

The Effective Import of the Law by Cameroonian Legislators in Promoting Gender Parity in The Political Participation of Women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon

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ABSTRACT

Politics perceived to be dreaded by women and considered men's domain, has registered an influx of women aiding sustainable democracy and governance. But in the African continent where culture shapes gender roles and career choices, women tend to experience exclusions from politics. This is the reality of most African countries including Cameroon. Women account for 51% of Cameroon's population, yet occupy just 13%. Only 6.7% of Mayors in Cameroon and 13% of the Members of Parliament are women. South West Region with 877 councilors, has 139 women. Ndian Division with 225 councilors 23.5% make up female political representation. Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisional Council has four (4) and six (6) female councilors respectively unveiling that from 2013 to 2024, female political participation stands low. Despite Cameroon's commitment to gender equality, gender gap widens up when it comes to politics in Ndian Division. This paper evaluates the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators in promoting gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Cameroon. A mixed method which adopted the descriptive survey design was used, Primary data was collected with an ordinal scale questionnaire and interview guide, with validity and reliability tested by content validity index and the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient reliability test. The Chi Square X^2 was adopted for analysis with findings that showed that there is not sufficient evidence to support the claim the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators does not promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon. Purposive sampling was used to select participants from the accessible population.

Keywords: Hard Laws, Soft Laws, Gender Parity and Political Participation

INTRODUCTION

For over four decades, gender bias has been at the forefront as one of the areas for concern for the national, regional, international institutions and communities. This is due to adverse consequences that accompany gender inequality generally in the political development of the state, and peculiarly attached to women, preventing them from maximising their full potentials whether in the economic, social or political sphere of development (UN Women, 2021). To this effect, from the global to regional level, charters and policy papers have been signed and adopted by most African states with Cameroon not being exempted, all to ensure the promotion of women in making contributions to the political life of their communities and state at large (Doffonsou et al. 2014:12).

While some world democracies have made substantive progress in promoting the number of women in national parliament thereby increasing the global average from 11.3% in 1995 to 22.1% in 2015 according to Inter Parliamentary Union report (IPU. 2017), the 2019 IPU report stipulates that the level of progress world-wide is slow (IPU, 2019). However, western democracies that tend to enjoy a significant degree of economic advancement still experience a considerable variation when it comes to gender relations. Nordic countries which have been thought of possessing gender equal societies, still fall short of parity. In Nordic countries

women occupy only 41.7% of the seats in their legislatures on average. While the United Kingdom is at 30%, the Republic of Ireland is at 22.2%, and the United States has just 19.1% of women's representation respectively as postulated by IPU (2017). Men are over represented to a greater extent in leadership roles than women (UN Women, 2017). Though much is being done from the global and regional platform to improve women's participation and representation in politics, the figures are still discouraging in some areas. As per the reports put up by Kumar (2017:78-85), Bolivia has attained 51%. Cuba is making lead way by 48%, Iceland in Europe is on 47%, Timor-Leste has 32% and in Africa, Rwanda is top notch with 55% of women's political representation.

Within the African Continent; Rwanda, Senegal, Mozambique, South Africa seem to be making progressive efforts in achieving greater participation and representation of women in politics. But from the perspective projected by Abua & Fonchong (2004), Cameroon has not been able to sustain any substantial increase in the representation of women in her political leadership. With the ratification of several global and regional legal frameworks aimed at the improvement of women's participation and representation in politics, Cameroon still finds her female population very low when it comes to political participation and representation. The UN Women's Report (2014) unveiled that out of the 38 countries studied, 18 of those countries showed that women make up less than 10% of parliamentarians. As posited by Abua & Fonchong (2004), Cameroon has in no way proven immuned from this problem of gender inequality in political representation as expressed. These are indications that women's involvement in the political affairs of their states is very minimal as compared to their male counterparts.

According to Kah & Tembi (2018:2) Cameroon has still not met up with the parity line. The result is glaring in Ndian Division where women's political participation and representation is low. The number of female councilors stands at 23.5% as opined by Kinge & Adepoju (2014: 146). With 25 and 31 councilors from Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisional Councils respectively, five (5) and six (6) female councilors are actively involved in the political life of the area respectively. Having few women in the politics of these two municipalities indicates a problem.

Statement of the Problem

As certain world democracies are making progress in promoting the number of women in national parliament in effect, increasing the global average from 11.3% to 22.1% as posited by IPU report (2017). African countries like Rwanda, Senegal, Mozambique, South Africa have made progressive efforts in achieving greater participation and representation of women in politics. Rwanda on her part has been outstanding in her efforts to increase women's presence and activeness in politics as she records 55% of women's political representation as postulated by Kumar (2017:78-85). To Kah & Tembi (2018:2) Cameroon has still not met up with the parity line. The result is glaring in Ndian Division where women's political participation and representation is low as the number of female councilors stands at 23.5% as stipulated by Kinge & Adepoju (2014: 146). Cameroon has not been able to sustain any remarkable increase in the representation of women in its political leadership. Although Cameroon has imported both hard and soft laws through the ratification of several global and regional legal frameworks aimed at the improvement of women's participation and representation in politics, Cameroon still finds her female population very low when it comes to political participation and representation. This outcome leaves an anticipation of the probability of questioning the effective import of the law by the Cameroonian Legislators in promoting gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.

Research Question

How effective has the import of the law by Cameroonian legislators promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon?

