

Catholic Women's Association (CWA) in the Nso Fondom of Cameroon from 1964-2013: An Historical Appraisal

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Abstract: This paper examines the activities of the CWA of the Roman Catholic Mission and its impact on the Nso community in Bui Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. From its inception, the main aim of this association was, and still is, to enable the women to study the Word of God, build their Christian faith and foster the works of evangelization in the Church and in the community. The focus of this study is to show how instrumental the women have been in carrying out activities that have an impact on the church in particular and the community at large. The spiritual growth of its members was enhanced by teaching them the doctrinal and biblical lessons contained in the work plan of the association. Home economics lessons were also taught as well as self-empowerment projects that helped to foster the economic growth of the womenfolk in particular and the community in general. The group also carried out charitable activities by providing both the spiritual, financial, and material assistance to the poor, sick, and underprivileged persons living in the community. Some spectacular activities were carried out during annual conferences and during the dedication of new members into the association. This work was carried out with the use of primary and secondary data. Primary data were obtained by conducting interviews with CWA officials, members, and chaplains. Secondary sources were obtained from books and CWA magazines. Within the period under study, the CWA carried out spiritual and socio-economic activities which affected more especially the lives of women, and the entire community.

Key Words: Catholic Women Association

I. INTRODUCTION

The year 1962 in the history of the Roman Catholic Church saw the opening of the Second Vatican Council in Rome presided over by Pope John XXIII. Amongst the decisions of this Council was the decision to encourage the participation of the lay faithful in the evangelization work of the church (Amungwa, 2012: p.7). The formation of the CWA was prompted by the declarations made by the Second Vatican Council on the apostolate of lay people. Apostolica decree No.24 states that the hierarchy's duty is to favour the lay apostolate, furnish it with principles and spiritual assistance, direct the exercise of the apostolate to the common good of the church, and see to it that doctrine and order were safeguarded (CWA Bylaws and Statutes, 2012: pp.iii). Most fundamental of all the Council's decision was the basic tenet that access to the scripture should be "open wide" to all Christians. Thus, in line with this declaration made by the

Council, Anna Foncha thought it necessary to form an association where Catholic women could jointly meet to study the Word of God, build their Christian faith and foster the works of evangelization (Anna, Foncha, interview, 2016). Thus, it is not an over statement to say that the lay faithful took the council's decision on biblical renewal seriously.

Eventually, the Catholic Women's Association was created in 1964 in Buea, Cameroon. Among the women who joined Anna Foncha to form this group were Nathalia Jua, Prudencia Chilla, Dorothy Atabong, Josepha Mua, and Angela Lafon. Some of these women were wives of the ministers and Secretaries of State of West Cameroon in the 1960s (Koyela, 1999: pp 7-8). Anna Foncha invited them to the Prime Minister's Lodge in Buea and disclosed the idea to form an association of Catholic Women. Other co-founding members were: Mary Lebaga, Roseline Anoma, Martha Tumenta, Lucy Efiom, Regina Epule, Elizabeth Tamanjong, Joana Ngong and Theresia Mbeme. These women became pioneer members and subsequently evangelised the other areas of Cameroon to form CWA branches. Through the efforts and commitment of these women, CWA branches were formed in Buea, Mamfe, Bamenda, Nso, and Nkambe areas (CWA Publication, 2014, p 29).

From the beginning this association enabled the Catholic women to clean the church house, its premises and also to take care of the priests by providing food and spiritual encouragement to them in their vocation. They were also to be involved in social activities such as caring for the poor and sick persons in the community. The aims and activities of this association attracted a majority of Catholic women to join the group, and this marked the beginning of the Catholic Women's Association (CWA) of the Roman Catholic Mission (RCM) in Cameroon. As time went by its leaders saw a need to develop a work plan which contained Bible knowledge, health issues and self-empowerment projects that help to foster the spiritual, social, and economic growth of the women. Spiritual growth of its members was enhanced by teaching them doctrinal and biblical issues (CWA Bylaws, pp1-5).

When elections were conducted the first executive committee of the association was chosen. The members of this committee were: - Anna Foncha - Chairperson, Chilla

Prudencia - Vice Chairperson, and Atabong Dorothy - Secretary. The association was dedicated and blessed in 1964 as an agent of evangelisation in the RCM by Bishop Julius Peeters, Bishop of Buea. He and Father Lucas Atang were consulted for ecclesiastical approval. The Bishop was delighted in the initiative of “lay women” striving to form women’s association which would render services to the church. He blessed the association and approved its constitution at the Saint Anthony Catholic Church, Buea Town (CWA Publications, 2014: p30).

