: PCCCAB, *Smiling women*, No. 1 Edition, October 2009, p. 7.

The exploits and contributions of the above female elders served as motivation for other women to become elders even after the Ecumenical Decade. One of such women was Lilian Njalla Quan, whose eldership came with opportunities for participation in the power structure of the

¹¹⁹ Nyansako-ni-Nku, Sermon Delivered at the Funeral of Elizabeth Mbiwan on 14 September 2012.

¹²⁰ Peter Mafany Musonge, Tribute to Elizabeth Mbiwan, September 2012.

church. Being an elder molded and empowered Lilian Njalla Quan with some leadership qualities. She first became an elder in the PCC Beach Congregation in Limbe in 2004. Lilian Njalla Quan stressed that being elected as an elder came with leadership opportunities in the church, especially at the congregational level. “As an elder and member of Beach Congregation Session”, says Elder Lilian, “my work consisted of cleaning and preparing the church premises for Sunday and special services, helping the pastor(s) in serving communion and performing other church duties like marking communion cards, teaching catechumen classes to prepare candidates for baptism and confirmation. I also organized meetings with Christians in my neighbourhood every three months. During this time we did some Bible study and I explained what was not understood in church at a particular time.”¹²¹

It was this commitment to eldership that enabled Elder Lilian to serve as Congregational Chairperson in Beach Limbe Congregation for two terms of five years each. In this position, Elder Lilian chaired Session meetings, and she ensured that the congregation was maintained in the path of spiritual, financial and infrastructural advancement. During her first term as Congregational Chairperson, Elder Lilian introduced the culture of uniform outfit for elders, which was won under the robes. Other congregations in the Fako South Presbytery copied this example by also introducing uniforms for their elders. To this should be added the fact that Lilian encouraged other female elders to have a voice in decision-making in the congregation. The exercise of power in the Beach Limbe Congregation thus ceased to be male-dominated. There were more women in the Session than men, and decision-making was consensual. Under Elder Lilian’s leadership, women’s voices were heard in all local church matters, including finances and infrastructural development. To put it another way, Beach Limbe became an inclusive congregation, where men and women worked collegially for the growth of the church.

By expressing her leadership gifts in ways that were beneficial to the Beach Limbe Congregation, Elder Lilian was elected as pioneer female Presbytery Chairperson of Fako South Presbytery in 2014. The election to this higher office came with more leadership opportunities as she had to manage a presbytery of 50 congregations. Lilian’s first five year term was incredible, owing to the achievements which accrued from her leadership at the helm of the Fako South

¹²¹ Interview with Lilian Njalla Quan, 74 years.

Presbytery. Little wonder Christians are so generous in their evaluation of the work carried out by the Presbytery governing staff under the headship of Elder Lilian Njalla Quan. George Etuge, a former member of Beach Limbe Congregation, described Elder Lilian as “a female Christian leader who leads with integrity, inclusivity and accountability.”¹²² Among other things, Elder Lilian initiated a Congregational Chairpersons meeting which brought together chairpersons from the 50 congregations of the Fako South Presbytery. It was at such meetings that problems facing various congregations were discussed and solutions sought from pastors and other persons who could be of help. “Such meetings”, says Elder Lilian, “served as forums for harmonization of programs and proper management of the presbytery.”¹²³ She achieved good outcomes in her role as Presbytery Chairperson and was re-elected for a second term in 2019 on grounds of these contributions to the growth of the Fako South Presbytery.

As Presbytery Chairperson, Elder Lilian was/is member of the supreme governing organ of the church, the Synod. Delegates represent their presbyteries at the synod, which operates on the basis of collegiality. Each presbytery is represented in synod by three delegates (presbytery chairperson, presbytery secretary and the synod representative). This collegiality permits the voices of female delegates to be heard during deliberative sessions of the synod. Elder Lilian attended synod meetings as one of the delegates from the Fako South Presbytery and made valuable contributions during deliberations on matters relating to various departments of the church: education, health, evangelism, etc. It is interesting to stress that Elder Lilian’s participation in church decision-making institutions from the Session of the congregation all through to the Synod positioned her as a role model for many Christian women. This probably urged her to seek to achieve above expectations in any role. Her impact in the PCC, as evaluated by one female Christian who begged to remain anonymous, “is one of significance and excellence.” Elder Lilian notes that her achievements as Congregational Chairperson, Presbytery Chairperson and as Synod member were products of the motivation and guidance she received from mentors, especially Elder Ida Mallett. “I admire and see Mrs Ida Mallett”, says Elder Lilian, “a very dedicated elder, activist, and a great voice for women’s empowerment in the PCC, as a role model.”¹²⁴

¹²² Interview with Joseph Abonge Chenghe, 62 years, Bamenda, 20 March 2021.

¹²³ Interview with Lilian Njalla Quan, 74 years.

¹²⁴ *Idem*.

The forgoing life histories of female elders are indicative of the contribution of the Ecumenical Decade in increasing women's participation in the eldership. This permitted many women to access various leadership positions in the power structure of the church, from the congregation all through to the Synod. This female agency in the eldership and governance of the PCC would not have existed if not for the Ecumenical Decade launched by the WCC. This, no doubt, enabled the church to benefit from the gifts of women, especially their leadership qualities, which positioned it on the path to growth and expansion in various spheres of its mission work. This is in agreement with Elder Bertha Sume Mukwele's observation that "should female elders suddenly vanish from the scene", "the PCC will probably cease to grow."¹²⁵

Conclusion

This chapter has examined PCC's women empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and financed by the World Council of Churches. The chapter has shown that the mission of this decade of solidarity was to empower women within member churches of the WCC. As a member of the WCC, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon embraced the vision of the Ecumenical Decade and took measures to open more space for women within its structures. During the Ecumenical Decade, measures were taken to open the ordained ministry to women as well as to increase women's participation in the eldership. By becoming pastors and elders, women began to play a leading role in the power structure of the PCC. The chapter concludes that the Ecumenical Decade that was launched by the WCC yielded more leadership opportunities for women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

¹²⁵ Interview with Mukwele Bertha Sume, 62 years, Kumba, 23 June 2021.



**CHAPTER III: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON AND
BREAD FOR THE WORLD: PARTNERS IN THE WOMEN'S
EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMED**

Introduction

The Women's Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) was a new approach to the empowerment of women within the PCC and the Cameroonian society. The program came on the heels of the shortcomings of the Ecumenical Decade examined in the previous chapter and the resultant adoption of a new gender policy by the PCC in collaboration its ecumenical partners. The principal agenda of WEEP was to enable women to discover and recognize the talents and quality of power embedded in them. The program was financed by Bread for the World and implemented by the PCC in collaborative activities with a local NGO called Nkong Hill Top Association for Development (NAVDEV). The main objective of this chapter is to examine the extent to which the WEEP empowered and ameliorated the status of women in the PCC and the wider society. The opening section discusses the origins and objectives of the program. In the second section, the administrative structures and financing of the WEEP are examined. The empowerment activities that were carried out in the context of the WEEP are analyzed in the third section. The chapter seeks to demonstrate that the program empowered women through sustainable economic and leadership activities in ways that heightened their participation in the power structures of the church and society.

I- ORIGINS AND MISSION OF WOMEN'S EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMMES

The Women's Education and Empowerment Program was necessitated by the desire to end women's marginalization in the PCC and the Cameroonian society. With consistency, women were subjected to various forms of discrimination in the power structures of the PCC. This near absence of women's agency caused international faith-based institutions to encourage the PCC to open up more space for women in its system. This resulted in various empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women from 1988 to 1998. Unfortunately, there was continuing marginalization of women after the Ecumenical Decade. This stark reality of continuing marginalization of women necessitated a rethinking of the gender policy of the PCC.

The revision of PCC's gender policy in the early 2000s served as motivation for the emergence of the Women's Education and Empowerment Program. This revision was started

shortly after the evaluation of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and funded by the WCC. In the course of the evaluation, it emerged that even though women had accessed the power structure of the PCC through the participation in the ordained ministry and eldership, the majority of women in the church and society were still subjected to numerous forms of discrimination and marginalization. This realization came with the need for a rethinking and revision of the gender policy of PCC. As such, discussions were started at the level of the Synod Office to produce a gender policy capable of granting equal opportunities to men and women in the PCC. A study that was conducted in the context of this revision revealed that women very much outnumbered men in the PCC. Unfortunately for these women, most of the leadership organs of the church were in male hands.

The vision of the new gender policy that was in preparation and which was pending the approval of the Synod was enshrined in what came to be known as *Agenda 2000 and Beyond*. This was a strategic plan launched in the year 2000 in an effort to increase the participation of women in the structures of the church. The document acknowledged the persistence of ecclesial patriarchy and its demotion of women's status. It was in the light of this recognition of consistent women's marginalization in the PCC that another commitment was taken to heighten women's association with the power structure of the church, not only through ordinations and appointments that were the sole prerogative of the male-powered central administration, but to explore other options. The *Agenda 2000 and Beyond* document identified the further empowerment of women in the PCC as indispensable, and it recommended that robust efforts be taken to increase the involvement in the life and activities of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The launch of *Agenda 2000 and Beyond* as a strategic plan of the PCC was intended among other things to enhance and complement the church's engagement in issues of gender within its system and faith community.¹²⁶ The document insisted on the fact that the predominant patriarchal system in the church and society was obstructing empowerment initiatives. Little wonder the strategic plan was concluded with a call for the adoption of a gender policy specific to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Finally, it was in 2003 that the new gender policy was discussed during a Synod meeting. Held in Bamenda from 19-22 October, the Synod meeting which was christened as "The Synod of

¹²⁶ Nyansako-ni-Nku, ed., *Agenda Presbyterian Church in Cameroon 2000 and Beyond: What Kind of Church do we Want?*, Limbe, Press Book Print, 2003.

Transition” and attended by men and women, made a case supporting the empowerment of women for leadership. To some delegates, it was surprising that a church like the PCC with over 70% of its membership comprised of women was largely in the hands of men. The Moderator, Rt. Rev. Nyansako-ni-Nku, went as far as stating that the PCC was on a bad path without the full participation of its female members. It is important to stress that all Synod members were in agreement that the absence of women in leadership position was due to age-old traditional roles and prejudices which had deprived women of leadership opportunities. Simply put, the Synod observed that there was gross gender inequality in the PCC and recommended that programs aimed at empowering women be implemented.¹²⁷ The Synod Clerk, Rev. Festus Asana, indicated that the PCC was constrained by the love of God to improve on the lot of its women folk through the gender policy that was being examined.

These lengthy deliberations were concluded with a unanimous adoption of the gender policy by the Synod. The main goal of the Gender Policy was the establishment of an equal opportunity for both sexes within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It had three key objectives: 1) to intensify and diversify the education and training of Christians, with particular attention given to women especially in rural areas. 2) To ensure the sensitization of the Christians as to the potential of the women vis-à-vis the patriarchal culture and baseless prejudices. 3) To pursue a non-discriminatory policy in the employment and appointment of officials to various positions of leadership in the PCC.

In order to see into it that these objectives were to be attained, implementation strategies were built into the new gender policy. The most prominent strategy was the commitment of the church to intensify and diversity the education and training of women. It was also agreed that courses were to be included in the curriculum on gender issues at all PCC learning institutions. Pursuing such strategies required collaborative efforts between the PCC and international faith-based institutions. It was in the context of this new gender policy and identified necessity of collaboration with faith organizations that a special women’s empowerment program was envisaged. This eventually led to the launch of the Women’s Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) in 2005. It was a project of the PCC that was implemented with funds made available by Bread for the World. The

¹²⁷ Nyansako-ni-Nku, ed., *Agenda Presbyterian Church ... 2003*.

project was executed by the PCC in collaboration with a local Common Initiative Group called Nkong Hill Top Association for Development (NAVDEV).¹²⁸

The Women's Education and Empowerment Program had a plethora of objectives. First, WEEP was hoped to be very much involved in the women ministry with the main goal of ensuring gender equality in the socio-economic, cultural and the political spheres in Cameroon.¹²⁹ The program therefore had to pay attention to the problems of the female folk and its activities were not limited within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon but opened to all women in the region. Empowering women was intended to strengthen a lame world and society that could remain lame if women endowed with divine and natural talents were continuously left behind.¹³⁰ Bread for the World's decision to approve and financially support this valuable, enviable and laudable program for the women of Cameroon was hinged on the hope that it could bring more women into the power structure of the society.

Second, the Women's Education and the Empowerment Program was a faith-based initiative aimed at enhancing the status of women in the PCC and wider society in Cameroon. Its main vision was to bring about a positive impact in the lives of people within rural communities, with women as principal targets. It was engaged in encouraging women and girl child education, economic empowerment and gender awareness for men. WEEP had a passion for women's emancipation and it was committed to break the chains of ignorance and having victims of marginalization speak out. Its Motto was: "Empowering women for sustainable development."

Third, the mission of the program was to increase the involvement of women in decision-making and local government processes in the PCC and society. It was streamed towards increasing the number of women running for councils and parliamentary elections and reducing cultural malpractices and domestic violence within the project area. Linked to this goal was the desire to increase women's literacy rates in view of offering them opportunities to function beyond their homes.¹³¹ It was therefore hoped that WEEP officials should proceed by organizing workshops

¹²⁸ V. Q. Wetuh, "From a Local Church Group to a Movement for Women's Empowerment and Societal Transformation; A Case Study of the CWF of the Presbyterian Church in Likomba-Tiko, Cameroon", Master's Thesis in Theology, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2017, p. 25.

¹²⁹ Interview with Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba, aged 61, Moderator PCC, Yaounde, 3 July 2021.

¹³⁰ *Idem*.

¹³¹ Bread for the world, Project application form for WEEP, 10 January 2014.

and seminars with the intent of arming women with skills required for the amelioration of their welfare. Further, the program was launched in order to create awareness among men on the necessity and development implications of gender equality in church and society. Through this objective, the goal was to enable more women and girl children to enjoy equal inheritance rights as men and male children. This was to be achieved, as Valery Ngam states, “by organizing gender-workshops targeting traditional rulers and community notables.”¹³²

Taken together, officials of the program wanted to check hardship and poverty among women in view of enhancing community development. The partnership between Bread for the World and the Presbyterian Church was intended to roll away the root causes of women marginalization particularly in the rural areas. The Women’s Education and Empowerment Program was conceived to address the plight of these helpless rural women. It was a community-oriented program that cut across denominational and cultural boundaries in the region. It had as mission to reduce the gender gaps perpetuated by injustice particularly on women by improving the status of marginalized and underprivileged women and girls in the society with more emphasis on grassroots women and girls.¹³³ By coming on board this program, Bread for the World hoped to improve the status of women in the PCC and society through an aura of empowerment initiatives. The agenda was to empower women to the point where they could be able to assert themselves and be well informed on gender issues. In an effort to achieve the foregoing objectives, the authorities of the PCC and Bread for the World set up administrative structures for the program and identified sources of funding as detailed in the next section.

A- Administrative Structures and Finances

In an effort to properly implement the Women’s Education and Empowerment Program, the PCC and Bread for the World set up administrative structure and made available the required financial and human resources. Regarding the administration of the program, it is important to mention that the WEEP was a project of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It was placed under tutelage of the Development Department of the PCC, with the Development Secretary, Denis Kumbo, acting as principal administrator. In 2005 when the project was established, Rev. Mary Wose was

¹³² Ngam, “Bread for the World...”, p. 87.

¹³³ Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), Women’s and Empowerment Program (WEEP), Gender and Human Rights Manuel for Grassroots Population, First Edition, January 2017, p.1.

appointed as its pioneer Coordinator (see photo 6). In 2016 after ten years since the beginning of the project, a new Coordinator was appointed in the person of Beryl Esino Nokuba (see photo 7).

Plate 6: Portrait of Rev. Mary Wose



Source: PCC Central Archives Buea, Album No. 13, 2005.

Plate 7: Portrait of Beryl Esino Nokuba



Source: PCC Central Archives Buea, Album No. 13, 2005.

The Coordinator of WEEP was answerable to the Development Secretary who was expected to present a yearly report on the activities of the program to the Synod. The Development Secretary, it should be emphasized, was the Board Chair of WEEP. The reports he received from the Coordinator were usually sent to Bread for the World to justify how funds were used. The Coordinator was charged with ensuring that the objectives of the program were met. It was her role to recruit competent staff, collect data on various aspects of women's empowerment and to implement activities that were earmarked.

As such, the Coordinator was assisted by staff with expertise on various domains of women's empowerment like healthcare, education and economic empowerment. In fact, the Coordinator relied on resource persons to carry out the various activities of the project. For monitoring purposes, Bread for the World occasionally dispatched its Cameroon Project Officer, Petra Spitzer, to supervise and report on the Women's Education and Empowerment Program (see photos 8 and 9 below). The main office of the Women's Education and the Empowerment Program was located at the Synod Office of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in Buea, South West Region. There is a signpost at the entrance into the building hosting the WEEP offices. The sign post contained key information about the program, especially its motto: "Empowering Women for Sustainable Development" (see photo 10).

Concerning the finances, the WEEP was jointly funded by Bread for the World and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to the tune of 53,100 euros (approximately 34,515,000FCFA). As principal sponsor, Bread for the World allocated 50,000 Euros (32,500,000FCFA) while the PCC made available 3,100 Euros (approximately 2,015,000FCFA).¹³⁴ The finances of the WEEP are illustrated in table 2 below

¹³⁴ See Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP), "Gender and Human Rights Manual for Grassroots Population", 2017, p. 3.

Plate 8: Portrait of Petra Spitzer



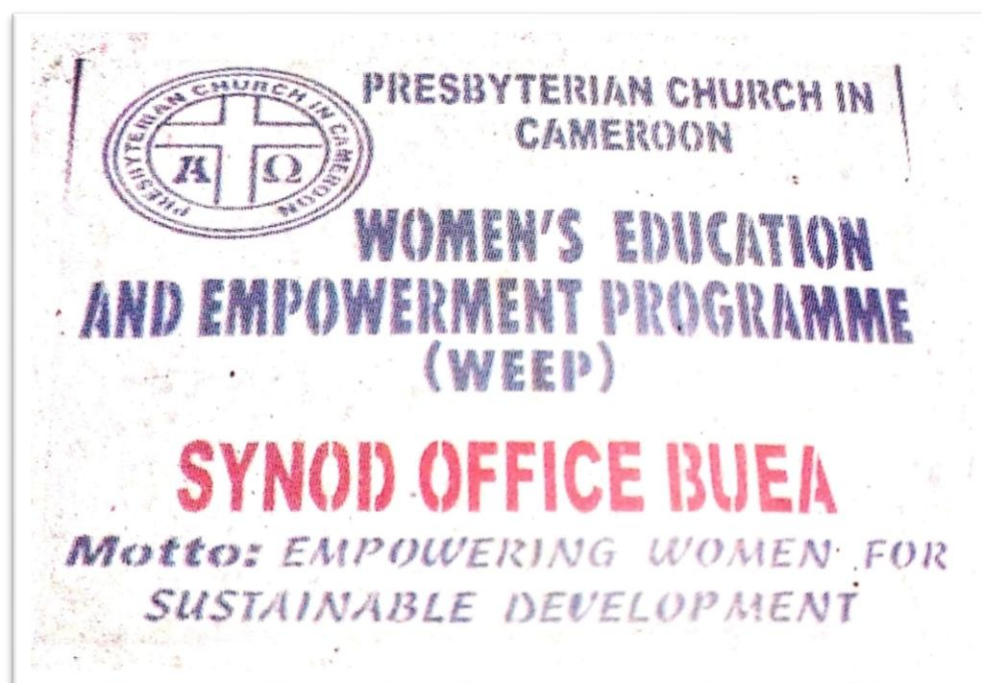
Source: PCC Central Archives Buea, Album 13, 2005.

Plate 9: Petra Pitzer at a Working Session with WEEP Officials



Source: PCC Central Archives Buea, Album 13, 2005.

Plate 10: Signpost of WEEP at synod office Buea



Source: Author, 3 July 2021.

In terms of area of focus, the program was implemented in the South West Region partly because of the cosmopolitan nature of the region and its environment. South West Region is made up of 6 divisions and 45 subdivisions with 66 municipal councils. Each council had a mayor and at least 4 deputies in case of the bigger councils. The region has very rich economic potentials. It had attracted immigrants from other regions making it more complex and cosmopolitan in nature. The South West Region harbor's the country's oil refinery and the largest plantation, Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC), with the highest employment opportunities. However, the dominant activity of the region was agriculture. The region had one of the state eight state universities that had a population of approximately 10,000 students with the female students making a population of over 50 percent.¹³⁵ The cosmopolitan nature of the region was a motivating factor for the initiators to seek Bread for the World involvement in the project to address the challenges of women.

¹³⁵ V. Q. Wetuh, *From a Local Church Group to a Movement for Women's Empowerment and Societal Transformation*, p. 25.