Research Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of the import of the law by Cameroonian legislators in the promotion of gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon

Research Hypothesis

H₀: $\mu = 45.559$; i.e., the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators does not promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon

H_a: $\mu \neq 45.559$; i.e., the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators does promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

With regards to political participation in Cameroon, women have had their dotted spaces emanating from struggles. Outcome of these struggles got women fitted in the political scene not that it was considered as their rights and responsibilities as citizens of their country to have equal participation and representation in politics. In the pre-colonial Cameroon, women played pivotal roles in the running of affairs with very high level of respect attached to them by the society. In the traditional society Cameroon, women were looked upon as possessing spiritual powers capable of either causing chaos or bringing peace (Nkwi, 2008). So, for maintaining societal order, women made influential contributions to decisions pertaining the functioning of the society. Decisions were not concluded on certain issues without women's perspective or voices taken into consideration. Secret societies comprising of only women demonstrated varying levels of power and experienced a spectrum of women as wives, mothers, concubines, slaves, queen mothers and political intermediaries (O'Rourke, 2020). With the coming of Europeans in the 19th century that is, the era of colonialism, colonial masters introduced and established the patriarchal system through political centralization and expansion of long-distance trade. This system-a new order instituted by Germany, Britain and France, produced new forms of inequality for women as wealth became more concentrated in the hands of elite men who sought to control women's labour and sexuality. By so doing colonial masters promoted male dominance. The economic power women commanded through the control of resources such as land and labour during pre-colonial days, shifted to the men (O'Rourke, 2020).

The colonialists sidelined women, relegated them at the back and instead projected men. Men got control not just over resources but women's sexuality and administrative power as well. In 1946, women's rights to stand for election were granted (IPU, 2017) and in 1958, the Anlu of Kom emerged with firm decisions against the Kamerun National Congress (KNC) following a bill on contour farming. The Anlu - a women's group in Kom became politically instrumental to the Kamerun National Democratic Party (KNDP) which used the Anlu as power base or political instrument for the popularization and acceptance of the KNDP to power (Nkwi, 2008). As postulated by IPU (2017) the first woman was elected into the parliament in 1960 under President Ahmadou Ahidjo as women began reinstating their political will after independence. In 1994, Cameroon under H.E Paul Biya ratified CEDAW to empower women and eliminate all forms of discrimination against women in political and public life. By so doing promote women's political participation and representation through the inclusion of equal voting rights and equal representation at all levels of government. Another strategy implemented by the Head of State had to do with the creation of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF).

At the institutional level, a Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) has been created and is headed by a woman. Under the impetus of this ministry, several strategic instruments, including the National Gender Policy (2011-2020) and the Multi-sectorial Action Plan for implementing the National Gender Policy (2016-2020) had been adopted. They were considered as the national charters or mechanisms for the promotion of gender equality in all areas. Aside the creation of MINPROFF, the country's constitution

upholds the principle of gender equality. The election governing body Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) defends sociological and gender representations in the composition of lists by political parties, and those parties who do not adhere, have their lists rejected. Thus, in the general elections of 2013, 20 out of 48 party lists were rejected for failing to respect the gender requirement as given in the Report of the CDES Cameroon (2013:12). Although numerous Conventions, Acts, Treaties have been ratified as well as countless speeches been made by the Head of State concerning gender equality, women's empowerment and increased women's political participation, one can still be pushed to establish that the much expected to effect changes have still not been done. Ratifying international laws and designing policy papers for this cause seems to be a charade. This is because other pertinent areas within the state's legal framework have not been adjusted.

This is the case with Article 1421 and 1428 of the Cameroon Civil Code, where women are not entirely entitled to use, enjoy or sell their property. In this regard, Article 1421 gave man in the capacity of husband the right to administer communal property. This by implication gave men the right to either sell or mortgage the couple's property without his wife's consent. Articles 108 and 215 of the Civil Code grants the husband the sole right to determine the family domicile and section 361 of the Penal Code defined the crime of adultery in terms more favorable to men than women (UN Cameroon, 2000). However, an analysis shows that the representation of women at these different levels of decision-making is still limited. This is also the case in Parliament and in the executives of decentralized territorial authorities. Even with a 51% of the population, women were just 13.5% of members in government. This indicates the existence of unequal representation with barriers to participation in the political processes as serious issues to handle in Cameroon. The report of UN Women-Africa (2018) came as a reminder to the government that every woman is a citizen of Cameroon and as citizens, they have the right and responsibility to vote. Voting is the civic duty of people above age 18. Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) as presented by the UN Women-Cameroon (2021) have revealed huge disparities within Cameroonian society. Out of 166 countries in 2018, Cameroon emerged 151st position with 0.86 as the GDI. For the GII, Cameroon recorded 0.566, ranking 140th position out 162. Findings revealed that the difference between men and women emanated from the gender factor.

One of the pertinent things to note is that the country's constitution upholds the principle of gender equality. And the election governing body Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) defends sociological and gender representations in the composition of lists by political parties such that those who do not adhere have their lists rejected. Thus, in the general elections of 2013, 20 out of 48 party lists were rejected for failing to respect the gender requirement as given in the Report of the CDES Cameroon (2013: 12). Although numerous Conventions, Acts, treaties have been ratified as well as many speeches been made by the Head of State concerning gender equality, women's empowerment and increased women's political participation, one can still be pushed to establish that the much expected efforts to effect changes have still not been done. Ratifying international laws and designing policy papers for this cause seems to be a charade. This is because other pertinent areas within the state's legal framework have not been adjusted. This is the case with Article 1421 and 1428 of the Cameroon Civil Code, where women are not entirely entitled to use, enjoy or sell their property. In this regard, Article 1421 gave the husband the right to administer communal property. This by implication gave men the right to either sell or mortgage the couple's property without their wife's consent. Articles 108 and 215 of the Civil Code grants the husband the sole right to determine the family domicile and section 361 of the Penal Code defines the crime of adultery to be more favorable to men than women (UN Cameroon, 2000).

The return to multi-party politics in the early 1990's, has paved way for which the issue of the representation of women and their participation in the political processes to become increasingly relevant in Cameroon (Vogel, 2011: 234). Reopening Cameroon to democracy was supposed to open up political participation in Cameroon. As a result, grant equal opportunities to adult men and women. But the ironic feature of the liberalization process has been the decrease of women in parliamentary representation (Kassea, 2006). Although women make up more than half (51%) of the adult population in Cameroon, they still account for less than half of registered voters based on the figures released by the elections management body, ELECAM (Voice of Africa, 2017). As per the reports put up by Kumar (2017) Cameroonian women in politics constitute only 27%. As such, female participation in Cameroon is still on the low side. The situation seems to be worse when it has to do with the population of N'dian Division. Female political participation and political

representation is still on the low. The study carried out by the UN Women's Report (2014) unveiled that out of the 38 countries studied Cameroon is facing the problem low political participation of women due to gender bias in the political milieu.