In 1965, regular weekly meetings continued and the pioneer founders established CWA branches in other areas of the territory. From Buea, Anna Foncha, Rebecca Ekema, Natalia Jua, Angela Lafon and Josepha Mua, among others, visited the hinterlands of Cameroon to create branches of the CWA in the various parishes. Some of the areas visited were Tiko in 1965, Fiango in 1965, Mutengene in 1965, Tombel in 1966, Njinikom in 1966, Mankon in 1967, Nso in 1967, Akum in 1967, Mezam in 1967, Mamfe in 1967, Wum in 1968 and Ndop in 1969 among others. During this period, the association was called the West Cameroon Catholic Women Association (WCCWA) since most of its branches existed only in West Cameroon. Through the commitment of its members, the association grew steadily into other areas of East Cameroon. It was introduced in Douala (Bonaberi) in 1978, Garoua in 1979, Yaounde (Emia Parish) in 1997, Nkongsamba in 1992 and Kribi in 2002 and other areas (CWA Magazine, 2004: p.4). The various branches were put together from diverse local initiatives to form the Christian Women Association (CWA). Progressively, the association which began with few members in Buea spread to various parts of the territory.

The first motto chosen by founding members in 1964 was “Consideration for Others.” This was in line with the major objective to keep the church house and its surroundings clean and regularly assist priests in their vocation by preparing food for them and cleaning of church linen. As members of the association grew in faith and number, the motto of the CWA was modified as follows: “To Serve and Not to Be Served”, drawn from the New Testament book of John 13:13-15. It emphasizes Jesus’s humility, love and concern for others. This Act took place when Jesus Christ washed the feet of his disciples. Thus, according to Roseline Menga, Jesus’ example of taking care of his followers remains a call for Christians to serve one another in the community (Menga, interview, 2016).

The motto of the CWA “To Serve and Not to Be Served” shows that Christian life is that of service. Obviously, CWA members during their dedication raised their right hands and affirm that they have come of their own volition without coercion from anyone to pledge before God that they shall serve the church as CWA members. In addition, they promise to abide by the statutes of the CWA, to contribute in any way possible according to their abilities not only for the growth of the CWA but also for the growth of the church through the

services they offer to mankind. Following this declaration, the CWA officials or executive members would help them to put on their new complete uniform (Menga, 2016).

The CWA greeting is “Through Mary, to Jesus.” Menga explains that the greeting was inspired by Jesus painful and last moment on the cross when he turned and said “mother behold your son” and to the disciples he also said “here is your mother.” With these words, she believes that Jesus before his death gave his mother, Mary, to mankind to act as an advocate or intercessor for our sins. The Blessed Virgin Mary channels our prayers to God, through Jesus Christ, and obtains his grace because God always answers the cry of the beloved. It is on this background that this greeting was chosen and the association has taken Blessed Virgin Mary as the model woman of faith. She explains that although societies considered women as subordinates to the men or a weaker sex whose place was in the kitchen, Christianity from its beginning had a special status for women as God chose the Blessed Virgin Mary to be the mother of the Savior of the world. In this light, Mary became the model for Christians and more especially women to build their faith both in the church and in their homes. She believed that this virtue has therefore given the women more opportunity to contribute to religious life.

Similarly, *Wiybaa Wo Nsobam*, interview in (2018) also felt that the CWA greetings were inspired by Mary’s humble attitude to accept God’s call to bear the Savior of the world. She believed Mary is a model that other women could follow. She enables mankind to act in faith and love. She received the angel’s message with humility and placed herself at God’s service by believing in the angel’s (Gabriel) message without doubt. In all, examining Mary’s attitude can equally inspire women to be of good model in the church and community.

Comfort Ashu (2000) share the same opinion that Christianity has raised a woman’s status. According to her, God made the Savior of mankind, Jesus Christ to come through the Virgin Mary. This projected her responsibility on the society and in the church. Her ability to endure the pain and observe the sacrifice of her child for crucifixion, revealed her humble behavior. Moreover, it was still women (Mary the wife of Cleopas and Mary Magdalene) who finally observed Jesus death on the cross at Golgotha and after three days they went to the tomb and found that Christ has resurrected (Mark 15: 40-47 and Mark 16: 9). The fact that women were witnesses to the sufferings, crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ is significant in the Christian faith.