Furthermore, every year nursery, primary and secondary schools were created in order to meet the needs of the rural population. The presence of many administrative institutions, churches, civil society organisations, and professional institutions accounted for the increasing influx of cosmopolitan population. These people were the targets for the implementation of the Women's Education and Empowerment Program. It was in this region and against this environment that the Women's Education and Empowerment Program was conceived to bring women in the corridors of decision making. Although WEEP was a project of the PCC it was jointly implemented with other groups such as the Nkong Hill Top Association for Development (NAVDEV) and a local Civil Society Organisation in Buea.¹³⁶

Table 2: Financing of WEEP Activities

	Description	Euro	
1	Activities costs	23 500,00	23.500,00
1.1	Enhancing women's participation in decision making an local gov. Processes	3.500,00	
1.2	Increasing awareness of women's and girl's rights through education and economic potentials	10.500,00	
1.3	Increasing men's awareness on gender	4.000,00	
1.4	Capacity building staff	1.000,00	
1.5	Monitoring visits, board expenses and allowance	4.500,00	
2	Personal cost	16.200,00	16.200,00
2.1	Coordinator	6.600,00	
2.2	2 field staff	6.900,00	
2.3	Secretary/cashier	2.700,00	
3	Recurrent cost	10.800,00	10.800,00
3.1	Office Supplies	3.800,00	
3.2	Transport and communication	1.800,00	
3.3	Financial audit (final audit)	1.500,00	
3.4	External consultation	700,00	
3.5	External evaluation	3.000,00	
	Sub Total		50.500,00
4.	Reserve	2.600,00	2.600,00
5.	Grand Total		53.100,00

Source: Financial Cooperation between Bread for the World and PCC on the WEEP, 2005.

¹³⁶ V. Q. Wetuh, *From a Local....* p.26.

The program was totally financed by Bread for the World since its commencement in 2005 with Fako Division as pioneer project area.¹³⁷ It was introduced after the launch of Agenda 2000 and beyond Program which was intended to enhance and complement the church's engagement in issues of gender within its faith community because the predominant patriarchal system did not provide an adequate chance for women to be fully empowered¹³⁸. Therefore, the activities of WEEP were designed to help the communities, especially women, to discover and recognize the talents and quality of power embedded in them. With the funds that were allocated by Bread for the World, various women's empowerment activities were implemented in the context of the WEEP in various spheres.

1- Empowerment Activities in the Context of WEEP

Achieving the objectives of the WEEP required that a plethora of activities be carried out by the PCC and local NGOs with which it collaborated. The activities took the form of seminars and workshops aimed at creating awareness among men and women on key issues affecting the lives of women. This was followed by various practical engagements in the field with the intent of ameliorating the status of local women. As such, these activities are examined in this section with a view to ascertaining the extent to which they aided the empowerment and liberation of marginalized and discriminated women.

II- SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

In the social domain, WEEP staff carried out a chain of activities aimed at improving the livelihood of women. This was particularly in the domain of marriage. Before intervening in the marriage institution, WEEP staff conducted a study which revealed that so many men and women were cohabiting and mistaking it for marriage. This practice resulted in significant difficulties for women especially as they were exploited by men.¹³⁹ In Konye Sub-Division for instance, many women who were involved in this form of marriage reported how they were disappointed by their so called husbands who suddenly took interest in other women. Ikume Naomi narrated how she was thrown out by her husband after ten years of cohabitation. All her investments were lost and

¹³⁷ Smiling Women. A Newsletter by WEEP of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, (October), number 1 edition, 2009. p1.

¹³⁸ Interview with Rev. Kinge Mary, aged 47, Pioneer Project coordinator, 24 February 2017, Buea,

¹³⁹ Mary Wose, "Women's Education and Empowerment Programme Induces Changes in the Communities", *Bread for the World's Partners in Cameroon Newsletter*, 2011, p. 9.

she had to start life all over.¹⁴⁰ This was not an isolated case as many other women reported similar experiences and frustrations caused by cohabitation in the name of marriage. It was also gathered that women in such marriages were dispossessed of their inheritance rights upon the death of their husbands. This was usually the handiwork of family members who refused to recognize the women as the legal wife of their brother. Consequently, the property jointly acquired by the woman and her deceased husband was confiscated by her spouse's family.¹⁴¹ In most cases, the women were abandoned with many children, and this made life very difficult. Besides, it was also noticed that cohabitation was still ongoing in the South West Region of Cameroon. Even more disturbing was the fact that many Christians of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon were victims of this form of marriage. This practice had a negative bearing on the welfare of widows in the Fako and Meme Divisions in the South West Region of Cameroon.

After becoming aware of this situation, the Coordinator of WEEP and her staff began work in Meme Division aimed at ending cohabitation. In 2008 WEEP resource persons organized awareness workshops in Konye Sub-Division. During these seminars which were attended by men and women, the local population was made to understand the dangers of cohabitation, and they were encouraged to officially get married by acquiring marriage certificates. But it emerged from the seminars that poverty, especially the lack of money, was the main factor responsible for cohabitation. Addressing this problem therefore required officials of WEEP to act beyond the organization of seminars. They were inspired by the involvement of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family in sponsoring mass marriage ceremonies for couples living together without marriage certificates.

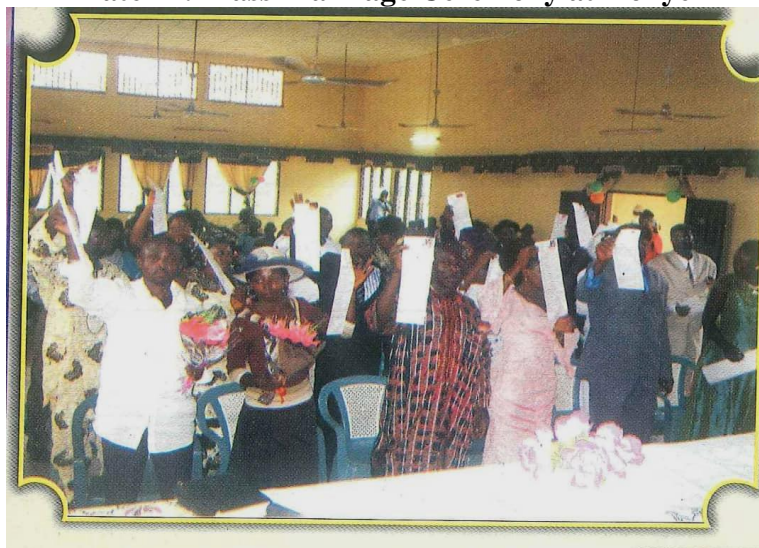
This was the context in which WEEP tilted its activities towards facilitating the acquisition of marriage certificates by cohabiting couples in Fako and Meme Divisions. In Konye Sub-Division for instance, WEEP organized a mass marriage ceremony for fifteen couples on 11 May 2011. The ceremony which took place at the Konye Council brought together couples from Ikiliwindi, Diongo, Mbakwasupe. It was presided over by the Mayor of Konye Council, Chief Ngoe Zacheus Awudu and the 1st Deputy Mayor, Alice Balemba Njanga. The Coordinator WEEP, Rev. Mary

¹⁴⁰ Interview with Ikume Naomi, 47 years, Trader, Kumba, 18 June 2021.

¹⁴¹ M. Wose, "Women's Education and Empowerment Programme...", p. 9.

Wose and the Presbytery Secretary for Meme North, Rev. Mary Salle were also present at the mass marriage ceremony. The key speech delivered at the ceremony was by Mary Wose who thanked the couples for accepting to participate in the mass marriage ceremony. The couples were urged to be committed husbands and wives in their new formal relationships. The Development Secretary of the PCC, Denis Kumbo, named these couples the “Batch of Great Expectation”. At the end of the ceremony, the fifteen couples received copies of their marriage certificates which were intended to consolidate the marriages and to protect these women who had suffered various forms of injustices due to cohabitation (see plate 11). Without doubt, these certificates helped in enabling women to claim family property upon the death of their husbands. Through these certificates, protection was also offered to the children as their mothers were sure of providing care and education.

Plate 11: Mass Marriage Ceremony at Konye



Source: Album 8, PCC Central Archive, Buea, 2011.

Another domain in which WEEP intervened was the promotion of women’s rights at the grassroots through a chain of awareness campaigns. This started in October 2005 when an awareness seminar was organized in Kumba aimed at enhancing the participation of women in various spheres of society. The intention was also to curb the prevalence of inequality and discrimination against women. Community facilitators were selected from targeted groups in Meme Division after the seminar in Kumba. These facilitators were further on how to intervene in

their communities. With these preparations in place, workshops on gender and women's rights were organized in many localities in the Division. During the workshops which pulled together hundreds of women, very topical issues were addressed. To capture and hold the attention and participation of these women, adapted communication tools and languages were used in formal and informal settings. In fact, trainings were carried out in both formal and informal ways in places such as markets, farms, schools, churches, funerals and various traditional gatherings.

The above grassroots trainings helped in lowering women's ignorance about their rights and responsibilities. The workshops equally heightened women's access to land and other natural resources. For instance, Ntube Joana acquired a piece of land after the workshops on which she constructed her house in 2014.¹⁴² Women's level of education and awareness on a range of issues were also increased. They were now able to assert themselves in society, building on information that their place was not in the home. Indeed, the participation of women in social life changed in an unprecedented manner owing to the training they received. To put it another way, the grassroots training, as summarized by Mary Wose, was "a timely intervention that reduced women's ignorance about their rights and responsibilities as many positive impacts have been recorded in the life of the communities and livelihood of women in Meme Division."¹⁴³

Overall, WEEP's intervention in the social domain permitted to take action towards ameliorating their livelihood in society. They acquired marriage certificates which protected them from various forms of abuses. They also gained awareness about their rights, ensuring that their violation by other members of society was checked.

A- Pecuniary Activities of WEEP

In cooperation with the PCC and local NGOs, Bread for the World implemented projects aimed at the economic empowerment of women. In elaborating and funding the Women's Education and Empowerment Program, Bread for the World saw economic empowerment as a stepping stone to the autonomy and livelihood of women. Within the framework of WEEP and after a field survey which revealed the economic challenges of women, the PCC and Bread for the World resolved to carry out economic empowerment activities for women in the Fako and Meme

¹⁴² Interview with Ntube Joana, Trader, aged 58, Buea, 24 June 2021.

¹⁴³ M. Wose, "Women's Education and Empowerment Programme...", p. 8.

divisions. The goal of these economic initiatives was to create income generating activities through the training of women in the production of marketable products.

In order to kick start the economic empowerment in the chosen localities, women were selected to participate in training workshops. The selection was based on a criteria set by the PCC like proximity, availability, economic status, and willingness to participate in the project. In Meme Division, training workshops were organized in four communities, namely, Kang-Barombi, Matoh, Kwakwa, Mambanda, Dieka-Bafaw, and Dikomi. During the survey, women in these communities requested to be equipped with economic skills for income generation. The areas of intervention that were identified by these women included soap-making, cake-making and icing. During the separate seminars that were organized in these communities, participants were mostly members of female Christian associations such as Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) and Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF).

The training workshops which were a blend of theoretical and practical lessons usually started with opening prayers and the introduction of resource persons by the Coordinator of WEEP. Participants were also told to consider the training as a stepping stone toward transforming their lives to avoid being left behind. During one of such workshops that was organized in Mambanda in 2012, participants acquired knowledge on soap-making. One of the participants, Eyong Joan, expressed satisfaction after the seminar in these words:

The workshops organized by the WEEP are very educative and transformative. They have gone a long way to empower many women. Women now know how to make soap and cake which is changing their economic status. Formerly, some women were just sitting and doing nothing, waiting for others to assist them. Participants of the WEEP-organized workshops now struggle on their own, and not necessarily depend only on others. I want to commend the WEEP.¹⁴⁴

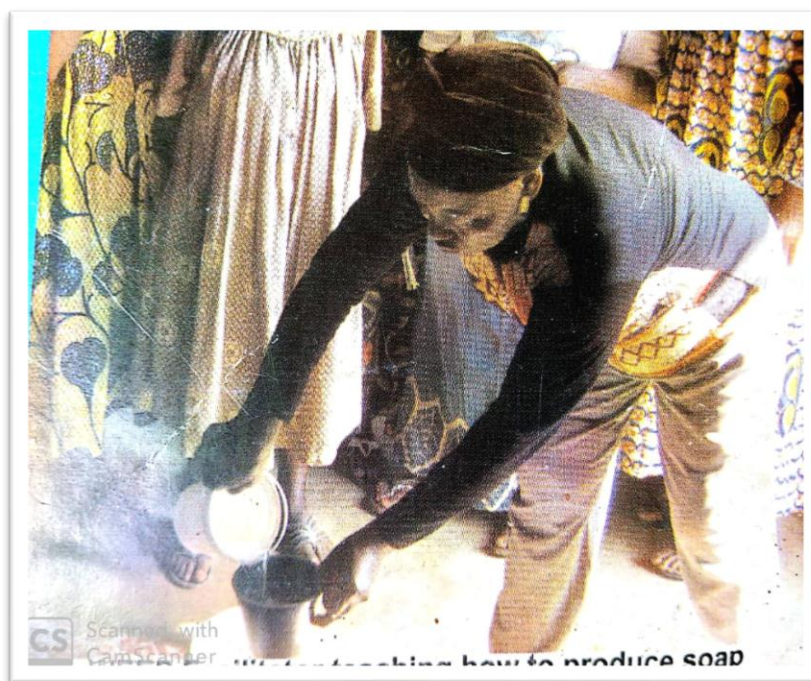
This feeling about the seminars that were organized by WEEP was not unique to Eyong Joan. Many other participants felt the same way, with most concluding that the seminars armed them

¹⁴⁴ For the quotation, read *Smiling Women*, No. 003, October 2012, p. 6. It is important to stress that *Smiling Women* was a newsletter of the WEEP. Its main purpose was to disseminate information on the activities of the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme.

with ingredients of transformation. According to Flora Mokambe, “women’s participation in the workshops turned their lives around for the better.”¹⁴⁵

Similar income generation training workshops were organized in communities across the Fako Division. In Muea for instance, hundreds of women were brought together and offered training in various economic activities in 2013. Later in 2015, WEEP officials evaluated the impact of the training in Muea and found that it had very much transformed the economic welfare of women. This was followed by the organization of a show during which Muea women showcased what they were able to do with knowledge gained during the workshops (see plates 12 and 13). It emerged that women who participated in the workshop went on to create a Common Initiative Group called Women of Faith.¹⁴⁶ With its over 70 members, this group was involved in various economic ventures in a way that has improved the welfare of its members.

Plate 12: Soap-Making Practical Lesson at a WEEP Workshop in Kwakwa, 2012



Source: *Smiling Women*, No. 003, October 2012, p. 7.

¹⁴⁵ M. Wose, “Women’s Education and Empowerment Programme...”, p. 8.

¹⁴⁶ WEEP, “Gender and Human Rights Manual for Grassroots Population”, 2017, p. 39.

Note: The foregoing illustrates a practical soap-making lesson during an income generation seminar that was organized in Kwakwa, Meme Division, by WEEP.

Plate 13: Economic Show Organized by WEEP in Buea.



Source: *Smiling Women*, No. 003, October 2012, p. 7.

In general terms, Bread for the World sponsored the training of over 1500 women and girls on income generating activities in the Region. A total of 875 women were involved in soap making while 625 women were involved in cake baking and icing. As such women's economic power increased as they supported their husbands to sponsor their children in schools and cater for the home. Within the same period, 2000 copies of WEEP Newsletters were produced and distributed. This earned the project a wider publicity and readership and made it to be known to most communities within Fako and Meme divisions.¹⁴⁷ Within the framework of WEEP, Bread for the World equally financed women's political empowerment activities as examined in the next section.

III- POLITICAL EMPOWERMENT ACTIVITIES

In the political sphere, officials of WEEP worked towards increasing the participation of women in decision-making in their community. To achieve this goal, WEEP organized capacity building workshops, trained traditional rulers on the necessity of gender sensitive leadership and

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Ikome Vivian, aged 48, WEEP Board Member, Buea, 20/2/2017.

worked with female politicians, especially councilors in view of increasing their participation in the political life of the country.

Concerning capacity building seminars, it was in the Fako Division that the very first one was organized. In collaboration with NAVDEV, WEEP officials organized seminars aimed at increasing women's participation in leadership in the church and in the wider society. The seminars which took place in Buea and Limbe were aimed at addressing the legacy of gender bias and imbalance in the leadership structures of the church and society at large. It was hoped that more women would be empowered and given access to leadership. This explains why the seminars brought together lay Christian women to learn and share experiences on approaches to women's leadership. In July 2007 for instance, WEEP organized a training workshop on women's leadership and local governance in Buea. Facilitators at the workshop addressed several dimensions of barriers to women's participation in leadership. They revealed the features of a good woman leadership, and stressed that women aspiring to hold leadership positions needed to be knowledgeable, unbiased, flexible, brave, respectful, and endowed with communication skills. The over thirty participants at the workshop shared their experiences through presentations, participatory activities and group discussions. It emerged from the workshop that women's empowerment was the first step towards full participation in leadership. So, the empowerment workshop built the personal capacities of women as a stepping stone for their involvement in leadership. The church and wider society were urged to provide an enabling environment for the actualization of women's leadership potentials.

It is worth stressing that from 2012, WEEP's promotion of capacity building as a tool for women's participation in leadership was extended to the Meme Division still in the South West Region of Cameroon. Within a year, four capacity building seminars were organized in the town of Kumba, targeting mostly female members of political parties, especially councilors in local councils across the division. In November 2013, for instance, a capacity building seminar was organized at the Presbyterian Church Centre Kumba by officials of the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme. The seminar was attended by thirty female councilors drawn from the five local councils in Meme Division. Its objective was to educate female councilors on gender mainstreaming, leadership, and good governance in relation to council budgeting. It was hoped that

knowledge on gender mainstreaming could help women to demand for council projects and budgets that take into consideration the needs of the youth and women who were most often not prioritized.

Female councilors who participated in capacity building seminars in Kumba eventually constituted themselves into the Association of Meme Female Counselors (AMFCO). The latter's main mission was to increase the participation of women in municipal and parliamentary elections. This initiative enabled female politicians in Meme to contest for top political positions. For example, five women contested for the position of Mayor and three for the position of parliamentarian even though they did not succeed. A total of 178 female politicians were trained directly on strengthening Women's Strategies for Political Leadership in Municipal and Legislative Governance in Meme Division and also coaching for six Female Mayors. These measures also helped women in politics to pursue the goals within their council areas, with 30 percent of the lists comprised of women.¹⁴⁸

Generally, the seminars and conferences that were organized in the context of the WEEP offered many women the potential to access leadership structures in the church and society. In both divisions, that is Fako and Meme, the number of women's representation in church group leadership increased tremendously.¹⁴⁹ In all PCC congregations in these two divisions, women were elected as elders, which permitted them to participate in decision making as members of Session. The life histories of women who became associated with leadership within the PCC stands as evidence of the success of capacity building seminars organized in the context of WEEP. The program contributed in bringing many women into various roles of leadership in the power structure of the church. This female agency in the governance of the PCC would not have existed if not for the gender sensitive seminars, which permitted women to become elders, congregational chairpersons, and presbytery chairpersons. The significant growth the PCC has recorded in the last fifteen years as evidenced by the number of Christians, congregations, presbyteries, schools, healthcare facilities, businesses and especially its expansion to Europe and North America is partly due to the presence of women in its executive structures. Slowly, the church is abandoning the false belief that a woman's place is in the home.¹⁵⁰ In the wider society, women's agency in the political life of the country gained more visibility given that fourteen women were elected as municipal

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Ikome Vivian, aged 48, WEEP Board Member, Buea, 20/2/2017.

¹⁴⁹ Lang, *Empowered Without Power*, p. 182.

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Mukwele Bertha Sume, 63 years, Kumba, 23/6/2021.

councilors and one more woman became a parliamentarian to add to the existing one. During the 2011 municipal and parliamentary elections, for instance, a total of 775 women were enrolled in the electoral registers owing to empowerment initiatives of the WEEP.¹⁵¹ Overall, women asserted themselves and gained more knowledge on gender issues reduced the gravity of gender inequality in society.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the extent to which the WEEP empowered and ameliorated the status of women in the PCC and the wider society. It has discussed the origins and objectives of the program. The chapter has also examined the administrative structures and financing of the WEEP, showing the potential of these aspects to shape the women's empowerment initiatives that were implemented within the framework of WEEP. The empowerment activities that were carried out in the context of the WEEP have been insightfully analyzed. The chapter concludes that the Women's Education and Empowerment Program empowered women through sustainable economic, political and social activities in ways that ameliorated their status and heightened their participation in the power structures of the church and society. In the final chapter, the impact and challenges of the intervention of FBOs in women's empowerment are examined.

¹⁵¹ Womens and Empowerment Programe(WEEP), Gender and Human Rights Manuel for Grassroots Population, p. 3.



**CHAPTER IV: CONSEQUENCES AND CHALLENGES OF WOMEN'S
EMPOWERMENT WORK OF FAITH BASED ORGANIZATIONS**

Introduction

The main objective of the final chapter is to examine the impact and challenges of women's empowerment activities that were implemented by Faith Based Organizations in collaboration with Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The opening section of the chapter gives attention to the resultant impact of women's empowerment work. The key issue here is to investigate how women's status and welfare were transformed thanks to their participation in empowerment programs that were funded by WCC and Bread for the World. These impacts are discussed under the economic, social and political domains. The challenges that were encountered by Faith Based Organizations in the course of empowering women are identified and analysed in the second section of this chapter. The section will be prospective as it provides perspectives on the engagement of FBOs in the empowerment of women in the PCC and society. The chapter argues that the empowerment programs that were funded by FBOs and implemented by the PCC ameliorated the livelihood of women despite the challenges that were encountered.