In Cameroon, women are underrepresented on voter rolls and in decision-making circles from municipal councils to parliament. According to reports put up by the Municipal Development Counseling Group 2013, only 154 women out of 877 councilors, barely 18% are actively participating and representing women in the political life of Cameroon (MUDEC, 2006). Kassea (2006) puts up statistics in terms of parliamentary representation from 1988 to 2002. According to his reports, women's representation in 1988 was 14%, 6% in 1992, 5% in 1997 and 10% in 2002. This is strong evidence signifying that Cameroon is currently suffering from low female political participation. In all the 10 regions of Cameroon between 2013 and 2018, for the number of women actively involved in politics, 18 women were elected in the senatorial elections of 2013 and 21 women were elected in 2018 as substantive representatives. As Alternate members of senate, 29 and 41 women were elected in 2013 and 2018 respectively. For the female senators appointed by the President of the Republic, 3 women were appointed in 2013, and 5 women for substantive representation while for alternate members, 4 and 5 women were appointed in 2013 and 2018 respectively (Cameroun Tribune, 2013).

Between 2007 to 2013 as explained by Kinge & Adepoju (2018), 13% of women were Members of Parliament. IPU (2013) reported that the figures climbed to 61 and as stated by World Bank (2023) the Lower House of Parliament has an incumbent legislature of 33.89%. When it comes to the municipalities, women comprised of 6.7% as Mayors and constitute just 15.8% as female councilors according to Kinge & Adepoju (2018). That is, out of the 877 Councilors from thirty-three (33) councils and two (2) city councils in the South West Region, one hundred and thirty-nine (139) were women. This statistic was put up by Cameroun Tribune (2013) and served as an indication that women are facing discrimination at the political sphere. For South West Region, two (2) women alongside three (3) female Alternate were elected as members of the senate in 2013. Only one (1) woman was appointed by the Head of State as Alternate member of the Senate. In 2018, two (2) women were elected accompanied by two (2) women as Alternate. From the 30% appointed, no woman was granted the opportunity of serving the state in the capacity of a Senator except one (1) woman who was appointed as an Alternate Cameroun Tribune (2013).

In the recently concluded senatorial elections held on March 12th, 2023, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) registered an absolute win over other parties and occupied all seventy (70) seats. Of the seventy (70) seats, twenty-eight (28) were occupied by women (CRTV, 2013). For those appointed, only four (4) women were for substantive representation and five (5) women were appointed as Alternate Senators. However, from all these appointed female Senators, none are not from South West (Voice of Africa, 2013). By implication, Ndian had no woman as Senator. Women from the marginalised area are further deprived from the politics of their area. The proportion of seats held by women in the National assembly from 2007 to 2025 mandate kept fluctuating. Between 1997-2002, women held twenty-three (23) seats (12.8%). Between 2002-2007 women occupied ten (10) seats (5.6%). From 2007-2012, women held nineteen (19) seats (10.5%). Between 2012-2018, women held twenty-five (25) seats (13.9%). From 2020-2025, according to Cameroun Tribune (2023), twenty-six (26) women are in the present legislature. The forecast that Cameroon will be hitting the 30% parity level by having fifty-six (56) seats occupied by women, making 31.1% has not materialised yet.

At the level of the councils, reports by Ministry of Administrative and Territorial Decentralization (MINATD) Statistical year book (2023) showed that less than 30% of Municipal Councilors are women. Between 2007 to 2025 mandates, the number of women increased from one hundred and four (104) to three hundred and sixty-six (366) for the positions of Mayors and Deputy Mayors. Out of one thousand and eighty (1080) Mayors and Deputies in Cameroon, the figures for women as Mayors increased from twenty-two (22), twenty-nine (29), and thirty-nine (39) progressively while Deputies increased from eighty-two (82), two hundred and twenty-one (221), to three hundred and twenty-seven (327) as per the different mandates.

Table 1: Numerical distribution of women as Mayors and Deputies in Cameroon from 2007- Present

Duty Position	Number of Positions	Number of Positions held by Women		
		2007-2012	2013-2019	2020-2025
Mayor	360	22	29	39
First or Second Deputy Mayor	720	82	221	327
Total	1080	104	250	366

Source: Adopted from MINATD, Statistical Year book 2023; MINDDEVEL

When it has to do with the South west region, it comprises of 6 Divisions and 33 councils out of which are two city councils. The total number of councilors amounts to 877. From the 877 councilors, 139 councilors are females making 15.8% according to Kinge & Adepoju (2018). Having the political scene to be male-dominated could account for the lack of female involvement in policy-making and the absence of female leadership at the highest level of governance (Goheen, 1996). The danger of excluding women in the decision-making process of the state results in an inefficient use of human resources, slow intervention on promoting the plight of women which eventually weakens democracy and hinder balance in national development. Also reduces the spirit of belonging and patriotism in a group of the country's population that are citizens of the state. Hence tilting policies to favour a segment of the population while neglecting the other. In the case of Ndian Division, the figures are low. As between 2013 to 2024, women from Ndian as Senators have been two. Pilot studies showed that one (1) woman has occupied the position of a Parliamentarian from 2007 to 2024. Then for the position of Mayors and Deputy Mayors, Ndian has had close to ten (10) women. When it comes to Ekondo Titi and Bamusso councils, women have actually held the helm of power. In the case of Ekondo Titi, a woman is currently on seat as the Mayor after the demise of the elected mayor during a bomb blast on an official tour alongside the Divisional Officer (D.O), and the sub-section president for the party.

