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UNIVERSITE DE YAOUNDE I

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FACULTE DES ARTS, LETTRES ET
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DEPARTEMENT DE SOCIOLOGIE

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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace-Work-Fatherland

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GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT PROFESSIONAL MASTER'S PROGRAM

AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EMANCIPATION IN YAOUNDE VI

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the
Professional Master's in "Gender and Development"

SPECIALISATION:

GENDER, ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL DEVELOPMENT

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DEDICATION

To my family, wife and children especially Efangwa

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With awesome gratitude, I shower infinite praises on God for the strength He gave me to go through this course. I indefatigably thank the Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family to whom I am much obliged and indebted.

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this research work titled “An Assessment of the role of Microfinance Institutions in the Enhancement of Gender Emancipation in Yaounde VI” seeks to answer the question and hypothesis whether the Micro Financial Institution (MFI) is a tool to liberate the woman from poverty, discrimination and violence.

From our assessment on the role of MFI carried out with three MFI, that is the Chartered Financial Assistance (CFA), Sumediang Finances (SUMFI) and Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union AWICCUL all in the Yaounde VI Subdivision in the Mfoundi Division showed that the emergence of MFI after the economic crisis and the failed banks of the late 1980 and early 1990 came as a rescue mission to alleviate poverty, make the woman and households financially sustainable, break down barriers of gender discrimination and violence and above all initiated the woman into entrepreneurship empowerment.

As a result of the advantages that flow from the existence of microfinance institutions, the woman and man are emancipated, that is, liberated and free from the shackles of poverty, seclusion, servitude and neglect that breeds strifes and conflicts. With this study therefore, it is affirmed and confirmed without any doubt or objection that MFI is a model for gender equality and emancipation towards financial independence, job creation and self employment for herself, family, household and community.

This two parts four chapters’ research work focuses on some gender and development theories that encourages female entrepreneurship through petit business ventures. That is to say it embraces a new focus on the dynamism of gender equality, gender stratification, self reliant development and parity.

The activities of MFI that enhances emancipation does not only limit itself to cash operations but equally reach out to other social services like education, healthcare, training, reinforcement of capacities, competences, skills and know-how.

Even though MFI are not spared from problems its advantages outweighs its disadvantages and inconveniences in that women according to Simone De Beavoir and Esther Boserup, can now take their destinies in their own hands because they have broken down all the barriers of backwardness through financial emancipation and empowerment, provided by the services and products of MFI.

RESUME

Le but de cette recherche intitulé «Une évaluation du rôle des microfinances dans le renforcement de l'émancipation des sexes en Yaoundé VI », vise à répondre à la question et l'hypothèse selon laquelle les microfinances est outil pour libérer la femme de la pauvreté, la discrimination et la violence.

De notre évaluation sur le rôle de microfinance qui a été portée par trois institution des microfinance (IMF) c'est-à-dire Chartered Financial Assistance (CFA), Sumediang Finances (SUMFI) et Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union (AWICCUL) toutes dans l'arrondissement de Yaoundé VI du département du Mfoundi a montré que l'émergence de IMF après la crise économique et l'échec des banques à la fin des années 1980 et au début des années 1990 est venue comme une mission pour alléger la pauvreté, faisant la femme et son ménage financièrement durable, percée la barrière de discrimination de genre et la violence et au dessus de toute, tout ceci a initié la femme à faire sa part d'entrepreneuriat féminine.

En tant que résultat des avantages qui découlant de l'existence des institutions des microfinances, l'homme et la femme sont émancipés c'est-à-dire, libérés et sauvés de la pauvreté, solitude, servitude et neglet de la race et le conflit. Néanmoins, avec cette étude, c'est confirmé et affirmé sans doute que le IMF est un modèle de l'égalité de genre et l'émancipation vers l'indépendance de finance, la création d'emplois et l'autonomie pour la communauté, la famille, la ménage, etc.

Ce travail de recherche est divisé en deux parties avec quatre chapitres, focalisé sur quelques théories de développement de genre qui encourage l'entrepreneuriat féminin à travers les petites entreprises. Cela veut dire qui en embrassant un nouveau focus sur le dynamisme de l'égalité de genre, le développement, autonomisation et parité.

Les activités de IMF qui augmentent l'émancipation ne se limitent pas à l'opération banque mais atteindre certains services sociaux comme l'éducation, la santé, renforcement des capacités, la qualité de compétence et le savoir-faire.

Malgré que l'IMF ne soit pas épargne des problèmes, ses avantages surpassent ses désavantages et les inconvenances selon Simone De Beauvoir et Esther Boserup. Les femmes peuvent maintenant prendre leur destin entre leurs mains parce qu'elles ont brisé toutes les barrières qu'empêchait l'émancipation financière et l'autonomisation fondée par les services et les produits de IMF.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AKAO	: Daily Mobile Collection by Canvasers and Jobbers
ATM	: Automatic Teller Machines
AWICCUL	: Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union
BEAC	: Banque d'Etats de l'Afrique Central
BIAO-MERIDIEN	: Banque International pour l'Afrique occidental et Meridional
BICEC	: Banque International pour la Commerce et l'Industries du Cameroun
BSWG	: Bayam-sellam Women Group
CAMCCUL	: Cameroon Cooperative Credit Union League
CEDAW	: Convention for the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CFA	: Chartered Financial Assistance
COBAC	: Commission de Banque de l'Afrique Central
DTC	: Decentralised Territorial Collectivity
FGD	: Focus Group Discussions
ICTs	: Information and Communication Technologies
ILO	: International Labour Organisation
IMF	: International Monetary Funds
MDG	: Millennium Development Goals
MFI	: Microfinance Institution
MINFI	: Ministry of Finance
MINPROFF	: Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family
MIRAP	: Mission to Sell Food Stuff at a Reduced Price
NGO	: Non-governmental Organisations
ROSCAS	: Revolving Savings and Credit Association
SAP	: Structural Adjustment Program
SDG	: Sustainable Development Goals
SGBC	: Societé General de Banque du Cameroun
SMART	: Specific, Measurable, Accurate, Accountable, Reliable, and Time Barred
SUMFI	: Sumediang Finances
VAT	: Value Added Tax

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TOPIC

**AN ASSESSMENT OF THE ROLE OF MICROFINANCE
INSTITUTIONS IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER
EMANCIPATION IN YAOUNDE VI**

GENERALITIES ON RESEARCH PROJECT

Microfinance institutions emerged as a result of the failure of the mainstream banks during the economic recession and crisis of the late 1980s and early 1990s. This emergence was also compelled by the misappropriation and mismanagement of clients' savings and accounts by the Post Office Saving Bank (Caisse d'épargne postal).

Those with small savings had to join themselves into groups to resolve their financial needs. With their small savings that mainstream commercial banks (SGBC, BICIC, BIAO-MERIDIEN, Credits Association) do not take into consideration led to the birth of microfinance institutions, cooperative societies, self help reliant groups, Njangi groups, thrift and loans, and ROSCAS (Revolving Savings and Credit Associations) to satisfy their basic needs of acquisition of capital to start their businesses, savings of the profits from sales of their farm products and petit trading, quick access to their savings to attend to their health care, education of their children, and the up-keep of their families amongst others without passing through the rigours inherent in mainstream banking systems.

Being a proximity financial institution that has revolutionised the banking sector; the role of microfinance institutions has brought banking transactions nearer the population that is cheap, expedient (timely), development oriented and void of corruption. In such institutions, their services move towards their clients through daily contributions where their workers meet their clients in their homes or business places to collect their daily savings. Their services do not also complicate in issuing loans to its customers. While the mainstream banks would demand for all sort of impossible collateral securities, microfinance issue loans based on your savings and the capabilities of your suretees. These institutions equally know their clients personally.

Microfinance thus emerged as a preponderant and primordial tool or paraphernalia to fight against financial dependence of the woman, combat grassroot poverty and gender inequalities. It also promotes women's emancipation and development, gender empowerment to alleviate poverty hence improving living standards of the woman and the family in a sustainable manner.

This research work is thus aimed at examining and analysing the role of gender and development in the Yaounde VI Subdivision through Chartered Financial Associations (CFA). Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union Ltd (AWICCUL) and through Sumediang Finances (SUMFI). We will examine the advantages of such microfinance as well as the stakes and challenges inherent therein. Thereafter, we would provide some recommendations for a way forward.

01. CONTEXT, JUSTIFICATION AND SCOPE OF RESEARCH WORK AND STRUCTURE OF THESIS

01.1. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The context of this study therefore seeks to assess the performance of MFI in the enhancement of gender equality through emancipation and on the impact it has on livelihood and household harmony of the family.

The failure of banks and the freezing of accounts did not also spare the woman even if she did not have any pecuniary interest in the mainstream financial institution. This means that she suffered as a collateral victim in that if her male partner was affected, the consequences repercutted on her because as a mother, wife and sister, she suffered more. This is because she was a dependant who had to eat or have her livelihood from the contributions of others. That is why the essence of this research is to provide to her means that she can be autonomous and a master of her own destiny.

01.2 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

As a justification of the studies, the employment situation that was worsened by the privatisation and liquidation of institutions and businesses led to the deterioration of social services that supports the family and households. The consequences were very far reaching like there was a high level of school drop outs, retrenchments, crime waves skyrocketed, prostitution became institutionalised. In short there were moral decadence, deviances and perversions of all sorts. For this reason therefore, the emergence of MFI was salvatory in that it calmed fears that for those who at least saved their hard earnings with MFI could withdraw them at anytime without complications. Women with their meagre resources saw an instant service that would solve their problems. This research thus affirms that MFI is an important tool in the enhancement of gender and development through emancipation.

01.3 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The scope of this research study is thus to affirm, confirm and ascertain the fact that MFI provides an all englobing and holistic evidence about the important role that MFI plays about its origin, evolution, nature, practice and procedures to enhance the emancipation of both genders towards development, complementarity and partnership.

Albeit this, the scope is to show the role that MFI play, its benefits, its actors and the efforts made to improve living conditions and above all else to overcome the hindrance of inequalities that clogs the wheels of gender and development.

The scope and limitations of this study covers a period of two years that is, 2014 and 2015. The research was carried out in Yaounde VI Subdivision of the Mfoundi Division where I worked with the Chartered Financial association (CFA), the Awing Central Cooperative Society (AWICCUL), and the Sumediang Finances (SUMFI) respectively. Irrespective of some inconveniences, the actors in the field were hospitable and accommodating to ease my research findings. I am much obliged of their contributions.

01.4 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

This dissertation/thesis on the assessment of the role of microfinance as an enhancing factor for gender emancipation is divided into two parts with four chapters treating different issues.

This study is out to prove how microfinance institutions are models to fight against poverty, promote socio-cultural development, break down inequality and gender gaps, eradicate violence and end discrimination against the woman in all its ramifications.

The research starts with an abstract which is a brief appraisal of the thesis/dissertation. It comes before the exposition of the chapter contents which opens up the topic of discussions leading to the answers of main research questions and hypothesis formulated to affirm, confirm, ascertain or reject the assertion.

Though the chapter contents are uneven, it tries to solve a specific problem so that at the end of the finding, we can state with certainty that microfinance is really an enabling tool at the disposal of the feminine gender to depart or break away or liberate herself from the tight control of her male counterpart who made them perpetually dependent because she did not have financial power and voice.

Now that banking services are at her door steps and at her back and call, she can save from her meagre resources. This is a protection for rainy day or better put, it will help her in the absence of her spouse. She will equally break away from the mould as a perpetual beggar.

Since emancipation means to transfer ownership of; or to be free from the control and power of another especially freedom from bondage and perpetual subjugation, the existence of MFI has released her from paternal care and responsibilities by making her sui juris in her own name.

The theoretical assessment or review of literature and data have been examined with meticulous care in order to buttress the important fact that MFI as an emancipation paraphernalia is not without limits. Some of this limits that hinders the woman from saving more in the MFI is as a result of power dynamics between both gender for example our tradition and customs restricts the woman from playing certain roles openly. If she does ultra vires it would be regarded as challenging the male authority or patriarchal setting. Besides the issue of power dynamics, there are other limits like the environmental factors, level of awareness, poverty alleviation mechanisms, judicial machineries, fear of the unknown and self reliant initiatives that can enable her raise more money from her petit business and stipends provided by the male folk.

Although Robert Chambers (1983) hitherto describes poverty as the deprivation trap, the case studies carried out in various MFI in Yaounde VI reveals after a comparative assessment study that MFI are there to propagate development that would impact positively on the lives and livelihood of the beneficiaries and their families.

The methodology used to evaluate our findings is done through diagrams, pie charts, bar charts, histograms, tables, photos, maps and other graphs. From the interpretations of the collected data, information and statistics, they enables us to come up with feasible recommendation that is SMART; (that is, specific, measurable, accurate, accountable, reliable and timely) is properly adhered to. The conclusion gives opening and room for further research on this concept of emancipation through microfinance services. The work ends with annextures of the bibliography, samples of questionnaire, interview guides and other documents that would enhance the research findings.

02. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The effects of the economic crisis that hit Cameroon in the late 1980s and early 1990s, did not spare the banking sector nor the actors in the financial domain. There was total down turn of business. Policies from the Brittonhood Institutions like the World Bank and the International Monitory Fund (IMF) could not remedy the economic crisis. The intention of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) could not bail out the economy.

This therefore led to retrenchment of workers, unemployment rose, banks and financial institution winded up. Businesses became bankrupt, privatisation and liquidation of state institutions became the rule rather than the exception. Savings and credits were frozen while dishonest managers embezzled hard earnings of contributors and blatantly mismanaged properties that were placed at their disposal.

As a consequence of this bad faith and mistrust, poverty set in, corruption became a way of life, development became stalled, political wind of change started blowing, urban disorder and moral decadence became rife, survival of the fittest replaced general interests in short the living standards dropped because of inflation. There was out right violence, gender inequalities, crime and sex discrimination.

To overcome these problems, citizens grouped themselves together in self reliant associations, Common Initiative Groups (NGOs), cooperative societies, Njangi groups and associations to cater for their needs and welfare. For them to secure their funds and resources, they had to create microfinance institutions to solve their immediate problems. Thus, njangi groups sprang up, thrift and loans groupings saw the light of day, cooperative credit unions became more exposed, and Rotating Credit Schemes (ROSCAS) emerged to solve the problem of their group to members. What was not good in this new breed financial establishment was that if you were not a member, you could not benefit from its services. However, with the passage of time some of them are operating like banks because of their ploughed back savings and profits.

This research is thus to highlight the role that microfinance institution has played and is still playing to enhance gender emancipation. It will also analyse the positive and negative effects on the protection and promotion of gender emancipation and empowerment and above all expose the benefits to the woman and the family as concerns self-employment, job creation and financial autonomy. Its services would transform the woman and gender as veritable agents for change and sustainable development.

03. STATEMENT OF RESEARCH PROBLEM (PROBLEMATIQUE)

With the emergence of Microfinance Institution (MFI) in Cameroon after the advent of the economic crisis and the failure of mainstream commercial banks that went bankrupt with the savings of creditors, poverty became very high while unemployment was rampant.

Microfinance institutions came to cure the problem of privatization and liquidation as failed prescription from the Brittonhood Institution like the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which instead made matters worse rather than solving it. This made the unemployed youths to migrate out of the country in search for greener pastures. The effects of brain drain cannot be over emphasized with the consequences of illegal or clandestine migration in the high seas. Microfinance provided jobs to these unemployed graduates as there were jobs to occupy them as jobbers, brokers and daily contribution collectors.

During that crisis period, the National Institute of Statistics stated that 11% of youths between the ages of 15 – 29 years were unemployed and this situation was worsened in the urban areas. The unemployment rate for youths between the ages of 15 and 19 stood at 94% while unemployment between the ages of 20 – 24 stood at 84%. Unemployment in the youth milieu at that time stood at 13%. Out of this percentage, 22% of unemployed population were found in Douala while 30% is found in Yaounde. As a result of this, the emergence of MFI considerable reduced this disturbing percentages because many of these youths were provided employment as counter clerks, desk workers or daily mobile collectors of savings from petit traders in the markets or in their homes or on the streets [they are called jobbers]. MFI equally provided start-up capitals to potential entrepreneurs without demanding complicated collateral security to engage into business or agriculture. Their interest rates are low and the refund time is reasonable and considerate. The role of MFI was a timely relief.

While the consequences of unemployment affected both genders, that of the feminine gender was worse. The statistical data from the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training in December 2004 stated that the unemployment and poverty level affecting women and the girl child is alarming. In the cities, the unemployment and poverty level of the female gender stood at 73% while in the rural areas it stood at 68.3%. Of the three (03) million females who were inadequately employed, one (01) million were unemployed and two (02) million underemployed. This high level of unemployment could be attributed to the lack of professional training, misplaced educational policies and priorities by the government or they were not physically apt for the rigours of the job market. For instance, as a jobber, or canvasser who has to criss-cross the town to collect daily savings, you needed to be physically fit to weather the storm from the scorching sun, aggressors and temptations.

Although MFI came to remedy a serious situation, the access to its services such as credits, savings, insurance, etc. is still highly unequal between the men and women genders. This

notwithstanding, considerable advances have been made after the 1990s to increase women's access to small loans, credits and savings facilities. This is true because with an 18.2 million population as per the 2009 census, 40% were living below the poverty level. Today the percentage has improved because those living below the poverty level have dropped to 22.1% in urban areas and 49.9% in rural areas. This considerable drop is due to the role played by MFI that put at the disposal of the population credit facilities without exorbitant collateral securities or high interest rates. These are services that mainstream commercial banks could not offer to the population who are basically farmers, petit business persons, hawkers, vendors and bayam-sellam.

The complexity of the above problems, provoked this research. Findings in the ongoing research are guided by efforts of stakeholders in the MFI who are engaged to build a more developed community. The outcome is to bring MFI activities closer to the needs of a dynamically changing and evolving labour market and economies that can help both genders to move into more productive, profitable and sustainable jobs as prescribed by the millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals geared toward eradicating extreme poverty which will thereby emancipate the woman to take her rightful place in the development of the nation.

It is against this back drop that this research has been proposed to answer the following questions.

04 RESEARCH QUESTION

04.1 PRINCIPAL QUESTION

What factors account for the role of microfinance in the enhancement of gender and development emancipation in the Yaounde VI decentralized territorial collectivities?

04.2 SECONDARY QUESTIONS

1. Can the services of microfinance institutions enable both men and women to participate equally and benefit equitably from the emancipation process?
2. To what extent have emancipation constraints encourage gender inequalities in the microfinance sector in the decentralized territorial collectivities of Yaounde VI.

05 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

05.1 PRINCIPAL HYPOTHESIS

The roles of microfinance institutions encourage the **enhancement of the** emancipation of both genders towards development in the Yaounde VI decentralized territorial collectivities.

05.2 SECONDARY HYPOTHESES

1. Microfinance institutions involve both genders equitably in rendering service that enhances emancipation without discrimination.
2. Even though negative traditional practices hinder the emancipation of feminine genders towards financial autonomy, microfinance practices and services do not discriminate.

06 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

06.1 PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE

To showcase the important roles that microfinance institutions play to enhance emancipation of both genders in the Yaounde VI decentralized territorial collectivities towards financial autonomy and the development of themselves, families, households and communities.

06.2 SECONDARY OBJECTIVES

1. To clarify the myth that microfinance institutions are models and tools for the emancipation of both genders without discrimination towards gender equality.
2. To determine the factors why microfinance services still face criticisms irrespective of their enormous activities vis-à-vis the mainstream commercial banks.
3. To determine the causes that hinder microfinance institutions to transform themselves into mainstream banks.

07 METHODOLOGY

07.1 THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research would be based on the feminist theories like social feminism, liberal feminism, gender concepts and approaches, banking theories and budgetary analyses.

07.1.1 The Feminist Theories

This theory would be used to analyse the role of microfinance institutions in the enhancement of emancipation of both genders that is geared towards development. For instance

WOLLSTONECRAFT Mary (1992) argues that women capacities equals to men so we should look at roles not sex. This argument is relevant to the study in that for gender to be relevant the capacity performance of the woman should be oriented toward empowerment.

To buttress this theory in relation to the role of microfinance at enhancing gender emancipation, Simone DE BEAUVOIR in her book “The Second Sex” argues and opin that for the woman not to be oppressed by the male counterpart, she has to be sufficiently educated like the male so that equality and equity should not be an issue of favour. She like the existentialists, encouraged women to break away from the chains of oppression that “they are not born women but can make themselves women.”

They that is, Wollstonecraft, De Beauvoir and proponents of the existentialist philosophy have paved the way for women to occupy central roles in their daily activities towards emancipation hence departing from patriarchy, phallocracy, male hegemony and cultural prejudices and stereotypes. With this encouragement women can do business, save their money and become financially independent. This independence reduces the gap for violence.

07.1.2 Liberal Feminism Theory

DOYLE WHEELER Anne (2000) like Betty FRIEDAM (2003) are proponents of the fact that everybody is born free and equal thus nobody should usurp another person’s rights. This means that since God has created man and women equally, they are thus free to enjoy their inalienable human rights. That is to say, a woman like her male counterpart is free to engage into business, make money, save it in a microfinance institution or bank as well as use the money as she likes to take care of herself, her family and community without restrictions.

FISHER et al (1993) supported the views of Wheeler and Friedam in that women and men have the same mental capacity but differ in their rationality. This means that women should be given equal opportunities to express themselves economically, socially, politically, culturally and otherwise without restrictions. Women should not be judged by their sex but should be given the opportunity to choose and decide for themselves. Allow the woman to demonstrate her capabilities and what she is able to contribute towards development.

They call on legislature to remove barriers that restrict women from working, travelling and managing their resources and money without discrimination. Cameroon legislature is in line with this because there are no restrictions to education or to employment. As you are educated, you

work and earn equal pay like your male counterpart. She has the right to use her salary as she cherishes.

07.1.3 Social feminism

Proponents like Karl MARX believe that there is a direct link between class structure and the oppression of women in that since the works of men are tangible and ocular he has to be rewarded whereas the work of the woman should not be rewarded because it is domestic, not valued, not tangible and not tradable goods or services. Social feminist castigates the ideologies of ALISON JAGGAR (1996) in that equality is not based on sex as per biology but on the role that each sex can perform. They equally challenge capitalism, patriarchy and phallocracy as they argue that women should not be subjugated because of their sex. They further hold that women should work, make money and contribute to the development of herself, family and community without any restriction or discrimination.

They propose that women should work because they play a complementary role. They castigate the measurement of gender based on class stratification and status symbol. The emergence of microfinance institution support the social feminist theory in that gone are those days when men used to trick women and collect their money. With the proximity of services rendered by MFI, she can save her earnings or money and use it for the education of her children and not to give her husband to marry another woman.

This theory is relevant to the research in that it encourages equality and equity for men and women to work be it in business, agriculture or white collar jobs so that she can either be self-employed, a job creator that employ other workers especially women and at the end of the day she is financially independent. This independence does not mean she would be disrespectful to the male gender.

07.1.4 Gender concept and approaches

It would facilitate this research through gender mainstreaming, national machineries and the status of women which seeks to bring women to the limelight thereby breaking the barriers of stereotypes, prejudices and discriminations.

Since gender mainstreaming, national machineries and the commission on the status of women are intended to enhance the participation of women in development as well as eliminate inequalities and gender gaps between sexes in all sphere and walks of life. This gender concept

and approaches will bring equality and complementarity that would redress gender inequalities, stratifications and stigmatizations. The existence of MFI is to remove emancipation and empowerment from the mould of stagnation and seclusion and servitude so that woman can take her right place and play her rightful role in the development of the society. Always give her the opportunity to show her worth and you would enjoy her and her services.

07.1.5 Banking theories and budgetary analysis

These are tools used to priorities the budget and banking transactions by taking into account gender considerations. It illustrates the implication of sex in the acquisition of banking facilities. While it is believed that it is men who have collateral security to acquire loans from mainstream banks, MFI are there to give soft loans to women with a reduced interest rate, with little or no collateral security backed by a responsible suretee with account in that same MFI.

MFI gives loans of small amount to women as start-up capital. For instance, with an accumulated daily saving up to 20.000Fr\$ she can have a loan of 15.000 francs to start a petit business of selling fruits or roasting maize or fish. From the profit made she can save some, use some on her family and plough the remaining in her business. MFI work on good faith because they know their debtors personally and physically. They equally carryout monitoring and evaluation on how the business is evolving. The MFI is equally there to provide advice, protection and counselling.