I- IMPACT OF EMPOWERMENT WORK ON WOMEN'S STATUS

The empowerment programs that were implemented in the PCC and society with financial resources made available by FBOs had a significant impact on the livelihood of local women. Women who participated in these programs were empowered in ways that transformed their lives in the social, economic and political domains. In this section, the transformations that occurred in women's lives are discussed. In fact, life histories of women who participated in the empowerment initiatives and got transformed for the collective good of society are discussed.

A- Social Impacts

The women who participated in the empowerment activities of FBOs got transformed in ways that might be described as social. Within the PCC and society, empowerment programs ameliorated the social status of women as it was evident in the status of female pastors in the PCC, amelioration of the marriage status of women, among others. When the PCC opened its ordained ministry to women, the expectation of some people was that the decision was going to be disastrous in the life of the church. These opposing voices to women's ordination expected a quick collapse of the church as they forecast that the male clergy were going to quit the church along with a drop in

congregational membership and a drop in church budget. This study found out that these things did not happen. Rather the expectation of those who felt that the entry of women was going to move the church forward, in various dimension, is what the study intend to reveal. The empowerment of female pastors helped in positioning the PCC on a growth path, with female clergy playing a pivotal role in various sectors of church life.

The empowerment work of FBOs led to a transformation of attitudes towards female pastors from initial rejection to full acceptance. As a matter of fact, women's participation in the ordained ministry was the change that was noticed in the attitudes of congregational members. This started in parishes and congregations that were first to be placed under female pastors. Although these women clergy were faced with discrimination at the beginning of their career, their commitment to the ministry of the Word and Sacrament changed the attitudes of the members of their congregations. In less than no time the church members who were hostile to these women become more receptive to them due to the positive direct experience they enjoyed with these female pastors in the parishes.¹⁵² This marked the beginning of the acceptance of female pastors in PCC's congregations as opposing voices went silent. Women in the example of Elizabeth Mbiwan who initially opposed the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry later became advocates of their inclusion and promotion. This was evidence that PCC's participation in the Ecumenical Decade launched and funded by the WCC had transformed the women were perceived and treated in the church. In nearly all PCC congregations where female pastors worked, perceptions towards clergywomen has shifted in ways that demonstrate the success of women's empowerment work carried out by FBOs. As observed by PCC's Moderator, Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel, members of the PCC who experienced a woman's ministry have now recognized the legitimacy of women's ordination.¹⁵³ However, there are still a few members hostile to the ordination of women, perhaps because they are yet to interact with a woman as their parish minister. This is why this study recommends that the PCC should not only trained more women for ordination, but should also constantly transfer these women, so that all parishes can have an experience with a female minister.

The consistency in the growth and expansion witnessed by the PCC in recent decades is in part thanks to the commitment of clergywomen to ministry work. The Ecumenical Decade

¹⁵² Interview with Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel, aged 61.

¹⁵³ *Idem*.

increased the number of ordained women within the PCC and empowered them to contribute towards the advancement of the church. In fact, it was during the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women that the participation of women in the ordained ministry of the PCC increased. The women who were trained and ordained as pastors in the framework of this Ecumenical Decade witnessed an amelioration of their status within the church. They became associated with the leadership of the PCC in various spheres. This is evidence that power sharing between men and women in church is good for the advancement of God's work. This co-responsibility of men and women was made possible by empowerment programs funded by FBOs and implemented by the PCC. This acceptance of women as people with potentials and capabilities made it possible for female pastors to participate in the life of the church. When the ordained ministry was opened to women, the PCC in a gradual process started taking measures to balance the gender gap inherent in its leadership. It started with an increase in the number of female members in the Synod of the PCC. It is the Synod that takes major decisions of the church. So increasing the membership of women in this body through their acceptance into the ordained ministry was an important step in the perspective of leadership.

In addition to the participation of female pastors in Synod, they also became prominent in leadership positions at the congregational and presbytery levels. At the congregational level, female pastors administered to their congregations and were at the head of congregational sessions. Apart from heading parishes and congregations, the women pastors who distinguished themselves received other appointments to serve in higher administrative structures of the church, especially at the presbytery level. In the first time in the history of the church Rev Martha Essem was appointed by the Staffing Committee of the PCC as the pioneer Presbyterial Secretary.¹⁵⁴ Later in 2004 the PCC got its second female Presbyterial Secretary, when Rev Angela Ngwateche became the Secretary for the Ndop Presbytery in the Ngoketunje Division of the North West Region. In this Presbytery Rev Ngwateche had fifty five congregations under her control along with the over sixteen pastors she had to manage.¹⁵⁵ Good enough she was up to the task, due to the training she had received together with the experience as she had worked in the Manyemen\Bebensi Parish, Nguti Parish and Tiko.

¹⁵⁴*The Sunday Eden*, No. 13, November 2009.

¹⁵⁵ See Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Diary, 2004, p. 54.

It was in 2009, that the PCC got its third female Presbyterian Secretary in the person of Rev. Mary Ekinde Salle. She was later appointed to the Meme North Presbytery, where she had to manage thirty-seven congregations and eight pastors.¹⁵⁶ After serving there for about four years, she went back to school to further her theological education which enabled her to earn a Masters in Theology. After leaving school she was reappointed by the Staffing Committee as the Presbyterian Secretary of the Fako South Presbytery in 2014, this time around she had the task of managing forty-five congregations and over nineteen pastors.

Another social impact that resulted from the empowerment of women by FBOs was the heightening of solidarity among women themselves and among men and women. There was an increase in collaborative work among women and between men and women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. This became evident during and after the Ecumenical Decade as men began to see the need to work and live together with women at three levels: home, church and society. Evidence collected through interviews from carefully selected informants point to the fact that most male Christians of the PCC started assisting their wives in house chores and farm work.¹⁵⁷ The home became a joint operational space for men and women for the collective good of the family. At the level of the church, the participation of women in various activities increased thanks to the implementation of empowerment programs. The patriarchal culture the PCC inherited from the Basel Mission started giving way thanks to gender sensitivity promoted by FBOs. In the church's congregations, women were permitted to read the Gospel during the liturgy and could bless children after baptism. In the Likomba Congregation for instance, Victorine Qui Wetuh served as a lay preacher and led church services.¹⁵⁸ So, gone were the days when women could only serve as leaders of the CWF movement. In fact, it was realized during the Ecumenical Decade that churches could not prosper without the full participation of women.

Women's work groups in the PCC such as CWF and the Women's Work Department as a whole gained prominence, with many women being associated with church work. As such, Cameroonian women became active in the life of the PCC in ways that were unprecedented. While

¹⁵⁶ See Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Diary, 2009, p. 17.

¹⁵⁷ Interview with Etuge Modesta, aged 67, Member of CWF, Buea, 4 May 2021.

¹⁵⁸ V. Q. Wetuh, "From a Local Church Group to a Movement for Women's Empowerment and Societal Transformation; A Case Study of the CWF of the Presbyterian Church in Likomba-Tiko, Cameroon", Master's Thesis in Theology, MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2017, p. 37.

many women gained access to various sectors of church life hitherto reserved for men, some of them distinguished themselves in exceptional ways such as Elizabeth Gana, Roseline Tanga, Margaret Morikang, Rachel Song, Frieda Maliva, Ophelia Ndifor, Catherine Chofor, Naomi Tamufor, Catherine Ntumngia, Regina Anjeh, Anna Ngwa Yingfuh, Gladys Viban and others.¹⁵⁹

In order to better demonstrate the transformation that took place in the status of women in the PCC, we are going to present the life history of two of the women mentioned above. Gladys Viban is one of the women whose rise to prominence within the power structure of the PCC occurred in the context of the implementation of women's empowerment programmes financed by FBOs. Gladys Shang Viban has served as Elder in the Presbyterian Church, Bastos Congregation since 2004. Serving as Elder in the Bastos Congregation and participating in workshops organized in the framework of programs funded by FBOs exposed Gladys Viban to leadership roles in the congregation. She was involved in varied areas of Kingdom service: Music Ministry (with the then Junior Choir – Now the Transformational Youth Choir), Youth Elder, church programs and events coordinator, sanctuary decorations and decorum, and Secretary of the congregation for 10 years; just to mention these. Her successful participation in congregational leadership was based on the wide and varied experiences she had gained as Elder. These experiences spanned from spiritual growth and maturity to personal development, leadership skills and the purpose of service in God's vineyard.¹⁶⁰ "I have learned the value of compassionate service, servant leadership, listening skills, and above all that availability is the key to ALL service," said Elder Gladys Viban.

There is evidence pointing to the fact that Gladys Viban worked hard as Elder, doing what many women have done in the church, using eldership to access a congregational power structure which had been dominated by men. Little wonder her re-election into eldership in 2009, 2014 and 2019 was mostly non-incident, from the nomination process or pre-selection process to the actual elections. By exercising her eldership and occupying congregational leadership functions with devotion and commitment, Elder Gladys Viban was overwhelmingly elected as Chairperson of East Mungo North Presbytery in 2014. In her capacity as Chairperson, Elder Gladys Viban ensured that the over 52 congregations of the presbytery were properly managed. Working closely with the

¹⁵⁹ E. Gana, "History of CWF as a Development Agent", In Gana E., ed., *Christian Women Move on in Hope and Hope in Christ*, Limbe, Presbook Print, pp. 69-85.

¹⁶⁰ Interview with Shang Viban Gladys, aged 62, PCC Elder, Yaounde, 4/03/2021.

Presbyterial Secretary and other officials of the Presbytery Committee, Elder Gladys recorded some commendable contributions to the growth of the Presbytery and the church at large. During an interview, Gladys Viban emphasized that “When we took office in 2014 our mission was couched in the vision of the Moderator of the PCC- The Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba - to be: Transformed Transformers.”¹⁶¹ “In this direction, we used transformation as a cross-cutting dynamic for church growth and church health in our Presbytery. Our vision focused on Purposeful Transformation to stimulate impact through spiritual empowerment, church planting, financial stewardship and capacity building for Pastors and congregational leadership - to engender this as a shared vision and to motivate the Christians of the East Mungo North Presbytery to embrace that vision.”¹⁶²

Elder Gladys and her team sought to reshape the narrative and thinking of the East Mungo North Presbytery across the board. The Pastors had workshops to harness their spiritual awareness, pastoral comportment, collegiality, team spirit and professionalism. This in turn trickled down to congregational leadership and then to the Christians. Emerging from this governance approach were achievements in the spheres of membership, infrastructure, land acquisition, and financial stewardship. From 2014-2018, membership growth rose from 25,000 to about 30,000, with an accompanying growth of congregations from 34 to 52. In the Yaounde area alone, Elder Gladys Viban led a team that succeeded in planting congregations/Prayer cells in Emana, Odja, Akok Ndoe, Nyom, Mbankolo, Nkoabang, and Mfou. Sunday School/Young Presbyterians also witnessed an increase in enrollment from 2674 to 5130. Regarding infrastructural development in the East Mungo North Presbytery, a mission secondary school went operational in Mfou while an ultra-modern health facility was opened at Nsimeyong in Yaoundé.¹⁶³

Beyond the presbytery level, Gladys Viban was/is a member of Synod which is the supreme governing body of the PCC. Besides, she currently seats on the Synod Executive Committee which implements important resolutions taken by the Synod. Clearly, Gladys Viban’s participation in FBO-funded empowerment programs contributed in enabling her to access the supreme power

¹⁶¹ Interview with Gladys Viban, aged 62.

¹⁶² *Idem.*

¹⁶³ *Idem.*

organ of the PCC.¹⁶⁴ Thanks to the implementation of the programs, Gladys, like other women, was able to serve the PCC from the congregational level right up to the most supreme organ of the church. The Synod, it should be stressed, is charged with addressing church issues such as elections, appointments, healthcare, education, church businesses, ecumenical partnerships, infrastructural development, and many other things relating to church governance. Considering that Gladys Viban served in both the Synod and Synod Executive Committee, she, no doubt, represents a case example of the transformation witnessed by women in the church and society thanks to empowerment programs financed by the WCC and Bread for the World.

Plate 14: Portrait of Elder Shang Viban Gladys



Source: Gladys Shang's Private Album, 10 October 2021.

The empowerment of women by Faith Based Organizations equally helped in transforming the marriage status of local women, especially Christians. The mass wedding ceremonies that were organized in the framework of the WEEP and sanctioned by the acquisition of marriage certificates by these couples brought more security and confidence to these women. There was growing awareness on the need to treat widows with care upon the death of their husbands. In their homes, these women earned respect from their husbands and husband's family members. The discrimination they suffered became a thing of the past, with one informant, Anna Effimba,

¹⁶⁴ V. M. Munge, "Yaah Gladys Shang Viban: Promoting Gender Equity in Cameroon", *Success Story*, No. 007, March 2008, p. 8.

stressing that her marriage agonies ended after they obtained a marriage certificate at a mass wedding ceremony organized by officials of WEEP in Konye.¹⁶⁵ This was not certainly an isolated case as many other women felt the same way. The acquisition of marriage certificates offered these women a new dignified status in their marital homes and wider society. This greatly reduced discrimination and marital abuses that were due to cohabitation without any official marriage.

Another social domain in which FBOs transformed the lives of local women was by reducing domestic violence and other forms of discrimination carried out against women. Participation in seminars and workshops organized in the context of WEEP pushed women to break the silence about these abuses and discrimination. They started talking about domestic violence in their communities in the hope of bringing it to an end. These women, especially in Limbe and Kumba where WEEP organized workshops, refused to be silent against domestic violence, even when they encountered challenges. By challenging domestic violence, these women began to live dignified lives in their communities. There are many cases of women who were freed from domestic either by challenging it or by educating their husbands that violence against a wife was a violation of her basic right. Some of these women went as far as taking legal action against their husbands in an effort to end the cycle of home violence. With time, the attitude of men towards their wives changed, with most of them understanding the necessity not to indulge in domestic violence. So, it can be argued without fear of contradiction that empowerment work that was carried out in the framework of the WEEP helped in checking domestic violence in communities across the Fako and Meme Divisions. The implementation of empowerment programs also transformed the economic status of women as discussed in the next section of this chapter.

II- AMELIORATION OF WOMEN'S ECONOMIC STATUS

The empowerment work of Faith Based Organizations that were implemented by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon resulted in the amelioration of women's economic status in the society. This was particularly the WEEP which was implemented in the Fako and Meme Divisions through the organization of training workshops and seminars. The seminars, as already discussed in the previous chapter, provided training to women on various economic spheres with the goal of enhancing their welfare. In this section of chapter four, the impact of the training workshops on the

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Anna Effimba, aged 46, Farmer, Konye, 12/05/2021.

economic status of women is examined. We are going to use the life histories of beneficiary women to demonstrate the fact that empowerment initiatives of FBOs came with economic improvement for many women.

The economic empowerment work of FBOs provided local women an opportunity to attain a self-reliant status. They depended on the income generation knowledge given during workshops to initiate entrepreneurial activities in their communities. In places such as Konye, Kumba, Buea, Muea, Mutengene, Ekona, and Limbe, women were able to set up different income generation activities from which profits were generated. In Muea for instance, Constance Ekonde, who participated in workshops organized by resource persons engaged by WEEP, established her business at the Muea Market in 2012. She rented a shop in which a plethora of items were sold to customers from near and far.¹⁶⁶ Constance Ekombe emphasized during an interview in May 2021 that participation in the business ameliorated her livelihood in ways that were also beneficial to her entire family. With profits generated from the business, Ekombe was able to provide food and other basic need for her four children and two siblings. She was also able to finance her children's education with income obtained from her business. By extension, Constance Ekombe was also able to contribute towards the development of her community in direct and indirect ways.¹⁶⁷

Many other women made strides in various micro projects in fields such small restaurants, tailoring, livestock keeping, crop business, and gardening. A prominent case example worth discussing is Anita Chefor, a CWF member who operated a sewing workshop partly due to the training she received from WEEP resource persons. The training and financial assistance she got through the Women's Education and Empowerment Program enabled her to purchase more machines and to start training female school dropouts. This this tailoring initiative, the economic status of Anita Chefor was significantly ameliorated. She progressed well in generating profit from this economic activity better than before the implementation of WEEP. During an interview, Anita Chefor described how the tailoring workshop has improved her livelihood in these words:

This micro-project has been a major source of income with which I have been able to sustain my livelihood. I have rented a decent house for me and my kids and we eat three meals per day without any difficulty. I am grateful to the officials of WEEP for the training which has rolled away

¹⁶⁶ Interview with Constance Ekombe, aged 52, Trader, Muea, 3 May 2021.

¹⁶⁷ *Idem*.

my economic challenges.¹⁶⁸ It is important to mention that Anita Chefor deed not keep the knowledge only to her as she recruited and trained some girls in sewing. At the end of the training, the girls were awarded certificates and at the same time motivated to open their own workshops. These women, most of who were in Buea, were also to generate income with which their living standards were ameliorated.

Some of the women were involved in the keeping of animals by establishing poultries and piggeries. Regarding pig production, women in Kumba and Buea established piggeries based on knowledge gotten from WEEP staff during seminars and workshops. It is worth noting that the pig sector in Cameroon has gained prominence in recent years owing to the economic challenges the country is facing. As a coping strategy, men and women resorted to the production of pigs by setting up pig farms in their communities. This has led to the development of what might be best described as a pig economy in which women participate fully. The pig economy consists of various economic activities linked to the pig industry such as the production of pigs, marketing and pig feeds and pigs, selling of pork meat, and other activities associated with the sector. Women who became involved in the pig economy were largely responsible for rearing, feeding and management of pigs. They also had a voice and place in the marketing of the pigs they reared. This participation in the pig economy had a positive impact on the status of women.

In general terms, the economic empowerment initiatives of Faith Based Organizations did transform the economic status of women, especially in the South West Region of Cameroon where the WEEP was implemented by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. There is evidence to demonstrating the positive contribution of FBOs to the economic empowerment of women. The livelihood of women who were associated with the empowerment programs was significantly ameliorated. These women, it should be emphasized, were empowered to the point that they were able to also contribute towards the advancement of their communities. This admirable impact of the empowerment work of FBOs on the status of women was also noticeable in the political domain as discussed in the next section of this chapter.

¹⁶⁸ Interview with Chefor Anita, aged 46, Seamstress, Buea, 3 May 2021.

III- POLITICAL IMPACT OF WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

The involvement of Faith Based Organizations in the sensitization and empowerment of women increased their participation in the political life of the country. The seminars and workshops that were organized for female councilors and other women who were interested in politics served as motivation for many women to venture into politics at various levels: registration in the electoral register, exercise of their voting rights, and presentation of their candidatures for municipal and parliamentary elections.

Regarding women's exercise of their voting rights, it is pertinent to point out that the work carried out by FBOs enabled women to understand the necessity to take part in the election of leaders such as municipal councillors, mayors, parliamentarians and the president of the country.¹⁶⁹ This was evidenced by an increase in the number of women on the electoral lists. In the Kumba constituency for instance, many women enrolled on the electoral register owing to the advocacy and workshops organized in the framework of WEEP.

To the increase in women's enrolment in electoral registers should be added the rise in the number of women who tabled their candidatures for the municipal and parliamentary elections in the South West Region of Cameroon where most of the activities of FBOs were implemented. The Municipal Election of 2013 which came shortly after numerous seminars organized by WEEP resource persons represented a major shift in women's participation in politics. Following this election, a total of fourteen women were elected as municipal councillors in constituencies across the South West Region. But most of these women were in Fako and Meme divisions where the WEEP was intensified. Some of these female councilors were later on elected as Mayors in their constituencies. Little wonder Henry Kam Kah and Mavis Yeluma Tembi include the South West Region among the regions with the highest number of women mayors after the 2013 mayoral elections.¹⁷⁰ They add that the South West Region also had the highest number of assistant mayors after the 2013 mayoral election, attributing it to advocacy and emancipation initiatives of local and international civil society organizations.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ R. F. Kinge and A. Oluwasanmi, "Women Education and Political Participation in the South West Region of Cameroon: An Empirical Analysis", *Public Administration Research*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2014, p. 102.

¹⁷⁰ H. K. Kah and Mavis Yeluma Tembi, "Cameroonian Women in Political Leadership, 1960-2015", *Afro Asian Journal of Social Sciences*, Vol. IX, No. 2, 2018, p. 9.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

In order to demonstrate women’s agency in local governance through municipal elections, it is relevant to briefly discuss life histories of female mayors in the South West Region who were elected in the context of women’s empowerment programmes financed by FBOs. A good example is Mbwaye Eposi Florence who was elected councillor of Limbe I Council in 2013. Later in 2020, Eposi Florence was elected as Mayor of Limbe I Council in replacement of Ro-Danny Mbua Mokako who died of Covid-19. It is important to emphasize that Eposi Florence trained as Home Economics teacher and taught various schools across the South West Region. Before her election, Eposi Florence was Vice President of the Women’s Wing of the Fako IA Section of the Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) party. The Sun Newspaper described Eposi Florence as “serviceable, straight-forward and likeable person who is competent enough to deliver the needed goods at the Limbe I Council.”¹⁷² Other women who were elected as mayors partly thanks to the work of FBOs included Rose Ngassa in Tombel Council and Magdaline Pondy in Isangele Council.

Plate 15: Installation of Eposi Florence as Mayor



Source: Limbe I Council Archives, 2021.

¹⁷² Joan Epolle, “Women in Politics”, *The SUN Newspaper*, 25 June 2010, p. 14.

Plate 16: Mayor Eposi Florence Granting an Interview after he Installation



Source: Limbe I Council Archives, 2021.

