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What Cameroon's development partners in-country could do, to help mitigate drivers of the country's Anglophone crisis

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Summary

This Policy Paper is intended to be a practical document: it recommends a number of areas of **policy dialogue** and concrete **programmatic, sectoral interventions** that Cameroon's development partners (U.N., bilateral partners, multilateral financial institutions) could pursue to help the country mitigate underlying drivers of the crisis affecting primarily its historically Anglophone Northwest and Southwest regions -- with effects on other regions as well.

It is written having specifically in mind, development partners with an operational presence and programmatic capacity in-country, who engage and support the Government and people of Cameroon across a range of thematic and development sectors. The scope or range of its recommendations spans from: (i) the political, to (ii) conflict mitigation and management through policy interventions in development sectors bearing on the specific triggers of the crisis, and (iii) response to and mitigation of the human rights and humanitarian consequences of the crisis. *The Paper highlights four (4) conflict mitigation approaches, and their underlying domains of technical expertise, that seem essential for States harbouring diversity as Cameroon does:*

- Devolution and sub-national governance in States with territorially and non-territorially diverse socio-demographic features (integration versus accommodation);
- Language policy and planning for multilingual States;
- Bijuralism, multi-juralism, and management of mixed legal systems;
- Language-in-Education policy planning for multilingual States.

This Paper is written as the crisis enters its 5th year, at the start of a calendar year when development partners' programmatic plans are being finalized. It is written one year after the conclusion of the National Dialogue on the crisis, the ensuing adoption of legislation in December 2019 on Official Languages and on Devolution to Regions and Local Councils, and in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of Cameroon's regional tier of institutions.

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SECTION I: OVER-ARCHING STRATEGY – OVERCOMING CONSTRAINTS TO ENGAGEMENT, SECTORAL POLICY DIALOGUE, AND MOBILIZING TECHNICAL EXPERTISE

Identifying and Overcoming Constraints to Engagement with GoC on the crisis

An overarching consideration that informs this Paper, is that Cameroon's development partners may face a number of challenges in supporting the Government and stakeholders on paths towards resolution of the crisis.

First, is the constraint of a diminished policy space for engaging the Government of Cameroon (hereafter, GoC) on matters it deems eminently sovereign questions, for which it asserts the greatest margin of discretion in policy making, and where it is apprehensive of the role of foreign actors. Second, the Government (like its peers faced with similar situations) is concerned about "internationalization" of the crisis, including its evocation at multilateral forums or global bodies.

Third, there is also the risk (not necessarily the reality) of internal dissonance among development partners' positions. If significant enough, these divergences can complicate a coherent sectoral policy dialogue, or encourage partner-shopping: trading off the views of some, against the views and positions of others. Fourth, is the perception that underlying the crisis are inherently political matters. These questions may be seen as reaching farther than the remit of specific development sectors. This may in turn provide mutual reinforcement to the sovereignty argument by the GoC, with the ultimate result that there is a common incentive to avoid raising the underlying issues, in specific sectors where these conflict triggers are located.

Development partners' in-country presences and teams have the particular advantage that they engage and support the GoC across a range of sectors of intervention, some of which touch squarely upon the crisis' trigger areas (such as the education and justice sectors). This palate of interventions should provide them levers with which to engage in "Policy Dialogue" with the GoC, and also with key stakeholders in the said sectors – policy dialogue being understood to mean the *substantive component and corollary of development assistance*.

While the GoC generates significant own resources through improvements in and diversification of the economy which provide a substantial national revenue base (making the country not functionally aid-dependent), Cameroon is nonetheless a significant recipient of development assistance, as well as concessional lending and grants from development banks. It also has long-standing partnerships with key sources of support, including its principal bilateral development cooperation partners (such as AFD, GIZ, JICA). Cameroon is also the Central Africa sub regional hub for multiple regional and international organisations engaging in various sectors of development, and transnational regulatory functions. Hosting these sub-regional presences is important for Cameroon's stature – and is an important incentive and lever for its continued engagement with its international partners.

Strategy 1: Conflicts over language systems in officially multi-lingual States are principally manifested through sectoral concerns : working on these sectors is a critical investment in conflict resolution, mitigation, and prevention of recurrence.

In officially-multilingual countries, when conflicts emerge along the lines of official language systems, they manifest themselves in spheres or sectors where the respective language systems are competing with each other, or where State policies or non-regulation of languages result in differential impacts for primary users of one or the other official language system. Such spheres may include the education sector as to the language of instruction or over educational content and ethos, the languages used to access State services, or the language system used in Courts and legal proceedings.¹ While the overall frame for resolution of such crises lies in *political* choices (such as articulating the form the State will take to manage its constituent groups, handling of group identities, and devolution arrangements to sub-regional tiers or institutions of Government), their triggers emanate from, and are manifested in specific domains or spheres of public life.

It should be appreciated that while group claims which underlie Cameroon's present crisis manifest themselves as, or are summarized into political models or demands (separatism, federalism, regional autonomy), these are umbrella labels which actually speak to how the State manages specific policy areas. Four (4) of these worthy of note are: the territorial *devolution process* (sub-national governance), *language policy and planning* (for official and other languages), *the delivery and regulation of education* (in two separate official language streams), and the *administration of justice* in two legal practice traditions which follow the official languages (French civilist and English common law).

For Cameroon's development partners, *mitigation, resolution, and prevention of the crises' recurrence* constitute clear priorities. With this in mind, we assert that *every intervention by its development partners* to enable Cameroon (i) conduct better language policy planning notably on the official languages, (ii) accommodate the two legal practice cultures or variants within the State, and (iii) run two concurrent language-in-education systems harmoniously with substantive equality of outcomes, *constitutes a major long-term investment in conflict prevention in the country*. Furthermore, given their demonstrated conflict potential in Cameroon, the appropriate *conflict-sensitive* development approach to engaging these sectors for development partners, is to factor in the above dual systems and the resulting diversity management, when working on domains such as devolution (sub-national governance), the education sector, justice sector support, and support to language policy and planning.

Peace and development policy analysts looking at this crisis need to look no further than the experience of other officially multi-lingual States (e.g. South Africa, Belgium, Canada) to see that preventing such crises requires a substantial investment in the right policies to

¹ See comparatively : Joseph Lo Bianco, Conflict, [Language Rights, and Education: Building Peace by Solving Language Problems in Southeast Asia](#), Language Policy Research Network Brief, April 2016; South, A; Lall, M; (2016) [Language, Education and the Peace Process in Myanmar](#). Contemporary Southeast Asia , 38 (1) pp. 128-153; Caucasus Institute of Peace, Democracy and Development & GTZ, [Conflict Potential Related to the Problems of Language and Education in Georgia's Kvemo Kartli Province](#), Policy Paper, 2006; William Tetley, Q.C., [Language and Education Rights in Quebec and Canada: A Legislative History and Personal Political Diary](#), Journal of Law and Contemporary Problems, (1983), Vol. 45, No. 4, pp 177 – 219; [Mahe vs. Alberta](#), [1990] 1 SCR 342, Supreme Court of Canada.

accommodate such official language diversity. That challenge is even greater for Cameroon, being a developing country.

The content of conflict-prevention, mitigation, and peacebuilding work on the Anglophone crisis should therefore be directed at its causes – which lie principally in the sectors identified above – and not extrapolated from non-context specific factors that tend to cause conflicts elsewhere. Admittedly, other factors such as youth unemployment, severe rural-urban disparities in development indicators, and infrastructure gaps likely contributed tinder to spark unrest leading to the crisis. However, it should be borne in mind that an assessment of development indicators suggests that a situation of economic or developmental disadvantage was not a common trait shared between the Northwest and Southwest regions, before the onset of the crisis in 2016. (National Household surveys for 15 years before the crisis show the Southwest as among the country's best development performers, and the Northwest among the worst).² This tends to make relative, the weight of these factors as triggers for the crisis that began in 2016.

Strategy 2: Sound technical expertise on accommodating, managing diverse official language-based systems within a single country, is a critical value-added asset Cameroon's partners should give voice to, and bring to the table.

Since the crisis began, there has been curiosity to understand various approaches to regulate sectors in which the official languages may be competing for use, and how improving their management could help over the long-term make for better coexistence and accommodation policies in Cameroon, of its diverse heritages.