This point would facilitate the research in that it would provide tools to analyse the differences between men and women at the level of the family and households in the preparation execution and evaluation of the household budget from the capital of the small or petit business. This is very important because their needs are prioritized thus creating an equilibrium between income and expenditure as well as the frequency distribution of their resources in a bid to eliminate inequalities and discrimination.

07.2 THE TECHNIQUES OF DATA COLLECTION

7.2.1 Introduction

Both the quantitative (questionnaire, documents, etc) technique and qualitative (interviews, focus group discussions and observations) approaches to collect data and statistics were employed or used to confirm or affirm or refute the hypothesis of the problem whether the role played by emancipation of both genders in the target decentralized territorial collectivities.

To ascertain the validation of this assertion, these techniques and approaches would permit us to have an in-depth understanding of the role of microfinance institutions, the importance of emancipating both genders towards financial independence through the resources of microfinance institutions and to identify the stakes and challenges that hinder MFI from operating like mainstream commercial banks. These approaches and techniques (would) equally enable the researcher to formulate an initiation project to encourage both genders to make use of MFI by taking advantages of the benefits it offers. This means it would enable clients to identify the petit business venture to engage in or the agricultural activity to do for a greater output or the type of documents needed to acquire a loan as a start-up capital for your business project. For instance, formulating a business plan and how, where and when to obtain a loan.

To elucidate the collection of data and its techniques; it was done following the stages below to wit:

i- Locations of data collection: Location/setting, population, sex of clients, their activities and type of MFI (mission and services).

ii- Primary data collection techniques (quantitative approach): Observation (field survey), interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussion, documents (text book, dissertations, thesis, journals, archives, libraries, articles, internet) and webography.

iii- Secondary data collection approaches (qualitative): Observation check list, interview guide, questionnaire sheet and documentary review.

iv- Data processing and treatment: Effectiveness of collected data and statistics, data processing, data treatment, data management and difficulties encountered in the field.

07.2.2 Analysis of Data Collection

Location of data Collection

i- Location/setting: This research finding was carried out at three different MFI. These locations and MFI are in the Center Region – Yaounde VI Subdivision – Chartered Financial Association (CFA), Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union Ltd, (AWICCUL) and Sumediang Finances (SUMFI); (see Annex V, Administrative Units of Cameroon and Annex VI, map of Centre Region- Yaounde VI) showing the council area of Yaounde VI and the localisation des marches.

ii- Population and organigram and activities: Yaounde VI is a cosmopolitan Subdivision in the Mfounddi Division. The CFA MFI is located at the Obili neighbourhood. Most of its clients are men and women who are engaged in petit businesses, agricultural activities, hawkers, vendors, bike riders, taxi men and some beer parlours. Its nearness to the Acacia market and the Melen market determines the range of its clientele. They have canvassers and jobbers who meet the clients at their business places to collect their daily savings. Their clientele is about 6000 clients. They do not pay civil servants' salaries. They have branches in Yaounde, Buea and Libialem. Their savings is about 100 million Francs CFA. Most of the clients of AWICCUL are petit traders, farmers, businessmen, bike riders, housewives, saloons, restaurant owners, etc., who do not transact with mainstream banks. It has a clientele of 11.169 as at 2015 November with 6250 men and 5470 women. Since its creation, it can boast of a share capital of 213 million, savings of 1 billion, deposits of 106 millions. Yaounde VI branch is just one of its six branches that are found in Awing, Buea, Douala and Santa Yaounde branch has a staff strength of seven (07) personnels.

Most of SUMFI clients are farmers, petit trades, bike rides, students and housewives that save their monies there. Their clientele is about 5.000 (2000 men and 3000women) with savings and deposit amounting to about 18 million. It has a staff strength of 4 personnel. Statistics as at October 2015. Their mission is to collect savings and grant loans. It has branches in Yaounde, Kumba and Bangem and five other places. Clients in all three MFI are both Francophones and Anglophones from all the 10 regions and aliens.

07.2.3 Primary Data Collection Techniques

In other to ascertain the role of microfinance institution in the enhancement of gender emancipation in the targeted areas, the researcher used observations, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussion, and documentations to collect the quantitative information to confirm or rebut the hypotheses as well as gather statistics to resolve the research questions.

The collected data and statistics started in June 2014 and ended in December 2015. It was done at different intervals on a fixed work schedule while at time it was done impromptu to cross examine and cross check the previous information that have been collected.

i- Observation: The researcher used this method at the various research locations whereby he took position as a worker or as a student on internship. I worked with the MFI from when they open at 8am and close at 5pm. On peak days, that is on market days (Wednesdays and Saturdays), we close at 8pm after the mobile collectors have deposited what they have collected in the field.

For the one week that I spent at each research post, I behaved as if I am a worker there. I observed all transactions that happened and jotted the findings and results on my note book. The check list and interrogatories that I prepared, I ticked what has been done as well as made a small comment beside it on what transpired as concerns banking practice, procedure and customer reactions. At the head office of SUMFI, I worked on a project for the formulation of strategies and method of issuing small loan packages to the less financially privileged women to run their business in conjunction with the bayam-sellam women groups (BSWG). The intention of the loan scheme is to grant funding to these vulnerable groups of women at a relatively low interest rate.

I equally took part in a workshop organised by CFA for bayam-sellam women of the Acacia and Melen markets on how to prepare a loan application as well as good business practices to be observed in order to refund loans with ease. What I observed was that most of the participants did not know how to acquire loans. Thus, this exercise permitted them to know how to draft the applications, what to attach to it as supporting documents, the importance of collateral security (as a guarantee and insurance) and above all the in-house procedures before the loan is accorded. They were also taught how to prepare a business plan.

At the AWICCUL MFI, what I observed at the commercial department was that I had to assist the commercial agent and the daily collector in their rounds in the town and market places to collect the savings of clients/customers. There is no minimum amount that a client can save. They can save several times in a day as the daily collectors pass around. My impressions were very satisfied in that the client was spared the duty to rush to the MFI to save her money. The effectiveness of this practice is that banking facilities are brought nearer the population where the services are cheaper, timely, development oriented and void of corruption.

ii- Interviews: In the course of collecting information and data at the various research posts, I prepared an interview guide that would help me to ascertain my hypothesis and research questions. The interview guide carried questions like: when did you know the services and role of MFI? Have you ever transacted with them? In your interaction, what type of services or product did you demand? Were you satisfied with their response? After your transaction did you have customer satisfaction? How is the publicity of the MFI done to attract customers? What can you propose to better or improve on their services?

The responses were carefully noted on my note book following the techniques of research methods. For instance in order not to raise doubts in the minds of the interviewees, I did not take down lots of notes. If I wanted to use my camera or recorder, I also asked for their permission.

My interviewed persons were divided thus: 2 from the MFI, 6 from the customer/client list and 2 from outsiders who have nothing to do with the MFI. The interview sessions were convivial in a conversational mood. No stress or interrogation.

All the collected information would be analysed on the chapter that deals with literature reviews and data analysis. At each station, 10 persons were interviewed, that is 5 women and 5 men.

iii- Questionnaires: Like the questions on the interview guide, the questionnaire carried similar questions. Spaces were provided for a “Yes” or “No” answer. At some points, sentences were written but it was not more than two lines. Since most of the MFI clients are illiterates, the questions were ticked or a sentence was written as the response. For those who could read and write, they answered for themselves.

The questionnaires were distributed using a random sampling method of statistics collection and analysed using a frequency distribution on similar responses and contrary responses. For instance, each research station had two questionnaire for the workers, 6 questionnaires went to clients where 4 were women and 2 were men. 02 questionnaires went to outsiders where gender balance was taken into consideration. Analysis would be done in the chapter that analysis the collected data, statistics and information. 30 questionnaires were prepared, that is, 10 for each post of research.

iv- Focus group discussions: In order to cross-check the collected information and data so that certain incongruities can be put right, at each post I organised three different focus group discussions.

Group one discussion was made up of the staff of the MFI. This is to collect some information on the practices and procedure inherent in the house. Here, I am exposed to the number of clients, the type services rendered, products on sales, amount in coffers, share capital, loans given out and the recovery pattern. Customer relations, satisfaction and the methods of publicity of their MFI and population responses. Sex disaggregation data was collected, that is number of male and female clients.

Group two was with the customers and clients on their relationship with the MFI, their satisfaction ratings, what can be done to improve the services, the reception at the counter, the daily mobile collections, behaviours of staff of the MFI and any other issue or complaints that they deem relevant. I endeavoured to make the discussion very convivial and conversational. It is not like a forum to report anybody or apportion blames. I seek their consent to use my recorder or take them photos. However, I did some jottings on my note book. The **group three** was with both groups above and outsiders to cross-check the information gathered, so that the analysis should be straight, viable and credible.

v- Documentation: Here, the books and registers were consulted to know how they record entries and information. It also showed how accounts are kept and letters filed. Some of the registers that the MFI keep are similar in all the three research posts. Such books and registers are the savings book, deposit book, loan registers, cash tellers, receipts booklets, daily collection ledgers, visitors' books, complaint registers, money transferred registers, etc.

vi- Webography: This website is to register the wireless money transfer services. This was witnessed at the CFA Yaounde office and AWICCUL branches in their money transfer transactions. The SUMFI did not have it because though they have electricity, the network of phones and computers is not reliable.

07.2.4 Secondary data collection approaches

The data/statistic collection tools used to ascertain the qualitative assertion that microfinance institutions play a vital role in the enhancement of gender emancipation in the identified decentralised territorial collectivity. These paraphernalia/tools were observation checklist, interview guide/interrogation, questionnaire sheet and document review columns.

i- Checklist for participant observations: While a prior list of things to be observed was established, once each point was successfully observed, it was marked on the observation checklist as done. At the end of the day, those ear-marked things that were not observed the previous day were carried forward to the next day. By the end of the one week stay at each station the check list was exhausted with satisfactory conclusions.

ii- Interview guide/interrogatories: This formulated guide is intended to guide the researcher not to be repeating questions asked unless it is a follow-up question to clarify a point. This guide is used to conduct succinct interviews where the interviewee is given ample time to expantiate on

the question asked thus providing candid answers beyond reasonable doubts and to the best of his/her knowledge, understandings, belief and consciousness to enable MFI to enhance the emancipation of both genders to achieve complementarity, partnership, harmony and development for themselves, families, household and communities.

iii- Questionnaire sheet: This one page paper carries some questions that would enable the understanding of the topic of research, clarify the research question and provide responses to the formulated hypothesis.

The respondent of the questionnaire does not need to disclose his/her identity as per name and other identifications, however, they should provide their age, profession, and signature. No telephone numbers or personalised identifications. It is anonymous.

iv: Documentary reviews columns: The consulted books, periodicals, registers, thesis, journals and internet, were registered in columns. Each document consulted had a column where the information gathered were written for further analysis. For instance, the references of the document liked title, author, the pages that references would be collected and how it would be treated or used, the date of publication and publishing house.

07.2.5 Data processing and treatment

The quantitative and qualitative approaches and techniques used in collecting the primary and secondary data would be processed and treated through: Data collection procedure, data management, data analysis, difficulties encountered collecting the data and effectiveness of the collected data.

i- The effectiveness of the collected data and statistics: The collected information would tremendously help to define and resolve the research problem and hypothesis in ascertaining the vital and important role played by MFI at enhancing gender emancipation towards financial autonomy for both genders because:

- It would orientate the collection of data in the field as well as structure the content of the conceptual framework;
- The key roles it would play at confirming the hypotheses shall not be over emphasised because it would facilitate the analysis of the data collected to provide precise answers to enhance the inclusion of gender emancipation as an equitable tool for empowering both

genders in all domains especially concerning financial autonomy, job creation, leadership roles and employment issues especially self employment;

- The questionnaires would enable the collection of sex disaggregated data that reveals quantifiable and qualifiable differences on the impact of emancipation between men and women who are beneficiaries of MFI services and products in relation to their responsibilities, level of participation, sense of belonging and gender awareness on the budget, household chores, gender consideration, and gender mainstreaming as a means to improve on their living conditions, living standards and the fight against poverty and inequalities;
- The focus group discussions and interviews would help to elucidate the importance and understanding of power dynamics paradigms on the benefits of gender emancipation through the services and products of microfinance and the impact on empowerment as concerns the examination of the effect of policies, programmes, projects and strategies on both genders for their welfare and social statuses.
- The tools used for participant observation, gender impact assessments and analytical procedures and practices would expose the limited knowledge and awareness of the various actors on the subject matter of gender emancipation through MFI. That notwithstanding, the answers given to the research questions and hypothesis would clear those doubts;
- Though the limited knowledge of actor on the subject matter did not hinder the expected results very much, the above mentioned tools helped to dissect the myth of emancipation and empowerment levels of gender response to financial autonomy and responsive budgeting in a bid to determine whether the effects of the impact focussed on women in isolation or on both genders taking into consideration the performance of their gender roles which is distinct from their biological sex roles.

ii- Data processing: The choice of the different research posts was to acquire a broader view and perspective of the working of MFI. According to the science of research methodology, the interviews were carried out in a convivial environment and at a convenient time where the interviewees are relaxed and able to give in-depth information on the questions asked. Their responses enhanced the theme and provided expected responses. The time allocated for the exercise was respected to the later because everything went on well according to plan in all the three different locations.

iii- Data treatment: In analysing the collected data to ascertain its quantitiveness, frequency tables were drawn up. These tables were supported according to Russell (2006) with figures, tables, graphs, photos and maps.

The treatment was also done by comparing variable and cross tabulations in order to identify factors that favour the role of MFI as an enabling factor for gender emancipation through sustainable saving mechanisms that meet the clients at the door steps of their homes or business places.

Where differences and divergent views emerged, frequency, modulation distribution method of random sampling was used to ascertain whether the level of inconveniences would affect the veracity of the research that is being carried out. However, the value chain method that was used in determining the frequency of disparities proved insignificant hence could not adversely affect the highlighted hypothesis. Thus, MFI is a veritable tool in enhancing gender emancipation for both genders.

iv- Data management: For every entry that was qualitatively or quantitatively collected, it was anonymously coded to facilitate cross-referencing (Delbert, 2007). For the information collected to be reliably used (Grawitz, 2004), interviews that were recorded in megaphones or tape recorders were transcribed before exploitation. Questionnaires and documentations that were in the other language were translated for easy understanding and usage.

v- Difficulties encountered while collecting the data: The roads are very bad and the climatic condition is dominated with rainfall and extreme cold weather condition. This is one of the main causes of the lateness witnessed in this work.

Irrespective of the zones where the research was carried out, some of the actors or respondents refused to cooperate. Some could not grant interviews because their hierarchy had not given a go ahead. Those who were willing to talk or respond to the questionnaire were semi-illiterates. Nonetheless, with pressure and insistence they cooperated.

The reticence to speak or cooperate stemmed from the fact that some thought I was a spy or sent by somebody to investigate something. Others outrightly refused to cooperate saying that they have exposed their problems to other researchers before and no solutions have been provided to them. Some intimated that their responses were instead used against them. However, with the techniques of research methodology, they were convinced and thus, cooperated.

The slim purse of the researcher as well as the duration at each research zone made the stay difficult. However, with the assistance of persons of good will, the stay was commendable. These inconveniences notwithstanding the research went on well.

08 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

08.1 GENDER

The BEDFORD Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms, 138-139 states that gender is a term referring to the socially constructed identifies of men and women, masculine and feminine, boy and girl. For instance, gender is distinguished from sex which is anatomical. Gender is widely held to be a product of the prevailing moves, expectations and stereotypes of a particular culture. Gender also means what attributes roles that are assigned to each of these categories as determined by culture and may vary from one culture to the next.

Gender defines the values that society attaches to being feminine and masculine and helps to shape the difference in social value attached to men and women. It also defines the relations between boys and girls, women and men that is the way in which men and women interact in the home, in the school environment, in church, within the work place, in politics, in society and with regards to economic issues.

Gender refers to the social attributes associated with being male and female which are socially constructed and learnt through socialisation processes. These processes begin at birth within the home and continue throughout the life cycle, within the education system, the religions and all other societal institutions which serve to maintain and reinforce these differences.

Gender roles thus refer to the different responsibilities and roles which are socially ascribed to men and women. The sexual division of labour is an example of gender defined portfolio where tasks are assigned to men and women. For example nurturing and care giving chores as assigned to women by tradition whereas other productive work is assigned to men or acquired by him as he attains certain status in society.

Women and men perform different roles which are considered appropriate in a given context and time like the woman's practical, strategic and specific needs prescribed by biology. Note that gender portfolios and attributions or job descriptions vary from society to society and are often influenced by factors such as race, class, religion, age, social stratification, level of education, marital status, etc., reproductive and productive work in almost all societies is undervalued and

especially work to make money that can transform her into a self employed person, a job creator that employs other persons or a job that would make her financially independent, or a veritable leader and a good manager. Gender is there to break all these restrictive and discriminatory barriers that would lead her to gender equality, equity, partnership, complementarily and as an agent for change and development.

08.2 GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

It implies an increase in the quantitative and qualitative level of consumption that ensures an equal distribution of social wealth in society between both genders. It does not concern with the changes in nature but with humanity. For this humanity to be accomplished, development partnership should be participatory and complementary to achieve perfection.

08.3 MICROFINANCE

The term microfinance was first used in the 1970s to indicate the provision of loans to the poor to establish income-generating projects. It targets the poor masses with more emphasis on poor women who could not have otherwise obtained credit from the mainstream commercial banks due to harsh and stringent procedures and conditions.

Since the late 1990s, the term microfinance has come to be used to indicate the so-called “second revolution in credit theory and policy” that are customer-centered rather than product centered, (Eliha and Rahman, 2006).

The terms microfinance and micro-credit tend to be used interchangeably to indicate the range of financial services offered specifically to the loan-income households and micro-enterprises, (BRAU and WOLLER, 2004).

Microfinance principally encompasses micro-savings, micro-insurance, micro-credits and money transfer for the poor. Microfinance is thus the practice of delivering small collateral free loans to usually unsalarised borrowers or members of cooperative societies who otherwise cannot get access to credit, (Hossain, 2002).

08.4 EMANCIPATION

It is the process of giving people social or political freedom, liberty and rights, e.g. women’s or female emancipation or black emancipation in the days of slavery. In Latin, the word EMANCIPATUS is the past participle of the French word EMANCIPARE which means “To

transfer ownership of...". Here, "manus=hand" and "capare=to take" i.e. you take (according to HEAVE (1625.) what you have purchased (mancip/mancep) or fought for. This means you take possession of your liberty, freedom or rights through financial or social emancipation.

The Webster ninth new collegiate dictionary (1990) as well as the Cambridge Advanced Learners Dictionary, (2013) defines emancipation (emancipate) as firstly to free from restraint, control or the power of another especially to free from bondage e.g. financial bondage. The MFI has come to liberate or free the women from this bondage through the rights of emancipation. Secondly, emancipation also means to release from paternal care and responsibility and make sui juris. Thirdly, emancipation portends to free from any controlling influence (as traditional mores or beliefs) from masculine emasculation.

Emancipation is the act or process of breaking away or departing from masculine emasculation or domination that has perpetually subjugated the woman. E.g. the fact that women always depend on men for their financial breakthroughs and welwithals, men have used that financial scarcity to women as a bait to always dominate them, control them and abuse them. Emancipation has thus come to liberate as well as free the woman from this emargination or deprivation of rights so that she can be financially independent, she can be self employed and can create jobs to provide employment for others. Emancipation is therefore one of the major roles of MFI towards poverty alleviation and financial sustainability and sustenance. With this assistance from MFI, the gaps of violence have been considerably sealed while discrimination in all its forms is in a crescendo. Emancipation is thus both a process and an outcome.

Emancipation is different from empowerment in that while empowerment as a verb (empower) is to give someone official authority or the latitude to do something that would make you more confident and make you feel that you are in control of your life, emancipation on the other hand gives you the power and means to be a master of your own destiny. That is to say as an empowered woman, you are give fish but you do not know how to catch the fish but with emancipation you are taught how to catch the fish, whereby the equipment and materials are provided to you to do the fishing and you are shown the water to do the fishing. With emancipation, you are given that means to rightfully take back your deprived virility, strength, vigour and spirit that was weakened by male androecium which is an artificial cross-pollination process.

The simple difference between emancipation and emancipation is that while the former is a practical liberation, the later is facultative in that the Chinese proverbs summarise it by stating that

“rather to feed someone with fish (empowerment) you should teach that person how to fish (emancipation). With empowerment, if you are not given you will not eat but with emancipation, for you to eat, you have to fish yourself. MFI has come to teach the woman how to raise income to save so that she can raise start-up capital that would make her independent. It is her financial sustainable independence that would chase away poverty, hence ushering gender equality, equity and parity.

While emancipation is the stepping stone and ladder towards liberty, freedom and the enjoyment of inalienable rights, through financial sustainability, it is not only limited to socio-economic and political freedoms and liberty. It is also concerned with community, organisational, political, psychological, institutional and operational emancipation that is done in different levels like the welfare, access, conscientisation, participatory and control levels.

Proponents of the emancipation theories, approaches and concepts argue in its favour like Friedman, Zimeman and Graman bank of Bangladesh that since emancipation is not about worth or merits but on the effectiveness of its application, the growth of microfinance is a good example of its success story as it has led to the emergence of self help groups like the examples of the case study as well as bayam-sellam women’s groups in the various markets in Yaounde VI like Accacia, Marché Melen, Marché Nvogbetsi, Marché Etog-ebe and other road side vendors and hawkers.

08.5 SUI JURIS

Means one of full legal capacity [Roman Law; (RL)]. An independent person not subject to any of the three forms of authority which are protestas, manus and mancipium. In English Law, a person who can validly contract and bind himself by legal obligation uncontrolled by any other person is a sui juris.

- **Protestas otherwise known as Manumissio** in Roman Law (RL) is the giving of freedom to a slave; that is, setting him free from the hand or protestas of his master.
- **Manus (RL) Hand:** Marital power. A woman was subjected to the manus of her husband by (1) Confarreatio (a religious ceremony); (2) Coemptio (fictitious sale) and (3) Usus (cohabitation).
- **Mancipium** (Latin) or **Manciple** (English) which is the office of steward; that is the act of purchase. In French, it is mancip or manceps that is to purchase a steward or purveyor especially for a college or monastery.

Note: A woman was regarded as a steward or purveyor (caterer) once she is liberated or relieved of her duties or after the expiration of stewardship, she is known as an empowered mancipation who is emancipated; that is freed or liberated from Androecium that is House or Vicinity.

08.6 EMPOWERMENT

It is a critical concept presented by African Women's Network called "DAWN" (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) at the 1985 Nairobi forward looking strategies summit where empowerment was defined as the development that enables people to develop their own life to overcome oppression. It enables the woman to participate equally with men as it is increasingly used in development programmes, policies and projects.

Empowerment means TRANSFORMATION and transformation entails the taking of control of her and their lives, setting their own goals and agenda, gaining skills, building self confidence, solving problems, developing self reliance, equal power relation between men and women, just societal structure void of patriarchy and phallocracy, changes and broadening of her personal opportunities. This is to say empowerment is not only a collective social and political process but an individual one as well.

The different types of empowerment are political, personal, self confidence, social, legal, cultural, economic, spiritual, administrative, environmental, etc. The levels of empowerment are control, participation, conscientisation, access, welfare, management, directing, planning, organising, evaluation, strategist, grassroots, planning, networking, associative life, transformed attitude, productivity and social progress, institutional and organisational operational development.

In sum, to empower is to give someone official authority or the freedom to do something that would make you more confident and make you feel that you are in control of your life. It is to give official authority or legal power to mandate someone to do something. As a mandamus, the mandatarius cannot exceed the limits imposed upon him because "mandatarius ternunos sibi positos transgredi non potest". This means as a delegate, she cannot sub delegate because she would be restricted by equitable estoppels which says "Delegatus non potest delegare". If she exceeds her limits, she would be committing an ultra vires offence which is out of the ambit of vicarious liability. Empowerment is thus a strict liability as in Ryland v. Fletchers whereas emancipation gives you the latitude of liberty and freedom to do as you want. With emancipation,

there is no “non est factum” because it is based on « qui facit per allium facit perse» where your principal is liable for your acts.

PART ONE

**GENERAL PREAMBLE ON THE ORIGIN AND ROLES OF
MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS, ITS SERVICES AND PRODUCTS
AND THE ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN TO ENHANCE GENDER
EMANCIPATION**

GENERAL PREAMBLE ON ORIGIN AND ROLES

1. ORIGIN OF MICROFINANCIAL INSTITUTION

Although the growth of MFI escalated in the early 1990s due to the economic crisis, the effects of bankrupt banks and failure of financial policies, it is worthy of note that MFI had existed in Cameroon for almost 50 years but in a low key manner.