Checking out the number of women actively involved in the political life of the two councils, one will tend to see and say that men are dominating the political atmosphere of the two sub-Divisions. Women's political participation in these two zones, are very low. In spite international Conventions and laws ratified by Cameroon, as well as national laws and policies designed to increase women in politics, having more women actively involved and supported within their parties to participate in politics especially in Ekondo Titi and Bamusso Sub-Divisions, has been difficult. The projection of more men than women in the political affairs of these two Sub-Divisions has created a gender difference in political participation in both Sub-Divisions. This broad gender difference or gap in political participation forms the foundational stone of this study. This research is geared towards evaluating the effectiveness of the import of the law by Cameroonian legislators to promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon

Cameroon has ratified numerous hard and soft laws when it comes to promoting and protecting women's rights. For hard laws, international treaties and Conventions that Cameroon has ratified for the improvement of women's political participation will be reviewed below. However, before reviewing the various hard and soft laws Cameroon has ratified, it is imperative to understand what hard laws and soft laws are. According to Shelton (2000) hard laws are legally binding rules, treaties and agreements that are enforceable through courts or legal mechanisms as they create formal legal obligations and enforcement mechanisms like sanctions or dispute resolution processes. To Abbott & Sindal, (2000) these laws include treaties, conventions, statutes and regulations that countries or entities are obligated to comply with once ratified. Four parameters have been identified by different scholars as elements which must be taken into consideration for that which is ratified to be called a hard law. To Boyle (1999) it must be legally binding as countries or organisations must comply with the provisions. Aside legal bounds, it has to be enforceable as posited by Pauwelyn (2004). There should be mechanisms put in place for enforcement such as courts or arbitration tribunals. Raustiala (2005) Added to that, there should also be specific obligations like the establishment of clear legal duties and responsibilities and lastly, it should also carry sanctions and penalties which will be placed on those that refuse to comply.

Non-compliance should earn legal penalties or even international sanctions as reported by Guzman (2008). These parameters will be used in evaluating whether the laws imported by the Cameroonian legislators are effective enough to achieve gender parity in the political participation of women.

Hard Laws imported by Cameroonian Legislators in Promoting and Protecting Women's Rights So as to Increase Women's Political Participation.

The hard laws legally binding Cameroon towards her engagement in ensuring women's political participation and representation are international, regional and also domestic in nature. The hard laws ratified by Cameroon include;

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW) 1954

The Convention on the Political Rights of Women which was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 7th July 1954, guarantees women the right to vote and to be eligible in all elections without discrimination.

The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICCPR/ICESCR) of 1966.

The International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was created on the 16th of December 1966, with a structure that called for the provision of opportunities for men and women to exercise their rights in the relevant areas fully.

The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) 1979.

In 1967, the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was adopted. This Declaration set the stage for the elaboration and adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women in 1979. The Convention brings together, in a single legally binding instrument, provisions requiring the elimination of discrimination on the basis of sex in the enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and specific rights of particular concern to women and girls (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003:7-8). The United Nations General Assembly which was held on the 18th of December 1979, which led to the adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, was the culmination of decades of international efforts to protect and promote the rights of the world's women. These efforts moved from initiatives taken within the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946 to make policy recommendations to improve the status of women. Then the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims that all human rights and freedoms are to be enjoyed equally by men and women without distinction of any kind, between 1949 and 1962. Numerous treaties such as the Convention on the Political Rights of Women (1952), the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women (1957) and the Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962), which protected and promoted the rights of women in areas where the Commission considered these rights, were particularly vulnerable.

In 1965, the Commission embarked on the preparation of what was to become in 1967 the Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This Declaration assembled in a single legal instrument the international standards which articulated the equal rights of men and women. Though not a treaty, it had moral and political force yet did not establish binding obligations for States. ((Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003:8). In 1972, the possibility of preparing a treaty to give a binding force to the Declaration by the Commission on the Status of Women was found. Encouragements for the preparation of the treaty was emanated by the World Plan of Action adopted by the 1975 World Conference of the United Nations International Women's Year which called for a convention on the elimination of discrimination against women, with effective procedure for its implementation. This work was also encouraged by the General Assembly, which proclaimed 1976 to 1985 as the United Nations Decade for Women. Thus: led to the establishing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted by the General Assembly in 1979. With much hope expressed by the General Assembly that the Convention would come into force at an early date, Cameroon just like every other state ratified the convention.

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) was ratified by the President H.E Paul Biya under Decree No. 88/993 of 15 July 1988 pursuant to Law No. 88/010 of 15 July 1988 which gave him the authorization to exercise such powers (United Nations 1999: 15) Cameroon ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on 23 August 1994. In 1992, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women put in place (Banks, 2009:782-783). This Committee recommended that Cameroon implement temporary special measures in various forms, such as outreach and support programs, quotas and other proactive and results-oriented measures aimed at achieving equality of women with men in the public and private sectors as stated by Human Rights Council (2018:5). During the consideration of the initial report of Cameroon, the representative of Cameroon noted that preparation of a bill was underway to address violence against women. The combined second and third periodic report states that there is a draft law for the prevention and punishment of violence against women and of gender-based discrimination. Please provide an update on the status of the preparation of this bill and the draft law including the definition of discrimination against women and any sanctions provided according to the United Nations (2008:2).

At the level of the electoral laws, the capacity to vote and the conditions of eligibility for election were greatly considered. Thus, electoral privileges were granted to any Cameroonian national that is by affiliation or naturalized Cameroonian, without distinction as to sex. Both men and women were called upon to vote in elections, provided he or she has completed his or her twentieth (20th) year and is not disqualified by law. Moreover, any Cameroonian citizen, without distinction as to sex, may be enrolled on a list of candidates for election to the National Assembly, provided he or she has the right to vote, is duly enrolled on an electoral list, has completed his or her twenty-third (23rd) year on polling day and can read and write. Article 3(2) of the Municipal Elections Act includes the fair representation of women among the essential criteria to be applied in compiling electoral lists (United Nations, 1999:20-21). It is in this line of ensuring that all forms of discrimination against women are eliminated that in 2011, Cameroon submitted a national report (National Report) to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. This report was a combination of the fourth and fifth periodic reports on the implementation of CEDAW and covered the period from February 2009 to September 2011 (The Advocates for Human Rights, 2014:2-3). Through the ratification of CEDAW, Women as well as men can freely exercise their civic rights through the ballot box. This right to vote is not dependent on any property or literacy requirement. Therefore, women are not excluded from this part of political participation.