Initially elected as Mayor in 2007 at the beginning of the Women's Education and Empowerment Program, Rose Ngassa obtained her re-election in 2013 for another term of office. It is relevant to note that Rose Ngassa is a successful business magnet in the South West Region and beyond. Under her headship, the Tombel constituency witnessed significant growth in the areas of infrastructural development and the provision of basic necessities. These three female mayors we have profiled are role models for many other women who are aspiring to play an active role in the political life of the country. As members of the Association of Meme Female Counsellors (AMFCO), whose creation was hastened by WEEP staff, female mayors and assistant mayors have been encouraging other women to take interest in the political life of the country. In its monthly meetings which were held in major towns across Meme Division, female councillors were challenged to take the bull by the horns in view of increasing their presence in the political arena. It is hope that the next municipal election will offer women another opportunity to table their candidatures and to be elected as councillors, mayors and parliamentarians.

Plate 17: Installation of Rose Ngassa as Mayor of Tombel Council in 2013



Source: Mayor Rose Ngassa's Private Album, 2021.

In addition to these female mayors were female parliamentarians who took advantage of WEEP activities to join politics and to be elected into the prestigious National Assembly of Cameroon.

A- Challenges Faced by FBOs

In the process of cooperating with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to empower women for greater participation in the church and society Faith Based Organizations, particularly the World Council of Churches and Bread for the World, encountered various difficulties. These challenges ranged from continuing opposition by men, insufficient funds, the socio-political crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, to the absence of follow up of empowered women.

Concerning continuing opposition staged by some men in both the church and society, it is important to state her that this obstructed the empowerment work of Faith Based Organizations. Within the PCC, some Christians, mostly men, opposed the empowerment of women for leadership, arguing that their place was in the home. In fact, the policy of excluding women from active participation in the life of the church was inherited from the Basel Mission and sustained by

leaders of the PCC. During the Basel Mission era, the biased interpretation of biblical texts and the cultural and institutional set-up of the Christian church offered society with a patriarchal image of God which served as a basis for the marginalization of women. This no doubt produced an age-old pattern of predominantly male leadership in the Basel Mission Church in Cameroon which was handed down to the PCC in 1957. It was this patriarchal culture that became an obstacle to the women's empowerment programs launched and financed by Christian organizations. In the course of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women launched and financed by the WCC, some old PCC Christians challenged the opening of the ordained ministry to women. This opposition to women's ordination was championed by Elizabeth Mbiwan who argued the ordained ministry was the preserve of men. In 1999, Elizabeth Mbiwan led a group of churches to the Synod Office in Buea to challenge the decision to admit women into the Theological College in Buea. This group of disgruntled women held a meeting with the Moderator, Rt. Rev. Henry Awasom and told him that the church ought to reverse the decision. Insistently, they emphasized the distinctive contribution of women as mothers in the domestic sphere, preferring that the empowerment of women be informed by the domestic roles they were expected to play.¹⁷³

Elizabeth Mbiwan even went as far as stating that the inclusion of women in the ordained ministry was going to disrupt the proper functioning of the PCC owing to women's incapability to act as pastors. This opposition was not only at the top given that there were similar opposing voices in congregations where female pastors were stationed. Pioneer female pastors faced numerous challenges at their places of work owing to continuing opposition. To put it another way, these female pastors, especially the early ones faced the problem of rejection. Upon posting, these women were quite often rejected in their congregations as confirmed by Rev Dr. Azange Margeret during an interview she granted.¹⁷⁴ This rejection found expression by means of outright rejection or by refusing to receive the holy sacrament from their hands. A good example is that of Rev Perpetua Fonki, being the first female pastor to be trained, she went through the hurdle of rejection from Christians in the first congregation she worked in. This same situation could be observed in many other churches all over the world. For instance, in Indonesia a number of women have been ordained as pastors but the Batak Society has not yet accepted their presence in the Protestant

¹⁷³ Interview with Rev. Azange Margaret, aged 59, PCC Pastor, Yaounde, 15/06/ 2021.

¹⁷⁴ *Idem*.

Christian Batak Church. The reason being that, women are not suitable to teach in the church, advised men and speak in public to a crowd. They are a lower class than men. Also, worth noting is the case of Rev. Mary Salle Ekinde, who happen to have been the Presbyterian Secretary of Meme North. The challenges she encountered were confirmed by Peter Ojong, who is an elder and Christian of the congregation. He observed that “we had a case in question in our congregation, where one of the male elders had to abandon the church because he was corrected over what the pastor thought it was right”.¹⁷⁵

Another important practical problem that confronted female clergies in the PCC who were empowered by FBOs was that of blending church duties and family responsibilities. Even though they are pastors, having programs running in church, preparing sermons, evangelizing, preaching and sometime teaching, they were still expected to be wives, mothers and carryout household chores. This has been a very challenging task blending all these activities usually burnt them out. Faced with this difficult situation, these women and the church had to do something. This led to the female pastors’ seminar in 1998, which marked the beginning of the annual come together of the female theologians known as The Female Pastors’ Conference.¹⁷⁶ It was organized by Rev. Dr. Festus Asana, the then Dean of PTS Kumba and Rev Hedda Klip who was the chaplain and lecturer at PTS. It was also attended by the Synod Clerk at the time Rev. Dr. Nyansako-ni-Nku, who traced the history of the decision to admit women in the Ministry of the PCC. The aim of holding the conference was the discrimination that existed between the female pastors and their male counterparts. These women were generally not well received by the population. So therefore this conference was a forum to evaluate, learn and share their experiences in order to look for possible solutions.¹⁷⁷ The Female Pastors’ Conference has been a forum where these female clergies come together to seek for solutions, in order to resolve some of the difficulties they faced on the field.

To the opposition faced by empowered women should be added the insufficient financial resources which obstructed the work of FBOs. It was emphasized in chapter two that women’s empowerment programs in the PCC and society were solely financed by FBOs. Unfortunately, the funds were not usually sufficient and made it impossible for some earmarked tasks to be

¹⁷⁵ Interview with Ojong Peter, 62 years, Elder in PCC Kumba, Buea, 13/05/2021.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes of the Seventh Annual Conference of PCC Female Pastors and Students held on the 27-28 February 2004 at Tiko.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

accomplished. It was due to financial constraints that some women's empowerment activities that were earmarked for the Ecumenical Decade could not be carried out. The PCC had hoped to organize training seminars and workshops in all its presbyteries in the framework of the Ecumenical Decade, but this was obstructed by insufficient funds. This explains why the workshops and seminars were only held in places such as Buea, Douala, Yaounde, Kumba, and Bamenda. Most rural presbyteries where women were confronted with all kinds of discrimination were left out. The funds that were made available by the WCC for Ecumenical Decade activities in the PCC were large insufficient. In 1995, three years to the end of the Decade, the WCC reduced the annual income it was giving to the PCC and called upon leaders of the church to seek for alternative sources of income. This was not possible because the PCC was caught up in a financial crisis whose roots were traced to the 1970s. The crisis was caused by the new labour code instituted by the Cameroon Government. The code required the PCC to place its workers on the same pay roll like government employees. This code came at a time when the church was finding it difficult to match its budget with the burden of managing her health and educational institutions.¹⁷⁸

This lack of money had a negative bearing on the extent to which the objectives of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women were achieved. While the number of female pastors and female elders increased, there was no significant participation of women in the power structure of the PCC. In fact, leadership structures such as the Synod, Synod Committee, Presbytery Committee and Congregational Sessions as well as positions such as Presbytery Chairperson, Presbytery Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Development Secretary, administrators of educational and health facilities, Synod Clerk and the position of moderator were still largely in male hands.¹⁷⁹ This was evidence that financial and other challenges did not permit women's empowerment activities of FBOs to roll away patriarchy in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

The women's empowerment work of Faith Based Organizations was also impeded by the socio-political conflict in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. The ongoing conflict in these two regions of Cameroon initially began as the "Anglophone" problem with roots traced to the colonial era. The conflict began in 2017 following the turning of strike actions by lawyers and teachers into a secessionist military campaign. On November 5, 2018, the Moderator

¹⁷⁸ Joan Epolle, *"Women in Politics"*p. 102.

¹⁷⁹ Interview with Rev. Elong Rose Dione, aged 43, PCC Pastor, Yaounde, 18/06/ 2021.

of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, Rt. Rev. Samuel Forba Fonki, issued a communiqué which, *inter alia*, made public the closure of mission schools in zones of insecurity operated by the Presbyterian Education Authority (PEA) in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon.¹⁸⁰ This decision came on the heels of two spectacular episodes of students' abduction at Presbyterian Secondary School (PSS), Nkwen on October 31 and November 4, 2018 by unidentified gunmen. While the first incident involved 11 students, the second was more disturbing as a total of 78 students and three staff members, including the Principal, were forcibly taken to an unknown destination. These two incidents, which occurred in swift succession, were terrifying and shocking, and this was evidence that the war in Anglophone Cameroon was/is cataclysmic for Christian Churches in the area. Since 2017 when the crisis turned into armed conflict, churches have suffered at the hands of separatist fighters and Cameroonian State forces. Several clergymen, Christian faithful, and mission teachers have either been killed or seriously wounded. The considerable unrest also occasioned the displacement of Christians, some of whom immigrated to neighboring Nigeria. Besides, some mission schools and health facilities have been targeted and forced to close.¹⁸¹

Indeed, Christian churches based in the two Anglophone regions have been caught up in the war and exposed to an aura of atrocities committed by secessionist militias and government troops. These parties to the conflict have equally carried out numerous atrocities against the population such as kidnapping civilians, burning villages, attacking and closing schools, killing people, enforcing lockdowns, and attacking health facilities.

Owing to these atrocities, women's empowerment activities that were carried out in the framework of the WEEP were disrupted in places such as Kumba, Ikiliwindi, Kwakwa, Konye, and Ekona. The seminars that were organized by WEEP resource persons were terminated at these places considering that the organizers refused to go to the field. In addition, many women in these communities were forced from their homes by the conflict making it impossible for them to participate in WEEP activities. In fact, the network of grassroots women's empowerment work that had been established was disrupted by the conflict. The new Coordinator of WEEP, Beryl Esino Nokuba, who took over from Rev. Mary Wose in 2016, was unable to remain active in the field

¹⁸⁰ Letter by PCC's Moderator, Samuel Fonki, 5 November, 2018, p. 4.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*

supervising the activities of the programme.¹⁸² This was worsened by the inability of Petra Spitzer, the Cameroon Project Officer designated by Bread for the World, to visit Cameroon and supervise the activities carried out in the context of the WEEP. Her last visit to Cameroon dates to 2016 when she came and installed Beryl Esino as Coordinator.¹⁸³ Since then, the ongoing conflict has prevented her from visiting Cameroon with resultant consequences on the women's empowerment work financed by Bread for the World. As such, the conflict obstructed the extension of WEEP's activities to the entire South West Region and to the North West Region and other parts of Cameroon. Indeed, its implementation was limited only to the Fako and Meme Divisions in the South West Regions. As the conflict drags on, it is feared that Bread for the World and its partner, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, might mutually terminate the project.

Conclusion

This final chapter has examined the impact and challenges of women's empowerment activities that were implemented by Faith Based Organizations in collaboration with Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. It has investigated how women's status and welfare were transformed thanks to their participation in empowerment programs that were funded by WCC and Bread for the World. These transformations were visible in the economic, social and political domains. The challenges that were encountered by Faith Based Organizations in the course of empowering women have been identified and analysed. The chapter concludes that the empowerment programmes that were funded by FBOs and implemented by the PCC ameliorated the livelihood of women despite the challenges that were encountered.

¹⁸² Interview with Rev. Neba Delphine Njea, aged 38, PCC Pastor, Yaounde, 18 June 2021.

¹⁸³ Interview with Rt. Rev. Samuel Fonki, aged 61.



GENERAL CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine the contribution of FBOs to the empowerment of women in the PCC. It has given particular attention to women's empowerment in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women launched by the WCC in the 1980s and the Women's Education and Empowerment Program that was implemented with funds made available by Bread for the World, a German-based Faith Based Organization.

These two projects, as the study demonstrates, stand as evidence of the involvement of FBOs in women's empowerment through their financing of the gender equality initiatives of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. While this women's empowerment agenda was positive for women in the sense that it opened up greater space for them in the church and society, very little evidence is available about the gender-related implications of the practical initiatives of FBOs to empower women. There was therefore a need to probe into whether the empowerment programs implemented with financial resources from FBOs actually liberated women from patriarchy and discrimination. As such, this study analyses the work of international FBOs as they attempted to challenge the gender insensitive attitude of the PCC on the issue of gender in the context of women's participation in the church and society. Faith Based Organizations such as WCC, Bread for the World and Mission 21 worked in collaboration with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to eliminate discriminations against women by funding empowerment projects. The study has built upon data from a plethora of sources to demonstrate that entrenched patriarchy and accompanying discriminations against women in both the PCC and society were challenged through women's empowerment programs financed by international faith-based institutions.

It was in light of this central argument that the study was guided towards addressing the following question: To what extent did Faith Based Organizations empower women for full involvement in the PCC and society? This main question yielded four subsidiary questions with each corresponding to a chapter in the work. First, what were the bases of FBOs' involvement in the empowerment of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon? Second, what were the activities carried out by the PCC in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women? Third, in what ways was the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme implemented by the PCC on behalf of FBOs? Fourth, what was the situation of women in the PCC and society after the intervention of Faith Based Organizations?

The foregoing research questions and central argument acted in combination to determine the main and subsidiary objectives of the study. Generally, the study aimed at examining the contribution of Faith Based Organizations in promoting women's empowerment in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the society. Four subsidiary objectives were pulled from this main objective. First, the study sought to contextualize FBOs' involvement in women's empowerment and the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Second, it has examined PCC's women empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and financed by the World Council of Churches. Third, the study has analysed the Women's Education and Empowerment Program which was funded by Bread for the World and implemented by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Finally, the study has examined the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and the society after the implementation of FBOs' empowerment programs.

Summarily, the intervention of FBOs in the empowerment of women in the PCC and society are addressed in four chapters. The opening chapter contextualized the involvement of international Faith Based Organizations in women's empowerment and the status of women in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The chapter provided a historical context of Faith Based Organizations and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. This has served as a leeway to appreciating women's status in Christianity in Cameroon since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The historical roots of FBOs were also been examined in ways that have exposed their gender agendas and how these were placed at the center of their ecumenical ties with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. The changing status of women in the PCC was also examined, and this has revealed that there was an entrenched culture of patriarchy within the church. This situation, as the chapter further demonstrates, necessitated the implementation of empowerment programs for women. The chapter concluded that gender agendas of international FBOs acted in combination with the low status of women to occasion an ecumenical partnership between the PCC and religious faith institutions aimed at enhancing the agency of women in church and society.

PCC's women empowerment activities in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women which was launched and financed by the World Council of Churches were also examined. The analysis revealed that the mission of this decade of solidarity was to empower women within member churches of the WCC. As a member of the WCC, the

Presbyterian Church in Cameroon embraced the vision of the Ecumenical Decade and took measures to open more space for women within its structures. During the Ecumenical Decade, measures were taken to open the ordained ministry to women as well as to increase women's participation in the eldership. By becoming pastors and elders, women began to play a leading role in the power structure of the PCC. It emerged from the discussion and analysis that the Ecumenical Decade that was launched by the WCC yielded more leadership opportunities for women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Chapter three examined the extent to which activities that were implemented in the framework of the WEEP empowered and ameliorated the status of women in the PCC and the wider society. It discussed the origins and objectives of the program. The chapter also examined the administrative structures and financing of the WEEP, showing the potential of these aspects to shape the women's empowerment initiatives that were implemented within the framework of WEEP. The empowerment activities that were carried out in the context of the WEEP were also insightfully analysed. The chapter found that the Women's Education and Empowerment Program empowered women through sustainable economic, political and social activities in ways that ameliorated their status and heightened their participation in the power structures of the church and society.

In the final chapter, the impact and challenges of women's empowerment activities that were implemented by Faith Based Organizations in collaboration with Presbyterian Church in Cameroon were examined. It investigated how women's status and welfare were transformed thanks to their participation in empowerment programs that were funded by WCC and Bread for the World. These transformations were visible in the economic, social and political domains. The challenges that were encountered by Faith Based Organizations in the course of empowering women were identified and analysed. The chapter concluded that the empowerment programs that were funded by FBOs and implemented by the PCC ameliorated the livelihood of women despite the challenges that were encountered.

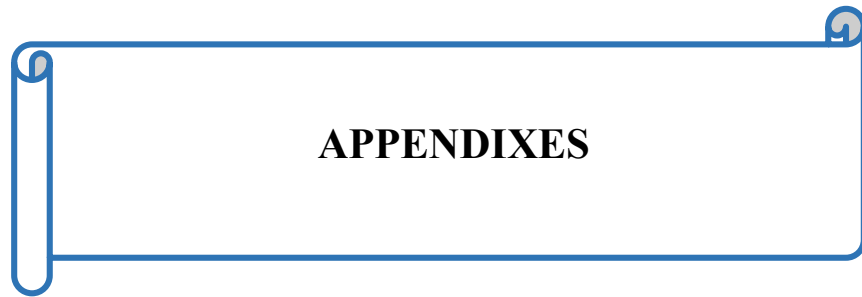
In the light of the foregoing discussion, this study has brought to light four key findings. First, the study has revealed that gender agendas of international FBOs acted in combination with the low status of women to occasion an ecumenical partnership between the PCC and religious faith institutions aimed at enhancing the agency of women in church and society. Second, it has

also emerged from the study that the Ecumenical Decade that was launched by the WCC yielded more leadership opportunities for women within the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. Third, the study has equally found that the Women's Education and Empowerment Program empowered women through sustainable economic, political and social activities in ways that ameliorated their status and heightened their participation in the power structures of the church and society. Finally, the study demonstrates that the empowerment programs that were funded by FBOs and implemented by the PCC ameliorated the livelihood of women despite the challenges that were encountered.

Building on these findings, this study that entrenched patriarchy and accompanying discriminations against women in both the PCC and society were challenged through women's empowerment programs financed by international faith based institutions despite the field challenges that were encountered. As a matter of fact, empirical evidence from the empowerment work that was done in the context of the Ecumenical Decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women as well as the Women's Education and Empowerment Program point to the stark reality that international Faith Based Organizations such as the World Council of Churches and Bread for the World work collaboratively with the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to ameliorate the status of women in church and the wider society. Within the PCC, the implementation of these two programs enabled women to access the ordained ministry which was initially the preserve of men. The many women who were trained and ordained as pastors began participating in the leadership structures of the church, with some going to the extent of serving as Presbytery Secretaries and members of Synod, considered as the supreme governing organ of the PCC. Many other women leaned on the empowerment work of FBOs to play prominent roles in the life of the PCC as elders and chairpersons at the level of the Congregation and Presbytery.

In the wider society, particularly in the South West Region of Cameroon where the WEEP was implemented, the political, economic and social status of many women was uplifted. While women were motivated to take interest in the political life of the country by participating in elections, a few daring ones campaigned and were elected as councillors, mayors and parliamentarians. These gains notwithstanding, the patriarchal culture is still present in the PCC and society and this study is recommending that international Faith Based Organizations should continue working with the PCC in view of further ameliorating the status of women in Cameroon.

It is further suggested that the PCC should also fully implement its policy of gender equality within the church before venturing into the wider society to empower women.



APPENDIXES

Appendix 1

Title: GUIDED QUESTION ON THE ACTIVITIES AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF FBOs AND OTHER RELATED PROGRAMS TO EMPOWER WOMEN WITHIN PCC.

These questions are intended to collect data on the FBOs and their contribution to the empowerment of women within the PCC and the society including other related programs in the Northwest and Southwest of Cameroon from 1971 to 2017.

A. Status of the informant

Name:.....

Age:.....

Occupation:.....

Address:.....