Its first apparition was in 1963 in the North West Province as it then was. It was created by a Rev. Father JASEN a parish Priest from Holland who worked in Kumbo and Nkambe areas. He saw the way money was being handled in a careless way by his parishioners and decided to create a MFI to keep their money for future usage on the education of their children, health care, feeding well, reduce alcohol consumption and other benefits that flow from saving money.

The relative success of this MFI scheme in 1968 led to the creation of the Cameroon Cooperative Credit Union League (CAMCCUL) with branches all over the nation today. This exponential growth was due to the failure of mainstream financial institutions that slumped because they were increasingly unable to serve its citizens and clients with financial services and products.

With the freezing of clients' accounts and savings, they became very frightened and thus lost confidence in banks. The MFI came as a salvatory opportunity to rewrite their shattered financial life scripts. This is so because since it is created by a group of persons, it is possible for them to monitor its development at a close range.

2. ROLE OF MFI IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EMANCIPATION

Emancipation which is the act of liberation or freedom from control and power of another person from bondage and seclusion is enhanced by the services and products of MFI which are tools for development in the developing world. Fundings for MFI programmes is set to increase further as the years go by because it has the intention to promote gender equality policies.

Without over emphasising on the important role MFI play in the emancipation process of both genders towards development, MFI cooperate to solve future economic problems through present day decisions and actions thereby producing viable citizens and clients who are capable of working towards poverty alleviation, through the upliftment of the rural sector by financing the agricultural sectors and small scale commercial projects.

MFI represents a broad range of geographically diverse micro-credit institutions offering financial services and other products designed to the poor who could not be served by the formal mainstream banks because of their bureaucratic constraints and other stringent conditions.

LAFOURCADE et al, (2005) says that MFI operates on the policy of self-help. They have a very low level of profitability with interest rates. Their loan schemes and other services benefit the households in addressing basic social problems and its fight against poverty and poverty alleviation despite its pit falls. It equally emancipates both genders by empowering the community towards auto-employment, job creation and financial independence.

Though MFI emerged to cure or cover the gap created by failed banks as a result of the effects of the economic crisis and the failure of the Brittonwood policies, the aim of MFI is to empower the population as a whole to carry out micro projects and to develop their communities suo moto. The principal mission of MFI is therefore to provide quality proximity financial products and services to members by collecting savings from the general public, safeguard and make them available to members on demand.

MFI offer other types of financial and social assistance to members and community to enable them fully embark on their various economic, social and agricultural activities thereby, helping them to help themselves. For instance, the provision of basic needs like pipe born water, give scholarship to students, provide medical facilities, equipment and medications to health centers in rural areas, build community halls and other development paradigms.

The other goals of MFI is poverty alleviation through financial assistance to the poor especially women in the rural areas, semi-urban areas and peripheral zones who are engaged in household chores to improve their livelihood. As an important tool for development, it is geared towards poverty alleviation, reduction of conflict and violence gaps, gender emancipation, women empowerment, gender equity and equality.

3. HOW HAS MFI ENHANCED GENDER EMANCIPATION TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT?

The fact that the poor rural woman has the notion of banking and the zeal and means to raise money to save, as a vital indicator that the services of MFI has opened up a new thinking cap for development and poverty alleviation through sustainable financing. This means that the poor woman at Marché Acacia or Melen or Mvogbetsi or Etoug-ebe has embraced a new focus on the

regard of gender equity, gender stratifications, sustainable development, improved standard of living, equity and parity, equality, etc as concerns self employment, job creation, financial independence, leadership and decision making.

MFI has influenced and promoted gender emancipation towards development in the case study areas in particular and Cameroon in general in that, MFI has proven that it is a model for gender equality and women's emancipation from masculine domination towards financial independence for herself, her family and the community at large. This research thus focuses on the same gender and development theories that encourages female entrepreneurship and the emergence of small enterprises and petit business ventures.

In extenso, the research findings is thus carried on the socio-economic goals of women groupings and networking on poverty alleviation and financial upliftments that will lead to sustainable emancipation and empowerment of women and her male counterpart.

As an expected result of this research findings, shows that microfinance is an important development tool that addresses issues by enhancing self emancipation to combat poverty as well as expose the challenges inherent in the practice that needs to be addressed in other to strengthen its capacities and competences at improving livelihood, living standards and breaking the barriers to poverty and violence in all its ramifications.

4. ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF MFI IN THE RESEARCH AREAS BESIDES THEIR SUNDRY SERVICES AND PRODUCTS TO ENHANCE EMANCIPATION

It is worthy of note that most microfinance institutions carry out almost the same extra banking activities to enhance development or conscientise the population or provide assistance to the communities that benefits both genders. For instance, SUMFI brings together affiliated groups under an umbrella to promote peace, unity and solidarity among Bakossi women. They educate and empower their members economically, socially and culturally so that they can be autonomous towards equality. When they meet, they exchange ideas and good practices on current issues concerning them and the nation. They reinforce their capacities, competences, skills and know-how to fight against poverty among the Kupe-Muanenguba woman irrespective of tribe and sex. They equally sponsor education endeavours by giving scholarships to underprivileged children, help girl children who are vulnerable as well as the elderly. They promote, encourage and facilitate gender equality, gender emancipation and women's empowerment by creating development funds

to sponsor businesses of members and facilitate the realization of small projects that are geared towards poverty alleviation.

AWICCUL activities vary from branch to branch depending on the exigencies on the field. Besides holding regular meetings to inform their clients on the current situation of their accounts and their new products and services, the clients/members receive lectures on topical issues concerning health, finance, culture, security issues, household upkeep, gender equality, emancipation, socio-economic empowerment and other activities deemed imperative. They encourage women to create mobile shops by selling items like jewellerys, cosmetic products, under wears, food stuff (cooked and raw), second hand clothing, sachet water, etc. AWICCUL also provide material, financial and moral assistance to member in sad and happy moments. Branches equally organize holiday workshop for children.

The Chartered Financial Assistance (CFA) since its inception has achieved tremendous success at promoting development, enhancing emancipation, eradicating poverty and providing a new focus to women and gender as concerns the importance of making use of MFI services to improve their wellbeing. They have given loans where some of the clients have constructed their houses in Yaounde and Buea. They organised several training workshops to reinforce the capacities of women and gender on leadership and development concepts. They assist women involved in agricultural activities and petit trading for instance they helped the rural councils in Buea, Tombel and Lebialem to rehabilitate their water systems so that the way local women suffer to fetch water can be reduced. They encourage and promote excellence in school by the award of scholarships and prizes to deserving students. They organised adult literacy classes to teach women on the importance to make personal money while the rest can be saved after deducting expenditures. They empower both genders on home management so that they can improve on their dignity and self esteem. They equally donate health equipment and medications to hospitals as well as benches to schools and “minimum packets”.

These achievements and activities notwithstanding, there are some challenges that emerge. The first of such challenge is the lack of funds to carry out their numerous diverse social programmes. The number of clients is increasing at a decreasing rate because even though many women engage into activities that generate incomes, their daily expenditures on their household and livelihood is too heavy so there is nothing remaining for them to save for rainy days. Even if they save some meagre sums, it is insignificant because the amount is too small. Some loans that were given out have not been refunded. The clients argue that business is very slow thus, they

cannot raise money to refund the loans. Others are recalcitrant and nonchalant who have deliberately refused to refund their loan. However, thanks to the insurance they paid as collateral security. The interest from the insurance tries to offset the loan. These challenges notwithstanding, the MFI are still forging ahead because of their positive outlook.

5. FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE AND INFLUENCED THE GROWTH OF MFI IN OTHER TO ENHANCE GENDER EMANCIPATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Some of these factors are ownership, location, track records, duration of activities, customer services, size and economics of scale, marketing strategies, religion, clientele.

Ownership plays a vital role in that, the owner or owners of that MFI determines its clientele at the first instance. For instance, even though other clients join the MFI, the first group of clients' identify themselves with the origin of the owners. For instance, SUMFI is dominated by the Bakossi tribe of Kupe Muanenguba, CFA is dominated by the Bangwa tribe of the Libealem Division while AWICCUL is dominated by the Santa people of the North West Region. Though statistics show that they have a high number in the structure, other tribes equally find their position. Irrespective of the high number of tribes-men in those institutions, their savings are not much as compared to those of Bamilike people who are clients.

As per **location**, most of the first clients are residents of that locality. It is but normal that charity begins at home. Also, banks that treat with the poor rural masses do not need to be located at the heart of the central business district. It should be nearer the people because it is a proximity banking facility.

Track record of doing business where clients seldom complaints about their savings or services acts as publicity for others to come and join the MFI. Once the MFI avoids what killed the mainstream banks, they are bound to win.

The longevity of the bank equally lends credibility. The **duration** of its existence without any negative story or publicity turns to attract more clients.

The **activities** that the MFI carries out besides the normal financial transactions speaks volume. Just the scholarship or benches or equipment or medication that they offer to the community speak volume. The clients and would-be clients are attracted to such MFIs by their

arguments that if they can do such a thing to the community, then they are worth being identified with.

If the **customer service** is attractive, timely and less stressful without cumbersome procedures and bottleneck clients come in their numbers to register. The fact that they have canvassers and jobbers who move around to collect daily savings thus sparing clients the problem of going to their agency to save their money is a very positive sign.

The **size** of the institution and the **economies of scale** which shows that the MFI is always very buoyant, gives credibility that at any time that a client approaches them his/her problem would be resolved with relative ease.

Marketing strategies like late closing of the branches to enable them save their money is very salutary. Even on Sundays, they open their doors. This means in situations of emergencies and unforeseen contingencies, the MFI would be at their assistance. With the availability of money transfer services at any time, and day, they can send or receive money makes MFI credible.

Religion is another factor in that members of the same religious denomination have a soft spot to treat with their fellow Christians. For instance, SUMFI is both owned by the Catholics and Presbyterian Christian. CFA like AWICCUL have 60% Christians and 35% Moslems and 5% animists.

The **Clientele** is made of married persons, single parents, bachelors, spinsters, students and associations. Like in publicity, once a client is satisfied with the services and products they tell their brothers and sisters. This means the new client would come because of the publicity made by the friend or relation. It is said that a good product needs no advertisement because it sells itself.

CHAPTER ONE

SERVICES AND PRODUCTS OFFERED BY MFI TO ENHANCE AND FACILITATE THE INITIATION OF GENDER EMANCIPATION

1. INTRODUCTION

The services of SUMFI, CFA and AWICCUL, all have a similarity in that as a MFI, all their services and products are the same. However, some have modified their nomenclature to suit their status quo. For instance, what CFA and SUMFI refer to as saving, AWICCUL calls it deposit. Above all else, I would treat the services and products as one for all the institutions because the observable difference is insignificant as to change the *raison d'être* of this research work.

Furthermore, the services and product are bound to be the same because the regulatory body which is the COBAC (Commission Bancaire pour l'Afrique Central), BEAC (Banque d'Etats d'Afrique Centrale) and the Ministry of Finance (MINFI) have produced a laid down procedure and practice on how MFI should be run. This law which is the ground norm carries instructions that any MFI irrespective of its category that works *ultra vires* would have its institution close and the actors prosecuted before the court of laws.

Thus said, this chapter shall be elucidated through the lexicon or vocabulary of the banking discipline so that we should have one operational definition of terms as a working language. We will look at the services and products that MFI offer to facilitate emancipation, the procedures at the floor of the MFI, a comparative study of the case studies and finally we will examine the challenges inherent in the practices and procedures of MFI in the furtherance of gender emancipation towards auto and general development.

1.1 BANKING LEXICON OR VOCABULARY

1.1.1 SAVING ACCOUNT

Saving account is the account that enables the savings of the clients to yield some profits to the tune of about 7% per year and it is always available. It can also serve as a start-up capital in launching your business ventures. This account is open to both physical and moral persons.

1.1.2 CURRENT ACCOUNT

These are accounts used by the MFI institution to make profits through charges of levies on them to its holders as loans. This amount is subdivided into three types to wit: Private Current Accounts, Business Current Accounts and Fixed Deposit Accounts.

1.1.3 DEPOSIT ACCOUNT

This is an amount that is put into the MFI. It can be withdrawn only after a specific duration. It is not an account that is visited very often. To withdraw from your deposit account, the MFI tells you that you can only borrow it as a loan. Thus, from your fixed deposit, your loan interest is what swells your savings accounts.

1.1.4 SHARE ACCOUNTS

Each MFI has an account known as share holders' account. This is what is used to float the MFI. Its least amount is 20.000 Frs. It has no summit amount.

1.1.5 CHEQUE CLEARING

A cheque is a written order by a client to the MFI to pay on demand a specified sum of money written on the cheque to the bearer who can be a physical or moral person. The parties to a cheque are the:

- i- The Drawer:** This is that person who has written or drawn the cheque to be cashed by himself or by another person.
- ii- The Drawee:** Is the bank on which the cheque is drawn who transfers or pays the money to the payee.
- iii- The Payee:** Is that person who receives the cheque or cashes the cheque because his name is written on it.

1.1.6 A LOAN

This is a written contract between a lender and a borrower in which the borrower pays a certain amount of money known as interest for the use of the lenders' funds over a definite period of time.

1.1.7 COLLATERAL SECURITY

It is an asset offered as suretee to secure a loan. In case of default of payment, that sureteed asset would be foreclosed and liquidated to offset the loan.

1.1.8 INTEREST RATE

The price paid by the borrower for the loan he/she has received from the lender within a specific period of time for that transaction.

1.1.9 DELINQUENT LOAN

This is loan that has past its due date of refund.

1.1.10 FUNDED DATE

This is the date that the amount of loan granted to the borrower is available in the borrower's account.

1.2 SERVICES AND PRODUCTS OF MFI TO ENHANCE GENDER EMANCIPATION OF BOTH GENDERS TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT

The need to offer banking services and products to poor communities, (standlake, 1998, 10th Edition) are ways and strategies put in place for the offering of proximity financial facilities as an inevitable mechanism to emancipate both genders with equality towards development and financial autonomy. The reasons that have instigated MFI as a proximity bank to solve the problem of women marginalisation are according to Juanarius Jingwa (2014) are firstly to increase the small incomes of women so as to help expand their business thus increasing their financial holdings and power. Secondly, to increase the financial portfolios, thereby reducing poverty as well as increase their standards of living and thirdly more access to finance thus enhancing their financial awareness.

The **products offered** by MFI according to its regulatory institutions (COBAC, BEAC and MINFI) are savings accounts, deposit accounts, payment of salaries e.g. of private companies, operation of business accounts, offering of loans, term deposits, daily savings, purchase of shares, money transfers, vault for ornaments and documents (like jewelleries and wills), current accounts, deferred payments guarantee, insurance for loans, counselling services; (see Annexure N^oVII).

The **services offered** by MFI as prescribed by the regulatory institutions are bills of lading for importers, bill clearance, coverage of maintenance schemes, payment of salaries, money transfer representatives, financial orientators, socio-economic counselling, project advisers, project sponsoring, public sector contract, bank rollers, auditing, shares calculations, loan recoveries, etc. See Annex VII on AWICCUL trend analysis of their products and services for 2015.

1.3 PROCEDURAL MECHANISMS TO OFFER SERVICES AND PRODUCTS BY MFI TO FACILITATE THE EMANCIPATION OF BOTH GENDERS

There exist some internal and external procedural mechanisms to facilitate the initiation of both genders especially the women folk into banking transactions that would emancipate her from the shackles of servitude, seclusion and neglect according to the laid-down rules and regulations of the control and supervisory authorities like COBAC, BEAC and MINF. Each type of account has its required documents before it is opened for any transaction to take place. These procedures vis-a-vis the various accounts and where it is operated are: operations at the front counter office, operations at the cash desk, operations at the back office and operation of loans.

1.3.1 OPERATIONS AT THE FRONT COUNTER OFFICE (RECEPTIONIST DESK)

The services offered here include the opening of accounts, money transfers, closure of accounts, customer services and cash desk operations. This is where accounts are opened. The account can be a savings account or current account or deposit accounts. Each has a specific characteristic and conditions to be fulfilled before you are considered a client of that MFI. Upon the opening of an account, the client or customer is given an account number consisting of the MFI code number, a suffix and a "lettrecle" code. For instance, at CFA if your account number is 012097SACC, this means that the MFI code number is 01, the client's number is 209, the suffix is 7 and the code letter is SACC, (the type of account and the branch code; e.g. savings account at the branch of Yaounde). The characteristics, requirements and conditions to open the different accounts are:

i- Savings Accounts: This type of account enables the clients' savings to yield some profits to the tune of 7% per year and it is always available for withdrawals at the client's wish. It can also serve as a start-up capital in launching a company or business venture. This account is opened to both physical and moral persons. The requirements to open such an account are:

- For physical persons: the requirements are:

- copy of National Identity Card or passport;
- minimum opening deposit of 15.000Frs.;
- opening charges of 3.000frs.;
- registration forms collected from MFI;
- 2 passport size photographs.

Note that the minimum amount in your account after the last transaction is 10.000frs. You can dispense with this amount only when you want to close the account.

- For a moral person like companies or association, the requirements to open an account are:
 - an initial deposit of at least 20.000frs;
 - copy of the constitution of company or institution;
 - copy of internal regulations;
 - photocopy of identification papers of promoters;
 - 02 passport size photos of promoters;
 - registration forms collected from MFI;
 - form of authentication of signatures of bank signatories at least 03 members; the president, secretary and treasurer.

ii- Current Accounts: This account is used by the MFI to make profits through charges levied on them to its holders. For instance, before your salary is paid, (e.g. of a security company), bank charges are deducted. It is this collected charges that swells the accounts of the MFI.

This type of account is divided into four (04) sub types each having its own “lettreclé” and code that distinguishes and differentiates each from the other. Its characteristics and requirements to open an account are equally different and peculiar to its transactions. Some of the different current accounts are: The Private Current Accounts, Business Current Accounts, Fixed Deposit Accounts and closure of Accounts.

➤ **Private current accounts:**

This account is opened to the private sector employees (like security guard companies) and some civil servants under the labour code and public service of an inferior index to obtain their salaries. Transaction is done with the help of a cheque booklet. Each time this transaction is executed, bank charges are deducted as handling charges. This type of account does not yield any interest because it is just a channel to pay your monthly salary.

However, you can use your salary as guarantee or insurance or surety to acquire a loan. If loan is accorded, your salary would be deducted to repay the loan. Some interest is equally deducted from your salary for the loan services rendered. The modalities to open this account are: A valid identity card, minimum deposit of 50.000frs, opening charges of 5.000frs, an attestation of effective presence at service, a copy of recent payslip, an attestation of non-indebtedness for those transferring from one bank to another and 02 passport size photos.

➤ **Business current account:**

This account is opened by both physical (human beings) and moral persons (business, companies, enterprises) to facilitate their transactions. It is convenient because it is easy to manipulate. It prompts accessibility makes business transaction fluid. The requirements for a moral person are: current business licence, tax payer's card, minimum opening deposit of 100.000frs, minimum balance of 20.000frs, opening charges of 10.000frs, copy of identity card, 2 "4x4" photos.

The needed documents for a physical person are: 2 "4x4" photos, copy of ID card, business licence, minimum deposit of 50.000frs, minimum balance of 10.000frs and opening charges of 5.000frs.

➤ **Fixed deposit account**

This is the blocking of a specific sum of money for a particular period of time. The longer the duration, the more interest it yields at an agreed rate between the MFI and the depositor. This means once the sum of money is deposited, the depositor/client cannot access the account till after the due date. The requirement modalities to open such an account are: a minimum deposit of 1 million francs and above, copy of ID card, 2 "4x4" photos, the least duration of deposit is six (06) months. The negotiable interest rate is between 8-12% per year.

Note that after these requirements are provided, the counter clerk would then issue an attestation which confirms that the customer has an account with the MFI. All these documents are then sent to the back office for filling. The difference between the current account and other accounts is that a cheque booklet is issued to the customer or client instead of a passbook.

➤ **Daily mobile collection accounts:**

The commercial department agents carry out these daily collections as they penetrate all markets segments to meet their clients who would not have the time to visit the MFI before it closes or by the time the client leaves the market, she would not have time to effect that transaction.

With the insecurity outside, the client cannot go home with her sales of the day, thus, these mobile collectors go around to collect such deposits or savings for further transmission to the MFI.

The clients have their passbooks where their savings are registered while the mobile collector has his ledger where the entries are written for cross-checking in the office. This daily service known as “AKAO” created for very poor people, means that the client can save as small as 500frs each time the daily collector passes around. She can also withdraw money from her account without going to the office of the MFI. The daily collector does the transaction on the spot. This enables the customer/client to purchase goods or plough the money to increase her capital. The minimum balance in the account after withdrawal is 500frs and the amount to open this account is 500frs. Once opened, you can save as many times as you have the money and as many times as you see the daily collectors.

In sum, a vox pop carried out whether or not they believe that MFI has a positive effect on women emancipation in particular and gender development as a whole, majority responded in the affirmative. In the words of one AWICCUL employee “Microfinance has changed the lives of so many small business people and the rural woman in general as the success stories are bound and legendary”.

iii- Transfer of account from one branch to another branch: This is done at the request of the client, where the client’s account is closed at one branch with charges for closing the account deducted and a new account is re-opened at a new branch according to the wish of the client. After this operation, the documents are sent to the back office for registration and filing. The re-opened account does not carry any charges because the transaction is in the same MFI. The change is due to geographical or occupational mobility or other personal considerations that is at the client’s convenience.

iv- Closure of account: Clients can close their accounts at their request but they have to inform the MFI within reasonable time. The banking rules and regulations talk of one month. For this to be effected, SUMFI like CFA insists as a procedural right for the customer to deposit a hand written application addressed to the branch manager or director stating the *raison d’être* for the closure. After some verifications of the account to ascertain that neither the MFI nor the client is indebted to the other, the MFI branch would inform the headquarters as the case may be for their consent. Once clearance and visa to close the account is given, if there is any balance or interest on that account, it is then paid to that client and an attestation on non-indebtedness is issued. On

the other hand, MFI can refuse the closure of an account if it is done in bad faith. For instance if it is a joint signatory account, all the parties must consent and append their signatures before such a closure is effected. Secondly, a customer can be unsatisfied with the customer services rendered and would want to quit. In such a case, the MFI would dialogue with you to rethink your decision while they promise to make amends. Sex nor gender does not influence such decisions to close an account. Account are not transferable from one person to another. Once it is closed, it is closed. Anybody who wants to reopen it should do so suo moto.

In the resumé, the functions of the operation at the front counter office otherwise known as the receptionist desk includes the reception and orientation of clients and customers, a second assisting customers in filling their cheques and deposit slips for both withdrawals and deposits respectively and finally upgrading their financial transaction in their booklets and also to provide information to new customers.

1.3.2 OPERATIONS AT THE CASH DESK

This is the area of the front office of a microfinance institution where liquid money is deposited or withdrawn. The cashier who is responsible for this service has the following functions to perform such as: - opening of the cash deposit; dealing with the deposit operations; dealing with the withdrawals operations; operations of closing the cash desk; the incoming and outgoing cash books and finally operations after closure of the coffers and vault (safe).

1.3.3 THE OPERATIONS AT THE BACK OFFICE

The back office is the pivot of the MFI because it is that section that oversees the activities of the operations of the front counter office and the operations of the cash desk. It takes care of all the accounting operations. It is not open to the public because they have no direct link with the customers or clients. This back office operation controls, supervises and confirms the veracity of transactions apriori carried out with the client to ascertain whether it is within the banking norms and the policy of the MFI. The accounting operations that this back office carries out include verification of transactions; cheque clearing; bank to bank transfer, automated operations like ATM (Automatic Teller Machines) and other transactions. Some of the specific operations and transactions of the back office are:

- **Cheque clearing:**

A cheque is a written order by a customer or client to his bank to pay on demand a specified sum of money written on the face value of the cheque to the bearer of the cheque whose name is written on it with his identification information written behind and appendaged with a copy of his identification papers be it a moral or physical person to cash the money at the pay counter.

There exist three (03) principal parties to a cheque before it is cashed to wit:

- **The drawer:** This is the physical or moral person who has written or drawn the cheque payable to someone or a garnishee.
- **The drawee:** This is the bank on which the cheque is drawn who transfers or pays the money to the payee;
- **The payee:** This is the physical or moral person who receives the cheque or whose name is written on the face value of the cheque and who is therefore paid the amount stated on it.

