

# “*Suffer Don Finish*”, Counting the Cost of Multiparty Upheavals in Bamenda, Cameroon in the 1990s

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**Abstract:** - The history and character of multiparty politics at the local level in Cameroon coincided with the evolution of things in the rest of Africa as affected by the Cold War politics. It took the debilitating effects of the World economic slump of the 1980s and the early 1990s to once more unleash a kind of venomous wave of radical change that blew across Africa with a very high velocity destroying existing conservative forces along its way. Therefore, 1990 marked a watershed in Cameroons' political history as multiparty politics was re-introduced with the launching of the Social Democratic Front (SDF) or (*suffer Don Finish*)<sup>i</sup> in Bamenda. Its launching saw the death of six Cameroonians, the militarization and the imposition of a dawn-to-dusk curfew<sup>ii</sup> in the town. This paper raises many questions, and sought potential answers as well. How did the people of Bamenda survive the dawn to dusk curfew imposed in the town? How did they feed themselves regularly? How did they go about their businesses in the presence of gun trotting-military men? How did they communicate? How, when and why were the troops eventually withdrawn? What are the long term consequences of these upheavals? Sources will be mostly gotten from ordinary people who were involved and implicated in the processes, newspapers and archives. On the whole, the paper is written from the perspective of the voiceless people.

**Keywords:** *Suffer Don Finish*, Multiparty, Counting, Cost, Upheavals and Bamenda.

## I. INTRODUCTION

The re-introduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s following the ‘wind of change’ from Eastern Europe unleashed a venomous spate of conflicts which took on serious ethnic, regional and socio-economic and political dimensions in some African countries (Kah, 2018). In many African Countries South of the Sahara, the leaders were reluctant to embrace multi-party politics when it was re-introduced in the 1990s. According to Bayart (2009:20), in Cameroon for instance, President Paul Biya reluctantly embraced multi-party politics only after much pressure at home and from the international community. The town of Bamenda played a momentous role in the struggle for political liberalisation in the 1990s, because it was the birth place of the first opposition party the Social Democratic Front (SDF)<sup>iii</sup>. As a result of this, Bamenda was regularly subjected to political violence and insecurity especially during periods of electoral consultations (Nyinchiah, 2016:42) largely because it was the fief of the main Opposition Party, *Suffer Don Finish*-the SDF. This violence seriously affected some young people in and around Bamenda (who actively took part in the political manoeuvres of the 1990s) but they chose to seize

different opportunities to survive (Ibid, 2016: 74) rather than resign to fate. This paper therefore, prop into firstly, how the people at the margins of national citizenship made sense of their lives in Bamenda, what mechanisms they employed to negotiate transition to full citizenry and, in a context where national institutional support for them had disappeared completely or was tenuous. Secondly, it would examine the socio-economic and political cost of the agitations that the town became deeply embroiled in, this in the context where Bamenda was viewed as defying all authority and state institutions and therefore all state institutional support to the people was withdrawn. The people designed and developed their own development and growth path. This forms the nub of this paper.

## II. THE ECONOMIC COST OF POLITICAL PLURALISM IN BAMENDA

The chaos that accompanied the reintroduction of multi-party politics in Bamenda negatively affected the economy, social institutions and introduced a culture of fear, borne out of intimidation and harassment by the forces of law and order. The people were described as violent and resistant by the government (Ngwana, 2001:178). Many foreign businesses in Bamenda especially those owned by the Nigerians were closed down. These business men and women moved to other towns where the atmosphere was more conducive to do business (Ibid :179). The local business people abandoned the town and moved to the periphery. One of the prominent businessmen in Bamenda, Andrea Kamdem, popularly known as Andy Brown pointed out that:

Most business people in Bamenda were doing business with money borrowed from big financial institutions. We had joint the struggle for change because we believed that the high taxes impose by the government on businesses (*Suffer Don Finish Emphasis*) would end and we will be able to pay our debts. Secondly, we had the hope that change will provide a conducive atmosphere for us to do big business. The reverse was true. Most of our businesses collapsed. Some people could not pay their debts and left the town for good. Some went out of the country. A majority are in their villages, and had sold their family lands to pay their debts. These contributed to divorces and serious family squabbles. The Ghost Town period brought us into this mess.

Before, the Bamenda man could buy a pair of shoes for 50000FCFA (US\$84.99) and above, but today they cannot (Kamdem, 2014).

It was clear that most people became part of the struggle for change for different reasons and ambitions most importantly to end suffering. It was to either evade taxes or means not to pay debts borrowed from financial institutions. This was likely what might have pushed some business people into politics in the 1990s in Bamenda. But a majority of the people of Bamenda wanted a change at all cost even at the expense of their bad financial status. This can be supported from the fact that, when the opposition designed “red cards” for the people to pay, at the cost of 5000FCFA (\$10) to 10000FCFA (\$20) per card, the people paid as sign for their support for ‘Biya Most Go’ and a change in the running of state affairs. Even government supporters had to carry this card to avoid their cars from being burnt down (Ngwana, 2001). This accelerated the rate of poverty in the town. The red cards did not exit Biya as they were made to understand by the opposition. The result was urban- rural migration.

The escalating violence had crippled one of the town’s major national and foreign income earning industry, crafts and tourism. Bamenda was noted for its traditional regalia (the Bamenda gown), carvings, smelting, births, lakes and landscape. As reports were made in the press of the violence, like in other conflicts zones, fewer and fewer tourists chose to visit Bamenda. Poverty set in as a vast majority of the people who made a living out of this sector were forced out of business. Articulating this situation, the Regional Chief for Cinematography and Audio-visual Production of culture for the North West Region, Tati Charles holds that:

Our regional delegation of culture had to move to the villages to get craftsmen and craft works for exhibition. Even those who were still involved in this industry did it only for leisure. In addition, whether it was by design or natural, our crafts were not being exhibited at the national level. Also, our craftsmen were not invited for such competitions. It was quite difficult for our ministry and the people. It took the ministry time, money and energy to revamp this sector and convince the crafts men to take up the art again (Tati: 2014).

Many who had depended on this sector for a living were unemployed and they lacked money to pay for basic social amenities like health, education, electricity and water. The result of this poverty inevitably caused emigration from the town to other regions and across the borders especially to the USA, Britain, Belgium, Germany and Canada. This introduced the syndrome of what Njamnjoh refers to as ‘*bushfalling*’, the culture of travelling abroad in search of jobs, sent remittances back home to help salvage the family from poverty. Those who could not move decided to make life through banditry and prostitution. This underground economy

of the urban poor resulted to insecurity and health problems like HIV and AIDS and other sexually transmissible diseases.