Date:

Relationship the PCC:

B. Questions

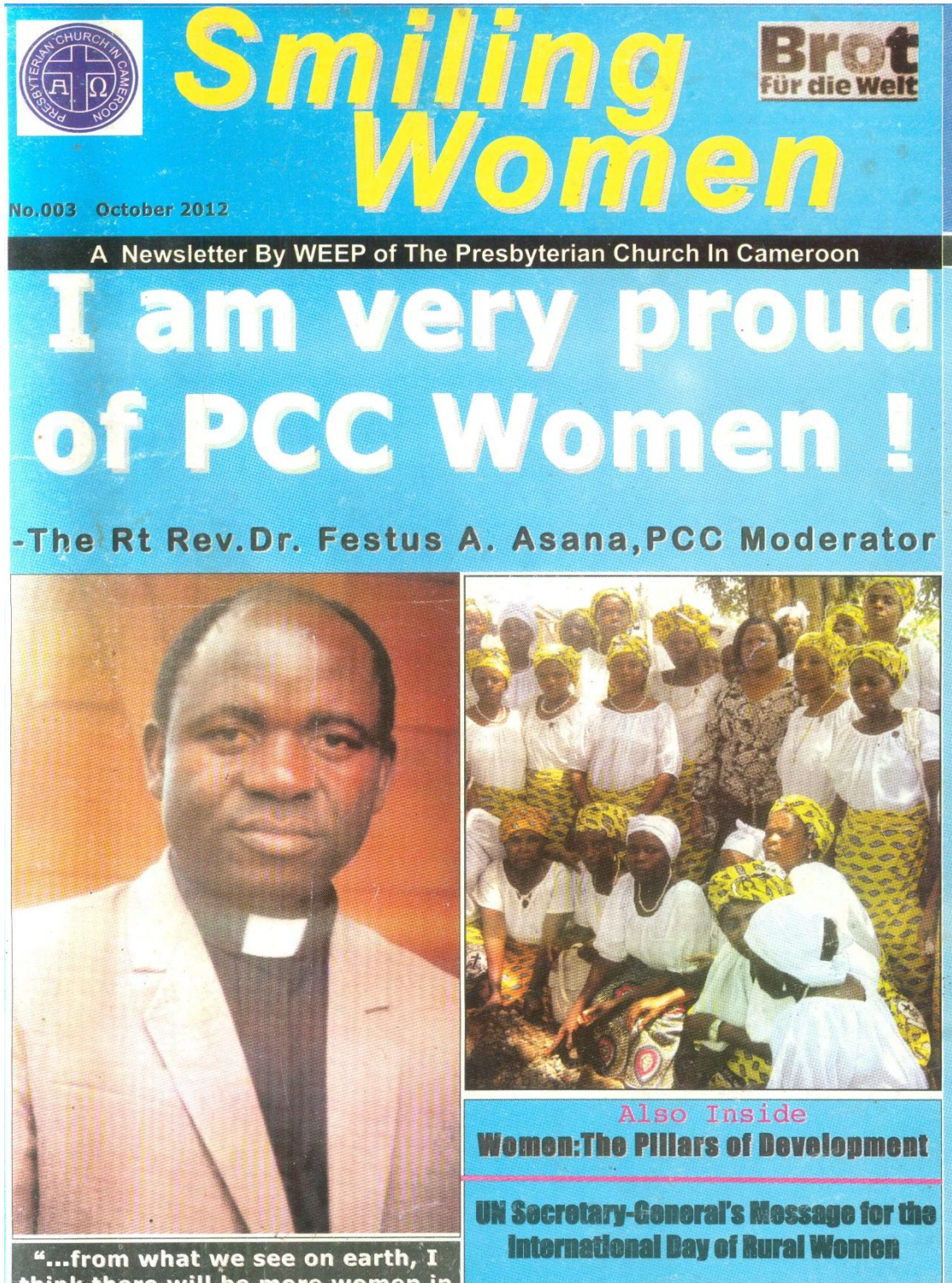
1. What has been the involvement of (FBOs) Faith Base Organization to empower women within Presbyterian Church and the society?
2. How far have these women benefited from involvement within the PCC?
3. What was the situation of women in the PCC before the intervention of the FBOs and what has been the outcome of this intervention?
4. How has the Ecumenical decade of churches in solidarity with women in terms of activities?
5. What was mission 21 all about and how was the PCC involve?
6. What were the objective of (WEEP) Women Education and Empowerment program?
7. What is the connection between Bread for the World and the PCC in the NW and SW?
8. What was their objective within the PCC?
9. How far has the Bread for the World attained its objectives within the PCC?
10. What more can be done to improve the situation of women within the PCC and the society?

Thanks immensely for making my research a success.

Source: Author

Appendix 2

Title: *BROT FUR DIE WELT* NEWSPAPER N° 003 OCTOBER 2012



The cover of the newsletter 'Smiling Women' features a blue background. At the top left is the logo of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, which includes a cross and the letters 'A' and 'Ω'. To the right of the logo, the title 'Smiling Women' is written in large, bold, yellow letters. Further right, the logo for 'Brot für die Welt' is visible. Below the title, the text 'No.003 October 2012' is printed. A black horizontal band contains the text 'A Newsletter By WEEP of The Presbyterian Church In Cameroon'. The main headline, 'I am very proud of PCC Women!', is written in large white letters. Below this, it says '-The Rt Rev.Dr. Festus A. Asana,PCC Moderator'. The cover is divided into two main images: a portrait of Rev. Festus A. Asana on the left and a group of women in traditional white and yellow attire on the right. At the bottom right, there are two text boxes: 'Also Inside Women:The Pillars of Development' and 'UN Secretary-General's Message for the International Day of Rural Women'. A quote at the bottom left reads: '...from what we see on earth, I think there will be more women in'.

Smiling Women

Brot für die Welt

No.003 October 2012

A Newsletter By WEEP of The Presbyterian Church In Cameroon

I am very proud of PCC Women !

-The Rt Rev.Dr. Festus A. Asana,PCC Moderator

Also Inside
Women:The Pillars of Development

UN Secretary-General's Message for the International Day of Rural Women

"...from what we see on earth, I think there will be more women in

I am proud of our Church women

-Rev Dr. Festus Ambe Asana, PCC Moderator

What is your vision of the PCC? And how far have you gone with the implementation of this vision?

When we were inducted into office there were a number of things which I presented as my vision, vision of the team that was coming in; all who had to work together for the progress of the church. Three words that highlighted this vision were transparency, accountability and unity. If you are talking about accountability and transparency, and you don't work in unity, that can't be achieved. So I considered these three things were crucial-not that the church is all about money, but that these three things are important. That was the vision we had in mind and I believe that we are pursuing that vision very steadily.

It is not easy. We live in a society where generally people feel like they should benefit for themselves. And to think of the church as a community and society in which we live together, a community in which we should share resources and be honest with what we do is something that is always an uphill task. But I can tell you that we have been pursuing that vision very steadily and we seek to see that the church is united. We have put in place measures that help to make the church more transparent and accountable. That is why our treasury department has employed many young people from the university. In all the departments we now have finance clerks and accountants who ensure the money is put in the right place and managed correctly. We have an audit department which does auditing now more regularly. With this, I consider that our vision is being pursued and rightly. We are thankful to God for giving us the guidance to pursue and to achieve what we have achieved so far.

The Women's Education and Empowerment Project (WEEP) is said to be one of PCC's pet projects. What is your vision of the WEEP?

We think it was also a vision to create such a program to target the rural women for education and empowerment. Our female Pastor the Rev. Mary Wose Kinge, who is leading this program, has done it very well. She has gone to the grass roots, has assembled female mayors, chairpersons of congregations who are women to educate them on empowerment. I have presented papers in some of these meetings which she organized. I tell you it was a good vision to have such a program.

The fact that it has been sustained up to now and one of our partners, who is helping with part of the funding has continued to do so is because of the confidence that has been built. The program has been very successful. If you

would testify that they have benefited from the program-not just materially but through the education they have received. I can proudly and happily say it is a worthwhile program and we are ready to sustain it the way it has been done-because its leadership has proven they can lead and the women are happy with it.

If you were to expect anything from the WEEP, what would that be?

Well, all we would expect from WEEP is that, its leadership should be consistent and continue the same way it has been going. They should not be discouraged at all-whether materially or by the fact that some people may not be participating, or that some people have not seen the usefulness of the project; this shouldn't discourage the leadership. The other thing I would advocate is that, we are calling out to the women who are approached by the leadership of the WEEP to avail themselves of this opportunity. If they don't know what the WEEP is doing, they should come and find out. And I can assure them, they won't regret. This program is not out to exploit or get anything from the women, but rather to give them empowerment and education. So it is a two-way tract: the leadership should be consistent and the women for whom this project was created should come out and take advantage of it.

Generally, how would you assess the role of women of PCC?

There is no hesitation. I am very proud of the women of PCC. Many times I have declared publicly that if the entire church were organized the way the Christian Women's Fellowship of PCC is organized, the PCC would be a better church.

The women's organization of the PCC is a powerful arm of the church. And you would realize when it comes to financial contributions, contribution by labour, contribution in fellowship, contribution in spirituality our women are in the leadership. And no woman who joined the Christian Women Fellowship has ever felt like moving back. Many of the women in the Christian Women Fellowship testify that, it is the CWF that gives them the courage and enlightenment to stand before a crowd and speak. This is because they have learnt a lot, are spiritually empowered; have been educated through the programs of the CWF. Of course, I am taking a lesson from CWF



other women in the church who are also making their contributions in other ways: through the choirs, other movements in the congregations and their general participation in the church.

I want to repeat that, we are proud of the women of PCC. They make us feel happy; they make many realize that, on spiritual lines the women are ahead. And we have often said that from what we see on earth, I think there will be more women in heaven than men. We are really happy for our women; sometimes they push the men to work harder for the course of Christianity.

Any comment about female pastors?

Well, you may like to know that I am one of those who advocated the training of female pastors in the PCC and I have promoted their course very strongly. In the year 2000, we had a projection in what we called PCC in the year 2000 and beyond. We projected that we were going to have a number of female pastors by the year 2005. Before that year came we had almost doubled that number to give them the chance to compete with the men. As I attend graduations at the seminary, I have seen women excel.

It proves to us that, what the men can do, the women do it excellently. I have often said if the men fail the church, we want to see the women come up with something that revives the church. We regard female pastors equally like the men. And the Christians of our church have accepted them fully.

ACTIVITIES

Female Politicians Enhance Capacity at WEEP Workshop

A two-day seminar-workshop for capacity-building for elected female politicians in Meme division was last May organized by the Women Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP). The workshop, which took place at the Church Centre in Kumba, brought together participants from Konye and Mbonge Councils. The workshop was intended to empower female politicians for effective leadership.

The ceremony started with a meditation led by the Rev. Ngale Simon, the Director

of Church Centre Kumba. This was closely followed by a welcome addressed from the Coordinator of WEEP, Rev. Mary Wose. The workshop was officially opened by Makoge Ivo, representing the Government Delegate to the Kumba City Council. Mr. Makoge Ivo was accompanied by a host of other dignitaries such as the Divisional Delegate for MINEPAT, the Secretary General to the Kumba City Council, Mr. Kumbo Denis the Development Secretary of the PCC and Honorable Councilors.

Participants were drilled on Climate Setting, Basic Concepts and on Understanding the Council Milieu. The workshop was very entertaining as participants brainstormed and came out with a good mastery of the Council Administration and some political values. Jokes and riddles also characterized the workshop.

At the end of the workshop participants were equipped with leadership skills to build up their capacity as female politicians.

Grassroots Empowerment for Greater Achievements



The women Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) operating under the umbrella of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) opened its doors in 2005 after it secured a grant from Bread for the World (BFTW) in Germany. The program is intended to curb the prevalence of inequality and discrimination against women in the South West Region.

In a bid to achieve this, grassroots training workshops have been organized with community facilitators (CFs) selected from targeted groups in Meme Division. The training workshops were organized after the training of Trainers (TOT) workshop on Gender and Women's rights. The issues treated are quite topical and enriching. Dealing with women on a very broad spectrum could be quite challenging but the trainers have been up to the task. Adopted communication tools and languages are being used in order to meet the realities of the rural population. Trainings are carried out in both formal and informal ways; on the way to far farms, church, groups and traditional meetings.

The objectives of the workshops have been to: reduce women's ignorance about their rights and responsibility, improve women's access and control over resources, improve the level of education of women and increase women's control over their reproductive health.

The grassroots training have been educating rural women to experience positive changes in their lives and fortunes especially with regards to the way the traditional men see them. The training enhances the active participation of women in all domains of social life in their communities.

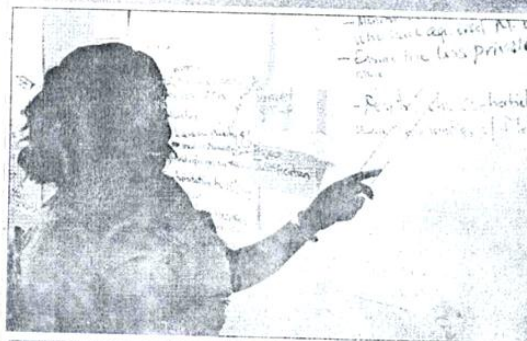
In fact, these grassroots training has been described as timely intervention to reduce women's ignorance about their rights and responsibilities.

There is no doubt that many positive impacts have been recorded in the communities and livelihood of women in Meme Division.

Grassroots women now occupy leadership positions and some active



Above: Resource person Suzan Ameh Muluh lecturing grassroots work (Suzan Ameh Muluh seen in picture) and below WEEP's Joseline Lengu does a similar



WEEP, CEFAM Train Mayors on Good Governance

A two-day seminar on Gender-sensitive and Good Local Governance was recently organized by Buea-based Local Government Training Centre, better known by its French Acronym CEFAM and the WEEP of PCC at Hotel Vianello in Kumba.

Aimed at equipping municipal authorities to function with a gender lens, so that their output can have a positive trickle down effect on their people, the seminar was attended by a cross section of mayors of Ndiang and Meme Divisions of the Southwest Region of Cameroon, who later described the training as a worthwhile exercise.

The Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, the Rt. Rev. Dr Festus Ambe Asana, who opened the seminar, emphasized that leadership is God-given and that those at the helm of power must function with the Fear of God, generally said to be the beginning of wisdom.

Speaking on behalf of CEFAM, Mr. Anu Vincent, explained the raison d'être of the seminar and urged participants to build the capacity of women and promote gender equality in Cameroon.

The resource persons drilled participants on basic concepts of gender and good local governance. She told participants that gender inequality emanates from traditions, beliefs, cultures, interests, values and norms of society. Also, she added that these inequalities are transmitted or propagated in our homes, schools, politics, social meetings, traditional settings, media and the families.

The second day two of the seminar was opened by Rev. Mary Woss, the Coordinator of WEEP. Inspired by the Bible book of Luke 5:4-16, she reflected in a sermon on the willingness to serve with the fear of God.

Mr. Denis Kumbo, Development Secretary of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, lauded the participants for their great interest in issues that concern the development.

He advised that women should regularly be



given a chance and responsibilities like men. He recalled how his Canadian friend once said that Africans are less-developed because they don't think or broaden their minds; that they are narrow-minded.

Mr. Kumbo called on the participants not only to be good leaders but also to be agents of sustainable development, at all times.

BFTW Special Envoy Scores WEEP High

March 30, 2011 was a special day to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon as a whole and WEEP in particular, as the Africa Regional Representative of Bread for the World (BFTW) Ms. Petra Spitzer paid an important visit to WEEP for the first time in her official capacity.

Ms. Petra Spitzer met with some PCC officials notably the Synod Clerk Rev. Abwenzoh William and the Development Secretary, Mr. Denis Kumbo, who doubles as the Board Chair of WEEP.

Introducing the special guest, Mrs. Ndi-for Patience who is the Coordinator of SIRDEP said the visit was a familiarization tour with the organizations that are supported and funded by BFTW.

Welcoming the Africa Regional Coordinator, Synod Clerk Rev. Abwenzoh said

the partnership between PCC and BFTW was very important. He further explained that through the PCC, the rural communities (Women and Youths) of Cameroon have gained so much from BFTW especially in the area of social development.

The Development Secretary and Chair of Board Mr. Kumbo, on his part, said he was very happy that BFTW chose the WEEP Project for such an important visit.

He said WEEP was very special to BFTW because of its activities, adding that the fact that the WEEP project was being funded for its fourth phase demonstrated the level of confidence that has been built over the years. The WEEP Coordinator then presented the various activities of the project, its successes, weaknesses as well as the challenges that the project was facing.

Taking the floor, the BFTW Africa Regional Coordinator said she was overjoyed to be in Cameroon and particularly to meet with the



Ms. Petra Spitzer(left) being briefed on WEEP activities.

WEEP team. She said from documents and by visiting the project site itself, had proved to her that the project was on the right track.

She then visited the project locations where she met with women's groups and the CWF group of Fiango in particular. Welcoming Ms. Spitzer, the then parish Pastor of PC Fiango, the Rev. Dr. Mbengu David, said PC Fiango was very blessed to receive an important guest from BFTW. He urged the Regional Representative not to relent in her effort to support the African woman and the Cameroonian woman in particular. He wished Ms. Spitzer a safe return back home after a fellowship meal.

Also present at this consultation meeting was Mrs. Vivian Ikome, WEEP board member.



RURAL WOMEN'S DAY MESSAGE

"Empowering rural women is crucial for ending hunger and poverty. By denying women rights and opportunities, we deny their children and societies a better future. This is why the United Nations recently launched a programme to empower rural women and enhance food security."

-Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon
 Message for the International Day of Rural Women

The first International Day of Rural Women was observed on 15 October 2008. This new international day, established by the General Assembly in its resolution 62/136 of 18 December 2007, recognizes "the critical role and contribution of rural women, including indigenous women, in enhancing agricultural and rural development, improving food security and eradicating rural poverty."

Rural women play a critical role in the rural economies of both developed and developing countries. In most parts of the developing world they participate in crop production and livestock care, provide food, water and fuel for their families, and engage in off-farm activities to diversify their families' livelihoods. In addition, they carry out vital functions in caring for children, older persons and the sick.

The theme for the 57th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (4 to 15 March 2013) is: "Elimination and prevention of all forms of violence against women and girls."

PARTICIPANTS' REACTIONS TO WEEP SEMINAR/ WORKSHOPS

The seminars organized by the WEEP are very educative. They have gone a long way to empower many women. Women now know how to manage their homes. Formerly, some women were just sitting and doing nothing, waiting for others to assist them. Participants of the WEEP-organized workshops now struggle on their own, and not necessarily depend only on others. I want to commend the WEEP

-Madam Eyong Joan,
 CWF Mambanda

On behalf of the Kumba Participants, I would like to appreciate the seminar. They were worthwhile. The Weep Coordinator, Rev. Mary Kinge, at the end encouraged us to form a group and we have done just that, and will soon swing into action, in order to consolidate our gains. We must thank the PCC for its efforts to empower women.

-Mrs. Elonge Hannah, First Deputy Mayor, Kumba II

Honestly speaking, Rev Mary

done a lot to empower women in all aspects. Before we had the seminar for female mayors, she had been organizing many workshops for women leaders on different subjects, and sometimes including the men. Some Konye men whom I have met, who were participants have commended the seminars. Many men now support women to implement what the latter have learnt from the seminars.

-Mrs. Alice Balimba, First Deputy Mayor, Konye Council

The Seminar on Domestic Violence was very educative and I can tell you that it has changed the lives of the women who attended it. Many who did not know what they were doing before-instigating violence or were victims of violence now do the right things. Their participation have changed their own life styles and homes, thanks to the lessons got from the seminar. I want to salute the efforts Rev. Mary Kinge

-Mrs. Flora Makambe,
 CWF, Mbonge

Bravo, Rural Women You Are The Pillars of Development

On the occasion of this year's World Rural Women's Day (October 15), the Women's Education & Empowerment Project (WEEP) of PCC wishes Cameroonian rural women in particular, and others world-wide, in general a wonderful celebration.

This annual rural women's day, launched at the World conference on women in Beijing, is intended to bring into the limelight the plight of rural women, considered as the world's very important but invisible workers.

The WEEP hereby reiterates its readiness to always support the cause of women

Six communities in income-generating

The Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP) organized a training workshop on Income-generating Activity for six communities in Meme Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.



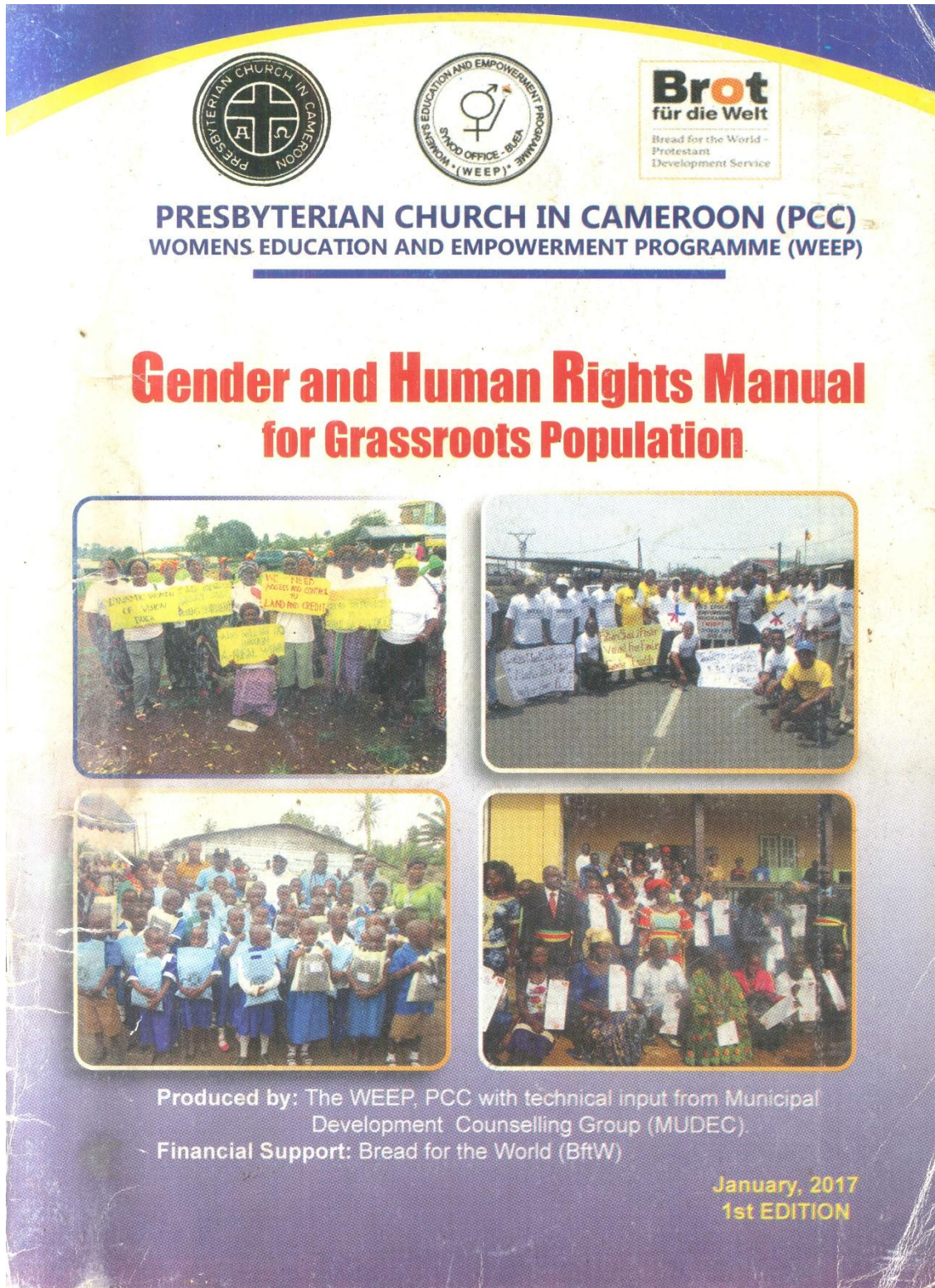
The communities are Kanabon, Barorabi, Mambanda, Mambanda, Dikomi, Baraw and Dikomi. Considering the changing trend in the lives of a woman in recent year's world wide, women of these communities requested to be equipped with economic skills for income generation. Their needs included soap-making, cake making and long. The reports came from CWF, WEEP and other social organizations. The training was started in the month of October and will continue for a period of one month.