In the same vein, the Rev. Dr. Festus Asana, former moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) in a speech made during the Christian Women Fellowship (CWF) 50th anniversary celebration in Cameroon in 2011, explained that women’s involvement in the church activities should remind the world of the courageous women in the Bible who accompanied Jesus Christ till his death and bore witness to his resurrection. Hence, the women became the first to announce

the resurrection message of Christ to the disciples and the world at large. Today, women still have a lot to offer the church if they remain a positive force and influence on the society and when their inspiration comes from God (Yinyuy, 2018, p.198). With this biblical formation, the CWA, like other Christian women associations in Nso Fondom in particular and Cameroon in general, has carried out activities which have an impact on the life of the church and the community at large.

II. CONCEPT USED IN THE WORK

2.1 Catholic Women's Association (CWA):

It is a faith based and non-profit making association of the catholic women which was formed in 1964 by Anna Foncha, wife of the former Prime Minister of West Cameroon, John Ngu Foncha to enable the women come together, study the Word of God and carry out activities which could bear a positive impact on the community and on the church. The CWA constitution bears a set of rules and regulation (by laws) which governs the association. The rules and regulations help in the functioning of the association. The bylaws and statutes also contain the name of the association, its nature and motto. Membership of the CWA was and is opened to all baptized Catholic women and girls, single or married from 18 years onward. Members upon completion of an initiation or probationary period of at least one year could be dedicated. Every regular member owns a membership card which enables them to belong to the group anywhere in other areas of the country (CWA Bylaws and Statutes, 2012, pp1-5).

III. SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

The research materials were collected from both the primary and secondary sources. Primary data were mostly collected from archival material and oral interviews conducted with some CWA officials and members alike in the Nso community. The choice of those interviewed was dictated by the desire for reliability as most of them lived and carried out some of these activities personally. Secondary data were collected from documented sources obtained through the use of books. The necessity for interviews was created by the lacunae exposed by archival material and secondary sources. In addition, the study makes use of photographs to depict a pictorial evidence of the CWA missionary activities in the area.

With regard to the methodology of collecting data, an interview question guide was used. Interviews were conducted using an open-ended questionnaire format. The use of this method enables the respondents to compose answers while the interviewer records them. The method was useful as it enable some informants to go beyond the expected answer and express other relevant information which has enriched the study.

The area of study is Nso which is found in Bui Division of the North West Region of Cameroon (Yinyuy, 2018: p.29). Bishop George Nkuo (2016) explains that the

CWA in Nso falls under Kumbo Diocese which extends to Oku, Noni, Ndu and Nkambe (Donga and Mantung Divisions). These geographical demarcations were done by the early missionaries and it has remained so till date. It is vital to note that Kumbo Diocese is made up of two Divisions but this study is however limited to Bui division with special emphasizes on Nso fondom. The study lays emphasis on the following parishes: Shisong, Tatum, Kumbo, Mbiame, Mbonso, Meluf, Mbveh, Tobin, Melim, Kikaikom Shiy, Jakiri and Kikaikelaki. Members were selected from these groups at random and interviewed.

The period under study ranges from 1964 to 2013. In 1964, the CWA was formed in the RCC in Cameroon as an agent of evangelisation. The formation of this female association helped to increase the spiritual growth of the women and also enable them to evangelise in the church and the community. The year 2013 is important in that it marked 100 years of evangelisation in the RCC in Nsoland. During this occasion, the CWA in Nso invited Christian women groups from different denominations to join them in the centenary celebration. This was another landmark event in the history of evangelisation in the Nso area as Christians in general and CWA women in particular from all over the territory jointly celebrated 100 years of the gospel in Nsoland.