Note should be taken here that the payee can still be the drawer. This is in a situation where the payee issues the cheque in his own name and clears or cashes it at the same bank by himself in another location or branch.

➤ **Bank transfers:**

In the context of MFI banking nomenclatures transfers of this nature refers to when money is moved from one account to another account in the same bank or from a different branch of the bank to another. This transaction also takes place between different banks. The CFA carries out two main types of transfers. The first is the inter-branch transactions where funds leave from a different bank to another and secondly the intra-bank transactions where money leaves from one account to another account in a different branch of the same MFI.

➤ **Cross checking the journal**

This simply means checking the various transactions carried out in the bank. It is done at the back office on a daily basis beginning with the printout from the computer that shows all the operations of deposits and withdrawals made on that day.

1.3.4 OPERATIONS OF LOANS

A loan is a written document between the lender and the borrower in which the borrower pays a certain amount of money known as interest for the use of the lenders fund for a specified period of time.

Loans are issued for a medium or short term bases. Long term loan lasts as from one to three years. The short term loans last from two months to one year. For short term loans like over drafts or back to school loans, no securities are demanded because your savings and salary acts as your collateral security. However, for the long term loans, your salary, savings and the floating charges of the project stand as your collateral security, guarantee and insurance against deferred payments.

It was observed that the loan scheme award was not fully developed. At times it is awarded on sentiments or relationship bases or other attachments and considerations. That is why in the organigram of the MFI, the loans department is attached to the administrative department. Here, a loan committee is made up of the CEO, branch manager, commercial department chief, the administrative head and loan profile evaluator. This team is bestowed the duty to study the loan files, deliberate and assess the susceptibility before the loan can be awarded. At times, it is discretionary because feasible projects are rejected while worthless projects are sponsored.

The above notwithstanding, before loans are granted at the CFA MFI, like the others, there are certain conditions that must be fulfilled and respected by the borrower before they are being granted loans. These conditions are:

- The lender must be a client of the MFI for at least three months;
- The minimum balance of the client's account at the time of her application for a loan should be at least 1/3 of 33% of the amount requested;
- The clients must show proof of the economic productivity of what she intends to do with the loan;
- The collateral security must be more than the amount requested. This can be a moveable or immovable property like a house, plantation, real estate, land, car, machines of high capacity or anything of high quality, importance and value.

Once the above requirements are satisfied, an application for loan is addressed to the branch manager of that MFI. The supporting requirements are attached and deposited. At the counter, a loan form is issued. The client fills it and deposit with the file. The file is sent to the loans department for deliberations by the loan's committee. Within a week, if you are not called before that statutory time limit, know that your loan application has been refused. However, it is rare to witness the second situation because the aim of MFI is to help the rural poor, especially women who apply for loans less than 20.000frs as start up capital.

1.4 A COMPARATIVE APPRAISAL OF THE MFI SERVICES AND PRODUCTS OF THE THREE CASE STUDIES IN THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EMANCIPATION

Microfinance in the recent past has witnessed a positive upward trend in Cameroon especially within the rural poor communities (Ziai, 2004), as concerns the transfer of masculine financial powers and roles to the feminine folks. She is not only free from restraint and controls of the phallocratic hegemony but she has the financial power to take independent decisions.

This growth notwithstanding, the evolution of MFI in favour of women in particular and gender in general has never been without challenges. For instance, statistics has shown that only less than 6% of Cameroonians are served with (Fagha, 2010) banking products and services of the MFI. This problem is serious because it is the rural poor that constitute the largest part of the active population which is over 70% in Cameroon. Microfinance has therefore by-passed the institutionalised banking traditions of the formal sector by offering micro-loans and micro-credits to the poor communities without collateral securities guarantees and suretees.

Most of the MFI concentrates their resources by encouraging savings and providing credit facilities to the rural poor as is the case with AWICCUL, SUMFI and CFA amongst others. Albeit the fact that MFI are moving towards modernising their services with Automated Teller Machines, master cards, money transfer nationally and internationally, they also attempt to acquire complex soft ware to provide clients with instant online and mobile account details. The rural poor who are vulnerable and marginalised are not excluded from the access of loans and credit facilities.

Without being complaisant, even though our rural communities are deprived of electricity and mobile network, the marginalised women are not left out. The MFI has carried its services and products to them at their door steps. Not overemphasizing the important role played by the rural poor in the socio-economic development of their communities, the efforts of the women are commendable, (Anderson, 1993, p. 31). That is why it is ascertained that the emergence and evolution of MFI is a vital tool at equalising gender emancipation thereby making the woman like her male counterpart a veritable agent of change and development.

The sustenance and sustainability of MFI is regulated by institutionalised authorised framework like the government through MINFI and other bodies like COBAC and BEAC, series of consultative meetings are held with operators of MFI in a bid to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which is today referred to as the Sustainable Development Goals

(SDGs) and the Brittonwood institutions who are bent on promoting and protecting the rights of women in all ramifications.

As a result of this acknowledgement, (Gauld and Kern Dannels, 2002), MFI and cooperative societies are multipurpose, dynamics, versatile and development oriented by nature. By encouraging and mobilising communities to save and borrow wisely, their excess savings enables the creation of capital which is in turn ploughed back to either expand existing business or create new ones. Their activities to say the least are not only limited to cash operations but to other social services as well. Such services include family planning, gender equality, women's emancipation, gender empowerment, education, health care and community development through realised activities like group training on life coping skills, self help programmes, group work and networking, etc.

While Fagha (2010) argues that MFI programme helps individuals, households and communities to rebuild their lives through entrepreneurship, innovative and self reliant projects, Karen Iles (1999) opines that although there are numerous advantages of microfinance per se, the industry is facing much hurdles in Cameroon in particular and the world at large. Ediage Eric (2014) suggests that for an effective development to take place, these challenges have to be overcome by improving on the poor communication network as well modernise the infrastructural facilities that has caused the loan recovery culture an almost impossible project. Corruption, self interest, tribalism and favouritism, he intimated are endemic epidemy in the microfinance industry. Such barriers have to be broken if the emancipated woman would rightfully emerge.

Clara Renzetti and Danel Curran (1989) raised an alarm that the astronomical interest rate which makes it difficult for the poor borrower to breakeven with the loan repayment schedule seriously threatens its sustainability. Juanarisu Jingwa (2014) adds that there is also the problem of administrative bottle-necks and cumbersome procedures within MFI which makes accountability difficult. This paves a fertile ground for corruption, fraud, misappropriation and embezzlement of the saving of poor clients. What makes it worse according to Edimo Mbappe, (2013) is the problem of interpersonal personnel conflicts, non-respect of hierarchy by shareholders, staff members and clients. To make matters worse, banking language is not understood by clients while the MFI staff do not take time to explain issues to clarify the doubts of clients who patronise their MFI.

Agreeably, MFI is not as bleak as it is being painted above. Matinussen (1997, pp. 45-56) buttresses this fact by stating that financial and economic opportunities are emerging with vast credit options to uplift the woman to the lime light through liberalised economies, privatisation, democracy, the rule of law, globalisation and competitiveness. The irony of all these as the researcher observed is that nothing seems to be working in favour of the poor underprivileged grassroots masses because community development is a sham. This is justifiable because MFIs are fast derogating from their initial goals and *raison d'être*.

It is not a hidden secret that the Cameroonian rural entrepreneur has not been sufficiently empowered because once you start a small business, the taxation department suffocates your efforts, hence giving your efforts a still birth. Further to this, Njana Biloa (2016) categorically elucidates that credit cannot cover most of the poor bracket because poverty is still deeply embedded and enshrined in the fabrics of the rural communities. They are not credit worthy as per the traditional mainstream commercial banks. Even where these rural poor brackets form self help groups and networkings to acquire loans, the gains are fast eroded by debts surrounding them from high interest rates charged on the loans. The fact that the business climate is slow making it impossible to raise the money on time to offset the loan is very difficult. The daily workload of the woman is a cause for concern in that Mihanjo (2010) states emphatically that her daily chores hinder her effort to do other things to raise the money to refund the loans. Thus, they are fast losing their small assets like personal belongings to liquidate her loans.

This notwithstanding, MFI is a necessary evil at the disposal of the woman on her march towards emancipation and emergence.

1.5 CHALLENGES INHERENT IN THE PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES OF MFI IN THE FURTHERANCE OF GENDER EMANCIPATION TOWARDS SELF AND GENERAL DEVELOPMENT

In every forum where people commune together with diverse backgrounds, challenges are bound to set in. The problem with MFI is its clientele, lack of funds to carry out their numerous dives socio-economic programmes and the waterloo of debts and loan recovery. The membership of the three case study are stagnant. Clients wish to come and save and transact with the MFI but their means are limited. For instance, irrespective of the aggressive campaign by SUMFI to encourage its tribe sisters to come and open accounts, they are very reticent. Not that they are nonchalant, they do not have the means. Unemployment is high while start up capital is difficult

to come by. Above all else they do not have collateral securities like their male counterparts. Despite these challenges, they are forging ahead.

Debt Waterloo on the side of the clients as well as on the side of MFI leaves much to be desired. Anderson (1993), says interest rates charged by MFI on loans range between 20 to 40% and sometimes to a staggering 100% per year when additional overall charges such as insurance, service books, service cards, membership fees and the late payment charges become additional insurmountable charges that the clients and the MFI have to bear. Nonchalant and recalcitrant clients and borrowers have made the MFI to massively fluctuate the interest rate charged. Exorbitant high interest rates charged have not only made the motives of microfinance questionable but has placed its victims in a debt trap.

This debt Waterloo of a trap has led to the general conclusion that MFIs are business ventures geared towards profit extortions from the rural poor and not to help them alleviate poverty as their initial *raison d'être* carried. The quest for business and profit maximisation has led to an influx of MFI in the community and country where MFI agents do not care to know whether households and families have an already outstanding debt with their financial houses. All the MFI care about is getting a customer sign a loan amount after all the more loans contracted, the more interest accrues to the MFI benefits. It is sad that for a client to make withdrawals from his deposit in the MFI, they are told to borrow it. This means you borrow your saved money and pay interest on it that would never revert to you. These are some of the things that scare clients away, (Ediage Eric, 2014).

The worst scenario is that microloans are being given without questioning the purpose. Most of the extremely poor people end up using these loans to meet up with their immediate needs rather than investing in the intended business. This has accounted for the high rate of default payment leading to frustration and tension in households as they find themselves caught up in the debt trap. The resultant effect as per New York Times (2010) is that households end up paying interest on loans for more than two or three MFI and those who cannot stand the heat end up committing suicide.

A typical example is from Bangladesh where Joba Rani a farmer in 2013 from the village of Jamlabaj in North East Bangladesh had to sell all her cows and other livestock to offset her loan as a result of poor harvest. Other households who cannot afford to sell off their livestock send their

children into prostitution as a means to raise money to offset the loan. Communities and clients equally complain of harassment from microfinance debts recovery collectors.

Similarly in India, according to its national crime record bureau in 2009, reported that more than 87,000 farmers committed suicide between 2002 and 2006 due to poor harvest and mounting interest rates on microfinance loans. The Deccan Chronicle of 27th September 2010 corroborated the above assertion when they published an article condemning microfinance for disempowerment and disempowering gender through small holding group thereby landing them into debt traps. Forty (40) years old Banda Esha and thirty-six (36) years old Devarakonda Bhagyamma from the village of Palivelpula India are said to have sold their property for loan repayments and were further required to stand as sureties for other six women in their groups who took microfinance loans for personal needs. On a similar occasion, pregnant women further committed suicide or miscarriage due to the inability to pay her loans or stress flowing there from. Mounting pressure and disgrace from microfinance debt recovery collectors and agents precipitate the commission of suicide as a result of their harassments of debt trapped loan clients, (Asia Pacific Reports, 17th November 2010).

From these examples, one can clearly see that the motives of MFI as a tool for poverty alleviation and development are not completely genuine. This gives a misjudgement of microfinance as a development paradigm since it does not benefit the entire communities in their areas of jurisdiction. Instead of emancipation and enhancing the capabilities of communities, it is disempowering and disempowering them. Household tend to live in misery and fear from being harassed by microfinance recovery agents. They now resolve to traditional njangi and quarter thrift and loans. This negative *raison d'être* of MFI is a gross departure from its ideas of development, freedom and liberty as the tenets of emancipation.

The fact that households tend to sell their property in order to offset their debts means that it is deviating from its norms of poverty alleviation. Property are sources of income according to Hernando Desoto. Therefore, one can rightly conclude that microfinance is not an adequate tool for helping the poor out of poverty. Ironically, it is a tool to worsen their existing conditions given the above example. This has led many including myself to question the future sustainability of MFI. These examples notwithstanding, are isolated cases of miscalculations, misrepresentation and misrepresentation putting the pros and cons on a scale of 100, the benefits of microfinance institutions as proven from my observation of the 3 case studies can be rated at 75% success as a tool to fight against poverty and misery in the local rural communities. The effects at alleviating

poverty are felt by both genders positively in the drive towards emancipation. It is a vital developmental tool for gender.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ROLE PLAYED BY WOMEN AND MEN TO ENHANCE GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MICRO FINANCE INSTITUTIONS

2. INTRODUCTION

With the advent of failed banks and the consequences that followed, the emergence of MFI came to mitigate the mistrust that shrouded or surrounded banking and finance transaction. MFI came to kick start development by providing credits, loans, insurance and peace of mind because savings of clients were safely kept as they could access it without complications.

This chapter is intended to showcase the roles that women and men play to sustain the existence of MFI as a tool to enhance gender emancipation and women empowerment towards development, financial self sustainability, poverty alleviation and fight against all forms of discrimination and violence.

In examining these roles, the parameters to be taken into consideration are to look at the role of female entrepreneurship, the development of enterprises, the formal and informal sectors of the economy, women emancipation and microfinance, roles of men and women, issues facing women specifically as a result of their gender roles, issues facing men as a result of their gender roles, how has the community benefited, sustenance of the MFI, some inconveniences and probable way forward to enhance gender emancipation.

Elucidating these roles would give many women access to microfinance services as well as initiate an upward rise of emancipation and empowerment toward poverty alleviation (Rogaly, 1996) which is an ideal solution to the economic problems of the nations' poor citizens, (Rosenberg, 1998).

2.1 THE ROLE OF FEMALE AND MALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF SMALL ENTERPRISES THAT ENHANCES GENDER EMANCIPATION

Kofi Anan at the World Summit on sustainable development in Johannesburg, South Africa in 2002 said that “Without the private sector, sustainable development will remain a distant dream”. By “private sector” he was referring to direct investment by enterprise and their vital role in the development process.

Although there exist a significant number of small enterprises, they are mostly found in the informal sector and are often controlled by men. Due to problems of lack of capital, poor infrastructure, taxation bottlenecks and administrative cumbersome procedures, they hardly break even. The situation is worse with the female gender. They are reduced to help maids because of lack of start up capital. For this reason therefore, they are found in the informal sector of the inferior class where they are hawkers as a result of their large labour force. This situation equally draws them backward because they lack skills and capital.

The lack of capital, and technological know-how, ignorance, laziness and low intelligence notwithstanding, the women still find their way. The issue is for her to sell her farm produce like vegetables and other spices. The revenue she makes enables her to save in the MFI. Once it reaches a certain amount, she applies for a small loan to improve her agricultural activities. She can employ workers while she diversifies her income generating activities. She is equally capable of paying rents on the piece of land she is exploiting. Even though she cannot buy the land, the advantages of the microfinance loan without exorbitant collateral security enables the entrepreneur and her enterprise to sustain itself towards emancipation, equality and financial independence.

2.2 THE FORMAL AND INFORMAL SECTORS IN THE MFI

While the formal sector is dominated by the civil servants, academicians and politicians who earn a regular salary, those in the informal sector have to sweat and fern before they can eat (Edgar, 2008, p. 24). That is why the emergence of MFI is seen as a new credit model to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor genders toward development. The formal sector which is characterised by official and standardised accountability mechanisms is regulated with a fixed working hours, stable salary and decent working environment. It is usually over ruled with bureaucratic and administrative procedures (Manga, 2014) that is absent in the informal sector.

It is this absence in the informal sector that instigate mainstream commercial banks to refuse the poor and primitive farmers access to obtain loans because of lack of guarantee, suretees and collateral security (Desoto, 2000). The behaviour of the formal sector makes them highly selective and biased amongst clients with large deposits as against those with small deposits including women. The emergence of MFI came to offset these bureaucratic hindrances in other to enable the emancipation of both genders towards self sustenance and community development because they can acquire loans to start business without any collaterals or guarantees.

The informal sector on the other hand represent the greatest job market due to the inability of the policy makers to create formal jobs and employment that can absorb all and sundry. Per the ILO, the informal sector represents 72% of jobs in sub-Saharan African. The informal sector is characterised by self-employment with local technological and organisational skills. They are industrious and knowledgeable but have no documented rules nor standardised accountability to regulate the sector.

This sector involves men and women who engage in all menial walks of life like hawking, vending, petty traders, street vendors, shoe-menders, blacksmith, bike riders and the unemployed who do jobs as they come across daily. Here, there is no diploma involved, no retirement age and no retrenchment or dismissal of personnel. They sustain the black market because their activities is not regulated. They evade taxes, promote bribery and corruption in order to bypass the law and other bottlenecks and cumbersome procedures. In local palance, they are referred to as bayam-selam.

Even though there is high unemployment and tax evasion in the raising of money in the informal sector, microfinance closes its eyes to such ills. They still collect savings from the informal sector workers and give them loans to start up or expand their businesses. The intention of the MFI is to improve the situation of the individual, both genders and the community. While the informal sector raises its capital through the illegal means, what is salvatory is that through their accrued saving, they acquire genuine loans to set up legal businesses thereby reducing unemployment as they employ other unemployed workers. This favours economic growth and development without bias of sex hence, promoting the empowerment of both genders in general and women's empowerment in particular towards development and financial autonomy.

2.3 WOMEN EMANCIPATION AND MICROFINANCE SERVICES, PRODUCTS PRACTICES AND PROCEDURES

Women movement have identified the access to credit as a major hindrance on her ability to earn income. Coupled with her mistrust from the failed banks in the 1980s and 1990s and its consequences, they are reticent with the services of mainstream banks. That is why they have resorted to the services and products of MFI as a way out to their financial predicaments.

Of the 90 million customers of MFI worldwide, 68% of the customers are women. It is not a secret in the developing world that women are responsible for the wellbeing of their families and the education of their children as well as community development. From observation, women are

better customers, wise leaders, good managers and reliable when it comes to money management, loan acquisition and reimbursement. As a result of this quality, women are often viewed within the microfinance industry as a good example of reliability. The effectiveness of her reliability increases her economic powers as an epitome of the poor which increases her self confidence, self esteem, respect, independence as well as reduce anxiety, conflict gaps, gender based violence and discriminations within her family and the society.

A common denominator that cut across the three case study of this research is that microfinance focuses more on women groups as an instant source of income by setting up credit programmes as a strategy for organizing women workers of the informal sectors. Credits and saving of women worldwide are ways of increasing women's incomes and to bring women together to address other wider gender issues. The emergence of this poverty-targeted microfinance like the Grameen Bank of Bangladesh, fashion programmes that are emancipation oriented that will enable the woman to break away from the mould of male domination and phallocracy to a more liberal and free environment where she can demonstrate her worth as a veritable agent for change and development.

Microfinance is thus an enabling promoter of gender emancipation in the context of a wider strategy for women's economic and socio-political empowerment which focuses firstly on feminine organisation and gender awareness to challenge and change gender discriminations and gender based violence. The second focus is on the provision of financial self sustainable services to a larger number of poor people to cover costs, benefit from economies of scale and expand their resources base to enable them save more. It is assumed that increasing women's access to microfinance services will in itself lead to her individual economic and socio-political empowerment as well as the development of the community and thirdly it is assumed that increasing women's access to microfinance will in itself (Abesolo Calix, 2015) increase household income which will then translate into improved wellbeing for women which will intern bring about wider changes and improvements on gender inequalities, feminist emancipation, poverty alleviation and financial self sustainability.

2.4 ROLE OF MEN AND WOMEN AS DISTINCT FROM GENDER ROLES IN THE ENHANCEMENTS OF GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MFI

Gender differences are closely related to the specific roles between men and women in the society as distinct from their sex roles, which is characterised by prejudices, and stereotypes that

is traditionally based. This traditional bias that hinders equitable role plays is predicated on traditional values, morals, belief and clichés on certain expectations from the society on how men and women have to behave, their aspirations, their positions, their responsibilities, the distinctive jobs reserved for women and how they have to relate to one another vis-a-vis the male sex.

These roles which are traditionally and socially constructed are either specific, strategic or practical and are categorised to serve as useful bases for understanding and analysing the dynamic nature of gender to wit:-

- a) Domestic roles – Include works carried out in the home like house chores, child care, food processing and cooking, mother craft, collection of water and wood for cooking and heating. Though it is specific as women’s jobs, the advent of gender dictates that both sexes can perform such jobs. It does not offend tradition or society norms.
- b) Income and food production – Before gender became institutionalised, it was erroneously believed that it is only the male that has to work to fend for the family while the women stays at home to cook and take care of the family. Such thinking are fast changing. With the liberation of labour law and commercial laws, nothing restricts the woman from engaging in income generating activities. There is no specific job for the men nor women as concern income generation and food production. What is good for the geese is good for the gander because what a man can do to raise money, a woman can equally do and do it better.
- c) Community management: While the woman was previously restricted to the triple roles of reproduction, production and community animation or management. It was also considered as not a job because it was not valued or calculated in monetary terms. Community management which is considered as unpaid work included care for elders, cleaning of water catchments; cleaning road side and manage community projects. Gender has stopped all such modern slavery. Money can be collected to pay hired labour while the woman engages in other ventures to raise income to maintain herself and her family.
- d) Community politics: This includes decision making, opinion forming and leadership roles. Men should not decide on everything including issues that concerns women specifically and practically like child birth. Once the child is delivered, the man can play the role of babysitter while the woman goes out there to look for money. Nothing would reduce the powers of the man as a breadwinner. It is high time we start changing our perception on gender roles and sex roles. The coming of MFI has bridged this gap. Sensitisation on change aesthetics on gender emancipation is also making inroads towards gender emancipation.

From the above categorisation, before gender became institutionalised and operationalised, gender differences were disadvantageous and prejudicial to the female gender as they were regarded as the weaker sex having less power, owning fewer resources, having less access to services and receiving less incomes for the same work done as compared to men and cannot own land or property because she herself is regarded as property. All these are all prejudicial, perjorative and stereotypical.

On the other hand, men face little problems because it is believed that as breadwinner, he has to work extremely hard to feed his family and maintain his status quo as a man. In trying to satisfy his gender roles of growing food, farming cash crops, livestock and marketing, he forgets to know that economic and natural factors can hinder his efforts like falling market prices, increase cost of farm inputs and lack of breeding stocks as well as poor health and illness or the effects of climate change frustrate harvests, or worst still, the bank where he is saving his money winds up or goes bankrupt, what will that man do?

That is why both genders should work to raise money so that in cases of unforeseen contingencies, the other partners can come in to rescue the situation. We should not be dogmatic in believing that the supposedly weaker sex has nothing to offer. With the slim salaries of civil servants today, it is the resources that the woman makes that keeps the family going after deducting bills, ancillary and overhead charges.

In my candid opinion, much work on gender research and policies have been geared towards redressing the imbalances inherent in power dynamics from the woman perspective. It therefore appears that there is a clearer framework and more emphasis placed on analysing women's gender needs than those of men. There is thus need as a categorical imperative (Marie Therese Abena, 2016), to develop analytical framework that helps understand gender issues facing men.

2.5 INCOME GENERATION SOURCES FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS

Women and Development Approaches (WAD) which investigates the reasons and processes that lead to the access and control of community resources, Caroline Moser's framework in this regard concerns with gender role identification, gender needs assessment, disaggregating control of resources, decision making within the household, planning for balancing the triple role. Gender awareness teaches that irrespective of the triple role of the woman which is today outdated, the woman has other sources of raising funds that will lead her toward financing emancipation.

That is to say, the practical needs of women towards emancipation are those needs if met, will help the woman realise her current activities such as finances for her daily upkeep, farm tools and inputs like seeds and others. The satisfaction of her strategic needs on the other hand are those needs if met will transform the balance of power between the man and the woman hence the *raison d'être* of emancipation which means freedom or liberty from deprivation. Such needs include welfare, equity, anti-poverty, efficiency and empowerment.