The presence of the forces of occupation in the town of Bamenda introduced and intensified the phenomenon of rape. This act was indiscriminate among the young girls and the middle aged women. The forceful contact between the soldiers and the young girls brought a lot of health problems. These ranged from unwanted pregnancies to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), including HIV and AIDS. The rate of STDs among youths during the period of the Curfew and State of Emergency was generally wide and unknown, given the large number of youths who were raped. They had unprotected sexual intercourse. It was clear that STDs would become a major problem in the township of Bamenda (Kwenda:2014). Dr Sama Kwende testified that, “It was discovered that most of the gendarmes who were sent to Bamenda were sero-positive.... It was “go out there and finish them.”(Ibid: 2014).

Besides, their guns, the soldiers used their health situation to decimate the population of Bamenda. Peterkins Manyong called it a biological warfare on the North West and the population of Bamenda.(Manyong:2008). By 1995 nearly 75% of HIV patients were below the age of 30 years. The group among men was between 20-24 years and it was lower in females of 15-19 years (Awasum: 2014). This was an indication that youths during the crises period were most vulnerable to chronic STDs. It also indicated that girls in Bamenda between the ages of 30-40 were infected and boys from 30-35 had contracted STDs (Kwende: 2014). Whole families were either affected or infected. This was a whole new crisis of its own. Bamenda was ranked first twice, in the 1990s as the Province with the highest HIV/AIDS carriers. This was as a result of the political crisis and post-election turmoil.

During the period of curfew and State of Emergency, movement especially in the night was restricted and sometimes completely forbidden. People converged most often in palm wine joints (*Mbuh houses*), and bars to share their experiences as well as release their tension, fear and stress. These places became risk zones. When they were in the drinking places in the evenings, some customers made decisions to either spend the night there or were ready to be harassed by the gendarmes or assist them in their actions if they had to go back home. These spots also became fertile places for the gendarmes, who like the civilians had to relieve themselves from stress by drinking palm wine. Some will drink, get drunk and even refuse to pay their bills (Focus Group Discussion: 2013)<sup>iv</sup>. Conflict always arose between them and the bar or *mbuh house* owners, who with the support of other customers, forced them to pay for what they had consumed. In a group discussion at “World Trade Centre”, a popular palm wine joint at Hospital Roundabout, they agreed that:

Palm wine houses were very busy during that period. The gendarmes visited off-licenses at first. But these palm wine houses were important because in the evenings, people who had stayed indoors the whole day and those who were involved in demonstrations came to inform others of the events and new information that might have been circulating. It encouraged some to either join them....The gendarmes who were exhausted after a long day's tussle with the demonstrators, came to these places to drink and have fun with women. Most often, they used force to satisfy their desires. The result was often confrontations with the people. Here, some people ended up being arrested and locked up (Ibid).

Most of these palm wine joints were owned by women. It was a means to make money and pay for their social services and those of their families who most often were in the villages. In addition, most of them were either unmarried or had divorced for economic and social reasons. Beltar Nganji, a palm wine joint proprietors said:

Some of our clients are agents of these security men since they know that most of us selling are not married. They informed some of these men who wanted to take advantage of us. Since it was more of politics, we hated them because they were Francophones. But some of us, who have no money, fell for them. It became their habit to come and eat and sleep in these places. Those who completely refused them and their money became their targets (Nganji: 2014).

Most of these squabbles between the population and some gendarmes called for reinforcements. Other gendarmes came into torture, arrest and seize the unfortunate women who were there. Moreover, some of the women had developed hatred for the soldiers simply because most of them spoke only French language which is the language of the Cameroon military. To the people of Bamenda, anyone speaking French was an enemy and a francophone and therefore not friends to the Bamenda man. The fight to collect bill, tended into a fight to liberate the women. In most instances, the soldiers overpowered the men and took the women away. The consequences of these actions ended in rape and sexual harassments (Focus Group Discussion, 2013).

The greatest casualties of rape and sexual intimidation were girls and women caught in taxis. A township taxi driver in Bamenda testified that, a taxi was stopped and all car and personal documents were demanded only from men. The men who were not in possession of such documents like the National Identity (ID) cards were demanded to pay between 200FCFA (US\$0.4) to 500FCFA (US\$1). In some cases, any coin that was placed in the palms of a soldier was pocketed notwithstanding the amount. The girls and women in the taxis were not asked to present any document. The soldiers said that "the women had a natural ID that was worth money". They

then ordered the women out of the car. Some women gave in out of fear (Vuof: 2013). Sometimes a few gun shots were fired in the air to frighten them or a slaps was given to dehumanise them. Others were raped just beside the taxi, and then pushed back into the car (Ibid). Those who put up any resistance were those who did not want to have sex with strangers, or those who asked that the soldiers should use protective-condoms. These confrontations produced two results: either, the victims were arrested and accused of fighting with the gendarmes or they were taken to the BMM (referred to by the gendarmes as 'God NO Dey'. There is no God here so victims were no to cry for help from God) at Up-Station for torture. The fact that God does not exist meant that there was no bargain for sex here. The "*balançoire*" or the torture machine made its victims accept doing anything after the first beating with the cane. Most of those who had the experience of the torture chamber and the "*balançoire*" at BMM like Labia Victor testified that:

There were no separate detention cells for men and women....A group of gendarmes, two or three, would move into the cell in the day or night and seize a girl or two to the corridor leading out of the cell and have sex with them. Sometimes, two or more will have sex with one girl...Some came back bleeding and others crying....Some detainees sometimes had sex with these girls too. (Labia:2014).

These were the daily occurrences experienced by the girls and women in Bamenda during the turbulent era. The transmission of sexually transmissible diseases was easy. Men who had unprotected sex with women and girls forcefully to amuse and entertain the gendarmes came in contact with any disease the women might have had from these soldiers. They transmitted these diseases on to their wives or girlfriends upon being released from the detention cells. Dr Kwende Sama is of the opinion that the soldiers were aware of their health situations, "they had to force some men who were in their custody to have sex with women they had infected". This contributed in the spreading of the diseases in the town of Bamenda. These stories made many women and girls to move about with condoms. In addition, others decided to befriend gendarmes in order not to be victims of the harassments, and others decided to have them to secure their release from the torture chamber. The hardship and the desire for basic items, coupled with poverty in Bamenda, made women and girls to become attracted to these gendarmes (Shang: 2013). The soldiers had some money to spend and so could secure sexual partners thereby spreading diseases. Labia Victor also testified that:

At some point, we advised some of the women in the detention cells to make the gendarmes their boyfriends and avoid harsh treatment from them. Some accepted while others were ready to continue receiving beatings from these forces of law (lessness) and (dis)order. Some of those that had accepted them, pleaded on behalf of those women who stood their grounds.