IV. THE HISTORY OF THE CWA IN NSO FONDON

After the creation of the CWA in 1964, Anna Foncha and the other co-founders of the association visited the hinterlands of Cameroon and created branches in the various parishes of RCM in the grassfields. The first branch of the CWA in Nso was created in 1967 at Shisong parish. The first pioneer members to join the movement were: Bridget Nsawir, Benedita Berinyuy, Martina Kumenyuy, Winifred Kibvri, Liingooi Alucia Yula, Christina Lambi, Martha Nsaiboti, Margret Bongju, Anastasia Nkwain, Bridget Tume and Angelina Moikaah. These women became the pioneer founders of the CWA in Nsoland. Through the efforts of these members, other branches of the CWA were created in different areas of Bui and Donga- Mantung Divisions in Meluf, Jakiri, Mbiame, Tatum, Djottin, Oku and Tabenken in Nkambe (CWA Publication, 2014: p.29).

Martina Kumenyuy recounted that the beginning of the CWA in Kumbo Diocese was not an easy task. According to her, majority of the Catholic women did not want to join the association. They assumed that the group was meant for educated women and wives of the church workers (catechists and teachers). That notwithstanding, the activities carried out by this association attracted some women to join it and benefit from the lectures. In carrying out the evangelisation activities of the association, the Nso women christened the association *Sum Nyuy* literally translated as "The Lord's Garden or the vineyard of God." This name was intended to lay emphasis on the religious role of the association. The name *Sum Nyuy* was more of an appeal to the Nso Catholic women to jointly work for the Lord by carrying out activities which could help the

church spread its mission: teach the Word of God (Kumenyuy, interview, 2016).

Furthermore, the beginning was also difficult because some Catholic men did not want their wives to belong to any group without their approval. These men criticized the creation of the group and considered it as an association for “high class women” and thus discouraged their wives from attending its meetings. As such, there was a near lack of cooperation from some men during the early days of the association. It was thanks to the spiritual mentorship of Fr. John Kolkman who took up the responsibility to guide, direct and educate the CWA members about the common goal of the church ensuring that Christian doctrine and teachings were safeguarded in the association. The encouraging words from Fr. Kolkman enabled the CWA members to better understand the Christian faith and evangelize their families, friends, and the society at large. Despite these challenges encountered, the spirit of determination, commitment, and unity among its members facilitated the growth of the association in Nso (Kumenyuy).

Generally, the association was structured into branches, zones, and divisions, under the spiritual guidance of the Diocesan Bishop. Beyond the diocese, the association was organised at the ecclesiastical province level. At the national level, the national executive was charged with the leadership of the association.

Catholic Women's Association (CWA) Evangelistic Activities in Nso Fandom

The CWA in order to achieve its goals has carried out several activities in the Diocese of Kumbo. Some of the activities carried out include Bible studies, spiritual retreat, dedication of members, health talks, charitable works (visits to the poor, needy and sick), sale of farm products and palm oil retailing schemes.

4.1 CWA Branch Weekly Meetings and Bible Studies

The CWA members in the Diocese of Kumbo meet once a week to study the Work Programme and the Bible. Enerstine Kongnso explained that the main aim of Bible studies was to enable the women know the Word of God, grow spiritually in faith and glorify God by developing a Christian lifestyle. It was through constant Bible reading that the CWA members acquainted themselves with the Word of God and could better share these Bible readings with family members in their homes or with the people living in the community. It was an obligation for CWA women to know the gospel so as to be able to spread the true message about Jesus Christ. To be bearers of the Gospel message, every CWA member was expected to have a good lifestyle as a basic pre-requisite to transmit the gospel to others. In other words, CWA members who participated or attended their weekly Bible meetings, while in their homes or in the community shared or circulated information on what they have learned in their own way. In sharing ideas and new information acquired in the CWA lectures with others the members brought in some sort of

transformation in the church and community (Kongnso, interview, 2016).

Equally important, *Yaa* Ancella Fanso, said that CWA members before and during their dedication were obliged to attend regular Bible studies and Sunday mass in order to grow in the Christian faith. CWA leaders encouraged the members to study and meditate on the Word of God and learn the Catholic doctrine which guides them in their evangelisation drive. It was through constant Bible reading that CWA members were strengthened to bring others to the saving truth of the gospel. She argues that committed members intensified prayer life in their families, upheld Christian values and education and brought up their children in the ways of the Lord. On every last Sunday in December, the CWA women in the various parishes celebrated the Feast of the Holy Family. The CWA women join the Catholic faithful and their family members to celebrate this feast because it is in the family that the mystery of human life is lived out. The family was and is still basic unit of the church in the society. It is the cradle of all virtues and values. Most CWA members share the Word of God and prayers with their children in order to sow the seed of faith in them so that they could grow in faith and virtue. She added that devoted and inspired CWA mothers in their various parishes could carry out doctrine classes (doctrinal formation) whereby they instructed new converts on the teachings of the church and prepared them for CWA dedication. She has prepared more than 300 CWA members for dedication in the Dioceses of Yaounde and Kumbo respectively (*Yaa* Fanso, interview, 2018).