Participants were urged to use their newly acquired skills for their own benefit and for the benefit of the society at large. They were also told to consider the training as a stepping stone toward transforming their lives in order not to be left behind.

At the end of the workshop, participants were amazed at the new knowledge acquired from the facilitators / resource persons. They thanked WEEP immensely and prayed that it should continue in similar form in the coming years.

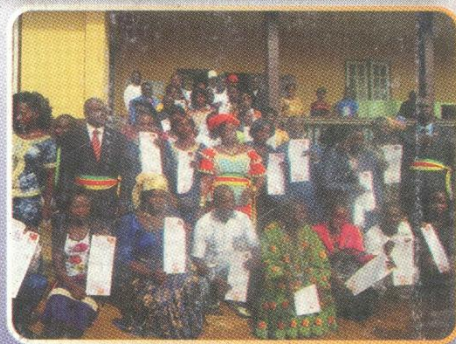
Appendix 3

Title: PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON (PCC)



PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON (PCC)
WOMENS EDUCATION AND EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME (WEEP)

Gender and Human Rights Manual for Grassroots Population



Produced by: The WEEP, PCC with technical input from Municipal Development Counselling Group (MUDEC).
Financial Support: Bread for the World (BftW)

January, 2017
1st EDITION

MESSAGE FROM THE MODERATOR

Established in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) since 2005, the Women's Education and Empowerment Programme (WEEP) has been very much involved in the women ministry with the main goal of ensuring gender equality in the socio-economic, cultural and the political atmosphere in Cameroon. Being a programme that is fighting gender inequality with particular focus on the female folk, its activities therefore are not limited with the PCC, but know no denominational limitations.

Entering its twelfth year of activities, educating women on their rights and creating awareness among them on the vast opportunities and options available to them to batter their lot in a male dominated society, is a great attempt and persistence in the right direction. Empowering women is strengthening a lame world and society that remain lame if the women, endowed with divine and natural talents are left behind.

This publication is coming out at a time when the female Pastors of the PCC have just celebrated their twenty-five years in the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments. Celebrating on a very captivating theme: "Leave Her

Alone..." Reflection of Women in the Ministry. Twenty five years of Women in Ordained Ministry in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon; justifies and evaluates the invaluable contributions women have made in the propagation of the gospel of salvation. Their outstanding role would not have been played if the women were never left alone and encouraged to play that role. Inspired by their towering inputs and outputs in the ordained ministry, thirteen years later, it was time for the women of the lay community to be empowered as well.

This publication, therefore, is a laudable initiative that brings to light the field activities of WEEP; and should therefore be an eye-opener to those still living in the shadow of darkness. Arming or empowering women in all spheres of life, though belated, is a very welcomed venture in a world that the burden of ensuring a glorious life had outstripped the lone and leading efforts of men only.

Although published by women, it is not for women only, but for both sexes because the challenge to transform the world and make it a



better place to live in can never be achieved by women or men only. It is a mutual venture that calls for mutual effort, cooperation and collaboration. An old African proverb says, "One hand cannot tie a bundle."

We remain grateful to Bread for the World (BftW) for their unrelenting technical and financial supports to sustain this invaluable, enviable and laudable programme for the women of Cameroon. We also commend the work of the staff of this programme in the PCC. May God continue to replenish your resources for greater exploits in your humanitarian endeavours.

Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba
Moderator of the Presbyterian
Church in Cameroon

MESSAGE FROM THE DEVELOPMENT SECRETARY.

A look at history shows that women have made great steps in the fight for equality and inroads in equal opportunity in education and the workplace. Despite the remarkable progress made in the struggle for gender equality, women, especially in developing countries, still face limited economic opportunities, inadequate health care, early marriage, gender based violence, discrimination, institutional barriers to equal participation in the society and deficient education (two-third of the world's uneducated children are girls and two-third of the world's illiterate adults are women). Numerous studies have demonstrated that educating women and girls is the single most effective strategy to ensure the well-being and health of children and the long-term success of developing economies.



The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set specific targets to reduce poverty, including targets for increased gender equality in education, work, and representation. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) hold real promises to embed advances in women's rights and include a specific goal (Goal 5) for gender equality. Goal 5 is more broad-based than the last gender goal and includes targets on ending gender-based violence, eliminating child marriage and female genital mutilation and ensuring access to sexual and reproductive health. It also includes equal access to education, expanding women's economic opportunities, and reducing the burdens of unpaid care work on women and girls. Lack of education limits prospects, decreases family income, reduces health, puts women and girls at risk of trafficking and exploitation and limits the economic advancement of countries.

This manual therefore offers information, self-help tools, encouragement and inspirational quotes and sayings to be used as a guide on the journey of reclamation by increasing awareness on the scope of the gender issue, its impact and to strengthen prevention efforts. Women are motivated to be the best they can be and it is expected that the HeForShe clubs (*a solidarity campaign for gender equality initiated by UN Women with the goal to engage men and boys as agents of change for the achievement of gender equality and women's rights*) created by WEEP in some schools and communities will result to testimonies of men working on campaigns against gender based violence and taking action against inequalities faced by women and girls. The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) through the Development Department fulfils the mission of liberating God's people from inadequacies. We advocate for women to participate fully in economic life across all sectors mindful of the fact that this is essential to build stronger economies, achieve international goals for development and sustainability and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. The PCC believes that empowering girls and women through education is the single most effective way to improve the lives of individual families as well as to bring economic development to poor communities in Cameroon. Women are entitled to all rights; the right to live free from violence, slavery, and discrimination; to be educated; to own property; to vote; to be involved in politics, to hold high offices, and to earn a fair and equal wage. Yet almost everywhere around the world and especially in Africa, women and girls are still denied them, often simply because of their gender. The time to make a difference is now as we renew our minds to be transformed in all aspects of discrimination. Women can do wonderful things, so give them a chance and make a difference.

Jessy Mbock Nkongho Eben
Development Secretary, PCC.

Appendix 4

Title: BREAD FOR THE WORLD PARTNERS

August 2011 Edition

The Women Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) of the PCC induces changes in the communities.

In April 2005, Women Education and Empowerment Programmed [WEEP] was created by the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon [PCC] with Fako Division as the Pioneer Project area. Four years after its creation, with the strong collaboration of Nkong Hill Top a Common Initiative Group, WEEP's activities have been extended in the five subdivisions of Meme division. However, since its creation, the organization has been involved in diverse activities aimed at projecting the image of women in the socio/ economic landscape of Fako and Meme divisions.

In a bid to realize its objectives, the following achievements have been recorded so far;

Through awareness creation and training, WEEP has enhanced the participation of women in all works of life as women in the project area can now be seen actively participating in the decision making structures and local governance of their communities.



WEEP has also improved women's capacity and involvement in politics especially those aspiring to occupy political positions as councilors, mayors or parliamentarians.

Again, through our Sensitization Meetings held with Men and Women groups, the family status of the woman has been greatly improved upon as a good number of women can now boast of having legalized their marriages and are also contributing greatly to the welfare of their families. Thus it has reduced Women's ignorance about their rights and responsibilities.

WEEP has increased gender awareness among Traditional rulers in Fako and Meme Divisions as women can now take part in the Decision making processes of their communities.

However, the impact of WEEP's activities could not have been recorded without stepping on some toes. For example the activities have broken down established laws and policies that have negative impacts on the cultural beliefs and practices of most communities. Also, Empowering women has made the privileged class to share or lose some of their powers to the less privileged especially women.

Empowering the grassroots.

To curb the prevalence of inequality and discrimination against women in our society Bread

for the World [BFTW], in 2005, awarded a grant to the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon to carry out a project through the Women's Education and Empowerment program [WEEP] whose goal is to increase women's status and participation in development and decision-making processes in their communities. To achieve this goal, the Organization found it pertinent to organize trainings and workshops at grassroots or rural areas.

Grass

roots training s and worksh o p s were organiz ed by commu nity facilitat [C F s]



ors sele cted from targeted groups in Meme Division. These trainings were organized after the Training of Trainers, TOT, workshop on gender and women's rights. The issues treated were quite topical and enriching. Dealing with women on a very broad spectrum could be quite challenging but the trainers were up to the task. Adapted communication tools and languages were used in order to suit the realities of the rural population. Trainings were carried out in both formal and informal ways, on the way to their farms, church, groups and traditional meeting. The main objectives of organizing the grassroots trainings were to;

Reduce women's ignorance about their rights and responsibility, improve women's access and control over resources, improve the level of education and increase women's control over their reproductive health. The grassroots training educates rural women to experience a change in

their lives and fortunes especially with regards to the way the traditional men see them. The training enhances the active participation of women in all domains of social life in their communities. It also improves women's leadership skills by changing their mentality and way of doing things as women.

In effect, the grassroots training was a timely intervention to reduce women's ignorance about their rights and responsibilities as many positive impacts have been recorded in the life of the communities and lively hood of women in meme division. Grassroots women and men now occupy leadership positions. Women actively take part in the development process of their community. Women are now proactive in their households by taking the initiatives to carry out income generating

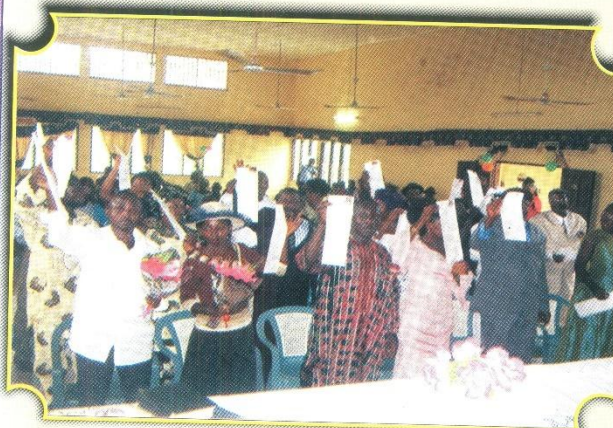
August 2011 Edition

Women Education and Empowerment Program (WEEP) facilitates the acquisition of marriage certificates by fifteen (15) couples in Konye sub division.

The 18th of May 2011 was a remarkable date for some 15 couples who acquired Marriage certificates during the Mass Marriage Ceremony Organized in Konye Council by Women Education and Empowerment Programme [WEEP]. These couples came from Konye, Ikiliwindi, Diongo, and Mbakwa supc. It all started with the singing of the National Anthem followed by an opening prayer led by the Presbyterian Secretary for Meme North Rev Mrs Mary Salle.

Municipality. Speaking after the signing was the Development Secretary of the PCC Mr Denis Kumbo who urged the couples to be committed husbands and wives in their 'New Formal Relationships'. He named them the 'batch of Great Expectation' and called on the couples to set a good example for others to emulate.

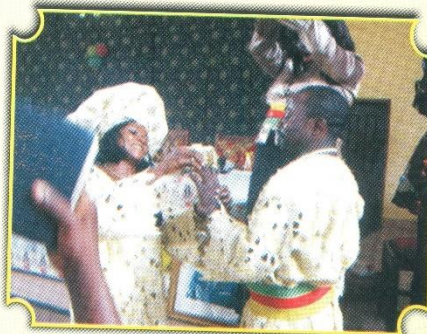
Mayor of Konye: chief celebrant speaking on



behalf of the couples, Mrs Ngoh Elizabeth expressed gratitude to WEEP for their concern and very kind gesture to the people of Konye Sub-Division. She concluded that WEEP has done so much for them and it would never be forgotten. These certificates will help to consolidate the marriages and give more confidence to the women who are often violated and pushed out of the family by the in laws upon the death of the

The Mayor, Chief Ngoe Zacheus Awudu and the 1st deputy Mayor Mrs Alice Balemba Njanga co-chaired the ceremony. The coordinator of WEEP Rev Mrs Mary Kinge in her speech said WEEP has been working in Konye Sub-Division for the past two years and discovered that so many men and women were cohabiting and mistaking it for Marriage. Most of the cohabiting partners had an average number of 05 children per household. As a result, WEEP responded to the call made by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family by sponsoring 15 couples in legalizing their Marriages.

The Coordinator further went on to thank the Mayor, Chief Ngoe Zacheus Awudu of Konye who was also the chief celebrant for their collaboration to ensure that the ceremony was happening in their



husbands. The certificates will enable especially the women to claim the family property after the death of the husbands and this will help them take care of their children.

**By Rev Mrs Mary Kinge
Coordinator of WEEP**

Appendix 5.

Title: PCC central achieves Beau

PREBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON

Theological College
P.O. Box 590, Kumba

10th July, 1992

Dear Sir,

Admission into the Theological College

The Principal of the Theological College Kumba, on behalf of the Committee of the Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon announces that the following candidates have been given admission into the Theological College Kumba for the 1992/93 academic year:

1. Talikong Amos Nfor
2. Nche Christatus Zama
3. Nde Alfred Fongon
4. Achuranjoh Philip Newnoh
5. Ndang Manfred C.
6. Daniel Gob Menoh
7. Woyu Moses Bongasui
8. Bansi George Neba
9. Mensjo Fabian Laoboy
10. Akaba Nweti Emmanuel
11. Rachel Najela Nukuna
12. Achendu Victor Ndifon
13. Chekai Jonathan Fien
14. Ando Solomon Tamo
15. Kang Denis Tem
16. Tacheche Nchangfu Florence
17. Akalambi Roger Nke

Waiting List

1. Angwe Davidson Asoh
2. Epiemembong Louis Ebong

Each candidate is further requested to send "a letter of acceptance" to the Principal of the Theological College Kumba before the 15th August, 1992. A list of requirements will immediately be forwarded to each candidate as soon as the Principal receives his/hery "letter of acceptance". Candidates whose "letters of acceptance" are not received before 15th August, 1992 will be replaced by those on the waiting list.

Yours sincerely,

Assna
Rev. Dr. Festus A. Assna
Principal.

cc: - The Moderator, PCC
- The Synod Clerk, PCC
- The Secretary, Committee
of the Ministry
- The Communication Depts.
MAM/rjf



YAOUNDE,
24/7/92.

The Principal,
Theological College,
Kumba.

Dear Sir,

REACTION AGAINST YOUR 1992/93 IN-TAKE

I saw some where the admission list into the Theological College Kumba and I would like to make some observations in regards to the planification of training pastors into the Ministry. My observations may be wrong and if that be the case just tear this note and throw it away.

I have seen that out of the 17 candidates who have been given admission into the theological College this year, there is no one single name that resembles a name from the South West. The following is the list I have seen:-

1. Tabikong Amos Nfor
2. Nche Christantus
3. Nde Alfred C.
4. Acharanjoh Philip Newnoh
5. Ntang Manfred C.,
6. Daniel Gob Menoh
7. Wogu Moses Bongasui
8. Bansi George Neba
9. Mangjo Fabian Laoboy
10. Akaba Nweti Emmanuel
11. Rachel Najela Nukuna
12. Achendu Victor Ndifon
13. Chekai Jonathan Eien
14. Audo Solomon Tamo
15. Eang Denis Tam
16. Tacheche Nchangfu Florence
17. Akalambi Roger Nke

Am I right in my observation? If the answer is yes then allow me please make the following analysis of the situation.

1. How is it possible that out of 66 candidates who wrote the entrance examination, all came from the North West, or out of the 26 candidates called for interview, there were none from the South West apart from Mr. Epiembong Louis Ebong? Is it a plan to have the supreme reign of the North West over the whole Church?
2. The policy of planification, balanced or proportionate training of pastors has been maintained since the beginning of the Theological College. It seems that that policy is being changed through no real good reason.
3. The only accepted and standard examinations we know in Cameroon is the G.C.E. O/A levels. How is it possible that the Theological College throws out candidates with A levels. Some of those candidates were already admitted into the Yaounde University, but left due to some problems which occurred during 1990/91 academic year.

.... / 2

- 2 -

4. The admission of the North West candidates alone into the Theological College Kumba may not be disconnected with the illegal sending of four private candidates to the Theological Faculty in Bouaoué for pastoral training and all of them come from the North West. They shall be imposed on the Church after their training as pastors of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. And this is also done in the name of God.

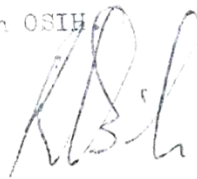
5. This matter is very serious especially at this time when letters are coming from left and right about the supremacy of the North West Province and how the South West shall be marginalised. e.g. The letter of the Metta Elites to the S.D.F. Chairman reported in the "New standard of Tuesday July 30 1991"; and the letter written by Mr. Ni Fru Ndi to Mr. Ben Muna. These letters may ^{be} forged, but what we are seeing seems to translate the spirit of these letters into realities. But should that spirit enter inside the Church of God?

I feel that we should all fight against this spirit because it is very detrimental to the smooth running of the Church. I hope the above situation shall be corrected soon.

Thanks for understanding.

Yours in Christ,

Rev. Dr. Reuben OSIH



cc: The Moderator, PCC ✓
The Synod Clerk, PCC

Appendix 6

Title: BREAD FOR THE WORLD protestant development service

Project Application Form**– Simplified Standards****Financial Cooperation**

Version as of: 10.01.2014

Your project proposal to the Protestant Agency for Diakonia and Development Bread for the World – Protestant Development Service (hereafter referred to as financing partner) must contain the following information in order to check whether support is possible. Please consider all points listed, unless marked “optional”. This document should not exceed a maximum of 15 pages; any necessary additional information ought to be attached on separate sheets.

**Brot
für die Welt**

Bread for the World -
Protestant
Development Service

PROJECT APPLICATION FORM FOR WEEP

FINANCIAL COOPERATION

1. GENERAL INFORMATION:

Name of Organization	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)
Address	Synod Office P O Box 19, Buea Cameroon
Contact Person	Rev Mary Nduma Wose
E-mail	weeprog@yahoo.com and ndumamary@yahoo.co.uk
Fax	Not Applicable
Project Title	Women's Education and Empowerment Programme
For which period of time is the Project planned (project period)?	2 Years
For which period is funding requested from the financing Partner?	2 Years (January 2014 to December 2015)
What are the Total planned expenditures of the Project?	€ 53,100
What is the Amount requested from the Financing Partners	€ 50,000
To which other (national/international) organizations have you applied for funding.	NON

New or Continuation of Project:

The project is a continuation of an ongoing phase

Overview of achievements and lessons learnt

Achievements

- 1) Grassroots training on Gender and Women's Right in 81 communities reaching over 40,000 people (women 27,523, men 3,361 and youths 9,116) Thus Women have been able to assert themselves and are well informed on Gender issues , which has the collaboration between the Men and the Women in communities.
- 2) Aquisition of marriage certificate for 30 couples in Fako and Meme divisions. This has earned women especially widows greater assess in the law courts to claim and inherit properties of their late Husbands. Also their certificates have enabled the women gained recognition in the communities they live. Children born in previous unions have also had a sense of belonging as well as their security within the family.
- 3) WEEP facilitated the aquisition of two networks for Female Politicians, Association of Fako Female Counselors (AFFCO) for Fako and Association for Meme Female Counselors (AMFCO). This activity has enable Female Politicians of Fako and Meme to vie for top political positions. For example in Meme 5 women are contesting for positions of Mayors and 3 for positions of Palamentarians; while in the last Senatorial elections 02 women of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) contested for the post of Senator, but didn't make it.
- 4) 178 Female politicians have been trained directly on Strenthening Women's Strategies for Political Leadership in Municipal and Legislative Governance in Meme divisions and also coaching for 06 Female Mayors. This has also helped the Women in Politics to pusure the goals within their Council Areas and 30% of the women getting on the list.
- 5) 1500 Women and Girls were sensitized and trained on income generating activities thus 875 Women are involved in soap making while 625 Women are involved in cake baking and icing. As such Women's economic power has increased as they support their husbands to sponsor their children in schools and cater for the home.
- 6) 2000 copies of WEEP Newsletters were produced and distributed. This has end the project a wider publicity and readership that makes the project known to most communities within Fako and Meme.
- 7) 62 traditional rulers and chiefs (59 men and 03 women) have benefited from the training on Gender, access and control over natural resources in Fako , Konye and Mibonge sub divisions. This has facilitated the collaboration between the Project and Chiefs and the Women in the community through their inclusion in Resource Management in the Community.