The emotional, physical and psychological experiences of the people of Bamenda during this era can be qualified based on the level of sexual abuse they went through from the hands of the gendarmes. Almost 95% of the sexual intercourse was unprotected, and resulted to unwanted pregnancies, the transmission of STDs, HIV and AIDS that became a serious social health problem in the region. This could have been a ploy to wipe out the younger generation both skilled and unskilled workers alike, and to deprive the region of its future. Basic social services were absent and the authorities did not care. Lack of educational facilities can be cited as an instance.

### *Education*

The Ghost Town and post-electoral disturbances were followed by the closure of some educational institutions in Bamenda. Teachers, students and pupils were confined to their homes. Professor Paul Nkwi states that there was no formal declaration from either the government or the opposition bench closing down schools and other economic institutions in the town. Parents and business operators, for fear of the safety of their children (students and pupils) and the security of their properties caused by the insecurity from both the gendarmes and the population, withdrew their children from school and shut down their businesses respectively. But Henry Kam Kah who was a secondary school student at Longla Comprehensive College, Bamenda and who had suffered the effects of this disorder in the school calendar argues that, with the post elections violence, the opposition parties had called for the boycott of schools. They called it off when they saw that children and students in other parts of Cameroon were going to school.

Opposition supporters, in order to show their disappointment, marched in the major streets of the town. In some cases, the non-violent marches turned violent as the security officers, fired teargas, threw grenades and used water cannons in their attempt to disperse the demonstrators. In Bamenda, the population went wild and resorted to the burning down and the destruction of property. Schools and other educational establishments were among the institutions destroyed. The biggest lay private school in Anglophone Cameroon, Nacho Comprehensive High School, was burnt down. By 1992, the school hosted a student population of about 5000. The proprietor, Albert Cho Ngafor, (Manyong: 2008) had declared his support for the CPDM. He was unfortunate, given that it was alleged that he was among the North West elite that had co-founded the SDF and he had defected because his relation was appointed Prime Minister-Simon Achidi Achu. The population viewed this as open betrayal and so they decided to punish him. It was for this reason that not only were his school and home at Foncha Street set ablaze, but he was also molested by the angry crowd. Nsom Cyril, a resident of Nacho Junction, Atuakom, a civil society activist and an eye witness to the event stated that:

The crowd gathered at the main gate of the college. Ngafor came with a revolver and fired some shots in

the air to frighten and disperse the crowd....This was done in the presence of gendarmes. After a few minutes, someone shouted that his bullets were finish...From every indication, this destruction and the burning was organized from the top to sabotage Bamenda and its quest for change. Those who were involved in these acts were not marching for democracy. Some people in the government used it as opportunity to settle scores with their political enemies (Nsom: 2015).

Nsom pointed out that Ngafor was not one of the founders of the SDF(SDF:2015:35), but it was the belief that most popular business people in Bamenda were background supporters for change and consequently supporters of the new political party which was out to counter the ruling CPDM. On the other hand, in the desire to win the business people in to the government camp, it was alleged that the CPDM elite of Bamenda had sponsored vandals to commit these atrocities in order to discredit the opposition and made these business magnates to see the ruling party and the government as that which promotes peace and not violence. This was true to some degree because most of the burnings were done with either few security men on the scene or they would arrive late. More so, the duty of any security officer in such a situation was to protect the lives and properties and institutions of this nature. It was not the case in Bamenda. As Doh Emmanuel Fru in his *Nomads: The Memoir Of A Southern Cameroonian* puts it, "I watched through the window of my house in Gomgham, I saw the crowd set fire on Tita Fomumkong's house....The police did not show up to rescue Alhadji and his family. About thirty minutes later, a police helicopter flew a few circles over the area and apparently half-heartedly tossed tear gas canisters far from the angry mob, to no effect, and then it turned and was gone as quietly as it had showed up". (Fru: 2013:141) This was therefore true not only for Ngafor and his school but to Ncho and his Mile Eight Mankon Hotel Resort.

The burning down of Nacho College posed a serious problem to the students and parents of Nacho Comprehensive High School for two reasons. Firstly, most parents and students had already paid their school fees and so it was difficult for them to have money to pay again in another school, given that from 1990 to 1992, Bamenda had not known peace and so most economic activities had been grounded. Being one of the most popular schools, Nacho College commanded pride and prestige, factors that conditioned students' choice of that particular school. With this situation, between 1991 and 1993, a majority of students and pupils stayed at home. Only the children of the rich and the elite who could afford the hundreds of CFA, paid the school fees of their children in the "elitist" and prestigious mission colleges in the town, and which were heavily guarded by the security officers. Some destitute students came to the end of the road of their educational pursuit.

During the period of 1991 to 1992 there were calls for "No school until Biya resigns." It was a means employed by the



people of Bamenda to force the president out of power. The “no school” slogan accounted for one reason why the rallies of this period were heavily attended. The students and teachers who were supposed to be in the classrooms were idle and found solace in political activism. This did not produce the intended results and so the political and social actors decided to make a reversal of the policy. Firstly, it disfavoured the children of the poor particularly and secondly it was disadvantageous to the region as a whole. In his homilies and pastoral letters to the people of Bamenda, the Archbishop of Bamenda, His Grace Paul B. Verdzev called on all Christians and all people of goodwill to consider the education of their children, and the necessity to preserve the future of Cameroon first. (Verdzev:2013) This was simply because education had some good public aspects with enormous externalities. It became the concern of individuals and collective effort to convince the political leaders of the 1990’s to set Bamenda “free”.