Within the context of our research study, the needs for women emancipation through the services of MFI activities and services would generally involve capital raising, technological know-how, marketing and commercialisation, inputs for agriculture and equipments, access to farmland and education for herself and her family.

To transact with the bank very well, the woman or gender has to have a source of raising income. Agriculture as the first stop constitutes the backbone of her source of income, which makes up over 80% of the working population in Cameroon. Though they do not engage into industrial cash crop farming, the subsistence agriculture that she does is the sale of highly consumed foodstuff like maize, cassava, groundnuts, plantains, beans, spices, vegetables and fruits amongst others. Some with heavy capital engage in animal husbandry like poultry farming and other rodents. What they produce is to feed their families while the rest is sold to raise funds and income. Her daily toil goes a long way to boost the economy and hence develop the communities as their living standards improve. With the money in her hands, she saves it for rainy days and unforeseen contingencies.

As a *bayam-sellam*, she markets her produce from the farms to the urban centres thus providing urban dwellers with food for sustenance. The raised funds do not only improve her living standards, it also alleviates poverty, and hardship which contributes to the development of the value chain process.

Besides the commercialisation and marketing of their farm produce, they equally engage into small and medium sized industries such as food processing for instance corn hauling mill, cassava mill, spices mill, etc. These transformation activities generate income and bring about development with improved living standards. Other income generating activities carried out by the rural poor woman include needle work, knitting, marking, hairdressing, dressmaking, arts and crafts, basket-making, mat weaving, cotton spinning, restaurant business and others. The

effectiveness of this income generating activities goes a long way to improve the economy, reduce unemployment, promote development and make her financially independent.

Mindful that a rural woman is defined by either where she finds herself or what she is doing as an income generating activity. Some rural women are very versatile. They are open to change because at every time they are born teachers wherever they find themselves. Education is the backbone for any meaningful development process. As they are opened to change, their lifestyle is an emulation for behavioural change because her role as a development agent cannot be over emphasised or undermined.

2.6 TARGETING POOR WOMEN WITH RESOURCES AS THE BEST WAY TO REACH POOR CHILDREN

For the woman to raise capital that she can save in a MFI in a bid to emancipate herself and male partner, MFI and development partners should develop credit friendly programmes for poor women which is cheap, expedient, simple and manageable. Stakeholders should equally provide services and economic activities to the poor in their communities that would improve their productivity, profitability and decent working conditions for the women to raise funds easily. She has to be assisted to include her economic activities flexibly into her roles of parenting and other household responsibilities and chores.

The ability for her to grow and replicate depends on clear, well-defined and comprehensive models known and built on what works and is workable. That is to say balance community participation with technical and financial soundness by being sure that borrowers are able to absorb credit funds for purposes intended, have the capacity and discipline to repay and save as well as the skills and responsibility to manage well. They have to strive for financial sustainability which is done by increasing scales to spread costs among many, charging fees and being rigorous about recovering and rotating assets.

They should avoid causing a significant increase in the unpaid workload of children, school dropout and a decrease in time for play and rest. For these resources to be generated so that she can save for tomorrow, adolescents should be offered economic education and starter systems for livelihood. The financial services shall be integrated with other benefits such as literacy, health education, sanitation and environmental conservation, etc, as long as the amount of cost of the other services are controlled to be largely cost recoverable. Finally, monitoring and verification

impact assessment for poor lending and other income projects should confirm that income is increasing and a portion of it is distributed within households in ways that benefit children.

2.7 WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION FRAMEWORK THAT ENABLE WOMEN AND GENDER TO RAISE RESOURCES FOR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AND MF TRANSACTIONS

This method of fund raising was developed by Sara Hlupekile Longwe as a way of analysing the various ways that women and gender can raise funds for auto independence and sustainance (Williams et al., 1994). The aim of this framework is intended to help planners question what women's emancipation and equality means in practice and critically assess to what extent a development intervention is supporting this emancipation. The degree to which these are present in any area of social and economic life determines the level of women's emancipation commitment to equality and empowerment (March et al., 1999).

The Longwe framework indicates the extent to which women are equal with men and have achieved emancipation through their financial and other resources mobilisation and generation to satisfy individual, household and family needs. The framework identifies certain level of equality as follows:

2.7.1 CONTROL LEVEL

This term refers to women's control over the decision making process through conscientisation and mobilisation of resources to achieve equality of control over the factors of production and the distribution of benefits. This equality of control means a balance of control between men and women so that neither side dominates.

2.7.2 PARTICIPATION LEVEL

This concerns equality in participation in the decision making process, policy-making, planning and administration. Its importance is that both genders should be involved in the needs assessment process, project formulation, implementation and evaluation. Equality for participation means involving women in making the decisions by which their community will be affected in a proportion which matches their proportion in the wider community.

2.7.3 CONSCIENTISATION LEVEL

This is understood as a conscious understanding of the difference between sex and gender and the awareness that gender roles are cultural and can be changed. Conscientisation also involves a belief that the sexual division of labour should be fair and agreeable to both sides and not involve the economic or political domination of one sex by the other. If she believes she can make money so be it. Her conscience and efforts should not be imprisoned.

2.7.4 ACCESS LEVEL

This refers to the woman's access to the factors of production on an equal basis with men; equal access to land, labour, credit, training, marketing facilities and all public services and benefits. Longwe points out that equality of access to fund raising is obtained by applying the principles of equality of opportunities which typically entails the reform of the law and administrative practice to remove all forms of discrimination against women.

2.7.5 WELFARE LEVEL

Longwe defines this as the level of women's material welfare relative to men. Do women have access to resources such as food supply, income and medical care? In this framework of income mobilization is the level of equality hierarchical? March et al., (1999) suggest that if a development intervention focuses on the higher level, there is greater likelihood that women's emancipation will be increased by their intervention. If the intervention focuses only on welfare, it is very unlikely that the woman will find their income generating project emancipating; that is leading to her liberation and financial freedoms.

2.7.6 THE RECOGNITION LEVEL

Longwe further suggests that it is important to establish whether women's issues are ignored or recognized by identifying the extent to which resource mobilization project objectives are concerned with women's development. Recognition is a woman issue when it considers the relationship between men and women rather than simply at women's traditional and subordinate sex-stereotyped gender roles (March et al., 1999). This tool assumes that women's emancipation is the concern of both women and men in the design of the project which can be at the negative, neutral and positive levels.

This method of fund raising in other to save in MFI is particularly useful in illustrating how the role of emancipation is intrinsic to the process of development. It highlights to the gender

practitioner and the community microfinance agent (in an effort to change attitude) aspects of development works that were not previously recognized or appreciated as a gender issue toward financial sustainability.

PART TWO
DATA ANALYSIS, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND LITERATURE REVIEW TO FACILITATE GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MICROFINANCE SERVICES AND PRODUCTS

3.1 DATA REVIEW AND ASSESSMENTS

The review of collected literature, information, statistics and data is conceived to put in place findings that would facilitate the analysis of the assembled data. Those who contributed this literature be it in the form of participant observations, interviews, focus group discussions, questionnaire responses and documentation were done in an anonymous way with the assurance that it would be treated confidentially and used strictly for the furtherance of academic purposes.

That said, the *raison d'être* of literature review is to make a vivid interpretation and a graphic presentation of how the information was collected and the procedures and tools employed to diagnoses the hidden science behind the facts and figures so that while analysing the data, the user of the final results like policy makers would be able to arrive at concrete conclusions and decisions that would facilitate the formulation of policies, programmes, projects and strategies that would enhance gender emancipation through the services and products of microfinance institutions.

The employed procedures and tools to dissect the collected information under the research methodology of observations, interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and consulted documents shall be made manifest through the study of statistics which concern concepts like population as a unit in statistics, concept of samples, frequency distribution, variables, modalities, and the calculation of indicators and conditionalities. The results obtained would either affirm or rebut the research question and hypothesis whether MFI is a vital tool for emancipation. This would be done through:

3.1.1 OBSERVATIONS

The observation of the target population of the three MFI to ascertain my hypothesis as well as provide answers to my research question was done with the help of statistics which is a mathematical method which allows for firstly the **presentation** of statistics in the prescribed techniques, secondly the **description** of the data quantitatively or qualitatively, thirdly make a **resumé** of the comments and finally **synthesise** the commentaries using indicators, variables and conditionalities.

The population observed as a unit in statistics that is 10 from each MFI, is different from normal population that is taken into consideration. That is to say even though men and women are clients of MFI, our concern is on women. For this reason, women are regarded as a unit in statistics because where all of them are grouped together, they become population as a unit in statistics. As a unit, the whole population of women in the MFI which is relatively over 55% of the clientele of MFI who have the same nature is regarded as an object of observation. Note that each element of that size of the population is called an individual and not a statistical unit.

The size of the population to be studied from the entire population is symbolised by the letter “N”. When “N” is less than infinity, it is referred to as finite ($N < \infty$) because we cannot count it. When the number or size of the population can be counted, it means the observable population is finite. Since there is no clear cut line between a finite and infinite population, a finite population would be analysed as an infinite population if the sample bears a relationship with the population such that we have the size of the sample (n) which is almost 5% the size of the population, that is, $n \leq 5\% N$. This means the population that is studied is a subgroup of the total population which is hypothetically presented as $N=1000$, $n=5\%$ which means 50 individuals. Therefore, n equals 5% of N. This sampled population is defined thus because of time constraints, financial hardships and avoidance of analysing cumbersome data.

3.1.2 INTERVIEWS

Since it is difficult to interview over 15,000 clients of the three identified MFIs of the research, **random sampling** as a statistical technique was used to choose those to be interviewed. In each MFI, we were concerned or interested with 20 participants who were randomly selected from the workers, the clients and the population. Due to gender equality, the sampled population was equally divided between men and women. This sampled population that was randomly selected is a subset of the general population as a unit or item to be studied. The sample is thus a representative of the population from which they are drawn. This miniature statistical technique is used because of time constraints and to avoid costs. They are analysed in order to draw conclusions of the population. It must be presented in an analytical manner.

My usage of random sampling techniques is to analyse a subset of a given population that would facilitate analysis and save time of the research so that the obtained results would be used to draw conclusions concerning the parent population. This selected population of the entire population known in French as “Methode de sondage” is referred to as descriptive statistics because raw information is needed to be broken down and put into charts for easy references. This

raw data (donnée brute) is synthesised and thereafter resumed into refined information to be used by policy makers to design policies, programmes, projects and strategies to enhance gender emancipation through MFI and other domains of life be it political, economic and socio-cultural.

The advantages of using random samplings in dissecting information on gender emancipation through interviews is that: firstly, it reduces cost, that is, the cost would be reduced because we easily observed a small group as a representation of the parent or entire population. Secondly, there is greater speed because we observed a small group easily than the whole population; thirdly, there is greater flexibility because in conducting a small group survey, it is flexible because we got the required information with ease and finally there is greater accuracy because when observing a small group, you concentrate more and get appropriate measurement and references (put members in a basket, shuffle it and pick the numbers you want to use).

Although the results from sorting out the information of the interviews through the random sampling were accurate, measurable and flexible, there were some disadvantages of error margins. These errors emanated when we were recording the data or information into their appropriate pigeon holes and groups. Errors were also committed when defining the sampled size of the population through the measurement, editing and coding of the collected data. We equally observed errors that arrived from failing to observe the required units. These errors notwithstanding, were not enough to gravely affect the genuineness of the collected information. It did not distort the expected results when the data was analysed using the laid down parameters of its indicators and conditionalities which are scientifically and empirically verifiable. However, for purposes of research such comments are needed to show the balanced and unbiased objectivity and precision of the researcher and the research findings.

Another technique that I used to sort out information from the interviews carried out was the **Deterministic sampling** which is also known as non-random sampling. This deterministic sampling technique makes use of convenience sampling and plausibility sampling.

- By convenience sampling, the survey was restricted to the part of the population that was readily available that is, I sampled with workers or clients who were present in the MFI at the time I made a surprise visit besides the specified period that I stayed in the MFI. I decided to select the first 10 names and persons that I met there.
- By plausibility sampling; the survey was conducted in the area where one thinks that it would be plausible to find the required information. For instance, in a study of the

behaviour of the average client, I decided to sample the middle aged clients using the quota technique where the selected population is structured under certain behaviours, like sex because we found it highly correlating with other characters. This plausible or quota sampling is statistically represented thus:-

$N=100$ (population)

$n=$ Sampling size of the population, $n=10$. Quota sampling will be to multiply the member by the sampling rate.

$$\frac{n}{N} = \frac{10}{100} = \frac{1}{10} = 0.1, \text{ where male is } 75\% \text{ and women } 25\%.$$

This, representation means that from the interviews carried out, the quota sampled was multiplied by the number of individuals in each category by the sampling rate in order to completely represent the structure of the population in the sample. The sampled interviewees was made up of $75 \times 0.1 = 7.5 \approx 8$ male and $25 \times 0.1 = 2.5 \approx 2$ female. In order to maintain the size “n”, we approximate the variable.

Though some randomness was involved, we cannot use it freely because the probability is not certain. When this technique was properly conducted on anonymous and spontaneous clients of the MFI to ascertain the advantages of gender emancipation through financial independence, the results yielded good results. However, these results are not amendable even though they have the same denominator like the techniques gotten from the random samplings theories and techniques. The reason being that, the probabilities are not specified.

In conclusion to the eliciting of information from the conducted interviews, since the results obtained using the above two techniques were the same, it was not worth the while to use the other techniques to shifter these research methods which are multi-stage sampling, cluster sampling, stratification sampling and systematic samplings. The information would be represented on tables of random numbers and consecutive columns and lines.

3.1.3 QUESTIONNAIRES

The questionnaires that were formulated and distributed to MFI workers, clients and the population were between 60 to 100 copies. The intention was to collect written answers to clarify the research question as well as confirm or affirm the research hypothesis whether MFI is an important tool to enhance gender emancipation towards development. In providing the answers to the questionnaires, the respondent had to tick the right answers or write what he/she thinks was

the exact answer. The questionnaire was like a modest dress of a woman which is long enough to cover all the vital parts and short enough to be attractive.

While no questions on the questionnaire were skipped or wrong answers given, our questionnaire did not limit the quality of the information to be supplied. Our pretesting of the questionnaire on a small scale of randomly selected population was credible and accurate because those who answered it were knowledgeable and intelligent. This does not mean all of them were educated formally. This action was to avoid errors in compiling the data (for example bad responses). The size of the target population reflected the sampled size of the variables to produce accurate information and results. Because of its appropriate length, time was gained, cost constraints were reduced, speed was accelerated, responses were flexible and accuracy greater. Accountability and certainty of the variables was done with precision.

After minimizing the error margin as a result of measurement of population, or editing or codifying of the data, information and statistics, the conclusion drawn and lessons learned were compared using the considerations like firstly their convergence, that is what did all of the respondents answer or say. Secondly their divergence, that is what makes their responses to have different variables. Thirdly their complementarity was similar or collorary to the facts in issue, that is gender emancipation. Fourthly their antagonism that is, what they contested or attacked or had different view and finally their affirmation, that is what they accepted without any objections.

In dissecting and diagnosing the responses on the questionnaire that lead to data analysis, the variables in the questionnaire were divided into quantitative and qualitative variables which are measurable and verifiable. This measurable information is subject to change under different conditions. When the variable becomes an object of studies like women involved in MFI to ascertain gender emancipation, that is when we say that the variable responds to the question: "What type of information are we to retain for each variable".

The response to the above question is the measureable dimension of the concept of variables which have two or more modalities which is the object of the research study as it is fashioned to express characters that the data would analyse like the age, sex, marital status, education, location of MFI, sources of income of both genders amongst others to ascertain the hypothesis or respond to the research question in other to further academic sciences of gender emancipation through microfinance transactions.

In sorting out the responses and putting them in their various groups of qualitative and quantitative variables, each had specific qualifiers which are explicative, that is active variables or external variables. The variables were characterized thus:

3.1.3.1 Quantitative Variables

Variable is said to quantitative to affirm or confirm an assertion when its different modalities are **measurable** for example, manual revenue for female entrepreneurs, age of personnel of MFI, number of children who are clients in the microfinance. Here, we can distinguish several quantitative variables that would facilitate the data analysis like discrete variable, continuous variable, independent variables, dichotomy variables, polytomic variables, etc.

1. *Discrete quantitative variables:*

Quantitative variables of the questionnaire are said to be discrete when it takes the punctual value because it is generally isolated or anti-natural. That is why when we were formulating the questionnaires we did not ask loose ended questions that would warrant or need a follow-up question. Some of the examples used to determine a discrete quantitative variable are the number of children in the household, when was the marriage celebrated, when was the account opened in the MFI, how is the revenue raised that is saved in the MFI, what is the type of account? Is it a joint or separate account, what is the intention of the account? Is it for education or healthcare or development account? These variables have a particular modality and frequency that seeks to solve a particular problem in order to clarify the question raised or complement a fact in issue.

2. *Continuous quantitative variable:*

This variable is termed continuous when we collect all the values in an interval of variations for example, age, household expenses, health expenses, child expenses and other unforeseen contingencies. These continuous expenses would either encourage savings as long as it does not disturb the source of income or the savings are stopped as a result of opportunity costs and priorities forgone.

3. *Independent variable:*

Is that variable that does not depend on any other thing for example age.

4. *Dichotomy variables:*

This means two things are involved for example sex which can be male or female.

5. *Polytomic variables:*

This is a variable that can be presented in two or more forms for instance religion (is the owner of the MFI a Christian, Moslem or Aetheist?) Tradition (is the owner of the MFI my tribe's man or someone that we share one culture or we are from the same region, division, subdivision or village?)

3.1.3.2 Qualitative Variables

Variable is said to be qualitative when its different modalities are not measurable that is, it is static and dogmatic like for instance a religious variable entails or includes Christianity, Moslem, animists, aetheist. An education variable on the other hand would encompass intelligent persons, school dropout, illiterates, knowledgeable persons and intellectuals amongst others. Some of the characteristics of qualitative variables that are not measurable to enhance gender emancipation through microfinance institution would englobe: Dependent variables, control or intermediary variables and discontinue variable.

1. *Dependent variables:*

This is a variable that is dependent on other variables for instance, salary. If you do not work you will not earn it.

2. *Control or intermediary variable:*

These are variables that intervene or interfere between the independent and dependent variables for example, management of salaries of a problematic marriage, the city council development undertakings or issues on age of recruitment.

3. *Discontinue variable:*

You cannot add the value of this variable. You just take it like that for example, while making an appraisal of the quantitative and qualitative variable of the responses of the questionnaire to ascertain or affirm the research questions and hypothesis, a burning problem came up on the situation of the savings. This problem bothered on who owns the account and on what would they use the money for. While the woman says her savings if for herself and that of the man is for the family, the man says that is not possible thus threatening the roots and foundations of the family.

This problem was resolved by the answers on the questionnaire through what is known as the sources of variables which can be random, deterministic or symbol variables. As a solution a variable whose source of variation cannot be controlled or predicted is called random variable or stockastic variables for example, date of death, throwing of dice, rain, weather, sun, price of

agricultural products (homologated or fixed). If you have regards for death you should be careful with enmassing wealth because life is vanity. On the other hand, variables is said to be deterministic because it cannot be predicted or controlled. It is also known as non-random or non-stockastic variables. The final solution to this problem to bring equity on who owns an account in the MFI is solved by the teachings of symbols variable. Variables and statistical analysis are symbolized by letters. While capital letters symbolizes your priorities and small letter represents forgone opportunities. If you make your list of important needs and preferences and symbolize them with capital and small letters, the benefits you attach to money vis-à-vis your life and your family would determine and shape your line of reasoning. For instance if your interest is that you do not want to grow old; that is, you want to do everything to maintain your youthful age, you are committing a grave error because the symbol or determinant of age is above man's calculations and reasoning. Instead of worry-up that you do not want to grow old, you should concentrate on saving for your children and latter life in age. You do not have to run behind money at all the time because a stitch in time saves nine. The best fertiliser is the shadow of the farmer. Parents and families should discuss finances as one.

3.1.4 FOCUS GROUPS DISCUSSIONS (FGD)

As many as six (06) Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were organized with different stakeholders of the 3MFI; that is two each. The participants included women entrepreneurs, bankers, public officers, local government representatives, media, NGO and civil society organizations. The literature and information collected from this FGD were used in order to explore pertinent variables for the study. Considering the nature of variables and types of respondents both quantitative and quantitative procedures of data collection were applied. The different participant brought different quantity and quality of information to enrich the study.

To carry out this discussion, a comprehensive FGD guideline was developed. This guideline covered issues to be addressed, reporting requirements and data summary sheet. Each participant was provided a FGD guideline so that they could actively participate in the discussion. The pertinent variables used in this FGD were also explained to them so that they can easily provide information as well as the researcher could collect data from them.

In reviewing the literature collected the participants in the various FGD that lasted two (02) hours at each sitting had to discuss, brainstorm and provide candid answers to questions as well as share their experiences regarding problems of women entrepreneurship development concerning MFI and the emancipation of gender and women towards development. Some of the issues

discussed were based on access to finance, registration of their business (that gives them resources to save in MFI), capacity building in banking and finance, access to market, flow of information into subject matter, networking, socio-demographic profile of women-owned enterprises, regulatory procedures including taxation; VAT and access to finance, business management including business planning; accounting and book-keeping, social perspective of women entrepreneurs in family life, associative life and their contribution to the family and finally we discussed on the overall perception about business environment and investments from their savings or loans from the MFI towards gender emancipation equality and equilibrium.

To review the tons of the raw data collected as well as interpret its veracity, we made use of frequency distribution techniques. This frequency distribution techniques enabled us to calculate the data that would lead us to the conclusion whether MFI is a reality or not in the enhancement process of gender emancipation towards liberty and freedom of the woman from male domination and patriarchal subjugation and phallocratic seclusion.

Frequency distribution is used to summarize masses and tons of raw data to come out with conclusion that would resolve a problem or clarify an issue like the subject matter of the study. The methodology used to diagnose the literature collected was to distribute the raw data into classes or categories and to determine the number of items or individuals falling into each one of the classes or categories. Such a tabulation or tabular representation of the data is called **univariable** frequency distribution in the case of sample (items). On the other hand, when dealing with the population (individual) we made use of probability distribution.

Since raw and voluminous data when not summarized appears useless to decision makers and researchers because they cannot arrive at valuable conclusions, the techniques to summarize such data can be done through the construction of a frequency distribution table. If you want to use the qualitative variable to construct this table it is known as **categorical distribution**. On the other hand, if you want to use the quantitative variables to construct this frequency distribution table is it referred to as the **Numerical distribution**.

We used both techniques to construct our tables to facilitate the understanding of our analyzed data. Literature gotten from the FGD was reviewed through:

- 1- The different types of frequency distribution used;
- 2- Their characteristics;
- 3- Class intervals and limits;

- 4- Forming frequency distribution tables;
- 5- Cumulation of frequency distribution;
- 6- Treatment of qualitative variables;
- 7- Statistical treatment of quantitative variables;
- 8- Treatment of continuous quantitative variables.

3.1.4.1 Different types of Frequency Distribution used to Review the Literature of FGD for Data Analysis to Confirm the Important Role of MFI in the Enhancement of Gender Emancipation for Women are:

a) Absolute frequency

An absolute frequency is the number of individuals falling into each one of the columns “K” that make up the frequency table. It is symbolized by “ f_i ” such that it corresponds to the absolute frequency of the “ i^{th} ” class.

That is to say: $i = 1, 2, 3 \dots K$ classes.

$$f_1 + f_2 + \dots + f_k = \sum_{i=1}^k f_i = n$$

n = to the total of the sample size or the total number of individual that have been surveyed.

Σ = is the sign to show that they have added all these numbers (e.g. participants in the FGD).

b) Relative frequency

A relative frequency is the proportion of individuals presenting the same characteristics in the considered set. It is symbolised by “ f_i ” such that “ f_i ” defines the relative frequency of the i^{th} class. That is to say:-

$$\sum f_i = 1$$

$$\text{Indeed } f_i = \frac{\delta_i}{\sum \delta_1} \quad i = 1, 2, 3, \dots k \text{ class}$$

$$\text{Then } \sum_{i=1}^k f_i = \sum_{i=1}^k \frac{\delta_i}{\sum \delta_1} = \frac{\sum \delta_i}{\sum \delta_1}$$

$$= \frac{\sum \delta_i}{\sum \delta_1} = 1$$

Here, we multiplied the relative frequency by 100. 1 specifies percentage %. The $\sum f_i = 1$. This means they affirmed that MFI is a very vital tool in the enhancement of gender emancipation towards the liberty and freedom of the woman financially.