However, the rapid crystallization of the crisis into political goals (separatism, federalism, autonomy, unitarism) began to define the conflict's fault lines over what political pressure groups including ultimately belligerent ones, were seeking, and what the Government would or would not concede – freezing the debate. In a charged political environment, compounded by rapid escalation into armed conflict in less than a year (from teacher/lawyer union protests in late 2016, to emergence of armed insurgent groups in late 2017) each side and public opinion with it, would entrench its views. This would often make for a binary opposition conflict between political models, which in themselves had scarcely been properly appropriated, debated, or experienced, among and between their respective proponents. Fears (of separatism, war, foreign intervention, balkanisation, a radicalized diaspora, and of an often-ruthless pro-separation armed movement) would further freeze policy discussion and proposals.

Our *Project on Constitutional Options* witnessed this in the lead up to, and deliberations at the National Dialogue, late in 2019. As its delegates geared up for an apparently irreconcilable showdown between proponents of "federalism" and proponents of extant "unitarism", we noticed that few delegates to the proceedings were aware of, or had studied the middle-of-the-road State forms between the above two: which are *Unitary States with asymmetrical devolution to specific regions or territorial units based on their peculiarities as part of a broader national devolution process; or Region-based, composite States (Regionalism)*. These are however widely studied and recognized State form options, used to conciliate the

² See Constitutional Options Project, [Key Data, Figures, and Statistics](#) (accessed : January 2021).

uniformizing approach of Unitarist States with regional or territorial peculiarities they may be faced with.³

These composite State forms (such as region-based States, which are distinct from federal ones) had not been explored, yet Cameroon's own Constitution (Section 62.2) already provided the constitutional basis for some asymmetry between its Regions. Realizing this, the Dialogue's delegates quickly agreed on a Special Status for the NW and SW Regions within a Unitary State as a compromise option, which got adopted, and is now in its teething stages of articulation for experimentation.

Cameroon's policymakers have often conceded challenges in handling the two official language heritage systems, including when they exhibit differences, or come into conflict. Cameroon's President was clear in his remarks at the Paris, France Peace Summit in November 2019, that the authorities are somewhat exasperated as to what do to additionally, to make the 2 official languages equal (since despite efforts to date, differences remain in the legal system, education system, and in the respective accompanying linguistic mindsets and mentalities).⁴

This Paper offers the view that whatever ultimate political model the State adopts and pursues to address the crisis, Cameroon is going to need expertise to manage these dual legacies. It therefore posits that a *core value added proposition* that Cameroon's development partners should mobilize – for the benefit of the GoC, national policymakers, and stakeholders – is the best in-country and external expertise available on how countries can manage, handle, and accommodate official diversity of the type Cameroon has. In Section II, this paper highlights four (4) distinct, globally recognized fields of specialised technical expertise that appear essential to inform a national conflict-mitigation approach on the crisis' underlying drivers:

- (i) Devolution and sub-national governance in States with territorially and non-territorially diverse socio-demographic features (integration versus accommodation);
- (ii) Language policy and planning for multilingual States;
- (iii) Bijuralism, multi-juralism, and management of mixed legal systems; and
- (iv) Language-in-Education policy for multilingual States.⁵

³ See: André Roux et Guy Scoffoni, [Autonomie Régionale et Formes de l'Etat](#), In *Renouveau du droit constitutionnel*, Mélanges en l'honneur de Louis Favoreu, Dalloz, 2007, pp. 895-913 ; Pierre de Montalivet, [l'État unitaire français et la décentralisation: L'hybridation des modèles territoriaux](#), in *Fundamentos*, vol. 10, La Evolución de los Modelos Territoriales: Reformulación versus Ruptura (2018), pp 131 – 154 ; Ronald Watts, [Asymmetrical Decentralization: Functional or Dysfunctional](#), Paper Presented at International Political Science Association, Québec, Canada, August 2000.

⁴ See: InvestirauCameroun.com, [Forum de Paris sur la paix : Paul Biya explique la crise anglophone en cours au Cameroun](#), 13 novembre 2019.

⁵ As the extensive resources cited in this paper indicate, there exist pools and repositories of in-country research and expertise on: (i) language policy and planning; (ii) bi-juralism, mixed, and comparative legal systems; and (iii) language-in-education policies – which need to be given voice in the national policy-making process.

Strategy 3: Insert language-systems diversity into sector-based Policy Dialogue with GoC as a means to open national civic and liberties space, and create in-roads to share technical expertise

In the context of aid effectiveness, it is the prevailing practice that development cooperation and assistance entail both *policy dialogue* between national authorities, stakeholders, and development partners, and the actual *provision of development financing and inputs* to various sectors of development activity. It is here that Cameroon's development partners, operating at technical level with sectoral Ministries – such as Justice and Education – can play a critical role to help place the effective management of dual official language streams (which manifest themselves in these sectors) onto the policy agenda of these sectors.

The previous record of *sector-based internalization* of the dual official language heritage systems in Cameroon, has been mixed. In the Education sector, where the 1998 Framework Law (*Loi d'Orientation*) on Education and other texts recognize two educational sub-systems (in English and French respectively), sectoral planning documents such as the Education Sector-Wide Approach Plan (SWAP) internalize this feature.⁶ Yet, in others such as the Justice sector, where existing national laws do not as clearly regulate the dual legal traditions, sectoral planning documents often do not mention Cameroon's bijuralism,⁷ with the attendant risk of its being relegated to the background.

Faced with what is considered overall a political issue, whose resolution the GoC may posit is entirely within its national sovereign prerogatives (and thus resist well-meaning external advice and support) a *sector-based approach helps to unpack the said problem or challenge into its constituent parts or spheres of manifestation*. It also assists policymakers and key stakeholders in the concerned sectors to appropriate how they can *technically* resolve challenges in accommodating these heritage systems. These are openings to be used for constant *sector-based* policy dialogue with the GoC in functional and practical domains, given a national context where mere evocation of the differences between the systems can be seen as exacerbating or giving prominence to a national feature (dual systems) which would rather be de-emphasized.⁸

Development partners can play a key role in raising these diversity-management approaches proactively (in specific sectors where they arise), to help maintain a *healthy level of national discussion, policy debate, and most importantly, civic and liberties space* for it to take place. The effect of the descent into armed insurgency, rendering the country's political environment tense, is not only to narrow GoC's receptiveness to foreign partners' counsel on the crisis, but also to *shrink the civic and liberties space within* Cameroon, for stakeholders to discuss these issues. Yet, no sound headway from the crisis can be envisioned if Cameroon's stakeholders, such as its linguists and language policy specialists, educationists, and jurists are unable to propose policy improvements for these sectors. Along with proactivity in Policy

⁶ Republic of Cameroon: Technical Committee for the Elaboration of the Sector Wide Approach / Education, [Draft Document of the Sector Wide Approach / Education](#), 2006, pages 22 to 27.

⁷ République du Cameroun, *Stratégie Sectorielle du Sous-Secteur Justice et Plan d'Actions*, 2011 – 2015, (95 pp, on file).

⁸ See : National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, [Press Release](#), 3 May 2019; and Cameroon-Info.Net, [Media Report](#), 28 April 2019.

Dialogue, it may well be useful to engage technical expertise *proactively* in some sectors through selected entry points, in order to help shape approaches.

A reassuring message when engaging with national policymakers and interlocutors is to reiterate the point that *Cameroon is not alone as a country, to face challenges in managing the coexistence of different official languages for access to State services, dual education sub-systems, or dual major legal practice traditions*. Experience around the world shows that when countries harbour this type of diversity, conflicts can and do occur. This has given rise to an entire domain or specialty combining *conflict analysis* and *contact linguistics*, known as “language conflicts”, which arise from contact or competition between languages.⁹

These conflicts often arise from or have their origins deep in sectors that can be described as *conflict-prone (or centrifugal)* because they vary or entail competition between official language systems. Accommodating them or obtaining the right national regulatory framework for them is difficult. Even older States, with vastly more economic and human resources face these same challenges – and are often embroiled in political tensions over them, bringing these countries to the brink of conflict and even separatism (Canada, Belgium, Spain, and some States in Asia are examples).

It may be questioned whether in the absence of a major shift in direction towards grounding State policies in *recognizing, conciliating, and accommodating differences* between these official language legacy systems, it is worthwhile pursuing sectoral policy dialogue or availing technical expertise thereon. Our response is three-fold. *First*, as explained above, in these matters, the “sectoral” is where the “political” tends to take root (complaints about sectoral policies such as in Education and Justice, give rise to political demands). *Second*, prolonged uniformizing policies may have rendered policymakers less familiar with modern, evolving tools for managing co-existence of diverse systems, and *third*, that when the political will is found, it will invariably need to be translated into sound, *sectoral* policy actions.