Furthermore, civil society organisations have contributed in mobilising women to compete for positions within political parties. Some Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have carried out extensive and comprehensive sensitisation campaigns, educating women on the importance of exercising their civic rights and take up leadership positions in their various political parties. Women are eligible to contest elections, a right enshrined in the Constitution, but in practice it is an uphill task for women as reported by Women in Research and Action (WIRA) et al. (no date: 24). Though they are not often found in the top ranks of political parties but are at the bottom where they are involved in singing, dancing and fanfare during political events, while more men are debating political issues (Women in Research and Action (WIRA) et al. (no date: 24). In addition to the usual obstacles to women's political participation, political parties have to endorse candidates for elections. The electoral law does not give room for independent candidates, as such, still constituting a hindrance for women who may be capable to run as independent candidates. Although many political parties have emerged to participate in the political life of the state, most political parties have not put in place laws that protect the interest of female candidates especially that of prescribed quota representation for women as advocated by many. During the 2007 legislative and municipal elections, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) tried through a circular letter to ensure the endorsement of one female candidate where there were three contesting seats.⁹ Although this move was highly appreciated by women, it was insufficient because it was not strictly implemented throughout the national territory by the party.

During the 2007 twin legislative and parliamentary elections of July 2007, there was an increase in women's participation as well as a slight increase in positions held by women. However, the political arena does not favour women because of limited financial resources. The effort of the Ministry of the Promotion of the Woman and Family (MINPROFF) was lauded in making provisions for financial assistance to qualified female candidates during the 2007 legislative elections. Though commendable, this action or measure taken by

MINPROFF was a failure for the fact that the support was only made on the eve of the elections. This was not helpful as it did not yield the expected results. The financial assistance equally failed in another aspect because consideration was not accorded to local female councilors who also needed it. The general trend shows that a majority of women endorsed as candidates for elections have often been alternate rather than substantive candidates (i.e. nineteen (19) female parliamentarians and thirty-three (33) alternates in the 2002 against one hundred and sixty-one (161) males). Substantive candidates are the real candidates while alternate candidates take the place of the substantive candidate only in case of vacancy (Women in Research and Action (WIRA) et al. (no date: 25).

In the 2007 parliamentary elections, the twenty-two (22) women elected were all alternate members. During the 2002 municipal elections, of the nine thousand nine hundred and sixty-three (9963) candidates, only one thousand three hundred and two (1302) were women making a 13.1% of the three hundred and thirty-seven (337) elected mayors, only ten (10) were women constituting 2.9%. This is relatively low. The low trend of women's participation also stems from the fact that the government of Cameroon has not succeeded to implement veritable policies for political parties to promote equality in their parties. Women in political parties are usually mobilised for trivialities like dancing, singing and fanfare, while serious political decisions and activities subtly become the preserve of men. This may go a long way to explain why in a party like the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), in which the women's wing is found all over the national territory, surprisingly had no female counselor in 18 councils out of 337 councils during the 2002 municipal elections. Women are appointed at all levels of the National Elections Observatory (NEO). However, this representation is still insignificant compared to the number of men (Women in Research and Action (WIRA) et al. no date:27). Hence, as much as the government tries to implement international laws and conventions for the promotion of women in politics, certain lapses can still be observed. As such, the government needs to triple her efforts on the strategies she is implementing to achieve the goal of the conventions and laws ratified with respect to increasing women's political participation.

The Constitutive Act of the African Union (2000)

The Constitutive Act of the African Union signed in July 2000 was designed in such a way that it called for elective positions or offices to take into consideration the promotion of parity when it had to do with representation in the various elective offices of the Union.

The Protocol for the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003)

The Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) on the Rights of Women in Africa was adopted in Maputo in July 2003 eight years after the commencement of the drafting process in Lomé, Togo in March 1995. Before the Protocol entered into force, there was need for fifteen member countries to ratify as found in Article 29 according to Kounte (2005). The Protocol entered into force months later on 25 November 2005. As a major achievement to be celebrated, the next objective was to target African women's movement to alleviate women's status and ensure women's rights were respected. In pursuit of this objective, the initiative to produce the Protocol to educate and raise awareness of women's rights emerged. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and its additional protocol on women's rights have been signed and ratified/acceded by Cameroon on the 25/07/2006 and 13/09/2012 respectively. The Protocol recognized and guaranteed a wide range of women's civil and political rights as well as economic, social and cultural rights. Thus, reaffirming the universality, indivisibility and interdependency of all internationally recognized human rights of women (Amnesty International, 2004:2).

Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) and Electoral Laws

The existence of gender bias and prejudice in a community or state is a representation that national development has been hampered. In the case of Cameroon, there are certain diverse measures that have been put in place to remedy the situation of women's low political participation. As a result, it was necessary for a national policy document to be drafted, in order to act as guidelines for action by not just the government, but also involving non-governmental organizations and development partners in the area of gender promotion in

Cameroon (Fouthe, 2017). Cameroon vision 2035 which exposed the thoughts of the President of the Republic, H.E Paul Biya on his pledge to promote women and ensure equality of women and men in all spheres, has been in line with the 1996 Cameroon Constitution. The Cameroon constitution has been a proponent and projector of the rule of law and also an institutional means for the support and defense of Women's and Family rights. Electoral laws that deal with electoral capacity and eligibility requirements in Cameroon are the same for women and men. That is to say the electoral laws when it has to do with choice of representatives and participants are gender neutral as it applies to all gender. Again, legislation on the creation and financing of political parties, offers both women and men equal opportunities. Even though a thirty per cent (30%) quota has been set, very few of the councils have adhered to it. This is partly due to many women's lack of confidence and many women's ignorance of the electoral system (Gender Empowerment and Development, 2010:9).