3.1.4.2 Characteristics of frequency distribution to support or object to the proposition

The first characterization of frequency distribution that we used to review the literature and information collected from the FGD is the **Categorisation** of their contribution into various parameters like marital status, civil status, occupation, etc. of the participants. To explain categorization as a characteristic of frequency distribution, we used as example the distribution of marital status of some 100 individuals as a condition sine qua non to open an account in a MFI. The result we had was presented thus:

Table 1: Categorisation of Marital Status with Bank Accounts

Individual Categories	Frequency	
	Absolute	Relative (divide absolute by 100)
Married	30	0.30
Divorce	20	0.20
Widows	15	0.15
Single	35	0.35
Total	100ⁿ	100ⁿ

The second categorization of frequency distribution that was used was to interpret contributions from the FGD was **Numericals**. The example to explain the technique of numerals used is the distribution of number of children in a sample of 90 households that own accounts in MFI. The difference is that the sampled numbers are variables assumed to represent the number of children with bank accounts. The table is presented thus:-

Table 2: Categorisation of Children with Bank Account

Individual Categories	Frequency	
	Absolute	Relative (F) (divide 19 by 90)
0	19	0.21
1	24	0.27
2	25	0.28
3	10	0.11
4	8	0.9
5	4	0.4
Total	90	1.00

Since statistics is to take decision, if we want to look at the situation of children, we will see that the 2nd child needs to be encouraged if he is in Europe. However, since the statistics is in Africa where we regard children as wealth and power, children in categories 4 and 5 needs to be encouraged to save more in the banks.

In this second example therefore, if we decide to use the quantitative discrete variable to interpret the statistics, the classes would be specified by single numbers which are values assumed by the variables. This is specially the case because the data set is made up of consecutive values.

The third categorization of frequency distribution as a characteristic to review literature from a FGD is **continuous variable**. The classes here are specified by a symbol made up of two (02) numbers and brackets for example [50.00, 60.00 [which means the first bracket “[”50.00 is included in the class while 60.00 “[” is excluded. For an accurate result, it should be specified that the classes should not overlap. The example we chose to explain this continuous variable is the distribution of wages of a sample of 65 civil servants who have saving accounts in the MFI. The table is represented as below:

Table 3: Histogram of Frequency Table of Decision Taking Powers of Couples and Households

Wages 10 ³ CFA 10 ³ CFA=x1.000	Frequency	
	Absolute	Relative (÷65)
[50.00, 60.00[	8	0.123
[60.00, 70.00[	10	0.154
[70.00, 80.00[	16	0.246
[80.00, 90.00[	24	0.369
[90.00, 100.00[	5	0.072
[100.00, 110.00[	2	0.031
Total	65	1.000

In this example of wage distribution in a continuous variable, the numbers specifying the classes are not values assumed by the variables (as opposed to the case of a discrete variable). The classes are specified such that they do not overlap.

3.1.4.3 TREATMENT OF QUANTITATIVE VARIABLE TO ASCERTAIN THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

The presentation of statistics on a table for instance, distribution of couples with accounts in MFI divided according to their decision taking powers in their households was presented thus:

Table 4: Showing Decision Taking Power in Households to Open an Account

Persons who take decision	Effectiveness Ni	Frequency fi%
Men	285	84.81%
Women	85	16.3%
Couple	180	28.45%
Total	520	100

In analyzing the table, the variable equals to decision taking power and persons. The population studied is 520 couples. Statistical unit constitutes each couple. Modality is the quantitative variable which is made up of men, women and the children. The information we are looking for is the person who takes decision in the household as concerns banking matters. Though the statistics is in favour of the man, the woman has an enviable position because of her comparative advantage of visibility and comparability of information from the onset as per its measurement for male which is $fi = \frac{ni}{N} \times \frac{100}{1}$. *fi* = Frequency of modalities; *ni* – output of modalities and N = total output. It was worthy of note that if the last mark is above five, you round it up. This quantitative variable can be presented graphically and on diagrams thus:

Figure 1: Diagramme in Tuyaux d’orgue showing couples who take decision on Banking Issues

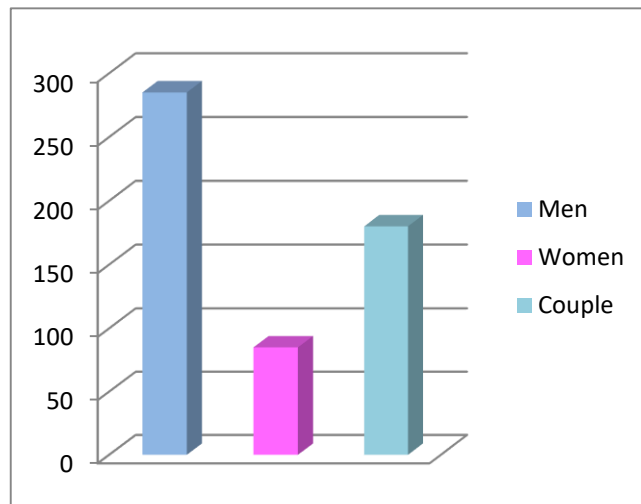
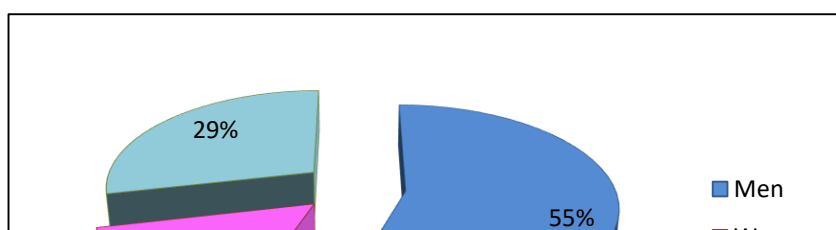


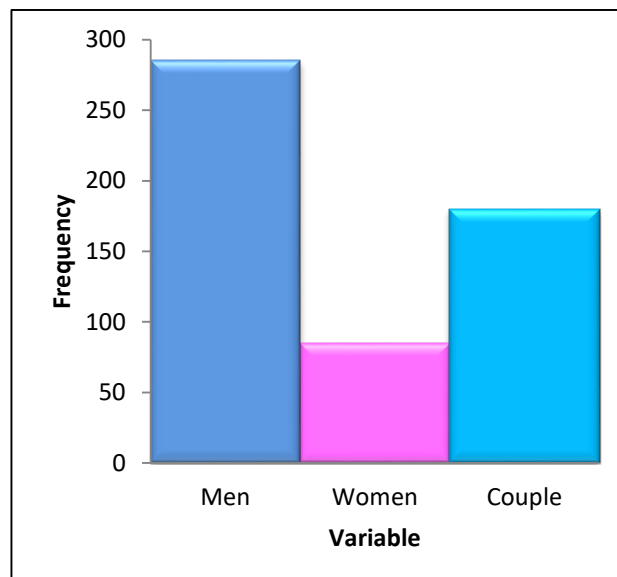
Diagram in Tuyaux d’orgue showing distribution of couples who take decisions on banking issues. This information is represented on a pie chart thus:

Figure 2: Distribution of couples who take decisions on banking issues on a pie chart



This same information was analysed and interpreted as a continuous quantitative variable where the statistics were regrouped by classes and then studied as a discrete variable. In the case of an equal amplitude, the frequency table was presented on a histogram thus:

Figure 3: Frequency table was presented on a histogram



3.1.5 DOCUMENTS

Documents such as books, project proposals, quarterly progress reports, result framework, dissertations, periodical and newspapers were consulted in order to explore pertinent variables for the study. In reviewing this pertinent variables collected from documentary research methodology, they were calculated as indicators and conditionalities to ascertain whether previous contributors from other authors on the subject matter have divergent or complementary or antagonist view on gender emancipation through MFI.

However, a voracious diagnosis from different works no doubt affirmed that MFI is a way out for women in the acquisition for their liberty and freedom from financial hardship.

Nonetheless, they opined that much has to be done by men to encourage women to engage into entrepreneurship, banking and finance. They also argued that policies, programs and projects should be designed to initiate women into income generating activities as well as self reliant undertakings. This is the first step to her emancipation, liberty and freedom as an independent person who is an agent of development and pivot of change.

While Simone De Beauvoir reminds the woman to take her rightful position because she was not delivered a woman but rather she should not reduce herself into a woman by her thoughts, words and actions, Olympe de Gouges, tells the woman not to sleep if she wants to attain gender equality. Mary Wallstonecraft loudly tells the woman to break away from the mould that they are the weaker sex. She castigates those who are proponents that as a weaker sex, they are good for home chores. Our own Calixthe Beyala does not give men rest as she supplicates that men should give women the economic powers so that she can show her worth.

Esther BOSERUP (1989) in her book “Women’s Role in Economic Development”, highlights the importance of feminine entrepreneurship as her threshold toward liberation from poverty. She intimates that without economic backing, the woman is far from being a veritable leader and astute manager who is self-employed, a job creator and a person who is financially autonomous. CARR Marilyn and William Mariana (2010) in “Trading Stories, experiences with gender and trade”, out rightly reminds the woman that without her economic power, she would always be subjugated under male domination and poverty.

DINGA-NYOH Sarah (2005) in “Women as Entrepreneurs in a Formal and Informal Economy” tells women that making money is not enough. They have to save their proceeds so that they can acquire loans to benefit from economies of scales. With this backup, they can talk of equality with men. She reminds them that if mainstream banks cannot accommodate them, then they should make recourse to microfinance institutions and other njangi groups like ROSCAS that can give them instant credits that they can plough back into their businesses to attract growth.

MAYOUX L. (1998) in “Women’s Empowerment and Microfinance Programmes Approaches”, provides an evidence and way forward for women to tap the benefits from MFI which is at their door step and it is easy to do business with them. CHOWDHURY Anis (2009) in “Microfinance as Poverty Reduction tool – A Critical Assessment” sells the important role that MFI play to encourage women rewrite their shattered lives script from poverty and backwardness. However, ZIMMERMAN M. (1993) in “Empowerment theories, where do we go from here?”,

argues that financial equality between both genders would not be given to the woman on a plater gold. He pricks the consciences of women on the importance of education. Thus education is not to have PhDs but to be knowledgeable as to know the difference between good and bad in the economic and financial world. A woman who is not knowledgeable would always remain in the small scale business world. They have to network and cooperate in other to gain big. Roy ANANYA (2010) like Robinson M. (2001) are of that same view. The short and long is that all these authors have acknowledged the fact that for the woman to be financially independent, free and liberated she needs to be emancipated. This emancipation shall be achieved faster through the services and products of MFI.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

After a succinct interpretation of the collected information from the various research methodologies used, the results gotten from the survey would enable policy makers as well as permit the researcher to propose recommendations that would reinforce the services and products of MFI to enhance gender emancipation so that the women can liberate herself from the prangs of poverty and masculine domination. That is to say discrimination and violence gaps would be considerably reduced.

The literature review would facilitate the analysis of the data so that it can be used without much complications. It is easily understandable because the data collected and analysed are presented in graphs, diagrams, tables, charts, figures and schemes. Qualitative and quantitative data were calculated according to the prescriptions of Russell (2006) that tables of frequency distributions should be collected and coded in a triangular model that encompasses structured and semi-structured variables that would expose the research methods and procedures that would explore pertinent information for this study.

The analysed data and statistics provided absolute, relative and probable results as the case may be to justify the research questions and hypothesis. The errors that emanated from the codified calculations and measurements were analysed using the under-mentioned parameters so that the margins of doubts were considerably reduced. At the end of the interpretation and analysis it was accurately certain that the findings as concerns gender emancipation is a gate way for women liberation because a women without financial power according to Esther BOSERUP as supported by Simone De Beauvoir and corroborated by Olympe de Gouges is no woman. From the

comparative gender analysis, it was made manifest that the differences that exist between male and female capacities in MFI transactions are sustainable in that they are all geared towards development and household sustenance.

The parameters employed in this data analysis as diagnosed from the literature review shall be based on the omnibus grounds of age, sex, education, occupation, source of income, decision taking power, institutional support, civil status, religion, number of children. Thereafter, we would examine lessons learnt from the analysed data and finally shared best practices and experiences to help policy makers and the furtherance of research to decide on the subject matter.

3.2.1 THE OMNIBUS GROUNDS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The socio-demographic background and parameters used to analyse and interpret the collected data from the survey carried out using the different types of research methods, techniques and procedures to confirm, affirm, refute or rebut the research questions and hypothesis on the role of MFI in the enhancement of gender emancipation as a means of liberty and freedom are:

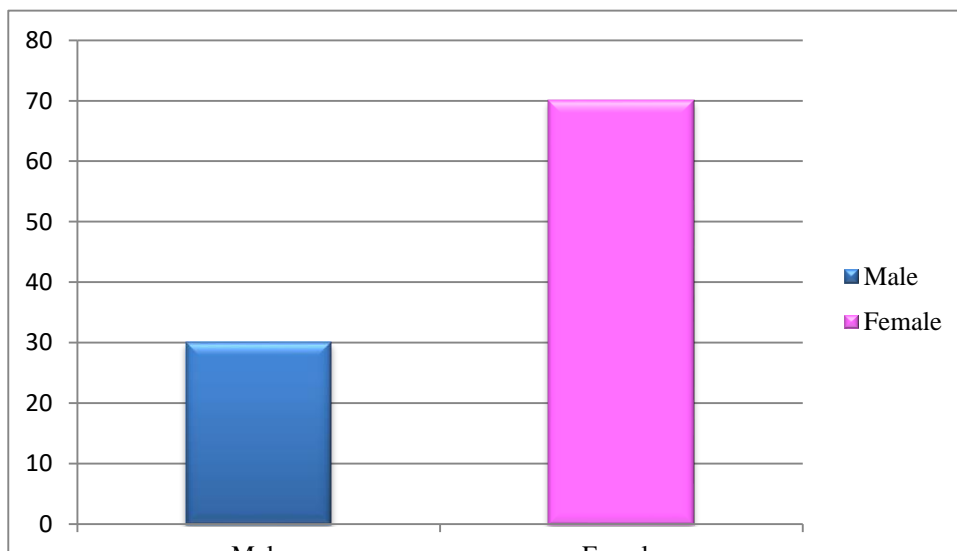
i- Sex/Gender

The frequency distribution of the sex or genders of those who answered or responded to our questionnaires or interviews or those whom we observed or participated in the Focus Group Discussions (FGD) were:

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents According to Sex/Gender

Sex	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency	Percentage
Male	30	30	30%
Female	70	70	70%
Total	100	100	100

Figure 4: Frequency distribution of sex of respondents by gender



Note: Gender as a factor may or may not promote growth. This depends on the effort of the income generating activity that produces resources that can be saved after expenditures are deducted. The study reveals that for that gender to save in the MFI other factors of production have to be taken into consideration to promote growth of their sources of income (Robinson Rinley, 2007) like location of business, advertisement, customer relationships, tribal tendencies, religious affinities and social networkings. The study revealed that the female gender had more savings than men in those MFIs.

ii- Age

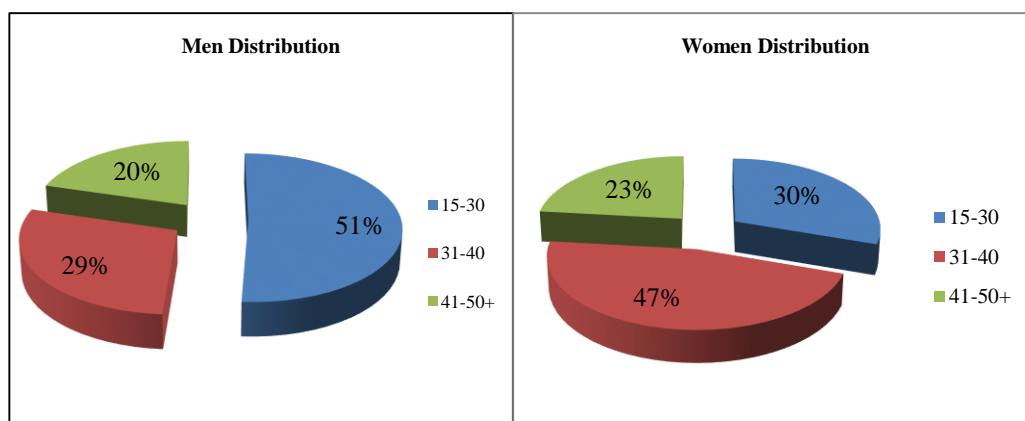
Percentage distribution of those with accounts in MFI by age are:-

Table6: Age Distribution

Age	Men		Women	
	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency	Absolute Frequency	Relative Frequency
15 – 20	25	25%	13	13%
20 – 30	40	40%	50	50%
31 – 40	14	14.1%	20	20%
41 – 50	10	1.1%	10	11%
51 – +	11	3.1%	07	2.1%
TOTAL	100	100%	100	100%

The percentage distribution of women MFI clients by age indicates that most of the women entrepreneurs with accounts are younger than their male counterparts. It is also evident from the values of mean and median age which were found to be 31 – 40 years that they own a lot of accounts. Diagrammatic representation of the age structure on a pie chart of MFI clients are.

Figure 5: Absolute frequency representing respondents by age range



The figure and table show that out of the 100 respondents, 45 which is the majority fall within the age range of 31–40 and represents 45%. Those between 15–30 years represent 25% and those between the ages of 41–50+ represent 30%.

iii- Education

Table 7 shows the percentage distribution of respondent genders by the level of education.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents by the Level of Education

Level of Education	Gender		Percentage
	Men	Women	
Post graduate	10	25	10.9
Graduate	12	10	16.8
High school	40	40	26.7
Secondary school	25	20	34.7
Primary school	10	11	5.9
No level	5	12	4.0
Total	100	100	100

In terms of education, women with post graduate degrees are 10.9%. Graduates are 16.8%. Only 4% of women interviewed have no formal education but some of them can read and write. Majority are knowledgeable on the keeping of accounts. Both male and female have high school certificates making a 26.7% of the clientele of MFI.

iv- Marital Status

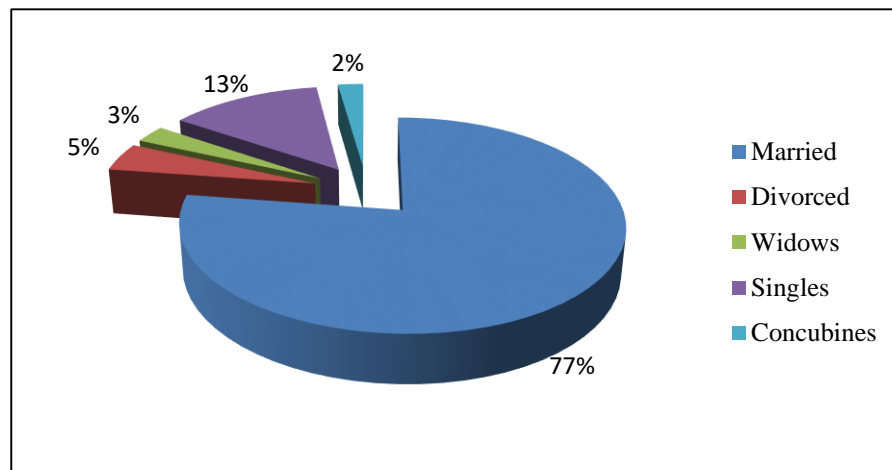
From the socio-cultural perspectives, marital status is also an important factor that has vital influence on women's socio-economic and political life. Considering this, the survey focused on the impact of marital status on the enhancement of gender emancipation in the banking sector. The table below shows the distribution of marital status of clients interviewed as well as those who responded to the questionnaire.

Table 8: Marital Status of clients interviewed and those who responded to the questionnaire

Marital Status	Male	Female	Percentage
Married	10	20	70
Divorced	1	3	4
Widows	2	5	2.5
Singles	4	6	12
Concubines	0	1	2
Total	17	45	100

Most of the clients are couples making a 70% clientele while concubines and divorced persons makes the lowest percent. It is represented on a graph thus:

Figure 6: Percentage of Marital Status of Clients who were Interviewed or Responded to the Questionnaire



The graph shows that married couples are the highest percent of client.

v- Occupation

The occupation of the clients of MFI according to sex shows the disparities and sex disaggregated rate on their sources of revenue and resources.

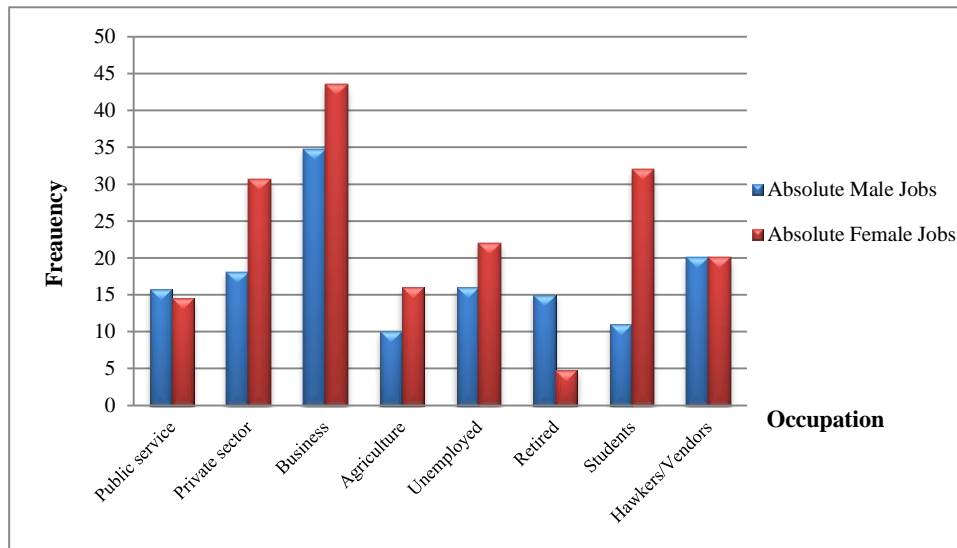
Table 9: Respondent occupation as Sources of Revenue and Resources to Save in MFI

Table of occupation	Absolute Male Jobs	Relative Female Jobs
Public service	15.7	14.5
Private sector	18.0	30.6
Business	34.8	43.5
Agriculture	10	16

Unemployed	16	22
Retired	15	4.8
Students	11	32
Hawkers/Vendors	20	20

It is evident from the table above that the absolute male occupation is one of the determinant factors to inspire or help women to become entrepreneurs so that they can transact with MFI. Roughly women occupation contributes to 34.8% of their savings. This information is represented on figure below thus.

Figure 7: Bar Chart showing Respondent Occupation as Sources of Revenue and Resources to Save in MFI



This bar chart shows that the maximum number of clients of MFI are in the private sector doing business which represent 50% while the rest are in the public sector and agricultural sectors sharing the remaining percentage.

vi- Religion

As a factor that attracts clients, religious affinities play a vital role to attract clients as explained in the table below.

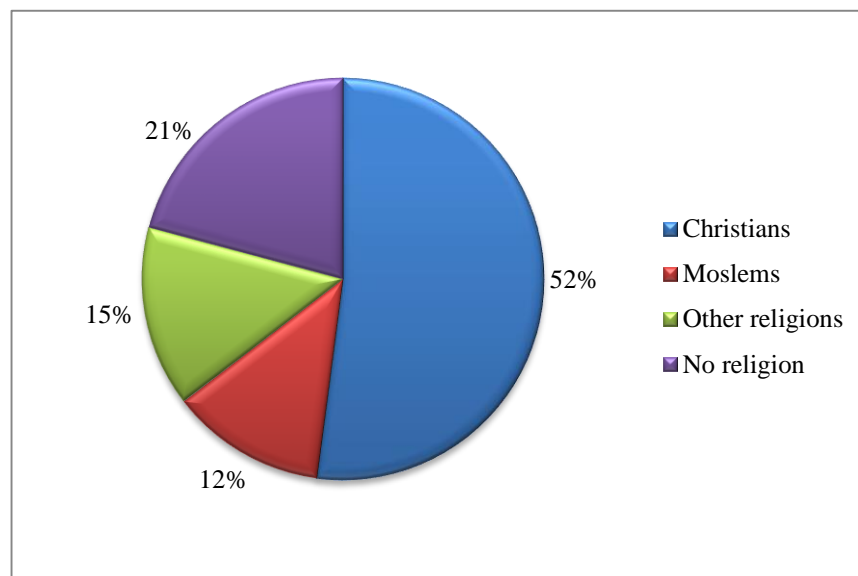
Table 10: Religious affinities as a ground to attract clients

Religious denomination	AWICCUL		SUMFI		CFA	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Christians	10	15	9	13	10	10

Moslems	5	1	3	2	5	3
Other religions	3	4	2	5	4	6
No religion	5	5	5	5	5	5
Total	23	25	29	25	24	24

Although religion plays a role, those without any religious denomination are a remarkable force to reckon with. Above all, women clients dominate. On a pie chart diagram, it is represented thus.