One of the heavily attended SDF rallies of late 1992 was summoned to map out the strategy in this stalemate. The government had refused to comply, the president had refused to resign and the children in Bamenda were at home. The Bamenda people attended the rally with one thing in mind “war”, but these were people without any military training, no weapons nor support from other regions and even neighbouring countries for their course. However, their tenacity and resilience that had sustained them from the early 1990s convinced them that with their dane guns and with the probability that the soldiers would turn against the gendarmes, they could resist and even go to war. Opening the rally, at the Mankon Municipal Stadium, the Chairman Ni John Fru Ndi with his usual charisma and energy, greeted his people in the traditional SDF slogan:

“SDF Power, SDF Power, SDF Power to the people and equal opportunities”. (3x)

This slogan from the chairman was a call for silence, for attention and one for the next line of action. It was already close to three months and schools were not on. The Bamenda public-the students, teachers, parents and school authorities seemed to enjoy it. They showed no signs of fatigue. People’s stance was echoed in the local proverb in Pidgin English which states that, “*under pot no di fear smoke and fire.*” In other words, the people were prepared to die. Far from this expectation, the chairman opted for the return to school. When this pronouncement was made, the people for the first time responded angrily to the chairman “No! No! No!” They clamoured in these words in Pidgin English:

“Which time? Which time? We don suffer, you don send your pikin dem for Whiteman country make dem go school. We own dem dey house, we no go go....” (2x)

This was a demonstration of the people’s anger and frustration. The masses were not completely ignorant of the prevailing situation, given that they were aware that the

children of the rich and the elites must be attending schools abroad but what they wanted was change, a change that would come for both the rich and the poor. But, at this juncture, the rich and the party leadership, because of their financial prowess had sent their children to a more secured study environment, with the surety that upon completion, they would secure good jobs. “Whiteman Country” or abroad was perceived as the surest place to secure good life, a good field for big harvest within the shortest means. In other words, people left with the notion that, they had worked and sacrificed the future of their children for the “big” people and their families, was much talked about in the town of Bamenda. The rally ended abruptly, as the crowd uttered the words and dispersed with heavy hearts. They went away with the thought of how to prepare their children to go back to school.

Out of the stadium and in the neighbourhoods, the slogan was still the same: “No education and war against Paul Biya”. The intention most probably was that another rally would be convened to reverse that statement. Most parents only realized that it was final. It was in January 1991 when their children went back to school. Most parents at this time were poor and had hardly envisaged the back to school soon. Most school authorities had also not planned for the resumption of schools. The students and pupils themselves were disillusioned with education and school. They were for “Biya must go”. Most were already thinking and making projections of a new Cameroon when Biya would have gone. The fact became clear that “Biya would not go”. This posed another major problem to the people who needed an urgent therapy to their social problem.

Bamenda town by the 1990s had few schools to accommodate the number of pupils and students. The existing schools had tight admission procedures due to lack of vacancies. The requirements that ranged from complete school fees and each student should be in possession of all the school textbooks scared the very poor parents. The private mission schools<sup>v</sup> (Private lay Education agency Bamenda, 2013) that seemingly had the highest number of schools put together had more difficult and complicated conditions. The government had put another selection test for students to write and pass before admissions were granted into the first year of government secondary schools. Even those that had met the official requirements into the first year of a secondary school, that is, a pass in the Government Common Entrance Examination (GCEE) in ‘List A’ and the First School Leaving Certificate Examination (FSLCE) sat for the examination. Merit was not the aim here. This was because the principals asked 50,000FCFA (US\$100) both from successful and unsuccessful candidates and those who could pay were given admission. (Ndika: 2014). This amount became official, even though receipts were not issued upon payment. The amount plus the 15000FCFA (\$30) school fees was more than what poor parents could afford. Most parents opted for the lay private schools that charged between 40000FCFA (\$80) and

45000 FCFA (\$90) as school fees with no requirements. In addition, since most of the lay private schools wanted students, their school fees were paid in instalments. It was almost impossible for a child to repeat a class or be dismissed. This was quite pleasing to a cross section of the parents and students who wanted to reduce cost as much as possible. In addition, the poorer parents and adults who could not still afford to pay 40000FCFA(\$80) or 50000FCFA(\$100) in the lay private schools or regular day schools, resorted to evening schools or adult literate schools that charged less than 30000FCFA(\$60) and 39000FCFA(\$78). The proprietor of the oldest evening school in Bamenda-Extra Mural Evening College (E.E.C) opened in 1974 and hosted by the campus of the Presbyterian Primary School Azire said:

It was as a result of the discrepancies in school fees among the mainline schools and freezing poverty among the Bamenda population that the phenomenon of evening schools became fashionable....Multiparty politics brought the Bamenda people to their knees....However it was a mix blessing as it introduced a new form of business to the town.(Talla:2014).

Most adults and business people who wanted to read and write took advantage of this opportunity. Even students of regular schools used their evenings to benefit from additional lessons from these schools. After the “hot periods” in Bamenda, the evening schools also competed with full time schools for students. In the neighbourhoods of Bamenda and in the rural areas, most parents were withdrawing their children from schools because they could not pay the cost of education. In any case, they were in need of the children’s labour to supplement the family income. This accounted for the increase in the number of house helps from the North West and Bamenda to other regions of the country and abroad. Women Empowerment centre Bamenda: 2002:37) In September 2002, a report from the Women Empowerment Centre, Mezam revealed that 18% of families had withdrawn their children from school due to lack of money for school fees. This was because the little money they had was reserved for food. It simply meant that education, even though a priority was hindered by the absence of institutional support for poor parents. The lack of education inevitably had a severe impact on their lives. Without education, their prospects simply dwindled to a few limited options.

The hundreds of teachers who had voted for change in 1992 did not seem to see this change come immediately or someday. They did not only become disillusioned with the system, but abandoned the profession for the United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada. They also left because poor salaries, and deplorable working conditions. Increased harassments from government supporters and security agents who accused them of being opposition supporters contributed to their abandoning of the profession. Peterkins Manyong puts it that he had abandoned teaching

because of the very poor salary scale, especially for private mission and lay private school teachers. According to him:

I had taught in Longla College and Our Lady of Lourdes College. Never at any time had I earned a salary above 60000 FCFA (\$120). Instead, with each passing year, it was reducing. It was necessary to quit....I decided to become a freelance writer.... (Manyong:2014)

Most teachers were at the mercy of their employers who had taken advantage of the very bad economic situation of Cameroon and Bamenda in particular, to exploit them. It was common to hear phrases from employers like “there are many of you out there willing to take less than what you are earning”. Most teachers went for months without salaries. Other teachers in this situation moved out of the country in search of greener pastures. This massive movement of the skilled and trained educational personnel shook the fabric of the educational foundation of the region in particular.

The socio-economic and political problems in Bamenda had a profound effect on the teachers’ morale. Hyperinflation which was a product of the 1993 civil servants’ salary cuts. The 1994 devaluation of the CFA Francs eroded their salaries generally and increased the number of teachers who became target of repression. They were identified as dissidents because of their supposed support for the main opposition party. Fear of reprisals and low salaries had prompted many of the teachers to quit their jobs. The exodus of most trained personnel caused the availability of the labour force to fall, thereby limiting employment and income possibilities. This did not only affect the educational sector, the social sector as a whole was affected. It increased the level of poverty, regional imbalance and consequently, regional and ethnic tension. This was visible at the level of infrastructural development as roads were destroyed in the town in the 1990s following the violence and burnings that accompanied the democratic transition in Bamenda.