⁹ See : Peter Hans Nelde, ["Language Conflict" : The Handbook of Sociolinguistics](#). Florian Coulmas (ed), Blackwell Publishing, 1998. Blackwell Reference Online. 28 December 2007; Jeroen Darquennes (University of Namur), [Language conflict research: A state of the art](#), International Journal of the Sociology of Language, September 2015, 27 pp; Georg Kremnitz, [Du « bilinguisme » au « conflit linguistique » : cheminement de termes et de concepts](#), In: Langages, 15^e Année, n°61, 1981. Bilinguisme et diglossie. pp. 63-74 ; [Peace in Progress : Linguistic Conflicts](#), No. 21, International Catalan Institute for Peace, September 2014.

SECTION II: SPECIFIC POLITICAL, SECTORAL AND TECHNICAL ENTRY POINTS WITH CONFLICT-MITIGATION POTENTIAL, ON CAMEROON'S DUAL OFFICIAL LANGUAGE-BASED SYSTEMS

Area 1 - DEVOLUTION, TERRITORIAL AND NON-TERRITORIAL DIVERSITY

Preserve and enrich the national policy and civic space to discuss, articulate, and develop models of organisation and allocation of State responsibilities to accommodate diversity, including through devolution.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: is to improve substantially among a wide range of Cameroonian State institutions, policymakers, and civic actors, the understanding of different forms of State organisation, ordering, and devolution, that can be resorted to in order effectively to administer regions of a country, or accommodate population segments with significant peculiarities (historical, linguistic, cultural).

Expertise Pools to draw from: Devolution arrangements in comparative constitutional design, asymmetrical devolution in Unitary States, Special Status devolution frameworks, territorial autonomy arrangements, non-territorial autonomy, hybrid and composite State forms, integration versus accommodation in constitutional design for plural societies.

The Challenge: driven by a strong ethos to consolidate national unity, Cameroon has in nearly 50 years of unitarism, implemented policies to uniformize the State's administration at national and sub-national levels across the country, driven by strong *central* institutions. The pressures of the crisis in the historically Anglophone regions, amidst the country's incipient process of devolution to regional and local tiers of government, has resulted in a legislated political option to recognize *regional asymmetry in devolution* (through Special Status regions). Implementing this will however be challenging in a State ordered principally on classical unitarism, which emphasizes the unicity (and uniformity) of legislative, executive, judicial, and linguistic prerogatives and features across the entire country.

Value-added Activities and Entry Points: A critical need for Cameroonian institutions and civic actors is to open *spaces to discuss and examine the meaning and practical implications* of what the State has laid out as the *structural response* to the crisis. Presently, this lies in the notion of *asymmetrical devolution*, under which "the North-West and South-West Regions shall have a special status based on their language specificity and historical heritage" (Section 3, General Code of Regional and Local Authorities, December 2019).¹⁰

The above legislation is clear that it has not yet defined what *specificities and peculiarities* the Special Status is expected to protect – Section 3(4). The law's formulations (Sections 328.1 and 328.2) as well as the companion Law on Official Languages (December 2019)¹¹ show that the legislator has retained a framework of *national* and not *devolved* institutions (even in Special Status regions) steering nationwide policies on official languages, education, and justice. The reluctance towards *territorial-based* policies (handling parts of the country differently) is consistent with classical unitarism. Yet, even *non-territorial* based arrangements, such as how

¹⁰ See : [General Code of Regional and Local Authorities](#), 24 December 2019.

¹¹ See: [Law on the Promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon](#), 24 December 2019.

English language use, the corresponding educational sub-system, or the Common Law legal tradition would be managed or safeguarded at *national* levels, raise challenging policy questions.

Cameroon is not the only country with features such as official multilingualism, historical affinities, identity formation, or territorial preponderance of official language systems within specific regions, *asymmetric* devolution within a Unitary State, and progressive dispersal, spread, and contact between official language systems, outside their historical regions of predominance. Constructive examination and discussion of how other countries have attempted to address these peculiarities through devolution, special status or autonomous regions, and non-territorial autonomy will make a healthy addition to Cameroon's efforts, structurally to address the Anglophone crisis.

It can only be beneficial if Cameroon's stakeholders: (a) increase their familiarity with these modes and models of State ordering and/or devolution to respond to group specificities; (b) examine and monitor the quality of legislation, regulations, and practice that are adopted to give meaning to this structural political solution; and (c) evaluate its effectiveness – in light of other comparative experiences – in responding to Cameroon's challenge. An active program of *conferences, media debates, and publications* with due attention to the Special Status regions' constituents and other central policymakers, implemented by responsible partner entities, can significantly improve the quality of national discourse on this issue.

Matters pertaining to how the State's design may optimally accommodate the French/English heritages, including in their territorial dimension, necessarily touch upon political issues that are contested in the crisis, and constitute areas in which GoC/national authorities may be most sensitive about the role of development partners and international actors. Yet, it must be remembered that at their core lie questions of constitutional and institutional design which are not unique to Cameroon. Other countries grapple with these complex questions of devolution, and variants of territorial and non-territorial autonomy as means to manage group or regional specificities, and this has resulted in *an entire domain of technical expertise*, which Cameroon can draw from – to adapt, modify, or select from, to best suit its national experience.¹²

It can be observed that since the crisis began, the *overall levels of ideation, debate, and elucidation to the wider public, of the different options of State organisation to address Cameroon's challenge, have been low*, including from the country's constitutional lawyers and

¹² See: Melbourne Forum on Constitution-Building, [Asymmetric Territorial Arrangements in Decentralized Systems](#), October 2018; Ronald Watts, [Asymmetrical Decentralization: Functional or Dysfunctional](#), Paper Presented at International Political Science Association, Québec, Canada, August 2000; Centre for Security Studies & SwissPeace, [Peace Mediation Essentials: Decentralization, Special Territorial Autonomy, and Peace Negotiations](#), Switzerland, November 2010, 12 pp; John Coakley (2016) [Introduction: Dispersed Minorities and Non-Territorial Autonomy](#), Journal – Ethnopolitics, 15:1, 1-23; Tom Ginsburg, [Constitutional Design for Territorially Divided Societies](#), Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA), August 2018, 9 pp; Von Ruth Lapidoth, [Elements of Stable Regional Autonomy Arrangements](#), Centre for Applied Policy Research Working Paper, Ludwig-Maximilians University, Munich - Germany, August 2001, 49 pp; Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, [Positive experiences of autonomous regions as a source of inspiration for conflict resolution in Europe](#), Doc 9824, June 2003; Hans-Joachim Heintze, *Implementation of Minority Rights through the Devolution of Powers - The Concept of Autonomy Reconsidered*, International Journal on Minority and Group Rights 9: 325-343, 2002.

comparative political scientists. Given the embryonic process in which the domains of (regional) specificities and the exercise of asymmetrically devolved attributes are yet to be fully articulated, Cameroon's stakeholders both central and in the concerned regions, should be encouraged to keep open the discussion about these arrangements, enriching them with relevant expertise and comparative experiences.

Area 2 - LANGUAGE POLICY AND PLANNING

Improve institutional arrangements and capacity in the domain of *language policy and planning*, with an emphasis on the Official and widely used languages, and improve metrics to determine differential language impacts on citizens, in order to anticipate, prevent, and mitigate language-based conflict in a multilingual State.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: is to improve national capacity to plan the use of languages in Cameroon, in order to ensure their effective regulation and management, as a conflict prevention and mitigation tool in a country marked by relative linguistic diversity in both exogenous (foreign) and indigenous (local) languages.

Expertise Pools to draw from: Language policy and planning, sociolinguistics, linguistic demographics, language law and legal regulation of languages, language regulation in multilingual States, language contact and language conflict.

The Challenge: Cameroon does not have an overall *Language policy* – that is, an overarching instrument guiding the State's actions in the domain of use, acquisition, learning, growth, preservation, and assignment of official and other valorising functions, to both the country's exoglossic (foreign) official languages, and its indigenous languages. This situation has been a source of concern for a significant number of Cameroonian specialists in language policy, planning, and linguistics.