When it comes to voting, women and men enjoy the same rights to vote provided that they are above twenty (20) years old (Constitution, Art. 2, 1996). Political voice by law, make women have the same rights as men to vote, hold public office, serve as electoral monitors, and participate in political life (US Department of State, 2017). To promote women's participation, the government has integrated several measures, including the adoption of Act No. 2012/001 amending the Electoral Code of Cameroon making request and stating requirements for political parties to consider achieving a gender balance in preparing their electoral lists. The adoption of a Gender and Elections Plan which sets a target of 30% participation of women in public service (2012), and the establishment of the Parliamentarians' Network for Gender Advancement (CEDAW, 2014). The Act introducing the gender legal consideration in creating all candidate lists is applicable to parliament, municipal council, Senate, and regional council elections (Advocates of Human Rights, 2014). To echo this, the Electoral Code adopted on April 19, 2012, amended on April 15, 2019, made provision in Article 151(3) that "the Constitution of each list must take into account the different sociological components. It must also take into account gender." With this provision, the legislator wanted to increase the chances of women's representation in the electoral lists presented by political parties.

Soft Laws imported by Cameroonian Legislators in Promoting and Protecting Women's Rights So as to Increase Women's Political Participation

According to Abbott & Snidal (2000) soft laws are non-binding rules, guidelines, principles or declarations that influence the behaviour of the state but do not have the capacity of formal legal enforcement mechanisms unlike hard laws. Soft laws rely on voluntary compliance and socio-political pressure and not legal sanctions like hard laws as posited by Shelton (2000) Soft laws are embodied by features such as non-binding as reported by Boyle (1999) that is to say, they are not legally enforceable but can guide legal interpretations and policy making. Aside its characteristics of being non-binding, soft laws are also flexible as they permit states to gradually adopt principles and adopting them to the national contexts (Raustiala, 2005). Additionally, soft laws have normative influence as they often serve as precursor to hard laws, shaping international norms as opined by Guzman & Meyer, 2010). Finally, Pauwelyn et al. (2012) identified the feature of voluntary compliance as states and organisations are not obliged to follow. Rather, they choose whether to follow the provisions of soft laws. Most times, the pressure comes from international reputable organisations to the states for the execution of soft laws. The following are the soft laws Cameroonian legislators have incorporated as part of the legal framework for enhancing women's political participation by the countering of Gender Bias.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) (1948)

According to Inter-Parliamentary Union (2003:7) the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) of 10th of December 1948, constitutes the first international instrument to detail the rights and freedoms of individuals. It contains thirty (30) articles covering the integrity of the individual's political and civil rights (such as freedom of thought, expression, religion, association and access to the political process) and economic rights (such as the right to employment, education, social security, and full participation in society). The Declaration proclaims that everyone is entitled to the rights and freedoms it sets forth without distinction of any kind, including that of sex. The vision of the UDHR centered on equality and non-discrimination; thereby re-enforcing a platform for women's equal enjoyment of international human rights (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2003:7). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights emphasized on the principle of equal human

rights without discrimination. The UDHR places every individual irrespective of sex or gender on an equal level. The political aspirations of women cannot be undermined because of their sex.

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights (VCHR) of 1993

The Vienna Conference on Human Rights (1993) was organised with the aim of recognizing the fundamental rights of women and the girl child. This conference established that the rights of women and the girl child were an undeniable, integral and indivisible part of the universal rights of human beings.

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD, 1994)

The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) was convened in 1994 with a stronghold admitting that improving the political, social, economic and health status of women is both an essential end in itself and a sine qua non-condition in achieving sustainable development.

The Beijing Platform of Action (BPFA) 1995

The Beijing Platform of Action in 1995 called on governments all over the world to take measures ensuring women had equal access to and full participation in power structures and decision-making processes. In 1995, Cameroon as a developing country signed the Beijing Platform for Action as reported by Ndichia (2010:14). With a capacity to become an emerging democracy, Cameroon became a party to the BPFA and has made efforts to understand how best to factor the letter of the platform into the country's executive practices, legislation, judiciary, press and the civil society actions. In implementing the BPFA, note was taken on the prevalence of certain issues such as abject poverty, unhealthy party politics, and a patriarchal political culture as afore mentioned issues were impeding participatory governance in Cameroon. These issues were to be understood as hurdles to be addressed, in order for the BPFA to be fully achieved. Having twelve (12) critical areas of concern for signatories to work on; these critical areas of concern were on thematic areas like:

- Women and poverty;
- Education and training of women;
- Women and health; violence against women;
- Women and armed conflict;
- Women and the economy;
- Women in power and decision making;
- Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women;
- Women's human rights; women and the media;
- Women and the environment; and
- The girl child.

From the critical areas of concern by the BPFA as highlighted above, one could not help but noticed that emphasis was placed on women and the girl child (Ndichia, 2010:12-13). It has been fifteen (15) years down the line after the signing of the BPFA. It is therefore of great importance to know the level at which the Cameroon government has gone in the implementation of the said document. Also, it is imperative to envisage the kind of strategies used by the state to obtain the impact at the national level. From this review, it is glaring that the government of Cameroon and other stakeholders have carried out different actions towards the implementation of the platform. However, reactions in the field also show that all the stakeholders in Cameroon, both private and public are generally of the opinion that there is still much more to be done than what has already been realised with respect to implementing the platform in general and in reducing violence against women in particular.

Although critics will always demand for more to be done so as to go beyond the 30% parity, one cannot deny that the government has not done anything with regards to increasing women's presence and participation in politics. First, the Ministry of Women's Affairs which was merged with the Ministry of Social Affairs due to economic crisis that faced the state in the late 80s, following Decree No. 88/1281 of the 21st September, 1988 was reinstated in 1997 following Decree No. 97/205 of 7th December 1997. Checking out the time-frame

between the ratification of the BPFA and the re-installation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs, one can therefore likely say that, the ratification of the BPFA triggered the recreation of the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Aside creating the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Ministry has as charge for the implementation of measures that are related to the respect of women's rights in the political, social, economic and cultural spheres. When it has to do with the political landscape of Cameroon, more women have been voted and appointed into the lower and upper houses of Parliament. More women are now Councilors and are also breaking the glass ceiling and making marks as Mayors. All these achievements are due to the power of influence for the female vote holders.