#### *New Roads Networks*

The constant movement of people to circumvent the armed forces in and across the Bamenda City led to the development of a new road network which connected the different parts of the City. Before the advent of pluralistic politics in Bamenda, the town could boast of a winding official road that connected the Up-station administrative centre, together with a senior service residential quarters in down town. This road linked the main Commercial Avenue through Old Town, Nkwen, Sonac Street and to the Bamenda airport.

From the 1990s, the people were stripped of their amenities by the gendarmes to use the main official roads. They erected barricades in all the major road junctions linking the different parts of the town. The people who had to continue their daily activities, in turn, developed footpaths as an alternative. With their buttocks, feet and hands together with head loads, and women with children on their backs, they crawled through

these paths to develop and open avenues for themselves that could link them to different destinations and business sites. Corpses were transported on head to long distances through these paths. Babila Ignatius Tita Sama, a petty trader at Commercial Avenue Bamenda, recounted how his uncle's corpse which was removed from the Regional Hospital Mortuary was transported to Bali Nyonga as a head load. Given that all the roads were blocked, the corpse was transported through bush paths through Mbatu and Chomba to Bali (Sama: 2014). This was the experience of a cross section of the people of Bamenda. Besides, the difficulties people faced in transporting corpses, the burial of these corpses and the celebration of life presented another problem. Ndimbu Peter Jaji a young brother of a deceased gendarme that was brought in from Maroua, explained that:

“...Even though my brother was a gendarme, his burial was disrupted at the Saint Joseph Metropolitan Cathedral cemetery. As the helicopter flew from their base at Up-Station, its occupants noticed a crowd at the grave side, threw teargas to disperse the mourners....It became difficult for us to celebrate the life of my brother to this day.”(Jaji: 2015)

Apart from burials, an important religious event like the ordination of deacons in 1991 and 1992 was done under this condition. Rev. Father Bonaventure Ndong, paying tribute to the Emeritus Bishop, His Grace Paul Verdzev in one of his songs, recounted how the Bishop trekked to ordain the Deacons in Bambui. With the duty to attend rallies, the people sought for means to arrive fast, be it at the City Chemist Roundabout, the Bamenda Municipal Stadium or Mile Four, Nkwen. Through the footpaths, they always answered present. The footpaths created a new means of transportation in Bamenda due to the political crisis of the 1990s.

The social and political unrests connected several areas in the city. They gave birth to the development of footpaths that connected Mile Four Nkwen to Ntabessi, and linked Cow Street to Ntamulung, Sonac Street and Liberty Square. This was also true of New Lay Out which was linked to Up-Station connecting it to Old Town and Commercial Avenue. These footpaths have now been converted to major roads, and new neighbourhoods developed, thereby expanding the town. This was conditioned by two reasons: firstly, it was a way of erecting their own barricades in order to prevent the free movement of military vehicles and water cannon vehicles and even the free movement of foot soldiers. Secondly, it was an attempt to destroy “government property”. Based on group opinion, it was to force government to use the people's tax money, to the benefit of all and not for a few individuals and their families. Unfortunately, the second aim has not been addressed by the government since then. Despite these difficulties, the Bamenda people defined and designed other means of transportation. Trekking and head load as a means of transport was fashionable during the crises period.

The difficulty of transport and communication was accompanied by a sense of insecurity and disorder which had spread across the town due in part to the deteriorating economic conditions and in part to a declining respect for authorities. The May 1990 situation accelerated the process of social and economic deterioration. The people designed means to cater for their low socio-economic conditions. This was done through the intensification of farming activities (Nkwi: 2014). The villages close to the Bamenda Township became developed and were absorbed in to the town. This was because those who migrated to these neighbouring villages like Bambui, Bambili, Bali, Santa and Bafut with capital established small businesses like provision stores off- licence and small inns and motels. Others with skills opened workshops like carpentry and mechanic garages. This created some employment in these localities and pinned down some youths from moving out of the villages (Ngwa: 2014). These activities encouraged growth and development and the villages grow up as sub-urban areas.

During the difficult days of 1991 and 1992, the villages supplied the town with food on Fridays and Saturdays which were referred to as “replenishing days.” Bamenda then experienced an urban-rural migration, as most people who could not continue with businesses in town took up new jobs in the farms to meet with the increasing demands in the town (Ibid). The huge supply that met with the huge demand served two purposes. Firstly, it brought in fast cash in the town and to those who were supplying the food. More so, the villages became ever ready to cultivate more. This increased the social- economic status of the people in the countryside. Secondly, the people in the town stocked more food which gave them energy to continue with the protest action. It was this situation that made a gendarme officer comment that “the boys of Fru Ndi are very strong because they have plenty to eat (*les garçons de Fru Ndi sont très forts. Ils ont beaucoup a manger* (Ngwa:2014). Most of the gendarmes brought into Bamenda were amazingly surprised at the bravery, determination and courage exhibited by the people.

Given that the soldiers were not adequately provided for during their stay in Bamenda, they resorted to creating a climate of terror in the town which served not only to intimidate the population into submission, but to get the people accommodate them by giving them food and extending some social services. Brutality which took the form of breaking into homes, demanding receipts of all electronic gadgets and household equipment or seizing all the equipment and taking them to their military station were common. Where these were absent or had no quality, the soldiers destroyed them or demanded a bribe ranging from 200FCFA (\$0.4) to any amount from the owner. Victims could be spared if food was provided. Many households prepared food to give to the gendarmes. The youngest or a female member of a family was sent to invite the gendarmes who came and partook in the family meal.



Some families asked some to bathe and have rest before continuing with their jobs. In such occasions, the government's next action for the town was consciously or unconsciously revealed to that family that was hospitable to them. They advised them not to move out at certain hours and to certain places in town where the new set of soldiers were to be stationed. Secondly, the names of especially North West elite who were traitors to the town and its people were revealed. Thirdly, they advised on how people could hide their property from the next military battalion. They also informed them when and where the military will next invade. A people or family that could not provide either of the above items suffered the worse form of brutality. Parents were beaten in front of their children while the female members of the family were raped in front of their parents.