Their research – including peer-reviewed works published nationally and internationally over the past two decades – tends to converge almost unanimously in the assessment that there is a lack of satisfactory language planning (for both the official languages, and other languages) in Cameroon, and that this language planning void could constitute fertile terrain for future tensions or conflict in the country. They also observe that Cameroon has a dense linguistic landscape in which multiple languages (2 foreign, multiple local) compete for use in the same arenas; that the absence of language policies and regulation results in a survival-of-the fittest scenario in which power, status, and demographics of languages determine their *rapport de force* and hence the status and situation of their respective users; and that this situation breeds tensions.¹³

To cite extensively from a widely published Cameroonian linguist, despite their desirability and inevitability, linguistic diversity and multiculturalism are inherently prone to a number

¹³ See: Augustin Simo Bobda, [Life in a Tower of Babel without a Language Policy](#), Linguistic Agency, University of Duisburg-Essen, Germany, Series A: General & Theoretical Papers, 2004; George Echu, [Coping with Multilingualism: Trends in the Evolution of Language Policy in Cameroon](#), Philologie im Netz (Online Journal of Philology) Vol. 25, 2003 pp 31 - 46, Berlin, Germany; Dieudonné P. Aroga Bessong, [Le bilinguisme officiel \(français-anglais\) au Cameroun : un problème d'aménagement efficace](#), Revue : Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction, vol. 10, n° 1, 1997, p. 219-244; and Jean Tabi-Manga, *Les politiques linguistiques du Cameroun. Essai d'aménagement linguistique*, Editions Karthala, 2000, 237 pp ([reviewed here](#)).

of problems, including misguided ethno-linguistic loyalties that may create dissension, tension, and conflict (the so-called *guerre des langues*). He however underscores that such conflicts have little to do with language intrinsically but result from lack of optimal management of ethno-linguistic diversity and multiculturalism. He offers sound policy advice that “*the proper management of languages in a multilingual setting in accordance with well-known principles is therefore indispensable in stemming the potential tide of ... polarisation within the nation’s fabric and ensuring linguistic rights, national integration, and national development.*”¹⁴

In December 2019, filling a legal vacuum that existed for decades between the *constitutional* prescription of nationwide bilingualism and equality of the two official languages, and several lower level *administrative circulars* reminding State employees of the requirement of bilingualism in the State administration, Cameroon’s first *language regulation law* (Law on the Promotion of Official Languages) was promulgated : the said law has however *preceded* a national language policy. There is also convergence among Cameroon’s specialists in the field, that the vacuum in language policy, planning, and management has been filled by self-help, with a mix of languages competing for, or combined in public use, and citizens acquiring skills in the official languages based on their self-perception of status and opportunity accruing to the said language.

This has been noted in the new *Millennium* with the advent of globalisation and keen interest by historical French speakers (Francophones) to acquire English – seen as a vector of global opportunity, through a deliberate generational shift to school instruction in English. Linguists have however noted that the competing, unregulated posture of the official languages has deepened *identity formation around languages* – these identities often being *non-complementary towards national harmonious coexistence*, but rather reflecting pre-existing, perceived status hierarchies between language users. A frequent observation is the near hierarchisation between “local” English (identified with Cameroon’s local primary English users, or Anglophones), and “global” English – the more desired or ascribed to English identity associated with globalisation. ¹⁵

Cameroon’s linguistic demographics show challenging patterns, notably in respect of its two official languages. Despite the country being constitutionally bilingual in official language use across the entire territory, the last census data (2005) revealed that only 12% of the population was bilingual in the said languages, 87 % of persons literate in official languages could use only one (were monolingual), and showed a preponderance ratio of 5 : 1 in the use of each

¹⁴ Beban Sammy Chumbow, [*The Challenge of Linguistic Diversity and Pluralism: The Tier Stratification Model of Language Planning in a Multilingual Setting*](#), In Social Sciences and Cultural Studies - Issues of Language, Public Opinion, Education and Welfare, Asuncion Lopez-Varela (Ed.), September 2012.

¹⁵ See : Eric A. Anchimbe, [*Anglophonism and Francophonism : The Stakes of \(Official\) Language Identity in Cameroon*](#). Alizés : Revue Angliciste de La Réunion, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines (Université de La Réunion), 2005, pp.7-26 ; Jane-Francis Afungmeyu Abongdia, [*Language Ideologies and Attitudes of Francophone Learners towards English in Yaoundé*](#), Cameroon (MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape), 2009, 155 pp; and Eric A. Anchimbe, *Global Identities or Local Stigma Markers: How Equal Is the ‘E’ in Englishes in Cameroon?* pp 47-62, in *Englishes in Multilingual Contexts: Language Variation and Education*, Ahmar Mahbob and Leslie Barratt, (Eds.), Springer Publications, Netherlands, 2014.

official language in the regions of its historical provenance (these figures have likely improved since the last census, due to increased learning in particular of English).¹⁶

In addition to a policy void, Cameroon harbours an *institutional gap* in the locus of decision-making on language policy and planning, compared to established practices in that domain, for officially multilingual States. Thus, Cameroon does not have a “Central Language Authority in the form of a Language Institute, Language Centre, Language Academy, or Language Board” which would serve as its institutional nerve-centre for language policy, planning, and management.¹⁷

Cameroon does not have a shortage of dispersed institutional activity in the language domain, which includes the Bilingualism Program, and Regional Linguistic (Training) Centres, the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multilingualism (which neither has overall language planning within its mandate, nor reflects same in its membership composition which hardly includes Cameroonian linguists and language planning specialists), Cabinet Department and State Agency Translation and Interpretation Units, an Advanced School of Translation and Interpretation, University Departments of Linguistics, and Regional & Local Authorities tasked with promoting indigenous (local) languages. However, unlike *Devolution* (subnational governance), *Justice*, and *Education*, which are the other three (3) sectors for suggested interventions, *development partners may not find a fully-organised language policy and planning “sector” or institution in Cameroon – our recommendation is that they should encourage its establishment.*

Value-added Activities and Entry Points: Development partners should consider prioritizing support to the GoC and its key national stakeholders to work towards clarifying the policy direction, and the institutional responsibilities for language policy planning in Cameroon. The backdrop of the Anglophone crisis (as concerns the official languages) and a certain tide of ethno-regional pressures (as concerns assigning functions to indigenous, national languages) may be factors that render the process more challenging. However, doing so will be an investment in long-term conflict prevention and mitigation – since unmanaged linguistic diversity has shown its conflict potential.

Language policy and planning, as a specialist field, provides an important frame of reference through which States can plan, project, and use their language resources to achieve the aims of national development and cohesion. Most national language planning models do not only contemplate national-level *regulation of official languages*, but also assign, in cascading order to lower territorial units some functions to other languages, for instance widely used *indigenous vehicular languages* (at Regional level), and *limited reach proximate languages* (at Local level).¹⁸ Language policy planning constitutes a sovereign State function that is increasingly affirmatively exercised, and not exercised by default or minimally. An observer on Cameroon has noted that its lack of an (implemented) policy on languages contrasts sharply with what prevails comparatively in other multilingual societies.¹⁹

¹⁶ See : Patrice Tanang Tchouala et Hervé Joël Efon Etinzoh, (2013), [Les dynamiques démolinquistiques au Cameroun de 1960 à 2005](#), Québec : Observatoire démographique et statistique de l'espace francophone / Université Laval, 100 p. (collection Rapport de recherche de l'ODSEF).

¹⁷ See Chumbow, *The Tier-Stratification Model of Language Planning* (cited above), at pp 332, and Tabi-Manga, *Les politiques linguistiques du Cameroun* (cited above).

¹⁸ See Chumbow, *The Tier-Stratification Model of Language Planning* (cited above), at pp 328 and 331.

¹⁹ See Augustin Simo Bobda, *Life in a Linguistic Tower of Babel* (cited above), at pp 3.

It is remarkable that probably more so than any other field or discipline, *specialists in the area of linguistics and language planning and policy* showed prescience, by very accurately predicting, as early as ten (10) years before the advent of the current crisis, that a problem was looming in the horizon.²⁰ The critical need in Cameroon is to create the institutional space for sound language planning – and give voice to Cameroon’s language policy specialists and linguists. To date, their extensive research appears often to have found little uptake into mainstream policy making, which explains the paradox between a high-level of specialist production, and a paucity of policymaking in the domain.²¹

A dedicated language planning function (both process and entity) in Cameroon would amongst other beneficial impacts: (i) aggregate and validate the best research in the area; (ii) provide advice in the formulation of State language policies; (iii) commission and/or conduct prospective studies on trends and factors in language acquisition, use, preservation, and revitalisation; (iv) recommend model language policies for State institutions and entities; (v) review the effectiveness and performance of State language policies; and (vi) work complementarily with bodies such as the NCBPM to inform State policies to optimize the harmonious use, and minimize the conflict potential of (official) language diversity.