In addition to weekly meetings held at the branch level, the CWA executive members also attend zonal, divisional, diocesan and national meetings as programmed in their Work Plan calendar for the year. Majority of the CWA branches in the Diocese of Kumbo within the period of study held their meetings on traditional nonworking days in order not to disrupt farm work or other economic activities embarked on for a livelihood. Njodzeka (2018) explains that in addition to Bible studies, they also carry out financial and material contributions needed for the upkeep of the association. CWA women support the training of priests through financial and moral contributions. It is in this regard that the CWA was referred to as the “strong pillar” or “Action Group” of the local church. It is through the contributions and other activities carried out in the association that they were able to know active or non-active members in the association. They visited sick people and backsliders during the week or after Sunday mass to pray and share the Word of God with them. Critical cases were reported to the priest so that they could visit, pray and anoint them. In this way, she described the CWA as a faith based association that focuses on the wellbeing of people and equally enables its members to serve God in a better way.

4.2 Reading of lessons and announcements

It has been observed that majority of the CWA members in Nso actively participated in the reading of Bible lessons and announcements in their various parishes during mass. In addition, they equally cleaned the missions' premises and the cemetery. Moreover, they have to provide the elements needed for the Stations of the Cross on Good Friday and donate candles and linen use by the priests in the service. Furthermore, they also identified the sick people in the community and pray with them. In case of a critical situation, they would invite the priests and deacons to visit, pray, administer Holy Communion and/or anoint them for healing. As a matter of fact, Rev. Fr. Polycarp Yukeng (2015) therefore considered the CWA as the Action Group of the RCM because the CWA women were and are still the main arm of the church that embarked on practical evangelism.

In the same vein, Bishop George Nkuo appreciated the heroic efforts of the CWA in supporting the church in general and the Nso community in particular. He remarked that their commitment in church activities enabled most of its members to acquire more knowledge on church teachings or doctrine which helped to strengthen their faith and spiritual growth. He admitted that the spiritual activities carried out in this association such as prayers, Bible studies and fasting produced women of faith who served the church and the community.

4.3 Introspection and Retreats

Furthermore, the CWA over the years has organised additional spiritual activities in the Nso community such as retreats, novenas and the feast of Immaculate Conception. Moreover, the CWA women in Nso massively joined their parishioners in diocesan pilgrimages. For instance during the Lent Season, the CWA members lead the Station of the Cross in their various parishes (Shiyla, interview, 2018). In the same vein, Rev Father Divine Esoa in his sermon during the Feast of Assumption challenged the CWA women to follow the example of the Blessed Virgin Mary and live pious lives. He encouraged CWA to go into the world and spread the gospel. Moreover, he urged members to tell people living in the community that the Catholic faithful do not worship Mary since some people have this misconception. He explained that they worship God but "honour" Mary who forever remains the mother of Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of Mankind. He instructed Christians to be humble and adopt attitudes like Mary's who had concern for those living around her by pleading with his son to provide them wine in the Wedding Feast in Cana (John2:1-11). He therefore called on all the worshippers to adopt humble life styles so that the Blessed Mary would continue to intercede for them in heaven (Yinyuy, 2018, p.236).

4.4 Charitable Works

Ayuni Emelinda explained that the CWA members over the years have taken the responsibility to jointly pray with the sick persons in their homes or in the various small Christian

communities every morning. During the morning prayers the CWA women always shared the Word of God with the sick person and counsel them from diverse thoughts. CWA women in accordance with their doctrinal formation encouraged sick people to trust in God's healing mercies as they take their medical treatment seriously. This effort made by the CWA mothers to visit and circulate information about the sick persons in the community enabled the church hierarchy and priests to serve them on time. Members informed the priests on critical cases so that they would come and anoint them on time. In this light, the CWA women have developed another new strategy in evangelisation wherein they channel information to the Parish Priest or other priests concerning Christians or sick people in their community (Ayuni, interview, 2017).