Figure 8: Pie Chart Representing Religious Affinities as a Ground to Attract Clients



vii- Tribal and other grounds:

Even though belonging to a tribe plays on the volume of clientele, most of the clients did not look at tribe or ethnic group or bilingualism. The clients are both Francophones and Anglophones with the Bamelikes dominating. The clients are concerned with the benefits they would derive from the services and products of the MFI that accrue from their savings.

3.2.2 LESSONS LEARNT FROM THE ANALYSED DATA, STATISTICS AND INFORMATION TO SUPPORT RESEARCH STUDY

MFI has committed themselves to facilitate gender emancipation of the women so that she can liberate herself from poverty and discriminations. The lessons learnt from the analysed data strongly show that through MFI, both genders in general and the woman in particular can attain

financial self sufficiency and sustainability, alleviate herself from poverty, breakdown discrimination and stereotypes as well as attain feminine emancipation.

Gender guidelines and manuals focuses on increasing women's access to programmes designed for financial sustainability that touches on:

1. changes in collateral requirement to include female forms of property;
2. reduction of loan sizes and more flexibility in saving requirements and
3. group trainings to decrease administrative costs and increase women's social and human capital.

It is imperative to mention with reservation that microfinance networks and advocacy fails to directly address empowerment issues. This silent marginalisation is also supported by women because when gender issues are being discussed, the woman seldom lobby for the change of her status. In other to transform MFI advantages in favour of women, she has to be consulted before final decisions are taken. In order to justify their role as a key actor in poverty alleviation, MFI interventions also need to be orientated towards the masses by making a roundabout turn from focussing on well-to-do women to the less privilege and vulnerable women.

In designing emancipation projects that englobes all shades of women, MFI should forget about the issue of making more money for the bank. They should concentrate on uplifting the poor. Nonetheless, a viable emancipation strategy must be designed and defined by women with long term advantages to maximise the impact of MFI on the lives of women. It requires equality in access to all microfinance services as well as breakdown all gender discriminatory stereotypes and prejudices.

Emancipation as a development matrix and paradigm, it has to instil and install business strategies for self reliant projects for the local poor and low income households towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) on poverty alleviation, and financial sustainability.

The pressure from market forces exerted on MFI to act as full banks is fast eroding its initial reason d'être. Being plagued with corruption, poor accountability, self interest, mismanagement and misappropriations, MFI are caught in a vicious circle that is instead putting its clients into difficulties as some are winding up or are past running into bankruptcy or liquidation. This leaves the poor client vulnerable and helpless.

3.2.3 BEST PRACTICES FROM THE ANALYSED DATA THAT WOULD HELP POLICY MAKERS ON EMANCIPATION

By acknowledging the lapses exposed by the analysed data, the best practices that flow from the lessons learnt to make MFI stronger in the drive to extricate women from poverty through financial awareness, this liberty and freedom would be attained faster if goals are strategized and streamlined to the needs of the target clientele. Secondly, communication should flow on the products inherent in the MFI to the advantage of women. Thirdly, government's intervention is absolutely needed to control and supervise their activities because they are fast derogating from their original missions. For instance, though there are the COBAC and BEAC rules regulating them, the interest rates should be standardized. For standardization to be attained, electronic banking should be introduced so that account of stakeholders can be tracked even with their phone.

Another issue is that competent personnel should be employed in such institutions who know client services. In-house recycling training should be organised. This done MFI would successfully eradicate all gender conflicts and poverty.

Although MFI face a lot of challenges, they still remain the principal development agent that will bring freedom and liberty to the woman that will equate gender equality and parity for all sexes. For this to be appropriated, other innovations such as the use of modern technology like Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) and e-banking should not be a preserve only for the mainstream banking sectors.

CHAPTER FOUR

STAKES, CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS TO ATTAIN GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MFI

4.1 STAKES AND CHALLENGES THAT HINDER GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH MFI

Although MFI is aimed at emancipation the population as a whole and the woman in particular to carry out micro-projects and to develop their communities, through financial and economic opportunities like credit options, liberalised economy, democracy, competitiveness, privatisation, globalization, social dialogues and networkings, the ironical fallacy of all these is that nothing seldom works in favour of the vulnerable poor and underprivileged grassroots masses because MFI are derogating from their original *raison d'être* and mission. The rural poor are yet to be alleviated from poverty. Credits cannot cover most of the needs and aspirations of the poor because they are not credit worthy. Above all the MFI rather wants to operate like mainstream commercial banks with all its rigours and conditionalities like high interest rate that instead impoverish the poor rural clientele. Worst still, banking language is not understood by the clients who always complain of opaque and ambushed transactions.

Another challenge that clogs the wheel of gender emancipation through MFI services and products is the loan-debt trap. This means that MFI encourage clients to contract loans without them being sufficiently educated on the rigours and obstacles in that transaction. The interest rates are not fixed as it fluctuates by the day. Charges like insurance policy, service cards, service book, cheque leaflets are all added to the charges thereby making the interest rate to be even more than the amount of the loan. If unable to pay the loan, the client is forced to sell his/her assets, to offset the debt. Those who are not capable of reimbursing, they end up dying from stress and suicide.

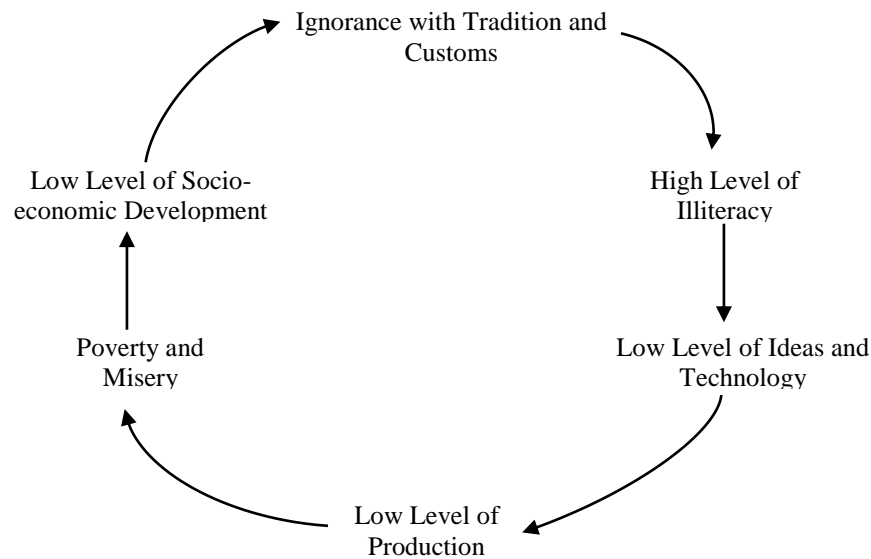
Negative cultural attitudes, beliefs and women's workload at home make women to be perceived as possessions or property. Women who strive to take part in financial leadership are ridiculed as wanting to be money minded, ambitious, immoral and unruling. Because of this, men do not allow their wives to attend meetings as they fear they might be sensitized negatively and lured into banking relationships that might destabilise the patriarchal role of the man as bread winner. These negative cultural practices are worsened by the low education level that affects the woman's capacity to comprehend and engage in to technical and complex banking processes which men engage into. In spite of good governance policies to promote education for all, a good

number of women of leadership age and banking prowess and capabilities are still of low education.

Inadequate resources for women, the lack of skills and the non-exposure to networking and associative life makes them not to have ownership of productive resources; for example land and property that can give her a bargaining power and exchange value to compete with her male counterpart in the microfinance sectors make her vulnerable thereby exposing her to discrimination and vulnerabilities of all sorts. In a bid to meet the household responsibilities, women are engaged in food supply with agricultural labour that is characterised by high workload, unpaid and unvalued labour leaving her with no funds and time for politics or any other leadership position that can improve her lot towards gender emancipation through MFI. The lack of negotiating and lobbying skills undermines their capacity to compete favourably with their male counterparts as a result of lack of confidence and fear of the unknown. Those who advocate for their liberation and equality seldom provide them the means to continue or sustain the fight.

The poverty circle is a major stake to women emancipation through microfinance as a result of ignorance, the weight of custom and traditional practices that prohibits men and women from working equitably; for example, while men engage into cash crop farming to raise funds, women are relegated into subsistence farming of which the profit they make is insignificant. After running the household, nothing is left to save for the rainy day in the MFI. Thus, sex disaggregation contributes in bringing about poverty and misery to the feminine gender in the community thereby making her output to remain low. This hinders her socio-economic development while the vicious circle of perpetual poverty continuous. Poverty circle as a hindrance is represented thus:

Figure 9: Poverty Circle that Hinders women's Financial Emancipation



With such a cycle, the woman can rarely rise to the top through MFI because of lack of resources. For her to raise money from her activities that she can save in a MFI, she has to grapple between balancing her business activities that generates funds, her family and time management. Even though there are some successful women who have tried to balance this trilogy, it remains a real challenge for women. Her activities come to a halt as a result of pregnancy, childbirth, child care and motherhood. All these affect the woman's output which is not the same with the man. To overcome these challenges, she has to always negotiate to strike a balance. That is why women tend to dominate non-profit making activities because they have been relegated to play the roles of providing emotional support, animation and maintenance like cooking, which is not valued because it is outside the cash economy. Men on the other hand are responsible for economic support as traditional breadwinners.

Because women are responsible for so many different domestic chores and the raising of children which is not remunerated, they do not have extra time to develop their entrepreneurial skills that can enable them raise personal funds for her financial independence. Ngeh (2000) concludes that, that is the reason why women remain poor because they do not have enough time, skills and means to run their businesses that would lead them to gender equality and emancipation.

Following the factors hindering the marketing of the products of women, those who were interviewed were asked to describe their perception about the factors that were hindering proper marketing of women's products. The major opinions were as follows: lack of proper training (86%), lack of raw materials (75%), lack of capital, 90% (human and financial capital), social

barriers (95%), sexual harassment and family restrictions (70%), religious beliefs and traditional customs (71%), lack of market information and networkings, 53%; lack of modern machineries and efficient workforce (60%). Irrespective of all these challenge, the poor rural women still break even because of the awareness raising campaigns carried out by successful feminine entrepreneurs. Gender emancipation is still possible through microfinance services and products.

The focus group discussions organized with the different stakeholders who are directly or indirectly involved with women emancipation development and microfinance entrepreneurship, the participants shared their experiences regarding problems of women's emancipation and financial independence as predicated on access to finance, non-registration of their businesses that exposes them to tax harassment and council debacles, lack of training and skills in development and banking matters, access to markets and information, restricted social mobility is hindering the evolution of their income generating activities. They are always in conflict with the laws. The absence of a uniform family code deprives the woman of equal rights to family property and finally though MFI are so many, there is lack of coordination between and among the different institutions working for women emancipation through MFI towards self and general development.

4.2 SOLUTIONS TO THE STAKES AND CHALLENGES THAT HINDERS THE ATTAINMENT OF GENDER EMANCIPATION THROUGH THE SERVICES AND PRODUCTS OF MICROFINANCE INSTITUTIONS

Notwithstanding the stakes and challenges that stand on the way to achieve gender emancipation through the services and products of MFI, there are workable and feasible solutions that encourage the enhancement of gender emancipation through MFI. Though several problems have been raised, the solutions weigh more than the problems. This justifies the fact that MFI is a necessary and important tool to accompany the woman towards financial autonomy, job creation and a self employed entrepreneur. Some of the earmarked solutions are:

Concerning access to finance, participants who were interviewed or took part in the focus groups discussion or responded to the questionnaires, said that the regulatory bodies of MFI, that is COBAC, BEAC and MINFI should fix up a target for each bank to provide loan for women's small and medium size enterprises and form a monitoring team to follow-up and evaluate the implementation of its decisions on financing loan schemes and interest rates.

For this access to finance to be practicable, loan schemes should be made user friendly. That is, a comprehensive credit policy should be initiated in order to create access of women to finance.

This, policy must keep a provision of collateral free loan, credit without interest or low rate of interest for long term loans. These loans should maintain a gender disaggregated data that monitors the progress of the loan disbursement to women.

Since the reinforcement of capacities, competences, skills and know-how is a categorical imperative in banking and finance transactions, training and capacity development sensitizations should establish entrepreneurship development academy for the building or recycling of women's capabilities and competences on the importance of MFI in the emancipation of gender. Business management, accounting, bookkeeping, marketing, business planning and banking transactions should be developed in favour of women. In this training, ICTs should not be left out. For this training to attain its desired impact, counseling services to the woman on a regular basis should be done on a regular basis. She should undertake a comprehensive training programme based on her needs assessment.

In other not to continuously run in conflict with the law, tax officials and council workers, should respect the existing provisions of tax holidays, exhaunorations and tax-exemptions which is extended for a considerable number of yeas so that she can breakeven to take care of her household needs and have reserves to save in the MFI. This done she would liberate and free herself from male chauvinism. For female entrepreneurs involved in capital goods importation, special tariffs should be given to them.

The organisation of marketing and development of business network would resolve the problem of access to market. The organised workshop and seminars would provide market intelligence to the woman through cross-visits, door-to-door campaigns amongst women entrepreneur within and out of the country. The development of an up to date data base on potential buyers of the products of women and making it readily available would ease networking, demand, supply, pricing and delivery. The organisation of trade fairs and expositions will showcase their know-how as well as link them up to potential buyers; for instance MIRAP.

The removal of social barriers and the creation of an enabling environment with a level play ground would open up opportunities for the actors to have a fair share of the advantages of economies of scale. The introduction of lessons on entrepreneurship development in educational curriculum would have a trickle down effects because it would be a mechanism to change social attitudes towards women. This would be made manifest by the establishment of an information centre that is well equipped with information on markets, designs, buyers, sources of finance,

services and products of MFI as well as the practice and procedures in such structures. The role of the media to break down these barriers cannot be over emphasised.

In addition to existing poverty eradication programs, the government should undertake a separate program for women entrepreneurship development. This separate program would maintain a quota for women in the project undertaken by respective ministries and make sure that this quota is maintained properly. The effectiveness is to ensure the representation of women in different committees that are engaged in women entrepreneurship development.

Approaches to redress the challenges of gender stratification and stagnation that hinders the evolution of gender emancipation through MFI are the contestation and revandication approaches of the French school which seeks to give reason why feminists want to correct these inequalities as well as engage actions and movement for the edification of their actions because they are fighting the course for their involvement, emancipation, empowerment, liberation and freedom to bring equality between the status of men and women to benefit equitably from the services and products of microfinance institution towards development.

A final solution to surmount the stakes and challenges that hinder the enforcement of gender emancipation through MFI is the development of gender sensitive indicators which are essential mechanisms and tools for monitoring the impact of microfinance activities on male and females and on changes in gender relations as a result from using the benefits from MFI services and products. For MFI to be gender sensitive, the indicators need to:

- require the collection of sex-disaggregated information wherever possible on who participates and benefits;
- assess whether the program/project has different benefits and impacts for males and females and assist us to analyse why these differences between women and men occur;
- assess whether the program/project is bringing about a change in gender relations and assist us to analyse how gender relations are changing positively or negatively and how this impacts on the achievement of overall program/project objectives and finally;
- involve both women and men in developing indicators and in collecting and analyzing information.

In other to interpret the indicators correctly, both quantitative and qualitative indicators should be taken into consideration while assessing benefits, changes in gender relations and other impacts. For example, a quantitative gender sensitive indicator for emancipation programs may

measure the number of male and females who attend awareness raising workshops on MFI activities. On the other hand, a qualitative indicator may assess whether female and males can identify ways to protect themselves from MFI bankruptcy, insolvency and liquidation. That is to say how can they protect themselves from negative financial practices.

CONCLUSION

This study titled “**An assessment of the roles of microfinance institutions in the enhancement of gender emancipation in Yaounde VI**” tries to analyse the contribution of microfinance institutions at alleviating poverty, providing financial self sustainability, breakdown the barriers of all forms of discrimination, violence and marginalisation and finally to enhance feminine emancipation towards gender equality and equity in all spheres and domain of life.

This assessment is done with the help of the following MFI like Sumediang Financing (SUMFI), Chartered Financial Assistance (CFA) and the Awing Central Cooperative Credit Union (AWICCUL). From the raised research questions and the formulated hypothesis, the parameters to guide this assessment were based on the roles played by MFI, the contribution of male and female genders to sustain their savings, support from the institution to encourage development towards self employment, job creation and financial independence.

The conclusion shall be presented through the findings of this research study, the conclusion proper and recommendations to improve the roles of MFI to better attain the objectives of this research dissertation which is the enhancement of gender emancipation towards liberty and freedom of both genders.

01 FINDINGS

The first finding is that MFI play a preponderant and paramount role at emancipating the population from poverty. This is done through the sponsoring of micro-projects from the savings of its clients. That is to say, it helps individuals, households and communities to rebuild their lives through entrepreneurship and innovative self-reliant projects.

The role of poverty alleviation, towards socio-economic development for the rural poor communities is done through the multipurpose, dynamic and savings oriented nature of microfinance services and products. The MFI as a strategy encourage and mobilise communities to save irrespective of the amount that will enable the creation of excess capital which is in turn ploughed back to expand their businesses or create new ones. Their activities to eradicate poverty are not only limited to cash operations but it is extended to other social services like family planning, gender equality, women emancipation through different empowerment efforts, education and training as well as the creation of self-help groups and networkings.

The second findings is that it is of vital importance to emancipate the woman by reinforcing her capacities, competences, skills and know-how thus transforming her into a job-creator who is first of all self employed and financially autonomous. With these characteristics, she can efficiently manage her **welwithels** to change lives, structures, situations as an agent for development and meaningful change. By investing in the woman and the girl child not leaving out the men and boys, we can accelerate socio-economic and political progress.

For women and girls to effectively play their role as agents of change through emancipation, they need to be included at all levels of decision making to ensure that their needs are properly met and their candid opinions taken into considerations (having a sense of belonging).

It is a fact from our findings that where women prosper, the society prospers and where women suffer, so too the society in which they live in. That is why this dissertation supports all the millennium and sustainable development goals through its human development programs in health, education, gender and youth development.

The third finding is on the emergence and evolution of MFI. Even though MFI had emerged in the North West region in the 1960s, through the foresight of Rev. Father JASEN a Dutch from Holland, its evolution escalated in the early 1990s due to the economic crisis and the bankruptcy of mainstream banks like Cameroon bank, BICEC Bank, SGBC banks, etc. This led to the disappearance and freezing of accounts of clients. As a result misery and abject poverty set in. As a way out, microfinance and cooperative societies came up to solve the financial problems of its members.

Our findings revealed that MFI represents a broad range of geographically diverse micro-credit institutions that offers financial services and products designed to the poor who could not be served by the formal mainstream banks because of their bureaucratic constraints and other stringent banking and finance conditions. Lafourcade et al, (2005) says MFI operates on the policy of self-help. They have a very low level of profitability. Their interest rate from loan schemes and other services are for the benefit of household as it addresses basic social problems and fight against poverty and all forms of discriminations.

Its evolution has provided quality financial products and services to members by the collection of deposits from the general public and women in particular, safeguard their savings and make them available to members on demand after profits and interests are deducted. That is to say they offer financial assistance to members to enable them fully embark on their various

economic, social and agricultural activities. It thereby alleviates poverty through financial assistance to the poor especially women in rural and peripheral zones of cities who are engaged in household chores. In sum, the emergence of MFI is an important tool for poverty eradication, gender emancipation, women empowerment, and gender equality and equity.

Our findings further found out that despite the advantages that flow from the services and products of MFI, there are some challenges that MFI produces for its clients as well as institutional and operational hurdles that it has to surmount or overcome if it wants to stay in business. The issue of taxes and duties that is levied on MFI is exorbitant. Even though there are laid down procedures, practices and texts that regulates the activities and operations of MFI, the taxes are killing them. Besides the statutory taxes, overhead and ancillary taxes and rates come up that surprises and overwhelm the operators of MFI. As a consequence, it is the clients who suffer because the MFI spreads the risk by levying it on the clients in the form of high interest rates or charges on any transactions at the counter of the bank.

Notwithstanding the stakes of taxation, another problem is with the personnel of the MFI. Some do not know the ethics and deontology of banking. They are not only rude but lack the refineness to communicate with clients. This poor communication and archaic infrastructures have caused loan recovery culture, projects survey, monitoring and evaluation almost impossible. Their exorbitant interest rates make it difficult for the poor borrower to meet up with the loan repayment schedules thereby threatening her sustainability. The lack of information flow, leaves the client to grope in the dark.

Administrative bottlenecks and cumbersome procedures and opaque practices of control official within the MFI, makes accountability difficult, thereby paving a fertile ground for corruption, fraud, self agrandisement, favouritism, inter and intra personnel conflicts an epidemy and canker worm in the microfinance industry, (Fagha, 2010).

02 RECOMMENDATION

From our findings, the following recommendations can be proposed to the government, policy makers, the university, the community, MFI, the concerned genders, clients of MFI as well as men and women to improve on the services and products of MFI so that gender emancipation can be achieved to liberate and free women from the domination of their male counterpart through financial independence. The recommendation if properly followed would alleviate poverty, provide financial sustainability to the woman and both genders, eliminate all forms of discrimination against women and enhance feminine empowerment through gender emancipation. Some of these recommendations are:

- 1- Concerning poverty alleviation, policy makers and stakeholders should raise the gender awareness of decision-makers on the importance to involve women into all development plans. They should eliminate poverty and its root causes so that women can live with dignity and realize their ideals and goals of gender equality through financial emancipation with the help of MFI. Such action to eradicate poverty should appeal to the government to give full consideration to the special, practical and strategic needs of the woman while formulating policies concerning MFI so that the poor women can have access to resources, land and other products that would enable her engage into income generating activities so that she can save for rainy days in those microfinance. They should take measures to guarantee that women and men enjoy equal rights by eliminating the unequal restrictions on women's access to credit. To finally improve the financial stands of women and the other gender, stakeholders should increase investments in social services and social security in their financial expenditure and accelerate the establishment of sustainable social security systems without any discrimination.
- 2- Ensure women's all-round participation in economic production and development which entails the formulation of economic development strategy, participate in economic decision-making and management processes, allocation and utilization of resources, equal opportunity of participating in economic activities, gain of reasonable labour and work promotion, and finally the enjoyment of labour protection and social security.

For this economic production and development to be attained, there is need to establish women's data base at all levels so that gender analysis will become a component part of planning, decision-making, projecting of macro and micro departments at different levels

and resource allocation and utilisation will reflect all the more women's interest and the social norm of equality between women and man.

Laws on equal employment opportunities for women and men as well as its distribution according to work should be formulated and implemented with the relevant mechanisms to protect mobile and migrant women workers from social, economic and sex exploitations.

- 3- For her to play her rightful role in her triple functions of production, reproduction and community animation, she has to be educated as a categorical imperative and a condition sine qua-non. Since ignorance is attributed to darkness, education on the other hand is that light that charms away darkness and fear. To charm away ignorance and fear, primary or basic education has to be universalised and made free in accordance with actual conditions because those who cannot read or write or manipulate the computer are illiterates indeed. Whether it is pedagogic education (for children) or androgogic education for adults, both sexes should go to school because "the illiterate mother of today is the girl child of yesteryears who did not go to school". Stakeholders have to eliminate illiteracy among the women folk so that they can play their role as agents for change and development. That is to say we should develop their human resources and enhance their abilities and qualifications through different forms of education so that they can take their proper place in different areas of human activities.
- 4- For gender emancipation to be attained, both genders have to be in good health. Since output depends on good health, improving their health condition will not only benefit women themselves because it is of vital importance for the sustainable development of the whole society. Since women have their particular health needs, appropriate, affordable and quality health care services for women should be provided to them so that their output can be improved. We should thus advocate and enhance the study of health protection and urge the collection and analysis of relevant gender based statistical data, so that women's health situation will be included into the policies, programmes and projects so that appropriate counter-measures can be taken.
- 5- Without money, politics cannot be well played. To do this, stakeholders have to clear away every visible or invisible obstacles to women's political participation. Change the prejudicial and discriminatory views on them and their roles in decision-making so that they can manifest their intelligence and wisdom. We have to thus encourage and deepen women

study, provide sufficient gender-based analytical and statistical data for the government and legislative bodies to make policies and plans with regards to women political participation.