Given the already actualized potential of language-related conflict in Cameroon (fuelled by complaints of unequal treatment) an important priority task would be to *improve the capacity and tools to determine the differential impacts of official language policies on citizens, and language equity between end-users of the two official languages*, across the society and economy in a multi-lingual State. Demographic and other factors account for a larger quotient of French language use (more speakers and users of the language) including in the delivery of State services. While research has established differential levels of access enjoyed by users of either official language (such as in access to higher education, or other public services),²² there is a need for formal, public instruments to document the ultimate impacts (on the citizen, user experience) of the extant language situation, in terms of differential personal development outcomes.

Access to State services, educational opportunities, employment, and career-professional advancement are key areas to examine for differential official language impacts. In order to ascertain the situation of opportunity differentials in both the public and the private sectors, key research stakeholders should include vocational and higher education institutions, public

²⁰ See in particular, Simo Bobda and Anchimbe, (cited above).

²¹ The field of linguistics and language planning in Cameroon benefited from sound early scholarship from specialists such as former Cabinet Minister Professor Bernard Fonlon, who is credited with articulating an ideal for (personality-based) bilingualism in Cameroon. See: Bernard Fonlon, [The Case for an Early Bilingualism](#), *ABBIA Journal*, Vol 4, pp. 56 – 94, 1963; Bernard Fonlon, [The Language problem in Cameroon \(An Historical Perspective\)](#), *ABBIA Journal*, No 22, pp 5 – 40, May – August 1969. Two generations of Cameroonian linguists have since followed with active scholarship on Cameroon’s dynamics in this area.

²² See: Gratién Atindogbe & Midinette Koumassol (University of Buea, Cameroon), [Being multilingual in a bilingual environment: Implications for quality education](#), Pan Commonwealth Forum, September 2019; Jean-Paul Kouega, [Bilingualism at Tertiary Level Education in Cameroon: The Case of the University of Yaoundé II \(Soa\)](#), ISBN6: Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium on Bilingualism (30 May-2 June, 2007, University of Hamburg); Isaiah Ayafor, [Official Bilingualism in Cameroon: An Empirical Evaluation of the Status of English in Official Domains](#), Ph.D. Thesis, Albert Ludwigs University of Freiburg, Germany, 2005; Dieudonné P. Aroga Bessong, [Le bilinguisme officiel \(français-anglais\) au Cameroun : un problème d'aménagement efficace](#), *Revue : Traduction, Terminologie, Rédaction*, vol. 10, n° 1, 1997, p. 219-244.

sector recruitment centres, the National Employment Fund, private sector employer groupings, and private sector staffing agencies. Similar studies conducted in other countries have for instance, been able to determine *the career progress or earnings differentials that result* from acquisition of either or both official languages.²³ Such data provide policymakers with important insights into how the official languages are rewarded in practice, and incentives for their acquisition. These studies/surveys should elicit the experience of users of English and French as their 1st and 2nd Official Language (OL), in different regions of the country, and its agglomerations, and enable identification of challenges faced by English OL₁ users in areas where it is the less preponderant language, and vice-versa for French OL₁ users.

Such surveys go beyond verifying the equal use of official languages in *government, semi-public, or state-subsidized bodies* (as the NCPBM is mandated to do per Section 3.2 of its enabling decree of January 2017) in that they also encompass the official languages' interaction outside the public sector, and in private transactions, providing a more holistic appraisal of their use. Their importance is heightened in Cameroon's context, because of the complex inter-relationship between the official languages at national, sub-regional, and global levels. Existing research tends to confirm a higher demographic quotient (and hence advantage in transactional use) of French in many settings at *national (domestic) level*, with English users facing higher access constraints. However, for increasingly important *international* transactions and settings, English tends to acquire a higher stature and transactional value, due to its wider global use.²⁴

Area 3 – BIJURALISM AND MIXED LEGAL SYSTEMS

Create incentives for holding a national, technical conversation on bijuralism, plurijuralism, and mixed legal systems, which are the modern legal techniques to accommodate more than one legal practice tradition in a single country.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: To support the GoC, and incrementally, key legal constituencies in the country, namely the Ministry of Justice, the Judiciary corps, the private Legal Profession (Bar), and Legal Educationists (academics) to review Cameroon's arrangements for, and improve its capacity to accommodate the different legal practice traditions that arise from the country's heritage (Civilist or Romano-Germanic law, and Common law), in light of comparative good practices in this domain.

Expertise Pools to draw from: National bijuralism and multi-juralism policies, legislative bijuralism and legal drafting, mixed and hybrid national legal systems, comparative legal systems (Civil Law and Common Law), legal harmonization and unification of law processes, legal education and training in bi-jural and multi-jural States, legal mobility and multi-jurisdictional practice.

²³ See : Robert Swidinsky & Louis Christofides, [The Economic Returns to the Knowledge and Use of a Second Official Language: English in Quebec and French in the Rest-of-Canada](#), Journal : Canadian Public Policy, 36 (2) : 137 – 158 (2010); Henry A. Diaz, [English-French Bilingualism Outside Quebec: An Economic Portrait of Bilinguals in Canada](#), Conference Board of Canada, 2019, 92 pp.

²⁴ See : Jane-Francis A. Abongdia and Fiona Willans, [The position of English globally and nationally: A comparison of Cameroon and Vanuatu](#), Current Issues in Language Planning (Journal), Vol 15, 2014, pp 55 to 74. (Interesting comparison of two countries with English and French as official language, which also examines the *alternating* prestige "status" of Cameroon's official languages, between the domestic and global levels).

The Challenge: Consistent with the practice in Unitary States, Cameroon has generally sought the unification of its legal system into a single corpus of modern laws, applicable across the entire country. Starting off from different received foreign laws, unification of applicable laws has been pursued in specific domains (such as criminal laws and procedure, aspects of personal status and family law, labour law, and increasingly in commercial law, through supranational treaties). However, segments of the law presently remain non-unified, with contention over even the *process* of their unification (such as resistance to codification). Unlike in the Education sector, there is much less legislative clarity and sectoral policy commitment to recognize these two legal tradition streams in the Justice sector.

The challenging juxtaposition of the major legal traditions (civil law and common law) in Cameroon can be summarized thus: (i) Cameroon's legislation does not formally designate them as *stable* sources of law and legal tradition, but rather has retained them for close to 60 years as *residual* sources of law pending their (uncompleted) transplantation by nationally-adopted laws, (ii) *de facto*, since 1961, the Courts and legal practice have generally aligned with modes and usages derived from common law in the English-preponderant regions (NW, SW), and modes and usages derived from civil law in the French-preponderant regions, (iii) Cameroon has neither a written national policy on bi-juralism or accommodation of dual/multiple major legal traditions, nor a mandated institutional entity or function thereon, and (iv) Cameroon does not have a permanent law reform body with parity or bi-jural representation to handle unification or harmonisation of national law; structural law reforms are generally handled by the Ministry of Justice which affirms that it draws upon expertise from both legal traditions.

Additional features include: (v) with few exceptions, initial (university) training in law is largely conducted in two legal education streams grounded in the common law and civil law traditions respectively, with students having principally the *option* (but not the mandatory requirement) to acquire knowledge in the other legal stream, (vi) on training for legal professionals, training for lawyers at the Bar (through in-office pupillage) substantially follows one or the other legal tradition – not both, while unified Magistracy training now includes a general track, and a dedicated Common Law track, (vii) the legal professions in Cameroon are “mobile” across the legal traditions’ spheres of influence, with lawyers permitted to practice nationwide, and the Justice Ministry assigning Magistrates from either background *across* the regions where each legal culture is dominant, and (viii) Cameroon, as part of supranational legal harmonization processes, is adhering to bodies of community and treaty law (regulating *business laws*) from State groupings (OHADA, CEMAC) with French language predominance in their Courts and legal resources.²⁵

²⁵ On the Cameroonian juxtaposition of legal traditions, see : Nkoulou Yannick-Serge, [Langue et droit au Cameroun \(Linéaments de la problématique de l'unification du droit dans un contexte bilingue\)](#). In: Revue internationale de droit comparé. Vol. 67 N°3, 2015. pp. 695-726 ; Pierre Etienne Kenfack, [La gestion de la pluralité des systèmes juridiques par les Etats de l'Afrique noire : les enseignements de l'expérience camerounaise](#), Cahiers de la recherche sur les droits fondamentaux, No. 7, 2009, pp 153 – 160; Justice Lucy Asuagbor, [La coexistence de droits dans un même espace économique : la perspective Camerounaise](#), Institut international de Droit d'Expression et d'inspiration Françaises, 31e Congrès 2008 de Lomé : Le rôle du droit dans le développement économique ; Justin Melong, [Implementation of OHADA laws in a bilingual and bi-jural context: Cameroon as a case in point](#), Revue de l'ERSUMA, No. 2, mars 2013. Salvatore Mancuso, [« La coexistence du droit civil et du common law en Afrique »](#), Revue de l'ERSUMA :: Droit des affaires – Pratique Professionnelle, N° Spécial, IDEF - Mars 2014, [L'interpénétration des systèmes juridiques : de l'ignorance à la confrontation et à la coexistence harmonisée](#); Claire Moore Dickerson, [Le droit de l'OHADA dans les États anglophones et ses problématiques linguistiques](#), In: Revue internationale de droit comparé. Vol. 60 N°1, 2008. pp. 7-17.