Over the years, most of the CWA branches in the Diocese of Kumbo have been creating time to visit, sit, and talk with the sick people be it in the hospital or in the community. The act of visiting sick persons was very necessary because it enabled them not to feel abandon by the church. The CWA members also informed the sick person or people taking care of him or her on the day or time the priest would visit them to administer the sacrament of healing. This information was important because it helped those who were taking care of the sick person to keep the house and the sick people clean before the priest or other visitors could come in (Ngehsi, interview, 2016).

In cases where the sick people do not survive from the illness the CWA or other family members would inform the priest about the death of the Christian and present the necessary documents to the priest so that they would jointly arrange for the burial. For instance, if the death person was a CWA member, a token of 500 francs was and will be collected from all the members as condolence dues to assist the bereaved family. Beside this, a majority of the CWA members living in the same quarter with the diseased person would also contribute foodstuff such as corn flour, rice, groundnuts, palm oil, and vegetables to cook and entertain the mourners. During this unfortunate incident, the CWA group entirely would carry out shared responsibility. Shared responsibility in the sense that the members partitioned themselves into groups: one group to assist in cooking and another would clean and decorate the church for the funeral service. Some would join the family members to bring the corpse from the mortuary (Landze, interview, 2018).

4.5 Income-generating activities

Bridget Nsawir, one of the pioneer members of the CWA in the Diocese of Kumbo and Rev. Fr. Kolkman initiated the CWA or *Summ Nyuy* self-help project. With this project every CWA member in the Diocese of Kumbo was required to supply half a bucket of dried corn and beans for the project. This food stuff was collected and stored at the CWA house at Bamkikaay, Kumbo where it was sold to Catholic boarding schools and the general public at minimum rates. The money realized from the sale of these produce was used to buy palm

oil. This palm oil was sold to CWA members and the entire community. Consequently, these activities have had a great impact on the church in particular and the community as a whole.

4.6 Impact of CWA activities on the Church and community.

The CWA in Cameroon, and most specifically in Nsoland, has played an important role in the evangelisation drive of the church. Members of these associations have always made an effort to put into practice the Christian teachings they had received, and the impact of this is felt far and wide.

Through weekly Bible studies, fasting, and prayers, women acquired more spiritual knowledge and shared the gospel message with their families. This enabled them to grow in the fear of God. Consequently, through this Christian way of living, the Nso community have learned from the CWA members and have had a better understanding of the Christian faith. With this spiritual enrichment, the Nso fendom witnessed an increase in the number of church ministers who served as priests, Rev Sisters, brothers, teachers, and catechists. Some indigenous Priests working in the Diocese of Kumbo whose mothers were and are members of the CWA include: Fr. Roland Bernegeh, Fr. Anthony Yilaka, Fr. Anthony Lawir, Fr. Anthanasius Sangnyuy, Fr. Herman Lawong, Fr. Justin Sefemby, Fr. Henry Dinayen, Fr. Rene Wongbi, Fr. Emmanuel Mbeh, Fr. Cyprian Tatah, Fr. Hyacinth Fornkwa, Fr. Njobam Giles, and Fr. Emile Yuban among many others. It is not an overstatement to say that the sermons preached and lifestyles of some of these priests have influenced many sons and daughters of Nsoland to join the priesthood and sisterhood. Some of them have rendered services throughout the national territory and abroad (Sabina Njobam, interview, 2018).

Furthermore during conferences and dedication services, the association invited friends, clergymen, and dignitaries from various parts of the country to join them in the celebration. This enabled the church to experience an increase in finance and in the number of worshippers. Moreover, the special offerings or donations made on these occasions enabled the church to raise much money and to equally embark on more giant projects like the construction of church halls in villages such as Kiyan, Roh, Mbah, Sakir and Tatum among others. Remarkably, the group's enlightening activities have enabled more women to join the association at all times (Dzevela, interview, 2016).

Many mission schools have received material and financial assistance from the CWA in the domain of education. First and foremost, some of the members who were financially able made an effort to educate their children in Catholic schools situated in Nso in order to sustain the growth of church schools in the area. Whenever necessary, CWA branches, or zones visited some of the mission boarding schools in Nso such as St Augustine College (SAC), St Peter Catholic School Mbveh and the St Aloysius Minor Seminary (SAMS) at Kitiwum to assist the schools both financially and

materially. Some of the items donated by these associations included bags of rice, beans, tapioca, plantains and cooking pots. From these visits, the association became aware of the challenges faced by the students and the staff of these institutions and looked for a way forward (Dikuba, 2016).