- 6- To eliminate discrimination against women, prohibit violence against women and protect women's rights which is of interest of all, we have to safeguard women's human rights in order to reduce conflict gaps between perpetrators of violence by ensuring not only "de jure" but also "de facto" equality between women and men. Violators should be punished according to the law through the adopted preventive and punitive measures.
- 7- To the MFI specifically, interest rates of micro loans should be standardized under the national control laws of COBAC, BEAC and MINFI regulatory bodies. This will help build clients borrowing confidence, and sense of belonging. They should introduce the Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) and other softwares to facilitate accounting operations. This will go a long way to curb the problem of clients' complaints, theft, and corruption.

As a matter of fact, trained personnel should be employed who know and respect banking ethics, practice and procedures. Above all, they should carry out sensitisation to inform, educate and communicate their products and services through interpersonal communication for behavioural change.

In sum, from the research carried out using the various techniques, methodologies and empirical evidences, one can conclude without fear, favour or bias that, despite the stakes and challenges inherent in the services and products of MFI, its advantages outweigh its inconveniences. It is confirmed that it is a vital tool for gender financial self sustenance, poverty alleviation and the eradication of discriminations, violence and marginalisation for the enhancement of emancipation and equality.

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ANNEX

Annex I: List of Respondents for the interview and Questionnaires

N°	Name of Respondent	Age	Sex	Place of Interview
1	Tamasong Haruna	45	Male	Obili-Carefour
2	Mesumbe Eric	40	Male	Stalone
3	Susan Mbatsogo	45	Female	Polytech
4	Ebage Ekoti	46	Male	Etoug-Ebe
5	Tambe Mary	55	Female	Centre Handicapé
6	Mrs. Agbor Ambang	43	Female	Amide Jeune
7	Domka Gene Dom	47	Female	Bonamusadi
8	Mary Ndumbe	32	Female	Nsimeyong
9	Ekane Joseph	24	Male	Acacia
10	Enongene Emanuel	30	Male	Marché Melen
11	Tatang Felix	50	Male	Mvog-Bessi
12	Mulema Ophilia	28	Female	Miniferme
13	Donfack Pulcheire	39	Female	Biyem-Assi
14	Soso Monekosso	56	Female	Flamenco
15	Kambe Sone	44	Male	Science
16	Lucien Ebah	38	Male	Tsinga
17	Ekwonge Serge	27	Male	Ngoakelle
18	Fontoh Leng Grace	37	Female	Obili Chapel
19	Nanfack Marie	43	Female	Bisquiterie
20	Mbella Jean	15	Female	Emia
21	Susan Njare	25	Female	Etoug-Ebe
22	Ebage Nelli	40	Female	TKC
23	Rebecca Nlepe	43	Female	Carrefour Kameni
24	Edimo Mamodu	51	Female	GP Melen
25	Kulibali Mamodu	60	Male	Mokolo
26	Nkwo Harry Moscow	47	Male	Biyem-Assi
27	Odine John	26	Male	Mending
28	Ekolle Franka	35	Female	Melen
29	Susan Sakwe	25	Female	Acacia
30	Nanje Grace	24	Female	Chapelle Obili
31	Bobé Gladys	42	Female	Bisquiterie
32	Esomba Mado	34	Female	Biyem-Assi
33	Njikang Sylvie	35	Female	Ngoa Ekelle

Annex II: Interview Guide

1. Greetings and exchange of pleasantries.
2. Self introduction of interviewee and interviewer.
3. Introduction of reasons for interview.
4. Do you know about the services and products of microfinance institutions?
5. Is it of any advantage or disadvantage to you?
6. Which type of accounts do you operate there?
7. Are the workers friendly or otherwise?
8. Who introduced you into MFI transactions?
9. Are you satisfied with its services?
10. How do you raise income that you go and save in that MFI?
11. Is your spouse or partner aware that you have an account there?
12. What do you do with your savings and account?

Thank you for your answers.

Annex III: Focus Group Discussion Guide

1. Greetings and self introduction and reasons for the discussion.
2. What is your knowledge on the services and products of MFI?
3. The impact of MFI is it negative or positive in your life, family, household and community?
4. How did you start transacting with the MFI?
5. Those who are not members of any MFI, what is disturbing you?
6. Those who are members, how do you raise money that you go and save?
7. What do you do with the money that you save in those institutions?
8. Since you started saving your money, do you have any gender problems or discriminations?

Thank you for your contributions.

Annex IV: Questionnaire

This questionnaire is aimed at assessing the role of MFI whether it enhances or retards gender emancipation towards development. Your answers which are confidential would contribute to the furtherance of academic research.

A. Identification of Respondent

- 1- Occupation: _____
- 2- Residence: _____
- 3- Sex: Male Female
- 4- Age: _____
- 5- Marital Status: _____
- 6- Qualification: _____
- 7- Religion: _____

B. Knowledge of the Subject Matter

- 8- Do you know microfinance institutions? Yes No
- 9- What are its services and products? Savings Deposit Loans
Money Transfer Others
- 10- How are its services? Difficult Easy
- 11- What are some of the problems encountered? _____

- 12- What solutions do you propose to solve problems? _____

- 13- Did anybody encourage you to join a MFI? Yes No
- 14- Did anybody hinder you from joining a MFI? Yes No
- 15- What do you use your savings for? _____

- 16- Since you have this account, has your life changed? Yes No
- 17- How do you raise money that you go and save in the MFI? _____

- 18- With the MFI, are you financially self-sustainable? Yes No
- 19- Has poverty been alleviated in your family and household? Yes No
- 20- Are you emancipated to liberate and free yourself from discrimination, violence and rejections? Yes No

Thank you for your responses.

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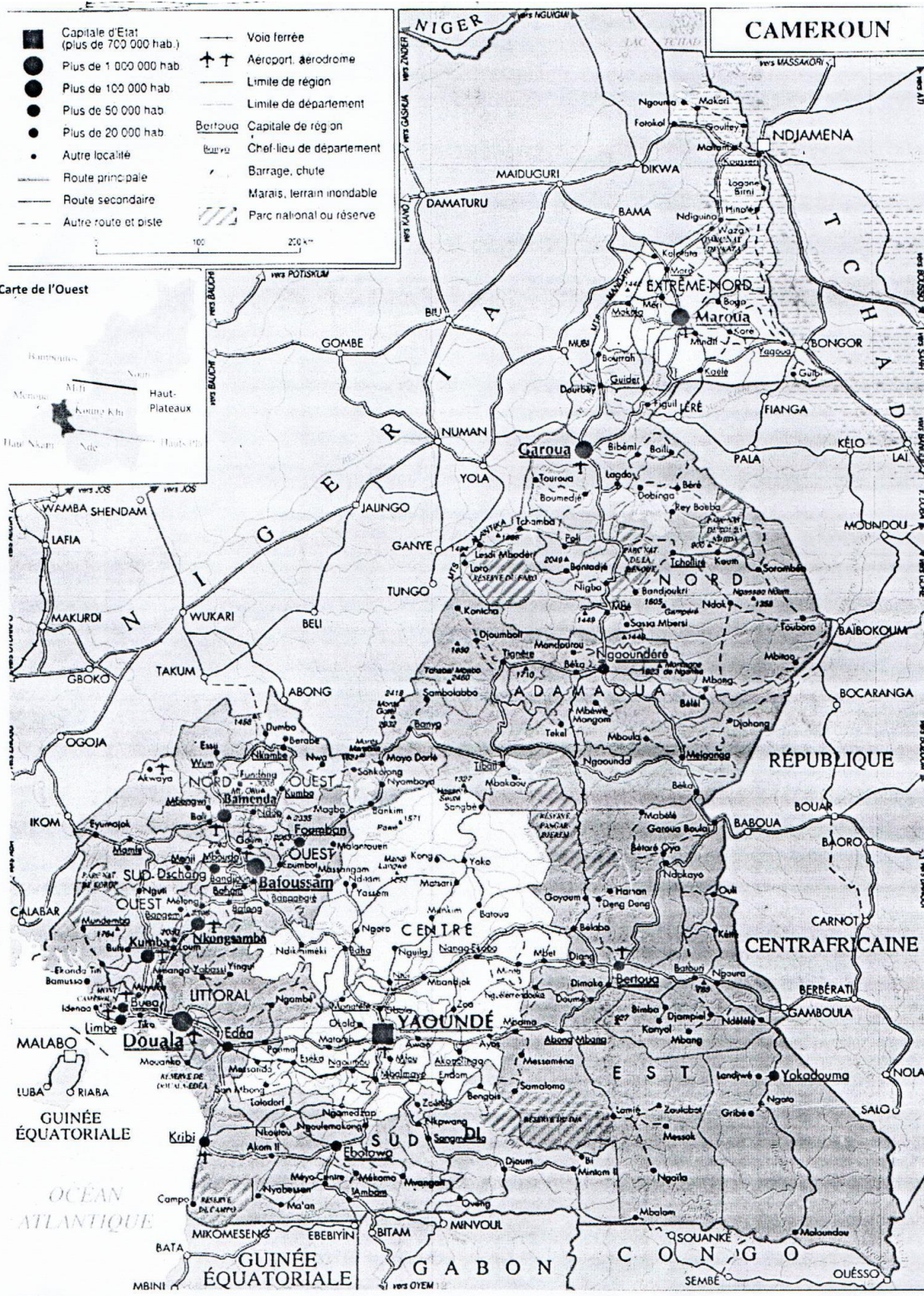
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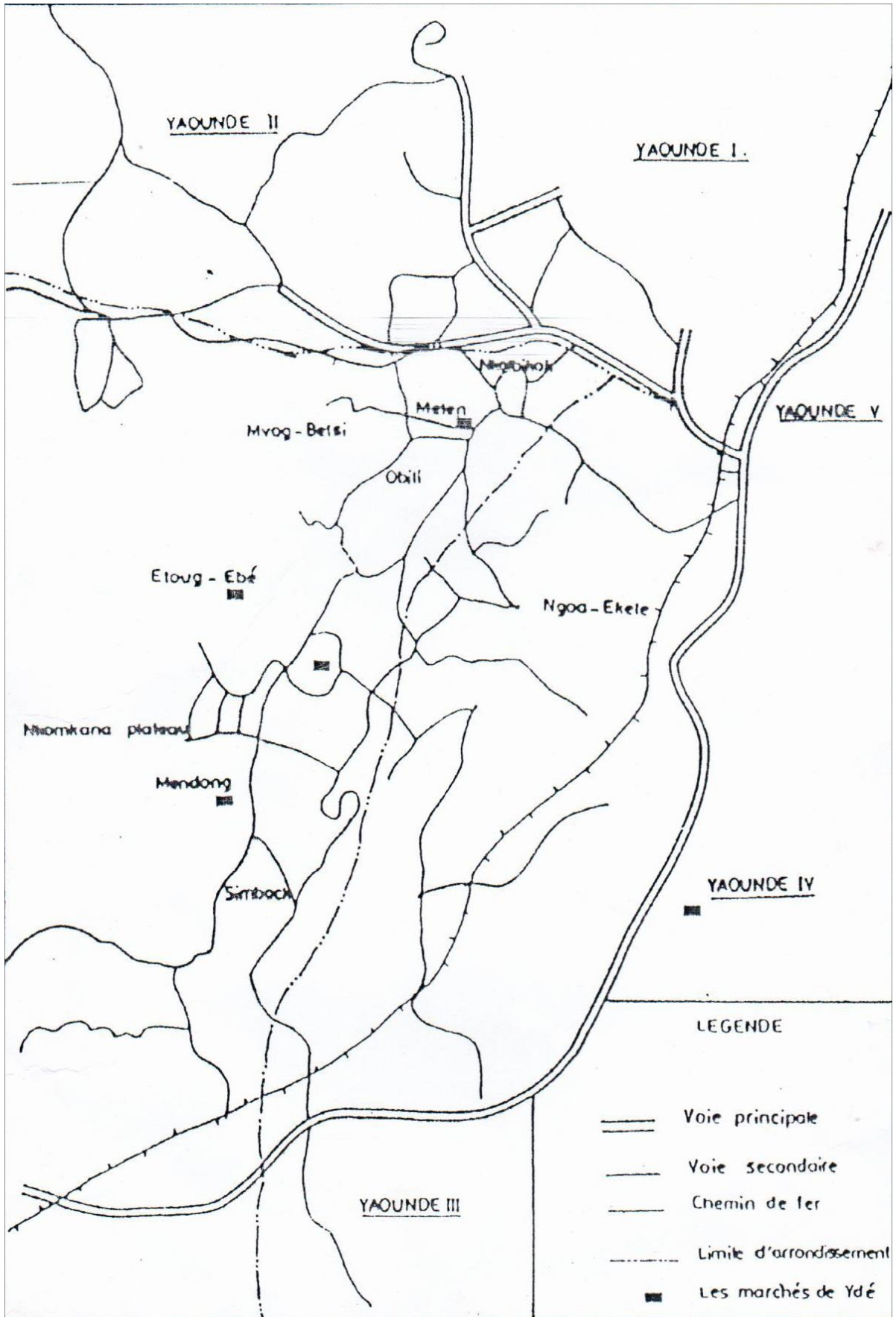
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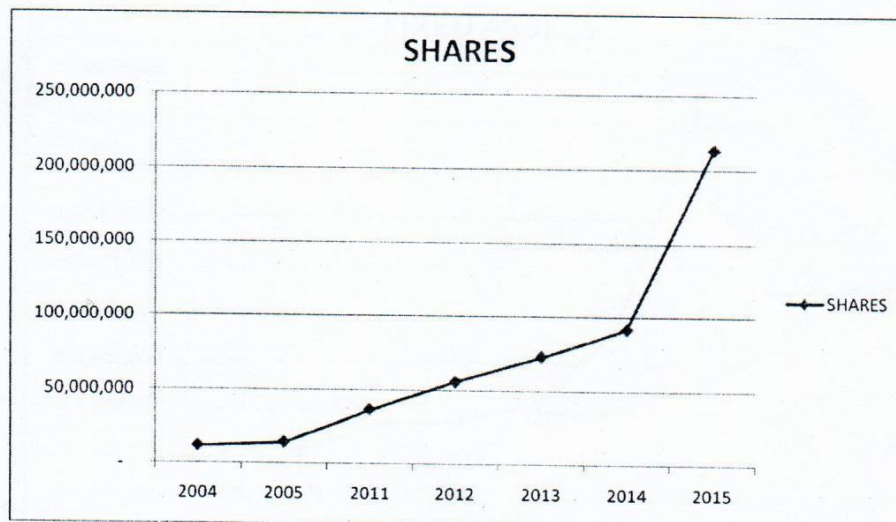


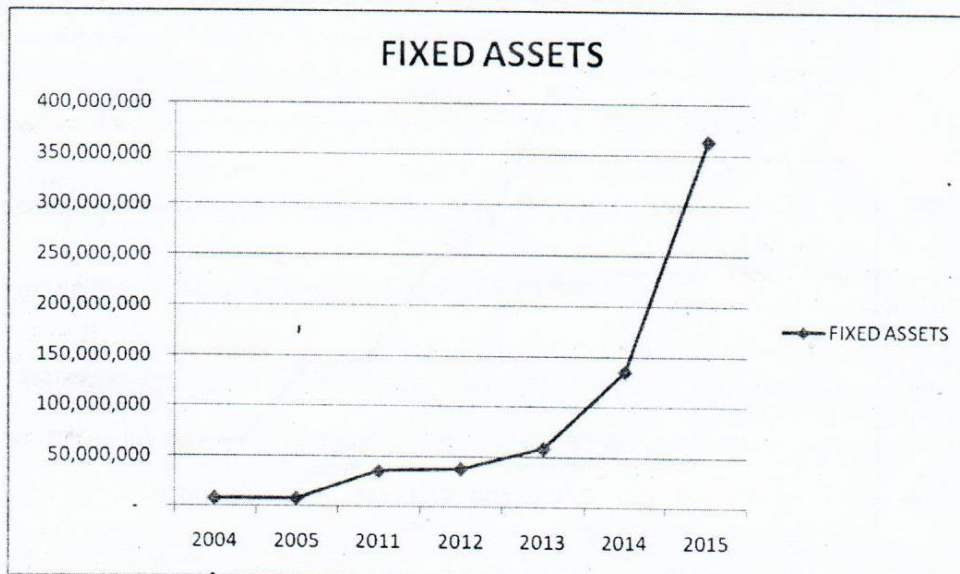
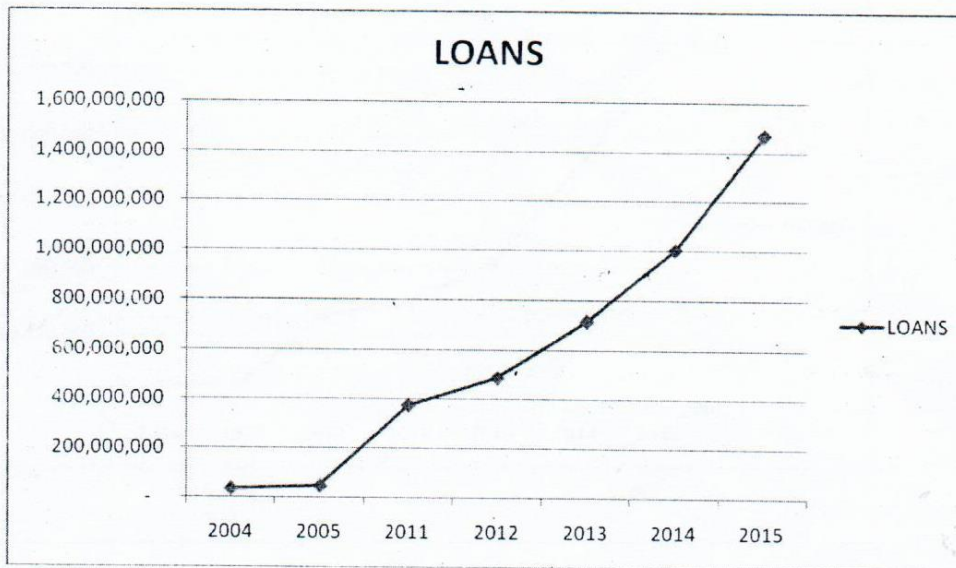
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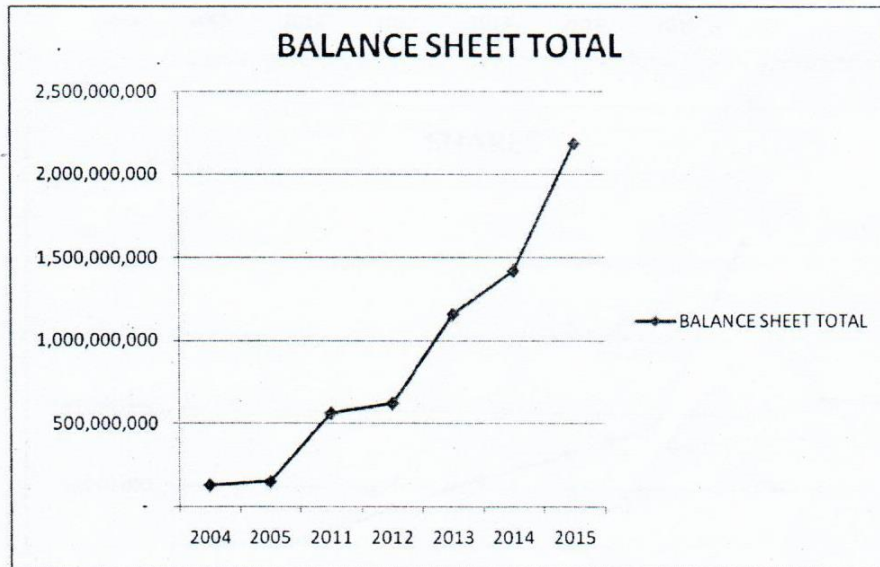
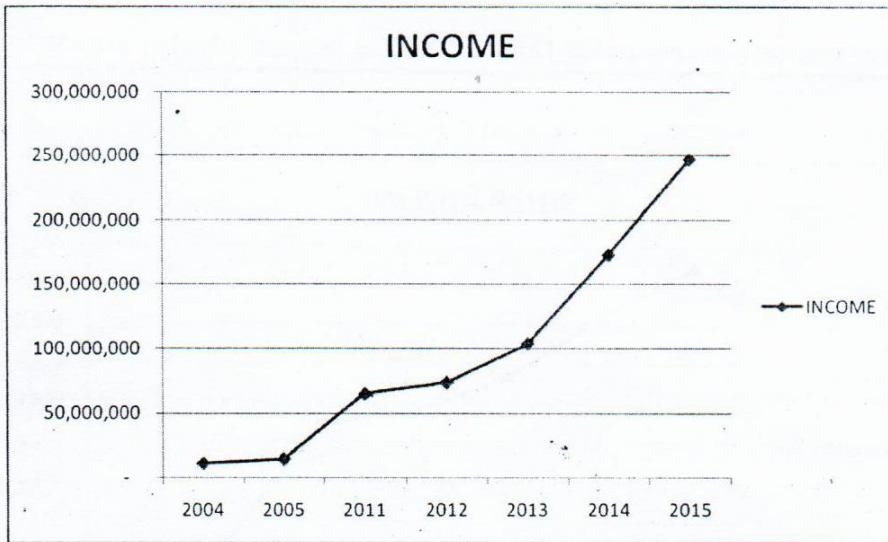
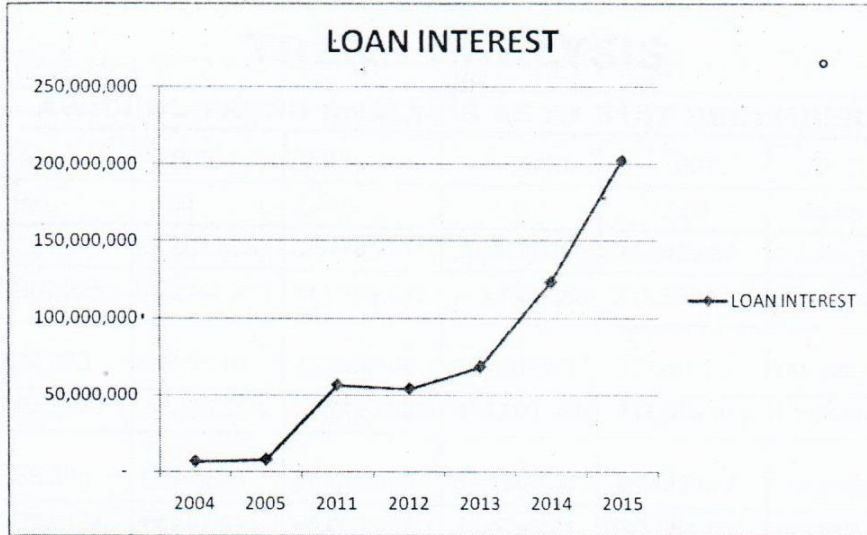


Annex VII: Trend Analysis of products and services of awiccul

AWICCU TREND ANALYSIS AS AT 31ST DECEMBER 2015							
YEAR	2004	2005	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
MEMBERSHIP	591	720	2,240	2,407	2,839	3,608	4,252
SHARES	11,820,000	14,404,505	36,778,314	56,042,678	73,245,964	91,982,154	213,199,898
SAVINGS	93,402,225	115,142,319	475,799,393	513,844,356	715,559,601	1,107,544,398	1,205,902,522
FIXED ASSETS	8,094,913	8,080,310	35,853,106	38,484,893	59,049,038	135,623,221	363,695,261
LOANS	37,023,093	48,197,224	378,423,928	489,003,080	717,374,013	1,005,476,669	1,470,787,435
LOAN INTEREST	6,568,385	7,693,505	56,740,000	54,176,356	68,469,827	123,210,255	202,511,816
INCOME	10,950,124	14,252,612	65,003,127	73,579,221	103,554,137	173,080,993	247,011,611
BALANCE SHEET TOTAL	128,769,836	149,991,198	561,827,319	619,781,321	1,158,586,414	1,421,658,011	2,180,812,128







Source : AWICCUL 2015 Annual Report