Value-added Activities and Entry Points: In States that harbour more than one major, modern legal tradition, the operative legal technique to accommodate this feature is referred to as *bijuralism, or multi-juralism*. This technique connotes a range of efforts undertaken to ensure that *national* laws, legal texts, and procedures, are rendered and applied in a manner that ensures users of each legal tradition will find in them, a reflection of the concepts and terminologies familiar to the said legal tradition – while having the same legal effects nationwide.²⁶ Mixed, hybrid, bi-jural, or multi-jural countries are the subject of increasing study around the world and employ varying paths to accommodate their diversity. The reception of influences and inter-permeability between legal traditions is established around the world (and occurs in Cameroon), and with appropriate safeguards – such as through legal education, and bi or multi-jural law reform commissions or processes – enhanced unification or accommodation of systems can be achieved.

The *lack of clear legislative recognition of, or specific Justice sector policy commitments* to accommodate these 2 major legal traditions may have accounted for the difficulties in setting up a formal Government approach on bi-juralism. Justice Sector authorities have expressed apprehension about laying emphasis on different legal practice traditions and sources co-existing within a single State. They have raised the concern that this co-existence or juxtaposition of common law and civil law may “impede the emergence of truly Cameroonian law”, and should yield to the decisive imperative of national integration.²⁷ However, early in the onset of the crisis (31/03/2017), the President of the Republic authorised the first set of Executive branch measures which began to recognize bijuralism (including establishing a Common Law section at the Supreme Court’s judicial bench, and a separate Common Law training stream at the National Magistracy School).

An important entry point to generate support for policies on bi-juralism lies in the Cameroon Bar Association – the professional order that regulates the over 3,500 lawyers called into private practice across the country. The Bar Association is a single nationwide body, representing all lawyers in private practice in the country – whether trained in or practising law with a primary civilist, or common law legal tradition influence, or both.

The Bar Association’s history and dynamics account for a significant representation of both legal traditions, including in its decision-making organ, the Bar Council. Its members are increasingly confronted with issues of cross legal system practice, due to professional Bar training across legal systems, professional mobility between the country’s regions, and changing legal market demands. This has resulted in many lawyers and law firms increasingly seeking to establish themselves as bi-jural, to respond to a national, continental, and global legal market that requires familiarity with both legal traditions. Subject to further

²⁶ On bi-juralism and mixed legal systems, see: Vernon Valentine Palmer, [Mixed Legal Systems - The Origin of the Species](#), 28 Tulane European & Civil Law Forum, pp. 103 (2013); Esin Orucu, [What is a Mixed Legal System: Exclusion or Expansion?](#) *Electronic Journal of Comparative Law*, vol. 12.1 (May 2008).

²⁷ [Propos liminaire du ministre d’Etat, Ministre de la Justice Garde des Sceaux, Conférence de Presse](#), 31 mars 2017, « Dans un pays comme le nôtre où coexistent la Common Law et le droit civil, ces sources de droit différentes, sont susceptibles, si l’on n’y prend garde, d’empêcher de réaliser notre marche irréversible vers l’élaboration d’un droit véritablement camerounais ... [U]ne rencontre comme celle-ci est l’occasion idéale pour nous interroger sur l’utilité d’opposer le Cameroun anglophone au Cameroun francophone ou d’opposer la Common Law au droit romano-germanique; en vérité, la seule préoccupation qui vaut la peine d’être évoquée n’est-elle pas la question décisive de l’intégration nationale? »

engagement, the Bar will constitute an important early ally in planting the roots of bi/multi-juralism – and is deserving of support for an activity to review and project on Cameroon’s experience thereon, in comparative perspective.

Area 4 - LANGUAGE-IN-EDUCATION POLICY

Strengthen capacity to forecast, plan strategically, and develop adaptive policies on Language(s)-in-Education, language-in-education systems supply, and management of dual language-in-education sub-streams in a multilingual State.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: To strengthen the capacity of the GoC and key stakeholders (education specialists, teachers and educator unions, examination certification boards, and devolved sub-national authorities with education sector responsibilities) to conduct inclusive planning for, and manage the coexistence of Cameroon’s dual Language-in-Education sector streams in English and French, across the basic (primary), secondary, technical, vocational, and higher education levels of learning.

Expertise Pools to draw from: Language-in-education policies and planning, multilingual education, education policy in multilingual States and societies, inter-education system mobility and comparability, comparative education systems, devolution in the education sector.

The Challenge: A legacy of its two official language heritages, Cameroon runs two “language-in-education” systems, which means that learning takes place *primarily* in one or the other of its official languages, for most learners across the education system. Cameroon’s Framework Law on Education of 1998 (Section 15.1) organises nursery, primary, general and technical secondary education, and teacher training into two language streams (sub-systems), one in French, and another in English. It further specifies that these 2 education sub-systems “co-exist” with each retaining its specificities in its methods of evaluation and examination certifications (Section 15.2). In tertiary (University) education, the State’s universities comprise of: (a) Universities in which learning is performed in either official language (bilingual universities) albeit with a demographic preponderance of French lecturers and students, and (b) Universities chartered to function “in the Anglo-Saxon tradition”, meaning where learning takes place in English.

Given its official language multilingualism, Cameroon has undergone several approaches to Language-in-Education policy.²⁸ These can be summarized as follows: (i) early pilot attempts at a concurrent dual (English and French) language-in-education system at secondary level, which was not further expanded, (ii) the current predominant model (including in State/public schools) of wholly *separate* English and French language-in-education streams at nursery, primary, and secondary levels – both streams often co-located on the same premises, (iii) the increasing voluntary cross-enrolment and “full immersion” by children/students with French home backgrounds into the English language-in-education

²⁸ For an important historical perspective, with an emphasis on the differences exhibited in the language-in-education system in English, see: Georges Courade, Christiane Courade, [L'école du Cameroun anglophone : de l'école coloniale à l'école nationale](#). In: *Tiers-Monde*, Tome 19, n°76, 1978. pp. 743-769 (Original published article in French); and Georges Courade and Christiane Courade, [Education in Anglophone Cameroon: 1915 – 1975](#), National Office for Scientific and Technical Research (ONAREST), Yaoundé, 1977. (Unofficial translation of original text in French, with multiple annexes).

stream, (iv) a “partial immersion” scheme with children learning in *both* languages-in-education streams during the first 4 years of primary school, before reverting to their main language stream, (v) University education in a “mixed” language-in-education format, with lectures delivered indistinctly in either official language, and (vi) University education in single language-in-education streams (per the Universities’ charter).²⁹

A separate and related observation pertains to the *levels of acquisition of learners’ second official language, as a result of formal school instruction*. Official language bilingualism data (cited above) indicates that completion of formal schooling does not tend to correlate with acquisition and retention of the second official language (meaning the language that is not the language of instruction), hence the critique that the educational system has not always successfully served as an anchor to achieve the State policy of bilingualism.³⁰

Available education sector statistics indicate that while both education sub-systems have some presence nationwide, there remains a *preponderance of enrolment in, and adherence to each educational system, in the regions (territorial units) of the country where it historically originated* – e.g. 75% of secondary school students in the English sub-system nationwide were in the historically Anglophone NW and SW regions which had few learners in the French sub-system, while the latter’s majority enrolment was in the 8 other regions of the country.

The two decades since 2000 have witnessed an increasing phenomenon of “language-in-education” sub-system switching, in particular in larger urban agglomerations. This consists of pupils and students from families where *French was the first official language (OL1)* used opting to enrol in primary, secondary, and university education, in schools of the *English sub-system*. A subject of keen study by Cameroon’s linguists and language-in-education researchers, this trend appears principally driven by changing perceptions of the status of English (among primary French speakers) from being Cameroon’s other (and lesser-used) official language, to being a vector of *globalization* and access to increased educational and professional opportunities, for interactions outside Cameroon’s national space.