Victims suspected in the list of the elite were not demanded any item but were beaten to death. The case of the tragic death of Che Ngwa Gandhi, an accountant with the Marketing Board, is a pointer to this. The death which came about as a direct result of the horrendous and utterly sadistic torture inflicted on him (Verdzekov: 1992: 10) by the soldiers. It was as a result of these killings and brutality that the UN Human Rights Committee, which monitored in compliance with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), noted in its 1994 review of Cameroon's human rights records that "freedom of expression is not guaranteed...owing to the multiple cases of torture...ill treatment, extra judicial executions and illegal detentions suffered in particular by political opponents" (World Bank Report: 1997:79).

Like most countries in Africa that went through this period of political turbulence, and found solace in civil society organisations, Cameroon and Bamenda in particular, were not different. By the 1990s, there was the proliferation of civil society groups in Bamenda which were bent on opening and expanding the political space (Awasum: 2005:161). These were groups or individuals who had the interest in redressing the political, economic and social abnormalities (Gam:2010:140) in the society. They embodied students, Workers' Trade Unions, professional groups, and religious bodies. The groups, especially those of the Catholics, Presbyterians and the Baptists became vibrant and vocal because the immiseration, torture and deprivation of the people were unbearable. They became thirsty for freedom, justice, peace and good governance.

The Bishop of the Bamenda Archdiocese, His Grace Paul Verdzekov, became very vocal through his writings, sermons and pastoral letters to all Christians, people of goodwill and to the soldiers and government officials. In one of his messages to the people titled "Violence Never Pays" he wrote:

...Had the people of Bamenda resorted to violence as an answer to the difficulties imposed upon them, they would have violated the law....They would have created thereby a vicious spiral of violence and of bloody repression; they would have aggravated the

sufferings of the poor, brought deep hatred in countless hearts and inflicted wounds that might take generations to heal.... (Verdzekov:1992)

As a result of the unspeakable crime of torture that existed in the town the Bishop of the Bamenda Archdiocese decided to form an Ecumenical Organization of Christians, Protestants and Catholics known as Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (ACAT). Besides prayers, its members moved into the field and investigated acts of torture and reported to the bishop who sent it to the headquarters (Nsom: 2015). It was the headquarters of ACAT, based in France that sent direct information to the presidency in Yaoundé of the situation in Bamenda and the excesses of the security officers. It was as a result of the role played by this group that partly explains why troops were withdrawn from Bamenda. More so, the population actively cooperated with the group and the Bishop. They did so by supplying the bishopric with information about those arrested, tortured and detained. This activity then prompted the church to put a committee in charge of the prisons (Ibid). It was through this committee that illegal detentions and imprisonments were reversed. These moves by the church provided a safe haven to a cross section of the population, using the church's Justice and Peace Commission which had co-opted legal practitioners into its mission for peace. It was to work for peace and justice in the town, since there can be no true and lasting peace among human beings without justice (Ibid).

The political elite of the opposition parties interpreted justice for the people through the non-payment of social services like water and electricity bills, Cameroon Radio and Television (CRTV) and CNPS (*Caisse Nationale de Prevoyance Sociale* or National Social Insurance Fund) contributions and other taxes (Mbu: 1993:161) to the government. Though this was meant to cripple the government and force it to make people-centred reforms, it however had a short and long term implications on the people. In the short run, the people who were living below the poverty line had some reserves which they could use to feed their families and meet up with medical expenses. In addition, the fact that people were called upon not to consume foreign products made them not to pay for these services and thus, had to depend on local goods and services which were less expensive in comparable terms to foreign products. In the long term, the non payment of these bills, made some people who had accumulated them to pay more. This was because they had to pay the bills and penalties on them. Those who could not pay had their water and electricity lines suspended. A majority of the people have been suffering the effects of their action till date.<sup>vi</sup>

Many families resorted to rationing. This was in the form of the reduction of meals from three to two times or less per day. This aspect introduced "the policy of management" in Bamenda and intensified the culture of sharing and communal spirit. One household could be seen preparing meals together with a neighbour or preparing and adding the share of the neighbours. The result was that a culture of respect for parents



was inculcated into the children who regarded or saw any woman as a mother like their biological mothers.

In order to meet with family demands and other social needs, most people resorted to the sale of chickens, goats, firewood and other assets to raise money. The introduction of these small businesses was associated with borrowing from “njangi” houses and Cultural Development Associations<sup>viii</sup>. Given that people were less confident in the banking systems, these “njangi” houses became the surest places of raising capital for businesses. Those who could not be part of these “njangi” groups, organized themselves into small groups based on social status and came up with daily savings groups in the different neighbourhoods with amounts ranging from 100FCFA(\$0.2) to 1000FCFA(\$1.7). Others were done in kind, like the sharing of savon which was used for bathing and washing of household items, or cooking palm oil and salt.<sup>2</sup>This was meant to help one another.

While others escaping from the insecurity in Bamenda moved to other town like Douala Bafoussam and in the plantations in the coast of the South West Region of Cameroon. Another group went further to neighbouring countries like Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria and took up cross-border trade, others obtained money from micro-finance houses, to send their children abroad especially to the USA, Canada and Belgium. Families made contributions others mortgaged family estates(Njamnjoh:2010:6-8), while some people went in for loans with high interest rates with these micro-finance institutions like the credit Unions to pay for these ventures abroad. By sending siblings abroad it became a security mechanism for almost all families in Bamenda. These siblings sent back remittances to be invested in either buildings, renovations of homes and sending of seconded car to be sold by their relations. This explained the rapid growth of seconded goods, urban renewal and new modern architecture noticed in Bamenda. This accounted for why the Credit Unions were able to secure more customers. Again, they became engaged with these institutions because of the interest on the loans, which they kept on paying. The effect of this was that it led to brain drain, taking away the skilled and productive portion of the population to the West. Some families have, unfortunately, remained indebted because of this situation (Ibid).

The population also resorted to survival strategy which was aimed at getting money and food from the CPDM. They attended their rallies and meetings and boosted the numbers attending these rallies. This was, however, cheap political popularity whose objective was to tell the rest of the Cameroonian people of the renewed confidence of the people of Bamenda in the CPDM. In as much as the population was desperate, the CPDM linchpins were more desperate in securing sympathizers for the party. This was explained by the fact that ministerial and other political positions in Cameroon

and for the Bamenda elite in particular, could be secured only by the number of votes a person could obtain for the party. This particular situation brought in the idea of the elite buying the consciences of the people and a sacrificing their own consciences to “put food” on their tables. To achieve this, party uniforms, soap, salt, and cooking oil were distributed to households, individuals and groups for free. On national days, like May 20, plates of food, bottles of alcohol and a thousand francs were doled out to those who participated in the CPDM party activities. To further beef-up their numbers during important occasions, the ruling elite made it mandatory for head teachers and principals to send pupils and students who lined up the streets to get filmed and projected as CPDM sympathisers. Even so, party bigwigs came up with the slogan “vote for Paul Biya and he will give you development” (Nchinda: 2013). This was “empty talk”, as all what the people wanted was their money, food and drinks and the politicians, the vote.