While the general awareness on the Beijing platform of Action in the country, especially in the regions is grossly limited to those involved in women's promotion, violence against women as well as discrimination against women in all works of state's life is very rampant in many cases. The government and civil society structures working to promote women are generally fully aware of the circumstances. However, the will of the public sector and the means of the private sector must be visible in order that the legal institutional framework can be better adopted and matched with the required actions to better the plight of the woman in Cameroon. In short there is need to move from declarations and discourse to commitment and action Ndichia (2010:15). Meanwhile it is averagely understood to have been a revolutionary platform aimed at giving more voice, more equality, more freedom and simply greater power to the women. The Beijing platform was misunderstood by many persons especially the male folk, hence the expression "you women went to Beijing" meaning that women gained some freedom and equality in Beijing. It can be observed from the discussion above that a good number of actions have been ongoing, (both consciously and unconsciously) towards the implementation of the Beijing platform of Action Ndichia (2010:16).

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000

The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) was designed at the opening of the millennium that is in year 2000. This was a policy paper drafted by the United Nations as a development agenda with a set of goals that is eight goals and targets. These goals were expected to be reached at on or before 2015 with indicators for the monitoring of progress recorded by states as stipulated by Kandawasvika-Nhundu (2013). These goals included; the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger, ensure primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce mortality of children below five years, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, establish a global partnership for development. Goal 3 which emphasised on the promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women indicated the acknowledgement of women to be treated equally as men in all ramifications and not to be discriminated upon whether in the economic, social, cultural and political domain.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of 2012

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a strategic paper constructed and ratified by members of the United Nations as a modified continuum of the Millennium Development Goal which has an Agenda of 'Leave no one behind' (LNOB) in 2030. These goals were born at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. This strategic paper has been designed to meet up with development goals for the next 15 years. Leave no one behind is the central, transformative promise of the 2030 Agenda. In the aspect of women, the SDG 5 which aims at achieving gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls is an intrinsic enabler for sustainable development and representative democracy for each country and the world at large. The SDG 5 stipulates the requisite collective action for transformation, creating conducive environments towards substantive equality for all women and girls. It fundamentally addresses key areas of gender inequality like gender-based discrimination in law and in practice, violence against women and girls, the lack of and unequal access to and ownership of economic resources, and women's unequal participation and representation in both private and public decision-making positions.

Observations by Tametong & Aboudi (2021) has created a realization that So far, Cameroon has ratified a set of international conventions as a means to ensure that no bias is meted on women because of their biological and physiological characteristics. For the Regional legal instruments ratified by Cameroon pertaining the promotion of women's Rights in political participation and representation, the study will try to handle the

following though not an exhaustible list of legal instruments. They include; The Dakar Platform for Action (1994), African Plan of Action to Accelerate the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action for the Advancement of Women (1999), Protocol for the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) and the AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) (Online Discussion on Women, 2007:3). These instruments all aim at promoting the full participation of women in political leadership and processes in African countries.

The Nairobi Conference (1985)

The Nairobi Conference which was convened in 1985, introduced certain actions and strategies that needed to be implemented regarding ways to promote women's participation in politics and decision-making. The advancement of Women, gender equality and women's political participation and representation at varied levels which this conference preached on have stood out as measuring yard and has been acting as a pertinent part of politics in Africa and the rest of the world according to Banda (2013).

Dakar Platform for Action (1994)

The Dakar Platform for Action was signed by all fifty-three (53) states of which Cameroon is part of. This was signed in Senegal, April 2000. Being an Education Forum meeting in Dakar, Senegal, members or signatories to this committed themselves to the objectives and goals of education for all, for all citizens and all societies. The Dakar Framework for Action is a representation of a collective commitment to action by governments to ensure that the objective and goal of education for all, is achieved with lasting results. To effectively assume this responsibility, there have been established partnerships with a broad base within each country, supported by cooperation with agencies and international and regional institutions (Dakar Platform of Action, 2000:2).

Ratifying the Dakar Platform for Action can be seen as a platform to increase women's participation in politics. Understanding that one of the reasons for the regression and slow progression of women in politics is the lack of education and confidence. Low adult female literacy rate prevents women from accessing information about the political process, voting, and candidates running for election. Aside being prevented from helpful information to enable women's participation in politics, lack of education also plays down on women's confidence to stand up with men in fields assumed to be male domain which is politics. To better the position of women in the political sphere and for the alleviation of women in participating in the political life of Cameroon, the Dakar Platform for Action has been ratified by Cameroon. The ratification of this framework has helped to increase women's access to education. Education is used as a tool to boost confidence and also increases the possibility of women actively participate in the political life of the state. As such overcome barriers and facilitate women's political participation were made.

The AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (SDGEA) 2004

The AU Solemn Declaration on Gender Equality in Africa (2004) is an important African union (AU) instrument for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment among AU member states. (Solemn Declaration 2:158). Countries are committed to reporting annually on their progress towards gender equality. In addition, the commission is expected to submit a general report every year on the progress of the implementation of the declaration, as well as on the state of gender equality at both the national and the regional level. Only eighteen (18) Member States have submitted their initial report on the SDGEA, namely Algeria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Ghana, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe. Senegal is the only country that has submitted a second report (SIDA, 2010). This declaration, signed by Heads of State and Government, reaffirms a commitment to the principle of gender equality as enshrined in Article 4 (I) of the Constitutive Act of the African Union. Other existing commitments, principles, goals and actions set out in the various regional, continental and international instruments on human and women's rights.

The National Action Plan for Women in Development (NAPWID) 1997

The Cameroon Government planned and implemented its first strategy document on women's empowerment, a material which defined government priorities and strategies in this area. It was a policy statement coupled with the National Action Plan for Women in Development (NAPWID). The seven areas of involvement was curtailed from the twelve points selected within the framework of the Beijing recommendations which includes: improving living conditions of women, improving the legal status of women, developing female human resources in all vital sectors, ensuring active participation of women in decision-making, protecting and promoting the girl child, fighting violence against women, and improving the institutional framework for effective integration of women in development (MUDEC, 2006).