- 8) 20 follow up and 02 review meetings were held for Community Facilitators and Elected Female leaders and Politicians thus the frequent review meetings has helped women to be assertive. This meeting has helped to strengthened the knowledge gained by the Women as they demonstrate stonger committment in Lobbying and Advocacy.

Lessons Learned:

- 1) There is growing awareness and alertness on the part of women thus, would not allow their rights to be trampled up on by men. However, cultural malpractices continue to hamper the smooth realization of women's emancipation. Where a traditional ruler leads the caravan for women's empowerment, his/her influence is greater to achieving this. Hence, activities that focus on the education of men on gender issues will contribute and enhance the realization of the Project Goal.
- 2) The men (50%) within the project area attest to the fact that the neglect of their girls not being educated has thought them bitter lessons because the girls, even though in the lower rungs of society have still proven to be more responsible than the preferred boys. Hence, if brilliant but poor girls within the project are given scholarships, there is the tendency of securing a better future for the woman.
- 3) The sponsoring of Mass Marriages within the project area has helped to consolidate existing marriages and the new ones contracted. The legalized marriage has helped to determine the woman's bargaining power within the household and improved on her status.
- 4) The creation of the Associations for Female Political leaders continue to enhance their capacity in participating and discussing and taking political actions. For example, 05 women political leaders. With the creation of the Associations for Female Politicians, the women intend to mainstream gender and bring into council activities the interest of the women for better governance but this has so far not been easy given that the male mayors have had very little or no adequate knowledge to gender issues as they missed out on the trainings on gender mainstreaming for Council Executives.

Also in some communities, they have grouped themselves to form lobby and advocacy groups which act as watch dogs in the communities against cases of cultural malpractices such as the WEEP Winners group in Kwakwa and Kombone where the Chief is an active member.

From the foregoing it is clear that this project is changing attitudes positively at the grassroots and empowering women to occupy greater public space. It is therefore necessary to replicate it to others divisions of the region while consolidating the gains so far made in Fako and Meme division in order that they are entrenched.

As an outcome, prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS in the region as stated by the Ministries of Public Health and Women's Empowerment and the Family, remains at 5%. The infant mortality rate is 65.84 per 1000 life birth. Life expectancy at birth is 53.69 years (52.89 years for Male and 54.52 year for Female and the total fertility rate stands at 4.49 %). Women had a slightly higher prevalence rate to

their male counterparts and the factors which promoted this include ignorance, low income levels, intimidation from men in authority and other forms of psychological violence against women. In this project phase therefore, it is anticipated that HIV mainstreaming amongst women' groups and community leaders will help to defray the fears expressed that enhance HIV/AIDS.

However, the execution of the project phase did not go without difficulties in the Community. It was observed that the presence of HIV/AIDS among couples is still a major issue to handle. Women especially, who are HIV positive continue to face gender bias and eventually domestic violence since cultural sexual norms continue to discriminate against women.

During the grassroots trainings, it was realized that there was need to intensify the sensitization campaign on the Education of the girl child (especially in communities that WEEP has not covered) since there were high rates of teenage pregnancies (56%) and cohabitation (72%) that came as a result of good yields during the cocoa season. The young girls abandon school when cocoa dealers do their sales. They are attracted and corrupt by the presence of 'immediate money'; majority of them ending up with disease or being abandoned with their babies. This was the general concern of the communities that WEEP had covered within the past 24 months (2011 & 2012).

Another cause for the school drop by girls was due to the absence of text books by the pupils and students. Out of the six primary and secondary schools that were visited to collect enrolment for boys and girls, the project discovered that 4 out of 10 girls had readers or workbooks; while 4 out of 6 boys had either of the books. This created a major obstacle to the performance of the girls/boys.

In this phase the project will consolidate and expand its activities in new communities of Meme Division and shall strive to engage and empower women economically, to enable them consolidate their political gains and their bargaining power in access and *control* over natural resources such as land. Increase the acquisition of marriage certificates for couples; provide learning materials for intelligent but poor pupils, students at primary and secondary levels; engage men in dialogue to enable them deal with masculine traits and become responsive to issues relating to gender. Training for the board members is also envisaged as there were some loop holes identified during the last evaluation.

While the project will continue to monitor and follow up the impact of its work in Fako and Meme division, it will stimulate an enabling environment for the respect of women's rights in rural communities while building the capacity of women politicians at the grassroots level as well as those elected and promoting gender mainstreaming in local governance.

2. Project Background:

The Social, Political, Ecological and Economic Background.

In the country

The Republic of Cameroon is a country of central and western Africa. It is bordered by Nigeria to the west; Chad to the northeast; the Central African Republic to the east; and Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo to the south. Cameroon's coastline lies on the Bight of Bonny, part of the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean. The country is called "Africa in miniature" for its geological and cultural diversity.

Cameroon is home to over 200 different linguistic groups. Because of colonialism, both French and English are the official languages in Cameroon. The life expectancy is 53.69 years (52.89 years for males and 54.52 years for females).

Cameroon's natural resources are very well suited to agriculture and arboriculture. An estimated 70% of the population farms, and agriculture comprised an estimated 19.8% of GDP in 2009. The quality of health care is generally low. Outside the major cities, facilities are often dirty and poorly equipped. The HIV/AIDS sero prevalence rate is estimated nationwide at 5.4% for those aged 15–49 although a strong stigma against the illness keeps the number of reported cases artificially low. Traditional healers remain a popular alternative to Western medicines. Last year 2012, the Government of Cameroon through the Ministry of Health opened 05 haemodialysis centers to cater for the health needs of its citizens

The rates of school attendance in Primary, secondary and tertiary levels are among the highest in sub-Saharan Africa. Today, there are eight State's Universities in Cameroon. In addition, private Universities amongst them are the Cameroon Christian University run by the PCC, Catholic Universities. Technical and professional schools, and a number of teacher training colleges have been established in recent years.

Ecologically, Cameroon is Africa in miniature with a vast variety of natural endowment. Cameroon is blessed with a Mountain which is the highest in West Africa, a coastal line with inlet into the sea, full of fish and aquatic organs, there is also the presence of a forest, rich with timber and other important plants, a desert. Cameroon as well has two seasons, a rainy and a dry season. This ecological feature helps the country with its touristic industry, as well as it is responsible to the population settlement pattern of the country. This is so because more people turn to settle in the regions with the economic natural endowment

In the region

The south West Region is among the 10 regions of Cameroon and has Buea as regional seat. It has one Administrator, who is the governor and he is assisted by other Civil Administrators within the 6 Divisions, and over 45 subdivisions, with 66 Municipal councils. Each council has a Mayor and at least 4 deputies in case of the bigger Council. Out of 66, 20 are females

The Region has very rich economic potentials. This attracts immigrants from other regions making it more complex and cosmopolitan in nature. The South West Region harbors the Country's oil refinery and the largest plantation – Cameroon Development Cooperation (CDC), with highest employment opportunities. However, the dominant activity of the region is agriculture.

The region has one of the eight State's Universities that has a population of approximately 10,000 students with the Female students making a population of over 50%. Every year Nursery, primary and Secondary schools are created in order to meet the needs of the rural population.

Project Area

Meme Division is one of the six Divisions that make up the South West Region of Cameroon. It is bounded by Ndiang Division to the West, Kupe Muaneguba to the North, Fako Division to the South, Manyu Division to the North-East and Lebalem to the East. The name Meme (originally Kumba) division came from the river Meme that originates and flows through a significant portion of the land.

The Headquarters of Meme Division is Kumba, (www.cityofkumba.com) wherein is found the office of the Senior Divisional Officer (the chief administrative officer) and close collaborators, and the Departmental Head offices of the various Ministerial operations of the Country, Cameroon. It has five subdivisions namely: Kumba I, II, III, Mbonge and Konye. Meme has a population of over 800,000 thousand inhabitants with about ¼ of this population falling within the youth age group and almost evenly divided between urban and rural dwellers.

The main economic activity in the Division is agriculture. About 80 % of the working population is engaged in Food crops production, cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, rubber etc (plantation agriculture) and animal husbandry. Meme Division is one of the major cocoa producing regions in Cameroon.

Meme Division is undoubtedly the economic powerhouse of the South West Region. The urban centre of Kumba is a huge trade market wherein goods from neighboring Nigeria and as far as Benin and Gabon are marketed. The divisional headquarter Kumba is the centre of important trade routes – Douala - Nigeria through Ekondo Titi to the West region of Cameroon, Douala-Nigeria through Mamfe, merchants moving to and from Benin, Gabon, Nigeria all have to travel through the city of Kumba.

Worthy of note is the fact that women, over 70% form a greater population in the agriculture sector. Also the presence of many institutions – administrative, Church, Civil Society, professional institutions, account for the increasing influx of cosmopolitan population. The demographic structure is heterogeneous but the indigenous population comprises of the Bafaw, Bakundu, Balong and Barombi.

3. PROBLEM DESCRIPTION

Although women make up the larger population of the country and the South West Region in particular, they are very much relegated to the background. They make up a majority of the militants in the various political parties, yet the men usually determine participation in leadership positions. It is observed that during the last Senatorial Elections (April, 2013), there was general lack of faith in the selection process; for example, the list in the South West Region for the ruling party (CPDM), had only one lady as a

substantive candidate and two as alternates. It is a consequence of low political literacy, low self-esteem, and insufficient political skills to participate in politics. For instance, there is no Female Parliamentarian among the two in the division; among the five municipal councils, only three women are deputy Mayors. Both Traditional and Administrative councils are largely male dominated having 'token women' representing their folk. This however, continues to propagate the subjugation of women and increasing the gender imbalances within the communities.

Furthermore, even though majority (80%) of the women are found in the market economy, they hardly get access to credits in financial houses hence as a consequence, they fall back in acquiring skills that can help them generate income to improve on their livelihoods. This low economic status of women hinders them to participate in other social engagements, which exploit their full potentials for the development of their communities. This situation does not help the women mobilize their communities neither nor does it facilitate their participation in the upcoming Presidential and Legislative elections come 2013. As a result, they continue to play minimal and reproductive roles within the political arena.

This poverty situation continues to hamper the development of women. This however promotes the spread of disease, abortions and unwanted pregnancies despite the presence of health units and other medical facilities. This is because health units in most cases are not fully equipped to handle serious cases in the rural communities. The presence of disease in homes, especially amongst couples incites anger, blame and denial that usually lead to conflict and eventually domestic violence. Consequently women suffer the pain and shame that go with it.

Young girls stay home to carter for their siblings especially when they are driven from school because they lack text books. This situation increases the illiteracy rate in girls living in the rural areas, and consequently earns them unhealthy relationships of cohabiting in illegal unions. This, however, incapacitates women and girls to participate fully in public life.

Justification of the Project

In order to bridge some of the gaps and meet a greater population by the project in Meme Division, it becomes important for another project phase to help overcome the latent shortcomings herein above mentioned especially considering that Cameroon is about to organize the both Legislative and Municipal Elections in 2013.

Statistics within Cameroon show that majority (80%) of women live in the rural areas of the Country. Since the primary goal of the project is to improve on the status of women through education, it becomes imperative that the project is extended hence affecting the lives of many women in a way that enables them to assert themselves. Considering also that a woman is economically less

powerful, empowering her economical will facilitate their participation in politics since they are the main actors at the grassroots level. Furthermore, targeting men as a category will also build and increase confidence and trust in men who usually feel threatened by the changes.

The project will enable women to have a strong political will that will inspire confidence in them to take up leadership positions. Sensitization meetings with women and men will curb the incidences of domestic violence and thus promote an enabling environment for both men and women couples and youth.

4. TARGET GROUPS

The project targets the following population segments:

- Women's groups and associations
- Church groups
- Local traditional councils
- School / colleges
- Local municipal councils
- Local development and socio-cultural associations
- Youth groups
- Women's networks, and other civil society organizations

A) Direct beneficiaries:

S/N	Category of	Number of persons to be reached	Age Range
1	Female	6000	35-65years
2	Male	1500	25-65years
3	Girls	1500	15-34years
4	Boys	1000	15-34years
Total		10.000 persons	

Indirect Beneficiaries:

However there will be a large number of indirect beneficiaries which are hard to measure thus Indirectly the programme should influence over 60.000 persons, giving an average household size of 6 persons. This will constitute the immediate family members of the direct beneficiareies, friends, social groups in which they belong etc. The messages on the newsletters will be read by wide population which cannot be determined.

Optional Information:

A Ethnic particularities:

This group of persons come from diverse ethnic backgrounds with different social status.

B Social, economic and cultural status:

Over 75% have as economic activity subsistence agriculture. 25% is engaged as civil servants and employees of the private sector.

C If the target group is organised:structure, working methods etc of the organised groups:

Almost 85% of the groups are organised in smaller groups,which makes it easier for the project to work with.The groups are coordinated by an executive that ensures the smooth functioning of the groups.

D Participation of target groups:

The target population participated in the planning for this project, through meetins of women forum and field activities, the movement(groups) of churches, especially selected groups of Christian Women Fellowship of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in Meme Division. The beneficiaries will draw up action plans at verious levels of activities and jiontly participate with project staff in monitoring the implementation of such plans. As for evalution, they will also be involved during the transfer of functions(TOF) field visits, evalution trips by the project management board and eventually the external evalutors.

5 EXPECTED OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS.

DEVELOPMENTAL GOAL To Contribute in Promoting Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

Project objective: Improvement on the socio-economic development and cultural situation of women and girls in the Meme Division.

Indicators:

1. Number of women contributing actively in running council activities have increased from about 900 (2012) to about 1.100 by the end of 2015.
2. Number of women and girls who legalize marriage has increased from about 650 (2012) to 800.
3. Traditional rulers are more proactive on gender issues.

Expected Impact

This project will, in the end, impact positively on women in different ways. Women leaders *at least 40%* will be more proactive in the decision making process as well as motivate other women to emerge as local community leaders effectively performing key roles in the society. The rate of sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, (*especially as gender and HIV/AIDS will be mainstreamed in the project programme*), among men and women should reduce *by at least 10%* as women are empowered economically to make informed choices on their sexuality.

As negative traditional practices are curbed and the public is more aware of the rights of women, all forms of violence and discrimination against women are reduced *by 30%*, thus allowing women to enjoy a more wholesome and fulfilling life.

As more women and girls get educated, their awareness and assertiveness amongst men will enhance a sustainable living in their communities. Hence, couples (especially the females) will receive legal entitlements to all benefits accrued from marriages thereby consolidating their bargaining power with overzealous in-laws.

In the project area and the wider environment project activities will lead to increased public awareness of basic human rights. This should improve the respect of rights and thus create an enabling environment for citizen participation in socio economic and political life, all of this culminating in an increased quality of life for all.

The project will interact with networks of women's groups, thus offering support to member groups to engage more forcefully in women's advancement on a long-term basis.

Furthermore, by encouraging women to harness the economic opportunities and potentials in the community, the project will contribute to poverty alleviation *by at least 10%*, fight against women discrimination and enhance the self-esteem of women.

Through participatory joint action with men and traditional structures that promote women marginalization, the project has the potentials to change traditional perceptions of men and traditional systems that promote marginalization leading to a more egalitarian and equitable society. The men on their part will come to a better understanding of dealing with masculinity.

Unintended Positive Impact

- The numbers of persons envisage might increase due to the interest of the programme to the entire community.
- Gender equality among community institutions will improve.

Unintended Negative Impact

Some chiefs at first sight may put up resistance, without a proper understanding of the project.

BASELINE DATA.

Yes. Since the project is ongoing, we intend to use previous data on the issues that the project is addressing. For example for the year 2012, the recorded the following data on: the enrollment for boys and girls in schools stood at 4877 and 5349 respectively; couples who have acquired marriage certificates were 674; women owning land rose up to 753; concerning reproductive health issues, the number increased to 5431 and children acquiring birth certificates came up to 815. Seventy (70) women have held leadership positions within the Political sphere for 5 years. Hence, a new mandate begins in 2013 after Municipal and Legislative elections of September 30th. Also women in Leadership positions in both socio-cultural domains rose up to 917. It should be noted that the term of office within these categories ranges from two to three years; hence, the number keeps fluctuating.

INSTRUMENTS AND METHODS.

STAR MODEL.



Measures to ensure sustainability?

-The communities contribute by doing the negotiation and allocation of the hall which are usually church, council, school and cultural halls and buildings. This thus acts as the communities' participation to ease the success of the project.

-The formation of Women Associations for example the Association of Fako Female Counselors (AFFCO) and the Association of Meme Female Counselors (AMFCO) to sustain Female Political Leadership and Community watch-dogs committees such as the WEEP Winners of Kwakwa and Kombone.

-Follow up and review meetings are organized to monitor the trained activities.

5. ACTIVITIES

➤ ***03 Sensitization meetings on women's participation in local governance structures and for women's groups.***

Sensitization meetings shall be organized in the respective municipalities. The purpose of these meetings shall be to reinforce awareness on the project and its objectives and a general sensitization on women's participation in politics, gender mainstreaming in local governance structures and voting processes. They shall target directly the women's groups, women leaders in Municipalities, other stakeholders and the public at large. The instruments to be used shall include meetings, radio slots and newspaper publications.

➤ ***Produce 2000 support and sensitization materials***

The WEEP will continue to produce newsletters and posters, which shall be produced yearly. This newsletter shall carry information about gender sensitivity activities and other women and development issues in local communities and the country at large. Copies shall be distributed to other networking organizations and stakeholders free of charge. There shall be slots on radio, television and newspapers to keep the public constantly sensitized and informed especially during the International women's day and the Rural Women's Day.

➤ ***Hold a two 01 day follow up meeting with female political leaders and provide support to run activities.***

Female political leaders are role models for other women in the communities but they work in disperse ranks that tend to weaken their impact in any affirmative action's to promote the cause of women. The creation of an association for female political leaders has helped to bring women leaders together. The meetings will further strengthen their actions in solidarity for women' cause.

➤ ***Organize one 02-day workshop for 30 female political and Social leaders and other stakeholders on strategic planning and leadership***

The female political leaders sometimes emerge out of chance and they tend to grapple with issues of leadership without any vision or sometimes with unclear plans. This workshop will bring consciousness to female political leaders to encourage and enhance the emergence of many other women in leadership as well as strategically plan to achieve set goals and objectives that contribute to change the lives and livelihoods of women.

➤ ***Organize 15 02day grassroots training on gender and women's rights in 15 communities in the division.***

These grassroots trainings are organized to raise community awareness. While the focus will be on women, based on the experience from the preceding phases, at least 25 % of participants will be men. This way, in each community a large number of persons will be available to assist the community facilitator in promoting gender equality and women's rights.

➤ ***Hold four review and follow up meetings with 40 community facilitators in 5 municipalities***

The WEEP field staff shall be expected to visit the communities and hold review and follow up meetings with trained community facilitators with the aim of monitoring the progress and impacts of the project in the communities. This will provide opportunity to adjust plans, and reinforce the skills of the facilitators where necessary.

These 50 communities' facilitators shall be made up of the facilitators in the third phase of the project that is those trained in the fourth phase (2011-2012).

➤ ***Organize 01-day workshop for 25 Traditional rulers and community notables on gender issues***

Traditional rulers are the upholders of culture and tradition in our societies. In most cases, these traditions do not favor women in the access and control over resources, especially land. Therefore, there is a need to build gender awareness among the traditional rulers especially as concerns access and control in local natural resources.

➤ ***Organize 05 sensitization meeting with women on Sustainable Economy and opportunities***

In the communities, women withstand the worst of poverty because they are alienated from the economic resource base of the community. Sometimes women are ignorant about the possibilities and economic opportunities open for them. Through these sensitization meetings, women shall be exposed to understanding the concept of sustainable economy and discover the opportunities available for them in their communities.

➤ ***Organize four 01-day workshops on skills improvement for women in 5 Municipalities***

In these workshops, women shall be trained on different economic skills that will enable them generate income for their sustenance and livelihood. They shall be exposed to marketable skills, which they can use within their communities to positively change their conditions and improve on their welfare.

➤ ***Link women' groups to credit schemes and assist them in project design and loan procurement***

Although there is a proliferation of micro credit finance houses, many women and women groups do not benefit from the opportunities either because of ignorance or inability to access these credit schemes because they cannot meet the criteria set by them. This project shall act as liaison to these micro finance schemes, introducing women and women' groups to take advantage of them as well as assist potential beneficiaries whom the project shall identify with meeting up with the set requirements of these micro finance houses.

➤ ***06 Sensitization campaigns on the education of the girl child / Identification of 60 poor but intelligent students/pupils***

Carry out 06 sensitization meetings on the education of the girl child with parents, teachers, and women' groups. Many parents still hold the belief that educating a girl child is not important as she will eventually leave the family and marry into another family. However, although ignorance plays in some of the parent, there are some children who drop out of school due to poverty. These sensitization campaigns in Churches, Schools and other social forum shall appeal to stakeholders to recognize the value of sending the girl child to school. The project team shall also ensure the identification of poor but intelligent students/pupils to be assisted by the project. Text, work and exercise books shall be provided to ***60 deserving pupils/students (girls)***.

➤ ***Organize 02 Mass Marriages for 40 couples in 05 Municipalities***

The phenomenon of cohabitation has claimed a large section of society. Hence, the institution of Mass marriages by the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family came to savage the plight of women who are found in this union. During this ceremony, couples shall be sponsored to acquire authentic marriage certificates so as to consolidate their gains in their unions.