In addition, pick pocketing; stealing, banditry and prostitution were reportedly on the increase in Bamenda. Pick pocketing, duping, scamming and conning or “419” as it was locally called were common phenomena along the Commercial Avenue. This one was particularly on the rise at popular points like Hospital Roundabout and Mobile Nkwen. As women and youths struggled to make ends meet, the women’s vulnerability increased, forcing them to become sex workers. Ironically, this underground economy of the urban poor was only exposing them to more poverty, risk and misery. This was because the boys were constantly on the run from the forces of law and order and frequent mob justice from the population. The women on their part combined their role as spies for the bandits or agents of the “419s” and prostitutes. They were faced with two problems-First, how to run away from the security agents and secondly, how to avoid the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases at a time when the health services in the town were collapsing. Apart from being forced by circumstances to place their lives at risk the women, like the men, were also exposed to greater risk of violence, extortion and rape at the hands of the soldiers. Poverty not only facilitated the spread of social ills, it also worsened living conditions both at the local and family levels. The hospitals became places where people went to die. The general hospital in particular was poorly funded so much so that even basic drugs such as aspirin and quinine were paid for by patients. This health delivery system was collapsing at the same time that the health situation was decimating the Bamenda population. For instance, Bamenda got the dishonourable reputation of having the second highest rate of sexually transmissible illnesses in the country. Other crimes like banditry and pick-pocketing quadrupled. All these affected the socio-economic development of Bamenda. There was urgent need for change and continuity.

#### *Change and Continuity*

Although the economic and political dimensions of the crisis are also profoundly far reaching, it is the social dimension

which had inevitably drawn a greater amount of attention. Given that the people had demonstrated their disgust with the government and its institutions, the government equally became “anti-Bamenda” at all levels of national life. The town was deprived of government services from infrastructure to appointments and other social services. The budget of the North West was at no time during this crisis period above 2.5 billion FCFA (\$5000) as compared to that of the other regions of the country within the same period. This was a deliberate attempt by the government to deprive the people of money and force them to submissiveness. But unfortunately for the government and fortunate to the people, this policy was applied to a people who had been living in poverty and depending on their farms to make life worthwhile. With this, the people who had been used to self-reliant development, first of all engaged in infrastructural developments. Funds for these projects were secured through ethnic, peer and other common initiative groups (Ndikan:2014).

Owning a house became the priority of the Bamenda people. Most of these houses were given out for rents to people who wanted to invest in the town. Visitors who moved into the town were sure to have accommodation not only in official hotels, but in the neighbourhoods, in houses built for this purpose. Bamenda was one of those towns without a government-owned lower cost houses for low income earners. Because of these amazing developments in the town, in spite of government’s neglect, the government had the belief that the people were counterfeiting bank notes (Sama: 2013). With this situation, a new crisis developed in the town. Special police force and security agents were deployed to the town, to strictly monitor and identify the “fake bank notes and coins” from the authentic ones (Ibid). Their findings only revealed that the people had made money from the sales of their food crops to neighbouring towns. With this, they had reserves from which they could tap. More so, the political turbulence had taught the people how to manage with the little they have (Ibid). This only explains the fact that in spite of all the odds, the people survived and were ever determined to challenge the regime.

#### The intensification of Traditional Doctors and their Activities

Given that health care services had collapsed, and the fact that the people interpreted occurrences and happenings in their lives through nature, they sought natural solutions to these problems. This intensified the presence of traditional doctors. These doctors who became very vibrant provided diagnoses to every illness as fortunes and misfortunes in people’s lives. It changed the social status of its practitioners besides being an industry that created jobs, especially to the male population in Bamenda. Citizens from other parts of the country regularly visited Bamenda to either seek protection or to be maintained in their positions. Some sought charms and amulets which would make others lose their positions. They appointed. This industry that existed became prominent in the era of political pluralism. It made Bamenda not only to be known for its political activities and agitations against the government

but also for its role in protecting those who wanted protection traditionally. It was as a result of this that some of the traditional doctors decided to move to other parts of the country to market their services that were now in high demand (Tonla:2013).

Since the Bamenda people had been recognised as a people who could fight for justice at all costs, so were their charms and medicine men considered to be potent. She Hilary Tonla, a traditional doctor, born in kumbo in Bui Division of the North West Region in 1959, had inherited the practice of traditional medicine from the grandfather when he was 18 years old. He completed the course when he moved and settled in Oku in 1988, with a friend whose father was a traditional doctor. It was from here that he moved and settled in Old Town, Bamenda to continue his practice. He noted that:

We left Bansa and Oku with bags of bees during the march to Yaoundé to see the president.... When we were stopped by the soldiers from Kuotaba we disappeared into the bushes...after that incident some soldiers followed us to Bamenda to seek charms on how to disappear (Ibid).

The logic of the bees lies in the notion that the traditional doctors were capable of commanding these bees and directing them to its target and they will perform what they were commanded to do. This act cannot be naturally explained by an average Bamenda man. The orders and laws of these men were often respected, accepted and followed religiously. Their clients often “compensated,” and not paid for, to the traditional doctors with fowls, goats, palm oil, salt and hundreds of thousands. The wealthy people compensated them with cars and parcels of land. Their activities that often involved mysticism, took the form of incisions on certain parts of the patient or consultant’s body with razor blade, and rubbing the cuts with a combination of local herbs grounded into dusty form. In very serious cases, the people are stripped and bathed in streams (Ibid). The ethnic groups that practised these activities are the people of Oku, Kom, Nso, Wum, and Babungo. There was a shrine where people could speak and listen to their dead loved ones in Batibo. Its activities attracted people from other regions so much so that people had to request and be granted the opportunities to consult these mediums.

### III.THE PROLIFERATION OF NEW CHURCHES

The proliferation of new churches came to add to these traditional practitioners. In spite of this proliferation, the spreading of the Gospel had been going on in Bamenda. These new churches focused their messages on “Prosperity Gospel.” In Bamenda, this new wave of Pentecostal churches beside the economic crisis that had hit the country in the 1980s intensified in the 1990s. This can be further explained in terms of a combination of hardship in the midst of political violence, accompanied by high death rates and illnesses which the average Bamenda man could not explain.