The National Gender Policy Document (NGPD) 2002

The drafting of the National Gender Policy Document (NGPD) has been observed as one of such measures considered as an indication of the government's willingness to ensure that they execute and realise the recommendations made from the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Action Platform (Platform for Action), the Additional Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Millennium and Sustainable Development Goals (MDGs & SDGs), the Rights of Women in Africa and other important international and regional instruments ratified by Cameroon. The National Gender Policy document is a development tool based on the principles of human rights, social justice, equality between men and women and democracy. Its implementation is relevant in reducing gender inequality thereby promoting sustainable development (Fouthe, 2017). At the national level, the public policy is based on the morals and principles of social justice, human rights values, good governance and democracy in a bid to achieve equality and equity between women and men in all aspects of the state.

The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) 2003

The Cameroon Government in April 2003 using the participatory approach adopted a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and sector strategies in the areas of health, education, rural development, social development, etc. The PRSP manifested a highlight in the continuation of reforms by authorities since attaining the completion point under the enhanced debt relief initiative for Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). It adopted the following guidelines for gender equality: the improvement of the socio-legal status of women, the advancement of women's living conditions, the promotion of gender equality and equity, the development of family welfare, the strengthening of institutional mechanisms and the promotion of good governance (MUDEC, 2006).

The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) 2009

The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) adopted in August 2009, was a revised version of the PRSP. The GESP had set out guidelines for gender equality in the following seven sectors: rural infrastructure, industry and services, governance, education, social and health services. The GESP is the springboard of all development activities, including the National Gender policy which is based on its guidelines.

Data Set and Methodology

The research approach applied in this study was the mixed research method. The descriptive survey with hypothesis tested and the probability sampling technique initiated in this study is the cluster sampling. The study population involves the population Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions is approximately 19,230 and 56,503 respectively as posited by city population (2024). It can be concluded that the population studied approximately 75,733 from randomly selected villages within the Sub-Divisions. Data was generated from the field through the administration of instruments such as questionnaires, interviews. The hypothesis was tested by the use of chi-square after the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was used to test reliability of the questionnaire which gave excellent results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Concerning responses as to how effective the import of the law by Cameroonian legislators promote gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon, interviewees hold the views that through the ratification of CEDAW, women as well as men in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division in the South West Region of Cameroon can freely exercise their civic rights through the ballot box as confirmed by Inter-Parliamentary Union (2003:7-8). To ensure that women are not sidelined, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was set up in 1992 (CEDAW, 2014). Also, the implementation of temporary measures such as quotas and other proactive measures aimed at achieving equality of women organ in charge of elections in Cameroon (ELECAM) has been empowered to take decisions concerning electoral procedures. Lists presented by political parties can be rejected if the party fails to respect the 30% parity of women. At the level of the political parties, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), and the Social Democratic Front (SDF) has ensured the endorsement of one female candidate where there are three contesting seats. This is in line with information proclaimed by Advocates of Human Rights (2014). In conformity to this rule, the CPDM party lists submitted to ELECAM must have at least 30% female representation.

This rule has been strictly observed and executed by ELECAM such that it has rejected a list from the SDF because it did not respect the 30% female representation. Also, the presence and promotion of the women's wing of the CPDM; that is the WCPDM have made it easy for women to be part of the political life of the state. Finally, the creation of the ministry of women's empowerment with the Delegation of MINPROFF in all sub-divisions just for women, is useful in engaging women in diverse activities and educative talks on women's health issues, women's economic empowerment and also political empowerment. All these efforts have been put in place by the government to ensure women's presence in politics are evidently noticed. Achieving gender parity such that women's political participation is attained in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division, requires the effective import of laws by Cameroonian legislators. The hypothesis tested provided very strong evidence ($11,886.335 > 45.559$) to support the claim that the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators in the promotion of gender parity significantly relate to the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions. The ratification of International, Regional and national legal instruments in the form of hard and soft laws, are calculative indicators of the efforts or attempts made by Cameroonian legislators as a drive towards improving gender parity and women's political participation.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

As much as the government tries to implement international laws and conventions for the promotion of women in politics, certain lapses will still be observed. The application of hard and soft laws ratified by legislators, coupled with good practices copied from other countries should play a pivotal role in motivating Cameroonian legislators to come up with strategic policies to redress the issue of women's political participation. As such, the government needs to triple her efforts on implementing these laws effectively to achieve the goal of increasing women's political participation in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division.

Recommendations Based on the Findings

Regarding the effective import of the law by Cameroonian legislators in the promotion of gender parity in the political participation of women in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi Sub-Divisions of Ndian Division, certain recommendations made were as follows;

- Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) should be sensitive to the rules and regulations governing its activities through gender lens. Registration with ELECAM is not gender sensitive for the electoral register. More women should be registered by female electoral staff not just flooding everywhere with male electoral staff. Having women in the field will make women who are shy to easily get convinced by male staff to register.
- Also, the electoral controlling body of Cameroon through its delegations in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi sub-divisions need to ensure that they are firm on the rule that no list goes through ELECAM and

accepted without having 30% parity of women. With this mind, political parties will be conscious of doing what the government requires of them.

- The 30% mandatory quota as a strategy to ensure women's political participation should be replaced with other strategies like the zipping system of representation by political leaders to increase women's political participation. The zipping system will raise the bar beyond 30% female participation and representation. This will ignite the interest of more women cancel the notion of fraud being the order of the day when it comes to politics.
- Furthermore, there should be an implementation of strict mechanisms to ensure that all Conventions and treaties are respected to the later. If possible, endorse harsh punishment for perpetrators who promote male chauvinism and restriction of women in politics. By so doing, gender parity will be achieved and women's political participation in Bamusso and Ekondo Titi sub-divisions will increase.

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