This process has occurred largely out of parental and student choice, without specific State regulation or policymaking, but has heightened contact between language and education systems, and the stakes and prospects for friction over management of education in English – which is no longer the preserve of the (minority) historical English users. Historically, the Anglophone community has been sensitive over nationally driven reforms of the English

²⁹ See : Jean-Paul Kouega, [Bilingualism at Tertiary Level Education in Cameroon: The Case of the University of Yaoundé II \(Soa\)](#), ISB6: Proceedings of the 6th International Symposium on Bilingualism (30 May-2 June, 2007, University of Hamburg); Gratien Atindogbe & Midinette Koumassol (University of Buea, Cameroon), [Being multilingual in a bilingual environment: Implications for quality education](#), Pan Commonwealth Forum, September 2019; George Echu, [The Immersion Experience in Anglophone Primary Schools in Cameroon](#), Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism, (ed. James Cohen, Kara T. McAlister, Kellie Rolstad, and Jeff MacSwan, 643-655. Somerville, MA (2005); Kuchah Kuchah, [English Medium Instruction in an English-French bilingual setting: issues of quality and equity in Cameroon](#), Comparative Education [Journal], Vol. 52, 2016, pp. 311 - 327.

³⁰ See : Alain Flaubert Takam, [Bilinguisme Officiel et promotion de la langue minoritaire en milieu scolaire : le cas du Cameroun](#), Revue Electronique Internationale de Sciences du Langage (SudLangues), No. 7, Septembre 2007 ; Camille Ekomo Engolo, [Analyse Sociologique du Bilinguisme d'Enseignement au Cameroun](#), Revue « Éducation et sociétés », 2001/2, no 8, pages 135 à 161.

education system, resulting in varying levels of tension in past decades over policies affecting that system's curriculum, structure, and examination certification boards.³¹

The Anglophone crisis emerged in this context. Its triggers included concerns over the recruitment and posting of State teachers (some with French-language education backgrounds) to teach general curriculum subjects in English language-in-education schools, and the proposed harmonization of University curricula (to enhance mobility) between the French and English-based Universities. Both processes deemed by English system education and teacher unions to threaten the originality and specificity of the said system.

Value-added Activities and Entry Points:

Language-in-Education policies refer to the strategic choices made by States, and/or their sub-national units when so empowered, to determine the language in which schooling or instruction is delivered through the formal school system. *Language-in-education policies* are intrinsically linked to, and derive from overall State *Language policy and planning*, since the process of formal school instruction, and the language of its delivery is critical to the acquisition and retention of languages in a State. As such, the fundamental linguistic policy choices effected in a State's language policies and plan, are expected to be reflected in the language(s) of instruction used, as well as the composition of (additional) languages learned in schools.³² Language-in-education is a discipline in its own right, attracting much research, scholarship, and policy work, in multi-lingual societies.³³

Given the context and dynamics in Cameroon's Language-in-Education systems, with dual streams, constituencies which identify strongly with the sub-streams (especially in English), and new forces (of globalization) encouraging switching between language-in-education streams, enhanced capacity to manage the harmonious co-existence of Cameroon's education sub-systems is critical. Comparative observation reveals that in officially multi-lingual States, conflicts over access to, and control of Language-in-Education subsystems can and do occur. In *officially multilingual countries* such as South Africa (language of instruction in higher education) and Canada (access to instruction in specific languages, such as English in Quebec), language-in-education policies constitute a sensitive question.

In such settings, education becomes an extended area in which potential contestation over language systems is played out – and education is itself seen as critical to formation and nurturing of identities. Under rubrics such as *education in multilingual societies* or *multilingual education*, there is increasing specialist knowledge on how such States may craft their education systems and policies to enable equitable access and outcomes.

³¹ See Richard F. Akum and Francis B. Njamnjoh (Eds.), *The Cameroon GCE Crisis: A Test of Anglophone Solidarity*, Langaa RPCIG, 376 pp., 2008.

³² See generally: Chumbow, *The Tier Stratification Model of Language Planning* (cited above); and Fonlon, *The Case for an Early Bilingualism* (above cited).

³³ See: RTI International. 2015. [Planning for Language Use in Education: Best Practices and Practical Steps to Improve Learning Outcomes](#). Washington, DC: U.S. Agency for International Development; UNESCO, [If you don't understand, how can you learn?](#), Policy Paper 24, Global Education Monitoring Report, February 2016; UNESCO, [Comment apprendre, quand on ne comprend pas?](#), Document de référence 24, Rapport Mondial de Suivi sur l'Education, Février 2016.

Cameroon's development partners - both bilateral and development banks – are engaged in education sector support, an example being the World Bank's 130 million USD, Education Reform Support Project for Cameroon, approved in 2018, which focusses on improving access, and the management of quality basic education. The onset of this crisis, engendering *widespread attacks on the education system, large drops in school enrolment, attendance, and completion; and displacement of the education workforce and learners from the 2 regions*, portends new challenges for education in those regions, and for the educational stream in English – which takes its historical roots there.

A first value-added activity would be to *support spaces to discuss viable approaches towards managing the co-existence of Cameroon's two language-in-education sub-streams*. In addition to the issue of specific (territorial-based) arrangements for the NW and SW regions with large adherence to the English sub-system (under those Regions' devolved Special Status prerogatives), there is the need as the said system gains nationwide appeal, *to craft policies that would preserve its specificities*, which is required under Section 15 of Cameroon's 1998 Framework law on Education. With both systems (French and English) operating in orbit nationally, preserving their respective specificities – including from unplanned, unmoderated influences – is a challenging policy task to handle even at central, national policy level.

A further important value-added activity would be a *prospective, planning study on language-in-education demand and choice among learners and parents in Cameroon*. This includes giving greater visibility to, and policy uptake of the extensive existing research on changing patterns of demand, and voluntary switching between these language-in-education streams or sub-systems.³⁴ While the State has adopted a *laissez-faire* approach to switches in school system choice, mass shifts in education sub-system choice present challenges such as the need for a higher supply of teachers and school spaces in English (nationwide), pressure on the existing supply of education in English, and prospects for contention over management of standards and quality in the said education sub-system. It would enable education sector planners determine the motivations for this trend, and to take measures to accommodate the said demand.

³⁴ See : George Echu, [The Immersion Experience in Anglophone Primary Schools in Cameroon](#), Proceedings of the 4th International Symposium on Bilingualism, (ed. James Cohen, Kara T. McAlister, Kellie Rolstad, and Jeff MacSwan, 643-655. Somerville, MA (2005); Kuchah Kuchah, [English Medium Instruction in an English-French bilingual setting: issues of quality and equity in Cameroon](#), Comparative Education [Journal], Vol. 52, 2016, pp. 311 - 327. Stephen Ambe Mforteh, [Cultural Innovations in Cameroon's linguistic Tower of Babel](#), TRANS – Internet Journal for Cultural Studies, Austria, Vol. 16, March 2006; Eric A. Anchimbe, [Anglophonism and Francophonism : The Stakes of \(Official\) Language Identity in Cameroon](#). Alizés : Revue Angliciste de La Réunion, Faculté des Lettres et Sciences humaines (Université de La Réunion), 2005, pp.7-26 ; Jane-Francis Afungmeyu Abongdia, [Language Ideologies and Attitudes of Francophone Learners towards English in Yaoundé](#), Cameroon (MA Thesis, University of the Western Cape), 2009, 155 pp.

SECTION III: MITIGATION OF AND RESPONSE TO THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND HUMANITARIAN CONSEQUENCES OF THE CRISIS

Area 5 - HUMANITARIAN

Seek adherence by actors engaged in the crisis to a minimum humanitarian commitment to spare civilians and protected objects from attack, especially the education system – being the root-cause sector most violently attacked during the crisis.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: is to achieve some level of adherence by all actors in the crisis to highly visible commitments, to spare civilians and protected objects from attack during the crisis, most especially the *education system* as well as humanitarian assistance operations and health facilities.

The Challenge: The crisis in the NW and SW regions has seen a constant pattern of attacks against civilians and protected objects. Most notably, *attacks against the education system (learners, teachers, school premises and infrastructure)* have been systematic. Previous analyses of these attacks have demonstrated their “ideological” nature, with schools and the education system being attacked by armed groups as a means of waging conflict. Discontent with the State’s management of the education system, and ideological mobilisation towards creation of a separate school system has made control of education a political “cause” insurgent groups are fighting for – and disruption of the extant education system, a conflict objective and tactic.