Cameroon, like other independent African states, constitutionally defended the right to religious worship. As a consequence of this fundamental human right, the last decade has witnessed the proliferation of religious groups particularly in the Anglophone regions with most of them being Pentecostal in their theology. This spectacular spread of Pentecostalism in many parts of Africa, as Akoko Robert explains, is because of politics and the pursuit of modernity. He further argues that these Pentecostal churches carry with them a clearer economic message of individual prosperity and enrichment within a local-global context (Mbe:2009). These crises had exacerbated poverty, misery, unemployment, fear, doubt and uncertainty among the people. The situations were quickly exploited by the new pastors or “men of God”, most of who came in from neighbouring Nigeria to evangelise for the purpose of employing themselves. These new churches, their doctrine and messages almost pushed the traditional doctors out of business. Their activities ranged from deliverance, casting out of demons, having visions and giving testimonies.

Their messages were compelling and sometimes frightful. The new Christians or “Born Again” were compelled to live a life of poverty. In order to make their clients believe they drew their conclusions from Bible passages, the born again churches provided forums where their followers forgot worldly things. The men of God also used the Bible passages to make their Christians pay tithes and other contributions to the pastors and their churches. Besides, it was being a consoling hub for a people who had lived in violence and poverty. They paid for these services in their different worship houses. It also provided jobs to many who became pastors or evangelists.

#### IV. THE LOSS OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

An important aspect noted during this period in Bamenda was the loss of craftsmanship, especially among the youthful population and children who were either supposed to be in school studying or in workshops learning trades, but who had abandoned it. This was because the culture of having “fast money” developed. Most of these youths preferred to be carriers (*mbambe*) in bus stations and motor parks, while others chose to be hawkers, taxi drivers, and bike riders (*Okada or Achaba men*). The result was the increase in street children, drug abuse, and alcoholism. Although these had existed before, they took different contours at this time. Parents lost total control over their families and children. In spite of this, the fact remained that garages, carpentry workshops dotted all over the town could still boast of young people determined to make meaning out of their lives. Bamenda could also boast of so many schools and colleges and an impressive number of learners were willing to move to another level of intellectual achievement.

“Physical violence in some cases was a necessary and is a desirable means for an individual or group to achieve social liberation” (Fanon: 1980:65) In other words, the crisis that

followed the economic and political violence in the world had made the Bamenda people achieve social liberation. For example, it became very difficult for a security officer to unjustifiably arrest and detain someone in Bamenda. It also became customary, even out of Bamenda, for the people to be accused of inciting revolts and/ or strikes. The events of the 1990s therefore made Bamenda and its people to be known in all aspects of national life. The government on its part enacted pro-people policies and improved on the treatment of inmates and other people detained in the gendarme and police cells throughout the country. Also, the rest of the country expected the Bamenda people to always act when an anti-people legislation was passed by the regime. For example, when salaries were slashed in 1993-1994, the common phrase made by the people was “what was Bamenda saying”, (*Qu'est-ce que Bamenda dit?*), “Bamenda will not let go’ (*Bamenda ne va pas laisser passer*). These phrases were made because the citizens of Bamenda were stupefied by their self-defence against the general national tendencies of complete dependence on the state for any form of milk. They won for themselves freedom and liberty as one of their rights as citizens. To this, Fanon further posited that “the extent of one’s freedom is a function of socio-political institutions and practices”(Iibd)” In other words, these institutions and practices can either have a liberating or constraining impact on individuals or groups. In the case of Bamenda, the people were admired by the rest of the country for their courage and determination in securing liberty.

#### V. CONCLUSION

This paper sought to highlight the euphoria in Bamenda, Cameroon following the reintroduction of multiparty politics in the 1990s and the birth of the Social Democratic Front party. Following the launch of the SDF party, jubilant young Cameroons in this region staked their lives for the new found democracy. Many of the people responded to the birth of the SDF with positive optimism as they so in the party an end to their predicament neglect and total abandonment by the central government in Cameroon. They quickly styled the party *Suffer Don Finish* (SDF), but this eventually cascaded into political violence in which some youths lost their lives, arms and fortunes and more sufferings set in. It became too many instead of *Suffer Don Finish* to *Suffer Don Start*. However, in the course of the so much violence in the town some of them who lost their arms and hands in the course of the violence chose not to resign to fate but to seize opportunities to cope with life by involving in petty enterprising activities. This has kept them afloat economically and enabled them to be self-dependent.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>i</sup>The euphoria in which the Bamenda people greeted the formation of the SDF, gave them the hope that the lots of the Bamenda people has come to an end. To them was an era of hope prosperity, the end of neglect, they were sure to benefit politically, socially and economically. It was for this reason that they syled their new party *Suffer Don Finish* (the end of suffering) in pigin English.

<sup>ii</sup>A curfew is an order specifying a time during which certain regulations apply. Usually an order issued by the public authorities or the military requiring everyone or certain people to be indoors at certain times, often at night. It can be imposed to maintain public order or to suppress targeted groups.

<sup>iii</sup>Bmend is referred to as the hub of political activism in Cameroon because it was in Bamenda that the Cameroon National Union(CNU), the lone party in Cameroon from 1966 to 1985 was replace with the Cameroon People Democratic Movement (CPMD) was born in Bamenda, until 1990 the CPDM was the only party in Cameroon. in the same Bamenda, 26 May 1990, John Fru Ndi defy all administrative injunction and lunched the first opposition party in Cameroon in the era of renewed political space in Africa.

<sup>iv</sup> Group discussion at world trade centre at hospital roundabout, a palm joint which was existing in the 1990s. To this day it brings people of different works of life together. People share their experiences in a variety of social and political issues.

<sup>v</sup> The Catholics, Presbyterian and Baptist had close to eight Secondary schools and more primary schools in the different mission stations in town. The government could only boast of the Government Bilingual High School Ntamulung Bamenda located in the centre of the town. The lay private schools were equally located in the main town and they were few in number.

<sup>vi</sup> Many households in my neighbourhood at Old Town are victims of this. As a result they are benefitting from their neighbours who were paying their bills regularly and those that paid the initial amount and the penalty on them. Others have used the addresses of their sblings to have their line reconnected.

<sup>vii</sup> Cultural and Development Associations are vehicles use by different ethnic groups to promote cultural, social and economic development of their different villages, encourage cultural festivals promote education of the girl child ,discourage teenage and early marriages as well as enhance the individual growth of its members through small thrift and loans funds(*ngangis*). O recent these associations have included politics in the agenda of the association. They are more now instruments used by the regime to promote its activities.