Equally important, this association has always assisted the sick and needy. The association organized evangelistic visits to meet and reach out to this group of people living in the community. During such visits the association would offer some useful advice, prayers, Bible meditations, and provide basic needs such as food, clothes, writing materials, money, and words of encouragement to those visited (Picture No. 1 below). These visits were made in strategic places like big compounds, palaces, health centers, hospitals, and the Kumbo Blind School so that the evangelisation message was addressed to a good number of people.

CWA Members Tatum Zone on an evangelization visit to Nkulu



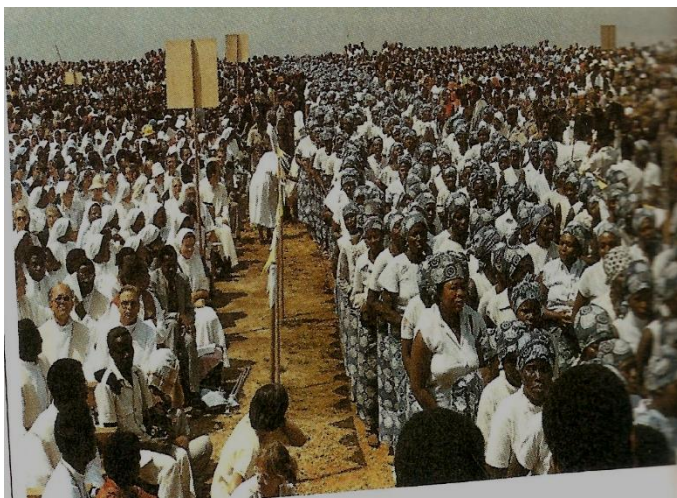
Source: Landze's Collection (2013)

There is no doubt that the activities of the CWA have contributed to the growth of the parishes where they belong by actively participating in all parish activities: induction of priests, fundraising, cleaning, and decoration of the church, among others. All these activities have enabled the church to grow. Besides, gifts provided to orphans, clergy, seminarians, and catechists in cash or kind have helped to foster the spirit of Christian charity in the church and community at large (Njodzeka, 2018).

The Year 2013 saw the celebration of 100 years of RCM in Nso *Fendom*. This was a crowd-pulling event that brought people from various parts of the territory into the Bamenda Grassfields. For the event to be successful, the CWA Kumbo Diocese together with its counterparts in the Bamenda Ecclesiastical Province jointly organised and planned on how to feed the guests and the college of clergy that was present during the occasion. The CWA also carried

out a march past from the Kumbo Cathedral to the Kumbo Municipal Stadium. The event was graced with choral music, dancing, and merry making. The women offered songs of praises to the Almighty God thanking Him for the growth of the church in Nsoland. Also, some of their members carried banners and placards bearing inspirational messages drawn from the Gospel. Members of this association also rendered accommodation and health services during the event. The massive attendance of CWA members during this anniversary occasion proved that CWA Kumbo Diocese had grown by leaps and bounds (Picture 2). In the picture below, CWA women massively came out and led the procession into the ceremonial ground during the 75th anniversary of the RCM in Nso.

CWA Women in Procession during the 75th Anniversary of the Roman Catholic Church Celebration in Nsoland



Source: Firm in Faith, p.23, 1988

V. CONCLUSION

From the above analysis, we realise therefore that the CWA in Nsoland since its creation has carried out several activities which have positively affected the life of the church and people living in the community. The association also frequently carried out evangelistic visits to schools, the prison, homes and hospitals to pray and assist the needy ones in the community. In addition, most of their work plan for the year contains health care and home economic lessons which have greatly helped to empower the women both socially and economically. In a nutshell, the timeframe 1964 to 2013 does not mark an end to the evangelising activities of the CWA, but shows what has been achieved. On the whole this association has succeeded in its evangelisation drive because it approached evangelism through the socio-economic needs of the people. However, despite this positive impact, evangelisation still remains an ongoing process. Members of the CWA through the Christian teachings which they have received find themselves continuously challenged to spread Christianity to the people living in the community who have not yet believed in God.

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