➤ ***Organize 01 Conference for 30 men on Masculinity and Violence.***

The focus on violence has always been on the women. Understanding the position of the perpetrator could be a starting point for ending violence against women. This conference shall bring together men of all walks of life wherein, they shall talk about male socialization and how it affects society today.



	Description	Euro	
1	Activities costs	23.500,00	23.500,00
1.1	Enhancing women's participation in decision making an local gov. Processes	3.500,00	
1.2	Increasing awareness of women's and girl's rights	10.500,00	
1.3	Increasing men's awareness on gender	4.000,00	
1.4	Capacity building staff	1.000,00	
1.5	Monitoring visits, board expenses and allowance	4.500,00	
2	Personal costs	16.200,00	16.200,00
2.1	Coordinator	6.600,00	
2.2	2 field staff	6.900,00	
2.3	Secretary/cashier	2.700,00	
3	Recurrent costs	10.800,00	10.800,00
3.1	Office Supplies	3.800,00	
3.2	Transport and communication	1.800,00	
3.3	Financial audit (final audit)	1.500,00	
3.4	External consultation	700,00	
3.5	External evaluation	3.000,00	
	Sub Total		50.500,00
4.	Reserve	2.600,00	2.600,00
5	Grand Total		53.100,00

Income

Description	percentage	Euro
Confirmed monatory contribution of target group		1.200,00
Confirmed monatory contribution of PCC		1.900,00
Funds requested from the financing partner (BftW)		50.000,00
TOTAL		53.100,00

Risks

The main risk to which this project could be exposed is that of meddling by administrative, traditional and political authorities. However, going by previous experience this is unlikely as the project methodology is one that ensures continuous sensitization of all these key stakeholders. Besides, the project actively involves these actors in its activities. Further risk may only occur if the partners decide to withdraw its funding. This might however affect the project negatively as major activities that need adequate funding may collapse. But putting up in place the Community Facilitators guarantees a strong commitment for continuity.

Mitigation measures for risks

- The involvement of administrative, Traditional and Political Authorities into the Project phase as facilitators as well as the major stakeholders is as a means to make the various authorities to be aware of the existence and goal of the project. However we strongly believe that getting them involved is as a result to avoid any further conflict of interest with whom so ever.

9.RECOMMENDATION: SEE ATTACHED FORM.

ANNEX

	<i>INTERVENTION LOGIC</i>	<i>OBJECTIVELY VARIFIABLE INDICATORS</i>	<i>SOURCES OF VERIFICATION</i>	<i>ASSUMPTION</i>
OVERALL OBJECTIVE	Improvement on the Socio-Economic Development and Cultural situation of Women			
SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 1	Women's participation in decision making and local governance processes is enhanced	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of women contributing actively in running council activities increases by at least 20% by the end of 2015. 2. Number of cases reporting cultural malpractices and domestic violence reduces by 10% within the project area. 3. Number of community projects that benefits women and youths increase by at least 20% by the end 	Field visit Observation Reports Testimonies Interviews	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Commitment of women Collaboration of traditional authorities 2. Male partners are willing to collaborate

<p>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 2</p>	<p>Women's Literacy rates opportunities for exploiting economic potentials increased</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of women and women's groups starting new and profitable businesses increases by at least 10% 2. Number of girls who get to higher levels of learning increased by at least 30% 3. Number of women and girls who legalize marriages increased by 30%. 	<p>Interviews Observation Field visits Meeting reports Land documents Marriage certificates</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women are willing to change attitude to business Credit facilities. 2. Women and girls denounce the subjugation of men. 3. Law courts collaborate with widows. 4. Inlaws/relations with other stakeholders collaborate with women.
<p>SPECIFIC OBJECTIVE 3</p>	<p>Men's awareness on Gender and Development increased.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of men who are reached by the project increased by at least 20% 2. Number of traditional rulers becoming proactive on gender issues increased by at least 25% 	<p>Field reports Field reports.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Men and women collaborate between men and women. 2. Traditional rulers are willing to eliminate cultural malpractices. 3. Men, Women and other Stakeholders are willing to speak out.
<p>RESULTS 1 WOMEN AND POLITICS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women participate in decision making and local governance processes. • Women political leaders take lead roles in decision making in public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 500 persons sensitized on women's Participation in Politics. ➢ 30% men and 50% women in 05 municipalities who occupy executive positions in municipal councils and municipal council programmes are trained twice on gender sensitive governance. ➢ 2000 copies of Magazine produced and distributed to the communities; and 200 copies of 	<p>Training Reports Observation Monitoring</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Women will develop the interest and get involve in posts of reponsibilities. 1. Both Women and Men are more active in public affairs.

	<p>life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ posters produced and distributed. ➤ 05 radio talk show carried out on women and politics. ➤ 30% women politicians in 05 municipalities trained on Leadership skills. Continuous lobbying and Advocacy with Female Political Associations of Meme and Fako Divisions. 	<p>Reports</p> <p>Observation</p> <p>Testimonies</p> <p>Interviews</p>	
<p>RESULT 2</p> <p>GENDER AND WOMEN'S RIGHT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Women and Girls enjoy equal inheritance and property rights as men and boys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 85% women, men and youth in 05 municipalities trained on Gender and women's Rights. ➤ 40 community facilitators able to follow up post trainings. ➤ 25 traditional rulers trained on Gender issues 	<p>1. Women and Girls have access and control over natural resources.</p>
<p>RESULT 3</p> <p>WOMEN AND ECONOMY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More women have access to credit and engage in profitable business activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 500 women and 300 girls sensitized on sustainable economy in 15 communities. ➤ 200 women and girls trained on income generation. ➤ 03 women's groups get credit/or support from government services. 	<p>1. Women and Girls become more independent of themselves.</p>

<p>RESULT 4 WOMEN AND EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More girls get into higher levels of learning and become more assertive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 10% (100), girls get assistance for schooling. ➤ 40 girls identified and assisted in each of 10 schools within the project area. ➤ 40 couples acquire marriage certificates in 05 councils. 	<p>Testimonies Interview Marriage Certificates</p>	<p>1. Women and Girls are aware of thier rights and duties.</p>
<p>RESULT 5 GENDER AND MASCULINITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ More men become aware of gender issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 30% of men become proactive to gender issues. ➤ 30% of men are able understand the concept of masculinity. ➤ 30 men trained to curb violence and deal with masculinity. 	<p>Field Reports Testimonies Monitoring Reports</p>	<p>Men and Women work together.</p>

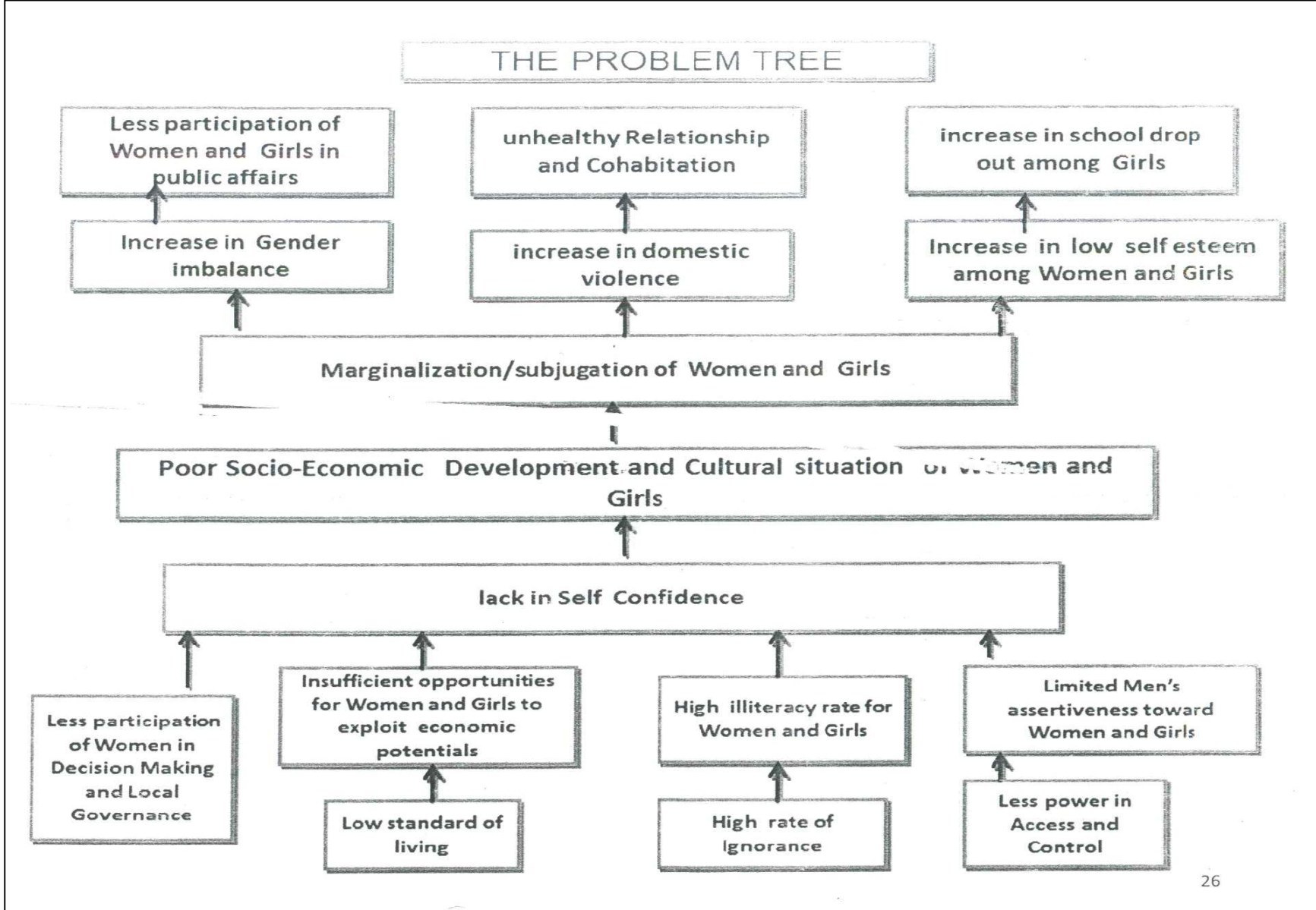


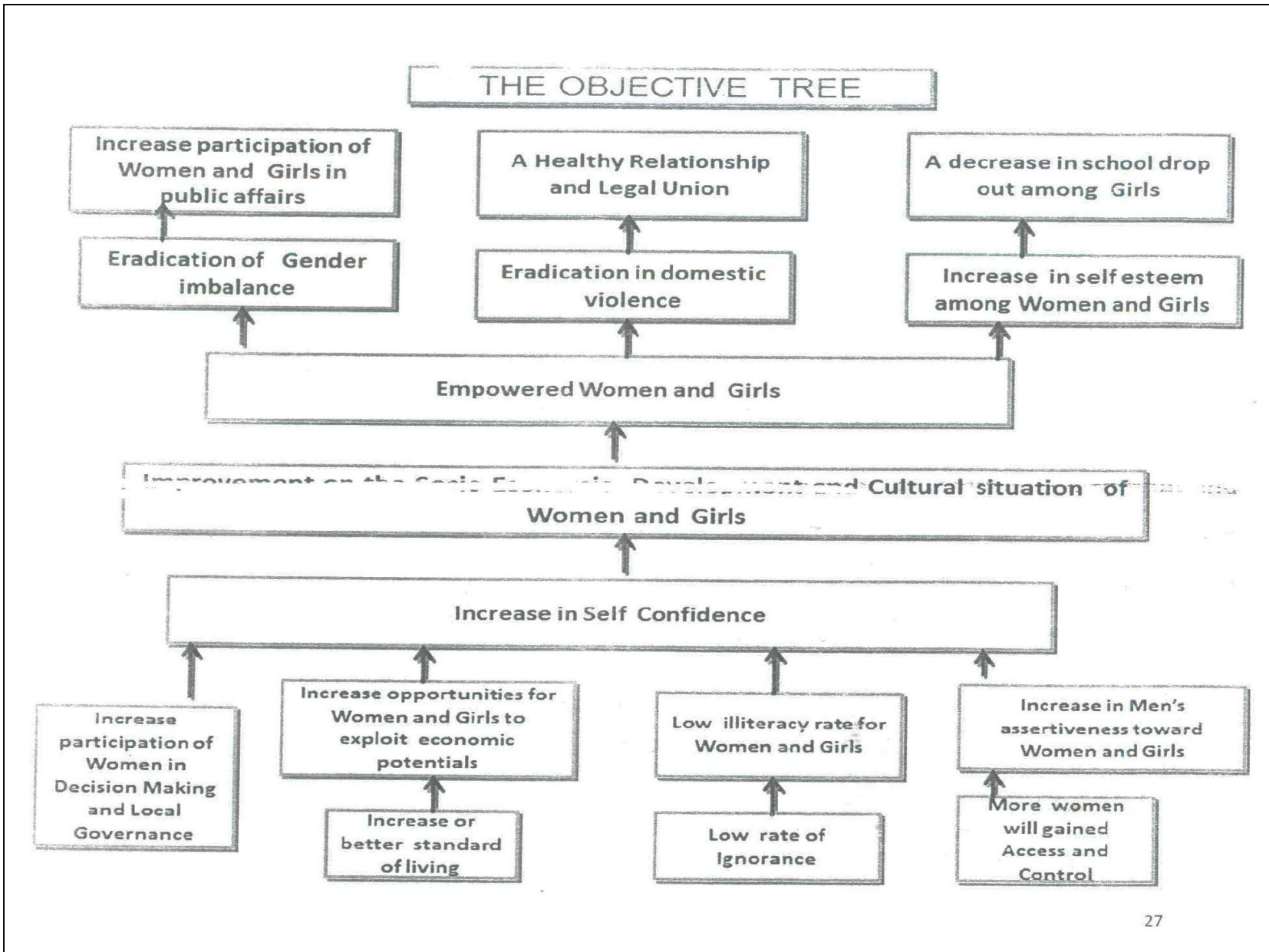
Operational Plan for 2014 to 2015

Results	Activities	Process Indicator	Time frame	Person Responsible	Collaborator	Resources
Women's participation in decision making and local governance processes is enhanced	Sensitize stakeholders (traditional rulers, women's groups, public and church groups on women's participation in politics and Local council governance.	03 meetings held (01 per municipality) 10,000 persons reached through radio talks and newsletter	2014	Project team (PT)	Local authorities Women's group leaders Government services Teachers Churches	Resource persons Transport Newspaper Airtime Finance
	Organize training workshop for 30 female political and social leaders on strategic planning and leadership	two day workshop organized for 30 participants	2014	PT and Resource persons	Local councils, socio-cultural and religious leaders.	Hall Resource persons Lodge Refreshment materials Transport Communication media coverage
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce support and sensitization materials Participate in Women's celebrations 	2000 copies of Newsletter produced yearly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 02 women's celebrations (March 8th and 15th October) 	2014 - 2015	PT	NGOs Women's groups Advocacy organizations Councils	Finance Materials Communication
Women political leaders take lead roles in decision making in public life	Follow up meetings with Fako and Meme Female political leaders.	Four meetings held with Fako and Meme Female Politicians	2014 and 2015	Project Coordinator	Female Politicians	Hall Transport Communication

	Carry out 06 sensitization campaigns for 250 persons on the education of the girl child in Churches and other social forum.	250 persons sensitized in 05 municipalities	2014 to 2015	PT	School authorities Parents Students and Pupils	Hall Lodge materials Transport Communication
More women and girl children enjoy equal inheritance and property rights as men and boy children	Identify and Assist 60 girls in primary and secondary school.	60 Girls provided with school Materials.	2014	PT	Students and pupils	Hall materials Transport Media coverage
	Organize one 1 day workshop for 25 traditional rulers and Community notables on gender	25 Traditional leaders trained	2015		Traditional Councils Community	Hall <i>Resource persons</i> materials Transport Communication media coverage
	Organize and sponsor Mass Marriages for 40 Couples in Meme Division.	40 Couples acquire Marriage Certificates.	2014 to 2015	PT	Cohabited couples Municipal Administrators	Hall <i>Resource persons</i> Transport Communication media coverage
	Organize 15 grassroots trainings on gender and women' rights in 15 communities in Meme Division for 500 persons	500 persons trained	2014 -2015	PT	Women's groups Youth groups Churches	Hall Lodge Feeding materials Transport Communication

	Hold 06 review and follow-up meetings with 40 community facilitators	2 review / follow-up meetings held with 40 community facilitators	2014-2015	PT	Community facilitators	Hall Transport Materials
	Organize one 1 day workshop on Masculinity and Gender Based Violence and HIV/AIDS.	One 1 day workshop held and 30 persons trained	2015	PT	Women' groups Churches Teachers	Hall Lodge Feeding materials Transport Communication Media
	Network with Networks for Women Organizations	Pay annual dues in 02 networks	2014 -2015	Project coordinator (PC)	Government Agencies and NGOs	Finance
	Sensitize 250 women on economic potentials and opportunities in the community	250 women sensitized	2015	PT	Women' groups, Small scale business women, Churches	Transport Materials Communication
More Women have access to credit and engage in profitable business activities	Organize 4 one-day workshops in 5 municipalities on skills improvement for economic opportunities for 200 women	200 women trained on economic skills	2015	PT	Women' groups, Small scale business women, Churches	materials Transport Communication
	Link 04 women' groups to credit schemes and assist them in project design and loan procurement	04 women' groups linked to credit schemes	2014 and 2015	PT	Micro Finance Houses, Women's groups, Delegations of Agriculture, Small and medium size enterprises,	Transport Communication





Projekt-No :
Projekt-No
Organisation

B-CMR-2014-5001
PCC Weep

Project title

Women's Education and Empowerment
Programme

Project period

01.01.2014 - 31.12.2015

Description		Euro	
1	Activities costs	23.500,00	23.500,00
1.1	Enhancing women's participation in decision making an local gov. Processes	3.500,00	
1.2	Increasing awareness of women's and girl's rights through education and economic potentials	10.500,00	
1.3	Increasing men's awareness on gender	4.000,00	
1.4	Capacity building staff	1.000,00	
1.5	Monitoring visits, board expenses and allowance	4.500,00	
2	Personal costs	16.200,00	16.200,00
2.1	Coordinator	6.600,00	
2.2	2 field staff	6.900,00	
2.3	Secretary/cashier	2.700,00	
3	Recurrent costs	10.800,00	10.800,00
3.1	Office Supplies	3.800,00	
3.2	Transport and communication	1.800,00	
3.3	Financial audit (final audit)	1.500,00	
3.4	External consultation	700,00	
3.5	External evaluation	3.000,00	
	Sub Total		50.500,00
4.	Reserve	2.600,00	2.600,00
5	Grand Total		53.100,00

Income

Description	percentage	Euro
Confirmed monetary contribution of target group		1.200,00
Confirmed monetary contribution of PCC		1.900,00
Funds requested from the financing partner (BftW)		50.000,00
TOTAL		53.100,00

Place/Date: *Buea 23/1/14*

Protestant Agency for Diakonia and
Development for Bread for the World –
Protestant Development Service

Name/s:
Dr. Uta Bracken

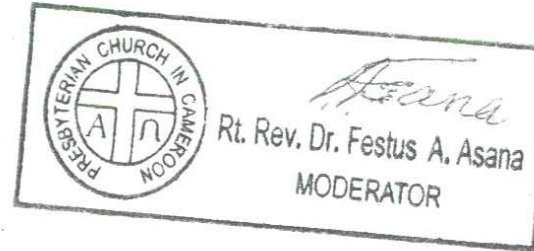
Position/s:
Head of West and Central Africa Desk

[Handwritten Signature]
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Signature

Place/Date: *BUEA, 31/1/14*

PCC Weep

Name/s:



Position/s:

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.....
Stamp and signature of the Project Partner's

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S/N	Name	Age	Profession	Place	Date of Interview
1	Abonge Joseph Chenghe	62	Farmer and PCC Christian	Bamenda	20/03/ 2021
2	Chefor Anita	46	Seamstress	Buea	3/05/2021
3	Effimba Anna	46	Farmer	Konye	12/05/2021
4	Ekombe Constance	52	Trader	Muea	3/05/ 2021
5	Etuge Modesta	67	Member of CWF	Buea	4/05/2021

6	Ikome Vivian	48	WEEP Board Member	Buea	20/02/2020
10	Mukwele Bertha Sume	62	WEEP Beneficiary and Trader	Kumba	23/06/2021
9	Njalla Quan Lilian	74	Elder PCC	Yaounde	20/04/2021
7	Ntube Joana	58	Trader	Buea	24/06/2021
5	Viban Gladys Shang	62	Member of PCC Synod	Yaounde	4/03/2021
12	Ojong Peter	62	Elder, PCC Kumba	Kumba	13/05/2021
14	Rev. Dr. Azange Margaret	59	PCC Pastor	Yaounde	15/06/2021
15	Rev. Elong Rose Dione	43	PCC Pastor	Yaounde	15/06/2021
13	Rev. Kinge Mary	47	Coordinator of WEEP	Buea	24/02/2021
16	Rev. Mbella Ikome Lyonga	52	PCC Pastor	Bamenda	6/04/2021
17	Rev. Neba Delphine Njea	38	PCC Pastor	Yaounde	18/06/2021
18	Rev. Ngwa Agnes	62	PCC Pastor	Bamenda	18/06/2021
19	Rt. Rev. Fonki Samuel Forba	61	Pastor and Moderator of the PCC	Yaounde	3/07/2021

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