Attacks against civilians and protected objects, notably against the educational system in the 2 regions, have continued into the ongoing 2020-2021 academic year, with the gravest of them being the deadly school shooting in Kumba, SW region, in October 2020. While precise group/institutional responsibility for these incidents have not yet been clarified, these attacks were carried out by belligerents in the crisis.

Value-added Activity and Entry Points: The gravity of attacks against protected objects, most notably schools, in the crisis has brought Cameroon under the scrutiny of the principal global processes to monitor attacks against education, notably the U.N. blacklist of parties to conflicts around the world that commit grave attacks against children in armed conflict (including attacks on education) under U.N. Security Council Resolution 1998, of 12 July 2011. The said Resolution requests:

[The U.N.] Secretary General to also include in the annexes to his [annual] reports [to the Security Council] on children and armed conflict, those parties to armed conflict that engage, in contravention of applicable international law: (a) in *recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals*, (b) in *recurrent attacks or threats of attacks against protected persons* (meaning *civilians, such as learners or teachers*) *in relation to schools and/or hospitals in situations of armed conflict*, bearing in mind all other violations and abuses committed against children.³⁵

As from 2020, the *crisis in Cameroon will come under observation and be reported on*, with respect to these grave crimes against children in the conflict. This constitutes an important

³⁵ <https://childrenandarmedconflict.un.org/document/resolution-1998-2011/>.

and timely opportunity to send strong signals to all parties in the crisis, to desist from attacks against civilians and protected objects, especially schools and education. In the most recent report of the U.N. Secretary General to the Security Council on Children and Armed Conflict, dated 9 June 2020, the Secretary General stated as follows:

In view of the gravity and number of violations reported and, where possible, verified in **Cameroon**, [namely] recruitment and use [of children in armed conflict], killing and maiming, abduction [of children], attacks on schools and hospitals, and denial of humanitarian access, and in Burkina Faso (attacks on schools, and killing and maiming) during 2019, **both countries will be added as situations of concern with immediate effect and will be included in my next report.** (Paragraph 243).³⁶

Despite their dispersed nature and lack of a single military command or unified political structure, the non-State armed groups engaged in the crisis exhibit some level of coordination in their political or military actions. They have politico-military leaders who speak on their behalf, issue policy statements on their demands and their posture towards education, claim responsibility for specific attacks, and conduct political and fundraising work for them, principally abroad. Notably, in the wake of the most violent attacks against schools late in 2020, some of these actors issued statements to distance themselves from the attacks and to demonstrate their adherence to the prohibition of attacks against protected objects, under the laws of war.

Given this new international scrutiny on attacks against education by belligerents in the crisis, and the quasi-ideological nature of such attacks (which creates a heightened risk of their recurrence in the crisis), it is a propitious moment to prevail – through humanitarian channels – upon all actors in the crisis, to take a proactive stance, by voluntarily committing to refrain from all forms of attack against education (learners, teachers, or school establishments). Such voluntary commitments or engagements would be without prejudice to the formal process of listing, undertaking of satisfactory measures by listed parties, and de-listing of parties, under the Resolution 1998 procedure. The said commitments may extend to other frequently targeted protected objects, such as medical facilities, as well as humanitarian assistance operations and personnel.

AREA 6 – HUMAN RIGHTS

Build national law enforcement, prosecutorial, and judicial capacity to investigate, prosecute, and bring to justice, the worst forms of violence committed during the crisis, especially acts potentially constituting war crimes or crimes against humanity.

The Specific Objective, Impact Sought: is to support the GoC and the criminal justice process in the country, to put in place the legislative framework (criminal laws), as well as law enforcement, prosecutorial, and judicial capacity to investigate, prosecute, and bring to trial the perpetrators of the worst forms of violence occurring in the crisis (as well as other conflict situations in the country), thus putting an end to impunity for the said grave crimes.

³⁶ https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/15-June-2020_Secretary-General_Report_on_CAAC_Eng.pdf.

The Challenge: Since 2013 when the Boko Haram crisis began in Cameroon's Far North region, the country has increasingly been faced with new forms of violence, in particular committed against civilians and protected objects, in the context of armed violence. The onset of armed attacks in the Northwest and Southwest regions since late 2017 has continued this trend, adding to the tally of grave incidents committed such as mass killings, torture, sexual violence, and attacks deliberately targeting schools, hospitals, places of worship, and humanitarian workers.

These forms of violence associated with armed activity present new challenges in terms of investigating and bringing to book their perpetrators. The principal legal response to the Boko Haram crisis consisted in the adoption of Cameroon's *law against terrorism* in December 2014, under which hundreds of persons have been prosecuted (before military tribunals which have jurisdiction) for committing, abetting, or facilitating acts of terrorism.

Value-added Activities and Entry Points: Like the Boko Haram crisis, the situation in the NW and SW regions reveals the insufficiency of the anti-terrorism framework to cover all the serious transgressions that occur in such contexts. Most notably, Cameroon does not at present punish under its national criminal laws, the three grave crimes under international law associated with periods of armed violence, namely *war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide*. This means that at present, Cameroon's legal system has neither the *normative framework in place, nor the practical experience* to prosecute these specific crimes, which are *globally recognized as the specialised criminal laws, applicable to situations of armed violence*.

In response to serious atrocities committed in the context of the Boko Haram conflict and the crisis in the NW and SW regions, the GoC's formal position has been that their perpetrators will be investigated and *brought to justice*. (Worthy of note is the important difference between going after and *neutralizing* the armed groups in the context of military operations, and identifying, apprehending, and *bringing to justice* the perpetrators of the said crimes). In his end of year address on 31/12/2020, the President of the Republic, reacting to the October 2020 school killings in Kumba, stated that the said crime "will not go unpunished. All the perpetrators will be hunted down relentlessly and brought to justice".³⁷

In 2020, the Military Tribunal in Yaoundé began the prosecution of Army soldiers accused of committing grave crimes against civilians in Zeleved (Far North Region) and Ngarbuh (Northwest Region). Investigations into other incidents for which State agents may bear responsibility, such as the killing of journalist Samuel Ajiekah (aka Wazizi) who died while in army custody, remain pending. These investigations and trials constitute an important entry point and incentive for Cameroon to adopt the appropriate legal framework, and acquire the institutional capacity, to prosecute grave crimes associated with armed violence.

Key intervention points will include *first*, ensuring appropriate criminal legislation is passed to punish the grave international crimes. In principle, serious incidents committed in the context of armed violence could be prosecuted as (i) *ordinary offences* such as murder or bodily harm under the general Penal Code, (ii) as *offences such as terrorism*, where the other underlying requirements of that offence are met, or (iii) as offences such as *war crimes or crimes against humanity* – in particular where the contextual requirements of existence of an armed conflict for *war crimes*, or a requisite scale of violence (widespread and systematic

³⁷ Presidency of the Republic, [Head of State's New Year Message to the Nation](#), 31 December 2020.

attack against civilians) for *crimes against humanity* is met. It is important for Cameroon to have this third category of crimes in its laws because *ordinary offences* are generally of lesser stature: they are sentenced more leniently, can be amnestied, and are subject to the statute of limitations. Meanwhile *terrorism* offences can only be used to prosecute insurgents against the State, and do not cover transgressions committed by the State's own forces – which *do* occur, by the GoC's own admission.

Second, strengthening the capacity of actors in the criminal justice chain,³⁸ namely judicial investigators (Police, Gendarmerie), prosecutors, Judges, and lawyers at the Bar, to effectively investigate, diligently prosecute, and hold fair trials for these crimes associated with armed violence, will be necessary. Some of these new forms of crimes come with specific complexities in establishing their legal requirements, securing methods of proof (such as forensic evidence), and additional imperatives such as representation of crime victims as parties at trial, ensuring competent legal defence for accused persons, and protecting victims and witnesses who often face heightened threats in such cases.

There exist expertise pools, including within Africa, to assist countries' national judicial systems to prosecute these crimes effectively. Given the national and international attention to these forms of criminality, having the appropriate frameworks in place to investigate and prosecute these crimes will be important for the GoC – including to address repeated calls by multilateral human rights bodies (such as the UN Human Rights Council) and by Cameroon's key bilateral partners, for an end to impunity for these grave crimes.

³⁸ Under existing laws, military tribunals will constitute the focus given that they have exclusive *jurisdiction* over war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide (July 2017 Military Justice Code), over offences involving the use of modern firearms (December 2016 Law on Firearms), and the offence of Terrorism (December 2014 anti-terrorism law).